Session Descriptions

Session 1: Storytelling in Method and Practice

1. Researching Arts-Based Wellness Promotion for Suicide Prevention Among Aboriginal Youth. Dustin Brass, Erin Goodpipe, Benjamin Ironstead, Indigenous Peoples’ Health Research Centre

Youth suicide is one of the most conspicuous examples of the inequalities that exist between the health of Aboriginal peoples and of other Canadians. Not only are suicide rates among Aboriginal youth much higher than those of their non-Aboriginal peers; Aboriginal youth in Canada have the highest suicide rate among all Indigenous groups in the world.

The team is composed of a diverse group of researchers with expertise in Aboriginal youth health, arts-based methods, public policy, qualitative, and quantitative research. The project will build the capacity of Aboriginal youth, community members, knowledge users, and researchers to investigate, identify, and address conditions leading to Aboriginal youth suicide and other self-harming behaviors through the development of culturally appropriate arts-based methods of research. The team will also study the short and long-term effectiveness of arts-based approaches in supporting Aboriginal youth wellness. Lastly, this study will formulate policy recommendations on Aboriginal youth suicide that are culturally appropriate and have the potential to increase the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal peoples over the coming generations.

First Nations artworks tell personal narratives that go beyond aesthetic appeal. For this project the design reveals that stories are the basis of artwork, which have a) a physical platform, the scroll and paints b) a mental aspect, the memory of their stories c) a spiritual connection, in the preparation of the painting and d) the emotional aspect of sharing the stories. It is an educational pedagogy in activity based learning in relation to the medicine wheel concepts.

2. Presenting Photos, Art, and Stories from “Honouring the Knowledge & Skills of Families”. Terri Peterson, Saskatoon Health Region & Faculty of Social Work, University of Regina

In the autumn of 2014, I engaged in a collaborative and transparent partnership with a community of KidsFirst Saskatoon participants, both current and past service users, to build knowledge based on the concepts of social inclusion, capacity building, and empowerment. The people involved in the KidsFirst program hope to provide their children with a safe and connected experience of family. Many of the families involved in the program have experienced multi-generational trauma and familial disruption; they are working hard to challenge the role of oppression, racism, poverty, violence, addiction, mental illness, food insecurity, housing insecurity, and disability in their lives. The ‘Narrative Collective Approach’ introduces a process to collectively identify, acknowledge, honour, and richly describe the knowledge and skills of marginalized communities. It is an anti-oppressive, empowerment based methodology and provides a socially just framework for people to unite and respond to the collective trauma and oppression they have experienced while thickening their stories of capacity and resiliency. Over a period of three months, the co-authors explored and documented their stories, through art, photos, dialogue, and written narratives, of struggle and determination with a dream of addressing the social inequities in the larger community, impacting service delivery and policy, and encouraging other
families.

3. Inclusivity Unmasked! (At the University of Regina). Randy Johner, Kelsey Culbert, John Loeppky, and the Astonished! Student Researchers, University of Regina

The Astonished! Student researchers will share a digital story called, ‘Inclusivity Unmasked’ that showcases the findings of their research project. The Astonished! Student researchers from the University of Regina are a group of vibrant young student researchers with complex physical disAbilities. They are members of The Big Sky Centre for Learning and Being Astonished!, an organization that is committed to working in inclusive community to address barriers facing young adults with complex physical disAbilities (core members) by creating opportunities for social, recreational and cultural engagement, and for employment and housing. In this exploratory project, the Astonished! Student researchers were interested in learning more about accessibility and inclusion within the University of Regina. Data gathering consisted of photographs taken with iPads, conversations rather than interviews to gather words and phrases that our society understands in terms of inclusion or exclusion and music selections that brought reflective meaning to those words and phrases. The photographs and the words and phrases were analyzed and sorted through a process of consensual thematic agreement- What looked like inclusion/exclusion? What felt like inclusion/exclusion? Findings from this exploratory study indicate that inclusion is present at the University of Regina but that further inclusivity remains to be ‘unmasked’.

Session 2: Supports and Responses to Violence in Our Communities

1. Rural and Northern Community Response to Intimate Partner Violence. Darlene Juschka and Mary Hampton, University of Regina; Tracy Knutson, STOPS to Violence

This presentation provides information on a SSHRC-CURA project, led by RESOLVE (“Research and Education for Solutions to Violence and Abuse”) Saskatchewan at the University of Regina. The project led by Dr. Mary Hampton and Diane Delaney built on established connections among three RESOLVE prairie province research offices, researchers in the Northwest Territory (NWT), and justice and community family violence agencies across the provinces/territory to conduct research that will enhance our understanding of effective community response to intimate partner violence in rural and northern regions of the Canadian Prairie Provinces and NWT. The project is in its fourth year and data collection and analysis are being completed, while efforts to disseminate findings have begun.

2. Development of the Anonymous Reporting and Third Option Programs for Survivors of Sexual Assault. Melissa Wuerch, University of Regina

The goal of this research project was to gather information regarding the development of two new victim reporting programs, the Anonymous Reporting and Third Option Program, to share with interested stakeholders and jurisdictions. These programs allow victims to receive the benefits of accessing specialized health care and community support services, without forgoing their sense of autonomy when going through the reporting process. Ten members of the Regina and Area Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) were interviewed. Questions were asked regarding the development and implementation process, as well as important group features and dynamics for success. Participants discussed the importance of having the right key players, indicating that community agency representatives and government level representatives were imperative for success. Suggestions were
made regarding important group features and dynamics, such as maintaining continuity among group members and ensuring that collaboration, respect, and compromise are valued throughout the process. Moreover, several strategies for success were discussed, such as establishing guidelines, building consensus within the community, setting realistic timelines, being open to change, doing a practice run, and throughout the process, staying focused on the end goal.

3. The Link: Animal Safekeeping and Domestic Violence. Tracy Knutson, STOPS to Violence

Animals play a significant role in our society. A recognition exists that animal abuse and domestic violence often occur in tandem. Victims of domestic violence may have deep attachments to their animals, often depending on them for comfort, constancy, personal assistance or income. Perpetrators of domestic violence take advantage of this human-animal bond in order to control or emotionally abuse their victims. Victims who cannot find a safe place for their animals may delay leaving an abusive relationship for fear of what might happen to their animals.

STOPS to Violence and the Saskatchewan SPCA have partnered to improve our understanding of the impact of the concern of safety of companion animals, service animals and livestock as a barrier to individuals leaving situations of interpersonal violence and abuse in Saskatchewan and to identify potential options and solutions.

Through our work to date, we have found that the experience of human service providers in Saskatchewan indicate a need in our province for increased awareness, knowledge and services related to animal safekeeping. Information gathered indicates that there are a number of opportunities for collaboration between human service providers and animal welfare networks to begin to address these gaps, including information sharing, education and cross sector collaboration.

Session 3: Inclusion in Our Communities

1. Supported Living in Mental Health: Contributing to a Healthy, Inclusive Community. Heidi Langford, Phoenix Residential Society

Phoenix Residential Society provides a variety of programs that are meant to support people to live independently or work towards that goal. Programs are individualized and flexible and all staff is trained to work using the principles and values of Psychosocial (Psychiatric) Rehabilitation. Our programs are implemented using strategies and interventions which are founded in evidenced based best practices. Beyond learning from current and past relevant research Phoenix Residential Society continually endeavors to answer the question of how to best support people who have a mental illness to a) live more independently b) have a higher sense of security and well-being c) higher sense of inclusion. Other benchmarks for measuring outcomes are decreased hospitalization both for psychiatric and physical health reasons and decrease contact with the justice system.

These indicators of successful intervention are measured on an ongoing basis using a variety of measurement tools including Multnomah Community Ability Scale and the Camberwell Assessment of Need. Individual assessment is done at intake and at every six month interval. Data is compiled from assessments as well as number of emergency room visits, hospitalizations, and contact with the criminal justice system. Qualitative semi-structured interviews were also completed within the last two years to include narrative self-reported experience to assess program effectiveness. Preliminary data has
suggested that Phoenix Residential Society has improved sense of security related specifically to housing, improvement in physical and mental health, increased community integration, and reduced contact with criminal justice system.

2. Identifying Local Priorities: Newcomer Settlement and Integration. Carol Brouwers, Regina Region Local Immigration Partnership

The Regina Region Local Immigration Partnership Project is a collaborative community initiative that will build on the community’s strengths, promote linkages between sectors, enhance collaboration and coordination and foster a more welcoming community where immigrants are fully engaged and integrated. Locally identified priorities to successful newcomer settlement and integration will be identified and a strategy and action plan implemented with the goal of improving integration outcomes for newcomers in Regina. A broad-based Partnership Council, comprised of key stakeholders, will work to move forward change based on the locally identified priorities.

In 2015 the RRLIP completed a high level scan of the community’s assets and gaps (asset mapping) as it relates to newcomer settlement and integration in Regina. Community Forum consultations were also conducted. The asset mapping and community forum process allowed opportunity for the RRLIP to immediately engage with community, initially identify local priorities for successful settlement and integration and inform membership to a broad-based Partnership Council.

3. Digging Deep: Examining the Root Causes of HIV and AIDS Among Aboriginal Women. Carrie Bourassa, Ms. Margaret Poitras, Natalie Owl, Carolyn Pelletier, Tanya Sayer, Dr. Stuart Skinner, Eric Oleson, Elder Betty McKenna

Aboriginal Women are over-represented in HIV/AIDS statistics, and the literature indicates that Aboriginal women, in particular, are the most marginalized population in Canada. Yet there is a startling lack of gender-specific (sex, lesbian, transgendered), Aboriginal-specific, HIV/AIDS resources, programs and services. In this context, this research endeavours to contribute towards a deep understanding of the drivers that fuel this reality while identifying the assets within the Aboriginal community that sustain women and contribute to culturally relevant solutions to.

This research is important and timely given the multiple risk situations that contextual the daily lived experiences of many Aboriginal women. For Aboriginal people in Canada, colonization remains one of the most destructive elements affecting societal structures today. Our focus on Aboriginal women is to support them to develop evidence-based, community and asset-based solutions that are culturally safe. Our specific objectives include:

1) Understanding the complex Aboriginal social determinants of health that interact to produce higher rates of IDU, HIV/AIDS, and HCV among Aboriginal women, particularly those who are identified as hard to engage and those who have not been tested;
2) Developing a model of culturally safe care;
3) Increasing the research capacity of All Nations Hope Network (ANHN) –and the broader Aboriginal community in Regina (pilot site);
4) Developing educational videos to accompany the culturally safe care model and enhancing the understanding of cultural safety for Aboriginal women living with HIV, AIDS and HCV.

Our presentation will highlight a CIHR-funded, 3 year project that is community-based and employed
Indigenous community-based research methods. Key points are the potential benefits to the community we serve and also the health practitioners we work with and engage as we pursue positive systemic change.

**Session 4: This is How We Did It**

**1. Confronting the Challenge—Community Supports, Stability and the Role of the Mental Health Disposition Court. Brittany Mario and Michelle Stewart, University of Regina**

Individuals with mental illness are overrepresented in the criminal justice system. In fact, 13% of males and 29% of females have been identified at admissions to correctional facilities as having a mental illness. This social justice challenge is present across North America, and Regina is no exception. In November of 2013, the Regina Mental Health Disposition (RMHD) court was established as a problem-solving court meant to address the needs of mentally ill and cognitively impaired individuals who come in contact with the criminal justice system. This court uses a collaborative, multi-disciplinary approach in which community partners are engaged in the court. The court attempts to divert individuals away from incarceration when they are able to be appropriately and safely managed in the community.

This presentation will discuss a community-engaged research project that focuses on the perspectives of stakeholders of the RMHD court. Using mixed qualitative methods, this project is organized around interlocking research questions that include: what is the relationship between mental health, cognitive impairment, community stability and negative justice system contact; how does this court help address the challenges that are faced by those living with a mental illness or cognitive disability? To answer these questions, the research team has conducted interviews with stakeholders alongside participant observation and analysis of court documents.

The research project involves: an interdisciplinary research team that includes students from the University of Regina; an advisory board made up of campus, community and government representatives; and a partnership that links campus with the Ministry of Justice and the Provincial Courts through a University of Regina Partnership Grant. This presentation will include a discussion of preliminary research findings as well as an overview of the partnership associated to the grant and how it informs research methods and dissemination—it will also highlight areas for future research and collaboration.

**2. Ability and Substance Abuse Issues in Saskatchewan. Randy Johner, Gabriela Novotna, Nuelle Novik, Bonnie Jeffery, and Michelle McCarron, University of Regina**

A growing body of evidence suggests that substance abuse in persons with ability issues is a concern that has been underrepresented in addiction research despite persons with ability and substance abuse issues experiencing substance abuse issues (PASAI) at a much higher rate than the general population. In addition to programmatic and environmental barriers, literature indicates that geographical location (e.g. urban versus rural), population density, age, gender, culture and ethnicity, or immigration status contributes to the complexity of issues experienced by PASAI. Our research project is based on the premise that individuals with coexisting ability and substance use issues should receive services for both conditions; their ability issues should not prevent them from receiving treatment for their substance abuse. Thus, one of the goals of our research project is to find out what are the needs of PASAI currently accessing addiction treatment programs in the province of Saskatchewan. Our research
questions are: 1. How are identified services meeting the needs of PASAI’s? 2. What are the experiences of PASAIs with currently provided services? 3. What needs to happen to meet the needs of PASAI’s? In order to answer these questions, we interviewed key informants (policy makers, service planners and professionals providing substance abuse treatment and interventions to PASAIs) and service users. We also conducted a listening session with allies and family members of PASAIs to gather their stories, insights, and information about practices that are currently provided. In this presentation, we will share preliminary findings from our research project. Poverty, lack of service provider training, lack of awareness of diverse ability issues and accessibility-related barriers to facilities, materials and treatment methodologies are some of the key data findings.

3. Connecting to the Deep Past in Saskatchewan’s Deep South. Tomasin Playford, Saskatchewan Archaeological Society

Saskatchewan Archaeological Society member, Mr. Biron Ebell, approached the society in 2013 to discuss the possibility of undertaking archaeological research at the Farr site. Mr. Ebell spent many years of his younger years in the community of Amulet, located about an hour south of Regina. He continues to be a steward of several archaeological sites in the area although he moved to Winnipeg many years ago. The Farr site is important because the artifacts recovered from the surface of the ground indicate it an old site (9,000 years old) and very little was known about the integrity of the site. Although the town site of Amulet no longer exists, there are several other communities in the area including Ogerma, Pangman and Bengough. The SAS undertook a Community Archaeology Project at the Farr site in June and July of 2015. As part of this project, schools groups and the general public from the area were invited to participate in archaeological investigations at the site. The result, almost 100 people assisted the SAS with uncovering 100’s of artifacts. The SAS is currently analysing the artifacts and the results of the analysis will be shared with the communities. This project is an example of Community Archaeology.

4. Vulnerability and Adaptation to Climate Extremes in the Americas (VACEA). Dave Sauchyn, VACEA and University of Regina

This international and inter-disciplinary research project addresses the consequences of global climate change for agricultural and indigenous communities in Canada, Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Colombia. It provides new knowledge to strengthen the capacities of governance institutions and rural populations to adapt to shifts in climate variability and the frequency of extreme events. The research framework actively engages stakeholders and directs all research activities towards evaluating past, current and future exposure, sensitivity and adaptive capacity, and applying this new knowledge to the design of improved adaptation strategies. The project takes a community-oriented and participatory approach to the study of adaptation policies and practices. By integrating an assessment of community vulnerability with a scientific understanding of regional climate variability and extreme events, we are able to evaluate the climate risks faced by the rural communities. With our project partners from the communities and governance institutions we identify options for managing this risk through adaptive management practices and appropriate governance and policy. We gather input and advice from the rural communities, agricultural sector, and institutional decision makers to ensure community- and policy-relevant outcomes and deliverables.

Session 5: This is How We Work Together
1. Residential Cooking Fires project. Candace Liskowich and Angela Prawzick, Regina Fire & Protective Services

Cooking related fires are becoming an increasingly significant threat to public safety. In 2014, in Regina, the rate of structure fires caused by careless cooking climbed to the highest number observed since at least 1992, causing 89 of the city’s 167 structure fires, and resulting in an estimated $1,920,000 damage. This increase in cooking-related house fires is happening not only in Regina, but is a North America-wide trend. To gain a better understanding of the human behaviours causing this significant trend in public safety risk, Regina Fire & Protective Services reached out to the Community Research Unit. Regina Fire & Protective Services and the CRU are currently working collaboratively on a research project aimed at gaining further insight into the nature and extent of residential cooking fires in Regina.

The research project partners have developed a survey tool used by firefighters to gather behavioral and demographic information immediately following a cooking incident. This statistical tool will help shed light on the demographics and behavioural patterns associated with residential cooking fires. This type of research is groundbreaking within the North American fire service. Ultimately, the research project seeks to support the development and implementation of effective education strategies that are informed by evidence-based research. As the project moves into a preliminary reporting phase, it marks an important achievement in University/community partnerships and highlights the unique relationship between the emergency service and academic worlds in effecting positive social change. This type of collaboration not only has the power to effect positive change in public safety and education, but to potentially save lives.

2. The Saskatchewan Partnership for Arts Research. Mary Blackstone, Ian McWilliams, and Sam Hage, University of Regina

The Saskatchewan Partnership for Arts Research (SPAR) was initiated by the Saskatchewan Arts Alliance (SAA) and includes the SAA, SaskCulture, the Saskatchewan Arts Board, and the University of Regina. Our first project is Understanding the Arts Ecology of Saskatchewan (UAES), a grassroots study of the role of artists and the arts in Saskatchewan. This research is intended to increase understanding of the social, cultural and economic roles of Saskatchewan artists and the arts as well as facilitate evidence-based program and policy making.

In 2014, SPAR conducted two surveys: one a major survey of Saskatchewan artists, the other a survey open to the public. Survey responses are providing a clearer understanding of how artists and the arts are functioning within the province. Saskatchewan artists are exceptionally cross-disciplinary and collaborative, forming links not only among themselves and with arts organizations but also with a complex network of educational institutions, businesses and organizations outside the arts. Complex cultural, social, and economic ties link artists and their communities.

SPAR continues consultations with artists, arts organizations and communities. If you wish to participate, we welcome expressions of interest. SPAR is funded by the four partners and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

3. Emerging Themes for Discussion: Partnership and Recruitment Issues in Community-Based Research. Shari Caffet and Shanthi Johnson, Saskatchewan Population Health and Evaluation Research Unit
Beginning in 2012, Dr. Shanthi Johnson launched ‘Saskatchewan Advantage: Preventing Falls Among Seniors’, a collaborative project between Regina Qu’Appelle Health Region (RQHR) and the Saskatchewan Population Health Evaluation Research Unit (SPHERU) aimed at reducing falls among seniors over 60. The study employs the Home Support Exercise Program developed by the Canadian Centre for Activity and Aging as the intervention, and is implemented using a system integrated approach through the existing infrastructure of Regina Home Care. Thus, study participants are necessarily vulnerable and subsequently difficult to reach. While this raises ethical concerns, it also raises unique recruitment challenges.

Two issues of interest have emerged and will be discussed:

Complex Collaboration with Health Region: The partnership with RQHR has led to unique issues dealing with the complex reality of several moving pieces in a large community-based project using a system integrated approach. Working with a health agency presents additional restrictions not found in other partnerships, such as additional confidentiality and access limitations concerning patient information. In addition, this partnership requires cooperation, training, and continuous support at multiple levels, from the Executive Director of Home Care, to Continuing Care Aides. Furthermore, staff changes, retirements, turnover of CCA’s, and balancing the rural/urban split present challenges worth discussing.

Recruitment Challenges and Solutions: Balancing Persistence with Respect. The vulnerable nature of participants presents not only ethical concerns regarding contacting Health Region Home Care clients, but practical recruitment challenges. This is a population frequently targeted by phone scams, fraudsters, and as such are rightly taught to be very skeptical of strangers phoning them. Common research recruitment issues that arose involving establishing trust and obtaining informed consent had to be approached by accommodating not only health region confidentiality and access policies, but also hearing difficulties over the phone, font size and verbiage in written correspondence, cognitive and mobility challenges, and so on. We had to continuously develop unique solutions to these challenges that may be useful to others conducting similar research.