

NEW STAFF PROFILES

Katya MacDonald
Project Administrator

I come to this project from a background in community-engaged oral history research with Indigenous communities, both in Saskatchewan and in B.C. Since completing my PhD in History, I have also worked in research in a variety of fields. I'm looking forward to learning and working with this project as well!

Kristen Pawliw
Research Assistant

I am a graduate student with the University of Regina. I have taught for the Saskatchewan Rivers school division for 12 years, and am currently teaching the second grade. Before going into Education, I attained a 3-year degree in Native Studies. I am a Métis person myself, and am passionate about supporting Indigenous worldview; and as such am an advocate for Indigenous Education. I live in Prince Albert with my husband and two daughters.

ACCESS TO RECOVERY WITH ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY DEVICES

SEPTEMBER 2018

This newsletter provides updates about the Access to Recovery project, funded by the Canadian Institute of Health Research. It is based at the University of Regina and is partnered with the Métis Addictions Council of Saskatchewan Inc. (MACSI). The goal of the project is to create a mobile app to assist people dealing with addictions in their recovery. A particular focus of the app will be to ensure that it is accessible to people with learning challenges or disabilities.

Background photo by Katya MacDonald

AUGUST TALKING CIRCLES

In August, members of the research team had the chance to hear the perspectives of MACSI clients in Regina, Saskatoon and Prince Albert. At four talking circles – one each in Regina and Prince Albert, and two in Saskatoon – clients responded to a series of questions to give us a sense of clients' needs and interests for an app to support their recovery. They also spoke about their own cultural backgrounds, and how they see the role of culture in their lives. MACSI Program Director Emily Bear facilitated these circles, with her dad, Ross Gardypie, serving as an Elder.

The talking circles were attended by inpatient, stabilization, and day program clients, so participants were at various stages of their recovery process. They shared diverse perspectives about their own cultural backgrounds, learning preferences, and tools to help them during their recovery. At the same time, we heard some common ideas come up again and again. (continued on next page)

AUGUST TALKING CIRCLES, CONTINUED

Topics that participants mentioned included:

- Loss and trauma (including intergenerational trauma)
- Resilience
- The importance of humour to remain resilient
- The value of sharing and hearing stories
- Culture and spirituality
- Preferences for learning information visually and in hands-on ways
- An interest in quick access to resources, exercises, and daily affirmations

A next step will be to discuss what activities and information to include in the app, based on our resources and the ideas shared in the talking circles.

LITERATURE REVIEW HIGHLIGHTS

Research assistant Kristen Pawliw has been reviewing existing research on assistive technology for people with disabilities. Much of the work that has been done with Indigenous populations to date has been based in Australia, even though many similar needs exist in Canada and elsewhere. One of the goals of the Access to Recovery project is to provide a basis and an example for research in Canada that supports First Nations and Métis people and cultures locally. The existing literature also shows an ongoing need for technological developments that assist people with mental health and addictions issues.

TED TALK AT HEALTH INNOVATION SUMMIT IN REGINA



MACSI Program Manager Emily Bear and Randy Johner, a Principal Investigator on the Access to Recovery project, gave a 15-minute TED Talk at the Health Innovation Summit in Regina (<https://healthsummit.ca/>). Attendees at the gathering were interested and enthusiastic about the project.

L-R: Randy Johner, Emily Bear, and Saskatchewan Union of Nurses Communications Officer Erin Thomsen. Photo: Shayne Lazarowich, MACSI Communications Manager.

NEXT STEPS

The Access to Recovery project team will meet as a group on October 4, 2018. At that meeting we will discuss some future directions for developing the app. We will consider how to ensure that it is inclusive of diverse Indigenous cultures, how to make it effective and accessible for diverse learning styles, and how we will keep the app usable and up-to-date

over time. In October and beyond, members of the project team will begin coding and analysing data from the talking circles, and will begin one-on-one interviews with MACSI clients who have expressed an interest in being interviewed.

Project contact information

Principal investigators: Randy Johner (randy.johner@uregina.ca) and Gabriela Novotna (gabriela.novotna@usask.ca)

Project administrator: Katya MacDonald (katya.macdonald@uregina.ca)