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CIHR INSTITUTE OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLES' HEALTH

LEADERS IN ABORIGINAL HEALTH RESEARCH

Métis researcher Dr. Caroline Tait works with communities to identify best practices in FASD prevention for Aboriginal women and their children



Dr. Caroline Tait, is Assistant Professor at the University of Saskatchewan and Faculty Researcher with the Indigenous Peoples' Health Research Centre (IPHRC) in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Excellence in academia and research are hallmarks of her career to date, Dr. Tait achieved the prestigious Canada-U.S. Fulbright Scholarship and was a Visiting Fellow at Harvard University. Professional distinction however is one part of Dr. Tait's accomplishments, her passion

for community-based research and social justice is equally notable. Through her focus on social factors that affect Aboriginal peoples' health, she is highlighting the need to examine determinants of health and address inequities in health service provision.

Aboriginal health research students looking ahead to a career in this field can benefit from Dr. Tait's advice – find a research topic that inspires your passion. Her own journey into research with Aboriginal women and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) was sparked by the "G case", the case involved a pregnant Aboriginal woman and generated a national debate on mandated addictions treatment for pregnant women. Early in her research career she became interested in the complexity of FASD prevention and

Aboriginal women's health, as she states, "It was really medicalizing social distress and mental distress among indigenous people in this very interesting way."

Now, Dr. Tait has a CIHR funded research project on FASD prevention that is being conducted in 3 First Nations communities in partnership with the Saskatchewan Northern Intertribal Health Authority. Though it is still

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Métis researcher *continued...*

early in the study, it has already identified issues that stem from poverty, including overcrowding in houses and homelessness on reserve, are putting Aboriginal women at risk for alcohol and substance addiction during pregnancy. Dr. Tait states, "What we're really finding is that there are certain groups of women who are very vulnerable in this circumstance. If we're looking at providing prevention we can see already that we need to look beyond just the basic message of 'no alcohol during pregnancy'."

Addressing risk factors is important and Dr. Tait is quick to caution against focusing solely on Aboriginal women. Instead, as she is doing in her research, Dr. Tait recommends prevention should be examined broadly within a historical and community-based context, addressing gaps in appropriate addiction treatment and post-treatment

services for relapse prevention.

Dr. Tait's research expertise in social determinants of Aboriginal peoples' health is more than academic, she grew up in poverty and has seen the effects of colonialism and discrimination in her community. Despite the many challenges in Aboriginal health research, Dr. Tait loves her work and sees the increasing numbers of Aboriginal women that are pursuing postsecondary education as a real strength, "It really highlights that indigenous women see education as, in this case a research career, as a way out of poverty in many cases, and a way in which they can improve their own lives but also the lives of their community." The Aboriginal health research community is fortunate to have researchers like Dr. Tait that are raising the profile of Aboriginal health issues and creating a standard of excellence for research that is relevant to Aboriginal communities. •

CIHR-IAPH Scientific Director's Award of Excellence 2007

The CIHR-IAPH Scientific Director's Award of Excellence recognizes outstanding students in Aboriginal health research at the Master's and Doctoral levels. Awards are given to trainees in Aboriginal health research that have high potential to become outstanding researchers in Aboriginal health research. The deadline for application is April 1, 2007. Students interested in applying can contact Ms. Mary Hum-Wan at the CIHR-IAPH University of Victoria office for full application information. The value of the award is \$1000, winners will be presented with the award at the 2007 National Gathering of Graduate Students in Aboriginal Health. •

CIHR-IAPH PARTNERSHIPS

MOU signed with Assembly of First Nations and First Nations Governance Committee – Sets path for generating important information on First Nations health

On November 3, 2006 a Memorandum of Understanding was signed in Montreal, Quebec between the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), the First Nations Information Governance Committee (FNIGC) and CIHR-IAPH. The agreement is an important first step in developing a partnership that will support scientific excellence and community relevance in the analysis of the First Nations Regional Longitudinal Health Survey (RHS) data; the RHS is currently the only First Nations research initiative that is developed and managed by First Nations.

Plans are being developed to launch a call for research proposals that will involve the FNIGC in the process and ensure research ethics principles in partnerships between First Nations regions and Aboriginal health researchers are met. In the Assembly of First Nations Press Release (November 6, 2006), Chief Phil Fontaine lauds the new agreement and states the need for data on health and poverty can be used by communities and governments to improve the lives of First Nations people. Dr. Jeff Reading noted that the knowledge created will help in addressing the health status of Aboriginal people. •





CIHR-IAPH Institute Advisory Board (IAB) and Scientific Director at the CIHR-IAPH IAB meeting, November 3-4, 2006, Montreal, Quebec (Missing: Dr. Francine Romero).

CIHR-IAPH Welcomes Three New Institute Advisory Board Members

CIHR-IAPH is pleased to welcome three new Institute Advisory Board (IAB) members that came on board in September, 2006. The first meeting for the new members was November 2-3, 2006 in Montreal, Quebec, the meeting was attended by 15 of the 16 IAB members – a record turnout. The incoming board members replace two extraordinary inaugural IAB members who completed their terms in August, 2006 – Marlene Brant Castellano, O.C., O.Ont., BA, BSW, MSW, and Judith Bartlett, MD, MSc, CCFP. CIHR-IAPH thanks them for their hard work and expert contributions to CIHR-IAPH initiatives since its inception, and wishes them all the best in their future endeavours.

The new CIHR-IAPH IAB members are Steven Graham, BSc (Pharm), PhD, Margo Greenwood and Micheal Chandler, PhD. The incoming board members complement the experience of existing IAB members who represent a standard of excellence and expertise in Aboriginal health research in their respective fields. Dr. Steven Graham brings expertise in research on prescribing of pharmaceutical drugs; Dr. Micheal Chandler is a distinguished CIHR and Micheal Smith Foundation investigator in the field of psychology; Margo Greenwood has experience in early childhood care, education and health, and is the Research Lead for the National Collaborating Centre on Aboriginal Health, Public Health Agency of Canada.

For more information on the CIHR-IAPH IAB, please see the CIHR-IAPH website: <http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/18515.html>. ●

CONFERENCE CALENDAR

February 22-23, 2007

Aboriginal Health and Remote Access Forum

Calgary, AB

www.insightinformation.com/

April 11-14, 2007

Community-Campus Partnerships for Health 10th Anniversary Conference

Toronto, ON

www.depts.washington.edu/ccph/conf-overview.html

June 10-15, 2007

The 19th IUHPE World Conference on Health Promotion and Health Education

www.iuhpeconference.org/en/conference/about.htm



FOCUS ON ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH (CBR)

Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network using CBR to address the HIV/AIDS epidemic

The Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network (CAAN) is actively pursuing community-based research (CBR) initiatives across Canada. CAAN considers the role of research important to addressing the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal people are still over-represented in HIV/AIDS cases in Canada; in 2005 Aboriginal people comprised about 9% of new HIV infections, an alarming number considering Aboriginal people represent only 3.3% of the Canadian population. CAAN sees the objective of CBR activities as “Researching Us to Life” in both addressing HIV/AIDS issues and helping to stem the epidemic in Aboriginal communities.

CAAN currently holds a number of CIHR HIV/AIDS grants in community-based research and has developed partnerships on specific projects with Aboriginal health researchers, including Dr. Judy Mills from



the University of Alberta and Dr. Charlotte Loppie from Dalhousie University. One project that is targeted specifically to capacity building is the national Research Technical

Assistant (RTA) program; the program supports two RTAs: one servicing Eastern Canada and one servicing Western Canada. The RTA program actively supports community-based organizations develop research projects through capacity-building and technical assistance.

Recognizing that Aboriginal HIV/AIDS CBR is a specialty within Aboriginal and community-based health research, CAAN has identified a number of principles and key features that are aimed at inclusion, collaboration, and respect for diversity and self-determination of Aboriginal communities. Knowledge translation and the principles of “OCAP” (ownership, access, control and possession) are also central in HIV/AIDS CBR initiated by CAAN.

CAAN has published its inaugural edition of the “Canadian Journal of Aboriginal Community-Based HIV/AIDS Research” and is currently working on the second edition. For more information about CAAN’s community-based research initiatives, visit their website: www.caan.ca for more information. ●

A renewed strategic plan for CIHR-IAPH 2006-2011

The **CIHR-IAPH Strategic Plan for 2006-2011** builds upon the work already undertaken by the Institute to date, and charts an ambitious course in working with stakeholders in Aboriginal health to continue to develop an advanced Aboriginal health agenda in Canada that is linked with a larger global indigenous network in health research.

As part of the strategic planning process undertaken by Institute Advisory Board members, staff, CIHR staff and other guests, the Institute’s mandate, vision, mission and values were refined and revised. CIHR-IAPH has set out five strategic directions that will guide its work in the next four years:

1. Develop strategic regional, national and international partnerships to advance Aboriginal health research;
2. Ensure inclusion and recognition of Aboriginal values and cultures in health research;
3. Enhance capacity and infrastructure to advance Aboriginal health research;
4. Resolve critical Aboriginal health issues; and
5. Facilitate and evaluate translation of Aboriginal health knowledge into policy and practice.

To view and download a copy of the CIHR-IAPH Strategic Plan 2006-2011 please see the CIHR-IAPH website: <http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/8668.html> ●



CIHR-IAPH invites researchers to share their success

Aboriginal health researchers are creating new knowledge to improve Aboriginal peoples' health – if you are a CIHR funded Aboriginal health researcher we invite you to share your accomplishments! Please contact CIHR when you anticipate your results will be published in a high profile journal or if you have any significant research developments. CIHR Public Affairs would be pleased to assist researchers with news releases and media coverage related to research developments and results. If you would like help promoting your research findings, please send an email to CIHR Media Relations at mediarelations@cihr-irsc.gc.ca. For more information on “Communicating the Value of Health Research” please see the CIHR Guidelines on Public Communication: <http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/30789.html>.

CIHR-IAPH is also interested in hearing about research findings that are published or research developments. We would like to help showcase your research results in CIHR-IAPH publications, including knowledge of best practices in developing partnerships with Aboriginal communities, knowledge translation and ethics. Please send information on your Aboriginal health research and its contribution to improving Aboriginal peoples' health to Ms. Namaste Marsden at the CIHR-IAPH University of Victoria office. •

CIHR 5-Year International Review

Panel recommends CIHR-IAPH stay the course

CIHR underwent its first independent international review in 2006 to fulfill its requirement for a comprehensive review of mandate and performance every five years, as mandated by the CIHR Act. The International Review Panel (IRP) was comprised of 27 scientists and health care professionals, and with the exception of one, all were from outside Canada and represented excellence in their respective fields. The IRP made a number of recommendations to CIHR in the areas of peer review, governance and management which are currently being implemented in consultation with the research community in Canada.

The review of CIHR-IAPH was positive and illuminated the successes and strengths of the Institute: the Scientific Director, national and international partnership development, capacity building and ethics were all noted as assets in the Institute's success. In all, the recommendation was for CIHR-IAPH to maintain its present trajectory in setting an advanced Aboriginal health research agenda in Canada.

The CIHR Year 5 International Review Panel Report 2000-2005 (June 2006) is available on the CIHR website: <http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/31680.html>. •

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