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## UAKN July 2016 Newsletter - Volume 4: Number 4 UAKN – Research for a Better Life

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### UAKN NETWORK DEVELOPMENTS

The Urban Aboriginal Knowledge Network (UAKN) is a national network comprised of urban Aboriginal communities, policy makers and academics, engaging in community driven research with the goal of contributing to a better quality of life for urban Aboriginal people. The UAKN national network provides a different type of partnership by developing stronger relationships, through a community driven process. There are currently over 52 UAKN research projects taking place the regions in different stages. There are currently 15 final papers submitted which all have accompanying research briefs to provide a quicker snapshot of key findings and recommendations arising from the projects. All these research outputs can be found using the [UAKN Research Mapping Tool](#). The UAKN recently co-hosted the 2016 CINSA conference which you can learn more about in the below article. The UAKN is beginning to prepare for their annual governance meeting with the UAKN Aboriginal Circle on October 26, 2016 and the UAKN Network Council meeting October 27-28, 2016 taking place in Ottawa, Ontario. We look forward to all the final papers to share all the final papers and key findings of the UAKN regional projects as they are made available!

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# Reconciliation through Research: Fostering miyo-pimatisiwin

#CINSA2016

Photo by Michael Dubois

uakn.org



## CINSA 2016 RECAP

The Urban Aboriginal Knowledge Network (UAKN) was pleased to co-host with First Nations University of Canada the 2016 Canadian Indigenous/Native Studies Association (CINSA) Reconciliation through Research: Fostering miyo-pimatisiwin conference held June 22-24, 2016 at First Nations University of Canada (FNUUniv) in Regina, Saskatchewan. Over 200 participants were registered made up of Elders, community members, scholars, volunteers and vendors that took part in the event over the three days. 47 sessions took place with over 94 presentations on topics surrounding education, Indigenous women, research ethics, truth and reconciliation, oral history, food security, identity, service delivery, youth, Indigenous two spirit, land, housing, social economy, community driven research approaches and processes and much more! All the presentations were presented in a variety of ways including individual paper presentations, panel sessions, roundtables, workshops, film screenings and performances that highlight community-driven research and pathways to achieving reconciliation.

CINSA 2016 was guided by the theme of Reconciliation through Research: Fostering miyo-pimatisiwin in the city. The CINSA conference represents the growing partnership between urban Aboriginal communities and the research community who are involved joint efforts to find ways of improving bimaadiziwin for urban Aboriginal residents. We saw this on many levels at the conference when looking at how many Elders and community members joined the CINSA conference for the daily sessions, keynotes and meals over the three days. Many UAKN projects were showcased where the outcomes and key findings of the community driven projects taking place were presented. The National UAKN Urban Aboriginal Service Delivery and Landscape project was presented by each region in four parts and the UAKN Secretariat looks forward to releasing this paper in the upcoming months.

The NAFC – Pathways - PEKE also sponsored a health stream throughout the conference where a variety of topics were highlighted such as Community Guided Research Ethics, Knowledge Translation Excellence for Indigenous Health, Pathways to Health Equity, Indigenous Community-Based Health Research, building a Sustainable Research Community and Research Processed.

An outcome of CINSA 2016 is the creation of a publication to showcase the final papers presented. Stay

## Central Research Circle: Community Driven Impacts

### OFIFC Research Panel Presentations Reinforce the Value and Importance of Community-Driven Indigenous Research to Advance Reconciliation at the Canadian Indigenous/Native Studies Association (CINSA) Conference in Regina

The Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC) presented two of its recently completed research projects on two panels at the Canadian Indigenous/Native Studies Association (CINSA) conference that took place from June 22-25, 2016 in Regina. Both panels highlighted the value and importance of advancing community-driven research that is culturally-grounded and trauma-informed. The majority of panelists consisted of Friendship Centre community members, who contributed to the projects as Knowledge Keepers. This is in-line with the principles of the OFIFC's USAI (Utility, Self-Voicing, Access, and Inter-Relationality) Research Framework. USAI research is a culturally-appropriate, methodical, and practical inquiry in the service of urban Indigenous communities that is grounded in Indigenous worldviews, in Indigenous ways of knowing, in connectedness to land, and in culture—which for the OFIFC is everyday good living.

The first panel, entitled, *Wiisinadaa: Traditional Foods & Diabetes Research Project—Challenging Mainstream Approaches to Health Research in Urban Indigenous Communities in Ontario*, was moderated by Magda Smolewski (Research Director, OFIFC) with Norm Dokis (Nature Interpreter, North Bay); Collin Meekis (Health Outreach Coordinator, Red Lake Indian Friendship Centre); Cass Gardiner (Algonquin Documentary Filmmaker and Photographer); and Harleen Panesar (Researcher, OFIFC) as panelists. The panel began with a viewing of the OFIFC's *Wiisinadaa: Let's Eat!* video that was directed by Cass Gardiner and follows the project which began in 2015, when the OFIFC and five Friendship Centre communities embarked on a research project to examine the link between traditional foods and the prevalence of diabetes in urban Indigenous communities. Both the video and the subsequent panel dialogue highlighted that this research project explored more than the experience of diabetes in urban Indigenous communities. Instead, this work considered the complex social, political, and economic factors that contribute to the prevalence of this disease by approaching diabetes through culturally-appropriate teachings and practices related to traditional foods. Panelists noted that Elders and Knowledge Keepers in the five communities described traditional foods as cultural determinants of healthy living, recognizing that health gaps exist due to barriers inhibiting access to traditional foods. The panelists reinforced the findings of this work, by calling for greater investment in the provision of culturally-appropriate health approaches to address the prevalence of not only diabetes, but also the experience of food insecurity and poverty in the urban Indigenous population.



***From left to right: Maya Chacaby, Jerri Keeash, Collin Meekis, Norman Dokis, Cass Gardiner, Magda Smolewski, Harleen Panesar, and Jade Huguenin.***

The second panel focused on the OFIFC's *Trauma-Informed Schools Research Project* and was moderated by Magda Smolewski (Research Director, OFIFC) with Jerri Keeash (OFIFC Aboriginal Youth Council Representative, Dryden), Maya Chacaby (OFIFC Senior Researcher), and Jade Huguenin (OFIFC Researcher) on the panel. The OFIFC engaged seven communities in the study including: Red Lake, Niagara, Midland, and Sault Ste. Marie in Phase I, as well as Sault Ste. Marie, London, Niagara, Sudbury, and Dryden in Phase II. Phase I of the study was completed in 2014 and broadly examined the role of historic trauma transmission in four Friendship Centre communities in Ontario and its continued impact on children, parents, and caregivers in the current public school system. Phase II of the project was completed in 2016 and looked at how to initiate and sustain meaningful partnerships to create trauma-informed school environments and practical applications whereby students developed tangible recommendations and tools that addressed how school staff and communities can play a stronger role in cultivating safe and accepting environments for Indigenous children, youth, and families. Panelists discussed how students used multi-media methods to develop recommendations and tools for fostering trauma-informed school environments. The panelists reinforced the recommendations of the project which called for: creating positive

Indigenous spaces in schools (such as a dedicated classroom, support room, or gathering space); the provision of supports that cater to all Indigenous learners (for example, students considered how schools can better support students who are also parents); teaching Indigenous culture (including teachings, stories, history, and language) in classrooms in a way that also informs how schools function (such as events, projects, workshops, and initiatives). Phase III of the project aims to implement recommendations from Phases I and II through a unique partnership with the Ontario Principal's Council, in order to develop both professional development and qualifying courses in culturally competent trauma-informed practices for principals and vice-principals in Ontario.

Showcasing community-driven research at the CINSA research conference—where the central theme was “*Reconciliation through Research*”—was an important opportunity to positively influence and shift the balance of authority in the Indigenous research landscape in Canada, which continues to privilege academic institutions. Furthermore, the current approach to funding Indigenous research in Canada muffles the voices of Indigenous communities, as the current system does not create spaces and meaningful opportunities for community-driven research that meets the interests and priorities that are self-voiced by Indigenous communities. In the context of the OFIFC's work, community members are regarded as valuable co-researchers, which is different from mainstream academic approaches to community-based or placed research. As discussed at our panel presentations, our approach to research creates culturally-grounded, safe, and trauma-informed spaces for Indigenous community members, including Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers, whose role we regard as valuable and necessary in our work.

The OFIFC's vision for the future of the Indigenous research landscape in Canada, is to shift this imbalance in power, whereby Indigenous communities will have the resources and opportunities necessary to initiate research that is in-line with their priorities. Moreover, this approach creates space for Indigenous communities to invite academic partners to participate in roles and responsibilities that are also identified by the Indigenous communities. This shift in worldview would meaningfully empower Indigenous communities to lead and control research that involves Indigenous people, and is a step in the right direction towards promoting Indigenous agency and self-sufficiency. This is how we can collaboratively honour the spirit of the recommendations from the Truth Reconciliation Commission of Canada's *Calls to Action* in order to advance reconciliation for the future of Indigenous research in Canada.

If you would like to learn more about the OFIFC, please visit their website ([www.ofifc.org](http://www.ofifc.org)) for additional information.

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## **Prairie Research Centre: Community Driven Impacts**

### ***Food is Our Belonging***

*Food is Our Belonging* was designed to examine the wellbeing of urban Indigenous youth through participation in a school-year long research project around Indigenous food. Through consultations with our partners- Neechi Commons Inc., and Maples Collegiate- a series of food activities were developed into workshops, with an emphasis on hands-on, and traditional learning approaches. Focus groups and interviews were held with the youth throughout the process to learn more about how these workshops affected their views on their sense of self, belonging, and cultural identity.

Over the school year, students took part in Elder teachings, a tour of Neechi Commons Inc., ice fishing, maple-syrup tapping, cooking, and seed planting. The students were clear about their desire for traditional

foods: “You get to catch it. The exhilarating rush of catching something and you’re proud of it. Especially something big.” For other students, the workshops brought out cultural traditions surrounding food, practices that are often forgotten: “I’ve never really experienced the traditional. I didn’t know anything about putting tobacco down when I was growing up.” Preliminary analysis from this research is currently underway. But one thing is certain- the students enjoyed being part of these workshops. A sense of camaraderie developed over the year, resulting in food being viewed as more than sustenance. Instead, students saw it as part of who they are.



Authored by: Tabitha Martens, University of Manitoba

# International Indigenous Policy Journal

ISSN 1916-5781



[Call for Papers](#)

[Call for Special Issue Papers](#)

[Scholarship@Western](mailto:Scholarship@Western) > [IIPJ](#)

## Special Issue Call for Papers: Reconciling Research: Perspectives on Research Involving Indigenous Peoples

The practice of seeking out answers to questions about ourselves, others, and the world around us is common to all human cultures. But the questions we ask, who is seen as having the authority to produce answers, and what are “legitimate” ways of answering are uniquely encoded within the culture and its dominant worldview. As a result, there are fundamental differences in the way in which knowledge is constructed under Western and Indigenous paradigms. Researchers who work with Indigenous peoples or on Indigenous issues face numerous challenges in engaging with these paradigms and translating them into methodology. The outcome of these discussions, deliberations, and decisions will ultimately shape the extent to which research enlightens, particularly with respect to policy. For more information on this call for papers, visit [here](#).

# Your source for urban Aboriginal research



uakn.org



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## Would you like to contribute or share something with the UAKN Newsletter?

The UAKN Secretariat is happy to accept all submissions related to community driven research and topics surrounding urban Aboriginal health and wellness.

**Please submit to:** Jennifer Rankin, Research Officer at [jrankin@nafc.ca](mailto:jrankin@nafc.ca)

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## *Regional Research Centres are hosted at the following universities:*



UAKN

Urban Aboriginal  
Knowledge Network

RCAU

Réseau de connaissances des  
Autochtones en milieu urbain

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**CURRENT UAKN CALL FOR PROPOSALS:** See the below links for the regional call for proposals for the Urban Aboriginal Knowledge Network through the research centres.

**Atlantic Research Centre:**

<http://uakn.org/uakn-atlantic-research-centre-call-for-2015-2016-open-call-for-proposals/>

**Prairie Research Centre:**

Stay Tuned for more call for proposals from the other regions by visiting [www.uakn.org](http://www.uakn.org)!

## HOW TO GET INVOLVED IN UAKN RESEARCH?

We are pleased to announce that as we enter year four of the five year SSHRC partnership grant that we have over 50 UAKN research projects with 15 final papers submitted that are available on the UAKN website. We are excited to be able to share the research results with communities, policy makers, academics and others to demonstrate the impacts that community driven research can have.

At the UAKN, we believe community driven research is truly innovative and we are always looking to expand this network. Our best partners are Friendship Centres and other Aboriginal community based organizations. We encourage you to contact us if you would like to learn more about UAKN research.

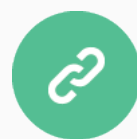
To learn more or to discuss community opportunities please contact Pamela Quart at [pouart@nafc.ca](mailto:pouart@nafc.ca)



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Website



National Association  
of Friendship Centres  
Association nationale  
des centres d'amitié



uakn | rcau  
Urban Aboriginal Knowledge Network | Réseau de connaissances des Autochtones en milieu urbain  
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