Newsletter

October 2021

A Message from the Director

Kim Matheson, Director



As a research centre focused on the relevance of our collective work to emerging and ongoing health issues, it should not be surprising that in the past year, the CHAIM Centre has been actively responding to the health and mental health issues associated with systemic racism. A core area of our research concerns the health and wellness of Indigenous Peoples in Canada. Although the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) process and final report brought awareness to Canadians of the atrocities that occurred in the Indian Residential Schools (IRS) that operated until 1996, the uncovering of the 215 buried children beside the Kamloops Indian Residential School on Tk'emlups te Secwépemc First Nation in May, 2021 was a devastating trigger for many Indigenous communities. Survivors had been saying all along that they had witnessed children dying or disappearing, but the Canadian government was persistently unwilling to pursue these accusations. And so this was not new news. Nor were the hundreds of additional unmarked burial sites that have been since identified. But the confirmation was an acutely painful reminder of the trauma so many survivors experienced. And the experience was just as painful to their loved ones who were provided vivid evidence of the horrors their parents, grandparents, aunties, uncles, elders, and other community members experienced, and who were forced to consider their own experiences in the aftermath, together with their strong connections and appreciation of the survival of their own children and their children's children – Every child matters.

In light of the re-traumatization of Indigenous communities, the CHAIM Centre has been actively participating in national events by sharing research and resources on our website. Not wanting to appropriate Indigenous voices, as educators, we viewed our role to provide Canadians with the information they needed to engage with information that would amplify those voices. As well, our students have been actively involved in ongoing research to serve community interests. For example, this past summer, several Science students reviewed transcripts of interviews with Elders from (and shared by) the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyak Dun, and provided back to the community a multimedia video with the voices of the Elders, along with infographics summarizing the main messages – on their part, the students gained insights into the history, culture, and resilience of the nation that they would otherwise never have been exposed to. Other students and graduates participated in ongoing collaborative research to connect health gaps to underlying biological and psychological processes, creating learning modules to empower First Nations communities to initiate their own research to address health issues that are relevant to them. Yet others were involved in the strengths-based research we've been conducting to document continuing impacts of IRSs and the role of culture as a protective factor that can promote resiliency (see our research spotlight). Together with Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, faculty, and community members from across Canada, we are rethinking how postsecondary institutions can provide meaningful and relevant research experiences that acknowledges and respects Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing within a range of disciplines.

While reconciliation is not grounded in any single action or event, we are presented with times of reflection and possibilities to contribute to the change process. We are in such a time, and the CHAIM Centre will continue to actively to pursue opportunities to promote healing and reconciliation.

Recent Activities

Over the course of the past six months and despite the effects of COVID-19, The CHAIM Centre was able to welcome new and returning team members, organize workshops, and continue to support research within its research priority themes.

- **Environmental & Occupational Health Research:** Dr Paul Villeneuve, Professor at Carleton University, and affiliate of The CHAIM Centre, has formed a research team specializing in Occupational and Environmental Health. **Susanna Abraham Cottagiri** is studying links between urban greenness, parks, and depression. **Justin Lang** is researching associations between neighbourhood walkability and mortality in Canadian cities. **Nick Dirienzo** led an air pollution exposure study in 2020, based in Grenada, that examined changes in outdoor concentrations of fine particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$) air pollution, including how they were impacted by Saharan dust storms. **Brianna Frangione**, an undergraduate student, summarized findings from studies of short-term meteorological changes on suicide and suicide attempts. To read more about this research and their findings please click here
- **Stress, Trauma, and Resilience Working Group:** The CHAIM Centre launched the Stress, Trauma, and Resilience Working group this summer. This interdisciplinary research group is focused on understanding factors contributing to stress-related pathology and resilience. Visit them on our website and follow their work on Twitter (@carleton_STAR) to learn more about their approaches and activities.
- **Walking Together in Two Worlds:** A two-day virtual workshop bringing together faculty, students, and community members was held to explore how to provide students with opportunities to participate in Indigenous-led community-based participatory research initiatives. Over 60 participants from multiple institutions, communities, and disciplines came to together virtually to consider how to enable Indigenous and non-Indigenous students to walk together in two worlds to conduct research that is meaningful to Indigenous communities. For more information about this workshop please click here
- **Fall term Communications Officer:** The CHAIM Centre has brought on a journalism student once again this year, welcoming back Lilo Noort as our Senior Communications officer. She will work to assist us in keeping our website and social media platforms up to date, content creation, and other digital media projects.
- **Welcome back Christine!** After a year away on maternity leave, in July we welcomed back our CHAIM Administrator, Christine May. Please reach out to her if you need assitance or have any questions at Christine.may@carleton.ca. We also want to take this time to express a big thank you to Betty Zahalan and Maria Pranschke for filling in for Christine while she was away.

Student Spotlight – A look into this years Summer Research Projects

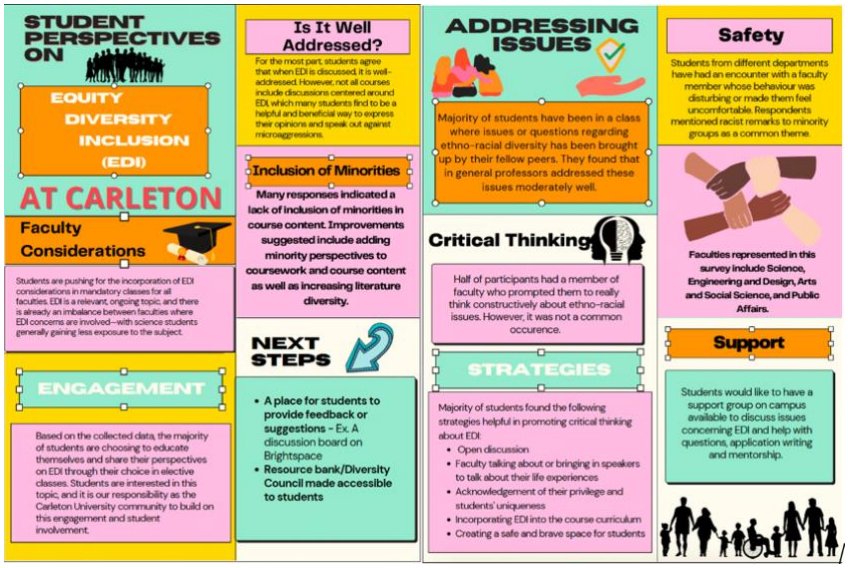
Students Sarah Lalji-Mawji (Neuroscience), Alejandra Metallic-Janvier (Neuroscience), and Leenah Abdelrazeq (Health Science) came together this summer as Dean's Summer Research Interns (DSRI) to work on various research projects focusing on different aspects of Social and Cultural Health inequities. The projects included creating infographics for several community led Indigenous research projects that involved faculty and students from multiple disciplines at Carleton University working together with Indigenous communities to co-develop projects with community members. The DSRI s were also a part of data collection from the Pandemic

Pets Study, conducted audio transcription and thematic analysis of tapes from the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyak Dun, and lastly administered surveys regarding student and faculty experiences of equity, diversity, and inclusion in their academic programs at Carleton. For more information, please visit the CHAIM Centre website – 2021 Summer Research Projects

Meet some of the students!

Alejandra Metallic-Janvier – "The projects I participated in gave me a range of insight into how qualitative research is done at many levels"

Over the course of the summer, I participated in a total of four projects. Firstly, a graphic summary of a 4th year thesis research project. This was incredibly useful as it taught me how to summarize research in an engaging and innovative way. Secondly, I filtered responses for a Carleton-led survey regarding Pandemic Pets. This experience allowed me to gain insight into the surveying process and how difficult it can be to filter relevant data from junk data. Thirdly, a large part of my DSRI surrounded the transcription of audio cassette tapes from the first self-government negotiations between First Nations in Canada and the Federal Government. I subsequently analysed the transcriptions for themes, using the coding software NVivo.



Infographic designed by Alejandra Metallic-Janvier

A key highlight from this summer was a guest presentation delivered by Dr. Jerry M. Maniate, which spoke to the role we have as individuals in the field of science to promote Equity Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) dialogue in health research. His passion, drive and urgency to support a more inclusive research environment inspired my team to actively participate and become "champions of change", as Dr. Maniate so powerfully expressed. Specifically, this presentation mobilized the launch of a student-wide survey to gather qualitative data on the pertinence of (EDI) principles at Carleton, from which we were able to explore the student's perspective and create an infographic to summarize our findings.

Sarah Lalji-Mawji – "I can confidently say, it was an extraordinarily fulfilling and positive experience"

This past summer, I participated in a total of 4 projects. The first was summarizing and subsequently designing an infographic based on a 4th year thesis research project: Understanding Inuit Youth Wellness Through Social Entrepreneurship. This project helped me hone my science communication skills. Next, I was tasked with filter responses for a research survey regarding pandemic pets. Not only did this cultivate my data analysis skills, but I learned about the surveying process and research methodology as a whole. Thirdly, I participated in the transcription and thematic analysis of audio cassette tapes using the NVivo software. These tapes contained content from the self-government negotiations between the Na-Cho Nyak Dun First Nations in Yukon, and the

Government of Canada. This experience taught me about qualitative analysis, and gave me an unique insight into the concerns and values of the Na-Cho Nyak Dun—many of which apply to First Nations all throughout Canada. I hope to use what I have learnt to not only further my science skills, but to be a genuine ally to Indigenous peoples. Finally, I worked on a Carleton-led student survey surrounding Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion at the university. As part of a racial and cultural minority in Canada, this research project was a highlight of my experience as a DSRI student. I felt like I was taking steps to start change, and I hope to soon see the completion of this project!

Spotlight – Current Research: Making the Connections between Residential Schools, Parent-Child Separations and Resiliency to Understand First Nations Youth Wellbeing

Indigenous Peoples in Canada experience many physical and mental health inequities compared to non-Indigenous people. While many Canadians are aware of these disparities, there appears to be a lack of understanding of the root causes, and how they continue to affect current health and wellness. This is what Drs. Robyn McQuaid, Kim Matheson and Hymie Anisman from Carleton University, together with their colleague Dr. Amy Bombay from Rainy River First Nation and professor at Dalhousie, have been examining for over a decade. Their earlier work found that First Nations youth and adults living in communities across Canada who did not attend Residential Schools themselves but had parents or grandparents who did, experienced higher rates of distress, including depression and suicidal ideation. These data demonstrated that trauma can be passed down across generations to affect wellness, what is known as intergenerational trauma.

More recently they have been examining the pathways through which experiences of Residential Schools come to impact subsequent generations. They find that First Nations youth with a family history of Residential Schools are more likely to grow up living without either of their biological parents, and spend more time in the Child Welfare System. In this regard, the harmful practice of taking Indigenous children and youth from their families and communities continues today, as around half of those in the Child Welfare System are Indigenous. Together, Amy Bombay, Robyn McQuaid, Cindy Blackstock and Kim Matheson received a Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) project grant to understand the roots of these continued practices in an effort to inform policy changes related to child welfare, and ultimately help to identify healing opportunities for Indigenous Peoples.

Despite continued systemic injustices, just as there are pathways in which trauma is passed down across generations, there are also pathways to resiliency and healing. First Nations youth with a family history of Residential Schools appear to be turning to their culture for healing, as they display increased rates of participation in community cultural events. This team's most recent data suggest that having a strong sense of belonging to their home community can buffer against community stressors to promote youth wellness. An example of this most recent work has been accepted in the Journal of Transcultural Psychiatry. They are continuing to explore the pathways to resiliency together with Indigenous partners and communities.

Paul, J., McQuaid, R., Perri, A., Stewart, S., Hopkins, C., Matheson, K., Anisman, H., & Bombay, A. (2022). Relations between bullying and distress among youth living in First Nations communities: Assessing direct and moderating effects of culture-related variables. *Transcultural Psychiatry*. In press.

Upcoming Opportunities

- **Apply to be a Communications Intern:** The CHAIM Centre is currently looking for its second communications intern to assist with social media, content creation, digital media, and website updates. If you are interested in applying please email chaimcentre@carleton.ca
- **2022 Health Challenge** We are once again hosting a One Health Student Challenge in the Winter term. If you are an undergraduate student interested in participating please visit our webpage to view past events and keep and eye on our social media and wepage for when you can apply. This year's topic: *Gaining from Greenspaces - Creating an intervention that promotes the use of green spaces to achieve public health benefits, while balancing the potential negative impacts on ecological health and biodiversity.*
- **Call for Grad student mentors** With the announcement of the 2022 One Health Student Challenge we would like to call out to any graduate students who would like to be a group mentor this year. If you are interested in being a mentor please submit your cover letter and CV to chaimcentre@carleton.ca
- **Call for blogs:** Did you know that the CHAIM Centre publishes blogs written by members and students of all levels? If you have an idea for a blog that touches on one of our key research areas, let us know! We provide editing support and promote each blog through our social media platforms. To view past blogs, please visit our website
- **Speakers Bureau:** Have a workshop, panel or other event coming up and looking for a speaker? The CHAIM Centre's Speakers Bureau has over 20 members with expertise on a wide range of health-related topics such as stress, epidemiology, student mental health and more! Visit our website to book a speaker. Or contact us if you wish to be included as a potential speaker!

Contact Us

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THE CHAIM CENTRE

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