

# 23rd Annual Indigenous Graduate Student Symposium



## *Carrying Our Ancestors With Us: Knowledge, Responsibility, and Collective Learning*

Friday, March 27 2:00-7:00  
Saturday, March 29 8:30-4:30

University of British Columbia  
Vancouver





# 23<sup>RD</sup> ANNUAL INDIGENOUS GRADUATE STUDENT SYMPOSIUM

The Indigenous Graduate Student Symposium (IGSS) brings together Indigenous graduate students from across disciplines to share research, stories, and emerging scholarship in a supportive, community-centered environment. It is a space engage in meaningful dialogue and strengthening relationships among Indigenous scholars.

The IGSS conference welcomes all Indigenous graduate students from across all faculties and institutions (regional, national, global), to present their work as they see it connecting to the theme, “Carrying our Ancestors with Us: Knowledge, Responsibility, and Collective Learning,” and/or any of the sub themes:

### Carrying Knowledge

How Indigenous knowledges are held and mobilized across disciplines and contexts.

### Responsibility to Community, Land, and Relations

Accountability to community, land, ancestors, and future generations.

### Resurgent Methods

Indigenous methodologies that disrupt or work beyond dominant academic norms.

### Building Futures

Exploring how disciplines are growing, shifting, or being re-imagined in response to contemporary challenges.

### Digital Basket

Exploring emerging technologies, application, ethics, and impact

## PRESENTATIONS

### Keynote Speaker

Saturday, March 28 9:30-10:15am

#### Dr. Dusin Louie

Dr. Dustin Louie is a First Nations scholar from Nee Tahi Buhn and Nadleh Whut'en of the Dakelh Nation of central British Columbia. He is a member of the Beaver Clan. Dr. Louie has worked as an historian in a land claims law firm, studied Indigenous homelessness in Western Canada, worked internationally for non-governmental organizations in Uganda and Australia, and began his academic career as an Assistant Professor and then Associate Professor at the Werklund School of Education in the University of Calgary.



Dr. Louie is also the Director of NITEP and an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia. He teaches courses related to Indigenous education, social justice, and educational philosophy; works closely with four school districts on decolonizing at the provincial and local level with government and private organizations, researches practical approaches to Indigenizing education, decolonizing education, Indigenous pedagogies, and critical theory. Dr. Louie has published in the top educational journals in Canada on diverse topics in Indigenous education.

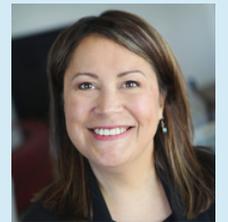
### Panel Discussion

Saturday, March 28 1:00-1:45pm

**Speakers: Drs. Maggie Kovach (UBC-V), Monty Montgomery (UBC-V), Shawn Wilson (UBC-O)**

**Facilitator: Lindsay DuPré Fiddler (UBCO-PhD Candidate)**

The presence of Indigenous graduate students is expanding across campuses requiring programming and strategies to support their success. In this presentation Drs. Maggie Kovach, Monty Montgomery and Shawn Wilson will share about two studies they have done on this topic including sharing their research purpose, design and key findings. The session will also provide an opportunity for audience members to reflect on their own experiences and share their visions for what the future of Indigenous graduate student education and research could look like.





# 23<sup>RD</sup> ANNUAL INDIGENOUS GRADUATE STUDENT SYMPOSIUM

## Friday, March 27

| Time        | Program Description  | Location               |
|-------------|--|------------------------|
| 2:00-4:00   | Tea Making with Dr. Alannah Young  | xwcicé səm Garden      |
| 3:00 - 4:00 | Visit the Museum of Anthropology   | Museum of Anthropology |
| 4:30-5:30   | Mingling and Dinner  | Sty-Wet-Tan Great Hall |
| 5:30-6:00   | Fireside Chat: Sitting with our Academic Aunties<br>Dr. Alannah Young and Dr. Deanna Reder | Sty-Wet-Tan Great Hall |
| 6:00-6:30   | Table Talk - Sharing Stories   | Sty-Wet-Tan Great Hall |
| 7:00        | End of Day   | Sty-Wet-Tan Great Hall |

## Gathering Spaces

### Tea Making

Friday, March 27 | 2:00pm-4:00pm

xwcicé səm garden

Limited seats available.

Dr. Alannah Young  
Senior Research Associate at The Centre for Land-Based Education, Research, and Wellness at xwcicé səm, UBC Faculty of Land and Food Systems. She is the founding director of the Indigenous Medicine Collective. Alannah works closely with Indigenous Elders to share medicinal herbal knowledge and integrate cultural protocols into health education at xwcicé səm.



### Museum of Anthropology

Friday, March 27 | 3:00pm-4:00pm



Join us for a guided visit to the Museum of Anthropology (MOA) at UBC. This experience offers participants the opportunity to explore the museum's collections and exhibits while learning about the histories, cultures, and artistic expressions represented throughout the space.



# 23<sup>RD</sup> ANNUAL INDIGENOUS GRADUATE STUDENT SYMPOSIUM

## Saturday, March 28

| Time        | Program Description   | Location  |
|-------------|---|---|
| 8:30-9:00   | Registration and Coffee   | Ponderosa Ballroom  |
| 9:00-9:15   | Opening with Marny Point  | Ponderosa Ballroom  |
| 9:15-9:30   | Opening Remarks with Jessica Knott and Dana LaFayette Hunter  | Ponderosa Ballroom  |
| 9:30-10:00  | Keynote Speaker: Dr. Dustin Louie   | Ponderosa Ballroom  |
| 10:00-10:15 | Q&A Discussion  | Ponderosa Ballroom  |
| 10:15-10:30 | Break   | Ponderosa Ballroom  |
| 10:30-11:55 | Concurrent Student Presentations  | PCN 1001, PCN 1002,<br>PCN 1302, PCN 1215, PCN<br>1008, PCN 1009, |
| 12:00-12:55 | Lunch   | Ponderosa Ballroom  |
| 1:00-1:45   | SAGE Panel: Drs. Margaret Kovach, Shawn Wilson, Monty Montgomery<br>Facilitated by: Lindsay DuPré Fiddler | Ponderosa Ballroom  |
| 2:00-4:00   | Concurrent Student Presentations  | PCN 1001, PCN 1002, PCN<br>1302, PCN 1215, PCN<br>1008, PCN 1009, |
| 4:10-4:30   | Closing Remarks   | Ponderosa Ballroom  |



# INDIGENOUS GRADUATE STUDENT SYMPOSIUM: ABSTRACTS

## **Tsattia Adzich (SFU): Urban Entanglements of Belonging: Mapping Indigenous Relationality through Artistic Praxis** *Muysqapihtaw'kos'an iskwew (Cree-Metis), Tri River Metis*

Engagement with urban landscapes as palimpsestuous junctures of relational accountability, mobility, and Indigenous cultural diplomacy has been, and remains urgent. In particular, the steady arrival of Indigenous peoples to cities like “Vancouver, Canada” on stolen Tsleil-Waututh (səlilwətaʔ), Squamish (Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw) and Musqueam (xʷməθkʷəy̓əm) Nations (Coast Salish) territories, for reasons ranging from the pursuit of educational or employment opportunities to seeking safety from unsafe circumstances necessitates robust, and perhaps challenging conversations about responsibilities community members have to these Indigenous geographies. My research rejects the separation of scholarly and personal motivations traditionally set by institutions when it comes to investigating geopolitical tensions of this nature, as my investment in this conversation is embodied and ancestral. My research questions emerged directly from my community of urban Indigenous peoples navigating responsibilities around making art and being guests on the colonially urbanized Coast Salish territories. I conducted 29 interviews with Indigenous artists to understand how their creative praxis shapes urban ecologies of Indigeneity and articulate multi-scalar Indigenous geographies of relational belonging and care. Drawing on Indigenous urbanisms as analytical framework, this presentation shares community insights into the layered geographies and tensions between urban Indigenous peoples navigating Indigenous life on, and to, Coast Salish territories through artistic practices.

## **Jennifer Amarualik-Yaremko (USASK): Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit in the Nunavut Education System** *Inuk*

Traditional Inuit knowledge, or Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, is now the basis of several policies within the Government of Nunavut. It is used as an easy way to include Inuit values at any level of government. The Nunavut Department of Education instituted a policy to “include” Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit into its operations, called Inclusive Education. This policy has seen revisions and some minor improvements since in order to improve the cultural relevance of education to Inuit and to improve educational outcomes. I do not find these improvements sufficient to achieve the goals within the policy or set by the Government of Nunavut with the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement.

I examine this policy's level of Indigenous values inclusion using a framework of Indigenous values inclusion in education published by Gaudry and Lorenz, and argue that Inclusive Education uses a compromised version of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit that allows and justifies colonial practises. I also argue that Inclusive Education pushes responsibility for fixing colonialism onto Inuit in Nunavut. I then explore some examples of excellence in upholding Inuit values that also remain successful in a Eurocentric sense, most notably the Representative for Children and Youth in Nunavut and Nunavut Sivuniksavut, a college in Ottawa that offers a certificate in Inuit Studies through Algonquin College.

## **Hailey (Lee) Barrell (UofC): Yeast Lightning: Reconstructing Plant Biosynthetic Pathways in Microbes** *Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation*

Indigenous plant medicines are observed in cultures worldwide. While these remedies are long established, it's important to corroborate their mechanisms in homage to leagues of ancestral knowledge. Plants have evolved bioactive defense molecules to cope with their natural environments. Modern medicine leverages these compounds to treat disease, but the extraction methods used are inefficient and environmentally costly. Finding sustainable production techniques becomes crucial to the health industry, and to a changing world. Enter, yeast (yes, the same kind you use to bake bread). Yeast is easy to work with and makes an excellent microbial factory for all kinds of compounds, from insulin to cancer drugs, and even for natural health products like curcumin. Come learn a little bit about how scientists can harness yeast as an elegant solution for pharmaceutical manufacturing.



# 23<sup>R</sup>D ANNUAL INDIGENOUS GRADUATE STUDENT SYMPOSIUM

## Abstracts:

### **Samantha Beynon (UVIC): How We Engage and Teach Indigenous Children's Literature?** *Nisga'a Nation - Gingolx Government*

I reflect on how my research question shifted over time and what that shift revealed about Indigenous research. Early in my doctoral work, my thinking was shaped largely by Western academic systems and by being physically away from home. While this distance allowed space for reflection, it also pulled my work away from the community it was meant to serve. I began to realize that my questions were becoming more about what institutions valued, rather than what my Nation needed. Returning to community reminded me that Indigenous research does not begin in isolation or in the university. It begins in relationship. Through ongoing conversations with Elders, language leaders, and community members, particularly Esther Adams, my research question was reshaped by what our community wanted for its children and future generations. Together, we focused on how Nisga'a children engage with language, culture, and responsibility when learning happens through land-based, Elder-led storytelling rather than through materials created elsewhere. This presentation shares how the research question emerged through listening, correction, and accountability to Ayuukhl Nisga'a. I describe how working alongside children and Elders across the four Nisga'a communities shifted my understanding of knowledge, authorship, and ownership. Rather than asking what stories should be taught, the focus became how stories are created, shared, and carried forward in a good way. By tracing this change, the presentation invites researchers, educators, and publishers to consider how Indigenous research questions are shaped, who they are accountable to, and why community-guided research leads to more meaningful outcomes.

### **Logan Burd (UBCO): 'Healing our Youth Home' Research Approach: Weaving Métis Youth Voices into Life Promotion and Upstream Youth Suicide Prevention** *Métis Nation British Columbia*

Youth suicide is a complex issue in Canada, with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit youth overrepresented in suicide attempts and deaths. In 2021, Métis youth in British Columbia were more likely than non-Métis youth to have considered suicide (24% vs. 17%) and attempted suicide (8% vs. 5%). Increased risks related to suicidality are a downstream manifestation of the historical and ongoing impacts of colonial violence perpetuated by suicide research that prioritizes deficit-based, risk-focused approaches, while upstream approaches include Indigenous knowledges and life-promoting solutions.

This doctoral research explores: How can Métis understandings of life promotion inform upstream youth suicide prevention? Through three objectives: 1) co-create shared conceptualizations of life promotion; 2) identify equity-oriented and systems-focused indicators to monitor and evaluate life promotion; and 3) generate recommendations for upstream youth suicide prevention. Grounded in my worldview as a Métis youth, this presentation will share the methodology and research plan for the Healing our Youth Home study, which uses a youth-led participatory-action, metaphor-inspired Indigenous research approach rooted in Métis knowledges, community-embedded relationships and equity science.



# 23<sup>R</sup>D ANNUAL INDIGENOUS GRADUATE STUDENT SYMPOSIUM

## Abstracts:

### **Cheyenne Cunningham and Leah Meunier (UBC): Storying knowledge: s̓x̓w̓ə̓x̓w̓əyém Indigenous Pedagogy Katzie First Nation**

Due to the absence of fluent speakers in the Katzie community and limited availability of legacy written and recorded materials, a significant portion of our collective work as Katzie people and scholars involves writing or gathering s̓x̓w̓ə̓x̓w̓əyém (stories) in collaboration with fellow Katzie community members. This work creates intentional spaces where community members can share experiences, teachings, and memories that have been passed down through generations. This ensures that this knowledge remains available and active within community. Our collective goal is to strengthen and expand knowledge of the hən̓q̓əmin̓əm̓ language through s̓x̓w̓ə̓x̓w̓əyém, which serve both as historical and contemporary sources of learning. These s̓x̓w̓ə̓x̓w̓əyém carry Katzie Traditional Ecological Cultural Knowledge (KTECK), including teachings related to land stewardship, cultural protocols, seasonal practices, and traditional place names. Through story-based learning, language education becomes relational and grounded in Katzie ways of knowing and being. This presentation highlights how s̓x̓w̓ə̓x̓w̓əyém function as both a pedagogical method and knowledge system within community-led language revitalization efforts. It also reflects on the responsibilities and ethical considerations involved in gathering and sharing stories in ways that honour community and culture. Centering s̓x̓w̓ə̓x̓w̓əyém demonstrates how language revitalization supports intergenerational knowledge transmission, cultural and language resurgence, and strengthened community connections.

### **Dr. Juan "Chico" Dimas (USC): The Original Students of the Land: The Experiences of Native American Students at 1862 Morrill Land Grant Universities in the Southwest Purépecha**

In 1862, the United States Government passed the Morrill Land Grant Act to provide 30,000 acres of land to each state to create an endowment for the formation of a university in their own state. Some of the most well-known universities which benefited from the 1862 Morrill Land Grant Act include: Cornell University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Under this act, over 200 tribes and communities were displaced from their homelands for universities to start their operations. Looking closer, over ten million acres of Native American homeland was seized. Today, Native Americans have the lowest higher education enrollment and bachelor's degree obtainment rates amongst their peers (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019a; Aud et al., 2010). The purpose of this study is to bring forward a new understanding to the Native American student experiences at 1862 Morrill Land Grant Act universities in the southwest who enrolled and graduated with their undergraduate degree. Dr. Juan Dimas (Purépecha) brings forth his dissertations conceptual framework influenced by his family's spiritual mentor and lived experiences. Within these findings from the study, the recommendations are based in addressing the unique needs of Native American students within the 1862 Promise and ensuring the lived experiences of Native American undergraduate students are continued to be shared for generations to come via the Oral Tradition Archive of the study. Dr. Dimas experienced deep mentorship from SAGE during his studies, and this is the first time sharing his findings/journey in community with his SAGE Family.



# 23<sup>R D</sup> ANNUAL INDIGENOUS GRADUATE STUDENT SYMPOSIUM

## Abstracts:

### **Sandra Fox (UBCO): Embodiment of Indigenous Knowledges in the Academy** *Musqueam Indian Band*

Although many post-secondary institutions are beginning to recognize the importance of Indigenous knowledge systems, they are early in their learning. Indigenous students still face colonial barriers and are required to meet Western standards to graduate. However, Indigenous community members and scholar practitioners have long worked to create space for Indigenous Peoples in the academy. As a result, today Indigenous students and aspiring allies can (re)learn and embody Indigenous ways of knowing and being as a part of their educational journeys, adding their voices to the work and creating further space for future students. Despite the ongoing challenges that still exist in our colonial reality, it is important to recognize the successes that came from the work done before us, as this can help us to imagine what we can do to continue this work as future ancestors.

As a Musqueam woman and current PhD student, I've had the opportunity to work in and with Indigenous communities in various fields for 20 years and have witnessed many changes in them. Through a brief story of my journey and experiences around the academy, I would like to reflect on and celebrate how our community and knowledge ancestors embodied Indigenous knowledges in these institutions to allow us to be where we are today. I also would like to invite the group to share what changes they have seen and consider how they integrate praxis of Indigenous knowledges in their lives to continue addressing challenges and making space for the generations to come.

### **Nicole Halbauer, X'staam Hana'ax (UNBC): Braided Voices of Ts'msyen Women : A Poetic and Scholarly Presentation about Matriarchs in Healthcare** *Tsimshian*

With an overview of unfolding PhD research and some spoken word poetry, this presentation addresses the theme of resurgent methods. For over fifty years, Ts'msyen women have shaped health, education, and community wellness across British Columbia. Our leadership, however, remains largely undocumented within academic and healthcare institutions. This presentation offers an overview of a PhD project that will braid together the stories of Ts'msyen Matriarchs whose lived experiences span from 1970 to 2025. The PhD research is grounded in Indigenous Research Methods, Narrative Inquiry, and Ts'msyen relational ethics. The research is responding to ongoing forms of disappearance-Epistemicide, institutional silencing, and the extraction of Indigenous identity for colonial systems. As a Ts'msyen researcher of the Ganhada clan, my positionality and matrilineal teachings will shape the project's accountability and methodology, something I discuss in the presentation. The presentation of my PhD research is amplified by spoken word poetry, a narrative that creatively explores shifts in White colonial society—from refusal of Indigenous identity, to conditional acceptance rooted in exploitation, to contemporary dependence on Indigenous cultural expertise during reconciliation initiatives. I am interested in revealing both resilience and harm: emotional labour, cultural burden, and the undervaluing of Indigenous knowledge systems within healthcare. By giving Ts'msyen stories a home in academia, the aim of my research is to challenge Western hegemony, revitalize Indigenous epistemology, and assert that Ts'msyen women have never been invisible—we have always been leaders, knowledge keepers, and essential architects of community wellness.



# 23<sup>R</sup>D ANNUAL INDIGENOUS GRADUATE STUDENT SYMPOSIUM

## Abstracts:

### **James Houle (SFU): A Year of Math Outreach with Math Catcher Fort Albany First Nations**

Almost one year ago, I took over the Math Catcher Outreach program at SFU, an Indigenous focused program that aims to increase math engagement in grade school classrooms. With this program, I travel to grade schools primarily across the lower mainland, but with reach as far as the Yukon, and do workshops with students from grades three through twelve. Drawing from Indigenous ways of knowing, these workshops are personal, story based, and encourage students to experience counterintuitive math with their own senses. In this presentation, I will reflect on the outstanding successes that Math Catcher has with students, some of the challenges of such a program, and future directions of Math Catcher.

### **Lori Huston (UBC): Heartwork: A Relational and Embodied Indigenous Methodology in Early Childhood Education Red River Métis / Métis Nation of British Columbia (MNBC)**

Digital learning formats in postsecondary education continue to increase, both locally and globally (Adam, 2024; Veletsianos et al., 2023). Increased reliance upon, and disruption by, technology used to enable the design and delivery of postsecondary digital learning has significant implications, given that technology is not neutral (Dron, 2022). Educational technologies that saturate the postsecondary sector are predominantly Western, Eurocentric in nature, embedded with socio-cultural assumptions about knowledge, ways of knowing and being, values, and pedagogy (Smith et al., 2024; Tamimi et al., 2021). At the same time, learning design scholarship and practice is also known to perpetuate approaches rooted in these same Western, Eurocentric understandings of knowledge and the nature of teaching and learning (Farrow et al., 2023; Kiguwa & Segalo, 2018; Neden, 2023). Using a framing of Activity Theory in understanding tools as cultural products inseparable from their cultural uses, a systematic literature review was conducted to examine how decolonization of educational technology and learning design is conceptualized and approached within postsecondary contexts. Findings include manifestations and constructs of colonialism, as well as approaches to decolonizing and Indigenizing pedagogy in digital learning design. This session will provide an overview of the study and offer participants the opportunity to discuss questions that arise around postsecondary teaching and learning practice.





# 23<sup>R D</sup> ANNUAL INDIGENOUS GRADUATE STUDENT SYMPOSIUM

## Abstracts:

### **Brittany Lavallee (UM): What's in my Research Bundle?** *Minegoziibe Anishinabe (Pine Creek First Nation)*

This presentation introduces the concept of a Research Bundle, grounded in Indigenous knowledge systems. Drawing from the teachings of the Anishinaabeg, the Research Bundle represents an intentional gathering of knowledge, responsibilities, relationships, and lived experiences that guide my research practice. It reflects how Indigenous researchers carry teachings and accountability within their work, recognizing research as a relational and ethical responsibility.

Through a visual and narrative sharing of items within my Research Bundle, including the four sacred medicines, a shell/smudge bowl, and an eagle feather. The presentation reflects on how these items hold significant intergenerational knowledge and cultural protocols. The Bundle also honours ancestors and engages scholarship that challenges institutional research practices, including Jennifer Grenz's article "Ethics Review Boards Should Respect Indigenous Scholars."

Situated within resurgent Indigenous methodologies, this approach challenges academic norms that prioritize extraction, objectivity, and detachment from community contexts. Instead, it centres relationality, reciprocity, cultural protocols, and ethical accountability as guiding principles. By sharing my Research Bundle, it also connects to Indigenous methodologies that can reshape how research is understood, practiced, and shared.

Ultimately, the Research Bundle shared a transformative journey as an Indigenous researcher conducting research within my own Nation and other Nations in Manitoba. One that is guided by family, community, and love.

### **Brian Lorraine (SFU): Decolonizing Educational Technology & Learning Design** *Métis*

Digital learning formats in postsecondary education continue to increase, both locally and globally (Adam, 2024; Veletsianos et al., 2023). Increased reliance upon, and disruption by, technology used to enable the design and delivery of postsecondary digital learning has significant implications, given that technology is not neutral (Dron, 2022). Educational technologies that saturate the postsecondary sector are predominantly Western, Eurocentric in nature, embedded with socio-cultural assumptions about knowledge, ways of knowing and being, values, and pedagogy (Smith et al., 2024; Tamimi et al., 2021). At the same time, learning design scholarship and practice is also known to perpetuate approaches rooted in these same Western, Eurocentric understandings of knowledge and the nature of teaching and learning (Farrow et al., 2023; Kiguwa & Segalo, 2018; Neden, 2023). Using a framing of Activity Theory in understanding tools as cultural products inseparable from their cultural uses, a systematic literature review was conducted to examine how decolonization of educational technology and learning design is conceptualized and approached within postsecondary contexts. Findings include manifestations and constructs of colonialism, as well as approaches to decolonizing and Indigenizing pedagogy in digital learning design. This session will provide an overview of the study and offer participants the opportunity to discuss questions that arise around postsecondary teaching and learning practice.



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## Abstracts:

### **Ryley McWilliams (SFU): Developing a Near-Infrared Optical Probe for More Accessible Prostate Cancer Monitoring** *Bonaparte Tribe*

Prostate cancer is one of the most commonly diagnosed cancers among men worldwide, yet existing diagnostic and monitoring methods can be invasive, uncomfortable, and difficult to access consistently. This work explores the development of a near-infrared (NIR) optical probe intended to support less invasive and more patient-friendly approaches to prostate cancer monitoring.

As a second-year PhD student in Mechatronic Systems Engineering, I am designing and validating an NIR-based sensing system that leverages the interaction of light with biological tissue to detect changes associated with prostate abnormalities. My current research focuses on the fabrication and characterization of tissue-mimicking optical phantoms that replicate the absorption and scattering properties of prostate tissue. These phantoms enable controlled testing, calibration, and refinement of the probe without reliance on patient data at early stages of development.

This project emphasizes responsible technology development in healthcare by prioritizing patient comfort, safety, and accessibility alongside technical performance. By shifting early validation to realistic physical models, the work supports ethical research practices while accelerating iterative design. More broadly, this research reflects how emerging biomedical technologies can be shaped by values of care, accountability, and long-term impact, particularly in the context of preventative and monitoring-focused healthcare.

This presentation will discuss the motivation, methodology, and early progress of the project, as well as reflections on developing health technologies that aim to reduce patient burden while maintaining diagnostic value.

### **Nicole Mercereau (USASK): Roots of Resilience: Navigating Métis Education Across Generations in Saskatchewan** *Métis Nation of Saskatchewan*

Historically, Métis people in Saskatchewan have had to embody resilience and fortitude to withstand systemic oppressions and colonialism, particularly within educational institutions (Boyer & Chartrand, 2022; Gillies, 2021; Racette & Sammel, 2020). The release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action in 2015 sparked a movement of accountability across societal realms to address the historical and ongoing injustices inflicted upon Indigenous peoples (Deer, 2022; Hare, 2022; Kovach, 2021), underscoring the timeliness of this research. To disrupt the underrepresentation of Métis perspectives and the cultural homogenization prevalent within the literature (Kearns & Aniuk, 2015; Scott, 2021), I draw upon my family's intergenerational resilience as racialized Métis learners to explore how they resisted the colonial agendas that sought to diminish them. This study employed a distinctive Métis methodological approach, informed by critical Métis studies and guided by a multi-generational Métis flower beadwork relational framework. Through this lens, I examine how westernized ideologies and Saskatchewan's provincial education systems have historically shaped, and continue to shape, the experiences of racialized Métis learners in the province, and how these experiences have had enduring impacts. Drawing upon conversations with five of my Métis family members, the study illuminates both the persistent challenges that call for more equitable and inclusive learning environments, and the progressive transformations within Métis K-12 education as Métis visibility and recognition continue to grow.



# 23<sup>R</sup>D ANNUAL INDIGENOUS GRADUATE STUDENT SYMPOSIUM

## Abstracts:

### **Vanessa Mitchell (UNBC): Indigenous Women Leadership: Rooted in the Traditional Kinship of Auntie Okanagan**

As colonial systems explore how to move beyond empty rhetoric and act on reconciliation and cultural safety, the demand for training and education to support organizational and system transformation is increasing. The primary focus for cultural safety is to impact Indigenous patients' ability to have access to care that is free of racism and discrimination harms. While there is literature that touches on Indigenous employee experience, the focus is still on how the Indigenous employee supports the Indigenous patient. What has yet to be meaningfully addressed through research and in practice is the need for cultural safety for Indigenous professionals, which is integral, as there is a high reliance placed upon Indigenous peoples to take the lead and fix the very harms inflicted and caused by euro-white-settler coloniality. My research concentrates on Indigenous women's experiences and shares how (re)connecting to the concept and essence of the traditional kinship role and responsibility of Auntie is an example of strength-based Indigenous leadership. Auntie" has deep resonance within Indigenous families and communities and is a concept that is not clearly understood or amply written about outside Indigenous circles. My research approach integrates conversation method (Kovach, 2021), Indigenous principles of storywork (Archibald, 2008), and enowkinwix<sup>w</sup> (Armstrong, 2009) and the central question of my doctoral research is, "How can Auntie and Auntie-ism foster and maintain cultural confidence for Indigenous women during a time of increased pressure and demand placed upon them by non-Indigenous settlers looking to advance cultural safety and reconciliation within colonial spaces?"

### **Grace Mounsey (UBCO): Bridging Generations: The Impact of the Traditional Ways of Knowing on the Mental Health of Assiniskawitiniwak Youth Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation**

The Assiniskawitiniwak, or Rock Cree people, make up the Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation in northeastern Saskatchewan, which consists of eight communities, including Sandy Bay. In 2007, Sandy Bay, Saskatchewan was labelled "Canada's suicide capital." My research asks why this happened, and why the struggle didn't end when the label disappeared, by examining the impact of traditional ways of knowing on the mental health of Assiniskawitiniwak youth. For thousands of years, Assiniskawitiniwak identity was formed through relationships between the Elders and youth. Through these relationships, Knowledge was passed down through the Rock Cree storytelling methodology called acathokiwina. Acathokiwina are sacred stories; legends from before our time. Acathokiwina help the youth discover their giftedness, their mithikosiwin, which is how they as a Assiniskawitiniwak person, assumes their responsibility within the community; which is essential for identity formation and fostering a sense of belonging. But colonization and cultural genocide disrupted this important process of identity formation. The Assiniskawitiniwak were forcibly stripped of language, culture, and traditional knowledge. As a result, the generational gap between our Elders and youth widened. Stories stopped being shared. Identity formation shifted away from traditional Rock Cree ways of knowing. Today, many Ass'niskawitiniwak youth continue to face mental health crises, substance use, suicide, and gang involvement; all tied to an underdeveloped sense of Ass'niskawitiniwak identity according to the Nations Elders. By bringing Elders and youth together, my thesis explores how restoring traditional ways of knowing—especially through storytelling—can support youth identity formation and mental wellness.



# 23<sup>RD</sup> ANNUAL INDIGENOUS GRADUATE STUDENT SYMPOSIUM

## Abstracts:

### **Luz Adriana Orozco Ortiz (UBC): Chibcha-Mhuysqa Muyquyguamox Muysqa-Chibcha (Abya Yala-Colombia)**

This abstract examines the paradigm shift occurring in the revitalization of Muysccubun, the language of we, the Muysqa people of the Colombian Altiplano Cundiboyacense. Historically, revitalization efforts have been situated within classroom settings, focusing on grammatical instruction and vocabulary acquisition from colonial texts. While valuable for initial documentation and awareness, this approach often separates the language from its living context, treating it as a subject to be studied rather than a way of life to be lived.

This paper argues for a critical transition from these classroom-centric models to Land-based pedagogies. It posits that Muysccubun is not merely a linguistic system but an emanation of the sacred landscape itself—the Sie (water), Quye (rock), and Fiva (paramo). Reconnecting language learning with the territory re-embeds the vocabulary of flora, fauna, and spiritual geography within its original cognitive framework, restoring meanings that are lost in translation. For instance, a plant name learned in a classroom is memorized, but on the land, it is encountered within the ecological and cosmological relationships that the word itself describes.

Central to this shift is the revitalization of intergenerational transmission. The classroom model isolates learners by age group, whereas Land-based programs inherently create environments where elders, youth, and children work together. In these settings, elders are not just informants but knowledge-holders who guide practical activities—such as traditional agriculture or water stewardship—using Muysccubun as the operating language. This creates a natural, immersive environment where children acquire the language organically through observation, participation, and the rebuilding of community bonds. Ultimately, this approach moves Muysccubun from a museum piece back into the dynamic flow of Muysqa life, ensuring its future by re-rooting it in its original, sacred territory.

### **April Reilly (SFU): Understanding Macrophages as Mechanical Sentinels of the Immune System Mi'k maw**

The human body is constantly exposed to a variety of external and internal threats, ranging from infectious microbes like bacteria to cells capable of forming tumours. To survive these threats, the body relies on a complex network of organs, tissues and cells known as the immune system. The innate immune system is the body's first line of defence, consisting of the skin and other anatomical barriers, as well as specialized immune cells. Among those, macrophages are present in almost all bodily tissues and act as "sentinels" that look for any signs of infection or assaults to the body. Macrophages interact with microbes or other cells using proteins on their surface known as  $\beta 2$  integrins. These proteins have unique characteristics. They enable immune cells to sense specific molecules at the surface of microbes or unwanted cells, as well as their physical properties. In other words, using  $\beta 2$  integrins, macrophages can touch and "feel" the microbes that try to infect our body. However, how macrophages process this feeling sensation to respond to dangers is not well understood. To understand how macrophages do this, I built artificial targets that mimic the physical properties of microbes and unwanted cells. Then, I used video microscopy to measure how macrophages respond in real time when they interact with these targets. This study will allow us to better understand how the immune system use touch to protect our body against assaults.



# 23<sup>R D</sup> ANNUAL INDIGENOUS GRADUATE STUDENT SYMPOSIUM

## Abstracts:

### **Kyle Shaughnessy (UBC): Solidarity and surthrivance: Dene land-based ancestral teachings and queer kinship practice** *Tlicho Dene, Ukrainian, Irish*

Indigenous land-based knowledge is passed down through geographically specific ancestral teachings on how to survive our respective environments, climates, and landscapes, and how to do so in ways that are ecologically sustainable and supportive of good community relationships. Colonial violence in the form of extractivism, land theft, and environmental destruction have regularly threatened to disrupt transmission of ancestral teachings from one generation to the next, and yet we continue our fight for sovereignty.

Similarly, lessons on how to thrive and survive, aka "surthrive" (McNeil-Seymour, 2018), as queers are passed on by explicit direction and example through the care and support we provide for one another in the face of hate and oppression. Censorship, criminalization, and sanctioned violence on various levels have been ever-present as we continue finding inventive ways to protect one another and our ability to experience joy, pleasure, and connection.

How have we weathered similar storms and what skills of surthrivance do our movements have to share and build off one another? How have we co-resisted epistemicide and erasure? What ancestral kinship teachings do we currently embody that can help us navigate the present-day climate and protect our queer and Indigenous cultural knowledges and practices?

McNeil-Seymour, J., (2018). Two-spirit resistance. In McFarlane P. & Schabus N. (Ed). *Whose land is it anyway?: a manual for decolonization*. Federation of Post-Secondary Educators of BC. (2018).

### **Amanda Street (UBCO): From Roots to Renewal: Indigenous Women's Lived Experiences in Higher Education Leadership** *Okanagan Nation/Okanagan Indian Band (Ńkmaḡlqs)*

This proposed study will examine the persistent underrepresentation and marginalization of Indigenous women in higher education leadership across Canada. Despite institutional commitments to reconciliation and equity, leadership structures continue to privilege Western, patriarchal governance models that exclude Indigenous epistemologies and overlook the intersectional realities of race, gender, class, and sexuality. This research seeks to address the central question: How do Indigenous women leaders experience, navigate, and make meaning of the systemic, cultural, and institutional conditions that shape their leadership journeys?

Grounded in an Indigenous qualitative methodological paradigm, this study will be conducted over the summer and fall of 2026 and will employ Indigenous conversational narrative inquiry, including kitchen-table conversations and semi-structured interviews, alongside autoethnographic reflection. Guided by storytelling, relational accountability, and collective meaning-making, this approach resists extractive research practices and honours interconnectedness between researcher and participants.

By centring Indigenous women's lived experiences, the research aims to illuminate structural barriers, including burnout, lateral violence, lack of mentorship, and systemic silencing, and to identify culturally grounded leadership pathways. The study will contribute to Canadian higher education scholarship by addressing a significant research gap, amplifying Indigenous women's voices, making inequities visible, and informing relational governance models and mentorship frameworks



# 23<sup>R D</sup> ANNUAL INDIGENOUS GRADUATE STUDENT SYMPOSIUM

## Abstracts:

### **Shayna Uhryn (UBC): Woodsmoke Impact on the Lung by Dose (WILD) Study** **Métis Nation - Saskatchewan**

Wildfire seasons are increasing in duration and intensity, with millions exposed to smoky air annually. Wildfire smoke is enriched in small particles, known as fine particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>, or particles less than 2.5 microns in width), which float in the air for up to thousands of miles and are inhaled into the lung. There is evidence of lung health effects in populations exposed to wildfire smoke, however how different concentrations of smoke affect lung health is poorly understood. I will link two clinical studies in the UBC Air Pollution Exposure Lab (APEL) that together test a range of wood smoke (a recognized surrogate for wildfire smoke) concentrations. After two hours of controlled human exposures to wood smoke PM<sub>2.5</sub> at concentrations of 500ug/m<sup>3</sup> (study 1), 300g/m<sup>3</sup> or 100ug/m<sup>3</sup> (study 2), each observed in Canada during annual wildfire seasons, I will examine effects on lung function and inflammation. I will align the protocols across studies and use statistical methods to compare differences in response by concentration. Not only will my study extend knowledge as to how smoke affects lung health, but it will also provide a basis by which to develop and test targeted interventions aimed at reducing the lung health impacts of this increasingly relevant exposure.

### **Yvonne Wyss (UM): Squamish Matriarchs Storytelling** **Squamish Nation**

My Undergraduate degree completed an academic literature review, "Conversations with Khahtsahlano," published and sent to the Ottawa Archives almost 67 years ago 1955. The literature review is from an Indigenous feminist perspective and explores critical indigenous and settler colonial politics and masculinities in hetero-patriarchy. To open discussion for a community-based research project to look for the names of matriarchs lost in colonial writing, a research project to fully explore the writings of Khahtsahlano of Chaythoos.

A matriarch's teachings woven between the lines...

From an Indigenous feminist perspective, the approach to inquiry is with communities of knowledge keepers. I learned and understood from scholars like Kim Tallbear, who approaches Indigenous feminist research by creating communities to guide her inquiry. Tallbear works with and utilizes this inquiry approach in creating community-led research that becomes Community-Based Participatory Research, "which creates research, education, and action to the process between the community and the research institution." (Tallbear, 2014). Organizing my research through inquiry and using community matriarchs, Elders, knowledge keepers, communities of scientists, researchers.

This book has been used almost as a standard for sharing the history of the Squamish People since it was published in 1955. (Matthews, 1955) Within many elders and families of the Squamish people today, this book is still used to understand Squamish history (Wyss, 2024). The journals show a significant influence of Khahtsahlano's mother, Qhway-wat, who raised her son as a traditional and cultural man with his language by elders, knowledge keepers, and her hand in his education. This comes through the descriptions of JSM and other people who viewed Khahtsahlano. For example, "He was a hard-working, kind, quiet man." "He is the most reliable Historian of Indian life in these parts," and "He is an authentic Indian4." The comments of settlers' families and professionals spoke highly of Khahtsahlano. The unspoken teachings and indigenous worldview are imbedded in his interviews. As a matriarch, through my research into the Indigenous worldview, I see that the book unfolds in a much different light.



# 23<sup>RD</sup> ANNUAL INDIGENOUS GRADUATE STUDENT SYMPOSIUM

## Abstracts:

### **Lindsay Yasinski (UBC): The Shared Experience of Indigenous Educators: Conversations and Connections Across Turtle Island *Metis Nation of Alberta, maternal kinship ties to Lubicon Lake First Nation and Woodland Cree First Nation***

This research project centers the voices and lived experiences of Indigenous educators working within public school systems in four distinct locations across Turtle Island. Grounded in Indigenous research methodologies and guided by relational accountability, our work underscores the crucial role of story, community, and place in shaping educational praxis. Through a series of conversational interviews, a modified collaborative story analysis, and affective coding, the research explores how Indigenous educators navigate, challenge, and transform colonial educational structures, while holding space for Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing. Three preliminary findings emerged from the research. First, a paradox of belonging/not belonging reflects the complex experience of Indigenous educators within the current educational system. Second, through a thematic analysis coding process that utilizes Indigenous methods, further insights were revealed about their lived experiences. Lastly, we propose a model for collaboration that serves as an Indigenous research methodology. In this article, we provide an overview of the project, share insights into Indigenous analytical methods, present our initial findings, explore the metaphor of the Buffalo as a methodology, and introduce a model for collaboration as an Indigenous methodology. Ultimately, the research affirms the strength, insight, and leadership of Indigenous educators and highlights the resurgence of Indigenous teaching and learning methods as a relevant educational pedagogy within public school systems.

### **Colleen Hannah (x<sup>w</sup>tx<sup>w</sup>taqs) and Karolyn Bonneau (UBCO): Breathing Life into our Doctorate Journey as tk<sub>tk</sub>miix<sup>w</sup>tət *Syilx - Okanagan Indian Band, Penticton Indian Band***

Breathing life into our doctorate journey as tk<sub>tk</sub>miix<sup>w</sup>tət

Resurgent Methods: How we are examining syilx pedagogy on our doctorate journey as tk<sub>tk</sub>miix<sup>w</sup>tət located outside of our traditional lands. Syilx pedagogy is closely tied to our capt<sup>ik</sup>wł, it is our story based syilx curriculum and pedagogy we carry it personally and professionally. How do we navigate the tensions between the teachings we carry and finding its place within western pedagogies as an equally recognized and valued pedagogical practice.

This journey of walking alongside our family of syilx scholars has led to the realization that we are doing all of the same work of our classmates, however we have the added burden of having to express our ways of knowing and being to the Doctor of Education program so they can understand our worldviews, beliefs, teachings and protocols as we navigate our research journey. This is exhausting. The tensions that arise from not having the support of Indigenous mentorship and Indigenous knowledge embedded within our research journey creates a disconnected and discontent affect. The only way we have been able to get through this far is by seeking out kinship with each other as syilx scholar-practitioners coming from the same program from the same people with the same responsibilities to our communities.



# 23<sup>RD</sup> ANNUAL INDIGENOUS GRADUATE STUDENT SYMPOSIUM

## Abstracts:

### **Kinwa Bluesky (UBC): Unceding Parliament: Algonquin Anishinàbe Responsibility, Title, and Constitutional Relationships at Kichi Sibi**

This presentation shares research on the Aboriginal title claim advanced by Kitigàn Sibi Anishinàbeg on behalf of the Algonquin Anishinàbe Nation to the Kichi Sibi Lands, including Kijik Pikwadìn, the Supreme Court of Canada, and the islands within the Kichi Sibi. The claim reflects enduring responsibilities to ancestral homelands that were never ceded. These responsibilities continue to guide governance, stewardship, and decision-making grounded in Algonquin Anishinàbe law and collective identity.

The work highlights how Algonquin Anishinàbe *akì inàkonigewin* expresses an ongoing duty of care to land, water, ancestors, and future generations. This duty is carried through spiritual relationships, place names, political advocacy, and intergenerational knowledge. These relationships affirm title as a living expression of Indigenous jurisdiction and community well-being, supported through both historical continuity and contemporary assertion.

Through an Indigenous rights and self-determination lens, this research shows how responsibilities to land guide constructive constitutional futures. It presents a vision of respectful co-existence that recognizes Algonquin Anishinàbe authority and honours long-standing connections to place. This approach supports reconciliation through shared governance, renewed relationships, and the revitalization of Indigenous jurisdiction in spaces that hold national significance. I plan to present in person.

### **Elsa Clément (UBC): The acceptability of blood microsampling technologies for traumatic brain injury: A qualitative study of healthcare providers working in Indigenous communities Anishinàbe**

This research project aims to understand the perceptions of blood microsampling technologies to improve traumatic brain injury (TBI) care in Indigenous communities. The historical and ongoing harms experienced within the Canadian healthcare system may affect receptiveness to such new medical technologies. Acceptability is a prerequisite for scalable, sustainable and meaningful implementation of new healthcare technologies, and the input from healthcare providers working in Indigenous communities, especially Indigenous healthcare providers, will offer crucial insights. An initial understanding of acceptability and concerns in the communities will help provide direction about how to proceed, or not proceed, with supporting implementation of blood microsampling technologies in TBI care in those communities.

This research project is still in its early stages and is in collaboration with the Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay. My presentation will be a discussion of my project and the various challenges of fostering meaningful, relational research within the digital world. Feedback, thoughts, and suggestions are welcome!

Working alongside Dr. Julia Schmidt, Dr. Cheryl Wellington, Dr. Noah Silverberg

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