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Message from the Director, Dr. Mansfield Mela

We are two months into the new academic year, and I hope you have all settled into a pattern despite the uncertainties brought on by the lingering effect of the pandemic. At the Centre, we have continued to do good work; completing projects, securing partners, and proposing research. We continue to work remotely while meeting deadlines. Our work with the Correctional Service Canada (CSC) remains innovative and fruitful. We are set to help evaluate the benefits of traditional medicine among a subset of individuals. The finding promises to light up the long-awaited desire to combine traditional and modern medicine. We have learned a lot from the process of engagement.

As we advance our strategic plan (due for adoption soon through the members of the Centre), we are pleased to announce that Drs. Phil Woods (Nursing) and Ibironke Odumosu-Ayanu (Law) have added their insight to the document. As new members of the executive committee, their individual experiences as Associate Deans of Research in their respective colleges is invaluable. Dr. Davut Akca, our research officer of two years has accepted a faculty position at Lakehead University, in Ontario. We are happy to play a relevant role in supporting his scholarly endeavors, which we know played a small part in this opportunity. We wish Davut the best and look forward to continuing to collaborate with him.

I am happy to have my colleague's profile in this newsletter. Professor Caroline Tait embodies relevant and topical research with direct benefits to the community she works in. The first time I met her in her Arts & Science office in 2004 I went for one hour and left after four. It was eye opening. She was so knowledgeable about her field and my own. Her piece on FASD and colonialism was central to our discussion, and it foretold a lot of current thinking about the prevalence of FASD. Subsequently, it was my joy for her to join as a member of my department *and* of the Centre for forensic Behavioral Science and Justice Studies.

If you want to attempt a scholarly match filled with facts, you can raise the following with Prof Tait: cultural humility, psychological safety, micro-reconciliation, investment and industrialization as strategies for reducing gang activity, minimizing trauma and the faces of love. There is certainly no shortage of topics she can be engaged on. Her knowledge and scope of reach is commendable. I am sure you will see from her contributions that she not only thinks of the community, but she also exemplifies what it means to be a collaborator. Dr. Tait has championed the mentoring of Indigenous faculty and students. She showed this by her example of involving learners in all aspects of experiential learning and research activities. In a large grant, with a diverse group of researchers, she set up one of the strongest mentee-mentor connections there is in research. Her efforts continue to yield great results and achieve strides in facilitating research, which *many* communities and USask benefit from. Thanks, Caroline, for your great work.

The next year will see us call for a targeted faculty grant proposal to align with the needs of CSC. We are actively recruiting students as research partners and to assist their experience in forensic-related research. Students are encouraged to check our website for the process or contact forensic.centre@usask.ca. We also hope to engage faculty very soon in the discussion of initiating an interdisciplinary Master's in Forensic Mental Health.

Take care,

Dr. Mansfield Mela
Director, Centre for Forensic Behavioural Science and
Justice Studies



Forensic Centre's Research Highlight

Dr. Caroline Tait, an unplanned path to research excellence

Dr. Caroline Tait, Department of Psychiatry, College of Medicine, USask and member of the Centre for Forensic Behavioural Science and Justice Studies

Few could be more “made in Saskatchewan” than Dr. Caroline Tait, a medical anthropologist and member of the Forensic Centre. She is Métis and was raised on a farm on the “river road” in the Nesbitt Forest between MacDowall and St. Louis, Saskatchewan. She says she had a wonderful time growing up in an area with other Métis families who fished nearly every Sunday in the South Saskatchewan River. While her father was a founding member of their Métis local, neither parent completed high school, so postsecondary education was never a huge pressure in her family. Instead, her mother’s advice, despite the honour of the profession, was explicitly “do not farm!” - seek a government job or something like that which could provide a stable, easier life.

Tait took her mom’s advice and did *not* farm but also did not immediately seek out a government desk job, rather finding a middle ground at SaskPower. After a trip to Mexico at 19, she knew she wanted to travel. So started the cycle of working to save money then travelling to places like Australia for a year and South Africa during the apartheid period. The experience in Africa, seeing formalized racism for the first time, was a revelation for Tait, such that she decided not to return to her 9-5 but rather explore postsecondary education for the first time.

Dr. Tait enrolled at the University of Saskatchewan, where she studied for two years before applying to McGill on a whim. Within six weeks of being accepted, she was on a bus headed alone to Montreal, where she began studying in the Department of Anthropology. She fell in love with the city and discipline almost immediately. Thanks to her upbringing, she had a strong work ethic but also did not take school too seriously. While she strived to achieve the best grades, it became a game to see how far she could make it. If her life was a game, she most certainly would have won Final Jeopardy, as she went on to complete an impressive academic path at UC Berkeley, back to McGill under the supervision of her mentor Dr. Margaret Lock, and then on to Harvard on a Canada/USA Fulbright, completing two fellowships.

The summer of her year at Harvard, her father’s battle with cancer brought Tait home and at the same time paved her career path. It was then that she attended a Men’s Wellness Conference, organized by her brother and Montreal Lake Cree Nation, near Waskesiu. At the end of the conference, while waiting for her brother to finish up, she flipped through an issue of MacLean’s that featured the “Ms. G Case” —a story of a pregnant Canadian woman who misused solvents and was being mandated into treatment. The many sides taken on the complicated case intrigued Tait. She promptly took the magazine with her and decided women’s health and addictions, particularly the lack of scientific evidence in Indigenous Peoples’ health, would be the topic of her research for her doctoral dissertation.

Since 2004, Dr. Tait’s career has been focused on developing and growing Indigenous health research centres with a strong mentorship component. Currently, she is involved with the nātawihowin First Nations Research Network and the mamawiiikayaahk Métis Research Network (Saskatchewan-NEIHR, fmhrn.ca), and the NEIHR (Network Environments for Indigenous Health Research) National Coordinating Centre (neihrcoordcentre.ca), a secretariat for the nine NEIHRs, both funded by the Canadian Institutes for Health Research.

We welcome all
feedback!

Please provide [HERE](#)
at any time.

Tait credits the incredible, knowledgeable faculty and staff involved for the Saskatchewan centres' success. They work towards conducting research led by First Nations and Métis communities, and finding ways to decolonize the university and institutions, such as giving community members the same access that researchers have to data and financial information about research funds.

Another major initiative is looking for ways that non-faculty can hold and have control of research funds, with the university acting as a liaison, and for community members to have access to operational funds and services.

A mandate of Tait's research centres is also to address human resource issues that exist unique to the prairies. To alleviate challenges for faculty in finding and training Indigenous staff, which is difficult with Saskatchewan's small population of Indigenous peoples with the skillsets required, they aim to recruit, train, and provide long-term employment to Indigenous researchers and facilitators who do not necessarily want to pursue a PhD. They recently hired Delanie Passer as a community research facilitator, to work with Indigenous communities to identify *their* research mandates and then match them with researchers from USask and other academic institutions who have expertise and interest in those areas. Dr. Tait's group is exploring working with other centres and units to collaborate and "job share" some of these vital positions. If Passer or another facilitator visited an Indigenous community, they could represent several disciplines to seek research interest in a variety of areas and then help foster those partnerships.

To become a part of this groundbreaking way of conducting research and fostering collaboration, the Network requires researchers to complete the online [OCAP Course from the First Nations Information Governance Centre](#). All of the active researchers at the Centre for Forensic Behavioural Science and Justice Studies have enrolled in the program and found it extremely valuable. Research Associate Dr. Lisa Jewell said, *"I thought it was very beneficial to complete the "Fundamentals of OCAP®" course offered by the First Nations Information Governance Centre. I have been familiar with the OCAP principles of ownership, control, access, and possession of First Nations data for many years. However, this course deepened my understanding of the need for, and intent of, these principles and strengthened my ability to apply them to our research."*

Another training opportunity coming soon is the Métis Nation–Saskatchewan (MN-S) Data Governance Principles training, which Tait and her team have developed with MN-S. This training will prepare people to conduct research with Métis and First Nations People, who will direct *how* that research will flow – that while they would not control the research, they will remain informed and have say how the partnerships unfold. This new method of data analysis will address historical information gaps – instead of focusing on "*Indigenous* issues," they will take a distinction-based approach, focusing separately on First Nations and Metis populations, to really drill down to better understand issues from First Nations or Métis perspectives, as they differ.

Apart from developing and growing research networks, Dr. Tait still has a personal interest in actively conducting research on unique topics similar to those that initially sparked her interest from visiting Africa and, closer to home, at the retreat in Waskesiu. Recently, she has started working with people on Emergency Response, to look at safety for evacuated people, and consider whether we should have First Nations and Métis evacuation sites —Indigenous people looking after Indigenous People in times of crisis. Another passion project is looking at the large number of Indigenous Peoples on waitlists for organ donations. She has found establishing think tanks with Indigenous people at the table an invaluable method to approaching these complex, specialized topics. People are not there to solve problems necessarily, but to share their experiences through storytelling, and lend their knowledge. The big picture is to develop "micro-reconciliation" (small steps towards reconciliation) and collective intelligence in a safe space that includes respected knowledge keepers and people with lived experience to help inform experts. In 2019, Tait published [a paper on micro-reconciliation as a pathway for transformative change](#) with Elder William Mussell and colleague Robert Henry that explored this idea more fully.

Now in the latter part of her career and *still* not a farmer, Tait is excited to see Indigenous people from their research networks and mentorship programs advancing their careers and carrying antiracist approaches and teachings forward. More and more young Indigenous students and scholars are finding success in postsecondary studies and research. Not yet quite ready to fully pass the torch, Dr. Caroline Tait looks forward to seeing all that she has helped build continue to strengthen the bridge between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples on topics that are of importance **to and for** Indigenous communities.

by L. Sorowski,
Coordinator for the
Centre for Forensic
Behavioural Science and
Justice Studies
November 2021

Currently working remotely
but, normally we can be
found at:
110A, 9 Campus Drive
University of
Saskatchewan
Saskatoon SK S7N 5A5
Canada
306-966-2687
Always at:
forensic.centre@usask.ca

Topics from the Field

Prepared by Dr. Davut Akca, Research Officer

CFBSJS



Please save the date:

Monday May 30th & Tuesday May 31st, 2022

19th Biennial (2nd Virtual) Violence & Aggression Symposium, @USask (remotely)

Discussions on decriminalizing possession of drugs continue as a response to the overdose epidemic. In 2020, there were 6213 opioid-related deaths according to the Public Health Agency, which is more than 50% higher than the number in 2019. Instead of pure criminal justice approaches, holistic (and urgent) action is needed to prevent and reduce deaths caused by overdose.

[Photo: @SGaibrie](#)

As opposed to expectations, suicide rates *decreased* in Canada during the pandemic. It is interesting to see more research from other jurisdictions and international studies have similar findings. Our Centre has ongoing suicide-related research projects and is open to new collaborations to examine various aspects of suicidal thoughts and behaviours as well as suicide prevention.

[Photo: @CaulfieldTim](#)

Impaired driving continues to be a serious threat for public health and safety. Despite the level of threat, it draws less attention from researchers. Our Centre previously conducted a study on "Impaired Drivers and Their Risk of Reoffending". An evidence-based approach and more research are needed to reduce and prevent tragic events happening due to impaired driving.

[Photo: @madd_sk](#)

Criminal Justice issues are usually in the center of political or subjective discussions. Researchers in this field need to pay more attention to objectivity and transparency in our methods and theoretical approaches than in any other discipline. In this thread, Dr. Henson comments on this aspect of criminal justice research and underlines the potential dangers of lack of objectivity.

[Photo: @abbie_henson](#)



Gaibrie Stephen
@SGaibrie

...

Toronto similar to Vancouver is seeking to get a special exemption from Health Canada to decriminalize possession of all drugs.

This will be life saving as opioid overdose rates are the highest this year since records began. Using drugs is not and should not be a crime.

12:55 PM · Sep 27, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone



Timothy Caulfield
@CaulfieldTim

...

"Suicide reduction in Canada during the #COVID19 pandemic" journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.11... via @UHN @UofT @UofTMS cc @tylerblack32

"...#suicide rates in Canada decreased against a background of extraordinary public health measures.."

Frustrating how anti-lockdown agenda used suicide.



MaddReginaSk
@madd_sk

...

Last month in Saskatchewan, there were 418 impaired driving offences (including 312 Criminal Code charges). This is why MADD Chapters exist. People are not seeing impaired driving as a serious crime. For families of injured or deceased victims ... it's a life sentence.
[@maddcanada](#)



5:50 AM · Sep 24, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone



Dr. Abigail Henson
@abbie_henson

...

Research should strive for objectivity yet *hard science objectivity* is an illusion in human subjects research, particularly in Criminal Justice, which is an inherently value-laden/socially constructed field. In social science research, objectivity means maximizing transparency

1:55 PM · Sep 24, 2021 · Twitter Web App