

SK-IMIN



**FINAL REPORT
FOR 2021-2022**





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Project Purpose

The Saskatchewan Indigenous Mentorship Network, one of nine Indigenous Mentorship Network Programs (IMNPs) across the country funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, ran from 2017-2022. The Saskatchewan Indigenous Mentorship Network, abbreviated as SK-IMN, was led by nominated principal investigator Dr. Caroline Tait, PhD, and managed by Allison Piché, along with a team of 75+ university faculty, graduate students and administrators. Its purpose was to support Indigenous graduate students, post doctoral fellows and new investigators to be successful in their pursuit of careers in the fields of health and wellness, Indigenous studies and community-based research.

The Network facilitated many mentorship activities and

provided student funding to facilitate project deliverables during its five years. At its outset, an external evaluator developed a logic model to identify short, medium, and long-term outcomes associated with project activities. This logic model was informed by the grant proposal, pre-grant survey, and post-funding faculty interviews conducted in 2018. Two streams are included in this logic model – institutional and individual.

Most of the grant outcomes described here focus on individual and community impact, rather than institutional change. However, a few important institutional changes are highlighted as we understand these as contributing to facilitating Indigenous graduate student and new investigator mentorship. At the mid-point

of the grant (2020) student interviews were conducted with those involved in the Network. The complete findings of this midterm evaluation are available here. These findings are summarized with updated data in this final report. More information about SK-IMN, and annual reports covering activities from 2017 to 2022, can be found on its website.

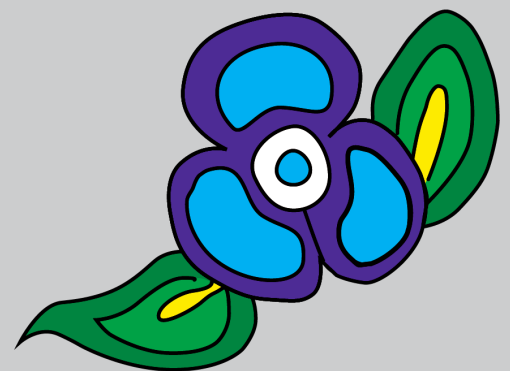
Going forward, Indigenous student mentorship will be supported through the CIHR-funded Network Environments for Indigenous Health Research (NEIHR) networks. This is a 15-year initiative launched in 2020. To learn more about the Saskatchewan NEIHR, the nātowihowin and mamawiikikayaahk Research and Mentorship Networks please [visit its website](#).



Key Outcomes

As identified in the mid-term evaluation, the SK-IMN facilitated five key outcomes for participants. This report found that the SK-IMN is:

- ▶ **meeting the needs of students**
- ▶ **facilitating professional development and career clarity**
- ▶ **creating a post-secondary environment that is culturally grounded and comfortable**
- ▶ **helping new investigators, students, and faculty to form relationships and expand their network**
- ▶ **creating meaningful mentorship opportunities**



FUNDING 2017-2022



From September 2017- March 2022 the SK-IMN provided funding to 55 undergraduate and graduate students in the form of 100 awards. These included travel awards, stipends, scholarships, and summer studentships.

- Program: 16 PhD, 29 Masters, 10 Undergraduate
- Identity: 41 First Nations students, 13 Métis, students and 1 Inuit student
- Institution: 39 University of Saskatchewan, 13 University of Regina, 3 First Nations University of Canada

To learn more about past recipients and funding through the Saskatchewan Indigenous Mentorship Network visit skimn.ca and the nātowihowin and mamawiiikayahk Research and Mentorship Networks go to skneihhr.ca

The mid term report found that SK-IMN support supported many mentees in continuing their academic careers. This support not only helped the students focus on their research or courses without having to seek out additional employment, it also supported them to attend important international conferences that were key in their fields of study. Demonstrating the flexibility afforded by this funding, interviewees described how it was particularly important during the Covid-19 pandemic because of thesis or dissertation changes and lack of potential employment opportunities due to social distancing and lockdowns. The stress of the financial burden that graduate students often face, including during the pandemic, was mitigated with the accessibility of financial support from the Network. This appears to be a crucial and important part of the Network and possibly leads to many more outcomes (e.g., willingness to continue, increased motivation, increased confidence).

Funding limitations

The most subscribed funding program were graduate stipends, scholarships, and graduate travel awards (pre-pandemic). Undergraduate summer studentships varied from year to year with regards to uptake. Some changes were made in 2022 to make these more accessible to faculty and students, but these studentships have been undersubscribed from 2020 on. It is recommended that remaining funds are put towards graduate scholarships to build a stronger cohort of Indigenous graduate students supported by the IMNP and NEIHR Networks and who more strongly identify with these groups.

2021-2022 Funding Recipients



► L to R: Kathy McMullin, Shana Cardinal, Doris Wesaquate

Graduate Mentorship Stipend

Tina Alexis
Shana Cardinal
Ann Dorion
Marlin Legare
Kathy McMullin
Jana Sasakamoose
Stacey Sayer-Brabant
Michelle Zinck

Each student received a \$3000 stipend to put towards their mentorship goals.

Graduate Travel Award

Indiana Best
Fall 2021 Online Conference

Due to COVID-19, we updated the Travel Awards criteria to include registration costs for online conferences.

Scholarship Recipients

Doris Wesaquate
Mentee Scholarship, \$20,000
College of Kinesiology
Supervisor: Dr. Heather Foulds



► July 2018, SK-IMN and USask faculty and students at NGGS, hosted by Ombaashi (Kamloops, BC)

Mentorship

When asked what makes a good mentor, students indicated that a good mentor was honest, accomplished, authentic, approachable, helpful, supportive, flexible, patient, respectful, and dependable. Interviewees also reported that they often found these attributes in mentors within the SK-IMN and appreciated that they were open to hearing the students' struggles while providing advice for navigating personal and professional challenges. Evidence suggested that many mentors provided honest feedback on students' research in their interactions, and also provided opportunities for professional experiences that the students would otherwise have been unable to obtain. Overall, mentorship experiences in the SK-IMN aligned well with students' expectations of an ideal mentee-mentor relationship and what they valued in a good mentor.

Mentorship Activities

- **Online Meet-Ups** began in 2020 as Coffee and Catch up sessions that brought together students and faculty from across the province to meet and share what they were working on each week. These shifted in 2021 to Write-Ins and a Lunch and Learn series, where students came together weekly to spend time working on their writing, sharing their work, and once a month a guest speaker was brought in to present to students on writing and grad studies-related topics.
- **Writing Your Journal Article in 12 Weeks – Pilot Course:** 12 students, faculty, and staff participated in this online course in the spring of 2021, built off the book by Wendy Belcher. Each week we came together to go through the workbook or hear from industry experts (Library writing staff, publishers, and faculty journal article reviewers).
- **Webinars and Guests:** We hosted thirty-four speakers, workshops and webinars, fourteen of which are archived as digital resources on our website and three that are available via access to our course in Canvas.
- We hosted four **Writing Retreats** over the course of the grant, three in person and one online post-Covid, in which 52 students and faculty mentors participated.
- **One on one mentorship:** 6 students and 5 faculty participated in online writing groups at the beginning of the pandemic, and we facilitated one-on-one online student/faculty mentorship sessions for 10+ students.



► February 5, 2019 Dr. Kim TallBear - Decolonizing Science and Technology Lecture

Events

We hosted a total of 34 guest speakers, book launches, info sessions, and panel presentations. Of these, 13 were in person (2017 – March 2020) and 21 took place online (April 2020-March 2022). Partners over the years included the Division of Social Accountability, the Office of the Indigenous Coordinator, College of Medicine, usask.caISES, and the Indigenous Graduate Students' Association at the University of Saskatchewan.

Three Annual Gatherings took place (2018, 2019, 2021). These included student, faculty, and keynote presentations, cultural and social activities, and field trips to learn from Indigenous health practitioners.



► February 2020 Writing Retreat, Elk Ridge

“It was important to be involved with a group and with mentors that have an understanding of Indigenous methodology as well as Indigenous issues and practice. I have made lifelong friends and feel grateful to have been involved in the mentorship program.”

► Writing Group participant

Evaluation

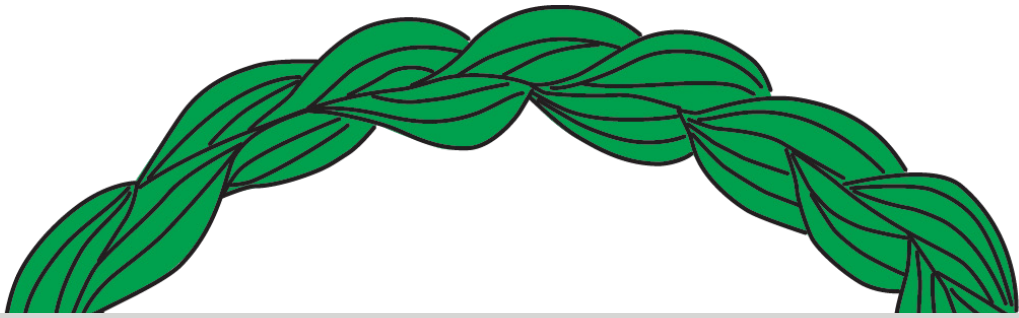
► Evaluation was embedded in the activities of the Network in a variety of ways. Following each major event, participants were asked to complete a post-event survey which asked whether the event/activity had facilitated key outcomes and indicators of the grant. These results are summarized in the mid-term evaluation report conducted by Two Bridges Consulting. Overall, these surveys indicated that the Network was achieving its desired key outcomes, listed above.

- For guest speakers and in person events we tracked attendance numbers
- Social media, website, and newsletter growth was also tracked, showing the reach of our activities and the growth of our audience over time.
- The midterm evaluation report, [available here](#), describes evaluation activities and outcomes more fully, and faculty are working on several journal articles on the activities and impacts of the SK-IMN over its five years.



Outreach

- In the first year of the grant our team had ongoing discussions regarding a high school health science outreach program. This included meetings with the Science Outreach program (Usask), Saskatchewan Public Schools, and a local high school. We hired an Outreach Coordinator to facilitate this work, but later found that, due to competing commitments, we needed to scale back our outreach activities and focus on maintaining a presence at on campus and community events.
- The SK-IMN Manager and students had an information booth or other participation in 11 community and campus events including Powwows (4), student recruitment events (3), and conferences or gatherings (4). These numbers don't include events where we actively assisted as an organizer.
- The SK-IMN Newsletter began in November 2017 and ran monthly until March 2022 (52 editions). The newsletter archive is available from October 2020 on [here](#). It grew to a circulation of 411 during this time.



► **Thank you** Thank you to Manager Allison Piché for all her work with the SK-IMN over the past five years, faculty for mentoring many students, faculty and student members for serving on committees and participating in events, and other staff who supported the Network, including Rhonda Taillon and Fleur Macqueen Smith. Most of all, thank you to the students who participated in the Network over the years, supporting each other and making the Saskatchewan Indigenous Mentorship Network a welcoming place for Indigenous graduate students in the province. We look forward to having you involved in the nātowihowin and mamawiikikayaahk Research and Mentorship Networks that make up the Saskatchewan NEIHR network.





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