

# LEARNING, ENGAGING AND COMMUNICATING

## PROJECT ACTIVITY UPDATE

### The Origin and Import of Health Inequities in Saskatchewan

SPHERU's project examining the history of public health and health care in the province has many facets: for example, the question of how body mass index (BMI) data from the past can be used to help answer questions about present-day epidemics among Aboriginal people, notably the current epidemic of Type 2 diabetes. Last November, SPHERU researchers Dr. Paul Hackett and Dr. Sylvia Abonyi presented on this topic at the Canadian Association for Physical Anthropology 40<sup>th</sup> annual meeting in Victoria, B.C.

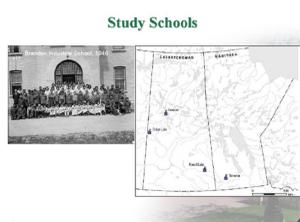
The researchers looked at student entrance examinations from four residential schools in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, data routinely

collected on First Nations children between the 1930s and 1950s.

From the records they gleaned information on everything from tuberculosis to prior education and family background. Most importantly, the records included the height, weight and age of the students when admitted to school.

From this they were able to generate composite BMI figures.

The BMI data are a valuable indicator for comparison with more recent health data of First Nations students and for understanding the historical process by which obesity has become increasingly common. The literature suggests a link to the epidemic of Type 2



diabetes that began to emerge in First Nations communities starting in the 1970s.

Hackett and Abonyi, with research partner Dr. Roland Dyck, intend to publish the results in the *Canadian Geographer*. The presentation is only part of the multi-faceted work SPHERU has undertaken for its SHRF Phase III Health Research Group Grant.

### Community Voices: Building a Foundation for the Future

SPHERU researchers recently completed a project in collaboration with the Rosetown Regional Family and Community and Support Services (RRFCSS) to determine the supports needed for people within their community.

The Community Voices: Building a Foundation for the Future project included an environmental scan, semi-structured interviews and focus groups. The project had two main objectives: 1) to identify strengths and challenges of community supports and services in Rosetown; and 2) to identify local solutions and prioritize future directions to support the future growth of Rosetown.

The findings highlighted four groups as having priority needs: young families, teenagers, seniors and people new to the community. The project resulted in the development of three reports. The research team used innovative strategies to facilitate effective knowledge translation throughout the project, including information and fact sheets; media releases; a radio interview; three newspaper articles; informational posters to local businesses and organizations; a community dialogue night and online sharing of the research findings.

Funded by RRFCSS and the MITACS-Accelerate Graduate Research Internship Program, the project supported a research mentoring opportunity for Carolyn Tran (MSW Student) under the supervision of Juanita Bacsu and Dr. Bonnie Jeffery of SPHERU.

#### OUR RESEARCH

While much population health research describes health inequities, our research focuses on population health interventions. We look at how to address inequities on the social determinants of health through the creation of new knowledge, policy analysis, and collaborative research. Much of our work falls within the themes of Northern and Aboriginal Health, Healthy Children, Rural Health and the History of Health Inequities, as well as Intervention Research.

## OUR RESEARCH TEAM

### University of Regina

Tom McIntosh, Interim Director  
James Daschuk, Research Faculty  
Bonnie Jeffery, Research Faculty  
Shanthi Johnson, Research Faculty  
Nuelle Novik, Research Faculty  
Mary Hampton, Research Associate  
Gloria DeSantis, Research Associate

### University of Saskatchewan

Nazeem Muhajarine, Research Faculty  
Sylvia Abonyi, Research Faculty  
Paul Hackett, Research Faculty  
Diane Martz, Research Faculty  
Nazmi Sari, Research Faculty  
Cory Neudorf, Research Associate  
Pammla Petrucka, Research Associate  
Sarah Oosman, Post Doctoral Fellow

#### WHO WE ARE

SPHERU is an interdisciplinary team of population health researchers from the Universities of Regina and Saskatchewan with sites in Regina, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert. Established in 1999 and funded by the Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation, with additional project specific funding provided by other provincial and national health research funding agencies, SPHERU is the first bi-university research unit of its kind in Saskatchewan.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Healthy Aging in Place project presents in Chicago

Nuelle Novik, Juanita Bacsu and Shanthi Johnson gave a presentation, Aging and Rural Mental Health, at the Aging in America, ASA Conference in Chicago in March. They provided an overview of SPHERU and the Healthy Aging in Place projects. The annual conference of the American Society on Aging brings together research and best practices in the field of aging, and this year attracted luminaries such as John Beard, the World Health Organization's Director of Ageing and Life Course.



### SPHERU in SHRF video

Shanthi Johnson and Nazeem Muhajarine of SPHERU are among the researchers featured in a new video from the Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation. It highlights success stories in health research, including Johnson's work on falls and fall-related fractures among seniors, and Muhajarine's built environment research.

### Completing the Circle has new website

Completing the Circle, a project with Mary Hampton as principal investigator, has set up a new website at <http://www.aboriginalendoflifecare.com/>. It shares video resources and publications concerning culturally sensitive end-of-life care with, and for Aboriginal families.

## PUBLICATIONS

### Healthy Families + Healthy Communities = Healthy Children

Nazeem Muhajarine and Fleur Macqueen Smith collaborated with Cory Neudorf and staff at the Public Health Observatory to release this report examining the vulnerability of children entering kindergarten in the Saskatoon Health Region.



Met-Syn, in Saskatoon aimed at reducing the chance that women will develop diabetes. Metabolic Syndrome is an internationally recognized clinical diagnosis indicating an individual has a cluster of factors for Type 2 diabetes, as well as cardiovascular disease.

### Alberta Centre for Active Living Research Update

Research Update, published by the Alberta Centre for Active Living (<http://www.centre4activeliving.ca/>), summarizes and promotes research of interest to academics and practitioners in health promotion and physical activity. Research Update is published online on a quarterly basis.

"Confronting Health Disparities: University of Regina Promotes Sports for Life and Aboriginal Youth Leadership Camp" (Vol. 19 / No. 3 September 2012).

James Daschuk and student Nicole Akan discuss two projects promoting sports and leadership to young Aboriginal people.

"A Snapshot of Regina's Organizations at Work on the Determinants of Community Well-being" (Vol. 19 / No. 4 December 2012). This article by Gloria DeSantis looks at community organizations working on the social determinants of health.



### Awareness, Action and Achievement

This report co-authored by Dr. Bonnie Jeffery of SPHERU evaluates a pilot project,

## MEET OUR RESEARCHERS



**Dr. Nuelle Novik, PhD**, joined SPHERU in January 2013. She is an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Regina.

Prior to joining in January, Dr. Novik worked with SPHERU as co-investigator on the Role of Social Systems in the Health of Seniors Living in Rural Saskatchewan pilot project and is actively involved with the Healthy Aging in Place study, which grew out of the pilot project.

Research areas of interest include social determinants of health and equity, rural and remote practice in health and social services, aging and seniors, mental health, community-based research, and palliative care and bereavement.

**Dr. Cory Neudorf, PhD**, joined SPHERU as a research associate in January. He is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Community Health and Epidemiology at the University of Saskatchewan.

Dr. Neudorf is also Chief Medical Officer of Health for the Saskatoon Health Region and collaborated with SPHERU on the recent Healthy Families report. Research areas of interest include intervention research, healthy children and health inequities.



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