

**For Immediate Release
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**You-Tube Video Gives Voice to Aboriginal Women Struggling with Drug Addiction:
U of S-Community Research Project**

A powerful new music video *From Stilettos to Moccasins* was released this week, the culmination of a unique project that gave voice to Aboriginal women healing from drug abuse, addictions and problems with the law, together with those who are helping them on their journey.

The video is part of a community-based research project conducted by the University of Saskatchewan (U of S), National Native Addictions Partnership Foundation (NNAPF), and the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (CCSA). The roughly four-minute video was shared at a national CCSA conference in Halifax this week and can be viewed on You-Tube at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1QRb8wA2iHs>

The research project examined the role that identity and stigma have in the healing journeys of criminalized Aboriginal women in treatment for drug abuse at centres across Canada. The video is being used by the research team in the development of a discussion guide for workshops at addiction treatment centres across Canada.

“By creating a music video, based on the findings of academic research, we can increase our capacity to strengthen understanding about Aboriginal women’s treatment needs among a broad range of service providers and the general public,” said U of S sociologist Colleen Dell, Research Chair in Substance Abuse. “It also offers a unique and personalized message of hope and inspiration to women on their healing journeys.”

The song featured in the video was created at a workshop in February at Cedar Lodge on Blackstrap Lake, SK., with the professional collaboration of singer/songwriter Violet Naytowhow, a Woodland Cree from Prince Albert. Naytowhow and others who composed the song perform in the music video, which was presented in Halifax this week at the national conference “Issues of Substance” during National Addictions Awareness Week (Nov. 15-21).

“As a way of informing treatment practice, capturing the unique experiences of Aboriginal women who have recovered from their addictions in song is most inspiring,” says Rita Notarandrea, deputy chief executive officer of the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse.

“We are merging these messages with academic literature and sharing this research with others, in the hope of achieving a greater impact on policy and practice of addictions treatment in Saskatchewan and across Canada,” says Carol Hopkins, NNAPF executive-director.

The team worked with Mae Star Productions, an independent Saskatchewan-based company, to produce the music video.

The multi-year collaborative research project was funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Institute of Aboriginal Peoples' Health. The project involved interviews with more than 100 First Nations, Inuit and Métis women in treatment for illicit drug use.

For more information, please see the website of the research project at:

<http://www.addictionresearchchair.com/creating-knowledge/national/cihr-research-project>

Note to Editors: Media outlets are welcome to broadcast the song and music video and to conduct interviews with members of the research team.

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Project Background

Illicit drug use among criminalized Aboriginal women is a serious health concern in Canada. Not enough is understood about how women's healing is impacted by their views of themselves as, and the stigma associated with being, drug users involved in crime and as an Aboriginal woman in Canadian society.

Grounded in a community-based participatory approach to research and Aboriginal methodology, interviews were conducted with over 100 First Nations, Inuit and Métis women in treatment for illicit drug use. The research starts with an understanding of women's drug use as a form of self-harm, that is, a coping and survival technique from emotional pain and distress rooted in abuse, violence and trauma in their lives.

The study also examines how treatment workers view their roles in the women's construction and re-construction of their identity and its impact on their healing. The goal of the study is to contribute original knowledge in the treatment field that can assist in improving the burden of ill health experienced by Aboriginal women in Canada.

The music video *From Stilettos to Moccasins* was released November 17 at the national conference of the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse in Halifax, during a workshop conducted by two of the women interviewed for the project along with a treatment provider, a researcher and an Elder, in a session titled "Hear Me Heal: A Research Project About First Nations Women, Drug Abuse and the Healing Journey."