

For Immediate Release: January 6, 2012

Two University of Saskatchewan-Based Addictions Projects Address Aboriginal Culture in Healing

The University of Saskatchewan and National Native Addictions Partnership Foundation are pleased to offer two unique, community-driven programs designed to help Aboriginal people with their healing journeys.

“Health Canada is proud to be supporting these initiatives through the funding it provides to the Saskatchewan Ministry of Health for the project, “Strengthening Substance Abuse Treatment Systems,” said the Honourable Leona Aglukkaq, Minister of Health.” “Funding provided under the Drug Treatment Funding Program will help improve substance abuse treatment systems in Saskatchewan, including accessibility, for those at risk of illicit drug abuse including youth.”

The Drug Treatment Funding Program is a component of the Government of Canada’s National Anti-Drug Strategy.

From Stiletos to Moccasins: A Guide for Group Discussion© is a half-day health intervention workshop, available at no cost to communities, which raises awareness about the role that cultural identity and stigma have in the healing journeys of criminalized First Nations, Métis and Inuit women in treatment for drug abuse. The workshop offers hope to individuals and is designed to be facilitated by community members with community members.

Pauline Young, a research participant and now one of 14 Project Ambassadors working across the country to promote the workshop, says “this project helped me to better understand who I am and its importance to my own healing. And now, through the workshop, I am able to this share this life lesson with others.”

“Turning research findings gathered from the community into a community resource is what our partnership is all about,” says Carol Hopkins, executive director of the National Native Addictions Partnership Foundation.

Rita Notarandrea, Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (CCSA) deputy chief executive officer, says, “This workshop is based on the latest evidence mirrored with cultural understanding. The findings of the pilot test were very encouraging, whether done in a correctional institution, a treatment facility or a local community centre.”

“The workshop comes with a 30-minute training video and all required materials, including feedback forms to ensure we continue to improve the program,” says Colleen Dell, Research Chair in Substance Abuse, University of Saskatchewan.

For more information, please visit the project website at:

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

Funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and various other community partners.

Aboriginal culture as a means of intervention in healing from addictions is the focus of the second project, titled *Culture As Intervention*. A provincial-wide ‘community conversation’ will run throughout Saskatchewan from January 6, 2012 until February 27, 2012. Saskatchewan residents are invited to share how Aboriginal culture has helped them, or someone they know, on the journey of healing from addictions. They can do so in many forms, from written responses to art and poetry by visiting <http://tinyurl.com/CultureasIntervention>

Three Saskatchewan residents are sharing their healing stories on YouTube, in the spirit of reciprocity:

- Jenny Gardipy relays the importance of traditional prayer coupled with the role of her children in her healing journey
- Valeries Desjarlais communicates how healing through cultural practices is “really all about relationships”
- The third video story is youth focused and presented by the Saskatoon Community Youth Arts Programming Inc. SCYAP’s Project Manager, Tammy Krueckl, says projects like this “help to share the important voice of youth in a method that is meaningful and relevant to youth, such as video, art and music.”

“Our focus is to get the community voice at the centre of these projects,” says Carol Hopkins.

Dell and Hopkins anticipate that the collaborative spirit of sharing in the project will broaden the conversation to a national level.

The team worked with Daft New Media, an independent Saskatchewan-based company, to produce the videos.

Funded by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Health Drug Funding Treatment Program.

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