

## BACKGROUND/INTRODUCTION

### What/Who is the Research Chair in Substance Abuse?

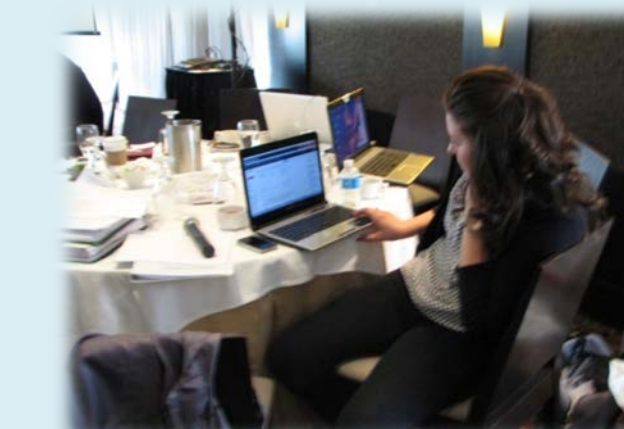


“..To increase Saskatchewan’s substance abuse research capacity, strengthen the training of addiction workers, and increase the effective use of research resources in substance abuse prevention and treatment.” (From the following website: [www.addictionresearchchair.ca](http://www.addictionresearchchair.ca))

- The Research Chair consists of a large team of people, located across Canada. A group of them are located in Saskatoon, and work on the U of S campus. Some members are from the surrounding communities in Saskatchewan and join the team when necessary.
- The main focus of the Research Chair’s office is on Addictions, with a large focus on Aboriginal/First Nations health.

### Where did I fit in on the research team?

- My role was similar to that of a Research Assistant – a role which allowed me to be both behind the scenes and a leader.
- The placement allowed for a varied and diverse experience of incredible opportunities. From singing songs to riding horses, I was busy!



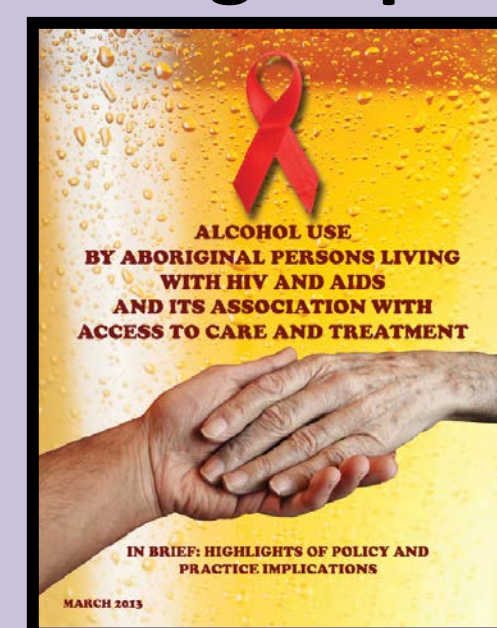
### Singing a Song (literally!)

- Service providers and research team members gathered together for one day to create and write the lyrics for a song that highlighted the important role that service providers play in the client’s journey of healing from addictions.
- Two artists were contacted to record the song, Joseph Naytowhow, a traditional Aboriginal musician, and rap hip/hop artist Lindsay Knight (aka Eekwol).



- What I learned: Music can be a unifying and unique form of communication among a diverse group of people – from service providers, to Indigenous knowledge keepers, to researchers.
- Creating the song provided an opportunity for the service providers to share both the joys and challenges of being in the field. Many shared that it gave them the chance to reflect on themselves and their daily activities, which is something they are not able to do very often.
- Main PHAC competency addressed with this project: Partnerships, Collaboration & Advocacy (#4)

### Writing Reports



- Assisted in the editing of the Research & Technical reports, “Alcohol Use by Aboriginal Persons living with HIV and AIDS and its Association with Access to Care and Treatment” and preparation of an abstract for the Wise Practices IV Conference on September 25-27 in Saskatoon.
- This provided an opportunity to understand the relationship between alcohol use by Aboriginal persons living with HIV/AIDS and the difficulties they experience in accessing care and treatment, and specifically the impact of perceived alcohol use amongst clientele by treatment care providers.
- Working on the report and abstract allowed for an in-depth look at the immense effort and coordinated processes required for a research study that is both qualitative and quantitative. I was able to comprehend and understand the implications of the results and the produced policy recommendations.
- Main PHAC core competencies addressed: Public Health Sciences (#1), Assessment and Analysis (#2), Policy and Program Planning, Implementation and Evaluation (#3)

## ACTIVITIES

### Out & About in the Community

- I attended several conferences throughout the summer as a representative of the Research Chair Office (Swift Current Drug Strategy Conference, NAISA Conference & APASK Conference)
- I was able to communicate in an effective and engaging manner with many diverse individuals from varying backgrounds about the office of the Research Chair in Substance Abuse. This is an important piece of the knowledge translation mission for the Office.
- It was my responsibility to ensure that those who attended with me were fully knowledgeable on the projects within the office.
- Main PHAC core competencies addressed: Communication (#6), Leadership (#5), Diversity and Inclusiveness (#7)



### Bonus Opportunities



- Although not initially included in the learning contract, two events were made available to me throughout my placement. First, I assisted in the coordination of a national gathering event held in Canmore, AB for the project titled, “Honouring Our Strengths: Indigenous Culture as Intervention in Addictions Treatment”.
- The event brought together treatment centre representatives from across the country to discuss the effectiveness of Aboriginal culture in healing from addictions.
- With almost 50 attendees at the event, the availability for me to work on skills for partnership, collaboration and advocacy (competency #4) were plentiful. This understanding of diversity and inclusiveness was important not only for myself, but for the success of the meeting as well.
- The second event was the Equine Assisted Learning program run through the Twisted Wire Program in Fort Qu’Appelle, SK. As a participant, I was able to experience what youth participants go through over a 16 week program in a condensed one-day version.
- We partnered up and worked with the horses for the full day, including riding them! This experience was unique as it provided insight into the important relationships and connections humans can have with animals.

## CONCLUSIONS

- I was able to grow my knowledge generally, as well as specifically, within the public health sciences.
- I learned how to be a leader, a team player, and how to challenge myself. Challenge is important for both personal growth and success in the career field.
- I experienced the benefits of welcoming opportunities and embracing new people from varying backgrounds, which has ultimately allowed for the development of a sense of humility in learning about and engaging with people from other cultures.
- I have learned about the concept of health and wellness as a holistic idea, including the unique connections I learned about in the EAL program.
- The practicum placement was an excellent fit for my already established skills and it also further enhanced those abilities.

## RECOMMENDATIONS & THOUGHTS FOR THE FUTURE

- I did not have the opportunity to apply advanced quantitative data analysis, however, this is something I hope to achieve in the future, should the opportunity arise.
- I feel I am more prepared now to enter the public health field and look forward to the varying experiences and career opportunities that might be available.
- Special thank you to my Field Supervisor, Dr. Colleen Anne Dell and my Academic Advisor, Dr. Marwa Farag!