

# TEAM 20

## Issues in Dementia Care for Indigenous Populations

Spring / Summer 2018

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**Lynden Crowshoe**  
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**Laura Warren**  
Dalla Lana School of Public Health

Elder  
**Betty McKenna**

Elder  
**Jerry Otowadjiwan**

**Melissa Blind**  
University of Minnesota Medical School, Duluth

### The path to better cognitive screening tools

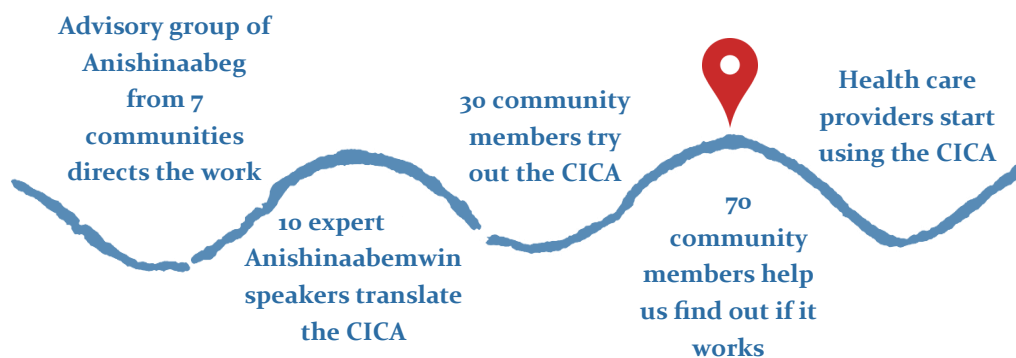


L-R: Louise Jones, Dr. Melissa Blind, Dr. Christopher Patterson, Karen Pitawanakwat, Rosanna Pietrangeli, Dr. Kristen Jacklin, Dr. Cheryl Allaby, and Sharlene Webkamigad.

In April, you might have seen us around the island. We visited with about 70 older Anishinaabe adults. **Chi-Miigwetch to all of the participants who offered time and energy to this project.**

“Cognitive assessments” are used to figure out if older people are experiencing memory loss. For a long time, we have known that these don’t work well with Indigenous people.

We developed a new one: the Canadian Indigenous Cognitive Assessment (CICA). Right now, we are figuring out how well it works.



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**Health Sciences North Research Institute**  
Institut de recherches d'Horizon Santé-Nord

**CCNA**  
Canadian Consortium on Neurodegeneration in Aging



**CCNV**  
Consortium canadien en neurodégénérescence associée au vieillissement

**CRdNHR**

**Laurentian University**  
Université Laurentienne

Our participants went through the CICA with Karen, Melissa, or Louise. Then Dr. Allaby or Dr. Patterson visited with them to do a fuller assessment of how their memory was working. During the same appointment, Rosanna, a social worker, would go over some mainstream cognitive assessments with them, and Karen or Sharlene would check their vitals. **We are so thankful that Dr. Allaby, Dr. Patterson, and Rosanna traveled from Hamilton Health Sciences and took the time to help us.**

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*"It can be well written [in English], but there's so much behind this. In Anishinaabemwin you get the whole picture. Our language was given to us as one, all one piece."*

*(Isaac Pitawanawkat, July 10, 2017, at the Naandwechige-Gamig Wiikwemkoong Health Centre, teaching us how to share our research findings)*



L-R: Louise Jones, Karen Pitawanakwat, and Melissa Blind plan the coming days in the medicine lodge at the Wiikwemkoong Health Centre.

During this time, we were offered space and support at the Naandwechige-Gamig Wiikwemkoong Health Centre, the Wikwemikong Nursing Home, the Young at Heart Elders' Centre in Aundeck Omni Kaning, the Aundeck Omni Kaning Health Centre, the Sheguiandah Elders' Centre, the Sheguiandah Health Centre, Mnaamodzawin Health Services, and M'Chigeeng Health Services. **Chi-Miigwetch to all of the workers who made this possible for us.**

**We hope that this work will result in a new cognitive assessment that is made available to older Anishinaabe people by their health care providers.**

## Chi-Miigwetch and Baamaapii, Isaac Pitawanakwat

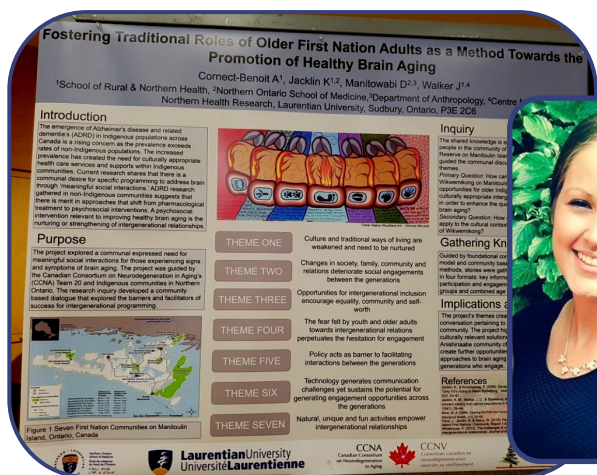


Bonita Bebamash, Melissa Blind, Jean McGregor-Andrews, Evelyn Roy, Ashley Amson, Rose Shawanda, Jennifer Walker, Roseanne Debassige, Isaac Pitawanakwat, Joe Peltier, Roselinda Peltier, and Rhonda Trudeau at South Bay in September 2017.

In April, when we heard that Isaac Pitawanakwat had transitioned to the spirit world, we were in the middle of work that he was a big part of. Isaac was a member of the Anishinaabe Language Expert Advisory. He helped translate and adapt the CICA (described on pages one and two), PIECES of my Relationships (page 4), and influenced many of the directions our research work has taken. His advice, stories, and his teachings will continue to live in our hearts. Baamaapii, Isaac. Chi-Miigwetch for all that you shared with us.



## Where are they now? Reconnecting with our trainees...



Ashley Cornect-Benoit and the poster she presented at the Canadian Conference on Dementia.

You might remember **Ashley Cornect-Benoit (left)** and **Sharlene Webkamigad** from community advisory meetings and their work in community. They were both being supervised and mentored by Dr. Kristen Jacklin through their Master's programs at Laurentian University. We are excited to share that Ashley and Sharlene have both graduated!

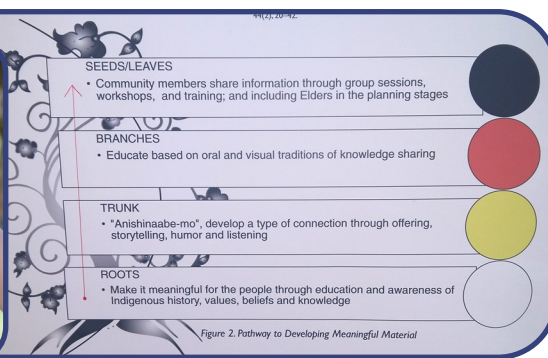
Sharlene started a PhD in Rural and Northern Health at Laurentian in September,

and her thesis will explore dementia in Indigenous communities with Dr. Jennifer Walker providing supervision and Dr. Carrie Bourassa as one of her committee members.

Drs. Walker and Bourassa are CCNA investigators. Sharlene worked at Health Sciences North Research Institute prior to accepting a position with Dr. Jennifer Walker as a Research Associate at Laurentian University. Sharlene has also taken on the role of lead research manager for a grant related to Indigenous healthy life trajectories.

Ashley started her PhD at the University of Calgary in September in Community Health Sciences. Her supervisors, Dr. Lindsay Crowshoe and Dr. David Hogan, are CCNA Investigators, and Ashley feels like working as a trainee with Team 20 helped her find the program and these mentors. She is continuing her intergenerational work in Wiikwemkoong for her PhD thesis, and plans to visit this summer. In her spare time, she supports Aboriginal graduate students through SAGE (Supporting Aboriginal Graduate Enhancement) at the University of Calgary as the current program coordinator, and contributes to various research projects through the Family Medicine and Nursing departments at the university.

Sharlene Webkamigad (left) presented a poster at the Canadian Conference on Dementia. Through this work, she developed a pathway for dementia education with Indigenous caregivers (right).



*My nephew used to live in that little place—it's about to storm you can hear the thunders. He was moving so fast my sister told me. She asked him what he was looking for. He was looking for what he needed. Our mother told us to give him some tobacco. You can also put cedar if you want. My sister helped him. He could hear the thunders ...he went to retrieve a little pie plate and put it on the stove, then matches. He started it on fire. He was smudging. His fear was relieved. (Anishinaabe Language Expert Advisory on how to keep loved ones safe)*

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Words to consider...

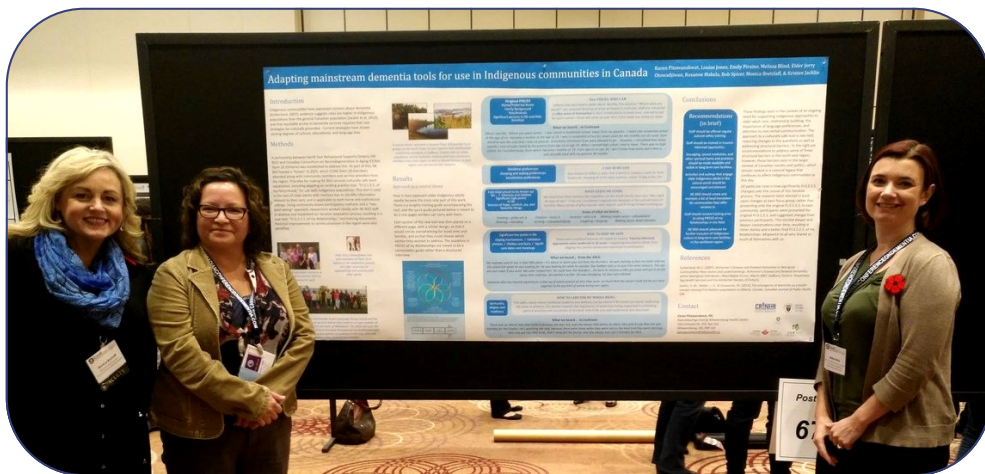
*Nsaaknigewin wii nbwaach'iding*

*– opening the door; a spiritual encounter*



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Karen Pitawanakwat (pictured above, second from left) presented a poster at the 9th annual Canadian Conference on Dementia in Toronto, Ontario in November.

“Adapting mainstream dementia tools for use in Indigenous communities in Canada,” shows how we adapted a tool that North East Behavioural Supports Ontario (NE BSO) uses in practice with older adults for use with older Anishinaabe and Cree adults in the region.

Also pictured are Monica Bretzlaff, manager of NE BSO and Aboriginal Mental Health Services at the North Bay Regional Health Centre (left), and Dr. Melissa Blind (right).



## Next Steps

Karen Pitawanakwat will be co-presenting some of our work at the Indigenous Health Conference in Mississauga in May. Her co-presenter is Emily Piraino, a psychogeriatric resource consultant at North East Behavioural Supports Ontario.

We are also working with the Community Advisory Group on what the next phase of our research with Manitoulin could look like. The Advisory Group has generously taken on the role of Advisory Council and is directing the next phase of funding applications.

Get in touch...

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## Meet Melissa



Dr. Melissa Blind is Cree and Ukrainian from Gordon's First Nation in Saskatchewan. She holds a PhD in American Indian Studies from the University of Arizona and a BA honours and MA in Indigenous Studies through First Nations University of Canada in conjunction with the University of Regina.

Melissa is a Senior Research Associate on the Memory Keepers Medical Discovery Team at the University of Minnesota, Duluth. She has been a part of Team 20 since 2014 and works closely with Kristen and Karen. Melissa's research interests include Indigenous understandings of health and wellbeing, including health disparities, Indigenous understandings of neurological conditions, including dementia and Alzheimer's Disease, issues surrounding identity, and oral narratives.

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