

RWVG ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24

Moving from Intention to Action

Authors: Goji Anandarajah, Karleigh Darnay, Diane Longboat, Sam Karami, Kristen Yee



CAMH LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

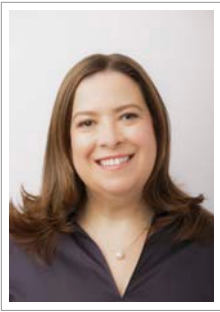
CAMH is situated on lands that have been occupied by First Nations for millennia; lands rich in civilizations with knowledge of medicine, architecture, technology, and extensive trade routes throughout the Americas. In 1860, the site of CAMH appeared in the Colonial Records Office of the British Crown as the council grounds of the Mississaugas of the New Credit, as they were known at the time.

Today, Toronto is covered by the Toronto Purchase, Treaty No. 13 of 1805 with the Mississaugas of the Credit.

Toronto is now home to a vast diversity of First Nations, Inuit and Métis who enrich this city.

CAMH is committed to reconciliation. We will honour the land through programs and places that reflect and respect its heritage. We will embrace the healing traditions of the Ancestors, and weave them into our caring practices. We will create new relationships and partnerships with First Nations, Inuit and Métis and share the land and protect it for future generations.





MESSAGE from LORI SPADORCIA

Senior Vice President, Public Affairs, Partnerships
& Chief Strategy Officer

Congratulations to the Reconciliation Working Group (RWG) as we celebrate their sixth year of incredible hard work at CAMH. It's truly remarkable to witness the growth and profound impact this group has had on our organization.

Over recent years, we've made significant strides in acknowledging the historic and on-going experiences of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis in what is today known as Canada. Launching the CAMH Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan set us on an important journey. I'm also grateful for the annual flag-raising ceremony in honour of National Day for Truth and Reconciliation which anchors us to reflect on our progress. The countless orange shirts during these events reminds me each and every year of the importance of community and fills me with a genuine sense of hope.

Throughout this past year, the RWG put a major focus on delivering tangible results for CAMH, in recognizing the great work right across the organization. I want to take this opportunity to spotlight a few moments that have stood out for me this past year.

The sharing of Youth Wellness Hubs Ontario's (YWHO) Wise Practices in Indigenous Youth Engagement was a highlight. Our goal to "get upstream" starts with young people and I'm truly inspired by this crucial initiative and projects like this that centre the experience and leadership of Indigenous youth.

In a significant event held this September, CAMH's INTREPID Lab led a profound discussion reflecting on

its two-decade journey dedicated to advancing truth and reconciliation. Efforts like this are instrumental in infusing truth and reconciliation principles into every aspect of our work, guiding our mindset and actions toward learning, healing, and equitable treatment for all. The conversation was honest, informative and thought-provoking.

Personally, I had the opportunity to act as sous-chef to Chef Rick Powless as we cooked traditional foods together and conversed about the importance of food to culture, traditions and ultimately in finding community and belonging. We explored the issues of food security and food sovereignty particularly in today's context and as it relates to our health and wellbeing. Across the globe, culinary practices are deeply intertwined with cultural identity, each recipe carrying stories of heritage, belonging and, for many, resilience. Our culinary event was also followed by a larger panel discussion in February 2024 to dive deeper into the issues. I was so inspired by my first experience as a sous-chef that I tried my hand at the recipes at home and to great success!

Huge congratulations to the RWG for their outstanding achievements this year in inspiring and leading truth and reconciliation across the organization. I am looking forward to continuing the important work ahead, reflecting on our progress, anchored in our strategic plan Connected CAMH and filled with hope for the future.



MESSAGE from GOJI ANANDARAJAH

Assistant Manager, Communications and Partnerships, RWG Co-Chair,

KARLEIGH DARNAY

Clinical Practice Lead, Youth Wellness Hubs Ontario, RWG Co-Chair

and

DIANE LONGBOAT

Senior Manager, Strategic Initiatives, Shkaabe Makwa & CAMH Elder,
RWG Elder-Advisor

Our vision for the RWG this year has been “*moving from intention to action*”. Over the last six years, previous work of the RWG has been focused on learning and acknowledgement of the history of harm caused to First Nations, Inuit and Métis, the impact that this harm has had on the wellbeing of these communities and the potential for healing that comes through identity, culture and traditional approaches to healing. We have also deepened our understanding of our joint responsibilities for truth and reconciliation in our professional and personal lives. As we move from intention to action, we shift our focus from learning to taking steps to support truth and reconciliation. From members of the RWG, to our partners, leadership and allies across CAMH - we have been collectively embodying this vision through the planning and delivery of many events and activities.

This year the RWG has been able to lift up and highlight amazing practices of our colleagues and leaders at CAMH. In May 2023, the RWG hosted a book club and facilitated small group discussions about *Decolonizing Trauma Work: Indigenous Stories and Strategies* by Rennie Linklater, Senior Director of Shkaabe Makwa. The book club was followed by a webinar discussion about trauma-informed care for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis individuals and communities with Rennie and facilitated by Dr. Amy Gajaria, Clinician Scientist, Margaret and Wallace McCain Centre for Child, Youth & Family Mental Health, during National Indigenous History Month in June.

More recently, the RWG celebrated how culture has the power to bring together communities and support healing through the first ever collaboration between the RWG and Black History Month Planning Committee for the *Midwinter Storytelling: Food is Medicine, Indigenous & Black Perspectives* event, featuring a panel with Rick Powless, Red Seal Chef, Oneida of the Thames First Nation, Dionne Sinclair, VP Clinical Operations & Chief Nursing Executive and Anita Prasad, Executive Director, Working for Change (Out of This World Café) and facilitated by RWG Co-Chair and Assistant Manager, Communications and Partnerships, Goji Anandarajah. We hope these events inspired you and provided you with information and tools needed to translate practices to support truth and reconciliation into your own work.

On behalf of the RWG, we would like to thank you for joining us each year as we continue to walk along the path of truth and reconciliation at CAMH. We are proud to showcase the work of the RWG and the impact this has had on supporting a culture of learning, healing, and action for truth and reconciliation each day. We hope that you will continue to join us to support this collective vision in the future. As Treaty partners, we also encourage you to sign the [Pledge to Reconciliation](#) to learn, heal, and take action towards reconciliation.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

More than 30 CAMH people from across the hospital make up the RWG membership.

CAMH Reconciliation Working Group 2023-24

Alexia Henriques	Diane Longboat	Karleigh Darnay	Sam Karami
Ashley Cornect-Benoit	Dixie Jackson	Kayan Yassine	Sandy Brooks
Benn Brisland	Eva Katz	Kristen Yee	Sarah Edell
Bharati Singh	Goji Anandarajah	Mahalia Dixon	Susan Anderson
Bobby Bonner	Heather McKee	Margaret McKeeman	Terri Rodak
Carley Lennox	Heidi Maracle	Olivia Keast	Tihana Skoric
Carrol Pearson	Jeff D'Hondt	Paula Broeders	Yara Janes
Cindy Noel	Jenifer Kim	Quinn Kirby	Zac Caldwell
Daphne Horn	Jill Shakespeare	Regina Wasalinska	

To make possible all of the initiatives presented and co-presented by the RWG, the group forms a number of sub-committees each year to accomplish the work (and have a little fun!). This year's sub-committee's included:

- Art Commission
- Book Club
- Communications
- Food is Medicine
- National Indigenous History Month
- Pledge to Reconciliation
- Recognizing the National Day for Truth & Reconciliation / Orange Shirt Day
- Social
- Evaluation

Events & Initiative - Every year, the RWG offers a variety of events and initiatives for staff and patients at CAMH to learn, heal and take action in truth and reconciliation. Almost 900 people participated in RWG live events and initiatives during this past fiscal year.



Staff Engagement with *Decolonizing Trauma Work*

CAMH people have consistently requested the opportunity to participate in spaces where it is possible to speak openly about the impacts of colonization, explore its influence on the health care system and discuss how to center Indigenous and other cultural worldviews of wellbeing.

In May 2023, CAMH people were offered several such opportunities, through engagement with Rennie Linklater's book, *Decolonizing Trauma Work* (Fernwood Publishing, 2014).

May
2023

Book Club: *Decolonizing Trauma Work*

Over 40 CAMH people participated in four meetings co-hosted by the CAMH Mental Health Sciences Library and the RWG.

Jun. 28
2023

Webinar: *Decolonizing Trauma Work*

Rennie Linklater, PhD and Dr. Amy Gajaria shared an intimate and compelling conversation for staff on the themes in *Decolonizing Trauma Work*. Rennie and Amy discussed the challenges with the psychiatric model and its roots in colonization, noting the work being done to bring Indigenous cultural teachings and ceremony into westernized models of health care, and invited everyone present to do their part to create safer spaces for Indigenous clients.

Jul. 12
2023

In July, CAMH people were invited to a gathering to continue to process themes in *Decolonizing Trauma Work* and discuss actions they can take in their own work.

“There are not many spaces at CAMH where we can grapple with the complexities of social justice within a colonial institution.”

– Book club participant

“[The book club] offered us a chance to connect with people at CAMH outside our teams and departments. I haven't experienced interdisciplinary conversation like this before and believe more of it is necessary if we are to transform health care systems.”

– Book club participant

“[I learned that] in order for traditional Indigenous healing practitioners to walk together with Western medicine, we all need to learn more about each approach as well as acknowledge who holds the power and may be acting from a systemic oppression perspective as well as set boundaries to invite a respectful balance.”

– Event participant

For those wishing to read *Decolonizing Trauma Work*, copies are available to everyone at the CAMH Library. The book is available at many other libraries across the province and for purchase too. *Decolonizing Trauma Work* and Jesse Thistle's *From the Ashes* topped the CAMH Mental Health Sciences Library's list of most circulated books in 2023.

NATIONAL INDIGENOUS HISTORY MONTH 2023

Children and Youth were the focus of June's National Indigenous History Month. In 2023, the RWG and the Indigenous Caucus (comprising of First Nations, Inuit and Métis physicians, staff, students and volunteers) offered CAMH people and the public many ways to recognize NIHM. Over 150 people participated in-person at the many events over the month.

Jun. 1
2023

Huddle Prompts

To kick off the month, a series of huddle prompts were shared with CAMH people to promote discussion in teams. Divided into four themes, the huddle prompts invited CAMH people to celebrate First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities and culture, as well as continue our individual and collective conversations about truth and reconciliation.

A sample of shared prompts, which we encourage everyone to reflect on in their own work, include:

- Have you engaged with any media by an Indigenous artist that has stood out to you? What stood out to you?
- Who are First Nations, Inuit and Métis you admire? Why?
- How can we honour and support culture, language and ceremonies as protective factors in healing for First Nations, Inuit and Métis in our work?
- Are there ways in which your team could reflect or engage more deeply in truth and reconciliation? How might you go about it?

Jun. 6
2023

Indigenous Youth Engagement: Sharing Wise Practices

The RWG, the Indigenous Caucus and Youth Wellness Hubs Ontario (YWHO) partnered to host a panel on wise practices in Indigenous youth engagement. Panelists included: Hannah Bull, Youth Advisor, YWHO, Melody Recollect, Youth Advisor, YWHO and Kaitlyn Gilham, Implementation Specialist, YWHO, with a land acknowledgement by Lee Cameron, CH&E Coordinator, YWHO. Panelists shared why Indigenous youth engagement is vital to program success, sharing the five guiding principles of respect, reciprocity, relevance, responsibility and relationality.

Virtual Panel: Indigenous Youth Engagement - Sharing Youth Perspectives on Wise Practices

A panel discussion in partnership with youth, the CAMH Indigenous Caucus, Shkaabe Makwa, the Reconciliation Working Group, and Youth Wellness Hubs Ontario

June 6, 2023 | 12:00 - 1:00 p.m. ET



"I will definitely change my practice within the next six months based on what I learned today!"

– Event participant

Jun.
2023

Out of this World Café Special Menu

The RWG partnered with Out of this World Café to feature a special menu throughout NIHM that included buffalo chili, bannock and wild rice salad. Teachings around the significance of these foods were shared alongside the meal. Food has always proven to be a great conduit of understanding other cultures, and it embodies centuries of ancestral wisdom, spiritual connections to the land, and communal traditions, recognizing identity.

Jun. 9
2023

Education Achieve Award

A highlight for the RWG in June was recognition from CAMH people for the RWG's role in supporting innovative and collaborative education initiatives at CAMH as a recipient of the 2023 Education Achieve Award.



Every Chair and Co-Chair brings a different energy and style of leadership to the RWG. The gift for me today is the knowledge that each of the RWG members carry a piece of the medicine of compassion for this work. Together we co-create a new reality culture of kindness, generosity and peace. – Diane Longboat



Jun. 22
2023

Drum Teachings Workshop

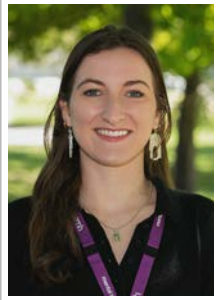
This very special workshop presented CAMH clients, staff, and the wider community the opportunity to learn about how the drum can help promote healing and instill a sense of pride and belonging in those who embrace it. The workshop was led by Steve Teekens, drummer, singer and Grass Dancer from Nipissing First Nation. Ashley Kagige, Clerk, Shkaabe Makwa, opened the event, and Regina Wasalinska, Recreation Therapist, Crisis Critical Care, gave a land acknowledgement.

“This was a great event, I have never experienced anything like this in my time at CAMH. I found the event so healing and hope you guys offer more opportunities like this.” – **CAMH client**

“The drum workshop was so empowering!” – **CAMH client**



Faces of CAMH



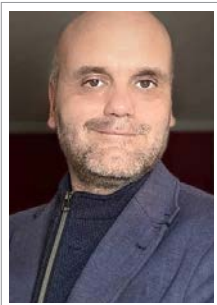
Kaitlyn Gilham

"This month is a great opportunity to reflect on the privileges, power, and influence that we hold, not just as individuals, but also in our roles working in healthcare. It is important to ask ourselves hard questions like: who are we missing at the table when we make decisions? Are our spaces and opportunities at CAMH accessible and youth-friendly? Are we valuing lived experience in a real way? [...] National Indigenous History Month is a fantastic time for celebration and learning, but also a great chance to reflect on our work thus far."



Walter Lindstone

"One of the biggest teachings I have received from children is both patience and unconditional love. These are two very high qualities to have in life and having children gives you that foundation to raise them in a healthy manner. I grew up in a family that dealt with poverty, addictions and mental health issues. Because of my background in Social Work, I can empathize with youth who are struggling, and I enjoy sharing stories of my own hurdles with hope that it reaches them to achieve their goals and focus on the bigger picture."



Jeff D'Hondt

"It is wise to develop partnerships with Indigenous-led organizations serving youth. Engagement with children and youth themselves is also key to gaining a better sense of their hopes and needs. Most importantly, I recommend ensuring that joy is part of youth programs, services and policies. First Nation, Inuit and Métis children and youth can face extreme challenges for reasons all too often seen in the media or recounted during clinical sessions. So much good can happen when the young can dance, celebrate, feast and play. Those gifts are too often stripped away. It's important to protect them. Smiles and laughter are medicine."

National Day for Truth and Reconciliation / Orange Shirt Day

Over the month of September, CAMH people participated in a number of events and initiatives to support their personal and professional learning, healing and action towards Truth and Reconciliation. Almost 500 people participated in live events this month.

Sept. 6
2023

CAMH Pow Wow

RWG members supported Shkaabe Makwa in delivering CAMH's second ever Pow Wow. The Pow Wow was a celebration, fostering cultural pride, intergenerational connections and preservation of traditions that honour and strengthen community bonds. It was a meaningful event to celebrate First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities and culture on the grounds CAMH now occupies, as well as to create an opportunity for the RWG, CAMH and the wider community to gather in person, the first time for many since the start of the pandemic.



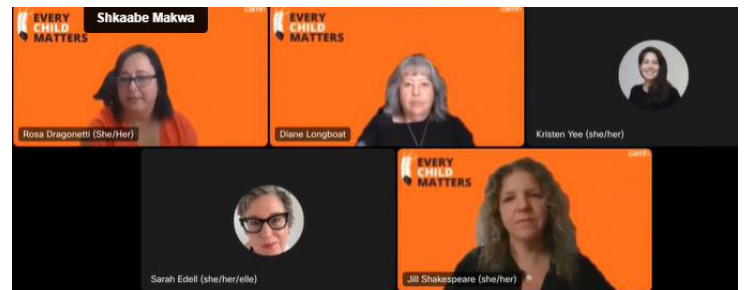
Sept. 27
2023

Truth & Reconciliation Wise Practices INTREPID LAB

Jill Shakespeare, former Senior Director, Provincial Systems Support Program and Rosa Dragonetti, former Project Director, INTREPID Lab came together for a discussion about how the INTREPID Lab at CAMH has advanced truth and reconciliation work over the past twenty years. Diane Longboat shared an opening prayer. Rosa shared an introduction to INTREPID Lab, what the work has meant to her, and what lessons she has learned over time that may help other CAMH people on their own journeys. We want to thank the INTREPID Lab again for all your important work.

“I have been deeply inspired by today’s event and the people doing great work towards reconciliation. Relational accountability begins with knowing who we are, what ground is under our feet, our own history and how we are connected, and knowing truth, speaking truth, and being in good relationship.”

– Event participant



Faces of CAMH

Oct. 2
2023

Shkaabe Makwa Leadership

“At Shkaabe Makwa specifically, we work as a team to ground our research, evaluation, training and provincial health systems work in Indigenous knowledge and teachings, and by doing so, we are helping to amplify Indigenous ways of knowing and doing within hospital systems. There are systemic issues that have directly impacted Indigenous Peoples and communities seeking supports for mental health and substance use concerns and our team is advocating for change every day.”



National Day for Truth and Reconciliation / Orange Shirt Day – CAMH recognized National Day for Truth and Reconciliation and Orange Shirt Day on September 30 in a variety of ways across its community.



Every Child Matters Flag Raising Ceremony in TD Commons



Education and promotional items given out in lobbies across CAMH



Every Child Matters Flag Lowering Ceremony



[CAMH Mental Health Sciences Collection Spotlight on Truth and Reconciliation](#)



Out of This World Café Special Menu offered, including a new permanent menu item, Ziiibiins Nibi Cedar Wildberry Chai Infused Alkaline Water, available at Out of This World Café Queen Street Location

Treaties Recognition Week 2023 / Food is Medicine

Treaties Recognition Week came into being in 2016 after legislation was passed in Ontario to honour the importance of Treaties and to help those in the province learn more about Treaty rights and relationships.



“I didn't know a lot of this knowledge and this quiz was very educational. Thank you!”
– **Quiz participant**

CAMH people were invited to test their knowledge of treaties and treaty rights by participating in a quiz organized by members of the RWG. Some important facts shared in the quiz:

- Indigenous Peoples in what is now called Canada have been making treaties and agreements since time immemorial;
- Toronto is covered by the Toronto Purchase, Treaty No. 13 of 1805 with the Mississaugas of the New Credit, as known at the time; and,
- Today, there are 133 First Nations in Ontario with a complex matrix of Treaty obligations involving federal and provincial statutory division of power, inherent jurisdiction of First Nations and constitutionally protected Treaty rights.

Feb. 5
2024

Midwinter Storytelling: Food is Medicine, Indigenous and Black Perspectives

Moderated by Goji Anandarajah, Chef Rick Powless, Dionne Sinclair and Anita Prasad shared in a panel conversation on the importance of food in various Indigenous and Black communities not only for the body, but also for one's mind and spirit. The concept of food is medicine invited the audience to consider various ways in which food can be protective and healing by nourishing our connections to identity, culture and community. The efforts of Out of This World Café were highlighted, as they have sought to showcase foods from Black and Indigenous communities. After the event, attendees were gifted with an Indigenous and Indigenous-inspired recipe booklet curated by Chef Rick Powless and Diane Longboat as well as boxed lunches containing delicious Indigenous and Caribbean foods.



“[[It was a reminder for me] about how food can have a significant impact for a patient while in hospital... especially food that is familiar. [I was glad to learn] that CAMH has Indigenous meals available for inpatients”
– **Event participant**



CLOSING MESSAGE



As CAMH advances on its journey of truth and reconciliation, the RWG eagerly anticipates embracing new challenges and opportunities ahead with determination. Our focus remains promoting learning, healing, and action. We are committed to healing through our actions and in our work, guided by truth and reconciliation principles, integral to our new strategic plan, Connected CAMH.

Aligned with the Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan 2021-2024, significant progress has been made across its 14 elements. CAMH has expanded healing programs for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities, and heightened the visibility of truth and reconciliation, promoting cultural humility among other initiatives. [Learn more about the outcomes of the Action Plan here.](#)

As the current action plan concludes, CAMH reaffirms its steadfast commitment to truth and reconciliation. The new Connected CAMH strategic plan embeds truth and reconciliation as central to health, aiming to deepen Indigenous cultural safety, humility, and anti-racism training in healthcare.

Initiatives include exploring a province-wide Anti-Racism Secretariat and Ombudsperson, reviewing CAMH policies comprehensively, and expanding culturally responsive healing programs.

These efforts are supported by the RWG and signal an exciting evolution towards a healthcare system that embodies health justice for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis patients, families, and communities.

We take great pride in the RWG's achievements and the collective dedication to truth and reconciliation at CAMH. As we look ahead, we see abundant opportunities and seek your continued support for our ongoing efforts. Remember, Truth and Reconciliation is Health!

About the Artist: **Lisa Boivin**



Lisa Boivin is a member of the Deninu Kue First Nation in the Northwest Territories. She is an interdisciplinary artist, bioethicist and a healthcare educator. Lisa was the first Indigenous PhD candidate at the Rehabilitation Sciences Institute at the University of Toronto, Temerty Faculty of Medicine. Lisa wrote and painted an arts-based thesis on Indigenous perspectives of wellness and the disabling effects of colonialism. Lisa strives to humanize clinical medicine as she situates her arts-based practice in the Indigenous continuum of passing knowledge through images.

