

AHRN-NT NEWS

ISSUE 4

SPRING 2009

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IN BRIEF:

In this issue, we welcome Denise Kurszewski, our new Director of Research Development to the AHRN-NT family. We also review the many new projects and research initiatives that have commenced over the last several months, all of which are currently highlighted on our new dynamic website. Needless to say, it's been a busy but incredibly fruitful period and we want to thank all our family and friends over the years for their generous support, without which we would not have gotten this far. Cheers!

- Editors



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Climate and Health in Aklavik

Adaptation to environmental adversity is not a new challenge for the residents of Aklavik. Fifty years ago, the community was considered unfit for occupancy due to its tenuous position in the Mackenzie Delta and repeated flooding. Residents were encouraged to move to the newly created community of Inuvik, but a number of residents chose to ignore the recommendations. Thus Aklavik's motto of "Never say die" was born, with the community's determination to respond to the environment around them and keep the community strong.

Global climate change represents yet another challenge faced by the community. However, the youth of Aklavik will also go global and meet the challenge with technological and methodological tools provided through the AHRN-NT coordinated "Climate as Health Determinant in Aklavik" research project. Supported by the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch of Health Canada, this new project will build on participatory methodologies that have previously been piloted at the local Moose Kerr High School through the Aklavik Dietary Choices Project.



Aklavik

As with Dietary Choices, youth will produce a short documentary for community viewing. Findings will also be shared with the research community via conference presentations and publications in public health or circumpolar journals.

For more information, contact Denise Kurszewski at denise.kurszewski@arctichealth-nt.ca.

The International Congress on Circumpolar Health is Coming!

AHRN-NT has been buzzing with activity as Yellowknife gets set to host the 14th International Congress for Circumpolar Health for the first time in 35 years. The July gathering will bring together over 700 scientists, health care professionals, policy analysts, government agencies, and community leaders from the circumpolar region, and will be one of the biggest events for the city this year.

As the secretariat for this year's Congress, AHRN-NT is organizing and coordinating all aspects of congress planning from arranging accommoda-

tions and exhibitors' areas to processing registrations and seeking sponsorships. In February, the scientific committee met in Yellowknife to review abstracts for the scientific programme. The number of submissions has already reached a near record, and efforts are underway to ensure all theme areas are adequately represented.

For more information, visit the ICCH14 website at: www.icch2009.com or contact Pat Thagard, the Congress Coordinator, at icch14@theedge.ca.



www.icch2009.com

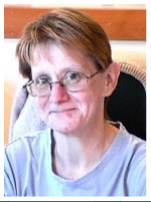
STAFF PORTRAITS



Susan Chatwood
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Director



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Director of
Research
Development



Virginia Cayen
Financial
Administrator



Pat Thagard
ICCH Congress
Coordinator



Debbie Russell
HPV Project
Coordinator



Rajiv Rawat
Technology
Coordinator



Lois Edge
Media Project
Consultant

PROJECT UPDATES

NWT HPV Prevalence Study

In partnership with the Public Health Agency of Canada, the Government of the Northwest Territories Department of Health and Social Services, and McGill University, AHRN-NT is facilitating the NWT HPV Study to determine the presence of the Human Papillomavirus infections in NWT women.

The study will piggyback off existing health infrastructure in selected NWT communities. Nurses, midwives, and doctors will ask women to participate by signing a consent form, completing a questionnaire, and having a Pap test.

The information collected will later be used to develop effective cancer screening and prevention

programs for NWT women, in addition to determining the impacts of social, demographic, and behavioural factors on HPV infection. Data collection will run through November 2009.

Debbie Russell is the project coordinator and can be reached at debbie.russell@arctichealth-nt.ca.

Arthritis & Chronic Conditions Study

A broad-based partnership with the Council of Yukon First Nations, Dene Nation, and academic researchers from the Universities of Toronto and Manitoba will study the prevalence,

impacts, and determinants of arthritis and other chronic conditions in First Nations in the Yukon, Northwest Territories and Canada. Currently, there is little information about emerging chronic

diseases among northern First Nations populations. The epidemiological findings from this project will contribute to the understanding of these diseases in their northern context.

Secretariat for SERNNNoCa

In late 2008, AHRN-NT proudly became the NWT network partner for the Social Economy Research Network of Northern Canada (SERNNNoCa). The Yukon College-led initiative is in fact the first time the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada has provided

funding directly to the North through northern colleges and partners and given recognition to having the research driven from the North.

In the next few months, AHRN-NT's Stephanie Fox will be compiling an inventory of social economy groups, networks, and institutions.

This will eventually provide the basis for developing broad community research partnerships directed at the specific needs of northern social economy organizations.

For more information, contact Stephanie Fox at sernnoca@arctichealth-nt.ca.

Pan-Northern Ethics Initiative

A pan-northern research ethics workshop including representatives from Yukon, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Nunavik, and Labrador was successfully held in Iqaluit from January 13-14, 2009.

The group will develop guidelines and promote best practices for ethical review of health research projects in the North. Initiatives include an evaluation of ethics review boards in the northern territories, recommendations for

best practices and the development of tools for community engagement in the ethic review process. The project is being coordinated by Denise Kurszewski who can be contacted at denise.kurszewski@arctichealth-nt.ca.

Membership in IACHP

Recently, AHRN-NT became a member of the International Association of Circumpolar Health Publishers (IACHP). The association publishes the *International Journal of Circumpolar Health*

and journal supplements which specialize in Arctic and Antarctic health issues. AHRN-NT will assist with the promotion of this avenue

for the dissemination of research findings and health information from the Canadian North. The journal and association website can be reached at www.ijch.fi.

UPCOMING

Network of Centres of Excellence?



Current AHRN-NT Office

In partnership with northern stakeholders and organizations, as well as our academic partners, AHRN-NT recently supported across the North a letter of intent for a Network of Centres of Excellence (NCE). NCEs aim to “bring together partners from the academic, industry, public, and non-profit sectors to conduct leading edge research and knowledge transfer activities in areas of strategic growth and opportunity for Canada.” As no NCE has ever existed in any of the territories, the creation of one across the North would expand northern research and higher education capacity immensely while providing a multitude of ancillary benefits. If the letter of intent is accepted, northern stakeholders will partake in the preparation of a full proposal.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Introducing Our New Website

AHRN-NT has developed a dynamic, content rich website to highlight its work and serve the needs of health researchers in the NWT. Alongside information on AHRN-NT’s projects, the website also features research updates, funding and job opportunities, and informative news items culled from various sources.

As an extension of our multimedia efforts, project consultant Lois Edge and technology coordinator Rajiv Rawat are also collaborating in producing health information podcasts for the AHRN-NT website. This will involve developing clips for free distribution to community radio as well as arranging broadcast-quality interviews with health researchers during ICCHI4. Incidentally, both the AHRN-NT and ICCHI4 websites have been built using open source software and hosted by a green hosting services provider.

For more information on our web development, or to share ideas, contact Rajiv Rawat at rajiv.rawat@arctichealth-nt.ca.

2009 Scholarships

For the third consecutive year, AHRN-NT is offering two scholarships of \$10,000 each to NWT residents who are registered in a Masters or PhD programme. The application deadline has been extended to **March 31, 2009**.

Entitled, “Awards for Students in Northern Health and Wellness Research,” the scholarships are aimed to encourage northerners to undertake research that will contribute to the knowledge and understanding of health and wellness issues broadly conceived to also include the natural, physical, and social sciences and humanities.

This award is made possible through the generous support of the CIHR Team in Circumpolar Chronic Disease Prevention. The application form can be downloaded from our website, www.arctichealth-nt.ca or by contacting Virginia Cayen at virginia.cayen@arctichealth-nt.ca.



INUIT HEALTH SURVEY

In addition to serving on the steering committee for the Inuvialuit section of the Inuit Health Survey, Susan boarded the Amundsen in August to participate directly in the survey. She also celebrated her birthday on the research vessel!



AHRN-NT BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Pictured in the fall when the board met to review the year’s progress and upcoming projects. From the top-left, Julie Lys (Ft. Smith), Billy Archie (Aklavik), Robert Buckle (Aklavik), Susan Chatwood (Director), Stephanie Irlbacher-Fox (Yellowknife), and Sandra Lockhart (Yellowknife). Seated are Helen Gruben (Tuktoyaktuk) and Maria Santos (Yellowknife).

NEW STAFF

Denise Kurszewski

Director of Research Development

Denise is Gwich’in, born and raised in the Mackenzie Delta. She holds a masters of education degree and has recently worked with the Gwich’in Tribal Council in Inuvik as Wellness Director. She will maintain a research office in Inuvik and will assist with projects currently underway in Aklavik and will coordinate NWT involvement in the pan-northern research ethics project. She looks forward to working with partners and communities in NWT and facilitating research opportunities. Welcome to the AHRN family Denise!

PEOPLE NEWS

CONFERENCES

Arctic Change, December 2008

Susan Chatwood and research affiliates Bree Denning (Queens) and Karolina Machalek (Toronto) attended and presented at the Arctic Change Conference in Quebec City. Hosted by the ArcticNet Network of Centres of Excellence of Canada at Laval University, the conference was the "largest trans-sectoral international Arctic research conference ever held in Canada." Bree and Karolina presented their masters' research projects with AHRN-NT (see below) and Susan presented on the Aklavik Dietary Choices project. The NWT HPV Project was also presented by our research partners.

Aboriginal Policy Research Conference, March 2009

Velma Illasiak, Denise Kurszewski, and Bonnie Koe of Aklavik will be presenting on the Aklavik Dietary Choices Project at the Aboriginal Policy Research Conference in Ottawa. The conference brings hundreds of researchers, students, policy makers, Aboriginal leaders, and other parties together to "present, consider, and debate exciting new research" and their implications for policies affecting Aboriginal peoples.

RESEARCHERS' CORNER

Bree Denning (Queens)



Bree graduated with honours from Queen's University in 2006 and moved to Yellowknife in May 2008 to complete her master's degree in epidemiology under the joint supervision of Queen's University and the AHRN-NT.

Her work focuses on place of birth and health outcomes for childbirth in the Northwest Territories. She also volunteers with various community service organizations in Yellowknife.

Karolina Machalek (Toronto)

Karolina is pursuing an MPH at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health, University of Toronto. Her work with AHRN-NT focuses on the development of a perinatal surveillance system for the NWT. Through the summer and fall of 2008, she coordinated a series of multi-stakeholder discussions with the Fort Smith Health and Social Services Authority Midwifery Program around the optimal database design for such a system. As no surveillance system had yet been developed for the NWT, Karolina's work was much appreciated.



AWARDEE UPDATES

Winners of the Northern Health & Wellness Research Award

2008 - Erin Freeland Ballantyne (Oxford)



Erin Freeland Ballantyne is a PhD student in geography and environment at Oxford University. Her research focus is on the interactions between youth and elders with respect to understanding environmental and community health. Born and raised in the NWT, she is the NWT's first recipient of the prestigious Rhodes Scholarship. Erin is working on researcher training, video production, and youth activities in the community of Fort Good Hope.

2007 - Alana Kronstal (Victoria)

Alana Kronstal was born and raised in Yellowknife. Trained as a health educator, Alana is completing a master's degree in the "Studies in Policy and Practice in Health and Social Services" at the University of Victoria. Her IPY research is looking at the impacts of rapid industrial development on population health in the Mackenzie-Delta region of the NWT.



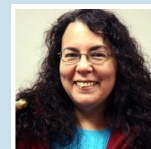
ADVISOR NEWS

Dr. André Corriveau

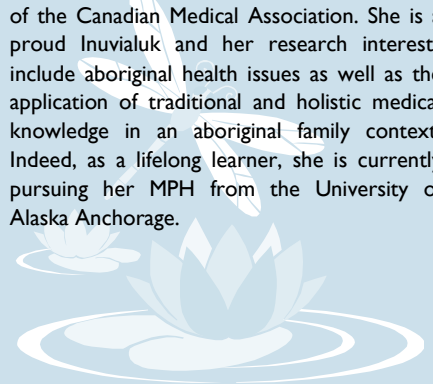
In January, our dear friend and advisor, **André Corriveau, MD, MBA, FRCPC**, was appointed to the position of chief medical officer of Alberta. The job brings enormous challenges with the province's growing population and health needs, but André's already considerable experience (seven years in Nunavik and fifteen years in NWT, including ten as chief medical officer) will serve him well. He will continue chairing the *International Congress on Circumpolar Health's* steering committee but will be relocating soon. Thanks for everything André, you'll be sorely missed!



NWT NEWS



AHRN-NT congratulates **Cindy Orlaw, MD**, who will assume André's position as the chief medical officer of NWT. Cindy has roots in Aklavik, grew up in Inuvik, and graduated from medical school in BC before returning to the NWT to become the first aboriginal woman president of a chapter of the Canadian Medical Association. She is a proud Inuvialuk and her research interests include aboriginal health issues as well as the application of traditional and holistic medical knowledge in an aboriginal family context. Indeed, as a lifelong learner, she is currently pursuing her MPH from the University of Alaska Anchorage.



About the Arctic Health Research Network-NT

AHRN was founded in 2005 by Northern community members, clinicians, academics, and scientists who believed that advancing the health and wellness of Northern people and communities was an important area of scientific inquiry and public policy. With three networks covering Canada's three northern territories, AHRN-NT focuses specifically on bringing people, facilities, and resources to bear on health-related research in the Northwest Territories, as well as on raising health and wellness issues throughout the region's communities.

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