

Julian-Rikihana, Ashley

Ashley Julian-Rikihana

PhD Student in Educational Studies
Faculty of Education, Acadia University

Summary Report for National Gathering of Graduate Students 2022
June 14-16, 2022; Dakota Dunes Resort, SK

“Understanding together, healing together: Mi’kmaq language revitalization as a tool for community mental health and well-being.”

<https://research-groups.usask.ca/neihrcoordcentre/events/indigenous-health-gathering.php#ShuttleBusScheduleTaxiandRentalCars>

Description of the conference/training event:

The 2022 National Gathering of Graduate Students (NGGS) was co-hosted by the NEIHR (Network Environments for Indigenous Health Research) National Coordinating Centre with support from the Saskatchewan NEIHR and the Indigenous and Mentorship Network Programs (IMNPs). This was the first in-person gathering of Indigenous graduate students since 2018. The gathering was hosted on the territory of the Whitecap Dakota First Nation, Treaty 6 Territory and homeland of the Métis.

In addition to this graduate gathering, the Witaya were in attendance. A gathering of Two-Spirit and IndigiQueer community members from Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Alberta.

The purpose of this conferences was to create connections, build networks, strengthen research opportunities, provide mentorship, and to further celebrate student successes.

Relevance of the conference/training to the research area:

As a first year PhD student, this conference was a great space to present an introduction to my research on language revitalization in relation to mental health and well-being among other graduate students. Part of the requirements within the Nova Scotia Inter-University Doctoral Program in Educational Studies is to complete a comprehensive scholarly portfolio, and through my presentation I was able to achieve an artifact towards demonstrating in-depth knowledge on my research topic. My proposed work, titled *Understanding together, healing together* encompasses families, parents, and guardians who are facing the effects of intergenerational trauma leading to language loss, trauma in relation to language learning, and displacement from culture. The urgency for families to reclaim their mother tongue language, to reclaim identity, and to pass on culture and language to children is prominent in the face of linguicide.

The relevance of this conference allowed me to hear relatable research topics to my own, including for example: Indigenous languages and wellness: Journey towards combining methodologies, and Mapping Anishinaabe Kendaaaswin: Land, truth, and treaties through oral history.

Realized/expected outcomes of attending the conference/training event:

The 2022 National Gathering of Graduate Students conference allowed me to step into the research field with unpolished research, at the beginning phases of my doctoral research. I felt the support of fellow Indigenous graduate students and was able to witness their sophisticated presentations as well.

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This experience is the steppingstone towards the future of my research by being involved in conferences. It was important for me to network with other Indigenous graduate students and to broaden my knowledge on the foundation behind the Atlantic Indigenous Mentorship Network, gaining friendships and colleagues along the way.

I attended sessions in a wide range of research areas. A few examples of sessions I attended include:

- Opikināwāsonwin/Raising our children well: Indigenous culture and the child welfare system in Saskatchewan (Jillian Senécal, Masters 2022).
- Not just surviving: Assessing impacts of Indian Day Schools on health & well-being (Wahéshon Whitebean, PhD 2022), and
- Indigenous languages and wellness: A journey towards combining methodologies (Brandi Berry, Masters 2022).

Next steps:

1. Active participation in the 2022 Indigenous Mental Health Impact Studentship (MITACS and MHRC). Through this studentship, I anticipate gaining in-depth knowledge on how mental health and wellness is impacted through accessing linguistic resurgence, revitalization, and reclamation efforts within my community of Sipekne'katik First Nation.
2. Begin gathering and narrating 10-15 artifacts to complete the required research/scholarly academic portfolio.