

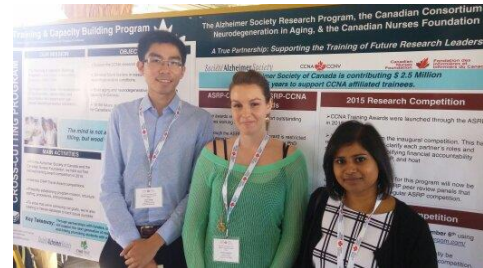
# THE SYNAPSE



THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER CONNECTING TRAINEES ACROSS THE CCNA

Welcome to the inaugural issue of THE SYNAPSE

The Newsletter *For and About* CCNA Trainees



Each quarter, the *Synapse* will share a trainee profile, news, upcoming events, and programming.

In this issue, a profile of CCNA Team 20 trainee Sharlene Webkamigad, results from the 2015 Trainee Survey, upcoming events, and a T&CB programming announcement.

## CCNA TRAINEE PROFILE

**Sharlene Webkamigad:**

**Bringing her experience and cultural knowledge to CCNA Team 20**



Sharlene Webkamigad has had an interest in health promotion and disease prevention since the age of 17.

Looking through the lens of Aboriginal health and wellness, Sharlene is now in the final year of a 2-year Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Health at Laurentian University (Sudbury, Ontario), where she is completing project work with CCNA’s Team 20: Indigenous stream that will contribute to an understanding of how best to communicate information about dementia to Indigenous people.

Growing up in Wiikwemikoong Unceded Territory on Manitoulin Island gave Sharlene valuable insight into the existing gaps in the health care available to Indigenous people and communities, both on- and off-reserve. Inspiration came after a 6-week health promotion summer school for high school students at the University of Toronto, where Sharlene had an opportunity to learn about different types of careers in this research area.

Sharlene went on to complete a Bachelor of Science in Nursing, a degree that has allowed her to work with Aboriginal communities on health promotion materials related to Alzheimer’s disease and other types of dementia.

Before joining the CCNA as a trainee, Sharlene worked closely with Aboriginal communities as a Registered Nurse in maternal health and diabetes care. She also helped develop Indigenous-based awareness materials on breast and prostate cancer.

### CCNA Team 20: Indigenous stream

CCNA Team 20 addresses issues in rural and [Indigenous dementia care](#). For her CCNA project, Sharlene is using a community-based participatory action research approach and decolonizing methodologies to look at how to create health promotion materials for older Aboriginal adults in the City of Greater Sudbury, Ontario. Part of her work with Team 20 has been to use an Indigenous perspective to, in Sharlene's words, "peel away at the layers of Western knowledge" by asking community members, "what is the most appropriate way" to communicate health information about Alzheimer's disease and other dementias?

Based on previous work done by Dr. Kristen Jacklin – CCNA Team 20 Co-Lead and Sharlene's supervisor – the project conducted focus groups and interviews with adults over 55 years of age, as well as care partners of people with dementia to evaluate two documents developed in the first year of the project, *Early Warning Signs and Symptoms of Dementia: A First Nations Guide* and *What is Dementia: Cultural Understandings*.

Sharlene's role has been to work on refining these materials by asking community members about their preferences regarding how dementia health information should be delivered and how health providers can help them better understand this material. Sharlene is now in the process of analyzing the data collected. Themes have begun to emerge that point to how dementia health information can be made more relevant for Indigenous people. Some of these findings will be presented at the [2016 Alzheimer's Association International Conference \(AAIC\)](#) in Toronto, ON, July 24-28.

Sharlene will be presenting her poster at AAIC on Tuesday, July 26 at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre.



As a CCNA trainee, Sharlene has had the opportunity to work with a highly interdisciplinary and collaborative team. At every stage in her project, she has consulted with people with different experiences and diverse backgrounds. When asked about her experience as a trainee, Sharlene talks about the benefits of being part of the larger CCNA community. Her first experience of this came when she attended CCNA Science Day last year in Ottawa. This was the first time she was able to meet in-person with some of her Team 20 colleagues from Saskatchewan, including Team 20: Indigenous stream Co-Lead Dr. Carrie Bourassa, and network with fellow CCNA trainees.

Sharlene has brought a wide and varied skill set to CCNA Team 20, talent that was recognized when Sharlene was awarded an [ASRP-CCNA Research Award](#) in 2015. When asked about what impact this award will have on her future career plans, Sharlene was quick to point out that the ASRP-CCNA Research Award has allowed her to focus on her program and develop relationships within the Aboriginal community, the research community, and with international partners. It has also provided her with opportunities to develop skills as a researcher and presenter.

When asked to share some of her accomplishments, Sharlene highlights presenting a paper at the 2015 International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics (IAGG) conference in Chiang Mai, Thailand. This was an opportunity for her to network with international partners in dementia care and research, including teams

from Australia, New Zealand, and the U.S. Sharlene looks forward to meeting them again at the AAIC conference in Toronto.

CCNA Team 20 has produced a newsletter "Issues in Dementia Care for Indigenous Populations" featuring a few of Sharlene's accomplishments in the [Spring Issue](#).

## RESULTS OF THE 2015 TRAINEE SURVEY

### CCNA TRAINEES AT A GLANCE

TOTAL TRAINEES: 49

❖ By Degree:

Masters: 13

PhD: 16

Postdoctoral: 17

Note: Data available for 46 trainees

❖ By Province:

ON: 21

QC: 18

AB: 5

BC: 3

NS: 1

Note: Data available for 48 trainees

We'd like to thank all trainees who responded to the online needs assessment survey last October 2015.

The survey was designed to obtain the trainee perspective on a variety of issues such as what educational topics you would like to see the Training & Capacity Building (T&CB) Program develop, how programming should be delivered (i.e., online vs. in-person), involvement trainees would like to have in the operations of the CCNA, and how you would like the T&CB Program to communicate with you (Email, newsletter, in-person). The survey consisted of 10 questions with both Yes/No and open-ended responses. Seventeen trainees (13 English and 4 French) responded. This article highlights some of the results obtained and outlines some of the ways we are responding to the feedback received.

When asked if the T&CB Program should offer learning opportunities on neurodegenerative conditions (including contact with those living with these conditions) and/or research methodology related to neurodegenerative conditions 16 of 17 trainees responded 'Yes.' In a follow-up query asking respondents to specify what type of opportunities they would like, 12 free-text responses were received. Disease-specific material, study methods, and meeting those living with neurodegenerative conditions were

all mentioned. A number of trainees also noted a desire to be linked to other trainees and to be exposed to interdisciplinary learning opportunities. Trainees indicated they would prefer learning opportunities to be delivered online, at a summer school, or at CCNA meetings. There is a clear preference for opportunities where trainees can connect and network with investigators and other trainees.

Thirteen respondents felt the T&CB Program should offer professional enrichment learning experiences (e.g., overview of the job market and potential careers, networking opportunities, how to succinctly pitch yourself, contract negotiation, or soft skills development). Five mentioned wanting information on both academic and industry career opportunities while 5 said they would like networking opportunities.

When asked how they would like these opportunities delivered, both online (7 respondents) and in-person sessions (8 respondents) were noted with many trainees suggesting a mix. In-person sessions might offer advantages in facilitating networking opportunities.

Nine out of 16 trainees indicated that trainees should be involved in planning CCNA meetings. When asked about setting up a trainee society 12 of 17 trainees indicated they would like to see a trainee society organized.

## How T&CB Is Responding to Trainee Feedback



### Trainee Participation on the CCNA Conference Program Planning Committee (CPPC)

A trainee representative (with alternative) has joined the CCNA Conference Program Planning Committee (CPPC). Claire Godard-Sebillotte was selected as your representative and Lindsay Wallace as the alternative. Claire and Lindsay have contributed to the planning of this year's program by being actively involved in the monthly teleconference calls of the CPPC. Claire and Lindsay would like to hear from other CCNA trainees, so please feel free to contact them with your input for the T&CB Program.

### Trainee Society

Because of the positive feedback for the creation of a trainee society, we will be consulting further with trainees about establishing a CCNA trainee society and what role a trainee society should play in the CCNA. Any society that is established will be organized by and for CCNA trainees with funding support from the CCNA T&CB Program.

### Interdisciplinary Research Project (IRP)

Responding to trainee interest in interdisciplinary learning opportunities, the T&CB Program will pilot an interdisciplinary research project (IRP). A small number of trainees will be selected via a competitive process to work with a mentor on a project that will focus on building interdisciplinary skills. Once trainees are selected, they will have an opportunity to meet with other trainees enrolled in the project and their mentor at an in-person meeting that will take place at the 2016 CCNA Science Day and Partners Forum in Vancouver, October 5-7. We look forward to providing trainees more information about this exciting opportunity soon.

### Professional Development Opportunities

This year, T&CB will be creating two online professional development modules, one focusing on how to craft your research message and another on how to deal with the media. Both will be available to trainees later this year. We will also offer two in-person professional development sessions at the CCNA Science Day and Partners Forum this year for those who can attend. The sessions will be on *Effective Networking* and *Non-Academic Careers*.

### Travel Funds

The CIHR Institute of Aging and Institute of Neurosciences, Mental Health and Addiction have partnered this year to provide a limited number of competitive CIHR-CCNA Travel Awards for CCNA trainees to attend the 2016 Science Day and Partners Forum. The deadline for applications is **Thursday, July 21<sup>st</sup>**. For more information and to apply, please visit [Trainee News](#) on the CCNA website.

*\*The CCNA would like to acknowledge our funding partners for the 2016 CIHR-CCNA Travel Awards, the Institute of Aging and the Institute of Neuroscience, Mental Health and Addiction of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research.*

## UPCOMING IN T&CB

Stay tuned for more information on an opportunity to receive one-on-one mentoring from a CCNA Investigator while working on an interdisciplinary research project with other CCNA trainees. Trainees will meet with the mentor in Vancouver at the CCNA Science Day and Partners Forum, October 5-7.



## DATES TO REMEMBER

**July 24 - 28** – [2016 Alzheimer's Association International Conference](#), Toronto, ON

**October 5 - 7** – [2016 CCNA Science Day and Partners Forum](#), Vancouver, BC

## T&CB AT AAIC

Visit the CCNA Training and Capacity Building and the Knowledge Translation Programs at the Alzheimer's Association International Conference, **booth #710** in *The Canadian Exhibit Pavilion* at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre.

For more information on the student experience at AAIC including networking receptions and events visit the [AAIC Student page](#). Students are welcome to attend any of the early-career events hosted by AAIC.

### AAIC Early Career Researcher Reception

Join other CCNA trainees and early career researchers at the Westin Harbour Castle for the [AAIC Early Career Researcher Reception](#) on Wednesday, July 27 from 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm. RSVP required.

This event offers opportunities for junior and newly independent investigators to interact with each other and network with representatives from different Alzheimer's and dementia research funding organizations, as well as with each other.



## STAY CONNECTED

## HOW TO CONTACT T&CB

We always want to hear from CCNA trainees, so feel free to contact us with your feedback about the types of events and programming that would be of value to you.

### EMAIL

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CPPC Trainee Representatives:

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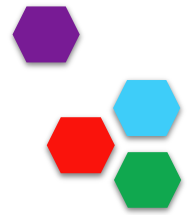
Lindsay Wallace: [lindsay.wallace@dal.ca](mailto:lindsay.wallace@dal.ca)

## TWITTER

Follow T&CB [@CCNA\\_Trainees](https://twitter.com/CCNA_Trainees)

## CCNA WEBSITE

<http://ccna-ccnv.ca/en/>



Until next quarter, thanks for reading!