



First Nations University of Canada

tradition innovation leadership

Media Release

First Nations University of Canada Researcher Wins Award from the Canada Foundation for Innovation to Support Cultural Safety Research

April 15, 2016—Dr. Carrie Bourassa, a Professor of Indigenous Health Studies at First Nations University of Canada (FNU) and one of the nation’s most highly regarded researchers in Indigenous health, has been awarded \$205,178 from the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI) to develop the **Cultural Safety Evaluation, Training and Research Laboratory**. The investment was made by the Government of Canada through the prestigious John R. Evans Fund (JELF) -- a fund designed to help universities attract and retain the best and brightest researchers from around the world by giving them state-of-the-art research tools.

Cultural safety is a broad concept, with wide-ranging implications for Canadian health care practice. It addresses issues of institutional discrimination and the effects of colonization, and examines how personal biases, authority and privilege can influence the relationships between health care providers and Indigenous people. Key elements of culturally safe practice include establishing trust with patients, and empowering them by reinforcing the value of each person’s cultural knowledge and beliefs. Cultural safety is based on the understanding of power differentials in the health care system; it exposes the social, political and historical contexts of health care and enables practitioners to consider difficult concepts such as racism, discrimination and prejudice.

The goal of the Cultural Safety Evaluation, Training and Research lab is to develop a world-class laboratory focused on cultural safety research needed to identify the historical and systemic practices that have contributed to the harmful treatment of Indigenous patients in Canada. The lab’s objectives include:

- Creating a standard for what constitutes “culturally safe” environments from a patient perspective, supported by metrics;
- Evaluating the effectiveness of “culturally safe” and “culturally competent” environments from an Indigenous patient perspective;
- Undertaking research specific to cultural safety and evaluation of cultural safety programs, initiatives and training that considers the historical, cultural and perceived practical basis for enduring culturally unsafe practices;

- Working directly with Indigenous communities to undertake projects that will evaluate the current state of their health care services, and creating action plans for the enhancement of culturally safe practices within local health care provision.

The project lead, Dr. Bourassa, sees a direct correlation between the laboratory's aims and the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission: "Since the release of the TRC report, we have all been enjoined to take steps to redress the historic wrongs to which Indigenous children and their families were subjected for over a century through the residential school. The TRC made several recommendations related to patient care, the training of Indigenous and non-Indigenous health professionals, and the transformation of the health care system. Cultural safety can promote reconciliation by focusing on research that addresses patient care in the context of structural racism, systemic and socio-economic inequalities, intergenerational trauma, spiritual healing and capacity building in communities."

Dr. Mark Dockstator, President of FNUniv, applauds CFI's support of this important Indigenous health initiative: "The funding of this laboratory through the John R. Evans fund will have many positive impacts for Indigenous patients and their families across Canada. Coming at the beginning of our institution's 40th anniversary, this announcement sets the stage for FNUniv's on-going contributions to the well-being of First Nations people, and to the critical national work of reconciliation."

The funding announcement will take place at the University of Regina in the Research and Innovation Centre at 11:00 a.m. on Friday, April 15, 2015.

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Media Contact:

Dr. Lynn Wells, Vice-President Academic
First Nations University of Canada
lwells@fnuniv.ca
306-790-5950 ext. 2305