



CENTRE FOR CRITICAL STUDIES OF  
**RURAL MENTAL HEALTH**

**2026**



# Mental Health on the Prairies

CONFERENCE & CONVERSATION

**Building Partnerships, Strengthening Capacity  
& Supporting Growth in Rural Mental Health**



**BRANDON  
UNIVERSITY**



**April 29 - May 1, 2026**



**Brandon University**  
270 18th Street  
Brandon, MB



# Campus Map

- 1 Glen P. Sutherland Gallery of Art
- 2 Healthy Living Centre (Gymnasiums)
- 3 Flora Cowan Hall (Women's Residence)
- 4 John R. Brodie Science Centre
- 5 McMaster Hall (Co-Ed Residence)
- 6 Main Dining Hall
- 7 Darrach Hall (Men's Residence)
- 8 Knowles-Douglas Students' Union Centre
- 9 Physical Plant Building
- 10 Power Plant Building
- 11 George T. Richardson Centre (John E. Robbins Library)**
- 12 Clark Hall (Arts Building)**
- 13 A.E. McKenzie Building (Admissions Office and Student Services)
- 14 Queen Elizabeth II Music Building (Kinsmen Hall, Lorne Watson Recital Hall)**
- 15 BU Early Learning Centre
- 16 Education Building
- 17 Western Manitoba Centennial Auditorium
- 18 Dr. James & Lucille Brown Health Studies Complex**



**George T. Richardson Centre - Evans Theatre**

- Community Film Screening with Rebecca Love

**Lorne Watson Recital Hall**

- Citizen's Forum

**Parking daily rates**

**Clark Hall**

- Opening Ceremony
- Keynote Speaker Presentations
- Pretendianism Panel

**Health Studies**

- Registration
- Concurrent Sessions
- Poster Presentations
- Food Services
- Quiet Space - Rm O48C

- P** Permit Parking  
8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., Mon. - Fri.
- Pd** Pay & Display Parking  
\$0.60 per hour, up to 8 hours
- Accessible Parking  
Located in front of Clark Hall
- Metered Parking  
\$0.01 per min., up to 100 min.
- Carpool Parking
- S** Campus Security Office
- Designated Smoking Area  
Smoking is permitted in these locations only.
- Ramp Access / Accessible Curbing
- Emergency Telephone

# Welcome Message

**From: Tracy Young, Co-Lead  
Centre for Critical Studies of Rural Mental Health**



**Mental Health  
on the Prairies**  
CONFERENCE & CONVERSATION

Thank you for joining us at Brandon University for the Mental Health on the Prairies Conference and Community Conversation. This year's conference themes are building partnerships, strengthening capacity, and supporting growth in rural mental health. The conference organizing committee chose these themes after much thoughtful discussion. Strengthening capacity is about building plans for a better future together and to do this we need to cultivate spaces for conversation, relationship building, and connection. With this in mind, the purpose of the conference is to bring people together to share, listen, and learn. We want to promote conversations that are thoughtful, respectful, and truthful between researchers, professionals working in health and social care, educators, community groups, and people with lived experience of mental health problems and addictions. In doing so, we aim to improve mental health research, support, and experiences on the prairies. This is a lofty goal, but we are excited to engage with you as conference attendees, with this in mind.



# Keynote Speakers

## REBECCA LOVE

*PSYCHOSIS, CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY, AND THE IMAGINATION*



Rebecca Love is a Toronto-based filmmaker, writer, visual artist and community organizer. She studied at the University of King's College, then completed a BFA in Film Production at Ryerson University, and an MFA at the University of Guelph in Creative Writing. She has produced eight short films, focusing on love, illness and neighborhoods. These stories have played TIFF, VIFF, FNC, Kingston, the Future of Film Showcase, and CBC. She is an organizer in the arts community: as editor of the Toronto Arts Report she pays close attention to developments in the worlds of theatre, fine art, filmmaking, writing, arts administration, and arts journalism. She is interested in questions relating to mental health, city planning, art history, and folk storytelling. She recently completed her debut feature 'Fortescue.'

## RUSSELL PURDY

*FROM RECOVERY TO REFORM:*

*LIVED EXPERIENCE LEADING SYSTEMIC CHANGE IN ADDICTION AND MENTAL HEALTH*



Russell Purdy is the Executive Director of Beccarian Correctional Care, where he leads transformative initiatives aimed at reshaping the role of correctional systems in addiction recovery and rehabilitation. Under his leadership, Beccarian has expanded across Alberta with Therapeutic Living Units (TLUs) and Transitional Service Programs that help individuals break the cycle of addiction, incarceration, and social disconnection.

A person in long-term recovery, Russell brings lived experience and deep insight to his work, shaping programs that reflect compassion, accountability, and the belief that change is possible. He is a CCAR-certified Recovery Coach and Facilitator and has served in leadership roles across both public and private treatment systems, including second-stage housing and recovery-based justice initiatives throughout Western Canada.

Russell's approach is rooted in the "community-as-method" model, which emphasizes peer support, structured routines, and the building of recovery capital; personal, social, and community resources essential for long-term recovery and reintegration. In all areas of his work, he strives to lead with humility and curiosity, believing these qualities are essential to growth, both personal and professional.

## DR. CAROLINE TAIT

*"I'M NOT FROM ANYWHERE": DID THE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION'S CALLS TO ACTION FIND THEIR WAY INTO THE CANADIAN CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM?*



Dr. Caroline Tait is an internationally recognized member of the Canadian academic community and is a Métis scholar and member of the Métis Nation-Saskatchewan. Dr. Tait is a Tier 1 Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Health Equity and Inclusion, University of Calgary. She holds a joint appointment as a Full Professor in the Faculty of Social Work and the Cumming School of Medicine. This recent move follows a long period of successful service as a Professor of Psychiatry in the College of Medicine, University of Saskatchewan.

Dr. Tait holds a Bachelor of Arts and Ph.D., Department of Anthropology, McGill University, a Master of Arts, Medical Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley and she completed a Post-Doctoral Fellowship in Social and Transcultural Psychiatry, McGill University and the Aboriginal Healing Foundation. Over the past 30 years she has been involved in community-based research with First Nations and Métis partners, with a focus on maternal health, mental health and addictions, systemic violence and racism, Indigenous research and data sovereignty, and more recently on organ donation and transplantation. Dr. Tait works remotely from her home in north-central Saskatchewan where she works daily with First Nations and Metis community partners.



# Agenda

*at a glance*

## DAY 1

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29

8:30 AM	Conference Registration	Health Studies - Rm 141
9:00 AM	Opening Remarks & Welcome	Clark Hall - Rm 212
9:30 AM	<b>Keynote Speaker: Rebecca Love</b>	<b>Clark Hall - Rm 212</b>
10:30 AM	Nutrition Break	Health Studies - Rm 141
11:00 AM	Concurrent Session #1	Health Studies - Rm 045/143/243
12:30 PM	Lunch Break	Health Studies - Rm 141
1:00 PM	Poster Presentations	Health Studies - Rm 043
1:30 PM	Concurrent Session #2	Health Studies - Rm 045/143/243
3:30 PM	End of Conference Day 1	
6:00-8:00 PM	<b>Community Event - Film Screening &amp; Discussion with Rebecca Love</b>	



# Agenda *at a glance*



**Mental Health  
on the Prairies**  
CONFERENCE & CONVERSATION

## DAY 2

## THURSDAY, APRIL 30

8:30 AM	Doors Open	Clark Hall - Rm 212
9:00 AM	Opening Remarks	Clark Hall - Rm 212
9:15 AM	<b>Keynote Speaker: Russell Purdy</b>	<b>Clark Hall - Rm 212</b>
10:30 AM	Nutrition Break	Health Studies - Rm 141
11:00 AM	Concurrent Session #3	Health Studies - Rm 045/143/243
12:30 PM	Lunch Break	Health Studies - Rm 141
1:00 PM	Poster Presentations	Health Studies - Rm 043
1:30 PM	<b>Citizen's Forum</b> ( <i>in-person only</i> )	<b>Music - Lorne Watson Recital Hall</b>
3:30 PM	Forum Wrap Up & End of Conference Day 2	

## DAY 3

## FRIDAY, MAY 1

8:30 AM	Doors Open	Clark Hall - Rm 212
9:00 AM	Opening Remarks	Clark Hall - Rm 212
9:15 AM	<b>Keynote Speaker: Caroline Tait</b>	<b>Clark Hall - Rm 212</b>
10:30 AM	Nutrition Break	Health Studies - Rm 141
11:00 AM	Concurrent Session #4	Health Studies - Rm 045/143/243
12:00 PM	Lunch Break	Health Studies - Rm 141
12:30 PM	Poster Presentations	Health Studies - Rm 043
1:00 PM	Concurrent Session #5	Health Studies - Rm 045/143/243
2:00 PM	<b>Guest Panel Presentation: Pretendianism</b>	<b>Clark Hall - Rm 212</b>
3:15 PM	Closing Remarks & Conference Farewell	Clark Hall - Rm 212



# Poster Presentations

## DAY 1 · APRIL 29

1:00 - 1:30PM | ROOM · HSB 043

Benefits, Opportunities,  
Costs, & Concerns:  
Adult Student Perceptions of Artificial  
Intelligence

Engaging Professionals and Older Adults  
Across Manitoba on the Development of  
Tools to Identify Signs and Risk Factors of  
Social Isolation and Loneliness in Older  
Adults

## DAY 2 · APRIL 30

1:00 - 1:30PM | ROOM · HSB 043

Project ECHO Mental Health  
and Addictions Manitoba:  
Rapid Growth and Sustainability  
Assessment

Mental Health in Agriculture

## DAY 3 · MAY 1

12:30 - 1:00PM | ROOM · HSB 043

Moral Courage and Ethical Decision-  
Making Confidence Among Registered  
Psychiatric Nurses in Western Canada

Exploring the Perceptions, Experiences,  
and Preparedness of Registered  
Psychiatric Nurses Transitioning to a  
Correctional Services Institution in the  
Prairie Provinces:  
An Interpretive Description Study

# Concurrent Sessions

DAY 1 - WEDNESDAY APRIL 29

11:00 AM - 12:30 PM

1:30 PM - 3:30 PM

## SESSION ONE

Location	Health Studies - Rm 243	Health Studies - Rm 143	Health Studies - Rm 045
11:00 AM	Academic Accommodations in Nursing Education: Reasonable or Unreasonable?	Drawing Insights: Art-Based Analysis of Precarious Work and Mental Health	Forgiveness as a Path to Mental Health: A Chaplain's Perspective on Healing in Polarized Times
11:30 AM	Universal Design for Learning: Nursing Education	The Mental Health Benefits of A Slow Walk in Nature: Nursing Students' Perspectives	Effects of Self-Efficacy on Psychological Well-Being of International Students
12:00 PM	Reassessing Academic Accommodations: Strengthening Transparency and Fairness within Mental Health Referrals		Communities of Care: Exploring Tensions in Higher Education
12:30 PM			

## SESSION TWO

Location	Health Studies - Rm 243	Health Studies - Rm 143	Health Studies - Rm 045
1:30 PM	Beyond Screens: Exploring ICT Issues and Competencies in Manitoba Schools	From the Other Side: A Letter to My Younger Selves	Supporting Families Through Networks: The Family Engagement Program at Child and Family Services of Western Manitoba
2:00 PM		Resident Councils and The Practice of Citizenship in Long-Term Care	
2:30 PM	Workshop: Barriers and Bridges to Safer Spaces; Practice Skills for Supporting Mental Health for Autistic and Neurodivergent Populations	A Scoping Review: Accommodations in Nursing Practice	What Works: A Strength-Based Approach to Farmer Wellness
3:00 PM			

# Concurrent Sessions

DAY 2 - THURSDAY APRIL 30

11:00 AM - 12:30 PM

SESSION THREE

Location	Health Studies - Rm 243	Health Studies - Rm 143	Health Studies - Rm 045
11:00 AM	Towards Flourishing: Over a Decade of Promoting Mental Health of Families in Manitoba	Key Insights from Mental Health Nurses Experiencing Disabilities in Rural and Urban Locations: Implications for the Work Place	
11:30 AM		Testimony After Trauma/ Project Resilience 911	
12:00 PM	The Recovering Farmer: A Journey Through the Labyrinth of Anxiety and Depression		Beyond Crisis Response: Preventing Psychological Harm in Rural Workplaces
12:30 PM			

# Concurrent Sessions

DAY 3 - FRIDAY MAY 1

11:00 AM - 12:00 PM  
1:00 PM - 2:00 PM

## SESSION FOUR

Location	Health Studies - Rm 243	Health Studies - Rm 143	Health Studies - Rm 045
11:00 AM	Childbirth and Parenthood after Sexual Violence: Insights from a Pilot Study	Social Empowerment and Student Leader Well-Being	
11:30 AM	Exploring Manitoba's Resources for Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence in Rural, Remote, and Northern Regions	The Effects of Personality and Conflict Handling on Friendship Quality	Working with Integrative Skills to Promote Healing
12:00 PM			

## SESSION FIVE

Location	Health Studies - Rm 243	Health Studies - Rm 143	Health Studies - Rm 045
1:00 PM	Stress and Coping Among Brandon University's International Students	Sexual Health Practices of International Students in Higher Education	
1:30 PM			Interdisciplinary Collaboration in Sexual Violence Education through Visual Storytelling
2:00 PM		Belonging and Thriving: Supporting Visible Minority Nursing and Psychiatric Nursing Students	

# Presentation Abstracts

DAY 1 • APRIL 29 | SESSION ONE • 11:00–12:30PM | ROOM • HSB 045

## **Forgiveness as a Path to Mental Health: A Chaplain's Perspective in Polarized Times** (30 minutes)

**Victoria Miles**

Mental health thrives in community. In rural and military settings, where isolation and stress can be compounded by stigma, the ability to connect becomes essential. Shame and anger are detrimental to both community and connection. This workshop explores forgiveness not as a moral obligation, but as a healing practice that can restore relationships, reduce internalized shame, and foster resilience in communities.

Presented by a Canadian Army Chaplain with lived experience of mental health struggles and close family ties to PTSD, anxiety, and depression, this session weaves personal narrative with professional insight from the Royal Canadian Chaplaincy Service. It invites participants into a gentle, spiritually inclusive space to reflect on the role of forgiveness of self, of others, and of systems, in their own journeys.

The workshop begins with a reflection on societal polarization and the mental toll of unresolved anger and shame. Participants will then engage in small group conversations, exploring their relationship with forgiveness and sharing practices that have supported their healing. This session is designed to foster connection, deepen understanding, and support the development of tools for those working in or living with mental health challenges in rural settings.

Workshop Objectives:

1. Explore the connection between forgiveness and mental health
2. Introduce a spiritually inclusive framework for understanding forgiveness as a healing practice, accessible across belief systems.
3. Facilitate group reflection and dialogue on participants' personal experiences with forgiveness, including barriers and breakthroughs.
4. Encourage community-building and peer support by creating space for shared storytelling and mutual learning.
5. Support the emergence of language and practices that may help integrate forgiveness into ongoing mental health conversations in rural and military contexts.

## **Effects of Self-Efficacy on Psychological Well-Being of International Students** (30 minutes)

**Susan Chang Su**  
**Gordon Flett**

COVID-19 pandemic has created unprecedented challenges to public health, negatively affecting people's physical health, mental health and overall well-being. Quarantine measures and social distancing exacerbated social isolation, loneliness, discrimination, and mental health problems. International students, as a particularly vulnerable population, have faced more severe adversities, including limited social support and networks, financial burdens, cultural conflicts, language barriers, and challenges in adapting to remote learning. This quantitative study examined effects of self-efficacy, (a key resilience factor reflecting an individual's belief in their ability to succeed in specific situations or accomplish tasks and cope with various pressures), discrimination and loneliness on psychological well-being, and explored if social support mediated these relationships. A total of 186 international university students in Canada (98 men, 84 women) were recruited online. Participants completed the following measures: the General Self-efficacy Scale, the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support Scale, the Discrimination and Stigma Scale, the UCLA Loneliness Scale, and the World Health Organization-5 Well-being Index, and demographic questions. Correlational analyses confirmed that psychological well-being was positively associated significantly with self-efficacy, and social support, and was negatively associated significantly with loneliness and discrimination. Sobel tests showed that social support and loneliness fully mediated the effects of self-efficacy on psychological well-being. This empirical study confirmed that self-efficacy positively predicts well-being, and that social support, as a protective factor, plays a crucial mediating role in this relationship. It is essential to help international students enhance their well-being by strengthening their social support networks, thereby reducing feelings of loneliness and improving their ability to cope with discrimination. Such efforts can ultimately promote better psychological well-being among international students studying abroad in Canada.

**Communities of Care: Exploring Tensions in Higher Education  
(30 minutes)**

**Laura Van Mulligen  
Gretta Sayers  
Mousumi Majumder  
Dominique Héту  
Cassidy Manko**

In post-secondary settings, educators not only impart knowledge but also create environments that foster students' growth, well-being, and belonging. They also shape collegial cultures that support the development, care, and engagement of their peers. This research project explores how care is defined within academia and the tensions that shape care practices. It aims to help faculty and students confront the challenges of traditional academic silos and foster cultures of collaboration.

This research is necessary because it seeks to critically reclaim and resituate care as a vector for responsibility, accountability, nurturing, and equity, which are central to the operational and human systems of the educational institution. To conduct this research, faculty members from four different disciplines met regularly to explore their experiences and positionalities as women working in academia. In addition, students and faculty across campus shared their personal lived experiences of the challenges, barriers and successes related to care via a survey, focus group, and/or interview. In preliminary observations, researchers found that both students and faculty need more care. Many students arrive at university with "learned dependence" and need additional guidance for academic success and personal development. Student support options, while beneficial for students who use them, are overburdened at Brandon University leaving many students under-supported in their mental health and academic skills. This equates to students requesting/requiring more care from faculty, which burdens faculty and has negative implications personally, mentally, physically, and professionally. These insights allow for better acknowledgment of the tensions and possibilities shaping care both inside and outside the classroom. Going forward, findings from this project will inform equitable frameworks that embed care, mental health, and wellbeing into teaching, learning, and institutional culture. By viewing care as a shared responsibility, this work promotes more inclusive and supportive academic environments across disciplines.

**Drawing Insights: Art-Based Analysis of Precarious Work and Mental Health  
(30 minutes)**

**Renata Truelove**

This presentation will focus on the methodology of a cross-disciplinary project, Precarious Work and Mental Health: Exploring Uncertainty through Research-Creation, from the perspective of the artist-research team. It will emphasize the use of research-creation as both a method of inquiry and as a form of knowledge mobilization. The project examined how families in rural Manitoba experience the intersection of precarious employment, mental health, and family life. Precarious work – short-term, insecure employment with limited benefits and protection – has become increasingly common in rural areas, with significant implications for individual and family well-being.

A team of artist-researchers worked directly with participant data, including momentary reflective responses, photographs, and in-depth interviews through a multi-phase creative process. This included reflexive experimentation, collaborative drawing, and visual storytelling, followed by critique and synthesis with the broader research team. Artworks produced through this process – layered paintings, drawings, three-dimensional elements, and sound collages – functioned as analytic tools that advanced interpretation of the data, moving beyond mere illustration. Through visual analysis, emergent themes were identified such as balancing responsibilities, family dynamics, persistent uncertainty, and psychological exhaustion.

The presentation will demonstrate how this artistic methodology operated as a rigorous and relational form of qualitative analysis. By bringing alive the nuanced, emotional, and embodied dimensions of precarious work, the artworks deepened understanding of and connection to participant experiences beyond the scope of traditional qualitative methods.

The resulting exhibition SHIFT/WORK: Portraits of Precarity will be discussed. This knowledge mobilization strategy, which transformed visual analyses into a public, immersive installation, highlights the capacity of research-creation to engage communities, spark dialogue, and make research accessible. Finally, the presentation will reflect on the role of mentorship and collaboration in supporting emerging artist-researchers, and the power of interdisciplinary partnerships and creative methods to advance mental health research.

The project was funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) and led by counselling psychologist Dr. Breanna Lawrence (University of Victoria, Principal Investigator), rural health geographer Dr. Rachel Herron (Brandon University) and visual artist and educator Prof. Lisa Wood (Brandon University), who also mentored the artist-research team (Renata Truelove, Michael Vachon and Dhairya Vaidya).

**The Mental Health Benefits of a Slow Walk in Nature: Nursing Students' Perspectives  
(30 minutes)**

**Catherine Baxter  
Laura Van Mulligen**

What do people need to know?

Nursing students experience high levels of stress throughout their undergraduate education programs. Academic demands, clinical stressors, financial pressures and challenges in their personal lives all contribute to their overall feelings of stress. For many people a walk in nature is relaxing and restoring and there is growing evidence that spending time in nature can be an effective way to reduce stress and promote mental wellbeing.

Why is this research important?

There is limited research exploring the benefits of spending time in nature on the mental health of nursing students. The findings from this study provide important insights into nursing students' perspectives on participating in weekly slow walks in nature and the effects on their mental wellbeing.

How was this research conducted?

Participants were recruited from a 3rd year community health nursing course. All participants completed eight, slow walks in nature over the fall term. Participants were guided on the first walk and then completed the remaining seven walks on their own. Data were collected from multiple sources including, reflective journals, photographs, and field notes. Qualitative data were analysed using Framework Analysis and key themes identified.

What did the researchers find?

This presentation will focus on one of the main themes identified from the data; “benefits to mental well-being”. Participant’s perspectives on the experience of taking a slow walk in nature and their perceptions of the impact on their mental health and well-being will be highlighted.

How can this research be used going forward?

The findings of this study add to the growing evidence that spending time in nature can benefit mental health and well-being.

**Academic Accommodations in Nursing Education:  
Reasonable or Unreasonable?  
(30 minutes)**

**Andrea Thomson  
Catherine Baxter**  
Sherri Dyck, Michelle Magnusson, Michelle Cleland

What do people need to know?

Accessible nursing education is essential for creating a diverse, equitable, and resilient healthcare workforce. Yet, nursing and psychiatric nursing students with disabilities face barriers to full participation in both academic and clinical learning settings. Many students experience challenges obtaining necessary accommodations, while faculty report limited institutional guidance or resources to support the inclusion of students with disabilities, especially during clinical placements where accessibility considerations are complex and poorly defined.

Why is this research/work important?

This research underscores the importance of equitable access to nursing education for students with disabilities, ensuring that all learners can develop the skills and confidence required for professional practice. Inclusive education supports workforce diversity and reflects the principles of social accountability in nursing. By understanding barriers to accommodations and identifying effective practices, educators and administrators can strengthen institutional capacity to comply with disability legislation, foster belonging, and enhance learner outcomes.

How was/is this research/work conducted?

A mixed-methods approach was used to investigate accommodation practices that facilitate or hinder inclusion in nursing education. An anonymous online survey was distributed to faculty and students in nursing and psychiatric nursing programs across western Canada. Ninety-five participants (52 faculty and 43 students) responded, offering perspectives on accessibility challenges, current accommodation practices, and perceptions of reasonableness in classroom and clinical settings.

What did the researchers find?

Findings revealed that accommodations such as additional time for skill preparation, extra breaks, protected chart-review time, assistive technology, and service animal access supported student success. However, faculty often expressed uncertainty regarding what constitutes a reasonable accommodation. Negative attitudes and responses from faculty discouraged students from disclosing disabilities or requesting further support, perpetuating barriers.

How can this research/work be used going forward?

Institutions should prioritize faculty training on accessibility, strengthen policies and administrative support for accommodations, and redesign curricula using universal design principles to proactively reduce barriers and enhance equitable access.

**Universal Design for Learning: Nursing Education  
(30 minutes)**

**Andrea Thomson**

What do people need to know?

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is an evidence-based educational framework that enhances accessibility and inclusivity through multiple means of engagement, representation, and action and expression. By minimizing learning barriers, UDL fosters equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) across post-secondary education, supporting the success of diverse learners. Despite its benefits, UDL remains underutilized in nursing education.

Why is this research/work important?

The growing emphasis on EDI in nursing education highlights the need for inclusive pedagogical approaches. Many nurse educators, however, lack UDL knowledge, institutional resources, and time to implement principles. Advancing UDL integration will not only improve accessibility but better equip nursing students to deliver equitable care.

How was/is this research/work conducted?

This project builds upon evidence from recent literature demonstrating UDL's effectiveness across classroom, online, and simulation-based learning environments. A review of current practice reveals limited adoption of UDL in clinical placements, indicating a gap in nursing education.

What did the researchers find?

Strategies to promote UDL in nursing education include using multiple means of representation by presenting information in diverse formats including text, audio, video, graphics, and interactive media to accommodate different learning styles and sensory preferences, and offering multiple means of action and expression, allowing students to demonstrate their knowledge through different modalities such as written assignments, presentations, simulations, or creative projects. Utilizing technology such as virtual simulations, captioned videos, and accessible digital resources also enhances learning accessibility.

How can this research/work be used going forward?

Applying UDL across nursing programs can advance accessibility, enhance faculty capacity, and strengthen EDI outcomes.

**Reassessing Academic Accommodations: Strengthening Transparency and Fairness  
within Mental Health Referrals  
(30 minutes)**

**Jan DeFehr**

Reassessing Academic Accommodations:

Strengthening Transparency and Fairness within Mental Health Referrals

Students requesting extra time for tests in rural and urban schools and universities are commonly required to obtain documentation from medical doctors or psychologists. Although professional ethics standards require full disclosure of relevant information, students attending the required mental health consults may not gain access to the critical knowledge they need to make informed decisions.

This presentation addresses several infrequently asked yet important questions, such as the following: Are mental disorder diagnoses based on chemical imbalance, genetic data, or scientifically valid biomarker evidence of pathology? How long will a mental disorder diagnosis remain in a young person's medical record? Could a mental disorder diagnosis create difficulties at a later point in life? Could a documented mental health history complicate eligibility for some professional licenses, adoption and child custody, organ tissue transplant candidacy, or life and disability insurance? Could mental disorder diagnosis be used against individuals within legal hearings, immigration or deportation processes, among other situations? What range of options might we consider as we attempt to compassionately and effectively support young people experiencing acute distress at school?

Intended for service providers, educators, students, and parents/guardians, this presentation 1) discusses potential for both help and harm in mental health interventions, 2) articulates the ethical imperative of full disclosure, and 3) showcases new Mental Health Informed Choice premises, practices, and policies at a Manitoba medical and social services clinic.

Opportunity for informed decisions is especially important for communities who experience marginalization and oppression within state systems. When students and caregivers experience opportunity to consider the potential for both benefit and harm in mental health services, they are more fairly positioned to navigate academic accommodations processes according to their own preferences, needs, and rights.

**Supporting Families Through Networks: The Family Engagement Program at Child and Family Services of Western Manitoba**  
(60 minutes)

Joshua Van Mulligen

Family networks play a vital role in supporting mental health, especially within child welfare contexts. This community presentation will outline the development, implementation, and impact of the Family Engagement Program, a cornerstone of the practice model used within Child and Family Services of Western Manitoba.

The agency's transformation from traditional child welfare approaches to a more collaborative, family-centered model, has seen a shift from viewing child welfare as the sole expert to recognizing families as experts in their own lives. This philosophical change has led to more flexible, inclusive, and effective responses to child safety and well-being.

Family Engagement Meetings (FEM's), introduced in 2016, which aim to involve families and their support networks in decision-making processes will be discussed. As well as how these meetings enhance relationships, promote buy-in, improve placement stability, and lead to better outcomes for children and families. The process of FEM's includes thorough preparation, capturing the voice of the child, and collaborative planning with families and their networks.

The presentation will include program evaluation data demonstrating the program's reach, feedback from families and community partners.

Some success stories will be shared which illustrate how FEM's have prevented apprehensions, facilitated reunifications, improve family well-being and empowered families to co-create safety plans. These stories underscore the transformative potential of network-based engagement in child welfare practice. Not only improving the mental health of parents the agency is working with, but improving the long term mental health outcomes of children the agency serves.

**What Works: A Strength-Based Approach to Farmer Wellness**  
(30 minutes)

Bryce Fisher  
Tracy Young

Dr. Merle Massie, Dr. Rachel Herron, Dr. Candice Waddell-Henowitch, Dr. Phillippe Roy, Dr. Wayne Kelly, Dr. Marysia Lazinski

Farming is more than a job; it is an action word (I farm), a place (I own a farm) and a way of life (I'm a farmer) that helps farmers make meaningful contributions to the economic, environmental, health, and social prosperity of their families, communities, and countries. It is a great paradox that while farmers support the well-being of others through their hard work, they often report low levels of personal well-being. Globally, studies have shown that farmers are at increased risk of stress, anxiety, depression, and suicide when compared to the general population. Research has also found that farmers, especially men, are reluctant to seek help for mental health problems from formal service providers.

Various studies have identified increasing climate and weather variability, financial stress, social isolation, community decline, overwork, government regulations and bureaucracy, public and media criticism, relationship stress, a culture of substance use, and physical injury as risk factors contributing to mental health problems among farmers. Conversely, some research has begun to identify time away from farming, connection to others, talking about mental health, and connection to nature, as therapeutic or protective. Yet the bulk of farmer mental health research is deficit-based, focusing more on 'what is wrong' than 'what is strong'. Strength-based multi-systemic approaches to farmer wellness are needed to better understand how farmers can flourish in the face of multiple adversities.

While there are known stresses in farming, coupled with both community and individual stigma towards mental illness, a strength-based focus creates needed space for positive peer and community stories, deliberately counteracting existing deficit-based narratives. More focused research is needed in this area that is attentive to the broader ecosystem of mental health resource and mental health research, beyond a deficit model and to engage farmers and their networks in hopeful conversations about their futures.

The overarching goal of this project is to share strategies and resources that promote farmer wellness at the individual, family, community, and sectoral level via these four objectives: 1) Identify strategies and resources farmers use to maintain or promote their well-being over time; 2) Explore how farm service providers observe and support farmer wellness; 3) Create a multi-media toolkit including composite stories of farmer wellness to share strategies and resources with partners; 4) Provide high-quality training and experience in cross-sector, community-engaged research partnerships.

This work builds on existing partnerships between Brandon University's Centre for Critical Studies of Rural Mental Health (CCSRMH), the Rural Development Institute (RDI) and The Do More Agriculture Foundation (DMAF). As a national charitable foundation built by farmers for farmers, working in partnership with DMAF connects this project with industry and community to ensure farm-focused strategies and toolkit resource development that resonate with farmers and ranchers in Manitoba, and right across Canada. This strategic partnership ensures resonance and cultural context, while leveraging an alliance focused on a shared belief in the strength-based perspective.

This presentation will provide background and information on the mental health crisis that exists across the agriculture industry across Canada; a firm rationale for the strength-based approach to our work; an overview of the data collection and project process to date; and an opportunity to discuss and direct ongoing action items and resource creation.

**From the Other Side: A Letter to My Younger Selves  
(30 minutes)**

**Melanie Elliott**

My intention is to write a letter to my younger selves - validating what was going on, where they were at, while also explaining what I know now about what was going on, and where we've ended up. Helping the younger me's see there was more going on then I knew, and that I've come to a place of self acceptance and peace with the flow of life.

Listeners will come to see how 2 things can be true at once - that something could have had major negative impacts and you can still hold space for where the other person was at. That pain and empathy can live in the same space.

**Resident Councils and the Practice of Citizenship in Long-Term Care  
(30 minutes)**

**Sheila Novek**

Alexandra Delaney, Isabel Huang

Resident councils are forums in which people living in residential long-term care homes meet on a regular basis to discuss concerns and share input with management. These forums create a space for residents to engage in organizational decision-making within institutions that tend to position residents as dependent, incapable and lacking agency. To understand how residents negotiate participation within these spaces, we undertook ethnographic research with two resident councils in two provinces (Manitoba and British Columbia). Data collection included: 1) analysis of relevant laws and policies; 2) observation of council meetings; and 3) semi-structured interviews with 12 residents, 12 family members, 13 staff, and 6 policy stakeholders. Informed by Bartlett & O'Connor's (2010) rights-based concept of social citizenship for people with dementia, our analysis explored the ways in which people living in long-term care practice citizenship within the context of resident councils. This presentation will highlight the diverse ways that residents engage as political actors within resident councils, as well as the relationships, practices and structural conditions that uphold and constrain citizenship within these spaces.

**A Scoping Review: Accommodations in Nursing Practice  
(30 minutes)**

**Andrea Thomson**

Laura Van Mulligen

Joanne Winsor Murray

H. Rainer Schira, Marian Ramage, Jennifer Adair, & Savannah Torres-Salbach

What do people need to know?

Nurses with disabilities make valuable contributions to healthcare, yet many experience barriers in accessing workplace accommodations necessary to perform their roles. Understanding the factors that facilitate or hinder the provision of accommodations can inform inclusive practices that support both workforce retention and care delivery.

Why is this research/work important?

With global nursing shortages and increasing workforce demands, retaining experienced nurses, including those with disabilities, is critically important. By examining how accommodations are implemented and denied, this research highlights opportunities to strengthen organizational policies, promote equity, and foster inclusive workplaces.

How was/is this research/work conducted?

A scoping review was conducted using JBI methodology to map available evidence on workplace accommodations for nurses with disabilities. Comprehensive searches of CINAHL, SocINDEX, PsycInfo, PubMed, Web of Science, EMBASE, and ProQuest Dissertations yielded 4,160 records. Following screening and eligibility assessment, 20 sources were included for data extraction and thematic synthesis.

What did the researchers find?

The review identified a range of accommodations, both formal and informal, that supported nurses' capacity to continue practice. However, barriers frequently arose from unclear accommodation processes, experiences of ableism, fear of self-disclosure, and inconsistent managerial support. Facilitators included supportive leadership, and transparent communication.

How can this research/work be used going forward?

Findings emphasize the need for clear, standardized policies and procedures for requesting and implementing accommodations in nursing workplaces. Organizations can use these insights to develop inclusive frameworks that reduce absenteeism, enhance retention, and promote accessibility across nursing practice. Future research should focus on evaluating strategies to operationalize equitable accommodation processes globally.

**Beyond Screens: Exploring ICT Issues and Competencies in Manitoba Schools  
(30 minutes)**

**Matteo Di Muro  
Michael Oduro  
Tracy Young**

Social media and other Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have become an integral part of human lives, offering avenues for social interaction regardless of location, connecting individuals based on shared interests, values, and activities. Digital tools present unique opportunities for learning and engagement in classrooms and schools. For students, learning how to use ICT tools in balanced and healthy ways is a crucial life-long skill, given that these tools are increasingly present in important aspects of our lives including learning, working, and leisure time.

In Manitoba, teachers, parents, and school administrators are left to navigate the complex field of ICT integration and instruction of important digital literacy skills without a specific curriculum, provincial plan, or any objective reporting measures of success. This research sought to address these critical gaps by exploring the challenges and opportunities that surround ICT use, digital literacy, and digital wellbeing in K-8 schools.

Using a Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) approach, this study highlighted the lived experiences of key stakeholders including administrators, teachers, parents, and students to understand these issues within the unique and diverse Manitoba school context.

This project investigated the following Research Questions:

- 1) How do schools in Manitoba address digital competencies such as digital literacy, digital health and well-being, and other digital skills, and what strategies and resources are they using to do so?
- 2) What are the perceived challenges faced by students, parents, teachers, and administrators in Manitoba schools concerning students' ICT and social media use?
- 3) What are the usage patterns of students regarding ICT tools such as social media and internet-enabled technologies, both within and outside of the school environment? What understanding of digital literacy do students and parents possess?
- 4) What are the perceived effects of implementing a series of classroom lessons on digital literacy to address concerns identified by stakeholders in RQ 2? How does this impact students' digital behaviors?

Understanding the issues around the ICT use of students both within and outside of the school day context is a developing area of research literature. Schools are well-positioned but underutilized in assisting students and their parents in taking ownership of their digital lives and social media usage. Developing the digital literacy skills required to leverage ICTs in healthy, balanced ways has great benefits for students continued learning and development. Research in this area can provide timely evidence of the problems schools and their stakeholders face, demonstrating the need for a province-wide curriculum or plan on how to implement and teach digital literacy skills in schools.

This presentation will provide an overview of the data collected and themes found across key education stakeholders in rural Manitoba. Learn about and discuss next steps, actions, and advocacy as outcomes of this work.

**Workshop: Barriers and Bridges to Safer Spaces;  
Practical Skills for Supporting Mental Health for Autistic and Neurodivergent Populations  
(60 minutes)**

**Saryn Hingston**

Based on patient-oriented research and rooted in the lived experiences of communities, this workshop brings education, understanding and practical ways to improve the mental health of neurodiverse populations that can be applied to various settings, from family and school to clinic and online spaces. Research estimates around 60% of adults and adolescents in inpatient psychiatric care and about 30% of people presenting with mental health distress meet criteria for or exhibit strong autistic traits. Autistic and neurodiverse people experience higher rates of anxiety, suicidality, and isolation than the general population and have unique challenges that contribute to these difficulties. This workshop brings understanding of common autistic and other neurodivergent experiences with a validating and neuroaffirming lens draws from Indigenous concepts. It highlights specific challenges that autistic and other neurodiverse people face and meets them with practical tools to address needs and promote mental health.

The content in this workshop has been developed with multiple communities of autistic and neurodivergent people, families, and support workers. The research it draws from includes neuroaffirming research lead by autistic people, including researchers, clinicians, and educators that include practical tools for support. It also draws from ongoing and emergent researchers lead by Autistic Doctors International.

This workshop has been adapted and shared with various audiences including queer community members; disability workers including social workers, physiotherapists and peer support teams; medical students; patient oriented researchers; and parents. Some of the skills and tools include communication, sensory considerations, practices that improve mental health such as stimming, and the SPACE tool allows for individual needs to be explored, communicated and supported.

**Beyond Crisis Response: Preventing Psychological Harm in Rural Workplaces  
(60 minutes)**

**Geoffrey Thompson**

Across Manitoba, rural communities are experiencing significant demographic and workforce shifts. Food processing, manufacturing, and agricultural operations increasingly rely on newcomer and temporary foreign workers, many of whom face unique stressors related to language, isolation, shift work, and limited access to culturally informed supports. At the same time, evolving provincial expectations for psychosocial risk prevention are placing new emphasis on the workplace as a setting for mental health promotion—not only treatment or crisis response.

This presentation explores practical pathways to build mentally healthier rural workplaces, grounded in prevention, shared responsibility, and cultural humility. Drawing on real-world experience from community-based occupational health practice and partnerships with labour, newcomer organizations, and rural employers, the session highlights low-barrier strategies to strengthen psychological safety, belonging, and worker voice—regardless of industry size or location.

Participants will learn how to identify workplace factors that contribute to stress and harm, explore the intersection of work, migration, and community belonging, and consider how rural environments can both support and challenge mental well-being. Manitoba's emerging psychosocial risk-assessment landscape will be translated into accessible concepts and practical steps that align with rural realities: fostering trust, creating shared language around mental health, and building cross-sector partnerships to ensure workers are seen, heard, and supported.

By the end of the session, attendees will leave with concrete tools to initiate conversations, strengthen early supports, and build psychologically safer workplaces within rural contexts. The focus is on real-world application, dignity at work, and the understanding that mental health on the Prairies cannot be separated from the places where people live, work, and belong.

**Key Insights from Mental Health Nurses Experiencing Disabilities in Rural and Urban Locations:  
Implications for the Work Place  
(30 minutes)**

**Joanne Winsor Murray  
Andrea Thomson**

What do people need to know? Despite an increasing focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) within our communities, mental health nurses with disabilities continue to be underrepresented in the practice setting both rural and urban.

Why is this research/work important? There is little to no research exploring the experiences of mental health nursing with disabilities who are currently practicing. This population faces significant challenges in the workplace when attempting to access accommodations and rural areas can add an additional layer of complexity.

How was/is this research/work conducted?

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten participants who identified as working as a mental health nurse with a disability. Using an inductive approach to data analysis the interviews were analyzed resulting in a number of themes.

What did the researchers find? Several insights were uncovered including the identified needs of the mental health nurses, the barriers they encountered and the key components that allowed them to thrive. The findings highlighted the need for supportive managers and their significant contribution to the retention and continued integration of nurses with disabilities. A number of safety concerns were also voiced in both rural and urban settings. In addition, rural nurses experienced unique challenges related to obtaining confidential treatment and travel demands required by the workplace.

How can this research/work be used going forward? This research provided a starting point to further explore the topic of mental health nurses with disabilities and accommodations. The information could be used to address changes to existing systems and management of accommodations to better meet the needs of mental health nurses.

**Testimony after Trauma/Project Resilience 911  
(30 minutes)**

**Amanda Conway**

**Dr Rosemary Ricciardelli, Dr Barbara Anshuetz, Pete Grande, Neil Orr,  
Laura Kloosterman, Syd Gravel, Brad McKay, Dr. R. Nicholas Carleton**

Project Resilience 911 is a nonprofit initiative in Manitoba aimed at promoting mental health for public safety personnel (PSP), including first responders, frontline workers, and military personnel. The project offers peer support, mental health education, and critical incident support for PSP, their families, and professionals working with these groups. Project Resilience 911 is focused on strengthening resilience in the mental health of Public Safety Personnel throughout Manitoba, enabling them to better serve their communities. Amanda is a co-author of the book *Testimony After Trauma*. This book was written to create guidelines for how public safety personnel (PSP) and their services can support employees required to attend court following a critical incident, we focus on eight dimensions of consideration: risk factors when testifying, courtroom preparedness, support during testimony, post testimony, of family members, challenges of investigation, processes of discovery, and the role of a trauma-informed courtroom. Our methods draw on lived PSP experiences, including in providing support to colleagues undergoing investigation/court. Reflecting on experiences, we unpack commonalities to explicate how to best support PSP undergoing investigation and testimony. We present the eight dimensions of consideration to expose how, following a potentially psychologically traumatic event exposure, additional harm can be reduced for PSP under investigation or attending court by peers, management, and mental health professionals if they assist in preparing PSP for and supporting PSP in the courtroom. We find support must continue post-trial/investigation to reduce the triggering effects of moral harm, offer an opportunity for closure, and should occur within a trauma-informed courtroom (e.g., affecting PSP, victims, witnesses). The guidelines for managing investigation requires dissemination across public safety organizations, following additional empirical research. Testifying and investigations have concrete, identifiable, and potentially harmful consequences on those involved. To recover post critical stress incident, one must be prepared, supported, and the courtroom must use a trauma informed framework – directed, we argue, at PSP, victims, and affected others. Policy implications and practical guidelines will be discussed as well as avenues for implementation.

**Towards Flourishing: Over a Decade of Promoting Mental Health of Families in Manitoba**  
(30 minutes)

**Mariette Chartier**

A population mental health approach that includes mental health promotion is necessary to address the high rates of mental distress experienced in Manitoba, given that early interventions and treatments cannot address all the mental health problems after they arise. Barry and colleagues (2019) define mental health promotion as a multidisciplinary area of practice that enhances the strength and competencies of individuals and their communities thereby promoting positive emotional and mental well-being. To date however, not enough research has been done in understanding how best to implement mental health promotion interventions. In Manitoba, a team of service providers, policy makers and academics set out to develop and evaluate a mental health promotion strategy to address this gap in knowledge. Towards Flourishing is an innovative mental health promotion strategy focused on improving the mental well-being of parents and the socio-emotional development of their infants in the postpartum period. Funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada, the team conducted interviews and focus groups and collected data over an 8-year period to examine how TF worked and whether it was effective or not. Parents and service providers told the team that TF was feasible, acceptable, useful and provided a mechanism for them to dialogue about mental health. A recent step-wedge randomized controlled trial found that TF was associated with higher emotional, psychological and social well-being scores and more frequent physician visits for mental health reasons. TF has been sustained for over a decade in Manitoba for many reasons including that it is imbedded in public health practice, has several dedicated mental health promotion facilitators and used a rigorous developmental evaluation framework at its onset. Although, TF is currently embedded within public health practice, it can also be adapted to other populations, for example within schools, community agencies, primary health care, and child protection agencies.

**The Recovering Farmer: A Journey Through the Labyrinth of Anxiety and Depression**  
(60 minutes)

**Gerry Friesen**

Farming is often described as a way of life, not just a job. But what happens when that way of life begins to unravel? In this powerful and deeply personal presentation, Gerry Friesen shares his lived experience with anxiety, depression, and addiction—an honest story of struggle, survival, and recovery.

Drawing from his years as a farmer and now as a mental health advocate, Gerry takes audiences through the realities of mental illness that too often remain hidden in rural communities. He speaks openly about the toll that stress, expectations, and identity can take, and how alcohol became a coping mechanism that nearly cost him everything. With candour and courage, he discusses moments of despair and thoughts of suicide, while offering hope and perspective on the road to healing.

Gerry's story is not only one of personal recovery but also of rediscovering purpose. Through vulnerability and humour, he invites others to reflect on their own mental health and to recognize that asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness.

Attendees will leave this session with a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by those living with mental illness and addiction, particularly in the agricultural sector. More importantly, they will be reminded that no matter how dark life may seem, recovery is possible—and connection, compassion, and honesty are powerful tools for change.

**Working with Integrative Skills to Promote Healing  
(30 minutes)**

**Navsharn Dhaliwal, Kelly Flanagan**

Holistic (integrative) nurses are licensed nurses, trained in whole-person care, recognizing everyone's uniqueness. They provide support to address gaps in health and nurture the body, mind, and soul. The emphasis of Integrative nursing is to promote health and wellbeing in every dimension of health (physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual) recognizing that all these dimensions are interconnected. The focus is working with each dimension to promote healing recognizing the connections. It is strengths based focus. The assessments are thorough assessing each dimension including social, environmental, occupational, and other areas deemed necessary. It is based on the client and what they are willing to share in the sessions. Many things can be addressed from the dimensions such as mental status, chronic pain, life transitions, sleep patterns, nutrition, physical activity, and not limited to these areas. Goals are then created with the client's strengths in mind. As an integrative holistic nurse there are some nurses trained in integrative modalities- such as Reiki, Cannabis Nursing, Nutrition, Somatic, counselling, and many other areas. Integrative Holistic Nursing involves working with allied health professionals for the client's optimal well-being. This is newer in Canada and in Manitoba. In the United States there are many Holistic Nurses and Nurse Coaches practicing with effective results.

**Social Empowerment and Student Leader Well-Being  
(30 minutes)**

**Marsha Harris**

The Brandon University Peer Wellness Educator program is a research-informed program facilitated for-students-by-students to promote mental health. Student leaders, known as Peer Wellness Educators (PWEs), are recruited each year to collaborate on the design and facilitation of thematic wellness events for their academic peers that align with the challenges faced by post-secondary students. While the program itself offers opportunity for wellness education that benefits the campus community, this study was designed to explore if there were also benefits related to well-being for the student leaders.

The PWE program design aligns with the Socially Empowered Learning Framework (Martin & Calvert, 2018), an approach to instructional design using "group based, agency-rich opportunities that address real-world issues and make a positive social impact" (Martin & Calvert, 2018, p. 28). Empirical findings on social empowerment include significant increases in collective efficacy, group potency, and shared agency (Buck et al., 2020; Martin, 2018; Martin & Calvert, 2018; Martin & Harris, 2022). The study to be presented is a recently completed iterative qualitative case study that investigated social empowerment and well-being based on the PWE student leaders' experiences. This study found that student leaders engaged in this socially empowered context experienced positive shifts in five areas of their self-perception: purpose, belonging, confidence, self-efficacy, and sense of fulfilment. In addition, these student leaders experienced positive shifts in their social well-being and mental well-being.

In this presentation, participants will explore their understanding of socially empowered learning; learn about impacts of group-based experiences on leaders' self-perception, social well-being, and mental well-being; and be provided recommendations for designing group-based programs that support leaders' social empowerment and well-being.

**The Effects of Personality and Conflict Handling on Friendship Quality  
(30 minutes)**

**Anuri Rejoice Okechukwu  
Susan Chang Su**

Friendship plays an important role in maintaining and improving mental health. It can provide social and emotional support, a sense of belonging, and offer closeness and companionship. It is a protective factor against mental health struggles. Personality can shape how friendships form, maintain, and develop, and can influence how to handle conflicts, which are inevitable and can challenge the quality of these relationships, particularly in emerging adulthood. This study explored how the Big Five personality traits mediate the relationship between conflict-handling styles and friendship quality among university students. The goal was to understand not only which conflict styles promote healthy friendships, but also how personality influences these outcomes.

A total of 133 students from a Canadian university participated in the study (95 female, 37 male). Participants completed online questionnaires measuring personality traits, conflict-handling styles based on Rahim's model, and friendship quality dimensions such as closeness, security, companionship, and help.

The results revealed that constructive conflict-handling styles like collaborating, accommodating, and compromising were positively associated with friendship quality, while avoiding and dominating styles showed negative associations. Agreeableness and conscientiousness partially mediated these links, especially between accommodating and closeness/security, and between compromising and help/companionship.

These findings underscore the significant role of personality in shaping how young adults navigate interpersonal challenges. Understanding these dynamics provides valuable insight into why some friendships thrive after conflict while others weaken. This research contributes to the growing body of literature on personality and conflict resolution, offering practical implications for educators, counselors, and practitioners who support young adults in developing effective communication and relationship maintenance skills.

**Childbirth and Parenthood after Sexual Violence: Insights from a Pilot Study  
(30 minutes)**

**Nadine Smith  
Krista Murray  
Candice Waddell-Henowitch  
Andrea Thomson, Natalie Mota**

What do people need to know?

For individuals with a history of sexual violence, the experience of childbirth can be emotionally complex and, at times, re-traumatizing. Although much of the existing research has focused on the impact of childhood sexual trauma, little is known about how sexual violence experienced in adulthood shapes childbirth and the early transition to parenthood. Having a deeper understanding in this area is vital to fostering trauma-informed, survivor-centered approaches within perinatal care.

Why is this research/work important?

Significant gaps remain in policies and clinical practices addressing the needs of survivors of adult sexual violence. Recognizing and closing these gaps is key to ensuring equitable, compassionate, and respectful maternity care that prioritizes emotional safety and autonomy.

How was this research/work conducted?

Guided by a trauma-informed qualitative approach, semi-structured interviews were conducted with birthing individuals living in a Canadian province who had given birth since January 2022. Thematic analysis explored how experiences of sexual violence affected participants' emotional safety, sense of control, and interactions with care providers throughout childbirth and early parenthood.

What did the researchers find?

Findings suggest that adult sexual violence can profoundly impact feelings of safety, trust, and bodily autonomy during childbirth. Participants emphasized the importance of compassionate communication, choice, and control throughout their birthing experiences.

How can this research/work be used going forward?

This study highlights the need to embed trauma-informed and advocacy-focused practices across perinatal and maternal health systems. Incorporating trauma awareness into protocols, strengthening provider communication skills, and fostering reflective practice can enhance emotional and physical safety for survivors. By adopting these approaches, health systems can create more supportive and equitable childbirth and postpartum experiences for all.

**Exploring Manitoba's Resources for Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence  
in Rural, Remote, and Northern Regions  
(30 minutes)**

**Hillary Derewianchuk  
Andrea Thomson  
Candice Waddell-Henowitch  
Nadine Smith, Rainer Schira, Krista Murray, Sherri Reimer**

What do people need to know?

Gender-diverse individuals in rural settings face a higher risk of experiencing intimate partner violence (IPV) and sexual violence (SV). Women in these areas often encounter more severe forms of violence and are less likely to report incidents or seek support. Geographic isolation, limited access to services, and stigma create significant barriers to obtaining care. Moreover, the close-knit nature of smaller communities means survivors may frequently encounter their perpetrators, compounding experiences of trauma.

Why is this research/work important?

Due to these barriers, the research team investigated available resources for IPV and SV, in RRN Manitoba. The team's aim was to compile a comprehensive and accessible directory of organizations offering IPV and SV support across these regions.

How was/is this research/work conducted?

The research began by conducting searches of available resources obtained from websites and Facebook pages. From there, interviews were conducted with a representative from each organization to confirm their services. In collaboration with the graphic artist, a visually engaging resource map that consolidated this information into an easy-to-use guide. The final step involved presenting the resource to support workers at the Manitoba Association of Women's Shelters to ensure completeness and accuracy.

What did the researchers find?

The compiled resource highlights the range and distribution of IPV and SV services available across RRN Manitoba. Findings suggest that there are more supports dedicated to IPV than to SV, which requires additional investigation and funding.

How can this research/work be used going forward?

The resource booklet serves as a practical tool for service providers, healthcare professionals, and individuals seeking assistance in RRN Manitoba. It offers a quick-reference guide for connecting with relevant supports during times of crisis. Moving forward, Klinik Community Health will maintain and update the resource to ensure it remains current and comprehensive.

**Interdisciplinary Collaboration in Sexual Violence Education through Visual Storytelling  
(60 minutes)**

**Laura Van Mulligen  
Candice Waddell-Henowitch  
Angela Voutier  
Krista Murray**

**What do people need to know?**

One in four women experience sexual violence before the age of 24, yet only about 5% report their experiences. Many victims/survivors delay disclosure for weeks, years, or may never share their stories. Barriers such as victim blaming, shaming, disbelief, and rape myths—rooted in stigma and heteropatriarchal norms—contribute to silence and isolation.

**Why is this research important?**

Sexual violence has serious impacts on mental health, including post-traumatic stress and substance use disorders. Health care professionals are often the first point of contact, yet research shows that nurses and providers may lack empathy or hold harmful attitudes. These responses can re-traumatize survivors and damage trust in care. This study explored the use of a graphic novella in nursing and psychiatric nursing classes to reduce rape myths, increase awareness of consent, and promote bystander intervention.

**How was this research conducted?**

Third year undergraduate nursing and psychiatric nursing students enrolled in Sexual Health and Interpersonal Violence courses participated in an educational session using a graphic novella titled “It Happened to Me and It’s Not OK: Sharing Stories of Sexual Violence.” Students completed pre- and post-tests and shared feedback through focus groups and open-ended questions.

**What did the researchers find?**

Students found the novella to be engaging and impactful. The results of the pre-post test showed increased awareness, empathy, and understanding of sexual violence, consent, and rape myths. Many felt more prepared to offer trauma-informed care and suggested broader applications for the novella in other educational settings.

**How can this research be used going forward?**

This presentation highlights the creation, collaboration, and evaluation of the graphic novella. Findings supports its use in nursing curricula and suggest future adaptations for high school education to promote early awareness and prevention.

**Sexual Health Practices of International Students in Higher Education  
(30 minutes)**

**Nadine Smith  
Favour Iykeokorochoa**

Jan Marie Graham, Candice Waddell-Henowitch,  
Danielle De Moissac, Krista Callahan

What do people need to know?

International students may face unique challenges in accessing sexual health information and resources, particularly when navigating different cultural norms and educational experiences. Understanding their needs and preferences is critical to providing effective, accessible, and culturally inclusive sexual health supports.

Why is this research/work important?

Access to comprehensive sexual health information supports informed decision-making, personal well-being, and healthy relationships. Identifying gaps in knowledge and preferred learning methods can guide post-secondary educational institutes in creating inclusive programs that empower students and promote safer sexual health practices.

How was/is this research/work conducted?

A study was conducted in 2024 with international students using an exploratory qualitative approach. A total of 18 participants included undergraduate students from 11 different countries, most from West Africa. Data was collected related to participants' sexual health education, knowledge, current needs, and preferred resources.

What did the researchers find?

Several students had received sexual health education in high school, primarily covering HIV/AIDS, abstinence, and contraception. Participants expressed a desire for more comprehensive information about women's rights, gender equality, consent, relationships and boundaries, and sexual health. Students highlighted a range of needs and preferred resources to support sexual health and wellness on campus.

How can this research/work be used going forward?

Findings from this study can help universities design sexual health programs that are culturally inclusive and responsive to the needs of international students. By providing accessible resources and targeted support, institutions can empower students to make informed decisions about their sexual health, foster confidence in navigating relationships and boundaries, and promote equity across campus communities.

**Belonging and Thriving: Supporting Visible Minority  
Nursing and Psychiatric Nursing Students  
(30 minutes)**

**Nadine Smith**

Kathryn Chachula, Nora Ahmad, Aloysius Anyichie

What do people need to know?

Visible minority nursing and psychiatric nursing students may face unique challenges that affect their sense of belonging and coping within their academic programs. Understanding these experiences is essential to identify supports, strategies, and resources that enhance students' well-being and academic success.

Why is this research/work important?

Feeling a sense of belonging and having effective coping strategies are critical for student retention, engagement, and overall success. By exploring the experiences of visible minority students, this study aims to inform initiatives and practices that foster inclusive and supportive learning environments.

How was/is this research/work conducted?

This study uses a multiple-methods approach. An online survey is conducted with nursing and psychiatric nursing students in years two, three, and four to assess their sense of belonging and coping. Semi-structured interviews are held with students who self-identify as visible minorities to understand their lived experiences.

What did the researchers find?

The study highlights key factors that help visible minority students feel included, supported, and capable of managing academic stress. Students identified resources, supports, and strategies that enhance their sense of belonging and coping, as well as gaps where additional support would be valuable.

How can this research/work be used going forward?

Findings can guide universities and program leaders in developing targeted supports, resources, and inclusive practices that strengthen belonging, reduce stress, and promote student success. Implementing these strategies can create more equitable, supportive academic environments, and enhance the overall experience for visible minority nursing and psychiatric nursing students.

**Stress and Coping Among Brandon University's International Students  
(30 minutes)**

**Jake Saurette  
Kathryn Chachula**

**Background:** International post-secondary students are an at-risk population with high rates of psychological distress and low mental health literacy. Lazarus (2000) emphasized that to understand the phenomena of stress and coping, it must be studied holistically, by integrating both quantitative and qualitative perspectives.

**Design & Method:** Guided by Lazarus and Folkman's transactional theory of stress and coping, this study's objectives were to apply a multiple method design to understand international student stress and coping. A peer-delivered mental health program was implemented at Brandon University with the goal to support international students' positive coping that included the development of mental health literacy, stress reduction, improved coping, and increased mental well-being.

**Findings:** Preliminary quantitative results and qualitative themes from the research will be presented based on data collected between January and December 2025. Braun and Clark's (2006) thematic analysis has revealed three emerging themes: the burden of pressures international students bear, the many domains of acculturative stress, as well as coping with being distant from social supports.

**Implications:** Findings can be used to inform universities on strategies to support the adaptation of its international students and their successful adoption of new coping resources.

# Poster Abstracts

DAY 1 • APRIL 29 | 1:00–1:30PM | ROOM • HSB 043

## **Benefits, Opportunities, Costs, and Concerns: Adult Student Perceptions of Artificial Intelligence**

**Andrea Antoniuk  
Tara Leach**

The application of artificial intelligence (AI) to education presents a double-edged sword. On one hand, AI tools may support learning, by providing instant feedback and enhancing understanding. On the other hand, AI tools may mimic the process of learning, and limit students' ability to develop functional and career-related skills. Given these opportunities and concerns, educators and researchers alike have urgently called for the establishment of ethical standards and guidelines. Logically, an important next step is to understand learners' perspectives of AI, for the purposes of supporting learners (and instructors) in maximizing the benefits and minimizing the potential for negative learning outcomes. Toward this objective, in the present study, we developed a survey exploring adult students' a) perceived changes in mental health and social-emotional functioning; and b) factors that affect AI use. Educators, researchers, and students may find the results of our study useful in the development of intentional, value-driven AI standards and guidelines.

## **Engaging Professionals and Older Adults Across Manitoba on the Development of Tools to Identify Signs and Risk Factors of Social Isolation and Loneliness in Older Adults**

**Rebecca Alexandre, Nancy Newall, Verena Menec**

Social connection is essential for physical health and mental well-being. Communities across Canada and globally are working to develop strategies to help prevent and address social isolation and loneliness in older adults. Manitoba's Targeting Isolation Community Connector program aims to enhance social connection of older adults through training professional groups to help connect socially isolated adults to resources. Three training resources—CARED/AIMER, CARED/AIMER Conversation Starters, and HELPS/AIDER tools—were developed in both English and French language to support professionals. The CARED/AIMER tool captures five main signs of social connection such as feeling connected and participating in social activities. The CARED/AIMER Conversation starters tool provides prompts to initiate discussion. The HELPS/AIDER tool provides a structured way to recall five main risk factors (e.g., health-related, life events). Together, these tools follow a strengths-based approach, recognizing signs and risks while leveraging existing personal and social resources. The purpose of the present project was to engage with Manitoban French- and English-speaking professionals and older adults to gain feedback on these resources. Data collection aimed at French-speaking Manitobans is on-going and further data collection for English-speaking professionals and older adults will be launched soon. This poster will report on the process of data collection including via survey, one-on-one interviews, and focus groups. Preliminary results from the French survey suggest a sensitivity surrounding social isolation/solitude terminology. A one-on-one interview with a Resource Coordinator further highlights the importance of trust in asking about social issues or “questions chargées” and the need to look for subtle cues. Going forward, this research will help inform practices to engage professionals and older adults in the development of resources designed to enhance social connection.

# Poster Abstracts

DAY 2 · APRIL 30 | 1:00-1:30PM | ROOM · HSB 043

## **Project ECHO Mental Health and Addictions Manitoba: Rapid Growth and Sustainability Assessment**

**Sarah Erickson**

Jennifer Hensel, Krystal Thorington, Jocelyne Lemoine, Tina Leclair

Aim: Project ECHO Mental Health and Addictions Manitoba launched in 2021. This poster describes the scaling of our ECHO program, focusing on strengths and areas for improvement. Procedure: Data on the growth of Project ECHO Manitoba were tabulated and a condensed version of the Washington University Framework for Program Sustainability was used to summarize six domains related to growth and sustainability. Areas of strength are highlighted, as well as domains where we continue to focus on overcoming challenges. Findings: Since 2021 Project ECHO Manitoba has expanded from 3 programs to 7, increasing annual registrants 7-fold to 675 and annual participants 6-fold to 503. Strategic Planning – Alignment of ECHO curriculum with provincial priorities and formation of an Advisory Committee; Program Evaluation and Adaptation – Collection of cycle data based on Moore’s Framework to assess program’s fit to attendees’ needs. Impact on perceived self-efficacy and professional isolation ongoing. Expansion of evaluation efforts to include contextual factors, including impact at the provincial level is planned; Political Support and Funding Sustainability – Permanent funding from Manitoba Health replaced small grants and in-kind support; Partnerships – Linkages with professional organizations to provide expertise, healthcare networks to increase reach to target audiences, and informal groups to support the program; Organizational Capacity – Program manager and full-time coordinator hired. Retention of administrative staffing remains an ongoing challenge; Communications– Relationship building with regional partners and professional organizations have increased reach through frequent advertising and diverse channels for recruitment. Implications/Applications: Project ECHO Mental Health and Addictions is a rapidly developing educational initiative in Manitoba. Political support, funding stability, and partnerships have been key to success of Project ECHO in Manitoba. Strategic planning, evaluation and adaptation, organizational capacity, and communications are ongoing areas of focus for future growth and impact.

# Poster Abstracts

DAY 3 · MAY 1 | 12:30-1:00PM | ROOM · HSB 043

## **Moral Courage and Ethical Decision-Making Confidence Among Registered Psychiatric Nurses in Western Canada**

Jordyn McBride

**Problem Statement:** Moral courage is a critical attribute for psychiatric nurses, who routinely navigate complex ethical dilemmas in mental health care settings. Despite its importance, limited research has explored the factors influencing moral courage and its relationship with ethical decision-making confidence among Registered Psychiatric Nurses (RPNs).

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between moral courage, ethical decision-making confidence, education level, and years of practice among RPNs in western Canada. Specifically, the study sought to determine whether moral courage correlates with ethical decision-making confidence, and whether moral courage and ethical decision-making confidence differ according to nurses' education level and years of practice.

**Methods:** A quantitative, cross-sectional design was used, involving 80 RPNs recruited from western Canada. Data was collected using the Nurses' Moral Courage Scale (NMCS) and the Ethical Decision-Making Confidence (EDMC) scale and analyzed using one-way ANOVA, Pearson correlation, Kruskal-Wallis tests, as appropriate, to assess the relationships and group differences.

**Results:** The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between moral courage and ethical decision-making confidence. Ethical decision-making confidence scores were higher among nurses with graduate-level education compared to those with diplomas or baccalaureate degrees. However, no significant difference in moral courage scores were observed based on education level or years of practice, and no significant association was found between years of practice and moral courage.

**Implications:** This study highlights the interconnectedness of moral courage and ethical decision-making among psychiatric nurses, while suggesting that factors such as years of practice alone do not predict moral courage. The results emphasize the need for targeted ethics education, mentorship and organizational initiatives to foster moral courage within psychiatric nursing practice. Future research should explore moral courage and ethical decision-making confidence over time and through qualitative inquiry to better understand contextual factors influencing morally courageous behaviour in mental health care.

## **Exploring the Perceptions, Experiences, and Preparedness of Registered Psychiatric Nurses Transitioning into a Correctional Service Institution in the Prairie Provinces: An Interpretive Description Study**

Ashley Lemus

Correctional psychiatric nurses provide care in restrictive environments with limited resources where the primary purposes are security and control of offenders. This environment is unique from any other nursing environment, and nurses are required to adapt their skill set to best meet the needs of offenders. Current literature indicates that psychiatric nurses working within correctional environments are ill prepared to meet the demands of their job. This study provides a literature review outlining the role of the correctional psychiatric nurse, the transitional experiences of novice correctional nurses, the experiences of nursing care in a custodial environment, and the educational preparedness of correctional nurses. Interpretive description was used to answer: What factors promote or limit the preparedness of registered psychiatric nurses and their practice as they transition into the correctional environment? Schlossberg's Transition Theory was used as the conceptual framework to guide the understanding of adult transitions as they move in, move through, and move out of transition, specifically analyzing how that transition is affected by role, routine, and relationship changes as it relates to new employment. Further research is needed to understand the influence restrictive, correctional environments have on correctional psychiatric nursing practice. The findings will be used to discuss implications for psychiatric nursing education and practices in preparation for nursing employment in a correctional environment.

# Presenter Biographies

**Andrea Antoniuk:** Dr. Andrea Antoniuk is an assistant professor of educational psychology at Brandon University.

**Andrea Thomson:** Andrea Thomson is a Registered Psychiatric Nurse and Associate Professor within the Department of Psychiatric Nursing at Brandon University. Andrea's research interests include accessibility and accommodations in nursing and psychiatric nursing, mentorship, acute-care psychiatry, and gender-based violence. Andrea typically subscribes to qualitative research methods such as phenomenology, narrative inquiry, and interpretative description, as well as mixed method research.

**Angela Voutier:** Dr. Angela Voutier is an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Education at Brandon University and a former school leader for 14 years. Angela has 35 years of experience in the public school system and has taught undergraduate and graduate courses in the Faculty of Education for six years. She researches and writes in the areas of school and professional development, inclusive school leadership, inclusive education, and supporting student and staff well-being.

**Amanda Conway:** has served with the Brandon Police Service since 2016 and currently works in their new Crisis Response Unit, partnering with mental health clinicians to respond to mental health-related calls. A registered social worker with a Bachelor of Social Work from the University of Manitoba, she has extensive experience in crisis services, community corrections, and teaching at the post-secondary level. In 2020, she co-founded Project Resilience 911, a Manitoba-based, multi-agency peer support initiative for first responders, frontline workers, military personnel, and their families. Her leadership has earned her the Manitoba Mental Health Service Award, Canadian Institute for Public Safety Research and Treatment's Champion of Mental Health recognition, and the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Award. Proudly Métis, with the spirit name Two Tobacco Woman, Amanda works to build cultural safety and advance reconciliation between Indigenous communities and public service. Outside of work, she enjoys outdoor activities with her family and is a dedicated wife, mother, and grandmother.


**Ashley Lemus:** My name is Ashley Lemus and I graduated from the BScPN program at BU in May 2014. I immediately gravitated towards correctional nursing working at Brandon Correctional Centre for a short period, while simultaneously working in Acute Mental Health. Family would lead me to move to Saskatoon, where I obtained full-time employment working for Correctional Service Canada. All 11yrs of my nursing experience have included correctional nursing in some form. I began the Master program in 2021, recognizing the lack of research in correctional nursing.

**Bryce Fisher:** Bryce Fisher was raised on a mixed cattle and grain farm near Wawanesa, Manitoba, and is a proud fourth generation "Aggie" with a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture from the University of Manitoba. After two decades of owning and operating his own apiary, Bryce returned to school to pursue a Psychiatric Nursing degree at Brandon University. His lived experience with farm stress, mental health challenges, and recovery, fuels his passion for fostering connection and resilience in the agricultural community. As a Research Assistant with the Centre for Critical Studies of Rural Mental Health, Bryce works to bridge the worlds of agriculture and mental health through research, peer support, and advocacy.

**Candice Waddell-Henowitch:** Dr. Waddell-Henowitch is a Registered Psychiatric Nurse and Associate Professor in the Faculty of Health Studies. Her research and advocacy focus on improving health care systems through feminist, anti-racist, and decolonizing approaches, with particular attention to the experiences of women and individuals marginalized by gender, sexual violence, and trauma.

**Catherine Baxter:** Catherine Baxter RN PhD, is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Health Studies at Brandon University. Her current research focuses on the integration of planetary health concepts into undergraduate nursing curricula, moral distress and community health nursing, accessibility and accommodations for nursing and psychiatric nursing students, and the integration of internationally educated nurses into the health workforce.

**Dominique Héту:** Dominique Héту is an Associate Professor in the Department of Francophone Studies and Languages at Brandon University. She specializes in comparative literary and cultural studies, with a particular interest in vulnerability narratives, poetics of ordinary care, and representations of belonging, responsibility, and relationality.



**Favour lyke lykeokorocho:** is a Biomedical Science graduate and Research Assistant at Brandon University, with experience in both laboratory science and community mental health. Favour is passionate about bridging research and real-world impact to improve well-being. He is part of a research team that is exploring sexual health practices among post-secondary international students, with a focus on understanding cultural influences and promoting inclusive sexual health education and access to needed resources in Canadian institutions.

**Geoffrey Thompson:** Geoffrey Thompson is a Registered Nurse and Psychological Health and Safety Advisor with experience supporting diverse and newcomer workforces across Manitoba. With a Master of Public Health and a background in cross-cultural health and community development, he helps workplaces build trust, reduce psychosocial risks, and create conditions where people feel safe, supported, and able to thrive. Geoffrey currently leads workplace mental health initiatives at the MFL Occupational Health Centre.

**Gerry Friesen:** Gerry Friesen, also known as The Recovering Farmer, shares his lived experience with mental health challenges and addictions. A former farmer turned mental health advocate, author, and straight-shooting storyteller, he is unafraid to tackle tough stuff with honesty, heart, and a deep respect for rural resilience. A combination of his own journey with anxiety and depression, training in conflict resolution and intensive counseling training provide him the tools to help others who are struggling.

**Gordon Flett:** Dr. Flett is most recognized for his seminal contributions to research and theory on the role of perfectionism in psychopathology. His collaborative work with Dr. Paul Hewitt of the University of British Columbia on perfectionism has received widespread national and international attention and has been the subject of numerous media stories, including coverage on CTV, CNN, and the BBC. This work has been supported by major research grants from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Other current research interests include the study of feelings of mattering to others in health and well-being. Also, in keeping with his interest in adjustment across the lifespan, Dr. Flett is conducting programmatic research on the nature and correlates of suicidality in the elderly. Dr. Flett holds a Canada Research Chair in Personality & Health.

**Gretta Sayers:** Gretta Sayers is an Assistant Professor of Music Theory at Brandon University's School of Music. Her research centers on music theory pedagogy and musical form and formal functions of Western Art Music composed around the turn of the twentieth century.

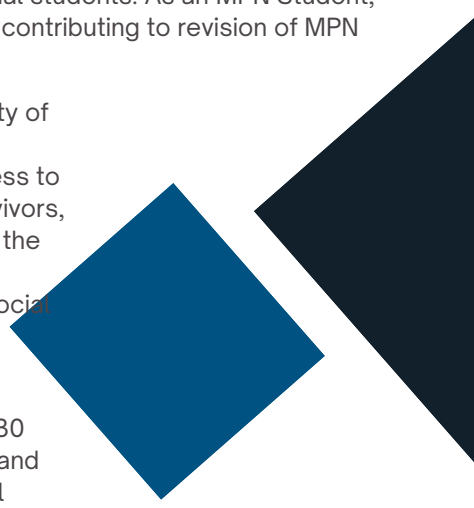
**Hillary Derewianchuk:** Hillary Derewianchuk is a research assistant at Brandon University's Rural, Remote & Northern Gendered-Violence Research Program. She graduated with a Bachelor of Science with a major in biology and a minor in religion in 2024 from Brandon University. In her free time, she volunteers at the Brandon Humane Society and as a coach for Neelin High School's track and field and cross-country teams.


**Jake Saurette:** is a Masters of Psychiatric Nursing (MPN) Student and a mental health Clinical Specialist. Her areas of interest are stress, coping, and mental health literacy among university students with a focus on international students. As an MPN Student, Jake is a past student-elected member on the MPN Steering Committee at Brandon University, contributing to revision of MPN Policies, Curriculum, and Student Admission processes as a highly valued member.

**Jan DeFehr:** Dr. Jan DeFehr is an associate professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Winnipeg. Informed by extensive publicly funded counselling/clinical social work practitioner experience, Jan's course development, teaching, and research focuses on building public access to peer reviewed critical analysis of the field of mental health produced by clients/ex-clients/survivors, professionals, and academics. An associate of The Taos Institute, she received her MSW from the University of Manitoba and PhD in Social and Behavioural Sciences from Tilburg University, the Netherlands. Jan is the author of *A Critical Mental Health Primer: Towards Informed Choice in Social Services, Education, & Healthcare* (2025; Canadian Scholars).

**Joanne Windsor Murray:** Joanne Winsor Murray is a Registered Nurse and Assistant Professor within the Department of Psychiatric Nurse at Brandon University. Joanne has been a nurse for 30 years and has held a variety of nursing positions in clinical and management roles in both rural and urban settings. Her research interests includes accessibility and accommodation, acute mental health, family systems, and expressive arts therapy.

**Jordyn McBride:** Jordyn McBride is a Registered Psychiatric Nurse, licensed in 2017 following completion of the Bachelor of Science in Psychiatric Nursing program at Brandon University, and is a Master of Psychiatric Nursing graduand having successfully defended her thesis in August 2025. She has worked in various areas of mental health including crisis services and forensic/forensic rehabilitation services. She is currently working as a Provincial Mental Health Flow Specialist with Shared Health.






**Joshua Van Mulligen:** Joshua Van Mulligen is the Supervisor of Collaborative Practice at Child and Family Services of Western Manitoba. A Registered Social Worker with a Master of Social Work (MSW), Joshua brings over 15 years of experience in child welfare, having served in diverse roles including adoption, child protection, and supervisory capacities. Joshua currently leads staff training in standards of practice, supervises the agency's Children's Therapy Program, supervises family engagement facilitators, and manages the Caring Dads programming by the agency. He also plays a key role in quality assurance initiatives, ensuring the delivery of effective services across the organization. His work reflects a deep commitment to strengthening family systems and promoting trauma-informed, collaborative approaches in child welfare.

**Kathryn Chachula:** Dr. Kathryn Chachula is a Registered Nurse with a diverse clinical background that includes community health nursing, medicine, postoperative nursing, critical care, and emergency nursing. She is Chair and Professor in the Faculty of Health Studies – Department of Nursing at Brandon University. Dr. Chachula's research centres upon teaching and learning in nursing education that includes newly graduated nurses entering the workforce, nurse and student nurse psychological trauma and supports, compassion fatigue, stress, and incivility.

**Kelly Flanagan:** Kelly (she/her) has been a nurse for 15 years, with a wide range of experiences, including acute, emergency, and critical care, as well as working in remote northern Manitoba nursing stations. She joined the CIINDE (Canadian Institute for Integrative Nursing Development & Education) faculty as an advisor for the Comprehensive Holistic Nurse & Coaching Certificate Program. Kelly has a self-employed practice in Winnipeg and has obtained her Cannabis Care for Nurses Certificate to support her holistic practice. She is always building her foundation of what holistic nursing means in her developing practice, and as a way of life. Her passions are learning about energy systems, dream work, and studying the effects of stress and trauma on our bodies (physical, mental, spiritual, and biofield). Her practice incorporates these aspects for clients and students as they navigate their learning and healing journeys. She would love for individuals to have more autonomy over their health and gain the confidence to take an active role in healing.

**Krista Murray:** Krista Murray is a Medical Anthropologist, who works as a Research Assistant with the Rural, Remote & Northern Gendered-Violence Research Program at Brandon University. Her interest in pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum has provided research opportunities in Southern Belize where she completed her Master's research, and now rural Manitoba. She is passionate about supporting birthing individuals and new parents.

**Laura Van Mulligen:** Laura Van Mulligen is a Registered Nurse and an Assistant Professor in the Department of Nursing, in the Faculty of Health Studies at Brandon University. Laura has over ten years' experience working with nursing students. Her research interests include supporting adult learners in the clinical and classroom setting within post-secondary education.




**Mariette Chartier:** Dr. Mariette Chartier is a Senior Scholar in the College of Community and Global Health at the University of Manitoba. Her main research interests are in the area of child and adolescent health, population mental health, and intervention research. She has authored over 70 peer-reviewed publications and 23 non-peer-reviewed reports. She has led government-funded reports on the Mental Health of Children in Manitoba, Mental Illness Among Adult Manitobans and the Health and Well-Being of First Nations Children.

**Marsha Harris:** As a therapist and scholar, my work has focused on well-being. I have been a therapist for over 20 years, with the last 10 at Brandon University. My research program includes student mental health and well-being, student leadership, leadership well-being, using plants to support well-being, arts-based meditation, and addictions. In my work there is a throughline and passion for well-being and inter-disciplinary collaboration.

**Matteo Di Muro:** Matteo Di Muro is an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Education at Brandon University, specializing in educational technology integration in schools, with a focus on teacher education, digital literacy, and AI integration and policy. He is currently a Ph.D candidate at the University of Regina.

**Melanie Elliot:** I am a wife, mother of 3 kids and 2 fur babies, a sister, a mental health advocate and lover of spirituality. I have previously been diagnosed with Major Depressive Disorder and Borderline Personality Disorder – but I personally now believe the Borderline was just ADHD topped with Complex Trauma. I never miss a chance to tell my people that I love them, and steal a hug.



**Michael Oduro:** Mr. Michael Oduro is a teacher in Manitoba who is currently completing his Masters of Education at Brandon University in the Faculty of Education.

**Mousumi Majumder:** Mousumi Majumder, Canada Research Chair in Genotoxicology and Full Professor in the Department of Biology at Brandon University, hopes to identify the environmental factors associated with breast cancer and find biomarkers for early detection.

**Nadine Smith:** Nadine Smith is a Registered Nurse and an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Health Studies at Brandon University. For over a decade, she has taught undergraduate psychiatric nursing students in clinical and academic settings. Her research examines issues related to mental health, nursing education, and the experiences of both students and healthcare professionals.

**Nancy Newall:** Dr. Nancy Newall is a long-time collaborator who have researched social isolation and loneliness among older Canadians drawing on large-scale national datasets such as the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging. The Targeting Isolation initiative was developed to engage with and provide research-based practical information to professionals, volunteers, and older adults on social isolation and loneliness. The Targeting Isolation website contains Manitoba statistics, blog interviews with community organizations, and free training e-modules and resources for professionals and community volunteers. To learn more, visit: [www.targetingisolation.com](http://www.targetingisolation.com).

**Navsharn Dhaliwal:** Navsharn Dhaliwal (she/her) is the Founder of Cultivating Connections' Nursing Corporation. The goal of Cultivating Connections' is to set realistic goals with individuals for them to gain balance in their lives working with their strengths. Navsharn completed her Bachelor of Nursing from the Red River and University of Manitoba Joint program in 2010. Navsharn has a vast experience in many areas of nursing primarily in Nursing Education. Navsharn completed the Comprehensive Holistic Nurse and Coaching Certificate Program and The Nurse Reiki Programs Level 1 through 3 at The Canadian Institute of Integrative Nursing and Development and Education (The CIINDE). Currently Navsharn is on the board for the Canadian Holistic Nurses Association as the Vice President. Navsharn is fascinated with integrative nursing care and healing modalities. She believes that imbalance in our dimensions of health lead to illness and disease. Navsharn is passionate about health promotion and working with individuals to understand their health and wellness needs!



**Rebecca Alexandre:** Rebecca Alexandre is a psychology major at Brandon University who joined the Targeting Isolation initiative in January 2025. Her work focuses on translating and adapting community connector tools into French to enhance inclusivity and reach among la Francophonie Manitobaine. With a background in art and education, she brings creative insight to research on science communication, social connection, and accessibility.


**Rejoice Okechuwu:** My name is Rejoice, I received a Bachelor's Degree of Psychology in Brandon University in July of 2025. I am interested in understanding human relationships and hope to pursue a career in counselling. I work in Manitoba Metis Federation as a Case Worker to support individuals and families overcome housing challenges and move toward a stable, independent living.

**Renata Truelove:** Renata Truelove is a recent graduate of Brandon University, where she majored in psychology and minored in visual arts. She aspires to work in the field of Creative Arts Therapies and is passionate about how artistic expression can support well-being and function as a meaningful research modality. Her research interests focus on integrating psychological sciences and the arts to generate deeper insights into complex human experiences.

**Sarah Erickson:** is the lead facilitator and coordinator for Project ECHO Manitoba, with a degree in Psychiatric Nursing from Brandon University and an Adv. BA in Psychology from the University of Manitoba. She draws upon her experience as a lifelong mental health advocate, and career in both acute and community care, to create a program that works to fill the gaps in mental health care in Manitoba.

**Saryn Hingston:** Dr Saryn Hingston is a Psychiatry resident at Rady College. She studied Medicine and has an MSc in Disability Studies from the Cumming School of Medicine in Alberta. She has ran programs for youth and adults with disabilities, involved in patient-oriented research, and is part of several national and international research and support groups for autism and ADHD. Dr Hingston occupies several privileged identities such as being/being perceived as white, educated, and able-bodied.





**Sheila Novek:** Dr. Sheila Novek is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychiatric Nursing at Brandon University (Winnipeg Campus). Sheila's program of research employs critical qualitative methods to explore the experiences of older adults, people living with dementia, family carers, and health care providers across community and long-term care settings. She is the Principal Investigator of a SSHRC Insight Development Grant exploring citizenship and engagement in long-term care.

**Susan Su:** Dr. Susan Chang Su is an Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology at Brandon University. She is a social and personality psychologist, and received her Ph. D in the Department of Psychology, and have completed three postdoctoral fellowship in the Department of Psychology and School of Nursing in the Faculty of Health in York University. Her main research topics include identity and self-conscious emotion study of experience and self-regulation of shame and guilt; cross-cultural study about parenting styles, and perfectionism studies; mental health of the immigrant women of children with developmental disabilities in Canada; mattering and belonging and well-being on international students under COVID-19 in Canada; acculturation, social support and loneliness on older adults under COVID-19 in Canada; mental health of employees under COVID-19.

**Tara Leach:** teaches English Language Arts, First Nations, Métis and Inuit studies, and Visual Arts at Prairie Hope High School.

**Tracy Young:** Tracy Young is a co-lead of the Centre for Critical Studies of Rural Mental Health (CCSRMH) and Research Facilitator for the Faculty of Health Studies, at Brandon University. Tracy is also Mental Health Counselor and Consultant in rural Manitoba, providing focused support primarily within the Agriculture Industry. As a Registered Psychiatric Nurse (RPN), she has an extensive history of mental health promotion and education, community capacity building, systems work and project management in both mental health and agriculture.

**Verena Menec:** Dr. Verena Menec is a long-time collaborator who have researched social isolation and loneliness among older Canadians drawing on large-scale national datasets such as the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging. The Targeting Isolation initiative was developed to engage with and provide research-based practical information to professionals, volunteers, and older adults on social isolation and loneliness. The Targeting Isolation website contains Manitoba statistics, blog interviews with community organizations, and free training e-modules and resources for professionals and community volunteers. To learn more, visit: [www.targetingisolation.com](http://www.targetingisolation.com).

**Victoria Miles:** Capt Victoria Miles serves as a Canadian Army Chaplain with the Royal Canadian Chaplaincy Service at CFB Shilo. With a background in spiritual care and a deep commitment to mental health advocacy, she brings both professional expertise and personal lived experience to her work. Capt Miles is passionate about creating inclusive spaces for healing and believes that forgiveness and deep acceptance - of self and others - is a vital part of that journey. Her approach blends storytelling, group reflection, and a gentle spiritual lens that welcomes people of all beliefs.

