

KEEPERS QUARTERLY

Official Newsletter of the Memory Keepers Medical Discovery Team (MK-MDT)

Purpose of our MK-MDT Newsletter

- Highlight accomplishments
- Announcements & updates
- Celebrate team members
- Give motivation
- Provide support
- Connect to community

WELCOME TO OUR SIXTH ISSUE
OF KEEPERS QUARTERLY!



MEMORY KEEPERS



VISION

Transformative research for brain health equity.



MISSION

Our mission is to engage Indigenous and rural communities in culturally meaningful research to improve dementia and brain health outcomes for all.



VALUES

- Strengths-based lens
- Two-eyed seeing
- Team science
- Community-based participatory research
- Six R's of research: Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity, Responsibility, Relationships and Representation

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Kristen Jacklin, PhD

03-04 RECENT NEWS AND EVENTS

Lunch and Learn with Dr. Melissa Blind and Sheamus Cavanaugh, Elder Advisory Council Meeting, Cultural Humility Training, Wisdom Steps, ICARE Retreat, AAIC Presentation with Dr. Antonio Guzmán, Dr. Genelle Lamont Awarded Alzheimer's Association Grant & Goodbye to Dr. Jordan Lewis

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DIRECTORS' UPDATE

A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Kristen Jacklin, PhD, Executive Director

As always, it brings me such joy to be able to share the amazing work that is being done by our staff and faculty at Memory Keepers each quarter. This edition is coming out a little later than normal because our Communications Manager, Brooke, welcomed her first child in April! Congrats to Brooke and her growing family. Over the last several months we welcomed some new staff members and a new faculty member to our team. You can read more about these new members in this issue. We are excited to see our team grow and are fortunate that we can attract passionate and caring individuals to maintain and grow our important work.

We have had a busy spring and summer, filled with team retreats, conference presentations, grant preparation and submissions, and community outreach. Dr. Josh Fergen presented results from our rural research projects at the 86th Annual Meeting of the Rural Sociological Society held in Madison, WI, at the end of July. Our Community Engagement Coordinator, Natalya Walker, attended over 60 in-person and virtual events for both our rural and Indigenous partner communities! In May, we held a community event where community researcher Collette Pederson presented preliminary research results to the Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa. This event also allowed for the community to provide suggestions on ways the MK-MDT can provide help or support to communities in Minnesota when it comes to aging, brain health, and health equity. We are working hard to stay up to date on what community concerns and aspirations are, as well as work to provide research updates.

Many of us travelled for our ICARE team retreat on Manitoulin Island, Ontario, Canada, in June. We held an art exhibition of seven paintings by Anishinaabe artist Leland Bell that depicted healthy brain aging teachings based on interviews with Traditional Knowledge Keepers/Carriers. It was a beautiful event that received local media attention. It was an honor to present these research findings back to the community.

Faculty member Dr. Genelle Lamont and Senior Research Associate Dr. Dana Ketcher were two of 24 applicants accepted to attend the Alzheimer's Association Interdisciplinary Summer Research Institute held in Chicago in August. This five-day program includes interactions with dementia experts and opportunities to refine grant writing skills. Dr. Lamont was also awarded an Alzheimer's Association grant that is featured in this issue.

I look forward to seeing us maintain this momentum through the fall months as we continue to work on grant applications and data analysis, and present our work to communities and at conferences. I end this note with immense gratitude to our MK-MDT team for their dedication and perseverance and wish you all a wonderful fall season.

Kristen Jacklin, PhD
Executive Director, Memory Keepers Medical Discovery Team

RECENT NEWS AND EVENTS

ICARE RETREAT

June 24-28, 2024



Our 2024 ICARE Retreat took place on Manitoulin Island, Ontario, Canada on June 24-28, 2024. It was an exciting time to catch up with friends and partners. Some of the events that took place were: Discussing ICARE project updates, a boat tour through North Channel with a historian, scroll teachings, sound bath, exhibit on Traditional Knowledge Keeper paintings with Leland Bell, and Creators Garden medicine walk.



HONORING ELDER WISDOM CONFERENCE

April 16-17, 2024

MK-MDT co-hosted a two day conference at Northern Lights Event Center in Walker, MN. Dr. Jordan Lewis was the keynote speaker. Red Lake Community-Based Researcher, January Johnson and Senior Research Associate, Dr. Melissa Blind also presented.

LUNCH AND LEARN WITH DR. MELISSA BLIND & SHEAMUS CAVANAUGH

April 29, 2024

Dr. Melissa Blind and Sheamus Cavanaugh, presented on the Addressing Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias Disparities: The American Indigenous Cognitive Assessment (AMICA) project.

ELDER ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING

May 29-30, 2024

The Elder Advisory Council came together at Larsmont Cottages to discuss project updates, partnership requests, traditional medicines, and applications for funding support.

RECENT NEWS AND EVENTS

DR. GENELLE LAMONT AWARDED GRANT FROM ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION

Dr. Lamont has been awarded \$200,000 over three years by the Alzheimer's Association for her grant entitled, "Minnesota American Indian Dementia Surveillance System." The aims of this project are to evaluate Tribal community members' knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions of dementia data collection, systems, and use to determine the capacity to link datasets to analyze American Indians (AI) dementia deaths.



CULTURAL HUMILITY TRAINING

June 3, 2024

MK-MDT staff and faculty participated in cultural humility training to practice self-reflection on how one's own background—and the background of others—impacts teaching, learning, research, creative activity, engagement, leadership, etc.

WISDOM STEPS

June 18-20, 2024

Team members from MK-MDT joined the Wisdom Steps Conference which encourages Elders to take simple steps toward better health. Activities such as participating in health screenings, attending a health education class, or enjoying a healthy living activity are promoted. Dr. Melissa Blind presented, "Connectedness: Impacts of isolation and loneliness on brain health" and there was a Community Dementia Listening Session hosted by MK-MDT.



DR. ANTONIO GUZMAN PRESENTS AT AAIC CONFERENCE

August 2, 2024

Our Post-Doc Associate, Dr. Antonio Guzmán, represented MK-MDT at the Alzheimer's Association International Conference in Philadelphia. He presented his project titled, "Therapeutic poetry program for Indigenous people living with dementia."



GOODBYE TO DR. JORDAN LEWIS

August 2, 2024

Dr. Jordan Lewis has accepted a new position as the Director of Research at the College of Rural and Community Development at the Center for One Health Research and the Center for Alaska Native Health Research, at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. MK-MDT is overjoyed that Dr. Lewis will be closer to his family in Alaska.



FACULTY HIGHLIGHT

More additions to our team!

CLIFF WHETUNG, PH.D., MSW

Assistant Professor

We are very pleased to welcome Dr. Cliff Whetung!

Dr. Whetung is a social worker and public health researcher. He is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Family Medicine and Biobehavioral Health at the University of Minnesota School of Medicine, Duluth Campus and faculty with the MK-MDT. His research focuses on the longitudinal relationships between social determinants of health, structural inequities, and cognitive health among Indigenous older adults in the United States and Canada.

He also applies productive aging frameworks to explore the impact of work, volunteering, and social engagement on brain health in later life. His research indicates that Indigenous older adults experience a large burden of structural inequities across the lifespan and that these modifiable risk factors are associated with accelerated cognitive decline in later life. Dr. Whetung is a band member of Curve Lake First Nation and received his PhD from New York University's Silver School of Social Work.



STAFF HIGHLIGHTS

More additions to our team!

Hailey Anttila, BA, BS

Research Assistant

Hailey graduated from UMD with a BS in Biochemistry and BA in Chemistry, May 2022. She assists

Dr. Genelle Lamont with research on dementia in Indigenous populations. Hailey is passionate about rural health care and hopes to continue her education to increase the positive impact on health and aging.



Elizabeth Fait, PhD

Post-Doc Associate

Beth Fait joined MK-MDT as a Post-Doctoral Associate in May, 2024. She comes from a background in project management and planning in healthcare systems and teaching in higher education. Her doctorate is in public health with a focus on mental health. Beth is working on community-based research projects that can create solutions to the gaps that occur between human services for marginalized populations.



Mitchell Rigert, MA

Qualitative Analyst

Mitchell joined MK-MDT in July, 2024. He recently graduated from Northern Illinois University with a M.A. in Anthropology and a Graduate Certificate in Southeast Asian Studies. His academic interests encompass the intersections of identity, collective representation, grassroots activism, media, and Indigeneity.



Elizabeth Weigler, PhD

Research Associate

Elizabeth is a white, cisgender woman who holds a PhD in Sociocultural Anthropology from the University of California at Santa Barbara. She began at Memory Keepers in June of 2024, and primarily supports analysis and knowledge translation for the ICARE project. From her previous research experience, she brings expertise in Collective Memory and Ethnoreligious Identity from CBPR and Post-Colonial frameworks.

When she is not working, she crafts, visits friends and family throughout the West and Midwest, and explores local canoe and backpacking routes.



Wyatt Cheney, MS

Qualitative Analyst

Wyatt joined MK-MDT in June, 2024. While originally from Southwest Iowa, he recently graduated with his MS in Geography from Kansas State University where he researched barriers to prescribed fire use among rural Kansans. Wyatt has a background in Geographic Information Science and mixed methods research, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative approaches in his work.



UPCOMING EVENTS:

International Indigenous Dementia Research Network (IIDRN) Conference - October 20-23, 2024

WANT TO BE A PART OF OUR TEAM?

We are hiring!

<https://memorykeepersmdt.com/careers/>

<https://med.umn.edu/memory>

LEADERSHIP TEAM



CONTACT US



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LINKEDIN:

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/memory-keepers-medical-discovery-team>

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