



# EXCEPTIONAL. UNCONVENTIONAL.

EPID@WORK STANDS FOR ENHANCING THE PREVENTION OF INJURY AND DISABILITY AT WORK. WE ARE A RESEARCH INSTITUTE AT LAKEHEAD UNIVERSITY LOCATED IN THUNDER BAY, ONTARIO. WE CONDUCT COMMUNITY-DRIVEN RESEARCH IN THE AREAS OF WORK-RELATED INJURY AND DISABILITY PREVENTION WITH A PARTICULAR FOCUS ON ISSUES RELEVANT TO NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO.

THE EPID@WORK RESEARCH INSTITUTE IS FUNDED BY THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR, IMMIGRATION, TRAINING AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT.

THE VIEWS EXPRESSED IN THIS PUBLICATION ARE THOSE OF EPID@WORK AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REFLECT THOSE OF THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO.

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**EPID**  
at work



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# MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

I am pleased to present the EPID@Work Research Institute's Strategic Plan for 2026-2030.

As we conclude our 2021-2025 mandate, I am incredibly proud of what we have achieved. We successfully transitioned from a newly established centre into a fully operational research institute. I am especially grateful to our team for establishing a sustainable foundation for the Institute, building strong community relationships, and generating critical data that reflects the unique reality of Northwestern Ontario.

As we begin this new mandate in 2026, our focus is shifting. We have spent the last few years building our capacity to conduct observational research to better understand the OHS challenges in Northwestern Ontario; now, we must increase our capacity for developing and evaluating interventions and applying those to real-world situations.

Our strategic direction for the next five years is driven by a commitment to action. We aim to close the gap between research findings and workplace practices. This means we will not only continue to identify the highest risks facing our workforce—particularly regarding mental health and vulnerable populations—but we will also work harder to evaluate solutions and put practical tools into the hands of employers and workers.

This plan aligns with the priorities of the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development (MLITSD) and Lakehead University, but most importantly, it aligns with the needs of our community. We remain dedicated to conducting research with the people of Northwestern Ontario, ensuring that our work contributes to safer, healthier, and more inclusive workplaces for everyone. I look forward to working with all of you as we embark on this next chapter.

Sincerely,



Director & Senior Scientist,  
EPID@Work Research Institute  
Lakehead University

Lakehead University-Ontario  
Research Chair in Injury &  
Disability Prevention  
Professor, Department of  
Health Sciences

## ABOUT EPID@WORK

EPID@Work Research Institute is a research institute at Lakehead University and is funded by the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development.

## OUR MISSION

EPID@Work's mission is to conduct collaborative, transdisciplinary, and actionable research with and for the Northwestern Ontario community to support healthy, safe and inclusive work.

## OUR VISION

To be considered as the premiere institute in Northwestern Ontario for high-quality research and knowledge mobilization resulting in healthy, safe and inclusive work.

## OUR MANDATE

Our mandate is to conduct research that addresses the unique occupational health and safety needs of Northwestern Ontario. We achieve this by:

- Addressing gaps in current OHS knowledge relevant to Northwestern Ontario.
- Building research capacity through the training of students and community members.
- Mobilizing knowledge into tools and other products and policies that are practical and accessible.



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# OUR VALUES

**Equity:** We will be fair and impartial in the treatment, access, and opportunities for all individuals, regardless of their background or circumstances.

**Inclusion:** We will create an environment where all individuals feel welcomed, valued, and respected, and where diverse perspectives and experiences are embraced and celebrated.

**Integrity:** We will demonstrate honesty, transparency, and ethical behavior in all interactions and decision-making processes, and uphold high standards of morality and fairness.

**Collaboration:** We will work together with others towards a common goal, sharing knowledge, resources, and responsibilities, and fostering a sense of teamwork and cooperation.

**Respect:** We will show consideration, courtesy, and appreciation towards others, recognizing and valuing their differences, opinions, and contributions.



# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Building upon the foundation established in our first mandate, EPID@Work identifies three interconnected pillars of activity: **Research, Engagement, and Training.**

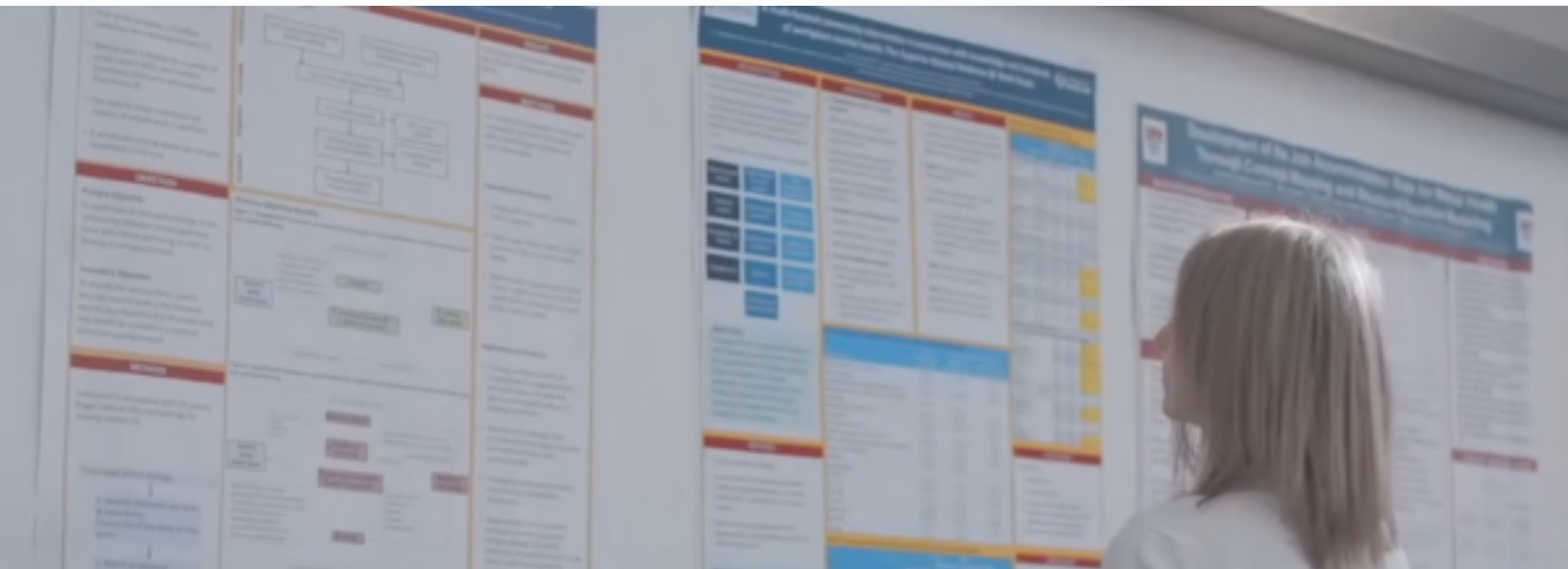
## Our Research

### Goal:

Conduct high-quality, community-based, transdisciplinary research in the areas of work-related injury and disability prevention, with a continued focus on issues relevant to Northwestern Ontario.

### Objectives:

- Conduct research with our community stakeholders in our core research areas (Workplace Mental Health; Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Accessibility (IDEA); Knowledge Mobilization & Implementation (KMI)), while expanding our focus to include the evaluation of existing programs to support evidence-based practice.
- Strengthen research capacity and innovation by leveraging the seed grant program to foster transdisciplinary collaboration and build the foundation for sustainable, long-term research initiatives.
- Ensure inclusive representation by expanding our research scope to better capture and reflect the experiences of under-represented and diverse populations within the Northwestern Ontario workforce.



## Our Engagement & Communication

### Goal:

Participate in, develop, and evaluate integrated knowledge exchange approaches with community stakeholders and the greater research community, moving beyond dissemination toward active implementation.

### Objectives:

- Continue the EPID Talks speaker series while introducing accessible, innovative formats to reach a broader and more diverse audience.
- Increase engagement with Health and Safety Associations and community organizations to build capacity in knowledge mobilization and impact evaluation.
- Develop experiential learning opportunities that connect students directly with stakeholders to foster the next generation of OHS leaders.
- Conduct research to identify effective ways of translating and implementing research findings into policy and practice.
- Require the Principal Investigator of any new project to meet with the KMI team first to build in KMI in all that we do
- Develop relationships with new partners including trade unions and Indigenous organizations





## Our Training

### Goal:

Provide an exemplary training and experience opportunity for the next generation of community-based transdisciplinary researchers in Northwestern Ontario and beyond.

### Objectives:

- Provide diverse student opportunities through theses, dissertations, and practicum placements. We will continue to engage students from health sciences while broadening opportunities for interdisciplinary placements to support our evolving research and knowledge mobilization needs.
- Maximize the retention of Northwestern Ontario talent by creating clear pathways for high-performing trainees.

## Our Team

### Goal:

Build a strong, supportive workplace culture where staff and students feel psychologically safe and able to perform at their best.

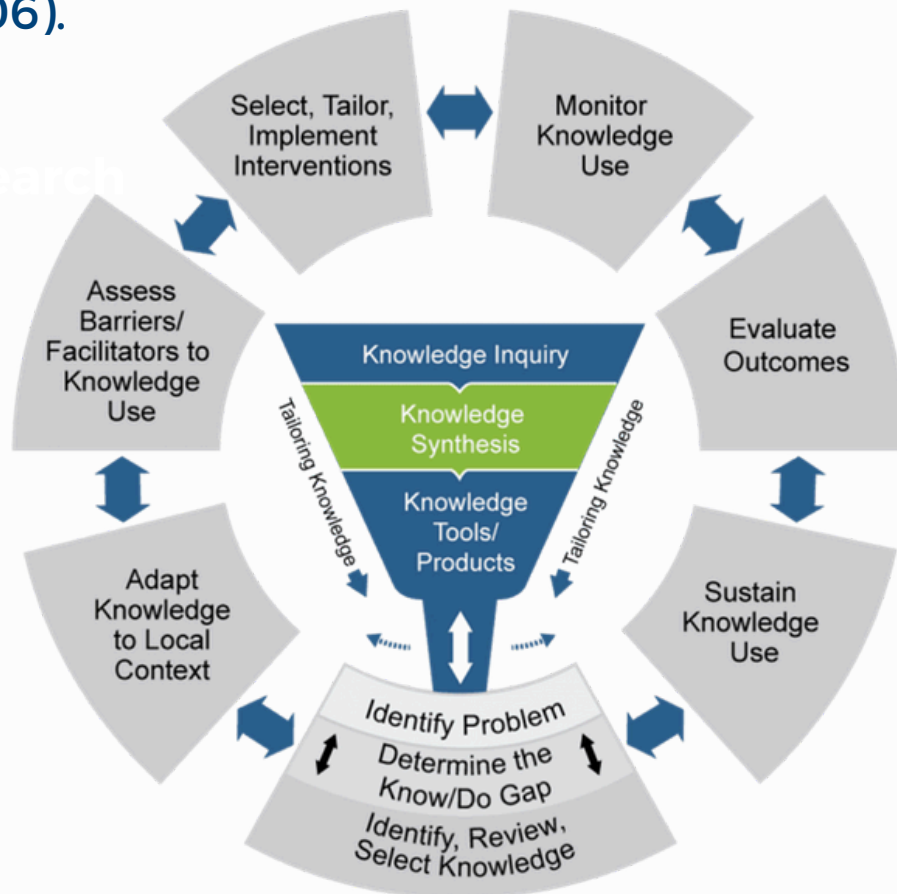
### Objectives:

- Build a strong team of internal, multidisciplinary scientists
- Focus on 'growing our own talent'
- Put a plan in place to reduce turnover and increase the retention rate of stellar staff
- Create casual opportunities for staff to interact and connect with their peers

# RESEARCH APPROACH

Our research programs at EPID@Work remain grounded in the **Knowledge-to-Action (KTA) Approach** (Graham et al., 2006).

## Our Research



**Original Source:** Graham ID, Logan J, Harrison MB, Straus SE, Tetroe J, Caswell W, et al. *Lost in knowledge translation: time for a map?* J Contin Educ Health Prof. 2006;26(1):13-24.

As the figure demonstrates, the funnel symbolizes knowledge creation, and the cycle represents the activities and processes related to the use or application of knowledge.

In our 2021-2025 mandate, EPID@Work focused heavily on the "Knowledge Creation" funnel. Moving into 2026-2030, our strategic focus shifts significantly towards the Action Cycle—specifically the phases of "Select, Tailor, Implement Interventions" and "Evaluate Outcomes."

We use community-based, transdisciplinary, and multi-method approaches to address each phase. However, we are now adding a layer of "System Evaluation" to this approach. By not only creating new interventions but also helping our partners evaluate their existing services using rigorous scientific methods, we close the loop between research and practice.

# CORE RESEARCH AREAS

Together with our stakeholders, we have refined our three core research areas to address the evolving challenges of the Northwestern Ontario workforce.

## Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access (IDEA)

**Strategic Focus:** From "Identification" to "Systemic Inclusion"

While our previous mandate established the unique risks faced by diverse populations in Northwestern Ontario, our next phase focuses on dismantling the systemic barriers to safe work and return-to-work.

- We continue to prioritize Indigenous perspectives on workplace well-being, ensuring our research challenges colonial definitions of productivity and addresses systemic barriers such as racism and stigma.
- We will continue our ongoing collaboration with injured worker groups, aiming to address issues of primary concern to them, including the identification of specific systemic gaps that trap workers with permanent disabilities in cycles of precarious employment and poverty.
- Building on our foundational research regarding newcomer inclusion and mental health, we will examine the intersection of cultural safety and physical safety for the immigrant workforce. We aim to develop broad-based strategies that help employers foster inclusive safety cultures, addressing the unique vulnerabilities faced by newcomers in the Northwestern Ontario labour market.
- Continue identifying and inviting other equity-deserving groups to become engaged with EPID.



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# CORE RESEARCH AREA:

## INCLUSION, DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND ACCESS (IDEA)

What steps will we take?	Who Will Be Responsible?	When Will We Check In?	When Will We Be Done?	How will we measure success in 5 years?
Continue enhancing existing relationships and build new ones with Indigenous organizations and communities	KMI team, Director, Scientists, post-doctoral fellows and students	Annually, every November	December 2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least 3 new Indigenous partners</li> <li>At least 3 new research projects conducted with Indigenous organizations/ partners</li> </ul>
Continue enhancing our relationship with the Thunder Bay and District Injured Workers Group	KMI team, Director, Scientists, post-doctoral fellows and students	Annually, every November	December 2030	A continued suite of research projects addressing challenges identified by injured workers
Build more relationships with Immigrant organizations and communities	KMI team, Associate Director, Scientists, post-doctoral fellows and students	Annually, every November	December 2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least 2 strong relationships built with Immigrant groups</li> <li>At least one research project engaging the Immigrant workforce in Northwestern Ontario</li> </ul>
Use data from our Northwestern Ontario Workplace and Worker Health study (NOWWHS) and other sources to identify further equity-deserving groups within the Northwestern Ontario workforce	Director, Scientists, post-doctoral fellows and students, KMI team	Annually, every November	December 2030	Identification of at least one additional equity-deserving group in NWO
Be an example workplace that fosters a work environment that prioritizes inclusivity, diversity, equity, and acceptance	EPID staff, Office Manager, Director	Annually, every November	December 2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All EPID policies respect equity, diversity, inclusion, and acceptance</li> <li>Identify at least one opportunity to enhance IDEA at EPID</li> </ul>

# CORE RESEARCH AREAS CONT.

## Mental Health in the Workplace

**Strategic Focus:** From "Awareness" to "Intervention Evaluation"

Mental health and wellbeing remain a primary OHS challenge. However, some local employers have moved beyond needing "awareness"—they now require proven strategies that work in the resource-scarce context of Northwestern Ontario.

- We will leverage our scientific expertise to evaluate community-based mental health employment services. Building on the findings from our workplace health reports, we aim to work with partners to determine which support models yield the best outcomes for individuals with mental health challenges.
- Building on our foundational work on psychosocial hazards, particularly in male-dominated industries (e.g., mining), public service, and remote healthcare, we will focus on developing and testing low-barrier intervention modules. These strategies will be designed for employers who lack dedicated HR departments to manage psychological safety and workplace culture.



# CORE RESEARCH AREA:

## MENTAL HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE

What steps will we take?	Who Will Be Responsible?	When Will We Check In?	When Will We Be Done?	How will we measure success in 5 years?
Continue building awareness and knowledge of mental health issues in Northwestern Ontario workplaces	KMI team, Scientists, post-doctoral fellows, students and staff	Annually, every November	December 2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A 10-15% increase in participant reach at EPID events about workplace mental health</li> <li>• At least one quarter of our annual publications address workplace mental health</li> </ul>
Develop interventions for addressing hazards in high-risk areas, particularly for small businesses	Scientists, post-doctoral fellows and students	Annually, every November	December 2030	Develop at least one new intervention to assist small businesses to address workplace mental health
Increase research specific to evaluating interventions/ supports used to address workplace mental health	Scientists, post-doctoral fellows and students, Director, Office Manager	Annually, every November	December 2030	At least two new workplace mental health intervention evaluation projects initiated

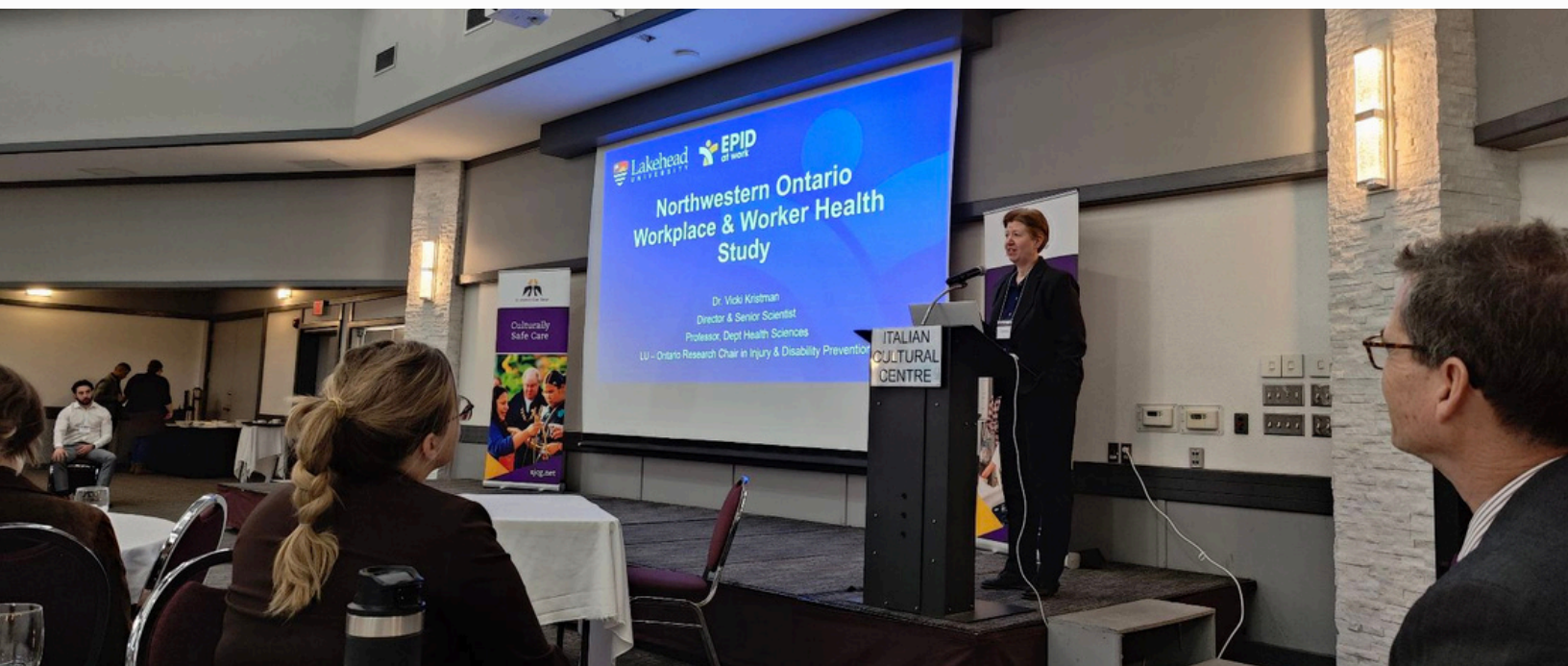
# CORE RESEARCH AREAS CONT.

## Knowledge Mobilization and Implementation (KMI)

**Strategic Focus:** From "Internal Capacity" to "Ecosystem Enabler"

In our first mandate, we successfully built a robust internal KMI team and started to embed the RE-AIM Framework (Reach, Effectiveness, Adoption, Implementation, and Maintenance) into our projects. Now, we aim to enhance and further our research in prevention intervention evaluation.

- Recognizing that small businesses struggle to translate research into practice, we will prioritize the creation of "implementation-ready" KMI products—such as automated policy generators and simple audit checklists—that reduce the administrative burden of safety compliance.
- We will expand our communication strategy to enhance our reach.
- We will continue to build our capacity to conduct evaluation research, including prevention intervention effectiveness.
- We will refine our application of the RE-AIM framework to better track "Adoption" and "Implementation." Our success will be measured not just by the reach of our research, but by its use and impact in partner organizations.



# CORE RESEARCH AREA:

## KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION & IMPLEMENTATION (KMI)

What steps will we take?	Who Will Be Responsible?	When Will We Check In?	When Will We Be Done?	How will we measure success in 5 years?
Develop OHS KMI products, such as tools, specifically for small businesses	KMI team, Scientists, post-doctoral fellows and students, Director	Annually, every November	December 2030	Develop at least two new KMI products specifically to assist small businesses to improve OHS
Expand our communication strategy	KMI team, Scientists, post-doctoral fellows and students, Director	Quarterly	December 2030	Increase our reach to relevant audiences by 10-15%
Build capacity to conduct evaluation research	Director, Office Manager	Annually, every November	December 2030	Recruit at least two researchers at the post-doctoral level or greater to enhance the conduct of evaluation research
Develop impact tracking mechanisms and ensure all projects are conducted with impact evaluation incorporated throughout	KMI team, Director, Scientists, post-doctoral fellows and students	Quarterly	December 2030	Impact tracking is incorporated into all projects with impact potential
Develop relationships with new partners, specifically including trade unions and Indigenous organizations	KMI team, Director, Scientists, post-doctoral fellows and students	Biannually, every May and November	December 2030	Increase our number of new partners by 50%



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