

JULY 15, 2021



Lakehead  
UNIVERSITY



ENHANCING THE PREVENTION OF INJURY  
& DISABILITY @ WORK RESEARCH  
INSTITUTE

STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2025

## ENHANCING THE PREVENTION OF INJURY & DISABILITY @ WORK RESEARCH INSTITUTE

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### **LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

Lakehead University's Research Institute for Enhancing the Prevention of Injury & Disability @ Work (EPID@Work) respectively acknowledges its campuses are located on the traditional lands of Indigenous Peoples.

Lakehead University's Thunder Bay campus is located on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabeg Fort William First Nation, Signatory to the Robinson Superior Treaty of 1850.

Lakehead University's Orillia campus is located on the traditional territory of the Anishinaabeg.

EPID@Work acknowledges the history that many nations hold in the areas around our campuses. EPID@Work is committed to eliminating systemic discrimination on both our campuses and to building and maintaining relationships with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples based on the principles of mutual trust, respect, reciprocity, and collaboration in the spirit of reconciliation.

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## **OUR MISSION**

Our mission is to bring people together to reduce work-related injury and disability through collaborative applied research and provision of education to enhance knowledge related to injury and disability.

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## **OUR OVERALL OBJECTIVE**

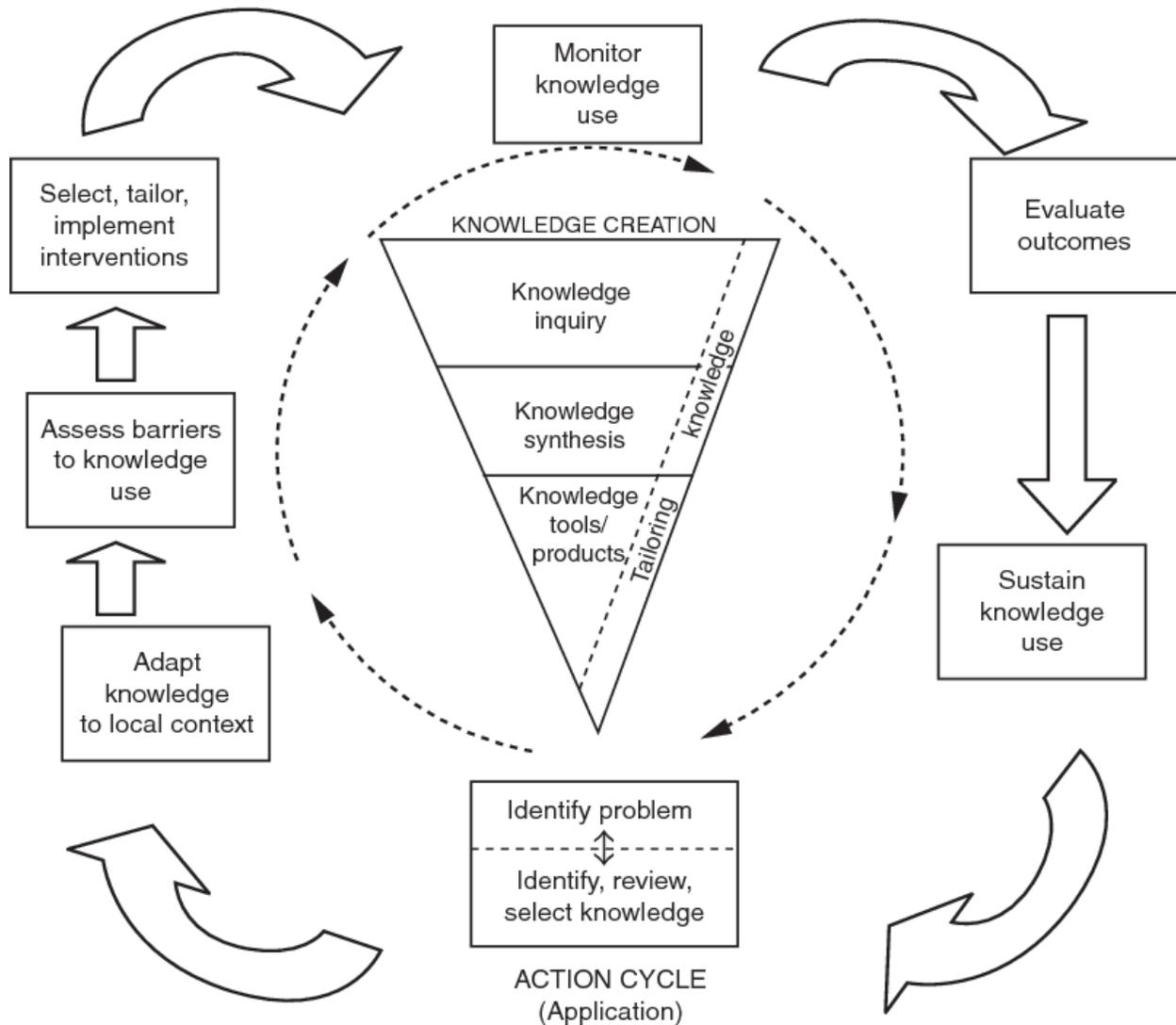
Information generated from our research will inform practice and policies aiming to improve health and social outcomes related to work in Northwestern Ontario and beyond.

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**GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

	<b>Goals</b>	<b>Objectives</b>
<b>Research</b>	Conduct high-quality, community-based, transdisciplinary research in the areas of work-related injury and disability prevention, with a focus on issues relevant to Northwestern Ontario	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct research with our community stakeholders in our core research areas</li> <li>• Establish a seed grant program to build research capacity and collaboration</li> </ul>
<b>Engagement and Communication</b>	Participate in, develop and evaluate integrated knowledge exchange approaches with community stakeholders and the greater research community participating in all phases of the research process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create three community-based Expert Committees for each core research area</li> <li>• Continue EPID Talks speaker engagement series</li> <li>• Partner with Health and Safety Associations to assist in knowledge transfer and project development</li> <li>• Develop informal student-stakeholder engagement opportunities</li> <li>• Conduct research to identify effective ways of translating and implementing research findings</li> </ul>
<b>Training</b>	Provide an exemplary training and experience opportunity for the next generation of community-based transdisciplinary researchers in Northwestern Ontario and beyond	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide student opportunities through theses, dissertations, and practicum placements</li> <li>• Provide training in knowledge mobilization, research methods, and partnership development to community members</li> <li>• Expand doctoral and post-doctoral opportunities</li> </ul>

**RESEARCH APPROACH**



Our research programs at EPID@Work use a knowledge-to-action approach (Graham et al., 2006). As the figure demonstrates, the funnel symbolizes knowledge creation and the cycle represents the activities and processes related to use or application of knowledge. Stakeholders and knowledge users are involved throughout the entire process, to ensure relevance, uptake and use of the research findings. We use community-based, transdisciplinary and multi-method approaches to address each phase of the creation of knowledge.

Graham et al. (2006). Lost in knowledge translation: time for a map? *The Journal of Continuing Education in Health Professions*, 26(1), p19

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## CORE RESEARCH AREAS

Together with our stakeholders and knowledge users, we have identified three core research areas for the Institute. The paragraphs below outline these areas, current strengths/ongoing projects, and future directions.

### **Equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI)**

This research area specifically addresses areas of equity, diversity, and inclusion. All workers should have equal opportunity to participate in the labour market without experiencing excess risk to harmful exposures leading to adverse health events, including injury, disability, or death. If adverse health events, there should be equal access to health care and compensation, such that all populations can experience a safe and appropriate return to work or appropriate compensation for their loss from the labour market. In Northwestern Ontario, these populations include Indigenous, immigrant, injured (or workers with disabilities) and young and older workers.

Major areas of interest include understanding labour force participation, work productivity, and disability from the Indigenous perspective. Indigenous workers' perceptions of work, work productivity, and disability may not align with the colonial definitions of these terms. We are trying to better understand these issues from an Indigenous/post-colonial perspective. Our partnership with the Nookiwin Tribal council has resulted in the development of a "Wiji" app to help Indigenous workers in a mental crisis situation in the workplace. We currently have a project ongoing to evaluate the app. Another project, led by Dr. Kathy Sanderson, is determining the inclusion and diversity barriers that are faced by new immigrants, organizations and communities within Northwestern Ontario.

Future projects intend to develop a supervisor training program for employers of Indigenous workers; investigate the potential for scaling up the "Wiji" app; identify risks associated with immigrants in the trades; and determine what factors are associated with workplace inclusion from the perspective of employers and workers with disabilities in the trades.

### **Mental health in the workplace**

A survey of Thunder Bay employers found that 40% indicated mental health as a high priority issue (Thunder Bay District Health Unit, unpublished). Mental illness is to the 21st century what physical industrial diseases were to the 19th and 20th centuries. Identifying, developing, implementing and evaluating tools and interventions designed to mitigate impacts of mental health disorders on workers and workplaces remains an ongoing challenge.

One of our goals is to understand how the workplace environment entitles or prevents bullying behaviour in workplaces. We intend to develop strategies workplaces can use to prevent workplace bullying and its impact in their organizations. Bullying and lateral violence have been identified by Indigenous workers to be a substantial problem. Therefore, we have a number of studies assessing the problem and attempting to provide strategies to assist those in need.

The Institute has attracted a number of students interested in workplace mental health. Given the importance of this topic to local employers, we are well positioned to address stakeholders' and knowledge users' concerns in this area for a number of years. We will continue to build on current collaborations with the Thunder Bay District Health Unit (Superior Mental Wellness @ Work), and others to address this important topic.

### **Knowledge Mobilization and Implementation (KMI)**

Historically, much research evidence would sit on a shelf in a library and not be followed through to action. This area of research focuses on the use of interactive approaches to create/co-create knowledge to increase its relevance and uptake into practice and policy. In addition, it seeks to build the body of evidence by also studying the knowledge-to-action processes and outcomes to identify promising practices in the implementation and ongoing use of research knowledge.

In the first year of this plan, the Institute will build capacity in this area through strategic hires of KMI Leads (Operational and Evaluation), two KMI associates (one with quantitative expertise and another with qualitative expertise), and a post-doctoral fellow. The RE-AIM (Reach, Effectiveness, Adoption, Implementation, and Maintenance) approach will be used to ensure that all current projects have a strong KMI component; opportunities for KMI evaluation among existing projects will also be explored. We will also create educational opportunities for both researchers and community members to build capacity related to KMI.

Moving forward, we will use the RE-AIM approach in the development of new projects proposed through EPID@Work, and explicitly include evaluation of KMI in funding proposals. Our KMI expert and associates will also develop specific projects for research evidence deemed ready for full implementation. Working with our many and varied partners and stakeholders, we will identify preferred knowledge products and tools to mobilize and implement important research findings to improve the health and safety of workers in Northwestern Ontario and beyond.



## EPID@Work

Enhancing Prevention of Injury and Disability @ Work (EPID@Work) Research Institute

**Exceptional. Unconventional.**