

2017-18 SHEELA BASRUR CENTRE

A Year in Review



Supporting public health experts and future leaders

Reflecting on the activities of the Sheela Basrur Centre (SBC) over the past year, we are reminded of the impact and reach of the Centre's programs.

In response to the evolving needs of the public health sector, we improved and fine-tuned our training programs, such as SBC's Crisis Communications Workshop, which was offered last fall (see the article on page 3). This session focused on the opioid emergency unfolding in front of us in real-time. This was an opportunity for partners across the province to convene, as they shared their knowledge, best practices and lived experiences. Given the long-term implications of this public health issue, demand for this training in the sector remains high. SBC is looking to offer this workshop again next year for those who missed it the first time.

Tackling another systemic issue, the 2018 SBC Lecture at the Ontario Public Convention (TOPHC) focused on Canada's treatment of its Indigenous people and examined truth and reconciliation in public health. This lecture brought forth timely knowledge, and demonstrated the Centre's versatility and responsiveness, connecting public health professionals with relevant information, impacting the sector and beyond.

The value and reach of our programs is always demonstrated through our connection with our award alumni. In this issue we caught-up with former award recipients (see the article on page 10), confirming that our initiatives are springboards for students, supporting their advancement to public health roles in the province and abroad.

Planning is underway to honour the 10-year anniversary of the Centre next year and we are also reflecting on what the next decade will bring for SBC. During this time, we think of Dr. Basrur and her remarkable communication and leadership abilities, which we continue to honour through our professional development activities for current and future public health experts.

Nearly a decade after the Centre's creation, we find ourselves approaching a crossroads as we look forward, predicting what the next ten years will hold for the Centre. Our focus for the Centre will remain on the vital skill building programs we offer and the development of new activities that respond to the changing needs of the public health sector. Our priority will move toward fostering the future generation of public health leaders, who we will entrust to tackle the next public health threat. This cohort will become the public health experts of tomorrow, continuing the important work we do and the work that Dr. Basrur was deeply committed to protecting the health and wellbeing of all Ontarians.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

**Student Travel Bursary
Call for Applicants
January 2018**

**Sheela Basrur Lecture
March 2018**

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Partners communicating in times of crisis



One key measure of strong health communication is whether or not it can be easily understood by those most at risk.”

— John Rainford, Workshop Facilitator and Director, The Warning Project

On November 29 and 30, 2017, a diverse group of 40 individuals working in public health and other sectors such as community health, harm reduction and Aboriginal health gathered at the Sheela Basrur Centre for a two-day crisis communications workshop. The workshop provided knowledge, information and skill building strategies focused on crisis communications within the context of the current opioid emergency.

Facilitator, John Rainford, of the Warning Project, focused on foundational crisis communications practices on the first day of the workshop and motivated an engaged group of participants to consider some of the communications challenges encountered during a crisis situation. These challenges included the communications demands required during an emergency, communicating with partners amidst uncertainty and rebuilding trust within the community. He also encouraged participants to think about aspects like transparency, stakeholders groups, panic, economics, political pressure, stigma and message coordination, when creating an emergency communications strategy. Scenarios relevant to the current opioid crisis provided opportunities for attendees

to work in groups to navigate through communications issues like message alignment among stakeholders, public outrage and email breaches/leaks.

Group activities generated in-depth discussions between the members (comprised of representatives from different organizations), as they worked together to tackle the communications barriers presented to them in the workshop. This approach reflected an actual emergency, where partners collaborate to overcome a common threat. The decision-making process strengthened group collaboration and prepared attendees for the skill building exercises they would tackle together the following day.

The second day of the workshop shifted the discussion from communications challenges encountered in the opioid crisis to actually addressing these barriers head-on. Group exercises focused heavily on communications planning and implementation. Similar to the previous day's exercise, groups worked together again to identify their top three communications challenges related to the opioid crisis and were tasked with creating strategies to address these barriers.

Attendees engaged in discussions around initiatives to confront the common challenges and suggested proposed strategies that included the creation of a task group/advisory council, a communications situational assessment, stakeholder mapping, communication coordination mechanisms and evaluation partnerships.

John Rainford and workshop attendees. (above)



Robert Crossan, Deputy Chief, Region of Waterloo Public Health and Emergency Services, Paramedic Services (above).

An interesting and lively panel discussion kicked-off day two and featured Dr. Jessica Hopkins, Medical Officer of Health at Peel Region and Robert Crossan, Deputy Chief, Region of Waterloo Public Health and Emergency Services, Paramedic Services. Both panelists shared their experiences, challenges around the opioid crisis and lessons learned in the field.

Feedback from the panelists stressed the need for community partners to align themselves with the media and other advocates to get messages out to the public to change public perception towards non-stigmatizing opinions.

Participants didn't come away with a resolution for this modern epidemic after the two days but it was still an opportunity for public health partners to connect with other community organizations to generate ideas and share experiences. This inspired thinking around the steps that we can take towards tackling this critical public health issue. Based on what we have learned from previous public health emergencies, we know that success is determined by our ability to collaborate and partner with organizations and stakeholders.

Since opioid use continues to be a critical public health issue, SBC will offer a communications session on this topic again in 2019. More information about our 2019 workshop will be posted on the SBC website in the coming months.



SBC workshop attendees (above).



Dr. Jessica Hopkins, Medical Officer of Health, Peel Region (above).

“ It was wonderful to be able to network with others on a very important topic – something we rarely have an opportunity for.”

— 2017 SBC Crisis Communications Workshop attendee

Affecting change through public health policy

The Student Travel Bursary supports students in pursuing their travel placements abroad, enabling a deeper understanding of public health from an international perspective. Through this experience, students witness how public health programs work in diverse communities while enhancing their leadership skills.



University of Toronto, Masters of Public Health student, **Leah Shipton**, was awarded the 2018 SBC Student Travel Bursary earlier this year. While in the process of completing her three-month practicum in the Gender, Equity and Human Rights department at the World Health Organization (WHO) in Switzerland, Leah took the time to update us on the important initiatives she is contributing to, concentrating on public health policy, human rights and global governance.

SBC: What is the focus of your placement?

Leah Shipton: During my placement, I am focusing on three main projects - two are 'officially' part of my intern placement and the third is an extracurricular activity.

The first project focuses on assessing the feasibility of developing guidelines for ending discrimination in health care settings. One of the core functions of the WHO is the development of evidence-based guidelines for various health issues (e.g. safe abortion, health services for people with HIV). These guidelines are used by health stakeholders, such as program managers, policy makers and hospital administrators, in different countries. Although some existing WHO guidelines incorporate recommendations to address discrimination in health care settings, there is no guideline available currently that summarizes the state of evidence on this topic.

Leah Shipton in front of the United Nations building in Switzerland.



Leah Shipton (bottom left) with the World Health Organization's Intern Board.

In response to this gap, I am supporting a project to determine the feasibility and appropriateness of developing guidelines for ending discrimination in health care settings. Part of my contribution to this project involves designing a conceptual framework for identifying non-discrimination interventions and analyzing 31 WHO guidelines to determine the extent to which non-discrimination interventions or considerations are integrated in existing guidelines. I have also presented and facilitated seminars on the analysis and the feasibility of developing guidelines for preventing discrimination in health care settings. Throughout this project, I had the opportunity to revise a chapter of the Handbook for Guidelines Development, which focuses on how to integrate gender, equity and human rights (including non-discrimination) into the WHO guideline development process.

Another project I'm involved in focuses on mapping the role of the law in WHO program areas. In understanding that the law can be used as a tool for promoting public health, this project aims to map out how the WHO is using the law in its various program areas. I conduct and synthesize the findings from interviews with lawyers doing work in program areas of the WHO. These findings can illustrate the different legal expertise at the WHO and how this expertise is used to promote health.

On top of that the day-to-day work for my placement, I have been contributing to the ongoing efforts by the WHO Intern Board to reform WHO's global internship program. In particular, I have been co-organizing and participating in the World Health Assembly Resolution Working Group to develop and advocate for ideas on how to implement the World Health Assembly Resolution 71.13, which aims to reform WHO's global internship program to make it more equitable. This includes addressing the under representation of interns from low

and middle-income countries, integrating more professional development opportunities for interns and providing stipends for interns with financial need.

SBC: What is the biggest challenge you have faced thus far?

LS: I am fortunate to have an incredible supervisor who is enthusiastic about hearing my ideas and supporting my professional development. Given my participation and contributions to a variety of diverse portfolios, the main challenge I have encountered has been balancing my placement projects, in addition to my participation on the WHO Intern Board and contributions to the Working Group activities.

SBC: How will your work impact future public health and human rights policies? Will your current projects advance public health and influence future public health programs?

LS: The projects I am supporting have long-term timelines, so my colleagues will be carrying them forward once I am finished my internship. I hope that my early contributions to these projects will positively impact public health programs.

By the end of my placement, I will have contributed to the early stages of a potential guideline that provides health personnel and policymakers clear guidance on how to address systemic discrimination against health workers and patients in health care settings using a human rights based approach. There is potential for this guideline to inform the design and implementation of programs, policies and legislation that will prevent and redress discrimination in health care settings

Leah Shipton at the World Health Organization.

worldwide. This guidance document has potential to address the significant health consequences of discrimination in health care settings, which often manifest as challenges related to health care accessibility and the quality of care received.

Public health is impacted by legislation and policies within and outside the health sector. The WHO often provides technical support to countries, advising on how to develop and implement legislation that will enable a health promoting environment for a particular health issue. This can include collecting and analyzing data on existing legislation to identify strengths and gaps, reviewing and advising on draft legislation, monitoring the implementation of legislation and providing in-country training to various professionals (e.g. ministry officials, civil servants) on relevant legal topics. Having the opportunity to map out how the law is being used across WHO program areas provides an important foundation for knowledge sharing and identifying additional ways to use the law in WHO programs.

SBC: Has your placement changed your perspective of public health? Influenced any future career aspirations?

LS: I am interested in preventing the potential negative impacts of corporate and business activities on public health. My placement is providing insight on what the WHO can contribute to the global governance of corporations (e.g. Tobacco Control) as well as the challenges it faces in regulating business and corporate conduct (e.g. resistance from powerful corporations that may not favour greater regulation). This placement will increase my awareness of the organization's successes and the challenges it continues to face. I am incredibly grateful to have this unique experience and perspective, which will be highly beneficial when considering a career in global health governance.



We commend Leah for the important contributions she is making to public health. Within her practicum, Leah is tackling critical public health issues that could potentially affect change through governance and policy work. This kind of work shapes tomorrow's leaders and the next generation of passionate public health advocates.

The Harvard experience: An Ivy League lesson in risk communications

The Centre's Don Low Communications Fellowship honours Dr. Donald Low, former microbiologist-in-chief at Mount Sinai Hospital and Medical Director of the Public Health Ontario Laboratory. The fellowship seeks to empower the next generation of public health professionals to advance their communications skills, equipping them with the tools necessary to become effective leaders and spokespersons.



Aldo Franco (left) and Jonathon Bouma (right).

Aldo Franco, Manager, Health Protection and Investigation, Region of Waterloo Public Health and Emergency Services and Jonathon Bouma, Manager, Environmental Health and Communicable Disease Control, Algoma Public Health, recently completed their Don Low Communications Fellowship learnings, opting to attend the *Applied Risk Communications for the 21st Century* course in March 2018 at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health in Boston, Massachusetts. Their learnings enhanced their risk management and communications skills to better serve their health units and the public health sector.

The course focused on elements of risk communications that included leadership in a crisis, motivating behavioural change and the emotional aspects of communicating risk. Aldo and Jonathon had the opportunity to converse with their fellow classmates, including a diverse range of attendees from sectors like the military, nuclear energy, environmental and academia. This networking experience was immensely valuable, offering attendees the opportunity to engage in lively discussions while sharing best practices in communicating public health data and knowledge.

The Harvard course also proved to be a source of inspiration for many who attended the program. Our recipients noted that the discussions amongst their fellow attendees reinforced the importance and reach of their work, motivating them to continue on their journey towards, making a positive impact on the health of Ontarians.

A better path forward: Reconciling our past to create a new future for Ontario



Panelist, Kevin Lamoureux on stage.

The 2018 Sheela Basrur Lecture, *“Promoting Truth and Reconciliation in Public Health”* unpacked some of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s (TRC’s) : Calls to Action, and explored how public health can enact the calls through the work that we do. In honouring Dr. Basrur’s leadership abilities and achievements, this year’s lecture inspired each of us to become advocates and leaders for advancing the calls to action as we turn our attention to themes like health equity, a topic Dr. Basrur was deeply inspired by.

Pat Mandy, Chair, Board of Directors, De dwa de dehs nyes Aboriginal Health Centre, Member of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, kicked off the session with a land acknowledgement. She shared some of her experiences as a member of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation, stressing the importance of advancing reconciliation in public health. Pat introduced our panel of experts from across Canada, who provided unique leadership perspectives and experiences from both Indigenous health and public health, offering strategies for advancing the calls to action in the work that we do.

At the national level, Kevin Lamoureux, National Education Lead, National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, provided a compelling presentation and inspired audience members to learn more about the TRC’s report and become advocates in affecting change. Kevin posed a question to the audience and asked if we wanted to be part

of the solution, as he noted the various calls to action around Aboriginal health, specifically access to health services for Indigenous people.

Sharing her provincial perspective, Dr. Maria Anderson, Medical Officer of Health, Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, discussed how Manitoba has addressed the TRC’s calls to action. She provided examples of how the province is tackling systemic issues that have impacted First Nations communities, Dr. Anderson cited the United Nations Declaration of Rights of Indigenous People as a framework for her presentation. Dr. Anderson outlined the vast Aboriginal health inequities and provided examples of how Manitoba’s Aboriginal youth are addressing the calls to action through political movement and advocacy.

Using a local lens, Dr. Rosana Salvaterra, Medical Officer of Health, Peterborough Public Health, highlighted how the TRC’s calls to action impact public health and the ways public health incorporated the calls into their work in Peterborough. She focused on section 50 in the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*, which encourages a partnership between First Nations and public health, generating inclusivity. Dr. Salvaterra outlined Peterborough’s efforts to propel the calls to action both on a municipal and local level.

The session encouraged us to reflect on how we can become public health leaders and allies in addressing the TRC’s calls to action. Although we cannot erase history, we can acknowledge the past treatment of our First Nations communities as we take steps towards reconciliation and creating a more inclusive space that promotes equity, respect and a better understanding of Indigenous culture.



Panelists, Pat Mandy (left), Dr. Maria Anderson (centre) and Dr. Rosana Salvaterra (right).

Where are they now? Catching-up with SBC's award alumni

We caught up with a couple of our alumni to get an update on where their careers have taken them since receiving their awards and how their SBC learnings inspired their professional paths.

Carla King

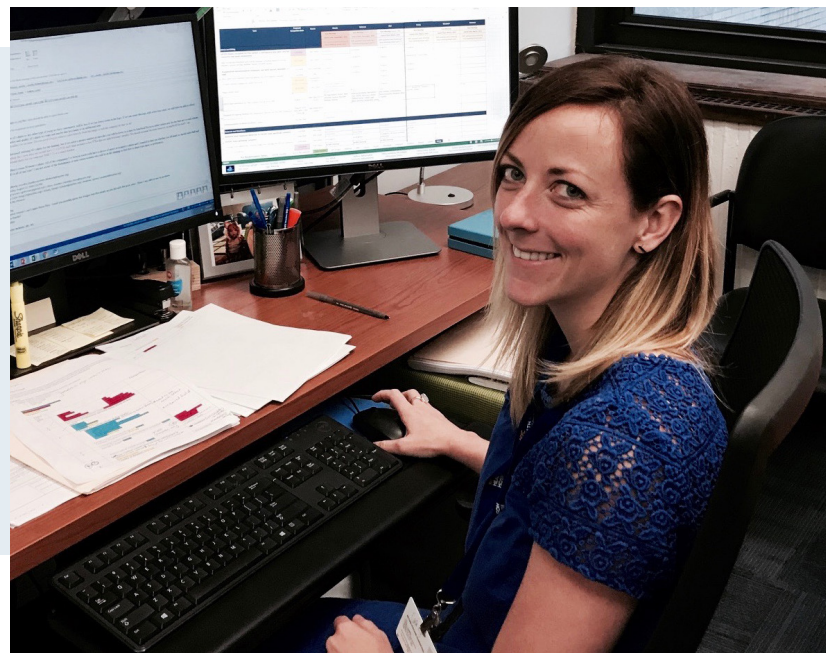
Award recipient: 2017 Student Travel Bursary

Travel placement: Haiti

Project: Peace Babies – a research project aimed at understanding the experiences of local women and girls with a child fathered by United Nations peacekeepers.

Graduated: Queen's University, Master of Public Health (2017)

Current position: Associate Director, NYC Health + Hospitals, Office of Behavioural Health



Carla King at NYC Health + Hospitals.

After graduating from the Master of Public Health (MPH) program at Queen's University, Carla landed in New York where she works as an Associate Director on the Consult for Addiction Treatment and Care in Hospitals (CATCH) program in NYC Health + Hospitals. A city-sponsored initiative, CATCH aims to tackle the opioid crisis by identifying patients with substance use disorder who are admitted to the hospital for other medical concerns. The program also connects patients with support services for ongoing substance use treatment.

In her current role, Carla focuses on program implementation and quality improvement while supporting the integration of mental health and substance use services into primary care settings, hospital inpatient medicine and emergency departments. Carla's work requires her to apply the stakeholder relations skills and leadership abilities she acquired while completing her MPH placement. She engages with stakeholders in academia, working closely with her partners in the Department of Population Health at New York University to evaluate the effectiveness of the CATCH program and utilize program metrics for continuous quality improvement.

Upon completing her practicum in Haiti, Carla was inspired to continue working in challenging environments, dedicating her career to addressing social inequities and the social determinants of health. For Carla, a critical takeaway from her experience in Haiti was the importance of advocating for populations without a voice. She observed many health-related programs in Haiti that seemingly failed to directly address the needs of the population. Her current position offers the opportunity to champion for vulnerable populations, and she notes, "I'm advocating for a population that experiences lack of housing, mental health issues and inadequate access to healthcare in addition to their substance use disorder. My goal is to listen and articulate the needs to those with the direct ability to support change."

Anna Vanderlaan

Award recipient: 2014 Communications Student Award

Winning campaign: #I Got My Shot For... - a communications plan aimed at tackling vaccine hesitancy.

Graduated: Queen's University, Master of Public Health (2015)

Current position: Health Promotion Specialist, Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health (WDGPH)

Anna has had a variety of work experiences in different settings since completing her Master of Public Health (MPH) program at Queen's University, most recently as a Health Promotion Specialist at Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health (WDGPH). Within this role, Anna focuses on leading health promotion activities related to situational assessments, programming planning, evaluation, community mobilization and capacity-building. As a member of the health unit's family health division, Anna's projects are concentrated on improving the health and well-being of children and their families, specifically the emotional and social development of children.

This challenging and diverse range of initiatives requires Anna to demonstrate her community engagement skills, which she considers pivotal to her success within her position. Her involvement in Dufferin County's local children's planning table, called Dufferin Coalition for Kids, (for which she is the evidence-informed planning coordinator), calls upon her strengths in stakeholder engagement. For this initiative, Anna brings together more than 20 organizations to facilitate the collaboration of this cross-functional group, who are instrumental in the creation of a community plan focusing on children and youth in Dufferin County.



Anna Vanderlaan leading a discussion at WDGPH.

Prior to her role at WDGPH, Anna worked in the Health Promotion, Chronic Diseases and Injury Prevention department at Public Health Ontario. Last year, she was recognized for her work in health promotion with the prestigious Health Promotion Rising Star Award. Her career has evolved considerably since graduating from the MPH program at Queen's University and receiving the SBC Communications Student Award. She acknowledges the SBC award for offering her the opportunity to speak publicly about a health promotion campaign. Often communicating with large groups, Anna relies greatly on her public speaking abilities in her career, claiming, "The SBC Communications Student Award competition provides a great opportunity for new public health practitioners to test their communications skills and meet new people in the field."

A special thanks to our award alumni for their contributions to this article. SBC is pleased to have supported both Carla and Anna in their career development.

Marking a milestone while embarking on a new era

As SBC prepares to celebrate its 10th anniversary, we reflect back on its early beginnings and look ahead to what the next decade will bring.

SBC emerged out of the passing of the *Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion Act*, which was created in 2007 under the leadership of Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health at the time, Dr. Sheela Basrur. This legislation established Public Health Ontario (PHO) as the province's first public health agency and it additionally declared that PHO headquarters would be named in honour of Dr. Basrur, just before her passing in 2008. Friends, family and colleagues of Dr. Basrur gathered at the official opening of the Centre in 2009 to raise funds for its programs. A painted portrait of Dr. Basrur hangs in the lobby, reminding us of the many contributions she made to public health.

SBC began as a vision, becoming realized through the work of the Centre's Advisory Council and PHO staff to support its initiatives. Current SBC Advisory Council member and former Chair, Dorothy Pringle, joined the Council shortly after the Centre was created and recalls the early discussions that took place among the members as they endeavoured to establish the focus for SBC. She explains, "The Council wanted to strike a balance by creating something that strengthened the public health workforce and, at the same time, paid homage to a brilliant leader who was so passionate about the work that she did in public health. We thought that if the Centre focused on skill building programs in the areas that Sheela excelled in, this would bolster the sector, while honouring her contributions to public health and her abilities."

Through discussions with the Council, the intention of the Centre emerged and remains focused on providing public health professionals with training opportunities in communications and leadership - disciplines that Dr. Basrur was highly skilled at.

As we look forward, we envision the next iteration of the



We thought that if the Centre focused on skill building programs in the areas that Sheela excelled in, this would bolster the sector, while honouring her contributions to public health and her abilities."

— Dorothy Pringle,
SBC Advisory Council member

Centre and what public health challenges might arise. If the increasing emphasis on public health strategies in addressing broader social issues is any indication of what lies ahead, we can foresee the need for future SBC programs to respond to the rapidly changing needs of the sector.

We cannot predict the public health risks and social climate we might encounter ten years from now, but we will prepare by turning our attention towards the next generation of public health professionals. SBC training will support tomorrow's public health experts in tackling future public health crises, whether emerging, long-term or systemic in nature.

Join us in commemorating this milestone. Planning is underway and more details will be posted soon at www.sheelabasrurcentre.ca or email SBC@oahpp.ca to receive information about this event.

Help support our next public health leaders

SBC training programs and awards are geared towards public health professionals and students, with a focus on communications and leadership development.

We are looking for generous supporters like you to contribute to the Centre to help us continue delivering our successful public health professional development programs. Your contribution means professionals and students across Ontario can strengthen their skills to become tomorrow's public health leaders.

Our programs

Programs like our Crisis Communications Workshop and Don Low Communications Fellowship are essential to the renewal of public health in Ontario. As public health issues continue to make headlines, our work in this sector is vital to the health and well-being of all Ontarians. The knowledge and training acquired through our programs and awards help to build capacity of future public health leaders and strengthen the public health system in Ontario.

Visit our website to learn more about what programs we offer [students](#) and [professionals](#).

Contribute to the Sheela Basrur Fund

Contributions made to the [Sheela Basrur Fund](#) support the Centre's programs and activities. Your donation will help provide current and emerging public health professionals access to experts in the media and public health sector, cutting-edge information and knowledge, as well as a wide range of communications resources.

Donate your public speaking proceeds

Do you have a speaking engagement coming up? Consider donating your proceeds to the Centre through our [Sheela Basrur Fund](#).

All donations are tax-deductible and are managed by our partner the [Toronto Foundation](#), a registered, public, non-profit organization that connects philanthropy with community needs and opportunities.

Be part of the leaders for change

Join our growing network of supporters by becoming an SBC champion. Help spread the word about SBC's programs by:

- promoting the Centre at your next event;
- sharing SBC promotional materials (email us for details);
- encouraging your colleagues to sign up for our [newsletter](#).

Interested in supporting SBC?

We would love to hear from you. If you are interested in donating, becoming an SBC champion or have any questions, please contact us at 647-260-7100 or SBC@oahpp.ca.

[Donate to the Sheela Basrur Centre](#)