



## PARTNERSHIP FOR THE ENGAGEMENT OF PEOPLE IN PAIN RESEARCH

Advancing EDI-D and Building Capacity for Critical  
Social Science Approaches to Pain Scholarship



### CO-DIRECTOR'S LETTER

I cannot emphasize enough how proud I am of what the PEPR team has accomplished over the past few months. Building something like PEPR, with such a diverse and dynamic team, was an ambitious undertaking from the start. From the beginning we have been striving to do something different – we went into this with a sense that current research practices in the chronic pain sphere were not working the way we knew it should, because it excluded so many of the perspectives, experiences, and approaches that are necessary to make sure that chronic pain research leads to meaningful knowledge and resources for diverse people with pain. But identifying a problem is just the first step in a long journey; I know deeply that the whole PEPR community has been working enormously hard behind the scenes to get us to where we are at now.

The various project teams are each doing their own important work under the umbrella of this overarching goal; you can learn more about that excellent work in this newsletter, on the PEPR website, and via various research outputs that will soon be shared. For now, I will share that PEPR's dynamic presence at the April 2026 Canadian Pain Society Annual Meeting really brought home to me how much we have accomplished and how special our team is. There really is no other group like PEPR. But perhaps what is most exciting for me is what is just around the corner. Most projects and initiatives under the PEPR umbrella have reached a stage where we have learned a lot and have much to share with our partners, and with the broader chronic pain community. **Stay tuned!**

#### Dr. Kate Rice

Co-Director - Academic



Social Sciences and Humanities  
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en  
sciences humaines du Canada

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[www.pepr-partnership.org](http://www.pepr-partnership.org)

## NEW FACES

We would like to welcome a new team member to PEPR:



### Cadence Harrison

Cadence (she/her) is a Master of Health Sciences candidate in Advanced Health Care Practice (Health Equity and Sustainability) at Western University. Under the supervision of Dr. Vanessa Ambtman-Smith, she is contributing to a collaborative research project between PEPR and the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) exploring culturally responsive approaches to engaging Indigenous communities in chronic pain research.

Cadence is a Métis researcher and former Head and Heart Indigenous Research Fellow whose work is driven by a passion for advancing Indigenous health and addressing environmental racism. Growing up in Sarnia-Lambton, she witnessed the health and environmental inequities associated with Chemical Valley, inspiring her commitment to community-engaged research that centres Indigenous voices, honours Indigenous ways of knowing, and supports more equitable health systems.

## PROJECT UPDATES

These are highlights from some of our research projects. You can find an overview of all PEPR projects at [www.pepr-partnership.org/projects](http://www.pepr-partnership.org/projects)

### The Making of Patient Engagement in Research: A Look at its History

Patient engagement is now widely seen as an essential part of health research. But how did it become such an accepted practice, and what criticisms have emerged along the way? This study explores the history of patient engagement to better understand how it developed and why it has become a common expectation in research.

Using a historical approach inspired by the work of philosopher Michel Foucault, we examine how ideas about patients, researchers, and participation have changed over time. By looking at the stories, policies, and practices that shaped patient engagement, the study aims to encourage reflection on its benefits, limitations, and future directions.

Team: Karime Mescouto (lead), Larissa Duarte (co-lead), Janet Rankin, Fiona Webster



### Weaving Indigenous Knowledge into Pain Research

The team has successfully co-created and adopted a Research Relationship Agreement with [Shkaabe Makwa](#) and Western University and are currently working on their ethics application.

### EMPOWER (Engaging Marginalized POWER, Expertise, and Representation)



After over a year of growth, PEPR's EMPOWER Committee is turning practice into publication. The committee, co-led and composed entirely of people with lived experience of chronic pain and marginalization (PWLECPM), is co-authoring a graphic novel, not as subjects of research, but as knowledge holders whose expertise gets to travel! To help build the foundation for EMPOWER's KM outputs, a McGill graduate student will be supporting the team this summer with a supportive literature searches.

## OTHER UPDATES

### PEPR Chaired Multiple Dialogue Sessions with Incoming IMHA Chair!



Kate

The PEPR team was very well represented at a series of dialogues with Dr. Rae Yeung, a which took place during the April 2026 Canadian Pain Society Annual Meeting. Dr. Yeung is a Professor of Pediatrics and Immunology at the University of Toronto and is the incoming Chair of the Institute of Musculoskeletal Health and Arthritis (IMHA) within CIHR. The purpose of these dialogues was to provide an opportunity for discussion and information sharing between various groups in the pain research sphere, including people with lived experience, basic scientists, and social scientists.

PEPR Co-Director Desmond Williams chaired the first session of the day, which was for people with lived experience of pain. Co-Director Kate Rice, who is a medical anthropologist, chaired the session for social scientists. PEPR Program Manager Dr. Laura Connoy, who holds a PhD in sociology, also participated in the social science session. The PEPR team is thrilled to have had this opportunity to learn more about how social science and the input of people with lived experience fit with the current priorities of the IHSK. The good news is, we have come away from these dialogues with the knowledge that the work that PEPR is doing is directly aligned with Dr. Yeung's vision for IMHA.



Desmond

After meeting with Dr. Rae Yeung in Quebec City at the CPS ASM and a month later at her stop in Vancouver, I believe PEPR is uniquely positioned to be utilized as an example of how pain research with a foundation of social sciences and PWLE Leadership can look. PEPR's commitment to finding more engaging and arts-based knowledge mobilization outputs also shows our commitment to helping bridge the communication gap between researchers and those who benefit from our findings. All-in-all, meeting with Dr. Yeung was both inspiring and affirming that what we are doing at PEPR is what is needed to push the narrative forward in the chronic pain research space, and that we have lots to contribute!

### Living Proof: Experience as Evidence in Pain Research

Living Proof's latest episode welcomed guests Natasha and Dave, members of PEPR's EMPOWER committee, for a conversation about lived expertise, leadership, chronic pain, and relationality and reciprocity in research engagement. Episode 4 is called "Engaging Marginalized POver, Expertise, and Representation: EMPOWER."



**We invite you to listen and subscribe on Youtube, Spotify, and Apple Podcasts and to share widely.**

### Medicine Wheel Zine

At the Canadian Pain Society meeting, PEPR's EMPOWER Committee introduced something new to the chronic pain research space: the Medicine Wheel Zine, co-created with **Dr. Hannah Burgé Luviano** and **Dr. Vanessa Ambtman-Smith**. The zine brings together the voices, knowledge, and lived wisdom of people living at the intersections of chronic pain and marginalization (PWLECPM), organized through the four directions of the medicine wheel. It is not meant to be a summary of research findings; it is meant to be something a person can hold, return to, and recognize themselves in. Knowledge produced by and for PWLECPM, belonging in every room, alongside researchers and clinicians, is exactly the point.

Download the zine and try it out! <https://tinyurl.com/PEPRzine>



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## CONFERENCES

### Canadian Pain Society 2026 Annual Scientific Meeting

We had a terrific time at the CPS conference in Quebec City. Our exhibitor booth was a hit; we had the pleasure of connecting with new friends and colleagues across the pain community. Presenters **Vanessa Ambtman-Smith, Anna Hood, Kate Rice**, and chair **Desmond Williams** held a very well attended and engaging symposium. **Karime, Laura** and **Jaklyn** shared posters. We also held a productive PEPR project meeting. Above all, we loved spending time together in person!



### Canadian Sociological Association

**Karime Mescouto** recently travelled to Halifax, Nova Scotia for the Canadian Sociological Association Conference, "Harbours of Hope: Sociology in a Divided World." Karime presented "The Social organization of patient engagement in research: an institutional ethnography study." A highlight of the conference was being part of the Institutional Ethnography cluster, where studies using IE through diverse topics could be presented and discussed together. Some folks finally met in person after attending numerous mentorship meetings organized by **Janet Rankin**.



### Canadian Knowledge Mobilization Forum

**Jaklyn Andrews** will be in Toronto in July to present the scoping review of EDI-D and knowledge mobilization at Research Impact Canada's biennial Knowledge Mobilization Forum.

Congrats to **Karime Mescouto** who participated in the Postdoctoral Research Sprint in the Postdoctoral Forum at Western University! The research sprint inspires excellent communication skills by challenging participants to share their research in 120 seconds in a way that is engaging and easy to understand for a diverse audience. Karime came in third place and also won the People's Choice award. Bravo! 🏆



**Olayinka Ariba** successfully completed her PhD defense at Western University. Congrats Dr. Ariba!

**Naya Nour-Eddin** was accepted to grad school. Congratulations Naya on the next step in your educational journey!

**Janet Montague** successfully completed her PhD defense at Western University. Congrats Dr. Montague!

## MEDIA



PEPR Co-Directors Desmond Williams and Kathleen Rice sat down for a chat with Shane Hewitt on his podcast, Shane Hewitt and The Nightshift. We're grateful for this conversation about the very personal experience of chronic pain and the questions we might ask in the pursuit of a more equitable, person-centered care system.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yK4Pq7jEMQQ>

Check out Desmond on Just Asking with Saroja Coelho on CBC Radio!

<https://www.cbc.ca/listen/live-radio/1-1424-just-asking>



### UPCOMING EVENTS:

#### Research Retreat

We are looking forward to gathering at the University of Toronto for our two-day long PEPR Research Retreat. On October 5th, our project co-leads will be presenting to team members, partner organizations, and members of the larger pain community. We anticipate 50 people at this event, which promises to be a great day for thinking and conversation. On October 6th, project co-leads will come together to identify common points and how these collectively speak to the overall aims and objectives of the PEPR Partnership.

#### CAPS Conference

The second Critical Approaches to Pain Scholarship (CAPS) Research Network conference will take place in Manchester, UK, from September 24–26. This year's conference theme is Decolonizing Pain. The conference will be offered in a hybrid format! We would be very grateful if you could also share this call with colleagues, students, collaborators, community partners, and others who may be interested.

More information, including a call for proposals and the registration process, can be found here:

<https://tinyurl.com/CAPSConference2>

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