2022-23 ANNUAL REPORT

nātawihowin* and *mamawiikikayaahk

Research, Training, and Mentorship Networks
(Saskatchewan NEIHR, skneihr.ca)

nātawihowin and *mamawiikikayaahk*
Research, Training, and Mentorship Networks
(Saskatchewan NEIHR, skneihr.ca)

Writing, Data Analysis, and Graphic Design

Fleur Macqueen Smith, MA (Writing and Analysis)
Micheal Heimlick, MA (Writing and Analysis)
Cory Baumgardner, MA (Graphic Design)

Research leads: Dr. Robert Henry, PhD, Nominated Principal Investigator, Years 3-5

Web: SKNEIHR.ca Email: skneihr@usask.ca Phone: 1-306-966-5762

Address: University of Saskatchewan, Station 20 West, 203-1120 20th St W, Saskatoon, SK S7M 0Y8

Table of Contents

A message from
Terri Hansen-Gardiner

Terri is Métis, and she lives in Ile-a-la-Crosse, a Métis village in Northwestern Saskatchewan, the second oldest community in the province, and the site of historic trading posts first established in 1778. She has spent many years working in government, and has worked supporting Indigenous People in the Saskatchewan healthcare system, particularly those going through cancer treatment. Terri is fluent in Cree and Northern Michif. She has been working with researchers in the Saskatchewan NEIHR since it was funded, and joined us as a knowledge keeper in residence in Year Three.

I first became involved in health research twelve years ago, after noticing how often non-Indigenous people came into our Indigenous communities in Northern Saskatchewan, extracted what they needed, and left, without providing any benefits for our people. When I got involved in research, I wanted to change that. When you work with our people, it is all about trust. We need to see you in person, to develop a trusting relationship. You can't develop that with cold calls, or emails. You need to do it in person, on the ground, in our communities.

And when you are working with our people, you should demonstrate your respect for us by considering how we are involved. If you want people to travel to participate in a project, make sure you provide funds for that ahead of time, so they don't need to cover those costs themselves. When you meet with us, we appreciate it when you make the environment welcoming, making sure there is food, taking care of travel arrangements and accommodations, and helping out in any other way you can.

Working with people from the Saskatchewan NEIHR over the last few years, I have seen up close how the researchers and staff really value our opinions and welcome our involvement. A good example of this is the time we spent together at the Back to Batoche Festival in July 2023, where NEIHR researchers brought together Métis people who are cancer survivors to create videos to share their stories. That was one of the best weekends I have had since I started doing cancer advocacy and support, and helping with cancer research after my own cancer diagnosis and recovery. Afterwards, I talked to other Métis people who participated, and we all felt the same way. It was a very special few days together.

As Indigenous People, we know we need to be involved in research, in training, and in knowledge translation to improve the health of our people. We need to support researchers who are doing this work with us in a good way, be they Métis, First Nations, or allies. None of us can do it alone. I can see that the NEIHR folks agree with this, as the way they invite our input makes it clear. I am proud to be part of this network.

"As Indigenous People, we know we need to be involved in research, in training, and in knowledge translation to improve the health of our people. We need to support researchers who are doing this work with us in a good way, be they Métis, First Nations, or allies."

Terri Hansen-Gardiner,
knowledge keeper in residence (Métis)

What's in this report?

- A description of the Saskatchewan NEIHR, and our activities in Year Three

- Information about how our activities were tracked and mapped to evaluation outcomes

- Statistics on social media reach

- Analysis of findings from our Year Three Annual Survey

- Analysis of findings from interviews with research leadership, covering the SK-NEIHR's activities in the first three years

- A conclusion, looking forward to Year Four and planning for renewal

What is the SK-NEIHR Network?

The Network Environments for Indigenous Health Research (NEIHR) is a national network of networks funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR). The NEIHR initiative was developed by CIHR to create and sustain supportive research environments driven by and grounded in Indigenous communities in Canada. There are currently nine networks across Canada, as well as a NEIHR National Coordinating Centre which is also based at the University of Saskatchewan. These networks are networks intended to be funded for fifteen years, from 2020 to 2035.

The Saskatchewan NEIHR Network (SK-NEIHR, skneihr.ca), is a Saskatchewan-based consortium of First Nations, Métis, and allied individuals, organizations, communities, and institutions with long-established leadership and working relationships in Indigenous health research, training, and knowledge mobilization. SK-NEIHR serves all of Saskatchewan, which is inclusive of Treaties 2, 4, 5, 6, 8 and 10, and is the traditional territory of Métis Nation-Saskatchewan, and the target population is First Nations and Métis peoples living in Saskatchewan.

The Saskatchewan NEIHR has two intertwined networks: the *nātawihowin* (First Nations) and *mamawiikikayaahk* (Métis) networks. Part way through Year Two, a decision was made to transition to the Cree and Michif names that were gifted for the First Nations and Métis networks that make up the Saskatchewan NEIHR, such that it is now known as the *nātawihowin* and *mamawiikikayaahk* Research, Training and Mentorship Networks (SK-NEIHR).

> We facilitate First Nations and Métis health research, training, and knowledge mobilization that is grounded in community and led by Métis and First Nations People.

Knowledge Keepers Clayton Shirt, Judy Pelly, Amelia McGregor and François Paulette at NGGS 2022

Guiding Principles and Objectives

Our networks are made up of researchers, community organizations, community members, and graduate students throughout Saskatchewan and nationally working in First Nations and Métis health and wellness. We facilitate First Nations and Métis health research, training, and knowledge mobilization that is grounded in community and led by Métis and First Nations People. Our work is guided by these foundational beliefs:

- that Saskatchewan Métis and First Nations People are best situated to lead research, training and knowledge mobilization involving our communities;

- that the SK-NEIHR belongs to Métis and First Nations Peoples in Saskatchewan, and that it can grow and evolve based on community-identified needs; and

- that we need to rely on the guidance of our community partners, Elders, knowledge keepers, and other experts for this work.

This network has grown out of the opinions, ideas, and leadership of Saskatchewan's First Nations and Métis governments, communities, and other key stakeholders. It facilitates a focused, community-driven approach, so health research dollars flow more effectively into communities, with the SK-NEIHR operating as a matchmaker between communities, researchers, and funding opportunities. At the core of this network is the foundational belief that the network belongs to the First Nations and Métis Peoples of Saskatchewan and can grow and evolve based on what they identify as community needs and priorities. Métis and First Nations Peoples across Saskatchewan are strong leaders in creating positive changes in healthcare delivery and in addressing health and social disparities experienced by their communities. We believe health research is central to these efforts. Our vision is for all First Nations and Métis Peoples in Saskatchewan to experience optimal health and wellness across their lifespans.

Our consortium represents a Saskatchewan Métis and First Nations NEIHR grounded in our shared values and priorities, inclusive of remote, rural, urban and reserve populations. From our respective traditional knowledge and cultural foundations, First Nations and Métis Peoples are best situated to lead research, training, and knowledge mobilization involving our communities. When ethical partnerships are formed with postsecondary researchers, our knowledge base is enhanced to include a broad spectrum of Indigenous and western research methodologies and analytic tools. When provided pragmatic strategies to co-design and co-develop research, Indigenous Peoples are able to mobilize positive change for their people, forming research, training, and knowledge mobilization partnerships between Indigenous communities and postsecondary researchers and students to support the transformative changes that our network strives for.

The relationship of First Nations and Métis Peoples to this land, and the relationship of traditional territories to the resilience and spirit is from where our future is cultivated. We come together in the spirit of working for our young families, for their futures, and the future for all our relations. The Saskatchewan NEIHR network is led by Indigenous researchers, and non-Indigenous allies, in partnership with Indigenous stakeholders in Saskatchewan. For descriptions of the research leadership, please visit our website, www.skneihr.ca.

L to R: Jaris Swidrovich, Tammy Popova, Dylan Merrick, Terri Hansen-Gardiner, Simon Lambert, Caroline Tait, Bobby Henry, Fleur Macqueen Smith, Carrie Lavallie, Heather Foulds, Jamie LaFleur and Leah Ferguson. Taken in September 2022 at the Principal Investigator and Staff Retreat at Elk Ridge.

Research Leadership and Staff

The Research Leadership Team is made up of Indigenous and non-Indigenous faculty working in Indigenous health and wellness. Current members are:

- Dr. Robert (Bobby) Henry (Métis, Indigenous Studies, University of Saskatchewan) – current Nominated Principal Investigator
- Dr. Caroline Tait (Métis, Social Work, University of Calgary) – founding nominated principal investigator
- Dr. Leah Ferguson (Métis, Kinesiology, University of Saskatchewan)
- Dr. Heather Foulds (Métis, Kinesiology, University of Saskatchewan)
- Dr. Holly Graham (Cree, Psychiatry, University of Saskatchewan)
- Dr. Simon Lambert (Māori, Indigenous Studies, University of Saskatchewan)
- Dr. Carrie Lavallie (settler, Indigenous Health Studies, First Nations University)
- Dr. Stacey Lovo (settler, School of Rehabilitation Science, University of Saskatchewan)
- Dr. Wendie Marks (Anishinaabe, Pediatrics, University of Saskatchewan)
- Dr. Sarah Oosman (settler, School of Rehabilitation Science, University of Saskatchewan)
- Dr. JoLee Sasakamoose (Ojibwe, Education, University of Regina)
- Dr. Jaris Swidrovich (Saulteaux, Pharmacy, University of Toronto)

Staff

- Fleur Macqueen Smith, MA, Manager (settler)
- Terri Hansen-Gardiner, knowledge keeper in residence (Métis)
- Tammy Popova, MA, Research and Administrative Coordinator (Indigenous [Yakut] from Northeast Russia)
- Ken Lai, BSc, Community Research Facilitator (Métis)
- Susan Shacter, MA candidate, Community Research Facilitator (Métis)
- Cory Baumgardner, MA, Communications and Knowledge Translation Officer (settler)
- Dylan Merrick, PhD student at the University of Saskatchewan, and communications and outreach graduate student assistant (International Indigenous)

L to R: Tammy Popova, Terri Hansen-Gardiner, Carrie Lavallie, Jamie LaFleur, Bobby Henry, Dylan Merrick, Fleur Macqueen Smith, Simon Lambert, Leah Ferguson, Jaris Swidrovich, Stacey Lovo and Heather Foulds on Orange Shirt Day, September 30, 2022

Key Activities

Research matchmaking: identifying funding opportunities and matching researchers and communities

Funding: community partnership funds for researchers to engage with communities to develop and submit grant proposals to large funding agencies, and knowledge translation funds to share research findings broadly

Writing and research administrative support: assistance with grant and report writing and knowledge translation, and financial management of research funds

Training and professional development: workshops, webinars, and training in community-based research and knowledge translation methods

Mentorship for graduate students and new investigators

Activities in the Past Year–What Have We Done?

As we entered our third year of operation, we focused on co-hosting the National Gathering of Graduate Students (NGGS) with the NEIHR National Coordinating Centre (NCC). The NGGS, which was held in person for the first time since 2018, kept the network busy from April to July 2023. We also welcomed Tammy Popova, an Indigenous woman from the Northeastern part of Russia to our staff team, as our new Research and Administrative Coordinator. Fleur Macqueen Smith, who has been involved with the SK-NEIHR since 2018 when we were first awarded development funding from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research to develop a Saskatchewan NEIHR network, continued to serve as the SK-NEIHR Manager.

After some post-NGGS activities, we focused the rest of the year on strategic planning, with our transition from Dr. Caroline Tait to Dr. Robert (Bobby) Henry as Nominated Principal Investigator as of Year 3; adding two more Indigenous researchers to our Research Leadership team (Dr. Leah Ferguson and Dr. Wendie Marks); hosting our first in-person Principal Investigator and Staff Retreat in September; and developing and hiring staff into new positions for community research facilitation, and communications and knowledge translation. We also travelled to Ottawa in January 2023 to participate in a NEIHR National Coordinating Centre in-person meeting with participants from all nine NEIHRs, the National Coordinating Centre, and CIHR.

2022 National Gathering of Graduate Students

After several years of online gatherings, the National Gathering of Graduate Students returned in person in 2022, co-hosted by the Network Environments for Indigenous Health Research (NEIHR) National Coordinating Centre and the Saskatchewan NEIHR. The excitement was palpable as 120 graduate students, faculty, Elders and NEIHR staff gathered south of Saskatoon on Whitecap Dakota First Nation at the Dakota Dunes Conference Centre and Resort.

"It was great to meet so many Indigenous faculty and staff who were encouraging and supportive of students. Despite knowing almost nobody going into the conference, I felt like I was part of a community, surrounded by people who wanted to see me be well and push me to go further."

- graduate student participant

Organizing of the NGGS began in the final part of Year Two, putting together an organizing committee, with members from each of the nine NEIHRs, that met regularly. Planning the NGGS was a major focus of the end of Year Two, and first half of Year Three. Overall the NGGS brought together 120 First Nations, Métis and Inuit graduate students, Indigenous and ally researchers, Elders and knowledge keepers, community members and staff for three days at Dakota Dunes Resort, on Whitecap Dakota First Nation. Dr. Margo Greenwood, in her new role as Interim Scientific Director for the Institute of Indigenous Peoples' Health at CIHR, spoke to attendees at the opening ceremonies.

Almost 60 Indigenous graduate students presented their research on areas as diverse as self-determined palliative care, Indigenous youth prevention programs, mental health technologies, and Indigenous restorative justice, and participated in academic and professional panel discussions that covered topics including grant data sovereignty, digital storytelling, grant writing, and academic careers and publishing.

The NGGS also included two Elders and Knowledge Keepers sharing circles, and entertainment and cultural activities with First Nations and Métis artists. The NGGS was joined by 30 people attending the Witaya Two-Spirit and IndigiQueer Gathering, which ran concurrently, with attendees at some of the NGGS sessions. The NEIHR National Coordinating Centre awarded presentation awards to 13 Indigenous graduate students at the conclusion. Attendees of the NGGS provided very positive feedback in the post-event survey, with most agreeing or strongly agreeing that the NGGS helped them meaningfully connect with academics and other students. For more information and a video recap, visit the Events tab on the NEIHR National Coordinating Centre website, at www.neihrcoordcentre.ca.

Fall Principal Investigator and Staff Retreat

Principal Investigators, staff, graduate students, and the SK-NEIHR knowledge keeper came together for three days of strategic planning at Elk Ridge Resort in September 2022. This was the first in-person retreat our NEIHR has held since our inception, due to COVID restrictions. Having this focused time gave us the opportunity to prioritize and plan activities for the rest of Year Three, and second half of the first five years of funding. It also gave us the opportunity to incorporate two new Principal Investigators on our PI team that were added for Year Three. Other key decisions made during this retreat included:

- developing a knowledge keeper position for Terri Hansen-Gardiner, whom we had worked with regularly, and wanted to continue to support;

- developing new staff positions for community research facilitation, communications and knowledge translation;

- hosting a hybrid roundtable discussion on the impact of pretendians on the academy, students, and Indigenous community, one year after the case with Dr. Carrie Bourassa;

- developing Terms of Reference for the Principal Investigators, including an Indigenous Identity policy;

- changing the Community Partnership research support funds into a rolling deadline, and adding Knowledge Translation support funds;

- planning for supporting and involving graduate students in the SK-NEIHR, with the ending of the Indigenous Mentorship Network grant and departure of its staff coordinator;

- planning to host our first in-person Research Engagement Day, in the fall of 2023.

Communications

We re-established our email newsletter in November 2022, with quarterly issues planned. We also engaged International Indigenous graduate student Dylan Merrick to assist us with website updating and outreach as in-person activities increased.

As the COVID-19 pandemic waned, interest in in-person events continued to increase, and interest in online activities decreased. In December we hosted an in-person roundtable discussion on the impact of pretendians on the academy, which we livestreamed to Facebook. This webinar was recorded and is on our website, skneihr.ca under Webinars.

We participated in several open houses at our offices, which are located off-campus at Station 20 West, a community enterprise centre: a community open house in November 2022; and Station 20 West's Tenth Anniversary Open House in March 2023. We also increased our communications and outreach capacity when we created a new staff position for a Communications and Knowledge Translation Officer, welcoming Cory Baumgardner to our team in March 2023.

Tammy Popova, Fleur Macqueen Smith, and Dylan Merrick, at the Station 20 West Open House, November 2022

Dr. Sarah Oosman

Dr. Wendie Marks

Drs. Robert (Bobby) Henry, Caroline Tait and Simon Lambert at the National Gathering of Graduate Students 2022

Research Support

In Year Three, we continued to provide letters of support and grant development assistance, particularly to Principal Investigators in our network. With 17 projects funded under our Community Partnership Research Support program since 2020, many of which requested extensions due to pandemic-related delays, we paused intake for Year Three to re-evaluate this funding. In the Spring of 2023, we re-launched the Community Partnership support program, making funds available continuously, and added a pool of knowledge translation funding. We hosted a webinar to launch this funding, which is available along with application information details of projects funded, under the Funding tab on our website, skneihr.ca.

We also continued to add members to our public member database for our website, searchable by research area, which can be found on our website under Member Database. The goal of this database is to facilitate research relationships in Indigenous health, wellness, and community-based research. People can contact members directly, or SK-NEIHR staff can help make connections if requested. We also developed and staffed two new positions for Community Research Facilitators, welcoming Ken Lai and Susan Shacter, both Métis, to our staff team in March 2023.

Graduate Student Support

In Year Three, funding ended for the Saskatchewan Indigenous Mentorship Network, as it folded into the Saskatchewan NEIHR. We supported graduate student travel in Year Three, including funding 14 Indigenous graduate students to attend and present at the 2022 National Gathering of Graduate Students. As part of our matching funding from the University of Saskatchewan, we offer an annual graduate student scholarship of $20,000. The 2022-23 scholarship recipient, Jamie LaFleur, participated in our Annual Retreat, webinar on Indigenous Identity, and joined us at the national meeting of NEIHRs in Ottawa in January 2023. In Year Four, we will be focusing on increasing our support for graduate students.

Evaluation of our Activities in Year Three

Data Sources Included in this Report (Methodology)

As part of the ongoing SK-NEIHR measurement and evaluation, we have collected design, implementation, and outcome data throughout Year Three to ensure the delivery of our activities is the best it can be, while simultaneously understanding the difference our efforts are making. Sources in this annual report include:

The SK-NEIHR 2023 Annual Survey

This is the second year we have completed our annual survey, covering Year Three of our funding, April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023.. The questions in this survey were largely repeated from last year, meaning we will be able to collate the results into a larger data set to support the renewal of the SK-NEIHR grant. However, because we cannot guarantee that the same people answered the survey both times, we have decided to only outline of the results of the year three annual survey in this report and will not be comparing from year-to-year (with a few minor exceptions). In future years, we will combine the datasets and use that as evidence of our impact.

Interviews with SK-NEIHR Principal Investigators

Similar to last year, the Principal Investigators (PIs) were all invited to an interview with a third-party evaluator. The purpose of these interviews was to explore PI's experiences with the SK-NEIHR. As with the survey, the questions used were nearly identical to the previous year (meaning we will be able to compare interview results later, just like the annual survey). Specifically, PIs were asked about program impacts and to offer reflections on what worked well, what did not work well, and what areas the SK-NEIHR should focus on in the future. Five interviews were completed and are used throughout this report to bolster other data sources.

Social Media Statistics

To better understand the reach of the SK-NEIHR network, we continued to track the number of likes and followers of our Facebook page. This also included the self-identified gender of our Facebook audience. This data is combined with last year's data set so we can continue to track the growth of the network.

2022 National Gathering of Graduate Students

In partnership with the Network Environments for Indigenous Health Research (NEIHR) National Coordinating Centre (NCC), the SK-NEIHR hosted the National Gathering of Graduate Students (NGGS) in June 2022. At this annual event, graduate students present their work and network with peers and Indigenous academics.

A short 10-minute survey was sent to 120 attendees. The purpose of this survey was to gather information on how this event facilitated outcomes for participants and to gather feedback on how it could have been made better. Fifty-nine attendees completed the survey, the results of which are outlined later in this report.

Indigenous Identity: the Impact of Pretendians in the Academy Webinar Feedback

In December of 2022 we hosted a hybrid (in-person and online) roundtable discussion entitled Indigenous Identity: the Impact of Pretendians in the Academy. This session was well attended, and 150 people responded to the survey that we sent out afterwards. Survey results are included later in this report.

Together, these five sources of data helped our interpretation of what outcomes we facilitated in Year Three. To begin this report, we will first explore our social media reach followed by outcome results from the survey and interviews.

Social Media Reach in Year Three

Throughout year three, the SK-NEIHR continued to maintain an active Facebook page, which included regular posts about opportunities, advocacy events, and information about how to get involved in Indigenous health research. Throughout year three we continued to see growth in our Facebook page, measured by the total amount of page "likes", which went from 785 to 891 in year three (a 13.5% increase). This resulted in a reach number of 15,484 and a total of 3367 unique visits to the SK-NEIHR Facebook page. Consistent with previous years, our Facebook audience was primarily women (85%). It is important to note that Facebook limits how this data is displayed, meaning any statistics on gender diversity within our audience is missing.

The SK-NEIHR Facebook continues to **grow,** with **likes** jumping from **785** to **891** in year 3
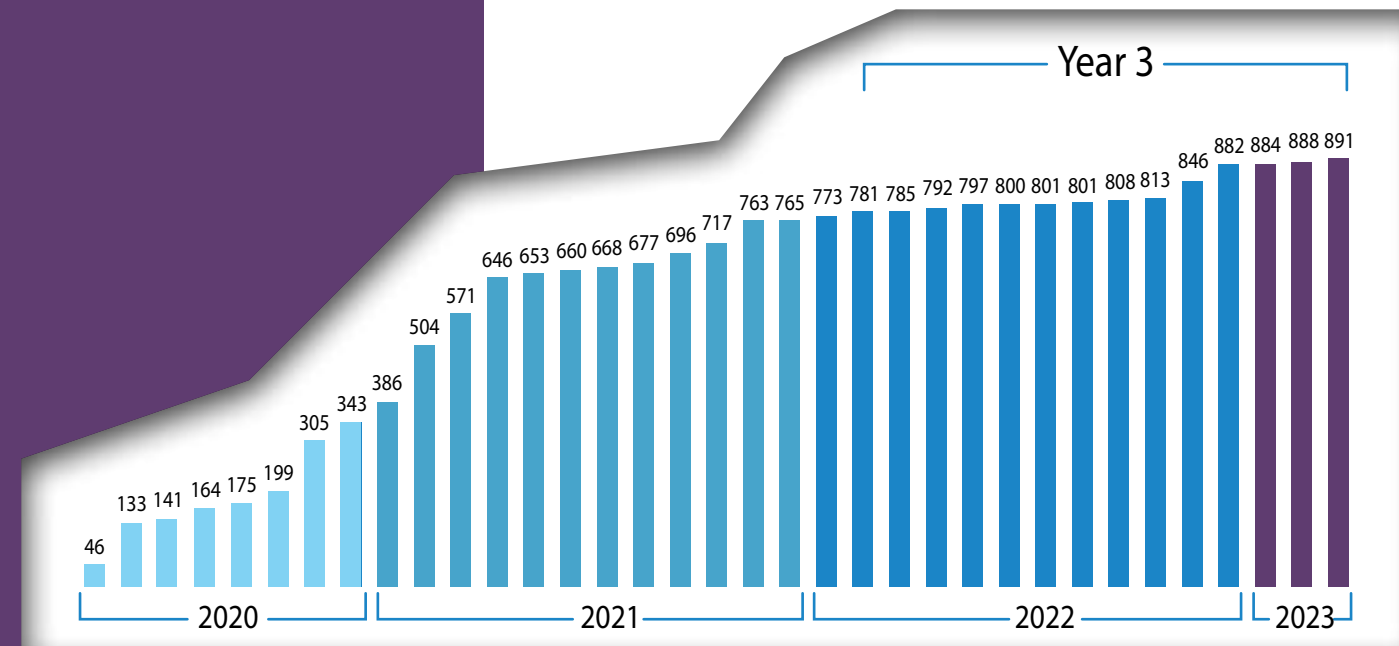
What outcomes did we see in Year Three (Annual Survey)?

The 2023 Annual Survey was open from April 10 to May 15th, 2023, and received 44 complete responses from researchers and SK-NEIHR partners. This was a branching survey, meaning that depending on how a person identified (e.g. researcher, student, community member, senior administrator), it would direct them to targeted questions for their demographic. For additional details on this survey, including a list of the survey questions, please contact the SK-NEIHR at skneihr@usask.ca.

Who answered the survey?

To better understand our results, we asked respondents to answer several demographic questions. The first was to determine which SK-NEIHR membership category they primarily identified with. As is seen below, many respondents selected researcher (41%), followed by student (16%) and SK-NEIHR leadership (11%). There were, among others, representation from Indigenous governments (9%), community organizations (9%), and community members (7%).

Many of the annual survey respondents **primarily identified** as **researchers** (including researchers in a SK-NEIHR Leadership position) and **students.**

Researcher	41%
Student	16%
SK-NEIHR leadership	11%
Indigenous Government	9%
Community organization	9%
Community member	7%
Academic Institution admin	5%
Healthcare provider	2%
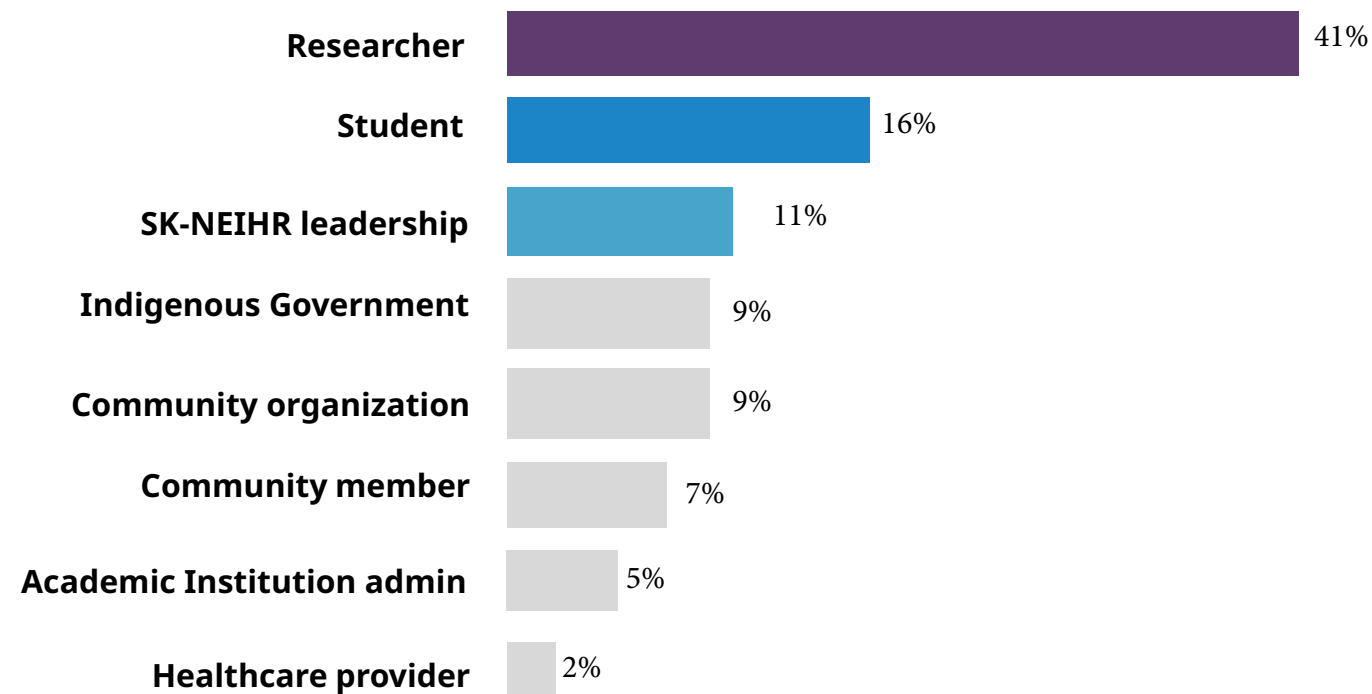
However, we recognize that selecting just one SK-NEIHR membership category is limiting to those we work with. To ensure we best understand the intersectionality that respondents bring to our network, we also asked them to select any additional categories they identify with. Exactly like last year's results, the second most selected category was community member (38%; behind researcher at 48%). Once again, this reinforces that SK-NEIHR membership is connected with community and, considering many are identifying as researchers, could be bridging the gap between research and community. As another note, the number of respondents who also identified as students and members of Indigenous government was up in this year's survey (students: 23% up from 3%; Indigenous Governments: 15% up from 7%).

When asked what **other categories** they identified respondents most often chose **researcher** or **community member.**

Researcher	**48%**
Community member	**38%**
Student	23%
Other	22%
Indigenous Government	15%
Knowledge Keeper	13%
Healthcare provider	8%
Academic Institution admin	8%
SK-NEIHR leadership	3%
Elder	3%
Community organization	0%
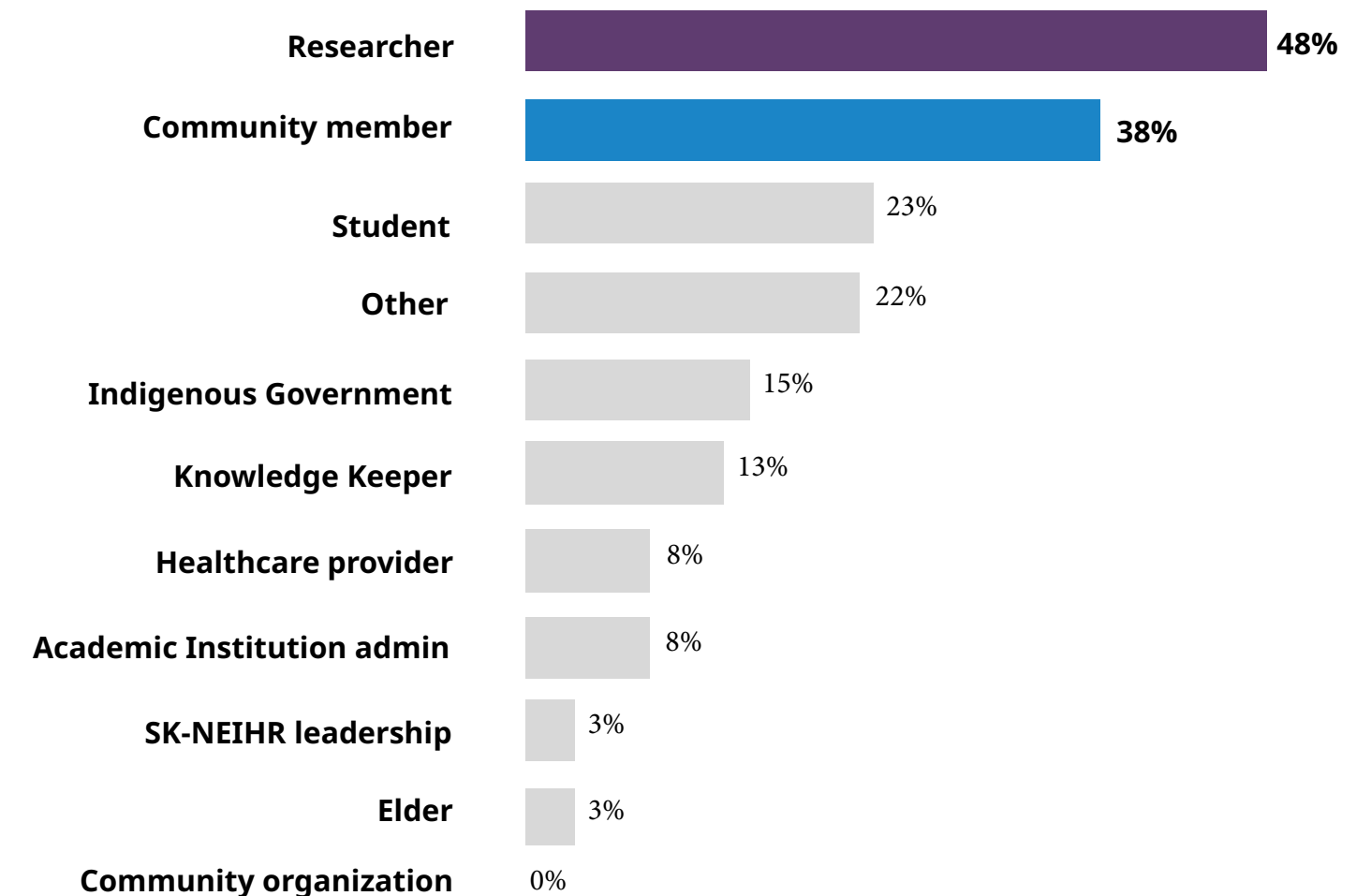
Furthermore, nearly half of respondents self-identified as First Nations (46%), with an additional 21% self-identifying as Métis. Compared to last year's survey results, there were more First Nations respondents and less non-Indigenous respondents (non-Indigenous respondents dropped from 36% in year two to 21% in year three, while First Nations respondents grew from 21% in year two to 46% in year three). Métis respondents largely stayed the same from year two (25%) to year three (21%).

Many survey respondents identified as **First Nations, Métis** or **non-Indigenous.**

First Nations	46%
Non-Indigenous	21%
Métis	21%
International Indigenous	5%
Other	5%
Prefer not to say	2%
Inuit	0%
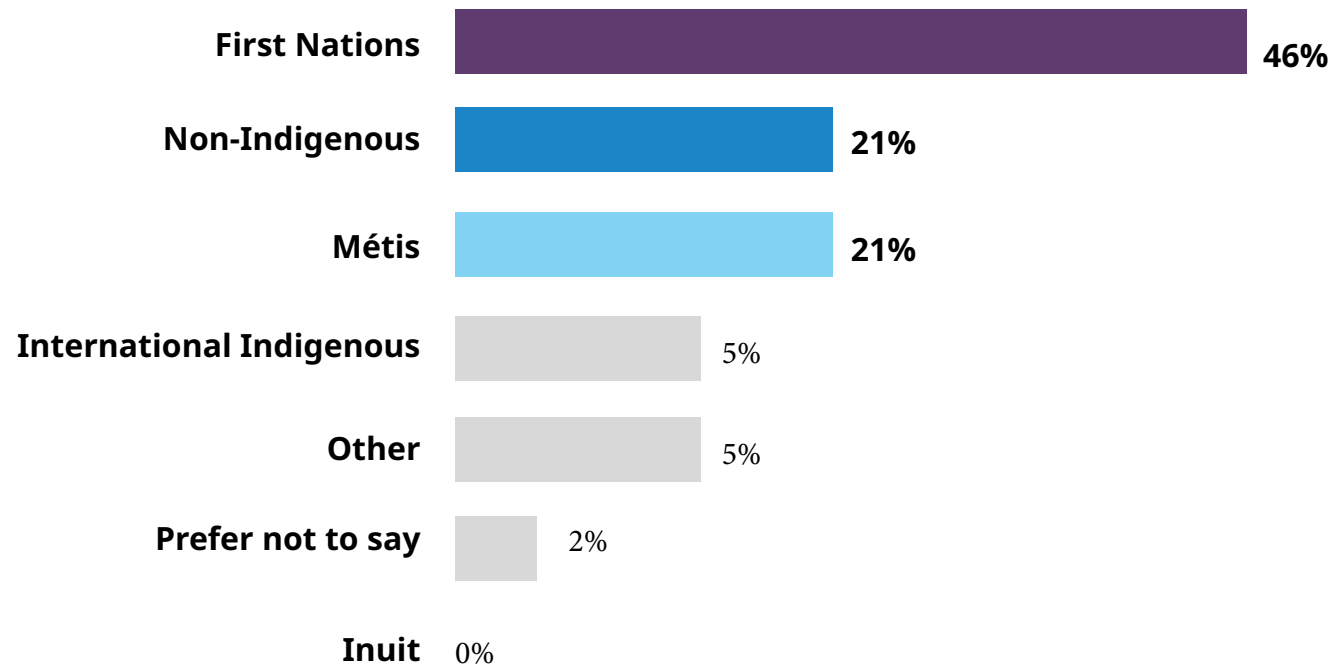
Finally, many respondents self-identified as female (54%), while just over one quarter identified as male (28%). Ten percent of respondents identified as Two Spirit.

Many survey respondents identified as either **female** or **male.**

Female	54%
Male	28%
Two Spirit	10%
Prefer not to say	5%
Non-binary	3%
Genderfluid	5%
Agender	0%
Trans	0%
Other (please specifiy)	0%
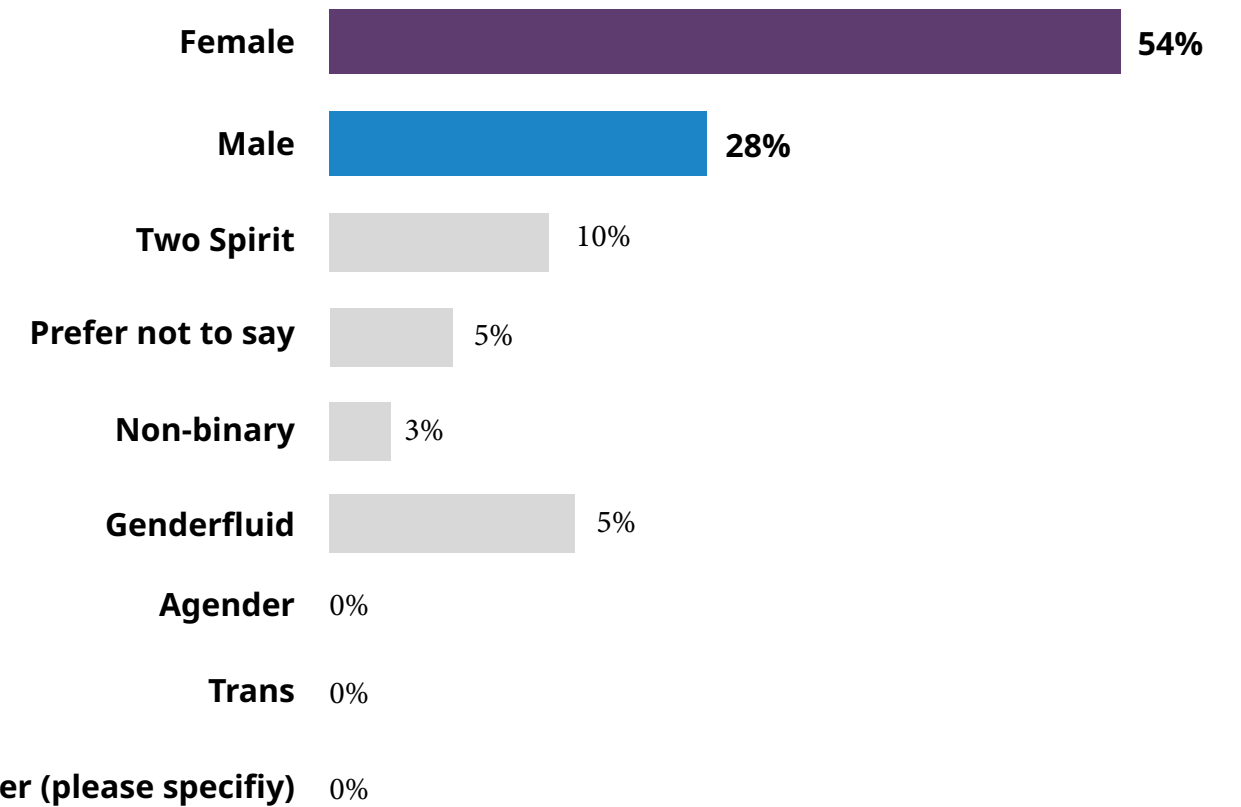
Overall Survey Results

With that context in mind, we can begin to outline the overall results of the 2023 annual survey. Although each membership category of respondents was asked to respond to targeted questions, there was a subset of questions that all groups of participants were asked to answer. These were questions around our core objectives, and they will continue to be asked each year to track changes over time (e.g., advancing community-based researchers, data sovereignty and research rights, making connections, etc.). Note that, in the survey, these set of questions were asked in random order to avoid order effects, so that the order varied for each respondent.

As with previous data sets, the results of this year's survey were encouraging. As seen in the graph below, most respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that the SK-NEIHR had facilitated key outcomes for them. This included advancing knowledge of anti-racism and/or anti-oppressiveness research opportunities (52% agreed; 19% strongly agreed), more awareness of health research opportunities (45% agreed; 25% strongly agreed), an advanced understanding of Indigenous research ethics (29% agreed; 40% strongly agreed), and a better understanding of Indigenous ways of doing research (38% agreed, 31% strongly agreed) among many others.

Of note, respondents were more likely to agree or strongly agree that the SK-NEIHR had advanced their understanding of Indigenous data sovereignty and research rights (50% agreed; 29% strongly agreed) and that they had a better understanding of the role researchers could have in advancing Indigenous wellness (38% agreed; 40% strongly agreed).

Similar to previous years, **many** respondents **strongly agreed** or **agreed** that **they have experienced the core SK-NEIHR outcomes in year 3**, regardless of the group they come from (e.g., researchers, community members)**.**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly agree
SK-NEIHR has made me (us) more aware of health research opportunities (e.g., grants, projects)	3%	10%	18%	45%	25%
The health research connectsions made through SK-NEIHR are timely and efficient	2%	10%	21%	40%	21%
The SK-NEIHR has advanced my (our) knowledge of anti-racism and/or anti-oppressiveness research approaches	2%	10%	14%	52%	19%
The SK-NEIHR has advanced my (our) knowledge of what responsive, community-based research is	2%	10%	17%	36%	36%
The SK-NEIHR has advanced my (our) knowledge of Indigenous data sovereignty and research rights	2%	5%	14%	50%	29%
The SK-NEIHR has advanced my (our) knowledge of Indigenous research ethics	2%	7%	21%	29%	40%
The SK-NEIHR has advanced my (our) knowledge of Indigenous methodologies	5%	8%	18%	40%	28%
The SK-NEIHR has helped me (us) to understand Indigenous ways of doing research	5%	10%	17%	38%	31%
I (we) better understand the role researchers can have in advancing Indigenous wellness	2%	10%	10%	38%	40%
I (we) have increased access to health resrouces since joining the SK-NEIHR	2%	14%	19%	36%	29%

Researcher-Specific Survey Results

As nearly half of the respondents identified as researchers, we thought it was important to explore the results of that group specifically. Researchers (including PIs) are the lifeblood of the SK-NEIHR, as they are the ones who help make connections with community, act on health research opportunities, and are the primary points of relationship building within Saskatchewan. Therefore, the SK-NEIHR spends a lot of effort to ensure we are delivering for r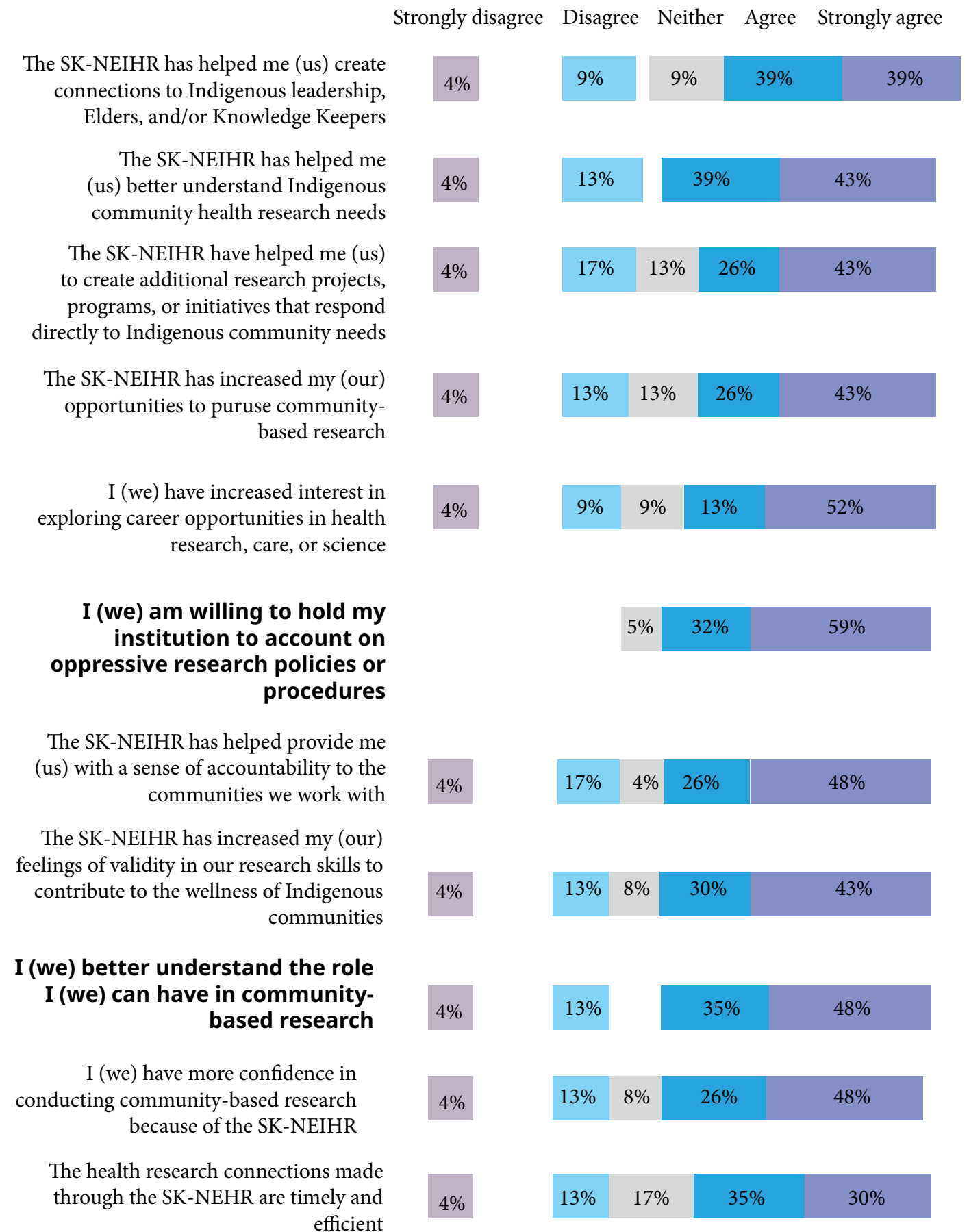esearchers. Promisingly, this effort appears to translate through in the year three results, as many either agreed or strongly agreed with key outcome statements (light and dark bars below).

Of those who identified as **researchers**, many either **strongly agreed** or **agreed** that they have **experienced key SK-NEIHR outcomes.**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly agree
The SK-NEIHR has helped me (us) create connections to Indigenous leadership, Elders, and/or Knowledge Keepers	4%	9%	9%	39%	39%
The SK-NEIHR has helped me (us) better understand Indigenous community health research needs	4%	13%		39%	43%
The SK-NEIHR have helped me (us) to create additional research projects, programs, or initiatives that respond directly to Indigenous community needs	4%	17%	13%	26%	43%
The SK-NEIHR has increased my (our) opportunities to puruse community-based research	4%	13%	13%	26%	43%
I (we) have increased interest in exploring career opportunities in health research, care, or science	4%	9%	9%	13%	52%
I (we) am willing to hold my institution to account on oppressive research policies or procedures			5%	32%	59%
The SK-NEIHR has helped provide me (us) with a sense of accountability to the communities we work with	4%	17%	4%	26%	48%
The SK-NEIHR has increased my (our) feelings of validity in our research skills to contribute to the wellness of Indigenous communities	4%	13%	8%	30%	43%
I (we) better understand the role I (we) can have in community-based research	4%	13%		35%	48%
I (we) have more confidence in conducting community-based research because of the SK-NEIHR	4%	13%	8%	26%	48%
The health research connections made through the SK-NEHR are timely and efficient	4%	13%	17%	35%	30%

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly agree
The SK-NEIHR has made me (us) more aware of health research opportunities (e.g. grants, projects)	4%	13%	9%	35%	39%
The SK-NEIHR has has advanced my (our) knowledge of anti-racism and/or anti-oppressiveness research approaches	4%	9%	9%	57%	21%
The SK-NEIHR has advanced my (our) knowledge of what responsive, community-based research is	4%	13%	4%	35%	43%
The SK-NEIHR has advanced my (our knowledge of Indigenous data sovereignty and research rights	4%	9%	4%	43%	39%
The SK-NEIHR has advanced my (our) knowledge of Indigenous research ethics	4%	9%	9%	30%	39%
The SK-NEIHR has advanced my (our) knowledge of Indigenous methodologies	4%	8%	17%	30%	39%
The SK-NEIHR has helped me (us) to understand Indigenous ways of doing research	4%	13%	8%	39%	35%
I (we) better understand the role researchers can have in advancing Indigenous wellness	4%	9%	4%	35%	48%
I (we) have increased access to health research resources since joining the SK-NEIHR	4%	17%	13%	22%	44%

Although all research-specific survey results appeared to be quite positive, there were four outcome statements that stood out from the rest. This meant that, in year three, researchers agreed that the SK-NEIHR helped them to develop:

•An increased willingness to hold their institutions to account on oppressive research policies or procedures (32% agreed; 59% strongly agreed)

•An increased understanding of the role they can play in community-based research (35% agreed; 48% strongly agreed)

•An advancement in knowledge of Indigenous data sovereignty and research rights (43% agreed; 39% strongly agreed)

•An increased understanding of the role they can have in advancing Indigenous wellness (35% agreed; 48% strongly agreed)

What's Changed for Researchers? (Individual Interview Results)

Connections, Community, and Relationships

As was the case in previous years, interviewees believed that the SK-NEIHR has created a strong sense of community, connection, and support. This finding spanned across all interviews, regardless of how involved the PI had been in the day-to-day operations of the network. Whether it was someone brand new to the group or someone who had been there from the start, all interviewees commented frequently on the welcoming environment created by the SK-NEIHR. They further explained that this type of an environment was unique, saying that they had not experienced such comfort in an academic setting until entering the network. Interviewees repeatedly pointed to the fact that the structure of the SK-NEIHR is fundamentally relational and, therefore, aims to create and maintain both personal and professional relationships.

This meant that interviewees felt like human beings first and foremost, while still expressing that the network was valuable to their careers. Some commented on how the network was a safe space for them and others, while others supported this by saying how the SK-NEIHR has carved a space out within institutions for Indigenous faculty to feel like they can be themselves without fear of repercussions. Not only has it appeared to create a stronger network of Indigenous faculty in Saskatchewan, especially at the University of Saskatchewan, but it has also accelerated research connections. Evidence suggests that it is likely that the tone set from SK-NEIHR leadership has facilitated an environment that is being implemented by staff and other PIs. Other interviewees also spoke to the importance of the people involved in the network and the high level of commitment they saw to ensure this welcoming environment was a reality. For example:

"Yeah, I would say very positive. Everyone is very welcoming right away. [Interviewees name] is new and she's interested in Indigenous community research. And there was no question of should I join or should I not join…everyone is very welcoming." - Interviewee

"While you're understanding the great work and contributions that you each bring, you also just get to know the humans, which is what's really impactful. So, you just get to know the people behind the researcher." - Interviewee

"I saw [name] two days ago, I was like, '[name]… We need to go for a walk. I want to pick your brain and just get inspired and you have so many connections and advice and guidance that you can share.' So, even though I know I still need to do that, the fact that I'm part of the network, I can." - Interviewee

"But then there's also the human aspect side of it, too, that I think is important for Indigenous researchers, and scholars, and staff, and students to have that community and that sense of belonging and to be able to connect with other Indigenous peoples on campus because we are growing but still far and few between. So, I think it creates this mighty force." - Interviewee

"Every time we have a meeting…I feel invited, I feel connected, I feel involved. I feel rejuvenated. I feel like I'm meeting peers. I feel like there's mentoring going on, so that's all really nice. I feel like the connection piece is there when I engage in it, and that's been really good. And I feel like there's support. I feel like there's opportunity to do research. I feel like there's opportunity to get support if I need to do research. That's all really good. It's a good experience." - Interviewee

"Yeah, any meeting, like a retreat, a meeting, a dinner, anytime we get together. And if we didn't have that NEIHR, we wouldn't be getting together on a regular basis, right?" – Interviewee

Stemming from this, PIs mentioned that they felt that the SK-NEIHR had more momentum in year three than in previous years. This was because of the ability for the network to meet in-person and, as a result, strengthen relationships that had been built throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Some commented on how they felt things were getting done more quickly, because people were able to identify issues and solutions in the same meeting. It was noted that the relational approach of SK-NEIHR leadership is a key factor in this, as it allows the network to evolve naturally according to the wants and needs of its members. For example:

"I've seen the Saskatchewan NEIHR change so much in a year. I feel as though, I mean, obviously the people are the same, but what they can do and what they are doing from 12 months ago to now, for me, is huge." - Interviewee

"But yes, there's momentum. It's, 'Okay, we're back. Okay, we're planning this retreat. Okay, we did that talk. Hey, what else can we be doing? Okay, we want to do a research day. We want to do another research day.' There isn't the, 'hurry up and wait,' anymore. It's, 'Let's plan and let's do in a good way.'" - Interviewee

"I'm trying to set up meetings with individuals and I keep telling them like, 'I'm open for coffee. If you want to talk about anything or any project you can call me. You can send a message to me.' I'm trying to keep that open space rather than just saying, 'Okay. This is what we're going to be doing.'" – Interviewee

SK-NEIHR's Vision and Future Directions

Another line of questioning explored in the interviews was the future of the SK-NEIHR. More specifically, what the grand vision for it could and should be moving forward now that there are no COVID-19 restrictions preventing the full implementation of ideas. Everyone indicated that they believed that the number one priority going forward was to ensure a strong, healthy connection between SK-NEIHR associated researchers and First Nations and Métis communities. Others spoke about how the NEIHR must have a stand-alone identity, regardless of who is 'leading' it at the time. In other words, it should be a network that exists to boost the careers of Indigenous PIs and the prominence of community-based health research in the province as opposed to being a research program for a select few people. It is likely that several years of intense planning has led to this point and that SK-NEIHR activities moving forward at all levels will focus on making this vision a reality. For example, interviewees stated:

"There's certainly a priority it seems to make sure that this network is strong and healthy." - Interviewee

"I think that will be first that communities will reach out to us. The big one is that communities will reach out to us if they have issues or they have concerns or they want to talk about research. I want us to be the place that here in Saskatchewan, that Indigenous agencies, communities and organizations turn to, to say, 'We're doing health research. How do we go about doing this?'" - Interviewee

"...But to see us as experts to help them navigate the university that they can come to us and we can actually bring and bridge networking together. By doing that, what I'm hoping then is we can actually begin to collate a stronger base of researchers and graduate students that can be in one place that we can actually start talking about and having these research meetings a little bit differently so the PIs can have their meeting." - Interviewee

"It's creating a space and a place so that individuals can come to, and then the NEIHR is seen as the place to go to. It's not going to see [name]. It's going to see the NEIHR." – Interviewee

Personal and Professional Growth

When speaking about the welcoming environment and connections created in part by the SK-NEIHR, interviewees often said that it led to increased personal and professional growth. Namely, interviewees explained how simply being present within the SK-NEIHR structure has led to learning of all sorts. This extended from being able to navigate circles within institutions (e.g., administration, funding, community, etc.) to heightened profiles of some PIs, to the generation of interdisciplinary research and ideas. As was the case in previous years, many indicated that this may have happened without the existence of the SK-NEIHR, but all confidently acknowledged that the SK-NEIHR was a significant influence in speeding that process up and ensuring that the necessary research infrastructure (relationships and connections) existed to profile Indigenous scholars. For example:

"It's helped me trying to be more politically sound at the university level, like understanding and being in those table spaces and trying to speak the language that needs to be spoken." – Interviewee

"[if the SK-NEIHR did not exist]...I think I'd have bits and pieces in pockets, but it wouldn't have both the breadth and the depth that it has. That's what it's given for me because I've widened my network. Not all of it is at this super in-depth, 'You're a super close colleague of mine right now,' but I've at least widened that network." - Interviewee

"As an academic, it's nice to know that if I am interested in doing research, that they're there to support and help me. I feel like I can be an ally and also have any concerns that I have brought to the table heard, so I don't feel like if I have any issues that that's not the place to bring them. I feel like that's the place that I can bring them if I have issues. As a professional, it's nice to meet with peers because it builds my academic purview, it builds my scholarly work, it allows me to engage with other academics." – Interviewee

"Anytime we're together virtually, in person, recreationally or professionally, I'm learning." – Interviewee

"...and my confidence and competence in academia in general. Again, whether or not it's part of the NEIHR mandate, you're privy to every conversation that people have, their promotion and tenure files, and recruiting students and issues in the province or issues in the country." – Interviewee

Two Spirit panel at NGGS 2022

Alongside personal and professional growth were descriptions of increased self-confidence and validation. Interviewees often spoke how they felt emboldened through the words and actions of their colleagues in the network. This was especially relevant during the exposure of pretendians in the academy during year three, which had a large effect on the SK-NEIHR team. Some credited the NEIHR with making them feel like they could speak out against injustice and ensure that policies, practices, and research were truly benefiting the people they work with as opposed to the colonial system of the institution. It may be thought of as a snow-ball effect – as PIs see others fighting for what they believe in, they felt more confident to stand with them and demonstrate that in their own colleges and research programs. The importance of this feeling cannot be understated considering the deliberate marginalization of these scholars within colonized places and spaces. To summarize, the SK-NEIHR has helped those involved to feel like they are indeed in the right place, doing good work, and arming them with the practical and psychological tools to advance the wellness of Indigenous peoples:

"To be a part of that network and a part of that circle, for sure, has increased my confidence, too. I'm not making massive steps and changes. When I think about [name] and all the work on the identity piece, it is to push the envelope, even just internally, to ask questions, to speak up when we should be having more of 'an Indigenization lens' than we maybe are having. So, it's increased my confidence to feed off of my colleagues' fierceness." – Interviewee

"Admittedly, I'm usually a very in-the-box thinker and I, too often, have played things safe and I follow the rules. And the amount of times I've vocalized in various internal committee meetings of like, 'I don't care if that's how we've done it before, let's consider doing it this way.' These are words would've never spoken of out of my mouth five years ago. Can I hang my hat on that all NEIHR-related? Probably not. But is that a massive surge of it for me? 100%, to know that people got your back." – Interviewee

"I still credit the NEIHR for giving me the tools and insight and bravery to navigate it myself. So things like contacting the editor of a journal because my work isn't getting published anywhere and seeing if I can work something out with the editor. So, I never would've considered doing that until I heard from people through the NEIHR who have done stuff like that before." – Interviewee

Research Mentorship

One of the ways in which the structure and people of the SK-NEIHR is enacting a welcoming environment is through mutual research mentorship. It was common for interviewees to describe instances of how the "personal" and "professional" within the SK-NEIHR often blended and led to meaningful advancements in their understanding and implementation of research programs. By working together, frequently meeting as a group or one-on-one, and deliberately making connections for PIs, many felt that the network was a valuable place to receive ideas and support for their research. Newer members to the SK-NEIHR spoke about how beneficial it was to be a "fly on the wall" and be able to listen and learn from prominent Indigenous scholars. The connections created led to higher engagement for some PIs which, in turn, led to reciprocal mentorship. For example:

"I don't know if I've really been involved in the disagreements, so I can't say if people who have feel differently, but I appreciate being able to witness and observe that being modelled in a professional manner." – Interviewee

"I've probably been a bit slow sliding up to what are people doing. Okay, well, you're a chair and you're a chair. We've got all these big-wig research chairs in here. I'm like, 'How do I get up into playing into that sort of league that they're all in?' So, I think, being a member of the NEIHR, recognizing I'm also in that leadership circle, but being a member of it, I think I want to make the most use of it as I can." – Interviewee

"And this is where I personally want to use the NEIHR…maximize on it a bit more, that is the intention. [name]'s always very clear, [they say] the intent is to help our scholars excel and invigorate their research, too." – Interviewee

"I can see what has been passed on to me will be passed on to my students and anyone else who they interact with. So, whether that's appropriate research protocols, tips on publishing, grant writing, it will transcend, well, generations, but also transcend into non-Indigenous folks within my field because there aren't any." – Interviewee

One PI spoke about how this aspect of mentorship within the network was soon going to take another step, as the SK-NEIHR is working on readiness toolkits for researchers and PIs who may be newer to the field or aren't as confident to work within community settings. This mix of active (meetings, relationships) and passive mentorship (toolkits) is a potent mix in the creation of strong researchers. For example:

What we're doing right now, I have [staff member name] and [staff member name] both developing toolkits, so readiness toolkits. [Name] is working on a readiness toolkit for new investigators, graduate students or researchers who are just coming into Indigenous research or try and do research with Indigenous communities…what the toolkit is it's a readiness piece where they can actually take a survey and get down so they can begin to understand who they need to speak to, how they need to go and build partnerships and everything else. We're developing those tools for individuals so that they just don't sit there and say, 'Well, I don't know who to talk to.'"

– Interviewee

Kate Boyer jigging at NGGS 2022

Student Mentorship

Another goal of the SK-NEIHR is the creation of opportunities and spaces for Indigenous students. Results on the effectiveness of this were mixed this year, with some PIs describing exemplary instances of student mentorship while others felt that more could be done. Focusing on the positive, many indicated that the co-hosting of NGGS was a positive step for Indigenous student mentorship for the SK-NEIHR. As is supported by that event's survey results (later in this report), many felt that this event was excellent and was a wonderful opportunity for students. Another PI gave a first-hand example of how a student, who was feeling discouraged with the institution, found a place and space in the SK-NEIHR that reinvigorated her sense of passion. For example:

"Yeah, that was just awesome, and she felt like lots of these discussions weren't being had anywhere because she was the only one, right, in her department, like so many of us are. But then when she was around our tables, she was just over the moon. I don't want to put words in her mouth, but I recall feeling that sentiment that she was just so excited, that we have been having these conversations as a NEIHR, and even the support that we offer to graduate students."

– Interviewee

"Our national gathering of Indigenous graduate students is huge, really, really awesome and we've even invited students to participate in our retreats as note takers slash organizers slash participants. I think of folks like [name]…who she felt so detached from Indigenous happenings on campus, and she was, I think maybe the only Indigenous grad student in her department. And, so being part of our community, it just solidified in her that she had a place, and even again, Indigenous identity fraud."

– Interviewee

As mentioned, however, some PIs felt that the SK-NEIHR needed to focus more on student mentorship, something that we will be focusing more in Year 4 (see page 18). This included gaining a better understanding of the wants and needs of Indigenous students within Saskatchewan. For example:

"And that comes back to what I was saying where I'm so out of touch that I'm like, "What do they need? Do they need advocacy for flexibility in graduate programs? Do they need funding to support travel? Do they need advocacy to have more Indigenous faculty?" And I think that's where I almost need, and whether it's a focus group that's a very go-to qualitative way or some information collecting strategy of a landing site online…"

– Interviewee

"But I feel like that student engagement is missing."

 – Interviewee

"And maybe more of an emphasis on the student mentor piece. I think that the faculty or the academic mentor piece is going well. And if you look at the reports, a lot of the reports just identify, we had meetings, we had meetings, we had meetings."

– Interviewee

Drs. Caroline Tait and Bobby Henry at an NGGS 2022 Student Panel

Creation of Research Connections

From the outset of the SK-NEIHR, one of the main purposes of the network was to create research connections. As with last year, interviewees provided additional evidence that this is indeed happening. It also took several forms, but mainly appears to be driven by SK-NEIHR staff and leadership through monthly meetings and through social media (including newsletters). Interviewees spoke highly of the process of the regular meetings, mainly that all participants are asked to give short updates. These updates often turn into valuable ways to check ideas and find out who that PI should be connecting with to advance their research. With more connections comes stronger relationships and with stronger relationships comes more community awareness of Indigenous scholars. One PI knowledgeable of the inner workings of the SK-NEIHR commented on how they have seen a large increase in communities contacting them for assistance this past year. This is a major indicator of success and PIs credited this to the structure, relational approach, and administration of the SK-NEIHR. For example:

"Certainly with the updates, you get a sense of what everyone's interested in working on, which is great for ideas for collaboration, or if someone has a question or a, "I'm working on this type of project," someone can chime in, 'Oh, I've got a connection that you should make,' or et cetera. So I find that really beneficial."

 – Interviewee

"There's another person in the leadership who, through one of our non-research-based conversations, was sharing with everyone just something about her health and wellness and that just sparked a follow-up conversation for ideas and suggestions. And I was able to circle back to her and thank her for her ideas and suggestions. It's this, there's the research scholarly benefits that, I think, come from it."

– Interviewee

"If you're attending meetings or you're going to, I keep saying, workshops and webinars or retreats, then you're being introduced to people, you're exchanging information, you're getting to know everybody."

– Interviewee

"I'm very aware of internally what we offer in terms of funds that people can apply for. Again, I do suppose, again, when you're engaged, you're informed. So, if you're attending our leadership meetings, I think of the tons of times that [the NPI] is like, 'And there's this opportunity, and there's this opportunity, and we can send out information about that, and there's this, that, and the next thing.'"

– Interviewee

SK-NEIHR Influencing Institutional Change

One finding that came through strongly in year three was the SK-NEIHR's focus on institutional change. Interviewees described several forms of this, but the one everyone mentioned was the involvement of the SK-NEIHR in Indigenous identity and the exposure of pretendians. PIs often spoke of the significance of this and said that it led to some policy changes within the institutions. Perhaps just as importantly, it also led to a prominent conversation about identity, the negative effects that pretendians have on Indigenous faculty, students, and staff (including trauma and deep hurt), and to emboldened advocacy for system change. For example:

"When we've planned webinars, for example, on Indigenous identity fraud, I learned so much in that regard too. And now that has transcended into my other work of like, okay, we need to have an Indigenous identity policy in my own faculty and at my new university at [redacted]. And I have the language, and stories to share and terminology, all of that down because I've been privy to it through the NEIHR folks. Otherwise, I would only have what I read in the news kind of, or sought out intentionally on my own."

– Interviewee

"I think the immediate thing that comes to my mind is Indigenous identity and just the fierce forward-thinking, no-bullshit-allowed mentality about it. I am just here for this for days because I think that is such a great example of advocacy and change within the institution."

– Interviewee

"And that's why I think of [name], and [name], and just people that I see at different events, pushing the senior admin folks on, and I don't mean in an angsty, angry way, but just pushing them to think critically about the Indigenous research signature area like, 'What does that mean? Is that different than the NEIHR? What does that look like? Why do we need it? Who's leading it?' So, I think, I know I'm inside to the NEIHR, so I see it as really good envelope-pushing."

– Interviewee

"I think there is a great level of mama bear fierceness in there that is advocating for change and trying to switch the narrative."

– Interviewee

"I've really appreciated people's vulnerability of sharing those experiences. And I think that's how other researchers such as myself learn about, take our blinders down and it isn't all sunshine and roses, there's different units on campus that are better and worse and everything in between. And so, hearing about researchers pushing back and being like, 'That's not how we're using these research dollars. This is how we are intending to be using them and that's how they will be used.' And so, I think there has been that push for that advocacy and that change."

– Interviewee

"What I'm trying to do is create an identity statement that we can actually use across the three universities for the NEIHR. In order to do this and in order to make sure that when we're giving our scholarships out, it's going to students as well and not just about … I'm trying to make sure that it's open for non-status as well to be into it."

– Interviewee

PIs did give additional ways in which the SK-NEIHR helped to facilitate institutional change. As previously mentioned, the SK-NEIHR appears to be fostering confidence and validation within PIs as well as arming them with the tools to do the work in a good way. When asked to expand on this, one PI mentioned how that knowledge base and sense of confidence is extending to their graduate students and that they are using anti-oppressive approaches when in the field. Although the true impact of this might not be fully trackable in the short term, the PI directly attributed the SK-NEIHR for this and strongly believed that it was their participation within the network that gave them the confidence to take on students, armed him with the necessary knowledge, and provided the space for students to feel comfortable to freely work on this topic. For example:

"It's just really cool to see them work on cultural safety modules with nearby (organizations) or communities. Seeing their work published and presenting at conferences and disseminating their learnings through those mechanisms, and lots of those are-. All of those are non-Indigenous settings too, because it's just not a thing in [interviewee's field] really, versus many other folks in the NEIHR participate in so many Indigenous-related events that are Indigenous studies or there's a greater representation of indigeneity in their field."

– Interviewee

As one last example of institutional change, another PI spoke about how the very existence of the SK-NEIHR created change within their institution. They described how when the SK-NEIHR was first started, they made the commitment to foster research between academics and communities. When faculty from this institution started to join the network, the institution felt compelled to create a Dean of Research position responsible for carrying out that very vision. While the PI indicated that the SK-NEIHR was not the only reason this happened, they did describe that the network was a significant influence on it:

Dr. Stacey Lovo with knowledge keepers, February 2023

"A really big thing that the NEIHR has done is supported faculty at [institution 1] in starting research, because we don't have a research pot. A lot of [institution 2] faculty, I believe, when they start, they have like $15,000 or something like that, that they can do some research with. [Institution 1] faculty don't have that opportunity. And so with the NEIHR, they have supported [institution 1] faculty in starting that research, which we wouldn't have had access to. And there's the president grants through [institution 3], but again, that's that little infrastructure pieces that you could build on top of each other and say, 'I have this funding which supports that funding,' and you have matching funding and stuff like that. And so then our university moved forward with putting in a Dean of Research. And so I think the NEIHR helped, definitely that thought was there before, but I think the NEIHR helped push that a little bit harder and bring that in… in the past, we had one president that said, 'our faculty don't do any research. They're just here to teach.' And so with the NEIHR, there was this impetus to say, 'No, we should be really involved in doing research with communities and Métis Nation.' And that helped, I think, push it along."

– Interviewee

Grants and Projects – Researchers Involved with the SK-NEIHR

To remain consistent with previous annual reports, we asked researchers to respond to a few questions about their research activity during year three (April 2022-March 2023). As with last year, we believe these numbers are an underrepresentation of the true extent of research occurring under the umbrella of the SK-NEIHR because not all PIs responded to the annual survey. Despite this, there was still an impressive number of community-based projects, articles, and health research dollars brought into Saskatchewan. Specifically, evidence suggested that in year three:

•There were 144 new community-based research projects, programs, or other initiatives rooted in an Indigenous methodology or approach (bringing the total up to 278 since the start of the SK-NEIHR)
•This number exceeded the total number from the first two years of the SK-NEIHR alone, likely due to the ending of COVID-19 pandemic restrictions
•There were 30 new articles published that employs a community-based approach (bringing the total up to 126 since the start of the SK-NEIHR)
•There were 89 new community-based research projects, programs, or other initiatives that use an anti-oppressive approach (bringing the total up to 182 since the start of the SK-NEIHR)
•There were 11 new articles published that use anti-oppressive approaches (bringing the total up to 59 since the start of the SK-NEIHR)

One of the outputs we have been keeping track of since the start of the SK-NEIHR is the amount of health research funding that researchers associated with the SK-NEIHR have successfully obtained. In year three, survey evidence suggested that 56 new grants were applied for (note that 15 of those received direct support from the SK-NEIHR, such as a support letter or meetings) and that 25 of those had been successful. This brings the total of successful grant applications from SK-NEIHR associated researchers to 63 since the start of the program. Of those 25 successes, it brought in an additional $8,240,256 for Indigenous health research (note that 12 researchers answered this question, whereas 18 answered the number of successful grants question). By our records, this means that approximately $18.7 million dollars in Indigenous health research has been generated by SK-NEIHR associated researchers in years one, two, and three.

To help us understand the specific impact of the SK-NEIHR on the grant application process, we asked researchers to indicate how influential the network was in the success of their grants. This was one of the rare instances where we compared this year's results to the previous. As is seen below, there was a shift in how influential researchers thought the SK-NEIHR was in the success of their grants. Namely, the number of respondents who indicated that the SK-NEIHR had no influence dropped from 35% to 16%, and the number of those who thought that the SK-NEIHR had a significant influence went up from 5% to 16%. This is a positive result, and we will continue to work with researchers to assist in bringing in more funding for Indigenous health research.

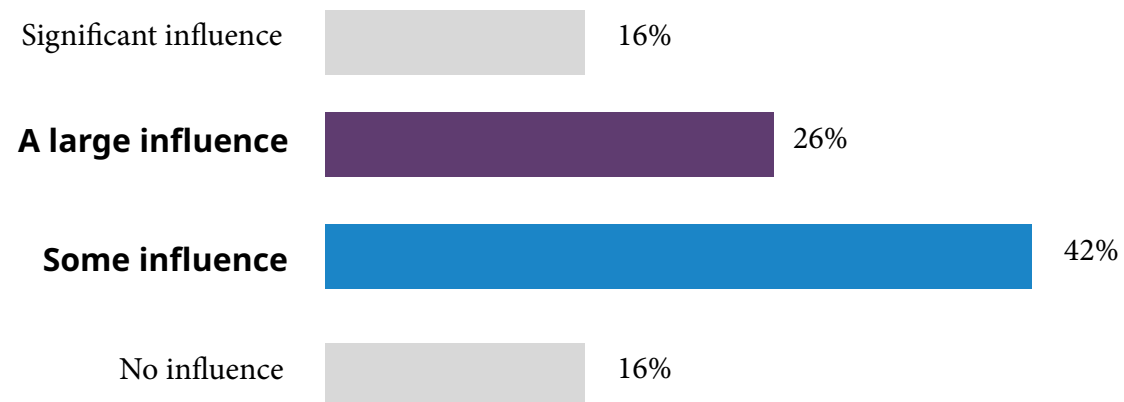Dr. Holly Graham (centre) with Melvina Redeagle and Val Arneault-Pelletier
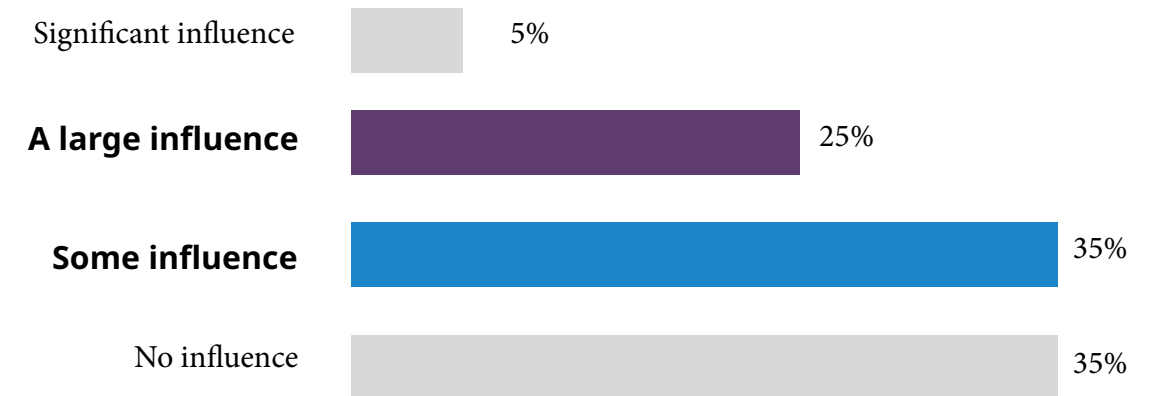
Back to Batoche Festival

Year 1 and 2 Combined Report

Researchers believed that the **SK-NEIHR** either had a **large** or **some influence** over the **success of their grants** in years 1 and 2 (January 2020- March 2022).

Significant influence	5%
A large influence	25%
Some influence	35%
No influence	35%

These findings were supported by interview results, as interviewees saw the benefits of research and grant support activities facilitated by the SK-NEIHR. Although some acknowledged that even more support is desired and that additional staff should be considered to make that a reality, everyone acknowledged that the SK-NEIHR provided valuable infrastructure that helped get grant applications completed. This ranged from providing support letters, creating connections, or even providing advice (e.g., mentorship from senior PIs). For example:

"We've been giving out lots of letters and support for individuals. [name] got their big grant. [name]'s working on theirs. There are a couple other ones that went through that we've been supporting. We continuously see that happening."

– Interviewee

"I did [get seed funding], yes. I engaged in one a couple years ago, and then I just had an extension over the past couple years. That's a really good initiative, and I feel like there was a lot of faculty that accessed it. I thought it worked well." – Interviewee

"I think that the Saskatchewan NEIHR helped me access some of those other institutional applications, or foundational applications, and through them, then I could also apply for other ones. It was like creating a Lego castle. With one block, I got two blocks and two blocks, I got three blocks, and then they all started to feed each other, which was really helpful. Instead of relying on one source, one large source, this helped create other little building blocks."

– Interviewee

Year 3 Report

Researchers believed that the **SK-NEIHR** either had a **large** or **some influence** over the **success of their grants** in year 3 (April 2022-March 2023).

Significant influence	16%
A large influence	26%
Some influence	42%
No influence	16%

Fiddler Dallas Boyer at NGGS 2022
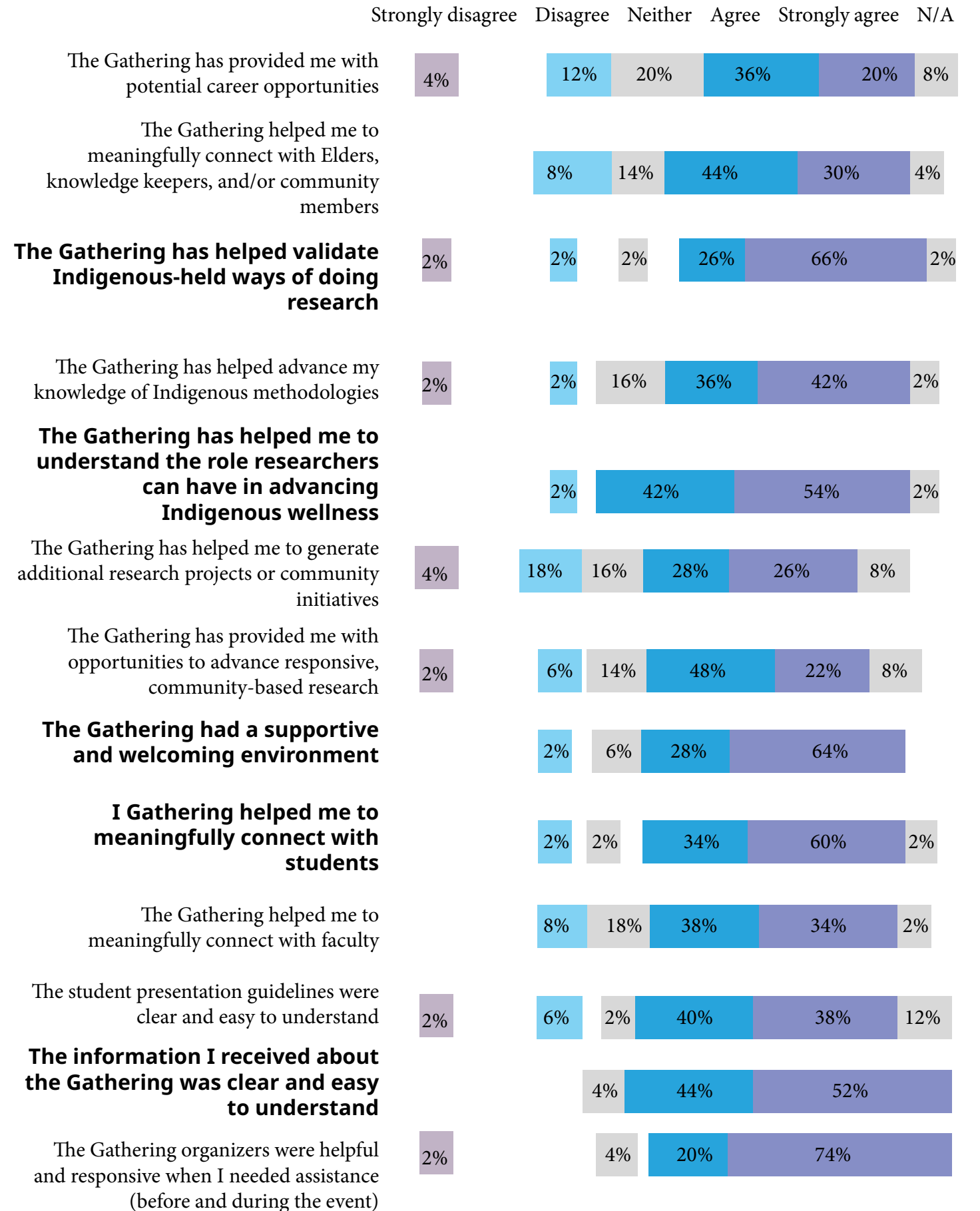
Event-Specific Outcome Data

As previously mentioned, the SK-NEIHR facilitated two major events in year three. The first was the NGGS in the summer of 2022 (co-hosted with the NEIHR National Coordinating Centre), and the second was a hybrid webinar exploring pretendians in research institutions. After both events, short surveys were sent to participants with questions related to the SK-NEIHR measurement and evaluation strategy. This means that these surveys can also help contribute understanding to the results already outlined, as well as offer an additional source of information to validate that the SK-NEIHR is facilitating these outcomes in a variety of venues with a wide-ranging audience. Therefore, we thought it was important to provide a short summary of the results from each of these surveys. To obtain additional information, please contact the SK-NEIHR at skneihr@usask.ca.

National Gathering of Graduate Students – Summary Results

There were 120 people who registered for and attended the 2022 National Gathering of Graduate Students on Whitecap Dakota First Nation, south of Saskatoon in June 2022. Almost sixty students had their abstracts accepted to present, and 52 students presented at the Gathering. Afterwards, all attendees were sent several emails with a link to the post-event survey, and 59 people completed it.

Of the 59 respondents to this survey, the majority of whom were Masters or PhD students [67%], the vast majority either agreed or strongly agreed that NGGS helped them to experience positive outcomes. As is seen in the graph below, the event appeared to help respondents understand the role researchers could have in advancing Indigenous wellness (42% agreed; 54% strongly agreed). Results also suggest that respondents believed it had a supportive and welcoming environment and that it helped them to meaningfully connect with other students (for both faculty and other students). Further, there was agreement amongst respondents that the Gathering helped to validate Indigenous-held ways of doing research (26% agreed; 66% strongly agreed), and that it provided them with opportunities to advance responsive, community-based research (48% agreed; 22% strongly agreed). Taken together, these results are very positive and suggest that NGGS was a meaningful and positive experience for respondents.

The **majority** of respondents **agreed** or **strongly agreed** that they had experienced positive outcomes at NGGS.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly agree	N/A
The Gathering has provided me with potential career opportunities	4%	12%	20%	36%	20%	8%
The Gathering helped me to meaningfully connect with Elders, knowledge keepers, and/or community members		8%	14%	44%	30%	4%
The Gathering has helped validate Indigenous-held ways of doing research	2%	2%	2%	26%	66%	2%
The Gathering has helped advance my knowledge of Indigenous methodologies	2%	2%	16%	36%	42%	2%
The Gathering has helped me to understand the role researchers can have in advancing Indigenous wellness			2%	42%	54%	2%
The Gathering has helped me to generate additional research projects or community initiatives	4%	18%	16%	28%	26%	8%
The Gathering has provided me with opportunities to advance responsive, community-based research	2%	6%	14%	48%	22%	8%
The Gathering had a supportive and welcoming environment			2%	6%	28%	64%
I Gathering helped me to meaningfully connect with students		2%	2%	34%	60%	2%
The Gathering helped me to meaningfully connect with faculty		8%	18%	38%	34%	2%
The student presentation guidelines were clear and easy to understand	2%	6%	2%	40%	38%	12%
The information I received about the Gathering was clear and easy to understand				4%	44%	52%
The Gathering organizers were helpful and responsive when I needed assistance (before and during the event)	2%			4%	20%	74%

A few open-ended questions were also posed to respondents to determine what outcomes they had experienced from attending NGGS. When asked what participants' biggest takeaway from NGGS was, the first theme to emerge was that NGGS helped facilitate meaningful connections and relationships. It's important to note that we heard that this event was often the first in-person event that many had attended since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. This may have amplified the finding that respondents valued the opportunity to connect and reconnect with their colleagues and fellow students. Students specifically mentioned how NGGS facilitated connections with other students across the country, something that could have long-lasting effects. For example:

"The biggest impact was reconnecting with students and faculty. Due to the pandemic, presenting my research has been minimal. This helped me to remember the importance of networking and sharing."– Survey Respondent

"I loved so many aspects of the Gathering, but especially being able to meet and speak with others in person. Having that unstructured time helped to deepen my understanding of the work that others do, learn who they are as people, and find alignment for future connections and/or collaborations." – Survey Respondent

Related to this theme, many respondents spoke about the great sense of solidarity and belonging they felt while attending NGGS. More specifically, respondents pointed to the fact that NGGS is meant specifically for Indigenous peoples (i.e., where the majority of attendees are Indigenous, and all students presenting are Indigenous), was key in them experiencing positive outcomes. It was common for respondents to speak about how bringing Indigenous researchers together facilitated a sense of community and spurred feelings of common purpose and renewal. Others spoke about how attending NGGS reminded them that they are not alone in their field and helped them to combat feelings of loneliness often felt by Indigenous students and researchers in institutions. Overall, it appears that NGGS had a supportive environment where attendees were able to meaningfully connect and, especially for students, helped to affirm their academic dreams and careers. For example:

"Being in a space where I was not the minority, or the only one. Realizing there were others working within Indigenous methodologies like me, and facing similar barriers and stigma. Hearing from faculty that they liked their jobs and felt like they were making a difference. I now feel like there may be mentors out there for me, before had no one to connect with, and [now I see] there are options within academia." – Survey Respondent

"It was beautiful to present in a room full of Indigenous Peoples and scholars. The impact of not having to white-wash or spend excessive energy explaining concepts to non-Indigenous Peoples was so refreshing. Meeting other students across Turtle Island studying Indigenous health will be huge for my academic growth. I am leaving feeling inspired and rejuvenated after a challenging few semesters." – Survey Respondent

"The validation of our knowledge systems without having to reflect western principles in order to be able to present our research. Learning about what others are doing is extremely helpful." – Survey Respondent

After describing what outcomes respondents had experienced, we asked them to describe why their takeaways mattered to them. This helped us to further explore the outcomes on a deeper level. When asked why attending NGGS mattered, respondents often commented on how it made them feel like they belonged in a research setting. In other words, their work and worldviews were validated through their experiences at NGGS. Some outlined how it reaffirmed their work (and career path/choice), how it made them feel supported beyond their immediate circles, and how it built self-confidence. For example:

"Building relationships and community, particularly in the area of Indigenous health, is important and Gatherings like this are integral in feeling support and confidence in the work I'm doing in Indigenous health. I've received validation and encouragement in my research work, so having the opportunity to experience this with other Indigenous People is so valuable. I've built relationships that will last long into the future." – Survey Respondent

"Before the Gathering I didn't fully realize the potential community impact of the work or the wide scope of the work and possibility to work in different areas/domains all pertaining to community health. Likewise I had felt discouraged/guilty about leaving my community to enter into the academy. Seeing others and the great community- focused work they do, helped me overcome that." – Survey Respondent

"It has reaffirmed why I am doing this work. I feel that knowledge sharing, connecting with other students and staff, are all the reward for some of the very challenging pieces of academia. I needed a reminder to keep going. I have also left with so many new ideas on how to make my research better, and that pursuing the PhD route one day could actually be reasonable!" – Survey Respondent

In addition to feeling validated in their choices and identities, many spoke about the reciprocity through mentorship and support they felt while attending NGGS. This appeared to have gone both ways, with students appreciating the support they received from NGGS events, faculty, and staff and faculty seeing the opportunity to return the mentorship they had received at previous NGGS or other events. Using the responses as a basis, it is relatively safe to assume that the design of NGGS helped facilitate a degree of reciprocal mentorship amongst attendees and created concrete connections for future research. For example:

"Responsibility - that I have as a junior faculty member to mentor students as I was once a funded mentee. The responsibility I have to continue to honour the relationships that were established with senior scholars when I was a mentee - I would not be a Métis scholar today without them."
– Survey Respondent

"I was mentored through the network and to be able to give back is important to me." – Survey Respondent

"There are very few Indigenous academics that have the time to mentor or offer candid advice. I think it is also hard to get your name into the world as a young scholar. Trying to make connections with hiring committees and Indigenous faculty has been very hard during the pandemic." – Survey Respondent

"I think it's valuable because my work and research is grounded in relationships. Being able to start to build connections with others in a safe, comfortable, and relaxed environment (like the NEIHR gathering!) is important to foster strong foundations for the future." – Survey Respondent
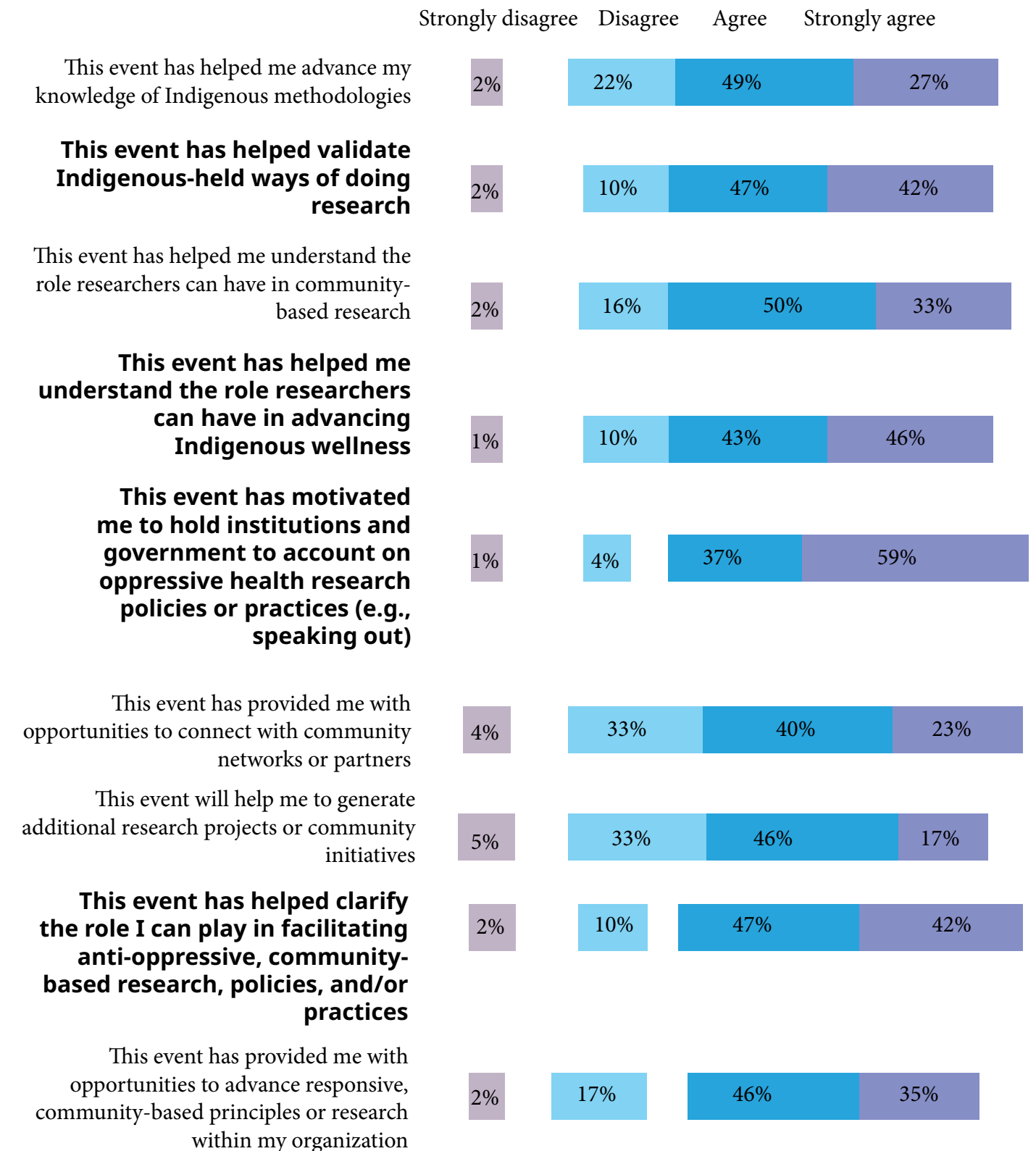

Dr. JoLee Sasakamoose with counsellor colleagues Kelsey Lipp, Chasity Delorme and Ceane Dusyk supporting Elders and attendees at an event September 30, 2022

Indigenous Identity: the Impact of Pretendians in the Academy Webinar – Summary Results

To explore the potential effects of the Indigenous Identity webinar held by the SK-NEIHR in December of 2022, a short feedback survey was sent to attendees. This survey was again designed around the core SK-NEIHR questions, but also featured a few unique questions around the webinar's implementation. For the purposes of this report, only the outcome results will be outlined. As is seen below, many of the 150 respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that the webinar facilitated positive outcomes for them. Notably, the roundtable discussion appears to have motivated attendees to hold institutions and governments to account on oppressive health research, policies, or practices (37% agreed, 59% strongly agreed). Additionally, evidence suggests that it helped to validate Indigenous-held ways of doing research (47% agreed, 42% strongly agreed), that it helped respondents to understand the role researchers could have in advancing Indigenous wellness (42% agreed, 46% strongly agreed), and that it helped clarify the role they could play in facilitating anti-oppressive community-based research, policies, and/or practices (47% agreed; 42% strongly agreed).

Overall, **many** respondents **agreed** or **strongly agreed** that the Indigenous Identity webinar **facilitated** many of the intended outcomes.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
This event has helped me advance my knowledge of Indigenous methodologies	2%	22%	49%	27%
This event has helped validate Indigenous-held ways of doing research	2%	10%	47%	42%
This event has helped me understand the role researchers can have in community-based research	2%	16%	50%	33%
This event has helped me understand the role researchers can have in advancing Indigenous wellness	1%	10%	43%	46%
This event has motivated me to hold institutions and government to account on oppressive health research policies or practices (e.g., speaking out)	1%	4%	37%	59%
This event has provided me with opportunities to connect with community networks or partners	4%	33%	40%	23%
This event will help me to generate additional research projects or community initiatives	5%	33%	46%	17%
This event has helped clarify the role I can play in facilitating anti-oppressive, community-based research, policies, and/or practices	2%	10%	47%	42%
This event has provided me with opportunities to advance responsive, community-based principles or research within my organization	2%	17%	46%	35%

When asked what impact the webinar made for respondents, several prominent themes emerged. The first was a better understanding of the impact, gravity, and consequences of identifying Dr. Carrie Bourassa, former Scientific Director of the Institute of Indigenous Peoples' Health at the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, and professor at the University of Saskatchewan, as a pretendian (a person who falsely claims Indigenous identity). Specifically, many commented on how they better understood not only how the situation played out but also the harmful effects it had on those who helped expose Dr. Bourassa. Others complimented the graduate student who was part of the roundtable, indicating that it helped them to better understand the consequences for Indigenous Peoples when pretendians are in the system (e.g., trauma, loss of Indigenous faculty, etc.). These comments appeared to have come from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous attendees, and included:

"Before listening to this panel, I hadn't thought much about the impact on students who have looked up to someone as a role model and then find out they were lying about their identity. I had thought more about the person taking a role that should have gone to someone else than I had thought about the wider impacts. The student who spoke really brought that element home to me." – Survey Respondent

"It was eye opening. Learned a lot about what Indigenous faculty and students have been going through in the aftermath of the pretendian issue at USask." – Survey Respondent

"The event really opened my eyes to the broad and far-reaching impacts of "pretendians" in academia. The emotion of the speakers underscored the impacts beyond any surface-level understanding. I have been thinking about this event since it happened and I'm so glad you hosted it for awareness-building." – Survey Respondent

"I learned about the negative impact of pretendians in the academic world by listening to a student and academic staff. I had not been aware of the efforts to bring concerns about Carrie Bourassa's lack of Indigenous credentials to the university. I also now see the terrible loss of accomplished Indigenous academic staff at the U of S. This will have long term implications for the university and current and future students." – Survey Respondent

Additionally, the words and experiences of panel members helped bring forth affirmation and, for some, realization of the inherent racism present within academic institutions. This was largely spurred on by panel members' explanations of the fallout of identifying Carrie Bourassa as a pretendian. Some linked it to broader systemic problems (e.g., colonialism) while others came to the conclusion that the institution remains an unsafe place for Indigenous staff, faculty, and students. For example:

"I learned that institutions such as academia will often make for an inhospitable environment for anyone who tries to seek racialized justice. It is a disheartening reality, and does not provide much hope for the next generation of racialized scholars coming into the organization. Most noteworthy was the explicit avoidance by the University of an academic misconduct route that Dr. Tait initially tried to explore. It had more to do with misconduct than of skepticism surrounding Bourassa's identity." – Survey Respondent

"Pretendianism is an act of colonial violence (evident in silencing)." – Survey Respondent

"It was eye opening to see a first-hand account of how this has affected Indigenous women and how the institutions responded to their suggestions of pretendians (i.e., protected the institution's reputation first)" – Survey Respondent

"A greater understanding of the barriers and implications of said barriers on Indigenous people in academia. It highlighted the ongoing oppressive and racist policies and procedures in place at the U of S as well as illuminated the lack of leadership and integrity in upper-level staff with their handling of recent events (and the departure of former Indigenous faculty years prior)." – Survey Respondent

Moderator Dr. Robert Henry, with panelists Jamie LaFleur, Tracey Robinson, Dr. Winona Wheeler, Dr. Caroline Tait, and knowledge keeper Terri Hansen-Gardiner

"Reinforced the settler state response to anti-Indigenous racism - place the burden on Indigenous women scholars to address, respond to and hold academic institutions accountable for following their established rules in response to academic dishonesty and lack of integrity demonstrated by White settlers who fraudulently claim Indigenous identity and academic qualifications. White supremacy in action." – Survey Respondent

Finally, for some, this webinar helped to motivate action against institutional racism and pretendians. In general, some respondents spoke about how they now feel emboldened to speak out against injustice, while others identified that non-Indigenous peoples have a large role to play in this issue as well. For example:

"I appreciated seeing that others wanted to talk about these issues and not brush them under the rug so to speak. Before this conference I knew I had a responsibility and accountability to my community and the Indigenous communities I'm working with to walk in a good way and this conference did reinforce that."

"I need to be more of a fighter/brave and stand up for my community, Indigenous Peoples."

"How significant the real impact of Pretendians is, particularly on students, and how pervasive this abusive behaviour extends, from university executives against Indigenous scholars, to rippling out to community members, how Indigenous Peoples and scholars are STILL disadvantaged and unsupported. It was really difficult to hear the panel's experiences and how badly they were treated. It makes me think about my role as a non-Indigenous person and the actions I must take to be a better ally." – Survey Respondent

Overall, results from this feedback survey suggests that the SK-NEIHR was able to both spread awareness of pretendians in institutions from the perspective of those people who are exposing them (roundtable participants spoke about their experiences with Dr. Carrie Bourassa and Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond), as well as spark important conversations about institutional change. Both directly relate to Indigenous wellness within and outside of the institution and, as is well established, are key objectives that the SK-NEIHR committed to work towards.

Conclusion: Looking forward to Year Four and Planning for Renewal

Sharing Circle at NGGS 2022

At the half way point of our first five years of funding, and the COVID-19 pandemic waning, we have focused more on strategic planning for the next few years, and planning for the renewal. As the evaluation demonstrated in Year Three, the work we have done in the past few years establishing this network is starting to really pay off, despite the many challenges, both from the pandemic, and with the Scientific Director of CIHR's Institute of Indigenous Peoples Health. We have added more Indigenous academics to our research leadership team, grown our staff team, added a knowledge keeper in residence, and added many members to our larger network. We have also greatly increased our activities in community, now that we are able to travel and meet with people.

As we enter the latter part of our first round of funding, evaluation will continue to play a critical role in determining our path forward by providing critical insights into our impact. We look forward to continuing to build the *nātawihowin* and *mamawiikikayaahk* Research, Training and Mentorship Network (SK-NEIHR) to support our vision: for all First Nations and Métis people in Saskatchewan to experience optimal health and wellness across their lifespans.

This page intentionally left blank.