



CRN

Centre de recherche en neurosciences
Centre for Research in Neuroscience

Dr. Keith Murai
Director, x43477

Dr. Charles Bourque, x44239
Dr. Samuel David, x44240
Dr. Salvatore Carbonetto, x44237
Dr. David Stellwagen, x42806

Dr. Brian Chen, x42379
Dr. Jesper Sjöström, x44561
Dr. Yong Rao, x42520
Dr. Don van Meyel, x42995



McGill

Yvonne Gardner
Administrative Assistant
Téléphone/Telephone
514-934-8094

MUHC Tel. No.
514-934-1934 + ext.
Télécopieur/FAX
514-934-8216

August 11, 2017

Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada
Science Promotion Prize

Dear Selection Committee,

It is with great pleasure that I provide a letter of recommendation for the science initiative *Convergence: Perception of Neuroscience* that has been nominated for the Science Promotion Prize given by the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada.

Convergence, Perceptions of Neuroscience (convergenceinitiative.org) was launched in 2016 with the support of several major partners including the Brain Repair and Integrative Neuroscience Program at the Research Institute of the McGill University Health Centre (~130 faculty and their research programs), the Concordia University Faculty of Fine Arts, and the Canadian Association for Neuroscience (>1000 members). *Convergence* is a remarkable collaboration between scientists and artists and reflects upon the origins of neuroscience where pioneers in the field over 100 years ago applied their artistic abilities to capture and convey discoveries about the brain. *Convergence* is serving to unite neuroscientists doing cutting-edge research with talented artists from Concordia University, allowing them to work side-by-side and learn from each other. This initiative provides a novel milieu for artists and scientists to apply their knowledge, creativity, and skill. Importantly, *Convergence* is breaking down barriers between disciplines while enabling better communication about the benefits of neuroscience research for society. *Convergence* has led to the formation of a 3-unit course at Concordia University (DART461) and over 25 major events including laboratory and art studio visits, public lectures, interviews (CBC Radio, Le Devoir) and formal presentations (Science and You Conference and The Canadian Association for Neuroscience Meeting). Last year's *Convergence* initiative culminated in a very successful public presentation and exhibition of neuroscience and art at the Grande Library in Montreal, a month-long exposé at a downtown art gallery in Montreal (Virtual Voice Gallery), and exhibition at the Canadian Association for Neuroscience Meeting with >1000 attendees. Importantly, *Convergence* is a rapidly growing and evolving initiative that promises to be even more successful in the coming year.

A large part of the success stems from the Director of *Convergence*, Dr. Cristian Zaelzer-Pérez who has a diverse training history and exposure to various cultures and scientific environments. Cristian was born in Chile and pursued training in graphic design (Temuco, Chile) and an undergraduate degree in Medical Technology at the Universidad Austral de Chile (Valdivia, Chile). Following this, he pursued a Ph.D. degree in molecular biology and biochemistry where he performed beautiful work related to the structure and biophysics of TRP and BK channels under the guidance of Dr. Ramon Latorre (Universidad Austral de Chile) and

The Research Institute of the McGill University Health Centre
Montreal General Hospital, 1650 Cedar Ave., bureau L7 132, Pavillon Livingston
Montréal (Québec) Canada H3G 1A4
Site Web/Website www.mcgill.ca/crn/

Dr. Francisco Bezanilla (University of Chicago). In 2009, Cristian moved to Canada to work with Dr. Charles Bourque at McGill University in the field of brain circuitry and osmoregulation. There he has been applying advanced neurophysiological approaches to dissect the role of TRPV channels in the detection of body temperature and osmotic stress. Cristian's research is of the highest quality and impact and this is reflected by publications in top-notch journals including Cell Reports, PNAS, Science, and Nature. With *Convergence*, Cristian has shown immense creativity and endless energy to build a highly impactful public outreach initiative. Cristian's kind personality and deep dedication has been instrumental in fostering collaborations and building key relationships that have led to the success of *Convergence*.

I truly believe the nomination of *Convergence* for a Science Promotion Prize by NSERC is well-deserved considering the impact of *Convergence* in science communication and promoting tangible interactions among scientists, artists, media, and the public. I have no doubt that *Convergence* will continue to transform how the public understands and perceives the role of science in society and I greatly look forward to participating in this impressive initiative in the coming year.

Sincerely,



Keith K. Murai, Ph.D.
Director | Centre for Research in Neuroscience
Professor | Department of Neurology and Neurosurgery
Leader | Brain Repair and Integrative Neuroscience Program, McGill University Health Centre