

ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT

2021-2022

Our world. Made better. Through mental health research.



WE DO RESEARCH DIFFERENTLY.

Mental Health Research Canada (MHRC) is a national, charitable organization dedicated to advancing new and existing mental health knowledge to better the lives of Canadians.

In a year like no other, in a time like no other, mental health is finally front and centre. It is likely that after 2 years of restrictions, lockdowns, isolation, masking, online learning, remote working, travel bans, closed schools, restaurants and offices, it is fair to assume that most Canadians have come face to face with the importance of good mental health. In fact, our ongoing data collection throughout the pandemic confirms this.

Mental Health Research Canada has continued on its growth trajectory and has made significant contributions to the mental health landscape during this pandemic. We found opportunities to add value on the national stage, underpinned by partnerships and collaboration, while avoiding duplication of efforts. Our revenues and staff team have grown as we have stepped up to address the unprecedented needs in mental health.

What has not changed for us is that we want to lead by example and **Do Research Differently**. Central to our grant funding requirements, stakeholders are partners in the research process – authentically and fully – from start to finish. Our Theory of Change is that there will be greater mental health for all in Canada via collaborative partnerships, the generation and sharing of useful knowledge and the engagement of stakeholders and people with lived experience in the research process.

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Growth in Unprecedented, Challenging Times

No one could have anticipated that we would still be dealing with COVID-19 two years later, but here we are; as a result, never has there been a more important time globally for mental health and mental health research. Despite COVID-19's challenges, we are hoping that some good may come from these difficult times as we emerge from this pandemic: mental health will continue to be more of a priority than ever before, our workplaces will become more wellness-focused and all Canadians will keep talking about mental health. Let's not miss this opportunity to keep mental health front and centre.

MHRC has had another extraordinarily busy and productive year of tremendous growth: our extensive national polling work supported by Health Canada tracking the mental health of Canadians has been extended for another three years; our new support for Indigenous Peoples honours Truth and Reconciliation; our deepening engagement of stakeholders in the research process enhances our impact; and our tremendous expansion of our support for early-career researchers helps build the pipeline of mental health researchers for tomorrow. All these items have resulted in a year of adding value in many important ways. All of our partners have enthusiastically renewed relationships with us, and more have joined. Together with like-minded sector partners, we continue to focus on building bridges between academia and service delivery to advance evidence-based, outcomes-focused solutions that will improve the mental health of Canadians.

We continue to approach all that we do collaboratively, working with stakeholders and partners to deepen our impact. Most importantly, WE DO RESEARCH DIFFERENTLY. We aim to change the way mental health research is done by ensuring that stakeholders are authentically engaged in the research process and lead in determining the kinds of knowledge that will drive actual change. We are also committed to ensuring that the knowledge we generate and share is relevant and important to people with lived experience—our most important stakeholders.

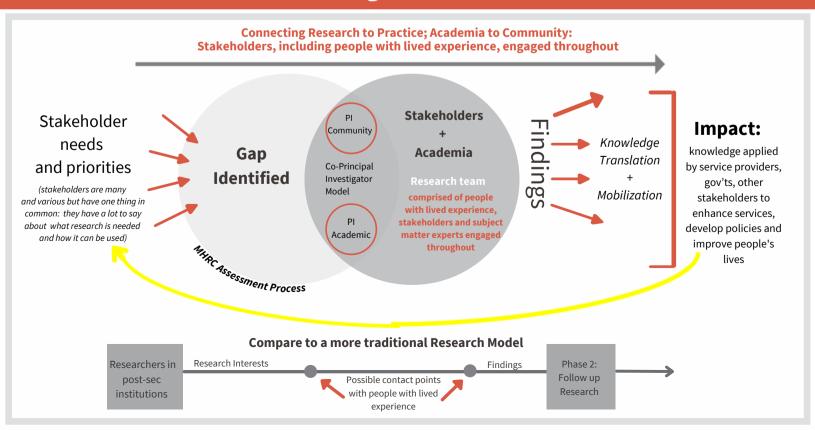
We are very proud of the work we have accomplished this past year. We are grateful to our staff team for their commitment and hard work in unprecedented and challenging times, and for the strategic leadership and expertise of our Board of Directors. Both have paved the way for the successful execution of our many important activities this year. Finally, to our increasing list of donors and funders, we could not do our work without your support. We are very appreciative of your contributions. You are investing wisely – in a lean organization that has quickly built a reputation for excellence, collaboration and meaningful contribution.

CEO

Akela Puples

Chair, Board of Directors

MHRC's Knowledge Generation Process





New funding in recognition of Truth & Reconciliation Day

September 2021 saw Canada's first Truth and Reconciliation Day, and we wanted to honour it with something meaningful. We decided to launch an annual Indigenous Studentship program to support Indigenous students from across Canada conducting research on Indigenous mental health.

We are proud to support the following inaugural recipients of this new program:

- Maureen Plante, University of Calgary: Braiding Sweetgrass: Supporting Indigenous Staff in Non-Indigenous Organizations
- Stephanie Tipple, University of Calgary: Indigenous Approaches to Wellness: A Response to the COVID-19 Mental Health Crisis in Indigenous Communities
- Tasha-Lee Schwantz, Yukon University: Mental health concerns of small business entrepreneurs due to financial distress in the Indigenous communities of Yukon Territory
- Ashley Julian, Acadia University: Nestuin Wiaqi Elmi'knik
 Kekina'muemkewey: A community-engaged research approach for
 accessing linguistic resurgence, revitalization, and reclamation
 efforts.

We also continued to oversee the following impactful projects in Indigenous mental health:



ONGOING STUDENT PROJECT

Exploring Mental Wellness Services: By and For Indigenous Peoples in British Columbia, Canada

from
Nikki Rose Hunter-Porter
Thompson Rivers University,
in partnership with
BC Interior Health

ONGOING GRANT

Lona'tshistanet
(Firekeepers): Enhancing
Coming of Age, a wellness
program for Oneida Youth
Dr. Dan Ashbourne, LFCC
Kahawani Doxtator, LFCC &
Dr. Jason Brown, Western
University

with support from:



BUILDING BRIDGES BETWEEN RESEARCH AND PRACTICE



Updates on our Multiprovince COVID-19 Initiative to support children, youth and families

In early 2020, MHRC launched an initiative to bring together funders from across the country to facilitate knowledges sharing and advance outcomes-focused research, such as:

Supporting the caregivers of children with support needs in BRITISH COLUMBIA (newly funded this year!)

from:

Dr. Jennifer Baumbusch
University of British Columbia &

Angela Clancy
Family Support Institute

along with last year's ongoing projects:

Tracking the mental health impacts of COVID-19 on children in SASKATCHEWAN

Enhancing wellness program for Oneida youth in ONTARIO

Fostering connections between LGBTQ+ youth & elders in NEW BRUNSWICK

Evaluating global COVID-19 literature in the context of NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR

"This has been a unique and very positive experience working in partnership with people with lived experience and with a co-principle investigator in a community based organization. MHRC's grant application criteria presents an important opportunity to work differently and in a way that will hopefully better position research findings for use and application."

– Dr. Jennifer Baumbusch University of British Columbia At the core of who we are is our **GRANTS**, where we partner with organizations across the country to fund timely, innovative research to address the needs of unique populations across Canada.

Our process advances the sector in its focus on **stakeholder engagement** and building bridges between research and practice. All projects must be lead by co-principal investigators, one in academia and one representing a stakeholder group directly engaged with those who will use the research. All projects must also ensure the fulsome engagement of **people with lived experience** through the entire research process.

NEWLY FUNDED GRANTS IN 2021!

....in New Brunswick

Acceptance and Commitment
Therapy through
Tele-Counselling for Caregivers
in New Brunswick

Dr. Pamela Durepos

University of New Brunswick; & Chandra MacBean
Regina Community Clinic

Prioritizing targets for workplace MH interventions using routinely collected administrative data

Dr. Ted McDonald

New Brunswick Institute for Research, Data and Training; & **Dr. William Journaey** Dalhousie University NB

.... in Saskatchewan

Co-developing mental literacy and self-care resource for racialized newcomer youth in Regina, Saskatchewan: A youth-led participatory action research

Dr. Geoffrey Maina
University of Saskatchewan; &
Dr. Razawa Maroof
Regina Community Clinic

Take Up Space, You Matter!: Fostering (Re)Connection After the Pandemic through Trauma-Informed

Community Arts
Programming

Dr. Charity Marsh
University of Regina; &
Danielle Sakundiak
Girls Rock Regina

Pathways and Barriers to Access and Utilization of Internet-Delivered Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (ICBT) by Diverse Ethnocultural People of Saskatchewan

Dr. Heather Hadjistavropoulos
University of Regina; &
Dr. Ram Sapkota
Online Therapy Unit

....in Northern Ontario

Enhancing access to child and youth mental health services through an improved referral pathway from police officers

Dr. Ron Hoffman
Nipissing University; &
Dr. Tina Benevides
HANDS TheFamilyHelpNetwork

SPOTLIGHT ON RESEARCH

Curious to learn more about our funded projects? In May 2021 we launched our Spotlight on Research **webinar series**, where we give our researchers the stage to tell the world about the impactful work they are doing.

Join our next one by registering for free on our website!

Many thanks to our co-funders:













TRACKING THE MENTAL HEALTH OF CANADIANS DURING COVID-19

MHRC has the most comprehensive dataset in the country

When the pandemic started in Canada in early 2020, few would have predicted that it would be two years before a semblance of normal returned. We wondered – how will an event like this impact mental health, and how long will it take to recover? In March 2020, we went about answering the first part of this question by asking Canadians to evaluate their mental health as it compared to the period immediately preceding the pandemic.

Two years later, mental health indicators remain highly elevated compared to before COVID-19. We've been through multiple waves of COVID-19 and multiple waves of lockdowns and can now identify a number of trends.

In addition to our polling series, we have created a page to highlight deeper analysis into key questions – subjects such as LGBTQ2S+, caregivers, nurses, workplace mental health, income & gender, ethnicity, rural/urban, and age & accessing services.

We have conducted 11 polls thus far in **our ongoing series**; we will continue to collect and analyze data, sharing our findings in a report released every six to eight weeks. Our data is also made available to the research community and integrated into MHRC's free, easy-to-use, online **COVID-19 Data Portal**.



KEY FINDINGS OF ELEVEN NATIONAL POLLS

Levels of anxiety and depression remain high

About 1 in 4 Canadians are indicating high anxiety or high depression, down from a peak of nearly 1 in 3 during the height of the pandemic.

Riding out the pandemic with resiliency

Most Canadians are resilient, with two in three consistently indicating they are good at bouncing back from challenging experiences.

Vulnerable populations

Certain groups are more likely to indicate high anxiety or high depression, notably: those who identify as LGBTQ2S+, mothers of young children, young mothers, the precariously employed, nurses, mental health workers, and younger Canadians.

Increase in access to mental health care

About 20% to 22% of Canadians have accessed mental health care since COVID-19, up significantly from the number who accessed care in the year before COVID-19. The major difference is in an increase in those accessing care online going from 2% to 9% of Canadians.

Increase in mental health diagnoses

Approximately 7% of Canadians have a new mental health diagnosis since COVID.

Loss of work/school days

Approximately 8% of students of working Canadians are losing days at work or school due to mental health. 21% are experiencing impaired days at school or work due to mental health.



We currently released 13 research briefs about the mental health of specific populations

Available at: www.mhrc.ca/researchbriefs

Thank you to our partner *Health Canada* for funding this project, and for extending this research for a further three years.

We would also like to thank our provincial partners who have expanded our project through upsampling:





researchNS







We would also like to thank the many partners who utilize this data in drafting reports on mental health in Canada.

AUTHENTIC ENGAGEMENT WITH PEOPLE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE

Several years ago, a movement in mental health research really took hold – the importance of consulting and engaging those who are living with mental health challenges in determining priorities for mental health research, programming and investments. Now consulting people with lived experience is becoming more common across the mental health landscape, and more efforts are being made to get their input, albeit with varied degrees of success.

Since our founding, MHRC has been making it a priority to ensure people with lived experience are fully engaged in all aspects of our work. They are present on our Board of Directors, staff team and peer review committees, and are integrated into all our funded research projects.

When COVID-19 struck, mental health quickly became a major concern around the globe and we realized there was a need to understand how Canadians were managing their mental health in these unique and challenging times. We achieved this via our pan-Canadian polling project. We were able to extract a large sample of data from people with mental health diagnoses to get their input on a variety of topics. This represented the largest sample of its kind in Canada.

We have now surveyed over 6,000 people with a mental health diagnosis, as well as thousands of caregivers for people with mental health diagnoses.





What we have learned:

Personal supports were substantially more likely to be most helpful in supporting mental health with 70% indicating they were quite helpful compared to only 47% for professional supports.



Self-guided resources are popular, while group counselling or treatments were not popular.



A majority of people with diagnoses manage with medication, while only a quarter or less are also in counseling with a mental health professional. These numbers vary significantly based on access to benefits.



Ending stigma was the number one priority identified by people with diagnoses. In research, people with diagnoses want to see new investments in improving service provision – ensuring people get the right services and treatments and that these are effective.



Satisfaction with mental health services decreased only slightly since the pandemic began, despite a major shift to virtual mental health services away from in-person service options.



Women with a diagnosis were far more likely than men to indicate they are not accessing services (but should be) because they had not "gotten around to it yet".



25 EARLY CAREER RESEARCHERS SUPPORTED

Thanks to our many partnerships, we are pleased to have invested **\$600,000** in **studentships** and **fellowships** this year.

2021-2022 Studentship Recipients

- **Nashit Chowdhury, University of Calgary**: Identifying the effects of COVID-19 on the mental health of the visible minority essential workers and their coping strategies
- **Selvini Devagasayam, Seneca College:** Minimizing Mental Health impact of Burnout and Vicarious Trauma on Front-line Workers of the Residential Care Agencies
- Caeleigh Landry, University of Regina: Feasibility of Online Mindfulness Exercises as an Adjunct to Tailored ICBT for PSP
- **Karen Leung, Western University:** Developing best practices for culturally appropriate programming to promote mental health equity among BIPOC youth
- **Petra Meijer, Humber College:** Developing a best practice model for mental health crisis care: A community engaged approach
- **Estellane St. Jean, University of Montreal:** Impact of an innovative, adaptive residential project on the quality of life of adults with autism
- Susana Montesinos, University of Manitoba: Kitigay Mindfulness
- **Breanna Zwick, University of Manitoba:** Farmer mental health in Canada: Associations with farm management and animal health and welfare
- Maureen Plante, University of Calgary: Braiding Sweetgrass: Supporting Indigenous Staff in Non-Indigenous Organizations
- **Stephanie Tipple, University of Calgary**: Indigenous Approaches to Wellness: A Response to the COVID-19 Mental Health Crisis in Indigenous Communities
- **Justice Billy, Yukon University:** Mental health concerns of small business entrepreneurs due to financial distress in the Indigenous communities of Yukon Territory
- **Ashley Julian, Acadia University:** Nestuin Wiaqi Elmi'knik Kekina'muemkewey: A community-engaged research approach for accessing linguistic resurgence, revitalization, and reclamation efforts.
- Krischanda Bemister, Ryerson University: Recall, Record, Reflect: A 3-Stage Qualitative Examination on the Impact of Compassion Fatigue on Toronto Zoo Staff
- **Jordan Shertobitoff, University of Saskatchewan:** Exploring the mental health knowledge and self-care practices for racialized immigrant youth in Regina, Saskatchewan.
- Sahana Ramamoorthy, University of Saskatchewan: COVID-19 and mental health impact in Saskatchewan: caregiver and child perspectives
- Amanda Scandrett, University of Regina: Take Up Space, You Matter!: Fostering (Re)Connection After the Pandemic Through Trauma-Informed Community Arts Programming
- **Gustavo Betini, University of Waterloo:** Assessing the mental health impact of COVID-19 on Canadians: A longitudinal study
- Indira Riadi, Simon Fraser University: Digital interventions to improve social connectedness and mental wellbeing of vulnerable older adults during COVID-19 and beyond
- Genevieve Proulx, University of Quebec: In Their Shoes: Maternal Experiences of Single-Parent Outaouais Women
- **Senem Guzel, Memorial University:** Scoping Review: Mental Health Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Children, Youth and Families

"Thanks to MHRC funding, I was able to focus on my research project while working with a community organization to better understand single mothers' maternal experiences. The tremendous support offered by MHRC is helping me advance my studies faster."

Genevieve Proulx, PhD Candidate
Université du Québec en Outaouais
Studentship Recipient



5 NEW FELLOWSHIPS THIS YEAR

2021-2022 Fellowship Recipients

- Chloe Lau, University of Toronto/CAMH: Uncovering the Link between Neurocognitive Functioning and Suicide Attempt
- Taylor Jenkins, Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital: Left in the waiting room: Evaluating a virtual intervention for siblings of children with special needs.
- **Stephanie Craig, York University:** Testing the SNAP program in youth with Callous-Unemotional traits
- William Reeson, University of Western Ontario: The Mood
 Disorders Society of Canada Virtual Assistant: Development and
 evaluation of a machine learning and artificial intelligence
 chatbot
- Oluwakemi Aderibigbe, Nipissing University: Enhancing access to child and youth mental health services through an improved referral pathway from police officers

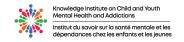
"By joining forces, Mitacs and Mental Health Research Canada are co-funding critical initiatives, building bridges between research and practice, and working to address the mental health challenges facing Canadians today. Mitacs is proud to partner with MHRC to support their important work."

Dr. John Hepburn, CEO, Mitacs
Funding Partner



Many thanks to our partners for supporting early career researchers:













Mental Health Research Canada made a commitment in late 2019, shortly before the pandemic, to add a focus on workplace mental health to our priority areas. The decision was sparked in part due to new research which indicated that nearly 70% of businesses did not have a workplace mental health policy and plan, and that those that did have policies and plans were finding a positive return on investment. It made sense – mentally well workers missed less time and were more productive at work.

As the pandemic began, we put our workplace mental health plans on hold but this year we started implementing efforts to advance the issue of workplace mental health. We are now the home of the most comprehensive data and analysis as to the state of workplace mental health in Canada, and look forward to advancing our work in getting more Canadians access to workplace mental health programming.

Visit our dedicated workplace mental health page at www.workplaceMH.ca



Many thanks to our funding collaborators





Workplace Mental Health Covid Research Brief

As outlined in our COVID-19 polling section, we have collected over 35,000 responses in our ongoing tracking of mental health of Canadians. As part of this, we have been able to map the unique composition of each workplace sector from before COVID-19 to today. Each sector was unique – some had challenges before COVID-19, some attracted a higher number of individuals with pre-existing diagnoses, and some had highly resilient workforces. While all workforces showed at least some change, we noted most significant changes in professions like nurses, teachers, and mental health workers.

Psychologically Safe Leaders Assessment

In October 2021, we released a study that explored how leaders view their own performance as it related to supporting the mental wellbeing of their teams. Leaders scored themselves, on average 83%. While we noted little variance between workplace sectors, we did note that women and older leaders scored themselves higher.

As this impact report is being written, we are about to release the second half of this study revealing that non-leaders would give their leaders an average scored of 67%. Again, we noted less variance between the sectors. We did find that both leaders and their employees noted similar areas of needed improvement, especially in the areas of Communication & Collaboration and Social Intelligence.

Psychological Health & Safety Report

In January 2022, we released a study looking at how all employees assessed their own mental health across 13 psychosocial factors that impact workplace mental health. We discovered some troubling trends, notably in transportation and frontline healthcare workers, as well as consistently lower scores among younger employees and those who identify as LGBTQ2S+, those with physical impairments and those with diagnosed mood disorders. This study also looked at related issues such as mental health stigma in the workplace and the issues of burnout. We found a burnout rate of 35% of employed Canadians.



The important role of leadership in workplace mental health

Workplace mental health is a culture that starts at the top

Starting in November 2021, MHRC has been delivering free online webinars featuring leadership from major Canadian employers discussing how and why they implemented workplace mental health plans. We featured our second webinar on Bell Let's Talk Day with the generous support of Bell Let's Talk.



Special thanks to participating employers:









ATB Financial

Spotlighting Canadian leaders who are focusing on workplace mental health

Special thanks to series sponsor: beneva

Workplace Mental Health: It Starts At The Top







MHRC

CHERCHE MENTAL
EN SANTÉ HEALTH
MENTALE RESEARCH
CANADA CANADA

June 2nd, 3:00 PM (ET)

Workplace Mental Health: It Starts At The Top



Zabeen Hirji



Curtis Stange ATB Financial



HERCHE MENTAL N SANTÉ HEALTH MENTALE RESEARCH CANADA CANADA

December 2nd, 11:00 AM (ET)



Seed funding from MHRC and partners leads to CIHR grants

MHRC's support of pilot projects and programs to meet diverse mental health needs has led to several of these programs going on to receive larger awards to expand with federal funding.

Researcher spotlight:

Dr. Mark Sinyor, M.SC, MD, FRCPC

One of MHRC's earliest grant recipients, Sunnybrook Research Institute's Dr. Mark Sinyor has developed and tested an innovative youth resiliency preventative mental health program for middle school students.

Called MyOWL (*Optimizing Wellness through Literature*), this program is centred on teaching cognitive behavioral therapy skills through ageappropriate, popular literature and has recently received a five year CIHR grant for \$757,350 to scale up the program. It has now been piloted and integrated into the curriculum for many schools in Canada and various other countries. For more information, visit MyOwl.org.

Grant issued in partnership with:





MHRC AS A KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZER IN NATIONAL PROJECTS FUNDED BY CIHR

MHRC has further supported two other projects that went on to become CIHR recipients, not only with seed funding but direct support for their applications and the provision of knowledge mobilization to help spread the word on their findings:

- Adapting and adopting highly specialized pediatric eating disorder treatment to virtual care: Implementation research for the COVID-19 context and beyond from Dr. Jennifer Couturier & team, McMaster University in collaboration with the Reach Out Centre for Kids & Danielle's Place.
- Data and equity needed to drive post-pandemic recovery in Canada: a Saskatchewan contribution from Dr Nazeem Muhajarine & team, University of Saskatchewan, in collaboration with the Saskatchewan Health Authority, and the Saskatchewan Population Health & Evaluation Research Unit.

towards mental health research

\$400 000 committed research grants

studentships/ fellowships

200%



increase in corporate revenue



federal departments engaged in our COVID-19 data collection

published research briefs



formal data sharing partnerships Almost



print and digital media impressions



current grants supporting impactfocused research

100%

increase in website visits

http://

over **8,000**



people surveyed on workplace mental health

more than

increase in number of student researchers funded

data collections on Canadian mental health

33%

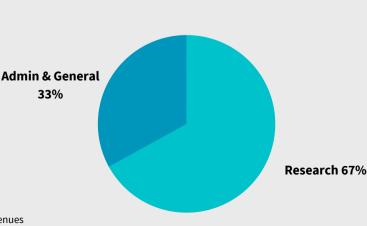
Currently funding projects in 9 provinces and one territory



REVENUE *

Individual **Donations 9% Research Grants Foundations 5%** 24% Corporate **Donations 20% Government 42%**

EXPENSES



*does not include investment revenues

WE ARE PROUD TO HAVE PROVIDED FUNDING SUPPORT TO THE FOLLOWING ORGANIZATIONS WITH THE HELP OF OUR PARTNERS

Community Organizations

Alberta International Medical Graduates
Association (AIMGA)
Alzheimer's Society of New Brunswick
Âsokêwin Friendship Centre
BC Interior Health
Block House Counselling & Psychotherapy
Services
CAMH

Centre Espoir Sophie
Child Development Institute
Farm Management Canada
Girl's Rock Regina
HANDS The FamilyHelpNetwork.ca
Jack.Org
Kinark Child & Family Services
La Fondation Louis et Vero
Middlesex London Paramedic Service
Mood Disorders Society of Canada
Na-Cho Nyak Dun First Nation
Online Therapy Tool
Reach Out Centre For Kids (R.O.C.K.)
Saskatchewan Health Authority

Sipekne'katik First Nation Health Services
The Family Support Institute
The Ontario Association of Residences
Treating Youth (OARTY)
Toronto Zoo

West End Senior's Network

Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton

Academic Organizations

Acadia University Dalhousie University Holland Bloorview Kid's Rehabilitation Hospital **McMaster University Memorial University Nipissing University** Queen's University **Ryerson University** Simon Fraser University St Thomas University Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre **Thompson Rivers University** Université de Montreal Université du Québec en Outaouais University of British Columbia **University of Calgary** University of Manitoba University of New Brunswick University of Regina University of Saskatchewan **University of Toronto** University of Waterloo University of Western Ontario York University Yukon University

THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS DONORS

Your increasing support fuels our activities and deepens our impact in the lives of Canadians.

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- Let's Pasta Food Services
- Soul Fire Power Yoga

We also thank the many generous Canadians who hosted or donated to fundraisers on MHRC's behalf.

We also thank our many anonymous donors for their generous contributions to MHRC.

THANK YOU TO OUR MANY PARTNERS & SUPPORTERS CANADA-WIDE

With special thanks to:

Financial contribution from



Health Canada Santé Canada













Knowledge Institute on Child and Youth Mental Health and Addictions

Institut du savoir sur la santé mentale et les dépendances chez les enfants et les jeunes







































Fonds de recherche Santé











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