



Mental Health
Commission
of Canada

Commission de
la santé mentale
du Canada



2022-2023 Impact Report



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Our Impact

It's the “pact” part of impact that sticks with us when we consider what this report presents – the culmination of the Mental Health Commission of Canada's (MHCC's) work over the past year. After all, to report on impact is not just looking at past achievements. It is also a promise for the future: the pact, the commitment, and the hope.

The ability to foster change in mental health is an ongoing commitment, for even when we achieve milestones we must be aware of emerging challenges. That is why the MHCC seeks to truly understand and engage with people who have lived and living experience of mental health and substance use health challenges. Not only are these experiences integrated into our research, planning, and outreach efforts. They make it possible to identify gaps in policy and services that provide our evidence-based research to inform change, training to reduce stigma, and programs to offer life-affirming hope. One example is Roots of Hope, a community-led initiative to reduce suicide rates whose impact is empowering communities and provinces across the country — most recently, the government of Manitoba.

Canada is a vast country with many geographic, cultural, linguistic, and economic differences. But no matter what your status, you can be affected by mental health concerns. Just as we all have physical health, we all have mental health — and it's something that needs tending. Yet, because doing so can be difficult for many people, the MHCC is part of a global forum of mental health leaders who are tackling challenges related to virtual care implementation and its intersections with artificial intelligence. As critical questions emerge, so is the potential for virtual care to reduce mental health service wait times — something we saw this year in the Northwest Territories. An MHCC project, implemented in partnership with the territorial government and Stepped Care Solutions, led to a 79 per cent reduction in wait times for mental health counselling in the region. The Stepped Care model allows individuals to access mental health services at level with the most effective impact. Each level can then be stepped up or down depending on progress and the nature of the concern. The reductions in wait times involved simplifying intake processes, introducing drop-in counselling sessions, and implementing e-mental health services.

The MHCC is also changing the lives of Canadians and communities by increasing mental health literacy and improving access to quality mental health and substance use health supports. Since care needs to be culturally informed to do this well, the commission partnered with the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) on a research and pilot program for culturally adapted cognitive behavioural therapy that is improving outcomes for Canadians of South Asian origin with anxiety and depression.

In addition, MHCC collaboration across numerous communities regarding the relationship between mental health and cannabis resulted in 40 community-based research projects. Six were led by Indigenous researchers, who provided perspectives on parental cannabis use and child welfare, cannabis retailers in Indigenous communities, and guidance on the interface of cannabis and traditional medicines.

We have also been collaborating with Indspire, a cross-Canada Indigenous charity that invests in the education of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis youth and young adults. This initiative focuses on mental health education and resources to support Indigenous students with Indspire's programs.

While these are truly impactful programs, mental health stigma continues to be a significant issue. We know from work with our research partners that 95 per cent of people with a mental health or substance use disorder were impacted by stigma over the past five years, with the majority reporting feelings of self-stigma and internalizing negative stereotypes.

This finding underscores the critical importance of our evidence-based training programs, including those offered through Opening Minds to increase mental health literacy. Since the MHCC was established in 2007, we have trained more than a million people in these innovative evidence-based courses and plan to increase this number significantly.

Together, we are actively ensuring that we are equipped to advance policy and program objectives in a sustainable and meaningful manner while creatively increasing our impact. Work like this changes lives.



Michel Rodrigue
President and CEO



Chuck Bruce
Board Chair



Sporting Mindfulness

More than 15,000 schoolchildren across Saskatchewan received mental health training thanks to a ground-breaking partnership between the Mental Health Commission of Canada and a professional football team.



The MHCC's alliance with the Saskatchewan Roughriders also led to a new version of The Working Mind (TWM), an evidence-based program to promote mental health and reduce the stigma associated with mental illness in the workplace.

“I’ve long been aware of the mental health training developed and delivered by the MHCC,” says Cindy Fuchs, the foundation’s executive director and a recognized leader in Saskatchewan’s not-for-profit sector. “When I learned about plans to develop a version of TWM for the sports industry, I saw an opportunity for us to work together and serve the greater good.”




The Saskatchewan Roughrider Foundation, the charitable organization affiliated with the Canadian Football League team, has been funding community-based education, health, and amateur sports projects for young people since it was established in 2019.

Developed by clinicians and peers, TWM offers facilitated discussions that focus on work-related mental health topics. Since the MHCC launched TWM in 2013, it has developed a series of industry-specific versions of the training by collaborating with a range of partners. One of those versions is TWM Sport, which was piloted through the foundation with the help of Saskatchewan Roughrider players and coaches, along with a handful of elite athletes in the province. Feedback from the pilot led to additional improvements to the program.

Determined to have more elite football players benefit from the training, the foundation paid to deliver TWM Sport to two varsity teams and several junior and women's teams. To spread its benefits further, the foundation also built on its long-standing partnership with the province's Ministry of Education.

For years, the ministry and foundation have partnered on the Game Changers Playbook to give elementary and secondary students evidence-based, curriculum-related mental health and wellness resources. Now, five Roughrider players trained in TWM Sport tour the province to talk about mental health with student groups through the foundation's Win With Wellness Presentation Series.



“The mind is the strongest muscle in your body,” says Brayden Lenius, a Saskatchewan Roughrider wide receiver who participated in the pilot. “You can develop your mind to become stronger and more resilient. TWM Sport teaches you how to do that.”

“Lessons from TWM are for everyone – not just pro athletes,” says Lenius. “Telling schoolchildren about some of the mental health challenges I face, and listening to their stories, helps me and helps them.”

The MHCC continues to seek like-minded partners to expand and improve the effectiveness of programs like TWM. In the end, everyone must recognize that mental health can be nurtured, that help is available, and that recovery is expected.

TWM Versions

Besides different versions for employees and managers in Canada, Australia, and the United States, TWM is available for specific industry groups. These include:

- First responders (fire, police, paramedics, corrections staff)
- Post-secondary students
- Health care
- Legal
- Oral health care
- Sports

By the Numbers

More than
300,000
people have completed
at least one version of TWM.

More than
1,500
TWM facilitators
have been trained worldwide.

More and more
Peer-reviewed studies
demonstrate the effectiveness of TWM.¹

¹ See, for example, [Effects of the Anti-stigma Workplace Intervention “Working Mind” in a Canadian Health-Care Setting: A Cluster-Randomized Trial of Immediate Versus Delayed Implementation](#) and [The Working Mind: A Meta-Analysis of a Workplace Mental Health and Stigma Reduction Program](#).



Taking Root

*Engaging and empowering individuals
and communities in suicide prevention*

The Roots of Hope model builds on community expertise to implement suicide prevention and life promotion initiatives based on five pillars of action and 13 guiding principles.

The impact of Roots of Hope on individuals and communities continues to deepen. Its success is based on sound evidence and an operating model that prioritizes collaboration and independence: Each Roots of Hope community is encouraged to develop and implement the initiatives — and establish the partnerships — it considers most appropriate. In many cases, they build on existing programs and services.



“Giving back to others through Roots of Hope has helped to save my life.”

“The launching of an eight-week support group for [suicide] attempt survivors provided a space for them to work through their struggles in a safe space. I went through the group myself and found it beneficial. I know that, as a lived experience person on the team, it has given me the opportunity to use my life experience for good and to make meaning out of what happened. My friend Travis also went through the group last year and found it helpful. He unfortunately died by suicide recently, but I think the group bought him the better part of a year.

I am very grateful that Roots of Hope exists. I am also grateful that the services we provide gave me more time with my friend. This is meaningful work, and I hope to be able to see it through. It's the only group of its kind in the area — and by area I'm pretty sure I mean all of Western Canada. Lastly, the suicide prevention-related events that Stony Plain hosts always have good turnouts, and I think the public is starting to be able to speak more openly about it.”

Wesley Jones
Roots of Hope community
Stony Plain, Alberta

“We are network of 65 volunteers trained in ground-based search and rescue. Many of the people we search for don’t want to be found, usually because they are experiencing a mental-health crisis. These now account for about 75 per cent of our searches. In many cases, the person is contemplating suicide, and time is of the essence. Partnering with Roots of Hope improves our ability to find and rescue people in crisis. The partnership also improves the mental health of our volunteers, who are now more resilient.”

Tina Brown
Planning Section Chief
Colchester Ground Search and Rescue
Colchester County, Nova Scotia

“A big reason that members of the 2SLGBTQI+ community experience higher rates of both mental illness and suicide ideation is social stigma, particularly in rural and remote communities. Under our partnership with Roots of Hope, two members of the 2SLGBTQI+ community in each of Nova Scotia’s four health-care zones have been trained to deliver SafeTALK suicide-prevention courses. Hundreds of at-risk people, along with their friends and families, will benefit. Roots of Hope is a catalyst – the extra ingredient that inspires tangible progress.”

Tyler Colbourne
Executive Director
Healthy Minds Cooperative
Nova Scotia

By the Numbers

2019
eight communities

2021
11 more

Today
18 communities,
three provinces, and one territory



Roots of Hope is based on community expertise

To increase the impact of their efforts, Roots of Hope community coalition forge partnerships with a variety of local organizations. Across the country, there are more than a hundred Roots of Hope partners, including universities, high schools, businesses, media outlets, long-term care homes, workplaces, hospitals, municipalities, school boards, police forces, libraries, churches, and Friendship Centres.



An aerial photograph of a suburban neighborhood during autumn. The houses are scattered across rolling hills, with trees showing vibrant orange, yellow, and red foliage. The background shows a vast expanse of similar landscape under a clear sky.

Wise Heads on Young Shoulders

The earlier, the better. That's the best way to summarize the research on how to foster mental health and prevent mental illness. The sooner you know, the more likely you are to seek help and help others.

HEADSTRONG helps grade 6 to 12 students raise mental health awareness, challenge stigma, and promote mental wellness and early help seeking. Informed by five years of research, and developed in collaboration with educators and students, HEADSTRONG uses a proven two-step process: Students from multiple schools are initially brought together to attend a summit; afterwards, groups of students in each school design and implement a range of activities and initiatives based on what they've learned.



Cape Breton–Victoria Regional Centre for Education

in Nova Scotia, one of the first HEADSTRONG school boards, held its inaugural summit in 2014. Since then, about 7,500 students at 16 middle and secondary schools have participated in HEADSTRONG.

Comments from middle school participants

“... inspired me to be brave, to speak up for my opinions and thoughts.”

“... feels like a safe space where you don't have to be scared to talk about your feelings!”

“... helped me to understand that my mental health is just as important as my physical health, and that I don't always have to be so hard on myself.”

“I'm not scared to talk about problems or mental health issues anymore.”

“It made me realize that I am in control of my life. I loved it and will be back next year.”

Comments from secondary school participants

“... inspired me to reach out about my struggle to others.”

“... a platform to encourage others to help themselves and talk about how we can make a positive change for people who struggle with mental health issues.”

“... has given me a community to be in and a cause to be part of. I enjoy helping out around the school.”

Halton District School Board

(near Burlington, Ontario) launched HEADSTRONG in eight schools in 2022 to complement its existing mental health programming. Its success inspired 32 Halton District schools to follow suit.

Comments from middle school participants

“It has opened my eyes to the amount of stigma that surrounds those with mental illnesses.”

“I now feel braver about speaking up for others, and I want help people feel brave like that, too.”

“I now look at mental illness in a new way.”

“. . . really changed the way I thought about mental health. It taught me that mental health was really important and can actually kill people if they don't show their emotions.”

Comment from secondary school participant

“It has inspired to reach out significantly more than before.
My peers and I can now have an open discussion about mental health.”

By the Numbers

Since HEADSTRONG was launched

in **2014** ...

202 summits

across Canada

(162 in-person, 40 virtual)

1,200+
schools

20,000+
students

During the

2022-23

school year ...

21 summits

(4 in-person, 17 virtual)

153
schools

1,744
students




A scenic landscape of rolling hills and mountains at sunset or sunrise. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and blue, with soft light filtering through the air. The mountains are layered, with the closest ones in dark silhouette and the farthest ones appearing as hazy blue shapes. In the foreground, there are rolling hills with sparse vegetation, and a small lake is visible in the bottom right corner.

A Step Ahead

Northwest Territories (NWT) residents can now benefit from Stepped Care 2.0[©] (SC2.0), an innovative approach to delivering mental wellness and substance use health services.

With the help of a counsellor (or on their own), service users can identify and access the supports and services they feel are most appropriate – from informal (e-mental health apps, peer support) to formal (one-on-one counselling), which can be adjusted as a person's needs and circumstances change.



“When you are broken and mentally drained, and decide to ask for help, you are hopeful that there may be a light at the end of the tunnel. You want to know you are not alone and can overcome your struggles. You seek assurance that, with help, you can improve your mental health and lead a “normal” life. Thankfully, within a Stepped Care 2.0 system, people are provided with a variety of care options to meet their own needs.”

NWT resident who accessed support

In March 2020, the NWT government began implementing SC2.0, in partnership with the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC), Stepped Care Solutions and the NWT's Mental Wellness and Addictions Recovery Advisory Group. Through consultations with the community, care providers, and administrators, the partners overhauled service delivery processes and transformed the system. This work enabled the government to integrate SC2.0 into its Community Counselling Program and offer diverse care options while significantly reducing or eliminating wait-lists.

The Mental Wellness and Addictions Recovery Advisory Group

includes residents from across the NWT. The group helped co-design SC2.0 in the NWT and continues to provide advice and wisdom rooted in lived and living expertise with mental wellness and substance use health.

SC2.0 comprises a series of increasingly intensive steps or levels of support and service. From a wide range of available choices, individuals and families can make informed decisions about the care that best suits their needs and preferences. For instance, they can access relevant information anonymously, get support from an e-mental health app, join a support group, engage with cultural or land-based programs, or access one-on-one counselling, among other options.

Under SC2.0, NWT residents can enjoy free access to several e-mental health services at the time most convenient to them.

- Breathing Room™ – self-guided support to help youth reduce stress, anxiety, and depression
- Strongest Families Institute – coaching programs for children, youth, adults, and families experiencing mild-to-moderate mental health and behavioural concerns
- Edgewood Health Network Wagon – addictions recovery aftercare support

Within SC2.0, the NWT also promotes and partners with several other initiatives, including the 7 Cups, Root'd, and Stronger Minds apps.

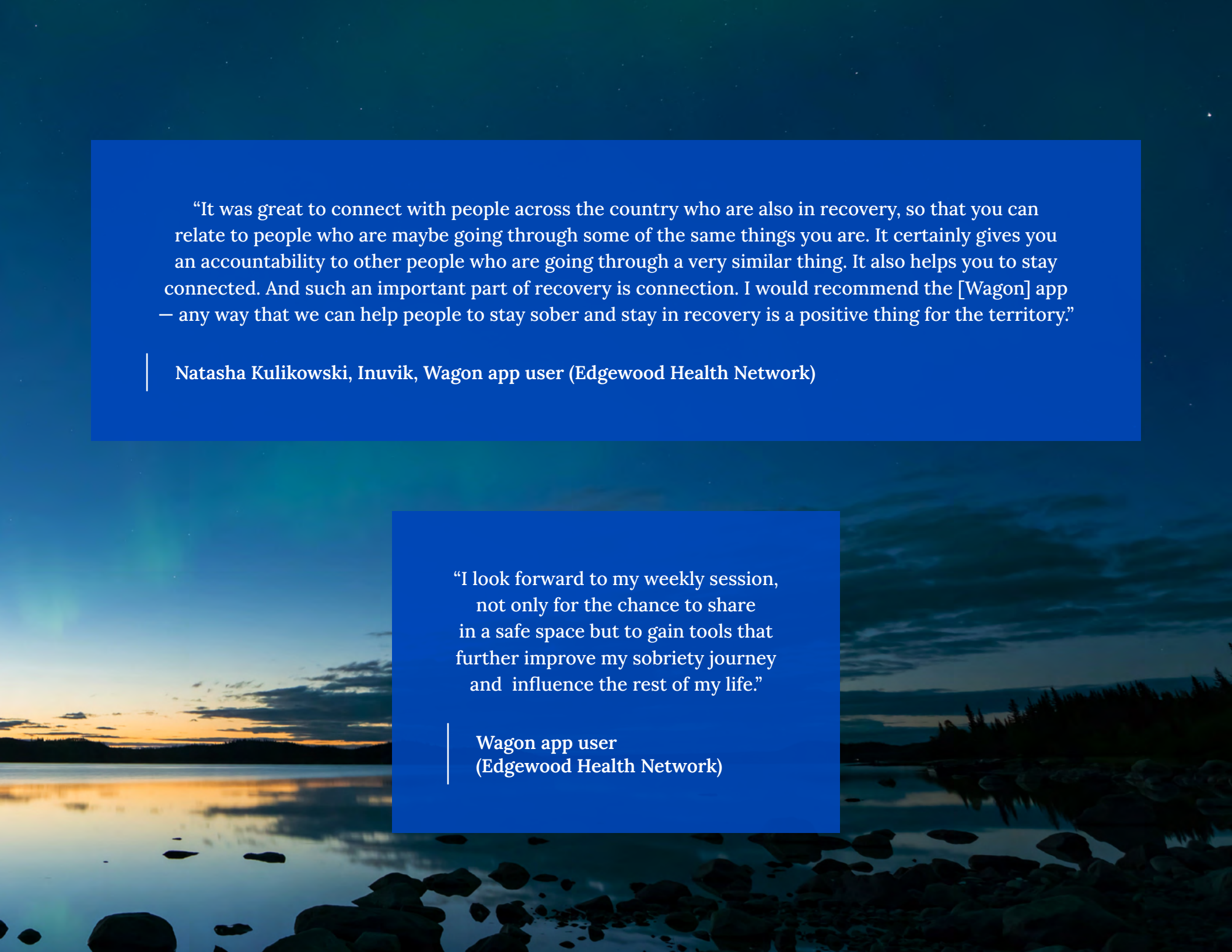
“They were very understanding, good to work with, and worked around my schedule. The drop-in was good because things happen, and you could email and cancel without any costs to me. Without the program, I don’t know how I could navigate the whole system.”

NWT Community Counselling
Program (CCP) user

“It was a non-judgmental environment and open to all my concerns. . . . The counsellors were very flexible and good to work with. [They] worked out the time of day and what worked for my life.”

NWT Community Counselling
Program (CCP) user





“It was great to connect with people across the country who are also in recovery, so that you can relate to people who are maybe going through some of the same things you are. It certainly gives you an accountability to other people who are going through a very similar thing. It also helps you to stay connected. And such an important part of recovery is connection. I would recommend the [Wagon] app – any way that we can help people to stay sober and stay in recovery is a positive thing for the territory.”

Natasha Kulikowski, Inuvik, Wagon app user (Edgewood Health Network)

“I look forward to my weekly session, not only for the chance to share in a safe space but to gain tools that further improve my sobriety journey and influence the rest of my life.”

Wagon app user
(Edgewood Health Network)

A Caregiver's Perspective

“Stepped Care 2.0 is the way my practice has evolved naturally. It’s a relief and validates how [we] already practised. It’s so natural, it fits so well.”

NWT Community Counselling Program
(CCP) service provider

“Stepped Care 2.0 is ideal for youth because they’re often not receptive to coming into an office, and they want help when they need it. Early in my career, a young person seeking help had to go through a nurse or doctor. Now there’s a wealth of readily accessible tools and strategies that can teach them how to regulate their feelings and anxieties.”

Nancy McInnis,
Child and Youth Counsellor,
Mental Health and Addictions Services,
NWT Health and Social Services
Authority-Beaufort Delta Region

Evaluation and next steps

In 2023, a comprehensive evaluation consisting of service user surveys, reviews of focus-group sessions, and service provider reports found that SC2.0 had significantly increased access to services and produced positive outcomes for many service users and providers across the NWT. The evaluation also identified gaps, lessons learned, and areas for improvement to guide the way forward. For instance, it called for more community engagement and enhanced culturally safe programs to integrate Indigenous approaches to care and wellness, and greater efforts to deepen service user and provider understanding for improved access to quality care.

To access the full report, follow [this link](#) or go to mentalhealthcommission.ca/resource/stepped-care-nwt/

The MHCC has also helped to implement SC2.0 in Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island. Discussions are underway to expand to other provinces and territories as well.

To learn more about Stepped Care 2.0, follow [this link](#) or go to <https://mentalhealthcommission.ca/what-we-do/access/stepped-care-2-0/>

By the Numbers

79%

NWT's **reduction in wait times** for mental wellness and substance use counselling (2020-22).

47,563

Counselling sessions

the CPP provided (2020-22).
About three-quarters were scheduled;
the rest were drop-in sessions.

94%

Scheduled counselling sessions
for individuals ;
the rest were group, family, or couple sessions.



Impact by the Numbers

Mental Health Training

Over
84,000
people in Canada
completed MHCC mental
health training courses

91%

felt more empowered about
mental health after training

94%

of healthcare providers and organizations
reported being better equipped to handle
mental health challenges after training

96%

of key decision-makers acquired the tools
to address mental health and wellness issues

Mental Health Products and Resources

98%

of decision-makers found MHCC products useful, relevant, and timely

99%

of community-based organizations found MHCC's products useful, relevant, and timely

100%

of community-based organizations equipped to address mental health and wellness

94%

of community-based organizations intend to use the knowledge gained from MHCC products

Over

9,000

signed up in Nova Scotia for e-mental health services through Stepped Care 2.0[©]

Workplace Mental Health

72%

of employees experienced improved mental health through psychological services,

yet only

39%

accessed them using extended health benefits

60%

of employers recognized the return on investment in wellness and psychological services

15,000+

people at work in Canada completed mental health e-module training



2022 was the first year for MHCC as a registered charity.

In 2022, MHCC became the newest member of HealthPartners, a group of 17 health charities with the goal of building a healthier Canada. Along with other HealthPartners charities, MHCC is helping to build on the \$200 million dollars raised in the pursuit of better health outcomes for people in Canada living with chronic illness, including mental illness.





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