



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Partnership provides mental health support for local students

***Medicine Hat, Alberta (September 29, 2022):*** Increased mental health literacy and support is coming for Medicine Hat students, thanks to a new partnership between Medicine Hat College and local school boards.

The Mental Health Enrichment Project was created in response to COVID-19 and the long-term impact the pandemic has had on students. Recognizing the importance of early intervention, this project seeks to identify and connect students to appropriate levels of mental health support now in an effort to reduce the need to access higher levels of support later in life.

With \$75,000 in funding from The Beej Project, mental health enrichment strategies will roll out across the Medicine Hat Public School District (MHPSD) and Medicine Hat Catholic Board of Education (MHCBE) later this year, although the implementation will look differently between the two divisions.

MHPSD is adding resources to enhance the capacity of their existing social emotional learning team, enabling the delivery of more social emotional learning to increase mental health literacy amongst staff and students.

“Part of the funding will be used to weave the delivery of social emotional learning curriculum into the requirements for fourth year education practicum students at MHC, building this important work into their practice from the ground up. This community partnership gives us the opportunity to share resources and achieve more as a collective; giving us the space to focus meaningfully on the next generation of teachers, while adding to the best practice of those already in the classroom,” says Tracy Hensel Assistant Superintendent of Student Supports.

For preservice teachers studying at MHC, the opportunity to be involved with the project enhances their capacity to educate and support students as soon as they enter the classroom.

“We know there are significant mental health needs in our community, and this collaborative approach will benefit students now and into the future. Our preservice teachers will graduate with a practical understanding of the curriculum and the ability to integrate this critical component into their own classrooms to support student wellness,” explains Lorelei Boschman, education program coordinator at MHC.

Drawing on a quote from Desmond Tutu, “*there comes a point where we need to stop just pulling people out of the river. We need to go upstream and find out why they are falling in.*”

It is with belief in mind that the Brandon Niwa Legacy Fund (The Beej Project) came to support this initiative. Led by MHC, a community advisory panel including Medicine Hat Public School Division, Prairie

Rose Public Schools, Medicine Hat Catholic Board of Education, and Medicine Hat Police Service, oversees the direction of the fund, which provides a variety of educational and research opportunities around mental health to our community.

"MHCBE is very thankful for the support of The Beej Project in enhancing our universal mental health promotion and education," adds Hugh Lehr, MHCBE Associate Superintendent Learning Services.

"Sometimes you never know who may be struggling with their mental health, so heading upstream and delivering education and strategies to all our students will have the greatest impact."

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