



### MASKED EDUCATION

**A**t the Centre for School Mental Health, we always work to develop new strategies to support the well-being of all children and youth in Canada. Our partnerships with school and community partners are now more important than ever as we work together to support our youth in this new world with COVID-19. The job is bigger than any one stakeholder or organization can handle alone. Our combined efforts are focused on delivering responsive and innovative programming and professional development regarding the emerging challenges around us. We have entered an unprecedented time of global uncertainty that will be felt by our youth for years to come. CSMH is aligned

with safety protocols and poised to continue our work to support educators and youth. In this newsletter you will see ways that we've started to pivot in response to the new education environment. As ideas are tested and best practices are learned, we will continue sharing knowledge with other leaders in the field. So far the dedication and creativity of our project teams has been so inspiring! Our passion and resilience fuels the exciting initiatives described in the following pages - thank you for your interest and support as we move the needle in the right direction.

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# CENTRED ON STUDENTS

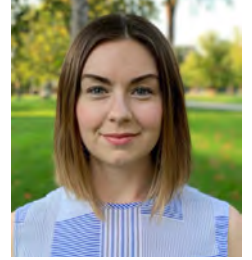
Mentorship and skill development are scaffolded throughout our programs and prioritized within our team. The student body is part of the broader framework of projects situated at The Centre for School Mental Health. Under the guidance of the Principal Investigator, each student assembles research/work plans to fulfill overarching objectives. The intricate nature of their studies intersects through project objectives. Our students' engagement in meaningful educational research makes them tomorrow's leaders in cutting-edge research.



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PhD Candidate



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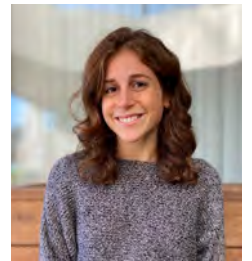
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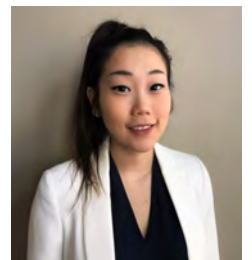
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# PROJECT UPDATES

## MINDUP™ FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

While the research portion of the MindUP for Young Children implementation study was put on hold during the spring of 2020 due to the pandemic, the London District Catholic School Board continued to support the implementation of MindUP in the home learning environment. During the school closures educators met weekly for support and to share their creative ideas for incorporating MindUP strategies and lessons in their virtual learning classrooms. This fall, LDCSB aimed to promote their student wellbeing during a potentially stressful return to school by offering all K through Grade 3 educators the opportunity to implement MindUP in their classrooms. LDCSB MindUP trainers adapted the in-person training to an online course for new MindUP educators, accompanied by curriculum resources created throughout the project. There were close to 90 new MindUP educators who signed up for the training to implement MindUP in their classrooms this school year. Nine schools decided to run MindUP in a strategic way with their kindergarten and/or primary grades. We look forward to investigating the impacts of COVID-19 on implementation of MindUP in classrooms as well as a multilevel analysis of sustainability in LDCSB. The M3 Group that teaches mindfulness strategies for families is also adapted into an online version and will be starting the first online group session this fall.



### RECENTLY PUBLISHED!

**Impact of MindUP Among Young Children: Improvements in Behavioral Problems, Adaptive Skills, and Executive Functioning**

**To learn more about MindUP, visit our [MindUp for Young Children project page](#)**

*Financial contribution by Public Health Agency of Canada*

## INNOVATION AND SCALE UP LAB

School Mental Health Ontario (SMHO) and the Centre for School Mental Health (CSMH) partnered to create the Innovation and Scale Up Lab (ISU Lab). The ISU Lab's mission is to examine and advance evidence-based and implementation-sensitive approaches within school mental health, and to mobilize both research and practice evidence to enhance quality, consistency, scalability, and sustainability in Ontario schools.



*1st Innovation and Scale Up Lab Partner Summit  
March 4 & 5, 2020*

This year, the Center for School Mental Health Ontario and School Mental Health Ontario co-hosted the first Innovation and Scale Up Lab Partner Summit in London, Ontario. The summit provided partners with the opportunity to learn more about other ISU Lab projects and consider future collaborations.

When we suddenly decided to work remotely due to COVID-19, our team faced the challenges of pivoting from in-person programming to virtual. Over the past few months, we have continued collaborating with our partners to co-develop case studies for projects presented at the ISU Lab summit. The case studies aim to share knowledge, provide more insight into best practices, challenges and lessons learned across projects.

These case studies and other resources and publications will be shared on the Center for School Mental Health Ontario's Innovation and Scale Up Lab website currently under construction. Our team is also developing a rapid review template and streamlining the review process of new ISU Lab innovations designed to support students' mental health and wellness.

**To learn more about the Innovation and Scale Up Lab, visit the [Innovation and Scale-Up Lab page](#)**



## STRONG SUPPORTING TRANSITION RESILIENCE OF NEWCOMER GROUPS

This 2019-2020 academic year has been a whirlwind for students, educators, administrators and families alike, from the labour action in Ontario and closure of schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The implementation of STRONG arrived to a halt in schools, along with our research activities.

In an effort to prioritize the delivery of mental health supports to newcomer families, our team turned to the leadership and guidance of local community organizations in London. We sought to better understand, "How were newcomer families, children and youth, faring during this global pandemic?"

Newcomer children and youth were facing periods of increased isolation, interrupted schooling, changing dynamics, and potential impacts on the family's financial stability, all reminiscent of their experiences in transit countries. Partners at community organizations informed us newcomer parents were expressing a need to better support their children and youth throughout this transition.

This past summer, in partnership with the Muslim Resource Centre for Social Support and Integration, we successfully piloted two STRONG groups with 10 newcomer children, ages 11-13 – all through Zoom! Our teams diligently adapted the STRONG intervention for a virtual implementation. At the onset of each group, our community partner thoughtfully organized and delivered program packages to the homes of group participants, which included headphones, snacks and the STRONG workbook. To mark the completion of each STRONG group, a celebration was held at a local park where STRONG graduates enjoyed delicious food, participated in art activities while practicing social distancing measures. Newcomer participants expressed great benefit for the STRONG intervention, sharing the utility of the coping and relaxations skills in their day-to-day lives. Watch all about our partnership at London CTV News, "Helping to Ease Stress for New Canadian Students": <https://london.ctvnews.ca/video?clipId=2024488&cache=yes>



*STRONG Facilitator Lina's Tik Tok*



*STRONG group care packages (MRCSSI Twitter)*

To further bolster our virtual STRONG implementation, our team additionally developed and piloted STRONG parent sessions with newcomer parents. Delivered in Arabic, STRONG facilitators educated parents about the content of the STRONG intervention, modelled relaxation techniques taught to their children, and provided a space to build connections amongst parents.

Moving forward, we are excited to continue the virtual implementation of STRONG in the London community while evaluating and capturing lessons from newcomer participants

and parents. Additionally, in partnership with School Mental Health Ontario, we are seeking to prepare and train school-based clinicians in the virtual implementation of STRONG as they support newcomer students across Ontario.

Our team has also been busy delivering presentations about our virtual implementation and lessons:



Development of the STRONG Intervention as Part of a Multi-tiered System of Support for Newcomer Students, Annual Conference on Advancing Mental Health, October 2020:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nNnjgTlr8qU>



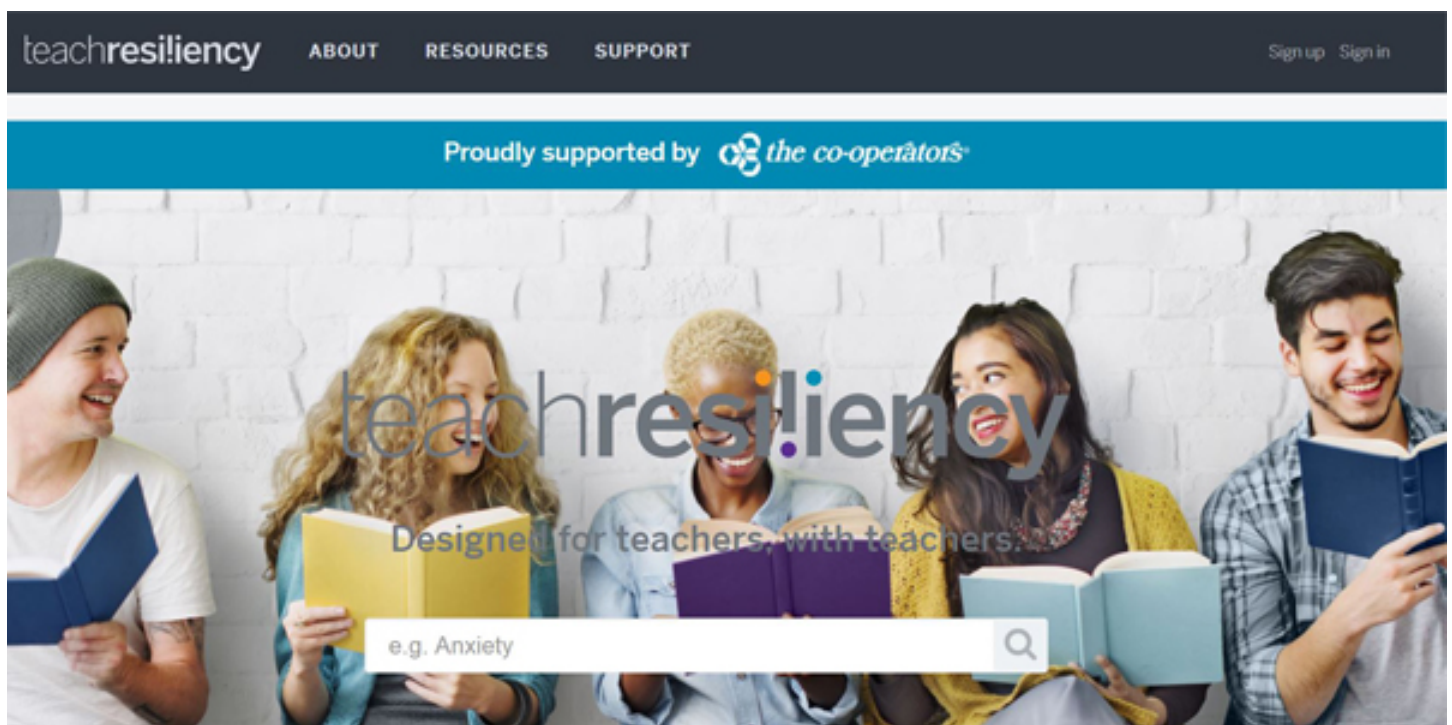
Supporting Transition Resilience in Newcomer Groups (STRONG): Virtual Implementation in the Community and Parent Engagement, Annual Conference on Advancing Mental Health, October 2020:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HZuZo-BHEmU&feature=youtu.be>

**For more information on STRONG, please visit our [STRONG project page](#)**

*Financial contribution by Public Health Agency of Canada*

## TEACH RESILIENCY



Teach Resiliency is an online platform for evidence-informed and practical tools, resources, and information to help teachers support their students' mental health, establish wellness in their classroom, and maintain well-being among themselves. Under the leadership of Dr. Maisha Syeda, the CSMH is currently conducting virtual focus groups with Bachelor of Education students across Canada to examine the acceptability, utility, and strengths of the Teach Resiliency website.

Our team has also continued to scan and evaluate school-based mental health resources for the Teach Resiliency website, especially prioritizing anti-racist and anti-oppressive classroom materials as well as compassion-focused stress management and teaching strategies for educators in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic.

**teachresiliency**

**For more information on this project, please visit our [Teach Resiliency project page](#)**

# RISE-R: RESILIENCE AND INCLUSION THROUGH STRENGTHENING AND ENHANCING RELATIONSHIPS

**The RISE-R project** aims to address identified gaps in the areas of violence prevention and mental health promotion. The RISE-R team conducts evidence-based research, and this project's overarching objective is to work with under-served populations. We are currently in the third year of a five-year timeline. The project is diligently working with community partners to ensure the delivery of Healthy Relationship programming. To date, we have successfully partnered with 32 organizations across Canada. Serving 1795 youth by facilitating 199 groups.

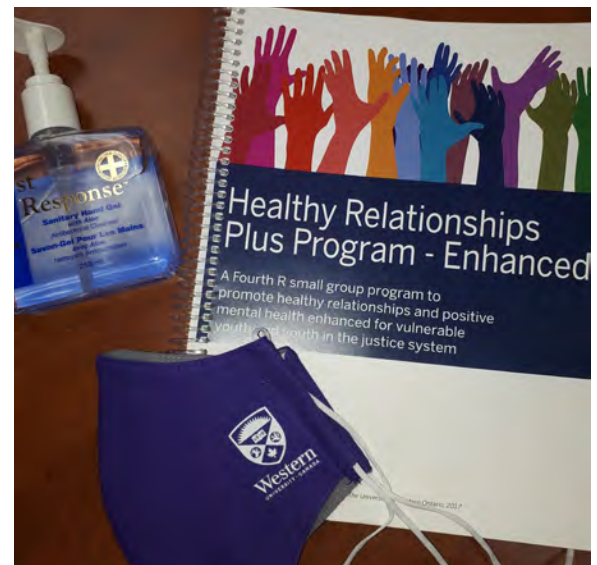


**Building Community** has been the backbone to the continued success of the project. In 12 months, the project has serviced 422 youth and run 63 groups. Since April 2020, the team has come together to learn, share and create, to support local communities during the pandemic. With this in mind, the RISE-R team has put into motion a series of innovative and creative approaches to the Healthy Relationship Program (HRP) delivery. Adaptation to the delivery of HRP has been a fundamental pivot during the pandemic. In part because all services have migrated to online teaching and learning. Aside from the change in physical and social spaces, the project has offered co-facilitation in each of these scenarios. Co-facilitation is a dynamic working relationship focused on delivering HRP and reducing the burden on community organizations.

Our Community of Practice, which involves organizations across Canada, has enabled the project to adapt and flourish. With this wisdom, HRP has extended its delivery to an online platform and in-person sessions. An example of in-person delivery (physical distancing measures in place) of HRP is documented with a group at Craigwood.

“Delivering in person during a pandemic required some adaptations to ensure safety for all. Everyone had to wear masks, sit 2 meters apart and sanitize chairs at the end of the group” (Kelsey). An example of online delivery of HRP occurred in the following settings: child protection, newcomer support, and mental health agencies. These flexible spaces and environments have ensured the accessibility and productivity of programming.

As the global pandemic continues to force us to question work environments, the RISE-R Project is steadfast in its approach to meeting research needs. We have been diligently conducting research in the context of focus groups, surveys and interviews. Together with our community partners, we continue to reach youth in diverse settings. Moving forward, we are optimistic in our approach to the virtual implementation, in-person and blended delivery of HRP in different environments.



We look forward to welcoming new partners in 2021 and increasing our HRP reach and capacity.

**For more information on this project, visit our [RISE-R Project Page](#)**

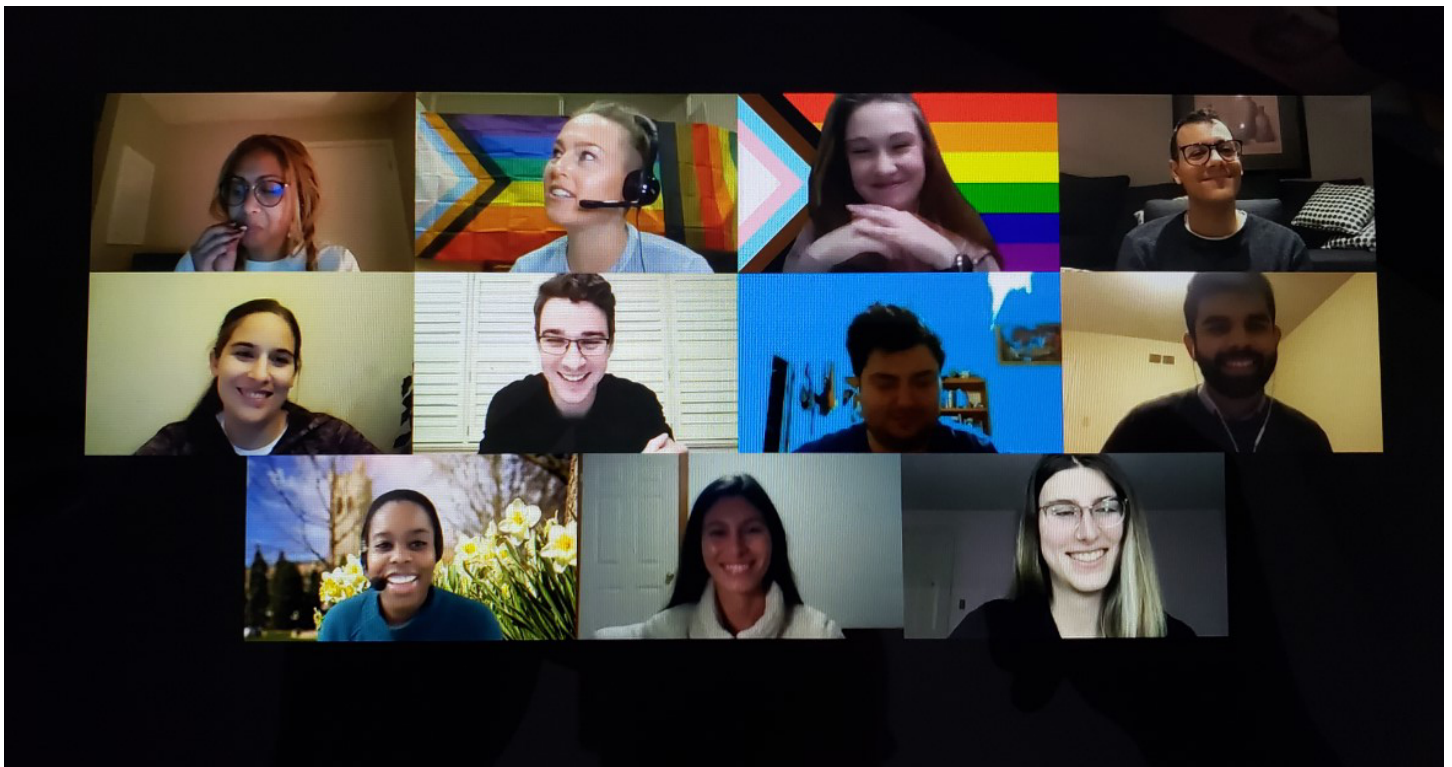
*Financial contribution by Public Health Agency of Canada*



## HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS PROGRAM FOR LGBT2Q+ YOUTH

From encountering school-based labour action to enduring a social- and institutional-shifting pandemic, our team was tasked with queering possibilities for HRP for LGBT2Q+ Youth training and delivery; in-person to online, our strategy evolved to meet people where they're at – home! In September 2020, we adapted our training to a virtual context and delivered it to over 40 educators/school staff in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. In all honesty, it was more challenging. Period. Technology can be connecting, but it is also be distancing. Cultivating a safe(r), more welcoming, and intimate environment that enables people to examine and discuss LGBT2Q+ topics, is never effortless; and, in our experience, it can emerge more organically in-person.

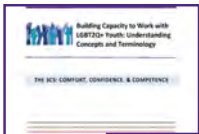
We planned and prepared for, delivered, and reflected on the training, and we rethought its possibilities, moving forward. Originally, we were concerned that practice facilitation – the most impactful and empowering component of the training – would be too challenging to tackle online, but participants rose to the occasion and readily co-facilitated sessions. Again, we met teachers where they were at – zoom! Learnings from this training, paired with the current context of many school boards who cannot grant teachers release time due to staff shortages, influenced us to, once again, pivot and establish an additional training model with both asynchronous and synchronous components.



*Online training videos modelling HRP for LGBT2Q+ Youth session implementation*

As such, we pulled together a dynamic group of past trainees to film a suite of in-person and online videos, which model HRP for LGBT2Q+ Youth implementation (i.e., opening circle, full session, individual activities, and closing circle). This diverse group of passionate and experienced educators, mental health practitioners, youth workers, and advocates brought the program to life by modelling session segments and offering honest and thought-provoking insight into facilitation. They stressed the necessity of understanding and addressing intersectionality – a theory of oppression, and practicing intercultural fluency in and through LGBT2Q+ programming. These videos, which will be shared with future training participants as a part of our new hybrid model, showcase how people can meet youth where they are at by facilitating in more equitable and affirmative ways.

In addition to developing visual training and program implementation supports, we recently published two new supplementary resources intended to help educators, administrators, and youth workers better support sexual, gender, and romantic minorities by introducing them to relevant:



## Concepts and Terminology:

<https://www.csmh.uwo.ca/docs/publications/TERMS%20FINAL.pdf>



**Research; Legislation, Policy, Guidelines; and Procedures and Practices:** <https://www.csmh.uwo.ca/docs/publications/GSA%20Guide%20FINAL.pdf>

**For more information on HRP for LGBT2Q+ Youth training, delivery, and evaluation, please visit the [Healthy Relationships Plus Program page](#)**

# FACILITATOR SPOTLIGHT

## ANNALIESE LOEPPKY

### *Project Coordinator, LGBT2Q+ Youth Programs*



In August, Jody Merrell from Children's Aid Society (CAS) London Middlesex and I (Annaliese Loeppky from CSMH) wrapped up the first Healthy Relationships Program for LGBT2Q+ Youth at CAS London Middlesex.

The group started in February as an in-person group with 6 youth in regular attendance. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the group was moved to online delivery (through Microsoft Teams) after a two-month break. A major outcome of the group was understanding how

to create safe spaces in online programming for LGBT2Q+ Youth and how to bolster youth engagement.

The start of our first online session included the creation of group guidelines which is a standard aspect of the HRP for LGBT2Q+. However, in the first online session we divided the group guidelines into two categories: General group participation and Online participation. Youth contributed what they needed to feel safe and comfortable participating in the group and participating in online programming. Notable guidelines from online participation included; no doxing (not revealing personal information/location of someone else), using headphones or informing the group when you did not have access to headphones, and to mute yourself when not speaking.

All sessions of HRP for LGBT2Q+ needed some type of adaptation for online facilitation. Youth seem most engaged with activities where the co-facilitators were comfortable with the applications or technology used to adapt them. It was evident that lack of familiarity on the part of the facilitators when using new technology was disengaging for youth. This disengagement illustrated the importance of using familiar technology when delivering programming online and keeping adaptations as simple as possible.

Additionally, Jody Merrell ran a socially-distanced outdoor Pride event in July which proved to be very effective at building youth friendships and increasing engagement for the remaining month of programming.

The important takeaways for bolstering youth engagement online included; letting youth set out specific guidelines for online participation, keeping curriculum adaptation simple, using technology familiar to the both facilitators and youth, allowing youth to be present in our online space in a way that was comfortable to them and being aware of online fatigue for both facilitators and youth.

Overall, the youth who completed the programming felt a sense of community with the facilitators and other youth and were able to articulate much of their learning.

*Financial contribution by Public Health Agency of Canada*

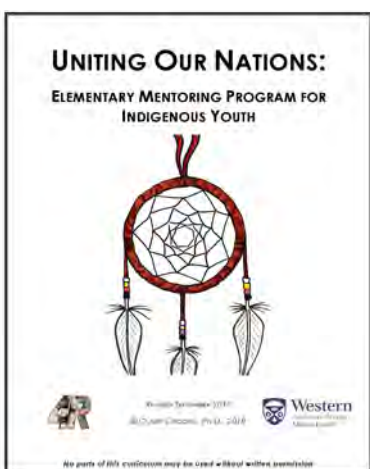
# THE FOURTH R

## UNITING OUR NATIONS: ELEMENTARY MENTORING PROGRAM

In early November 2020, two CSMH team members, Andrea Delaney and Mike Cywink conducted a two part virtual Elementary Mentoring training for a group of educators in the Fort McMurray Public School district in Fort McMurray, Alberta. The Elementary Mentoring program is part of the Uniting Our Nations Fourth R suite of programs for Indigenous youth. Andrea and Mike have many years of experience implementing the program with Grade 7 & 8 Indigenous students, and took part in updating the program. The Elementary Mentoring program was also enhanced to include mental health promotion content. The virtual

"We use the Fourth R Uniting our Nations as a Tier 1 Universal support to expose our grade 7&8 students to healthy relationship skills development. We appreciate that the program can be modified for the local context and has the ability to create a stronger sense of belonging for our Indigenous students."

Annalee Nutter, Assistant Superintendent  
Fort McMurray Public School Division



training was for 8 educators representing 4 schools in FMPD. The participants were teachers, school counsellors, and Indigenous educators. The school board is interested in incorporating the Medicine Wheel-based program into their health curriculum for Grade 7 & 8 students. The training was the first ever virtual offering of the Elementary Mentoring program and despite not being together in person, there were still lots of interactive activities to engage with in. The group learned about the Fourth R relationship skills, how to scaffold the skills with role plays, how the Elementary Mentoring Program works within our local Thames Valley District School Board, and how the program can fit with their schools and students. Educators engaged with the Medicine Wheel teachings and self-reflective practices, tried out assertive communication role plays, and created action plans for their own programs. We wish the educators luck and look forward to hearing about their implementation of the Uniting Our Nations Elementary Mentoring program!

To find out more about the Elementary Mentoring program and other Indigenous informed curriculum, please visit our [Uniting Our Nations Indigenous Programs page](#)

# EVERY CHILD MATTERS

Centre for School Mental Health Staff and Students acknowledge our past and honour Indigenous children who were sent to Residential Schools for Orange Shirt Day: Every Child Matters on September 30, 2020.



Andrea Delaney, Carrie Waters, Courtney Cadieux, Mike Cywink, Lina Saadeddin, Karmie Dhillon, Maisha Syeda, Morena Hernandez and Susan Dale



# STAY CONNECTED

[www.csmh.uwo.ca](http://www.csmh.uwo.ca)

[www.youthrelationships.org](http://www.youthrelationships.org)



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