



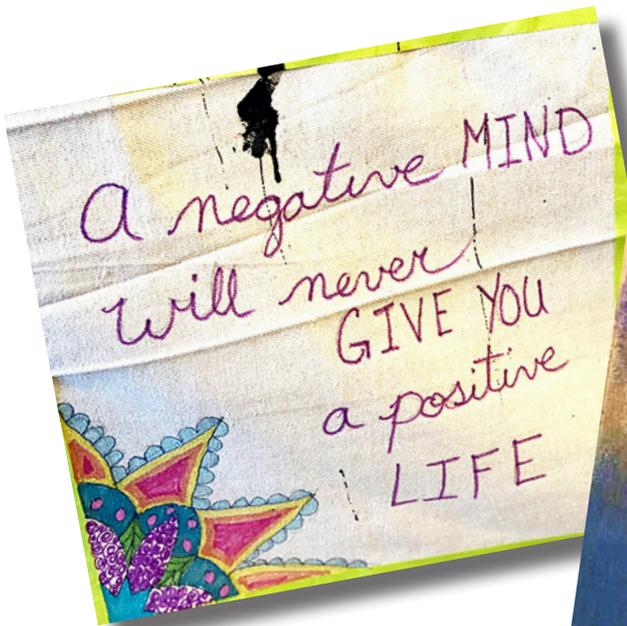
CREATIVITY

IN

*Chaos*

*Year  
Eleven*

OUR PLAN TO END HOMELESSNESS  
2020-2021  
PROGRESS REPORT



## LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We acknowledge that we are situated on Treaty 7 and neighbour to Treaty 4 territory, traditional lands of the Siksika (Blackfoot), Kainai (Blood), Piikani (Peigan), Stoney-Nakoda, and Tsuut'ina (Sarcee) as well as the Cree, Sioux, and the Saulteaux bands of the Ojibwa peoples. We also honour and acknowledge that we are on the homelands of the Métis Nation within Region 3.



“ART IS NOT WHAT YOU SEE, BUT WHAT YOU MAKE OTHERS SEE.”

- Edgar Degas

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

2020-2021 COMMUNITY COUNCIL ON HOMELESSNESS

ALBERTA HEALTH SERVICES  
 CITY OF MEDICINE HAT  
 COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF SOUTHEASTERN ALBERTA  
 COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SERVICES - GoA  
 LANDLORD REPRESENTATION  
 KNOWLEDGE KEEPER  
 MEDICINE HAT COMMUNITY HOUSING SOCIETY  
 MEDICINE HAT POLICE SERVICE  
 SERVICE CANADA



PARTICIPANTS OF THE MCMAN DAY SHELTER SHARED THEIR CREATIVITY, PAINS OF YESTERDAY AND THEIR HOPE FOR BETTER DAYS AHEAD. ON A CANVAS HANGING ON THE BACK WALL, THEIR ART CAME ALIVE AND WILL BE FOREVER IMMORTALIZED.

# Embracing chaos led to creativity

— MHCHS HOMELESS & HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

What started out as media snippets of an overseas health crisis in early 2020 turned into conversations about the potential of a mass health crisis on Canadian soil and then full pandemic planning and shutdown within a month.

I vividly recall the ease of key decisions while we were in the throws of the unknown, and the angst that later followed when reflecting on the potential impacts of action versus non-action.

This angst will take some time to leave our memory – it had consequences.

We asked a tremendous amount of the people that we serve, of our programs and services, our partners, and community.

We asked them to trust us in the absence of strong evidence, only 'what we know today' information about a pandemic that held a tight grasp over all of us.

We asked them to keep showing up, and to serve the most vulnerable, to keep them safe, connected, and supported.

We asked them to shift, modify, make do, and keep going, to persevere, and to remember the why.

We collectively delivered, kept people as safe as we could, watched families grieve the loss of loved ones, and quietly grieved ourselves.

We were relentless in our efforts to shine a light on the other things the pandemic brought to light; the stigma and discrimination about those still experiencing homelessness in our community.

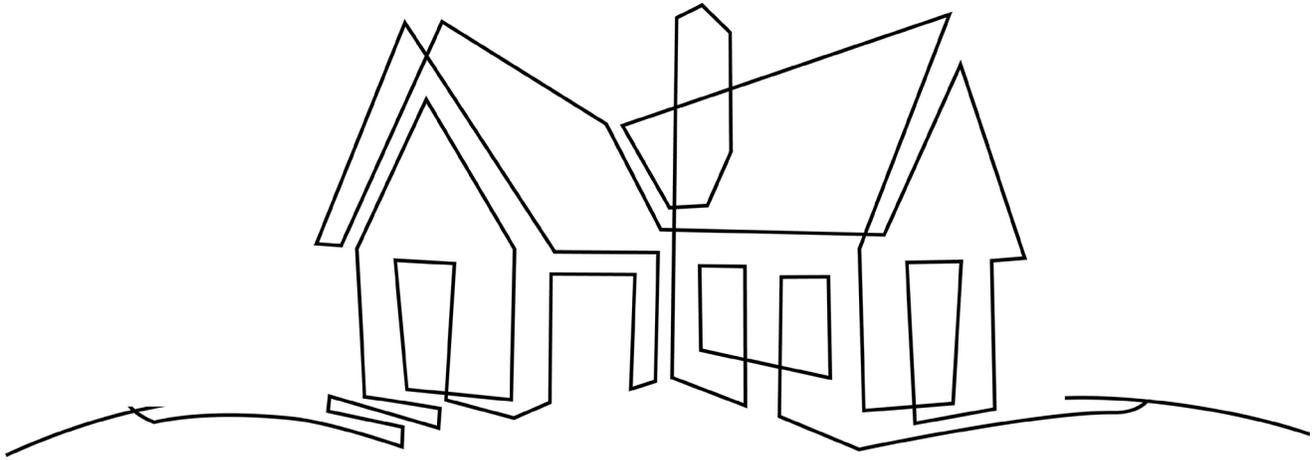
We also held course and undertook the Systems Transformation Work, completed the Medicine Hat Housing Strategy, and completed a full system evaluation.

Our creativity in chaos is our strength. It always has been.



JAIME ROGERS

# IMPACT OF HOUSING FIRST IN MEDICINE HAT

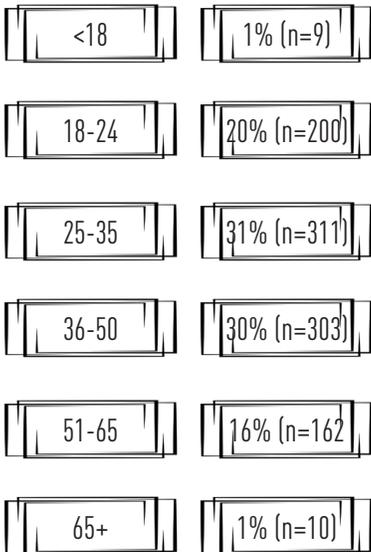


ADULTS 995 — 1323 — 328 CHILDREN

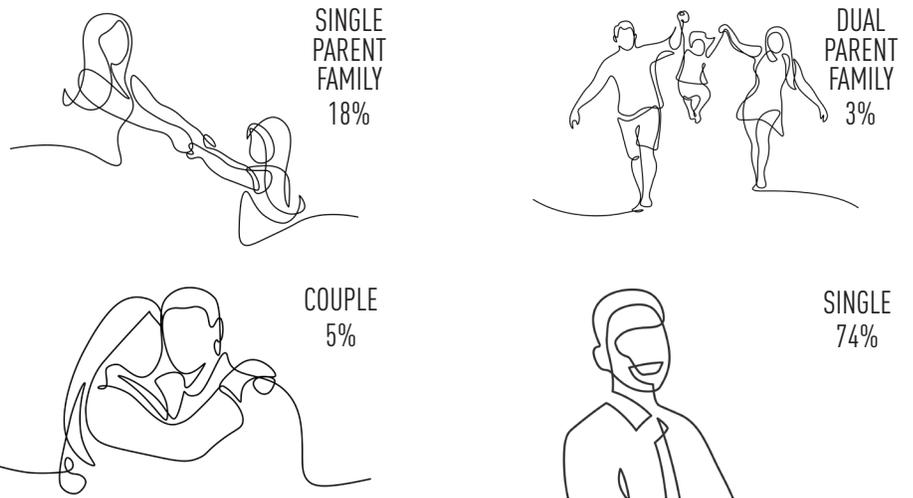
FORMERLY HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS HOUSED AND SUPPORTED SINCE APRIL 1, 2009



## AGE



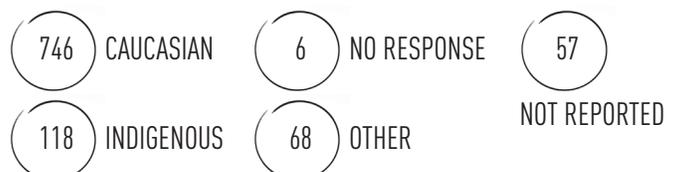
## HOUSEHOLD TYPE



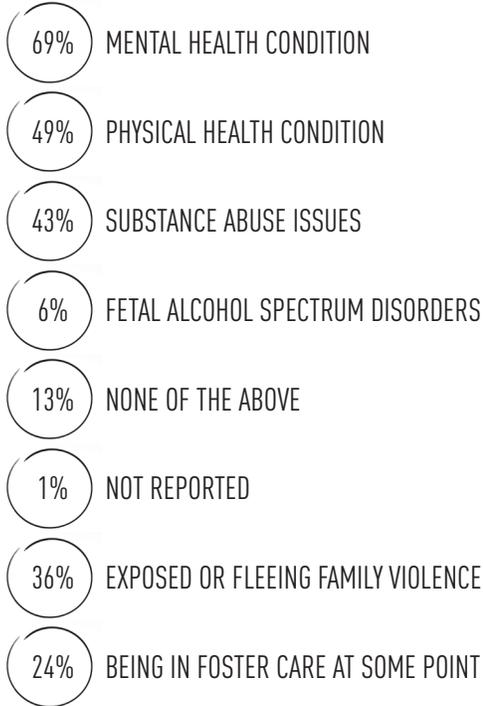
## VETERANS HOUSED

21

## ETHNICITY



## AT TIME OF INTAKE PARTICIPANTS REPORTED



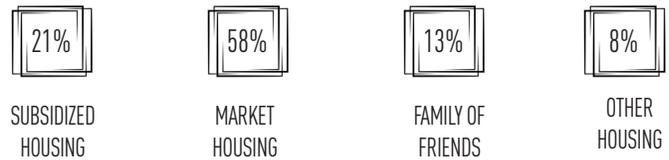
## MAIN SOURCE OF INCOME AT INTAKE



## POSITIVE PROGRAM EXIT



## HOUSING TYPE AT EXIT



# A relentless ability to adapt, survive and care

— MCMAN MEDICINE HAT

It was early March 2020. Looking back now it seems to be a shadow of a time soon forgotten. The new normal began to settle in. Society was changing at a rapid pace. Health restrictions, social distancing, evolving policies. . . this cannot be real. It will be over soon. What? Schools are closing, people are being sent home, businesses are closing, directional arrows, PPE. What is that? Do we have jobs? How can we help people? No in-person interactions. Can I see my family? Can I catch COVID. . . is this serious?

The whirlwind of emotions and unknowns were difficult. As humans, we know change can be difficult. We believe we can roll with change but if only it were that simple.

As a community and citizens of the world, our entire existence we had come to know, to love, to hate, was changing so fast. In what seemed to be a flash, staff and supervisors were staring at one another over a computer screen. Today this may seem so normal, but in March 2020, this concept was far from normal. As staff and supervisors stared intently we asked, "Now what do

we do? Is this our new normal?"

We knew we were needed. Society was crumbling, our sense of duty weighed heavy and we only had a few choices left to make. Let COVID be the reason for failure, or let it be the fuel for success.

We dug deep, we believed, we stared fear in the face. Through all our fears, we would not go down, not without a fight even though for all we knew, COVID was the next Spanish flu.

Staff went charging into battle, unsure of what this new world would bring. Grit was the shield they dawned. It was the power from within we all possessed, it is the reason humans have survived. We knew now more than ever, we must unlock its immense powers. We had each other. We had a community of care, and not even COVID could weaken our relentless souls.

We knew deep down we needed to innovate. But what seemed to be such a straightforward question had many complex solutions.

Everything was in an upheaval. The complexity of the situation dawned upon us. We had to re-imagine how we had been taught to serve so went back to the basics . . . food, clothing, shelter and safety.

We used technology and not for scrolling. We used it to connect on the most basic human level. We used it to create connection, to create safety, to create a sense of humanity, and normalcy. We, as a community, broke down the barriers of the old and created new ways to serve.

What truly made the past 16 months successful cannot be simply conceptualized. It is a combination of many groundbreaking approaches the community used to serve.

Success could be attributed to many reasons. Was it technology? Was it strengthening partnerships? Was it going back to the basics?

Truth be told, it boiled down to one simple concept, GRIT! We all possess it. It resides within our being, in the deepest recesses of the human psyche. It sets afire our relentless ability to adapt, survive, and to care for the continuation of humanity.

Without grit, the outcome of COVID would not be the same. It would have been a much darker world instead of the light that shines today.

TOP ROW: LEFT TO RIGHT  
KENYA GADER  
JACKIE MIDDLETON  
LINDSEY SMITH  
KAYLA RIGBY  
CARLEY DENNIS  
BRANDON WOOD

SITTING ROW: LEFT TO RIGHT  
CARRIE CAMPBELL  
JESSE MCINTYRE  
TONI CARLSON  
TAYLOR SCHLOSSER  
STACEY REDDING  
KEVIN DORNIAN



# Embracing change through a shared vision

— MHCHS OUTREACH

If one word could sum up the past 16 months for the Medicine Hat Community Housing Society's Outreach Department, it would be change.

Throughout the past 16 months, changes occurred that collectively impacted the Outreach department, compelling team members to creatively work together through a shared vision and understanding of what it means to serve people at risk of or experiencing homelessness in the midst of a pandemic.

With no blueprint to follow, the Outreach team focused on creative collaborations within the homeless serving sector, teaming up with the Homeless and Housing Development Department to quickly respond to, and provide temporary housing and other basic needs for vulnerable individuals who were at a higher risk of contracting the COVID-19 virus and had no place to safely isolate.

Staff shifted gears once again when asked to assist with the COVID-19 screening of individuals at the Salvation Army Resource Center. Outreach staff also assisted individuals when a temporary resource center was put in place in the MHCHS front office.

This creative action provided a much-needed day shelter and resource during business closures.

You don't realize the value of face-to-face

interactions, until you are told they can no longer happen.

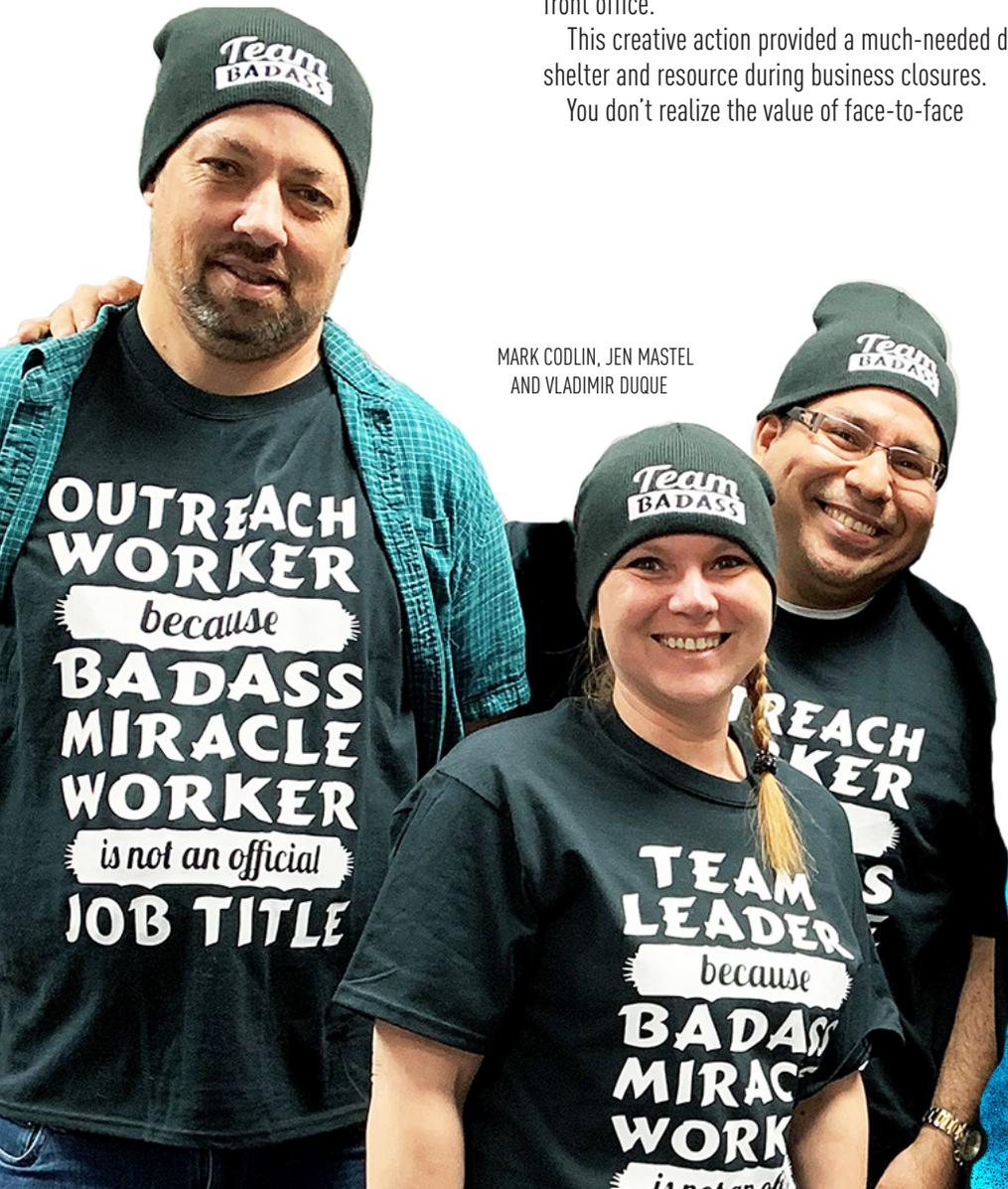
These are just a few of the creative measures that were undertaken by the Outreach team amidst the chaos.

Lesson learned . . .

It is in chaos that we thrive and are our most creative, it is just what we do. COVID-19 just happened to be the flavour of the year.

The Outreach department has accomplished much as a team over this past 16 months, and as a team, will continue to embrace change, refusing to be weighed down by layers of fear and uncertainty.

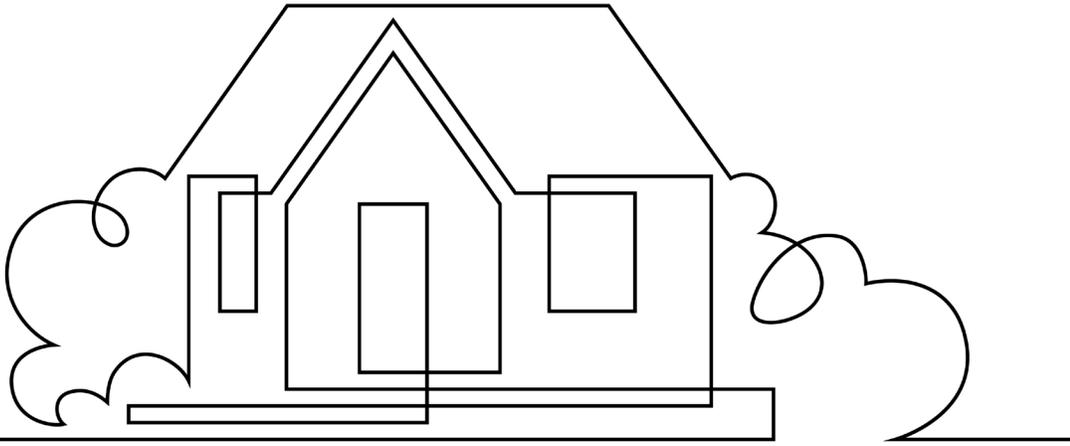
The team chooses to move forward, embracing chaos in whatever form it may take, and continue to work hard at making life better for Medicine Hat's most vulnerable people.



MARK CODLIN, JEN MASTEL  
AND VLADIMIR DUQUE

*"If I can just have a home, not just a place, and a few good people in my life, then I know I can make it."*

— PROGRAM PARTICIPANT



THE GRAI PROGRAM IS A MONTHLY SUBSIDY PROVIDED TO LANDLORDS TO ASSIST INDIVIDUALS THAT HAVE GRADUATED FROM HOUSING FIRST PROGRAMS AND REQUIRE RENTAL SUPPORT. MHCHS (OSSIFUNDED)

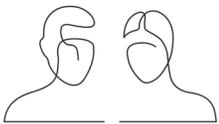
INDIVIDUALS ASSISTED THROUGH GRAI



MONTHLY AVERAGE PROVIDED TO LANDLORDS

## YOUTH HUB OUTREACH

MCMAN (OSSIFUNDED)



INDIVIDUALS ASSISTED W/27 RETURNING



FAMILY REUNIFICATIONS

## COUNSELLING PROGRAM

(OSSIFUNDED)



INDIVIDUALS ASSISTED MIYWASIN FRIENDSHIP CENTRE

## ROOTS YOUTH SHELTER

(OSSIFUNDED)



YOUTH SERVED

MCMAN YOUTH, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES ASSOCIATION

## HOUSING LINK

APRIL 1, 2020 - MARCH 31, 2021  
MHCHS (OSSIFUNDED)  
MEDICINE HAT COMMUNITY HOUSING SOCIETY HOUSING LINK ASSESSES INDIVIDUALS PRESENTING AS HOMELESS OR AT RISK OF BECOMING HOMELESS TO DETERMINE THE LEVEL OF SUPPORT NEEDED.

## INDIVIDUALS ASSESSED (NEW)



## RE-ASSESSMENTS



## TOTAL ASSESSMENTS



## RAPID RESOLUTION

INDIVIDUALS HOUSED



## HOUSING LOSS PREVENTION



## HOUSING FIRST PROGRAM

INDIVIDUALS HOUSED THROUGH THE MHWSS (OSSIFUNDED)



## RAPID RE-HOUSING

INDIVIDUALS HOUSED THROUGH THE MHCHS (OSSIFUNDED)

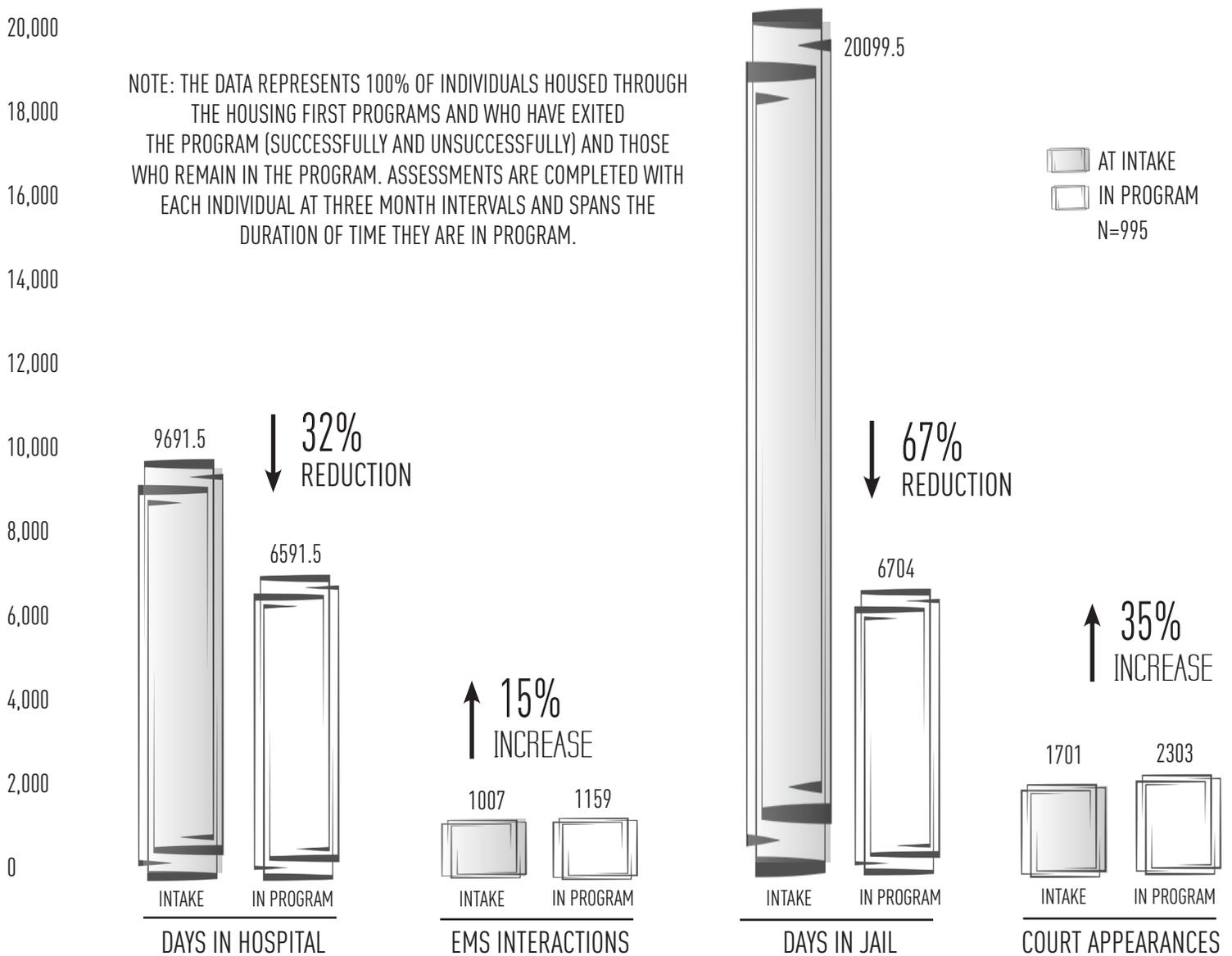


## PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

INDIVIDUALS HOUSED THROUGH CMHA (OSSIFUNDED)

# UTILIZATION OF PUBLIC SYSTEMS IN HOUSING FIRST 2009-2021

THE APPROXIMATE COST OF HOMELESSNESS ON PUBLIC SYSTEMS (PER INDIVIDUAL) IS ESTIMATED TO BE BETWEEN \$66,000 - \$120,000 ANNUALLY.  
THE COST OF PROVIDING HOUSING WITH SUPPORTS IS ESTIMATED TO BE BETWEEN \$12,000 - \$34,000 ANNUALLY.



## TOTAL COMMUNITY BASED SHELTER USAGE 2020-2021

20  
MCMAN ROOTS  
YOUTH SHELTER

237 ADULTS = 152  
CHILDREN = 85  
MH WOMEN'S  
SHELTER SOCIETY

157  
SALVATION ARMY  
CENTRE OF HOPE

## SHELTER UTILIZATION DOWN 64% SINCE 2009

# Amid chaos we triumphed with strength and resilience

— MH WOMEN'S SHELTER SOCIETY

These past 16 months have had all those great words thrown into it; pivot, resiliency, challenging, hope.

We were all tired of being told to be hopeful and the end is near. Some days were long and hard and dark, it felt too much and exhausting to think of continuing. But, amid chaos, we triumphed. We were creative. We redirected as needed and ensured no interruption of service delivery.

Being the lifeline for our participants to flourish was vital.

The day-to-day connections we brought forth with our team continued with the same enthusiasm that we built on every day. From the first introduction with the brightest smile to the

day we took them to graduation with happy tears.

That sense of pride never wavers.

Our participants know through the entire process that we are always proud of them. Proud of their success, proud of their failings because even in their failings, they are learning alongside us as a team.

It became clear right at the start of this pandemic how important human connection was for our participants. Some people cling closer together in an emergency and some people space themselves further apart. Although we were forced to be six-feet apart, emotionally we felt we were connected stronger than ever, through social media, zoom meetings, text messaging, Post-it notes and all the other creative outlets we have used to connect with everyone.

We thought outside of the box with creative ways to connect, like music, art, journaling and for that we will always be thankful and continue to use those creative connections even as we circle back to our "regular way of life".

We always kept our heads up and with masks on you could see our smiles in our eyes, because the community needed our smiles to build resilience and strength to carry on.

Through all the uncertainties one thing is certain we will always be here for our participants.



CANDACE STENGLER,  
CHAR DUPUIS, MELISSA WHYTE AND  
TARA SCHNEIDER-PICHETTE

# With determination and compassion, came innovation

— MH & DISTRICT FOOD BANK

To say that the last 16 months have been remarkable is an understatement.

It has been a time of sadness, fear and frustration, as well as a time of hopefulness and resilience.

The Medicine Hat & District Food Bank responded to the ever-changing needs in our community with determination and compassion.

Programs and services were adapted, new programs and services were put in place, and those that no longer met the community's needs were discarded.

Every aspect of the organization changed from how food was collected, to how it was distributed.

The safety of staff, volunteers and those needing the Food Bank was the primary factor in decision making.

COVID-19 restrictions limited volunteers in the building and stretched staff capacity to the limit.

A "night shift" was organized. Special thanks to the British military and our dedicated board members.

Accessing and processing food was often challenging. Costs and availability impacted much of the products purchased and many of our donors experienced the same issues.

As always, our community rallied to meet the increased needs of the Food Bank.

Our warehouse staff streamlined operations, developed efficiencies and responded quickly to the ever-changing product supply and demand.

Providing food for our members also changed. Our former, fully-stocked, shopping area had to close due to restrictions but the staff reacted quickly and a hamper system was put in place.

Hampers, which included fresh produce, dairy and meat were available for pick-up, and a delivery service was created for those quarantined, unwell, or unable to pick up. This simplified system although not ideal, ensured that

the Food Bank could meet the growing demand for services that resulted from the pandemic.

The Brown Bag Program changed from preparing lunches for approximately 900 school children, to delivering breakfast and lunch items to all area schools and providing both pick-up and delivery options of staples, fresh fruit and vegetables, dairy and bread, for over 500 families weekly.

Lessons learned during the past 16 months have been many.

Firstly, systems can and must change based on the needs of the community. Secondly, a small number of people with a monumental task can succeed if committed.

"We got this" has now become the new motto of the Food Bank.

The Medicine Hat & District's ability to deal with unprecedented change, creatively, will ensure that our new location, The Root Cellar, will continue to provide meaningful, innovative services to promote food security in our community.

*"You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You are able to say to yourself, 'I lived through this horror. I can take the next thing that comes along.'"*

— ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

# COVID-19

As of APRIL 28, 2021, Medicine Hat South Zone has a 267.2 per 100,000 population active case rate of infection to date. The City of Medicine Hat had 883 total cases, 182 of which were currently active and 683 of which recovered. There had been 18 deaths in Medicine Hat to date.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the community, the CBO/CE worked directly with AHS and community

partners to oversee and implement the **STRATEGY FOR VULNERABLE POPULATIONS** throughout the pandemic response.

The implementation of an emergency day shelter, isolation units, and a social worker in the Medicine Hat Public Library were some of the measures taken to reduce the repercussions of the pandemic.

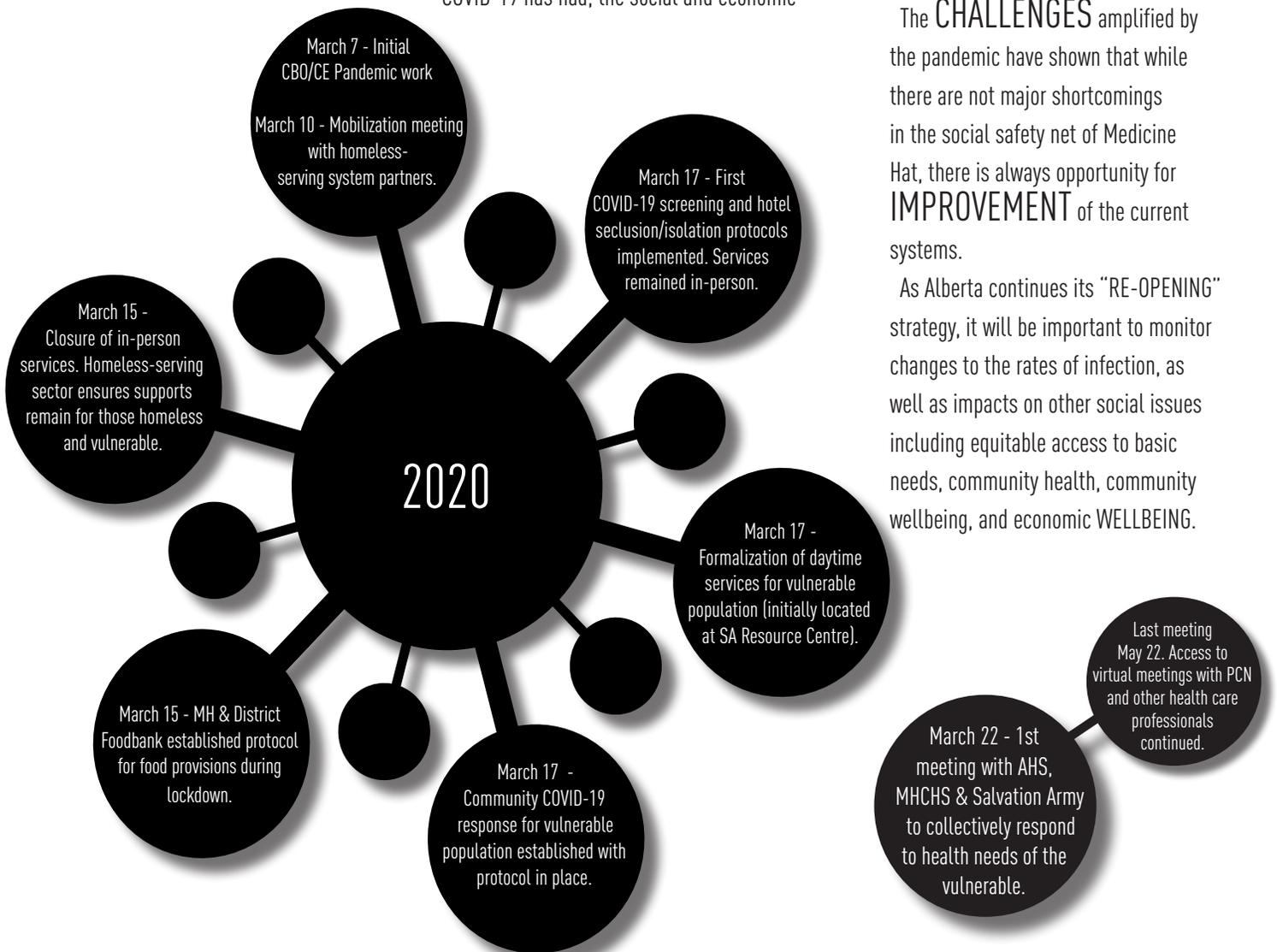
Along with the health repercussions that COVID-19 has had, the social and economic

repercussions has led to an **INCREASE IN DEMAND** for services related to mental health, safety, and physical health. Between the information overload, lost sense of daily structure and routine, collective worry for our high-risk community members, and the nature of socially-distant interactions, the demand for services will remain high.

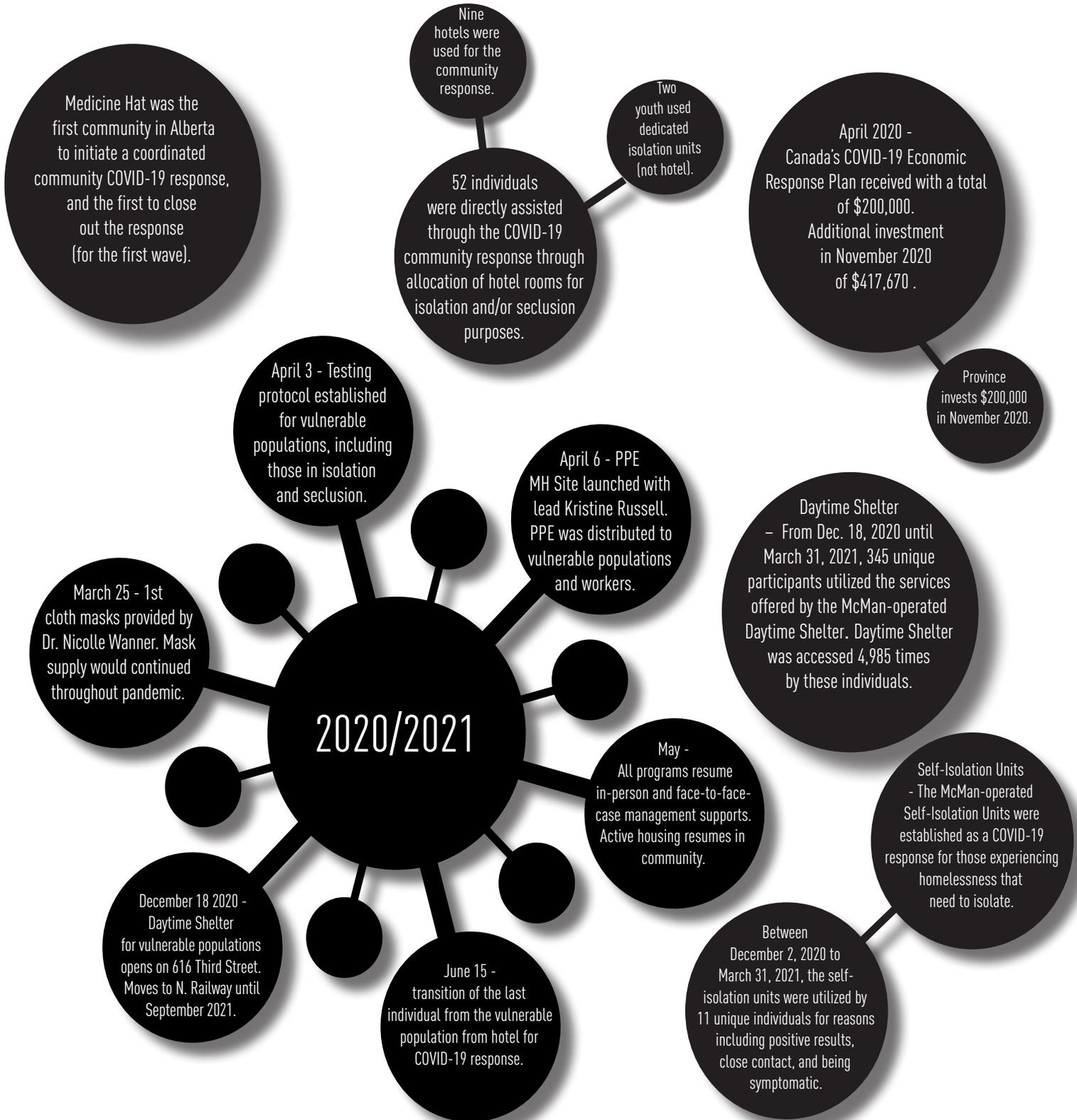
Medicine Hat has felt, and will continue to feel in coming years, the economic and social impact of self-isolation and quarantining.

The **CHALLENGES** amplified by the pandemic have shown that while there are not major shortcomings in the social safety net of Medicine Hat, there is always opportunity for **IMPROVEMENT** of the current systems.

As Alberta continues its "RE-OPENING" strategy, it will be important to monitor changes to the rates of infection, as well as impacts on other social issues including equitable access to basic needs, community health, community wellbeing, and economic **WELLBEING**.



# PANDEMIC



# Amid chaos, traditional teachings offer wellness and hope

— MIYWASIN FRIENDSHIP CENTRE: CULTURAL ADDICTIONS PROGRAM



Partnerships were vital to our success this year during the chaos of COVID-19 to striving to maintain balanced medicine wheels (i.e., spiritual, mental, physical, emotional) of individuals. We quickly learned how to use ZOOM and provided:

- Various crafting workshops.
- Weekly sharing circles.
- Medicine wheel teachings.
- Traditional teachings with Elders and Traditional Parenting Skills.

Mending Broken Hearts was not recommended during the COVID-19 pandemic; MHCHS supported a counselor to gain 12 Steps & Medicine Wheel Teachings and Mothers of Tradition Wellbriety Training.

Both new programs were quickly implemented via ZOOM and widely received by the community.

Individuals were able to access Chromebooks and free internet through Miywasin's COVID Support program to maintain a connection for weekly programs and break down barriers for individuals.

Individuals experiencing homelessness received access to Miywasin's COVID-19 Support program. This program provided individuals in need of emergency housing via hotels, a \$200 grocery card, Medical Financial Supports, Traditional Meat (i.e., bison, elk, deer) and Wellness bags (i.e., hygiene products, puzzles, Indigenous colouring books, crosswords, or word searches, How to Balance Medicine Wheel Guide).

Individuals were supported to transition into housing at Miywasin, Metis Urban Housing, or found housing in the community.

Individuals who needed Cultural Supports accessed smudge kits and/or Red Road & Elders Meditation Books. When clients needed transportation to appointments or attend programs when not allowed to transport, individuals received cab cards or bus fare to meet their needs.

Miywasin programs worked in collaboration throughout the year, supporting individuals focusing on mental health due to isolation.

CHASITY CAIRNS

# When the world shut down, PSH community found resiliency

— CMHA PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

**P**ermanent Supportive Housing is in its third year of operations.

The program currently is working with 34 individuals. The staff and participants at PSH have been having an amazing time utilizing the parking lot and have been holding some fun and creative community events.

The PSH team has created a monthly calendar of events such as bingo, yardzee, crib tournaments and ball hockey.

This past year has brought some of the biggest challenges which led way to demonstrate the our greatest resilience.

The PSH community came together and exhibited what community was all about. The program would not have been successful without the amazing support of outside agencies like the Medicine Hat and District Food Bank providing support when food security was difficult to achieve.

Looking towards the next year we are so excited for Indigenizing programming and creating events to celebrate the traditional ways of knowing.

So far this year the PSH program fully celebrated Indigenous Peoples Day and had a week of events. The staff and participants invited Knowledge Keeper David Restoule to lead a smudge and hand games in the parking lot. The staff and participants created medicine wheels, stew, bannock, fry bread and played hand games.

The PSH community participated and enjoyed the events and are already planning more for the future and are truly grateful for all the support in Medicine Hat.



JENNIFER MCBRIDE AND MICHELLE SANDERSON

# KINDNESS CHANGES EVERYTHING

YOUR *Creativity*  
WILL ALWAYS FIND A HOME.  
*In chaos -*  
BE BOLD, STAY DETERMINED,  
FIGHT FOR CHANGE.



MEDICINE HAT  
**Community  
Housing**  
SOCIETY

#104, 516 - 3rd Street SE Medicine Hat, AB T1A 0H3  
Phone: 403.527.4507 info@mhchs.ca  @mhjourneyhome  @journeyhomemh