

For Immediate Release

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Here Comes the Sun: EICS Receives Mental Health Grant Focused on Holistic Wellness

Sherwood Park, AB - Elk Island Catholic Schools (EICS) has received a \$440,000 grant funded by Alberta Education's Mental Health in Schools Pilot that will empower each of the district's schools to further elevate their holistic mental health supports for students.

Called Here Comes the Sun, the pilot project runs through June 2024 and is in partnership with St. Francis Xavier Church in Camrose, members of the Indigenous community, EdCan Network, and the Edmonton-based wellness organization PEPY. These partnerships enable school chaplains, health champions, and Indigenous mentors to develop additional skills that will further help EICS students, families, and staff to more proactively support and strengthen their overall wellbeing.

"Our EICS Administrative Procedure highlights our belief that student wellness is a core necessity for learning. I am excited for the opportunity that this grant provides for our division to further refine its focus on systemic wellness in light of our faith," said EICS Superintendent Paul Corrigan.

Through this grant, St. Francis Xavier Church's Rev. Kris Schmidt will educate participating staff about Sacramental Life and Spiritual Health, and PEPY model founder Steven Csorba will present key methods for utilizing spiritual, social, and physical health to develop resilience and wellbeing. From the Indigenous community, Elder Gary Gairdner and Knowledge Keepers Eva Stang and Rob Davies will share health and wellbeing wisdom and traditions, as well as provide training to host circle talks – a form of open communication that is rooted in demonstrating respect for the other and building interconnectedness.

Staff who participate in Here Comes the Sun will then share this knowledge in their schools to further strengthen individual and community wellness.

"Systemic wellness is a division priority and a key pillar in our assurance plan at EICS. This grant supports us tremendously in our goal of supporting staff and student wellbeing spiritually, physically, and mentally," said Jody Seymour, the EICS Director of Student and Staff Formation. "Our approach to wellness weaves together who we are as a Catholic community with Indigenous perspectives and the PEPY model."

EICS, part of Alberta's publicly funded education system, is committed to developing educational opportunities in the context of Gospel values. EICS is dedicated to providing quality, faith-based learning environments to students of any background and faith, where their skills are nurtured and celebrated by dedicated, caring staff.

For more information or to request an interview, please contact:

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