

# First Nation Police Officers' Mental Health and Wellness

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University  
of Regina



# Overview

- Description of First Nations' Policing in Canada
- Challenges for Officers in Self-Administered Police Services
- The “Wicked Problem”
- The Impacts
- Police Board Responsibilities
- Challenges in addressing police officer mental health
- Possibilities
- Where to next?



# First Nations Policing in Canada Today

- Great variations ranging from the Self- Administered, independent peacekeepers services such as Kahnawá:ke, Manitoba FN Police Services, Akwesasne, Nishnawbe-Aski, Rama or the Blood to the many First Nations that use RCMP services through tripartite service agreements.
- Federal and provincial government provide funds on a 52/48% basis. Well established that this funding is inadequate.
- FN police and peacekeeper services are relatively small and depend on the larger non-indigenous services for larger crimes such as cyber-crime, organized crime, major investigations.



# Province of Quebec

QC - Abitibiwinini, Entente de services policiers de  
QC - Betsiamites, Entente de services policiers de  
QC - Eagle Village Police Force Agreement  
QC - Eeyou-Eenou Police Force (James bay Cree)  
QC - Essipit, Entente de services policiers de la Première nation des Innus  
QC - Gesgapegiag, Agreement on the Provision of Police Services of the Micmacs  
QC - Huronne-Wendat, Entente de services policiers de la Nation  
QC - Innu Takuaikan Uashat Mak Mani-Utenam, Entente de services policiers de  
QC - Kahnawake Police Services  
QC - Kativik Regional Police Service  
QC - Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg Police Services  
QC - Lac Saint-Jean, Entente de services policiers des Montagnais du  
QC - Lac Simon, Entente de services policiers de la Nation Anishnabe du  
QC - Listuguj Mi'gmaq, Agreement on the Provision of Police Services of  
QC - Manawan, Entente de services policiers des Atikamekw de  
QC - Naskapi Village of Kawawachikamach Police Services Agreement  
QC - Odanak et Wolinak  
QC - Opitciwan, Entente de services policiers des Atikamekw d'  
QC - Pakua Shipi, Entente de services policiers des Montagnais de  
QC - Timiskaming, Agreement on the Provision of Police Services of  
QC - Wemotaci, Entente de services policiers des Atikamekw de

## Province of Ontario

ON - Akwesasne Police Service

ON - Anishinabek Police Service

ON - Lac Seul Police Service

ON - Nishnawbe-Aski Police Service

ON - Rama Police Service

ON - Six Nations Regional Police

ON - Treaty Three Police Service

ON - United Chiefs and Councils of Manitoulin (UCCM)

ON - Wikwemikong Police Service

# Western Canada

AB - Blood Tribe Police Service

AB - Lakeshore Regional Police Service

AB - Tsuu T'ina Police Service

BC - Stl'atl'imx Tribal Police Service

MB – Manitoba First Nations Police Service

SK - File Hills First Nations Police Service



# Indigenous Officers working in major urban centres with large Indigenous populations

- Different environment than their colleagues in Self-Administered police services as well as their colleagues in their municipal police service
- Police working in rural locations – particularly in the West – when with RCMP



# Unique Challenges for First Nation Police Officers in Self-Administered Services

- Relative to the military
  - deployment
- Relative to other Public Safety Personnel (e.g., paramedics, fire fighters)
  - Protection, Enforcement, Rehabilitation
  - Deployment, Exposure, Responsibility, Certainty
- Relative to other Police (e.g., RCMP, municipal)
  - The model of Indigenous Policing (FNIPP) under-resourcing
  - Lack of alignment between community needs and police legislated powers
  - Police culture
  - Inadequate mental health and wellness supports
  - Intergenerational trauma in their own families as well as the community they police



# Exposure Information – Pre-Covid

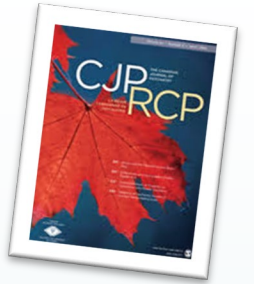


	% Ever	% Frequency Among Ever Exposed			% Worst Event	PTSD
	Total	1 to 5 times	6 to 10 times	11+ times	Among Exposed	AOR 95% CI
Life threatening natural disaster	66	92	4	5	2	1.2*
Fire or explosion	86	50	10	40	3	1.4**
Serious transportation accident	<b>93</b>	23	6	<b>71</b>	<b>14</b>	1.3
Exposure to toxic substance	67	61	7	31	1	<b>2.1***</b>
Physical assault	<b>91</b>	42	9	<b>49</b>	5	<b>1.7***</b>
Assault with a weapon	834	58	9	33	6	1.7***
Sexual assault	71	47	11	42	5	1.5***
Other unwanted sexual experiences	67	55	8	37	1	1.5***
Combat	19	78	22	-	1	1.4***
Life threatening illness or injury	77	54	6	40	7	1.4***
Severe human suffering	79	42	6	52	7	<b>2.5***</b>
Sudden violent death	<b>94</b>	36	13	<b>51</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>2.0***</b>
Sudden accidental death	<b>94</b>	35	11	<b>55</b>	<b>14</b>	1.3
Serious injury, harm, or death you caused	36	64	7	29	2	1.4***

# Other Stressors – Pre-Covid

	PTSD	Any Mental Disorder
Other Identified Stressors (Examples)	AOR ***	AOR ***
Staff Shortages	1.3	1.2
Fatigue (e.g., shift work, over-time)	1.5	1.5
Lack of resources	1.4	1.3
Negative comments from the public	1.4	1.4
Constant change in policy/legislation	1.3	1.3
Shift work	1.2	1.2
Feeling like you are always on the job	1.5	1.5
Traumatic events (e.g., motor vehicle accidents, domestics, death, injury)	1.5	1.4
Upholding a “higher image” in public	1.4	1.4
Friends/family feel the effects of the stigma associated with your job	1.5	1.5
Limitations to your social life (e.g., who your friends are, where you socialize)	1.5	1.5
Lack of understanding from family and friends about your work	1.5	1.5
Work-related activities on days off (e.g., court, community events)	1.3	1.3
Risk of being injured on the job	1.3	1.3

# The “Wicked Problem”



- Accurate mental health data for Police Officers working for Self-Administered services is not available – requires research!
- Mental Disorder Symptoms

**Positive Screening Percentages for Recent Mental Disorders Based on Self-Report Measures**

	Gen	Total Sample	Mun /Prov Police	RCMP	Correctional Workers	Fire	Paramedics	Public Safety Communicators
PTSD	~1-3	23	20	30	29	14	25	18
Major Depressive Disorder	~4-7	26	20	32	31	20	30	33
Gen. Anxiety Disorder	~3	19	15	23	24	12	21	18
Social Anxiety Disorder	~7	15	10	19	18	11	20	17
Panic Disorder	~1	9	6	12	12	5	10	8
Alcohol Use Disorder	~7-25	6	6	4	7	8	6	7
Any mental disorder	10	45	37	50	55	34	49	48

# Prevalence Information – Pre-Covid

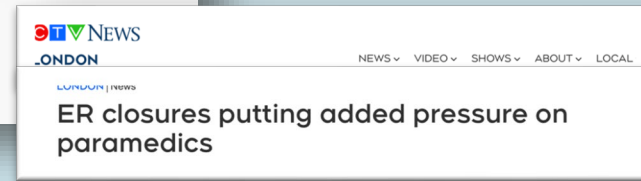
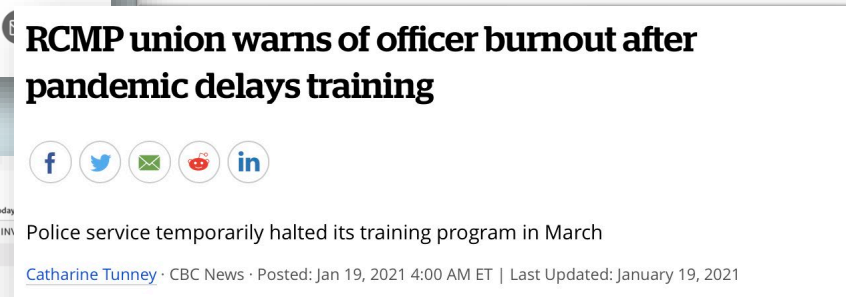
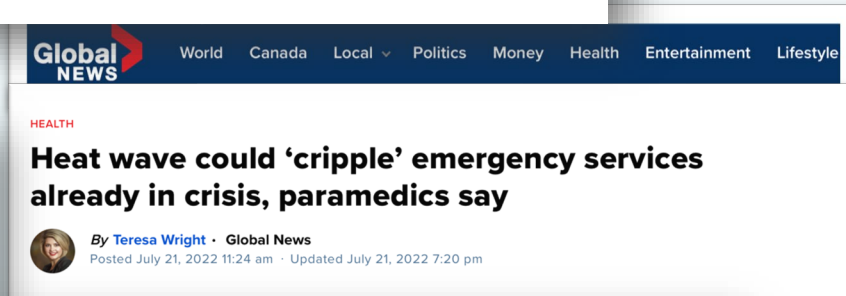
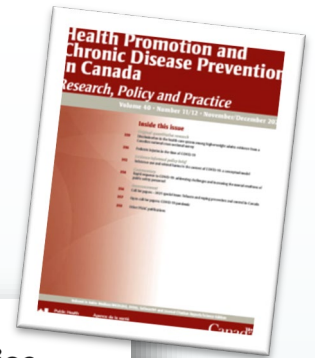


## ► Suicidal Ideation, Plans, and Attempts

Prevalence of Past-Year and Lifetime Self-Reported Suicidal Behaviour								
	Gen	Total Sample	Mun /Prov Police	RCMP	Correctional Workers	Fire	Paramedics	Public Safety Communicat ors
	Past-Year							
Suicidal Ideation	~4%	10	8	10	11	9	15	10
Suicidal Planning	~1%	4	3	4	5	3	7	3
Suicidal Attempt	<1%	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	1	<1
	Lifetime							
Suicidal Ideation	~13%	28	21	26	35	25	41	29
Suicidal Planning	~5%	13	9	11	20	9	24	14
Suicidal Attempt	~3%	5	2	2	8	3	10	9

# Other Concerns

- COVID-19
- Burnout
- Recruitment
- Retention



# Police Officer Mental Health: Upon Beginning Their Careers

- Recent research with RCMP cadets suggests that officers are actually mentally well prior to beginning their careers when compared to the general population.
- Clinical interviews found:

Mental Disorder Prevalence (%) Based on Self-Report Measures and Clinical Interviews				
	Pre-training Assessment		General Population	
Disorder	Survey % (n)	Clinical Interview % (n)	%	Test Statistic
Any disorder – current	15.1 (116)	6.3 (46)	10.1	4.53***
Any Disorder - past	3.9 (30)	12.5 (92)	33.1	7.59***
*** statistically significant difference @ $\alpha < .001$				



# The Extended Impacts: Families

- General Familial Issues
  - Career vs. Family commitments
  - Disruption to home routines
  - Social withdrawal
  - Experience secondary trauma
- Spouses
  - Relationship issues (e.g., distancing, arguments)
  - Jealousy (spouse jealous of the partner's colleagues)
  - Become the primary "support person" for their partner
- Children
  - Reported difficulties with feelings of sadness, worries and fear, disobedience and anger, attention, and friendships
  - Conflicted feelings (pride in their parent vs. rejection by peers who hold negative views of police)
- Lack of supports for the family members



# The Extended Impacts: The Public

- Mental health disorders resulting from occupational and organizational stressors are associated with:
  - Police misconduct
  - Absenteeism
    - Reduced productivity for the service as a whole
  - Administrative Errors
  - Making a safety error or violation
  - Uncontrolled anger
- Mental health issues for police officers undermines police effectiveness and potentially public safety





# Challenges in Addressing Mental Health and Wellbeing

- Challenges
  - Lack of accessible mental health resources
    - Lack of clinicians
  - Affordability of mental health resources
    - Employee health plans
  - Police schedules (shift work)
    - Associated with mental health issues
    - Difficulty in scheduling mental health treatment
  - Police culture and stigma
  - Lack of culturally appropriate mental health resources for First Nations officers and their families



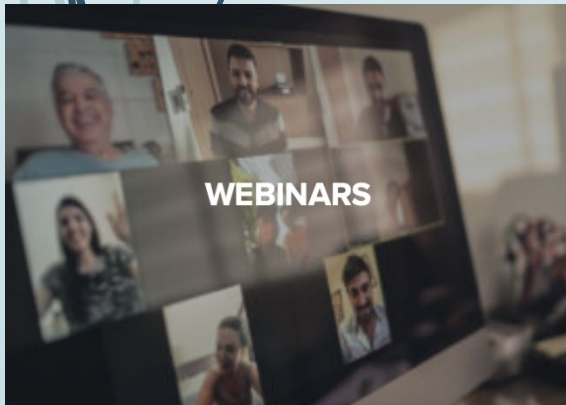
# Possibilities for Addressing Mental Health and Wellbeing

- Knowledge
- Assessment
- Training
- Treatment

# Possibilities: Knowledge Mobilization



- Research needs to be undertaken to understand the issues leading to mental health concerns for officers (and other staff) working in First Nation communities
  - Requires evidence-based solutions
- The Canadian Institute for Public Safety Research and Treatment (CIPSRT)
  - <https://www.cipsrt-icrtsp.ca/>
- PSPNET Families
  - <https://www.pspnet.ca/en/for-families-of-bsp/families-and-couples-resources>
  - Information designed to address family issues related to the occupational risks and requirements of public safety work.
  - Tips and exercises are designed to address issues described in the information pages. Strategies are designed to develop and enhance relationships.
  - Adapted from our PSP Wellbeing Course, this self-guided, internet-delivered, cognitive behavioural therapy program is designed to support a PSP spouse or significant other with their unique wellbeing needs.



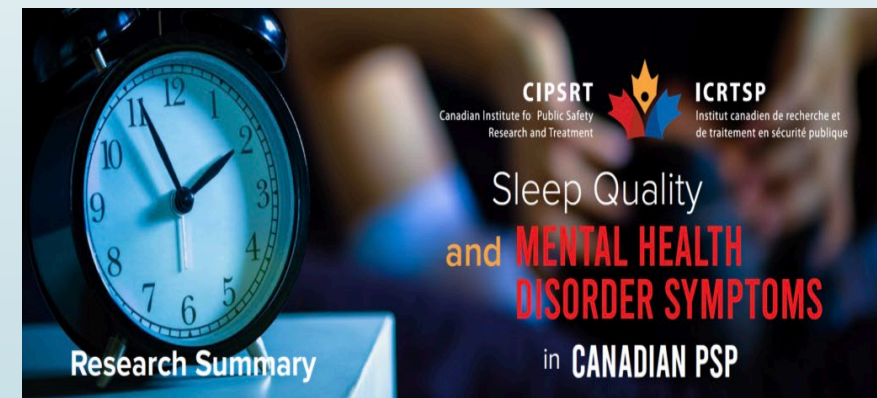
# Possibilities: Assessment

- The RCMP PTSD Study is an initiative in partnership with the University of Regina (**E**motional, **R**esilience, **S**kills **T**raining)
  - Includes:
    - Mental health monitoring
    - Proactive mental health activities
    - Evidence-informed training
    - Mental health care
  - Early results:
    - The Cadets are psychologically healthy when they begin their training
    - Cadets participating in the study appear to have better mental health
    - Cadets in the study appeared to experience improved mental health over the CTP, **associated with regular participation in the self-monitoring.**
    - There appears to be a decrease in mental health by the end of the first year in the field.



# Possibilities: Training

- Resilience training
  - Road to Mental Readiness
  - Before Operational Stress
- Mental Health “Tools”
  - “Sleep 101”
  - “Treatment 101”
- Lighting the Fire Within
  - Culture and Trauma-Informed Curriculum



# Possibilities: Treatment

- Canadian PSP experience frequent exposure to potentially psychologically traumatic events
- Canadian PSP face many barriers to face-to-face treatment
  - Logistical (Distance, Time, Cost)
  - Attitudinal (Stigma, Discomfort with Vulnerability)
  - Lack of PSP cultural competence among clinicians





# PSPNET

[www.pspnet.ca](http://www.pspnet.ca)



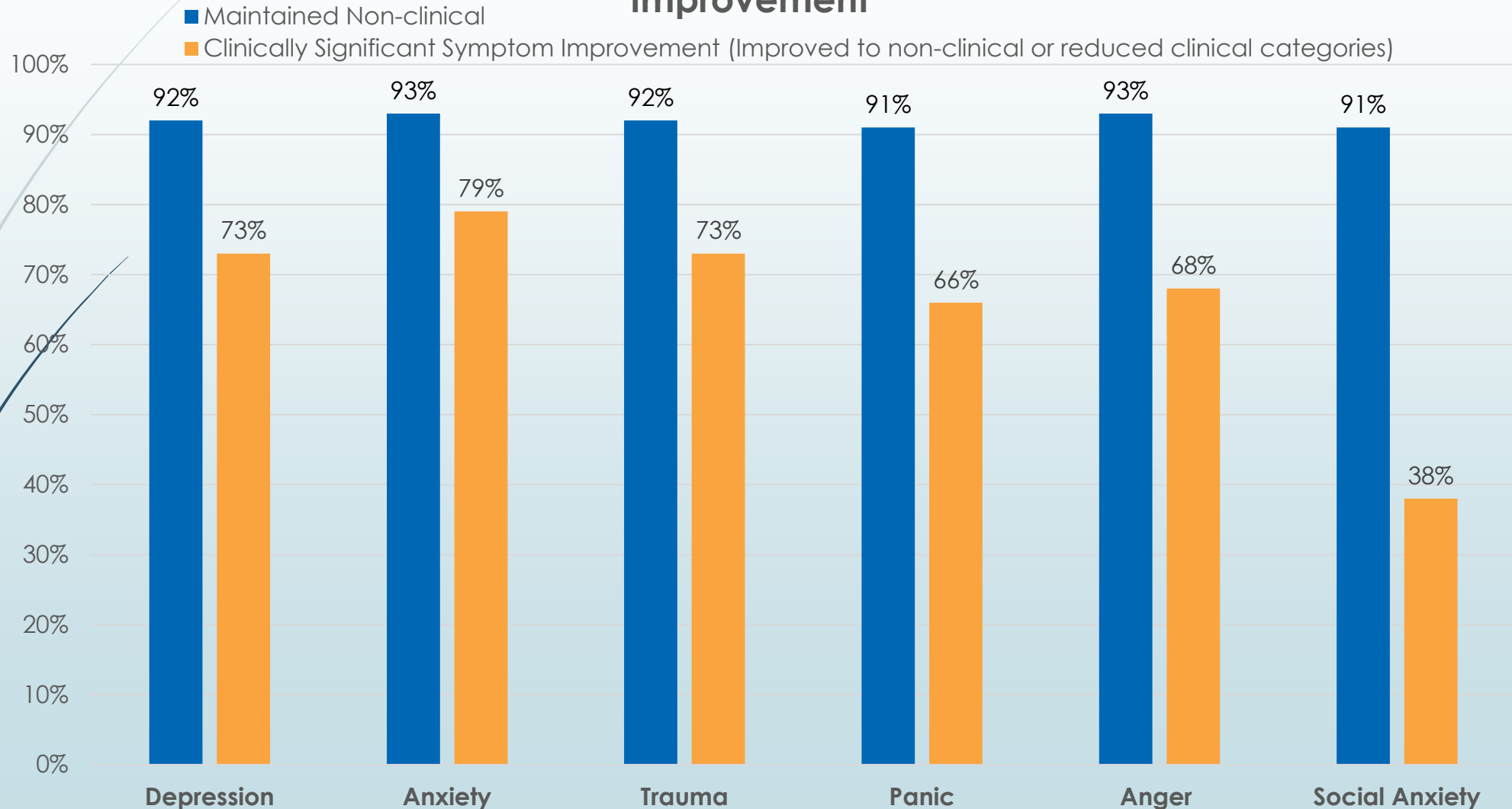
- Internet-delivered Cognitive Behavioural Therapy specifically tailored for Public Safety Personnel
- 3 types of treatments
  - Therapist-guided (wellbeing and PTSD courses)
  - Self-Directed Wellbeing Course
  - Spouse and Significant Other Self-guided Wellbeing Course



# PSPNET: Results



## Percentage Maintained Non-clinical/Clinically Significant Symptom Improvement







# PSPNET – Improved Functioning

- **“This course has been a real game changer in my life.** I’m so glad I signed up. It really has made a big difference in the quality of my day-to-day life and I feel very optimistic for the future.”
- “I have found that since beginning this course, the skills I have learned have helped me not only decrease my symptoms **but also help with my relationships within my family and friends.** I now have a better understanding of what I am feeling and why and have been a little more able to share that with the people close to me.”



# PSPNET – an evidence-based treatment for PSP – First Nation participation

- First Nation Participation and Results
  - 117 Indigenous individuals enrolled in a PSPNET program
    - 54 in Therapist-Guided Wellbeing Course / 14 in Therapist-Guided PTSD course / 49 Self-Guided Wellbeing Course
    - 7 spouses enrolled in the Spousal and Significant-Other course
  - Of the participants who completed the treatment satisfaction questionnaire
    - 87% reported increased or greatly increased confidence in their ability to manage their symptoms
    - 100% reported that the course was worth their time and 97% that they would feel confident referring a friend to PSPNET
  - Symptom Change
    - **8 weeks post-enrollment, Indigenous clients**
      - Who had clinically significant anxiety symptoms at pretreatment was reduced from 58% to 24%
      - who had clinically significant depression at pretreatment was reduced from 67% to 33%
      - who had clinically significant PTSD at pretreatment was reduced from 42% to 28%



# Where to from Here?

- We need a better understanding of the mental health of police officers working for Self-Administered Police Services
- We need to provide better resourcing for mental health training and supports for First Nations police officers
- We need better resourcing to Self-Administered Police Services to assist in addressing the organizational stressors
- We need police boards to work with their police leaders to create a culture in the police service that is supportive of officer's mental health
- We need to see more culturally relevant mental health initiatives
- We need to see more clinicians become “policing” and Indigenous culturally aware”