

# THE **ROBB NASH** PROJECT



## EDUCATION REPORT 2022-23



[www.robbynash.com](http://www.robbynash.com)

[learning@robbynash.com](mailto:learning@robbynash.com)



## Our Program

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### **A Living Curriculum: Stories of Life through Darkness**

**A Living Curriculum: Stories of Life through Darkness** is The Robb Nash Project's new mental wellness program for youth. Delivered in the classroom setting, our program supports educators in leading thoughtful, mindful discussions about mental health topics in a safe and inclusive environment. Contained on the D2L Brightspace online platform, this program has an edginess and authenticity typical of The Robb Nash Project brand that is appealing to youth.

**Leveraging the power of video storytelling and music, we reach youth emotionally, breaking down barriers and increasing awareness of mental health issues while promoting empathy.** The curriculum is no exception. With 4 modules, each story and song shared is one of struggle and strength—the true triumphant stories of youth we met while on tour. The program's journaling component encourages personal reflection and self-awareness and serves as a resource for educators to identify students needing support.

**A Living Curriculum equips youth with practical tools and strategies for managing their mental health, educating them on seeking help, building healthy coping mechanisms and ultimately empowering them to navigate their own mental wellness journey.** The pedagogical resources include guidelines, discussion prompts, and activities designed to help educators explore mental health topics more fully with their students.

**Throughout the curriculum, text NASH to 686868 is readily available for youth to connect directly with a Kids Help Phone crisis responder.**

*"Thank you for giving us the opportunity to try the Robb Nash Project! Mental wellness is such an important concept to focus on and with programs like this it allows the conversation to be addressed rather than stigmatized. Robb Nash and those involved are truly making a difference."*

Educator, Saskatchewan



# Curriculum Participation & Engagement



## Sept. 2022- June 2023 Participation



- 8 provinces, 1 territory
- 87 schools with the majority completing the full program
- 6,362 students took part
- 241 educators took part
- 23 interactions with the Kids Help Phone crisis text line as a direct result of the curriculum (Text NASH to 686868)
- 229 stream views of The Robb Nash Project's documentary "If you're reading this..." made available to schools and public libraries through McIntyre Media.

## Educator Survey Responses



- 86% said their students were positively impacted by the curriculum
- 72% said they were better able to identify students needing additional mental health supports
- 89.5% would recommend A Living Curriculum to other educators
- Most educators said they plan to participate again with their next group of students.

# What Educators are Saying



**2022-23 was the first full school year that A Living Curriculum: Stories of Life through Darkness was available for schools nationwide. Some of the educators from participating schools reached out to let us know how it went for them.**

"My students really connected with this, and wanted more content when we reached the end of it! I would definitely do it again with my next batch of kids! We have been 'done' with the curriculum for a bit now and the kids still get excited when I share a new message/post that Robb makes, his music fills the room often and they are very excited to see him live!"

*-Educator, Saskatchewan*

"Giving the students the opportunity to journal on paper or use the electronic option provided as well as completing the entries at their own pace seemed to allow them to share more freely. I was blown away at how many students opened up when they had the choice to interact with the material in their own personal space without peers around. Students opened up about stressors in their life that they would never discuss in a traditional classroom setting. Reading some of my student's entries broke my heart, yet I am so thankful for this living curriculum as it provided a bridge to start an understanding, supports, and step toward healing."

*-Educator, Manitoba*

"This was a wonderful curriculum and I am so thankful that this was available to our youth. We had a suicide in February and a lot of our student body was struggling. This was a wonderful way to let them know that help is available, and that struggles look different for everyone. Thank you for having us be a part of this program."

*-Educator, Manitoba*



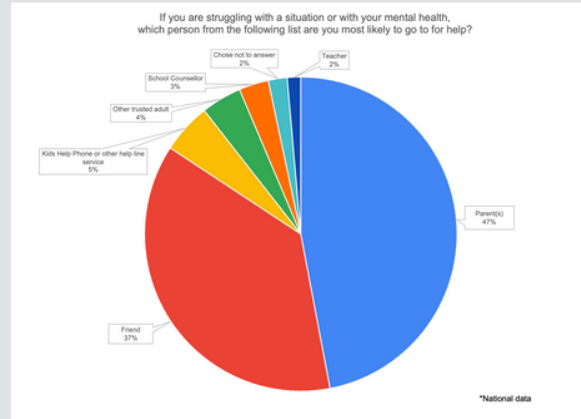


# What Students are Saying



*"It has helped me to realize that mental health struggles can present themselves in different ways. People can struggle in different ways, and recovery can look different for different people. People who are struggling aren't weak, they are stronger than many of us know."*

Student from Saskatchewan

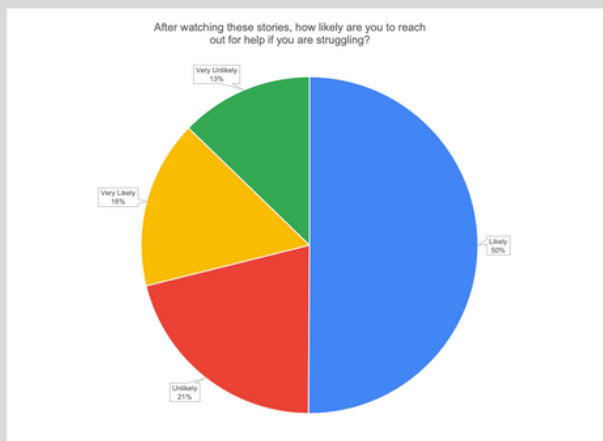


*"I will more likely understand what people have gone through because of these stories. I will be more willingly helpful towards people struggling with mental health. Hearing these stories taught me valuable lessons and taught me what I can do in order to help."*

Student from Saskatchewan

*"Seeing as I myself deal with these struggles, it has opened my mind a lot. I feel like I'm not alone, that there's other people dealing and thinking the same things as me, and I'm not just crazy."*

Student from Manitoba



*"Hearing these stories have changed my view of people that are going through mental health struggles because before I thought that you could just get over depression or something and just be happy but now I realize how serious it is and how bad it could be."*

Student from Alberta



# Program Highlights



## Virtual Meet Ups

Robb Nash was able to meet with a few schools virtually to receive feedback about their experience working through A Living Curriculum. Hearing directly from participating students proved essential in understanding the impact our program is having on mental health and well being.

Students shared their positive experiences working through the modules and demonstrated a greater understanding of how mental health challenges can look different for different people. Through their candid and helpful feedback, we learned where we can make some improvements to our curriculum.

Students were then invited to ask Robb questions. This was met with great enthusiasm. Robb encouraged students to continue telling their stories and to reach out for help should they need it now or in the future.



*the school's efforts were featured in their local newspaper*

## Students Moved to Action

After participating in A Living Curriculum, students in Ituna, Saskatchewan decided to take up the challenge given to them by Robb and find a way to give back to their community.

They worked together as a team to come up with a plan to spread joy and thankfulness to seniors and business owners around them. They then put that plan into action with the help of their teachers. The results were amazing and deeply appreciated by the community.

Feedback from the students following the event was filled with awe at their feelings of accomplishment and realization that giving instead of receiving is both rewarding and fulfilling.

# Program Highlights



## Live Concerts

As part of the curriculum experience, participating schools in Manitoba were invited to join us for our live concert experience in Winnipeg. Experiencing both the curriculum and the concert, provided rich engagement for youth attendees.



The concerts in Winnipeg on May 30 & 31, 2023 were our first in-person shows since the pandemic and were a resounding success with attending schools and youth audiences.

- Two morning shows
- 1,700 people (1,467 youth)
- 65 volunteers
- 25 Manitoba schools
- One enthusiastic school endured a 7 hr bus ride from northern Manitoba just to join us!
- Schools that had not yet had the opportunity to participate in the curriculum, vowed to do so after seeing the positive response from their students!

**Dillon Gazandlare**, a young Indigenous person from a northern Saskatchewan reservation, was inspired to play guitar after seeing a Robb Nash Project concert in his community. Dillon joined the band on stage for the first time at the Winnipeg shows, demonstrating his extraordinary guitar skills despite being a below the elbow amputee.

*Dillon's inspirational story of struggle & strength is featured in our curriculum and was seen by many participating schools in advance of the concerts, making his stage performance extra special and inspirational for students and educators.*



# What's Next

## Program Updates & Expansion

Educator and student surveys & comments from each school are analyzed and assessed to inform improvements and enhance elements of A Living Curriculum. Moving forward, participating schools will be invited to The Robb Nash Project concerts as a part of the overall curriculum experience and alternately schools attending concerts will be invited to participate in the curriculum.

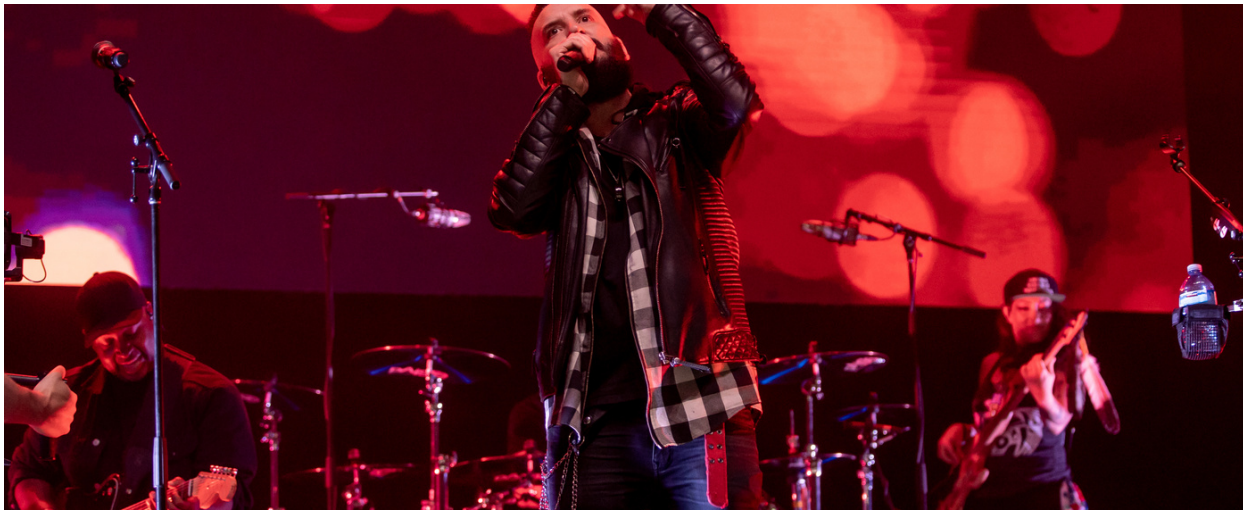
Connections are being made with school divisions, government agencies and potential funders in an effort to provide more Canadian schools with free access to A Living Curriculum and The Robb Nash Project concert experience. New opportunities to connect are always welcomed.

## New Curriculum Modules

Plans are underway to grow A Living Curriculum into a 3-year program to enhance and solidify learnings as middle year students move through varying challenges of adolescence. Each year of the program would be distinct, with new modules added and different calls to action shared. Extending the program will ultimately help to equip young people with the knowledge and skills to manage their mental health while encouraging meaningful connections in their schools and in their communities.

## Youth Ally Network

Plans are underway for a new program that will support adults as they navigate the mental health journey with the young people in their lives, thus providing a strong network of support for youth. This new program will be housed on a secure website and will be filled with information about issues facing today's youth with helpful vetted resources and examples of how to approach challenging situations with understanding and patience. This program will be made readily available to parents and guardians of students participating in A Living Curriculum and to all adults wanting to be an ally for youth.





# Our Education Support Team



## Linda Poulin, BBA, M.Ed, Director Educational Programs

As a teacher and curriculum writer, Linda understands the vital role that educators play in supporting youth through the many challenges of adolescence.

She oversees the implementation, growth and marketing of A Living Curriculum: Stories of Life through Darkness. Linda's work involves creating and sustaining healthy interactive relationships with our youth support partners. Innovating with new program development in order to support and engage with families and adult communities is also something Linda and the team are concentrating on as next steps. She evaluates the reports from school officials, parents, educators, news outlets and youth themselves to inform the developments of programs. She feels privileged to help youth in Canada who are needing our support.



## Amber Weiss, BSW, RSW, Enrollment Coordinator

Amber's role is to connect with and engage educators and youth organizations across Canada in an effort to share with them who we are and what we do.

As a registered social worker, she utilizes her skillsets when teachers and guidance counselors open up and share the difficult mental health struggles their students, and sometimes the whole community, are dealing with. She ensures they feel seen and heard by The Robb Nash Project, and helps to establish an understanding that our team is there to offer support. An innovative way we can do that is with A Living Curriculum. Once a school or organization has agreed to implement the curriculum, Amber works closely with the educator or school counselor to get their staff and students enrolled, answering questions and troubleshooting along the way.

## Dr. Shirley Steinberg, Ph.D, Education Council

Shirley, an urban educator and social theorist, committed to critical youth leadership and diversity inclusion, began her career in public schools and now serves as a Professor of Educational Leadership at the University of Calgary. She is the former Director of Institute for Youth and Community Research at the University of West Scotland. She also worked for six years with Kainai High School and Cardston Elementary to improve literacy and encourage students to attend university. She is the director of "The Elders' Room," an award-winning film about life on the Kainai Reserve.

Shirley met Robb Nash in 2014 through a research project and she joined Robb and crew moving from city to city listening to student and teacher stories. Shirley joined the Robb Nash Project's Education Council after researching the project's positive impact on students and teachers and realizing she *had* to be a part of the organization.



## Colleen Teske, B.Ed, M.Ed, Education Council

Colleen is a passionate educator committed to creating safe and caring learning environments and opportunities with support for all students to be successful. She has worked as a classroom teacher, school counselor, division consultant, adjunct professor and most recently as a principal of two Outreach high schools. In her free time, Colleen loves spending time with her husband and children camping and hiking in the Rockies. She looks forward to continuing her work with TRNP and supporting the design of programming to ensure it is practical and accessible to all students and stakeholders. As an advocate for mental health, she values the application and relevance the TRNP materials and learning experiences hold for staff and students alike.

