

# BUILDING RESILIENCE THROUGH HiMARC

## Programs and Projects



Heroes in Mind Advocacy & Research Consortium



UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA  
FACULTY OF REHABILITATION MEDICINE

The Heroes in Mind, Advocacy and Research Consortium ([HiMARC.ca](http://HiMARC.ca)) is leading numerous projects to support of military members, veterans, public safety personnel and their families. Projects focus on areas of resilience, trauma interventions and post-traumatic growth.

Resilience—the ability to bounce back in the face of life’s challenges—is essential to those who serve us, their families and all Albertans. This is especially true for those struggling with mental health challenges which affect ~6.7 million Canadians. In 2016, 44.5% of Canadian public safety personnel (PSP) reported symptoms of at least one mental health disorder. In 2013, 16.7% of full-time regular Canadian Armed Forces members reported symptoms of major depressive episode, panic disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, generalized anxiety disorder and/or alcohol abuse or dependence.



### 3MDR: Treating PTSD and Building Resilience

3MDR (Multi-modular Motion-assisted Memory Desensitization and Reconsolidation) is a promising PTSD intervention that uses novel technologies to support recovery and enhance resilience. The project is drawing international attention to the expertise and capacity in Alberta. After trialing 3MDR with military personnel and veterans, we will develop mobile versions and expand our reach to public safety personnel, families and other Albertans struggling with mental health conditions. Reaching those struggling through innovative technologies will maximize health and well-being.

### Digital Health for PTSD and Moral Injury

Physical distancing forced by the COVID-19 pandemic has prompted a rapid and radical paradigm shift toward remote mental health service delivery and a surge in the use of digital health (DH) (e.g., tele-therapy, eHealth, videoconferencing, apps). PSP, military members and Veterans at high risk for Post-Traumatic Stress Injuries (PTSI) may benefit from access to DH. HiMARC’s interdisciplinary research team has taken on the challenge of finding DH solutions to improve resilience, address trauma and foster post-traumatic growth.



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### Reintegration and Transition

Mental and physical health conditions can leave some individuals unable to work or successfully transition to civilian life. This has profound impacts on their quality of life and that of their families and communities. HiMARC projects intend to (1) expand a nationally and internationally sought-after Workplace Reintegration Program developed by the Edmonton Police Service that holds promise for military, veterans, PSPs and civilians in Alberta and beyond, and (2) explore the establishment of “hero-friendly campuses” in Alberta to foster successful transition to civilian life. Enabling those who serve us to continue to contribute their expertise helps to enrich and benefit individuals, families, communities and Alberta as a whole.



### Resilience Training

Military, veterans and public safety personnel strive to be resilient in their personal and professional lives.

Strengths-based, experiential, wholistic (mind, body, spirit) initiatives are currently being developed to foster resilience at the individual, unit and organizational levels. These initiatives, which aim to cultivate a resilience-mindset, teamwork, leadership and culture will employ multiple modalities and innovative technologies to achieve their aim. Resilience training equips personnel, units and organizations to function at their best, bounce back in the face of adversity and fulfill their mission for the public good.



### Resilient Parents...Resilient Communities

Families of military members, veterans and public safety personnel experience stressful events including frequent separation and engagement of a parent/partner in high-risk to hostile environments and war zones. Being resilient is essential. HiMARC projects aim to equip adults with skills to be more resilient, model resilience to children 0-8 years of age, and build resilient communities in Alberta and beyond. Resilient communities are critical to the success and vibrancy of current and future

# HIMARC

## Fostering Readiness, Resilience and Growth

**HiMARC** is a collaborative initiative and provincial hub led by the University of Alberta that aims to develop, evaluate, and help implement solutions to improve the resilience, health and well-being of military members, Veterans, PSP (public safety personnel) and their families.

**Vision:** To be a Centre of Excellence in resilience, trauma interventions & post-traumatic growth

**The Challenge:** Military members, Veterans, and PSP – who willingly put their lives on the line – stand ready to serve at home and abroad. In the line of duty, exposure to stressful and potentially traumatic events can heighten their risk of developing operational stress injuries (OSIs) including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and Moral Injury (MI). OSIs can impact physical and mental health, quality of life, well-being, relationships, and the ability to work and contribute to the mission. Focused and coordinated efforts to determine effective prevention strategies, interventions, services and supports that enable military members, Veterans, and PSP to be resilient, ready and growth-oriented will benefit them, their families, the organization, and the mission at hand.

**Goals:** To support the readiness, resilience and growth of military members, Veterans, and PSP through:

- *Collaborations* – bringing together partners across Alberta, Canada and beyond.
- *Partnerships* – coordinating synergies among committed individuals and organizations.
- *Innovations* – advancing Alberta-based innovations that *can be translated to the civilian sector, be commercialized through partnerships* (e.g., Health City, ELIXR, ST Innovations, & other commercialization paths) and will create sustainable jobs & economic opportunities.
- *Research* – creating and evaluating evidence-based interventions and technological innovations, *including use of virtual reality (VR), portable systems & effective internet-based applications*.
- *Implementation* – development, implementation and scale-up of evidence-based products.

**Future Plans and Impact:** HiMARC plans to develop and trial further innovations to enhance resilience, address concerns across military, Veteran, PSP and healthcare groups, and translate them for real-world applications. Building resilience, health and well-being will enable military members, Veterans, PSP, their families and organizations to thrive.

- *Resilient individuals* are the drivers of vibrant and strong families, teams and communities, and the engine behind a potent and diverse force.
- *Innovative, cost-effective technologies and interventions* can be used to enhance resilience, health & well-being, and address trauma, OSIs, and mental/physical health concerns arising from service, or exposure to adversity (e.g., natural disasters including COVID-19).
- *Strategies to facilitate successful workforce reintegration* offer valuable opportunities.
- *Sustainability, spread & scale* of interventions and innovations in Alberta, Canada and beyond will gain substantive leverage from key partners.

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