MACDONALD FRANKLIN OSI RESEARCH CENTRE

Lawson Research Institute

CELEBRATING TEN YEARS OF PROGRESS AND IMPACT



MacDonald Franklin OSI Research Centre Impact Report

This report is dedicated to the vision, generosity, and enduring legacy of those who believed Veterans deserved better care, better research, and a stronger future.



Ten years ago, a vision took shape.

What began with a transformative gift and a shared belief that Veterans deserved better care, better research, and better outcomes led to the opening of the MacDonald Franklin OSI Research Centre in 2018. Since then, the Centre has grown into a nationally and internationally recognized centre dedicated to advancing the understanding and treatment of operational stress injuries. That vision has been brought to life through the collective efforts of Veterans, families, clinicians, researchers, partners, supporters, and advocates who believed meaningful change was possible.

Together, we have built a Centre whose impact extends beyond research, helping shape care, inform policy, strengthen systems of support, and improve the lives of Veterans and their families.

As we reflect on the first decade of this journey, we recognize the generosity, vision, and commitment that helped make it possible. **We are grateful to Kyle MacDonald and honour the memory of John Franklin, whose belief in better outcomes for Veterans helped lay the foundation for what the Centre has become today. Their legacy continues through the research, partnerships, and impact reflected throughout these pages.**

This milestone is also an opportunity to look forward. The challenges facing Veterans and their families continue to evolve, and so must the research, innovation, and collaborations designed to support them. The foundation built over the past 10 years provides a strong platform for the next chapter.

Here, we celebrate the progress made over the past ten years and recognize the vision, generosity, and enduring commitment of all those who helped make it possible.



2026

Prepared by the MacDonald Franklin OSI Research Centre

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01

Director's Statement



As the Director of the MacDonald Franklin OSI Research Centre, I am proud to reflect on our progress over the past ten years in advancing research and innovation in military and Veteran mental health.

The Centre has grown into a leading national and international hub dedicated to improving the understanding and treatment of operational stress injuries, including PTSD, depression, and anxiety, conditions that continue to profoundly affect Veterans, their families, and other high-risk populations.

Our work has increasingly focused on personalizing mental health care. We have advanced key initiatives in pharmacogenetics, moral injury, and novel therapeutics, while strengthening the integration of research into clinical practice. These efforts have contributed to more tailored treatments, enhanced clinical decision-making, and improved understanding of complex and treatment-resistant conditions, while informing clinical practice, policy, and system-level improvements.

We have also adopted a more holistic approach to health and recovery, recognizing the intersection of mental and physical health, including chronic pain and other comorbidities. Our work extends to community engagement, workplace mental health, and supporting Canadian Armed Forces members transitioning to civilian life, with a focus on identity, purpose, and long-term wellbeing.

A defining strength of the Centre is our commitment to partnering with Veterans and their families. Their lived experience shapes our research priorities, study design, and knowledge translation, particularly in advancing our understanding of moral injury.

Collaboration remains central to our success. Through strong partnerships and our clinical and research psychiatry fellowship, alongside postdoctoral, graduate, and undergraduate trainees, we continue to build capacity and strengthen our role as a national and international leader in training and mentorship.

Looking ahead, we will continue to advance personalized, data-informed, and integrated models of care, while expanding partnerships to improve outcomes.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Kyle MacDonald, and to honour the memory of John Franklin, whose vision and generosity were foundational to the Centre. We are deeply grateful to the St. Joseph's Health Care Foundation for their continued support.

Together, we are advancing care and improving outcomes for those who have served our country and all those affected by operational stress injuries. Our shared commitment is to translate evidence into action, strengthening systems of care while ensuring that every Veteran has the opportunity to recover, reconnect, and thrive.



J Don Richardson, MD, FRCPC

Director, MacDonald Franklin OSI Research Centre



Credit: Master Corporal William Gosse, Canadian Armed Forces photo

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About Us, Our Vision, and Promises

Partnering with Veterans for Meaningful Engagement

Established in 2018, the MacDonald Franklin OSI Research Centre has evolved from a small team of four members into a robust network of over 50 researchers, clinicians, staff, and trainees dedicated to advancing knowledge and solutions for operational stress injuries, mental health, and wellbeing.

The most important thing we've learned in our ten years is this: research on Veterans that isn't shaped by Veterans rarely lands where it needs to.

So we built our work differently from the start.

That means Veterans aren't consulted after the fact — they're at the table when questions are being formed, when study designs are being debated, when findings are being interpreted, and when we're deciding how knowledge gets shared and with whom. It also means we take seriously that Veterans don't exist in isolation. Their families carry the weight of service too. Clinicians, service providers, and policy-makers shape the systems Veterans navigate every day.



Meaningful engagement means understanding all of those relationships, and building research that can speak to all of them.

Our Principle

Our research begins with the needs, experiences, and priorities of Canadian Veterans, active military members, and their families. We generate evidence with a clear purpose: to inform care, supports, programs, and policy that improve health and wellbeing. This principle shapes how we design, conduct, and share our research.

Our Mission

We conduct collaborative, innovative, and actionable research to address emerging challenges in the health and well-being of military members, Veterans, and their families. Our research, training, and knowledge sharing supports stronger policy, programs and care, improving the wellbeing of those who serve and work in high-stress environments.

What Makes Our Work Unique

Through participatory action research workshops, we have worked, and continue to work, alongside Veterans and family members to identify what questions actually matter to them, not just what researchers assume matters. That kind of grounding changes the work. It shapes which gaps we prioritize, which outcomes we measure, and how we talk about what we find.

Our Advisory Council brings together Veterans, family members, clinicians, and community leaders who provide ongoing guidance across our research portfolio. Project-specific advisory groups go deeper, bringing relevant lived experience and expertise directly into individual studies. These are not token consultations. They are working relationships built over time, and they make the research stronger.

We work closely with organizations that have earned the confidence of the Veteran and military community, including the Atlas Institute for Veterans and Families, the Canadian Institute for Military and Veteran Health Research, and the Chronic Pain Centre of Excellence for Canadian Veterans. These partnerships extend our reach and help ensure that what we produce is connected to the people and systems it is meant to serve.

Delivering on Our Promises

In 2017, Kyle MacDonald and the late John Franklin made the founding gift that led to the establishment of the MacDonald Franklin OSI Research Centre. In 2021, they deepened that commitment with another gift, further catalyzing research that improves the mental health and wellbeing of Veterans and their families. The stories that follow show what that continued investment made possible. But they represent only a portion of the work. Every direction we set out in 2021 has been pursued, and in many cases, taken further than we imagined.

Here we offer a snapshot of how each commitment has translated into action.



What We Set Out to Do. Where We Are Now.

Building the Team

2021: Establishing a stable team to position the research program for growth.

Now: This funding helped build one of the most respected groups in Canadian military and Veteran mental health research. The Centre is now a national hub. Our researchers hold seats at NATO, Five Eyes, the Canadian Psychiatric Association, the Veterans Affairs Mental Health Advisory Group, and CIMVHR, where three of our researchers have been named Fellows. Other institutions, funders, and international partners regularly reach out to work with us because the work has earned their trust.

Building the Data Infrastructure to Transform Veteran Care

2021: Develop a comprehensive dataset to support advanced analytics and evidence-informed treatment decisions.

Now: We are building a data ecosystem in Canada that can tell us whether a treatment works, for whom, under what circumstances, and at what point in recovery. We have approval to analyze treatment outcomes across one of the largest clinical Veteran datasets in the country, and are linking those records with Veterans Affairs outcome data to see the full arc of recovery. Internationally, we are developing shared data standards with partners in the UK, Australia, and Northern Ireland. We have also signed a data-sharing agreement with Defence Research and Development Canada, and begun applying artificial intelligence to clinician notes to surface patterns that traditional methods would miss.

Responding to Emerging Research Needs

2021: Address emerging research questions, including cannabis use in Veterans, institutional betrayal, and psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy.

Now: The specific questions have shifted as Veterans' needs have evolved. When COVID-19 hit and we knew it would fall hardest on Veterans, we moved quickly — surveying over 1,000 Veterans and family members and publishing close to ten papers on their experiences and gaps in support. Our research now spans military sexual trauma, institutional betrayal, resilience, the transition to civilian life, and the intersection of chronic pain and mental health. We have published on cannabis use among Veterans seeking treatment, advanced work on ketamine and rTMS, and are planning a study on how stellate ganglion block may address both pain and PTSD.

Advancing Personalized PTSD Treatment

2021: Use multidimensional data to stage PTSD, develop a personalized treatment algorithm, and improve outcomes for treatment-resistant cases.

Now: We launched a pharmacogenetics clinical trial matching Veterans to medications based on their genetics, and conducted the largest meta-analysis of PTSD treatments in military and Veteran populations to date. We built the PTSD MIND Collaborative — a national network of researchers and clinicians across OSI clinics — to tackle treatment-resistant PTSD and work toward a treatment algorithm for complex cases. With St. Joseph's soon to house one of the most advanced imaging scanners in the world, we are also positioned to deepen our understanding of the neurobiology of PTSD and what that means for treatment.



Credit: Corporal Eric Greico, Canadian Armed Forces photo

03

Personalizing PTSD Care

Optimizing Recovery

For many Veterans, finding the right treatment for PTSD can be a long and exhausting process. One medication brings difficult side effects. A therapy that helps at one stage of recovery stops working at another. Too often, care still depends on guesswork, a process that can be discouraging for Veterans and challenging for clinicians.



Our research in personalized medicine is working to change that.

An example of this work is our pharmacogenetics clinical trial — a study exploring whether genetic information can help **match Veterans to medications more likely to work for them, with fewer side effects, sooner.** The premise is straightforward: people metabolize medications differently based on their genetics. Understanding those differences means clinicians can make more informed choices from the start, rather than working through a sequence of options until something fits.



"What I think about the pharmacogenetics is it is really helpful in knowing how your body and mind react to medication. Everyone in my support system has found it very helpful. Thank you for everything you do. It's really appreciated."

- Darryl Burgess, a Veteran participant

The impact is immediate for both Veterans and the clinicians caring for them

But personalized medicine extends well beyond a single trial. Through the PTSD MIND Collaborative, we are bringing together leading clinicians



"As a prescriber, I am often puzzled when a patient doesn't respond to a medication or why another patient may have more severe side effects than expected. Pharmacogenetic testing helps explain these differences. It guides us toward safer, more effective treatment choices, and gives both patients and clinicians greater confidence."

- Dr. Ken Balderson, Psychiatrist, St. Joseph's OSI Clinic

and researchers to address one of the most persistent gaps in Veteran care: the lack of practical guidance for treating complex or treatment-resistant PTSD. Current treatment guidelines do not go far enough in helping clinicians navigate what comes next when first-line treatments aren't enough, and for many Veterans, they aren't enough. Veterans living with PTSD often present with needs that are more layered, more chronic, and more clinically complex than standard treatment pathways assume. Our work is helping build the evidence base needed to better support those realities.

Understanding Treatment Decisions

This includes **the largest meta-analysis conducted on PTSD treatments in military and Veteran populations, helping identify which approaches show the strongest evidence and where important gaps remain.** It includes research examining prescription patterns among psychiatrists in OSI Clinics, helping us better understand how treatment decisions are made in practice. It also includes Delphi consensus studies with clinicians, designed to identify the considerations, trade-offs, and reasoning that shape medication and treatment choices in real-world care settings. Taken together, these projects are laying the groundwork for clearer, evidence-informed, practice-oriented treatment guidance for PTSD care in Veteran and military populations.

Our research into emerging and innovative treatments is part of this same effort. **We have advanced research related to treatments such as ketamine and repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation (rTMS),** while also examining treatment outcomes more broadly through advanced analytics and clinical data. These efforts are helping answer a critical question for the future of OSI care: not simply whether a treatment can work, but for whom it is most likely to work, under what circumstances, and at what point in recovery.

Precise, Personalized Care

That shift, from one-size-fits-all care toward treatment that is precise, practical, and responsive to the individual, is what this research is moving toward.

For Veterans, it means reaching effective care sooner. For clinicians, it means making difficult decisions with greater confidence. For families, it means less time watching a loved one struggle through treatments that aren't working, and more reason to believe that recovery is possible.

04

Building a Team with Shared Purpose

Spotlight on Anthony Nazarov, PhD

When I joined the MacDonald Franklin OSI Research Centre in its early days, we were building something from the ground up: the team, the research agenda, the partnerships, the principles we continue to follow. What we've built since then is, I think, genuinely rare in Canada.



My path to this work started in graduate school, where I was already drawn to a question that still guides everything I do: how do we understand the impacts of trauma well enough to be genuinely useful to people living with it? That focus took me through a PhD examining how trauma shapes the way we relate to others, and into applied work as a Defence Scientist with the Department of National Defence, where I saw firsthand what it means to do science in service of real-world need, where rigour matters, timelines matter, and the people behind the data are never abstract.

That experience shaped **how I think about research: not as something that ends at**



Credit: Sophia Richardson

publication, but as something that should hold up in practice and inform decisions that affect people's lives. It's the standard that now our team and I hold ourselves to every day.

What I'm most proud of isn't any single study or finding. It's the foundation we've built, a cohesive team with strong values, deep curiosity, and the willingness to take on hard problems. An environment where trainees and staff can grow, contribute meaningfully, and be supported as they do. **A Centre that has earned a seat at national and international tables because the work is credible, practical, and trusted.**

The Veteran community still faces many challenges that need solutions. But I am genuinely hopeful, because everyone at this Centre shows up every day with the calibre, the care, and the commitment to meet that need. Being a part of this team is a privilege I don't take for granted.

Nick Held, Scientific Director
Canadian Institute for Military and Veteran Health Research



"The MacDonald Franklin OSI Research Centre has emerged as a national leader in military and Veteran mental health research, bringing together scientific excellence, clinical insight, and innovation. Through its strong and enduring collaboration with the Canadian Institute for Military and Veteran Health Research, the Centre continues to advance impactful research that improves outcomes for Veterans and their families, while strengthening partnerships across Canada's research community. Notably, both Dr. J Don Richardson and Dr. Anthony Nazarov are Fellows of CIMVHR, further reflecting our shared commitment to advancing excellence in military and Veteran mental health research."

05

Chronic Pain and Mental Health

Connecting Recovery Pathways

For many Veterans, chronic pain does not exist on its own. It lives alongside PTSD, depression, anxiety, disrupted sleep, strained relationships, and the daily effort of trying to function while carrying all of it at once. Too often, these challenges are treated separately, even though they shape one another in ways that can delay effective care, complicate recovery, and leave Veterans feeling caught between systems that do not fully connect.



At the Centre, we have approached this differently.

Chronic pain and mental health as a connected reality demands more coordinated, evidence-informed responses

This approach has allowed us to build a clearer picture of what Veterans living with pain are facing, and to inform how systems of care can better serve them. Through studies supported by the Chronic Pain Centre of Excellence for Canadian Veterans (CPCoE), **we have examined the complex relationship between chronic pain and mental health from multiple angles.** This includes a systematic review of ketamine as a potential treatment approach, research examining how chronic pain and mental health conditions co-occur in military and Veteran populations and what that means for policy and service planning, and qualitative work exploring the day-to-day realities of living with pain through the perspectives of Veterans, family members, and service providers.



"On behalf of our Changepain team, I highlight the professionalism and depth of research expertise of the MacDonald Franklin OSI Research Centre.
What makes their work stand out is their focus on the intersection of chronic pain and mental health, and the recognition that these experiences are deeply connected in the lives of Veterans. Their research reflects the realities Veterans face every day, along with the complexities that providers and systems are navigating alongside them. This collaborative approach, combined with a strong understanding of how systems work in practice, is helping move us toward care that is more connected, more responsive, and ultimately more effective for those it is meant to serve."
– Dr. Brenda Lau, Co-founder & Medical Director of Changepain

Care that reflects lived realities

Together, these projects extend from problem identification to the delineation of clearer pathways for prevention, treatment, and support. **Our research is informing how care can become more coordinated, more responsive, and better aligned with the real experiences of the people it is meant to serve.**

For a Veteran participant, this work reflects something deeply personal. After leaving the Canadian Armed Forces, he was diagnosed with PTSD and has lived for years with chronic pain caused by serious physical wear and injury from service. Pain has affected not only his body, but his mood, relationships, and daily life. His experience reflects what many Veterans live with: the reality that physical pain and mental health challenges can intensify one another, making recovery more difficult when care is fragmented or incomplete.

That is why this research matters. It is grounded in the understanding that meaningful progress will not come from treating pain in isolation, or mental health in isolation, but from recognizing how closely they are intertwined.

Commitment to meaningful engagement

Veterans, families, and clinicians help shape the questions, identify the gaps, and guide the interpretation of what is found. This ensures the research stays connected to real needs and produces knowledge that is not only rigorous, but useful. The impact extends beyond individual studies. By generating evidence on care gaps, treatment needs, lived experiences, and service barriers, this line of research is helping inform policy and system-level change. It is contributing to a future in which Veterans living with chronic pain and mental health challenges are met with care that is more integrated, more accessible, and better equipped to support long-term recovery.

At its core, this work reflects one of the Centre's broader commitments: **to produce research that creates practical, meaningful, and actionable change.**

06

Creating Opportunities for Growth and Leadership

Spotlight on Stephanie Houle, PhD

Working with the MacDonald Franklin OSI Research Centre over the last four years has been an enriching experience. Within my role as a research associate, I have had the opportunity to pursue my passions, develop new skills, work with national and international leaders in the field, and to deepen relationships and collaborate effectively with our team.



What makes the Centre unique and exciting is the clear mission of our work: to improve the wellbeing of those impacted by operational stress and their families. I truly believe that everything we do is aimed at achieving this purpose.

I am grateful for the opportunities that the Centre has given me to follow my **research passions in moral injury, answering key foundational questions in the field.** These include how best to conceptualize and measure it, the events that lead to it, and investigating the clinical utility of moral injury, that is, developing an empirical evidence base for how best to address moral injury in clinical practice. As a practicing clinical psychologist, I see the value of this work with the patients I serve every day. The Centre has also supported me as co-chair of the

Atlas Institute's Canadian Moral Injury Research Community of Practice, a national group of experts in moral injury and psychotraumatology research focused on improving the mental health of military personnel, Veterans, and their families, as well as others affected by occupational trauma, such as public safety personnel. I am proud to represent our Centre in this role.

A standout research program I have been involved in is an interdisciplinary, multi-institute, multi-year collaboration **examining Canadian Veterans' experiences of encountering children on deployment and the impacts of these encounters on their mental health.** As global conflict becomes more complex, military personnel are increasingly likely to encounter children in operational settings, yet this area remains under-researched. Early work involved a systematic review documenting knowledge gaps in deployment-related encounters with children, associated outcomes, and existing training and policy gaps.

This led to further research by our group, such as a qualitative study exploring Veterans' lived experiences of encountering children on deployment. **This program uses a participatory action research approach, directly engaging Veterans with lived experience to guide and implement recommendations for policy, training, and research.** Findings have been shared widely with academic, policy, and military stakeholders, informing training initiatives and mental health strategies within the Canadian Armed Forces. These include a symposium chaired by Hon. Lt. General Roméo Dallaire in Washington, DC. where I shared our work with representatives from charities, NGOs, and international governments. I also presented to the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) Steering Committee responsible for implementing the Vancouver Principles, which are 17 political commitments by UN Member States aimed at preventing the recruitment and use of child soldiers during all stages of conflict (Global Affairs Canada). I gave a keynote address at a conference in Lithuania as a representative of this research, providing knowledge and support to Ukrainian Veterans affected by the ongoing war. This collaboration is ongoing, with the support of external funding secured to further examine women Veterans' experiences on international deployments and their mental health impacts.

These are only a few examples of the Centre's global impact. **As conflict and operations become increasingly present and complex in our world, there is much work yet to be done.** I look forward to continuing to be a part of the MacDonald Franklin OSI Research Centre, as we continue to give voice to the experiences of Veterans and their families, to inform decision-makers and program administrators, and build a community of like-minded individuals who have the best interests of those who serve us at heart.



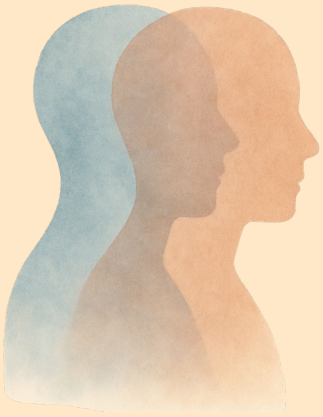
07

Moral Injury

Turning a Hard-to-Name Wound Into Care that Works

Moral injury doesn't always look like what people expect trauma to look like. It doesn't always centre on fear. More often it looks like guilt that won't quiet, a shift in who you thought you were, a sense of betrayal that's hard to name and harder to explain to the people you love.

Many Veterans carry it for years before anyone gives it a name — and longer still before they find care that addresses it directly.



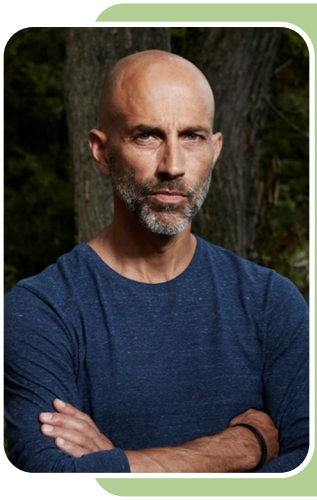
At the Centre, our moral injury research has had a single practical focus: **build the tools and evidence needed so that clinicians and systems can recognize moral injury more consistently, respond more effectively, and track whether support is actually working.**

Giving the field a way to measure what it couldn't see

For years, the field lacked a reliable way to measure moral injury. That made it harder to study, harder to compare findings, and harder to know whether treatment was helping.

We were part of the core team behind the Moral Injury Outcome Scale (MIOS), now the world's leading recommended clinical questionnaire of moral injury. This tool was built by listening first: to Veterans and frontline clinicians across Canada, the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom, whose experiences shaped it. In practice, clinicians can now

administer the MIOS to identify moral injury, understand the pattern of distress a person is experiencing, and track change over time.



"As a Veteran impacted by multiple deployments, I am most optimistic that those who follow will benefit from the work of the MacDonald Franklin OSI Research Centre. The moral injury research may prove to be one of the most important contributions to modern mental health care."
– Lt. Col. (Ret.) Stéphane Grenier, CM, MSC, CD, LLD

At the system level, it gives organizations like the Canadian Armed Forces and Veterans Affairs Canada a credible way **to understand how common moral injury is, where needs are concentrated, and whether programs are having their intended effect.**

Today the MIOS is used around the world and has been translated into multiple languages, a reflection of both the universality of moral injury and the global confidence in this work.

Understanding why people stay silent and what systems can do about it

Even when services exist, moral injury often goes unspoken. Not because people don't want help, but because reaching out can feel risky.

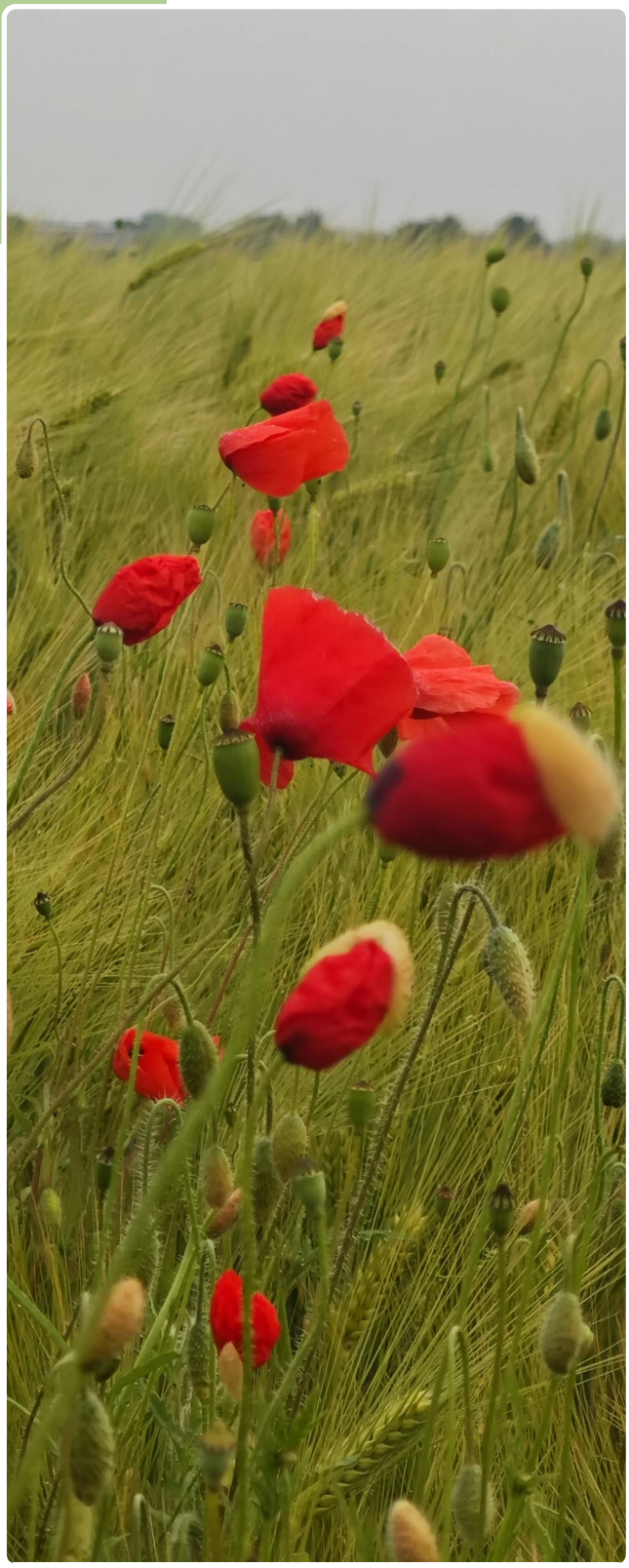


Credit: Corporal Eric Greico, Canadian Armed Forces photo

Our research examined these barriers directly, and what we found was clear: **access isn't only about whether services exist. It's about whether people feel safe enough to use them.** Confidentiality, low-risk entry points, and well-prepared first contacts often determine whether support is even considered. Understanding that gap is the first step to closing it.

Building the evidence base

Our moral injury research has grown into one of the most comprehensive bodies of work in this area in Canada. We have examined the morally injurious dimensions of encountering vulnerable populations in armed conflict, building a research line from literature synthesis through to qualitative analysis and workshops with serving members and Veterans. We have expanded into neuroscience-informed work to better understand how moral injury relates to reasoning and biology, with the goal of refining identification and tailoring treatment over time. And because moral injury rarely affects only one person, we are analyzing longitudinal data to understand how it shapes family functioning, and what that means for the supports families need.



Credit: Evgenii Esa, Pexels

Moving upstream: changing the conditions that drive moral harm

A full moral injury response cannot sit only at the clinic door. Many morally conflicting situations occur in environments shaped by leadership decisions, institutional culture, and resource constraints. Some of that harm is avoidable.

That is why **our work extends beyond treatment and measurement toward upstream, system-level change — strengthening preparation, improving leadership response, and addressing the organizational conditions that can intensify moral stress.** This includes close collaboration with the Canadian Armed Forces and the Department of National Defence, and work with the Dallaire Institute to drive change in international training doctrine.

Recognized at the tables where it matters

Over time, this work has made **the Centre a trusted source of expertise that others actively seek out — at national policy tables, within military institutions, and in international conversations about how armed forces prepare for and respond to moral harm**. That recognition reflects not just the quality of the research, but its practical orientation. The goal has always been work that can be used.

As we look ahead, the science continues to evolve and so does our commitment to staying at its leading edge. A recent thought leadership

paper we prepared, *Moral Injury and Why It Matters: Critical Questions and Ongoing Debates,* was designed to give leaders, clinicians, policymakers, and researchers a clear picture of where the evidence is strong, where uncertainty remains, and what can be done now. **Because Veterans living with moral injury can't wait for every question to be resolved. They need the best of what we know, put to work today.**



Dr. Houle presenting the Centre's work on moral injury. Credit: personal photo from Dr. Houle, 2025

Fardous Hosseiny
President and CEO, Atlas Institute for Veterans and Families



"We are proud to partner with the MacDonald Franklin OSI Research Centre in advancing highly specialized research that is critical to deepening our understanding of the unique and complex trauma associated with military service. This work matters. It strengthens the evidence base, informs better systems of care, and helps ensure Canada's Veterans are better supported to lead healthier lives after service."

08

A Supportive Research Home

Spotlight on Erin Collins, PhD

Dr. Erin Collins is an epidemiologist with the MacDonald Franklin OSI Research Centre. As a member of the research team, she applies expertise in biostatistics, epidemiology, and data science to support the Centre's expanding portfolio of research initiatives.



Her role includes developing analytical strategies, conducting statistical analyses, and reviewing the work of colleagues and collaborators to ensure research findings are rigorous, transparent, and methodologically sound. Erin is especially passionate about using data to uncover meaningful patterns and generate evidence that can inform responses to complex health challenges.

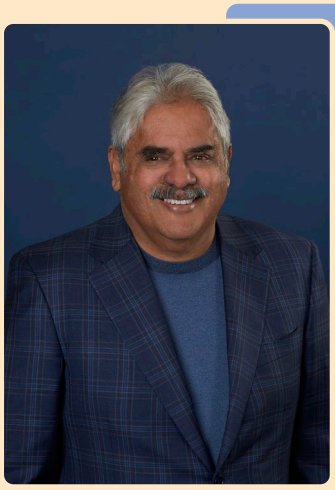
In addition to her analytical work, Erin is committed to mentorship and knowledge sharing. She enjoys working with students and colleagues as they develop their research and analytical skills. She values the collaborative environment at the MacDonald Franklin OSI Research Centre and the opportunity to contribute to projects that have real-world impact for the populations the Centre serves.

> *"The MacDonald Franklin OSI Research Centre is a truly special team. What stands out most is the strong spirit of collaboration and the shared commitment to the populations we serve. The work is driven by a genuine desire to make a meaningful difference. Given the uncertainty and frequent moves that come with military life, I cannot overstate how valuable it is to be part of a team like this. Being surrounded by colleagues who are passionate about supporting military and Veteran communities, while also allowing me to continue doing the work I care deeply about, means a great deal."*
>
> **– Erin Collins, PhD**

Erin's professional journey has also been shaped by her life as a military spouse. Over the past twelve years, she has relocated six times across four provinces. While frequent moves bring change and uncertainty, they have also **reinforced the importance of supportive research environments where collaboration and shared purpose allow meaningful work to continue.**

Erin was the 2025 Chronic Pain Centre of Excellence for Canadian Veterans (CPCoE) Postdoctoral Fellow and is grateful for the program's support. Through this fellowship, her current research examines how chronic pain and the transition from military to civilian life shape health and wellbeing after service. She presented her work at the 2025 Canadian Institute for Military and Veteran Health Research Forum, the 2025 Canadian Pain Society Annual Scientific Meeting in Québec City, and the 2026 Centre for Evidence for the Armed Forces Community Conference in the United Kingdom.

Dr. Ramesh Zacharias
President, CEO & Medical Director, Chronic Pain Centre of Excellence for Canadian Veterans



"CPCoE and the MacDonald Franklin OSI Research Centre have had a positive working relationship for a number of years. The MacDonald Franklin OSI Research Centre has been active in completing CPCoE research and always shows great dedication and passion for their work, which will improve the well-being of Canadian Veterans living with pain. The Centre is very supportive of CPCoE initiatives and is always willing to lend support. CPCoE looks forward to continued work with the MacDonald Franklin OSI Research Centre."

09

Beyond the Uniform

Navigating Life After Service



For many Veterans, leaving military service is more than a career transition. It is a profound shift in identity, purpose, and belonging.

In the military, life is structured around shared mission, trust, and a deep sense of camaraderie. That sense of connection is not easily replaced. **When service ends, many Veterans describe the transition to civilian life as abrupt and disorienting, marked by the loss of community, uncertainty about identity, and the challenge of rebuilding purpose in an unfamiliar environment.**

> This transition is one of the most critical periods for the long-term health and wellbeing of Veterans

Yet historically, it has been one of the least understood. At the MacDonald Franklin OSI Research Centre, our work has focused on bringing clarity to this experience and translating it into meaningful change.

Through Project INSPIRE, a national needs assessment involving over 300 Canadian Veterans, we identified key factors that shape how individuals navigate life after service. Veterans who felt understood, connected, and supported by their communities reported significantly better wellbeing and resilience. In contrast, those experiencing lower community integration faced greater transition difficulties, increased isolation, and poorer mental health outcomes. **Identifying these patterns was only the beginning.**

To better understand the lived experience behind the data, **we developed Stories that INSPIRE, a co-designed research and knowledge mobilization initiative that centres Veteran voices.** Through in-depth interviews and collaborative storytelling, Veterans shared what this transition actually feels like to them; they shared their challenges, their processes, and their resilience.



"A key outcome of this work is the Stories that INSPIRE documentary, which brings these experiences to life through the voices of Veterans themselves. Designed as a knowledge translation tool, the film is now being used to support onboarding and training for the next generation of service professionals at Veterans Affairs Canada, as well as broader education and public awareness efforts. By grounding training in lived experience, it is helping clinicians, service providers, and policymakers better understand the realities of transition and respond with greater empathy, cultural competence, and effectiveness. At its core, this work reflects a broader commitment: ensuring that Veterans are not only studied, but seen, heard, and valued."

— Lisa Garland-Baird, PhD, Senior Researcher, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance Branch, Veterans Affairs Canada

What emerged was a clear and consistent narrative. Many Veterans described transition as a rupture. The loss of camaraderie and shared identity created a sense of disconnection that was difficult to articulate. Some spoke about feeling caught between worlds, no longer fully part of the military, but not yet integrated into civilian life. **As one Veteran described it: "I miss the feeling of belonging... feeling of purpose... feeling of direction."**

Others highlighted how difficult it can be to build meaningful connections outside of the military, where shared experiences, language, and understanding are not always present. Experiences of stigma, bureaucratic complexity, and gaps in support can further deepen this sense of isolation. For some, withdrawal becomes a way of coping. But this is not where the story ends.

The research identified clear pathways toward resilience and recovery

Veterans who reconnected with peers, engaged in meaningful activities, and found ways to continue serving others through mentorship, teaching, or advocacy described a gradual rebuilding of purpose and identity.

These insights are directly shaping the way we understand the transition out of military service. Further, this work is actively informing how systems respond to it.

Results from this line of research have contributed to practical recommendations for improving transition support, including earlier and more structured planning before release, stronger relational continuity in care, integration of peer support models, and more accessible, Veteran-informed systems. This work is also informing ongoing conversations with Veterans Affairs Canada and system partners, **helping ensure that policies, programs, and services are better aligned with the lived realities of Veterans and the supports they need most during transition.**

10

Impact by the Numbers

A Growing Platform for Evidence, Leadership and Real-world Impact

We measure impact not only in research outputs, but in the trust placed in our work, the systems we aim to improve, and the people and partnerships that help carry this work forward. They reflect external confidence, meaningful collaboration, and a growing body of work designed to improve care, policy, practice, and outcomes for Veterans and their families.

The numbers that follow illustrate the scale of work generated since 2018.



Credit: Vlad Vasnetsov, Pexels

Turning research into shared knowledge

A central part of the Centre's mission is to produce and share knowledge that can improve understanding, support better decisions, and **help move evidence into action.**

95
Peer-reviewed papers published
Since 2021: **71**

13
Reports, briefs, and knowledge products
Since 2021: **13**

138
Conference presentations and posters
Since 2021: **84**

61
Trainees through our doors
Since 2021: **52**

Partners helping move evidence into action

Our work has been supported by external partners across Canada. This breadth of support reflects confidence in both the importance of the questions we are addressing and the **Centre's ability to generate work that is rigorous, relevant, and built for real-world use.**

58
External grants secured
Since 2021: 41

$15.4M
Total collaborative grant value
Since 2021: $11.1M

$7.9M
Directly supporting the Centre
Since 2021: $6.7M

Select Funders and Supporters

Western

Anciens Combattants Canada | Veterans Affairs Canada

National Defence | Défense nationale

ATLAS INSTITUTE FOR VETERANS AND FAMILIES

Chronic Pain Centre of Excellence for Canadian Veterans

11

Global Reach

The challenges facing Veterans and those affected by operational stress injuries are not confined by geography. By collaborating with researchers, clinicians, policymakers, and military organizations around the world, the Centre contributes Canadian expertise while learning from international partners. Together, these collaborations advance research, strengthen practice, and accelerate the translation of knowledge across borders.

A Seat at the Table, Where it Matters Most

The Centre actively contributes to international discussions where military and Veteran mental health priorities are shaped. Through participation in NATO initiatives, the Five Eyes Mental Health Collaborative, international advisory groups, and global forums, our team has helped inform conversations on operational stress injuries, PTSD, moral injury, resilience, and future directions for care. These engagements provide opportunities to contribute evidence, share Canadian perspectives, and help influence emerging research priorities, policy discussions, and approaches to supporting military and Veteran populations worldwide.

12 Major advisory and leadership tables attended

Since 2021: **8**

Featured Forums:

NATO - Five Eyes - Veterans Affairs Canada

Our international engagement prioritizes building relationships that strengthen research, improve practice, and accelerate impact. It is not simply about sharing knowledge. **By contributing Canadian expertise while learning from partners around the world, the Centre helps ensure that new knowledge moves beyond borders and into action.** As global challenges continue to evolve, we remain committed to expanding our international partnerships and strengthening our role as a trusted contributor to military and Veteran mental health worldwide.

Advancing Military & Veteran Mental Health Through Partnerships

Long-standing partnerships with organizations such as Combat Stress in the United Kingdom and Phoenix Australia have supported collaborative work on PTSD, moral injury, workplace wellbeing, resilience, and emerging approaches to Veteran care. These relationships have enabled shared learning, collaborative research, and the adaptation of evidence-informed interventions across military and Veteran populations. Over time, these collaborations have evolved into trusted, enduring partnerships that strengthen international research capacity, accelerate innovation, and create opportunities to address shared challenges together.

Extending Research into Global Practice

Research has its greatest value when it can be applied in real-world settings. Increasingly, frameworks, measures, and approaches developed through the Centre's work are being adapted and utilized by partners beyond Canada. From resilience and workplace wellbeing frameworks being explored in Brazil, China, Australia, and the Netherlands, to the international adoption and translation of the Moral Injury Outcome Scale (MIOS), our work is helping inform research, practice, training, and implementation across diverse cultural and organizational contexts. These applications demonstrate how evidence developed through the Centre can support improved understanding, decision-making, and care far beyond its original setting.

59

Major Conference and events attended

Since 2021: **52**

12

Keeping the Momentum Forward

Shaping the Future of Veteran Health and Wellbeing



Over the past decade, the MacDonald Franklin OSI Research Centre has grown from a bold vision into a trusted leader in Veteran mental health research, partnership, and innovation.

The progress reflected throughout this report represents the culmination of countless research studies, publications, and presentations. It reflects stronger partnerships, improved understanding of complex challenges, and meaningful steps toward better care and support for Veterans and their families.

As we look ahead, the need for this work continues to grow. Veterans are navigating an evolving landscape shaped by changing demands associated with age, emerging mental health challenges, complex transitions, chronic pain, moral injury, and the long-term impacts of service.

The next chapter is about building on a strong foundation to pursue new opportunities, address emerging needs, and ensure that research continues to translate into meaningful impact.

Together, we have built momentum. The opportunity ahead is to carry it forward.

The Opportunities Ahead

Earlier Detection, Earlier Support.

Too often, Veterans receive support only after challenges have become entrenched. **We see an opportunity to strengthen the ability of systems to identify risks earlier, intervene sooner, and better connect Veterans to the right supports at the right time.**

More Precise and Personalized Care.

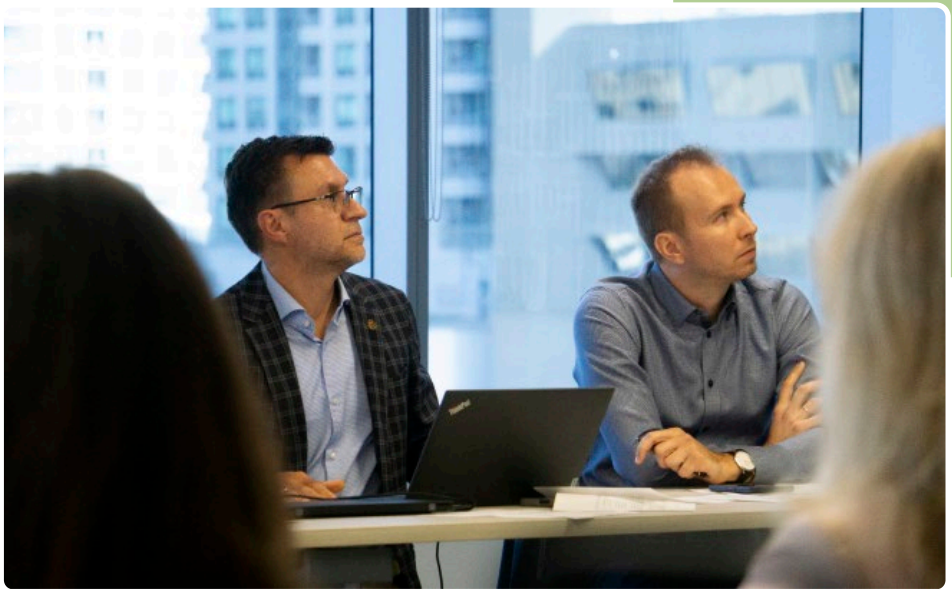
Veterans deserve care that reflects their unique experiences, needs, and circumstances. Through advances in personalized medicine, data-informed approaches, and emerging technologies, **we aim to support more responsive and effective pathways to recovery.**

Faster Translation into Practice.

Research is of the greatest value when it improves real-world decisions and outcomes. A key opportunity for the future is **accelerating the movement of evidence into clinical care, policy, programming, and practice** so that new knowledge can benefit Veterans more quickly.

Address Emerging Needs.

The Veteran community continues to evolve. **We are committed to addressing emerging priorities,** including chronic pain, moral injury, military-to-civilian transition, women and diverse Veteran populations, and other areas where important questions remain unanswered.



Credit: Sophia Richardson

Building the Next Decade Together

The progress reflected throughout this report was not achieved by the Centre alone.

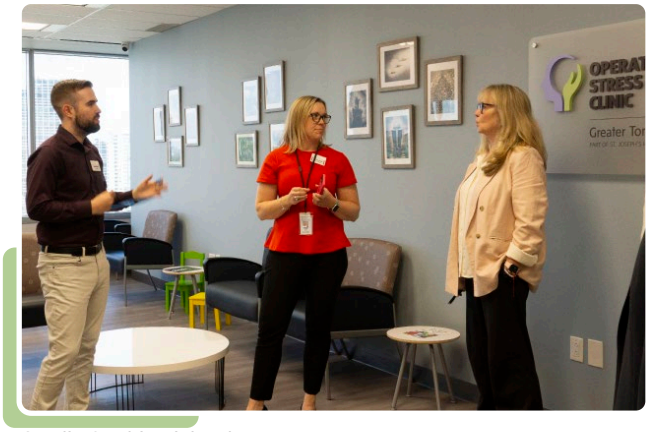
It was made possible through the collective efforts of Veterans, families, researchers, clinicians, community organizations, funders, and partners who shared a belief that better outcomes were possible.

As we look ahead, the spirit of partnership becomes even more important.

Many of the challenges facing Veterans today are complex, evolving, and not easily addressed through traditional approaches alone. Emerging issues in moral injury, military-to-civilian transition, chronic pain, personalized mental health care, and the needs of women and diverse Veteran populations require innovation, meaningful community engagement, and the flexibility to pursue questions that matter most to those we serve.

There is an opportunity before us to build upon the foundation created over the past decade. Together, we can identify emerging needs, explore innovative and cutting-edge solutions, strengthen systems of care, and ensure that research continues to translate into meaningful impact for Veterans and their families.

The next chapter of this work will be shaped by the partnerships we build, the communities we engage, and our shared commitment to creating a better future for those who have served.



Credit: Sophia Richardson



Collaborators at our 2025 Impact Summit
Credit: Sophia Richardson



Philanthropic support

Philanthropic support has played an important role in the Centre's growth and impact over the past decade. It has helped create opportunities to pursue emerging priorities and respond to community-identified needs in ways that traditional funding alone often cannot.

The flexibility provided through donor support allows the Centre to explore innovative ideas, build new collaborations, and accelerate work that has the potential to improve the lives of Veterans and their families.

13

Our Team

The Heads, Hands, and Hearts of the Centre

The MacDonald Franklin OSI Research Centre has been shaped by an extraordinary community of people. What has been built here reflects the dedication of leaders, staff, affiliated scientists, visiting scholars, trainees, students, and volunteers who brought their expertise, care, and commitment to this work.

We want to express our sincere gratitude to all those who have helped build this community and advance its mission.

Leadership



Scientific Director
J Don Richardson, MD, FRCPC



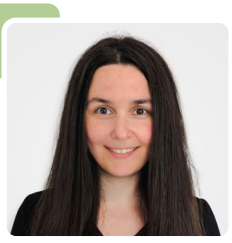
Head, Strategy & Innovation
Jenny Liu, PhD



Head, Operations
Kylie Dempster, PhD



Associate Scientific Director
Anthony Nazarov, PhD, PMP



Head, Implementation
Natalie Ein, PhD

The Team

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Erin Collins, PhD	Postdoctoral Associate
Callista Forchuk, MSc, MA	Research Assistant
Dominic Gargala	Research Data Analyst
Charlotte Henson, PhD	Postdoctoral Associate
Stephanie Houle, PhD	Research Associate
Ilyana Kocha	Research Assistant
Tri Le	Research Assistant
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Kristine Tauschek	Administrative Assistant
William (Liam) Younger	Research Assistant

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Ethan Whitehead, PhD (c), *Critical Care Nursing Officer,* The University of British Columbia; Canadian Armed Forces

Visiting Scholars and Fellows

Piali Bhati, Western University

Erin Courtice, Toronto Metropolitan University

Sara Stretton, Memorial University

Alexa Van Rassel, Western University

Kathryn Reeves, University of Windsor

Undergraduate Trainees and Volunteers

Ayaan Chowdry

Abigail Fisher

Jacky Li

Biya Wadhawan

Former Members and Alumni

Over the years, the Centre has had the privilege of supporting many individuals who contributed to this work while building their own careers and paths forward.

Administrative Support

Jenna Dias

Kelly Schluter

Luciana Brown

Shamantha J. Lora

Research Assistants

Clara Baker

Alec Brandwood

Madalena Costa

Julia Gervasio

Shyann Hang

Eliza Khan

Priyonto Saha

Research Associates and Data Scientists

Brent Davis

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Cassandra Skrotzki

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Rishika Bhogadi

Sierra Crocker

Jasper Crockford

Jay Ding

Akshitha Ereddy

Dakota Fisher

Maya Henderson

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Valerie Kulakouski

Yarden Levy

Evelyn MacDonald

Kyle Martin

Bella Moniz

Hung Nguyen

Joan Omar

Janissha Pushpaharan

Neha Raina

Suriya Ragu

Samdarsh Saroya

Sarah Smith

Karmen Tse

Chayanika Tyagi

Bailey Wolfs

Hazel Yott

Emily Zhang

Jessica Zhang



Credit: Taro Raptus, Pexels

14

Our Publications

Since 2018

2026

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