

# The Brandon Sun

## LOCAL

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### Exhibit provides eye-opening look into problem of male suicide

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*Dr. Kerstin Roger, a researcher involved with the "Man-Up Against Suicide" exhibit, speaks during an opening reception at Brandon University's Tommy McLeod Curve Gallery on Monday.*

A travelling photo exhibit began its final stop in Manitoba Monday night at Brandon University.

"Man-Up Against Suicide" features photos taken by people who have experienced suicidal thoughts, attempted suicide, or survived someone who has committed suicide.

Many photos are paired with words from the photographer.

A reception held at the Tommy McLeod Curve Gallery featured an address from Kerstin Roger, an associate professor in the University of Manitoba's department of community health sciences who organized the exhibit's six stops in the province.

Canadian men are four times more likely than women to commit suicide, but are only half as likely to be diagnosed with depression. Rogers said there are issues specific to Manitoba that are especially important to address.

"It has to do with our indigenous community, it has to do with our increasingly aging population, it has to do with our hard Prairie winters, the transportation issues we have here. To take this forward in Manitoba is really important," she said.

"Men have internalized that they shouldn't speak about their emotions. There's no recipe or quick answer (on how to handle that), but to identify men who may have a hard time talking about their emotions and sort of being aware of that."

Two major risk factors, Roger said, are self-medicating and hiding depression or emotions.

The display is one of several projects Roger is working on as part of a three-year grant from the Movember Foundation.

She says there are about 100 photos in similar exhibits across the country. Regardless of the location, the goal is to spur more awareness of men's mental health issues.

Several times, Roger and her research assistant were turned down after pitching the exhibit to the community-based centres and galleries around the province.

"Some places said no flat out, some places had questions like, 'What do the pictures show? What is this about? This is a really tricky topic, I'm not sure.' There were quite a few places that had no interest at all — they just said no," she said.

"I would say there's a real hesitation for people. It's a difficult topic. In some faith-based communities ... it's not an issue we talk about."

The exhibit is impactful.

One photo that stuck with Roger from the first time she saw the exhibit in Vancouver is of a bed by a man who suffers from depression.

"He said, 'My bed is both my haven and my prison. It's where I go to seek refuge but if I go there for too many days, it becomes my prison,'" Roger recalled.

The exhibit will be on display at the Tommy McLeod Curve Gallery until June 8.

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