What inspired you to do your research?
I volunteered in a Calgary school as a health promotion leader during the 2019–20 academic year. I continued to support the staff and students remotely after COVID-19 hit Calgary and in-class instruction was moved online. In April of 2020, one of the primary school teachers used social media to share that she felt overwhelmed, underappreciated, and exhausted as she worked to navigate teaching during the pandemic. I heard my colleague’s frustrations, but I did not understand the complexity of her individual experience, or how to best support her as a health promotion leader. In that moment I was addressed.

What is your research about?
Detailed above, the address, recognized as of importance in philosophical hermeneutic research, directly informs my objective for this study, which seeks to understand the individual level, systemic interconnectivity of primary teacher experiences of wellness at the onset of and throughout the pandemic, as well as teacher perspectives regarding how to address teacher wellness support in schools. My research question is: Using systems thinking, how might we understand primary teacher experiences of wellness during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as teacher perspectives regarding how to address teacher wellness support in schools?

How do you do your research?
Developed by Hans-Georg Gadamer, I approach my research from a philosophical hermeneutic perspective which identifies the possibility of understanding human experiences through language and conversation. With descriptive depth, hermeneutic research based on philosophical hermeneutics values the individual, unique in their context, and offers the researcher an opportunity to explore participant experiences, while providing the participant an opportunity to be heard. Therefore, I will be engaging in one-on-one, semi-structured interviews with 6–10 primary teachers in Calgary schools. A videoconferencing application similar to Zoom will be used to interview teachers due to COVID-19 physical distancing recommendations.

What is the implication of your research?
While the specific contributions of this study will not be evident until following deep interpretive analysis, there is potential for this research to illuminate understandings regarding approaches to teacher wellness support in schools and the complexity of primary teacher experiences of wellness during the pandemic. These understandings can inform and better equip pre-service teacher programs and K-12 schools with knowledge regarding what is working for teacher wellness and where the gaps are that need to be addressed. Furthermore, this work has the potential to inform understanding regarding how to better proactively support, prepare, and recognize teacher wellness in times of crisis in the future; according to health promotion in school constructs, an investment that stands to benefit both teachers and students.