



Mental Health  
Commission  
of Canada

Commission de  
la santé mentale  
du Canada



## Roots of Hope

A Community Suicide  
Prevention Project



Roots of Hope  
Promising Practice Exchange Case Studies

# Spotlight on La Ronge, Saskatchewan

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## INTRODUCTION

The Promising Practice Exchange Case Studies bring to light success stories from local communities that are implementing Roots of Hope. The studies are meant to show the model's standard framework in a range of local contexts and highlight how unique results in each community have shaped the program.

Each case study is guided by four key principles:

1. **Community Success.** Document and highlight community success stories.
2. **Focus on Place.** Illustrate how each local context guides Roots of Hope implementation.
3. **The Importance of Pillars.** Emphasize Roots of Hope's 5 pillars: means safety, public awareness, research, specialized supports, training and networks.
4. **Quality Improvement Opportunities.** Invite communities to talk about training tools or resources from the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) and partner organizations to encourage improvement for other communities across the country.

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## ROOTS OF HOPE

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Roots of Hope is a community-based model that supports populations across Canada in reducing the impact of suicide in their local context. The model builds on community expertise as it implements suicide prevention and life promotion interventions.

In the first Roots of Hope cohort in 2018, eight communities across Canada became part of a research demonstration project. The aim was to support them as they built their capacity to reduce the impact of suicide and to gather evidence on the model's effectiveness with an eye to establishing best and promising practices for wider adoption in the future.

In the Roots of Hope model, communities tailor their suicide prevention efforts around its 5 pillars:

1. **Means Safety.** Identify “hot spots” and implement measures to limit access to the suicide methods being used.
2. **Public Awareness.** Create local educational campaigns (e.g., posters, brochures, social media).
3. **Research.** Set research priorities, surveillance, and monitoring and evaluation to increase the suicide prevention evidence base.
4. **Specialized Supports.** Develop a range of possible prevention, intervention, and postvention services (e.g., peer support, support groups, workplace interventions, and coordinated planning and access to services).
5. **Training and Networks.** Provide training and learning opportunities for community gatekeepers (e.g., physicians, first responders, nurses, HR staff and managers, and teachers).

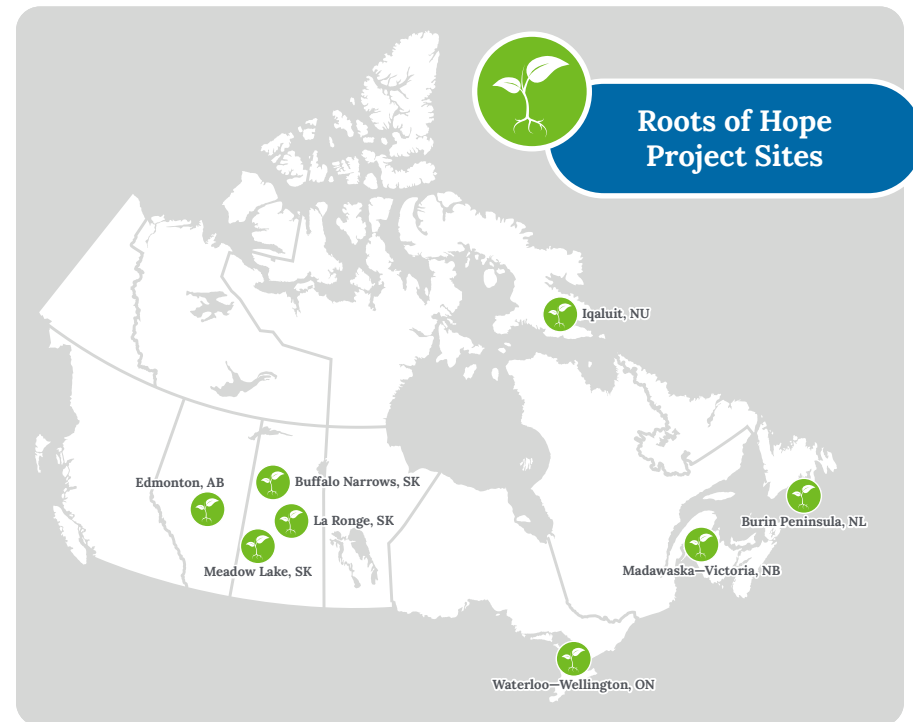


## COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

The Roots of Hope community of practice (CoP) is a way for coordinators, researchers, and other regional stakeholders to connect with an organization overseeing and delivering an action plan. Participants use its quarterly discussions to identify challenges and emerging issues, review successes, introduce best practices, and track the progress of a project. They also use CoP meetings to share information with communities about upcoming Roots of Hope events, webinars, and other items.

### CoP Goals:

- Support the transfer of knowledge on ways to implement, adapt, and sustain the Roots of Hope model, both nationally and within each local context
- Establish a network of members who can connect and resolve issues.
- Create a pathway for sharing information, best and promising practices, and other strategic advice related to implementation.
- Provide a platform to recognize the contributions of project coordinators.



## PROMISING PRACTICE EXCHANGE

The Promising Practice Exchange gives coordinators the chance to show their implementation progress with CoP members. These (virtual) monthly presentations also foster an exchange of best practices and key lessons learned among community coordinators, research coordinators, and key regional Roots of Hope stakeholders.

### Promising Practice Exchange Goals:

- Support the transfer of knowledge on ways to implement, adapt, and sustain the Roots of Hope model, as well as topics relating to suicide prevention and life promotion,
- Create a means of connecting with coordinators between CoP quarterly meetings.
- Provide a platform to recognize the contributions of project coordinators.



## THE LA RONGE COMMUNITY

The La Ronge and Area Roots of Hope Project lies in Woodland Cree territory in northern Saskatchewan within the Precambrian Shield's boreal forest. Woodland Cree people have lived in the area since time immemorial. Of the project's six communities, four are First Nation reserves (part of Lac La Ronge Indian band, the largest First Nation in the province) and two are municipalities (the town of La Ronge and the Village of Air Ronge). The local population is 99 per cent Indigenous on these reserves and about 75 per cent Indigenous in La Ronge and Air Ronge.



Municipalities	Population <sup>1</sup>
Town of La Ronge	2,688
Village of Air Ronge	1,106
First Nation Communities	Population <sup>2</sup>
La Ronge #156	2,260
Kitsaki #156B	651
Stanley Mission #157	2,016
Grandmother's Bay #219	398
Sucker River #156C	447
Hall Lake #217	626
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>10,192</b>

<sup>1</sup> Based on the 2016 Canada Census.

<sup>2</sup> Based on the March 31, 2022, Annual Band Census.



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## COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

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### La Ronge and Area Roots of Hope Project: Medication Safety

- This initiative took a multi-pronged approach to education and intervention activities on prescription medication safety.
- A La Ronge **means safety** working group consisting of community partners selected this activity.
- It promotes a “suicide safer home” and provides medication lockboxes to high-risk or vulnerable people in the community

#### Specific activities:

- Adapted the MHCC's Suicide Safer Home infographic into a tri-fold brochure that included community resources.
- Purchased 75 lockboxes to distribute to the local hospital and other areas (e.g., an on-reserve health clinic).
- Gave presentations, led by a pharmacist from the local hospital, on the La Ronge and area Roots of Hope Project Facebook page.
- Worked closely with a Saskatchewan researcher to evaluate the efficacy of the campaign.

#### Lockbox distribution:

- While most care persons did not request a lockbox, a small number were given to those who did.
- Emergency room nurses were initially unable to distribute lockboxes due to COVID-19.

- The coordinator provided some lockboxes in the community, along with education on how to keep homes “medication-storage safe.”
- Until COVID restrictions were lifted in May 2022, few lockboxes were distributed. Afterward, we provided 24 in one day at a major community event and have since taught safe medication storage to over 100 community members. Most did not request a lockbox but did take other measures, such as keeping medications less visible in the home, removing them from bathroom cabinets, buying smaller quantities, and disposing of those that were expired and unused. Many did not know over-the-counter medications could be used for an intentional overdose.



## An implementation barrier:

- COVID-19 restrictions and priority shifts made it difficult to contact clinicians to ensure that lockboxes were being distributed.
- With resources focusing on the pandemic in its early days, few if any boxes were being distributed.

## Scale-up:

- The province of Saskatchewan is exploring a wider-scale medication roundup campaign (currently, it is identifying potential partners).
- The coordinator in La Ronge has provided guidance to other coordinators in Saskatchewan Roots of Hope projects who are interested in distributing lockboxes.

## Other activities:

- The means safety working group has identified other priorities, including substance use health.



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## COMMUNITY IMPACT

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As a result of these implemented programs and activities, several other outcomes have occurred:

- 30 community members were trained in ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training).
- 11 community members took part in ASIST facilitator training in 2019.
- Demand for ASIST continues to grow (from organizations, individuals, etc.).





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