



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 Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan

Spotlight on Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan

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.

ROOTS OF HOPE

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).

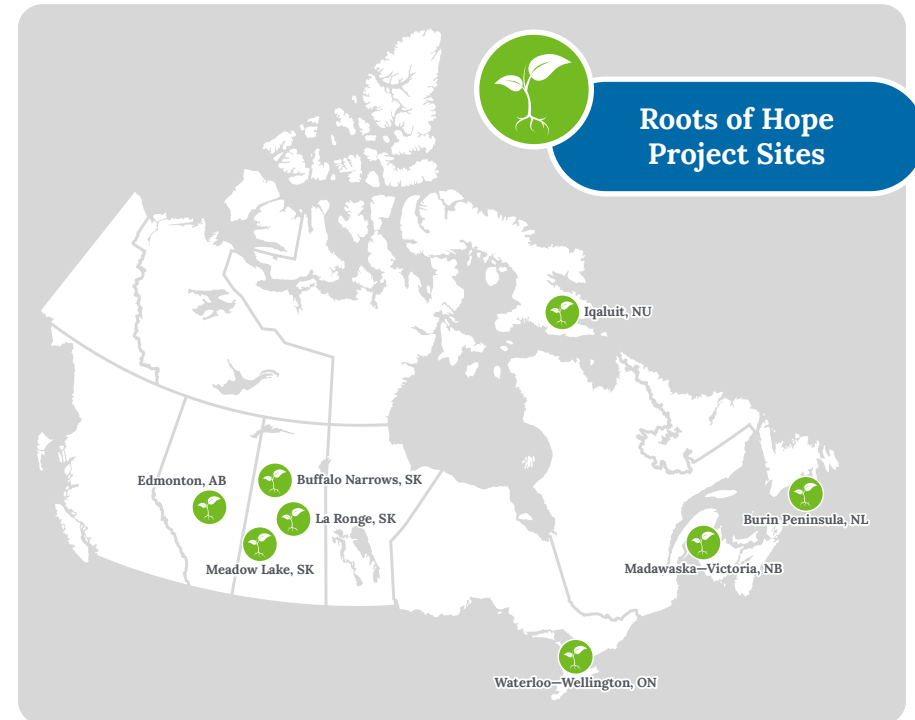


COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

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 MEADOW LAKE AND AREA COMMUNITY

While the City of Meadow Lake has a population of around 5,400, our Roots of Hope project serves the rural residents of 11 surrounding communities. Our priority population is youth, although the community also recognizes the need to reach out to men, who are role models for our youth.

Meadow Lake and area project partners include:

- Saskatchewan Health Authority
- Meadow Lake Tribal Council

COMMUNITY SUCCESSES

An active community advisory network has developed, whose members offer many areas of expertise. The meetings are well attended by representatives from a number of the affiliated communities. When unable to attend, they receive meeting minutes and interact with our Roots of Hope coordinator on their community's behalf.

One unexpected outcome of our project is the networking it has facilitated between agencies (sometimes in different communities) that have not worked together before.

COMMUNITY IMPACT

Public Awareness

The main way our Roots of Hope work has impacted public awareness about suicide prevention is through the staff capacity and program resources it provides. A key focus has been educating our communities on the factors that contribute to suicide risk, and how individuals can help prevent suicide, both in professional and private contexts. For example, we used radio ads, awareness walks, and other events to highlight the important roles of teachers, faith leaders, and youth leaders as well as neighbours, friends,

and family members. At the same time, we also recognize the need to augment public awareness activities with training. People must learn how to identify mental health-related distress and know how to help someone (in compassionate and knowledgeable ways), while allowing natural supports (e.g., friends, family, and non-mental health professionals) to contribute to the prevention of suicide attempts and suicides.



Training and Networks

Roots of Hope project team gives staff the time and resources to offer training suited to the needs and capacity of the community; for example, the project coordinator who is trained to deliver Mental Health First Aid. One goal of our community action plan was to train a variety of primary health care staff and community members to better recognize the signs of mental health concerns or distress, to make earlier intervention possible. Staff capacity and program resources have also made it easier to subsidize training costs, which allows community members to attend that do not have employers paying their registration costs. As well, after making an effort to think creatively about who individuals in distress might encounter in the community, we have offered suicide awareness training to a wide range of people. These include faith leaders; hairdressers; youth and youth workers; staff members working in mental health or addiction, primary health care, day care, and detox centres; community leaders; and members of the public.



Means Restriction

After examining emergency room (ER) stats that included the drug classes used in suicide attempts, a Roots of Hope researcher developed a survey to help mental health and addiction intake workers understand where the drugs used in suicide attempts were obtained. Often, the medication belonged to someone else or were non-prescription medications such as acetaminophen and ibuprofen. We also learned that families who were seeking to keep drugs out of the hands of youth were storing them in their cars and being exposed to extreme temperatures.

To restrict access to medication as a means of suicide, we developed a medication lockbox initiative. The lockbox uses a repurposed, lockable, marine dry box that is cheap and readily available. Stickers on the outside remind people that “Talking Can Help” and encourage them to call the province’s 811 health line if they are experiencing mental or physical health concerns. Other stickers, outside and inside the box, provide emergency numbers, including suicide helplines and poison control.

The project started through a partnership with a parenting organization that gave a lockbox to each family they served during child injury prevention modules. Clinical mental health and addiction staff, ER staff, and others have since been using the box and the information it contains as a conversation starter to provide means safety education with families. Harm reduction and victim services are now starting to use the boxes as well. Our lockbox also includes the Suicide Safer Home infographic, adapted by the MHCC, which provides information about other areas in the home where suicide means may be available, so these too can be addressed by families and caregivers.

Specialized Supports

MHCC-sponsored training increased our Roots of Hope coordinator's understanding of effective postvention and knowledge sharing practices. This training was timely and helpful. For example, using a postvention lens when providing support to workplaces, schools, and sports teams can encourage them to develop suicide-related policy before such an event occurs. Among the areas such policies could address include how managers should respond to a suicide death of an employee (or employee family member), how long memorials (which may spring up spontaneously) should remain on site, and what to do with items that may accumulate as part of the memorial.

Our project staff members have also focused on specialized support initiatives. These include work with managers and mental health and addiction teams seeking to improve their provision of timely, effective responses and supports to communities or organizations in crisis (while reducing the negative impacts on staff members who respond to crises or critical incidents).



Research

Our project's evaluations helped us learn whether our efforts were having an impact and what elements the community felt were beneficial. In turn, such research allowed us to build from one project component to the next and be confident that the community would be engaged. For example, our evaluation of radio ads showed that the community was interested in having a comedian with mental health-related material perform. The same research support behind our lockbox initiative was also important for our radio ad campaign evaluation. Overall, such support has been a key factor in helping our project move forward based on feedback from community members and professionals.



TESTIMONIALS AND STORIES

“I think Roots of Hope helps build capacity to prevent suicide in the community because it allows for creative approaches that can engage professionals and community members to be part of the collective solution. Having the capacity and resources to educate and equip people to be part of the effort to reduce stigma related to mental health problems – and to respond to people in distress, with skill and compassion – creates a network of formal and informal support that

can benefit many in the community. It takes time and dedication to develop relationships, but when good relationships are leveraged, they can open doors to other opportunities for projects and supports. I believe that any knowledge and capacity built into individuals and communities, through the work of this Roots of Hope project, will remain to benefit the people who live in the communities.”

– Roots of Hope project coordinator





Mental Health Commission
of Canada

Commission de
la santé mentale
du Canada

Financial contribution from



Health Canada Santé
Canada Canada

Mental Health Commission of Canada

Suite 1210, 350 Albert Street
Ottawa, ON K1R 1A4

Tel: 613 683-3755
Fax: 613 798-2989

[@MHCC_](#) [/theMHCC](#)

[/1MHCC](#) [@theMHCC](#) [@theMHCC](#)

[/Mental Health Commission of Canada](#)

mhccinfo@mentalhealthcommission.ca

www.mentalhealthcommission.ca

© 2023 Mental Health Commission of Canada



Roots of Hope

A Community Suicide
Prevention Project