



Mental Health
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du Canada



Roots of Hope

Annual Impact Report 2023-2024



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Introduction

In 2018 the Mental Health Commission of Canada introduced Roots of Hope, an evidence-based, community-led model to reduce the impact of suicide. The model builds on community expertise to implement suicide prevention and life promotion initiatives based on 5 pillars of action and 13 guiding principles. Since the launch of the Research Demonstration Project in 2018, Roots of Hope has been implemented in more than 20 communities, including three provinces and one territory.

There was a pivotal change for the Roots of Hope model in 2023. The results of the Research Demonstration Project were shared in early 2023, and the focus for the remainder of the year was on expanding upon successes and addressing potential areas of improvement. Significant work was undertaken to standardize Roots of Hope tools and templates for efficient data collection and effective impact measurement. The Roots of Hope team focused its efforts on building intercommunity connections, supporting implementation and sustainability efforts, and promoting the model to stakeholders across Canada.

These and other efforts have resulted in 15 communities contacting the Roots of Hope team indicating interest in learning more and possibly adopting the model. These promising discussions will continue in 2024 with particular consideration given to establishing relationships with Indigenous communities and learning more about the distinct mental health and wellness needs of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples.

Community Connections

Roots of Hope Summit

The inaugural Roots of Hope Summit was held on May 9, 2023, in Halifax, Nova Scotia. The event was scheduled to coincide with the 33rd Annual National Suicide Prevention Conference hosted by the Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention (CASP) on May 10-12, 2023. Both in-person and virtual attendance options were provided, and all Roots of Hope community coordinators and regional representatives were invited.

Of the 33 Summit participants, 16 attended in person (48%) and seven of these were supported through travel subsidies offered by the MHCC. The Summit provided an opportunity for roundtable discussions with targeted questions on the overall value of Roots of Hope, scale-up and spread to new communities, and potential areas for evolution of the model.

Principal Investigator Dr. Brian Mishara¹ gave attendees an overview of the outcomes of the evaluation of the Research Demonstration Project, and the National Community of Practice was officially launched at the Summit.

¹ Brian Mishara is the founder of and a director at the Centre de recherche et d'intervention sur le suicide, enjeux éthiques et pratiques de fin de vie. (CRISE). He is also a professor in the Université du Québec à Montréal's Department of Psychology.



Evaluation survey results indicate that 75% of participants found the Summit effective in building connections with other Roots of Hope communities and 63% indicated that learnings from the Summit have impacted how Roots of Hope is implemented in their community.

Great to connect with other communities and have opportunities to share and talk. It's always great to engage with diverse communities to learn from their experiences.

- Roots of Hope Summit attendees

National Community of Practice

In response to the success of smaller communities of practice hosted for specific cohorts of Roots of Hope communities, the MHCC launched a National Community of Practice (NCoP) to continue fostering connection, bringing all Roots of Hope communities together in one community of practice.

During NCoP quarterly meetings, participants can identify challenges and emerging issues, review successes, inform future initiatives, introduce best practices, and track Roots of Hope progress in their respective regions and communities. The NCoP also provides a regular opportunity for the MHCC and communities to share information regarding best practices, upcoming events, webinars, and other items.

NCoP meetings were held in June 2023, September 2023, December 2023, and March 2024. The participation rate was very high, with an average of 25 attendees representing almost 90% of those invited. Each meeting included a guest presentation introducing community participants to external opportunities and suicide prevention initiatives. The NCoP meetings also provided an opportunity for knowledge exchange specific to Roots of Hope, with an average of three community presentations and one roundtable or breakout discussion per NCoP meeting.

Evaluation survey results indicated that 78% of respondents rated the value of the NCoP as high or very high and 89% rated the quality and relevance of the discussions and presentations as high or very high.

I appreciate the effort MHCC is making to get/keep us all connected and to provide learning opportunities.

- Roots of Hope community coordinator

Roots of Hope site visit

Between April 1, 2023, and March 31, 2024, the Roots of Hope team conducted one community site visit, offering assistance and guidance to the Northern Zone, Nova Scotia, in their suicide prevention and life promotion efforts. For five days in October 2023, two Roots of Hope team members visited multiple community-run programs and sites, including the following:

- **Potlotek First Nation, Cape Breton:** Team members joined the [Potlotek Forest of Hope](#) launch event, which drew over 100 attendees including local and regional media outlets. They assisted in setup efforts, staffed an information booth, and



answered questions from community members, journalists, and other attendees. The launch event offered individuals the opportunity to plant a tree on a trail behind the local school. It also included drum circles, dancing, and information booths hosted by local stakeholders including the Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention and the Nova Scotia Health Authority/ Roots of Hope. The event was well covered by local and national media, including [CBC Radio](#), [Global News](#), the [Cape Breton Post](#), and the [Hamilton Spectator](#).

- **Barrington, South Shore:** Team members met with Louann Link, who founded [Let Your Light Shine – Jevon Link Society](#) in remembrance of her son who died by suicide in 2001. The society focuses its efforts on building community awareness and fundraising events, such as memorial golf and hockey tournaments.
- **Town of Yarmouth:** Team members had the opportunity to visit [Aidaen's Place Youth Wellness Center](#), which offers free wellness-based support for youth ages 9-17 years and their families. Following the loss of her daughter to suicide in 2019, Kelly Mitchell established this non-profit organization to provide a safe space for local youth to gather, provide peer support, and participate in activities ranging from Movie Mondays and History Nights to yoga classes and guitar lessons.
- **Debert, Colchester County:** Team members hosted a partnership gathering that allowed local Roots of Hope stakeholders to share learnings and successes from Nova Scotia. The full-day meeting had 13 attendees, who shared activity updates, discussed project management for current and future suicide prevention initiatives, and learned about data collection best practices.

Community site visits are a crucial element of the Roots of Hope approach to suicide prevention. They provide the opportunity to connect with community members, identify challenges, and offer tailored support to help communities implement evidence-based suicide prevention strategies. Additionally, the visits foster collaboration and partnerships between the MHCC and community stakeholders, enabling more effective and sustainable suicide prevention efforts.

Community Supports

The MHCC provided a range of supports to Roots of Hope communities to help them develop and implement effective suicide prevention initiatives and life promotion activities. The following supports were delivered April 2023 to March 2024:

One-to-one community meetings

Roots of Hope program managers offer each community the opportunity to meet one-to-one, once per quarter. These structured meetings are in addition to ad hoc conversations and other direct supports provided by the team. The quarterly one-to-one meetings allow for customized support, guidance, and feedback to meet the unique needs of each community.

Sixty-four one-to-one meetings were conducted, with nine of the 22 communities (41%) opting to meet every quarter. Community feedback indicated that the frequency of one-to-



one meetings may need to fluctuate with the phase of implementation, with those in the early stages of their Roots of Hope journey placing a very high value on one-to-one supports.

Community onboarding

In 2023, the province of Manitoba began the process of implementing Roots of Hope, after hearing about the model through a meeting of Deputy Ministers hosted by the MHCC early in the year. This process started with a July 2023 check-in meeting followed by an onboarding meeting in September 2023. It was determined that a series of workshops would be the most effective way to introduce the five Manitoba regions to the Roots of Hope model and implementation process. Three workshops were held in December 2023, February 2024, and March 2024, each focusing on community exploration and planning. The Manitoba Roots of Hope onboarding process will continue through 2024/2025.

Roots of Hope Guide

Developed in partnership with Roots of Hope communities, the *Roots of Hope Guide* provides communities with a suggested process for adopting and sustaining the Roots of Hope model. It takes into consideration their successes and builds in additional guidance around identified barriers and challenges.

The Guide is intended as a resource to make the development and implementation of community Roots of Hope initiatives easier and more effective. The four phases in the Guide are carefully defined and accompanied by tools, resources, checklists, and case studies to facilitate successful implementation. The processes and tools combine the experience of Roots of Hope communities with project management and implementation best practices.

Community Exploration Tool

In the *Roots of Hope Guide*, the first step in adopting Roots of Hope is the exploration phase, which focuses on fostering awareness and comprehension of the community's current landscape. In the exploration phase, communities use the Community Exploration Tool to create a community profile, collect data on suicide rates and risk factors in the community, and document existing supports and services. Using this resource, communities will better understand their unique local dynamics and lay a strong foundation for Roots of Hope success.

Community Action Plan

The Community Action Plan template was designed to assist Roots of Hope communities with data capture and project management. It is used during the Planning Phase to capture stakeholders, partners, and ideas for suicide prevention initiatives and life promotion activities. It is also designed to be used during the Implementation Phase to track the community-led work being done under each of the five pillars of action – means safety, public awareness, research and evaluation, specialized supports, and training and networks. Communities also use the Action Plan to capture key impact data related to stakeholder engagement activities, community coalition meetings, awareness campaigns, and training sessions.



Promotion and Knowledge Exchange

This year, Roots of Hope promotional efforts focused on sharing the results of the Research Demonstration Project and success stories based on community experiences. Roots of Hope was promoted with presentations at two international conferences, four national events, and six local or regional gatherings including:

- The Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention's 33rd Annual National Suicide Prevention Conference (May 10-12, 2023) in Halifax, Nova Scotia
- The 24th Annual International Mental Health Conference (June 7-9, 2023) in Australia
- The International Association for Suicide Prevention's 32nd World Congress (September 19-23, 2023) in Slovenia
- The First Nations and Inuit Suicide Prevention Association of Quebec's 18th Suicide Prevention Conference: Dialogue for Life (November 13-18, 2023) in Montreal
- Réseau québécois sur le suicide, les troubles de l'humeur at les troubles associés (RQSHA) 2024 Symposium (February 7, 2024) in Montreal to align with Association québécoise de prévention du suicide (AQPS) suicide prevention week activities
- The Nishnawbe Aski Nation's Choose Life Forum (March 4-6, 2024) in Thunder Bay

Other notable venues where Roots of Hope was represented include the National Métis Health Policy Forum (February 7-9, 2024) in Ottawa, a Suicide Prevention Ottawa networking event (June 22, 2023), an invitation-only suicide research workshop hosted by Dalhousie University (June 8, 2023) attended virtually, and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' conference and tradeshow (May 25-28, 2023) in Toronto.

Roots of Hope was also promoted as part of the MHCC's World Suicide Prevention Day social media campaign. In September 2023, 19 posts on LinkedIn, Facebook, and X (formerly Twitter) generated a total of 366 engagements.

Roots of Hope community case studies

The [Roots of Hope community case studies](#) were developed to share best practices, insights, and experiences from Roots of Hope communities, researchers, and leaders. As of February 2024, the case studies have been visited 2,866 times on the MHCC website.

Roots of Hope Community Voices video series

The [Roots of Hope Community Voices video series](#) provides viewers with a better understanding of Roots of Hope, its effectiveness, and its potential to support suicide prevention and life promotion efforts in communities across Canada. These videos highlight the efforts and successes in suicide prevention at the community level, featuring community coordinators sharing their Roots of Hope journey. The video series has been viewed over 350 times on YouTube.



Roots of Hope backgrounder

To promote greater understanding, the [Roots of Hope – A Community Suicide Prevention Project: Backgrounder](#) provides a comprehensive description of the model, outlines community initiatives, and addresses commonly asked questions. The backgrounder has been viewed over 230 times on the MHCC website.

Roots of Hope: Reflecting on Our Journey report

The [Roots of Hope: Reflecting on Our Journey](#) report was published on the MHCC website and has been viewed almost 200 times to date. It was also shared directly with 46 community contacts, 19 of whom responded to an evaluation survey, generating the following insights:

- 75% found the report relevant or very relevant to their work
- 63% indicated they were better equipped with knowledge/information related to suicide prevention because of the report
- 63% said they had used the information provided in the report to change and/or improve research priorities

Journal articles

The Research Demonstration Project was the focus of an article published in a 2023 issue of *JMIR Research Protocols*. The article, titled “[Evaluation of a Community Suicide Prevention Project \(Roots of Hope\): Protocol for an Implementation Science Study](#)” was written by Dr. Brian Mishara et al. As of February 2024, it has been viewed 3,275 times.

Roots of Hope was also featured in a 2023 article by Joshua Bauer published in the *Journal of Community Safety and Well-Being*. “[Roots of Hope: A Uniquely Canadian Approach to Suicide Prevention](#)” has been downloaded 188 times.

Conclusion

Roots of Hope has built upon existing areas of strength to broadly promote the model’s impact on community-based suicide prevention and life promotion efforts. Impact data and success stories have been shared through multiple avenues at the local, regional, national, and international levels, laying a solid foundation for Roots of Hope scale up and spread. This work will continue in 2024/2025 as we introduce standardized tools and resources, create an online venue for knowledge sharing and collaboration, establish clear data collection and support expectations, and build deeper community connections. As a result of improved data collection and evaluation, we will be better able to speak to the community and national impact of the Roots of Hope model in Canada.



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