



2021

World Indigenous
Suicide Prevention
Conference

Strengths in our Communities

Final Report



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Introduction

Suicide rates amongst Indigenous peoples worldwide continue to be high particularly in comparison to non-Indigenous peoples. In response, the World Indigenous Suicide Prevention Conferences (WISPC) are held to bring together experts, leaders, and members of the international Indigenous community to identify culturally appropriate approaches to suicide prevention. The inaugural WISPC took place in June 2016 in Rotorua, New Zealand, and the second, in November 2018 in Perth, West Australia.

The First Nations Health and Social Secretariat of Manitoba (FNHSSM) is honoured to have hosted the 3rd WISPC virtually on August 23-26, 2021, from the heart of Turtle Island – Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada in Treaty 1 territory. It is the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe (Ojibwe), the Nehiyaw (Cree) and the Dakota, and homeland of the Metis Nation. Winnipeg is the centre of North America and is home to the largest Indigenous (First Nations, Inuit, Métis) population in an urban setting in Canada. Approximately 900 participants from Canada, the United States, Australia and Aotearoa-New Zealand, amongst other countries attended the virtual conference.

FNHSSM also had the honour of hosting engagement sessions with Indigenous Youth, 2SLGBTQIA+ people, and community members, on August 17, 18, and 19, 2021, respectively and the first day of the conference. The purpose of these sessions was to learn about what positive actions in Indigenous communities, to obtain input on how to incorporate life promotion within families, communities, and nations, and to get initial thoughts on Calls for Action for Life Promotion – Suicide Prevention and ideas for the next WISPC. Approximately 820 participants attended these sessions.

Key Recommendations

Through their participation in small group sessions before and during the main conference, conference delegates put forward recommendations summarized as Calls for Action.

CALLS FOR ACTION

1. We call for the recognition of:

- a. Indigenous Peoples' Inherent Right to Mino Pimatisiwin – A Good Life.
- b. Self-governance as Life Promotion including meeting all basic needs (clean water, liveable income, income, etc.).
- c. Self-care as a basic need.
- d. Access to self-care as community care – the life of an individual ripples out to the family, to the community, and to the Nation.

2. We call upon Indigenous Nations to exercise their self-sufficiency by:

- a. Building on solutions and gifts within our Nations.
- b. Building capacity through training, sharing resources, honouring each other's gifts, and lateral kindness and unity.
- c. Increasing youth-driven development programs and community platforms, particularly on-reserve, that elevate and centre youth voices and perspectives.
- d. Undertaking advocacy with youth consent through validating messaging about youth from youth, including collaborating as nations and neighboring communities.



3. We call upon all governments and program and services delivery agencies, organizations, and institutions to provide barrier-free services and supports that are:

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| <p>a. Available at the time they are needed and when individuals and families are actively seeking change in their life, i.e. avoid waitlists.</p> <p>b. Inclusive and kind by meeting people where they are at, i.e. avoid “gatekeeping” or strict and bureaucratic requirements that can exclude some from accessing the help they need when they need it.</p> <p>c. Culturally- and land-based to facilitate reconnection to the natural world, language, ceremonies including rites of passage, kinship systems, traditional knowledge, and oral history including creation stories, to build self-esteem and confidence.</p> | <p>d. Provided in safe spaces, including for young men, women, gender diverse individuals.</p> <p>e. Targeted to youth in foster care or aging out of care and those institutionalized.</p> <p>f. Informative regarding resource listings and ideas for holistic self-care – emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual.</p> |
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4. We call upon the organizers of the next World Indigenous Suicide Prevention Conference and all Indigenous gatherings to:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>a. Hold a Welcome Home ceremony for 2Spirit people at the start of that conference/ gathering as well as an afternoon meet and greet session and space.</p> <p>b. Hold a Welcome Home ceremony for 2Spirit people within our Indigenous communities so that they are acknowledged.</p> | <p>c. Increase representation and voice of northern and remote communities at the planning, presenter, and staffing levels.</p> |
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5. We call upon our relatives and nations to incorporate life promotion within our communities by providing support to and resources about 2Spirit identity and inclusion of 2Spirit people and their families in different spaces and circles to create awareness, safety, and promotion. These supports and resources must target child and family services agencies/organizations and homes lacking cultural knowledge of 2Spirit people.

6. We call upon Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations to establish 2Spirit outreach worker/facilitator positions in each community and that focuses on youth.

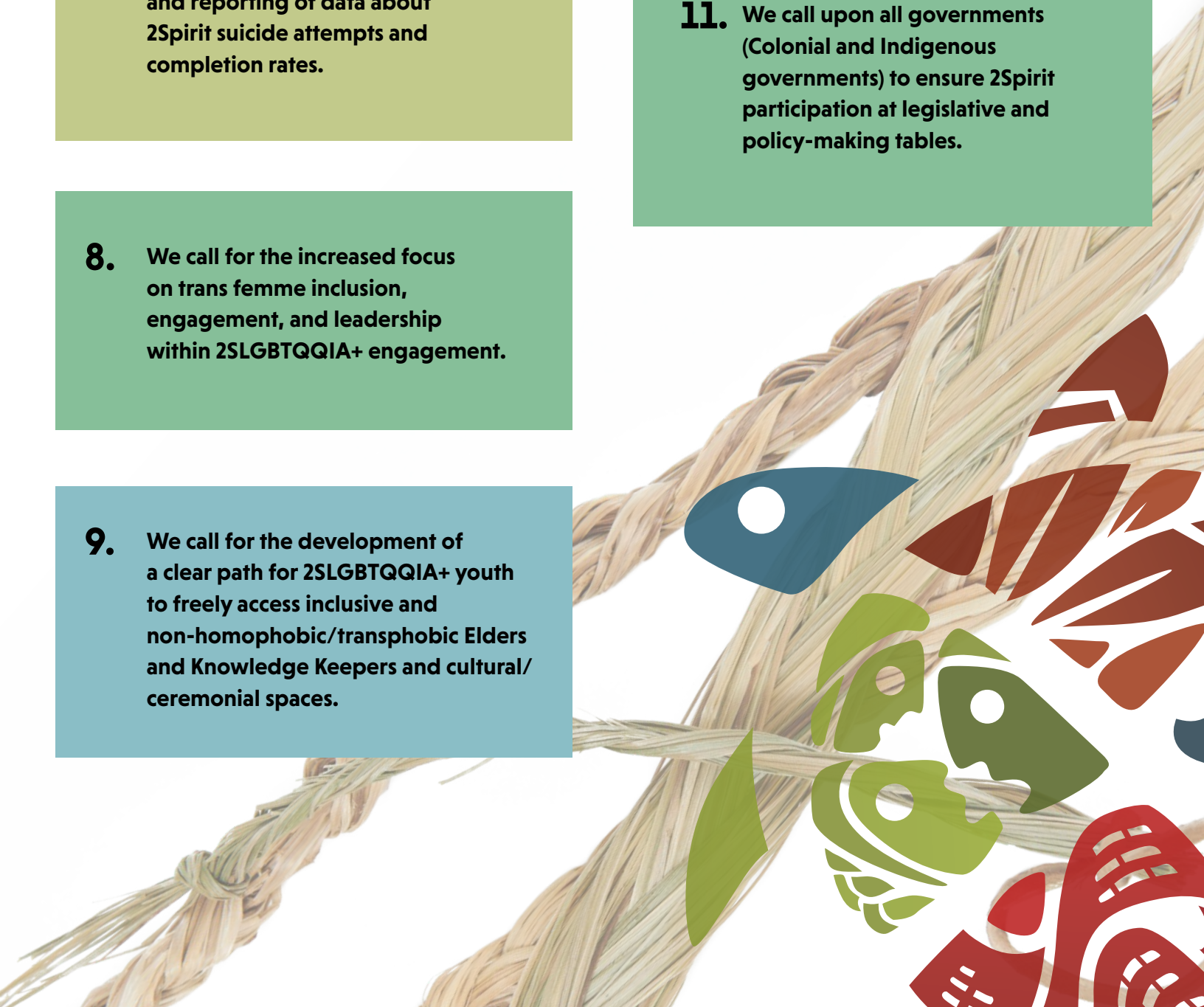
7. We call for the collection and reporting of data about 2Spirit suicide attempts and completion rates.

8. We call for the increased focus on trans femme inclusion, engagement, and leadership within 2SLGBTQQIA+ engagement.

9. We call for the development of a clear path for 2SLGBTQQIA+ youth to freely access inclusive and non-homophobic/transphobic Elders and Knowledge Keepers and cultural/ceremonial spaces.

10. We call upon all program and service delivery funders, including governments, to ensure funding recipients abide by federal and provincial legislation prohibiting discrimination against 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.

11. We call upon all governments (Colonial and Indigenous governments) to ensure 2Spirit participation at legislative and policy-making tables.





Background

AIM AND PURPOSE OF THE CONFERENCE

The 1st World Indigenous Suicide Prevention Forum was held in Rotorua, New Zealand in 2016. "This international event encouraged Indigenous nations worldwide to gather and to validate our cultural norms and realities whilst looking at how we contribute to reducing suicide and its impacts on Indigenous peoples." 400 people were in attendance from New Zealand, Australia, the United States of America, and Canada. It was done in conjunction with an Indigenous Youth Summit.

There are similar links amongst our Indigenous communities when it comes to suicide- colonization, history, intergenerational trauma, community experiences, etc., but it is our culture, traditions, languages, and connection to the land that are part of the solution. Through attending this event, Indigenous people had a chance to discuss strengths-based approaches to suicide prevention, to network, and to learn what was happening in other regions.



The event focused on:

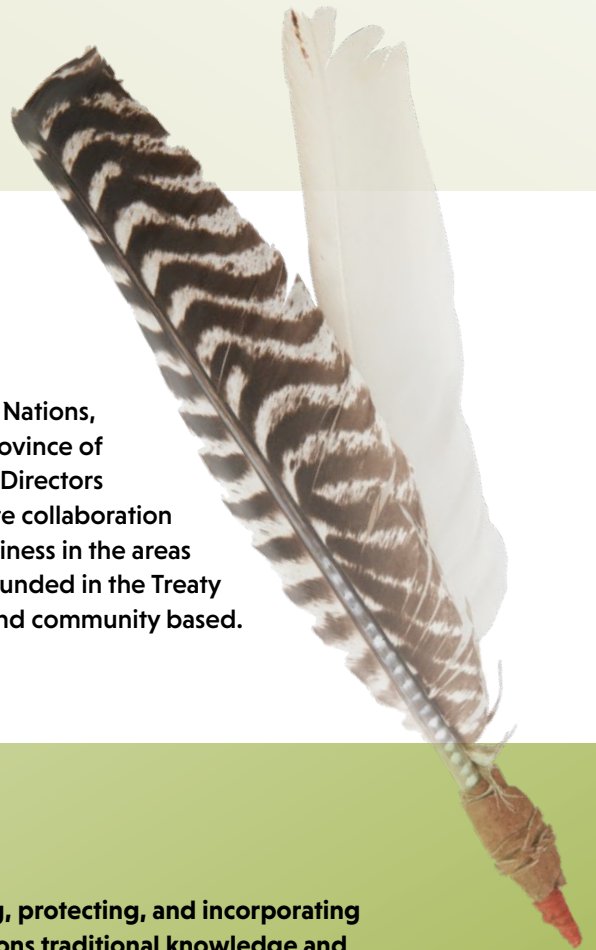
- Protective factors through building identity, resilience and culture;
- Ways of preventing suicide reducing risks;
- Sharing stories and knowledge; and
- Showcasing wise practices on the spectrum forum of prevention and intervention encompassed by culture and Indigenous knowledge.

HOST ORGANIZATION

FNHSSM is a non-profit First Nations organization that works with 63 First Nations, 7 Tribal Councils, and 3 Political/Territorial Organizations located in the province of Manitoba, Canada. It was created in 2014 and functions under a Board of Directors and the FNHSSM membership. FNHSSM is mandated to pursue a tripartite collaboration for a unified health system in Manitoba. Its objectives are to carry out business in the areas of health and social development for First Nations in Manitoba that are founded in the Treaty and inherent right to health and that are culturally appropriate, holistic, and community based.

The objectives include:

- Developing strategies and initiatives to promote and increase the participation of First Nations in Manitoba in the control and delivery of health
- Pursuing tripartite collaboration for a unified health system in Manitoba
- Promoting understanding of the health and social issues that affect First Nations through partnerships, research, and collaboration
- Affirming, protecting, and incorporating First Nations traditional knowledge and wellness practices
- Providing innovative programs and services for the well-being of Manitoba First Nations communities and individuals regardless of their place of residency



KEY ELEMENTS OF THE CONFERENCE AND PROGRAM STRUCTURE

In the tradition of past WISPC, there were several key elements of the conference that set it apart from mainstream conferences. As in previous years, there was a strong focus on culture, cultural safety, and cultural governance and respect, that continues to make these conferences unique.

Specific elements include:

1.

Presentations showcasing Indigenous initiatives and the work of Indigenous populations around the globe.
2.

Recognizing the importance of the voices of those with lived experience such as 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, community members, youth, Elders, and Knowledge keepers, including providing prominent spaces to share their expertise such as keynote, panel, and end-of-the day reflection presentations.
3.

Providing a high impact with presentations, workshops, breakout sessions, and panels, by

a.

Highlighting culturally based and relevant research, programs, initiatives, and lived experience with opportunity for engagement and learning

b.

Creating space for creative expression through the arts including film/videos.
4.

Culturally informed presentations, workshops, breakout sessions, panels, and reflections that observed cultural protocols through land acknowledgments, introductions, Knowledge Keeper support, and smudging, as examples.
5.

Trauma informed proceedings by making available wellness supports and providing self-care activities.
6.

International Indigenous community, youth, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ knowledge exchange and input.
7.

Demonstration and promotion of the WISPC as an internationally recognized forum for expertise and innovation in transformative multidisciplinary research, program development, and conceptualizations around best practices.

CONFERENCE STREAMS AND THEMES

The theme of the conference was "Strengths in our Communities" and focused on:

- Protective factors through building identity, resilience, and culture
- Ways of preventing suicide reducing risks
- Showcasing wise practices on the spectrum forum of prevention and intervention encompassed by culture and Indigenous knowledge

...a strong focus on
culture, cultural safety,
and cultural governance
and respect...



Conference streams were:

- Culture/Language/Land
- Data & Policy
- 2SLGBTQQIA+
- Youth
- Elders
- Creative Expression through Arts
- Healing
- Lived Experiences
- Intergenerational Connections
- Community Collaborations & External Partners

CARE AND SAFETY

In recognition of the levels of trauma, grief, and loss experienced by Indigenous communities, implementing strategies to ensure the safety of delegates was a high priority for conference organizers. The virtual nature of this year's conference limited care and safety supports to online availability and access.

As part of the event, a 28 Days of Self-Care was held from August 9 to September 5, 2021. Sessions ensured there were representation from Youth, Elders, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ communities. Information was shared on social media and a 28 Days of Self-Care group was started and linked to the main 2021 WISPC Facebook page. The 28 Days of Self-Care focused on two components:

- 1. Weekday Sessions: Monday – Teachings; Tuesday – Body; Wednesday – Mind; Thursday – Emotions; and Friday – Identity. Sessions were held online for 30 minutes to 1 hour. The following graphic provides additional details:**

28 DAYS OF SELF-CARE



Teachings Monday	Body Tuesday	Mind Wednesday	Emotions Thursday	Identity Friday
August 9 Introduction to Self Care- Carla Cochrane	August 10 Pow Wow Fit- Shanley Spence	August 11 Using the Past to Create your Future- Justin Langan	August 12 Laughing for Wellbeing (yoga)- Sandra Delaronde	August 13 Building your Confidence- Brandi Vezina
August 16 Five Perspectives on Land-based Healing- Albert McLeod	August 17 Body Works- Angie Cote	August 18 Ojibway Language- Dennis Chartrand	August 19 Songs of the Drum (learn to sing)- Ray Coco Stevenson	August 20 heARTivist (Art)- Wendy McNab
August 23 Understanding the Sacredness of Life- Mary Maytwayashing	August 24 Zumba- Iskeww Health	August 25 Laura Forsythe	August 26 Lateral Kindness- Victoria Pruden	August 27 Caring for Yourself after Childbirth- Jolene Mercer
August 30 Honouring our Spirit- K.A.S.P	August 31 Gentle Pilates- Taylor Tutkaluke	September 1 Prevention Through Recreation at the Sunshine House- Levi Foy	September 2 A Recipe for Resiliency: Healing from Trauma through Traditional Foodways- Indigikitchen	September 3 Hope, Culture & Strength- Scott Wabano

Thank you to: 

2. Weekend Challenges: Four challenges were held with further details provided in the following:



Self-care activities were also provided at the end of each conference day (August 23-26, 2021) These included:

"Understanding the Sacredness of Life" by Mary Maytwayashing (Treaty 2 Territory, Manitoba, Canada); Zumba by Iskwew Health (Treaty 6 Territory, Alberta, Canada); and "Lateral Kindness" by Victoria Pruden (Métis Nation, British Columbia region). Wellness supports for participants were in attendance at all conference sessions.

A mental wellness resource document was provided which included a compilation of supports from Aotearoa/ New Zealand, Australia, Canada, and the United States. It also included phone number based on attendees' 18 different countries, targeting their specific region.

A sacred fire was held courtesy of Anish Corporation, which also provided cultural and health supports, smudging, tobacco ties to offer for prayer, and eagle fanning, onsite. The sacred fire was available in-person with local covid-19 safety protocols in place. The event was visited daily by many people as a tipi was set up.

Conference Outcomes

CONFERENCE OPENING AND CLOSING

Opening Ceremony

Best wishes were sent by 2018 WISPC Elders including Tjalaminu Mia, Noongar Elder, CEO, Sister Kate's Home Kinds Aboriginal Corporation, Western Australia, and Prof Pat Dudgeon, Director, Centre of Best Practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention, University of Western Australia. Amy Groves, Noongar Youth, Administration/Promotions Assistant, Sisters Kate's Home Kids Aboriginal Corporation, Western Australia, extended greetings to Indigenous youth in Canada and good luck for positive outcomes for the conference.

Turanga Merito, Māori, Ngati Pikiao, also sent greetings. He was involved in the inaugural WISPC in 2016. He acknowledged Indigenous relatives throughout the world who have lost loved ones to suicide. He welcome the hosts of this year's conference – FNHSSM.

Elders representing distinct and diverse Indigenous peoples of Canada extended their welcome to conference participants: Sheldon Cote, Anishinaabe, Cote First Nation; Barbara Bruce, Métis, St. Laurent, Manitoba; and Grace Clark, Inuk, Whale Cove, Nunavut.

Grand Chief Arlen Dumas, Cree, provided greetings on behalf of all chiefs in the Manitoba region of Canada. He acknowledge the elders who bring advice, FNHSSM for bringing everyone together, and our collective ancestors as Indigenous people.

Victor Tsesseze and Dylan Hyslop, Dene, Northlands Denesuline First Nation, Manitoba provided a drum song. Nikki Komaksiutiksak, Inuk, Chesterfield Inlet, Canada provided a throat song. Ashla Michel and Modeste McKenzie, Dene and Métis, Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, performed a jigging dance. Terry Young, Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet), Kingsclear First Nation, New Brunswick, shared a song of welcome and greetings.

Closing Ceremony

Doris Young, Knowledge Keeper, Opaskwayak Cree Nation, Manitoba, Canada, offered words of encouragement to the young people and prayers to the Creator on behalf of everyone attending this conference. Wayne Mason, Sr., Knowledge Keeper, Fisher River Cree Nation, Manitoba, Canada, commented on the importance of prevention and how cultural ceremonies help youth find their identity, increase their self-esteem, and help to start their life's journey. He stressed the importance of working together, and he thanked everyone for their work and helping with the conference.

Walking Wolf Singers drum group provided a closing song with youth traditional dancers.



Participants were left with a closing message: and a comment by a renowned First Nations elder, provided here respectively:

“ In honour and memory of Every Child that attended Residential School.
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We pray for healing for our communities and to the ones who never made it home.
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We remember you and honour your spirit, may Creator and our Ancestors guide you home.”

The were also left with a quote from the late and highly regarded Elder, Elmer Courchene, Sagkeeng First Nation, Manitoba, Canada:

“ In all that we do, we must never forget that we work for the Little Ones.”

KEY THEMES

Emerging from the Conference

The Key Themes emerging across the conference identified through an analysis of keynote presentations and concurrent sessions are presented thematically:

Culture is foundational to suicide prevention and life promotion, providing the basis for:

- Indigenous-led approaches responsive to Indigenous needs and context
- The importance of storytelling – exchange and transmission of traditional knowledge and sharing your personal story when the time is right as it may become someone else’s survival guide
- Protective factors that build healthy and resilient behaviours such as traditional family parenting, language, and land-based activities
- Understanding of the importance of balance and (inter)connections on multiple levels
- Holistic wellness frameworks for individuals, families, and communities that can create hope, belonging, meaning, and purpose
- Community Crisis Plans
- Life Promotion Plans
- Confronting trauma – intergenerational, unresolved, and childhood trauma; trauma resulting from racism, discrimination, and sexual, colonial, and systemic violence
- Reclaiming, revitalizing, and restoring gender diverse (women, men, Two Spirit roles and responsibilities
- Prevention programming
- Building community capacity through suicide awareness, early intervention, and gatekeeper suicide prevention, and train-the-trainer training
- Postvention for the suicide bereaved
- Community engagement
- Multi-media suicide awareness and prevention messaging
- Evaluation and research methodologies

The primary place of **spirit** must be restored. Spirit is within everyone, is nurtured through prayer and cultural practices (e.g. naming ceremony), and is one principle that helps us to understand our DNA and conditions our genetics. Spirit may wonder or leave an individual because of abuse, drugs or alcohol, or any traumatic event which creates imbalance. It can be called back. Spiritual truth comes from transcending pain and awakening all that is – transforming the vibration at the cellular level so that we can see our authentic selves and the gifts we have brought.



Supporting the way spirit is supposed to travel on this earth must come **pre-conception** and with focused efforts on the **early childhood years**. From conception to the first 2 years, many of our behaviours are formed during this time with millions of connections being made within the brain, so that a stable environment is important. Research into restoring Indigenous nations framework on child-rearing will provide insight into such knowledge and practices will reverse the negative effects of colonization that have led to increased suicides in Indigenous peoples and positively impact the health and wellness of children. The first seven years of a child's life are critical. Holistic teachings prepare the child in starting to prepare them for the roles they will have. It also provides critical bonding for connection. Despite colonization and the impacts upon Indigenous cultures, we have never lost our teachings, they have always been there.

Blood Memory / Blood Bone Memory describes how Indigenous elders say memory is in the blood (and bone) and that our stories are passed through genetic (DNA) memory in addition to verbal means. Cells carry our memory and that of those who became before us. This helps to explain unresolved grief. Fundamental principles central to Indigenous worldview such as balance, interconnectedness, spirit, kindness, etc., help us to understand the behaviour of DNA and they condition our DNA.

Epigenetics are described as the study of how an individual's behaviour and environment can affect the way their genes work. While epigenetic changes are reversible and do not change an individual's DNA sequence, they can change how the body reads the sequence. Research on residential schools found that the more lineage a person has with Indian Residential School experiences, the greater the risk for depression and suicide, but also, that culture can work to interrupt the intergenerational transmission of risks. Currently there are research and development of training programs on understanding of epigenetics from an Indigenous worldview being undertaken.

The **spirit of suicide** refers to how suicide is considered to be a spiritual entity in many Indigenous traditions. It is asking us to have a spiritual death and rebirth to restore or remake our soul to continue our life work. It is about individual transformation. It is the last means to awaken who a person truly and to let go of wounds that just cannot be let go of. If healing cannot

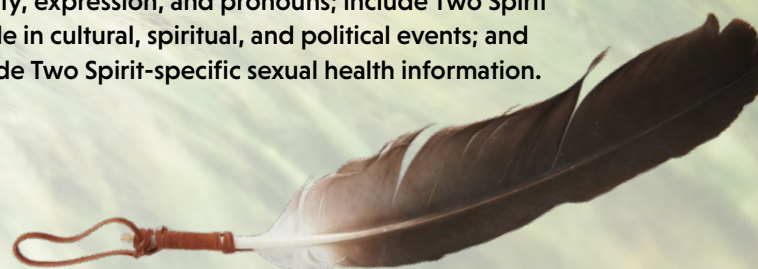
be realized on earth, it will be done on the other side. Understanding suicide from an Indigenous lens, in the language, is about promoting life and preventing premature unnatural death.

Life promotion is an asset-based approach focusing on bringing us to a better place for health and wellness that involves language, storytelling, and knowledge transfer to create hope, meaning, purpose, belonging and a sense of connection on many levels – to land, self, community, and spirituality. Deaths occur as a result of excessive behaviours that fail to promote optimum health and advancing life to its fullest potential.

Resilience of Indigenous peoples refers to the ability to adapt in the face of adversity by coming together to develop solutions that live within Indigenous cultures, knowledge, and ways of being. It is connected to our blood memory through our strong lineage to the ancestors. Fostering resilience is through (re) establishing connection with identity, land, culture, and community by engaging knowledge holders, incorporating knowledge, values, and customs, celebrating life, and centering Indigenous ownership and self-determination.

Protective factors include cultural identity, social connectedness, community awareness and support, 'breaking the silence', access to health care as soon as it is sought. There is increasing evidence that such factors can reduce the influence of risk factors for suicide or the probability of suicide attempts amongst Indigenous peoples.

Two Spirit people also come from the spiritual world and their life journey must not be negatively interfered with. Indigenous people have multiple understanding of gender with the gifts of all centred. Two Spirit people must be included at every level in the response to suicide prevention and life promotion. It is recommended that services providers: adapt to the Two Spirit reality of your child; continue to love and nurture Two Spirit people in your life; support Two Spirit gatherings; support chosen/surrogate families of Two Spirit people; create and support rights of passage for Two Spirit people; affirm personal gender identity, expression, and pronouns; include Two Spirit people in cultural, spiritual, and political events; and provide Two Spirit-specific sexual health information.





An Indigenous youth panel from Canada identified **Best Practices for Engaging Youth in Life Promotion:**

- It begins with listening
- Create an open, accessible, and space for youth to be their authentic self
- Multiple identities must be recognized included and respected. Question who is at your table, who is missing, why aren't they here and what can we do to get them here?
- Honour their voice, lived experience, and wisdom
- Acknowledge youth voice in meaningful way - properly highlighted projects and career, (taking ideas without acknowledge); monetarily – value lived experience; my knowledge on par with Western education. Mentor them. Give to them, not just take
- Story-telling – youth tell their stories in a different way; local language facilitates deeper connections; is healing; at core reflects, identity place, histories, pass on generations; empower youth and inform them about our respective beliefs; reciprocal learning – inspire another
- Shift paradigm from suicide prevention to life promotion
- Recognize that we are dealing with two epidemics - suicide and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two Spirit people
- Must ground selves in land and set good intentions. This is a foundational way of thinking of self and is how we will get to life promotion
- Build connections - challenge other youth to go into their communities and start setting up gatherings to bring people together



Emerging from Engagement Sessions

Engagement sessions with Indigenous Youth, 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, and community members, were held on August 17, 18, and 19, 2021, respectively and on the first day of the conference. The purpose of these sessions was to learn about what positive actions in Indigenous communities, to obtain input on how to incorporate life promotion within families, communities, and nations, and to get initial thoughts on Calls for Action for Life Promotion – Suicide Prevention and ideas for the next WISPC. These last two topics were shared during the main conference, allowing for other participants to provide additional feedback. All feedback on these topics are provided in the Calls for Action and Recommendations for the Next Conference sections of this report.



Uplifting things that are happening in Indigenous communities are:

- Cultural programs, resources, and supports, including ceremonies, language, social and community gatherings, intergenerational sharing, and land-based
- Youth- and 2SLGBTQQIA+ specific programming – for these populations, by these populations, and in safe and supportive environments
- Youth and 2SLGBTQQIA+ populations and the broader community utilizing multiple platforms and diverse means to use their voices to support one another, to advocate, and to promote what is important to them, including suicide prevention and life promotion, recognition of gender non-binary, and recognition of intergenerational trauma resulting from Indian Residential Schools
- Increased Indigenous representation in media, social media, business, sports, and politics
- Community call outs via online platforms for crisis response supports, e.g. COVID-19 pandemic, opioid crisis, emergency evacuations due to weather events



Indigenous communities are healing by:

Youth Engagement Session Feedback:

- Decolonizing ourselves
- (Re)connecting to culture, teachings, practices, and our bodies
- Undertaking reconciliation – sharing our truths, conducting research, individual and community reconciliation
- Learning different healing strategies - healing is not linear and there is no "correct" way to heal; providing resource information to youth on where to go for support
- Creating safe spaces to grieve, gather, and learn
- Restoring hope by uplifting and supporting children and youth
- Celebrating successes

2SLGBTQQIA+ Engagement Session Feedback:

- Initiating and building a movement of learning about the history of 2Spirit people and coming together regularly
- Not compromising self as a 2SLGBTQQIA+ person
- Acknowledgement by others, families, and communities of being 2Spirit through different actions – holding and participating in Pride events, providing 2S-specific bursaries, supporting children to freely express their identity
- Increased safe spaces for 2SLGBTQQIA+ people at gatherings
- 2Spirit knowledge-sharing and finding ways to help ourselves and others, especially those who are street-involved
- Supporting 2SLGBTQQIA+ youth – establishing youth groups, talking openly about sexuality, responding to areas of youth interest, mentorship, and responding to requests for healing

Community Engagement Sessions Feedback:

- Creating hope through healing, having an open mind, and returning to our communities and traditions
- Creating good energy through language, culture, and role modelling
- Living by the Seven Generations prophecy
- Acknowledging that generational healing is within our blood memory
- Acknowledging that healing is a process
- Healing through attending places of prayer, ceremony, and land-based camps
- Sharing and giving gratitude
- Celebrating life and being okay with where I am at

Indigenous communities are healing by:

- Generosity and lateral unity – it is natural to help one another as Indigenous people
- Creating safe spaces to encourage others to use their voice and gifts
- Gift-giving – showing appreciation for each other
- Feeding each other – wanting to help take care of each other's basic needs
- Youth-specific mental health and wellness tools – youth coordinator and youth "bundles" for self-care
- Trailblazing – opening new paths within families, communities, in different areas
- Mentorship and teaching – sharing stories, experiences, knowledge, and resources
- Collaboration
- Utilizing virtual events during the COVID-19 global pandemic – program accessibility, community groups providing hampers and information, and gatherings (including international) to share ideas
- Supporting each other no matter place of residence, and using word of mouth amongst family or peer groups



How Indigenous people can incorporate Life Promotion within our own families and with our own relatives and Nations:

- Creating and sharing safe and inclusive spaces and circles, especially for 2SLGBTQQIA+ people
- Initiate discussion & awareness in communities about 2Spirit identity
- Provide support & resources about 2Spirit identity
- Leading by example in living Mino Pimatisiwin (A Good Life)
- Being a good relative – meeting them where they are at unconditionally, strengthening bonds with relatives, check in on them, hold family events, and make time to bond with family, community, and nation
- Plan – identify things to look forward to
- Establish support groups and hold conference that spread awareness on mental health
- Provide Life Promotion training
- Provide opportunities for community members to travel and meet other – see the world, learn new things, and share different perspectives
- Share resources
- Uplift one another through no-cost activities



PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

Conference participants were invited to complete an online evaluation survey near the end of the final day of the conference on August 26, 2021. 42 completed surveys were received. Details of the feedback are in Appendix F. Highlights of evaluation findings are:

- Nearly all participant respondents (97.62%) were either very satisfied (80.95%) or satisfied (16.67%) with the conference overall
- The most favorite aspects of the conference were Keynote Speakers (45.25%), Presentations (25.71%), and Online Accessibility from Home/Region (11.90%)
- Nearly all participant respondents (97.62%) were either very satisfied (71.43%) or satisfied (26.19%) with the quality of the sessions
- Most participant respondents (89.47%) found the platform easy to use

What Participants Liked the Most about the Conference

Comments about what participants respondents liked most about the conference affirmed the impact of keynote speakers and presenters, especially if they were personal stories. One person stated that they liked *"the depth of the speakers' knowledge and their commitment to the problem."* Another person stated they liked *"the keynote speakers who shared their personal stories, very powerful and engaging."*

Others liked the actions and cultural teachings from Indigenous people across the globe. One person stated they liked *"the exploration of how it is affecting Indigenous people worldwide, seeing what's similar or different, and how people have used their personal experiences to grow and share that growth and healing with others."* Another person stated they liked *"the constant theme and message regarding the ties to culture. The message is clear. The research coming out of Australia and the correlation between culture and decrease in suicide."*

The following comment demonstrates how impactful the conference was for some participants:

I like hearing so many people not afraid to speak of suicide and the healing messages are very similar around the world. This conference was very inspiring...My work is so busy I lose my way often. This conference has changed something in me, and I will be forever grateful. [I am] reminded to take care of myself, seek my true purpose.

Some commented on how they liked the platform and being able to access any presentation later in the day.

How the Conference can be Improved

While most stated they did not have any suggested improvements, some expressed frustration with technical glitches, not being able to attend other presentations of interest because of concurrent scheduling, and not being able to easily find how to access recorded sessions.

Recommendations for the Next Conference

While it is hoped that the conference can be held in person, the most common recommendation for the next conference is to continue to offer it virtually. As well, a range of topics was suggested: a focus on Life Promotion including connection to the determinants of health; Elders panel; and increased diversity of Indigenous groups such as Inuit.

Conference Learning for Daily Life or Use in Community

There were a broad range of conference learnings that participants will use in their daily life or in their community:

- Remembering to pray
- Indigenous peoples have similar stories and share many similar beliefs – we are not alone
- Getting back to culture in all forms – belonging, hope, faith, love
- Shift, consciousness, and revitalization of language – from suicide prevention to life promotion, words are seeds
- Art is a tool for healing
- Colonization and its negative impacts on all Indigenous people

Additional Comments

- "I appreciate all who have listed, spoken, and shared."
- "Thank you...a very powerful and positive conference."
- "Well done to Indigenous sisters and brothers."





RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE CONFERENCES

Recommendations for future conferences were identified through a specific question on this topic during Community, Youth, and 2SLGBTQIA+ engagement sessions held on August 16-18, 2021, and through the conference evaluation survey. Highlights of the latter are identified in the previous section with more details in Appendix F. The former is provided here:

- **Training - Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST), Life Promotion Training, Lateral Violence, Harm Reduction, and for creating, developing, and implementing programs especially in a community setting including how to access funding**
- **Resources and connections for funding opportunities that are attainable**
- **Cultural practitioners (healers, storytellers, medicine people) and how they thrive today, pass on knowledge, and how they are involved in community activities**
- **Healing workshops including home remedies with local plant identification and use**
- **Hands-on Youth activities – if the conference is virtual, activity packages with conference materials can be mailed out before the conference**
- **Cultural activities such as beading and weaving, powwow fit, traditional games, etc**

Call for Action 4 provided earlier in this document is an additional recommendation for future conferences.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE STEPS

The way to healing, what we did for thousands of years, worked. What we are doing now isn't. We can recondition behaviours that young people can be proud of. If there is no word for suicide in over 2,000 Indigenous languages – this tells you it wasn't there.

Joe Williams, 2021 WISPC Keynote Speaker, August 25, 2021

Culture being highlighted as foundational in all presentations at this conference illustrates its centrality to suicide prevention and life promotion amongst Indigenous peoples globally. While resilience of Indigenous people to adapt and develop culturally based solutions to adversity as it arises, the themes of spirit and supporting the way spirit is to travel on this earth, blood/blood bone memory, epigenetics, and the cultural nature of protective factors, signal that Indigenous cultures innately promote life, starting at pre-conception. Program/project evaluation and a growing body of research document evidence of this.

Many conference participants and presenters commented that a paradigm shift is presently occurring – from suicide prevention (deficit based) to life promotion (asset based). This approach centres Indigenous cultures which enable us to reconnect what has been disconnected so that our authentic selves as Indigenous peoples with gifts to realize our life's purpose, not only for us, but for our families, communities, and nations. This is not to discount the value of suicide prevention, which will continue to be a tool in our toolbox.

Looking forward to the next WISPC, conference participants would like the option of attending virtually even if it can be held in person. Consistent with presentation and discussion themes, as far as content, they would like to see a focus on Life Promotion, particularly its connection to determinants of health. At the next WISPC, participants would like to see an Elders panel, cultural practitioners, training, healing workshops, cultural activities, hands-on activities for youth, and increased diversity in representation of presenters from different Indigenous groups. The Calls to Action identified through this conference also recommends increased inclusion of 2SLGBTQIA+ people and welcoming home ceremonies and specific spaces for them.

There is currently a call for interested regions to host the WISPC 2023. A letter of intent is needed for the International Advisory Committee.

Appendix A: Conference Committees

International Advisory Committee

- Ed Azure
- Katherine Whitecloud
- Vanessa Tait
- Maddy Pilon
- Nikki Komaksiutiksak
- Desiree Gillespi
- Pat Dudgeon
- Jacob Smith
- Michael Naera
- Nicky Thompson
- Jocelyn Jones

Local Planning Committee

- Dee Thomas
- Laura Forsythe
- Stephanie Sinclair
- Tara Petti
- Albert McLeod
- April Seenie
- Marcie Tavares
- Brittany LaPlante

Conference Administration

- 28 Days of Self- Care Coordinators
Stephanie Sinclair, Tara Petti and Park Digital
- Mental Wellness Supports Coordinator
Stephanie Sinclair
- Sacred Fire
Anish Corporation
- Opening Ceremony Coordinator
Leona Star and Nu Media
- Closing Ceremony Coordinator
Vanessa Tait and Kejic Productions
- Production and Technical
Reveal Events Group
- Engagement Sessions
Indigenous Leadership Development Institute Inc & Two Spirited People of Manitoba Inc.
- Graphics and Website
Vincent Design Inc.
- WISPC 2021 Conference Lead/Coordinator
Carla Cochrane

Appendix B: Partners and Sponsors



Appendix C: Delegate Information

Countries in attendance:

- Australia
- France
- Kenya
- Taiwan
- Barbados
- Great Britain
- Nepal
- United States
- Bangladesh
- Israel
- Aotearoa- New Zealand
- Vietnam
- Canada
- India
- Philippines
- Zambia
- Dominican Republic
- Fiji

Amount of people who attended the August 17-19, 2021, engagement sessions:

- Youth Engagement **282**
- Community Engagement 1 **240**
- 2SLGBTQQIA+ Engagement **175**
- Community Engagement 2 **126**

Appendix D: Conference Program



2021
World Indigenous
Suicide Prevention
Conference

"Strengths in our Communities"

Conference Agenda

August 23, 2021- August 26, 2021

Online

Monday August 23, 2021

10:30am – 11.00am	Welcoming Remarks Open Ceremony			
11.00am – 12.00pm	Keynote Speaker- Jordin Tootoo			
12.00 pm – 12:15 pm	Break			
12.15pm – 12.45pm	Breakout Session			
1A Community Crisis Response <i>Deanna Jones-Keeshig</i>	1B Health- <i>Leolani Ah Quin, Monica Taylor-Desir Kelly McGrady & Dr. Anita Martin</i>	1C Wahine Maori- <i>Maria Baker</i>	1D A Brotherhood for Men's Wellness- <i>Sandy Lambert & Frank Cohn</i>	
12.45pm –1.15pm	Breakout Session			
2A Buffalo Riders Training- <i>Jessica Ford</i>	2B Roots of Hope: Implementing a Community Suicide Prevention Project in La Ronge- <i>Cathy Wheaton & Nitika Rewari</i>	2C Suicide Risk and Resilience among Alaska Native American and Indian People: A multifaceted approach- <i>Julie Beans</i>		
1.15pm – 1.25pm	Break			
1.25pm –1.55pm	Breakout Session			
3A The Land of the Long Lost- <i>Kararaina Beckett aka Carol</i>	3B Creating a First Nations driven Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper Training- <i>Marsha Simmons</i>	3C Epigenetics & Indigenous Knowledge- <i>Mary Deleary</i>		
1:55 pm – 2.55pm	Engagement Sessions			
Youth Engagement - <i>Diandre Thomas-Hart & Ivana Yellowback</i>	2SLGBTQQIA+ Engagement- <i>Albert McLeod & Vanessa Tait</i>	Community Engagement - <i>Barry Indian & Ron Linklater</i>	Community Engagement - <i>Brittany Grisdale & Chelsea Meade</i>	
2.55pm- 3:00pm	Reflection- Next Day			
3.00pm- 3:30 pm	Self-Care Activity- Understanding the Sacredness of Life- <i>Mary Maytwayashing</i>			



2021
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Conference Agenda

August 23, 2021- August 26, 2021

Online

Tuesday August 24, 2021

10.30am – 10.40am **Opening Remarks and Check in**

10.40am – 11.25am **Keynote Speaker- Tanaya Winder**

11.30 am – 12.15pm **Workshops**

4A Healing Aspects of the
Land: Shkagamik Kwe
Nandwogonah- *Randy
Msheekhn Trudeau &
Marion Maar*

4B Homelands Connecting
Songs across lands and
oceans- *Maurial
Spearim, Katie Symes
Kee'ahn Bindol,
Belinda Duarte &
Michel Bruyere*

4C The Journey of the
Soul- *Jane Burning*

4D Community-led
Life Promotion-
*Mara Grunau &
Tanya Shaw*

12.15pm – 12.30pm *Break*

12.30pm – 1.00pm **Breakout Session**

5A Weaving Métis into
Suicide Prevention
Approaches-
*Reagan Bartel &
Nathaniel
LeChalifoux*

5B Time for Change-
Suzy Taylor

5C Improving cultural, social and
emotional wellbeing to address the
high suicide rates in Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander peoples-
Angela Ryder & Dr. Ee Pin Chang

1.00pm –1.45pm Youth Panel- Best Practices for Engaging Youth in Life Promotion-
Megan Metz, Connor Lafortune, Taylor Behn-Tsakoza, Will Landon

1.45pm – 1.50pm *Break*

1:50pm – 2.35pm **Keynote Speaker- Michael Naera**

2.35pm –2.40 pm **Reflections
Knowledge Keepers/Elders- Barbara and Grace**

3.00pm- 3.30 pm **Self-Care Activity- IZumba- Iskwew Health**



2021
World Indigenous
Suicide Prevention
Conference

"Strengths in our Communities"

Conference Agenda

August 23, 2021- August 26, 2021

Online

Wednesday August 25, 2021

10.30am – 10.35am	Opening Remarks		
10.35am – 10.45am	Elders/Knowledge Keepers- Sheldon & Mary		
10.45am – 11.30am	Keynote Speaker- Joe Williams		
11.35am – 12.05pm	Breakout Session		
6A	Culture as Foundation- <i>Deanna Jones-Keeshig</i>	6B	Culture and Suicide: Impact of culture engagement for wellness and healing- <i>Randi Sager & Dr. Ivana Djuraskovic</i>
		6C	Supporting the Trajectory of our Spirit- <i>Stephanie Sinclair & Valentina McKay</i>
12.05pm – 12.20pm	Break		
12.20pm – 1.05pm	Workshops		
7A	Two-Spirit Indigenous LGBTQI Resurgence in the 21st Century- <i>Albert McLeod</i>	7B	Ancestral Pathways to Wellness- Whispering Pine Training and Consulting Co.- <i>Henry Morgan & Jenny Rudrum</i>
		7C	Wise Practices for Relationship Building and Partnerships: Lessons learned from the Promoting Life Together Collaboration- <i>Kelly Brownbill, Nancy Parker, Despina Papadopoulos</i>
		7D	Strengthening Our Connections to Promote Life: A Guide by Indigenous Youth- <i>Tia Piché, Tristen Schneider, Marshall Morrisseau, Gabrielle Jubinville</i>
1.05pm – 1.20pm	Break		
1.20pm – 2.05pm	Workshops		
8A	Traditional Family Parenting- <i>Janet Fox</i>	8B	I Carry my Heart- <i>Mark Seabrook & Michelle Hrynyk</i>
		8C	Sister Kate's Home- <i>TJ Mia & Glen Stasiuk</i>
2.05 pm – 2.35pm	Films/Videos		
9A	<i>Youth Speaking their Truth about Suicide-</i> <i>Wayne Kaboni, Eric Schweig Mentor & Daphne McRae</i>	9B	<i>Kisahkihitin I Love you-</i> <i>Video- Rhonda Head</i>
		9C	Indigenous Ways to Well-Being: Youth Perspectives- <i>Doretta Harris & Karen Kyliuk</i>
2.35pm – 2.45 pm	Reflection- Elders/Knowledge Keepers Barbara and Grace		
3.00pm- 3:30 pm	Self-Care Activity		



2021
World Indigenous
Suicide Prevention
Conference

"Strengths in our Communities"

Conference Agenda

August 23, 2021- August 26, 2021

Online

Thursday August 26, 2021

10.30am – 10.40am **Opening Remarks**

10.40am – 11.25am **Keynote Speaker- Dr. Carol Hopkins**

11.30am – 12.00pm **Breakout Session**

10A
WE Matter- *Chelsea Mulvale*

10B Breaking Cycles of Abuse & Suicide- Heal Innovate Inspire- *Adele Hauwai & Dr. Derek Chong*

10C Identifying Stories of Resilience within Suicide Mortality Data: Implications for community-based suicide prevention strategies with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Young People- *Mandy Gibson & Raelene Ward*

12.00 pm – 12.15pm *Break*

12.15pm – 12.45pm **Breakout Session**

11A Beadwork is Medicine: Suicide within Northern Communities- *Tammy Wolfe*

11B Finding Strength- *Amanda Sanderson*

11C Feather Carriers: A Leadership for Life- *Ed Connors & John Rice*

11D Project Yarn Circle- *Charles Roll, Uncle Mark Robson & Mandy Gibson*

12.45pm – 1.30pm **Workshops**

12A Life Promotion for All my Relations- *Megan Metz & Ryan Moyer*

12B Thriving through Traumatic Paths- *Sheldon Cote & Angie Cote*

12C Debwetamowin- Faith and Belief- *Vanessa Cook & Sarah Martens*

1.30 pm – 2.15pm **Keynote Speaker- Honourable Murray Sinclair**

2.15pm – 2.35 pm **Closing Ceremony**

3.00pm- 3.30 pm **Self-Care Activity - Lateral Kindness- Victoria Pruden**

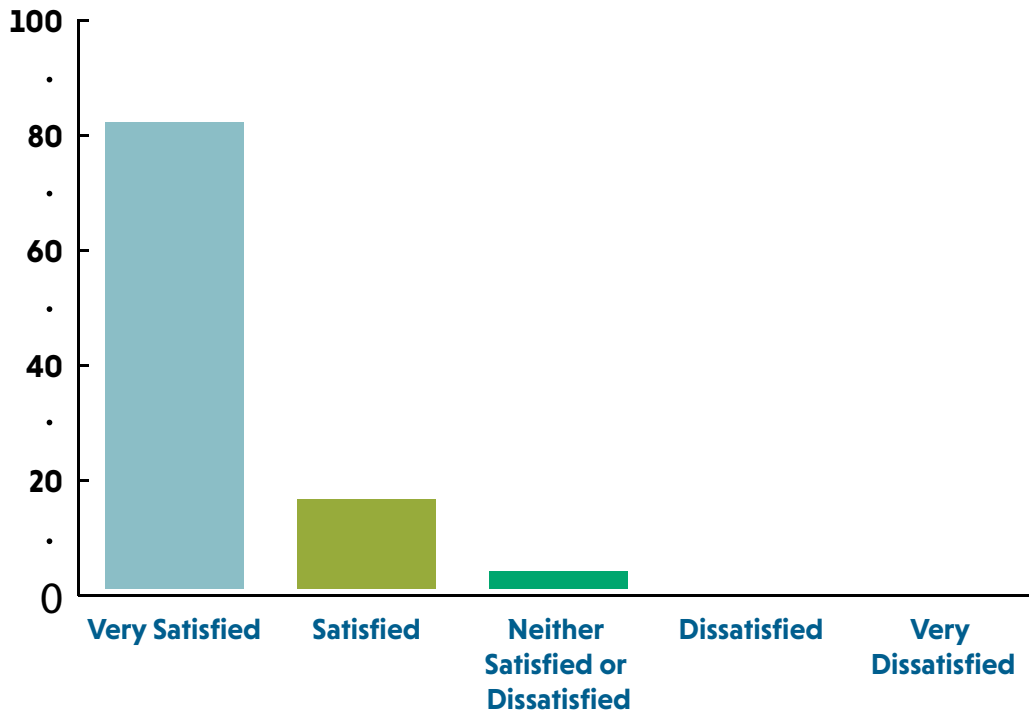
Appendix E: Conference Feedback/Evaluation

Social Supports Feedback

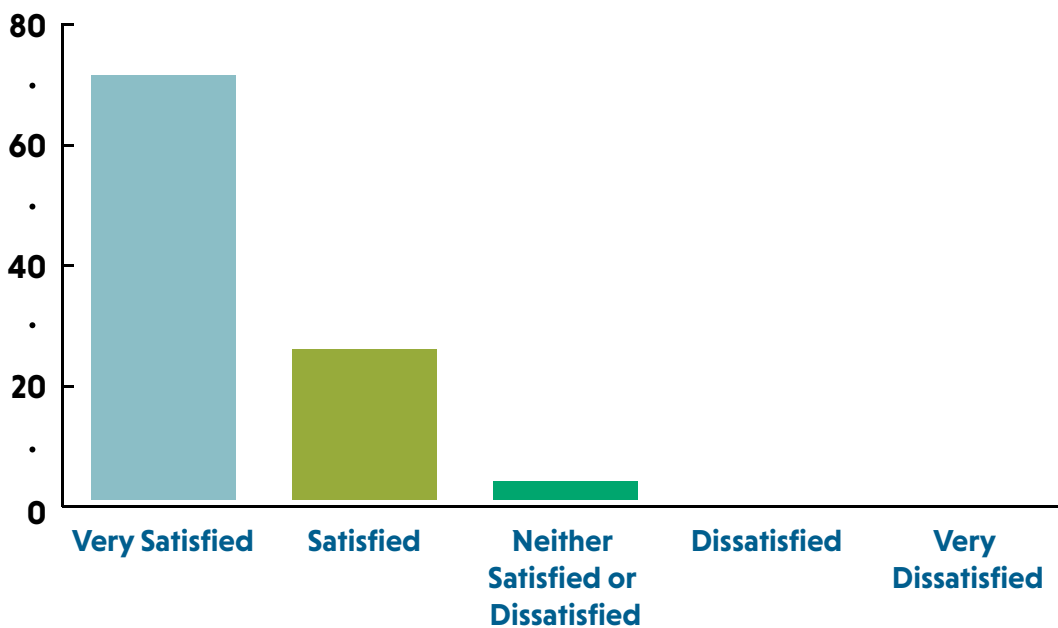
- Easy to use platform. Easy to connect.**
- Partner would check in with each other to see how they are doing. Good connections with social supports.**
- From online conference, able to have access to session whether attended or not. This was positive.**
- Time difference was difficult at first. Put scheduled teams as meetings to be in outlook calendars- so it would go to your time zone. For people 50+ write it down.**
- New for some people- different online experiences. Took some to get used to.**
- Some were reaching out for technical support rather than mental wellness support. Need more distinguishing for mental wellness support.**
- Was unsure if can still watch presentations while with support person. Face bubble wouldn't be there. Private chat box would be there but not sure if we can go into rooms. Needed further clarification.**
- What would be good- the ability to check in with each other- social supports. They know that they are there, etc.**
- Have logistical information for support workers to refer to, if needed.**
- It was quiet during shifts. Perhaps maybe because there was a lack of anonymity for the participants?**
- In-person is better.**

Evaluation Survey

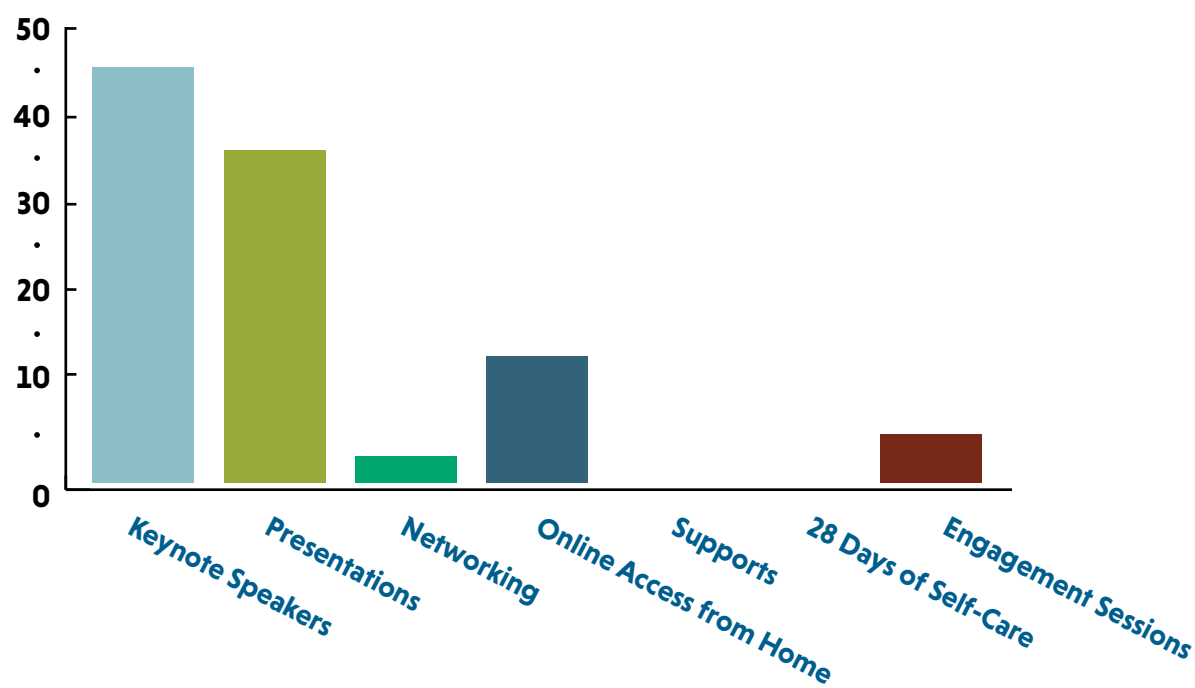
1. How satisfied were you with the event overall?



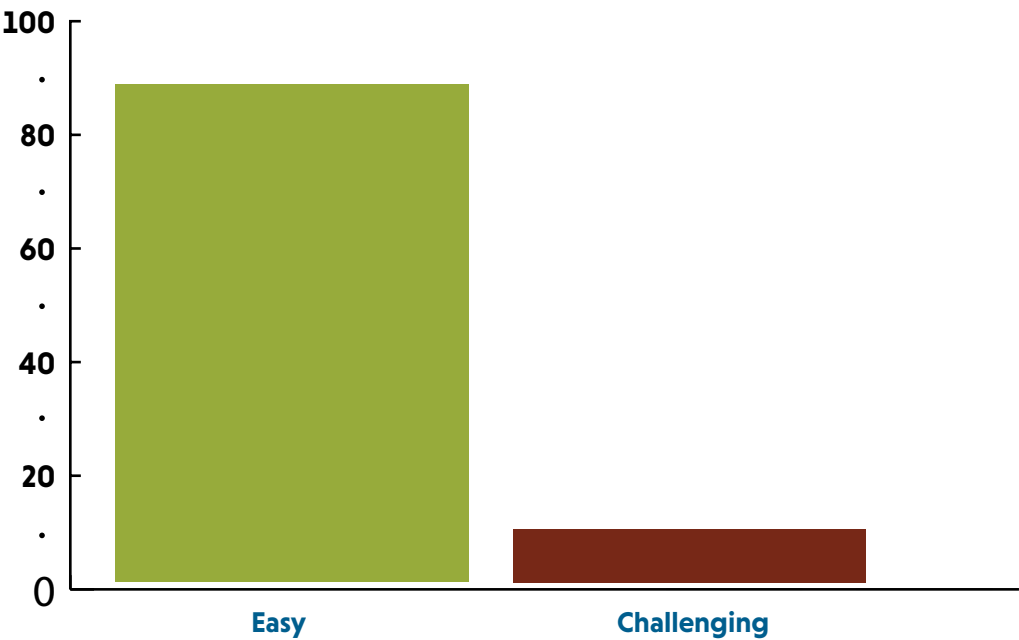
2. How satisfied were you with the quality of the sessions?



3. What was your favourite part of the conference?



4. How easy did you find the platform to use?



5. What did you like most about the conference?

● keynote **First Nations** ●
 EXPERIENCES suicide ● youth
 stories shared **conference** ●
 ● world ● people ● SUPPORT
 SEE presentations speakers
 ● ENJOYED message ●
 watch ●



6. How can we improve on the conference?

■ *Maybe a few more entertainers for me makes me more relaxed.*

■ *There were glitches during presentations-audio was off at times. Weaving Metis into Suicide Prevention Approaches was one I would've liked to see if it was fixed to watch fully.*

■ *The only improvement could have been in person.*

■ *I don't think that it could be improved. If you interrupt someone speaking too often, they can lose their train of thought. I think it worked out exceptionally well, especially given the different time zones and the difficulty of talking about an issue like Indigenous suicide.*

■ *Invite annually.*

■ *More Traditional Teachings from knowledgeable Elders,*

■ *It would be nice to have the self-care sessions recorded so those of us who want to go back to watch it later, can. Also, I am hoping Murray Sinclair's address is posted later as I had to leave half-way though. It was so inspiring.*

■ *It was great. I don't think anything was a problem.*

■ *Identify where to find the recordings.*

6. How can we improve on the conference? (continued)

/// There were so many good panels happening at the same time, it was hard to pick just one. More time to watch the additional panels would be good.

/// It was very well put together no improvements necessary.

/// Have more conference such as this and have one for women.

/// Sometimes it was glitching.

/// No improvements necessary.

/// Nothing, it was great.

/// More sessions and more hands on and engaging sessions. Downloadable videos of the conference for future reference.

/// The option to attend or view recorded events that I couldn't attend simply because I was in another event at the same time.

/// Nothing comes to mind.

/// I loved the platform you used for the conference. It was user friendly and allowed for all the information in one view! Keep using this in the future.

/// I do not think you need to improve anything. I enjoyed that you had support available for all events as well as people to chat with if you were running into technical difficulties.

/// Easier access to the recorded sessions, it was hard to tell which were recorded and which were not.

/// Nothing!

/// More dialog in networking portal. The private chat was good idea but may seem off putting if you reach out to an individual on the chat button. So, a more open portal is good too.

/// I'm not sure, it was great

/// Longer and more speakers from different countries

/// Disorganized - technology problems with most of the workshops I attended - very frustrating

/// fixed technical clichés.

/// Very well done, no recommendations.

/// It is great just the way it is. Very easy to navigate and hardly any issues, not from this end anyway.

/// N/A

/// Have all the sessions via Zoom so that it is more interactive and engaging. Just more time virtually to authentically connect.

/// You did absolutely amazing.

/// All good.

7. Do you have any recommendations for the next conference (i.e. online accessibility, themes, types of presentations, etc.)?

- /// More local advertising.
 - /// The event coordination, pre-recording and support were fantastic.
 - /// If needed Online accessibility. Hopefully we can have this in person and hear people's success stories with Life Promotion and what is working and not working. Land based activities would be great.
 - /// Fingers crossed it can be in person, lol.
 - /// No.
 - /// More youth speakers.
 - /// Select four traditional medicines that are used worldwide and have an Elders Panel discuss them to show how Mother Earth connects all Her People.
 - /// I'd like to see more Inuit involvement, including Inuit ceremonies. Drummers, more throat singing, but definitely the lighting of the kudlik.
 - /// Not at this time.
 - /// Find presentations from across the determinants of health to present on Life Promotion, we need to expand the network, engage more allies. Excellent work
- /// I think the situational videos of youth acting out situations where an individual chose suicide, and a new path was offered, or something changed were really emotional and evocative.
 - /// Not at time.
 - /// Online accessibility, herbs, storytelling.
 - /// I shared the conference with my co-worker but next year will be sharing with others. Miigwech.
 - /// I found it hard to copy links that were sent so an area for online resources and links to be posted that can easily be copied, and the ability to revisit the sessions or information shared in future. Being able to download the recordings or something?
 - /// More links to additional resources & tools that can be downloaded and printed or where we could order hard copies of information.
 - /// Continue to offer it virtually!
 - /// I needed to use Zoom sometimes in order to get audio, that might be something to work on?
 - /// It would be great to have both an online and face to face presence.
- /// Wondering if you could focus more on Elders including suicide prevention in that population.
 - /// Prevention is key, but what of the survivors of suicide loss. Compassionate Friends is a good model. It is about sharing with no judgement or interruption. Thanks.
 - /// Keep an online component so people can access the conference when it's in person again.
 - /// Online accessibility
 - /// I think incorporating a session that includes ways to incorporate spiritual and holistic practices into western medicine would be very useful, or even ways to approach this from a health care provider perspective.
 - /// I hope the next conference is a virtual one, and Canada, that you hold it again, you were amazing.
 - /// Not that I can think of at the moment.

8. What is one thing you learned from the conference that you plan to use in your daily life or in your community?

- // Just keep strength and never give up and pray lots
- // Emphasis on by youth for youth
- // "Finding Your Fire" "Words are seeds" "Youth Are Not Afterthoughts"
- // One thing that I learned is that even though we are all categorized (through colonization) we all have similar stories and share a lot of the same beliefs. I will use this when I am doing presentations to remind my community that we, even as a nation are not alone in battle.
- // That colonisation was designed to have this effect on Indigenous peoples. I already knew that, but I plan to speak more passionately about how mainstream society needs to reduce racism and system-level discrimination and increase the recognition of Indigenous peoples and give them equal rights to stop these suicides.
- // Enforce more youth leaders.
- // Listen - not just hear words.
- // Focus more on the teaching of the Inuit as medicine.
- // Staying Traditional and Showing gratitude and pray to my higher power daily.
- // "Ask Aunty" program.
- // I love the art presentation and learning how to use that art as healing and exploration of culture.
- // I learned quite a bit from this conference prayer is a big thing for me.
- // Hope, faith, love, and the learning of our cultures.
- // I am going to share what I have learned with other professionals.
- // Learning more about "Who I am".
- // Online resource for youth.
- // Art as a tool for healing.
- // As a settler, I plan to practice humility and unconditional support
- // Shift my language from prevention, intervention and postvention to hope, help and healing. Shift to life promotion instead of suicide prevention. Look for ways to integrate the toolkits and guides into our community to engage youth.
- // I liked the speech by Tanaya Winder. What she mentioned about giving life to your words really resonated with me.
- // Too hard to know.
- // Words are seeds!
- // The importance of continued learning.
- // I learned so much that my brain is full, and I need to think about this.
- // Some of the videos, tool kits, and resources.
- // Language revitalizing is key. Need to advocate for it. and practice it.
- // To work harder on the belonging and culture that people need to help find themselves. To work with my families to ensure they hear the message of how important belonging and culture is, to help them implement it into their lives if it is missing or need more. Words are seeds.
- // Helping other connect to community.
- // The lasting impacts of multi-generational trauma and how to better care for these individuals
- // N/A
- // The key presentations of interest reaffirmed that I and my organization are on the right track with the rest of the world. Powerful.
- // Getting back to culture in all forms.

Migwech! Ekosi! Pidamaya do! Mahsi Cho! Nakurmik! Marcee!

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