
~ Final Report ~

KTC Youth Suicide Prevention Conference

“Rekindling the Sacred Fire!”



~ March 8 - 10, 2016 ~

Ma Mow We Tak Friendship Centre
4 Nelson Road, Thompson, MB.



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Introduction

The Keewatin Tribal Council organized a Youth Suicide Prevention conference in Thompson, Manitoba from March 8th - 10th, 2016 at the Ma Mow We Tak Friendship Centre. The focus of the gathering was to provide training in suicide prevention and strategies that promote wellness. It was coordinated jointly by Little Black Bear & Associates and the KTC Health Team.

As it pertains to First Nation youth, suicide has been a deeply challenging issue for KTC and its member communities. The residual effects of residential schools, grief and loss, and a plethora of interrelated socio-economic issues have resulted in inter-generational trauma and suicide is often the culmination of these effects. KTC recognizes the great need to address these matters with sensitivity and respect and, although much effort has been invested in providing training and information in the past, there remains a great deal of foundational work needed in the future to stem the tide of suicide in First Nation communities. This gathering was a good step in the right direction.

The Principal trainer for the conference was Billy Rogers, a highly sought after and skilled facilitator that has been doing wellness training for the past 30 years. Billy hails from Oklahoma, USA and was a leader in the development of the Wellness Movement in North America in the 1980's and 1990's.

The following report is by no means a detailed account of everything that Mr. Rogers imparted to the participants; but it captures many of the salient points and provides an overview of the topics covered.

Think of the information presented in this report as “nuggets of gold” that we can use in our work and in our families to ensure suicide is prevented!

Note: The handouts provided by Billy Rogers are attached.



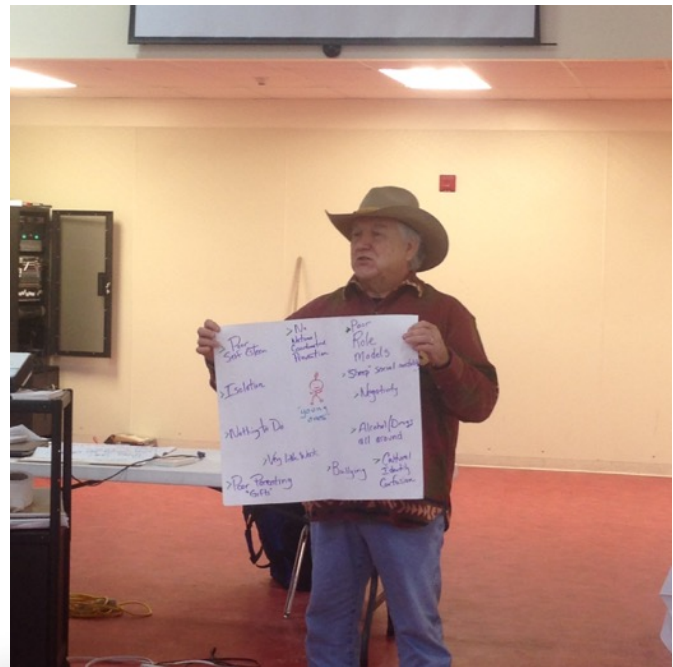
Following the opening prayer and introductions, welcoming remarks were offered by Grand Chief Sheila North Wilson, MKO; John Spence, Director of Health, KTC; and, George Neepin, Executive Director, KTC.

All agreed that a range of issues pertaining to suicide are inter-related and affecting our communities such as poverty to over-crowded housing. Everyone in our communities has been touched by the issue of suicide. The Grand Chief particularly shared her personal challenges with suicide growing up in the north and then moving to the south in the city; many of her thoughts were tied to feelings of inadequacy and there were dark influences that tried to persuade her to take her own life. This darkness is still there impacting our youth today. There are realities we are facing that must be addressed. Low self-esteem is such an important issue and we need to help our youth to build up their positive self-image. We have to spend time with our kids, talk to them, listen to them, and be there for them.

George Neepin said it well when he emphatically stated that, “suicide is a very serious issue, but we have what it takes to make a difference and to turn things around...to learn and benefit from one another. So let’s do it!”

Overview of Aboriginal Suicide:

Mr. Billy Rogers provided an overview of suicide in Canada to give participants a good idea of what we are facing nationally:



- What is Suicide? Death caused by self-inflicted, intentional injury.
- Suicide represents the greatest single cause of injury deaths in the Canadian population.
- It is estimated that suicide accounts for more than a third of all deaths among young Aboriginal people.
- The rate of suicide among Aboriginal youth is 5-6 times higher than the Canadian average.
- Aboriginal people who die by suicide are more likely to be male, young and single.
- Young Aboriginal girls are 7.5 times more likely to die by suicide than the average Canadian adolescent girl. Aboriginal male adolescents are 5 times more likely to die by suicide than their average counterparts.
- Hanging is the most common method of suicide.

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- Many Aboriginal communities state it is a major problem while other communities state they have not had any recorded suicides.
 - Alcohol is a huge contributing factor in suicides. Some estimates of alcohol-related suicide is in the 80-90% range.
 - There is a tendency for “cluster” suicides, where one youth suicide may trigger a series of attempts and/or suicides.
 - The Aboriginal suicide rate is much worse than the statistics indicate because they usually don’t include non-status, Metis and First Nations people living off reserve such as in urban areas.

Sources for the above:

- *Health Canada (2013)*
- *Canadian Aboriginal Suicide Report, Aboriginal Healing Foundation (2007)*
- *Canadian Task Force on Preventive Health Care (1994)*
- *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1995)*
- *Aboriginal Peoples Survey (1991)*
- *Suicide and Death in Young Males (1990)*
- *Suicide in Canadian Aboriginal Populations: Emerging Trends in Research and Intervention (1993)*

Billy Rogers

February 2016

WHY ARE CHILDREN ATTEMPTING OR KILLING THEMSELVES?

Mr. Rogers divided up the participants into 5 Groups to discuss the above poignant question. The following information is the group's answers to the question:

Group 1:

- Bullying
- Sexual abuse
- Neglect
- No trust
- Divorce/separation
- Low self-esteem
- Incest
- Fear and anxiety
- Bearing the sorrows / closed off
- Gossip
- Loss / losing
- Shame
- Peer Pressure
- Domestic violence
- Reservation i.e., imprisonment
- Deprived from the land, culture
- Government system, oppression i.e., Indian Act
- Mental Illness
- Alcohol and drug abuse
- Relationship problems
- Depression
- Despair
- Loss of loved one
- Grieving
- Jealousy



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- Anger
 - Loss of identity
 - No activity or opportunities on the rez
 - Rejection
 - Hopelessness
 - Poverty
 - Spiritual and religion abuse
 - Lateral violence
 - IRS syndrome
 - Loss of parenting, impacts

Group 2:

- Addiction
- Lack of affection
- Mental health issues
- Boredom
- Isolation and no support
- Truth or dare
- Copy cats
- Poverty
- Being bullied
- Cyber bullying on social media
- Loss of identity and sense of belonging, including culture
- Being abused, especially sexual
- No coping skills
- Low self esteem
- Grief
- Abandonment
- CFS Apprehension – being a foster
- Gossip and lateral violence



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- Murder
 - Suicides
 - Guilt
 - Family breakups
 - No positive role models
 - Lack of resources and sources
 - Spirituality is disconnected
 - Racism
 - Hopelessness

Group 3:

- Bullying and name calling
- General hopelessness
- Lack of self esteem
- Neglect
- You're a failure
- Peer pressure or copycat behaviour – suicide pacts
- Shame
- Guilt
- Oppression
- Abuse – psychological, physical, mental, cyber, or sexual
- Loneliness
- Lack of support
- Escapism or attention-seeking behaviour
- Lack of a sense of belonging
- Minimizing behaviours
- Lack of acknowledgement
- Family breakups and divorce
- Being a constant victim
- Relationship failure
- Lack of self-identity or cultural identity



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- Your development stage of lack of maturity or ability to make rationale decisions
 - Fear
 - Trust and safety issues
 - Lack of security
 - Depression
 - Sexual orientation and labelling
 - Illness including undiagnosed mental illness including postpartum depression
 - Alcohol and drug abuse
 - Revenge and desperation

Group 4:

- Bullying
- No coping skills
- Depression
- Feeling inadequate
- Peer pressure
- Not being listened to
- Families broken up
- Abuse
- Loneliness
- No direction
- Feel abandoned by families
- No friends or supports
- Mixed messages out there
- Glamourizing suicide, copycat
- No hope
- Environment
- Alcohol and drugs
- No guidance or stability
- When your idol commits suicide you want to do the same thing
- Media



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- Poverty
 - Low self-esteem
 - No identity
 - Using suicide as a threat to get their way
 - No belonging
 - Blaming
 - Relationship breakups



Group 5:

- Bullying
- Hopelessness
- Apathy
- Feeling lost
- Lack of identity
- Alcohol and drug use (of parents, individuals)
- Absent or unhealthy role models
- Abandonment or abuse issues
- Intergenerational trauma and cultural genocide
- Loss of traditional roles, values, customs
- Lack of life skills, coping, and problem solving
- Feeling alone
- Residential school impacts
- Biological factors: FASD, ASD,
- 60's scoop
- Kids in care
- Relocation and loss of land, community
- Lack of resources / limited
- Affect regulations
- Unresolved grief, compounded and complicated



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- Kids get sent out for high school
 - Conflicted relationship with church
 - Aboriginal spirituality vs. church/religion
 - Shaming
 - Social media
 - Glorified suicide
 - Justice system



So we can see here what the Causative Factors are and if we had the time we could explore each one of these in greater detail, said Mr. Rogers. However, the key next question is: *can we do something to reduce some or all of these factors that are causing suicide in our communities?*

The resounding and hopeful answer is: **YES!**



TEAM - Together Everyone Achieves More!

For Day 3 of this gathering we will think more about what we can do about suicide.

We can all acknowledge that there's a lot of burnout in this field. But if we all do our part, whatever it is, **TOGETHER - WE WILL BE MUCH BETTER!**

TOP 5 FACTORS...contributing to suicide:

1. Bullying – the emerging one – you might want to put efforts behind this one
2. Loss of identity and other losses i.e., family breakdown, kids in care
3. Alcohol and drugs
4. Mental health and depression
5. Glamourizing and attention given people who have committed suicide

What two things could you impact to address suicide - immediately?

1. Be a good Role Model!
2. Be a better Parent!

If we could improve our parenting by just 50% - this would greatly impact upon the issue of suicide!

Note: In 1983, Billy developed the first parenting class at the Native American Centre and it had profound effects on the people who began to take these classes. We can focus on parenting as well in our First Nation communities and many are taking parenting very seriously.

PARENTING:

Mr. Rogers stated very clearly: “Our goal is to have independent children at the end of the day, not having them depend on you!”

Some of the key topics related to parenting are:

- Well parenting
- Family
- Empathy
- Boundary

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- Consequence
 - Learning
 - Positive reinforcement
 - Self-esteem
 - Development level
 - Discipline
 - Teachable moments
 - Modeling
 - Unconditional love
 - Time-out
 - Listening with the heart



Here is a **nugget of gold**: *whenever you tell your children you are going to do something good, do it!* Can we begin to understand the depths of this one thing we can commit to? When children know and feel that we keep our word and are committed to them - they will respond in amazing ways. The opposite is also true, unfortunately. When we break our own word and do not do what we say we will do, the impacts can be devastating. So stay true to your word!

What's Next?

What can we do personally, as a community, and as a Nation to address the issue of suicide in our communities? (**Note:** *this is expanded upon on Page 33, Day 3*)

- Me: focus on yourself...to improve...to be a better person
- My Community - help out in your community...be a participant not a spectator
- Our Nations - get involved with larger events and interact with other communities
- Good Parenting begins with YOU!
- Establish Parent Support Groups
- Emphasize Traditional Values
- Teach parenting classes
- Hold Life Skill sessions for youth

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- Set up Peer leaders support teams: listening, intervention, referrals
 - Initiate training for Teachers on suicide prevention
 - Establish community Crisis Teams
 - Develop a National initiative (or KTC Region-wide)
 - Get leaders to make a REAL COMMITMENT to address suicide! Elect leaders who really care about the issues!
 - Community Awareness Day: Run for the cause, Speakers, Youth Panels, etc.

These are just a sample of things we can actually DO and Take Action on today and tomorrow! (Note: An evening session was held with Billy Rogers and he taught us about relaxation exercises. Sitting quietly and taking slow deep breaths is a great way to bring down one's tension or stress levels)

Day 2 – Youth Suicide Prevention Conference

GRIEF & LOSS

- Loss and death is part of life. We need to help our young people contend with this truth
- We each grieve differently e.g., two different women lost their husbands and both dealt with it totally differently
- The process can take time when people grieve
- We need to be patient and understand
- The process goes in stages

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross was a Swiss-American psychiatrist, a pioneer in near-death studies and the author of the groundbreaking book *On Death and Dying* (1969), where she first discussed her theory of the five stages of grief:

Denial – we will deny that something bad is happening or has happened; we have a feeling that “this isn’t real...”; your mind goes into a state of shock; you feel numb; but that numbness actually protects us; we refuse to accept reality.

Anger - Reality seeps down in your spirit; we are angry at God or other people; “why did this happen to me?”

Bargaining – the fog and heaviness sets in even deeper; it’s reality x2; now we finally acknowledge what’s real; they are not coming back; now you are going to believe; “... please God, don’t let this happen!” “Please come back, I won’t hit you again...” “Please, your Honour, I won’t do that again...I’ll change”. We want to strike a bargain.

Depression – it can last a long time; we could get deeper into this; but this is a Danger stage - now the heaviness has got a hold of you...when you wake up it’s like a dark cloud is following you...you have no reason to smile; every day is dark; people start to worry about you; they try to take you out of that space but you want to be alone; you want to go to your home and into your room and be by yourself; Billy: “you really need to keep an eye on this one”. Depression can settle in; most people can come out of that, maybe 9 out of 10 people; a lot of times you’ll be looking for something to pull you out of this dark place; you want relief from this hurt and pain.

Acceptance – you accept that this is it; this is how it’s going to be, it is reality; “I’m going to jail...” “she’s leaving me...” “I’ll never see grandpa again...”; our soul accepts it and we have to move on with our lives; there’s things yet to be done; one of the strategies: “we all have purpose in life...”; it’s up to you to find out what that purpose is; it’s not your time and you need to move past the hurt and pain and do more; we may be triggered by things: “a song or a movie”, “the holidays...”

Some key things, in summary, to consider:

1. We have to have closure; without closure the wound festers and there is no healing;
2. We need to let go. Hanging on to what used to be keeps us stuck and we cannot move forward with our lives;

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3. There's birth and there's death; we need to make the absolute best of everything in between.

Child & Adolescent Grief

- Children will grieve in spurts
- Babies don't understand or cognitively know about loss - but they may cry for you
- Safety and security – is what they are looking for

Stages:

3 – 5 years – still no abstract thinking

They don't understand permanent

It's the egocentric phase; if the parent had died they may feel "mom has gone bye-bye..." and when they don't return, they might feel "it's because of me they are going..."

6 – 9 years – starting to have a concept of death and dying

They've seen fish die or their pet

They'll dream about it; it might be a monster chasing them

They are afraid, anxious, have fear

We need to reassure them and let them know they are protected

10 – 12 years - beginning to understand death and dying

It's not just in our family but in other places and other families

Now they are asking questions

13 – 18 years - good understanding of death and dying

We say a lot of nice things about people at the funeral

We observe how others deal with death and dying and we follow

Challenge from Billy: “Killing yourself is cowardly – what do you think about this statement?” Deal with this as a group or in your community. Talk about it.

Signs of grieving:

- Can’t sleep or eat
- Don’t want to go to school
- Scared and don’t want to be alone
- They are more needy: “Why are you leaving?” “When are you coming back?”
- They act out in aggression or maybe want to be alone and not talk to anyone
- Some want to go into their closet or room
- It’s traumatic for them – keep your eye on them
- Watch for signs!
- Help them to heal; talk to them and get them to talk
- Talking circles for community members is a good thing to set up
- Deal with some real hard questions: what do you think about someone taking their own life?



Feeling activity for children and teens:

- It’s important for them to vent and say how they feel
- Q. What can you learn from this experience?

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- Q. Who would you trust enough to talk about your deepest thoughts?
 - Maybe they won't want to talk to you, they might want to talk to others, esp. their own peers

WHAT CAN YOU DO AS A PARENT?

- Be a good parent
- Be aware that lots of kids think about suicide
- Maybe they got a bad grade or lost a boyfriend or girlfriend
- There will always be warning signs – what are they? Learn more about them!
- Depression is a key sign...when they are withdrawn
- They may start to give things away i.e., electronics, music, favourite items
- They will begin sorting out their affairs and preparing to “leave”

HEALING ACTIVITIES FOR YOUTH

- Get them to make a sacred box containing their important stuff
- Have them face how they are feeling
- Share traditional stories
- Make ribbons to honour loved ones
- Send a healing balloon with a note inside
- Sharing circles
- Feeling cards – make them or buy them
- Celebrate their birthday
- Listen to songs
- Write poetry
- For anger, especially, get them to write a letter to the person that's passed



For Teenagers:

- Have sharing circles
- Share Photos
- Ask them: what would you like to say to that person (who has passed)?
- What would they like the adults to know in terms of their feelings?
- Go to the graveside together
- Smudging, sweats, ceremony, church
- Keep a journal, diary
- Do some sort of ceremony where you can put what you are carrying away
- We don't want to be forcing kids to talk though; we want them to feel safe – so make that environment happen and make suggestions and maybe they'll be willing to open up

Helping people heal after a loss:

- Survivors – have a lot of empathy
- Give people space
- Encourage memories
- Be understanding
- Don't be the therapist – don't try to answer "why?"
- Don't withhold information from people: answer when asked: "how did they kill themselves?"
- Give lots of safe touches and hugs
- Pray together
- Validate feelings
- Helpers will sometimes avoid and isolate themselves
- Keep an eye on each other
- Helpers don't be afraid to ask for help
- Debriefing – how do you feel about it all? Get them sharing

HOW CAN WE PREVENT SUICIDE?

- We have to set ourselves up for ensuring that it doesn't happen
- If someone wants to kill themselves, they will find a way to do it; but what we want to do is help them so they don't get to that point
- Talk about differences between Christian and Traditional views – what happens to people who kill themselves? Where do they go? Discuss.
- Good parenting, role models, and leadership

Breakout Exercise:

1. Get into teams of two. Take turns. First one to go closes their eyes and does not look at the paper.
2. Draw a moose, a tipi, a creek, a campfire, and a moon in the sky, a crow flying by the moon
3. Use your opposite writing hand
4. Partners help describe to the person where they should draw things

Observations:

- Getting into other people's minds
- We might not understand totally what a suicidal person is thinking
- But we still need to take steps to reach out

Take a child aside that may be suicidal:

1. Ask: Are you OK?
2. Watch their body language
3. Ask: Are you thinking about harming yourself?
4. Find out who that person belongs to and then go meet them to inform
5. Intervene!

What about the person who objects to you trying to help?

Be professional. “I’m just trying to help and to let you know that I care...” And then let it go...What about the alternative? What if you knew someone may have been suicidal and you did nothing about it?

- We called the Principal, the Health Centre, the Parents to help someone; we did all we could to help.
- Doctors have to emotionally remove themselves to a certain degree when dealing with their patients. They have to! Otherwise, if they got emotionally involved, they’d end up in a mental institution. We have to do the same to some degree
- Be good parents. Be good grandparents. If you do that, you will see an impact in your community. Surround your children with good medicine.
- Prepare your children to meet the world’s bullies and users and abusers. Teach them to be good problem-solvers.
- Be good role models.
- How do we respond to a parent that says, “my child is stressing me out!” Children DO stress you out. It’s a tough job. It’s a responsibility.
- Many parents don’t know how to be a parent. Why? They are 16 themselves. They pass along their own responsibility to their parents. And so grandparents are left to the task of raising that child.
- There’s a lot of kids dealing with parents splitting up; the norm today is blended families
- There’s something to be said about tradition because it gives you stability.

HEALTHY FAMILY CHARACTERISTICS

- What is healthy? You do things in a good way
- Listening and talking are the primary paths of connecting
- Listen first and then talk second



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- All are to have expression of feelings: “how do you feel about that...?”
 - Be consistent
 - Good role models
 - Discipline
 - No alcohol or drug abuse (don’t abuse prescription drugs)
 - Support one another – go to family activities
 - Don’t yell at your kids
 - Don’t lie
 - Monitor your children’s activities
 - Spend quality time together (go fishing, hunting, a walk, play catch, etc.)
 - Participate in spiritual activity together; teach them to pray
 - Conflicts are settled quickly – fix those conflicts! Don’t let them drag on
 - Feel safe in your own home
 - Give them a lot of love – lots of love!

COMMUNICATION

“How to talk to youth so they will listen - How to listen to youth so they will talk!”

Always know where your children are!

Areas of communication:

Watch people’s face, their eyes, if they shift, if they smile, cross their arms...watch the body speak

When you talk to the little ones don’t look over top of them or hover over them

Smile – it’s a sign of accessibility

When talking, don’t interrogate with probing questions

Avoid: “I told you so!” “That’s what you get!”

Use “I” messages: “I need you to...” “I’m disappointed...”

Don’t yell or scream

“Talk gently but firmly!”

Examples of what to do to communicate well:

- Let's say the child is in trouble
- You could say something like: "I need to tell you I'm disappointed in you today..." "I'm not mad at you..." "We've asked you the last three weeks to give this report at school...why has this not happened?" "We see your mark now and it's down...why is that?" "You didn't hand in 2 of your reports, and now that has affected your mark... what's going on? How can I help?" "We expect you to turn in your work..." "We need to see some improvement from you immediately..." "I know you can do this..."
- Don't take their dignity away



- Help them set goals
- Watch your tone
- Don't give them advice – why not? You take their decision-making skills away
- Instead, say: "What do you think?"
- Don't interrupt them when they are talking
- Don't finish sentences
- Put yourself in their shoes
- Don't be judgemental
- Help them to make the big decisions
- Be patient with the young ones; connect with them
- Listen and use a gentle voice

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- Self-esteem is one of the biggest things - always seek to lift the child and never crush them with your approach

SELF-ESTEEM:

- Young children and pre-adolescents get their self-esteem from their parents
- After 13 or 14, self-esteem is from sports or other activities or their peers
- Do we value ourselves?
- Being lovable and having self-confidence
- If you don't have high-self esteem can you get it? Yes.
- "Nobody likes me"... "I'm not accepted" are things youth they say to themselves
- How is self-esteem taken away? Put-downs. Negative criticism. Being self-critical
- If you're told you are worthless or no good you will believe it
- If you didn't get that love and acceptance, where will you get it? You'll go look for it
- Self-esteem – how much you like yourself; being good at something; show kids how much you love and care for them
- Give them an activity that they can excel at ... this will do wonders for their self-esteem
- What do you say when you talk to yourself?
- Accept that you'll make mistakes as a youth. Learn from them!
- Strive to accomplish something
- Help kids by teaching them to set goals
- Help them to take healthy risks
- Don't worry about what other people think – be true to yourself
- Learn to accept things that you can't change – don't carry that baggage
- Be proud of your own culture and don't be ashamed of it
- Don't hang around people who bring you down – people who gossip
- Understand that being well-liked is not necessarily being the most popular that will make you happy
- Treat people how you want to be treated



RELATIONSHIPS

Teen Relationships:

Attraction – physical chemistry

For teens it's all about the physical

(Exercise: get the boys and girls to each make a list of what they think is attractive for boys or girls)



Un-Healthy Relationships:

Help youth to understand what is not healthy:

- Is there meanness in your relationship?
- Insulted?
- Have you been threatened? Physically abused?
- How many have you been hit?
- How many of you know boys that have forced girls to do something sexual?
- They are constantly mad at you – all the attention is on them
- They are always critical about how you dress?
- Who are you trying to attract
- Always threatening to break up
- You're too heavy

What is this all about?

Power. Control. Neediness. Jealousy. Insecurity; But they are only seeing what they see round them;

The bottom line is: we gotta help make youth aware of what a healthy relationship is all about

Here's a Scenario:

You have a close relationship with your 16 year old daughter. Her boyfriend wants to have sex. How do you advise her?

- The vast majority of parents do not talk to their kids about sex
- So it's no surprise that our young girls are getting pregnant at a young age
- You have to decide as a parent – when is it OK to have sex?
- There are very few upsides to kids having sex even at 16
- We teach them about avoiding alcohol or drugs, but very few want to teach them about sex issues

Give your child a scenario:

You and your boyfriend had a couple of beers and he's coming on to you. What are you going to do to get out of that situation?

- Are you as parents going to talk to your children about sex issues? About Gonorrhea, Chlamidia, HPV, AIDS, etc.
- Kids need to feel comfortable to come to you parents to talk about sex issues; make them comfortable and don't shame them

BULLYING

- We are supposed to PROTECT our children
- Unchecked bullying can lead to suicide
- It's an issue and we need to deal with it
- Your 14 year old girl is being bullied in school – what are you going to do about it?

Statistical fact: bullies have been bullied

- A lot of schools don't know what to do
- Bullying is about Power and intimidation
- The lower you are on the social ladder the more likely you are to be bullied through some or a combination of the following ways:
 - Teasing
 - Slurs
 - Sexualizing
 - Physical
 - Pinching
 - Scratching
 - Twisting arms
 - Relationship isolation
 - Controlling
 - Cyber-bullying



Bully Survivor Skills:

- You can ignore and walk away
- Stay in groups or friends – bullies are less likely to pick you out of a group
- Use assertive language: “stop that, leave me alone...”
- Remember: bullying is predatory behaviour; they find someone to pick on
- Stand up for yourselves
- Tell an adult
- Avoid the bully and their surroundings
- Stay active i.e., sports, give them something to do
- Ask your peer group to help
- What if a bully pushes you in the washroom? What do you do? Go get help
- What if you give your child permission to defend themselves defensively

What is affecting the “Young Ones”?

- Very little work
- Poor parenting “gifts”
- Bullying
- Cultural identity confusion
- Negativity
- “Sheep” social mentality
- Poor role models
- No national coordinated prevention
- Poor self esteem
- Isolation
- Nothing to do



Check-in: How do you (participants) feel?

- Thank you
- Thumbs up
- Awesome
- Educational
- Helpful
- Inspiring
- Interesting
- Good
- Fantastic
- Fun, fun, fun!
- Excellent



With respect to youth suicide, consider this:

- Suicide is a symptom of something greater!
- Our children want to belong
- They want what others have
- They will learn by watching
- The info we have is all tied together
- The big problem is fixable
- We have the highest rates of suicide
- The problem is much too big for any one person or community to handle but if we all do something, that will add up
- Collectively, we can do it!
- You start with your family and your community
- If we teach the young, your family will be ok
- We want our children to grow up to be good leaders – to have spirituality permeate their lives
- Pay attention to your children's rituals e.g., child gives daddy a hug before going to bed
- How many of us hug our children? Kiss them? Or tell them, "I love you!"
- You are going to hurt more if you don't tell them you love them
- If you do tell them, then you will smile and be happy

Small group exercise: What are 2 or 3 rituals you do with your family?

What are some rituals?

- a) At your supper table discussion, ask: "...what is one thing you learned today?"
- b) Kiss goodbye
- c) Cooking for each other

Q: What are some rituals you do with your family?

To recap, why is suicide happening?

- Some parents are not good parents
- When we don't give a protective blanket around our children, they become vulnerable
- Would we send our children out in the snow without protective clothing to go fetch wood in the bush? No, we would give them all they need to do so
- So our #1 job as parents is to be the best parent for our children
- It's on us, as parents, to teach our children; teachers in schools are secondary. It's our role to teach
- When these are missing in our child's life, they will be underdeveloped
- They will eventually seek to fill the missing parts in their lives
- They will realize something is missing and they will know something is wrong
- We have to prepare children for life
- Teachers can tell when children are not loved at home
- We need to give them a safe place and a hug
- Children want to be hugged
- When children don't get love and affection, how do they feel? They will feel left out and begin to think: what's wrong with me? Why don't I deserve a hug?
- Life isn't really about talking. It's not about planning. It's about "what are you doing?"
- How many of you have heard: "I wanna go on a diet" or, "I wanna quit drinking"
- It's not about what you want to do, it's about **what you do!**
- We are products of our behaviour
- Our actions speak about who we are!

Icebreaker: Animal Farm - Just to refresh your memory, remember the Animal Farm? Participants were divided up into groups according to different animals such as: ducks, pigs, cows, etc. Each person was asked to practice what their animal sounds like: “quack, quack....mooo...mooo...oink...oink...” Now everyone had to close their eyes and sound out their animal to find their partners. Everyone heard the sounds all at once and it sounded like mayhem! Finding your fellow ducks or cows in the crowd with your eyes closed wasn’t easy. But it sure was a barrel of laughs and fun!!



Recognizing Youth Negative Thoughts or Thinking:

- How many of you know that babies (0 – 18 months) have different cries for different needs?
- Can you recognize the ways of crying? How would it make you feel if you could recognize the way they cry?
- Children also go through different stages in their behaviours

-
- They are going to think: “I’m different from others. The way I look, the way I talk, dress, communicate, etc...”
 - How we look at other people. In our culture, we were taught not to look at someone in the eye. But we go to a non-Aboriginal school and we’re told to look at someone in the eye
 - Girls think: “I’m too fat...” Boys think: “I don’t have big enough muscles...”
 - Or they think: “I’m different from other kids...” “I’m not going to worry about it...” “I wonder if my friends really like me?” “I am alone...” “Everyone is looking at me...” “Things will never change on the Rez...” “No one understands me...” “What is my culture, anyway?” “Everyone else is doing it so why not?” “I want to belong to something (gangs, groups...)...” “Sexual fantasies, what is this all about...?” “My parents don’t understand me...” “My family is weird...” “How come I am not like...?” “I want “stuff but we can’t even afford it...”

BE AWARE OF WHAT KIDS ARE THINKING ABOUT!



Cultural Development Model of Unbalance

- Before we can fix a problem, we have to understand how we got there in the first place!
- We are hanging on to our pain – why?
- The youth suicide rate is slightly higher in Canada than the USA
- What we are finding here in Manitoba is that kids are committing suicide at a younger and younger age
- What is going through the mind of a 10 year old to convince them of committing suicide?
- Girls attempt suicide more than boys
- Suicides are under-reported
- One of the trends today is bullying. 10 years ago it wasn't there. It is now. This includes cyber-bullying
- Parenting Styles: Permissive, Authoritarian, Nurturer...which style do you have?



*Taking time out to have fun was an important aspect of our conference!
Pssst - your beautiful!*



Day 3: WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT YOUTH SUICIDE?

This all important question was explored from three different perspectives: from an individual's point of view, from the community, and from our Nation or wider community throughout our country.

WHAT I CAN DO!

- Talk about suicide
- Just be a good parent
- Healthy parenting (creating independence not co-dependence)
- Know my identity (pride, language, culture)
- Exhibit healthy behaviours
- Teach family values
- Positive self-image
- Promote empathy & support

- Listen and hear our youth
- Provide daily rituals
- Self-care
- Be a role model
- Planting good seeds
- Love and nurture
- Take care of ourselves
- [Spend] quality time together
- Acknowledge and communicate with youth
- Honour Youth's gifts
- Be a mentor (patience, non-judgemental)
- Listening, sharing circles
- Awareness by resource sharing
- Be positive healthy role models (No gossip, sober)
- Rites of passage
- Share our stories
- Family events (camping, game night, celebrations)
- Promote traditional values
- Healthy communication (talking with, not talking to)
- Provide healing strategies
- Support groups
- Acknowledgement
- Patience, traditional values
- Be a role model



WHAT CAN THE COMMUNITY DO TO ADDRESS SUICIDE?

- Community gatherings
- [Identify] leadership roles in a family
- Establish community supports

-
- Structured, organized sports
 - Traditional teachings (language, traditional skills)
 - Utilization of elders
 - Retracing family/community history
 - Advocate for more resources
 - Sacred places and spaces
 - Promote education
 - Community awareness on issues
 - Training - suicide, life skills, and mentoring
 - Sobriety walks/events (suppers, dances)
 - Peer support groups (different kinds)
 - On-call emergency line 24/7
 - Local Crisis Response Team (establish)
 - Involvement with school curriculum
 - Networking (local, outside)
 - Have a community awareness conference
 - IRS Impact Information
 - Structured youth activities (hunting, fishing, trapping, games, traditional)
 - Parenting classes
 - History of communities
 - Men & women's support groups
 - Honouring youth
 - Life skills
 - End gossip and lateral violence
 - Parent/teacher meetings
 - More leadership involvement
 - Teen support line (kids help line)
 - Sharing circles
 - Community balance networking responsibilities
 - Community events
 - Youth Conference done by youth themselves



-
- Elders' teachings
 - Training: Assist, CISM, Survival Skills
 - Traditional drum and singing
 - Youth centre
 - Cultural camps
 - Positive leadership
 - Good role models (no gossip)
 - Acknowledging youth (talents, gifts)
 - Yellow Ribbon Campaign
 - Jr. Chief & Councils (establish)
 - Child/Youth/Adult interaction
 - Educate community members and promote awareness (suicide)
 - Youth Council
 - Life skills training
 - Grassroots crisis response
 - Healthy communication skills



WHAT CAN WE DO AS A NATION?

- Leaders to promote initiative
- National suicide initiative promotion
- The people are #1 priority!
- Voice our community concerns
- Culture exchange with other communities
- More training dollars \$\$\$
- Be an advocate in social issues
- Promotion of traditional values and ways
- Promote community event and wellbeing
- Teaching culture awareness through western society
- National Day for our Youth
- Involvement at a national level - honouring youth
- Connect with other organizations / Network with other nations

-
- Healthy leadership and front line workers
 - Establish a northern youth regional suicide strategy
 - National walks to be raised
 - Set up Youth Centres (pool, arena) - recreation opportunities

* THESE IDEAS ARE GREAT AND THEY OFFER A WIDE VARIETY OF THINGS THAT WE CAN DO. NOW THE KEY TO ALL OF IT IS TO **TAKE ACTION!!**



JR. CHIEF & COUNCIL INITIATIVE

Ken Bighetty provided an overview of the Jr. Chief & Council Initiative that KTC is currently involved in coordinating and supporting within their region. It is a deeply impacting project because it empowers youth to set up their own leadership structure. Once this is done they begin to take ownership for establishing many different supports for youth within the community. They set up a home away from home or a centre where they can hang out. They decorate and make this space their own. Knowing they have others they can be with to do a variety of activities is a big step for many youth. It gives them a sense of purpose and this has had a profound effect on the youth. In one community, their crime rates dropped as much as 70% after the Jr. Chief & Council was established and youth were able to take steps to set up their own peer supports and things to do for the youth in their community.



This great work is continuing and there is high expectations for further success!

Way to go, Ken!

CONCLUSION:

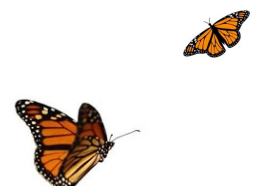
The stark reality - with respect to First Nation youth - is that suicide has been a deeply challenging issue in the KTC region among its member communities. The residual effects of residential schools, grief and loss, and a plethora of interrelated socio-economic issues have resulted in inter-generational trauma and suicide has been the culmination of these effects. The KTC organization as a whole has recognized the great need to address these matters with sensitivity and respect and KTC has invested much to build a stronger foundation to stem the tide of suicide in First Nation communities.

This gathering was a good step towards building that foundation. It is a small step but an important one. Participants have clearly articulated their approval for this conference and they desire to see more gatherings like this in the future, particularly ones that can happen directly within the KTC communities. ***(Note: The Evaluation Report is attached as Appendix C).***

There were many issues raised by Billy Rogers to get the participants thinking in the right directions. The two days that Mr. Rogers spent with the group was much appreciated and there is great anticipation and hope that another gathering with his leadership could be conducted again in the future.

The gathering was, overall, a great success in no small part because of the cooperation and teamwork of the KTC Health Team, in conjunction with Little Black Bear & Associates and the esteemed Mr. Billy Rogers.

Until next time...Ekosi! Masi!





Our dear friend and trainer, Billy Rogers!

NOTE: PLEASE SEE BILLY'S BIO IN THE ATTACHED APPENDIX B.



John and George thanking Billy for all of his help and his great insights as our trainer!





An awesome time had by all - and how about those homemade conference bags?

EKOSI! MASI CHO!



~ APPENDIX A ~

Conference Participants:

Adrian Yassie
Alice Saunders
Arlene Watt
Audrey Mayhem
Caroline Flett
Curtis Bee
Denise Trout
Diane Disbrowe
Eva Samuel
Evelyn Okemow
Giselle Clarke
Janet McIvor
John Ross
Josephine Neepin
Leon M. Tsessaze
Martha Grieves
Mary Jean Clipping
Nancy Powderhorn
Nancy Williams
Natalie Majcher
Rachel Yellowback
Tamara Dumas
Yvette Robinson

KTC Team:

Adam Nalge
Adele Sweeney
Anita Crate
Arla Tait-Linklater
George Neepin
Gina Brightness
Hector Spence
John Spence
Juda Keeper
Ken Bighetty
Marilyn Linklater
Mary Azure Laubmann
Mary Linklater
Melvina Tait
Victor Tsessaze

Special Guests:

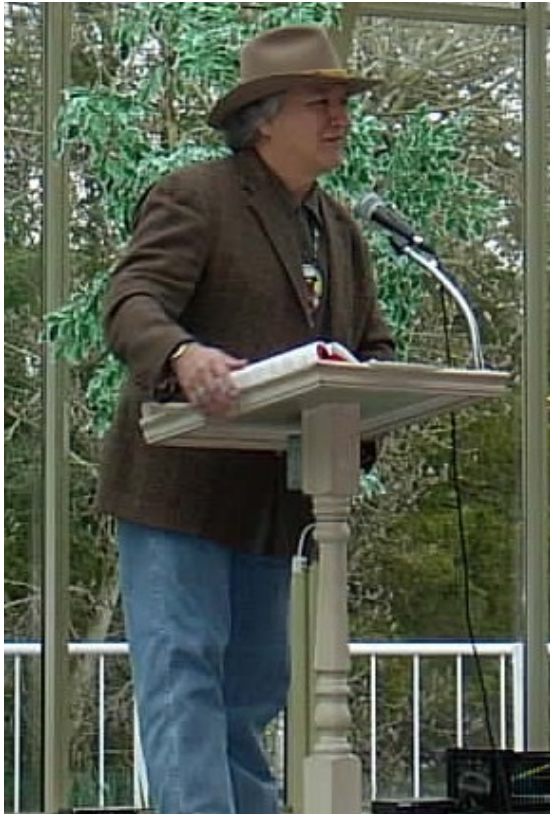
Billy Rogers, Oklahoma, USA (Trainer)
Grand Chief Sheila North Wilson, MKO



This session was facilitated by:
Little Black Bear & Associates
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www.littleblackbear.ca

~ APPENDIX B ~

BIOGRAPHY - BILLY ROGERS



Billy Rogers hails from “Zol Tone,” traditional territory of the Kiowa Tribe (Kiwah) in southwestern Oklahoma. He has lived in Norman, Oklahoma with his wife and granddaughter for 30 years.

Billy, who is ½ Kiowa, has been doing work in Native North America for over 29 years. He has worked with over 400 tribes and First Nations in the USA and Canada, in addition to numerous organizations, schools, government agencies, and communities.

Billy provides training and consultative services in a number of areas including: staff development, native council/board leadership, school administrator/teacher cultural awareness, community development, wellness and health promotion, youth life skills, parenting and personal development.

Prior to becoming a private consultant, he founded and directed the Native Wellness Institute, a non-profit native training organization. Before that, he initiated and directed a nationally recognized continuing education department for 17 years at the University of Oklahoma that focused on healthy Indigenous lifestyles. While there he began the native wellness movement that has impacted thousands of native people across North America. Billy has also been a University instructor, teaching undergraduate and graduate courses. More recently, he has been involved in Indigenous sacred site and traditional lands conflict issues. He has degrees in psychology and public health.

Billy has been blessed to come to Canada for over 3 decades to share and also learn from Aboriginal teachers.

To contact Billy for training, please email: nativewellness@sbcglobal.net



~ APPENDIX C ~

CONFERENCE EVALUATION RESULTS

**KTC Youth Suicide Prevention Conference
March 8 – 10, 2016**

N = 17 of possible 24 respondents (or 71% response rate)				
	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Poor
Overall, my experience at this conference was:	64%	24%	6%	0
The conference topics were:	71%	30%	0	0
The organization of the conference was:	47%	24%	24%	0
The conference facilities were:	41%	30%	24%	0
The information packages (conference kits) were:	64%	18%	12%	6%
The Presenters / Trainers were:	82%	12%	0	0
The interaction among participants were:	41%	35%	12%	0

Analysis:

1. The vast majority of participants had a very good to excellent experience at this conference;
2. The conference topics were excellent and very good;
3. The organization of the gathering was good to excellent;
4. The information packages were good to excellent, but could be improved;
5. The presenters were very good to excellent;
6. The interaction among participants was very good to excellent.

Overall, the participants expressed their great satisfaction with this conference.

SUMMARY:

The participants were greatly satisfied with the quality of information provided and delivered by a caring presenter / trainer, Mr. Billy Rogers. They also enjoyed their interaction with one another.

Participants felt happy and inspired at this conference. It was a positive experience for them and they learned a lot; they would like the information they received here to reach the community level. The significant internal response by many was that of HOPE.

Again, the great thing that was inspired at this gathering was a sense of hope. It meant very much to participants to have learned so much and to have themselves opened to so many thoughts and ideas that can help them in their work and their personal lives. It held great meaning that shifted their mindset in positive ways.

Many participants liked the presentations given by the trainer, Mr. Billy Rogers. He gave quality information and delivered it in a gentle way. The information about the Jr. Chief & Councils being worked on by KTC, the sharing, the participation and interaction, and the topics covered were all enjoyed as well.

What was not liked by participants were things that distracted from the gathering as well as the little things that would have made the process flow better. Providing Kleenex, giving advance warnings that people could be triggered by the information covered, the room temperature, and providing better snacks at breaks. But the main thing was that participants would have liked more time spent on the topics presented.

Involving more youth in the process and spending more time on topics with a bit of a slower pace in addressing each of the topics would have been greatly appreciated. It was a lot of information to cover in the two-day period and that was somewhat overwhelming to the group. Future gatherings should involve presenters that youth can relate to i.e., peers.

The participants would like to see this kind of conference/workshop brought to the communities to involve more people i.e., leaders, youth, elders, etc. and to hold these gatherings out on the land. It was a great experience that they would like more people to be part of and to experience for themselves.

And finally, the notion that suicide is a symptom of larger issues was a profound realization for participants.

1. What STANDS OUT clearly in your mind about this conference?

- *The Junior Council stood out for me*
- *I keep thinking about how Billy Rogers has said that parents are a big part of how children will turn out. I agree.*
- *It was good*
- *Wasn't aware of the extent of the seriousness of youth suicide*
- *Speaker was engaging. Excellent.*
- *Everything*
- *How very important it is to be and know whom you are; to be rooted in your culture, language and land. This is one of the reasons why there is so much suicides in our communities*
- *The sharing and the role playing*
- *Youth, crying out for help; we need to focus on community issues*
- *Billy Rogers teachings stood out; his presence in Day 3 was missed but Darrell did good as well*
- *The quality of information received and the method of delivery by caring and involved people*
- *About how to deal with kids, teens, about death and relationships*
- *How we can address the issue of suicide (me, community, national)*
- *Billy Rogers; his outstanding presentations*
- *The group exercises and the interaction Billy Rogers had with the people*
- *Awareness*

Analysis:

The participants were greatly satisfied with the quality of information provided and delivered by a caring presenter / trainer, Mr. Billy Rogers, and their interaction with one another.

2. Overall, how did you FEEL about the conference?

- *Overall, I really had fun and I learned a lot*
- *I felt good (x2)*
- *I would request to have more conferences and workshops – possibly bring to the communities*
- *Hopeful for communities*
- *Awesome! I'm happy I came*

-
- *I feel very strongly about getting the positive information I learned to everyone in the community, reflections of what children see in the community have a big impact on the children*
 - *It was a great conference*
 - *Very informative*
 - *I feel different. I feel hope for our people and our youth*
 - *I felt hopeful that things could begin to change in a positive way at a grassroots level*
 - *It is very good to get together and putting our minds together*
 - *Confident and hopeful*
 - *Learned a lot*
 - *Very, very inspirational*
 - *Felt uneasy at first because of personal experience, as the presenter went on I felt hopeful and at ease with the topic*

Analysis:

Participants felt happy and inspired at this conference. It was a positive experience for them and they learned a lot; they would like the information they received here to reach the community level. The significant internal response by many was that of HOPE.

3. What MEANING did this conference have for you?

- *It means that there is hope and people out there to help you and want to help you when you need it*
- *Youth suicide prevention*
- *Hope – save our youth – with honesty life value*
- *Hope*
- *A lot of meaning; a lot of affirmations*
- *We have the knowledge, understanding, empathy for others and all the communities have to work together to help everyone I came here to learn and I certainly did!*
- *I learned a lot about empathy. I was one of those who used to think “Get over it or Move on!” Not all people can pick up right away. It changed my mindset.*
- *This conference made me think about the people, but also my own children and what they go through. An eye-opener!*
- *It gave me hope that there are willing to begin to make change*
- *The meaning it had for me is how kids really feel*

-
- *Understanding and an eye-opener (personal)*
 - *Very helpful*
 - *The need to reach out to anyone who may be struggling with suicide ideas*
 - *How to help the youth*

Analysis:

Again, the great thing that was inspired at this gathering was a sense of hope. It meant very much to participants to have learned so much and to have themselves opened to so many thoughts and ideas that can help them in their work and their personal lives. It held great meaning that shifted their mindset in positive ways.

4. What did you really LIKE about the conference?

- *I liked the presentations, especially Billy Rogers*
- *The Jr. Youth Chief & Councils Initiative sounds very interesting also*
- *The presenters*
- *Interaction with all involved*
- *Content of the conference*
- *Billy Rogers facilitating techniques and everything else*
- *Presentations by Billy Rogers – the exercises were a lot of fun, information on all the topics and all other presentations were good*
- *The exercises we did – the sharing*
- *The involvement of participants and the energizers were fun!*
- *The warm sense of welcoming the quality of information, the food, and the topics we covered*
- *The speaker and the way he explains about the problems*
- *Display (suicide) booths*
- *Presentations followed by examples or personal stories*
- *All the participants, presenters*
- *The presenters and topics (Billy) and exercises*

Analysis:

Many participants liked the presentations given by the trainer, Mr. Billy Rogers. He gave quality information and delivered it in a gentle way. The information about the Jr. Chief & Councils being worked on by KTC, the sharing, the participation and interaction, and the topics covered were all enjoyed as well.

5. What did you NOT LIKE about the conference?

- *No, I liked it*
- *Nothing*
- *Sat by myself*
- *I liked everything*
- *No food!*
- *Coffee breaks and snacks were boring*
- *Teary eyes – no Kleenex*
- *Not enough time. One full week would have been better*
- *Sometimes it was too cold in the room*
- *Late getting started. I don't believe in Indian Time. Late is late.*
- *It was all good!*
- *I didn't feel enough preventative strategies were presented. But that might be a separate workshop*
- *Nothing*
- *Door opening too much (distraction)*
- *To give a warning or a heads up that some people will have triggers*
- *Nothing*
- *Liked it all*

Analysis:

What was not liked by participants were things that distracted from the gathering as well as the little things that would have made the process flow better. Providing Kleenex, giving advance warnings that people could be triggered by the information covered, the room temperature, and providing better snacks at breaks. But the main thing was that participants would have liked more time spent on the topics presented.

6. What should be done DIFFERENTLY for a future Youth Suicide Prevention Conference?

- *Have more youth present during the conference*
- *Ask communities to include more youth and not just health and resource staff*
- *Something different*
- *Start traditional knowledge and reach youths at hand to prevent youth suicide – have all involved*
- *No resources in conference packages*
- *No information with respect to help lines*

-
- *KTC – Information re: Training available*
 - *More time*
 - *More time spent on one topic*
 - *I think more time for sharing circles to allow time for melt downs*
 - *Youth's will need a facilitator that they can relate to; someone who is at their same age and went through issues but overcame them!*
 - *Bind the handouts so they don't get lost*
 - *Provide more paper to take notes*
 - *Bring more youth, parents*
 - *Point out warning signs of suicide*
 - *More community tied in to MKO region*
 - *Include a youth from each community whenever the topics are/or focus on the youth*
 - *To bring in more youth from our community*

Analysis:

Involving more youth in the process and spending more time on topics with a bit of a slower pace in addressing each of the topics would have been greatly appreciated. It was a lot of information to cover in the two-day period and that was somewhat overwhelming to the group. Future gatherings should involve presenters that youth can relate to i.e., peers.

7. Any other RECOMMENDATIONS or COMMENTS?

1. Bring conference to all communities under KTC community work exchange per community
2. More awareness monthly to bring awareness
3. More decorative tables
4. Things to fiddle with, doodle pads
5. Booths displaying resources, posters
6. It was a very interesting and good learning experience
7. Have more involvement from youth, education, elders. Have it in the wilderness (culture camps), etc.
8. Leaders to be invited to come and learn
9. I really appreciated that we discussed that suicide is symptomatic of a far larger problem and that all people need to begin assessing what they can do to help prevent these problems; so I think more attention needs to be paid to the "next steps"

-
10. Provide counsellors on site or inform participants if anyone needs the service (lot of triggers and overwhelming for some)
 11. Excellent work by all who helped and prepared for Youth Suicide Prevention Conference
 12. Good job!
 13. Exercises, I can pass to my people in workshops and/or support groups

Analysis:

The participants would like to see this kind of conference/workshop brought to the communities to involve more people i.e., leaders, youth, elders, etc. and to hold these gatherings out on the land. It was a great experience that they would like more people to be part of and to experience for themselves as well. And finally, the notion that suicide is a symptom of larger issues was a profound realization for participants.

EKOSI! MASI CHO!

