



# Feather Carriers: Leadership for Life Promotion



## Where do I come from? The Creation of Feather Carriers



The Feather Carriers: Leadership for Life Promotion initiative encompassed a community mobilization strategy and collaborative life promotion training approach founded in 2015 by Dr. Ed Connors, John Rice and Dr. Debby Wilson Danard. The vision for this initiative came out of a relationship to the land, and requests from Indigenous communities in this region, who were looking for additional supports and resources related to suicide prevention.

Our network of supports include local Indigenous communities and organizations:

- Bamaadisiwin Mental Health and Addictions Planning Circle
- Barrie Area Native Advisory Circle
- Mamaway Wiidookdawdwin Primary Health Care Team
- Enaahtig Outreach Mental Health Team
- Canadian Mental Health Association



## Who am I? Feather Carriers Training



The year-long life promotion training aspect of the initiative is an approach that speaks to the heart and minds of people working with First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) individuals and families who are at risk of premature death, as well as supporting loss survivors. Gathered from all directions, Feather Carriers brings the knowledge and experience of the whole community into practice. It builds on the values and belief that in this present time, life is worth living. As such, the training supports the development of community leaders through Indigenous knowledge and cultural understandings of life promotion, so they can continue to promote life and prevent premature death (i.e. suicide) in our communities.



## Why am I here? Suicide Prevention to Life Promotion



During the development of Feather Carriers, the founders discussed the feedback they had received from the local Indigenous communities over the past 30 years. Based on the feedback, there was a sense from Indigenous communities, that the mainstream suicide prevention trainings were missing elements. The communities felt the mainstream training did not:

- 1) Address suicide from cultural perspectives.
- 2) Discuss the complex history of intergenerational trauma Indigenous peoples experience.
- 3) Provide sufficient follow up and support to training participants.

This led to the creation of the year-long Feather Carriers training, which is organic, flexible, and wholistic in nature. The training aims to engage participants in the process of a paradigm shift from suicide prevention to life promotion, and through this process supports individual and group reflection and growth as part of the journey towards *mino bimaadisiwin* (living a good life).



# Where am I going? Training Initiatives



The Feather Carriers: Leadership for Life Promotion training is a year-long process held over the course of five (5) days. The day-long sessions are held on a seasonal basis, with Day 1 and Day 2 occurring consecutively, so that participants have a solid foundation in the concepts and cultural understandings of life promotion. Through the training process we look at:

- A life promotion paradigm from Indigenous perspectives.
- The impacts of colonization, racism, and intergenerational trauma that have led to unnatural premature deaths in Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) communities.
- Our understanding of identity through contemplating the four essential questions.
- Our understanding of Indigenous wellness through the lens of the First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum Framework.
- The power of storytelling through the Miikaans teaching and understanding our bridging stories.

As part of the training process, and larger commitment to life promotion, the training participants implement the skills and knowledge they acquire through the training, into their own work or personal practices. This practical application is demonstrated through the presentation of a life promotion “project” upon graduation.



Contact us for more information about our training and initiative:

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