

Following the First Nation Suicide Prevention Task Force meeting that took place in Fredericton September 7<sup>th</sup> 2006, members decided that in order for the committee to recruit members or to focus on specific priorities that we need to take a closer look at the committee's mandate, challenges and propose a direction to the larger committee.

For these reasons, a working group met on September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2006 to discuss those issues. The committee members were: Eva Sock, Harrison Milliea, and David McTimoney from Elsipogtog, Genine Paul St-Mary's, Trish Fanjoy and France Daigle from the Department of Health.

We looked at what has been done so far by the First Nation Task Force since it was established.

- In 2003 a group of First Nation communities of NB met in Elsipogtog to discuss about the needs for a First Nation Task Force on suicide prevention in NB.
- In 2003, a work plan was established for the First Nation Task Force for the fiscal year 2003-2004
- Meeting took place every six weeks in different First Nation communities of NB to give a chance to have as many people as possible to attend.
- After we tried going around communities and it was a challenge, we decide to have the meeting in Fredericton since it was the most central location for the members that were attending
- Recruitment letters were sent to both Chief and Council and Health Centre of each of the First Nation Communities in NB in order to recruit more people. That initiative was not very successful.
- Every member of the Task Force did personally recruit potential interested members to join. A large number of individual were interested but it was a challenge for them to come to meeting since no funding was aloud to cover expenses. Members attending the Task Force work group are doing it on their own time and expenses
- The First Nation Task Force committee requested a budget of \$6000 (the committee wanted to be an additional suicide prevention committee) from the department of Healthy and Wellness (at the time) and it was denied. Members of the Task Force were encouraged to take part in the actual 13 suicide prevention committees in the province. These committees main focus is not only for First Nation but for the general population.
- The Department of Health and Wellness (at the time) covered for 5 person from Elsipogtog to be train with the ASIST training. (The cost was around \$15,000). Only two of the five trainers are active.
- In 2005, a request came to the Department of Health to pay for 5 First Nation to take the ASIST training. It was approved and 5 people were registered. Out of these five, two attended the training and the other three didn't and the Department had to pay the registration. Again the total cost was around \$15,000.

- We now have 9 First Nation person that are able to offer the two days ASIST training. Out of these nine, three are active.
- The First Nation Task Force committee wrote and sends in total three proposals for different project to the Federal Department (Aboriginal policing, community mobilizing program and crime prevention) and was denied application from all of them.
- In partnership with the Aboriginal Policing and Health Canada, the White Stone Program for youth from 18-35 was offered in NB in January 2005. In total, eight First Nation communities participated in the training. A total of 25 youth registered and 23 completed the training. The program has seen light in very few First Nation communities due to the lack of financial support to continue the initiatives.
- A consultation took place with MAWIW in regards to potential partnership between the Task Force and MAWIW and also to inform them of the working group.
- The Task Force was able to gather a resource inventory of resources that exist in most of the First Nation communities in NB and to share it to each other. Some communities were not aware of services that existed in other communities. It was a successful exercise for the members around the table.
- The two days suicide intervention training was offered in some First Nation communities in NB. The interest is present but participant can't pay for the material and no funding is available.
- During the National conference on suicide prevention in NB in 2002, a First Nation cultural awareness took place and was well attended by Non aboriginal person.
- Here's a list of different conference were the NB First Nation Task Force presented: the NB Wellness Conference, Harvard University, Gambling conference in NS, Addiction conference in Moncton, First Nation Inuit conference in Montreal, NB suicide prevention annual meeting, MAWIW youth conference and the National Association for Suicide Prevention conference

Following our accomplishment, we looked at the purpose of the NB First Nation Task Force:

Here's a list of what members around the table discussed:

- To gather together to have the opportunity to talk about suicide and the concerns in our different communities
- To share resources so that we don't duplicate resources
- An opportunity to train amongst each other
- An opportunity to share what we do for the for the caregiver (support for each other)
- To educate each other of suicide prevention initiatives

After we looked at our purpose, we talked about our priorities:

Here's a list of the priorities identified by the group:

- Education, prevention activities in each of the First Nation communities in NB
- A suicide prevention newsletter for each First Nation communities.
- The NB First Nation Task Force to be an advisory committee for other group such as: MAWIW, Union of First Nations and the provincial suicide prevention committee.

We also discussed about an action plan but we felt it was hard to decide depending who is around the table.

Objectives of the NB Task Force:

- a) To do activities to reduce the rate of suicide in First Nation communities
- b) To educate non First Nation on the importance of being inclusive of First Nation population.

What is the goal of the NB First Nation Task Force:

Short term:

- To find out what we have in regards to suicide prevention in each of our community around prevention, intervention and postvention activities.
- To have Elders as members of the Task Force

Medium term:

- To have as many First Nation people train on suicide intervention

Longer term:

- To have the NAYSP(national aboriginal youth suicide prevention strategy) to be part of the NB suicide prevention program
- To make sure that the White Stone program is implemented in the First Nation communities where members received the training
- To have every members of First Nation communities to take part in suicide prevention training or awareness and preferably the two days ASIST training.

Following the discussion we looked at the barriers or obstacles that exist in our communities in regards to suicide and suicide attempts in First Nation communities:

- The attitude toward suicide in your communities. Most of the members of the group agreed that suicide is very TABOO in First Nation communities and it is not something that we talked about.
- It is important to understand the infrastructure in each of the communities before making an action plan. Follow the proper process and channel if we want to see success.
- Take some time to look at what are the risk factors in your communities in regards to suicide.
- Explore with community members what is their perception of suicide. It is easier to plan when you know where people are.

- Look at the strengths in your community (what's working) and build upon it to establish some actions. If you have champions in your community use them.
- If your community show a serious commitment in regards to suicide prevention use that to inform other community members. Once members know the people in power support the initiative, they will be likely to follow.
- Look at what is being done in your community in regards to the culture and build on it to strengthened the protective factors for suicide prevention
- Keep in mind that a community means everyone and that when there's a suicide or an attempt, the entire community is affected.