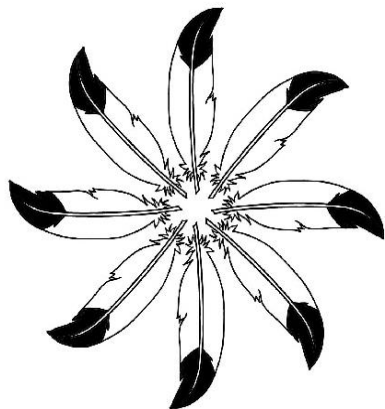


# Improving End-of-Life Care in First Nations Communities:



Learning about Grief and Bereavement in  
First Nations Communities  
November 2014

# **Conflict of Interest Declaration: Nothing to Disclose**

**Presenters: Gaye Hanson**

**Title of Presentation: Learning About Grief and Bereavement in First Nations Communities**

**I have no financial or personal relationships to disclose**

# **Conflict of Interest Declaration: Nothing to Disclose**

**Presenters: Holly Prince**

**Title of Presentation: Learning About Grief and Bereavement in First Nations Communities**

**I have no financial or personal relationships to disclose**

# Acknowledgements



Fort William First Nation



Peguis First Nation



Anishinabek Family Care



# Workshop Objectives

- Background on curriculum and workshop development
- To understand the unique characteristics of First Nations grief and loss
- To develop knowledge and skill in thoughtful practice and processing of grief and loss
- Results and recommendations from workshop delivery to EOLFN participant community
- Experiential learning activity
- Next steps

# Introduction to the Curriculum

- The purpose of this curriculum is to provide an introduction to First Nations loss, grief, and grieving to front-line care providers who serve First Nations individuals, families, and communities.
- The educational workshop is provided as a contribution to capacity building at the community and organizational level, it is not meant as a therapeutic workshop.

# Introduction continued ...

- The curriculum was developed to teach knowledge about loss and grief, and the unique First Nations characteristics
- This experiential workshop provides an experience of developing a circle of trust and how to develop safety and trust in a group of people
- The group is used as a foundation for learning about sensitive topics, such as grief and loss, with a group of adult First Nations and non-First Nations participants of varying ages and backgrounds

# Grief & Loss Workshop Overview

There are 5 Workshop Objectives:

- To provide culturally relevant and supportive environment for health care providers and others providing family support to explore First Nations loss, grief, and bereavement
- To provide an opportunity to develop further awareness, knowledge, and skills in reflective practice and processing of personal loss, grief, and trauma



# Workshop Overview cont. ...

- To further understand the unique characteristics of First Nations loss and grief
- To develop options for helpful responses drawing on the strengths and capacities of First Nations communities
- To increase capacity to provide care with First Nations individuals, families, and communities in their loss, grief, mourning, and bereavement work

# First Nations Grief & Loss

- Each family and community has its own strengths grounded in culture, values, and relationships with the land and each other
- The reality of many First Nations communities is that there are many losses within extended families that have wide ranging impacts throughout the family and community
- High death rates, which are early in age, unexpected, and traumatic or violent resulting in loss stacked upon one another without time in between to complete any one grieving process

# Historical Loss & Trauma

- Since first contact with outsiders, First Nations people have experienced colonization: loss of land, language, and culture; residential school; and child removal from home and community.
- This context of historical loss created the backdrop, at different levels and with differing impact, of how First Nations people experience loss today.
- The impact on cultural and personal identity; healthy family and parenting relationships; self esteem; and connection to historical practices and protocols all make grieving more challenging

# Gender Roles

## The Way Men and Women Approach Grief

- There are culturally identified gender roles and communication patterns in most First Nations communities that make a difference in how grief is managed
- Generally, men raised from boyhood with the idea that they should not openly express pain and grief
- Men are also more likely to isolate themselves in their unexpressed pain and try to address the pain through unhealthy coping methods such as drug and alcohol use, gambling, or other addictive behaviours

# Spirituality, Religion & Mourning

- People have a variety of spiritual and/or religious beliefs, often including conflicting beliefs held by individuals, and not all the same beliefs are followed within the family
- Beliefs can be a great source of comfort as well as the source of confusion and conflict in some situations
- Public sharing of grief is mourning and there are many cultural and spiritual or religious ways of marking loss through gatherings, ceremony, or ritual

# Workshop Participant Demographics

- 17 participants, one of which was male
- Age ranges from 18-65+
- Participants were either employed or retired
- 10 of the participants are currently involved with the EOLFN project in the community in some capacity

# Pre-Workshop Participant Survey

- 10 participants have previously attended education programming related to Grief & Loss
- 14 participants were somewhat confident or confident in their knowledge of grief & loss and providing those services to families and community members
- 15 participants were somewhat comfortable or comfortable in discussing & supporting community members during their grief & loss

# Post Workshop Participant Survey

- All participants felt somewhat comfortable or comfortable in their ability to:
  - Reach out to community members who would benefit from grief & loss support
  - Understand the unique characteristics of First Nations grief & loss
  - Support a bereaved family member
  - Recognize when a community member or family would benefit from grief & Loss support



# Post Workshop Survey cont. ...

- All participants agreed with the following statements regarding the workshop:
  - Workshop objectives were clear and met
  - Resources & materials were relevant to their community and would assist them with grief & loss
  - Course content relevant to the community; facilitator was knowledgeable; and sufficient time was allocated
  - All would recommend this Workshop to other First Nations Communities across Canada

# Post Workshop Survey cont. ...

- Most Important thing learned (select quotes)
  - “Increased cultural competence in culturally appropriate approach”
  - “How the grieving process is and that everyone grieves in their own way and pace”
  - “The importance of pain and suffering. They have a purpose”

# Post Workshop Survey cont. ...

- Other areas that could be included in Workshop (selected quotes):
  - Substance abuse & addiction
  - More elder involvement
  - ACP – prep before death; living will; POA; wills & estates
  - Memorial services
  - Include short videos; poems; skits
  - More to let emotions out in these kinds of workshops

# Experiential Learning Activity

- Circle Talk on sharing methods that work for processing loss
  - Journaling Exercise
    - Think about your own grieving processes
    - Write down what worked and what did not work
    - Reflect on what you do that works for self-care
    - Put a star beside those ideas you would like to share with the group

# Next Steps

- Continue to deliver, evaluate and improve the workshop – disseminate the curriculum
- Identify other related educational and support needs for First Nation individuals, families and communities
- Support the development of culturally based and mainstream methods for supporting healthy grieving through education and healing activities

# Contact Information

Dr. Mary Lou Kelley  
Principle Investigator  
Phone (807) 766-7270  
Email [mlkelley@lakeheadu.ca](mailto:mlkelley@lakeheadu.ca)

Holly Prince  
Project Manager, Co-Investigator  
Phone (807) 766-7274  
Email: [hprince@lakeheadu.ca](mailto:hprince@lakeheadu.ca)

[www.eolfn.lakeheadu.ca](http://www.eolfn.lakeheadu.ca)