

CENTRE FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION

Annual Report 2011-12

The day the "What's Your Story?" cards were first brought back to us was a day we won't forget. The Aboriginal youth had shared their life experiences about suicide (p.9). Some of us could not read them all, the pain and violence was too great. Kids this young shouldn't have to feel this way. No one should have to carry this weight.

One of the most challenging things about suicide prevention is to pick a place from which to view the whole subject. The human response side, laden with feelings of potential pain, loss, and diminished function, is where most of us begin. We search for relational analysis, cause and effect, behavioural observation or medical malfunction. We view our societal positions and community interactions and observe priorities in decision-making. These include the political, medical, and legal areas and at the end of the day we find it hard to even see one mode of operation which will dent this growing tide of suicide.

Opinion leaders in sports and entertainment have taken a stand against pressure and injury in the NHL. Educators' forums, talk shows, and public debate have addressed cyberbullying and general schoolyard bullying. The media calls for answers or direction and we have none. We examine how to make bridges safer, how to have weapons controlled, drugs less available and distress centre numbers more accessible.

There is discussion and training around protective factors and risk factors, and survivors write of experiences both profound and destructive.

Commissions have been formed, papers have been written, and Think Tanks gathered.

Yet putting all of this knowledge together we still haven't stopped suicides.

We at the Centre for Suicide Prevention (CSP), as an educational non-profit organization, in collaboration with the Canadian Mental Health Association and other partners, are responding to daily requests from the public. We have resources, skilled personnel, caring compassionate workers, Trainers and a desire to stop these deaths.

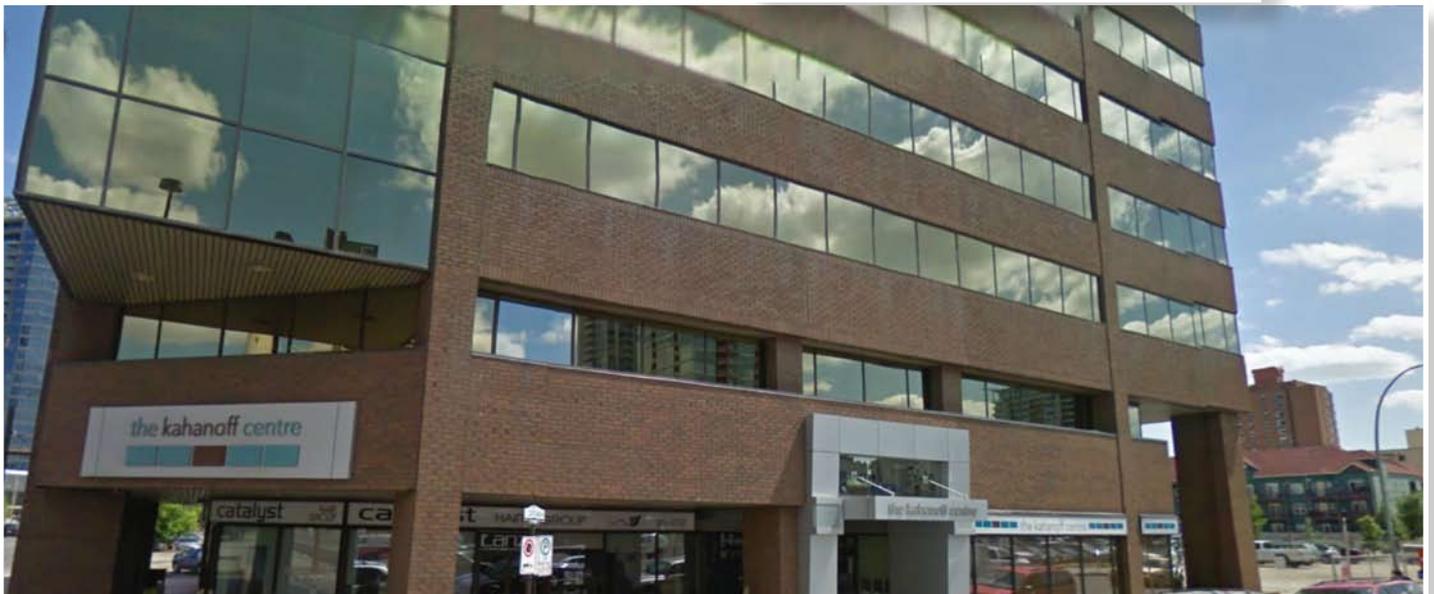
Suicide does not have to be an option. How wonderful it would be to read a different kind of story card.





Contents

Education Mandate	3
Collaborators	4
Library	5
Training	6
Communications	7
Senate Presentation	8
What's Your Story	9
On the Road	10
Everyone's Responsibility	11



YOU'RE
NOT
ALONE



"AT CSP, WE HAVE SPENT THE LAST year expanding our education model as well as maintaining our HISTORICAL APPROACHES... OUR mandate at CSP IS TO educate – THROUGH WORKSHOPS, PUBLICATIONS, PRESENTATIONS AND ONLINE COURSES."

Mara Grunau, Education Director

Education Mandate

The Centre for Suicide Prevention is a not-for-profit education centre and that is what we are committed to: education. Teaching and learning occurs in a variety of contexts through a variety of players. At CSP, we have spent the last year expanding our education model as well as maintaining our historical approaches. This report showcases our array of efforts to educate as wide an audience as possible and we would be remiss to not credit our many players.

Library, information services, knowledge exchange and curriculum development

Robert Olson, our Librarian, writes a regular editorial column on current hot topics in the suicide prevention literature. He also produces toolkits, which are resources of aggregated information about different at-risk groups.

Suzanne McLeod, our Curriculum Developer, developed 2 special feature resources around cyberbullying. Together with Robert, Suzanne took this research to the Senate Standing Committee on Human Rights to testify to the relationship between suicide and cyberbullying. Suzanne also travels throughout the province to work directly with youth affected by cyberbullying.

Training

Ed Yuen, our Training Manager, is a Trainer himself. In addition to facilitating CSP workshops, he responds to community requests for suicide prevention presentations and travels to these communities to present information and offer bereavement support. Ed also coordinates CSP's extensive Trainer Network. CSP currently has over 100 Trainers who facilitate suicide prevention, intervention and postvention workshops throughout Alberta and across Canada and 11 Mentors who coach new Candidate Trainers through their learning process and help support Full Trainers maintain or further develop their facilitation skills.

Our mandate at CSP is to educate – through workshops, publications, presentations and online courses. Together we are working to expand our audience so that more information reaches more people more often.

It has been a busy year of collaborations for CSP!

Our flagship event was our learning symposium held in March. **It's Everybody's Business: Alberta communities take action to reduce suicide** was a partnered event with Alberta Centre for Injury Control & Research (ACICR). Together, we brought in keynote and concurrent speakers to address key issues in suicide prevention and to equip delegates with practical initiatives they can implement in their own work. Keynote speakers included Dr. Michael Trew from Alberta Health Services (AHS), Bill Wilkerson from the Global Economic Roundtable on Addiction and Mental Health and Richard Ramsay from LivingWorks Inc.

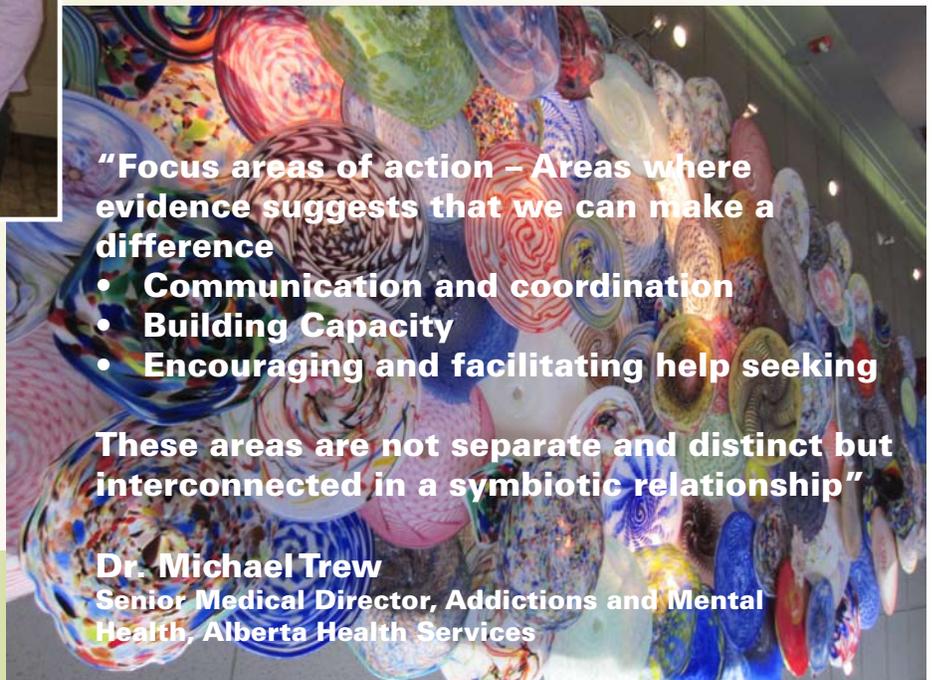
Concurrent sessions ranged from grief and bereavement to suicide prevention in the Aboriginal community, men and suicide, community approaches to suicide prevention and homophobic bullying and suicide prevention. The second day was made up of facilitated small groups where delegates identified strategies to improve our collective work. The third day, sponsored by the Canada Post Foundation for Mental Health, provided specific training for CSP Trainers. Overall the symposium was a huge success; people expressed a desire to attend an event such as this on an annual or bi-annual basis.

Free Workshops: CSP's Pre-Symposium Event

Thanks to a grant from the Canada Post Foundation for Mental Health, CSP was able to offer 5 workshops free of charge to the public on our Pre-Symposium Learning Day. All sessions operated at full participant capacity. We offered 1 session of Straight Talk and 2 sessions each of Tattered Teddies and safeTALK. In addition to the Canada Post Foundation grant, the Kahanoff Centre also supported this initiative by donating much of the classroom space.



March 8, 2012 – From Left: Mara Grunau, Education Director with Warren Winnipeg, Aboriginal Youth and Communities Empowerment Strategy (AYCES) Coordinator and Patti Stark, Community Mobilization Coordinator, ACICR.



“Focus areas of action – Areas where evidence suggests that we can make a difference

- **Communication and coordination**
- **Building Capacity**
- **Encouraging and facilitating help seeking**

These areas are not separate and distinct but interconnected in a symbiotic relationship”

Dr. Michael Trew
Senior Medical Director, Addictions and Mental Health, Alberta Health Services

Glass Ceiling Sculpture, Hotel Arts 'Millefiore'
Barry W. Fairbairn

Collaborators



Library

How do you enhance and improve an already impressive library containing approximately 45,000 articles devoted to suicide research?

You make this very rich source of information more productive and more accessible.

In the past year, we at the CSP Library have been diligently translating and transforming this information into usable knowledge by creating resources that greater numbers of people can understand and utilize.

Some of these resources include:

- **iE: infoExchange** – a column examining relevant topics in the field of suicide. It is a tool meant to both educate and engage the user into the suicide conversation.
- **Toolkits** – resources which aggregate information about different at-risk groups. These also include features such as statistics, warning signs, risk factors, protective factors, links, programs, and recommended readings.
- **Special Features** – resources which offer factual information on specific suicide-related topics. One particularly successful feature was on cyberbullying.

Our audience tells us that they would like resources to be available online and without cost. The content created thus far and placed on our website represents the beginning of this process.

In fact, we consider the website to be the hub of activity at CSP; the virtual presence of the library on our website is as equally significant as our physical library.

We anticipate that the upcoming year will be every bit as eventful, challenging and fulfilling as the last. We look forward to it.

IF YOU CARE TO KNOW, WE CAN HELP

iE: infoExchange



"This is an interesting article... Thanks Robert for increasing awareness of the important link between alcohol abuse and suicide."

Barbara Campbell

Response to iE5: Alcohol Dependence and Suicide

Toolkits

and

Special Features



"Good article. Peer support and stories such as this are helpful for those who suffer similar issues."

Anita

Response to iE5: Alcohol Dependence and Suicide

"Information like this is very valuable to all of us working with addictions, clients with issues such as suicide. Have made it available to the staff I work with."

John Lee, Senior Probation Officer

Response to iE4: Men and Suicide

WE WILL HELP YOU PROTECT THEM



The Centre for Suicide Prevention offers a variety of workshops such as Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST), ASIST Tune Up, safeTALK, Straight Talk and Tattered Teddies. This fiscal year, 2011-2012 the total workshops presented by type were:

Workshop	Number	Participants
ASIST	189	3,972
ASIST Tune Up	64	546
safeTALK	21	441
Straight Talk	11	199
Tattered Teddies	20	328
Other	7	106
Total	312	5,592

CSP currently has a contract with Alberta Health Services (AHS), Aboriginal Health, in Aboriginal Youth and Communities Empowerment Strategy (AYCES) communities. CSP held a Training-for-Trainers (T4T) in the summer of 2011, where 10 Aboriginal AHS employees were trained to become Candidate ASIST Trainers. The goal of this project is to build capacity in the AYCES communities by equipping them with local ASIST Trainers who in turn provide ASIST training to community members on an ongoing basis.

In January 2012, CSP ran another ASIST T4T where 20 Candidate Trainers were trained. Between this January session, the AHS session and a half-dozen Candidate Trainers who trained elsewhere in Canada, our Mentors have been very busy. Each Candidate Trainer completes 2 Mentored workshops before working independently; this

large volume of Candidate Trainers in a very short time has resulted in an unusually high workload for our Mentor group. We appreciate their willingness to step up, support and coach these new Trainers.

We presently have 120 Trainers throughout the province of Alberta. Of the current list of active Trainers, approximately 70 Trainers attended a recertification day held either in Calgary or Red Deer. All Trainers will be going through recertification in 2013 as the new version of ASIST, ASIST 11 rolls out.

Gradually more workplaces are coming on board to offer suicide prevention workshops or expand the scope of the workshops offered to their staff. Of particular significance are the relationships CSP is building with the City of Calgary, West Jet, school boards and unions in bringing workshops to each of their respective work environments.

This year we have had the opportunity to run pilot projects with 2 different groups with the River of Life online course: Manitoba Health and the Anglican Church Council of the North. Manitoba Health identified 50 participants to take the River of Life online course. These participants all work with youth but represent many different sectors. The Anglican Church Council of the North identified interested members of isolated, northern communities. Participants were asked to complete pre and post-tests identifying prior knowledge, knowledge gained from the course and knowledge retained 3 months out. Overall, participants wholeheartedly recommended the course to anyone who works with Aboriginal youth.



CSP-Developed Straight Talk: Youth Suicide Prevention and Tattered Teddies: Preventing Suicide in Children Workshops

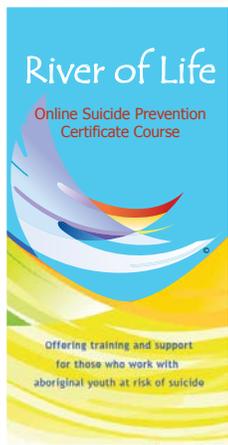


Communications



AT CSP WE ARE CONSTANTLY EVOLVING AND CREATING A NEW PATH FOR OURSELVES. HERE IN THE COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT, THIS VITALITY IS ALWAYS FELT, BECAUSE AS THE ORGANIZATION EVOLVES, WE MUST EVOLVE AS WELL.

Our website has become one of our primary communication tools, and as such it is being continuously updated to evolve with our organization. It's a great way to see what we're doing and learn about CSP as an organization. Most importantly though, it allows everyone access to a wealth of resources about suicide prevention, suitable for the general public.

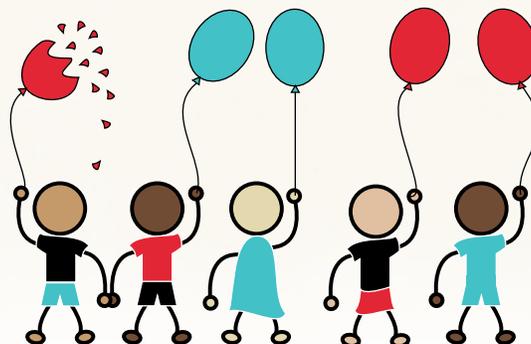
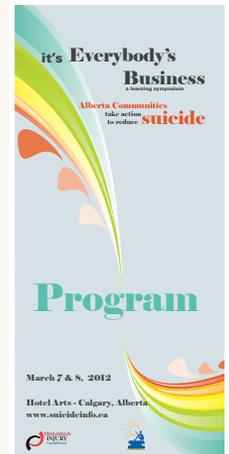


The *What's Happening* section of our website acts as our blog, where we post pictures and updates of everything we do. It's a fun way to check up on us and stay informed of all our activities.

Our Twitter account has helped us further expand our communication scope and give timely information to the public. Within the year we've gained 880 followers from around the world. This includes the general public, psychologists, teachers, Aboriginal organizations, mental health experts and organizations, journalists, doctors and much more.

CSP frequently receives requests for presentations, materials, workshops, and resources and it's up to the Communications Department to fill these requests and equip our facilitators with materials. This year we've been all over the country, from Ottawa to Manitoba, Saskatchewan to BC.

As one of Canada's only suicide prevention centres, we receive calls from media all the time. We are always happy to accommodate these requests; we're focused on building public awareness of suicide and we recognize the media as a great partner for this cause. This year we've had multiple appearances and mentions on CBC Radio Calgary and 660 News. We've provided information to the Globe and Mail, Global TV Calgary, OpenFile Toronto, and City TV Calgary. We look forward to furthering our media relationships this year!



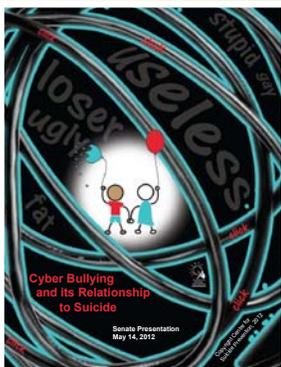


May 14, 2012 – Robert Olson, Librarian, witnessing to the Senate Committee on Human Rights regarding Cyber Bullying and Its Relationship to Suicide.



May 14, 2012 – Suzanne McLeod, Curriculum Developer, witnessing to the Senate Committee on Human Rights regarding Cyber Bullying and Its Relationship to Suicide.

Senate Presentation



This past spring, CSP was called to give testimony to the Senate Standing Committee on Human Rights regarding the relationship between suicide and cyberbullying. A few months prior, Suzanne McLeod, Curriculum Developer, produced a special feature resource, *Cyberbullying* and later, adapted it for the Aboriginal community. It was this early knowledge

exchange publication, based on the sparse empirical research available on cyberbullying that garnered the attention of the Senate committee and resulted in CSP's invitation. To our knowledge these CSP resources are the first of their kind.

In preparation for the event, CSP staff pulled together a group to research and produce a 10-page written submission. We combed all studies completed to-date and interviewed Aboriginal youth about their lived-experience; a close friend of 2 of these youth had died by suicide after being tormented online and over his cell phone.

Suzanne, together with Robert Olson, CSP Librarian, traveled to Ottawa to present to the Committee in May. They were able to convey many devastating stories from youth who have been involved on both sides of the cyberbullying equation (some to the point of suicide) and were able to make specific policy recommendations to the Senate. Also, they spoke frankly about the destructive effects of cyberbullying in many Aboriginal communities and the high suicide rate experienced there as well, due to the cycle of cultural discontinuity. They fielded many questions around these issues and Senators approached them after the session to talk about possible further initiatives.

The Senate is expected to release its final report on cyberbullying to the public.



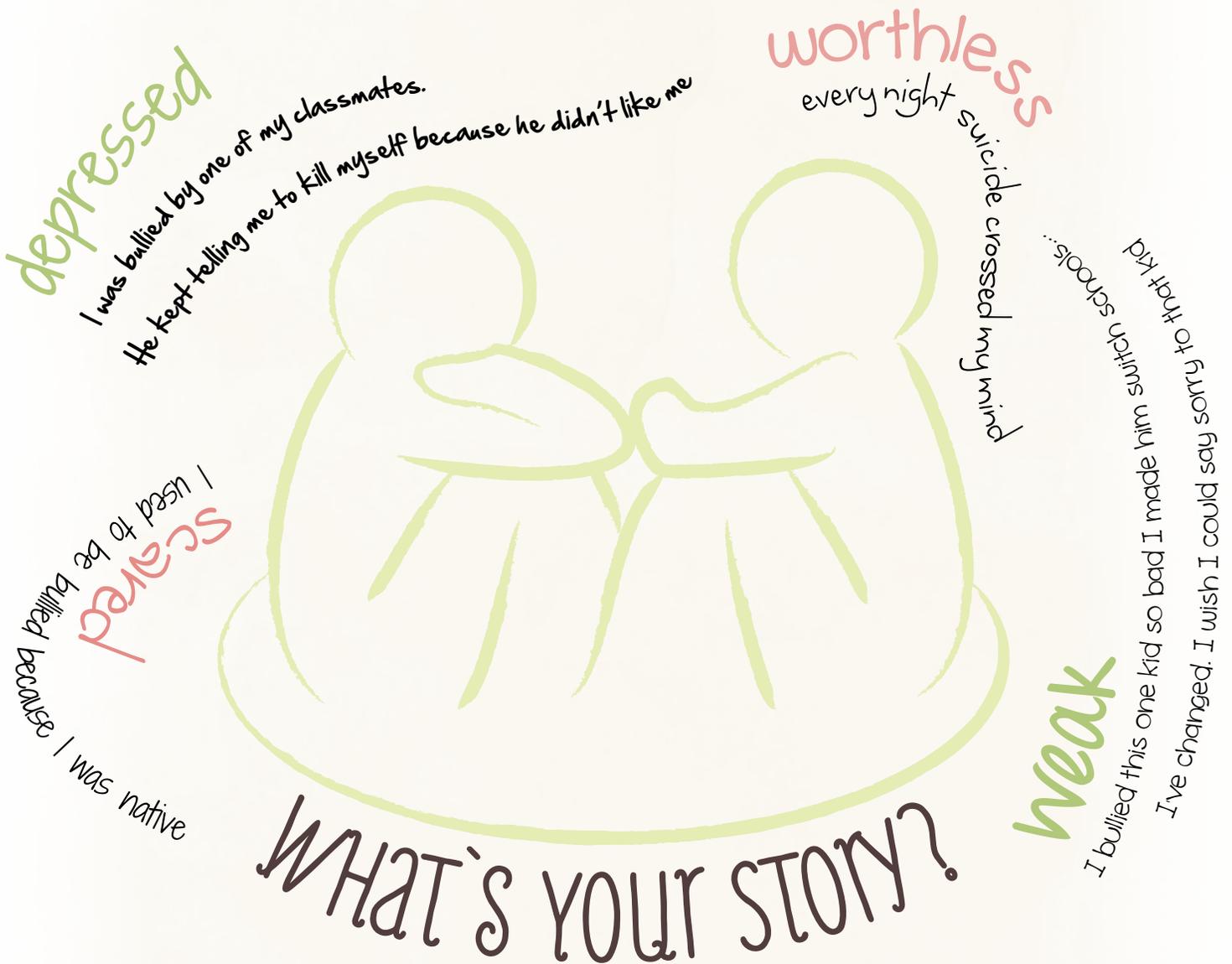
May 14, 2012 – From Left: Robert Olson, Librarian and Suzanne McLeod, Curriculum Developer, witnessing to the Senate Committee on Human Rights regarding Cyber Bullying and Its Relationship to Suicide.

The *What's Your Story?* Cards were developed by CSP as a way for us to gather the stories of Aboriginal youth.

Often, these stories pertain to suicide, bullying, and death.

The stories we've collected say more than statistics ever could, as you can see by the excerpts.

These cards are always anonymous and are given out at presentations as part of an exercise. We always ensure proper support is given to those individuals that are triggered by the telling of their story.



Our hope is that by telling their stories, Aboriginal youth will feel heard and validated. So far, the cards have been used as part of our presentation, *Cyber Bullying and Its Relationship to Suicide* as lived experience samples.

On the Road

HOBBEWA, SIKSIKA, TSUU T'INA

Suzanne McLeod, Curriculum Developer and Ed Yuen, Training Manager, have been further developing their relationships with the Hobbema, Siksika Nation and Tsuu T'ina communities. These communities have invited Suzanne and/or Ed to attend various conferences such as Hobbema Health and Wellness Conference, Siksika Health Services Annual Health Fair and the Siksika Medicine Lodge Youth Conference. Suzanne and Ed have made presentations around cyberbullying, suicide prevention, bereavement and grief.

Out of the relationship with the Siksika Mental Health Program, the Elders, together with the Mental Health Coordinator, participated in a safeTALK workshop. This was a very positive experience and has resulted in the Elders initiating safeTALK workshops being offered to many people in their community.



May 3, 2012 – Ed Yuen, Training Manager, attends Siksika Health Fair

CBC INTERVIEW AROUND RIVER OF LIFE, ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES, CALGARY

Suzanne McLeod, Curriculum Developer, was contacted by CBC Radio 1 to discuss how the incidence of Aboriginal people knowing their Aboriginal language acts as a protective factor against suicide. This concept of cultural continuity is a key theme in the River of Life. The reporter produced a one-week long series called "Finding the Words" and Suzanne's portion was aired on March 8, 2012. Here is the link to the interview: <http://bit.ly/JMYiYj>



May 1, 2012 – Mara Grunau, Education Director attends MHCC Think Tank

CASP 2011, VANCOUVER

At the last Canadian Association of Suicide Prevention (CASP) conference, Suzanne McLeod, Curriculum Developer, presented the River of Life online course in a half-day workshop format. Of the participants attending, about one third was Aboriginal. Feedback from the session affirmed the course's cultural approach to teaching and learning through story telling. Also, participants valued learning the history of Aboriginal peoples and how it directly contributes to the suicide rate. Some discussion ensued around having the River of Life in workshop format versus the online course.

Suzanne also hosted a poster presentation outlining the Tattered Teddies workshop and workbook. People were intrigued that we were studying this young age group, and affirmed the message that child suicidality needs to be addressed. Many of the delegates were teachers, psychologists and social workers who witness the trends that are unearthed in Tattered Teddies and asserted that this information needs to be conveyed to parents more clearly.

7TH ANNUAL NATIONAL ABORIGINAL HEALTH FORUM, CALGARY

Our Curriculum Developer, Suzanne McLeod, presented the River of Life online course at the 7th Annual National Aboriginal Health Forum. She discussed the background of the course's development process, Aboriginal historical factors and how River of Life meshes with other programs such as Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) and Tattered Teddies. She also discussed cyberbullying in the Aboriginal community and distributed the special feature resource as well. Many orders from our online store emerged from this presentation as well as requests for CSP to visit communities to present on cyberbullying.

THINK TANK, OTTAWA

This spring, CSP was invited to participate in a national Think Tank co-hosted by the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC), CASP and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. *Building Momentum – A collaborative approach to suicide prevention* was intended to "review ongoing and proposed research around suicide prevention; knowledge exchange practices that can decrease the time from innovation to implementation; and lay the foundation for a National Collaborative on Suicide Prevention" (MHCC website). Education Director, Mara Grunau attended on behalf of CSP.

Everyone's Responsibility

Maybe, just maybe, after years of informing, pleading, begging, cajoling, our Canadian society is preparing to acknowledge that the problem of suicide is everybody's business!

Our federal government is within a whisker of enacting a bill requiring the Government of Canada to develop a federal framework for suicide prevention. The preamble to Bill C-300 (here quoted in part) says it well:

*"Whereas Canadians want to reduce suicide and its impact in Canada and suicide prevention is **everyone's responsibility**;"* (Bill C-300, para. 2, 2011)

May I respectfully ask: Where do you as an individual, where does your agency, organization or business check in on the knowledge component? Do you possess the personal skills and concern to ask a family member, employee, friend or neighbour if they are thinking about suicide? Have you made provisions to ensure that your staff, congregants, students or volunteers are aware and equipped to respond to the vulnerable?

For the most part, suicide may be characterized as a willful act. Suicide prevention requires willful actions. Bill C-300 Preamble continues:

"Whereas suicide is preventable by knowledge, care and compassion;" (ibid., para. 3, 2011)

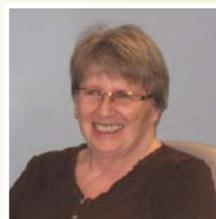
For more than 30 years the Centre for Suicide Prevention has focused on its mission to inform and equip people with the knowledge and skills needed to avert suicide. This past year alone we responded to community need by offering more than 300 workshops within Canada. We have developed new ways of disseminating information

to Aboriginal communities, schools, churches, agencies, workplaces, general community gatherings and through our informative website. Many people are sufficiently concerned and compassionate to become informed and involved. Many more are needed.

The only real answer to suicide is prevention. Do you believe suicide prevention is **everyone's responsibility**?

We salute the leadership being shown by the federal government. We commend their intent to do something about suicide prevention. Of course it will take more than mere declarations in a Bill. The ultimate test of "a federal plan to affect public attitudes" (ibid., para. 7, 2011) is the willingness of each one of us to step up to the plate when someone's life is on the line.

It's time for all of us to become knowledgeable, and express the care and compassion needed in the saving of precious lives.



A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Diane Yackel".

Diane Yackel, BScN, MA, FT
Executive Director

Bill C-300: *An Act respecting a Federal Framework for Suicide Prevention*. (2011). 1st Reading, September 29, 2011, 41st Parliament, 1st Session. Ottawa: Public Works and Government Services Canada. Retrieved June 11, 2012 from <http://www.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?Language=E&Mode=1&DocId=5144669>

BOARD

Co-President
Co-President
Vice President
Secretary Treasurer

Carmelle Hunka
Lisa Cuthill
Linda Beaton
David Dart
William Bone
Kathleen Cloutier
Michael Power
Dr. Rodney Truax

Governance

STAFF

Executive Director
Executive Assistant
Education Director
Training Manager
Workshop Coordinator
Registrar/Office Manager
Librarian
Curriculum Developer
Communications Director
Web and Graphic Designer

Diane Yackel BScN, MA, FT
Brenda Vanderwal
Mara Grunau, BEd, MPA
Ed Yuen, RSW
Charleen McPhail
Bobbie-Jo Racette
Robert Olson, BA, MLIS
Suzanne McLeod, BA, MA
Brenda Ann Taylor, BEd, MCS
Crystal Walker

Centre for Suicide Prevention #320, 105 12 Avenue SE Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2G 1A1
Phone (403) 245-3900 Fax (403) 245-0299 Email csp@suicideinfo.ca Twitter @cspyycc



www.suicideinfo.ca

