

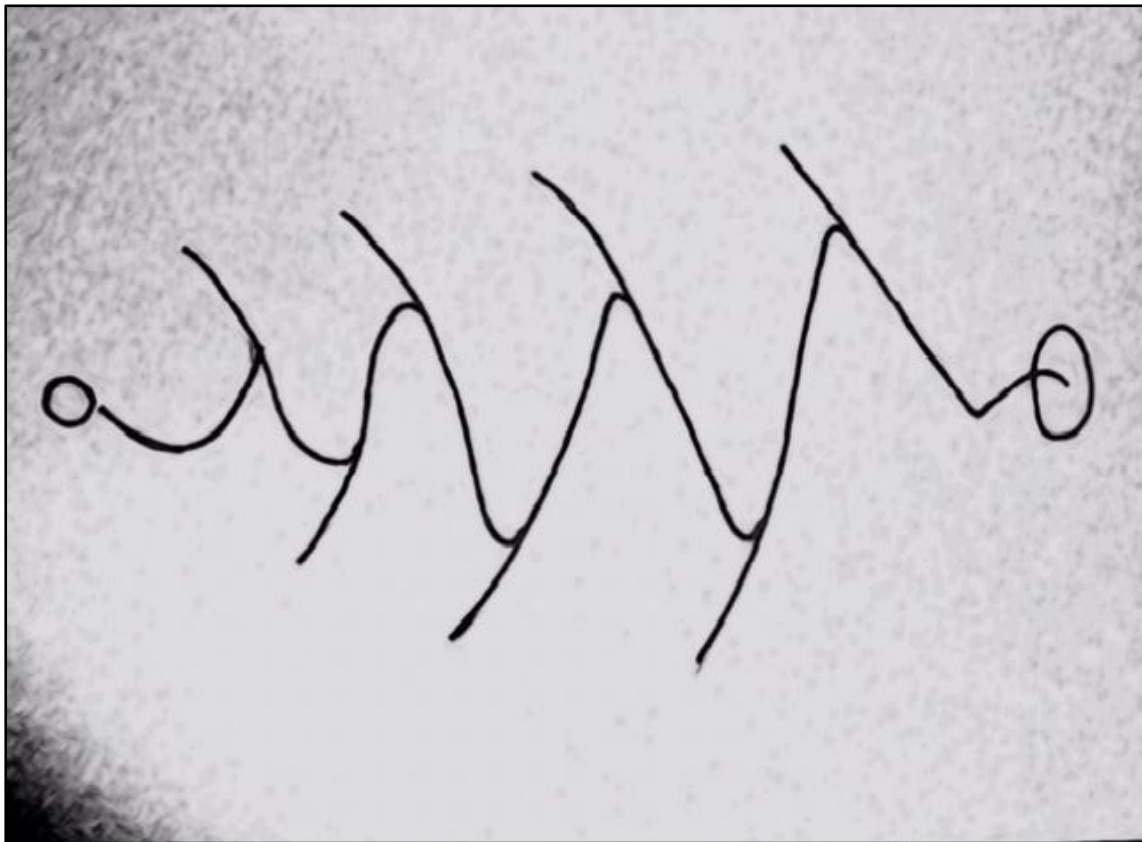


**INTRODUCTION TO FEATHER CARRIERS:
LEADERSHIP FOR LIFE PROMOTION**

AANIIN BOOZHOO - SEKO – TAANSHI - HELLO

We start with greetings in the four founding languages of Feather Carriers: Ojibway, Mohawk, Métis and English.

We are an Indigenous suicide intervention training program based on traditional and modern Indigenous knowledge as well as clinical experience. Training is provided in year-long teaching circles (cohorts) where participants learn to apply teachings related to concepts of *life promotion* and *premature unnatural death* to themselves and are then more honestly and skillfully able to teach it to others in their communities. Rather than treating the crisis of suicide in isolation, we see suicide as one of many outcomes, (including addiction and unhealthy relationships), that occurs as a result of loss of meaning in life and connection to others. The way to address this is through developing a sense of identity and knowledge of one's spirit. This will give us the anchors needed to weather the storms of life.



Collectively, Feather Carriers is an approach that speaks to the hearts and minds of people working with individuals who are at risk of premature death, as well as loss survivors.

Gathered from all directions, the Feather Carrier teachings bring the knowledge and experience of the whole community into practice. It builds on the belief that *in this present time*, life is worth living. As such this training is meant to develop community leaders who will help promote life and prevent premature unnatural death. From this place of strength and resiliency the voice of the life spirit is heard in the stories of

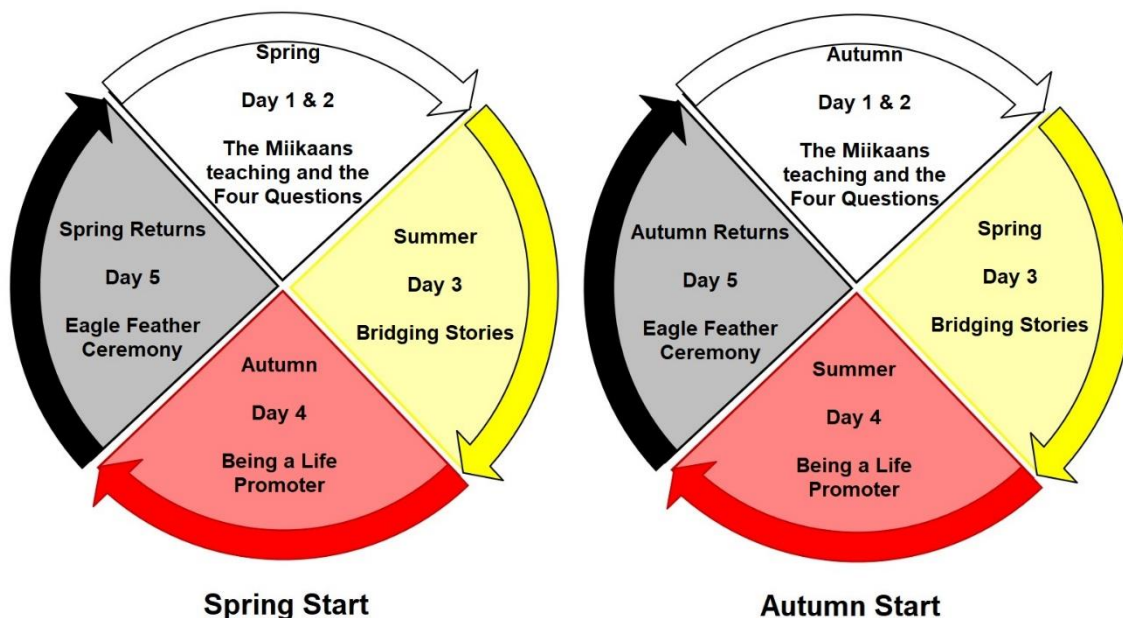
suicide and loss survivors who continue to walk the path of *mino bmaadisiwin* (the good life).

It also involves respecting our ancestors who have left through the western doorway before us and sending into the future the message of the seven grandfathers to have wisdom, love, courage, truth, respect, humility, and honesty as we walk in balance on *mino bmaadisiwin miikane* (the path of the good life).

Feather Carriers was originally offered to Anishinaabe communities in the Simcoe/Muskoka region and the teachings and language reflect this history. When we offer our life promotion teachings to other territories, we also respect the life promotion teachings of the communities we are visiting. We ask to hear their teachings around life promotion and make room for them in the training.

THE YEAR

Feather Carriers can begin in any season, depending on the needs of the community or organization, although we do our best to avoid meeting in the winter, when weather often creates dangerous travel conditions. We can accommodate those who need to participate virtually but emphasize the spiritual value in learning the teachings in person. The cohort meets 4 times over the course of a year for a total of 5 training days. Days 1 and 2 are held back to back.



Everyone is welcome to join us for sunrise ceremony to open the first day. We also open our graduation (day 5) with a sunrise ceremony.

We open the training with ceremony so you are invited to have any sacred items you wish to have present with you, and you are encouraged to bring your medicine bundle. This can include tobacco/sama, sage or sweet grass for smudging, water to drink during a water ceremony and a candle to burn. This is not required and the participants are not required to join in any of the activities that we offer. We make it clear as we open that everyone is invited to participate as they feel comfortable and that we respect all people's beliefs and practices.



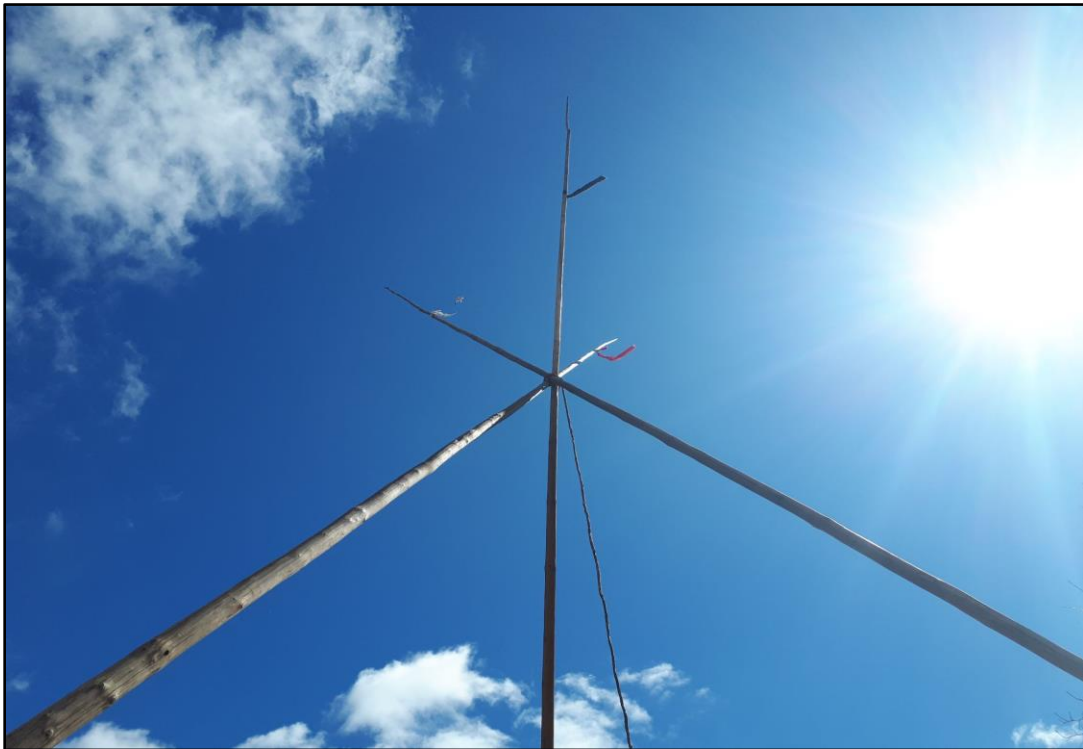
Wasauksing First Nation, one of the places where Feather Carriers began

We take regular breaks throughout the day to ensure that we all remain rested and the overall learning experience of these teachings is interactive. However, the first two days contain an introduction and overview to our Feather Carriers teachings and learning experiences. We also provide a copy of the materials that we will share with you during our time together. If you wish to print these documents to refer to during our session you are welcome to do so.

You might also choose to have a journal. We encourage you to take notes and to log your reflections within a diary throughout the year long journey of life promotion.

Day 5 is for the graduation. The cohort meets again in the same season they started, demonstrating the change that takes place with the passing of time. The main work of the day is for the participants to individually present their response to the offer to take up the work of life promotion. The process and content of the presentations will be discussed during the training. Each participant will be offered an eagle feather to help them with the responsibility of promoting life, and there is a dancing out ceremony at the end.

The graduation ceremony is a celebration. There is a feast and friends, family and other miigwanaabiik (feather carriers) are encouraged to attend.



LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Changing the approach to suicide from reactive prevention to life promotion
- Knowledge of the Miikaans (Little Roads) teaching and Etuaptmumk (two-eyed seeing)
- Understanding the role of intergenerational trauma, identity and colonization in relation to suicide in Indigenous communities
- How to identify what makes one *enaadmaget wii bimaadziying* (a life promoter)
- How to apply the life promotion teachings to oneself and pass it on to others

AFTER FEATHER CARRIERS

The end of the Feather Carriers training is the beginning of a dialogue with the idea of life promotion.

New Feather Carriers/Miigwanaabiik return to their communities and their organizations and are encouraged to use and pass on what they learned. For example, the drawing of the Miikaans (little roads) teaching, the map of life, is for anyone to teach and be taught. The same is true of all the Feather Carrier teachings.



Those who have graduated Feather Carriers are welcome to become teachers in training or ozhiitaa jig (*those who are picking up their gifts*). Ozhiitaa jig help teachers with cohorts and take part in teaching.

Promoting life is a long road, the teachings might be seen as planted seeds that will grow differently in each individual and each community. The Feather Carriers organization maintains contact with the miigwanaabiik after the training is over. We host free events for them, such as online teachings and the Eagle Staff feast which takes place once a year.

Feather Carriers are encouraged to collaborate and meet. Local groups could take on projects such as forming support groups in the wake of a premature unnatural death in the community, cultural revitalization projects, or mutual assistance hubs. The Feather Carriers organization can assist with fostering and growing these local groups when asked.

This is a short introduction. For more details contact our program manager at steve.martin@feathercarriers.earth or at 705 957 8946.

MIIGWETCH - NYA:WEN - MARSEE - THANKS