

Partnerships for Success

Government partnerships with positive outcomes for Indigenous people, businesses and communities

An Honoured Achievement: Embracing Life Initiative Recognized at Home and Abroad

In May 2023, Embracing Life received international recognition when the initiative was presented to King Charles III at Buckingham Palace. Saskatchewan's then Lieutenant Governor and Woodland Cree member, Russ Mirasty, highlighted the community-centred approach in an audience with the Crown. This historic Vice-Regal Audience with the King underscored the importance of infusing Indigenous voices into the work being done to support remote and northern communities. This global recognition also reflects Embracing Life's dedication to promoting mental health and preventing suicide, rooted in the values of Indigenous communities.

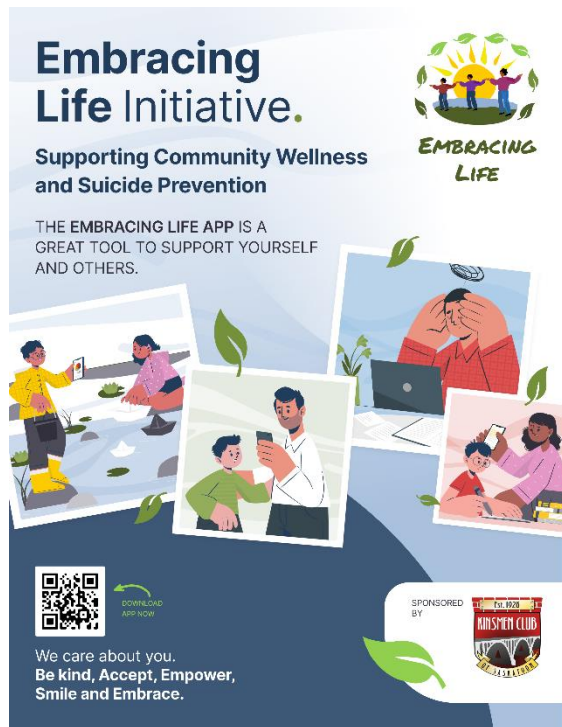
The Embracing Life Initiative began in 2013 as a group of northern agencies wanting to address self-harm and suicide prevention in the north of Saskatchewan. Over time, it evolved into a collaborative platform uniting northern communities, First Nations and Métis organizations, and government agencies, with the addition of youth and youth mentors to develop community-led solutions for mental health support. Since 2013, Embracing Life has delivered training and built tools to help northern residents help themselves, as well as the people around them.



Pikaea Groves, Eric Choquette, Brandi Bell, Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan, the Honourable Russ Mirasty and Her Honour Donna Mirasty

"Over 90 per cent of the world's mental health is dealt with at home or within our personal circles," explained Brandi Bell, a Senior Policy Analyst at the Ministry of Government Relations and the Embracing Life Secretariat. "When we're struggling, we talk to friends, coworkers, and loved ones."

In 2019, Embracing Life refocused on community-led support, launching the Embracing Life app in 2022. The app provides accessible tools and resources to guide conversations on mental health and promote life-sustaining strategies. "Relationships and community are medicine," Bell said. "How we engage in conversations and empathy is how we get to suicide prevention."



Click the image above to download this poster.

In 2023, the initiative expanded further with the help of summer student and advocate Pikaia Groves. Groves gathered contributions from more than 50 northern youth towards a Youth Toolkit, set to launch in early 2025. Accessible through the Embracing Life website, the Toolkit can help youth self-reflect and engage with friends about mental health topics.

"As a young person, it can be daunting to address your own or your friend's mental health," said Groves. "This toolkit will offer lessons, stories and themes that youth expressed they wanted to learn more about."

Embracing Life hopes to become a place where people can confidently go to find resources. The app is one example. It offers a two-pronged approach: direct support strategies, mood

trackers, a safety plan to help young people manage what they need when they are struggling, and resources and a conversation guide to help support others facing difficult times. "As someone using the app, I've found that its scripts and prompts make these crucial conversations about suicide more approachable," Groves said. "It meets people where they are on their journey to better mental health. Some individuals focus on suicide safety for themselves and their friends, while others explore deeper mental health topics." She added that together, the app and forthcoming Toolkit will address both needs effectively.

Since its launch, the Embracing Life app has reached over 4,000 devices across Saskatchewan and beyond, with users averaging 28 minutes per session—an indicator of the app's impact and engagement. It has recently been recognized for its high standards by the Mental Health Commission of Canada and will be included in the Commission's launch in 2025 of a national library of mental health apps. The Embracing Life app was rigorously reviewed for its approach to data, privacy, cultural safety, usability and more.

Embracing Life is backed by many stakeholders, including Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations and multiple Saskatchewan ministries. The Embracing Life Initiative partners with agencies such as the Prince Albert Grand Council and Northern Lights School Division, collaborating to address community wellness and prevent suicide.



King Charles III Coronation Medals

The Embracing Life Initiative was recently celebrated in La Ronge, where Lieutenant Governor Mirasty awarded both Bell and Groves the King's Coronation Medal for their dedication to this work. The ceremony was a powerful reminder of how local and global recognition can inspire communities to sustain this momentum.

For Bell and Groves, the acknowledgment underscores that public service and community collaboration can bring about transformative change. They emphasize that public servants are not simply policymakers but are pathfinders, bridging government resources and community needs.

Embracing Life has a simple goal: to foster resilience and a sense of belonging. It encourages public servants, students, and community members alike to show compassion and sit with others through difficult times. As Bell says, "Our responsibility isn't to fix everyone's problems, but to let people know they're not alone."

Learn more about the Embracing Life Initiative and explore the resources on [the Embracing Life app](#). We can build a stronger, safer, healthy and connected Saskatchewan.