

Executive Summary: Supporting a Circle of Care

What You Need to Know

Supporting a Circle of Care is a culturally specific and trauma-informed toolkit developed for Indigenous caregivers of people living with dementia. This initiative was led by the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) in partnership with Indigenous community leaders and academic collaborators. The toolkit was designed with the unique challenges faced by Indigenous caregivers in mind, and aims to give caregivers practical resources and strategies to enhance their well-being and increase their understanding of dementia, through a culturally safe approach. As part of the toolkit development, Sharing Circles guided by Elders and Knowledge Keepers were held to ensure that participants feel heard, supported, and equipped to navigate their caregiving journeys.

Program Goals

- Enhance the social, cognitive, emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being of Indigenous caregivers.
- Build caregiver capacity to effectively address the needs of people living with dementia and provide strategies to reduce stress and promote caregiver self-care.
- Increase awareness and understanding of dementia, including symptoms and risk factors.
- Foster connections among caregivers to reduce isolation and create a sense of community support.

Achievements and Impact

Between 2021 and 2023, the program collaborated on the development of the toolkit with Indigenous communities across Canada.

Key Outcomes

- The creation of a toolkit (in English) and resources (in English and French) to address caregivers' unique needs.

- The project found that 80% of participants reported increased knowledge and skills related to dementia care.
- Caregivers noted improved knowledge about dementia, enhanced levels of support, and decreased feelings of isolation.

Lessons Learned

- Knowledge Keepers are essential in fostering culturally safe and supportive environments.
- Engaging with Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and Indigenous communities should include compensation for participants for their contributions.
- Translating materials into Indigenous languages enhances accessibility and uptake.
- Integrating evaluation into group activities encourages meaningful participant feedback.

Why It Matters

Supporting a Circle of Care addresses the cultural, emotional, and practical dimensions of dementia care experienced by Indigenous caregivers of people living with dementia who are navigating complex caregiving roles. Through culturally safe practices and community-driven approaches, it strengthens connections, reduces isolation, and enhances overall well-being.

Visit the website to learn more:

- [Supporting a Circle of Care](#)
- Browse other community-based dementia initiatives in the [Dementia Interventions Playbook](#).