

# Meaning of Empathy



In June 2022, the Collaborative Mentorship Network for Chronic Pain and Addiction (CMN) partnered with the National Film Board of Canada to provide early access to health care practitioners to view *Kímmapiiyipitssini: The Meaning of Empathy*, a Canadian documentary on how the opioid crisis has impacted the Kainai Nation and Blackfoot peoples in Alberta.

The innovative and blended approach for delivering this continuing professional development opportunity provided access to more than 100 CMN members and their teams, and culminated with a live question and answer session with film participants Dr. Esther Tailfeathers, Kerry McLean, Lori Eagle Plume, and Nikki Robinson.

The poignant documentary follows Dr. Tailfeathers throughout her work in the Kainai nation and was shot and directed by her daughter and filmmaker Elle-Maija Tailfeathers. This film focuses on a harm reduction approach to working with individuals struggling with addiction and displayed the efforts of health care workers to heal their community using harm reduction.

This film provides insight into the lives of those with limited resources and the stigma they experience which continues to be perpetuated in western medicine. *Kímmapiiyipitssini* leaves impactful understanding of different circumstances that may drive people to or to not seek care for their substance use and why some stay reliant on substances.

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*“Thank you for opening this up to all specialities and for everyone’s candour and contributions.”*

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*“It was a great experience - should be done again for other audiences as it’s such an important message!”*

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*“I can find more ways to listen to people who are struggling and try to meet their needs. It was very powerful to hear that being there for someone is so important even if their problem can’t be immediately solved.”*

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*“Recognizing system constraints of time and insufficient resources, and how these problems perpetuate people not feeling seen nor heard. Working harder to be kind and to try to overcome these constraints and self-monitoring: as per Dr Tailfeathers’ wisdom, when my irritability increases, it’s time for more self-care.”*

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*“The panel discussion around acts of love was a personal confirmation for me that I am on the right path in my efforts with my daughter as she struggles with mental health concerns. It was also a reminder to continue to show compassion to street people that I come across and to be more actively involved with the Bear Clan Patrol in Mohkinstsis, also known as Calgary, whose work is similar to the Sage Clan Patrol in the film. I recognize that I mainly serve the privileged - those who have insurance coverage or are wealthy enough to pay out of pocket for my services. It reminds me I must do more.”*

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ALBERTA COLLEGE of  
FAMILY PHYSICIANS



COLLABORATIVE  
MENTORSHIP NETWORK  
for Chronic Pain and Addiction