

Anti-Stigma Day Staff and Volunteer Resources

The Elizabeth Fry Society of Peterborough
Summer 2021



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The Elizabeth Fry Society of Peterborough provides gender responsive services and programs which focus on community interventions for individuals who have been or are at risk of being criminalized.

We believe in the abolition of the prison system. We initiate social action and foster community involvement and responsibility in efforts directed at social change, reform of the criminal justice system, and development of community alternatives to incarceration.

We promote community awareness, knowledge and understanding of the issues faced by women involved in the criminal justice system and the conditions which contribute to women becoming criminalized.

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This resource was compiled by the Summer 2021 Placement Students of the Elizabeth Fry Society of Peterborough. This resource intends to assist staff, students, and volunteers to engage with and educate the public about substance use related stigma. The Anti-Stigma Day campaign hosted by The Elizabeth Fry Society of Peterborough on June 26th is a response to the “International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking” marked by The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. This International Day supports the War on Drugs through social media campaigns, information, etcetera, serving to further stigmatize and ostracize our peers who use substances.

What Is Stigma?

1. Imogen Tyler - [Imogen Tyler - Stigma \(Sound Design\) - YouTube](#)

A short video that briefly describes stigma and introduces the concept of “stigma machines”, a systemic analysis.

2. Project Inclusion: Stigma - [project-inclusion-3.pdf \(d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net\)](#)

PDF. An explanation of stigma, pages 199-123. Find the full report at: [Project Inclusion: Stigma - Pivot Legal Society](#).

The Origins of Stigma

1. Imogen Tyler - [How does stigma contribute to social inequalities? Webinar with Prof Imogen Tyler - YouTube](#)

Stigma as a mechanism for slavery, inherently linked to capitalism and social control. “[Stigma] functions to devalue entire groups of people for the purpose of fortifying existing social hierarchies and very often to create new opportunities for extraction of...capital and the re-distribution of wealth upwards.” – Prof. Imogen Tyler

The War on Drugs

1. Drug Policy Alliance - [Discrimination Against Drug Users | Drug Policy Alliance](#)

How stigma intersects with classism. Touches on how stigma blocks access to housing and employment.

2. TalkingDrugs - [The War On Drugs Is Built On Racism. It’s Time To Decolonise Drug Policies. | TalkingDrugs](#)

How stigma intersects with racism & the history of the War on Drugs.

Stigmatization is a tactic used to facilitate and justify the systematic oppression/repression of ethnic minority groups and political dissidents: “The Nixon campaign in 1968, and the Nixon White House after that, had two enemies: the anti-war left and black people. You understand what I’m saying? We knew we couldn’t make it illegal to be either against the war or black, but

by getting the public to associate the hippies with marijuana and blacks with heroin, and then criminalizing both heavily, we could disrupt those communities. We could arrest their leaders, raid their homes, break up their meetings, and vilify them night after night on the evening news. Did we know we were lying about the drugs? Of course we did.” - Nixon’s Assistant for Domestic Affairs 1994.

3. Akwatu Khenti - [The Canadian war on drugs: Structural violence and unequal treatment of Black Canadians \(yorku.ca\)](#)

Academic journal on “the impact of Canada’s war on drugs on segments of the Black community, specifically with respect to the impact of structural violence, over-policing, and high incarceration rates.”

4. Kim Siever - [In 2019, Canada imprisoned 70% more Indigenous people than in 2001 \(kimsiever.ca\)](#)

Statistics evidencing the overincarceration of Black and Indigenous Peoples in Canada. These statistics are essential to a fuller understanding of the intersections of racism and substance use related stigma. See the resource below for statistics on the population of people in prison who used substances prior to incarceration.

5. Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse - [Substance Abuse in Corrections FAQs \(ccsa.ca\)](#)

Statistics on the overincarceration of people who use substances.

6. Canadian Drug Policy Coalition - [CDPC report_eng_v14_comp.pdf \(drugpolicy.ca\)](#)

Details the outcomes of Canada’s War on Drugs.

Barriers to Access

1. Dr. William Cloud - [The Old Adage, “Addiction Does Not Discriminate,” Appears to be a Myth - The Brief Addiction Science Information Source \(BASIS\) \(basisonline.org\)](#)

Addresses intersections of classism, racism, and substance use stigma. Discusses the role of “recovery capital” (i.e. personal, social, and physical resources) in successful recovery attempts. Inadequate access to housing, health care, and transportation and the experience of stigma are barriers to successful recovery attempts.

2. Nora Volkow - [Addressing the Stigma that Surrounds Addiction | National Institute on Drug Abuse \(NIDA\)](#)

Touches on barriers to service people face because of substance use related stigma. Touches on how the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbates the overdose crisis and stigma.

3. American Psychiatric Association - [Stigma and Discrimination \(psychiatry.org\)](#)

Touches on barriers to access and social exclusion people face because of stigma related to mental illness.

Accidental Overdose Deaths

1. First Nations Health Authority - [First Nations Opioid Overdose Deaths Rise in 2018 \(fnha.ca\)](https://fnha.ca/first-nations-opioid-overdose-deaths-rise-in-2018)

Article and infographic on the disproportionate rates of overdose among Indigenous communities in Canada.

2. The Ontario Drug Policy Research Network - [Preliminary Patterns in Circumstances Surrounding Opioid-Related Deaths in Ontario during the COVID-19 Pandemic \(odprn.ca\)](https://odprn.ca/preliminary-patterns-in-circumstances-surrounding-opioid-related-deaths-in-ontario-during-the-covid-19-pandemic)

A PDF report on the circumstances of opioid-related overdose deaths in Ontario during the COVID-19 pandemic. Proposes efficacy of safe supply.

Toward Harm Reduction and Health-Based Policy

1. Canadian Drug Policy Coalition - [Evidence Around Harm Reduction and Public Health-Based Drug Policies - Canadian Drug Policy Coalition](https://drugpolicy.ca/evidence-around-harm-reduction-and-public-health-based-drug-policies)

Busting common myths about harm reduction and public health-based drug policy.

2. Canadian Drug Policy Coalition - [CDPC report_eng_v14_comp.pdf \(drugpolicy.ca\)](https://drugpolicy.ca/cdpc-report-eng-v14-comp.pdf)

Offers recommendations for a new approach to drug policy informed by “peer-reviewed evidence, principles of public health and respect for human rights”.

3. Canadian Nurses Association - [Harm Reduction in Canadian Prisons--Companion Paper \(cna-aiic.ca\)](https://cna-aiic.ca/harm-reduction-in-canadian-prisons-companion-paper)

A PDF report that presents the efficacy of harm reduction programs in prisons. Touches on over-representation of marginalized groups in Canada’s prison system.

“...Despite the adoption of zero-tolerance strategies and increased drug testing in federal prisons, drug use rates remain high. As a result, Canada’s correctional investigator has recommended that more resources be allocated to treatment, prevention and harm reduction strategies”.

Prompts and Points to Guide Conversation

Substance use related stigma:

- Is primarily maintained by substance use policy.
- Significantly increases the risk for overdose and accidental overdose death.
- Creates barriers for people to receive support and seek help for substance use & addiction.
 - Potential loss or punishment associated with letting others know you use substances creates fear that keeps people in active addiction despite wanting help.

- i.e. fear of removal of children from the home or loss of access to seeing children.
- Blocks the introduction of new policy that can save lives and reduce harm.
- Dehumanizes.
- Intersects with classism and racism.
- Stereotypes individuals as a drug user regardless of if they are using substances.
- Blocks access to essential care, housing, jobs, etc.
- Creates feelings of shame, embarrassment, and isolation.
- Prevents individuals from learning about techniques to reduce bodily harm related to using substances.

Believing that using substances makes someone a bad person affects:

- Policy.
- Public attitudes.
- Quality of care (ex: healthcare)
 - I.e being denied care/service, receiving inadequate care, being treated disrespectfully.
- The safety and wellbeing of people who use substances.
- The safety and wellbeing of people who do not use substances.

Ways to combat stigma:

- Learn and share the facts about substance use and addiction. Recognize the expertise of people with lived experience.
- Learn and share the facts about harm reduction, including safe supply and safer consumption sites.
- Learn how to use Naloxone and carry it with you.
- Lobby for and support policy change.
- Recognize the intersections between racism, classism, and substance use related stigma.
- Avoid perpetuating the narrative of “deserving” (of inclusion/help/resources) versus “undeserving” people who use substances.
- Recognize the common threads among different experiences of substance use related stigma.
- Recognize the common threads among the different circumstances that bring people to substance use.
- Become curious about how your own attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours are influenced by stigma.
- Name stigma when you notice it in your environment/interactions.
- Use person-first language.
 - Ex: “They have an addiction” or “They use substances” instead of “They are a drug addict/user”.

References

Neufeld, S. D. (2021). Reducing Substance Use and Stigma in Peterborough. *Peterborough Drug Strategy*. Brock University.

Neufeld, S. D. (2021). So You Want To Reduce Stigma Towards People Who Use Drugs. Brock University.