

WHAT PERPETUATES STIGMA?

DISCRIMINATION

STEREOTYPES

SOCIAL EXCLUSION

PREJUDICE



This pamphlet includes information from:

Professor Imogen Tyler

Ann Fordham of TalkingDrugs

Kim Siever News

Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse

The Ontario Drug Policy Research Network

Canadian Drug Policy Coalition

Dr. William Cloud, PHD, MSSW

Scott D. Neufeld of Brock University

Sean Fogler

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SUAP Peer Support Program

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(705) 768-4334



150 King St. 4th Floor W.
Peterborough, ON K9J 2R9
T. 705-749-6809
F. 705-749-6818
TF. 800-820-7384
www.efryptbo.org



#STIGMAKILLS



UNDERSTANDING SUBSTANCE USE RELATED STIGMA

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THE HISTORY OF STIGMA

THE ORIGIN

Stigma: derived from the Greek root word *stig-*, meaning to puncture or prick.

In Ancient Greece, a stigma was an involuntary tattoo put on the face. People viewed as untrustworthy received a stigma to ensure social exclusion.

THE WAR ON DRUGS

Prohibitionist criminal law is Canada's primary mode of addressing substance use. However, there is no evidence that this improves the issue. Rather, it increases potential for harm via:

- Stigmatization.
- Facilitating the illegal drug market.
- Deflecting from addressing the "why".

Canada's War On Drugs disproportionately affects people who are Black, Indigenous, and low-income.

In 2019, **30%** of the prison population was Indigenous. At least **7 in 10** people in prison used substances before their incarceration.



STIGMA:

- Dehumanizes and ostracizes.
- Creates feelings of shame and isolation.
- Creates barriers to essential resources (housing, health care, etc.).
- Creates fear of punishment or loss that prevents people from seeking help.
- Blocks new policy that can address the issue and save lives.

"Stigma violates the right of people with addictions to be human, strips us of our dignity, and says to us that we have no value." -Sean Fogler

COMBAT STIGMA

- Learn/share facts about substance use, stigma, and harm reduction.
- Get trained in Naloxone and carry it.
- Support policy change.
- Learn how stigma intersects with racism and classism.
- Become curious about how your own beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors are influenced by stigma.
- Name stigma when you notice it.
- Use person first language.

SOME INSIGHT INTO #STIGMAKILLS

Stigma significantly increases the risk for accidental overdose death. Racism, classism, and substance use-related stigma intersect to affect risk.

TOWARD HARM REDUCTION AND HEALTH-BASED POLICY

In Canada, injection substance use among clients of InSite safe consumption site dropped by **23%**, with **53%** entering treatment and a **71%** decrease in public injection. InSite saves taxpayers well over **\$6 million** per year by preventing HIV and death.

