

Let's Start

A conversation **about alcohol** in our community.

Main themes arising from community forum, citizen voice drop-ins and key informant interviews

"Let's Start" community consultations were held between November 2014 and May 2015 to gather community perspectives on the topic of alcohol. An alcohol forum and six "citizen voice" sessions were held in November and December 2015 in Thunder Bay and District, and 20 key informant interviews were conducted between March and May 2015.

For the full qualitative report visit bit.ly/letsstarttbay

WHAT WE DID

How we drink...and why

KEY INFORMANTS

- for social reasons
- to cope with problems
- it's normal to drink

COMMUNITY MEMBERS

- as a part of everyday life
- excessively
- to get drunk
- as a way of dealing with life circumstances

WHAT WE HEARD

Why it matters...alcohol use impacts

KEY INFORMANTS

- impacts are multi-layered and interconnected
- affects people's health and safety (violence, crime, impaired driving, health issues, addiction, suicide, deaths)
- affects families and children
- affects relationships
- limits success in life
- creates difficulties in having and keeping the basic necessities of life
- leads to involvement in the legal and child welfare system
- increases demand on social services
- for some, the consequences are minimal

COMMUNITY MEMBERS

- affects families and children
- leads to violence and crime
- affects health
- causes injury and death
- puts a strain on resources
- leads to social issues
- creates a negative image of the community
- also connects people and contributes to the economy

What is helping the situation and what is making it harder to reduce alcohol harms

HELPING

- social supports and treatment services
- awareness-raising and education
- regulations limiting alcohol availability
- bar policies and designated driver programs
- working together in partnerships
- keeping people engaged in activities
- workplace policies

MAKING IT HARDER

- drinking alcohol is a social norm
- difficult social conditions
- stigma and racism
- alcohol used as a coping mechanism
- gaps in health care and treatment

HELPING

- treatment and supportive services
- education, awareness and skill-building
- regulation and policing

MAKING IT HARDER

- lack of treatment services
- lack of awareness and dialogue
- alcohol is easy to obtain
- alcohol use, youth drinking and heavy drinking normalized and often a learned behaviour
- alcohol the centre of many community events
- alcohol marketing pervasive
- difficult social conditions
- stigma and racism
- inadequate parenting
- difficulties relocating from remote communities to urban centres

WHAT WE HEARD

What can be done

KEY INFORMANTS

- take a multi-tiered approach
- improve treatment systems and services, with an emphasis on more holistic, integrated, culturally appropriate, individualized and family-focused approaches
- focus on the social determinants of health including housing and poverty reduction
- increase opportunities for people to participate in their community and their culture

COMMUNITY MEMBERS

- expand and improve treatment options
- increase awareness and education for youth, parents and general public
- more drinking and driving countermeasures
- greater regulation of alcohol availability
- more non-drinking events
- improve social conditions
- enhance social inclusion

Who should be the focus of the efforts to prevent and reduce harms?

KEY INFORMANTS

Children and youth should be a focus of prevention activities, as well as Aboriginal people, postsecondary students, women and pregnancy, families, adults and people with mental health challenges.

Interventions should focus on people who are marginalized, people experiencing alcohol use problems, young people, families with young children, Aboriginal people, people with mental health challenges, women and pregnancy and men.

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Participants emphasized the need to take a multi-tiered approach that is interlinked rather than isolated interventions that are disconnected.

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COMMUNITY MEMBERS viewed alcohol consumption in their community in particular ways, revealing underlying attitudes around drinking.

How people use alcohol was described in two distinct ways: those who use it responsibly, and those who “abuse” it.	Excessive drinking was associated with specific groups such as youth, Aboriginal people, people who are homeless and low income groups.	Youth were a frequently mentioned group and a sense of collective responsibility was evident around youth drinking.	Unlike youth, comments in relation to marginalized groups were almost exclusively problem-oriented and offered few solutions.	The comments made in relation to marginalized groups suggests that stigma and racism exists in our communities.
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