



Stigma Ends with Me Impact Story

Social Context and Project Background

Stigma and discrimination towards people who use drugs and those with a substance use disorder are among the biggest barriers to care and treatment because they can prevent people from accessing vital services and supports. To respond to this issue, the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction (CCSA) launched a multi-dimensional **Stigma Ends with Me** project with the goal of improving wellness and reducing harms for those with lived and living experience with substance use. The project has achieved impact through a combination of workshops, targeted training, social media campaigns and online resources. Together, these activities have raised awareness and enhanced understanding about stigma and substance use by educating and providing resources and tools to individuals and organizations. It has brought people and organizations together to increase capacity and provide the vision, strategies and resources to challenge stigma in our homes, workplaces and communities.



Artwork from the Stigma Ends with Me workshop in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, September 2019



Reaching Targeted Audiences, Creating Ripple Effects



Dr. Theresa Tam gave opening remarks at Stigma Ends with Me workshop in Saskatoon, March 2019

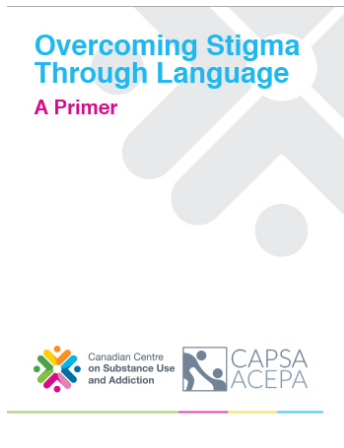
Since project launch, CCSA has collaborated with the Community Addictions Peer Support Association (CAPSA) and other partner organizations to undertake public education on this issue and deliver 13 stigma workshops across the country. These workshops have reached almost 900 attendees, including many with lived and living experience, and attracted individuals from such different sectors as the care system, research, federal and provincial governments, the health professions, public safety and education.

Influential leaders have also participated in the workshops, including the previous federal Minister of Health, the Honourable Ginette Petitpas Taylor, Canada’s Chief Public Health Officer, Dr. Theresa Tam, the Honourable John Haggie, Newfoundland and Labrador’s Minister of Health and Community Services, and Saskatoon Chief of Police Troy Cooper. From the academic sector, Dr. John Kelly, Elizabeth R. Spallin Professor of Psychiatry in Addiction Medicine at Harvard Medical School, has participated in many of the workshops as a plenary presenter.

In September 2019, in response to a perceived need, CCSA and CAPSA released *Overcoming Stigma Through Language: A Primer*, which has been downloaded more than 1,000 times. The primer facilitates conversations and increases awareness of the stigma that surrounds people who use substances, their support networks and service providers.



Federal Health Minister Ginette Petitpas-Taylor during a Stigma Ends with Me workshop in Ottawa, November 2018



Since August 2018, CCSA has promoted Stigma Ends with Me through CCSA’s social media platforms. In November 2019, CCSA continued to expand the reach of the project by making #StigmaEndsWithMe the theme for National Addiction Awareness Week (NAAW). Messages sent from our different campaigns and tagged as “Stigma” and “NAAW” have resulted in a significant wave of increased awareness. More people are accessing our messages as reflected in 169,296 impressions as well as more than 3,000 engagements. Within only one week, the hashtag #StigmaEndsWithMe reached 10,214,549 screens on Twitter.

Going beyond CCSA’s public education efforts, the stigma project has attracted many stakeholders who have requested to use our resources and have CCSA collaborate on local efforts. The ripple effects were most successful among universities. To date, CCSA has collaborated with the University of Saskatchewan, Carleton University and Memorial

University of Newfoundland to help organize their stigma campaigns. Data collected to date have shown promising impacts:

- A student-led campaign at Carleton University reported around 21,000 impressions on their Instagram pages and almost 2,000 engagements on combined social media platforms. This attention has led to interest from several other campuses.
- The University of Saskatchewan social media campaigns reached almost 18,000 people and had more than 23,000 content views.
- Memorial University gained 6,500 followers after launching a campaign on Facebook and Instagram.

Influencing Capacity Building

Changes in one’s awareness, beliefs and knowledge are often the first steps that lead to behaviour change. Overall, almost every individual who attended a Stigma Ends with Me workshop gained capacity in some way. Our post-workshop surveys revealed a strong increase in capacity resulting from every workshop compared to pre-workshop surveys. Survey respondents reported average gains of 90% in awareness, 81% in knowledge, 79% in skills, 66% in support and 65% in collaboration.

Going beyond capacity building, following the workshops around 350 attendees committed to taking specific actions to reduce stigma in their workplaces and communities. The identified actions ranged from individual to organizational to community level. Common themes to these actions included changing to non-stigmatizing language and getting involved in more open, non-judgmental conversations. At a higher level, some attendees committed to offering workshops to frontline workers or conducting presentations in their communities. These commitments to either changing behaviours or spreading awareness are critical to address stigma and reduce barriers to services and supports.



Workshop participants holding Stigma Ends with Me signs, St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, September 2019

The Next Steps: Influencing System-Level Changes

CCSA aims to influence system-level changes by partnering with key organizations in its **Reducing Stigma through Collective Impact** initiative. Many of the stakeholders involved in this collective impact initiative were either partners or participants from our past initiatives who expressed interest in driving change in their organizations and communities. A core team of key local organizations has come together on a common agenda to address stigma in Ottawa as a pilot site using a collective impact approach. The leaders on the core team are committed to making a difference in our community. The vision is to ensure that by 2022 Ottawa-based organizations have implemented policies and practices that have resulted in reduced stigma, reduced discrimination and increased wellness for people with substance use disorders.

