

# Harm Reduction in a College Residence

Algonquin Residence Life Management Team

Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental  
Health Conference - Bold Ideas

# Introduction to the Team



**Brittanie Walker-Reid**  
Residence Life Manager



**Brandon Jodoin**  
Residence Life Coordinator



**Jennifer Phillips**  
Community Advisor

# Learning Outcomes



By attending this experience, participants will be able to...

- Identify training that can contribute to increased confidence when addressing substance use, misuse and harm reduction strategies on a Canadian Post-Secondary Campus
- Identify policy change that can result in increased points of intervention for post-secondary students who may misuse substances in a way that impact their academics, housing, and finances
- Identify key roles that different departments of housing can play in ensuring a 'Safer Use' environment for all students living in residence



# “An Illicit Invitation” - October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2014



“The Algonquin times was able to find, with relative ease, drugs in the form of offers of marijuana, MDMA and cocaine, all within an hour and a half of signing in the front desk.”

“When informed that both security and health services are not formally officiating any anti-drug discussions with students, Jensen said it may be time for a change.”

“Acquiring drugs in Algonquin residence is as simple as a quick tap of the nose to let someone know you’re down to party”  
- Garret

(Robinson, M., 2014)

# Algonquin College Harm Reduction Strategy 2015-2017

The AC Umbrella Project is creating a safer space on campus to discuss how the use of alcohol and other drugs impact students' lives and focuses on helping students reduce any problematic effects they may experience.

Polly Leonard, MSW, RSW  
Harm Reduction Project Manager  
Algonquin College



## Strategic Area 1: Health Promotion and Education for Students

### INITIATIVES INCLUDE:

- 1.1 Implement a National Addictions Awareness Week
- 1.2 Participate in Orientation programs
- 1.3 Key outreach during high-use times
- 1.4 Integrate Recovery Day Ottawa on campus and attend community event
- 1.5 Develop and promote marketing and educational material
- 1.6 Develop and ensure ongoing promotion of website
- 1.7 Integrate e-CHECKUP to Go Alcohol and e-CHECKUP to Go Marijuana
- 1.8 In-class presentations
- 1.9 Gamification of harm reduction - *Rainy Daze*

## Strategic Area 3: Community Capacity Building

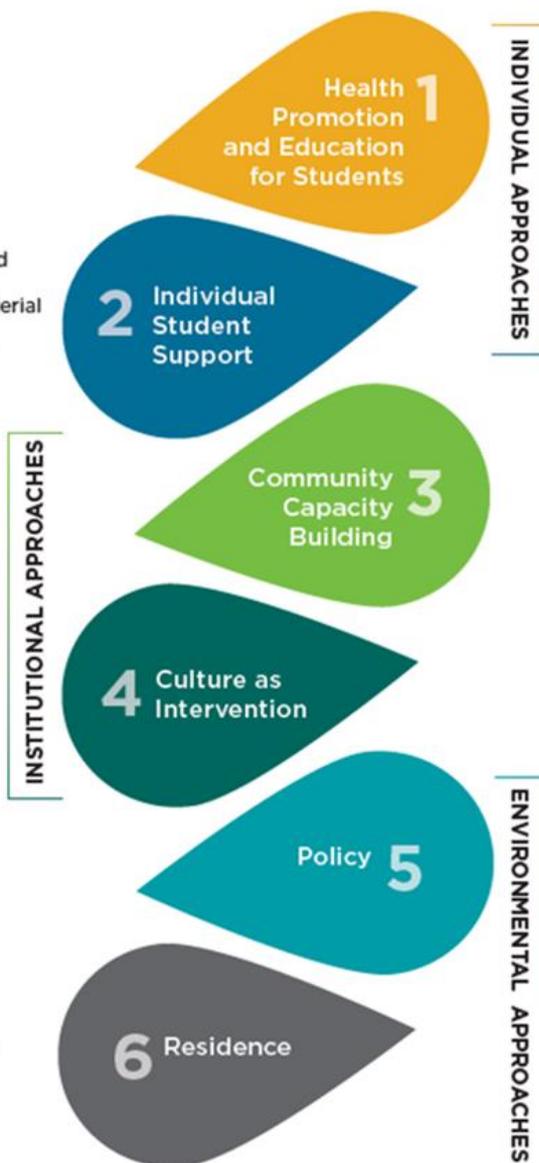
### INITIATIVES INCLUDE:

- 3.1 30-member General Advisory Committee
- 3.2 Provide student placement opportunities
- 3.3 Provide experiential learning opportunities
- 3.4 E-Learning Module for staff
- 3.5 AFIT Training for AC community
- 3.6 Knowledge sharing
- 3.7 Media recognition
- 3.8 Community Advisory Committee
- 3.9 Students' Association support and involvement
- 3.10 Students' Advisory Committee

## Strategic Area 5: Policy

### INITIATIVES INCLUDE:

- 5.1 Provide recommendations for HS11 AC Alcohol Policy
- 5.2 Provide recommendations for Residence Student Handbook
- 5.3 Expand educational sanctions for students
- 5.4 Execute National College Health Assessment



## Strategic Area 2: Individual Student Support

### INITIATIVES INCLUDE:

- 2.1 Provide harm reduction consultations to students
- 2.2 SMART Recovery meetings for students on campus
- 2.3 Attend Make the Cut annually
- 2.4 Streamlined navigation system
- 2.5 Provide ongoing consultations for Counselling and Health Services
- 2.6 Create a staff information package for counsellors
- 2.7 Staff and faculty meetings

## Strategic Area 4: Culture as Intervention

### INITIATIVES INCLUDE:

- 4.1 Collaborative Mamidosewin student placement opportunities
- 4.2 Work closely with employees at the Mamidosewin Centre
- 4.3 Provide policy recommendations for the Mamidosewin Centre
- 4.4 Coordinate Indigenous cultural safety training for AC staff
- 4.5 Coordinate Inuit cultural safety training for AC staff
- 4.6 Research best practices
- 4.7 Partnership with Wabano Aboriginal Health Centre - Cultural Safety Training Project
- 4.8 Events at the Mamidosewin Centre

## Strategic Area 6: Residence

### INITIATIVES INCLUDE:

- 6.1 Parent Pre-Move-In Newsletter
- 6.2 Training for all staff, RLCs, RAs, Managers, front door
- 6.3 On-site programming
- 6.4 Student placement opportunities
- 6.5 Educational sanctions
- 6.6 Weekly scheduled harm reduction consultations



# Understanding Substance Use

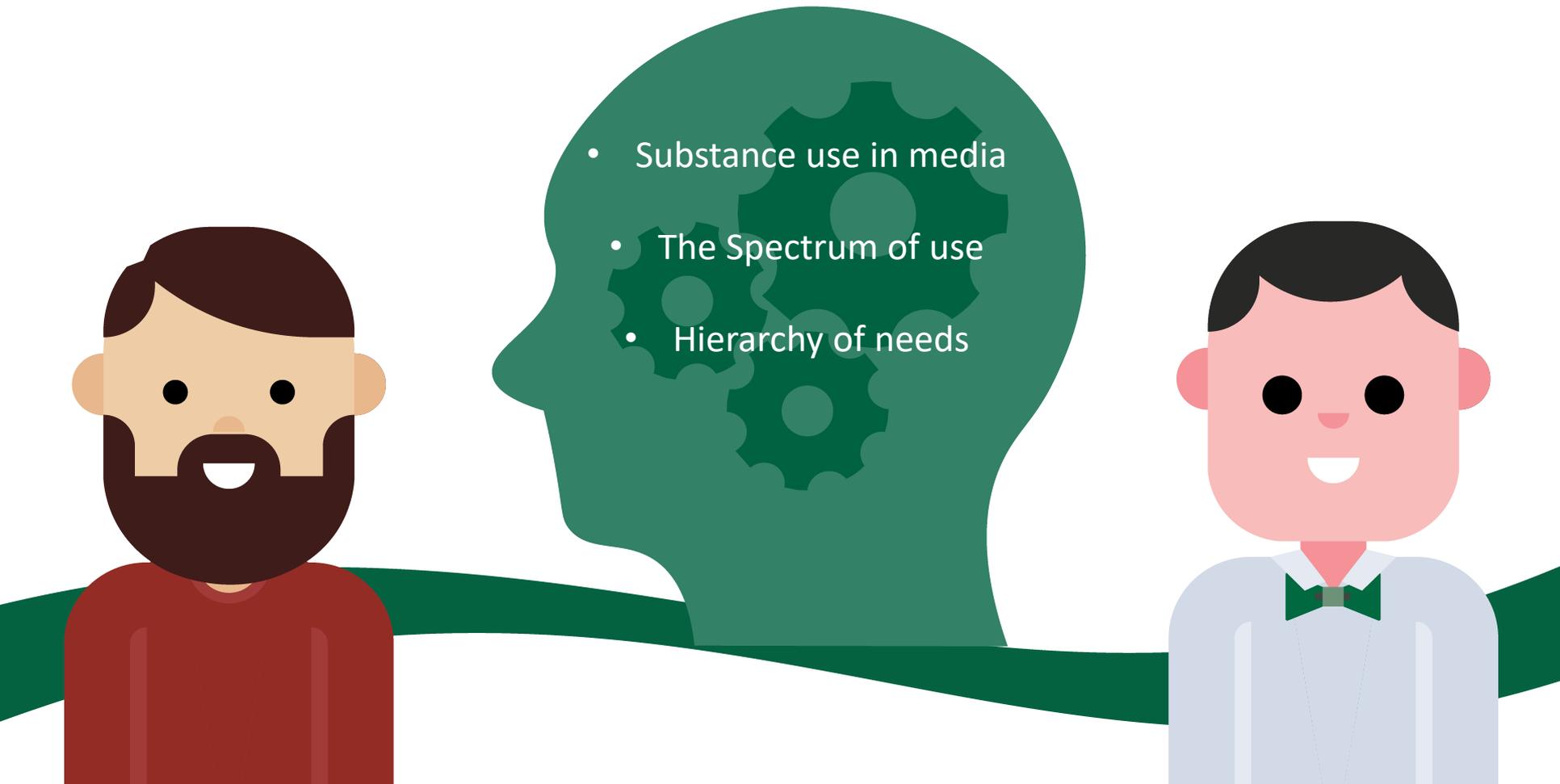
# Our Trainer - Amanda Neilson



Amanda Neilson RSW,BSW, CYW  
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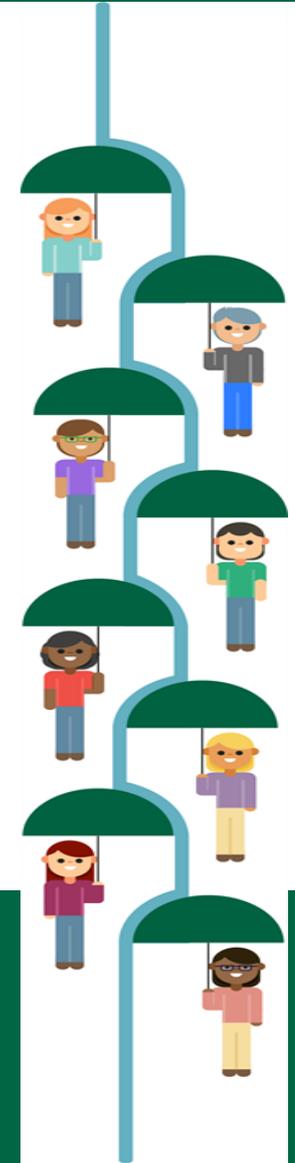


# Addictions and Family Interventions Training

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- An illustration featuring two stylized human figures holding hands. On the left is a man with a beard and brown hair, wearing a red shirt. On the right is a man with short black hair, wearing a light blue shirt and a green bow tie. Between them is a large, dark green silhouette of a human head in profile, facing left. Inside the head silhouette are several interlocking gears of varying sizes, also in shades of green. A list of three bullet points is centered within the head silhouette.
- Substance use in media
  - The Spectrum of use
  - Hierarchy of needs

# Factors that Contribute to Dependency

- Addictions in the family (genetic and learned)
- Mental Health/Learning Disabilities
- Early experimentation
- Environment- family, peers, neighborhood
- Availability of substances
- Trauma, stress i.e.. neglect, abuse, bullying



# Understanding the Denial System



# Understanding the Triangle of Chaos



It's not fair, everything happens to me, poor me, look at what you made me do, won't take a stand,  
Doesn't respond, simulates compliance, pretends importance

# Being an Ally

Facilitator

- Active listening
- States clear boundaries
- Do nothing that the other can do for themselves

Message:

“I care about you and I know you are capable”

Survivor

Thriver

Compassionate

Challenger

- Active listening
- Make expectations clear
- Provide Choices

Message:

“I am willing to listen to your without making it mine to solve.”

Everyone is engaged in healthy behaviour

# Understanding the Stages of Change

- Precontemplation
- Contemplation
- Preparation
- Action
- Maintenance
- Relapse



# Motivational Interviewing

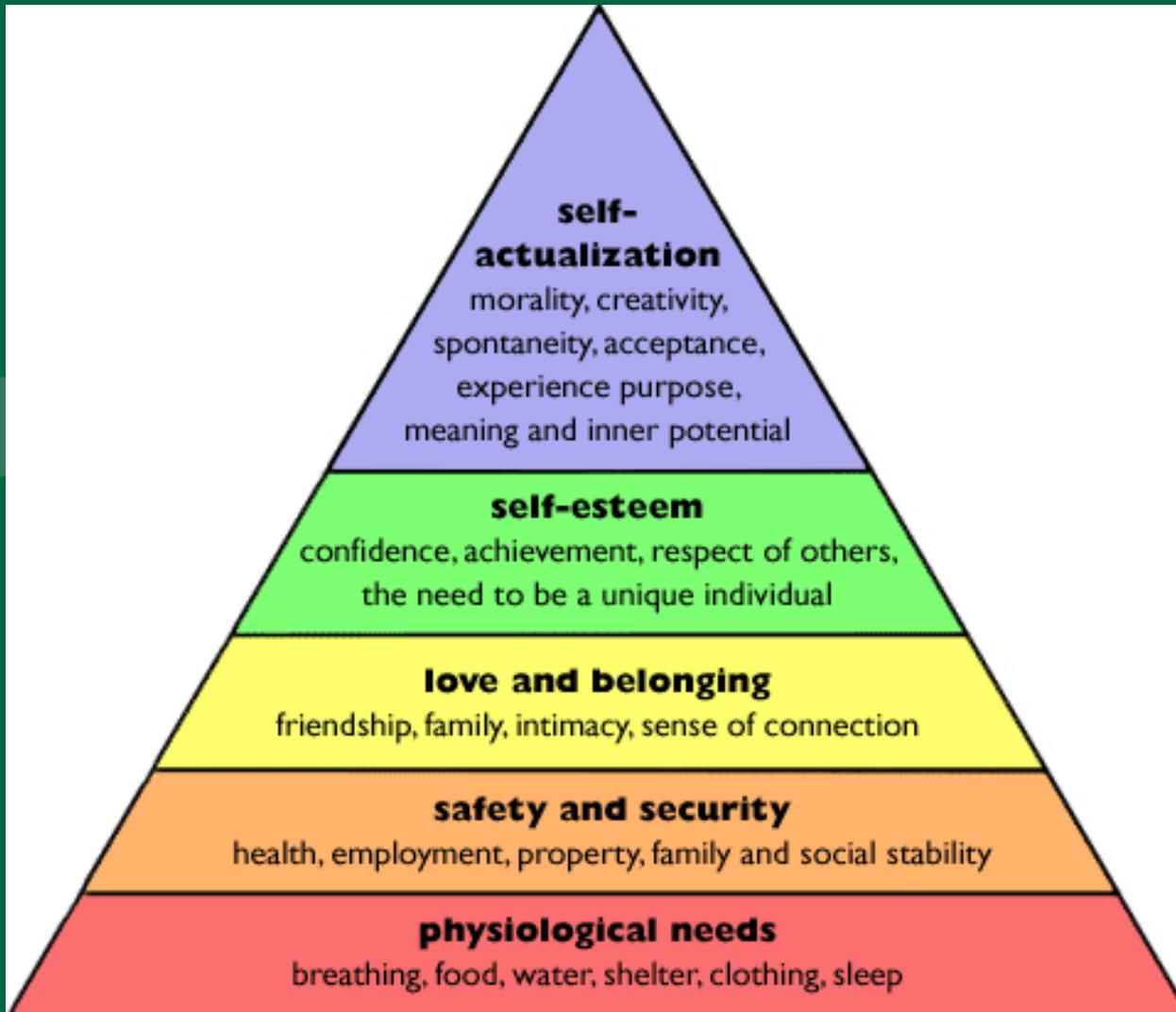
- Full day training understanding and practicing motivational interviewing
- Helped increase Residence Life Management Team confidence when exploring impacts of substance use for students
- Increased ability to promote further discussion regarding substance use
- Increased ability to elicit change talk and promote harm reduction strategies



# A Better Understanding



# Hierarchy of Needs



# Understanding Harm Reduction

- Is neither for/nor against substance use but rather recognizes that people may choose to use substances and aims to decrease the negative effects of their use
- Decreases safety risks while not having to completely stop the activity
- Focuses on the harm not the substance
- Is a non-judgemental approach that recognizes people are at various different stages of use and respects individuals' goals

# Why a Harm Reduction Approach?

- Our demographic: 1034 students
- Majority of students age: 17-19
- High population of 17-24 year olds
- Close proximity to Quebec (18 year olds have easier access to alcohol and bars)
- Harm Reduction recognizes that people may use substances and simply aims to reduce the risk factors associated with their use
- Students seem to respond well to this approach vs. the 'Don't do it' or 'drugs are bad' approach
- Algonquin College Residence and the AC Umbrella Project aims to create a supportive environment for individuals' to make informed decisions based on their own goals



# When Substance Use and The Residence Community Living Standards Intersect

# What are the Residence Community Living Standards

- Algonquin College Residence Community Living Standards are the policies and/or rules that our residents' are expected to adhere to while living in residence
- Helps residence staff manage a large population in a close setting to create a safe, secure and effective learning environment for all students
- Acknowledges our students rights while also highlighting their responsibilities to their residence community

# Residence Alcohol Policies & The Gold Standard Checklist

- Limit of 12 355 mL cans per person
- Limit of one 750 mL bottle per person
- Any single serve container large than 355 mL or bottle larger than 750 mL is not permitted
- Single serve glass containers are not permitted
- Alcohol with a concentration greater than 40% is not permitted
- Residence orientation runs 10 days where alcohol is not permitted in residence

# What does this mean?

- High number of low level alcohol violations
- Increases points of interaction/intervention with residence staff
- Early intervention has lead to increased support in areas such as academics, finances, and community conflicts
- Students inability to adapt to policies/restrictions often signify a more problematic relationship with substance use

# Educational Sanctions for Alcohol & Cannabis Violations

- Through our knowledge of Harm Reduction Residence Life has taken a more creative approach to conduct vs. the previous disciplinary approach that was not in line with harm reduction
- Residence Life Management work with students who come up in the conduct process and are often creative in their response
- Early Response: Placement students often follow up with warning letter paired with conversation encouraging different Harm Reduction methods to prevent future incidents
- Placement students continue working with students who come up in conduct and often support Residence Life in facilitating connections to campus resources

# When Conduct Escalates

- Through training RLC's have an increased capacity to help students connect their conduct to their substance use/misuse
- Educational Sanctions:
  - E-Chug & E-Toke – Alcohol & Cannabis use self assessment
  - Students are often asked to create a reflection letter in response to the results
  - Volunteer at residence events
  - Attend mindfulness & stress workshops in residence

# Harm Reduction Consultations



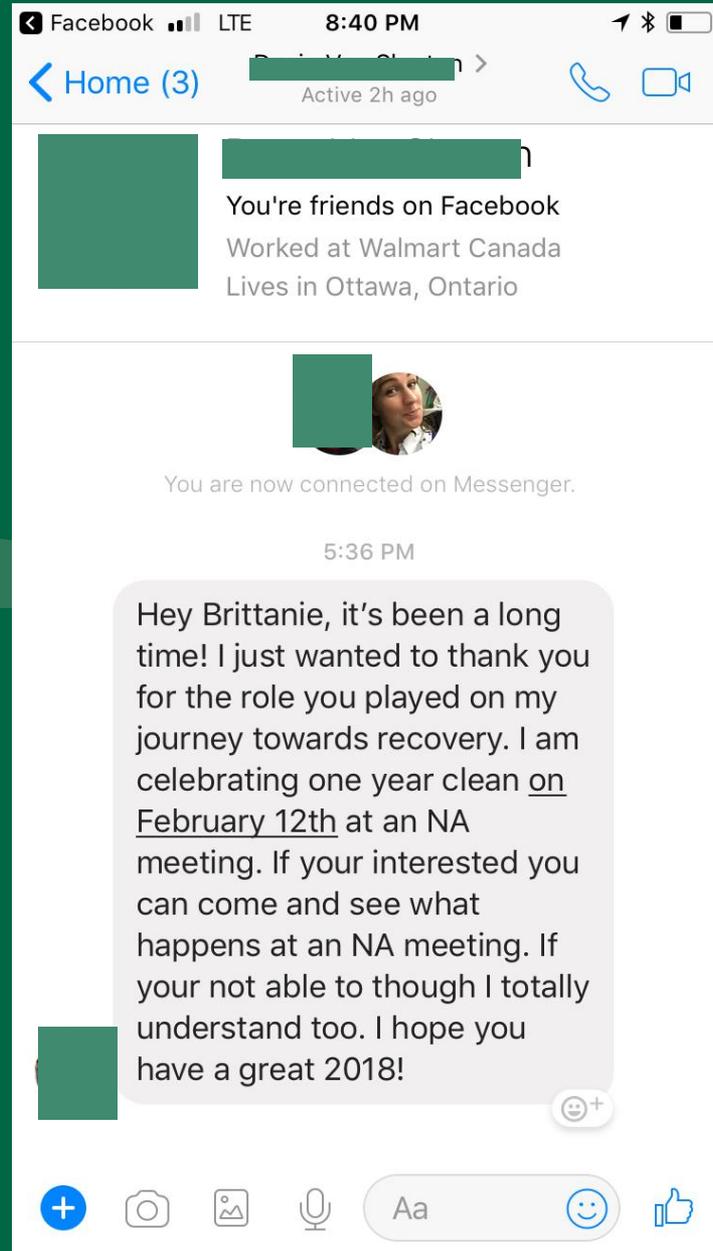
# Algonquin Residence Conduct Highlights



- Highest number of alcohol violations per student within Campus Living Centres
- Highest number of illegal substance violations per student within Campus Living Centres (Pre-Oct. 17)
- Levels of violations vary but increase points of intervention for residence life staff



# The Impact





# Student Staff & Outreach

# Before The Students Move-In

- Parent newsletter encouraging parents to discuss substance use with their incoming student
- Parent newsletter includes how to have a conversation as well as many campus/community resources
- Secondary information is sent out regarding orientation week policies along with alcohol limits for the academic year



# Student Placements

- **Child and Youth Care**  
third year student  
placement opportunities
- **Social Service Worker**  
second year student  
placement opportunities
- Interview process to  
determine best fitting  
candidates
- Student placements are  
provided with **SMART**  
(Self Management and  
Recovery Training)



## SMART Recovery

Have an addictive  
behaviour that is troubling you,  
such as over eating,  
internet gaming,  
drugs, alcohol?

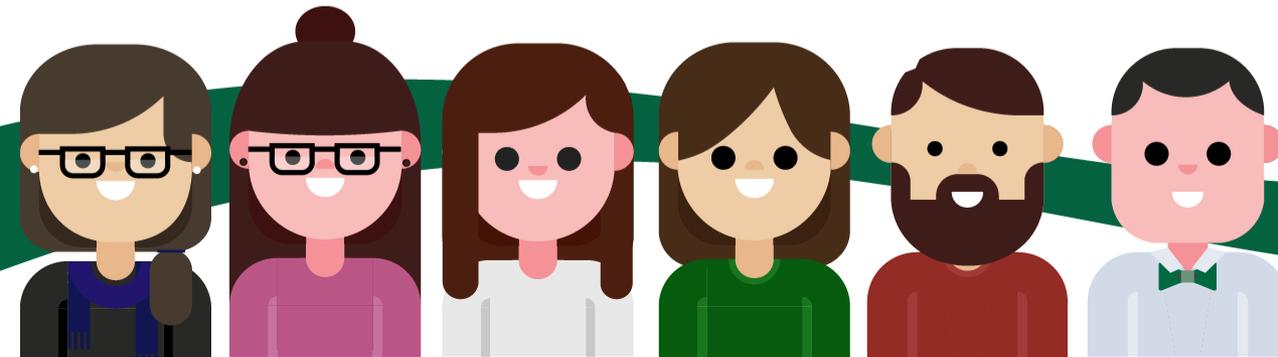
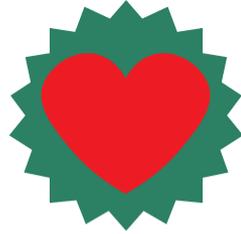


Get help recovering from any addictive behaviour by  
working on motivation, urges, negative thinking, and living  
a balanced life style. All students are welcome at this  
**confidential, student-only** self-help meeting.

The goal of **SMART Recovery** is for you to achieve a healthy,  
positive and balanced lifestyle so you can conquer new  
challenges when you feel confident your addictive  
behaviour is behind you.

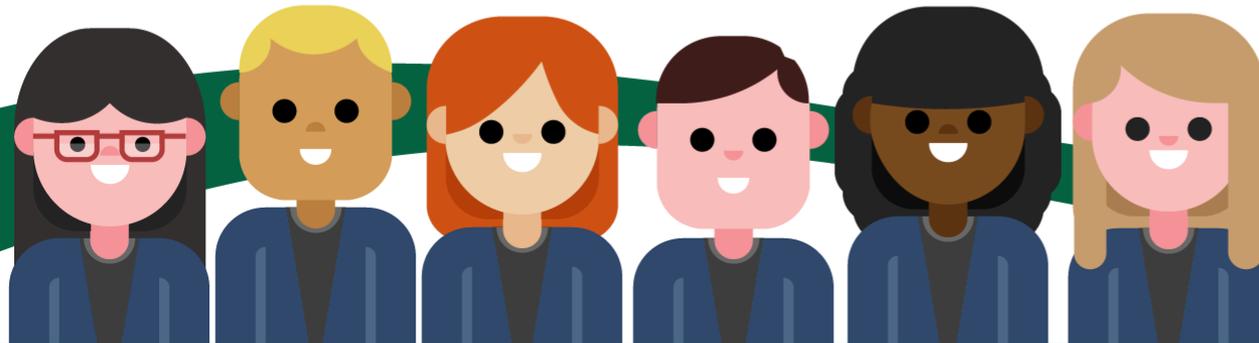
# On The Front Line

- Front Desk, Resident Advisors, CYC's, and SSW's are trained on a 3 hour condensed version of AFIT Day 1
- Training has helped student staff identify their biases and opinions on substance use
- Increased awareness of biases has resulted in increased ability for student staff to address substance use without judgement



# Residence Life & Umbrella Project First 6 Weeks Programming

- Strong emphasis on education around Residence Community Living Standards
  - Jeopardy, Kahoot, & other trivia style games to promote knowledge of alcohol limits, cannabis expectations and resources available through the campus and community regarding substance use
  - Student staff engage in preventative conversations to educate students and promote ally ship



# The Subtle Tips

- Promoting water for hydration
- Promoting food & snacks throughout an evening of alcohol use
- Ensuring you have thought about how you will get back to residence
- Having a buddy to look out for each other



# Halloween & St. Patrick's Day Programming

- Residence Life email – decreased guest limit (1 per resident)
- Promotes alternative programming offered through Residence Life (Board games, acoustic performances, pool & ping pong tournaments, courtyard activities)



- Preventative programming begins one week before date
- Activities promoting a 'Safer Partying Plan' are present throughout residence
- Uber codes to ensure students are planning their return trip after a night out

# National Addictions Awareness Week

- Harm Reduction 101 – Passport Fair
- Dinner Basket Conversations
- Choose your ride
- Drunk Goggles Mario Kart



\*Creating a safe space to talk about substance use on campus!



# National College Health Assessment

- 20% Resident participation
- 45% male response 55% female response
- Residence Placement students provided a space for students to complete National College Health Assessment
- Students were served nachos as they completed the survey
- Helped Algonquin College & Residence Management gain valuable knowledge of what our students were experiencing & behaviors they were engaging in
- The data collected allowed Residence to identify key areas of which we would like to focus



# The Culture Shift



- Residence Management ongoing commitment to training and understanding of substance use and harm reduction
- Residence Staff trained on substance use & harm reduction year over year to better serve students
- Residence policies are continuously reviewed to ensure support & accountability are in place for the students living in our residence
- Residence continues to allot programming funds to harm reduction & 'safer use'



# “Residence Life includes controlled lifestyles, marijuana and alcohol” - March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2018



“Residence teaches students what their limits are and that is because the RAS are strict when it comes to how much a student is drinking and give them warning if they drink too much or are caught smoking marijuana, it keeps them in control.”

“I think the residence [parties] are good because they are more controlled than off campus parties, they’re more of a safe environment.”

“The residence has pop up stands with glasses of water and measuring cups that remind students to pay attention to how much they are drinking.”



(Shoushounova, I., 2018)

# Acknowledgements

- AFIT & Motivational Interviewing for all Residence Life Coordinators in Campus Living Centres
- Harm Reduction Project Team



A screenshot of the 'Best Practices in Canadian Higher Ed.' website. The page features a navigation menu with options like 'About', 'Submissions', 'Mental Health Promotion', 'Service Models &amp; Programs', 'Policy', 'Data', and 'People &amp; Places'. The main content area displays a photo of students and the title 'UMBRELLA PROJECT'. Below the photo, it lists 'Best Practices &gt; Umbrella Project' and 'Umbrella Project MAR 01, 2017 | Algonquin College'. A search bar is visible at the top right, and a 'KEYWORDS' section at the bottom right lists 'assessment'.

# Questions?

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# The Umbrella Project: 4 Years of Harm Reduction in Residence

## Campus Services: Algonquin College Student Support Services

- Applying for the Grant
- Hiring
- Marketing
- Managerial Leadership and Championing

## Rideauwood Addiction and Family Resource Centre Harm Reduction Consultant & Project Manager

- Training and Capacity
- Researching and Collaborating
- Weekly Consulting in Residence
- Facilitating Access
- Creating Digital Program Delivery Strategies
- Linking Transitioning Students

## Community Supports: Rideauwood Addiction and Family Resource Centre

- Providing the Knowledge and Training based in Best
- Receiving Referrals, Providing Support to Students and their Families



# The Umbrella Project: 4 Years of Harm Reduction in Residence

## General Manager:

- Creating Office Space
- Budgeting: Digital Resources
- Budgeting: Programming and Ops
- Budgeting: Professional Development
- Ensuring ALL Dept. Training
- Liaising with Risk Management



# The Umbrella Project: 4 Years of Harm Reduction in Residence

## Residence Life Manager

- Implementing Best Practice
- Collaborating with Campus & Community partners
- Evolving Policy, Procedures and Rules
- Initiating National College Health Assessment
- Analyzing Data to Inform Priorities and Measure Effectiveness
- Supporting Media Relations
- Purchasing Resources
- Supervising Students
- Championing & Sharing the Project

## Residence Community Standards Coordinator

- Revising Policy & Residence
- Evolving Educational Sanctions
- Creating Judicial Letter
- Executing Policy, Procedures and Training



# The Umbrella Project: 4 Years of Harm Reduction in Residence

## Residence Life Coordinator:

- Ensuring On Call Approach
- Engaging with Parents
- Motivational Interviewing and Referring
- Participating on Campus-wide Working Groups
- Knowledge Building

## Community Advisors:

- Promoting the Umbrella Project
- Creating posters and educational materials
- Supporting Placement Students and Resident Advisors in Harm Reduction Programming

## Placement Students:

- Creating Campus-Wide Initiatives
- Performing Fun Student Outreach
- Conducting Weekly Harm Reduction Programming
- Facilitating SMART Recovery
- Customizing for Aboriginal Focus
- Following up with Students Post Room Inspections:



# The Umbrella Project: 4 Years of Harm Reduction in Residence

## Housekeeping Supervisor:

- Documenting and Reporting

## Housing Coordinator and Operations Manager:

- Managing Residence's Substance Free Community
- Communicating Rules & Substance Limits
- Curating Room Inspections
- Ensuring Cross-Training

## Maintenance:

- Never under-estimate their impact!
- Supporting Housekeeping in Reporting Damages and Cleanliness Issues

