

Let's Speak Up! (LSU!) is a participant-led group of DTES residents that support one another and work on issues that affect their lives in the community, which means that group members decide on what topics and issues to tackle and which projects to pursue. LSU! encompasses a working group that meets weekly to develop, learn, and practice leadership skills, civic and political literacy, and systems change capacity. Our meetings also provide an opportunity for folks to maintain a grounded, safe, and familiar space on a weekly basis, building on participantled connections with one another. We are committed to meaningful participation in civic decision-making processes in the DTES. This year LSU! has taken a deeper exploration into how capacity building can take place, as well as challenging the often negative discourse surrounding the DTES that feeds into widespread and interwoven systems of stigma.

This poster is an attempt to depict some of the ways in which stigma; self, social, and structural are experienced by community members. Stigma in the DTES is commonly imbedded around issues of; material poverty in a deeply unequal city, substance use amid the eighth year of a provincial public health emergency, and those most acutely experiencing the current mental health crisis. While stigma is usually related to specific social groups such as folks experiencing homelessness or people of a specific ethnic group, community residents know that there also exists a perpetual and on-going prejudice in Metro Vancouver towards people who are perceived to belong to the DTES in and of itself. With this project, we'd like to illustrate some of the ways in which LSU! participants have and continue to experience the negative behaviour, reactions, and messaging that is elicited from the rest of the city.

STIGMA

Negative attitudes, beliefs, or behaviours directed at a group of people resulting in the negative labeling, stereotypes, and fear towards the subject group. Stigma leads to discrimination and barriers that affect a person's wellbeing in myriad of ways.

STIGMA IN THE CONTEXT OF THE DTES is commonly related to material poverty, mental health challenges, and substance use. Stigma devalues, denigrates, and shames individuals who are perceived to belong to the group in question, leading to a myriad of negative health and social outcomes for individuals, groups, and even entire communities.ⁱⁱⁱ

STRUCTURAL STIGMA

"You shouldn't

They're better

I feel ashamed to have

wasted time on addictions

than me

Shame

have kids"

Structural stigma is the policy and procedures that are interwoven into social and healthcare institutions in more covert ways. They restrict and reinforce the often inferior quality of care that stigmatised individuals face.^{iii, iv}

SOCIAL STIGMA

Social stigma refers to the messages, verbal and/or behavioural, that are enacted or reinforced by society at large. These beliefs are often both internalised by individuals and also act as reinforcement for inhibitive and regressive social health policy.^{iii, iv}

SELF STIGMA

The internalized messages or beliefs a person holds about oneself. Self stigma is a major deterrent to successfully receiving resources and/or services necessary for improving related health outcomes.^{ii, iii}



SPEAK

HOW DO WE EXPERIENCE STRUCTURAL STIGMA?

STRUCTURAL STIGMA

A cop accused me of theft and arrested me on the bus on Hastings and Main. He called me 'evil'

"Just try to exercise"

SELF STIGMA

WHAT ARE THE WAYS WE

INTERNALIZE STIGMA IN OURSELVES?

I'm disappointed in myself

All the bad events in ones' lives are solely our own fault

"No one has a

job over there"

"Life wasters, getting high all

day and not getting help"

"Everyone has anxiety,

stronger than you are"

some people are just

"What do you mean

you can't get out of

legs don't work"

bed? It's not like your

"Have you seen the

zombies walking on

Carnegie lost my housing application

The whole world thinks they know us, and they use that ignorance to unfairly target us

We can't have our group anymore because of a loss in funding

SOCIAL	STIGMA
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WHAT ARE THE SORTS OF THINGS WE HEAR FROM OTHER PEOPLE?

I can't go in here because

it's only for certain groups

l'm not

here

welcome

"Why do you live in the badlands? Don't go there"

Most people from my diaspora community

immigrated to Canada with a lot of financial

privilege... My own community treats me with

classist stigma and prejudice because of that

"You are all thieves"

l'm never

seriously

taken

l feel

"Don't go to the DTES. There is nothing good there. Stay out of trouble"

> "Just quit!" (substance use)

> > "Mental illness is just an excuse to live off benefits and not contribute to society"

> > > "Just move out of the DTES.

Security guards and other staff look down on me when trying to access services I'm qualified for

"Can't you just choose to be happy?"

"You are stinky, don't

shower, and wear the

same clothes all the time"

"Let's make a detour

so we don't have to

around the DTES

see those things"

We are constantly being treated like we're nuts, like we don't know what we're saying



ART CREDITS: Flowers by Ali, 'Eye of Stigma' by Form

- Boyd, J., & Kerr, T. (2016). Policing 'Vancouver's mental health crisis': a critical discourse analysis. Critical Public Health, 26(4), 418-433.
- ii. Mental Health Commission of Canada. (2023, May 17). Stigma: The Facts. Retrieved December 7, 2023, from https://mentalhealthcommission.ca/resource/stigma-the-facts/#:~:text=Many%20 people%20living%20with%20mental,stigma%20attached%20to%20the%20illness.
- iii. Stigma around drug use. (2023, September 5). Government of Canada. Retrieved December 7, 2023, from https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/opioids/stigma.html
- iv. Livingston, J. D. (2020). Structural stigma in health-care contexts for people with mental health and substance use issues. Ottawa, Canada: Mental Health Commission of Canada.

The Downtown Eastside Neighbourhood House is situated on the ancestral, traditional, and unceded territory of the x^wmə0k^wəýəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.