INNOVATIONS IN HARM REDUCTION FOR YOUTH CANNABIS USE.



To supplement the speaker presentations and youth expert panel we developed this digital "mini-booklet" for this event, which provides more information about the speaker's projects, which are youth-focused cannabis harm reduction research projects and programs developed post-legalization.

This booklet serves also to inform the different stakeholders brought together by the event, which include youth experts and advocates, community organizations, and researchers. This event is grounded in harm reduction, youth-led approaches, and how to be inclusive to the diverse needs of youth who use cannabis.

Featuring presentations from:

- Cannabis and Mental Health
- Cannabis in Our Communities: A Focus on Inuit Youth
- Get Sensible!
- TRACE (Teens Report on Adolescent Cannabis Experiences)
- Weed Out Misinformation
- YMCA Youth Cannabis Awareness Program

Organizing partners: Daniel Bear, Humber College; Rebecca Haines-Saah, University of Calgary, Emily Jenkins, University of British Columbia.







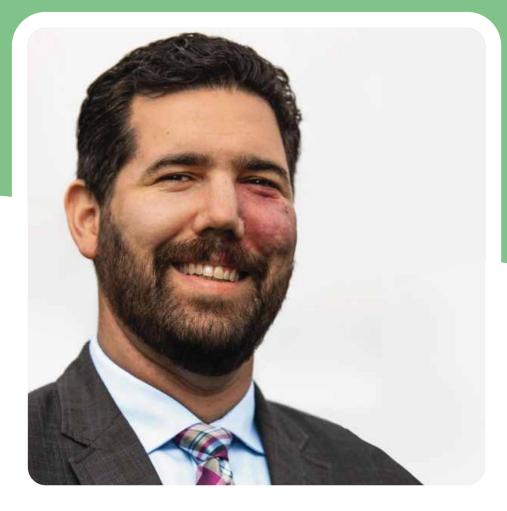
INTRODUCING THE Amazing) SPEAKERS 2022



Chelsea Giesel



Chelsea Giesel is a Senior Projects Coordinator in the Health and Wellness Program department at Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada. Chelsea studied Public Affairs and Policy Management, specializing in International Studies at Carleton University. Her focus areas in Inuit health wholistically cover substance use, mental health, and sexual health. She coordinates participatory research, and the creation of resources and activities for knowledge sharing. Chelsea has led the Cannabis in Our Communities Project from its early stage to its near completion.



Daniel Bear



Dr. Daniel Bear has been working in drugs policy since 2003 when he started a chapter of students for sensible drug policy, and went on to work with the American Civil Liberties Union's Drug Law Reform Project where he focused on public education and outreach initiatives across the United States.

Dr. Bear's doctoral work focused on the implementation of cannabis policy by police in the UK, and since legalization of cannabis he has focused on cannabis education, harm reduction, and how young people make decisions about how and where they consume cannabis.

Dr. Bear is a member of the Global Cannabis Cultivation Research Consortium (GCCRC), and PI of the Engaging and Educating Young-Adult Cannabis Consumers project. He is a Professor in the Faculty of Social and Community Services (FSCS) at Humber College in Toronto. You can find Dr. Bear on Twitter or visit his [Profdanbear.com]website.



Emily Jenkins





Dr. Emily Jenkins, a registered nurse, is an Associate Professor in the School of Nursing at the University of British Columbia. Grounded in principles of mental health promotion, harm reduction, social justice, and equity, Emily's research is characterized by an "upstream" and systems-level focus. Her research is responsive to priority health and social issues, including the development of interventions to minimize the harms of substance use across the lifespan, guide youth policy engagement to promote mental health, and enhance mental health systems. She co-leads the TRACE program of research alongside Dr. Haines-Saah.



Heath D'Alessio



Heath (they/them) is a youth mental health activist, public speaker, and person with lived experience of drug use and mental illness. They believe that adolescent drug use is primarily a health issue, emphasizing that young people are autonomous individuals with complex needs and uniquely valuable insights, all of whom have an equal right to health services and evidence-based information free of judgement, stigma, or shame.



Kiah Ellis-Durity





Kiah Ellis-Durity (she/her) holds a degree in Comparative Religion, Culture and Political Science. She works as a Project Facilitator for the Cannabis and Mental Health Project and Co-Project Manager for Get Sensible. Through her work Kiah aims at normalizing discussions around substance use and mental health while empowering youth to make educated, well-informed decisions.



Rebecca Haines-Saah





I am an Associate Professor in the Department of Community Health Sciences, Cumming School of Medicine, University of Calgary. I am a public health sociologist, with a PhD (2008) in Behavioural Health Sciences and Addiction Studies from the University of Toronto.

My research interests are in public health and harm reduction approaches to substance use and drug policy reform. My recent projects have focused on youth and young adult cannabis use and opioid use, the family contexts of substance use, and parent advocacy for action on Canada's overdose death emergency.



Scott Ste Marie



Scott Ste Marie is a strategic advisor for Cannabis and Mental Health and the Founder of Depression to Expression, helping people take control of their mental health and discover the strength within themselves. Scott is a Keynote Speaker, Podcast Host and YouTuber reaching over 20 million people worldwide with his positive mental health content. He is thrilled to be part of this project to help youth make informed decisions about cannabis use.



Steve Keller



Programme de sensibilisation des jeunes au cannabis du **YMCA** Steve Keller is the Curriculum Developer of Online Platforms for the Youth Cannabis Awareness Program. A graduate of Trent University's Bachelor of Education program in 2012, Steve has been supporting youth through educational workshops and programs with the YMCA of Greater Toronto for the past eight years. Steve is an energetic and outgoing speaker who believes in the importance of cultivating meaningful youth engagement through non-judgmental, two-way dialogue with youth in order to help them express their own insight while expanding their understanding to make informed decisions about substance use and mental health.

THE Increadible) PROGRAMS



Heath D'Alessio, Project Manager-CEO getsensible@cssdp.org heath@cssdp.org kiah@cssdp.org

Get Sensible

Ţ

https://getsensible.org/



Get Sensible



Get Sensible



Get Sensible

Canadian Students for Sensible Drug Policy (CSSDP)

Get Sensible is a for youth, by youth, cannabis education and harm reduction campaign. Aligning with Canadian Students for Sensible Drug Policy's mandate to support drug education efforts, and building upon youth consultations on cannabis legalization and regulation conducted in Canada, the Sensible Cannabis Education toolkit and the Get Sensible campaign responds to calls for the development and dissemination of realistic and evidence-based cannabis education for youth.

Get Sensible started off as a roundtable discussion with youth prior to legalization to identify what their hopes and needs were coming out of legalization- one of the biggest gaps they identified was education. Get Sensible responds to the needs identified by young people, around having realistic education rooted in evidence and in a post-legalization context, as well as in the context of ongoing public health (pandemic and mental health) crises, environmental stress, and an increasingly online world.

Harm Reduction

Get Sensible is at its core a harm reduction campaign. Get Sensible goes beyond abstinence by using a variety of harm reduction tools and philosophies, in combination with a range of realistic prevention strategies. Get Sensible provides messaging on safer smoking strategies, tips for self-reflection on cannabis use, and messages of compassion and self care to enhance the self esteem of young people who may use cannabis so that they feel compelled to reduce harms in the first place.

Inclusion

One tenant of Get Sensible is recognizing that young people are not a monolith, and that they often have intersecting identities that illustrate the nuance of their needs and how to appropriately respond to those needs. Get Sensible does not shy away from discussion around things like sex, gender, race, ability, income as we recognize the importance of this context

Engagement

Everyone engaged by this project has been under 30. We are committed to being a campaign run by young people, for young people, embodying our philosophy on youth-led, peer-to-peer interventions that emphasize the expertise of people with lived experience and the knowledge and perspectives of young people from diverse backgrounds.

Funding: Formerly funded by Health Canada through SUAP Currently operating without funding (as of August 2022)

Partnership: VoxCann GRIP (Group de recherche et d'intervention psychosociale) Canadian Drug Policy Coalition NICHE Canada



Cannabis in Our Communities:

A Focus on Inuit Youth and Maternal Health and Wellbeing

Let's Talk About Ujarak: Cannabis Community Care toolkit

Chelsea Giesel, Senior Projects Coordinator cgiesel@pauktuutit.ca 519-766-3806



@pauktuutit





pauktuutit.ca letstalkaboutuiarak.com

Let's Talk About Ujarak is a cannabis resource toolkit, guided by Inuit values and created to help Inuit increase their knowledge about cannabis use and how to reduce possible harms. The resources in this toolkit include factsheets, posters, a discussion guide, an assessment tool, and more - all developed from a trauma-informed and strength-based Inuit perspective.

Resources are created for (as well as with guidance/directives from) Inuit expecting parents and youth. The toolkit also includes general information that can help lnuit to make informed decisions about cannabis. These resources are offered in English and five dialects of Inuktut. These resources can also be a valuable tool for service providers, educators, policy makers and all members of the community. The aim of this toolkit is to increase awareness, reduce stigma, and encourage strategies for reducing possible harms of cannabis use.

The first step of this project was an engagement phase, through which the project team connected with expecting or young Inuit parents and youth through discussion groups, online surveys and interviews across Inuit Nunangat and urban centres following the legalization of cannabis in 2018. Pauktuutit gathered information of these groups' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours regarding cannabis. This helped us determine the gaps in knowledge and resources that Pauktuutit could help fill while building on best practices already taking place.

In partnership with and Advisory Committee of professionals and Inuit with lived experience that guide our project activities, we created resources to help fill needs and knowledge gaps to better equip Inuit to make healthy and informed decisions about cannabis use. Resources were reviewed and tested by Inuit youth and revised per their recommendations.

Resources were launched in November 2021 and were accompanied by a series of diverse knowledge sharing activities tailored to the region and stakeholder we were sharing with.

This project uses a unique harm reduction approach, in that it is specific to Inuit cannabis use. Indigenous and Inuit experience with substances, including cannabis looks much different than for your average Canadian youth. It is an experience inextricably linked to the impacts of colonization, colonialism, and its legacies, including residential schooling, the child welfare system and disruption of culture and traditional ways of life.

The approach to harm reduction for Inuit youth who use cannabis must therefore be informed and guided by these experiences. Harm reduction is a system for valuing, respecting and having empathy for others irrespective of their substance use. This system has been part of Inuit values as long as Inuit have existed. Our project approaches discussing harm reduction strategies through this lens of Inuit values to relate it to practice that is central to Inuit culture and tradition.

Inclusion

This project addresses the diverse needs of Inuit youth who use cannabis by looking at cannabis use holistically, including the layered reasons (specific to Inuit). Many of the reasons for use and reasons for potential harms are closely linked with the social determinants of health for Inuit youth. Crowded housing, food insecurity, under-employment, trauma, lack of access to health services or recreation are challenges that Inuit face and that can exacerbate problematic cannabis use or the risks of cannabis use. Pauktuutit continues to advocate and work toward improvement in these areas which will in turn impact youth cannabis use. Pauktuutit also leverages the strength of Inuit values, community and tradition to address cannabis use among Inuit youth.

ngagement

Youth were central in identifying needs, gaps and challenges in cannabis knowledge and awareness in their role as knowledge sharers in group discussions. Youth also play an important role on the advisory committee that guide the project, its activities and key messaging. Our youth reviewers were central in fine-tuning strength-based and Inuit led messaging about safer cannabis use.

Funding: Health Canada: Substance Use and Addictions Program
Partnership: Advisory Committee with members across Inuit Nunangat and urban centres



Programme de sensibilisation des jeunes au cannabis du **YMCA**

Youth Cannabis Awareness Program



youthcannabisawareness.ymcagta.org



@YMCAGTA



@YMCAGTA

verview

The Youth Cannabis Awareness Program (YCAP) offers free programming to youth aged 12 to 24, as well as adults (parents/guardians and professionals) involved in the lives of youth. Informed by protective factors contributing to youth mental health, YCAP provides a multi-faceted approach to increase knowledge and skills supporting positive youth development.

YCAP takes a harm reduction approach and does not make value judgments regarding recreational cannabis use. The program aims to minimize risks associated with cannabis use by providing youth, and adults involved in youth's lives, with the most accurate and unbiased information.

YCAP is a free education and prevention initiative funded through Health Canada's Substance Use and Addictions Program and delivered by the YMCA of Greater Toronto across Canada.

ontex

Youth ages 15 to 24 report the highest prevalence of cannabis use in Canada, particularly those in the 19 to 24 age range. Furthermore, cannabis use during adolescence increases the lifetime risk of developing a substance use disorder and may amplify existing mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety and psychosis. It can also trigger functional and structural changes to the developing brain, which can influence memory, concentration, thinking, learning, handling emotions and decision-making. The stigma associated with youth cannabis use may also prevent some youth from seeking support.

rm Reduction

We promote a balanced perspective, meaning that YCAP explores both the uses and risks of cannabis. Our presentations are evidence-based, meaning that our materials are based on unbiased research from recognized and well-respected resources. YCAP seeks to reduce harms/minimize harms associated with cannabis use. Examples of harm reduction strategies in the context of cannabis use could be refraining from using cannabis before the age of 25, designating a sober driver if a person chooses to use cannabis, or using products with a lower THC for a new or first-time user. YCAP promotes strategies like these with a focus on promoting healthy communities.

nclusion

YCAP takes a neutral approach to cannabis, meaning that we do not promote its use, nor do we make value judgements regarding recreational cannabis use. We want to provide youth with the most accurate and unbiased information. Our program promotes a safe space for youth to share their questions, comments, thoughts and beliefs about cannabis, with a focus on promoting positive youth development.

The YMCA, furthermore, is an organization whose core values focus on the importance of respect, caring, honesty and inclusivity. YCAP works with youth from diverse backgrounds and offers education workshops, engaging youth projects and programming for any and all youth. The YMCA also believes in a barrier-free program, and as such all of YCAP's services are offered to the public free of charge.

Engagement

Youth are included in YCAP in various different ways:

Youth Engagement Projects: Adult-youth partnerships creating positive change through the development of youth initiatives, promoting youth expression and community action related to youth cannabis use.

YCAP's Annual Youth four Youth (Y4Y) Digital Media contest: An annual peer-to-peer youth engagement initiative empowering youth between the ages 15 to 24 to raise awareness about youth and cannabis use through a media competition. Youth are invited to create a poster or video (or both!) about the potential risks of adolescent cannabis use, harm reduction strategies and/or how to access referral supports across Canada, and the top 5 poster and video submissions (as voted on by youth across the country) receive a cash prize.

Youth Advisory Council: The YCAP Youth Advisory Council is a national advisory council of youth volunteers that represent Canada's youth voice and perspective pertaining to the YCAP initiative and its prevention and education programming. Youth members engage in leadership opportunities related to reducing the harms of youth cannabis use across the country.

Education Placement Opportunities: Students studying post-secondary programs in Canada are welcome to conduct their placements with YCAP, during which time they will create a media-based awareness project of their choosing, co-facilitate workshops and community events for youth in Canada, and work with YCAP's team to research and further the knowledge brokering of cannabis education for teens, young adults and parents.

Funding: YCAP is funded through Health Canada's SUAP funding stream

Partnership: YCAP has supported and partnered with various agencies across Canada on diverse projects, including: Cannabis & Psychosis Drug Free Kids Canada Weed Out The Risk Centre for Excellence in Women's Health Rural Development Network Youth Gambling Awareness Program (YGAP)



Sarah Roht, Operations Manager sarah@schizophrenia.ca

Cannabis and Psychosis: **Exploring the Link**

Ţ

cannabisandmentalhealth.ca



cannabisandpsychosis.ca

verviev

The Cannabis and Mental Health project was created by youth for youth, expanding the reach of our original Cannabis and Psychosis - Exploring the Link project. In collaboration with YouthREX and the Mental Health Commission of Canada, The SSC built on the strengths of each partner, to co-create the Cannabis and Mental Health Course for youth 14-25 and the Mentor Guide is designed for educators, program leaders, and mentors working with youth ages 12-18. We aim to equip youth with the tools to make their own informed decisions by embracing:

- harm reduction
- health promotion and
- stigma reduction.

These resources aim to benefit individual and community wellness.

ontext

The continued development of cannabis education for youth is of critical importance. According to a recent article, "the longer-term success of cannabis legalization as a policy experiment that benefits public health and safety outcomes remains uncertain. However, these desired beneficial outcomes will require people who use cannabis, especially the disproportionately large number of young users, to have guidance on how to reduce key risk behaviours that contribute to adverse health outcomes and related disease burden."

Preliminary data on cannabis use trends and clinical outcomes for youth since cannabis legalization is beginning to yield key insights, highlighting the need for Canada to continue to deliver on the public health mandate by:

1) providing education on potential health risks and guidelines for safer cannabis use to youth populations, and, 2) providing targeted intervention approaches for individuals most at risk from cannabis use-related harm.

In addition to changes resulting from the legalization of cannabis, youth in Canada have faced many unforeseen challenges over the past 18 months, navigating the new restrictions imposed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, dramatically shifting the ways in which they are connecting with their peers, community, and school environment. Since the pandemic, those aged 15-24 reported the greatest declines in mental health.

Harm Reduction

The new reality of legalized cannabis has shifted the conversations we're having about the relationship between cannabis use and mental health, especially among youth. We know that youth are sophisticated consumers of information and must be equipped with tangible skills, tools and knowledge to help them understand the risks and benefits of cannabis use for mental health and wellness.

Canadian youth have told us they want "reliable, evidence-based educational material on cannabis" and that they can be credible key partners in the development of such materials. They have encouraged "all levels of government to see the value of promoting balanced cannabis discussions and co-designing resources with youth."

The Cannabis and Mental Health Harm Reduction approach includes

- Evidence-based approach
- Minimizes health, social and legal impacts associated with cannabis use
- Provides youth with knowledge and tools to make informed decisions
- Non-judgmental and meets people "where they're at"

nclusion

The Cannabis and Mental Health course, and the Cannabis and Psychosis project provide balanced, engaging and comprehensive information to help youth navigate credible evidence as well as learn from youth with experiential knowledge. It is reaching diverse youth populations across Canada who can most benefit from harm reduction and health promotion resources geared to their needs and realities.

ngagemen

Our work has been fully led by our Youth Advisory Committee (YAC), composed of a diverse range of young people from across Canada. Members of the YAC provided critical input at all stages of the development and implementation of the project, ensuring that the lived experiences of young people are central. They spearheaded the digital, research, and evaluation components of the project. Their expertise spanned knowledge mobilization, mental health advocacy, harm reduction and lived experience.

Funding: Health Canada's Substance Use and Addictions Program (SUAP) /Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC)

Partnership: Health Canada's Substance Use and Addictions Program (SUAP) /Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) / YouthRex



TRACE V - Developing Cannabis Education and Harm Reduction Messages with Youth: A Qualitative Youth Engagement Research Project

Rebecca Saah, rebecca.saah@ucalgary.ca Emily Jenkins, emily.jenkins@ubc.ca



Verviev

TRACE V is the continuation of the Teens Report on Adolescent Cannabis Experiences (TRACE), a qualitative research program that began in 2006. Our study addresses critical gaps in approaches to cannabis education for youth by exploring how young people's lived experiences of health and social inequities shape their cannabis use.

Overall, our team conducted 56 interviews and four focus groups with young people aged 15 to 24 from across Canada. We recruited young people from diverse backgrounds (i.e., gender, ethnicity, sexualities, and community). We asked them about how their cannabis use is connected to what we described as "health and social struggles," including connections to mental health or mental illness.

Contex

Prior to legalization in Canada, many cannabis education initiatives had limited reach and relevance to youth who use cannabis because they were focused on abstinence-based approaches, and youth were not meaningfully engaged in their development. Our work is grounded in the belief that cannabis legalization presents the opportunity to either mitigate or exacerbate the association between cannabis-associated harms and what is termed 'structural marginalization', which results from intersecting inequities including socioeconomic status, racism, gender discrimination, trauma and social exclusion. Cannabis education developed specifically for youth whose structural contexts may position them at greater risk for harms and problematic use is non-existent and is urgently needed.

Irm Reduction

Our approach to youth cannabis use is guided by harm reduction and youth engagement principles. Harm reduction has emerged from a perspective of health equity and human rights for people who use substances, in recognition that preventing substance use harms need not be an 'all or nothing' approach, but one that considers how harms can be reduced, based on the needs of the individual and their context. In the youth context, harm reduction provides an orientation to substance use intervention that extends beyond an emphasis on abstinence and has the potential to overcome shortfalls of existing programs.

clusion

TRACE V was carried out under the aims of centering youth voices and empowering youth to make choices towards reducing harms, while accounting for the structural context that 'wraps around' use, and the complex ways in which health and social inequities shape youth cannabis and other substance use. The inclusive approach steps away from "one size fits all" drug prevention programs and moves towards the development of youth-centered cannabis education grounded in harm reduction and young peoples' lived experiences.

Engagement

The COVID-19 pandemic led to a shift in our youth engagement strategies and research methodologies. Youth who had experienced health and social inequities and have used cannabis were invited to participate in online individual interviews over zoom. During the interview process participants were asked about other topics that were relevant to them that the question guide did not cover. The team also asked for feedback on the interview guide to remain open to youth input during the research process. Additionally, youth were consulted via focus groups to check the initial themes uncovered from interviews by the research team.

Funding: CIHR Cannabis Catalyst Grant **Partnership:** Our Knowledge User partners for this project were Canadian Students for Sensible Drug Policy and the Public Health Agency of Canada





Engaging and Educating

Young-Adult Cannabis Consumers

weedoutmisinformation.ca

@weedoutmisinfo

@weedoutmisinfo

weedoutmisinformation

Dr. Daniel Bear, Principle Investigator Daniel.bear@humber.ca

Engaging and Educating Young-Adult Cannabis Consumers is a research project produced by cannabis researchers at Humber College in Toronto, Canada. The project was launched with the goal of understanding how young people in Canada were engaging with public education information about cannabis, and to use that information in collaboration with project partners to create more effective, stigma free, honest public education materials. The project sought to identify where cannabis consumers were obtaining information about cannabis, what information they wanted, who they trusted to deliver the information, and in what platforms they wanted that information delivered. The results highlight the need to target drugs education campaigns to the self-professed needs of people who use drugs, and to ensure the language in such campaigns is carefully considered to avoid the inadvertent use of stigmatizing language or depictions.

Weed Out Misinformation is the harm reduction focused public education campaign created by the EEYCC team. It was designed to help ensure people can enjoy cannabis while minimizing the relatively low risks that can accompany cannabis consumption. The Weed Out Misinformation website includes public education content in the form of posters, brochures, guizzes, and short videos from cannabis experts.

The legalization of cannabis in Canada in 2018 created new opportunities to engage young-adult cannabis consumers with more effective public education information about the drug. In both the illicit and legal phases of cannabis regulation the efficacy of public education campaigns was quite limited and focused on abstinence, fear, and othering cannabis consumers.

Our team conducted a mixed methods study involving 1,598 survey responses from Canadians 18-30 who consume cannabis, and ten focus groups with 87 respondents. Respondents identified shortcomings in past education campaigns, what harms they believed might be caused by cannabis consumption, where they obtained information about safe cannabis consumption practices, and how they wanted such information to be delivered in the future. With the data from that research, we asked students in a Bachelor of Creative Advertising program to develop initial ideas for a public education campaign focused on harm reduction and young cannabis consumers, and utilizing a human-centred design approach. A further six focus groups were held with cannabis consumers, budtenders, and cannabis policy experts. Their responses and feedback were analyzed, and the Weed Out Misinformation campaign was created by Research Assistants hired from the Bachelor of Creative Advertising at Humber.

Harm Reduction

clusion

The research we conducted showed respondents were exposed to frequent myths about cannabis and had difficulty separating true harms from hyperbolic myths. They had little knowledge or access to harm reduction information about cannabis consumption practices. They were also very sensitive to language used in past campaigns that stigmatized or othered people who consume cannabis.

The campaign provides harm reduction information, including considerations of the set and setting cannabis is consumed in, alternatives to smoking cannabis, and information about cannabis overconsumption. Young people can view a First-Time Cannabis Checklist on our website or read our handout on which method of cannabis consumption is right for them.

The needs of young people were recognized in all phases of planning and creating the public education materials of Weed Out Misinformation. Young cannabis consumers were surveyed and interviewed in focus groups to identify exactly how existing public education materials about cannabis were lacking. When draft materials were created, they were again taken back to young people for feedback to ensure the creation of successful content.

The research team sought participation from cannabis consumers from under represented populations, and worked with drugs consumer support groups to engage with under represented communities. The team worked with Humber's Centre for Human Rights, Equity, and Diversity to conduct outreach to students, and review materials for markers of bias. The team also worked with Humber's Student Wellness and Accessibility Centre to ensure the campaign materials were easily engaged by individuals with diverse learning and comprehension needs.

ngagemen

The Weed Out Misinformation campaign includes interactive materials to encourage young people to engage with the information. On the campaign's website, young people can take a quiz on general cannabis knowledge, take a quiz on spotting cannabis myths, view posters and brochures, or watch short videos of experts in the field dispelling common cannabis myths.

In addition to the online content, Canopy Growth Corporation, a licensed cannabis producer in Canada, has encouraged retail stores to disseminate our public education campaign materials.

Funding: Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC): College and Community Social Innovation Fund Partnership: Canadian Students for Sensible Drug Policy, Canadian Public Health Association