

EIDGE



Eastside
Illicit
Drinkers
Group
For
Education

Illicit Alcohol

- Illicit alcohol is defined as
 - that is alcohol not meant for human consumption
 - illegally produced homemade alcohol
 - store bought alcohol that is consumed in a highly criminalized way (i.e. drinking in public spaces).

Creation of EIDGE

2009/2010 Caravan

- the BC-Yukon Association of Drug War Survivors went across BC to hear about the issues of Drug user across the province
 - Many Illicit drinkers came to these meetings to speak about their unique issues that weren't being addressed

Creation of EIDGE

- Illicit drinkers were attending other VANDU meetings as they had no where to express their issues etc.
- VANDU decided to sponsor a illicit drinking group

Illicit alcohol use and impact on health

- People who drink illicit alcohol are at risk for many negative consequences to their health.
 - Illicit alcohol has substances in addition to ethyl alcohol that can be toxic to a person's eyes, liver, kidney, and other organs.
 - As well, the combination of severe alcoholism and homelessness puts people at risk of violence and exposure.





EIDGE - Mission Statement

Eastside Illicit Drinkers Group for Education (E.I.D.G.E.) is a group of people who use illicit alcohol. We work to improve the lives of illicit drinkers through education and support. We work together to end the discrimination of illicit drinkers and promote safety amongst our members.

Eastside Illicit Drinkers group for Education (EIDGE)

- EIDGE is a peer advocacy group that runs weekly meetings at VANDU
- EIDGE defines illicit alcohol as is alcohol not meant for human consumption.
- EIDGE members regularly drink
 - Rubbing alcohol (rubbie), Listerine (list), hand sanitizer (gel), salt wine (aka cooking wine or rice wine), etc

EIDGE Meetings

- Peer-elected Steering committee (4-6 members)
- 30 people attend the meeting each week. Meeting are facilitated by 2 steering committee
- discussion topics include:
 - issues concerning illicit drinkers, like harm reduction, stigma, police harassment; community events and activism; housing; and services available to members.

Harm Reduction: Mixing and diluting

- very knowledgeable about how to mix drinks to make them safer and to make them taste better.
- Discussion of the different kinds rubbing alcohol (Isopropyl etc)
- kinds of illicit alcohol to drink that cause the least harm(e.g. rice wine with the least salt)

EIDGE

- In the DTES Illicit drinkers are some of the most marginalize people.
 - Very few services are low barrier
 - Regularly experience violence and victimization, poor health, and social isolation.
- Peer-led education and empowerment is an important strategy
 - will minimize harms through support and shared knowledge

Harms from Illicit Drinking

- At every meeting members speak about harms felt from drinking alcohol. These harms ranged in severity from minor cuts and scrapes to liver failure.
- Some of these health effects stem from the substances and volumes of alcohol people are drinking or using, where they are drinking (e.g. outside where they are exposed to the weather), and accessibility of health services.

Deaths in the illicit drinkers community



Deaths in the community

- In less than a year EIDGE lost 11 members.
 - The deteriorating health and high death rates show how marginalized illicit drinkers are
- With little to no services that are low barrier illicit drinkers have no where to turn when in need of shelter or support.
- Increasingly they are targeted by police and have to drink in more remote locations reducing or dissolving much of the community ability to watch out for one another.

Harm Reduction: Eating Before Drinking

- Most participants said that they did not eat before drinking.
 - availability of free food and in most communities was scarce.
- This is different from Vancouver where there are numerous providers of free and low-cost food that are well known to residents.
 - Eating before drinking is practiced by many in Vancouver.



Reasons for Drinking Illicit Alcohols

- Cost is important- cannot afford alcohol from the liquor store so often will drink illicit alcohol.
- What people drink is also influenced by liquor store and groceries store policies.
- Many stores have policies regarding who they will sell to and how many times a day they will sell to someone. Which limit their choices.

Illicit Alcohol Research

- Very little research regarding the use of illicit alcohol and its impacts both physically and sociologically.
- EIDGE has worked on several qualitative studies
 - BCCDC: two projects on illicit alcohol consumption and harms (1 in Vancouver, 1 through out BC)
 - UVIC/CARBC on a study regarding knowledge around harms and MAP's of illicit alcohol users

Where we went









Managed Alcohol Programs (MAP)

- Overall, members believe MAP's are helpful, if not them personally then someone they know
 - Having an increase in the types and availability of alcohol-related health services is desperately needed in Vancouver
- Station street program is seen as a success by EIDGE members but believe there needs to be more spaces available



Non- residential MAP

- Strong Peer component in the creation and implementation of this program
- Would be open 24hrs
- Would be a lounge for drinkers to hang out socialize, sleep etc.
- Would be less formal and medicali-zed than traditional MAP's.
 - Nurse practitioners instead of Dr.'s

Managed Alcohol Programs (MAP)

- Many EIDGE members have housing or are not looking to move. Believe that there should be multiple versions of MAP's
- EIDGE would like there to be a non-residential MAP in Vancouver

Challenges to Getting a Non-residential MAP

- FUNDING!!
 - VCH, City of Vancouver and the BC Ministry of Health have stated this is an amazing idea and that we have there full support, aside from financial support
 - Currently the group doesn't even have funding for weekly meetings, efforts are being used to find this essential funding instead of pushing for a non-residential MAP

Sherry Program

- Despite not have MAP EIDGE wanted to provide its members with an alternative to illicit alcohol
- In April 2013 EIDGE began buying sherry through the BC liquor and selling them in house.
 - Sherry not available at market value in DTES
- Roughly sold over 500 bottles of sherry in a year







Working together

- In the last few month EIDGE has begun to work with other organizations (PHS, St. Paul's Hopsital, PIVOT etc) towork on improving the health and well-being of EIDGE members



Next Steps

- The stigma surrounding illicit alcohol and illicit drinking keeps people from living healthier, safer lives. The public, health-care decision makers, service providers and the police all need to know more about the drinking community so that they can support the needs of the drinking community.

In memory of all illicit drinkers



Questions?

