

## Face-to-face Meeting

**Elsipogtog – 23rd and 24th of May 2018**



Following the 2017 ACCESS Open Minds NB event in Caraquet, approximately 40 people from the ACCESS Open Minds NB program met for two days at the Elsipogtog First Nation Youth Center. The Elsipogtog ACCESS site hosted young people who are receiving ACCESS mental health services, social workers, researchers and family members from the three ACCESS OM / ES NB sites, namely Elsipogtog, Caraquet and St John.

Participants participated in various activities related to the theme of community mental health. In fact, they were able to discuss about the stigma of mental health, the governance of ACCESS OM / ES NB, the strengths of each ACCESS OM / ES NB site and they had to network as well between sites in round tables and large group. The ACCESS OM / ES NB research team presented research findings from the focus groups conducted with youth at the three sites. The similarities between the sites provoked very good discussions.

The youth had an activity on empowerment and self-care in order to give them tools to strengthen their base. Subsequently, we had two presentations, one on Social Pediatrics by Elaine Deschênes (Memramcook) and Sarah Campbell (St John), and the other

on Peer Support by Hilary Rankin and Stephanie Young from Laing House (Halifax). These presentations provided a variety of perspectives on developing community programs.

Participants also had the chance to take part or observe cultural activities of the Mi'kmaq: welcoming by a community elder, discussions in a circle most of the time, a traditional dance performed by two young people and a sweat-lodge. In addition, each participant left with South Dakota sage, a rare medicinal herb.

The activities were all held with a good spirit of sharing and respect where everyone was welcome to speak even if we exceeded the established schedule. The success of this event will contribute to the fortification of the ACCESS OM / ES NB network and everyone is eager to meet at the next Face-to-face meeting that will take place in St John in 2018.

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