

# Alcohol & Injury in Atlantic Canada:

Creating a Culture of Safer Consumption

Jennifer Heatley, ACIP



# Purpose & Methods

- Investigate alcohol & injury link & culture of use
- Produce evidence-based policy recommendations for reducing alcohol-related injuries
- Environmental Scan
  - Literature Review (academic & grey): 1998-present
  - Key Informant Interviews (21) from Atlantic Canada

# Alcohol & Injury

- Alcohol use leads to:
  - Increased risk of injury resulting in emergency room visit
  - Increased injury severity
  - Increased number of body regions injured
  - Difficulty making diagnosis



# Alcohol Related Injuries

- Literature

- Motor vehicle collisions (MVCs) – on & off road
- Falls
  - Young & older adults
- Violence
  - Assaults
  - Sexual assaults
  - Domestic
- Suicide
- Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)

- Key Informants

- Emphasis on off-road MVCs
- Violence
- Falls
- Suicide

# Culture of Alcohol Use in AC

*It's not that we're drinking alcohol, it's **HOW** we're drinking alcohol.*

	Total Alcohol	Beer	Wine	Spirits	Coolers
Canada	115.75	92.04	14.77	5.90	3.04
NL	117.76	100.02	5.99	8.48	3.27
NS	107.36	86.67	10.10	7.04	3.55
PE	106.86	85.98	9.29	7.43	4.16
NB	104.15	86.44	7.79	4.85	5.07

## Compared to Canada:

- Atlantic Canada has highest rate of people consuming 5+ drinks in one sitting.
- A higher % of Atlantic Canadians drink in a manner considered hazardous (AUDIT)

Per capita consumption litres per annum, 2007

Also:

- Declining age of first drink
- Increasing rates of consumption among females
- Intoxication as a planned outcome

Literature Review

# Culture of Alcohol Use in AC

- Findings – Alcohol Consumption:
  - Socially accepted & expected
  - Intolerance of alcohol abstinence
  - Excessive consumption & intentional over-consumption
  - Normalization of intoxication
- Findings – Alcohol & Injuries:
  - Alcohol-related injuries are “badges of honour”
  - Amusing stories

*It's not that we're drinking alcohol, it's HOW we're drinking alcohol.*

Key Informants

# Creating a Culture of Hazardous Consumption:

- Heritage
- Industry
- Marketing, promotion & media



# Final Report Recommendations

1. Decrease advertising
2. Decrease access
3. Increase pricing
4. Create support for change





# Decreasing Advertising

- Countries with partial restrictions vs. none
  - 16% lower consumption rates
  - 10% lower MVC fatality rates
- Countries with full restrictions vs. partial
  - 11% lower consumption rates
  - 23% lower MVC fatality rates
- Ban alcohol sponsorships



*"Now, kids, don't look until you're twenty-one."*

[www.GetSerious.org](http://www.GetSerious.org)

USA: A full ban would save between 5000-10,000 lives per year

# Decreasing Access

- Outlet Density
  - Increased rates of violence, crime, impaired driving among youth, binge drinking, overall morbidity
- Hours & Days of Sale
  - Increased rates of violence, impaired driving & MVCs
- Bar Hours



# Increased Pricing

- Results in:
  - Reduced consumption overall
  - Reduced harmful & hazardous consumption
  - Reduced dependence
  - Reduced alcohol-related harms (to self and others)



(Moe Green)

# Creating Support for Change

- Use social marketing techniques to:
  - Create readiness for policy change among the public
  - Denormalize binge drinking, drinking to intoxication & underage drinking
  - Normalize help-seeking
- Assess capacity of stakeholders' understanding of social marketing & best practices in alcohol policy & work to build capacity where needed
- Support training of healthcare professionals

# Conclusion

- Low prices, high access & high exposure to advertising =
  - ↑ CONSUMPTION
- Increased CONSUMPTION =
  - ↑ Suicide & violence
  - ↑ Motor vehicle collisions



# Questions?

**Contact: Jennifer Heatley  
MPH (c), BSc. HPRO, BSc. Psych**

**[jheatley@acip.ca](mailto:jheatley@acip.ca)**