

HUMAN TRAFFICKING FOR THE
PURPOSE OF SEXUAL
EXPLOITATION IN NORTHEASTERN
ONTARIO: SERVICE PROVIDER
AND SURVIVOR NEEDS AND
PERSPECTIVES



NORTHEASTERN ONTARIO RESEARCH ALLIANCE ON
HUMAN TRAFFICKING

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

In the spring and fall of 2017, the Northeastern Ontario Research Alliance on Human Trafficking ([NORAHT](#)) – a partnership between Amelia Rising Sexual Assault Centre of Nipissing, the Anishinabek Nation: Union of Ontario Indians, the AIDS Committee of North Bay and Area, and Nipissing University – hosted eight different workshops across northeastern Ontario with service providers and persons with lived experience. The purpose of NORAHT's study is to understand patterns of human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation in northeastern Ontario; to identify existing services and grassroots advocacy; and to identify service gaps and barriers in this region.

NORAHT's research is located within an anti-oppressive decolonial framework because understanding violence against Indigenous women requires a framework that addresses the gendered, violent legacy of colonialism. Following principles of participatory action research (PAR), which emphasizes the co-creation of knowledge through collaboration and research for the purpose of collective action, we asked participants the following questions:

Morning Session: Service Mapping, Gaps and Barriers:

- What is your or your organization's experience with human trafficking?
- What did you do or would you do in responding to human trafficking?
- What resources or tools do you wish were available to organizations in your community and region in order respond to human trafficking?"

Afternoon Session — Next Steps:

- What are the next steps?
- What do we want to make happen?
- How can we start to make it happen?" Flip charts from these sessions"

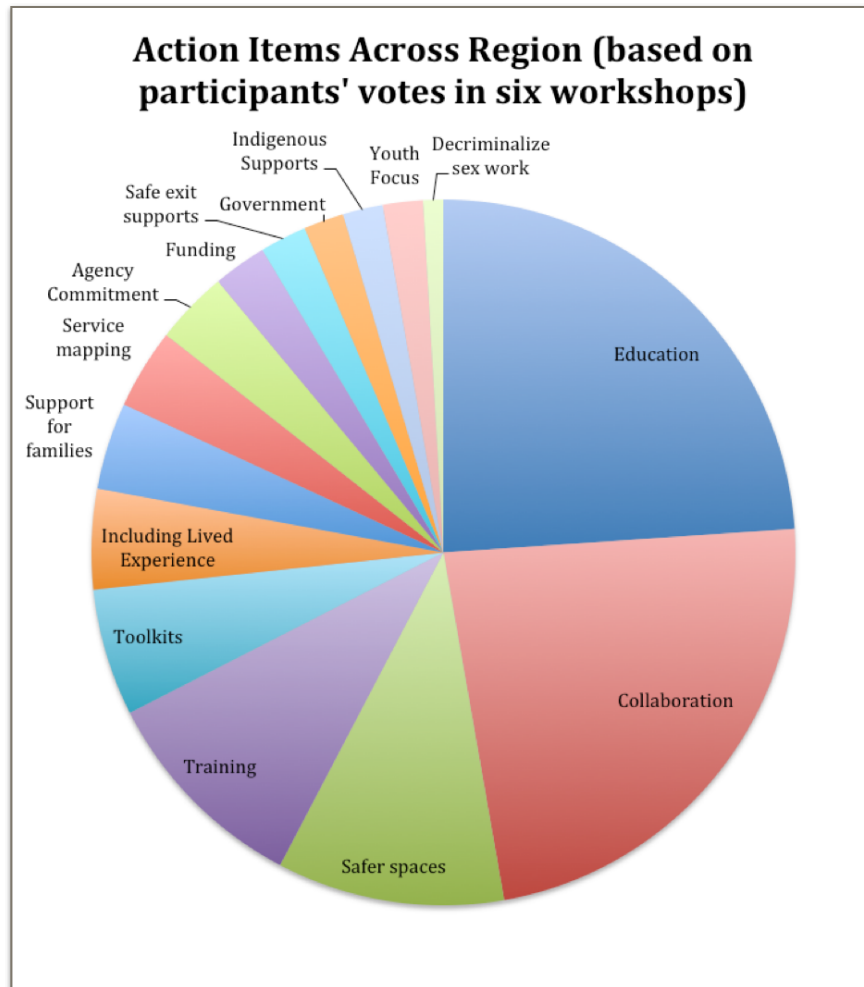
In total, 165 participants attended our workshops in North Bay, Sudbury, Sault Ste Marie, Manitoulin Island, Cochrane, Kirkland Lake, Parry Sound and Dokis First Nation. Approximately 60 of those participants attended on behalf of Indigenous agencies and/or self-identified as Indigenous. Five participants had lived experience (either directly or as family members) in human trafficking and/or the sex trade.

1. FINDINGS:

There are significant resource gaps in the region, including the need for:

- Safe and affordable housing
- Research and better data on human trafficking

- Funding
- Service provider toolkits, including Indigenous-specific resources
- Safe(r) spaces and other transitional supports
- Education and general awareness



Northern-specific barriers to service provision include “huge geographical area,” “remoteness and accessibility” and the inadequacy of putting someone on a bus to head “down south” for services away from family and community supports. Thus, we heard multiple calls for the development of safe(r) spaces and/or a dedicated safe house in the region for survivors of human trafficking.

Overall, participants across the northeast prioritized the need for education and collaboration, including through the development of safe(r) spaces, toolkits and service mapping. Participants also noted the importance of providing supports to families of those who have been trafficked and of listening to the voices of persons with lived experience in human trafficking and/or the sex trade.

2. Observations and Next Steps:

We commend the tremendous work being done by service providers across the region despite, in many cases, the lack of resources or mandates. However, we also note several challenges that emerged during the workshops. We encountered tensions regarding the autonomy of sex work, a lack of understanding or agreement as to what constitutes human trafficking, the use of problematic terminology such as “girls” and “victims” that denies people’s agency, self-determination and empowerment, and a vital need for resources, including culturally specific resources.

One of the key lessons we have drawn from this opening phase of the project is the importance of further including lived experience. Thus, we seek more people who are willing to share their stories and advice regarding human trafficking and/or the sex trade. We hope to develop educational resources and indicator tools (both top requests) that are sensitive to the nuances of sex work as well as the unique circumstances of the north.

The next stage of NORAHT’s project is the “action phase” of participatory action research. We are planning three conferences for Fall 2018 in order to discuss findings with participants, hold breakout sessions for the development of toolkits and other resources, and continue to build awareness and networks. Please save the following dates and stay tuned for further details!

Sault Ste Marie: Sept. 26-29, 2018 (hosted by Hope Alliance, PACT Grandmothers, and Missanabie Cree First Nation)

Timmins: Nov. 8, 2108

Sudbury: Nov. 19, 2018

The full report and individual community briefings are available on our website in the [news and research](#) section for quick reference.

Written by: Northeastern Ontario Research Alliance on Human Trafficking (NORAHT)

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