



Community Engagement Sessions: North Bay and Sudbury

NORAHT has hosted two out of its eight projected community engagement sessions thus far. The North Bay session (June 26, 2017) had 14 participants, and the Sudbury session (June 28, 2017) had 26 participants. Participants were from various community agencies (i.e., victim services, women's shelters, sexual assault centres, health centres, mental health and addictions, and other non-profit groups). As well, we had several people with lived experience. NORAHT was able to provide an honorarium for those attending with lived experience.*

The purpose of the community engagement sessions, which are based upon participatory action research (PAR) methodology, is to:

- 1) Identify gaps and barriers in local services for persons who have experienced human trafficking and sexual exploitation; and
- 2) Initiate the development of regional service provider networks, toolkits and other resources for responding to human trafficking and sexual exploitation.

Participants in Sudbury seemed to have had more training in human trafficking than participants in North Bay, although all participants in North Bay had encountered or suspected they had encountered trafficking. There was a lengthy discussion in North Bay about indicators of trafficking, how to identify someone who has been trafficked, and how to get people to disclose they have been trafficked. In Sudbury, perhaps 9 or 10 participants had encountered human trafficking, either as service providers or directly in their own lives. Conversations unique to Sudbury included the need for shared resource lists, common care pathways, and supporting families whose loved ones are being trafficked.

Issues and concerns common to both sessions include:

- As of August 23, while there are multiple services** that can assist trafficked persons in North Bay and Sudbury, no single service provider is sufficient in meeting an individual's needs, and this is a barrier to accessing support.

* If you are eligible for an honorarium (someone with lived experience who attended on their own time), it is not too late to ask us for it. Contact Rosemary Nagy at rnagy@nipissingu.ca or 705 474-3450 ext. 4156.

** Note: Victim Services programs in Ontario have dedicated funding for assisting trafficked persons with some short-term needs. Victim Services seems to be the only organization with dedicated HT funding.

- Most service providers are doing this off the sides of desks and dedicated staff and resources are needed.
- Greater collaboration, including through a local anti-human trafficking committee, would be of benefit.
- A safe place or dedicated shelter for individuals who have been trafficked would be best. Existing shelters for trafficked individuals are limited and far away, and trafficked persons do not necessarily fit the mandates of shelters in the area.
- More public awareness and education is needed, including education tailored to parents, children, and service providers.

Voices from Lived Experience: Participant A argues that we cannot address exploitation and coercion in the sex trade until sex work, in its entirety, is decriminalized. In Canada, we have been saturated with “anti-sex trafficking” social media campaigns, and funds are being allocated to sex work prohibitionist programming. Without discussing the realities of why women and girls are so vulnerable to predators, including through the criminalization of sex work, these sorts of campaigns will continue to be a “money grab” for agencies who are unwilling to declare decriminalization as vital to reducing the prevalence of violence and exploitation in the sex trade. We need to get to the systemic roots of this devastating reality in our communities, and the overreaching umbrella of “victims and predators” in the current “Nordic model” cannot do this. In fact, it causes and perpetuates harms against already vulnerable community members.

Sudbury participants prioritized:

- Public education,
- A dedicated shelter/safe space,
- Forming a local committee.

North Bay participants prioritized:

- Data and information, including from previously trafficked persons and police,
- Education and awareness,
- Frontline resources.

For more detailed notes from each session, see the members login tab under the “Service Provider Network” on our [website](#).

Next steps: Are there any volunteers?

While NORAH T can facilitate the organization of local committees or collaborative efforts by sharing contacts, information and resources, it is necessary that local agencies and/or individuals, including people with lived experience, take lead roles in setting up collaborations. NORAH T can also liaise between local collaboration/committees across the region, including through the use of our website and the plenary community engagement session planned for spring 2018. **Please contact us at noraht@nipissingu.ca if you are interested in developing and/or participating in further collaborations within your local area, and we can help facilitate the process.**

NORAHT plans to survey police services

Based on feedback we received during the first two community engagement sessions, as well as our own desire to get a better sense of what local police services see and do, we are planning to conduct survey research in the fall. We value your input and suggestions. **Are there specific questions about human trafficking you think we should ask city, provincial and First Nations police services?** Please send suggestions to noraht@nipissingu.ca or call Brenda Quenneville at 705-840-2403.

Online Human Trafficking Training at <http://helpingtraffickedpersons.org/>. This organization is also conducting a [survey](#) on labour human trafficking.

Voices from Lived Experience

Participant B is the mother of a survivor of human trafficking. While her daughter was being trafficked, Participant B had no one to turn to: “It was the longest two years of my life.” There is a big gap when it comes to supporting parents. Stigma was a problem when reaching out for help. She had no one to turn to until she had her daughter in her arms. Now she is able to access counseling: “But why didn’t anybody help me in the last two years?”

NORAHT Launches Website

Check it out at <http://noraht.nipissingu.ca>. Note the **members login** section, under the tab titled “Service Providers Network.”*** The members login section contains our draft report “Community Service Providers and Human Trafficking: Best Practices and Recommendations for Northeastern Ontario,” as well as the slides from our presentations at the community engagement sessions. You may also find more detailed notes from the North Bay and Sudbury sessions, including the **flip chart notes** from both sessions and the “**dot-mocracy**” results from Sudbury.

Upcoming Community Engagement Sessions: Spread the Word!

Sault Ste Marie: Oct. 4, 2017
Manitoulin Island: Oct. 5, 2017
Kirkland Lake: October 2017 (TBD)
Cochrane: October 2017 (TBD)

*** Participants at the community engagement sessions received a handout telling the password and how to logon to the community service provider. If you cannot find your handout or would like to join as a member, email us at noraht@nipissingu.ca.