
Media Release



Timiskaming embarks on a proven approach to reduce teen substance use

January 10, 2024 - For immediate release

561 students complete Planet Youth Survey

Planet Youth Timiskaming is a new 5-year pilot project based on the Icelandic Prevention Model, a world renowned, community-based approach to supporting the wellbeing of youth and reducing their early use of alcohol and other drugs. The model is based on the principle that the whole community needs to be involved in order to impact youth behaviours.

The approach was pioneered in Iceland in the early 90s, a time when the country had one of the highest teen substance use rates in Europe. Over a 20-year period, with joint efforts across communities and institutions, Iceland went from having one of the highest youth substance use rates in Europe to the lowest. Planet Youth is now active in more than 16 countries around the world, including here in Ontario.

In February 2023, the Timiskaming Drug and Alcohol Strategy brought together over 35 community partners for a learning session with guest speakers from Iceland. A Steering Committee was formed, and in September 2023, Timiskaming District became the second community in Northern Ontario to participate in the Planet Youth Guidance Program.

“In Timiskaming, our lack of local data has been an ongoing challenge. Without data, it is difficult to understand the scope of the problem.” says Mayor Stacy Wight of the Town of Kirkland Lake, and member of the Planet Youth Steering Committee. “With the Planet Youth approach, our communities will gain valuable insights into the health and well-being of our young people, implement effective local solutions, and track changes over time.”

In November 2023, all grade 10 and 11 students in the District of Timiskaming were asked to complete a voluntary anonymous survey. The survey was completed by 83% of these students, which is an impressive response rate in terms of data collection. This success is thanks to the support and collaboration of school boards and local school communities, as well as an excellent [promotional video](#) created by students from Kirkland Lake District Composite School.

The survey data will go into reports that will help our communities understand what life is like for 14-17 year olds in the North, Central, and South parts of Timiskaming District.

The data reports will be available later this winter. Planet Youth Timiskaming will then focus on sharing the survey findings and supporting the creation of community-led action plans that will strengthen protective factors and mitigate risk factors that are linked to substance use. Local Action Teams are being formed, and anyone is welcome to join a team and contribute to solutions that will improve the lives of all children and youth.

Planet Youth Timiskaming is a key part of the Timiskaming Drug and Alcohol Strategy’s effort to prevent substance use. The approach is coordinated by the Timiskaming Health Unit and is guided

by a steering committee with representation from the District of Timiskaming Social Service Administration Board, the Town of Kirkland Lake, the Town of Englehart, the City of Temiskaming Shores, Conseil scolaire catholique du district des Grandes Rivières, District School Board Ontario Northeast, Beaverhouse First Nation, Keepers of the Circle, Salvation Army, and the Timiskaming Drug and Alcohol Strategy.

To join or learn more about [Planet Youth Timiskaming](#), please contact:

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