

Remembering the people behind the stigma



By Kristena Schutt-Moore

Removing the stigma around drug use and overdoses was part of the theme for this year's International Overdose Awareness Day. On Wednesday, Aug. 31, the North Hastings Community Trust, Mental Health and Addictions Services and the Bancroft Community Family Health Team gathered with members of the community to honour those who have passed away from overdose, and with a goal to help remove the stigma to help those affected by drug use.

The group gathered at the corner of the Post Office parking lot to help raise awareness about the current opioid crisis and the impact that stigma has, and to discuss ways to reduce the stigma that surrounds drug use, as well as mental health. Naloxone kits were also available for community members to pick up and be trained on how to use them. Those who have lived experience were also able to share their stories with addictions and mental health, as well as a moment of silence for those who have passed acknowledge the grief of family and friends left behind. After those in attendance watched a live video stream of the International Overdose Awareness Day events happening in Belleville at the Market Place were they unveiled a mural by artist Sarah Winn that visually represents the impact of stigma and the importance of support.

In Bancroft, the talks swirled around how addictions, mental health and homelessness are all interconnected and how it really affected the whole community. One of the speakers in Bancroft was Joe Kidma, who said that the stigma makes people feel like they don't belong and he asks that people think ?what if it was my child??