



Boys, Men and Masculinities Meeting Notes

Truro, NS
June 27, 2012

WHAT'S GOING ON WITH BOYS AND MEN IN NOVA SCOTIA?

Children and youth are growing up in an increasingly hypersexualized environment. A small team at the Department of Health and Wellness wanted to find out how hypersexualization was showing up in Nova Scotia, so we talked to a wide range of folks across the province. The themes of “boys and men” and “masculinity” kept popping up and seem like a potential area for innovation and impact. We invited a variety of people who are doing work around men and boys and masculinity to come together to have some conversation about the topic. This report provides an overview of what we talked about.

Purpose of the Meeting

- Share what we heard about men, boys and masculinity in the first phase of the Department of Health and Wellness’ Hypersexualization (HSZ) Project.
- Bring those working in the area of men, boys and masculinity together to connect

- Learn what is working in the area of men, boys and masculinity
- Learn about trends and what’s happening on the ground
- Explore possibilities for innovation and impact

Outline of the Day

- Welcome and introductions, community standards
- Share back of themes related to Men, Boys and Masculinity during DHW’s HSZ Project
- Making connections
- World Café
- Closing

World Café Questions

We asked 3 questions during the world café and took notes for the last 2 questions. The second question mentions a “duffel bag” which we had talked about that morning. The duffel bag refers to all the messages that boys and men receive about what it means to be male – the

baggage. You can find a list of the contents of the duffel bag on page 3.

1. **How does this connect to your experience?**
2. **What would it be like if the duffel bag was empty?** (Visioning what is possible)
 - Creating a support structure
 - Building relationships and critical thinking to be able to manage the bag.
 - Some aspects of “the duffel bag” may have some benefit. We need struggle to develop us.
 - Engaging young men to facilitate and show up for programs
 - More programs which involve reflection.
 - Unisex programs
 - Diversity in roles, experiences
 - Create new social norm – more respecting, accepting context

- Less emphasis on differences between genders
- Emotional understanding
- Positive relationships
- Less bullying, less suicide
- More openness to talking, sharing, connecting

3. What opportunities do you see?

- Making educators aware of community resources
- Programs for dads and kids
- Having the courage to hold media accountable
- Stand up to big business
- Holding ourselves and our systems accountable (we have a lot of specialists, but few specifically for males) – asking for and expecting programs and services for men
- Recognize that we're on the cusp of something
- Put a "box" (restrictions) around industry and profit-making ventures instead of a (gendered) box around individuals.
- Learn from other social movements
- Facing up/ noticing what's going on
- Collaboration and partnership
- Getting youth involved
- Creating safe spaces for men and boys to have conversations
- Positive role models and mentors for boys
- Roots of Empathy
- For parents: limit or eliminate screen time as long as possible

- Consciousness raising
- Programing – gender analysis, media analysis
- Know when to have groups and discussions for men only so they have room to discuss. Mixed settings that do not require disclosure of gender identity also important.
- Intergenerational learning – different generations, different ideas

Evaluations

In the evaluations, the vast majority of participants said that the gathering helped them to develop connections and relationships that would be helpful to their work.

People identified the following insights they were taking away from the meeting:

- This is an issue that I rarely thought of before, now I am full of ideas
- There need to be further conversations, more discussion needed
- Change is both personal and systemic
- Workers are thirsty for conversations with peers about this topic
- Holding myself accountable for my own actions surrounding this topic
- New thoughts for practice
- Another piece to think about – area to focus on
- That something like "slow food" needs to happen around this topic
- Need to keep tying an anti-oppression approach with action (i.e. analysis to doing)
- Renewed energy

- New media plays such a detrimental role in the hypersexualization of all genders
- I am taking away the knowledge that others are working towards change such as myself
- The like-minded people trying to find out "how" to help our men and boys
- Role in working with men and boys
- Safe spaces for boys to explore masculinities
- Needing to keep this in my head and heart
- The research that has been done and that our work resonates with the research
- I'm not sure if the leadership is currently here and that that leadership needs to be found and nurtured
- Complexity of the topic, not new insight, just re-realizing it
- Let people be who they are
- There is a lot of great work happening!
- Province wide effort happening
- The level of commitment and diversity of those impacting the culture of boys and men

"Men are equally victims...it's not an easy world for men..."

HSZ project participant

In evaluations, people said that the meeting helped them to identify the following actions that could be taken in their community related to boys, men and masculinity:

- Continuing this conversation in my community
- Continuously challenge those ideas of norms, attempt to reach equality
- Not in my community because we are doing a lot, but it made me hopeful about the Department's ...actions to support the development of caring, respectful programs and services for men and boys
- Just spread the word and make others aware of what's going on
- I will use the information for my class, Masters, family, etc.
- value what the "peer leaders" and youth health centres can bring to the work
- the conversation today was a starting point that hopefully will not lose momentum



“Whether you are gay or not, you damn well better not look gay, sound gay, act gay...so it totally restricts what it is that a young man can do.”

HSZ project participant

Messages to Boys/ Men

Here's what people shared with us during the HSZ project in terms of the messages they receive about what it means to be a boy or a man. These were the contents of the "duffel bag".

- Don't be gay
- Don't feel sorry
- Be cool around women
- Hook-up or pick-up; sleep around
- Have a bad boy or player image
- Be aggressive
- Talk loud, be obnoxious
- Be brave
- Drink lots of alcohol
- Have a big body (tall, muscular)
- Sexually perform, be interested in sex, know how to have sex



Who's Doing What?

We posted a large piece of paper so we could “map” programs and initiatives related to boys, men and masculinity. Here is what you scribbled on the wall:

Initiative Name	Area	Description	Contact
Men's Health Center	Antigonish	-Provides continuum of care and services to boys and men -provides provincial advocacy, training opportunities around male sexual victimization -provides advocacy and event planning on positive male messaging (i.e. fathering)	Nancy MacDonald, Family Service of Eastern NS 863-2358 www.fsens.ns.ca
Young men's group	Halifax	-Looking at a young men's group at Oxford School in the fall, partnering with Dalhousie Nursing School and Dalhousie Health Promotion.	Moe Green Moe.green@gov.ns.ca
Man Talk	Halifax	-group for male victims of sexual abuse	Robert Wright www.robertswright.ca wrightrs@ns.sympatico.ca 443-0192
Mindfulness Based Resiliency Skills	Yarmouth	-focused in the area of mental health and addictions, but there may be a link to masculinity?	Stephen Paquette Yarmouth Mental Health/ Addictions
Hypersexualization research	Barrington Municipal High	-doing Masters research on hypersexualization and how it affects men and women	Wade Banks, teacher
Males access to Care	West Hants/ Windsor	-what are the barriers, resistance, notions that prevail re. males access to care? Changes need to happen	Janice Dempsey Stewart Youth Health Centre Coordinator, CDHA
Men's Canoe Retreat	Tatamagouche Centre		Brian Braganza
Raising and Mentoring Boys and Young Men Workshop	Tatamagouche Centre	Oct 24-26 2012	Brian Braganza https://www.tatacentre.ca/index.php/programs/details/1748
Heartwood Programs		-youth engagement, wilderness programs, boys residential program	Brian Braganza
Men and Boys Forum	Yarmouth/ Tri County area	-November 2012	Doris Landry
Hypersexualization and Sexual violence Toolkit	Yarmouth/ Tri County area		Doris Landry
Boys Council Program	US	-recommended by Cheryl Woodworth (cheryl.woodworth@cehha.nshealth.ca)	www.onecirclefoundation.org
Middle School Boys Focus groups	Cobequid/ East Hants?	-3 groups done in 2010. Key learning was that boys wanted adult male leaders (vs. older peer facilitators). Main themes were competition, male roles and responsibilities, relationships, stress and coping. For more info contact Cheryl.	Cheryl Woodworth cheryl.woodworth@cehha.nshealth.ca

