

2025-26 ANNUAL REPORT

DRUG EDUCATION CENTRED ON YOUTH DECISION EMPOWERMENT (DECYDE)

April 1, 2025 - March 31, 2026

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Key Milestones	4
Our Team	5
Collaborators and Funders	6
DECYDE at a Glance	7
French Translation Project	8
Web Redesign	9
Partnerships and Consultations	10
Contribution Spotlight	11
Community Addictions Prevention and Mental Health Promotion Fund	12
COMPASS Pilot Project	13
What We Heard from Youth	14
What We Heard from Educators	15
Promotional Videos	17
Educational Presentations and Professional Learning	18
Social Media	19
Awards	20
PhD Student Update	21
Knowledge Translation	22
Looking Ahead	24

INTRODUCTION

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We acknowledge that the lands on which the DECYDE team at Memorial University is situated are in the traditional territories of diverse Indigenous groups, and we acknowledge with respect the diverse histories and cultures of the Beothuk, Mi'kmaq, Innu, and Inuit of Newfoundland and Labrador. We also recognize that our research, staff, students, volunteers, and participants live and operate in many Indigenous territories across Turtle Island. We acknowledge and are accountable to the history of colonialism and its impact on our work.

WHAT IS DECYDE?

DECYDE (Drug Education Centred on Youth Decision Empowerment) is a **substance use prevention and harm reduction strategy** created by an interdisciplinary research team at Memorial University, St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador (NL), Canada.



MISSION

To equip youth with knowledge and skills to make informed decisions about substance use by fostering resilience, reducing harm, and promoting well-being through evidence-based, trauma-informed prevention and harm reduction education, delivered in collaboration with schools, families, and communities.



VISION

To empower youth to make safe and informed choices regarding their mental and substance use health.

FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES

Evidence-Informed

The information presented in the DECYDE strategy and materials is balanced, unbiased, and draws on the best available research evidence and lived experience.



Trauma-Informed Practices

Trauma-Informed Practices (TIPs) are a strengths-based approach grounded in an understanding of the impact of trauma, helping to create opportunities for individuals to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment.



Prevention & Harm Reduction

Primary prevention aims to delay substance use by enhancing protective factors. Harm reduction aims to provide people with knowledge to make safe and informed choices and reduce the negative consequences associated with drug use.



Skills-Based Health Education

Skills-Based Health Education (SBHE) is a learning approach implemented through various perspectives and methods to support the development of skills and attitudes to enhance well-being.



KEY MILESTONES

YEAR IN REVIEW

WORK THAT INFORMED DECYDE

The DECYDE strategy is shaped by diverse research and engagement methods to ensure it remains relevant, effective, and grounded in the best available evidence.

Implementation and Knowledge Translation Frameworks



Partner and Public engagement



DECYDE Youth Advisory Panel and Steering Committee



Teacher Pilot Testing



Evidence & best practices



KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

RESOURCES DEVELOPED AND REFINED:

ENGLISH RESOURCES

Substance Snapshots **35**

Educational Materials **34**

Lesson Plans for Grades 4 - High School **19**

Educational Videos **6**

FRENCH RESOURCES

Substance Snapshots **35**

Educational Materials **32**

Lesson Plans for Grades 4 - 9 **15**

Educational Videos **3**



NEW

LAUNCH OF THE FRENCH WEBSITE:

The French version of the DECYDE website launched in February 2026. This dedicated platform now hosts all French-language materials, ensuring broader and more equitable access to DECYDE.

EDUCATIONAL PRESENTATIONS:

- **Thirteen** different educational sessions for teachers and interested parties.
- **Eight** posters and **two** publications were completed and published.
- Contributed content expertise to the Department of Education professional learning videos for teachers supporting implementation of the new Health curriculum.



DECYDE is a **recommended resource** in the Department of Education's newly updated health education curriculum! The new health curriculum will begin implementation in 2026. DECYDE is also featured on [Bridge the gap NL](#), an online resource providing information on mental health and substance use for youth and adults.

OUR TEAM

LEADERSHIP

DR. LISA BISHOP

Lisa Bishop is a Pharmacist and Professor with the School of Pharmacy at Memorial University. She is an established educator and researcher and is co-leading the DECYDE strategy.

DR. JENNIFER DONNAN

Jennifer Donnan is an Associate Professor with the School of Pharmacy. She has a passion for protecting youth from the harms of substances, and has expertise in program evaluation. She is co-leading the DECYDE strategy.

CORE DECYDE PROJECT TEAM



DR. GREG HARRIS

Professor
Faculty of
Education



DR. NICK HARRIS

Associate Professor
Department of
Psychology



WILLIAM LUMMIS

**Regional Addictions
Prevention
Consultant**
NL Health Services



GARY PEDDLE

Citizen Advisor
SUNAR



KELSEY WESTALL

Research Assistant
School of Pharmacy

OTHER CONTRIBUTORS (2025-26)

TEACHER CONTRIBUTORS

Beth Beattie
Sophia Burke
Jason Earle
Jenelle Gallivan
Megan Heath
Colleen Trainor

GRADUATE & UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

Robyn Cumben
Kathryn Dalton
Molly Downey
Mahiba Khan
Megan Heath

RESEARCH ASSISTANTS

Goodness Awunor
Tegan Baker
Aliya Seward

COLLABORATORS AND FUNDERS

COLLABORATING ORGANIZATIONS

- Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction (CCSA)
- Choices for Youth
- Conseil Scolaire Francophone Provincial (CSFP), Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador
- Government of NL, Departments of Education and Health & Community Services
- Lifewise
- NL Community Youth Networks
- NL Health Services (NLHS)
- NL Teachers' Association (NLTA)
- SafeWorks Access Program (SWAP)
- The COMPASS Study team

GOVERNMENT OF NL COLLABORATION

The Government of NL is a supporter of DECYDE and serves on our DECYDE Steering Committee.

The DECYDE leadership team works closely with the Department of Education (EDU) to help inform the new health curriculum outcomes for Grades 4–12. The EDU has endorsed DECYDE as a recommended resource to help teachers deliver curriculum related to mental health and substance use.

The Department of Health and Community Services works closely with our team on informing ways to enhance the health and well-being of youth in NL.



WE GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGE THE SUPPORT FROM OUR MANY FUNDERS:



Health
Canada

Santé
Canada

Canada



CIHR IRSC
Canadian Institutes of
Health Research | Instituts de recherche
en santé du Canada



NL Health
Services



DECYDE AT A GLANCE

DECYDE offers a robust suite of English and French educational resources designed to assist teachers and others committed to supporting youth. These materials were developed and refined through pilot testing as well as feedback from youth and key collaborators to ensure they are relevant, effective, and responsive to diverse needs.

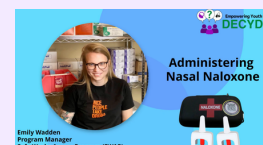
19 English Lesson Plans

15 French Lesson Plans

- Grade 4: 3 lesson plans (EN/FR)
- Grade 5: 3 lesson plans (EN/FR)
- Grade 6: 3 lesson plans (EN/FR)
- Grade 7: 2 lesson plans (EN/FR)
- Grade 8: 2 lesson plans (EN/FR)
- Grade 9: 2 lesson plans (EN/FR)
- High school: 4 lesson plans (EN)

6 educational videos for students

- **3** for elementary lesson plans (EN/FR)
- **3** on naloxone use (when and how to administer injectable and nasal naloxone) (EN)



3 promotional videos for educators (EN)

3 videos from our latest series, "Voices from the Classroom", where teachers discuss DECYDE resources, mental health, and harm reduction.

For a complete overview of all DECYDE lesson plans, including curriculum outcomes and learning activity objectives, view the **DECYDE Lesson Plan Summary** document here: <https://decyde.ca/teacher-portal/>



34 Educational Materials (32 available in French) offer evidence-based info to support DECYDE lessons on mental health, substance use, and safer choices.

35 Substance Snapshots provide brief overviews of substances, effects, safety tips, and emergency guidance. Available in both English and French.



HIGHLIGHTS OF PROGRESS AND IMPACT

YOUTH AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Engaging youth, those with lived experience, teachers, and community partners was key to creating relevant, impactful resources.

COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS

Collaboration with partners helped ensure successful DECYDE uptake.

CURRICULUM INTEGRATION

Inclusion in the Department of Education's Health Curriculum Guide supports adoption by educators.

PILOT TESTING AND FEEDBACK

Pilot testing with educators provided valuable feedback for modifications.

OPEN ACCESS

Hosting on an open-access website increased access.

BILINGUAL ACCESSIBILITY

Government-funded French translation expanded accessibility to students in both official languages.



The DECYDE website is an open-access platform offering centralized access to lesson plans, harm reduction tools, research publications, reports, and information on mental health and substance use supports, available in both English and French.

Visit us at www.DECYDE.ca

FRENCH TRANSLATION

PROJECT SUMMARY

The DECYDE team completed the first phase of a larger project to translate our lesson plans and materials into French for use in French-First-Language and French-Second-Language classrooms. Lesson plans for grades 4-9 and other educational resources were translated with the support of a professional translator, a secondary reviewer, and French teachers to ensure the materials were high quality, free of stigmatizing language, and aligned with substance-use terminology used by youth. These resources are available on our French-dedicated website (www.DECYDE.ca/FR) in February 2026.

The following resources have been translated:

15 LESSON PLANS

- Grade 4: 3 Lessons
- Grade 5: 3 Lessons
- Grade 6: 3 Lessons
- Grade 7: 2 Lessons
- Grade 8: 2 Lessons
- Grade 9: 2 Lessons

EDUCATIONAL VIDEOS & ACCOMPANYING SCRIPTS

We engaged 9 youth with native-level French-speaking proficiency to rerecord the audio tracks for each animated educational video. The 3 videos were recreated and uploaded to the DECYDE website.



DECYDE WEBSITE

The French version of the DECYDE website launched in February 2026 (www.DECYDE.ca/FR). This dedicated platform now hosts all French-language materials, ensuring broader and more equitable access to DECYDE.



32 EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS



35 SUBSTANCE SNAPSHOTS



TEACHER FEEDBACK

French teachers from urban and rural communities reviewed the translated materials. They provided written feedback and participated in an interview with our team. Feedback was highly positive, highlighting the quality and value of the resources in filling a gap in French-language substance use education. Suggested revisions were incorporated into the final materials.



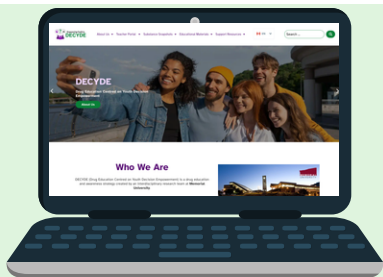
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF FUNDING

Financial support for this French translation project was provided through the Canada–Newfoundland and Labrador Agreement for Minority-Language Education and Second Official-Language Instruction. We gratefully acknowledge the participation of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Government of Canada.

NEXT STEPS IN FRENCH TRANSLATION

The DECYDE team has applied for funding for the next phase of this work to translate and reformat high school lesson plans and remaining educational materials.

WEBSITE REDESIGN



The DECYDE team worked with a web development company to redesign the website to make it more user-friendly, visually engaging, and capable of hosting both English and French content. The redesigned site now features an improved structure and navigation, including dedicated sections for the Teacher Portal, Substance Snapshots, Educational Materials, Support Resources, and an About Us page. The new website launched in November 2025, while the French-language version was released in February 2026.

TEACHER PORTAL

Grade 4

Visit Page

Grade 5

Visit Page

Grade 6

Visit Page

Grade 7

Visit Page

Grade 8

Visit Page

Grade 9

Visit Page

High School

Visit Page

Now available in both official languages!

A collection of lesson plans from grade 4 through high school, including dozens of student activities, teacher discussion guides, and educational videos.

EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

Tips for Teachers, Guardians, and Youth Mentors

These resources offer key background information to support teachers, parents/guardians, and other adults who work with youth in fostering safe and informed learning environments.

- Adverse Childhood Experiences
- Empathic Strain
- Neurodiversity
- Skills-Based Health Education (SBHE)
- Trauma-Informed Practices

A collection of evidence-based resources on decision-making, substance use, mental health, and sexual health, featuring practical tips and engaging videos.

SUBSTANCE SNAPSHOTS

Cannabinoids
Depressants
Hallucinogens
Stimulants

Cannabinoids can be stimulating, hallucinogenic, or cause drowsiness. The main chemicals in Cannabis (psychoactive) and CBD (calming). They are naturally produced from the cannabis plant.

Cannabinoid infographics:

- ▼ Cannabis - overview
- ▼ Cannabis - dabbing
- ▼ Cannabis - inhaled
- ▼ Cannabis - edible
- ▼ Cannabis - synthetic

Open Access

A collection of Substance Snapshots offering clear, easy-to-understand information on cannabis, depressants, hallucinogens, stimulants, and other substances.

SUPPORT RESOURCES

Helplines
Mental Health and Substance Use Support
Sexual Health Resources

811 is for Individuals in NL in need of crisis response, mental health or substance use support, or medical advice. Dial dial "811" to be connected with a trained crisis intervener.

Domestic Violence Help Line: 1-888-709-7090

Department of NL comprehensive list of helplines

Wellness Helpline is available to all Indigenous people across Canada. To access support, call 1-855-242-3310 or visit our website to access the online chat option. Experienced and culturally competent counsellors are available 24/7. Services are available in English and French, and upon request in Cree, Ojibway (Anishinaabemowin) and Inuktitut.

A collection of resources, including helplines, mental health and substance-use support, as well as sexual-health information for youth and the adults who support them.

Visit our website: www.DECYDE.ca



ABOUT US PAGE

Discover more about the project, the team behind it, our research, publications and presentations, and answers to frequently asked questions about DECYDE.

PARTNERSHIPS & CONSULTATIONS

DECYDE STEERING COMMITTEE

The committee provides guidance on the development, adaptation, implementation, evaluation, and long-term sustainability of DECYDE.

The committee is composed of 12–15 members with an interest and relevant experience in substance use prevention and harm reduction education for youth.

Members:

- Centre on Substance Use and Addictions (NL Health Services)
- NL Teachers' Association
- People with lived or living experience
- DECYDE Team
- NL Schools
- Conseil scolaire francophone
- Youth Advisory Panel
- Departments of Education and Health & Community Services



DECYDE TEAM MEETINGS WITH MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION CONSULTANTS

- Regular monthly meetings bring together the core DECYDE research team, Addictions Prevention Consultants from Mental Health and Addiction Services (NL Health Services), and individuals with lived or living experience.
- The consultants share on-the-ground insights from their direct work with schools and youth, ensuring DECYDE resources remain relevant and responsive to real-world needs.
- They guide the development and refinement of DECYDE lesson plans and materials, ensuring alignment with DECYDE's foundational principles: being evidence- and trauma-informed, promoting primary prevention and harm reduction, and using a skills-based health education approach.



DECYDE YOUTH ADVISORY PANEL

- Comprising 14 youth aged 12-18 from both urban and rural areas of NL, the panel brings youth perspectives to substance use education. Members receive compensation for their time.
- Co-chaired by a young adult team member and a youth, the panel meets regularly to discuss substance use issues affecting youth, provide input on DECYDE topics and approaches, and offer feedback on project materials.




CONTRIBUTION SPOTLIGHT

The All-Party Committee Final Report



The **All-Party Committee** on Mental Health, Substance Use, and Addictions released their final report in July 2025. This report was based on consultations, review, and analysis of the provincial mental health and addictions system between September 2023 and February 2025. The **DECYDE** leadership team presented to the All-Party Committee in October 2024, and the team’s **contributions** were included in the final report.

“ Update and expand evidence-based **drug** and **alcohol education** in the school curriculum (e.g., **DECYDE**)
- Recommendation in the Final Report ”

 To view the final report, [click here](#).

DECYDE’S CONTRIBUTIONS IN THE FINAL REPORT

The Committee recognized the **DECYDE** team as one of the “local, national, and international experts” who presented to its members.

The Committee recommended integrating **DECYDE** into NL’s school curriculum to strengthen drug and alcohol education for children, youth, and families.

2025-2026 COMMUNITY ADDICTIONS PREVENTION AND MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION FUND

ALCOHOL CONTENT IN HIGH SCHOOL LESSONS

With support from the 2024–2025 Community Addictions Prevention and Mental Health Promotion Fund, this project enhanced alcohol-related education within DECYDE, with a focus on high school students. Funding supported the expansion of lesson plans to integrate alcohol content across grades, grounded in trauma-informed, harm reduction, and primary prevention approaches that emphasize psychological safety, inclusivity, and real-world relevance through active learning.

CONTENT DEVELOPMENT

Content was informed by consultations with youth, educators, clinicians, and people with lived or living experience, and embedded within lessons rather than taught as a stand-alone topic. Additional resources were developed to support community learning, including materials on substance-related emergencies, the recovery position, and alcohol-focused Substance Snapshots.



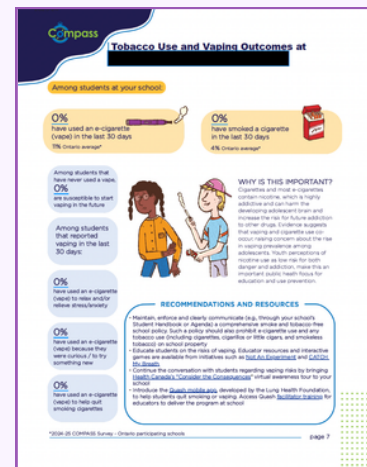
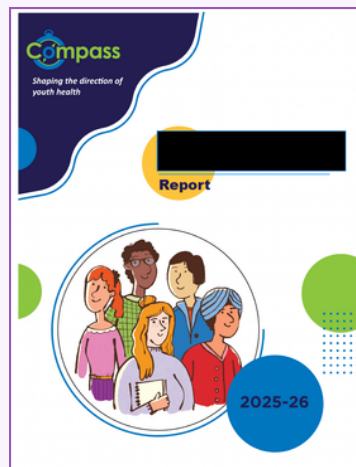
RESOURCE EXAMPLES

THE COMPASS SURVEY FEASIBILITY STUDY



OVERVIEW OF THE COMPASS SURVEY

The COMPASS survey is a large, Canadian youth health study that gathers linked, longitudinal data on key aspects of adolescent wellbeing, including mental health, substance use, healthy eating, physical activity, and school connectedness. Each school receives a tailored **School Health Profile** summarizing student behaviours, with evidence informed recommendations to help schools and communities identify priorities and guide interventions that support youth wellbeing.



COMPASS AND THE DECYDE STRATEGY

Supported by the Janeway Foundation, a feasibility study is ongoing in a sample of NL schools.

The goal is to assess the ease of integration, acceptability, and usefulness of the School Health Profile as part of evaluating the DECYDE substance-use education strategy.

Long-term, province-wide implementation would allow COMPASS to evaluate DECYDE's impact on:

- Student substance-use knowledge and behaviours.
- Exposure to protective and risk factors that inform prevention and harm-reduction initiatives.

Given the lack of current NL-specific data on youth substance use and mental health, **COMPASS would fill a critical evidence gap and support trauma-informed, prevention-focused education.**

FEASIBILITY STUDY OBJECTIVES



Assess implementation acceptability among EDU, administrators, teachers, and school councils (e.g., process and resource needs).



Evaluate the School Health Profile for supporting school-level decision making.



Conduct a preliminary assessment of COMPASS substance use measures (e.g., initiation, patterns, and protective factors).

OVERALL GOALS



Inform school health profiles for decision makers and guide prevention approaches at primary and secondary levels.



Shape future health and education initiatives aligned with evolving NL youth needs.



Strengthen evidence-based, trauma-informed substance-use education and support healthier school and community environments.

WHAT WE HEARD FROM YOUTH

YOUTH ADVISORY PANEL

The Youth Advisory Panel consists of diverse youth aged 12-18 from both urban and rural communities across NL. The Panel meets regularly to share ideas, review materials, and provide feedback on DECYDE initiatives.



TOPICS DISCUSSED IN 2025-2026 PANEL MEETINGS

REACHING DIVERSE POPULATIONS

Youth provided the following suggestions to reach diverse populations:

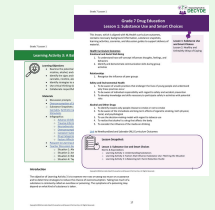
- Multicultural summer day camps
- Social media
- School initiatives (e.g., mental health or sharing our cultures club)
- School guidance counsellors or teachers as points of connection

In response, we will refer to these suggestions when recruiting vulnerable/diverse research participants.

DECYDE LESSON PLAN AND ACTIVITY FEEDBACK

The youth provided feedback on:

- Infographics
- Videos
- Substance use scenarios
- Mental health scenarios
- Workplace scenarios
- Activities (e.g., poem and song)



In response, the resources were modified to reflect suggestions from youth.

NICOTINE / VAPING DISCUSSION

Youth nicotine and vaping trends observed:



- Some start as young as 11-12 (grade 5), but the age of initiation appears to be decreasing
- Occurs openly or in bathrooms (grades 9-12) with equal use among girls and boys
- It is not common for youth to only vape (poly-substance use is prevalent)
- Youth usually start vaping before moving on to other substances
- Cigarette smoking among teens is rare

PEER SUPPORT CONFERENCE

Youth provided suggestions for a youth peer support conference currently being developed.

They shared suggestions on:

- Workshop and discussion topics
- Student selection and recruitment
- The ideal length and format of the conference
- Icebreakers
- Food and refreshment ideas



We will consider these suggestions as we continue to plan the youth conference.

ALCOHOL DISCUSSION

Youth alcohol use trends observed:

- Drinking starts around age 13
- Many youth reported knowing friends who drink every weekend
- Youth expressed that they experience pressure to attend the weekly parties, where drinking occurs
- Alcohol consumption is more common and easier to access than nicotine or tobacco



YOUTH EXPERIENCES ON PANEL

"It gives me a place to share my opinions and have a direct voice in making things more realistic and educational. It has been an empowering experience to know that our perspectives are being heard and used to create positive outcomes."

"The youth advisory panel makes me feel like I'm doing something that makes a difference. Hearing people my age talk about their experiences makes me feel like I'm not alone."

WHAT WE HEARD FROM EDUCATORS

PILOT TESTING

The purpose of this pilot study was to evaluate teachers' perceptions of DECYDE professional learning and lesson materials, assess their confidence in delivering substance use education, and explore their perspectives on students' receptiveness to substance use education, as well as the factors that may influence students' vulnerability to substance use.

Inclusion Criteria: Educators teaching any grade between 4 and 12 in the NL school system who are willing to field test the lesson plans.

Exclusion Criteria: Educators not currently teaching grades 4-12 in the NL school system or unable to communicate in English. Those who didn't complete the professional learning did not proceed to the classroom field testing phase.

PHASE 1: PROFESSIONAL LEARNING (32 EDUCATORS)

PARTICIPANT OVERVIEW

- 81.3%** of educators identified as women
- 46.9%** of educators were between the ages of 35-44
- 43.8%** were from a small population centre
- 60.0%** were classroom teachers
- 90.6%** taught in English



Participants represented various positions within the NL English School District and came from a wide range of school sizes and levels of teaching experience. Of the 32 participants who completed the professional learning session, 19 proceeded to the field testing phase.

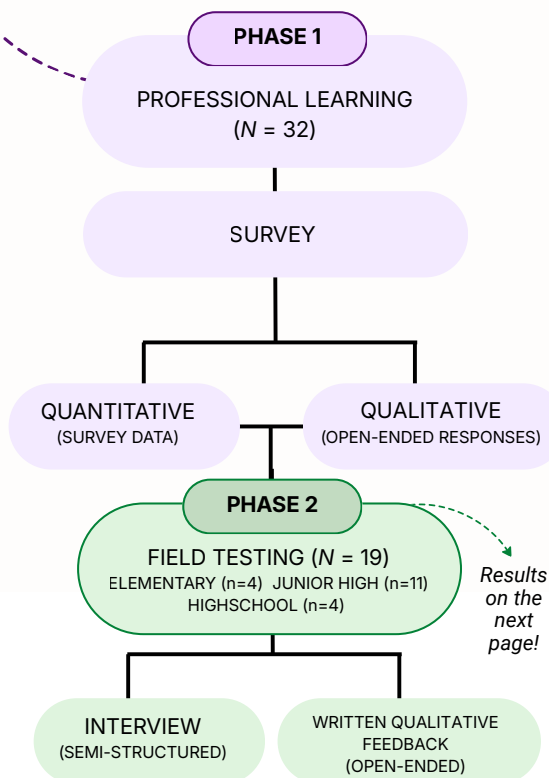
RESULTS

- Teachers appreciated the interactive learning approach and engaging delivery.
- They noted the value of the learning that was relevant and practical.
- Suggestions included further education on trauma, harm reduction, and self-care.
- Teachers appreciated the well-developed lesson plans and noted the value of the skills-based health education approach.

“This was one of the most informative PL’s I have attended. I actually have lessons and resources to bring to the classroom. Having the small groups to review the lesson plans was a great approach.”

“A fantastic learning experience that directly relates to situations that educators are facing.”

DATA COLLECTION OVERVIEW



Results on the next page!

“The session was interactive, and I felt comfortable asking questions or looking for clarification at any time.”

“More info regarding trauma-informed approaches would be helpful; many teachers in our system don’t have enough training or knowledge on the approach. This could be a full session.”

WHAT WE HEARD FROM EDUCATORS

PILOT TESTING PHASE 2: CLASSROOM FIELD TESTING (N = 19)

DATA COLLECTION OVERVIEW

Field testing completed:

4 Elementary classrooms

11 Junior High classrooms

Field testing ongoing:

4 High School classrooms



Written qualitative feedback



Interviews (semi-structured)

CONTENT ANALYSIS & LESSON PLAN UPDATES

- Teacher feedback was collated and incorporated into lesson plans for grades 4-9.
- Modifications included clarifying instructions, revising activities, reorganizing or removing material, and developing new content.

Examples of educator feedback and actions taken

“ Grade 7, Carousel Passport Activity:

“The Reducing the Harm When Using/Taking (Drugs) Activity also had to be clarified to students. I explained harm reduction and redirected students to find answers in the “How to Stay Safer” section of the infographic.”

Action Taken: Clarified Carousel activity to explain harm reduction as “staying safer” strategies.

“ Grade 4, Sharing and Reflection:

“Could be improved with less writing, maybe a more interactive way to share answers than all the writing.”

Action Taken: Included alternate ways for students to express themselves (e.g., written, drawing, poster) throughout all elementary lesson plans.

PRELIMINARY THEMES (THEMATIC ANALYSIS ONGOING)

Delivering substance use health education (e.g., value of professional learning, quality of DECYDE materials, and timeliness and need for this content)

“My students are now asking every morning, ‘Do we have Health today? It’s the new stuff, right?’ Some of them wrote that they felt really good during this unit; like school was making sense and talking about real things and they were glad that I wasn’t standing up and lecturing.”



Student knowledge, engagement, and experiences (e.g., diverse needs of students, student engagement and receptiveness, perceived health literacy)

“I have a student who’s on assistive tech. And he was really excited that he could be included without it being a big deal.”



Substance use approaches and substances (e.g., value of primary prevention and harm reduction, substances of interest)

“I think it greatly increased their knowledge and kind of their skill set. Prior, they had very little understanding of drugs. The harm reduction approach was something totally new to them. Giving them the option or showing them the ways out of certain situations...I think, by the end of it, they definitely had a much better idea of what to do in a lot of the situations.”



Decision-making by students (e.g., application of decision making, classroom engagement with FACE)

“I think it helped them to make informed decisions. If they’re ever faced with a scenario of drugs being presented to them, hopefully, they will use the FACE model when they have to make a big decision in their own personal lives.”



Factors influencing vulnerability to substance use (e.g., social and cultural norms)

“Honestly, I’m not sure if this group is just a bit naive when it comes to substance use, or if there is a strong home influence against substance use. Having said that, almost all of the students identified family as a strong influence in their decision-making.”

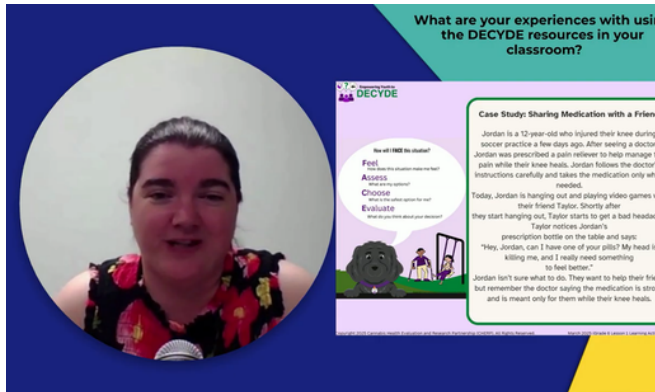


PROMOTIONAL VIDEOS



In the **Voices from the Classroom** series, teachers open up about bringing substance use education, harm reduction, and mental-health conversations into their classrooms, and how **DECYDE** helps make those lessons meaningful.

Video #1: DECYDE Substance Use Education Resources



These resources are spot on for what our students are going through these days. The case studies were so relatable... visually appealing, the colours are great, and it is in language that kids can understand.

Catherine Hoven, Teacher
Fogo Island Central Academy, Fogo Island, NL

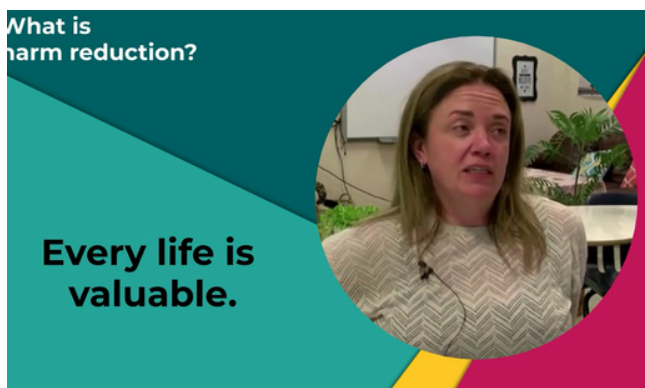
Video #2: Mental Health



Within the school system, we are not equipped to handle a lot of the topics in the trauma-based rhetoric.. This is why I love the DECYDE program... because it is based in trauma-informed [practices].

Melissa Long, Teacher
Stella Maris Academy, Trepassy, NL

Video #3: Harm Reduction



Harm reduction, to me, is saving lives. It's that every life is valuable. Every life is worth something. Everyone is worth helping. [Harm reduction] is about thinking why you are doing things, and how to keep yourself safe, and the mental health parts of substance use.

Beth Beattie, Teacher
Beaconsfield Junior High, St. John's, NL

EDUCATIONAL PRESENTATIONS AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

The DECYDE team delivered 13 different educational sessions for teachers, professionals, and the public:

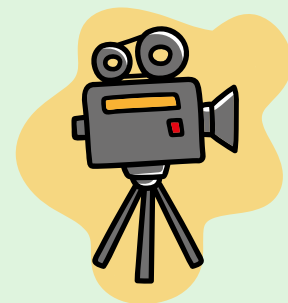
Professional learning sessions for teachers



Conference and general public presentations reaching diverse stakeholders and the public.



DECYDE was invited by the NL Department of Education to serve as a content expert for the new provincial K-12 Health curriculum professional learning. The team contributed to teacher-facing videos on substance use education, focusing on harm reduction, trauma-informed approaches, non-stigmatizing language, and effective classroom implementation strategies.



NEW

We are working on creating online modules for teachers and youth allies to help support the substance use and mental health education needs of the community.



SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE



Follow us on social media!

[Instagram.com/decyde_mun/](https://www.instagram.com/decyde_mun/)



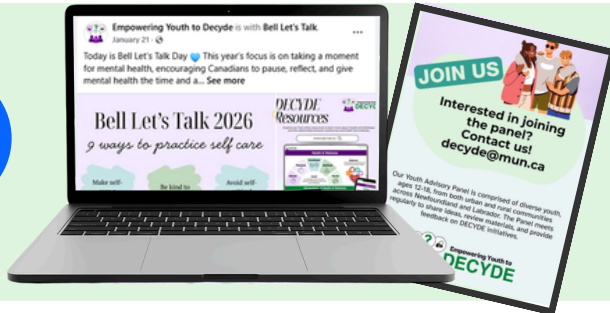
Now with more videos!

[Youtube.com/@DECYDE-CA](https://www.youtube.com/@DECYDE-CA)



Connecting with industry and research professionals

[Linkedin.com/company/decyde](https://www.linkedin.com/company/decyde)



Public and youth engagement

[Facebook.com/DECYDEMUN](https://www.facebook.com/DECYDEMUN)



x.com/decyde_mun



AWARD-WINNING WORK



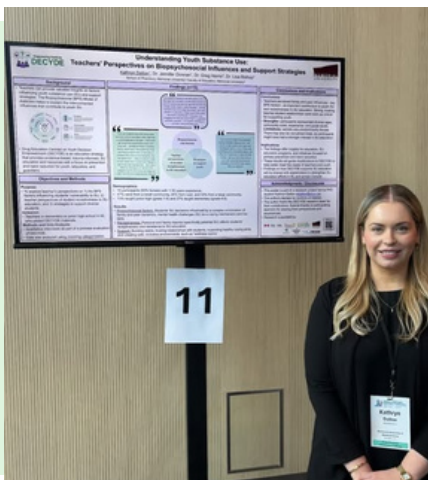
President's Award for Public Engagement

On December 16, 2025, Dr. Jennifer Donnan, Dr. Lisa Bishop, and Mr. Wayne Bishop accepted the **President's Award for Public Engagement** at Memorial University.

They were honoured for their innovative work with DECYDE, including their collaboration with health and educational partners, to help youth make informed decisions about substance use, harm reduction, and their health.

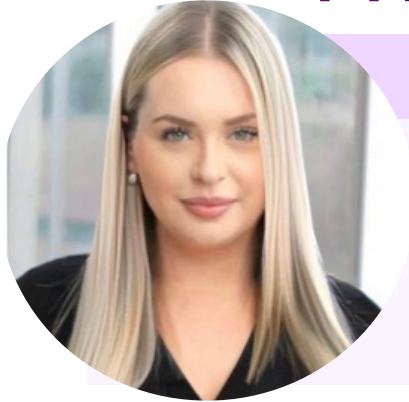


On November 19, 2025, the Dr. Jennifer Donnan received the **Best Research Poster Award** from the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction (CCSA). Her "Caregiver Café" needs assessment project explored how providing families with expert-led education and a structured peer-led support communities can be part of a broader youth substance use prevention and harm reduction strategy.



On November 27, 2025, PhD student Kathryn Dalton was awarded the **Dr. Mohsen Daneshtalab Graduate Research Poster Award** for her poster presentation at the School of Pharmacy's Research Day. Her research focuses on understanding the complex factors behind youth substance use to create effective, evidence-based education in the areas of prevention and harm reduction.

PHD STUDENT UPDATE

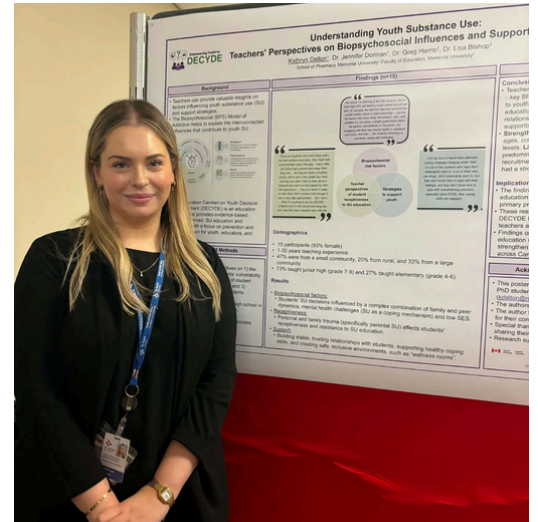


KATHRYN DALTON

Kathryn Dalton joined the team in Fall 2024 as a PhD student. Kathryn’s research focuses on understanding the unique needs of vulnerable youth through a scoping review and qualitative interviews. Her work will ensure DECYDE reaches the most vulnerable populations, support teachers, create targeted prevention and harm reduction efforts, and contribute to wider harm reduction and primary prevention efforts to ultimately help youth make safer choices.

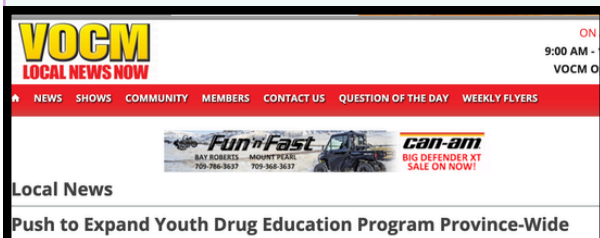
2025-2026 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Recipient of:
 - Dr. Mohsen Daneshtalab Graduate Research Poster Award
 - MUN School of Pharmacy Travel Award
 - MUN School of Pharmacy Millennium Graduate Fellowship.
- Attended and presented at Local and National conferences, including Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction (CCSA), Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) annual national convention, fasdNL's From Lived Experience to Collective Action Conference, SHARE Summit, and MUN School of Pharmacy Research Day.



Miscellaneous

- Featured on the MUN Graduate Studies website ([Link here](#))
- Interviewed by VOXM ([Link here](#))
- Creates and maintains the DECYDE social media page
- Volunteers as Co-Chair of the DECYDE Youth Advisory Panel



Research Update

- Study 1: Scoping review exploring the psychosocial and structural factors that impact youth substance use (alcohol and nicotine) initiation. This study is currently underway with plans to be completed by Spring 2026. The results of the scoping review will inform her other studies.
- Study 2 (qualitative interviews with youth) and Study 3 (interviews with organizations that support youth) will begin in Fall 2026.

Student success

Kathryn Dalton

Program: PhD in Pharmacy

Kathryn Dalton studies how alcohol, nicotine and other substances affect adolescent development while partnering with young people and educators to strengthen prevention and harm reduction programs and guide meaningful change.



[READ MORE](#)

Research Supported By



KNOWLEDGE TRANSLATION

PUBLICATIONS

Exploring Youths' Cannabis Health Literacy Post Legalization: A Qualitative Study.

Bishop, L. D., Drakes, D. H., Donnan, J. R., Rowe, E. C., & Najafizada, M. (June 2025). *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 40(1), 130-160.

Mapping the Landscape: A Scoping Review of Evaluated Substance Use Harm Reduction Programs for Youth.

Rowe E, Downey M, Harris N, Kinzel, E, Donnan J, Bishop L. (April 2025). *Journal of Drug Education: Substance Abuse Research and Prevention* 2025, Vol. 54(2-3) 83-121.

ORAL PRESENTATIONS

Let's Talk Substance Use: Implementing a Trauma-Informed, Harm Reduction Approach Through DECYDE.

Bishop, L. InspirEd NL "Secondary Educators" Conference. St. John's, NL. Mar 3rd, 2026.

Let's Talk Substance Use and Mental Health.

Donnan, J. Grand Falls YMCA, Grand Falls, NL. February 10, 2026.

DECYDE: A Novel Substance Use Prevention and Harm Reduction Strategy for NL Youth.

Donnan, J & Bishop, L. Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction (CCSA) "Issues of Substance" National Conference. Halifax, NS. Nov 18th, 2025.

Moving upstream: Improving youth substance use prevention.

Donnan, J., Kane, K., & Holmgren, A. Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction (CCSA) "Issues of Substance" National Conference. Halifax, NS. Nov 18th, 2025.

Youth Substance Use Health and Harm Reduction Education: An Update on the DECYDE Program.

Bishop, L., & Donnan, J. The 7th Annual NL Centre on Substance Use (NLCSU) Provincial Conference. St. John's, NL. Nov 13th, 2025.

DECYDE: A Novel Substance Use Prevention and Harm Reduction Strategy for NL Youth.

Donnan, J. & Dalton, K. Community Youth Network Annual General Meeting. St. John's, NL. Nov 5th, 2025.

Vulnerable Youth and Substance Use: Equity-Informed Insights for Education Strategies.

Dalton, K. Memorial University's School of Pharmacy "Snappy Synopsis". St. John's, NL. Nov 2025.

Empowering Youth: The Drug Education Centred on Youth Decision Empowerment (DECYDE) Strategy.

Donnan, J. C4T Research Group. June 20th, 2025.

Fostering Safe Conversations: Substance Use and Trauma-Informed Strategies for Youth.

Bishop, L., & Lummis, W. Presented at Menihek High School. Labrador City, NL. May 30, 2025.

Empowering Youth Voices in Substance Use Education.

Bishop, L., & Donnan, J. Memorial University "Engage Memorial" Conference. St. John's, NL. May 29th, 2025.

Research Update.

Donnan, J. Canadian Cannabis Research Summit. Toronto, ON. April 30, 2025.

DECYDE: A Novel Substance Use Prevention and Harm Reduction Strategy for NL Youth.

Bishop, L., & Donnan, J. NL Centre for Applied Health Research (NLCAHR) Substance Use Community of Practice. St. John's, NL. April 9th, 2025.

Biopsychosocial Considerations in Youth Substance Use Education: Teachers' Perspectives on Approaches and Challenges.

Bishop, L., Dalton, K. (presenter), Donnan, J., Harris, G. fasdNL "From Lived Experience to Collective Action" Conference. St. John's, NL. April 2025.

KNOWLEDGE TRANSLATION

POSTERS

Understanding Youth Substance Use: Teachers' Perspectives on Biopsychosocial Influences and Support Strategies.

Bishop, L., Dalton, K. (presenter), Donnan, J., Harris, G. Poster presented at Memorial University's School of Pharmacy Research Day. St. John's, NL. Nov 27th, 2025.

Adapting the Parent Café Model to Support Youth Substance Use Prevention.

Donnan, J. (presenter), Bishop, L., & Cumben, R. Poster presented at the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction (CCSA) Annual Conference. Halifax, NS. Nov 18th, 2025.

A Scoping Review of the Biopsychosocial and Structural Factors Contributing to Youth Substance Use Initiation.

Bishop, L., Dalton, K. (presenter), Swab, M., Westall, K., Donnan, J. Poster presented at the CCSA Annual Conference. Halifax, NS. Nov 18th, 2025.

Understanding Youth Substance Use: Teachers' Perspectives on Biopsychosocial Influences and Support Strategies.

Bishop, L., Dalton, K. (presenter), Donnan, J., Harris, G. Poster presented at the CCSA "Issues of Substance" National Conference. Halifax, NS. Nov 18th, 2025.

Vulnerable Youth and Substance Use: Equity-Informed Insights for Education Strategies.

Dalton, K. Poster presented at Memorial University's Faculty of Medicine SHARE Summit. St. John's, NL. Nov 10th, 2025.

Biopsychosocial Considerations in Youth Substance Use Education: Teachers' Perspectives on Approaches and Challenges.

Bishop, L., Dalton, K., Donnan, J., Harris, G. Poster presented at the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) Annual National Convention. St. John's, NL. June 2025.

Exploring Coping Motives for Cannabis Use in Post-Secondary Students.

Bishop, L., Bishop, O. C., Donnan, J., Downey, M. K., Harris, N.. CPA Annual National Convention. St. John's, NL. June 2025.

Voices of Educators: Exploring Educators' Perspectives of Substance Use Education.

Bishop, L., Donnan, J., Downey, M., Harris, G., Harris, N., Rowe, E., Torrville, B. Poster presented at the CPA Annual National Convention. St. John's, NL. June 2025.

LOOKING AHEAD: 2026-27



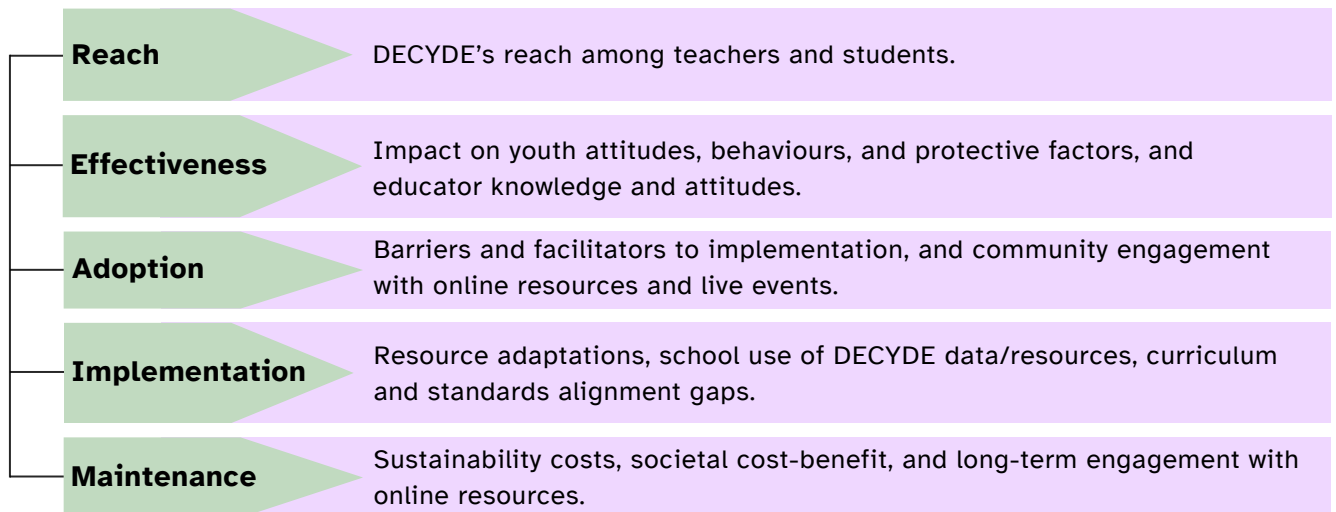
1. PROFESSIONAL LEARNING DEVELOPMENT

The DECYDE team is developing free, online modules to help adults support youth with their substance use health. The course covers core substance-use concepts, trauma-informed and harm-reduction approaches, stigma, mental health, supportive-adult roles, and how to use DECYDE resources. Content is informed by feedback from an earlier pilot. The training is being built in Articulate, with team and stakeholder review underway.



2. EVALUATION: PRISM RE-AIM PLANNING & EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Pending funding, we will begin a formal 5 year evaluation of DECYDE using the PRISM RE-AIM Planning and Evaluation Framework. Some activities will focus on NL, where DECYDE aligns with the new health curriculum and existing partnerships, while others will be national in scope. A convergent mixed-methods design is planned to integrate findings across all evaluation components.



RE-AIM PLANNING AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORK (GLASGOW ET AL., 2019)



3. FRENCH TRANSLATION PROJECT FOR HIGH SCHOOL LESSON PLANS

The DECYDE team has applied for funding to support the next phase of translation work, including high-school lesson plans and newly developed educational materials.



4. ROLL-OUT OF DECYDE CURRICULUM IN GRADES 7-9

The DECYDE curriculum will be integrated into Newfoundland and Labrador's updated health curriculum for Grades 7-9, launching in September 2026. This rollout will support the expansion of the DECYDE strategy and create new opportunities for evaluation.



5. EDUCATOR SURVEYS

The DECYDE team will develop and administer a survey with health educators in grades 7-9 to evaluate the full roll out of DECYDE materials in NL Schools.

This document was published by the Cannabis Health Evaluation and Research Partnership (CHERP).

Suggested citation:

Cannabis Health Evaluation Research Partnership. (2026). *2025-26 Annual Report - Drug Education Centred on Youth Decision Empowerment (DECYDE)*. <https://decyde.ca/about-us/research-and-publications/#reports>

© Cannabis Health Evaluation and Research Partnership, 2026.

Memorial University
230 Elizabeth Avenue
St. John's, NL
A1B 1T5

