

*Somerset West Community  
Health Centre*

# **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

*March 2021*

## **PRIMARY HEALTHCARE**

### **DIGITAL HEALTH WORKING GROUP**

We are participating on a Digital Health Working Group for the OHT-ESO. This Action Team was created in support of eReferral. The electronic referral program (eReferral) aims to move referring off the fax machine and onto the Ocean eReferral platform which eliminates a lot of additional steps as it includes features for referral submission, scheduling, electronic messaging and automated updates to the patient's chart in the referring physician's EMR.

### **ROOMING HOUSE OUTREACH CLINIC**

An outreach clinic hosted at 506 Bronson was held in early March through the collaborative efforts of the Centre's community development team, harm reduction and primary health care outreach teams. We connected with 35 residents to offer on-the-spot COVID testing as well as HIV testing.

## **MENTAL HEALTH AND COUNSELLING**

The Chinese Staff from Primary Health Care and Mental Health & Counselling programs worked together to host a huge virtual celebration for the Chinese New Year. On February 10th, over 80 Chinese Seniors joined the virtual celebration, and enjoyed watching a slide show of pictures from the previous year, singing Karaoke, playing games, and participating in lucky draws. The Staff team later delivered 28 meals, ordered from local Businesses in the Somerset Street Chinatown BIA, to the most vulnerable and socially isolated Seniors.

Through a partnership with Jewish Family Services, we began offering a Walk-in Counselling Clinic for the African, Caribbean, and Black Community in late January 2021. The program has already seen 18 unique clients, now averaging 5 clients per week. We are hopeful to receive funding in order to extend this service past March 31st 2021 and to continue providing low barrier opportunities for culturally safe and responsive mental health supports for the ACB Community.

This past week, both our Chinese & Vietnamese Community Support Workers hosted virtual info sessions for Seniors about Ottawa's vaccination roll out plan and how to use the screening tool to check for eligibility and register for the vaccine. Over 75 Seniors attended these sessions. Our staff are supporting many to navigate the online registration tool, confirm transportation to and from the vaccination centres, and confirm accompaniment to help Seniors navigate the process when at the sites. Many are struggling with accessibility challenges due to language barriers, isolation, and transportation.

## LUNG HEALTH

The Manager of the Lung Health program has been working with the Ottawa East Health team to establish indicators for the priority population of those living with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Our team brings a primary care perspective as they work to bring additional lung health services to the Ottawa east, Orleans, and Cumberland areas.

## OTTAWA NEWCOMER HEALTH CENTRE (ONHC)

In partnership with OPH and others, we held a "Somali Seniors' Forum." 70 people took part in the forum. The event provided a space for seniors to connect and relay important information about COVID-19 vaccines. The goal of the session was to alleviate some of the myths and fears about the vaccines and helped raise awareness about ways to access available resources/services. We were able to pass on important information ensuring that the delivery approach was low barrier and grounded in a culturally sensitive, linguistically appropriate, safe space for open dialogue. We hope that it will translate into more people seeking help, undergoing testing and feeling more confident about the vaccine as it rolls out over the next few weeks.

## FAMILY, COMMUNITY HEALTH AND HARM REDUCTION

## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, HEALTH PROMOTION, AND ADVOCACY

As part of our affordable housing advocacy, SWCHC is participating in the City of Ottawa's Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan consultation process and providing a written submission in the areas of housing as well as discrimination, marginalization and racism. The City's Plan will outline strategies and actions to improve safety and well-being for everyone in Ottawa and the consultation process was to gather more detailed feedback to set objectives, strategies and actions on each of the six local priorities. SWCHC staff attended City-led sessions, the Advocacy Committee will be providing a written submission, and a session was organized for our clients and community members through our Peers Helping Peers program.

In February, SWCHC partnered with Ottawa Community Housing and Ottawa Public Health to conduct COVID-19 wellness checks and outreach in two communities in our catchment area.

Resource bags were distributed, which contained resources related to takeaway meals, mental health programs & services, OPH COVID-19 and mental health resources, COVID-19 testing sites, SWCHC children and youth programs, and OPH COVID-19 resources in both French and English. Additionally, each outreach bag had a mask, hand sanitizer, handmade soap from a community member, reusable cloth masks, and some treats.

### **ROCHESTER HEIGHTS COMMUNITY HOUSE**

Since December 2020, the Rochester Heights Community House team has supported the work done by the Mission Food Truck at the rooming house located at 506 Bronson. Every two weeks, the Community House staff helps implement safety protocols during the food distribution and uses this opportunity to connect with residents identifying needs, providing information and safety supplies (masks, hand sanitizer).

### **VOLUNTEER AND STUDENT PROGRAM**

The Peers Helping Peers program is scheduled to wrap up its three years of funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation at the end of March 2021. The program is in the midst of an evaluation process and is developing a best practices manual for Peer Programs to be released in late summer. We are moving forward with a 'modified pick-up' version of income tax preparation support this year. Registration is underway.

### **YET KEEN**

More than 40 seniors joined the Lunar New Year celebration at Yet Keen on Zoom. We gave out special prizes of whole steamed chicken and the seniors were very happy! There was media coverage on these activities on CBC and CTV, facilitated by the United Way. The United Way donated a \$25 gift card to every Yet Keen member in celebration of Lunar New Year. Yet Keen's work was featured at a staff event United Way of Eastern Ontario Lunar New Year Celebration for staff. Alvis gave a presentation on how Covid has impacted the Chinese seniors community.

Yet Keen has held a community consultation on the interior design of the new location at 755 Somerset St. W. and members contributed passionately! Overall, members were pleased to hear about the relocation and were pleased with the convenience of the location and the stability that it will provide Yet Keen in the long term.

On Feb 18, Yet Keen collaborated with Kateri Native Ministry and held an intergenerational cultural exchange event through the support of the Bronson RISE project. About 25 people attended. 5 Yet Keen seniors presented on Chinese New Year and traditional practices and customs. Indigenous youth attended to learn about Chinese cultures. It was one of the first Chinese-Indigenous partnerships Yet Keen had and it was a meaningful exchange for everyone who participated. We look forward to continuing learning each others' culture and building good relations.

Yet Keen staff participated in the Community Engagement Session for National Action Plan to address Gender-Based Violence, hosted by OCASI, on Feb 23 and contributed input from the lens of services for Immigrant Seniors.

# HARM REDUCTION

## **AFRICAN, CARIBBEAN & BLACK (ACB) HIV PREVENTION PROGRAM**

We held multiple events to celebrate Black History Month, including:

- The ACB Speed Dating Event
- ACB Virtual Peer Support Group: Your Body Speaks: this event was in collaboration with ACB Mental Health Outreach Worker, Nagad Hersi, and included a yoga session led by The Yogini Nancy
- Durag Discussions Haircare Workshop: with guest facilitators Lynn-Cha and Fatima, two local Hair Care Educators and Stylists
- The Sacred Health Series: for episode 2 the special guest was Magda Osman. She discussed invisibility, reproductive rights, and the importance of widening these conversations within her ACB faith community
- Love Positive Women social media campaign
- Ottawa Black History in 2020: A Year In Review

## **ANONYMOUS HIV REGIONAL TESTING PROGRAM**

Our staff was a panelist on an anti-racism forum hosted by the community development team. They attended a user training on the updated provincial HIV POCT inventory tracking system in addition to durag discussions. Furthermore, they were a participant in an event titled "Kanawayhitowin :Taking Care of Each Other's Spirit", a workshop on inter community healing facilitated by the Ontario Federation of Friendship Centres.

## **SUBSTANCE USE SERVICES**

We are pleased to share that our Safe Supply project has been extended for 2 years! This service is part of the broader Ottawa Safe Supply partnership, funded by the Substance Use and Addictions Program of Health Canada.

February was an eventful month for our services as we navigated the impact of the Shelter Outbreaks in the street involved community. The higher incidence of COVID in the street- involved community put strain on our service users, and required increased staffing and support to accommodate greater numbers of CTS clients using in isolation. The overflow of cases resulted in the CTS being in outbreak status for the month, which ended on March 6th. Through our quick action and close collaboration with OPH to support client isolation, testing and contact tracing, at the time of writing the number of COVID positive clients was kept as low as 3.

Our staff also supported the short term conversion of the Tom Brown respite centre to an emergency shelter when the mainstream shelters had temporarily closed admissions.

Our COVID response team also played a crucial role during this time to support client isolation, care, contact tracing, testing, symptom monitoring and follow up, particularly as shelters and isolation centres were in overflow.