

*Somerset West  
Community Health Centre*

# CENTRE HIGHLIGHTS

JANUARY 2026



## ORDER OF OTTAWA:

Our CEO, Suzanne Obiorah, was honoured by Mayor Mark Sutcliffe and the City of Ottawa with the Order of Ottawa - a deeply deserved recognition of her tireless leadership and care for our communities.

As Chief Executive Officer of Somerset West Community Health Centre, Suzanne has spearheaded transformative initiatives that centre community, compassion, and culturally responsive care. Suzanne brings bold vision to some of Ottawa's most complex public health challenges; from housing and homelessness to mental health and racial health equity.

Amid complex societal pressures, Suzanne leads by asking where opportunity lives - and how we can build it through deep collaboration, courage, and community wisdom.

Congratulations as well to all this year's Order of Ottawa and Brian Kilrea Award recipients - an inspiring group of community leaders making a difference across our city!

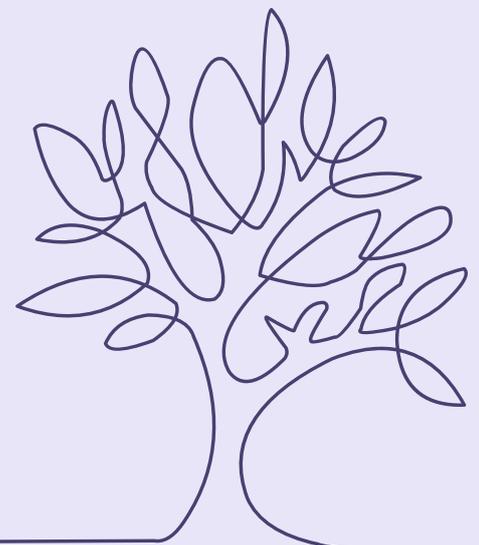
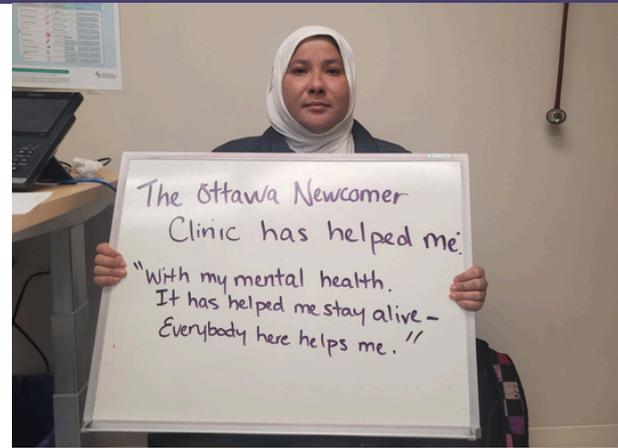
## GIVING TUESDAY CAMPAIGN

This year's Giving Tuesday campaign demonstrated the strength and generosity of our community, with donors rallying in support of the Ottawa Newcomer Health Centre (ONHC). Thanks to two anonymous matching donors, every contribution was doubled up to \$12,500, allowing individual gifts to have twice the impact. In total, the campaign raised \$29,615, a significant investment in expanding access to culturally responsive, low-barrier care for immigrants and refugees.

Funds raised will support ONHC's move into a larger, more welcoming clinic space equipped with additional exam rooms, improved medical equipment, and enhanced capacity for trauma-informed care delivered in more than 200 languages. This expansion will strengthen patient experiences and ensure the clinic can continue meeting the needs of newcomers as they navigate health systems in a new country.

The campaign also highlighted the ongoing impact of ONHC's work. Over the past year, more than 1,300 newcomers received initial health assessments, screenings, vaccinations, chronic disease support, and mental health services. Shelter-based screenings, health fairs, and culturally tailored health literacy programs brought care directly to underserved populations, reducing barriers and ensuring clients feel seen, heard, and supported.

The success of Giving Tuesday reflects a shared commitment to building a healthier, more welcoming Ottawa. Every contribution - matched or not - helps create safe, culturally grounded spaces where newcomers can thrive and access the care they deserve.

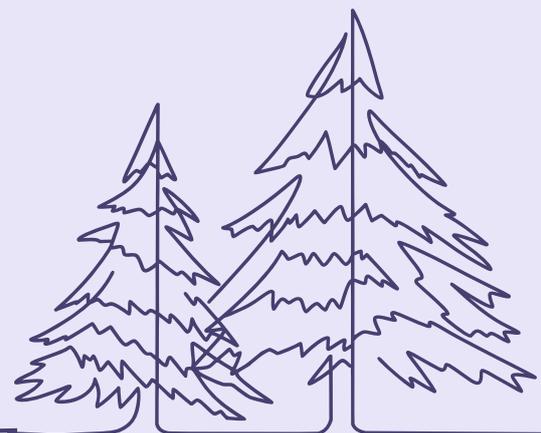


# INDIGENOUS CULTURAL FACILITATOR

The Indigenous Cultural Facilitator supported several important community-focused initiatives throughout the month, each reinforcing cultural visibility, wellness, and collective care. Early in the month, a flag-raising ceremony was held on Parliament Hill in recognition of Aboriginal AIDS Awareness Week. The event included drumming and participation from national representatives, creating a space that honoured Indigenous voices, raised awareness, and reinforced ongoing commitments to reconciliation and public education.

Later in the month, more than 200 community members attended a winter support event at Dundonald Park. Food, clothing, and winter jackets were distributed through collaboration with numerous community partners and volunteers. Veterinary services and pet food were also available, ensuring support extended to companion animals. Cultural and wellness supports were present throughout the event, including guidance from Knowledge Keepers and Fire Keeper support, helping ground the gathering in cultural safety and community care. The event demonstrated the strength of partnership-driven outreach and the shared commitment to supporting those most affected by winter conditions.

Holiday outreach continued with the distribution of Christmas stockings in partnership with Shawna's Outreach. More than 100 stockings were handed out in a single day, with approximately 500 distributed overall. These efforts helped ensure community members received practical items and moments of care during the holiday season, reinforcing dignity, connection, and cultural support.



# ALTERNATE NEIGHBOURHOOD CRISIS RESPONSE

This month, the Alternate Neighbourhood Crisis Response (ANCHOR) Program has been a vital support for the community since we began operations. In December, we were present in our community, and this report will provide an overview of how ANCHOR has been supporting those in need of our services.

## OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE

Throughout the month of December, we as a team have successfully responded to a total of 82 calls within our catchment area.

## PROVIDING SUPPORT TO THE URBAN OUTREACH WARMING CENTRE

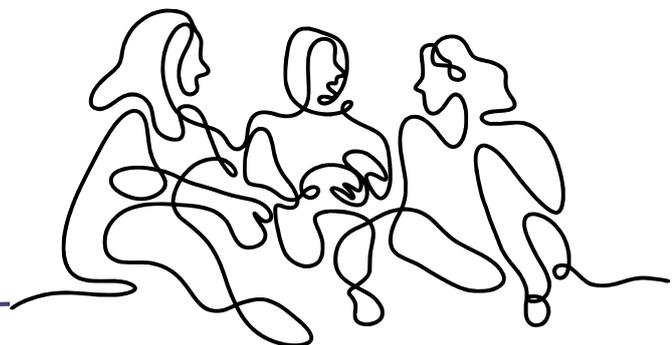
On December 8th, the CCHC Urban Outreach team announced the opening of a much-needed warming center for these cold months. ANCHOR will be providing support to this endeavor by providing staff support when needed and during overnight hours. While this is being spearheaded by the Urban Outreach team, ANCHOR will be providing support to their team.

## LAUNCHED CONNECT TEAM

Starting on December 6th, 2025, we have merged from using shift-link to using Connect-Team. We officially launched its use on December 10th. Connect-team is an app that we will be using to streamline communication and schedule needs for the ANCHOR program. Staff and leadership will be able to use the app to communicate with each other and allow leadership to communicate any community events, training, and schedule updates to the ANCHOR team. It is important to note that ANCHOR staff will still need to use Dayforce and bamboo to upload timesheets, book time off, and communicate with HR.

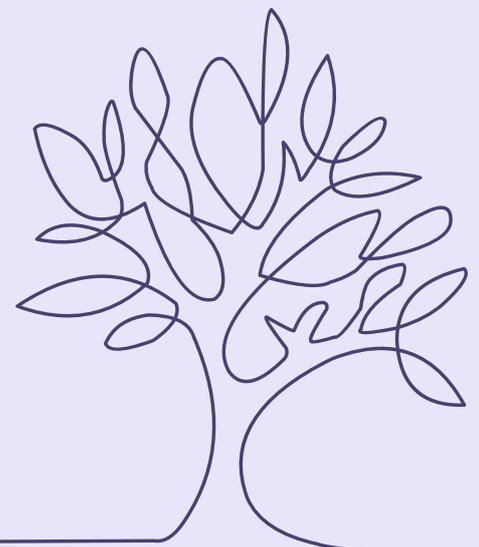
## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Throughout the month of December, ANCHOR has attended 6 community events. These events were; The World Aids Day community fair on December 1st. On December 2nd, ANCHOR team members had two presentations about ANCHOR services, one at Ottawa Community Housing and the other at the Elizabeth Fry Society. We had another presentation hosted by Ottawa Community Housing on our services and how we could provide support to their safety team on December 9th. The ANCHOR team also conducted some proactive outreach and went to the Parkdale Food Centre to provide information about our program as well as provide support during their operational hours on December 9th. On December 16th, ANCHOR team members attended the Dundonald Park Drum Circle holiday event. Lastly, on December 17th, the ANCHOR team attended and supported the CCHC holiday community meal.



# BLACK HEALTH PLAN

During the month of December, the focus for BHP has been planning some key initiatives for the last quarter (Q4: January – March 2026) to include cervical cancer awareness in collaboration with Ontario Health Teams, Black History Month conceptualization and planning with the Black Advisory Committee, and reviewing key learnings from Q2's report for process improvement. For Q4, there will be a focus on cervical cancer awareness to provide attachment to primary care as needed and access for Black and racialized individuals to get screened and obtain useful health information. This mobile clinic is being done in partnership with Ontario Health Teams, who will provide administrative support via a nurse practitioner and an administrator to track clients as they progress through the screening process. Additionally, our primary care team will be taking on Black clients who are within SWCHC's catchment area and in need of a physician or nurse practitioner. For Black History Month (BHM) in February 2026, several meetings were held with the Black Advisory Committee to craft the theme: The Future is Now: Building Thriving Black Communities in Ottawa. The focus for BHM 2026 will be hosting one event focusing on two core areas: Black Health Plan milestones, and economic empowerment. Each of these focus areas will be discussed by integrating the principles of Ubuntu ("I am because we are") to explore ways in which we can create thriving communities now and in the future. During these community dialogues, we want our community members to reflect on: How can Black communities thrive? How are we positioning ourselves to cultivate thriving Black communities now and in the future? How do we want this story to unfold? Lastly, key learnings on best practices for data collection and analysis will be shared with the leadership team at the next leadership meeting in January to ensure better data capture to reflect the amazing work we do at the center every day.



# PRIMARY CARE & REGIONAL PROGRAMS

## PRIMARY HEALTH CARE

The Primary Health Care Outreach team recently partnered with the Smiles for Seniors initiative to support isolated seniors this holiday season. Our team of elves successfully delivered gifts to 25 local seniors, fulfilling their wish lists and fostering meaningful community connections.



## MENTAL HEALTH & COUNSELLING

SWCHC's Black Mental Health Team, with support from the MHN team at ONHC, hosted a Community Year End Celebration for Black Health on December 11, 2025, at Chinese Alliance Church. About 100 clients, families, and community members came together to share good food, music, and time with one another. The evening was a meaningful way to close out the year — creating space to connect, reflect, and feel a true sense of belonging. It was a joyful and welcoming celebration that honoured the strength of the community, helped build trust, and reminded everyone that they are seen, valued, and cared for as we move into the year ahead.

Our Vietnamese Seniors Support services was honoured to partner with the Vietnamese Seniors Group in Ottawa-Gatineau to host a special event highlighting four powerful books written by local Vietnamese and Southeast Asian authors — and the researchers documenting their histories.



This community gathering shone a light on stories of survival, migration, rebuilding, and belonging. The authors and research team included:

- \* Alice Swann (2018) – My Journey from Saigon to Ottawa: A Vietnamese Girl's Story
- \* Lynn Ann Nguyen (2025) – Refugee
- \* Tho Pham & Sandra McTavish (2023) – The Cricket War
- \* Hearts of Freedom (2025) – Presented by Mike Molloy, Peter Duschinsky, Colleen Lundy, and Allan Moscovitch



# OTTAWA NEWCOMER HEALTH CENTRE

As we head into the colder months, the ONHC team continues to remain deeply engaged in the community—building strong networks of support for our clients, strengthening partnerships, and celebrating meaningful milestones, including hosting our first fundraising event.

We are thrilled to share that the Taggart Parkes Foundation has committed \$115,000 in support of the Ottawa Newcomer Health Centre. This generous gift moves us significantly closer to creating a brighter, fully equipped clinic that welcomes newcomer families with dignity. This success is a direct reflection of the way the team hosted the Taggart family at the clinic. From the warm welcome to the thoughtful tour, the team demonstrated who we are at our very best.

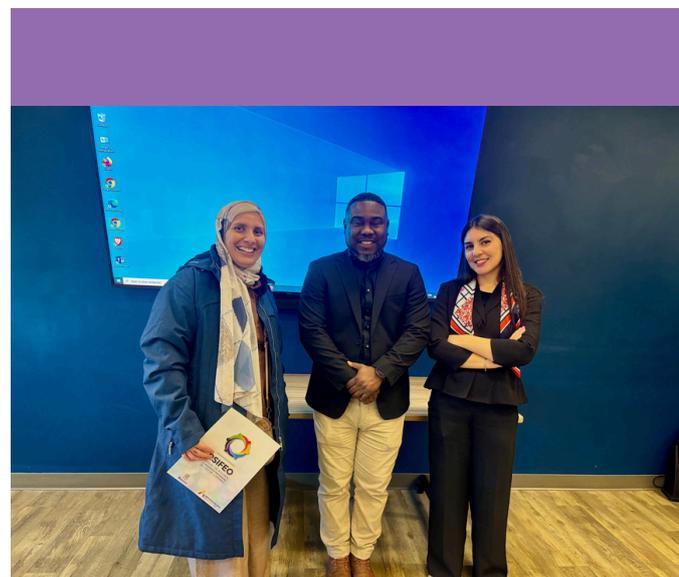
In addition to this exciting news, November was a month of impactful community engagement. Our Multicultural Health Navigator (MHN) team supported and led several successful events focused on increasing access to information, resources, and connections for some of the most vulnerable members of our community.

On November 12, the team supported the Diabetes Education and Screening Event, where participants received valuable information on diabetes prevention, early identification, and ongoing management. The team was also invited to speak at the 17th Santé Francophone Partners Meeting at the Rideau-Rockcliffe Hub. This opportunity strengthened our collaboration with francophone organizations such as CICAN and helped us establish clearer referral pathways to support francophone clients. The MHN team has since been invited to present at CICAN's next stakeholders' meeting to further highlight our services.

ONHC was also invited to present our programs at our sister CHC, PQCHC. This visit led to a rich exchange between their Family First team and ours. Importantly, it allowed us to clarify a common misconception that our services are limited by catchment area, and to walk through our referral process while highlighting the full scope of our work.

Our team also supported this year's Refugee Dental event (<https://refugeedental.ca/>), a program dedicated to connecting refugees with accessible dental care—another valuable opportunity to strengthen community partnerships.

Finally, we co-hosted a Newcomer Q&A session in collaboration with the Somerset Family and Community Services intern team and Leslie at our 755 Somerset Street location. This event provided a meaningful space for newcomer families to ask questions, learn about available supports, and engage directly with our staff. It was a wonderful opportunity to share resources and highlight the essential work of our MHN team.



# FAMILY, COMMUNITY HEALTH, & HARM REDUCTION

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & DEVELOPMENT

### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, VOLUNTEERS AND STUDENTS

The Community Engagement Team continues to strengthen connections across our programs by coordinating meaningful student placements and volunteer contributions. Work is underway on the upcoming Volunteer Annual Report for the City of Ottawa, highlighting the essential role volunteers play in expanding our reach and enhancing service delivery. Student placement outcomes and volunteer coordination updates will also be shared with staff to reinforce how these partnerships support our mission.

### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, VOLUNTEERS AND STUDENTS

This past season, the team played a central role in the Christmas Exchange Program. With the help of several staff and three dedicated volunteers, 583 applications were processed through Caring and Sharing. After removing duplicates, 475 families received support - 37 through food hampers and 438 through gift certificates valued at nearly \$12,000. While limited sponsorship meant not all applicants could be served, the program still delivered meaningful relief to hundreds of households.

Looking ahead, the Community Volunteer Income Tax Program (CVITP) will continue its hybrid model, offering both in-person clinics and year-round virtual services. Supported by 13 skilled volunteers, this program ensures community members have reliable access to free, high-quality tax support, reducing financial stress and improving access to benefits.

30 Rosemount Ave.

- Time slots: 10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. & 1:30 p.m.-4:00 p.m.
- Tuesdays: March 3, 10, 17, 24, 31; April 7, 14, 21, 28

Rochester Heights Community House – 865 Gladstone Ave.

- Time: 10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. and 1:30p.m.-3:00 p.m.
- Wednesdays: March 4, 11, 18, 25; April 1, 8, 15, 22, 29

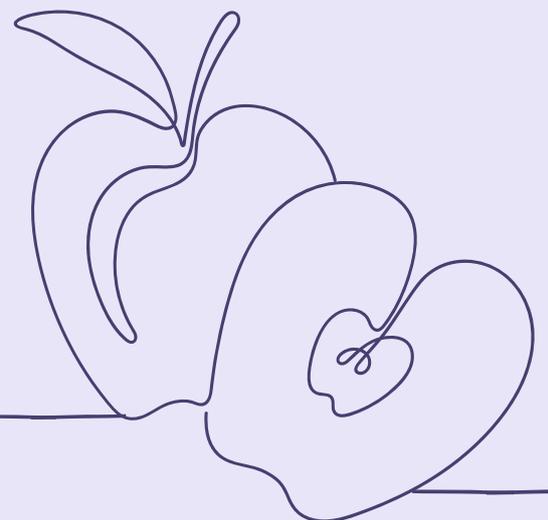


## ROCHESTER HEIGHTS COMMUNITY HOUSE

Rochester Heights Community House focused on strengthening community connection through seasonal celebrations and ongoing programming. Holiday events were held at both 280 Rochester and 865 Gladstone, with more than 120 tenants participating. Volunteers from several community partners supported the gatherings, helping create a welcoming environment where tenants enjoyed a turkey meal, music, and social activities. Tenant feedback highlighted strong satisfaction with the food, organization, and the chance to celebrate together.

Regular programming continued steadily following the celebrations. Volunteer-led bingo at 280 Rochester remained well attended, offering consistent social engagement and demonstrating the value of trained volunteers in leading recreational activities. Weekly movie nights also continued and played an important role during the winter period by providing a safe, comfortable space for tenants to socialize, choose films collectively, and reduce feelings of isolation. The multicultural breakfast program remained a key highlight, drawing more than 50 tenants weekly and fostering community through shared cultural food experiences.

The After-School Program balanced holiday activities with ongoing learning and play. Children helped decorate the space and planned a turkey meal, participating in menu decisions and food preparation to build teamwork and practical life skills. New games were introduced to support cognitive development, problem solving, and cooperative play, and children showed strong engagement with these additions. Despite winter weather, the program maintained a focus on physical activity through indoor movement, dancing, and active games, supporting both physical health and emotional well-being. The program continued to offer a safe, enriching environment for children and families.



## YET KEEN SENIOR'S DAY CENTRE

Yet Keen Seniors' Day Centre brought the community together for a joyful holiday celebration that highlighted connection, creativity, and shared tradition. The gathering began with festive Christmas crackers, and members crafted Christmas cards that were later delivered to isolated seniors at the Chinese Community Building to help reduce social isolation and share seasonal encouragement with those who may otherwise feel alone during the season.

The celebration also included volunteer-prepared meals, performances, and the always-popular Flying Hands Dance Game (which continues to be a popular way for members to stay active and engaged). The event wrapped up with a lucky draw and chocolate treats from Santa, strengthening ties among participants while extending outreach to seniors beyond the centre.



## CHILDREN & YOUTH

Children & Youth programs wrapped up the year with strong family engagement and well-attended program celebrations. Despite the mandatory break period, participation remained high, and families continued to stay connected through end-of-year activities that highlighted learning, play, and community involvement.

A major highlight this month was the generous contribution from the Ottawa Bluesfest Green Team. Their volunteers worked throughout the festival to collect cans, reduce waste, and promote environmental sustainability, resulting in an impressive \$21,214.20 raised to support community programming. Of that amount, \$5,303.60 was directed specifically to Children & Youth initiatives. This contribution will significantly strengthen after-school programming by helping maintain a safe, active environment where children can learn, play, and build positive relationships. It will also support youth-focused opportunities such as Youth Leadership and Babysitting Courses, expanding access to skill-building programs that foster confidence and independence.



# HARM REDUCTION

## NEEDLE EXCHANGE AND SAFER INHALATION

The Needle Exchange and Safer Inhalation (NESI) Daytime team held education sessions with clients. This month's theme was 'Surviving the Holidays'. The holiday season in December can pose many challenges for people who use drugs, such as navigating triggers, dealing with family or not having family, and money management issues due to social support funds being issued earlier in the month. We held small discussion group sessions to explore these, and other issues identified by participants. We offered strategies to navigate the season and get through the mid-winter stretch healthy and well.

Our Women's Breakfast program shifted dates to offer a pre-Christmas breakfast feast on December 19. We hosted a wonderful holiday feast and were able to provide gifts to participants provided by the generosity of the Shoebox for Women program, which provides shoeboxes filled with gifts such as art supplies, hair and makeup, and treats.

## ACB/HIV PREVENTION STRATEGY

The African, Caribbean and Black (ACB) HIV Prevention team participated in series of events organized by different organizations in commemoration of World AIDS day including the 2-day health forum for service providers where new development and research results are shared, flag raising at the parliament and also raising of the quilt and entertainment session that featured tables for outreach where we also had a table.

We also had two outreach events in collaboration with Leading Ladies Canada that featured sharing of backpacks to school aged children and sharing information including that of HIV prevention with newcomer families around Ottawa West

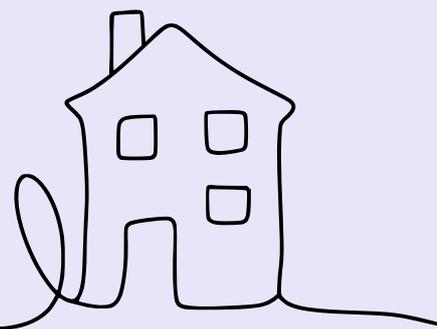
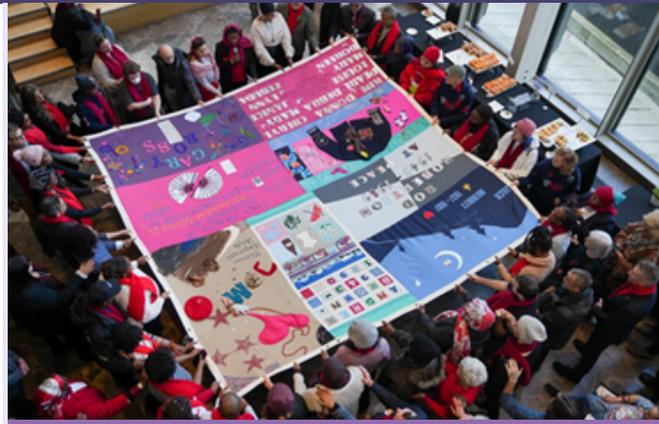


## ANONYMOUS HIV TESTING

Anonymous HIV testing activities remained strong throughout the month, with a focus on outreach, education, and expanding access for communities facing the greatest barriers to care. Early in the month, staff participated in the annual World AIDS Day commemoration alongside the AIDS Committee of Ottawa. During the community fair at the National Arts Centre, the team collaborated with peer outreach workers to provide HIV education and harm reduction information, helping increase awareness and support safer practices.

Regular participation in the weekly drum circle at Dundonald Park continued, including involvement in the winter gathering, Bibooni Giizis. Anonymous HIV testing was offered on-site from the NESI van, ensuring low-barrier access for community members who may not connect with traditional health services. This partnership continues to be an important avenue for culturally grounded outreach and harm reduction support.

A new partnership was launched with Centre 507, offering anonymous HIV testing within their adult drop-in space for people experiencing homelessness. This collaboration strengthens access for individuals who often face significant challenges in obtaining timely testing and care.



# OTTAWA BLACK MENTAL HEALTH COALITION

In December, Ottawa Black Mental Health Coalition staff provided more than 150 tote bags and resources for the ACB Wellness Resource Centre's annual Boys and Girls Brunch event and the SWCHC Francophone men's event on December 13<sup>th</sup>. This brings the Coalition's total for community engagement activities in 2025 to 19 community events for the public and 7 training sessions for stakeholders.

Also in December, OBMHC staff met with City funding representatives and secured an additional \$75,000 in funding for OBMHC activities in 2026. This funding will support the contracting of support to build capacity for member organizations and administrative staff for the Coalition.

The new OBMHC website launched December 15<sup>th</sup> and now provides more access to information and resources available to the public and professionals. See the new website at [www.obmhc.ca](http://www.obmhc.ca).

Finally, Black Mental Health Week promotional materials were sent to 60 partners and stakeholders in the community, and you can learn more about the events at [www.bmhweek.com](http://www.bmhweek.com).

