

*Somerset West
Community Health Centre*

CENTRE HIGHLIGHTS

OCTOBER 2025



HART HUB LAUNCH

On October 2nd we held a community event to celebrate our new Homelessness & Addiction Recovery Treatment (HART) Hub space, and reflect on the opportunities it brings as we continue to enhance services through the HART Hub. The Somerset West CHC HART Hub rests on three pillars: Basic Needs & Belonging; Accessible Health and Treatment Options; and Housing Stability through a direct pathway to 24/7 permanent supportive housing. Since opening on April 1, we've supported over 1,000 unique individuals - demonstrating its potential to make a real difference through an integrated, community-based approach. The needs in our city are immense, and while the HART Hub is not a standalone solution, it represents a promising step toward addressing the toxic drug and homelessness crises in our community.



The updated space gives us an opportunity to reconnect with clients and provide practical support, including showers and basic needs supplies; a daily meal service with lunch offered seven days a week; and leisure activities that encourage social connection and well-being. The Hub is a welcoming place where people can meet their immediate needs while finding community and support. We look forward to seeing this space continue to grow as a resource and gathering place for our community.

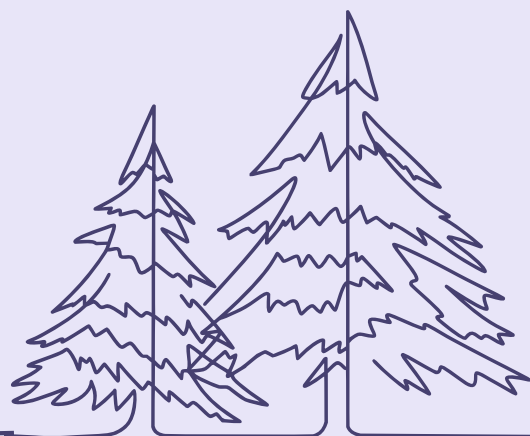
INDIGENOUS CULTURAL FACILITATOR

On Friday, September 26, 2025, we came together as a Centre to recognize the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation; and reflect on the history and ongoing impacts of Residential Schools, Sixties Scoop and honouring Survivors. The gathering featured Knowledge Keeper Marc Forgette and Makatew Workshops, creating a meaningful space for learning, connection, and cultural reflection.

This is part of SWCHC's broader commitments to advance Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action for health care, including integrating Indigenous healing practices into care (Call 22), increasing Indigenous representation in the health workforce (Call 23), and providing mandatory Indigenous health education for all providers (Call 24). We are proud that 100% of our senior leadership team has completed the Foundations of Indigenous Cultural Safety training, and that our Indigenous portfolio continues to lead initiatives such as National Indigenous Peoples Day and the Drum and Feast Gathering, welcoming over 400 community members this summer.

We are committed to continuing trainings and organizing events throughout the year so that the Calls to Action are not only acknowledged but acted upon.

Our recognition of Truth and Reconciliation also extended into the wider community. At Dundonald Park, more than 35 people gathered to learn, share, and reflect together. The park was recognized for its important work in the community, receiving the [Elaine Rabin Award for Social Services](#) from Jewish Family Services; and celebrated by Community Development Framework Learning for these achievements. Strong partnerships and collective efforts continue to make Dundonald Park a vibrant and welcoming community space. By learning, reflecting, and engaging together, we carry this work forward in meaningful and lasting ways.



ALTERNATE NEIGHBOURHOOD CRISIS RESPONSE

The Alternate Neighbourhood Crisis Response (ANCHOR) Program will expand west to Island Park Drive, covering the full Somerset West service area. The expanded boundaries will extend from Bronson Avenue to Carling Avenue, and from Carling Avenue west to Island Park Drive, with the Ottawa River as the northern boundary. Staff and team leads have already begun preparing for this transition, focusing on strategies for outreach and engagement in the new catchment, planning ways to connect with and support people in the newly added areas. This expansion means more community members will have access to the services and support they need.

PRIMARY CARE & REGIONAL PROGRAMS

OTTAWA NEWCOMER HEALTH CENTRE

We are pleased to share that the Ottawa Newcomer Health Centre (ONHC) has been awarded a \$25,000 microgrant through the Dr. Peter Centre, as part of the PHAC-funded Immunization Partnership Fund (IPF) initiative titled: **"Kuumba: Community Solutions for Building Vaccine Confidence Together through Micro-Contributions and a Community of Practice Supporting Black, Indigenous, and Racialized Communities"**. This national initiative seeks to strengthen immunization efforts through innovative, community-driven strategies tailored to the needs of historically marginalized communities. The Kuumba project focuses on building vaccine confidence through: Grassroots engagement; Culturally responsive outreach; and Strengthened community trust in health systems. ONHC's role will contribute to these broader aims by engaging newcomer populations — particularly those from Black, Indigenous, and racialized backgrounds — through targeted education, peer engagement, and outreach.

Staff from the Ottawa Newcomer Health Centre and Mental Health & Counseling programs were invited to present at an event organized by the Société Économique de l'Ontario (SEO), bringing together approx. 40 clients, community partners, and organizations including Montfort Hospital and CEPEO. SEO is one of the key players in the economic development of Ontario's Francophone and bilingual newcomers in their quest for quality employment. It was a valuable opportunity to build bridges in the community, to showcase our programs and services, and ensure that Francophone clients can access employment services and tailored support.

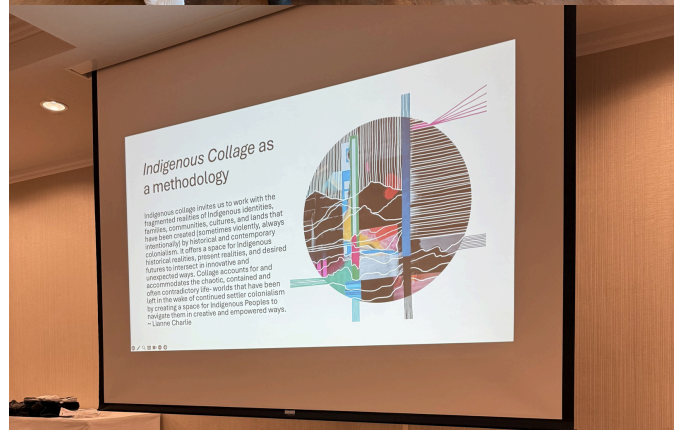


MENTAL HEALTH & COUNSELING

Somerset West CHC recently hosted “[Racism is a Pandemic: Racial Trauma Training for Community Workers](#)”, a workshop attended by 35 staff from our Mental Health & Counselling, Ottawa Newcomer Health Centre (ONHC), and Community Engagement teams. Led by Dr. Monnica T. Williams, a board-certified psychologist and Canada Research Chair in Mental Health Disparities, the session explored topics like racial trauma, microaggressions, implicit bias, and culturally responsive care. Hosting this event gave our teams a chance to build stronger connections across programs, enhance our skills in supporting racialized communities, and reflect on fostering an inclusive and trauma-responsive environment at SWCHC while also emphasizing staff self-care and wellness.

Our Black Focused Social Prescribing Navigator attended the Alliance for Healthier Communities’ Social Prescribing & Health Promotion Professional Learning Event, which brought together Community Health Centres, researchers, and sector partners from across Ontario. The event included a keynote, experiential activities, and discussions on topics such as trauma-informed care, Black-Focused Social Prescribing, and Indigenous cultural safety. Attending allowed SWCHC to stay connected to sector-wide innovations, explore new approaches to resilience and community engagement, and strengthen our capacity to advocate for sustainable social prescribing programs.

Our Mental Health & Counselling team participated in the seminar “[Maintaining Our Mental Health During Our Senior Years](#),” which brought together seniors from across the community to share, learn, and connect. Participants took part in expert-led discussions on coping with life changes, interactive activities, and learned about community resources available to support their well-being. We were grateful to be joined by our community partners to strengthen the message that none of us are alone. This event supports our ongoing commitment to collaboration, connection, and equipping clients with the knowledge and tools for healthier living. It also reinforces the message that mental health is a lifelong priority – just as important as physical health – and that community care brings meaning and joy to our golden years.



FAMILY, COMMUNITY HEALTH, & HARM REDUCTION

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & DEVELOPMENT

Our Community Engagement team has been busy keeping the Hub lively and welcoming! Weekly programs like Breakfast Club and the Cooking Group continue to foster social connection and healthy habits, while Food Rescue supports 20–28 families each week with equitable access to fresh food. Team members also help residents with everything from job searches to health resource access, ensuring everyone has the support they need. The Hub itself stays vibrant thanks to volunteer efforts and regular upkeep, with exciting fall events on the horizon, including the SafeTALK Workshop, and a Connect 4 Tournament in October.

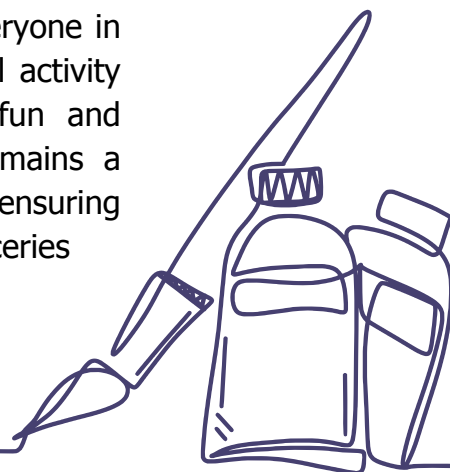
ROCHESTER HEIGHTS COMMUNITY HOUSE

It's been a busy and exciting fall at Rochester Heights Community House! Our After-School Program started up again in September, welcoming children back with lots of energy and excitement. Our team continues to provide a safe, engaging, and high-quality program that supports their social, emotional, and academic development. Activities include homework support, nutritious snacks, group games, and creative projects designed to foster teamwork and confidence.

In partnership with the Children and Youth Services team, Rochester Heights Community House now provides space every Monday morning from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. for their Playgroup sessions. The program offers a welcoming environment where parents, caregivers, and young children can gather to learn, play, and connect. By offering the venue, Rochester Heights Community House supports this valuable initiative and continues to expand its reach to different community groups, ensuring our services meet the diverse needs of families in the neighborhood.

Art programs for both children and seniors have also returned this fall, fostering creativity and intergenerational connection through painting, crafts, and collaborative projects. These sessions promote wellness, self-expression, and a shared sense of belonging, offering participants an opportunity to express themselves through creative avenues.

Our regular programs continue to thrive, offering something for everyone in the community. Seniors enjoy Zumba classes that promote physical activity and social connection, while weekly Bingo sessions provide a fun and engaging gathering for residents. Our Food Security Program remains a cornerstone of Rochester Heights Community House's services, ensuring community members have access to fresh produce and essential groceries through regular deliveries and food-sharing initiatives.



YET KEEN SENIOR'S DAY CENTRE

This month has been full of celebration, creativity, and connection for Yet Keen Senior's Day Centre!

We were proud to be part of Somerset West Community Health Centre's Annual General Meeting, where twelve of our talented seniors took the stage for a vibrant cultural performance. After weeks of dedicated practice, they wowed the crowd with their energetic energy and beautiful traditional attire. The performance received enthusiastic applause, and was warmly received by the audience.

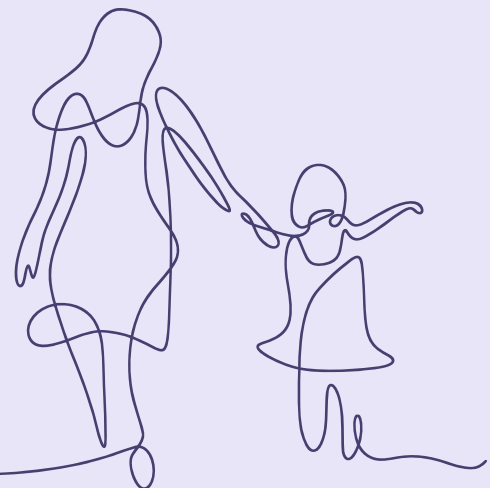
Our Joy of Cooking workshop was another success. Led by one of our dedicated volunteers, seniors learned how to make a delicious tomato seafood penne. The aroma filled the centre, and every bite was a hit!

To top it all off, 88 seniors joined us for a full-day outing, starting with a buffet lunch at the Mandarin Restaurant. The adventure continued at Petrie Island — and despite the rain, the group made the most of it, taking part in Laughter Yoga led by Peer Leaders. Spirits remained high, even under umbrellas, proving once again that joy isn't weather-dependent.

CHILDREN & YOUTH

Our after-school programs have welcomed 41 children from six different schools — including 11 new participants and 30 returning ones. On the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, the children made and shared Luskini'kin (bannock), while staff encouraged space for reflection and conversation.

September also brings transition at the Headstart Child Care Centres. Annually, during this month, our programs see 50% or more new children as many of the preschoolers go off to school. Fall is a season of change, and for us, it's a time to build new connections as we get to know each child and family.



HARM REDUCTION

NEEDLE EXCHANGE AND SAFER INHALATION

In September, the Needle Exchange and Safer Inhalation (NESI) program continued to support clients with shifting needs ranging from the toxic drug supply, housing issues, pet care support, and more. We've seen a noticeable increase in phone calls from individuals who found our information through the Somerset West website, highlighting the importance of accessible outreach.

The Needle Exchange and Safer Inhalation Daytime program began offering 'drop-by' hours at our 55 Eccles location, twice a week, as a connection point for clients to connect with NESI outreach workers. Meanwhile, the NESI Van continues to take calls throughout the night, supplying equipment and connection to people who use drugs across the Ottawa region.

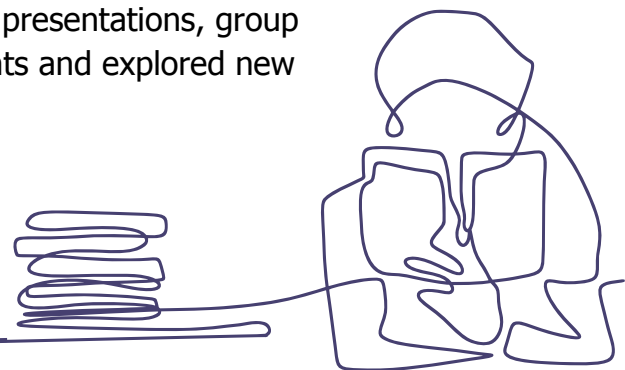
Our team has been actively building partnerships in underserved areas of the city, raising awareness of the NESI Van and exploring ways to strengthen service networks. September also saw the return of key coalition meetings, with Needle Exchange and Safer Inhalation staff participating in the Ottawa Outreach Coalition, the Rooming House Information and Exchange Network, the Ottawa Harm Reduction Coalition, and the provincial Harm Reduction Advisory Committee.

The NESI Women's Breakfast continues to be a lively biweekly event, offering a warm meal and a welcoming space for women who use drugs. Thanks to generous support from Ottawa Food Rescue, each breakfast is not just nourishing — it's a celebration of community.

ACB/HIV PREVENTION STRATEGY

This month, the African, Caribbean and Black (ACB) HIV Prevention team partnered with local organizations to host the Black Hair Healing Pop-Up, an event focused on supporting ACB women through education and one-on-one consultations around Black hair care and maintenance. The event created a welcoming space for connection, empowerment, and self-care — and feedback from attendees reflected high satisfaction and appreciation.

We also took part in the annual 2-day African and Caribbean Council on HIV/AIDS in Ontario (ACCHO) Strategy Symposium, which brought together organizations across Ontario working in HIV care and prevention. Through presentations, group discussions, and strategic planning sessions, we shared insights and explored new ways to strengthen support for the communities we serve.



ANONYMOUS HIV TESTING

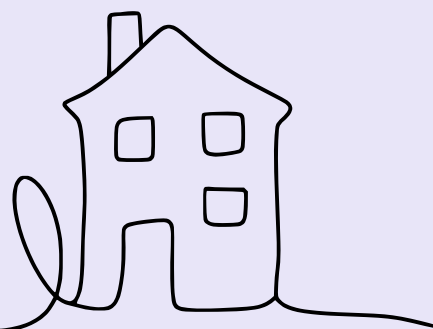
This month, the beginning of the new academic year brought us back to the University of Ottawa for weekly anonymous HIV testing appointments on campus. Testing at the university will continue weekly on Wednesdays until the end of April 2026. Our ongoing partnership with the Student Health and Wellness Centre is a great opportunity to offer low-barrier testing in both English and French to youth who are disproportionately impacted by HIV: ACB youth, queer and trans youth, youth who have experienced violence, and more.

On September 18th, we joined Black People United for Change and other partner organizations from across Canada for their demonstration urging government action to combat anti-Black racism. Following their demonstration on Parliament Hill, we joined them at Minto Park to help distribute home-cooked meals to unhoused folks in support and solidarity. Thank you to the Coalition to Abolish Anti-Black Racism for organizing this demonstration and meal distribution!

We joined harm reduction outreach workers across the province for the quarterly Outreach Network meeting. Here, we compared notes and learned from each other as individual workers and organizations committed to harm reduction. We also attended the Dundonald Park drum circle and the monthly Rainbow Service Provider Network meeting in September.

To continue to build off of the incredible community-building from Pride is Political in August, we're working with the Pride is Political Collective to set up important workshops about harm reduction and keeping each other safe in our community over the coming months.

Ongoing anonymous HIV testing sites continued this month at the weekly evening 2SLGBTQ+ testing site at MAX Ottawa, the women's breakfast with NESI, and the Club Ottawa bath house. We also continue to offer regular drop-in anonymous HIV testing on Mondays at 55 Eccles Street.



OTTAWA BLACK MENTAL HEALTH COALITION

This month the Ottawa Black Mental Health Coalition (OBMHC) will wrap up our summer community engagement events. This year we will have participated in 15 community engagement events with volunteers contributing over 170 hours to community engagement at cultural and arts festivals, health fairs, and conferences. Volunteers and staff distributed tote bags and mental health information at Dapo Fun Day, Afro-fest, and the African Canadian Association of Ottawa (ACAO) Multicultural Day. In October we look forward to participating in the Restore Medical Clinics health fair on October 18th, and Queens Connected's UsNow Conference on October 25. Ottawa Black Mental Health Coalition will provide tote bags and information for participants at both these events as well as have a booth to promote member organizations.

Black Mental Health Week 2026 planning continues in October as working groups work to develop the agenda around the theme Substance Use and Suicide: Breaking the Silence. Collaboration has also begun with Ottawa Public Health, CAPSA and The Royal Ottawa to provide training to community members in ASSIST, Mental Health First Aid and Stigma reduction during the week in March. Also in October, a 20 member delegation from OBMHC will take part in the half-day conference at the University of Ottawa, "Failed Care: The Challenges of Antiracist Mental Health in Canada". The event will feature two keynote speakers: Dr. Monnica Williams and Dr. Guimezap Tsopmo Jackson.

Finally, the Ottawa Black Mental Health Coalition was recognized by CAPSA for our dedication to reducing stigma and collaborating to improve access to mental health and substance use health at their annual WOW Festival on September 12th. OBMHC staff and the Executive Board were there to receive the Community Allyship Award, presented by Shawn Fisk.

