

*Somerset West
Community Health Centre*

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

JANUARY 2024



SAFER ALTERNATE RESPONSE

Somerset West Community Health Centre and Centretown Community Health Centre were selected by the Ottawa Guiding Council for Mental Health and Addictions, and the city of Ottawa, to deliver Ottawa's safer alternate response pilot project. An alternate response builds upon existing outreach and response programs that have been led by Centretown Community Health Centre and Somerset West Community Health Centre for years. The goal of the project is to offer a person in a mental health or substance use crisis with the right response, at the right time, from the right people.

HOW IT WORKS:

- Ottawa's alternate response service pilot launches in the summer of 2024, serving the Centretown and Somerset West areas 24 hours per day.
- The safer alternate response team will include a diversity of workers; and have extensive training in non-violent crisis intervention, privacy, and various health and anti-racism and anti-oppressive practices.
- Its composition will include staff from Indigenous, Black, and racialized communities, who bring lived and living experience of homelessness and substance use.

STAFF CELEBRATION

The winter months may bring its share of colder temperatures, and longer nights - but it is also a time to come together, and to take part in the rich tapestry of cultures that makes our Centre so beautifully diverse! The dedication of our Somerset West staff weaves the most vibrant threads. We're so grateful for the opportunity to gather and celebrate each other, in appreciation of the work we do year-round.



PRIMARY CARE & REGIONAL PROGRAMS

MENTAL HEALTH & COUNSELLING

The Black Focused Social Prescribing Pilot, funded through the Alliance for Healthier Communities, initiated a new monthly cooking group for community members accessing the Rochester Heights Community House. The program emerged from community feedback and requests, and peer leaders are engaged to develop the monthly menu and lead cooking demonstrations. The group regularly has 10-14 participants, and in future will engage guests to share community education on health and wellness. Participants enjoy a meal together, lots of laughter, singing and community care, and often extra food, spices, or produce to take home. Connections are made back to other Somerset West programs and services when needed, and overall the group is centered in culturally-anchored collective gathering and connection, and focused on the Kwanzaa principles of Ujima (Collective Work and Responsibility) and Umoja (Unity).



PRIMARY HEALTH CARE

SMILES FOR SENIORS

Santa's elves from Primary Health Care's Outreach team brought smiles to isolated seniors. Smiles for Seniors gives seniors experiencing isolation a gift from their "wish list". Once bought and wrapped, our team of elves delivered these gifts to 25 seniors! Spreading joy to seniors this holiday season!



WINTER CLOTHING GIVE-AWAY

The Rooming House Outreach winter clothing give away took place over November & December. The team gave away over \$6000 worth of winter gear including wool socks, gloves, hats, coats and boots. Harm Reduction staff also helped in giving out coats. This year's give-away was a success!

LUNG HEALTH

Lung Health staff gathered to participate in an annual CPR recertification as well as celebrate the end of 2023. As the lung health staff work across the Ottawa and Prescott Russell region, this provided the opportunity for colleagues to gather in person to share a meal, celebrate the amazing work being done within lung health, and connect with our colleagues.

The Complex Respiratory Care program (CRC) continues to be involved in the Provincial Long Term Strategy surrounding care for ventilated patients in the community. In December, the program manager met with a small working group focused on transitioning clients from hospital to home within the Champlain Region from local acute care hospital. This work will contribute to a consistent approach towards transitions across the province. In addition, the manager will continue to participate in the Provincial Long Term strategy Implementation committee to bring the lens of community care and coordination to the discussion. The program continues to work actively to support the work being done to align the approach to this specific patient population across the region and the province.

The CRC program continues to meet with all the local hospitals to provide an updated overview of the program and services offered with their staff and leadership teams. These meetings are continuing throughout the months of November to January and include the following partnering organizations: TOH (General and Civic Campuses), TOH - Rehabilitation Centre/CANVent, Montfort Hospital, Queensway Carleton Hospital, Cornwall General Hospital, and Hawkesbury Hospital.

Lung Health brought awareness to mark World COPD day by posting this year's current campaign on the Somerset West CHC social media accounts.

OTTAWA NEWCOMER HEALTH CENTRE

Ottawa Newcomer Health Clinic's Multicultural Health Navigator (MHN) program recently hosted an interdisciplinary team meeting, bringing together community health workers and multicultural brokers from across Canada at this year's National Cultural Brokers Networking Meeting. Our MHN program, situated at Somerset West Community Health Centre, stands out as one of the first "formal" (within the health system) and permanent MHN programs in Canada. Since its inception in 2015, the MHN program has successfully assisted over 2550 newcomers, significantly enhancing their ability to understand, access, navigate, and utilize health and other support services. The primary objective of this meeting was to provide a space where community partners could



network and cultivate relationships of partnership, collaboration, and growth. The meeting was successful in bringing together various partners across the city and we hope to continue to host these events.

FAMILY, COMMUNITY HEALTH, & HARM REDUCTION

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & DEVELOPMENT

YET KEEN

Yet Keen hosted its annual holiday party in December with 80 seniors participating. There were games, lunch, a gift exchange, a lucky draw and Santa Claus was there! We also celebrated the birthdays of seniors born in November and December. One of the founding members of Yet Keen, had her 99th birthday on the day of the celebration. Her daughter and all members were present to celebrate with her.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, VOLUNTEERS & STUDENTS

Somerset West's Volunteer and Student Program hosted grade nine students for "Take Our Kids to Work Day" – a widely recognized career exploration event in Canada. Students participated in activities and gained insights into the various programs and staff roles at Somerset West CHC. They had the opportunity to tour the Centre's Main Office at 55 Eccles Street, and participated in a community outreach tour led by the Harm Reduction team, offering valuable exposure to potential careers in the Community Health Sector.

Two of our dedicated volunteers played a crucial role in processing over 200 Christmas Exchange applications, facilitating assistance for more than 300 clients through "The Caring and Sharing Exchange". This initiative provides essential support to those in need during the holiday season, offering food hampers or redeemable gift certificates. Somerset West CHC volunteers actively contribute to alleviating hunger and overcoming barriers to service access for the individuals.

Our Community Volunteer Income Tax Program (CVITP) is poised for the upcoming year, having successfully registered and confirmed with the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) for 2024. As we adapt to evolving needs, we are transitioning to a hybrid service model, integrating in-person sessions with our established virtual services. In response to the increasing demand for these services, we are actively seeking new volunteers to join our experienced, professional, and dedicated CVITP team.

International Volunteer Day (IVD), a global celebration of volunteers, occurs annually on December 5th. This year, the United Nations marked the day by recognizing the power of collective action. In recognition of this day, on December 5th, Somerset West CHC sent out a volunteer newsletter expressing gratitude to our volunteers for their significant contributions to our community. Their efforts have made a positive difference for our clients and the community at large.

HARM REDUCTION

The holiday season can be a challenging time for many people who access our harm reduction programming, as many essential services close at a time when people most need the practical supports they offer as well as the sense of community they provide. The Homeless Crisis Outreach and DOPE Response teams connected with community members over the stat holidays and our on-site programming was helped by a generous donation of shawarma on December 25th, courtesy of one of our beautiful neighbours.

Additionally, another one of our community members collaborated with the NESI team to throw a holiday party for the community on December 21st and brought in a feast for everyone to share and celebrate together. It was incredibly lovely to see this generosity of spirit and care!

ANONYMOUS HIV TESTING

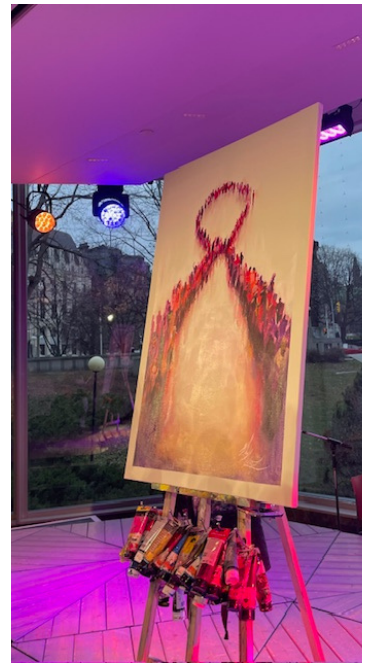
The Anonymous HIV Testing team met with MAX Ottawa to further develop our referral pathways for when their clients report reactive results on HIV self-tests distributed at MAX Ottawa. Internally, we also worked with the Harm Reduction team leads to support the department in understanding the role of self-testing and point-of-care testing at Somerset West CHC. At the University of Ottawa, we participated in a student wellness fair to promote our weekly on-campus anonymous HIV testing program, while University of Ottawa nursing students worked to create English and French videos to walk through the HIV self-test process. We began our monthly HIV testing outreach at Minwaashin Lodge's Monday night drop in. Finally, we gathered with service providers and community members at the HIV Health Forum hosted by the AIDS Committee of Ottawa for AIDS Awareness Week 2023.



Various Somerset West teams engaged in a day of outreach for the World AIDS Day event at the National Arts Centre. We provided training to support the roll-out of HIV self-test distribution on outreach calls in the Carlington area. With tremendous support from the Harm Reduction department, we facilitated an exploration of HIV basics, testing, and criminalization in the harm reduction sphere. We will continue to work closely with the outreach team at Operation Come Home to pave the way for youth-centered HIV testing pop-ups in 2024.

HIV PREVENTION STRATEGY

An open conversation was took place in collaboration with other strategy workers on needle exchange programs, and its overview and importance in HIV Prevention. It gave an opportunity for other workers with no harm reduction experience to understand the needle exchange service, and how they can support clients in need with community resources.



OTTAWA BLACK MENTAL HEALTH COALITION

The 52 members of the Ottawa Black Mental Health Coalition continue to be committed to raising awareness and reducing stigma, increasing access to mental health supports, and advocating for improved outcomes for Ottawa’s Black residents. In 2023, we reflect on the work accomplished by the collaborative efforts of the Coalition partners and look ahead to 2024.

The Coalition expanded the availability of services on the Counseling Connect portal through in kind partnerships with Family Services Ottawa and Centretown Community Health Centre. Free counseling appointments are now available 7 days a week. The Coalition also expanded the Executive Board leadership team to include four new members who represent experience and expertise in research, substance use/mental health, counseling and community health.

CHILDREN & YOUTH

We had been working to ensure all eligible families were referred to the Christmas Exchange program and received deliveries where needed. Our team in all program areas facilitated opportunities and attended community gatherings for families to celebrate the upcoming holidays and changing of the season. We were responsive with information sharing around our programs and services; offering assistance to families of Cambridge Street Community Public School if they required support applying for the School Board operated After School Program, as programming was changing with the Boys and Girls Club scaling back and discontinuing operations at this location. We will continue with our community connections while paying particular attention to this change and its potential impact.

