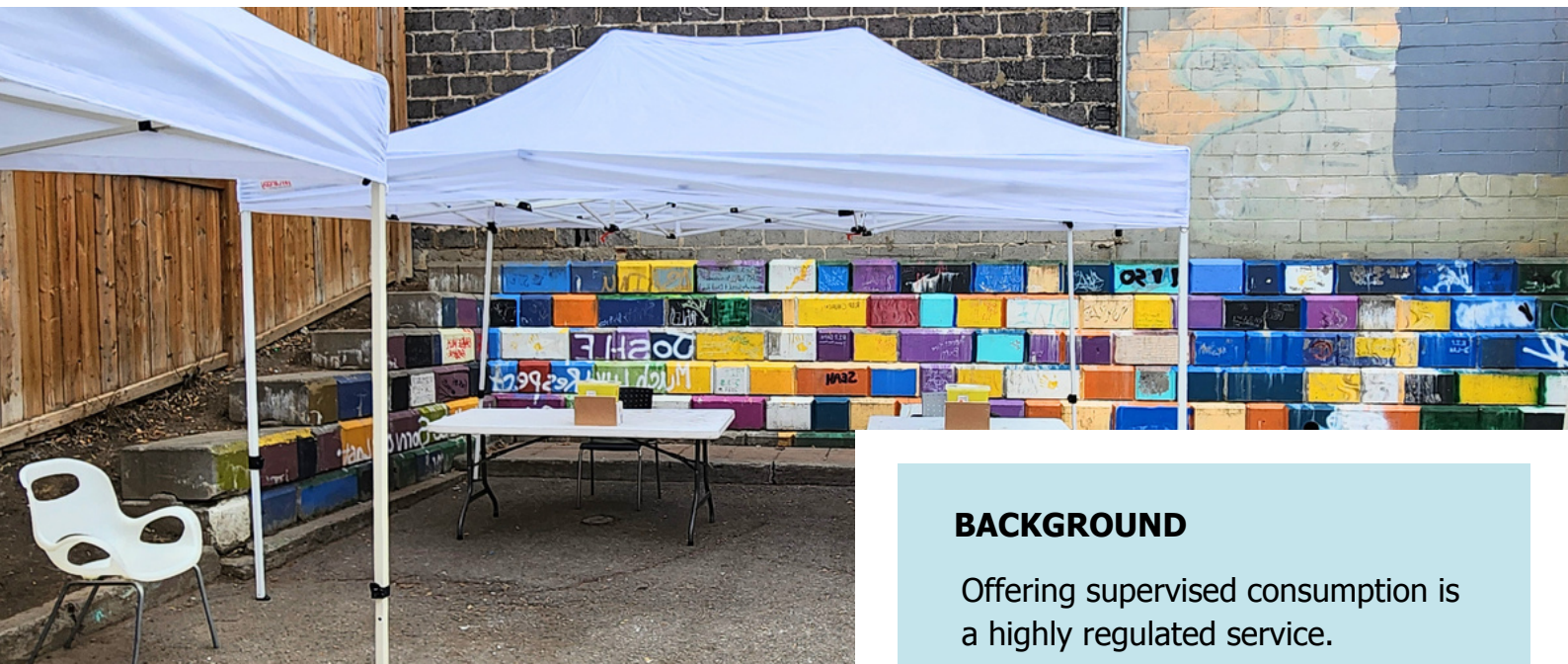


*Somerset West
Community Health Centre*

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

MARCH 2024



CONSUMPTION & TREATMENT SERVICE

We are pleased to share that we have been granted an emergency exemption by Health Canada that allowed us to temporarily transition our consumption and treatment service (CTS) to our enclosed outdoor courtyard temporarily. This temporary outdoor service will remain open until the indoor CTS can reopen.

We are grateful to Health Canada for quickly approving the exemption needed to move our CTS outdoors, and commend our incredible staff for setting up the outdoor space quickly so that we can resume this lifesaving service.

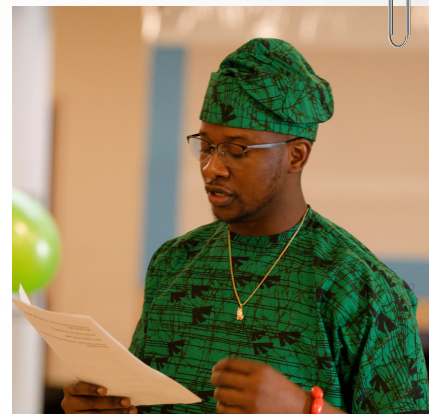
BACKGROUND

Offering supervised consumption is a highly regulated service. Somerset West CHC proactively reached out to the Ministries of Labour and the Ministry of Health, and Ottawa Public Health, to inform and seek guidance. The Ministry of Labour has visited Somerset West CHC and noted that the centre immediately implemented the appropriate measures to keep staff safe.

We are working with all three to find solutions.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

In recognition of Black History Month, Somerset West staff gathered to continue the journey that Black history invites us all to take – a journey towards truth, understanding and a more equitable future for the health of all Black people and communities. We were joined by two phenomenal guest speakers, Jacklyn St. Laurent and Dr. Clyde Ledbetter, who shared their insights and experiences related to this year’s theme "Embracing Joy and Rest".



LUNAR NEW YEAR

2024 is the Year of the Dragon, a symbol of power, honor, luck, and success! Our centre hosted multiple Lunar New Year Celebrations.



Vietnamese Lunar New Year events were hosted by the Mental Health and Counselling team and the Primary Health Care’s Outreach team, where more than 60 members of the Vietnamese community participated in a morning of fun-filled events of games, prizes, traditional dance, and cuisine.



The Primary Health Care’s Chinese Seniors Outreach Program along with the Chinese Mental Health and Social Service Program hosted over 90 members of the Chinese community. The joyful day featured games, Chinese Opera, cultural dance, prizes, and cuisine. All those who attended went home with a Lucky Red envelope filled with “Lei-Shi” candy and a golden coin symbolizing good health, fortune, and wealth for 2024!



All events were open to Somerset West CHC clients who participate in our Seniors' programming. In wishing everyone joy, prosperity and fulfillment, there was also an expression of appreciation to all the volunteers and staff who made the events possible!

Chúc Mừng Năm Mới! 新年快樂! 新年快乐!



FAMILY, COMMUNITY HEALTH, & HARM REDUCTION

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & DEVELOPMENT

YET KEEN

Yet Keen hosted its Lunar New Year celebration at Peking Duck and was well attended. The Yet Keen team did an outstanding job to foster an environment of laughter, food and games.



COMMUNITY HEALTH PROMOTION

Somerset West CHC worked in partnership with the Chinatown Business Improvement Association to provide a space for dancers to change in preparation for the Lunar New Year parade. The event was highly successful.



The Mechanicsville Winter Carnival, organized in partnership with Somerset West Community Health Centre, occurred on February 3rd and 4th at Laroche Park and Keith Brown's building. The event was highly successful, attracting

between 100 and 150 attendees for both days to celebrate winter festivities. Activities included sliding and a horse ride. The event included various activities for children and their families, promoting a feeling of community and winter cheer among participants. The Winter Carnival was a hub for community involvement, uniting locals and visitors. The event's success was bolstered by the joint participation of volunteers, sponsors, and community members with the collaboration of SWCHC highlighting Mechanicsville's strong community spirit. The Mechanicsville Winter Carnival was a success, effectively capturing the essence of winter and promoting a sense of unity among the community.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, VOLUNTEERS AND STUDENTS

Our Community Volunteer Income Tax Program (CVITP) supports our clients and community members with filing their income tax and benefit returns with dedicated support of our CVITP volunteers. We offer hybrid services, combining in-person sessions with our existing virtual options. 225 clients registered so far, around 65% asked for virtual services, and 35% requested onsite services. This program is available at our Rosemount and Rochester Heights Community locations.



We have seen the needs for this service increase after the pandemic by reviewing the registration number from last year 100 to 225 this year during the same period. Our CVITP would need more funding support from CRA and the community.

HARM REDUCTION

During the week of February 26, there were two instances where staff experienced nausea, dizziness, and headaches while working the Consumption and Treatment Services. The symptoms were short lived and staff have recovered, though our consumption and treatment service was closed following these incidents.

As the health and safety of our staff and clients remain our top priority, SWCHC proactively reached out to the Ministries of Labour, Ministry of Health, and Ottawa Public Health to inform and seek guidance. The Ministry of Labour has visited SWCHC and were satisfied with the centre's response to mitigate any harm or risk to staff.

Somerset West Community Health Centre has undertaken an investigation, which is ongoing.

In the interim, we are pleased to have been granted an emergency exemption by Health Canada to open a temporary consumption and treatment service in our enclosed outdoor courtyard. We are most pleased about being able to resume this work outdoors and once again contribute to Ottawa's capacity in providing this critical life-saving service.

ACB/HIV PREVENTION STRATEGY

The team participated at the Canadian of African Descent (CAD) research projects at the University of Ottawa. The focus was on the impact of HIV/AIDS on the CAD, and the need to scale up treatment in the community.

ANONYMOUS HIV TESTING

In February, we officially began our partnership with Operation Come Home to provide anonymous HIV testing during their drop-in for youth experiencing homelessness. We provided training to frontline staff with Centretown Community Health Centre to distribute HIV self-test kits responsibly to folks who are underserved by traditional HIV testing methods. In collaboration with the Adult High School, we spoke to students and community members about our HIV testing services at the What's Out There Fair during student registration.

We also attended the CO-CREATH's World Café where we spoke to professionals and researchers in the HIV sector about the services we offer and what we hear most from clients accessing HIV testing.



LETTING GO CEREMONY

A letting-go ceremony took place at Dundonald Park Circle under the guidance of a community Knowledge Keeper and a Harm Reduction staff. The letting-go ceremony holds particular significance within the Indigenous community. Expressing burdens and sharing them within a supportive community, then symbolically letting go through burning. The experience is profound and meaningful. We learned that writing down what holds you back can serve as acknowledgment and reflection. Sharing within a circle promotes community and understanding. Burning the notes symbolizes release and transformation. Fire is a purifying element, and burning represents letting go of burdens, enabling relief and renewal. We acknowledge incorporating elements from Indigenous traditions should be done with respect and alignment with specific cultural values and practices. The event took place February 6th and we had 21 participants who attended. It was a powerful moment and an event we would like to share again with everyone in the months ahead.



CHILDREN & YOUTH

The Laroche Park After School Program received a generous donation of \$5,986. Area leader John Currie led their team through the challenge of collecting, crushing and counting the beverage cans that are recycled at the festival and returning them for cash. The team then selected by vote a number of local charities to receive the funds on behalf of the Ottawa Bluesfest Green Team.



PRIMARY CARE & REGIONAL PROGRAMS

MENTAL HEALTH & COUNSELLING

HAIR, MIND, BODY, AND SOUL

Hair, Mind, Body & Soul is a bi-annual event for African, Caribbean & Black Women and Gender-Diverse people. This collective self-care gathering aimed to provide a culturally affirming space for Black Women & Black gender-diverse individuals to participate in activities centering mental wellness, hair care, sexual health, yoga and ceramics. The event took place on Saturday, February 10th at the Kind Space; and was hosted by Aids Committee of Ottawa, in partnership with the Ottawa Rape Crisis Centre, Umoja, Canadian Women of Colour

Leadership Network, Ottawa Public Health and Somerset West Community Health Centre. The event was well attended and included:

- **Hair:** This education and discussion session was led by Lu-AnnTelphin, a local loctician and Rasheedat Suleiman, a local hair and health educator.
- **Mind:** This session was led by Nagad Hersi of Somerset West CHC and Zoe Jammes of the Canadian Women of Colour Leadership Network. The session focused on music and writing as healing tools. Participants were provided resource packages, an activity book to create one's own mental health tool kit.
- **Body:** This gentle yoga session was led by Antonia Roul, licensed Yoga and Pilates instructor. This session focused on practicing gentle yoga movements for self care.
- **Soul:** Muna Mohamed and Maha Elmekki guided participants in the soulful practice of building with clay as well as sharing their own journeys with ceramics. Participants were provided with the air dry clay & tools.

SOLACE & SOLANGE

A Black History Month workshop for Black Women and Black gender-diverse students at the University of Ottawa, was hosted in collaboration with the Feminist Resource Centre, Aids Committee of Ottawa & Somerset West Community Health Centre. The event took place at The Feminist Resource Centre at the University of Ottawa, and explored Black mental health with inspiration from "A Seat at the Table" by Solange Knowles. The event addressed the challenges around exploring identity, navigating relationships with self, naming boundaries and self care.



CONSOLE & CTRL

Somerset West Community Health Centre's Black Mental Health program joined with the Aids Committee of Ottawa and the Ottawa Rape Crisis Centre offered Console & CTRL – a writing workshop & conversation on Black Mental Health, inspired by SZA's Album: CTRL. The workshop explored and addressed themes related to self-esteem, relationships with self & others and establishing self care practices. This workshop took a deep dive into SZA's album: CTRL, providing writing prompts, song samples, and collective discussion on Black mental health through SZA's music. Participants were provided with a mental health resource package, including an activity book for their reflections. Allen Andre was present to offer a live painting during the event, capturing the community conversations and reflections.



PRIMARY HEALTH CARE

DIABETES EYE SCREENING CLINIC

Championed by the diabetes team in partnership with the Centretown Community Health Centre and the Eye Institute, a free Diabetes eye screening clinic was offered last month. Clients of the practice with a diagnosis of diabetes (Type 1 or Type 2) and who did not have a diabetes eye exam within the last year have been invited to access the clinic.

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

In partnership with Centre 454 the primary health care team is excited to announce expanded Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) clinics for unattached clients of the Centre. The ODSP program is designed to help people with disabilities who are in financial need pay for living expenses, like food and housing (Income Support). These clinics can also help individuals who have been turned down or experienced reduced benefits, and can also assist with the appeals process. Starting in March, these appointment-based clinics will be held on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of the month at the Eccles branch from 1:00-4:00 PM.

KIDS COME FIRST IMMUNIZATION CLINICS

Primary Health Care in partnership with Kids Come First, is offering additional vaccine catch up clinics at 30 Rosemount. These clinics are open to anyone who:

- lives and/or goes to daycare or school in Ontario
- is due for vaccines
- does not have a primary care provider or cannot easily see their provider

A health card is not needed to book an appointment. Ensuring the health and well-being of our community is a priority to our Centre, and Somerset West is proud to play a role in making it easier for families to stay up to date on their vaccines!

HEART HEALTH SESSION TO VIETNAMESE SENIORS

With February being Heart Health month, the Primary Health Care’s dietitian in partnership with the Mental Health and Counselling team held a session on Healthy Eating for Heart Health specifically for Vietnamese seniors. The aim of the session was to increase the seniors’ awareness of the risk factors, and the importance of healthier food choices and staying active. The session was interactive and well attended by Vietnamese seniors.

PASSING OF OUR BELOVED TEAM MEMBER AND FRIEND

It is with a heavy heart that we share the loss of our team member and friend, Sean Rochon, a dedicated member of the Harm Reduction team. Sean has been with SWCHC since 2020 and has touched the lives of many at the centre and in our community. We especially remember his beautiful karaoke performance of Hallelujah during our staff holiday party. His heart and voice were full of care and compassion, and we are grateful for his dedication to our work and his impact in our community.

