

*Somerset West  
Community Health Centre*

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

*MAY 2024*



## **REOPENING OF OUR CONSUMPTION AND TREATMENT SERVICES**

We are thrilled to announce the reopening of our indoor Consumption and Treatment Services (CTS). This news comes after some eagerly anticipated renovations aimed at enhancing the ventilation and safety of our indoor spaces.

Our enclosed courtyard is also resuming operations, and will continue to serve as a safe, accessible, and welcoming community space for individuals who access the variety of harm reduction services we offer during our center's operating hours.

## **NEW HOURS OF OPERATION:**

Effective May 23rd, the Consumption and Treatment Services will operate:

- Monday 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM
- Tuesday 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM
- Wednesday 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM
- Thursday 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM
- Friday 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM
- Saturday 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM
- Sunday 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM

We are profoundly grateful for the varying avenues of support we received to ensure the safe continuation of supervised consumption services in the Somerset West community.

# FAMILY COMMUNITY HEALTH & HARM REDUCTION

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & DEVELOPMENT

On April 24th, Drew Meerveld presented a deputation to the City of Ottawa Planning and Housing Committee on behalf of Somerset West Community Health Centre's Advocacy Committee. The deputation expressed support for a motion that was put forward by Councillor Ariel Troster, recommending that the City of Ottawa explore the feasibility of an anti-renoviction by-law, similar to the one in Hamilton, Ontario. A number of other groups and residents also presented deputations. As a result, the Committee unanimously voted for City of Ottawa staff to support the motion.



### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, VOLUNTEERS AND STUDENTS

As the April 30th tax return deadline approached, the Community Volunteer Income Tax Program (CVITP) received over 449 client registrations and completed tax returns for 353 clients, including those referred by staff and low-income community members. Of these, 211 clients received onsite services, while 142 received virtual services. The program is supported by 11 professional tax return volunteers, administrative volunteer and student, and part-time staff hours. After April 30th, onsite services will no longer be available but we will continue to provide these services virtually.



From April 14th to 20th, we celebrated National Volunteer Week 2024, an opportunity to recognize the individual and collective efforts of our volunteers in creating a strong, interconnected, and vibrant community. We expressed our gratitude to our volunteers through thank-you messages on our website, social media, and in our volunteer newsletter.





### **YET KEEN SENIORS DAY CENTRE**

Yet Keen held its annual volunteer recognition event during National Volunteer Month. 93 seniors participated to recognize 29 volunteers who served Yet Keen in 2023. These volunteers contributed over 2,300 hours of programs and services during the year. The celebration featured performances from two of the Zoom classes (English and Mandarin classes), speeches from Somerset West CHC's Executive Director, Suzanne Obiorah, and refreshments.



Yet Keen seniors embraced the warmer weather with an April hike, exploring various scenic sites across Ottawa and enjoying the beauty of nature. This monthly activity encourages seniors to participate and stay active!

### **ROCHESTER HEIGHTS COMMUNITY HOUSE**

The Rochester Heights Community House had 355 visits in April. We have lost the support provided by the Ottawa Food Bank for necessary food aid, and anticipate that this will challenge some of our programs – in particular our Breakfast Club Program.

We have received \$1,500.00 through the City of Ottawa Civic Events Program to organize our annual Canada Day BBQ in the community.



## **CHILDREN & YOUTH**

Children & youth programming received funding, through our application to Canada Summer Jobs, to support the hiring of summer positions. These funds will further enhance the quality of services as well as allow for staffing of the summer Youth Leadership Program.

We coordinated a focus group for the City of Ottawa to lead a session with Mandarin speaking parents of young children. The purpose was to lend feedback to the City of Ottawa's Child Care and EarlyON - Service System Plan, that will help identify community priorities, strengths, challenges or gaps, and areas for action.



# HARM REDUCTION

## ANONYMOUS HIV TESTING

Outreach testing is ongoing in partnership with community organizations in the city. We finished up on-campus testing at the end of the term, to resume when the University of Ottawa resumes for the fall semester. Thanks to the support of Planned Parenthood Ottawa, we now have pregnancy tests in stock to provide for free through the anonymous HIV testing program.

## HOMELESS CRISIS OUTREACH

The Homeless Crisis Outreach Worker (HCOW) expansion into Centretown and the Bank Street corridor has been a huge success, with community members and businesses reporting knowledge of the program as well as other resources available outside of the HCOW hours of operation and positive engagement with staff and leadership who've been engaging in assertive outreach.

Staff and management from Harm Reduction participated in key stakeholder interviews and a co-creation session on Moving UPP (User Pathways Project). This project aims to leverage people's lived and professional experiences of the housing and homelessness sector's service to improve access and ease of navigation at the systems level.

## HOMELESS CRISIS OUTREACH NEEDLE EXCHANGE AND SAFER INHALATION

The Needle Exchange and Safer Inhalation (NESI) program's community clean-ups have begun again along with the return of the good weather. Staff and clients go on a walkabouts throughout the neighbourhood, to rotating locations, picking up trash and making friends along the way.

Last month the program supported the latest Collective Grief Initiative (CGI) memorial event on April 26. The CGI events are a collaboration of several harm reduction and related service organizations that Somerset West CHC participates in through the NESI program. These memorials are meant to provide a safe space for us to mourn, grieve, honour and humanize those from our community who have passed far too soon from tragic circumstances. We want to provide awareness of the frequent deaths of people experiencing homelessness and especially highlight the opioid crisis to be fueling the rise in deaths.

## ACB/HIV PREVENTION STRATEGY

The team engaged in conversations with community members around peer support groups for people living with HIV to determine how Somerset West Community Health Centre can be of support in terms of meeting times and frequency. We continue to promote our program, and create awareness during Eid celebrations in the Muslims in Ottawa Eid fair and the French Ivory Coast Community fair.



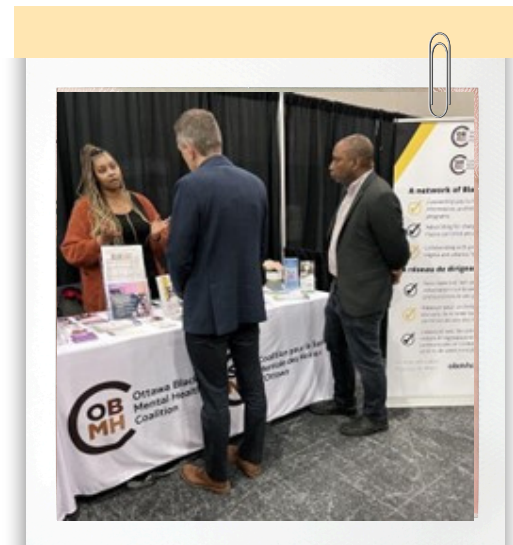
## OTTAWA BLACK MENTAL HEALTH COALITION

The Ottawa Black Mental Health Coalition (OBMHC) recently received \$197,000 in federal funding from Canadian Heritage - Community Support, Multiculturalism and Anti-Racism Initiatives Program. To strengthen the Community of Practice for Black mental health counsellor and community stakeholders who provide services to Black community members in Ottawa and the Champlain region through training, adapted resources and a gathering to share learning and best practices. These funds will be used to develop and strengthen the Community of Practice for Black mental health counsellor and community stakeholders who provide services to Black community members in Ottawa and the Champlain region. The objective of the project is to reduce experiences of racism within the mental health care system for both Black clinicians and clients and to build capacity in clinicians to better serve Black community members through:

- Culturally adapted assessments and tools for practice;
- Increased access to Black professionals and networks within the region;
- and Strengthened evidence-based best practices for clinicians working with Black residents.

### How we're doing it:

- By bringing Black and allied mental health professionals together this project endeavors to create a network for clinicians and increase feelings of belonging and decrease isolation and address the common concerns and issues that racism has in their work.
- By increasing the knowledge of best practices and culturally relevant approaches, this project will reduce experiences of discrimination for Black community members who are accessing services in hospitals and social service agencies.
- By bringing adapted tools and materials that support clinicians in better assessing mental wellbeing and connecting practitioners to relevant local programs and supports that are culturally affirming and meet the needs of the individuals they serve.



The Ottawa Black Mental Health Coalition recently participated in the 3rd annual Ottawa Black Business Expo at the Shaw Centre where we connected with hundreds of vendors and community members, promoting OBMHC partner programs and services. Notable visitors to the booth were Mayor Mark Sutcliffe and Councillor Rawlson King, Sarah Onyango for Rogers cable. Special thanks to Somerset West staff Seema Mahmoud for volunteering to support at this event. Staff are currently engaging with U of Ottawa's student volunteer and CSL programs to provide support and build capacity for the Coalition. Student placements will begin in summer 2024 and approximately 10-15 volunteers will be engaged in the coming months.



# PRIMARY CARE & REGIONAL PROGRAMS

## PRIMARY HEALTH CARE

### WELCOME DR. MICHELLE MCBRIDE

Dr. McBride grew up in rural southern Ontario. She completed her undergraduate training at College Glendon in Toronto. Upon graduation she worked for the Ontario Government, primarily for the Ministry of the Environment, for almost a decade before returning to school to study medicine at McMaster University. She completed her residency at the Northeastern Ontario Family Medicine program and moved to Ottawa to start her family practice. She has called Ottawa home for 17 years and enjoys the wonderful outdoor activities that the city has to offer! Michelle officially joins the team on June 3rd.



### VIRTUAL PROGRAM FOR CHINESE SENIORS- HAPPY CHANNEL, HAPPY LIFE

Over the past month, the Chinese Seniors Outreach team have been involved in a series of conversations with the Good Companions -Seniors' Center Without Walls (SCWW). Through these advocacy & collaboration efforts, a new virtual program was created for Chinese Seniors. The focus of this virtual support program is to enable seniors to stay healthy and enhance their wellbeing, especially for those that are home-bound. As a result, a monthly virtual program was created - the "Happy Channel, Happy Life", specifically for Chinese Seniors led by SWCHC's Chinese Outreach Nurse. The program will run the first Thursday of every month.

### TABLET LENDING PROGRAM FOR SENIORS

In partnership with the adult day program at Abbotsford House, the Chinese Seniors Outreach Nurse in conjunction with the Chinese Seniors Working Group has secured 10 tablets to lend to seniors who would otherwise not be able to afford them. The main goal is to help seniors stay connected with the community and provide access to client friendly resources during health and social workshops. The tablets provide materials in larger text for seniors with vision impairment and permit easier navigation. By extending these digital devices to vulnerable seniors, the hope is they will feel supported and benefit from improved access. This tablet sharing program has confirmed extension for another year! The lending program will continue to be evaluated with the hope of a further contract extension.

## LUNG HEALTH

In anticipation of World Asthma Day on May 7th, the Lung Health team will recognize the occasion by bringing awareness through social media posts and discussions with clients. The team will organize a walkathon where clients and staff will participate by tracking their steps and exercise throughout the week leading up to the day. Encouragement will be provided during clients' visits with the Respiratory Therapist or Physiotherapist, and we will be gathering each client's tracking cards to tally the steps!