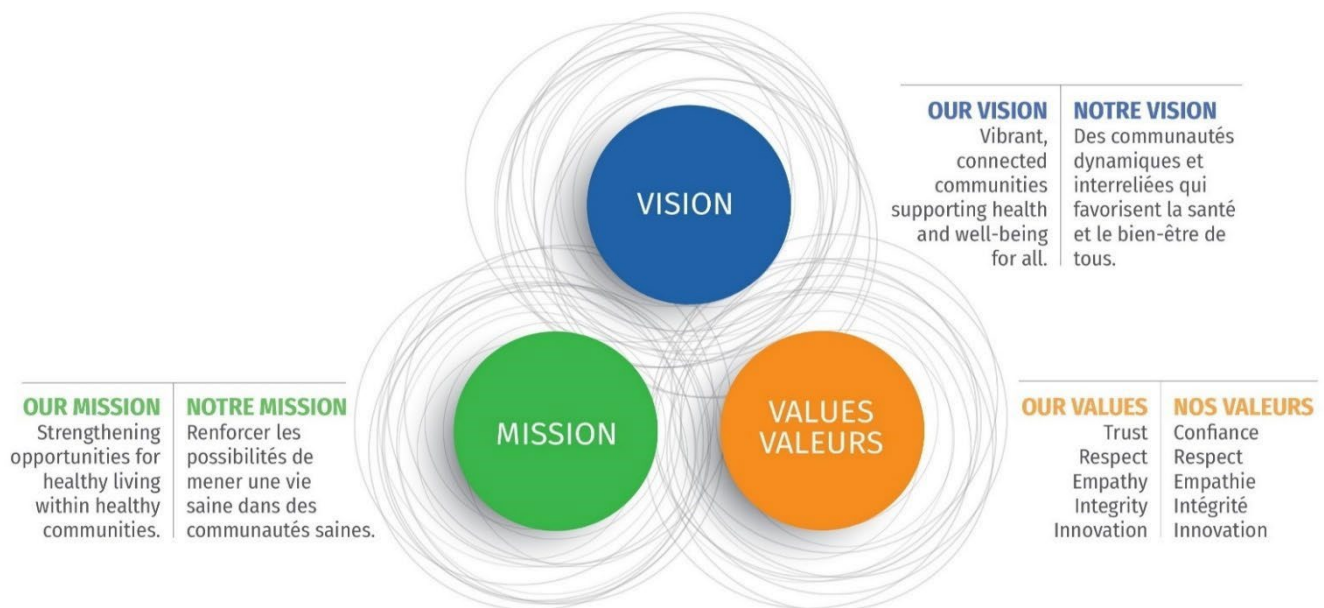


Medical Officer of Health/Chief Executive Officer Report to the Board of Health



We Are Public Health - Nous sommes la santé publique
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Prepared by Dr. Lianne Catton, MOH/CEO
October 26, 2023 BOH Meeting

General Report

1. Board of Health (BOH)

Strengthening Public Health

There are a few updates regarding the 3 components of the Ministry's announcement to strengthen public health including the support for voluntary mergers; review of the Ontario Public Health Standards (OPHS), and the funding review.

1. Voluntary Mergers: The Ministry of Health has created a *Voluntary Merger Key Informant Group (VMKIG)*, with some members identified by the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa) and AMO. There is good northern representation with Dr. Catton, the CEO and BOH Chair from Northwestern Health Unit, with other BOH, MOH, CEO and municipal representatives from across the province. There have been two meetings to review and share feedback regarding the proposed voluntary merger criteria, and it is expected that these criteria will be shared sometime in the next few weeks. The formal application processes are still under development by the Ministry.
2. OPHS Review: Pre-existing tables will be used as one opportunity for sector engagement and review of standards, with a goal for new standards for 2025.
3. Funding review for sustainable funding to support program planning and equitable program and service delivery: No updates currently.

2. Quarterly Ministry Reports

The Standards Activity Reports are a set of reporting tools that boards of health are required to submit quarterly as per the Ontario Public Health Standards: Requirements for Programs, Services, and Accountability (the "Standards") and Public Health Funding and Accountability Agreement. The Standards Activity Reports are prepared to communicate quarterly financial forecasts and interim information on program achievements. Through these reports, we are required to identify risks, emerging issues, changes in local context, and programmatic and financial adjustments in program plans identified in the 2023 Annual Service Plan and Budget Submission. Reporting is now due for the 3rd quarter (Q3) for the period up to September 20, 2023. Any portion of the ministry approved funding declared surplus by boards of health as part of the Q3 and Q4 Standards Activity Reports will be recovered at 100% through adjustments to the board of health's cash flow.

3. Local, Regional and Provincial Meetings

The Council of Medical Officers of Health (COMOH) section meeting in September was chaired as the Vice-Chair of COMOH. As the COMOH Vice-Chair, membership on the alPHa Board, COMOH Executive, and the Public Health Leadership Table (PHLT) with the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health (OCMOH), including the CMOH and Public Health Ontario. Meetings were attended with all of these tables in September.

4. Infrastructure

As previously discussed, the infrastructure needs in Timmins continue to create significant challenges and inefficiencies for the PHU team, and impact clients and programs. Regardless of any mergers, Timmins requires a new building.

Corporate Services

1. Human Resources

Recruitment

Recruitment continues for several positions in Timmins and the Branch Offices. Currently there are nine vacancies, with additional recruitment ongoing for casual immunizers in Hearst-Hornepayne area.

Since the last Board of Health Meeting two new temporary staff were hired, one administrative staff and one Registered Practical Nurse as well as a permanent full time Dietitian, which will currently be based out of Cochrane. The temporary positions are to December 31st, 2023. Additionally, a permanent part-time staff will be deployed on full-time basis until the end of the year. During the same period, we had one resignation, a permanent Public Health Nurse. We have also posted internally for a temporary management position. The new position will be Manager of Healthy Families and Merger Transition in the Timmins office.

Staffing Summary to October 16, 2023

- Public Health Nurse
- Public Health Nurse
- Public Health Nurse
- Public Health Nurse
- Administrative Assistant
- Administrative Assistant
- COVID-19 Coordinator
- Public Health Inspector

Health and Safety & Staff Development

Professional Development	Date	Number of participants
Crisis Prevention and Intervention Training	Sept. 22, 2023	10
IMS 100, 200, Emergency Response Training	Sept. 19, 2023	> 90

Labour Relations

The Management Labour Relations Committee met at the end of September with ONA counterparts and remains committed to regular communication with both CUPE and ONA.

2. Information Technology (IT) and Records Management

Watsec Cyber Risk Management continue to provide quarterly vulnerability assessments on IT Systems at the Porcupine Health Unit. The third quarter report shows that 14 out of 16 indicators have a risk level of low while 2 out of 16 have a risk level of moderate. IT staff is working with Corporate Services to decrease these risk levels to low. Bercell Integrated Technologies continues to monitor of PHU IT systems 24/7, update IT equipment to protect from cyber attacks and breaches and increase efficient operations as well as support installation and configuration of new hardware.

The IT team is currently updating emergency response plans to ensure timely response and communication to staff and relevant partners (e.g. public, community partners, Ontario government, acute care facilities) when IT failures occur

such the inability to send or receive emails, telephone calls, faxes, etc.. A total of 86 IT tickets were completed in September.

Privacy

The PHU, in collaboration with Watsec Cyber Risk Management, is conducting a Privacy Impact Assessment on an internal database to document suspected or actual breaches in privacy and the investigation and conclusion. This database will centralize the privacy breaches and allow the privacy officer to:

- Report on the number of suspected or actual breaches at the PHU,
- Identify trends,
- Develop educational sessions for health unit staff based on the trends,
- Ensure timely investigation and follow-up, and,
- Facilitate coverage during unexpected absences.

Access to Information Requests

Clients who want a copy of their health unit record must submit their request in writing. The Porcupine Health Unit complies with relevant privacy legislation to complete the requests received within 30 days. These requests are reported to the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario on an annual basis. From January to September 2023, three requests have been received and completed.

Requests for information from third parties with client consent are received frequently but do not need to be reported to the Information Commissioner of Ontario. Requests are most often received from the Cochrane Temiskaming Resource Centre and the Office of the Children's Lawyer.

The PHU, in collaboration with Watsec Cyber Risk Management, is conducting a Privacy Impact Assessment on an internal digital database for requests for information. This database will centralize requests for information received by PHU programs and allow the privacy officer to:

- Report on the number of requests received and the organizations requesting the information,
- Identify trends,
- Facilitate reporting to the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario, and,
- Ensure coverage during unexpected absences.

Vaccine Preventable Diseases and COVID-19 Response Program

1. Vaccine Preventable Diseases (VPD)

The VPD team has been actively engaging with community partners and members across the region, promoting vaccinations, addressing hesitancy, and amplifying vaccination efforts. The team provided clients with opportunities to receive routine vaccines across the region in PHU office settings, by serving 126 clients and administering 229 routine vaccines. Additionally, while the PHU no longer offers travel vaccines, the PHU remains a designated Yellow Fever (YF) Vaccination Center, and during this reporting period, administer one YF vaccine.

Following the Immunization of School Pupils Act (ISPA), the Grade 7 school-based clinics have resumed for the 2023-2024 school year, with three school clinics offered to date. To adequately prepare students for their vaccination day, presentations were offered to all grade 7 classes by a public health nurse (PHN). Presentations emphasize the importance of the grade 7 vaccines (Meningococcal, Hepatitis B and HPV), discuss the risk and benefits of vaccination, review the vaccine preventable diseases being protected against, and provide students with an opportunity to address

any questions or concerns with the nurse. Nurses also reviewed the Cards Program with students, which is an evidence-based framework that teaches students how to prepare for vaccination by reducing stress-related reactions, including fear, pain, dizziness and fainting during vaccination. The VPD team continues to collaborate with the PHU School Team to offer remaining grade 7 school-based vaccine clinics across the region this fall.

2. COVID-19 Response

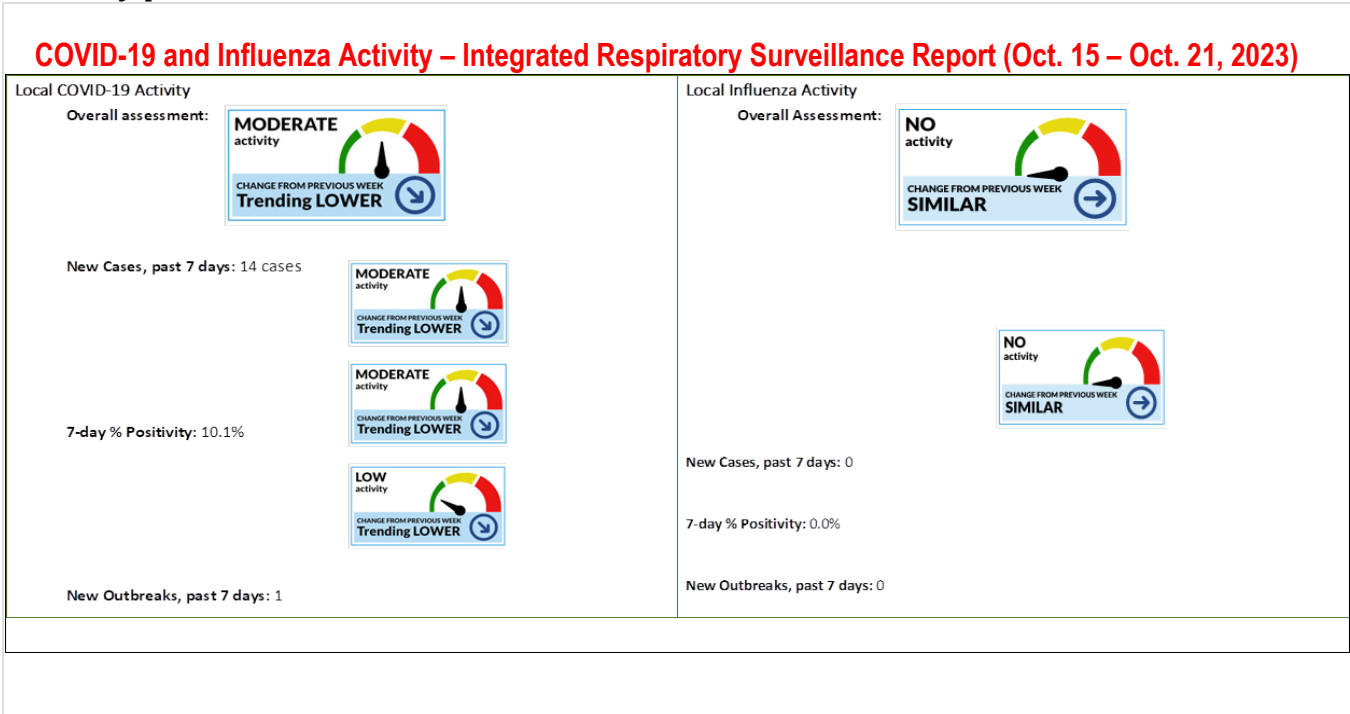
In late September, the PHU launched an updated Integrated Respiratory Surveillance System (IRSS). The new system provides an overall assessment of local data and indicates separately the current level of activity (low, moderate, high) and the trending direction (higher, lower, similar), for both COVID-19 and Influenza. The updated IRSS aims to allow for ease of interpretation and offer a simple at-a-glance look of the respiratory illnesses and trends in the PHU area. This information will support community partners and members in their assessment of actions to protect themselves and others.

Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs) continue to be available in PHU offices across the region for any community members or partners who wish to access them. Broad communications have been shared with community partners across the PHU region regarding procurement of RATs. It is recommended that those at high risk from COVID-19 who may be eligible for treatment get tested and seek treatment.

3. Local COVID-19 and Influenza Activity

Changes in the reporting of local COVID-19 and Influenza activity. The PHU website presents a simple overview of COVID-19 and influenza activity, and trends. The reporting will result in easier to understand the respiratory illness situation in the PHU region. Weekly updates will allow the PHU population to stay up to date on risk level and trends in the PHU region. Additional data outlining local and provincial levels of weekly case trends, laboratory testing and outbreak will continue to be available on Public Health Ontario’s Respiratory Virus Tool.

Currently posted on PHU website:



Summary

- Overall COVID-19 activity for surveillance week 42 (Oct. 15 - 21) was moderate and trending lower than the previous week.
- There was no Influenza activity for week 42, similar to the previous week.
- Provincially, COVID-19 activity was moderate and trending lower than the previous week and Influenza activity was low, similar to the previous week.
- Locally and provincially, Entero/Rhinovirus followed by RSV, had the highest % positivity.

COVID-19

- In week 42, there were 14 new cases, indicating a moderate level of activity and trending lower than the previous week.
- The 7-day % positivity was 10.1%, indicating a moderate level of activity and trending lower than the previous week.
- There was 1 new outbreak, indicating a low level of activity and trending lower than the previous week.

Influenza

- There was no influenza activity, which is similar to the previous week.

COVID-19 & Influenza Vaccine Clinics

- The fall means respiratory illness season has arrived. Respiratory viruses including COVID-19, Influenza, and RSV will be circulating.
- Protect yourself and those you care for by getting vaccinated.
- This fall you can get both your flu and COVID-19 vaccines at one of the many Porcupine Health Unit clinics in the area.
- The vaccines are safe and effective and the best protection available against flu and COVID-19.

4. Fall Respiratory Vaccine Program: COVID-19, Influenza, RSV

The PHU team remains instrumental in the planning, distribution, and implementation of COVID-19 and influenza vaccination programs across the PHU region. Recognizing the pivotal role that community organizations such as Long-Term Care Homes (LTCH), Retirement Homes (RH), hospitals, Primary Care, First Nation Communities, Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), and emergency medical services (EMS) play in the wider vaccination strategy, the vaccine team has been actively collaborating with these community partners to ensure they are adequately prepared for the upcoming vaccines and respiratory season. A significant part of the partnership involves the PHU vaccine team providing support as community partners set up their internal vaccination clinics. The PHU works closely with these partners to ensure they are equipped with the knowledge and resources to carry out vaccination efforts efficiently.

As the onset of respiratory season continues, vaccine clinic sites have been secured throughout the region. In Timmins, clinics will primarily operate from the main PHU office, while in branch clinics most clinics will be initially offered offsite at centrally located community halls and centres. In Timmins, offsite clinics include Northern College, Science Timmins, and two neighborhood schools for after-school hours. In addition, to ensure comprehensive

coverage and access for outlying rural communities, clinics are also being offered in Opasatika, Ramore, Val Gagne, Fauquier and Mattice. The PHU continues to work very closely with First Nation Communities and will support communities as requested.

Recognizing the importance of a well-prepared team, immunizers and support staff have been completing assigned training and refreshers to work in the fall respiratory clinics. The VPD team has been initiating the registration of new users to the COVax system, which is a pivotal tool for tracking and managing covid vaccinations. Staff have been actively participating in training to ensure proficient use of the COVax platform, optimizing the vaccine administration process.

The VPD team plays an integral role in the distribution of vaccines to community partners and is set to distribute COVID and Flu vaccines to Primary Care Teams, Hospitals, LTCH, RH, EMS, and First Nation Communities. The logistics are significant with such a large and complex region.

The PHU has been meeting with local, regional, federal and Ministry of Health partners to review potential plans for the ongoing COVID-19 vaccine program and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines to First Nation communities along the James Bay and Hudson Bay coasts. While routine vaccines have always been distributed to communities, the COVID-19 vaccine program has additional requirements and needs, in terms of inventory, reporting, storage, requiring a detailed review of the unique context to ensure appropriate plans were confirmed for the efficient distribution of vaccines. The PHU team has participated in numerous video-conference calls with the Ministry and other partners, to move forward with this direction. Fulfilling this responsibility will necessitate additional support from the Ministry, specifically in the form of COVax support for immunizers in these regions, the procurement of an extra vaccine fridge, and supplementary resources for shipping and logistics. The PHU has longstanding relationships with these communities, as historically the PHU has managed the distribution of their routine vaccines. While the plan remains to use these established distribution procedures, it is anticipated that the additional demands of the COVID vaccine program will lead to both increased expenses and dedicated human resource capacity.

Health Promotion

1. Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention (CDIP)

Engagement with Sports and Recreation Partners

The PHU team remains dedicated to amplifying concussion awareness among community partners - teachers, coaches, parents, and athletes. Following decreased services throughout the pandemic, during 2023 the Injury Prevention lead has revived and strengthened the concussion portfolio through comprehensive community engagement.

Several sport associations within the PHU region have received PHU partnership letters and specialized concussion toolkits for athletes, parents/guardians, and coaches. This includes associations in various sport, such as hockey, girls' hockey, ringette, figure skating, karate, horseback riding, swimming, curling, dance, and lumberjack sports. A case to highlight is the collaboration with the Timmins Minor Hockey Association (TMHA); where resources reached 15 board members, 136 officials, 500 athletes, and over 1,000 parents/guardians. In addition, the collaboration with the Timmins Ringette Association (TRA) resulted in the development and introduction of the TRA concussion policy and protocol, which addresses incident reporting, removal from sport and code of conduct.

Direct contact with organizations, focused meetings with coaches, parents, and board members, one-on-one consultation with sport organization presidents and community events such as the "Welcome to Timmins Night" and the purple illumination of the Timmins transit landmark, have resulted in heightened concussion awareness.

Engagement in Schools

The PHU is excited to share a new partnership with Northern College that empowers Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BScN) students to offer the *Brain Waves Program* to Grade 5 students. In September, BScN students were trained and equipped by the PHU team member leading the Injury Prevention Team and Concussion to proficiently offer the Brain Waves program. Presentations by BScN students will begin in grade 5 classrooms this fall. This initiative not only raises concussion awareness in schools but also underscores PHU's dedication to supporting the nursing profession by providing BScN students with an enriched experience, fostering their community engagement, health promotion, and health teaching skills.

In addition, schools were given an opportunity to commemorate *Rowan's Law Day* through an assembly using our provided toolkit. Internally, PHU staff also recognized *Rowan's Law Day* by observing a purple shirt day.

Healthy Aging and Falls Prevention

CDIP team continues to actively participate in various networking meetings and coalitions dedicated to enhancing falls prevention and healthy aging initiatives including Pre-Falls Pathway, Indigenous Falls Prevention Network, Stay on Your Feet (SOYF) Regional Networking Sessions and United Way community engagement meetings. The PHU team member leading SOYF continues to strengthen longstanding partnerships with seniors' centers and groups which has led to the implementation of seniors' pole walking groups with several community partner organizations. PHNs in branch communities (Hearst and Hornepayne) are working towards offering Seniors Fairs this coming fall, which will also include the offer of influenza vaccines and SOYF program promotion.

Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program

There were 137 claims processed during the month of September. The program model continues to work well with 4 denturists and 32 dentists signing an agreement with the Porcupine Health Unit for this program (6 of 32 are out of PHU district dentists).

Accidental Poisonings

The CDIP team is pleased to report that the "Lock Box Initiative" pilot project has undergone a full review by the Public Health Ontario's (PHO) Ethics Review Board (ERB) and has received approval for a one-year duration. It is significant to highlight that this is the first project from the PHU presented to the PHO's ERB for evaluation. This initiative will be launched in collaboration with the PHU's Healthy Babies Healthy Children (HBHC) program and will aim to mitigate the potential risk of unintended poisoning in children due to cannabis products. Parents or guardians identified via the HBHC program who acknowledge to cannabis use will be offered a voluntary opportunity to join the study and will receive a lock box at no cost. The study has a target of enrolling 50 participants and will include a telephone survey to assess its efficacy.

2. Healthy Growth and Development

- The Kapuskasing baby friendly coalition met on Sept. 6 and Oct. 4th; and also hosted a breastfeeding challenge during National Breastfeeding Week with 3 mothers, and 5 children attending.
- Cochrane completed a Conversation Café at the Early ON with the topic of Intro to Solids with 8 participants.
- Smooth Rock Falls completed a Rock and Talk in October on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and had 1 participant. They planned an October one on Safe Sleep but had no participants attend.
- Timmins completed a Rock and Talk on Car Seat Safety with 8 participants present.
- Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness event – PHU attended with a booth, about 25 participants: both parents and professionals.

- Planning for upcoming Virtual Prenatal Series starting October 18th; about 25 registrants currently.
- Planning for Prenatal in Day in Moosonee to be held on October 26th.

Completed 40 breastfeeding assessments and 6 formula assessments since Sept. 1st. So far in 2023, the team has completed a total of 328 breastfeeding assessments and 48 formula feeding assessments.

Healthy Babies Healthy Children (HBHC)

The HBHC coordinator has been working closely with Timmins and District Hospital Maternity department to offer training to all maternity floor nurses in HBHC programs, obtaining consent and navigating the referral process. This training was completed through a series of in-services for all maternity floor nurses. This was flagged by both TDH and the PHU as a priority and as an essential part of discharge planning for new mothers.

3. School Health

Collaboration with school boards and schools

In the Porcupine Health Unit area, there are collaborations with nine (9) distinct school boards, seven (7) First Nation Education Authorities and one old order Mennonite community. In the expansive PHU region, there are thirty-three (33) English schools, thirty-one (31) French schools, ten (10) First Nation schools and four (4) Mennonite schools. During the month of September, Public Health Nurses introduced themselves to their assigned schools, providing information regarding both mandatory and optional public health programs. Two (2) staff members also participated in the Professional Development Days organized by one school board. They presented on the *Playground Activity Leaders in Schools (PALS)* program and on a Youth Wellness Initiative.

Concussion and injury prevention

In light of a recent increase in concussion incidents within the PHU area, coupled with concerning trend of underreporting and under-recognition of concussion over several years, the PHU shared information on concussion programs and available services with school boards and schools. PHU outreach includes an active offer to review concussion policies, introduction to curriculum-appropriate concussion safety resources, information sessions for school staff to enhance their support for students in the classroom, and the promotion of resources such as *Rowan's Law Day* assembly toolkit, the *Brain Waves Program*, and the Youth Concussion Awareness Network.

Healthy eating behaviours and food safety

The PHU has successfully registered for the 18th year of Northern Fruit and Vegetable Program (NFVP). The NFVP is scheduled to commence in November 2023, with sixty-four (64) schools set to receive deliveries of two (2) servings of fruits and vegetables per week. This initiative will benefit over 10,000 students, from JK to grade 8, spanning from Timmins to Peawanuck and every school in between. Notably, an additional school was added this year: Ogoki Post-Marten River will be included in the program. Beyond providing healthy snacks, the program emphasizes the promotion of healthy lifestyle education and awareness in schools to complement the education curriculum. The resources offered can be utilized both at home and in school, contributing to the establishment of healthier habits in communities.

Physical activity

In response to school requests, the *Playground Activity Leaders in Schools (PALS)* program was successfully implemented in six (6) schools throughout the health unit area during the month of September. The PALS program is a student-led peer leadership initiative, involving grade 4-6 students who are trained to plan and lead fun and safe activities during lunch or recess. The program aims to provide opportunities for student leadership; enhance students' sense of belonging and inclusion and increase opportunities for physical activity thereby improving students' physical literacy.

Mental Health Promotion

Physical and mental health are determinants and consequences of each other. Positive mental health is critical to the maintenance of good physical health and in recovery from physical illness and injury. Conversely, mental health and its determinants can be improved in association with changes in social and physical environments. The PHU is working with two school boards to organize two regional Youth Champion workshops. The workshop will cover leadership, mental health continuum, link between mental health and substance use, coping strategies, and stigma.

Oral Health

The PHU is pleased to announce the expansion of the fluoride varnish program, initially offered in daycares, to now include students in junior and senior kindergarten in schools. The fluoride varnish program involves the application of a specialized fluoride solution to the teeth, which serves to strengthen dental enamel and prevent tooth decay. The team is thrilled to report that all school boards within the PHU have wholeheartedly accepted this program. Over the course of this school year, the dental team will be conducting two visits to administer these applications to young students, thereby safeguarding their dental health. It's important to note that this program has a primary goal of reducing the prevalence of dental decay in the region, which is currently high, and was highlighted as an increasing concern post-pandemic. This initiative reflects our commitment to promoting the well-being of young learners.

4. Substance Use and Injury Prevention

Alcohol and Cannabis

To promote Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health, the PHU is working in collaboration with the northeast health units on a social media campaign that promotes mocktails. This collaborative campaign will provide community members with fun alternatives to alcoholic beverages to help them to reduce their alcohol use. This campaign will include short videos or 'reels' posted to social media that contain fun mocktail recipes and a call-to-action linking back to *Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health (2023)*, and how to reduce alcohol-related harms.

Icelandic Prevention Model - Planet Youth Timmins

There is much work being done to move forward with this important and exciting initiative, with plans for the first round of surveys this fall:

- Planning and Design for the Planet Youth Timmins website is underway.
- Adapted, revised, and finalized the Planet Youth data tool (survey) in consultation with the coalition.
- Discussed the Planet Youth approach and how public health can lead this with other health units.
- Started planning for a promotional Planet Youth video from a Canadian perspective with PHAC.
- Hosted the first Planet Youth workshop: Introduction to Planet Youth & Coalition Building with community partners.
- Developed promotional materials to encourage attendance for survey implementation, e.g., posters for schools and posts to be shared on social media. These materials were also shared with community partners.
- Created a short video designed for youth, to introduce the model/approach and encourage attendance on the day of the survey.
- Introduced Planet Youth to students at Theriault during their October school-wide meeting.
- Connected with Timmins Youth Wellness Hub's Youth Advisory Committee to create a video for youth by youth. Plans to present the model at their November meeting.
- Hosting four community sessions mid-October for parents to understand the approach and increase community engagement.
- Hosting the second Planet Youth workshop: Pre-Data Collection Training on October 17.
- Survey implementation window is scheduled for October 23 - November 3.

Comprehensive Tobacco Control

Health care providers in the region were advised that the Porcupine Health Unit is no longer offering in-person smoking cessation assistance. This decision was informed by several factors, including the mandate of public health, impact, and the need to invest in a comprehensive approach for substance use, including alcohol, tobacco and cannabis. The Health Unit's mandate is focused on prevention, protection, and promotion, not the provision of individual treatment. The aim is to work with community partners who provide direct client services to enhance their quit services and connect them to or provide them with training opportunities; continue to promote provincial programs such as CAMH STOP on the Net and The Ottawa Model for Smoking Cessation and continue to work on policy, not only to prevent exposure to second hand smoke but to offer more smoke-free environments to support people on their quitting journey.

Harm Reduction and Opioid Response

1. Harm Reduction Program

International Overdose Awareness Day (August 31, 2023)

In honour of international overdose awareness day (IOAD) that occurs annually on August 31, the Porcupine Health Unit hosted virtual overdose awareness and Naloxone training sessions to try to expand the reach of this training opportunity throughout the PHU region. Five public sessions occurred; 2 in French; 3 in English, and included 1 in the evening, 1 during lunch hour and 3 over daytime work hours; with 38 people attending. Three PHU staff sessions occurred, with 115 staff present.

Community Specific Events

Each community is at various levels of readiness to host community events to commemorate International Overdose Awareness Day. Timmins has been actively hosting a community IOAD event since 2019. In 2023, PHU staff in branch offices engaged their local partners to see if there was a desire to bring awareness to their communities collectively in honour of IOAD.

Timmins and Area Drug Strategy (TADS) community event:

The PHU supported the planning and implementation, with other TADS partners.

- A vigil ceremony was held for family/friends/frontline workers (all those who have lost a loved one or have been affected by the opioid crisis). Guest speakers included: Christianne Blain - Northern College; Timmins Native Friendship Centre for opening prayer and drumming; PWLLE (Person with lived or living experience); and Family Members.
- Health, treatment, and social service providers hosted booths at the event (Gillies Lake).
- An appreciation BBQ took place for frontline workers.
- A purple bench was purchased to put at Gillies Lake.
- End Overdose Light was projected onto the Head Frame.
- Naloxone distribution and training occurred on-site by the PHU.
- Approximately 65 people attended.

Cochrane:

The PHU worked with the municipality, and health and social services in the community to commemorate the day:

- Flag lowering at Town Hall.
- Media release by PHU.
- Community event at the Cochrane Public Library:

- Information booths from several community partners (CDSSAB, Employment Ontario, Habitat Interlude, Victim Services, Jubilee Centre, PHU).
- Brief explanation/presentation of services available from each community partner.
- Naloxone training and distribution provided on-site by PHU.
- Approximately 20 people attend the event.

Hearst:

The PHU was invited by NCAS to participate in the community gathering to commemorate the day:

- Walk organized with different posters along the pathway on awareness, statistics, and real-life testimonies.
- Community event at the Club Action:
 - Lunch was held at Maison Renaissance.
 - Information booths from several community partners (CDSSAB, Habitat Interlude, Victim Services, Hearst counseling, PHU, NCAS).
 - Booth held from each community partner.
 - Naloxone training and distribution provided on-site by PHU.
 - Approximately 10 people attend the event.

Indigenous Partner Agencies:

Kunawanimano community relations (11 Indigenous communities) training day (August 30):

- The PHU was invited to provide overdose awareness and naloxone training at an in-person, outdoor training event that Kunawanimano Child and Family Services community relations department hosted. This training day coincided with IOAD, so with permission, IOAD theme was utilized during the presentation.
- Representation from the 11 mandated communities within Kunawanimano jurisdiction were present: Taykwa Tagamou First Nation, Wahgoshig First Nation, Mattagami First Nation, Chapleau Cree Nation, Chapleau Ojibway First Nation, Mattachewan First Nation, Constance Lake First Nation, Hornepayne First Nation, Missanabie First Nation, Beaver house First Nation and Brunswick house First Nation.
- There was conversation for 1.5 hours on the topic of substance use, local context, stigma, overdose awareness, and naloxone administration, with 25 people in attendance.
- Naloxone was distributed on-site.

Sexual Health/Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI), including HIV and other Blood Borne Infections (BBI)

Sexual Health Clinic Data

From July to September, there was a total of three hundred and ninety (390) visits to the sexual health clinics across all offices. The number of visits is slightly lower compared to the first and second quarters. In this quarter, most of the visits were in the Timmins office, followed by Cochrane, Kapuskasing, and Iroquois Falls. Of the total number of visits, two hundred and one (201) visits occurred where clients did not have a health care provider and twenty-eight (28) visits were clients where the clients' providers were not indicated. Like other quarters, a higher proportion of females were seen in clinic, with the majority being over the age of 20. This is likely due to the number of clients seen for cervical screening.

Chlamydia/gonorrhea urine testing accounted for most tests ordered followed by cervical screenings and cervical swabs for chlamydia, gonorrhea and vaginal swabs for yeast, bacterial vaginosis, and trichomonas. A total of twenty-nine (29)

Hepatitis C, forty-four (44) HIV and forty-three (43) syphilis serology tests were also ordered from July to September. There was a slight decrease in these tests over the summer months compared to the first and second quarters.

From July to September, similar to the second quarter, most Hepatitis C, HIV and syphilis tests were ordered for individuals over the age of 20 compared to the majority being ordered for people over 25 in the first quarter. Like the first and second quarters, most chlamydia and gonorrhea tests were ordered for people over the age of 20. There was a slight increase in the 15-19 age group for urine testing for chlamydia and gonorrhea in the third quarter compared to the first and second quarters. Considering the increased provincial rate of chlamydia in the 15-24 age group, further strategies to create awareness and access to testing should focus on reaching the 15-19 year-olds.

In the third quarter of 2023, clinic cases of chlamydia accounted for approximately 19% of total cases. There was a total of eighteen (18) chlamydia cases tested in the clinic. Most positive chlamydia cases were seen in the 15-29 age group, which is consistent with provincial trends. No gonorrhea cases were identified in clinic in this quarter. (Please see Appendix A Sexual Health Program Quarterly Board of Health Report Q3 July – September 2023)

Cervical Screening/Pap Clinics

In the third quarter of 2023, four (4) cervical cancer screening clinics were offered with three (3) in Timmins, and one (1) in Cochrane. A total of 57 clients were seen with almost half (27 clients) not currently rostered to a primary health care provider. An additional 14 cervical screenings were completed during regular sexual health clinics in Timmins.

Pregnancy Counselling and Referrals

Nurses in the sexual health program offer options counselling in clinic and over the phone to individuals who are pregnant and seeking services. All options including parenting, abortion, and adoption are discussed with clients who are unsure of their decision about their pregnancy. Clients who do not have a primary care provider and wish to continue with their pregnancy are referred either to a gynecologist or to the Primary Care Obstetrics Program (PCO).

Emergency Contraception

Access to emergency contraception without a prescription is available in most pharmacies and at the Porcupine Health Unit. There are two (2) approved medications, Plan B and Ella, each with specific eligibility criteria. From July to September, there were six (6) visits for emergency contraception, 1 client received Plan B and 5 clients received Ella.

Self Testing Clinics

Since September 2022, self-testing clinics have been offered every Wednesday. In the third quarter of 2023, 40 individuals attended the self-testing clinic. In comparison, there were 30 visits in the second quarter and 28 visits in the first quarter. It is important to note that two (2) clients were under 20 years old while thirteen (13) were under 25 years old. In the second quarter, only one (1) client was under the age of 19 while seven (7) under the age of 25. The sexual health program plans to expand self-testing clinics to most branch offices by January 2024.

Hepatitis A/B and Human Papillomavirus (HPV) High Risk Vaccines

Free high-risk vaccines are provided in the sexual health clinic to eligible clients. Eligible groups for Hepatitis A high-risk vaccine include people who use injection drugs, have been diagnosed with Hepatitis A or C, and men who have sex with men. Household and sexual contacts of someone with Hepatitis B, men who have sex with men, people with a history of a sexually transmitted infection, people who use of infection drugs, and people with multiple sexual partners are all eligible for the Hepatitis B vaccine at no cost. The human papillomavirus (HPV) high risk vaccine is available to men who have sex with men who are 26 years and younger. One (1) Hepatitis B immunization was provided in the Timmins clinic during the reporting period while two (2) Hepatitis A and fourteen (14) Hepatitis B were provided in branch offices. Please note that high-risk vaccines given in branch communities include totals given in sexual health and vaccine clinics due to limitations from Profile Intrahealth Electronic Medical Record to separate the numbers from each clinic.

Health Promotion Activities

- Safer sex presentation completed on August 8 at Taykwa Tagamou Nation-presentation request for summer students, nurse discussed sexually transmitted infections, birth control and sexual health services, booth set-up with handouts and condoms/barrier methods.
- Sexual health presentation to 10 international students at Université de Hearst-nurse discussed contraception methods and clinical services. Condoms and handouts left with coordinator for students.
- Two nurses attended Urban Park in Timmins on August 23. A booth with safer sex and Pap screening information was set-up. Nurses discussed clinical services at PHU and online resources while providing clinic cards/postcards for youth. Condoms/barrier methods were also available for individuals to pick-up.
- On September 6, one nurse attended the Welcome to Timmins event. A booth was set-up with handouts and condoms/barrier methods. The nurse provided education to people attending the booth about clinical services, and online resources.
- Ongoing resources provided by school and branch public health nurses to schools to support with teaching the healthy sexuality curriculum.
- Ongoing distribution of condoms for at risk groups (Université de Hearst, Seizure and Brain Injury Centre, Roland Michener Secondary School, Renaissance, NEOFACS, Northern College Residence).
- Ongoing monthly Instagram posts-topics for this quarter were oral sex/risk of STIs, and condoms/right to protect your sexual health.
- Instagram and Facebook posts to promote monthly walk-in clinics.

Continuous Learning for Staff

- On July 5, one nurse attended a Party and Play (PnP) webinar- PnP: Harm Reduction for 2SGBTQ+ Men Navigating Sex and Drugs that was offered by CATIE (Canada's source for HIV and Hepatitis C information).
- On July 18, two nurses attended a PrEP for gbMSM webinar-Everything You Need to Know that was offered by the Gay Men's Sexual Health Alliance.
- On July 21, one nurse completed the Writing in Plain Language course.
- On August 4, one nurse completed a 2SLGBTQ+ Foundations Course from Rainbow Health Ontario.
- All sexual health staff participated in the summer staff education series on July 20 and August 24: Topics were Workplace stress, mental health, and stress management.
- All sexual health staff participated in staff training for IOAD - Overdose Awareness and Response on September 12.
- One nurse completed CPI (Crisis Intervention) training on September 22.

The Porcupine Health Unit has published the Sexually Transmitted and Blood Borne Infections (STBBIs) Report 2012-2022 in June 2023. (Please See Appendix B Sexually Transmitted and Blood Borne Infections Report Porcupine Health Unit 2012 – 2022). This report provides an overview of confirmed case counts and rates of chlamydia, gonorrhea, HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis (A-C) and syphilis for the last ten years (2012-2022) in the Porcupine Health Unit region. A 10-year high-level trend analysis for all seven STBBIs and five-year risk factor analysis for chlamydia, gonorrhea, and hepatitis C were completed and findings are outlined in the report.

Key findings include:

- Chlamydia, gonorrhea and hepatitis C were the top three reported STBBIs in the Porcupine Health Unit region in 2022.
- Chlamydia and gonorrhea rates are on a decreasing trend, but hepatitis C rates have risen in the last five years.
- Younger age groups and females were at the highest risk of chlamydia, gonorrhea and hepatitis C infection.
- Other vulnerable populations include people who use substances, clients from First Nation Communities within the Porcupine Health Unit region, and people who have co-morbidities and other health statuses.

- The top three risk factors for chlamydia and gonorrhoea were high risk sexual activity, recent and new contacts, and judgement impairment by alcohol/drugs.
- The top three risk factors for hepatitis C were drug use (injection/inhalation/intranasal), sharing drug equipment, and high-risk sexual activity.

Health Protection

1. Control of Infectious Diseases (CID)

Needle/Syringe Program

In July, August and September, the Infectious Disease (ID) Team at the Porcupine Health Unit hosted eleven free Safe Needle Handling and Disposal training to community members. In total, 215 people attended the sessions. Participants received training on how to safely pick up needles, how to minimize their risk of needle stick injuries, and how to safely dispose of needles. Weekly sessions have been scheduled for the entire month of October.

2. Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) Hub

During the COVID-19 pandemic the Porcupine Health Unit (PHU) was selected as one of the province's Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) Hub sites and received funding to formally partner with community-based congregate living settings (CLSs), including long-term care homes, retirement homes, residential settings for adults and children, shelters, and supportive housing, to provide support and resources to CLSs to enhance IPAC practices within their facilities. In 2023, it is the goal of the IPAC Hub to increase IPAC leads' engagement in leadership opportunities to support IPAC practices in congregate living settings. (Please See Appendix C Infectious and Communicable Diseases and Control July – September 2023)

Developing Personal Skills

In July to September, the IPAC Hub Team:

- Prepared deliverables for the fall respiratory illness season on topics such as COVID-19, hand hygiene, additional precautions, and outbreak management.
- Partnered with the Epidemiologist at the Porcupine Health Unit to review and provide input on the new respiratory surveillance report that will be shared with congregate living settings within the region. The tool was launched October 4, 2023, on the PHU website. The online reporting of respiratory illnesses provides an overview of COVID-19 and influenza activity in the PHU region.
- Attended three outbreak management team meetings with the Inspection Team and the facility experiencing an outbreak.
- Travelled to Foyer des Pionniers, in Hearst, to promote hand washing with staff by hosting a hand hygiene booth, provided a personal protective equipment (PPE) presentation to staff and conducted a proactive audit with the IPAC lead at the facility.
- Reached out to Violence against Women shelter in the PHU region, to invite them to participate to the IPAC Hub meetings as they are included among the congregate living settings grouping.
- Conducted onsite education to staff from the Northeastern Ontario Family and Children's Services (NEOFACS) at the Schumacher Residence. The IPAC Hub team provided education on the chain of transmission, hand hygiene, personnel protective equipment (PPE) and point of care risk assessment.
- Provided congregate living setting the tools to create or update hand hygiene programs. The IPAC Hub provided facilities with a hand hygiene program structure, sample policy and a detailed presentation.

Environmental Health Program

1. Outbreaks

During the month of September, the Environmental Health team responded to nine respiratory outbreaks in congregate living settings, such as long-term care homes, retirement homes, and other facilities with common spaces. Seven outbreaks were related to COVID-19, one was rhinovirus, and one was parainfluenza. As of October 11, there were five active outbreaks of respiratory illnesses, which is looking to surpass September's outbreak numbers soon.

2. Food Safety

The Environmental Health department has been working towards completing all the required compliance inspections according to the requirements set out in the Ontario Public Health Standards. The current status includes high-risk food premises at 80% complete in the second term (May - August); with ongoing inspections in areas such as personal service settings, childcare centres, low-risk food premises, and fly in remote camps.

3. Safe Water

Recreational water premise inspections were 100% complete in third quarter (July - September).

4. Enforcement Training

On October 19, 2023, Mahesh Patel, Program Manager at Toronto Public Health, spoke to the Environmental Health teams for both PHU and Timiskaming (THU) on all aspects of enforcement. Many members of these teams are new to the profession, so this training served to strengthen knowledge around ticket writing, orders, and legal proceedings.

5. Emergency Preparedness & Response

Continue to prepare and support any emergency response needs across the region and inform public health and health equity perspectives in any local, regional emergency training discussions.

At this time support continues for Iroquois Falls and the response to flooding of Nellie Lake. The environmental health team has visited the 171 properties around the lake and continues to provide key messages for those involved while working on more individual follow-up.

The team participated in a debrief session with Ministry of Health and other partners in follow-up to the evacuations of First Nations communities due to both fire and flooding this year.

Knowledge and Strategic Services

1. Health Equity

An internal Diversity, Equity and Inclusivity Committee was established in June of 2023 to promote and implement diverse, equitable, and inclusive policies and practices at the Porcupine Health Unit (PHU). This includes fostering an equity-driven workforce that builds and strengthens trust, empathy, and connection with the people and communities in the PHU region.

The health equity public health nurse and the Indigenous Engagement Specialist co-chair the meetings and currently finalizing an action plan in collaboration with the committee members who represent different program areas.

In addition, there are 3 working groups who will address specific topics for populations of focus:

- French Language Services
- Indigenous Health
- 2SLGBTQ+ Health

The working groups are set to have their first meetings in October.

2. Indigenous Engagement

The Indigenous Engagement Specialist has focused their attention on cultural safety training for PHU staff to increase their competencies. Permanent staff are required to complete the San'yas Indigenous Cultural Safety Training and the temporary staff are required to complete Cancer Care Ontario's Indigenous Relationship and Cultural Awareness courses. In addition, managers, program coordinators and staff responsible for program planning and evaluation participate in OCAP training to ensure the collection and use of data related to Indigenous Peoples aligns with the principles of ownership, control, access and possession (OCAP).

At the Grand Rounds in April, a Cultural Safety presentation was provided to PHU staff and in September, the Indigenous engagement specialist also completed a presentation on National Truth and Reconciliation.

The Porcupine Health Unit is required to report to the Ministry of Health training completed by management, staff and the members of the board of health.

The Indigenous engagement specialist is a co-chair of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusivity Committee as well as the chair for the Indigenous Health working group. They also participate in various external committees.

3. Population Health Assessment and Surveillance

COVID-19 Surveillance was discontinued in September of 2023 and replaced with the new Integrated Respiratory Surveillance Report starting the first week of October. The report is published weekly (every Wednesday) during respiratory illness season and outlines the number of new cases, percent positivity and new outbreaks during the previous 7 days. These indicators are used to determine the overall level of activity in the PHU region for COVID-19 and Influenza. The overall assessments are posted to the health website to assist the public in making decisions to protect their health and the health of others.

The epidemiologist continues to provide monthly reports on infectious diseases locally and in comparison to the province. From May to September, they have also completed 11 epi service requests which include data requests, review of evaluation methodology, indicators and surveys and analysis of survey results as well as 4 projects.

4. Staff Development

The Foundational Standards team continues to support staff development to increase their skills and knowledge to plan, implement and evaluate effective public health programs and services. The following trainings were offered from May to September, with a total of 107 staff attending:

- Introduction to Public Health
- Program Planning and Evaluation
- Key Messages (x 2)
- Communication Plans
- Working with the Media
- PHU Branded Word Templates
- Indigenous Engagement
- Indigenous Health Terminology and Writing

5. Communications

Since COVID-19, the Porcupine Health Unit's presence on social media channels has increased and promotes health messages and health unit programs and services.

Each channel targets a different population segment:

- Facebook – adults
- Instagram – high school students
- Twitter – workplaces

A total of 502 Facebook posts (French and English), 104 Instagram posts and 16 Tweets were shared on the health unit's social media channels from May to September.

Four media releases were published during the last 5 months. Topics include active school transport, wildfires and extreme heat, Planet Youth and the voluntary merger between the Porcupine Health Unit and the Timiskaming Health Unit. As well, the health unit completed 24 media requests.

The communication specialist and the health communicator also participated in 30 consultations with staff related to communication.

Respectfully submitted,

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Medical Officer of Health/Chief Executive Officer