NUNG OWARDS A HEALTHIER COMMUNITY

2019 REPORT TO COMMUNITY





MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

I'm proud to share this Annual Report featuring the achievements and significant progress made toward improving education and outreach, expanding awareness initiatives and recruiting additional professionals to support the Strategy's five Pillars of Harm Reduction, Enforcement, Treatment, Housing and Prevention.

Through collaborative Community Allies, Working Groups and the Implementation Panel, we continue to make evidencebased progress in the reduction of harms associated with substance use in our city and region.

As we continue moving forward with our 2017-2021 Strategic Plan, Building a Better Tomorrow, we thank all those who have contributed their time and expertise towards the shared goal of reducing harms associated with substance use in our community.

Thank you to the Corporation of the City of Thunder Bay for its continued support, and to the many community organizations and members who continue to believe in the valuable work we do towards a healthier, safer community for all.

Councillor Rebecca Johnson

VISION

To improve the health, safety and well-being of all citizens by working together to reduce substance related harms.

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MISSION

To create and implement a drug strategy for the city of Thunder Bay, district, and region, that reflects the needs and strengths of its citizens. The strategy will focus on humane approaches that address the causes and effects of harm associated with substance use.

IMPLEMENTATION **STRUCTURE**

The following Working Groups are well established and have incorporated the Strategy's priority actions. Membership is diverse and all attempts are made to reflect the Drug Strategy's Pillars:

Prevention - Treatment - Harm Reduction -Enforcement - Housing

DRUG AWARENESS COMMITTEE (DAC) CHAIRS, SHEENA **ALBANESE & MIRIAH** BOTSFORD

The DAC spearheads prevention and education work to educate the public about substances and supports evidence-based prevention strategies. One of its goals is to reduce the stigma around addiction and build a compassionate community so people feel supported in their recovery.

PEOPLE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUP (PWLE) CHAIR, KAELEE POLHILL

From the lens of lived and/or living experience, this group provides input to inform the work of the Drug Strategy and its Working Groups, as well as the Poverty Reduction Strategy and other community initiatives. The group's membership is diverse in representation, which offers the expertise of lived and/ or living experience for issues related to poverty, homelessness, disability, substance use, mental health, and criminalization.

IMPLEMENTATION PANEL

CHAIR, COUNCILLOR **REBECCA JOHNSON**

The Panel meets quarterly and provides sustainability, coordination and oversight of Drug Strategy-related projects, as well as assists with evaluating progress.

HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS COALITION CHAIRS, ALICE BELLAVANCE &

CYNTHIA OLSEN

This Coalition functions as the Community Advisory Board (CAB) to meet the directives of Canada's Homelessness Strategy, Reaching Home. It also functions as the Housing Working Group to both the Drug Strategy and the Poverty Reduction Strategy. Its mission is to develop a housing continuum that is adequate, affordable, and accessible to all.

CHAIR, KAREN LEWIS

Strategy is built.

OPIOID SURVEILLANCE & RESPONSE TASK FORCE CHAIRS, ERICA SAWULA & **CYNTHIA OLSEN**

This group works to reduce the harms associated with opioid use through coordinated surveillance and emergency response planning. This group is responsible for collecting and sharing data related to opioid use and adverse events, as well as issuing alerts related to contaminated or toxic drugs in the community. They are also responsible for activating the Emergency Response Plan in the event of a surge in overdose-related events.

HARM REDUCTION **WORKING GROUP** CHAIRS, RONDA ROONEY & RICK THOMPSON

This group works to expand the availability of needle and syringe distribution, increase awareness of overdose prevention training, improve access to safer inhalation kits. and provide training about harm reduction to various service agencies and the general public. This group continues to act as an Advisory to the Superior Points Harm Reduction Program.

VICE CHAIR, ALICE BELLAVANCE

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP (FUNDERS' PANEL)

This group is composed of senior leadership with representation from the boards of organizations that provide funding to the Drug Strategy. The Community Partnership is led by the municipality with support from institutional partners that have mandates that coincide with the pillars upon which the Thunder Bay Drug

MATERNAL SUBSTANCE USE & **CHILD WORKING GROUP** CHAIRS, JENNIFER **MCFARLANE & WILMA KLEYNENDORST**

This group works to meet the unique needs of women, with the goal of providing substance-involved pregnant and/or parenting women and their children with continued care from both health and community organizations. The aim is to increase local capacity for action and contribute to the body of research in the area of maternal substance use.



Minister Patty Hajdu speaks to members of the Thunder Bay Drug Strategy during its 10th anniversary June 14.

DRUG STRATEGY CELEBRATES 10 YEARS!

It's been a decade since the inaugural Thunder Bay Drug Strategy began as a steering committee, led then by the now Honourable Patty Hajdu, Member of Parliament for Thunder Bay-Superior North and Minister of Health. Minister Hajdu joined the current Thunder Bay Drug Strategy Coordinator to share in the anniversary celebration with multiple stakeholders June 14 at City Hall.

Through a unified model of collaboration, the Thunder Bay Drug Strategy and its 65 members from approximately 35 organizations can be proud of their collective accomplishments. Together through the six working groups, members have influenced and established policies and programs that support housing and homelessness, reduce maternal substance use, and track opioid overdoses to develop appropriate response measures, to name a few.

Many other noteworthy harm reduction programs have been realized over the years. The Managed Alcohol Program houses some of the most marginalized members of our community and has been a model of care for other municipalities. The Drug Strategy

was also a strong proponent for supervised consumption sites, which the city now has in place at NorWest Community Health Centres. And because of strong collaboration, Thunder Bay has excellent distribution rates of naloxone kits, with emergency services fully trained in administering it.

While there remains much work to do, thanks to the coordinated efforts of the Thunder Bay Drug Strategy members, our city continues to make inroads towards a healthier future for all. Thank you to everyone who continues to dedicate their time and expertise on the many worthwhile initiatives aimed at building a better tomorrow.



IMPLEMENTATION

Using a collective impact framework, the Thunder Bay Drug Strategy's Building a Better Tomorrow (2017) identified 30 recommendations under five pillars in order to:

- Improve local capacity to prevent/reduce substance use,
- Support people to recover from substance use disorders, and
- Create an environment that increases the health and safety of all citizens.

Each pillar has evidence-based actions that can contribute to achieving the key results. The following is an update on the progress during the second year of implementation of the strategic plan:

→ BRAIN STORY – BRAIN BUILDERS LAB

The Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction (CCSA) was looking for champions, innovators and agents-of-change from across Canada who were interested in gaining in-depth scientific knowledge on the connections between adverse childhood experiences and addiction. Requirements were to complete the online Brain Story certification program, developed by Alberta Family Wellness, and take part in a two-day event where participants constructed project plans to help spread the knowledge gained from the course in their spheres of influence.

The Drug Strategy Coordinator and Crime Prevention → RESPONSE TO OPIOID OVERDOSES: Council Coordinator were among 50 people selected A TOOLKIT FOR WORKPLACES to participate in the Brain Builders Lab in March Due to the increasing prevalence of opioid-related 2019. CCSA will provide implementation support harms in Thunder Bay District, there is an increased for two years as the coordinators work together to chance of encountering someone who uses opioids develop opportunities to share this knowledge in and who is at risk of opioid-related harms in a Thunder Bay and region. At the conclusion of the workplace. In order to assist local businesses two years, the 50 participants will be brought back and organizations to incorporate opioid overdose together to share the results of the work. A major response protocols in their workplaces, a student component of work locally was facilitating the Brain on placement with the Drug Strategy led the Architecture Game to approximately 125 participants development of a Toolkit that could be used to inform at the annual Harm Reduction Conference. opioid response planning efforts that aim to reduce harms to individuals, first responders, and staff. The Toolkit was released in the summer, and Elevate NWO offered to be the lead in assisting organizations An online community survey was created to gather feedback from the public about cannabis retail with training on the fundamentals of harm reduction, stores. Results of this survey were used to inform overdose prevention and response, using and storing naloxone, and the development and implementation the recommendation to City Council to opt-in to allow of policies related to harm reduction and overdose cannabis retail stores in the city of Thunder Bay. City Council voted in favour and ratified its decision response.

\rightarrow CANNABIS LEGALIZATION

in January 2019. The Drug Strategy assisted in the

development of a policy statement to be used to guide the municipality's response to the Alcohol & Gaming Commission of Ontario for cannabis retail store applications through the Public Notice process. All municipal responses will be coordinated by the Drug Strategy Coordinator, and one response was submitted for a proposed location in 2019.

Further, the Drug Strategy and Crime Prevention Council provided feedback to the federal government on their proposed framework and regulations for edible cannabis products, which became legal for sale in Canada in October 2019.

→ SAFER DRINKING ENVIRONMENTS

Established to pursue actions around safer drinking environments (SDE), this sub-committee completed an evidence summary on best practices to reduce alcoholrelated harm in licensed alcohol establishments. It also gathered local data and evidence to describe the Thunder Bay context.



As an initial intervention, the SDE collaborated with Lakehead University (LU) to deliver safer bar and bystander intervention training at the beginning of the 2019 academic year. Approximately 22

participants from various departments at LU including Residence, Security, Outpost, Student Conduct, as well as some SDE Committee members attended the training. Training was provided by the Dandelion Initiative, a not-for-profit organization led and founded by survivors of sexual violence. They provided education, training and support to end gender-based violence and sexual harassment in the food, beverage and live music/ art industries. Workshop participants learned how to recognize, respond to, and prevent harmful behaviours and actions that can put students at risk of sexual violence.

Over the next year, the campus-based pilot project with LU will continue, including further training and policy development activities. Information gathered will inform the feasibility of engaging the local bar community in safer bar and bystander intervention training into the future.

→ YOUTH ENGAGEMENT COORDINATOR INTERNSHIP

As the result of a collaborative effort between Children's Centre Thunder Bay, Thunder Bay Counselling, St. Joseph's Care Group, and the Thunder Bay Drug Strategy, along with a successful funding application from Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation, a Youth Engagement Intern was hired. The intern's role is to engage youth in a coordinated manner and work with youth groups to complete various mental health projects, as well as link youth to local resources and ensure their voice is heard.

During the internship, the Youth Engagement Coordinator provided support to a current youth engagement program to help define their purpose and improve some processes in order to meet provincial guidelines for the group and assisted other youth engagement activities and groups, such as the Children's Centre Cultural Coordinator facilitating the Oshkiniikidjig Miikanens group. This group meets weekly and focuses on land-based teachings and Indigenous cultural activities.

HOME FOR GOOD FUNDING & THE LODGE ON DAWSON

For people living with mental illness and/ or addictions, finding and sustaining housing without supports is incredibly challenging. Often, individuals will cycle through the emergency department, withdrawal management, shelters, and/or jail.



The Lodge on Dawson, a 30-bed transitional housing program, opened in October 2019 through Home for Good Funding. The Lodge is a partnership with St. Joseph's Care Group, St. Joseph's Foundation of Thunder Bay, Alpha Court Addiction and Mental Health Services, Dilico Anishinabek Family Care, and The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board. Staff are on-site 24 hours, seven days per week providing services and supports. The clinical team is comprised of a variety of professions including nursing, psychotherapists, counsellors and physicians.

The Lodge aims to stop the cycle between timelimited crisis services and provides an extended (longer) stay in a stable environment so that individuals have the time to set personal goals toward making positive changes in their lives, while making long-term plans with proper support. With 30 beds, the lengths of stay will vary from several weeks to several months, depending upon individual needs.

→ YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROJECT

The Youth Violence Prevention Project in Thunder their respective students. The Safe Sobering Bay and District (YVPP) is a five-year project, funded Sites, developed from Recommendation #114, by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC). provide a safe space for intoxicated youth who are The YVPP aims to help youth develop the social walking, talking, and cooperating and who do not and emotional competencies they need to engage require emergency services. in healthy relationships, and make safe(r) choices regarding sexual behaviour and substance use, which To date, Northern Nishnawbe Education Council, is expected to reduce teen dating violence (TDV) in Matawa Education & Care Centre, and Keewaytinook communities. The YVPP will deliver the Fourth R Okimankanak have all opened Safe Sobering Services program to grade 7-9 students in eight partner boards with common elements. All sites are designed to have and education authorities' schools and evaluate what a home-like environment, and youth can access the works and what doesn't with respect to school-based services by self-referral, or through on-call services. program implementation and TDV prevention. A grade Once youth access the site, they are assessed and 10 Booster intervention to sustain learning outcomes monitored until sober. They then are automatically and prevent knowledge erosion will be developed connected to additional services upon discharge. In based on student feedback and best practice total, this has provided access to 14 beds for youth evidence. In the second year of the project: Fourth 13-22 who are students of the respective education R training was provided to 123 participants; Healthy Relationships Plus Program training was provided to authority.



29 community agency and education staff; and, a Trauma and Violence Informed Lens & Vicarious Trauma Workshop was held with 62 participants.

→ SAFE SOBERING SITES FOR YOUTHS

Through the coordinated effort of the North West LHIN, a working group has been meeting since September 2017 to create a framework and identify suitable locations to provide a safe space for youth who are intoxicated. After reviewing data regarding intoxicated youth in Thunder Bay, and through discussions with the named parties of the Seven Youth Inquest, it was determined that each named education authority would provide services that would be culturally

appropriate and meet the individual needs of

After reviewing updated data for emergency department visits, EMS calls for service, and police contact for intoxicated youth, it appears that there is a need for a fourth site. All four locations will provide a similar service and will work together. However, the fourth location will accept all other youth that are not under the jurisdiction of the named education authorities and will be open year-round.

Through the coordinated effort of the Thunder Bay Drug Strategy, a sub-committee has been meeting to determine a process for developing a year-round fourth location. Based on the local data provided, these services have the potential to divert nearly half of the emergency department visits for intoxicated youth.

Intervention solutions for youth continue to be underfunded and fragmented and are often based on adult treatment models that do not work for youth. This model has the potential to save lives and promote positive outcomes for youth, including completing their education and having more opportunities to find employment.

→ RAPID ACCESS ADDICTION MEDICINE CLINIC

Thunder Bay's Rapid Access Addiction Medicine Clinic (RAAM Clinic) was awarded a Transformative Change Award 2019 by the provincial Alliance for Healthier Communities. The Transformative Change Awards celebrate exceptional organizations whose innovative projects improve the health and well-being of people in communities that face barriers to health.

The RAAM Clinic, offered through two main sites in Thunder Bay at NorWest Community Health Centres and St. Joseph's Care Group's Balmoral Centre, provides support services to individuals who are struggling with addiction without an appointment. Clients receive medical treatment, counselling and peer support through referral, or as a self-referral, or on a walk-in basis.

Launched in 2018, the RAAM Clinic aims to tackle Thunder Bay's elevated rates of problematic opioid and alcohol use, while supporting overdose prevention as a community-wide effort. The RAAM Clinic is a collaboration of the following organizations: St Joseph's Care Group (RAAM Clinic site), NorWest Community Health Centres (RAAM Clinic site), Dilico Anishinabek Family Care, People Advocating for Change through Empowerment, Thunder Bay Counselling, Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre and Thunder Bay Drug Strategy.

→ PATH525

Fatal and non-fatal opioid overdoses have been increasing significantly over the past several years. It is widely known as a public health crisis, and is having devastating effects on families and communities across Canada.



When it comes to reducing substance-related harm in our community, it's a long road but one well worth travelling. Dilico Anishinabek Family Care and NorWest Community Health

Centres worked hard to make inroads towards Thunder Bay receiving permanent supervised consumption services. NorWest Community Health Centres was able to open a temporary Overdose Prevention Site on November 27, 2018 and began operating as a permanent Consumption and Treatment Service in June 2019.

In its first year of operations, Path 525 had 3225 visits, observed 1206 injections, and responded to 22 overdoses. There have been no deaths, nor need for police or EMS to attend the site.

→ COMMUNITY SAFETY AMBASSADORS

Donning bright green hoodies or t-shirts with the word respect emblazoned on them and armed with safety gloves and trash picker rods, Brooke Raynsford and Thomas Walser fill garbage bags with litter strewn throughout the streets and laneways of downtown Fort William.

Supporting the Drug Strategy and the Crime Prevention Council, Brooke was back for a second year as an Ambassador and Thomas returned for his third summer.

The Community Safety Ambassadors promote neighbourhood safety and well-being through picking up garbage, engaging with local businesses, reporting graffiti, and supporting community partner organizations with safety and well-being initiatives. The Ambassadors work annually from May through August to implement community safety activities within the South Core neighbourhood, as well as other neighbourhoods in Thunder Bay. Last summer, they cleaned up 2123 pieces of drug related litter, and 90 bags of garbage.



→ EDUCATION & EVENTS

The Thunder Bay Drug Strategy continues to be a respected source of information on a wide range of issues related to substance use. In 2019, local and national media consulted with the Drug Strategy on supervised injection services, harm reduction, cannabis legalization, housing and homelessness, stigma, recovery, the prevalence of overdose and local overdose prevention efforts, and the current landscape of substance use and related harms in Thunder Bay. Further, the Drug Strategy Coordinator reached nearly 800 people through 17 presentations on similar topics to community groups.

In February 2019, a digital newsletter launched highlighting the work of the Drug Strategy, featuring events and initiatives of partner organizations. By the end of the year, 484 people subscribed and the list continues to grow.

→ RECOVERY DAY 2019

Rockin' Recovery was established in Thunder Bay in 2014 as a festival event that highlights individuals who identify as being in recovery. Recovery Day recognizes all treatment, recovery and wellness choices; including addiction medicine and other harm reduction options, abstinence, and 12-step approaches. Its aim is to engage the community, provide education, raise awareness and help reduce the stigma surrounding addiction.

Held on September 4, our 6th annual event was a great success as a result of our continued partnership between Fort William First Nation and the Drug Awareness Committee.

The event, opened by the Matawa Education & Care Centre Drum, saw over 800 people take in the six Recovery Speakers' personal stories, interact with more than 30 booths from local organizations and artisans, and enjoy live entertainment from two local bands. Thanks to the overwhelming support from community organizations and volunteers who help make the event a success every year!





→ CANNABIS INFORMATION FACEBOOK LIVE EVENTS

In the summer of 2019, the Drug Awareness Committee engaged community members in the Thunder Bay District through information booths at various local events, and a public survey to gain insight into what the public needs to know about cannabis.

Based on the results of the survey, officials from the Thunder Bay District Health Unit (TBDHU) and Thunder Bay Drug Strategy led two Facebook Live question and answer sessions. The first was on edibles, and many community members tuned in and engaged with the panel with a number of great questions. Overall,



this session saw nearly 6000 views. The second Facebook Live question and answer session was held on cannabis rules and regulations. Panel guests included Constable Mark Cattani with Thunder Bay Police and Amanda Elder – Tobacco Enforcement Officer with TBDHU. More sessions are planned to take place in 2020.

→ INTERNATIONAL OVERDOSE AWARENESS DAY

Families and supporters of those affected by overdose came together in Victoriaville Mall for International Overdose Awareness Day (August 31), a day dedicated to raising awareness of overdose and reducing the stigma of drug-related death.

Forty-four placards were strung in the Village Green at Victoriaville Mall, representing the number of people who died in Thunder Bay district due to opioids in 2018, the highest rate of opioid overdose deaths in the province.

The event featured community resource booths, overdose prevention training and free naloxone, as well as activities to make a tribute to a loved one. All tributes were tied to the commemorative Overdose Tree at the end of the event.



→ THUNDER BAY COALITION TO END HUMAN TRAFFICKING

As a member of the Thunder Bay Coalition to End Human Trafficking, the Drug Strategy hosted one of several information booths on Feb 22 at Intercity Mall to educate the public about human trafficking. Given Thunder Bay has been identified as one of the top six hubs in Ontario for human trafficking, it is imperative to raise awareness of the issue and educate citizens on how to identify and combat it. Further, the Drug



Strategy supported and participated in a number of other events aimed at raising community awareness about human trafficking in Thunder Bay.

→ INTERNATIONAL HARM REDUCTION DAY

Celebrated every year on May 7, International Harm Reduction Day aims to promote human rights and evidence-based public health policy and practices.

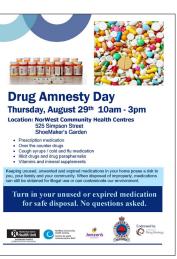
Harm reduction refers to non-judgmental, personcentered interventions, including programs and policies that aim to reduce adverse health, social, and economic consequences of legal and illegal substances. This can include (but does not require) abstinence. It is widely accepted by many groups, including the World Health Organization and Canadian Centre on Substance Use & Addiction, as an evidence-based approach to addressing substance-related harms.

A well-attended event was held as a collaboration of several partner organizations in Victoriaville Mall to provide information about harm reduction and related services in the community. Free HepC and HIV testing was available on-site, as well as naloxone kits and training.

DRUG AMNESTY DAY

The second annual Drug Amnesty Day was held outside NorWest Community Health Centres with partners from Thunder Bay Police and Thunder Bay District Health Unit. Residents were encouraged to bring in any over-the-counter drugs, expired prescription medication, or illicit drug or drug

paraphernalia. Despite police presence for safety, the drug amnesty provided complete anonymity and no questions were asked about the source of the drugs turned in. The event had about 50 people come by and turn in more than 200 litres of unwanted drugs.



COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

The Thunder Bay Drug Strategy remains an active member with many other community groups and committees who have common or aligned goals:

- Thunder Bay Crime Prevention Council
- HepNet (Hepatitis C Advisory Committeel
- Northwest Community Mobilization Network
- SWAN (Supporting Women through Adversity in the North)
- St. Joseph's Care Group Addiction & Mental Health Community **Engagement Council**
- Thunder Bay Poverty Reduction Strategy
- Urban Aboriginal Advisory Committee

• CHPI Advisory Table (Community advisory to the TBDSSAB Board)

- Thunder Bay Coalition to End Human Trafficking
- RAAM (Rapid Access to Addiction Medicine) Steering Committee
 - Managed Alcohol Program Steering Committee
 - Coordinated Access to Housing Planning Committee
 - Provincial Harm Reduction Program Enhancement Community of Practice
 - Municipal Drug Strategy Coordinators' Network of Ontario

CONCLUSION

The Thunder Bay Drug Strategy remains committed to collaborating with stakeholders through evidencebased education and engagement initiatives to further reduce harms attributed to substance use in Thunder Bay and area. Further, as we move into the remaining two years of our strategic plan, we have embarked on conducting a comprehensive evaluation of the Thunder Bay Drug Strategy to demonstrate its strength, and to identify areas to make improvements or re-focus our attention.

For more information, visit: thunderbaydrugstrategy.ca

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- Homelessness Prevention Initiative

- Public Health Ontario Community Opioid/Overdose Capacity Building Project
- Community Safety & Well-Being **Planning Steering Committee**
- Home for Good Steering Committee
- 2020 Point in Time Count Steering Committee
- Child and Youth Mental Health Community Planning Table
- Thunder Bay District Mental Health & Addiction Network





IMPLEMENTATION PANEL AND WORKING GROUP MEMBERSHIP

Alcohol & Gaming Commission of Ontario Alpha Court Anishnawbe Mushkiki BaySafe Brain Injury Services of Northern Ontario **Canadian Mental Health Association** - Thunder Bay Centre for Addiction & Mental Health Children's Aid Society of the District of Thunder Bay Children's Centre Thunder Bay **City Council** City of Thunder Bay **Community Members** Conseil scolaire de district catholique des Aurores boréales

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People Advocating for Change through Empowerment

People with Lived Experience Community Advisory

Salvation Army

Sexual Abuse Centre Thunder Bay

Shelter House

St. Joseph's Care Group

Superior North EMS

Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board

Thunder Bay Counselling

Thunder Bay District Health Unit

Thunder Bay Housing & Homelessness Coalition

Thunder Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre

Thunder Bay Police Service

Thunder Bay Poverty Reduction Strategy

Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre

Urban Abbey

Veterans Affairs Canada

Workplace Safety & Prevention Services