



PARKDALE QUEEN WEST

COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE



**Joseph Chau, Hygienist and
Tiffany Yu, Dentist, Queen West site**

DENTAL PROGRAM EXPANSION: IMPROVING SERVICES FOR THE COMMUNITIES WE SERVE

Our Dental Clinic located at our Queen West site re-opened on October 12 with new equipment and improved access to dental services. This is part of our continuing efforts to reduce the barriers that low-income, marginalized and underserved communities experience in accessing dental health care. *(Continued next page)*

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A NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Thanks to all members who attended the virtual and in-person September Annual General Meeting, and welcome to new Board members Lana Majid, Lindsay Jones and Morris Komakech and the continuing Board members. Your governance leadership focused on advancing PQWCHC's mission enables us to be innovative and take risks in building new and responsive services. The refreshed Strategic Plan currently being developed will be a blueprint for the sustainability of this work.

One area of great need for clients is access to affordable oral health services, as many seniors, youth, working poor adults, unsheltered community members and immigrants do not have access to private insurance or publicly-funded dental benefits. Hence, after years of planning, I am pleased to see PQWCHC expand its dental services. This will begin with increasing the number of operatory rooms, integrating X-ray diagnostic equipment into the clinic, and partnering with Evangel Hall to provide low/no fee oral health services.

We continue to see the dehumanizing and detrimental impacts of housing affordability and capacity issues in the homeless sheltering systems. We are witnessing a growing number of community members who use the exterior of our buildings as places of rest and refuge: we strive to work for the creation of deeply affordable housing while we work with our shelter partners to ensure the integration of harm reduction, overdose prevention and access to health services in the sheltering system.

Our work as providers of health services is inextricably linked with speaking to the public policy needs that will provide systemic solutions for the challenges that the clients and communities we serve face. Two such policy solutions are supporting calls for regularization of immigration status for undocumented residents and Health for All. In December 2022, fourteen federal Ministers in the Cabinet Committee on Economy, Inclusion and Climate "B" are set to debate regularization: this could provide permanent resident status for undocumented people. We invite you to join the call for the regularization of status and access to health care as a human right.

Unending thanks to all the clients who entrusted us with your feedback on how we are doing and areas for improvement. Thank you to all the staff at PQW for their steady support in the wave of burnout, increasing demands on healthcare providers and systems as we all work for equitable recovery from COVID and the overdose crisis.

Angela Robertson

DENTAL PROGRAM EXPANSION... (Continued)



In Canada, unlike medical healthcare, which is publicly funded and universal, dental care is managed through employment-based insurance, out-of-pocket payments, or publicly-funded assistance for low-income groups, children, seniors and people receiving social assistance. According to the Alliance for Healthier Communities (Alliance), only 6% of dental care is publicly funded.

Oral health is a significant measure of overall healthcare and wellbeing. Poor oral health can lead to several health-related complications, including poor nutrition, infections, trouble speaking, pain, and damage to the teeth, among others. In addition, poor oral care can significantly impact a person's social interactions and quality of life.

While oral health problems may be avoidable through healthy habits and preventive care, social and structural barriers to accessing oral healthcare such as low income and lack of insurance are among the most significant factors. As noted by the Alliance, 1 in 5 Canadians avoids visiting the dentist because they can't afford it.

WORKING TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO DENTAL CARE FOR CLIENTS AND THE COMMUNITIES WE SERVE

Individuals and communities most impacted by income-related health inequalities, including lack of access to dental care, are people who experience homelessness, Indigenous and racialized populations, seniors, refugees, newcomers and the uninsured. These communities often experience the worst oral health outcomes.

Although some publicly funded dental programs provide a number of routine services and procedures and emergency



Above: Vanessa Rajendra, Dental Supervisor; Julie Byrant, Dental Assistant; Joseph Chau, Hygienist; Jessica Ziliotto, Clinical Manager, Queen West site; Dr. Tiffany Yu, Dentist; Heidi Wong, Dental Receptionist

care, these programs often have eligibility requirements and limitations on the services offered, leaving many without sufficient coverage for preventive care procedures.

Parkdale Queen West continually works to reduce the barriers to access to quality healthcare for clients and communities. We work in collaboration with partners to improve access to healthcare for underserved populations, including dental care.

We are currently building a partnership with the Evangel Hall Mission (EHM), and in 2023 hope to expand our service model at their location. This will include adding a free dental component for those who need it the most. EHM supports individuals experiencing poverty, homelessness, and social isolation. EHM's current dental care model, offered in partnership with the Toronto College of Dental Hygiene includes free dental hygiene services for people living below the poverty line.

In addition, we are exploring a partnership with Toronto Public Health that would provide additional dental staff to support seniors with our service expansion, including a hygienist, dentist and dental assistant.

A significant service improvement to date is the **application of 50% off the current Ontario Dental Association (ODA) fee guide** (excluding laboratory fees) into our service model for clients accessing services without insurance or through private insurance. With our dental expansion, we aim to provide the best possible dental care for underserved clients and communities free of cost.

As we continue to build on our infrastructure, we are pleased to share that we created a new role for a dental clinic supervisor to help support the expansion; purchased new equipment and added physical space to maximize our service operations.

As a Community Health Centre, we are in a key position to provide integrated oral healthcare for our clients. Interdisciplinary teams work side by side in a physical location, providing multiple services and offering a number of health and social supports involved in preventing and detecting health-related problems.

This colocation facilitates synergy, communication, and providers can respond to health and dental care needs promptly. For instance, if a client complains of a toothache while seeing their MD, NP or RN, then clinicians can connect with a dental practitioner onsite and help address the issue. **"You often don't see this model outside the hospital"**, says Jessica Ziliotto, Clinical Manager at the Queen West site.

WHAT'S NEW AT PARKDALE QUEEN WEST'S DENTAL CLINIC?

Our Dental Clinic expansion consists of several improvements, including added physical space, new and improved equipment, and administrative support to better serve clients and communities.

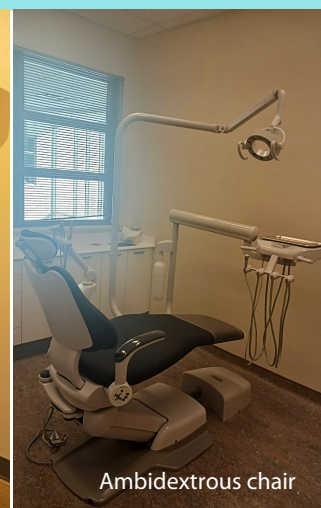
- **DENTAL CLINIC SUPERVISOR:** In August, we hired **Vanessa Rajendra** for this newly created role to support the clinic's team and operations and the expansion of dental services through our partnership with Evangel Hall. Vanessa is a trained Dental Assistant with 23 years of experience in the dental health sector in roles such as Regional Manager, Treatment Coordinator and Receptionist/Administrator.

- **SPACE RENOVATIONS** include new cabinetry and equipment and the addition of a **new operatory**. This additional working space allows dental practitioners to simultaneously service clients in various procedures, thus reducing wait time and maximizing service capacity.

- **NEW AND IMPROVED EQUIPMENT:** Looking into the future to service clients with the latest technology, we are now fully equipped with digital X-rays, including a brand new **panoramic imaging machine** (which takes a digital x-ray of the patient's head, mouth and jaw), and an **ambidextrous chair**, which ergonomic design provides maximum comfort for the patient and can accommodate left or right handed clinicians.



Panoramic X-ray



Ambidextrous chair

A TEAM “THAT GETS YOU THE RIGHT TYPE OF SUPPORT”: A CLIENT’S STORY

THANK YOU!

Recently, Parkdale Queen West’s Executive Director, Angela Robertson, met with a client who wished to deliver in person a letter and a thank you card for the team that supported her during a most challenging time in her life. She wanted to ensure that each staff who helped her through her journey received special mention.

In her letter, Aminah (not her real name) wrote: “I, like many battered women, need a strong and compassionate team like yours who do not ignore us but act on our brokenness, help pick up our broken lives and smile when you see us standing on our feet”.

Aminah came to Canada to join her sister, hoping to find a job and eventually work toward becoming certified as a nurse. Yet, too soon, she was in an abusive relationship and without the documentation to work or to seek medical attention when needed.

In time, Aminah was able to leave the relationship and move in with her sister. “When you come to a foreign land, have no family and have nowhere else to go, some people misuse you”, says Aminah.

It was through Sistering, an organization that helps women who are isolated and at risk, that Aminah met Dr. Andalib Haque from Parkdale Queen West in 2017. Dr. Haque connected Aminah with a team of providers who helped her navigate the various systems to find housing and begin the work toward getting Canadian residency.

“I met the team when I was at the point of giving up and ending it all. They encouraged me to get better. When you get the right support system, you can make it through”, adds Aminah.

Besides special thanks to Dr. Haque, Aminah wants to acknowledge the staff who, in their various roles, supported her and her sister at various times, namely: Michael John, Case Manager; Stefania Bonanno, Counsellor; Dr. Ketan Vegda, Psychiatrist; Kieran Hart, Nurse; Inthu Paranirupasingam and Catherine Scordos, Medical Secretaries; Katie Brunke, Dietician; Joanna Neander, Diabetes Nurse; Beth Jensen, Nurse;

Thandy Younge and Judy Tsao, Case Managers.

At present, Aminah is doing her Personal Support Worker (PSW) placement at a local organization. She plans to work as a PSW while she pursues studies to become certified as a nurse. “I was a nurse back home, and I still want to be a nurse here in Canada. I want to serve the community and help women who are in similar situations.”

And what better testament to that than Judy Tsao’s insight: “Aminah is one of those kind and compassionate souls who always puts people first. I have no doubt that she will bring quality and compassionate care to all those she supports”.

Aminah’s message to women who experience abuse is “not to give up no matter what happens” and to know that “there are people who care and who will support you through it all, such as my team at Parkdale Queen West”.

“I believe we don’t meet people by accident, they are meant to cross our paths for a reason, and I’m blessed that you and the team came into my life.”

- Aminah

INTERNATIONAL OVERDOSE AWARENESS DAY AT PARKDALE QUEEN WEST

If you happened to be around our Parkdale or Queen West sites on August 31, you may have noticed the purple paraphernalia, information tables, and the spirit of togetherness, remembrance and celebration.

It was Parkdale Queen West's celebration of **International Overdose Awareness Day**, an annual campaign aimed to bring awareness of the drug poisoning epidemic, remember without stigma those who have died, and call to end overdose deaths across the world.

- According to the most recent World Drug Report, an estimated 585,000 people died as a result of drug use in 2017, with opioids accounting for the majority of drug-related deaths.
- In Ontario, between January 2021 and October 2022, there were 4,189 opioid-related deaths.

In observance, Parkdale Queen West teams at both sites held community events intended to hold space, educate, advocate, grieve, and celebrate. Activities included: the creation of a community memorial banner, HIV and HEP C testing, Acupuncture, Naloxone response training, resource and information sharing, and harm reduction kits. The team at the Parkdale site recorded a total of 40 Naloxone response trainings!

Thank you to staff and community partners, and to all who dropped by our sites to bring awareness of the drug overdose epidemic and celebrate life.



Gui Chika and Kai Sommerville, Breakaway



Kenny, Kim Rampanen and Iye Sanneh, PQW

Harm Reduction team at the Queen West site



Barakat Olasupo and Liz Merlos, PQW

Community members at the Parkdale site

PUTTING THE SPOTLIGHT ON MENTAL HEALTH



Every October 10 since 1992, people across the world observe **World Mental Health Day** to raise awareness of the **stigma** surrounding mental illness and the importance of promoting mental health.

This year's theme, announced by the World Health Organization (WHO) **Making mental health and wellbeing for all a global priority** speaks to the crisis for mental health created by the COVID-19 pandemic and calls to mobilizing supports across all sectors to strengthen mental health care so that the full spectrum of mental health needs are met.

According to the WHO:

- An estimated 1 in 8 people globally lived with a mental health condition before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Rates of mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety increased by more than 25% in the first year of the pandemic.

In Canada, the Self-rated Survey on Mental Health conducted annually by Statistics Canada shows that:

- The proportion of Canadians reporting high (positive) self-rated mental health decreased during the pandemic from 64% in late 2020 to 58% between late 2021 and early 2022.
- Among those who self-rated with at least one mental health challenge (depression, anxiety or PTSD), 94% reported having been negatively impacted by the pandemic.

WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?

The WHO and the Canadian Mental Health Association define mental health as *a state of wellbeing*, with attributes such as: being able to realize own abilities, being able to cope with the normal stresses of life, being able to learn and work well, and being able to contribute to one's communities.

Further, there is a recognition that mental health isn't the absence of a mental health condition or illness; anyone can experience a mental health problem at any given time.

As such, mental health is not a constant, but a changing state of being largely influenced by a person's life experiences, past and present, social and economic environments, and ongoing circumstances.

Adversity— a significant and influential factor of mental health

Given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on individuals and communities, including deaths, long-term effects on health, loss of livelihood, displacement, social isolation and prolonged violence, among others, it is expected that the need for mental health and psychosocial support will increase substantially in the coming years.

The adverse conditions created by the pandemic amplified existing social and structural inequities, placing additional stressors on mental health, particularly for people already experiencing long-standing social and economic inequalities.

The rise of substance use and opioid-related overdose deaths in Canada and the world in the past few years is an example of how adverse conditions intersect with existing social and economic inequities which impact mental health and wellbeing.

Mental health, influenced by a range of multiple social, economic and structural determinants

Different populations have different experiences with the 'social determinants of health' (SDH), namely the social and economic factors that significantly impact the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities, including access to healthcare, housing, food security, education and employment opportunities, and freedom from discrimination and racism, among others. The impact of these differences can lead to a myriad of health inequities, where some individuals and communities have poorer health or mental health than the general population.

Access to the SDH is crucial for communities experiencing social and economic disadvantages and poor mental health as a result. Housing, in particular, is deeply tied to community belonging and social connections. Lack of housing or poor housing can be a significant barrier for people experiencing mental health or substance use challenges. It can also negatively impact recovery.

Poor mental health is intrinsically tied to the stigma associated with lack of access to the SDH. Stigma and discrimination are key barriers to social inclusion and access to the necessary supports.

The **stigma** surrounding mental health goes hand in hand with structural discriminative practices that create barriers to accessing the SDH. Among those affected are racialized populations, including Indigenous and Black communities, whose lives are impacted by long-standing systems of oppression and discrimination, such as colonization and racism.

Adverse past experiences coupled with ongoing stress, discrimination, powerlessness and oppression can significantly impact people's mental health and wellbeing across their lifespan. Understanding the intersection between intergenerational trauma and the ongoing stress of experiencing barriers to access to the SDH is essential for breaking down the barriers preventing people from seeking care and support.

Hence the importance of advocating for trauma-informed policies and practices that recognize and address the impacts of ongoing discrimination and disparities in health and outcomes. This needs to be done in synergy with services that integrate trauma-informed and harm-reduction approaches into their programming.

Mental health care, an interdisciplinary effort

Addressing mental health care involves addressing the social conditions and inequities that undermine people's health and wellbeing. Parkdale Queen West interdisciplinary teams do this in their varying roles daily.

Advocacy is embedded in every role, in primary care and mental health, harm reduction and health promotion programs. The teams work collaboratively to help clients access relevant healthcare services and social supports. This often includes advocating on behalf of clients with housing organizations, food banks, hospitals and social services (ODSP, OW).

Essential to helping clients access the supports they need are teamwork and communication. For instance, a physician or nurse practitioner can seek support from the client's counsellor to encourage the client to follow up with their medication.

"This is something we can help with; by including psychoeducation about how medication can help with symptoms of a mental health condition in the counselling session", says Kirti Jamwal, counsellor at the Parkdale site: "Sometimes, all the client needs is support and reassurance."

"Dealing with substance use is never easy, and it's even worse when people are struggling with mental health challenges and experience continual barriers to accessing social supports."

- Kirti Jamwal, Counsellor

To connect with our Mental Health Services, please ask for a referral from a PQWCHC provider.

PARKDALE QUEEN WEST AT *STATUS FOR ALL* RALLY AND MARCH

The rain didn't deter Parkdale Queen West staff and Board from gathering at Christie Pits Park on Sunday, September 17, joining hundreds of people holding umbrellas and signs and calling on the government to extend permanent *Status For All*.

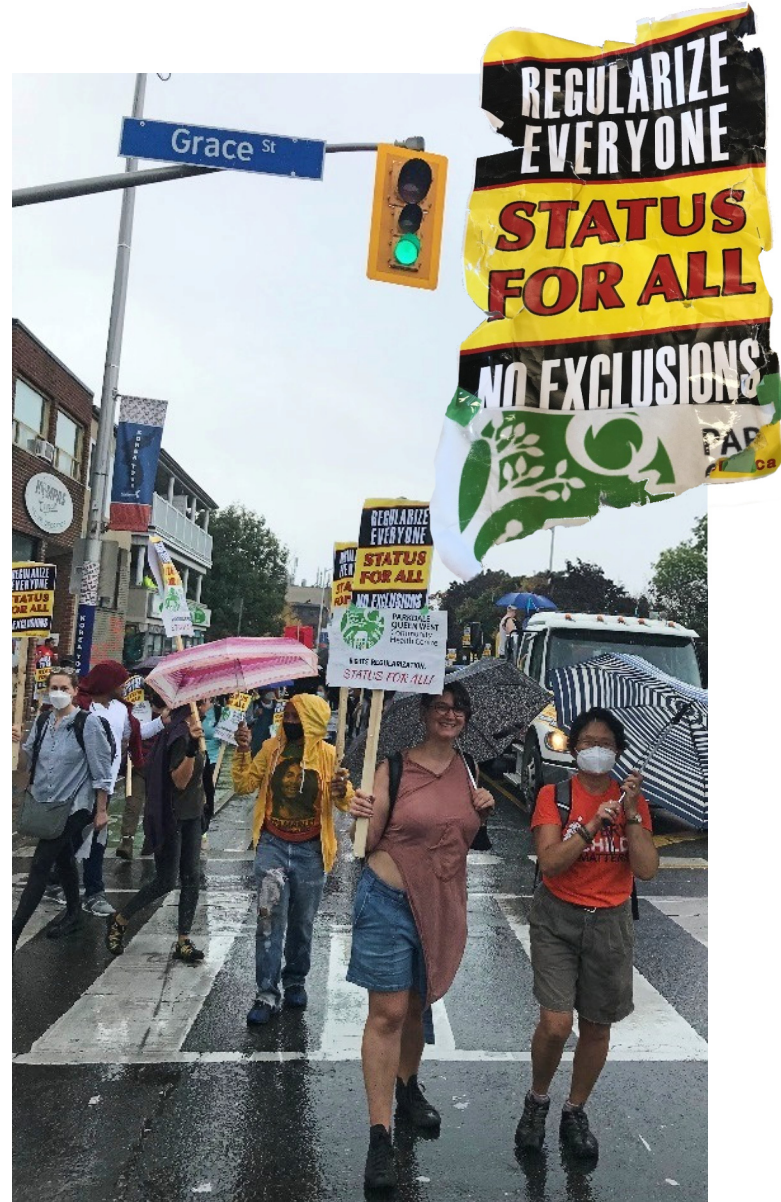
The Canadian government launched a regularization program during the COVID-19 pandemic for asylum seekers who worked in the healthcare sector. Since then, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has indicated an interest in expanding this initiative. Organizations supporting migrants' rights want to ensure that the program applies to all migrant and undocumented workers in Canada.

The pandemic highlighted the deep inequalities that migrants, refugees and undocumented workers experience in Canadian society. Many lost their work and wages and were deprived of income support. Many were forced to keep working in unsafe conditions in farms and food processing plants. Many domestic workers were isolated in their employers' homes; some facing greater surveillance, some facing abuse and violence.

Parkdale Queen West joined healthcare workers and health organizations in signing a petition asking the government to implement a comprehensive regularization plan for all migrants without exception, highlighting the negative health impacts of precarious immigration status.

At Parkdale Queen West, 9% of our clients are uninsured, and many delay seeking care because of their unregulated immigration status and lack of health coverage. This often means we see folks when they are sicker, twinned with the fact that they are less able to take time off work or lack the income needed to pay for medication.

Full immigration status for all migrants is an essential step towards eliminating inequalities and a necessary step for transitioning to a just and sustainable society.



Top (left to right): PQW staff Kate Atkinson, Grace Ellis, Alana Fletcher and Judy Tsao. Embedded is how one of the signs looked after the rain. Bottom (left to right): Grace Ellis, Executive Director Angela Robertson, Kate Atkinson, Board member Rozita Razavi, Faith Ndegwa and Alana Fletcher.



NIIWIN WENDAANIMAK'S SCULPTING WORKSHOP

This Fall, the Niiwin Wendaanimak (Four Winds) Program offered program members an eight-week clay sculpting workshop in partnership with the Gardiner Museum of Toronto. For the 10 program members who signed up, taking part in an activity that is centred on the artist's form of expression was a welcoming experience. And for many, it was their first time working with clay as a medium for expression.

Each workshop session began with a welcoming address and personal thoughts, followed by sculpting work and ending with a reflection. Working with the clay is working with the earth and the land. Thus program instructors provided detailed information about the lands in which the clays originated. For the members, it was an opportunity to reconnect with an art form their ancestors have been doing since they first came to this land.

Throughout the workshop series, program members worked on their clay sculptures, each with significant meaning to the member creating them. As the weeks passed, sculpting work unfolded into the members' larger creations. There were feathers, bears, turtles, a tribute to daughters and granddaughters, smudge bowls, and other creations. The Niiwin Wendaanimak program is looking to engage in a photography session of the works produced by program members for display in the near future.



PEER WORKER APPRECIATION

The Peer Workers who support the community at Parkdale Queen West CHC have an incredibly challenging job. Peers often engage in high-stress situations where they need to think quickly on their feet while also responding with care and compassion.

Peers do some of the most challenging work on the frontlines of numerous epidemics. They provide essential harm reduction supports to people in the community who are underserved and who are at risk of overdose. Peers work outside business hours and around every corner of the area which Parkdale Queen West serves.

On September 29, the staff at Parkdale Queen West held a Peer Appreciation BBQ at the Parkdale location in the Garden space to recognize and celebrate peers for their tireless work in the community.

At the BBQ, staff presented peers with appreciation gifts and speeches that testified to the quality of care peers offer. There was also space to acknowledge those community members lost to poverty and overdose and the impact they held for all.

CELEBRATING COMMUNITY HEALTH & WELLBEING WEEK

In celebration of Community Health & Wellbeing Week (October 17-23), Parkdale Queen West held events at both the Parkdale and Queen West sites, with activities geared to bring attention to this year's campaign theme: **Confronting Inequity, Celebrating Community.**



A member of the Seniors Group participates in a health trivia activity with PQW staff Jessica Zimmer

Community Health & Wellbeing Week is an annual advocacy campaign led by the Alliance For Healthier Communities in which members of the Alliance, such as Parkdale Queen West CHC organize activities to bring attention to issues and needs that are important to their communities.

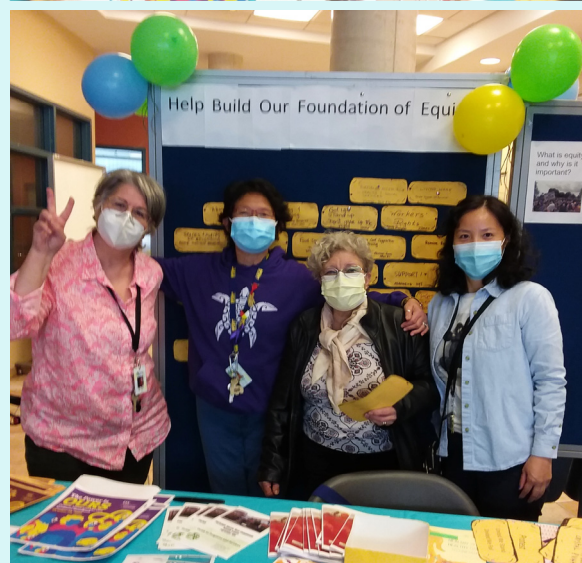
At the Parkdale site, we held an outdoor event on October 18, despite the not-so-good weather, but which still allowed us to celebrate with food, music, information tables and engaging activities for anyone who dropped by.

At the Queen West site, on October 21, clients and staff helped build a 'foundation of health equity wall', consisting of individual messages about what equity means for each, and placing them on a wall of makeshift bricks.

Staff from the various programs were onsite to promote community health and wellbeing and provide information about Parkdale Queen West services.

Thank you to all who participated in these events and helped celebrate community health and wellbeing week!

Top-right: Community members help build a 'foundation of health equity wall'
Below: PQW staff Deb Phelps, Judy Tsao, Rosa Ribeiro and Jackie Laing
Bottom: Sarah Li, Raymond Macaraeg and Elizabeth Guete, Parkdale site



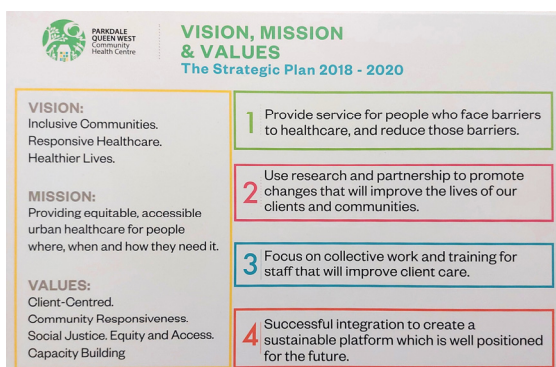
PARKDALE QUEEN WEST STRATEGIC PLANNING REFRESH

Parkdale Queen West CHC is going through a strategic planning process – that means looking at what we do, what’s happening in the communities around us, and what our focus needs to be for the next three years.

Representatives from our board of directors and staff have developed some proposed priorities. We are speaking with staff, clients, and community partners to get their opinion on these priorities – we want to know if you think we are on the right track.

Thank you to clients and community partners for their ongoing input to help guide our programming, service delivery, and strategic directions.

We look forward to sharing our new Strategic Plan in the near future.



Strategic Plan 2018-2020 (extended to 2022)

CLIENT EXPERIENCE SURVEY 2022

This year we made our Client Experience Survey a bit more user-friendly online and on paper, with options for users to bypass non-relevant information and to provide feedback on specific programs and services other than primary care. In addition, we added a section to gather data on the best ways to communicate information to clients and the communities we serve. For more about the survey, see our website www.pqwchc.org

Here are a few highlights:



What we do best:

- Inclusive and welcoming, client-centred care
- Offering a variety of services
- Supporting the community
- Harm reduction programming expansion

What we can improve:

- Appointment booking/rebooking process
- Decreased waits for appointments
- Improved care for trans clients/community members
- Options for in-person or virtual services

“I find the staff very knowledgeable. I like the fact that if one doesn't have the answer, they can consult a colleague. I feel well taken care of.”

- Survey participant

PQW REDUCED COST DENTAL PROGRAM

WHAT SERVICES DOES THIS DENTAL PROGRAM OFFER?

Basic dental services include:

- Dental examinations and x-rays, teeth cleaning, filling, extractions, nightguards and selected root canals

Major dental services include:

- Dentures, crown and bridge

HOW MUCH DO SERVICES COST?

- 50% off the ODA fee guide* (excluding commercial laboratory fees) for clients who are:
 - Without insurance
 - With private insurance

WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR SERVICES?

Anyone living within the City of Toronto

WHAT INSURANCE PLAN/COVERAGE IS ACCEPTED?

All dental plans, including private and publicly funded, as follows:

- Healthy Smiles Ontario (HSO)
- Interim Federal Healthcare Program (IFH)
- Non-Insured Health Benefits Program (NIHB)
- Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP)
- Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program (OSDCP)
- Ontario Works (OW)
- Private insurance



* The Ontario Dental Association (ODA) fee guide is intended as a reference for dental services which can be used by dentists and plan providers. The guide is updated annually by the ODA.



WHERE IS THE DENTAL PROGRAM OFFERED?

168 Bathurst Street, Second Floor (see map below)

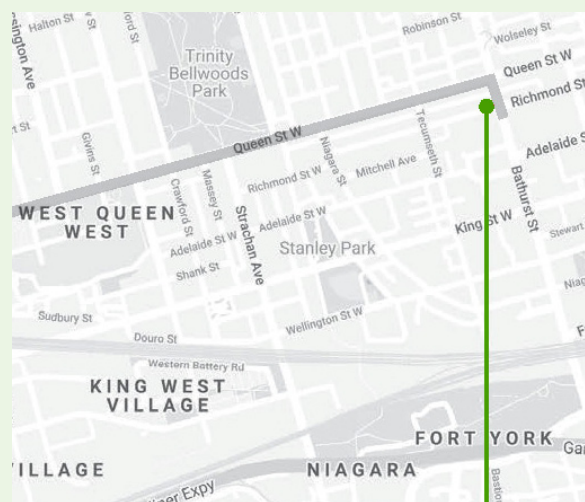
HOW DO I ACCESS THESE SERVICES?

- Call 416.703.8482 ext. 2203 to book an appointment
- Get a referral from your provider

Clinic hours are:

9:30 am - 4:30 pm , Monday - Friday

If you are experiencing a dental emergency and cost is a barrier, please let the Dental Receptionist know.



www.pqwchc.org

PARKDALE SITE

1229 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M6K 1L2
Tel: 416.537.2455
Fax: (Admin) 416.537.5133
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QUEEN WEST SITE

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Toronto ON M5V 2R4
Tel: 416.703.8482
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Fax: (Clinical) 416.703.8479

SATELLITE SITE

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Fax: 416.537.7714



**PARKDALE
QUEEN WEST**
Community
Health Centre

