



PARKDALE QUEEN WEST

COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE



PARKDALE QUEEN WEST LAUNCHES MOBILE HEALTH CLINIC

A LONG TIME DREAM. A SERVICE NEVER MORE IMPORTANT.

It's been a long time dream of Parkdale Queen West to bring mobile health services to our communities, as part of our mission to 'provide equitable, accessible services for people, when, where and how they need it'. The dream is now a reality, and ever at a most crucial time. Our Mobile Health Clinic enables us to offer COVID-19 testing and vaccination clinics for people who are marginalized and experience difficulty accessing services. *(Continued next page)*

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A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT



On behalf of the Board of Directors, I hope everyone is keeping healthy, safe and as well as can be in the third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic as the simultaneous struggle with a housing crisis, overdose epidemic, poverty, and racial injustice intensify.

Parkdale Queen West staff are leading and supporting the work being done at the COVID-19 Recovery sites for community members who are homeless. We have remained open and throughout Wave 1 and 2 providers have continued to provide virtual and in-person care, with our Supervised Consumption Services/Consumption Treatment Services open to all who need this life saving service. We also launched the TELUS Good for Health mobile health service in partnership with UHN. This has enabled us to bring COVID-19 testing and immunization clinics to many in our communities and to clients of our partnering organizations.

While Angela and the Parkdale Queen West team have worked tirelessly to provide responsive healthcare, the Board has amplified Parkdale Queen West's values of social justice, equity, and access through advocacy with our local elected representatives. We wrote to Mayor John Tory in support of Black Lives Matter's call to defund the police by 50% and to redirect resources to social services, housing, and harm reduction. We wrote to Councillor Cressy, Chair of the Toronto Board of Health in support of the City of Toronto seeking an exemption from the federal government to decriminalize personal possession of drugs as one strategy to stop the preventable deaths of people who use drugs.

Like our community, the Board is concerned about the health and safety of our neighbouring encampment residents. We wrote to Mayor John Tory urging the City of Toronto to use its resources to help encampment residents in living safely and securely while it develops real affordable housing solutions based on a rent geared to income model, in the communities where these encampments are located. We thank our community members who donated tents, sleeping bags, toiletries and more to support our clients who are homeless.

We thank the Parkdale Queen West community for supporting our mission to provide equitable, accessible, urban healthcare for people where, when, and how they need it, and all the clients for teaching and trusting us.

- Lisa Druchok, President, Board of Directors

MOBILE HEALTH CLINIC *(continued from cover page)*

The launch of our Mobile Health Clinic was formally announced by Telus on January 21 as an expansion of its Health for Good program, in a partnership with Parkdale Queen West CHC and the University Health Network's (UHN) Social Medicine Program.

Powered by Telus Health, this "clinic on wheels" is equipped with all the components to work as a health clinic, including medical equipment and technology you would find in any other clinic: Wi-Fi to get access to clients' medical records, harm reduction supplies, a reception area for client intake and mental health support, and a physician/nursing workstation with an examination table.

The mobile clinic will help us bring essential primary health care and harm reduction services directly to people in our communities who are marginalized, experience homelessness, and have difficulty accessing quality healthcare and mental health supports.

EVER AT A BETTER TIME.

We are bringing weekly COVID-19 testing and vaccination teams to people in shelters, drop-in sites, encampments and congregate settings in Toronto's mid-west region, in collaboration with UHN and Inner-City Health Associates. This work would not be possible without a mobile health unit that allows us to respond quickly to requests for large vaccination sites.

A LONG TIME DREAM.

Some 18 years ago, Raymond Macaraeg, Nurse Practitioner, and the clinic's Operations Lead, envisioned a mobile health clinic for the Parkdale neighborhood: "I remember doing outreach on foot, going to boarding homes and homeless sites in the Parkdale neighborhood. At the time, there was only the Sherbourne Health mobile clinic doing outreach in the community. I remember seeing the bus driving around early in the morning and thinking that this is what we needed at our Centre." In the future, Raymond envisions "going to the same locations on specific days so that people can expect us".





Parkdale Queen West teams supporting multiple COVID-19 testing and vaccination clinics in the community.

As vaccine doses become available, Parkdale Queen West staff, with staff from our partner organizations have worked tirelessly to bring COVID-19 testing and vaccination clinics to the communities we serve, and beyond. Here are some highlights:

Mobile COVID-19 testing

The mobile clinic has given us the capacity to conduct weekly COVID-19 testing locally, and at high-risk neighbourhoods that extend beyond our catchment area. Community response has been overwhelmingly positive, and to date we have administered over 511 COVID-19 tests.

Staff vaccination and training

The YMCA clinic, which initially opened in February to provide vaccine to community healthcare workers who were not offered vaccine in the hospital sector, provided Parkdale Queen West's clinical staff with the opportunity to receive their first dose of vaccine and to be trained to work in and run a vaccination clinic.

In-House vaccination clinics

We were fortunate to receive some vaccine to run our own clinic for 61 clients age 80 and older on March 13. This was a joyful event for many of the seniors who had been isolated for some time and had the opportunity to socialize, even from a distance.

As of March we are offering weekly vaccination clinics to Centre clients at our Queen West site.

Shelter, encampments and congregate housing

Parkdale Queen West staff, with staff from Inner City Health Associates, University Health Network, Women's College Hospital and Sinai Health have worked together since February to offer vaccine clinics, at shelters, encampments and congregate living settings in Mid-West Toronto. To date, we have delivered 547 doses to unsheltered community members.

PHOTOS: Parkdale Queen West and Women's College vaccine team (top-left); "Waiting to get vaccinated" (top-right); Vaccine team at the Parkdale Intercultural Association (bottom-right)

POP-UP community vaccination clinics

Our mobile health teams have been able to quickly respond to requests for large vaccination clinics in the South Parkdale community. By the end of May our teams administered over 2,500 vaccines to residents in the Queen West and South Parkdale neighbourhoods. This number is constantly changing as vaccine doses become available and thus the need to set up more clinics.

Supporting our CHC partners

In true collaboration spirit, Parkdale Queen West staff have supported the vaccination efforts of CHCs in the West End and beyond. We are honoured to support Black Creek, Unison and Davenport Perth CHCs.

The success of vaccination clinics is made possible through the support and dedication of our partner organizations, staff, students, and community members.



FUNDING FOR SAFER OPIOID SUPPLY PROGRAM EXTENDED

On April 14, 2021, Canada's Minister of Health, Patty Hajdu, joined John Tory, Mayor, City of Toronto and Dr. Eileen de Villa, Toronto's Medical Officer of Health to announce a \$2.3 million funding extension for two more years for Safer Opioid Supply projects that support people who use drugs. Maureen Gans, Parkdale Queen West's Director of Client Services, Jason Altenberg, South Riverdale CHC's Executive Director, City councillors and MPs joined the Q & A session that followed the speeches.

Safer Opioid Supply (SOS) is a harm reduction approach to addressing the toxic drug supply, with the goal of replacing contaminated street drugs with prescription alternatives of known quantity and potency. In the spring of 2019, Parkdale Queen West began offering this intervention to clients who were at imminent risk of death, both from contamination of the street supply, for the ways they were obtaining drugs, and for the ways they are criminalized under the war on drugs.

It is a great relief to have this secured funding extension for the next two years to bring this life-saving supports to our communities, as we continue to respond to drug overdoses during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

Thank you to the SOS Team for the work they do, and to all staff for their ongoing advocacy and support.

'Our clients in the SOS program tell us: "A lot of people come within an inch of losing their lives everyday - but SOS saves lives and makes people better. That's how valuable this service is". This extension of funding will enable us to continue saving lives and building a community of practice that will enable SOS becoming integrated healthcare and harm reduction practice.'

- Angela Robertson, Executive Director



TOP: Dr. Eileen de Villa; Councillor Joe Cressy; Jason Altenberg, South Riverdale CHC
BOTTOM: Minister Patty Hajdu; Maureen Gans, Parkdale Queen West CHC; Mayor John Tory

COVID-19 RECOVERY SITES: UPDATE

The recovery-site program was set up early in 2020 in partnership with Inner City Health Associates, University Health Network, The Neighbourhood Group, and the Shelter Support and Housing Administration - City of Toronto, to offer a dignified place of respite for people who are homeless and who are COVID-19 positive, or close contacts who required isolation.

The program continued to offer this essential service through the second and third waves of the pandemic while adapting to the current needs. For the staff working at the sites, the third wave has been particularly challenging, as the number of COVID-19 cases increased and the impact on the community has been greater than at any other time during the pandemic. Parallel and just as high has been the overdose crisis and lethal drug supply.

In partnership with the project's medical directors, the harm reduction team developed training for the de-medicalization of the managed alcohol program, and we have integrated an overdose prevention service. Since opening in April 2020 we have supported over 1,569 clients in our COVID positive program, and over 1,485 in our COVID isolation program.

After over a year of operations, the partnership is looking to expand out into a different model of care that focuses on a social care model aiming to be more responsive to our service populations' needs.

THANK YOU, DONORS

We deeply thank the businesses, people and organizations for their support during the first wave of the pandemic. Their donations helped to provide essential supports to people at the recovery sites and in the encampments. We were also fortunate to receive much-needed personal protective equipment which enabled us to continue supporting the community safely.

- Borden Ladner Gervais LLP
- Branch Out Theatre
- Budget Stop One, Parkdale
- Christopher Woods Catering
- Community of Christ, Scarborough Congregation
- Cumin Kitchen
- Dave and Sheri Stevenson
- Dera Sacha Sauda
- Food Share, Good Food Box
- FreshCo
- Full Worth, Parkdale
- Helen and Philip Delman Foundation
- Joe's No Frills
- KLiCK Health
- La Fondation Emmanuelle Gattuso
- Loblaw's
- Mobilizing Masks for Health Care Providers
- Nicole Bond
- NYEA Network
- Peter's No Frills
- The Slight Family Foundation
- The Workroom
- Telus
- Troop Donors Program
- Unity Health

HIRAETH - PHOTOVOICE EXHIBIT AT PARKDALE QUEEN WEST

If you happen to be around our Parkdale site at 1229 Queen St. West, you will see a Photo Exhibit on the south-west side of the building, and at our Queen West site at 168 Bathurst St. on the south side of Richmond St.—Facilitated by Amy Muli, Community Health Worker, and supported by Global Shapers, this photo-voice exhibit project brings the faces and stories of community members and their experiences with substance use, with a focus on their strengths and resilience.

The name 'Hiraeth', a word that embraces grief but cannot be translated into English, encompasses the project's original concept: to raise awareness of the impacts of the opioid crisis. Self-reflection and love became a second theme, spurred by a need to reflect on the devastating losses that our community has endured throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Below are the portraits and excerpts from two of the people featured on the Exhibit. We will continue to bring more of these photo-voices on the next issue of this newsletter.

AKIA (top-left)



I use They/Them pronouns and I am Black with a capital B. I am a harm reduction blacktivist and worker. When I was 10, my mother and siblings came to Canada from the States. We were fleeing abuse and needed to move fast. Those were really hard times.

Substances first made an appearance in my life when I was diagnosed with ADHD. I question if my life would have been the same had I not experienced so much violence early on. I have experienced racism and discrimination. I am openly poly and queer.

Harm reduction is not shameful or hateful. [...] Opiate use does not need to be about death. I don't want to talk about opiate use. It is not my identity; it is just something we do.

I want to know that I did what I could. People need to know that they are loved. How do I want to end my story? With a hug.

JEFF (bottom-left)



When I was 24 or 25, I left north-western Ontario [...] to come to Toronto. I quickly got a job and advanced to another position that was in Hamilton. Unfortunately, I got in trouble with the law and did some time. I didn't have the right support to help me transition back into the community [...] but eventually I got on a better path.

My relationship with substances is ever-changing. I don't like to drink. I sometimes take opiates for back pain, but it is not a regular thing. I have friends that use opiates and I worry for them. It is very dangerous but then again, everything is cut these days. Even cocaine has fentanyl in it. I tried to avoid it. Nothing is safe.

I dream of going home again. I want to go back up North but I am not sure how that will happen just yet. I know that my drug of choice is not available up north, but my life has changed so much. I am a lot calmer and happier. I want to die in my bed as an old man, maybe 95, just happy and safe in bed.





NIIWIN WENDAANIMAK'S LOWER SIMCOE MURAL WALK

On January 8, 2021, members of the Niiwin Wendaanimak (Four Winds) program at Parkdale Queen West enjoyed a visit to the Lower Simcoe Street underpass in Toronto, as part of their program activities. With drumming, the group walked along the 'Water Wall' and the 'Elder/Honour' murals, a section of the underpass that celebrates Indigenous history and perspectives.

Indigenous local artists and other members of the community created the murals in 2017, which now stand as a testament of Indigenous history in Toronto.

- The Water Wall mural is inspired by the work of Josephine Mandamin, Anishabaabewe grandmother who has walked almost 18,000 kilometres around the Great Lakes to bring attention to the physical plight of the planet's greatest resource, water.
- The Elder/Honour Wall mural comprises of 28 portraits of Indigenous Peoples named by the local community while honouring the Indigenous Elders and leaders of the local Toronto community; among these, the portrait of Elder Vern Harper, Indigenous rights activist and medicine man known as the 'Urban Elder' for his work in Toronto.

"Members got very emotional when they saw Elder Vern's picture, and they felt so good with the drumming going on at the same time."

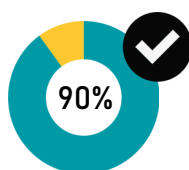
- Vivian Recollet, Indigenous Health Promoter

CLIENTS' EXPERIENCES ACCESSING REMOTE SERVICES

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, Parkdale Queen West teams continued to support clients through on site appointments when possible, and through virtual supports, via telephone calls and Zoom meetings throughout the various programs offered regularly.

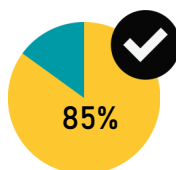
We wanted to know which programs and services clients were accessing remotely, and learn about their experiences with the services they accessed. We were fortunate to have on board placement students Abina Ganeshamoorthy and Jalyn Smith, who helped with the survey's design, reached out to 500 clients, and collected the following data:

→ Of 165 clients who responded to the survey:



said they were remotely accessing:

- healthcare services (primary care, physiotherapy, diabetes management)
- counselling supports
- wellness and health promotion programs



said they were either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the remote services they received

→ What clients said they liked 'best' and 'least' of the remote services they accessed:

BEST: Increased convenience, access to resources, support, decreased wait time

LEAST: Impersonal, prefer in person, technical issues, not enough time, miscommunications

"I was just in a men's shelter in mid March to end of July. I recommended this place to everyone there. I am glad you are calling and doing a survey for clients like myself. You guys are providing great services during this time period, and show that you care about your clients with these calls."

- Survey participant

**PARKDALE QUEEN WEST
OUTREACH WORKER
RECIPIENT OF THE SUSAN
SHAW COMMUNITY
ADVOCACY AWARD**



"I would like to learn more about how to create sustainable and safe spaces for individuals to thrive and succeed; especially for young people who are, or have experienced homelessness and addiction."

- Suwaida Farah

We are pleased to announce that Suwaida Farah, former Peer Outreach Worker at Parkdale Queen West, is the proud recipient of this year's Susan Shaw Award.

Susan Shaw was a community advocate and Parkdale resident for over two decades since 1977. Susan's commitment to social justice, accessible health services and to growing communities was the foundation for her decades of work with the Parkdale Community Legal Services and the Parkdale Community Health Centre. An advocate for fair and equitable understanding of substance use, Susan fought for the community to be heard throughout Toronto and relentlessly organized on several community boards and groups, spearheading many campaigns, services, and policy changes.

Susan passed away on March 17, 2019. In honour of her tremendous legacy, her family established the Susan Shaw Award, in recognition of ongoing championing within the community that keeps Susan's spirit alive, with the intention of encouraging and assisting young advocates to meet their goals.

Suwaida's work in the encampments and ongoing advocacy for equitable access to health services and safe housing within the community made her the perfect candidate and recipient of the award.

On January 8, 2021, Parkdale Queen West staff, friends and family gathered virtually in honour of Susan and her multifaceted efforts and remarkable voice within the Parkdale community. Suwaida shared her thoughts and feelings of receiving this recognition:

It is an honour to receive the Susan Shaw award. As Susan's daughter said to me: "fighting the good fight means taking care of yourself", and this award is helping me do just that. This award will be going towards my educational goals, as I am currently in the process of transitioning back into post-secondary education. I love working with the community; it allows me to stay inspired and critically think about how to show up for others and what it truly means to build community.

Suwaida is now a Health Navigator at Parkdale Queen West, where she continues to be a voice for change in the community.

Prenatal breastfeeding study published in the International Journal for Equity in Health

We are pleased to share the news that a prenatal breastfeeding study, conducted at our Parkdale Parents Primary Prevention Project (5Ps), was recently published in the International Journal for Equity and Health. The study provides initial evidence of the benefits of proactive postnatal breastfeeding supports in vulnerable communities.*

The study is one of many infant food security research projects of the Parkdale Infant Nutrition Security Targeted Evaluation Program (PINSTEP) which focuses on perinatal programs at Parkdale Queen West (the 5Ps' Feeding Tiny Souls, Great Start Together/GST) and the Healthy Beginnings program at The Stop.

The PINSTEP program, which is funded by the Sprott Foundation and the Joannah and Brian Lawson Centre for Child Nutrition, is a partnership between Parkdale Queen West CHC and the University of Toronto's Department of Nutritional Sciences, and is supported by two PhD candidates and a MSc student. The goal of this partnership is to develop methods and models to evaluate and implement breastfeeding and infant feeding support programs in vulnerable communities. Findings from the research have been peer-reviewed and published in multiple academic journals, as well as presented at a variety of conferences.

Through focusing on perinatal programs, which are funded by the national Canada Prenatal Nutrition Project, the PINSTEP program explores the feasibility of implementing community infant feeding supports in other parts of Canada, therefore potentially supporting many vulnerable families.

*For the full report, follow the link below:

<https://equityhealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12939-021-01386-6>



Angela Robertson,
Executive Director

Parkdale Queen West CHC clients and staff have the benefit of being supported by staff with long tenure in the organization, with many joining when the Centres that merged were founded, and many having worked with the Centres for 15 years and more.

After 20 years and more some of those staff are retiring. We thank them for their long history of serving our communities and for their commitment to providing care in the community health centre model.

This retired group of staff are colleagues, friends and family to many in the organization. We will miss them and will continually sing their praise:



Malkit Johal
Physician
Queen West site
- Retired February 2019
43 years



Janice Meilach
Counsellor
Queen West site
- Retired May 2020
26 years



Debbie Honickman
Physician
Queen West site
- Retired May 2020
26 years



Rosie Henderson
Nurse Practitioner
Queen West site
- Retired January 2021
46 years



Mary Rose MacDonald
Physician, Parkdale site
- Retired February 2021
32 years



Kinsey Lewis
Counsellor
Queen West site
- Retired April 2021
22 years



Ed Lee
Physician, Parkdale site
- Retired April 2021
30 years

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