



Thunder Bay District Health Unit

2018

ANNUAL REPORT

TBDHU.COM



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Message from the Board of Health Chair



Serving in my final year as Chair of the Board of Health, it is my privilege to present to you the Thunder Bay District Health Unit's 2018 Annual Report. Once again, the work being highlighted in this year's report reflects the needs of the entire district of Thunder Bay and brings to light the continued importance that public health plays in all our lives.

There are so many initiatives that bear mentioning; however, I will highlight just one or two of the stories that demonstrate how the organization works to meet the unique needs of our region. In early 2018, the TBDHU formally embraced cultural competency training and began the journey toward becoming a culturally safe organization. This important training not only aligns with the recommendations of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission and with TBDHU's 2017-2020 strategic plan, but it also leads to better understanding of the effects of colonization and consideration of the Indigenous perspective as it relates to public health.

One of the 4 pillars that arose out of the organization's strategic plan is a focus on Mental Wellness. The Superior Mental Wellness@Work project aligns with this through a focus on reducing psychological hazards in order to maintain mental wellness in the workplace. As wonderful as this initiative is, perhaps the most valuable component of this project came through its evaluation, carried out in partnership with Lakehead University. The findings from this work will not only contribute to addressing mental wellness locally but it will also contribute to a body of evidence able to reach jurisdictions far beyond Thunder Bay and District!

There are so many other initiatives – both in Health Promotion and Protection – that bear mentioning but I will leave it up to you to discover. Not only will you agree that the hard work and commitment of our staff is evidenced in the stories that follow but that the initiatives undertaken continue to meet the unique needs of our region.

As a final word, having served as a board member for 14 years—5 as Chair—it has been an absolute privilege to see the hard work and commitment of TBDHU staff carry on year over year. Regardless of challenges that have come up, staff consistently work to improve, promote,

and protect the health and well-being of the people that make up our beautiful region. Additionally, the goals of keeping the population we serve healthy and safe would not be possible without the dedicated work of all the Board members and administrative staff that have been involved over the years. I am confident that whatever lies ahead, this passion will endure. I am thankful for the honour to have served our communities in this capacity and wish this organization all the best moving forward.

Sincerely,



Joe Virdiramo, Board of Health Chair

2018 Board of Health

Alana Bishop, Municipality of Oliver Paipoonge

Andy Major, Township of Manitouwadge

Andrew Brigham, Provincial Appointee

Jack Masters, Provincial Appointee (term ended May 2018)

Jay Daiter (Vice Chair), Provincial Appointee

James McPherson, Municipality of Greenstone

Terry Fox, Town of Marathon

Karen Morley, Town of Schreiber & Terrace Bay

Norm Gale, City of Thunder Bay

Aldo Ruberto, City of Thunder Bay

Maria Harding, Provincial Appointee

Roger Shott, Municipality of **Neebing**/Township of Gillies

Richard Harvey, Townships of Red Rock, Dorion and Nipigon

Don Smith, Municipality of Shuniah

Bob MacMaster, Townships of **Conmee** & O'Connor

Joe Virdiramo (*Chair*), City of Thunder Bay

For a list of current Board of Health members and their contact information, visit: [Board of Health Members](#)

Highlights

Breastfeeding Education & Physical Literacy Lead to Increased Capacity



Attendees learning at the first Physical Literacy workshop.

TBDHU is always on the lookout for capacity building opportunities within the organization and throughout the community. When relevant opportunities arise, TBDHU searches for ways of involvement; understanding the impact that providing tools and imparting knowledge to educators, employers, and health care providers can have toward preventing illness, disease and promoting good health within our region. Two such initiatives in 2018 are expected to have wide implications toward achieving these positive health outcomes.

The first initiative was a day long workshop hosted by the TBDHU,

designed for non-health care providers who work with pregnant women or with young children and families. The workshop content was based on the BFI Strategy for Ontario's 20-Hour Course and was co-led by TBDHU public health nurses, including an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC), and the local La Leche League leader.

The 25 workshop participants represented several different organizations in both Thunder Bay and surrounding communities within the District. They were presented with information on breastfeeding basics, and how to support parents in their infant feeding decisions. The highlight

of the workshop included an engaging discussion where knowledge was exchanged on available community resources.

An evaluation of the workshop highlighted the ongoing need to support breastfeeding families in the community as well as the need to share infant feeding resources and information about best practices among those who work with families in non-clinical roles. With this important knowledge now possessed by front line, non-health care providers, breastfeeding best practices have an additional avenue for being transferred to Thunder Bay and District families.

A second capacity building initiative in 2018 is also expected to help people improve or maintain their health and well-being. The Building Physical Literacy Capacity project is a partnership between the City of Thunder Bay, the Thunder Bay District Health Unit, and Sport for Life Society and is funded by a grant through the Government of Ontario. This project serves recreation

providers, child care providers, and educators in Thunder Bay by equipping them with the necessary knowledge, skills, and training to embed physical literacy into their work. Ultimately, the project will benefit the health and well-being of Thunder Bay children who are encouraged and supported to have the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life.

The first of four master trainer sessions was delivered in the fall of 2018. Contracted by Sport for Life as part of this project, Dr. Dawne Clark trained 21 physical literacy champions, from a variety of sectors including education, private and public childcare facilities, and other community organizations that work with children in their early years. These master trainers will now go on to build physical literacy capacity in their workplaces and the children they work with. An excellent display of capacity building in action!

Cultural Competency Prioritized



As a group, Indigenous peoples in Canada have poorer health status and shorter life expectancies than other Canadians. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has called on the health care system to increase Indigenous self-determination and improve western-based systems to make them culturally safe.

In 2018, TBDHU embarked on a journey to become a culturally safe organization. The plan was launched in February of 2018 and represented the first step toward building cultural safety. Staff cultural competency training is one aspect of a larger effort described in the TBDHU Strategic Plan.

Indigenous people comprise a significant and growing proportion of the Thunder Bay and District population. TBDHU is committed to working with Indigenous people and organizations to improve health outcomes and reduce health inequities. “As cultural competency and trusting relationships are fundamental to advancing these efforts, the Senior Management Team endorsed this as a priority for all staff in 2018,” stated Lynda Roberts, Director of Health Promotion.

The first step in improving cultural competency within the TBDHU workplace was a foundational training provided to all staff throughout

2018. The training consisted of a combination of individual online and group in-person training. By the end of 2018, 84% of staff had completed all eight requirements of the foundational training, with the remainder having completed portions of the training.

Moving forward for 2019, the foundational training plan has been evaluated and revised for new staff. Additional optional training opportunities will also be provided to staff who wish to continue their journey towards increasing cultural competency.

Collaborative Project Promotes Workplace Mental Wellness Initiatives



Pictured L-R: Sue Armstrong, Workplace Health Promotion Public Health Nurse, Dr. Vicki Kristman, Lakehead University key partner; and Lynda Fraser, Health Promotion Planner
Plaque reads: "Let's Talk About Mental Health - Pain is real, but so is hope."

Promoting and supporting mental health and well-being in our community is one of 4 key pillars that came out of the TBDHU's 2017-2020 Strategic Plan. This pillar was addressed head-on in 2018 with the culmination of the Superior Mental Wellness@Work project, a two year initiative funded by

the Ministry of Labour that saw special attention given to helping promote mental wellness in the workplace.

The project was a collaborative effort of the Superior Mental Wellness@Work advisory committee, involving Thunder Bay District Health Unit and 13

community partners from various private and public sector organizations. Working together, the aim of the initiative was to develop workplace environments in which psychological hazards are reduced and positive employee mental health is maintained in Thunder Bay and throughout the District.

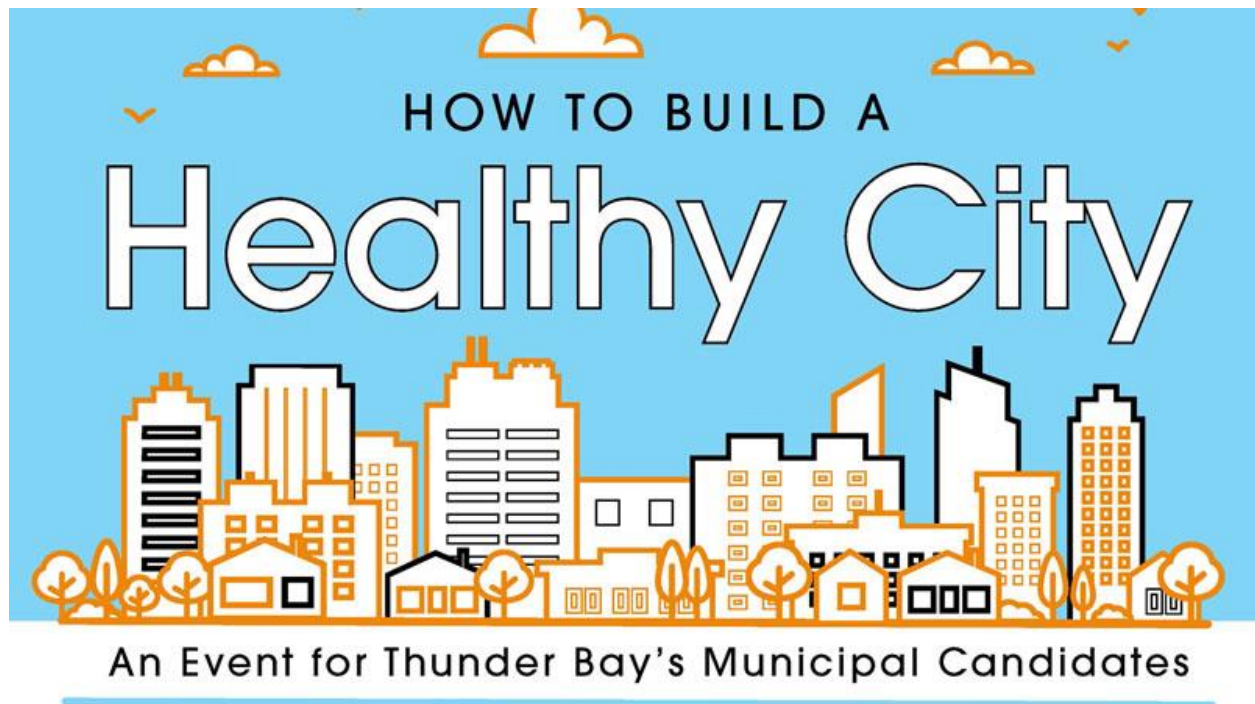
The grant enabled the project to offer a specialized training program three times, several workshops (such as Mental Health First Aid), and eleven speaker events in the city and throughout the region. A photovoice campaign called Get Real was also developed to inspire positive conversations about mental health in the workplace. It included a mobile art exhibit which was set up at over 20 locations throughout 2018 and continues to circulate through local worksites. In addition, the grant also funded further research to gain a deeper understanding of how worksite leaders can be supported to promote and protect employee mental health.

Evaluation of the project, conducted in partnership with Lakehead University, revealed that worksite leaders involved in the program reported better recognition of mental health issues; more familiarity with the National

Standard for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace and action plan development; and greater knowledge of the impact of mental health in the workplace.

Allane Danchuk, Director of Business and Finance at Thunder Bay Counselling and advisory group member says, "At Thunder Bay Counseling, we recognize that workplaces can be contributors to people's mental health. The Superior Mental Wellness @ Work project has had a broad reach into the community and has brought needed knowledge and resources to many workplaces. It really represents a high-quality, evidence-based, community collaborative initiative that has been shown to have a positive impact on the communities we serve."

Moving forward, the advisory group continues to seek opportunities in promoting employee mental wellness. Two online web portals at superiormentalwellnessatwork.com function as repositories of resources for both employees and employers toward promoting and protecting mental health in the workplace. The portals also provide information on the various mental health services available in our region.



The built environment has the potential to decrease many risk factors for chronic disease by providing opportunities for physical activity and increased access to healthy food. Healthy built environments are directly impacted by the decisions of municipalities and policy-makers, such as city council members. The 2018 municipal election was an opportunity to educate municipal candidates on the links between the built environment and health, so that when decisions regarding development, engineering, and planning arise, council members would have the knowledge and resources to make evidence-informed decisions.

On September 18, 2018, an educational event for municipal candidates and the public was held at the Da Vinci Centre. Guest speaker, Dr. Victoria Barr from BC Healthy Communities and one of the key contributors to the Healthy Built Environment Linkages Toolkit, provided the keynote address. This was combined with a panel discussion to answer key questions throughout the presentation. In addition to Dr. Barr, the panel included Health Promotion Planner, Joanna Carastathis, and Public Health Nutritionist, Ivan Ho. Approximately 30 of the 61 municipal candidates attended

the event as well as community members.

Following the presentation, a survey was circulated to learn municipal candidates' thoughts on building a healthy, thriving city. Overall, candidates were knowledgeable and supportive of

healthy built environment features. The Healthy Living team will continue to provide education opportunities for the new council in 2019, as well as partner with city planning and engineering departments to further the knowledge about healthy built environments.

Community Partnership Leads to Mutual Learning Opportunity



Superior Points team at work with Community Living Thunder Bay Employment Services client, Sam (front left)

In mid-2017 a unique relationship was formed between the Thunder Bay District Health Unit and Community Living Thunder Bay (CLTB) Employment Services. The role of CLTB Employment Services is to assist people with disabilities in developing skills, obtaining paid employment, enabling a

higher quality of life and encouraging independence and inclusion. Employment is the quickest and most direct route to inclusion, an important value at the heart of TBDHU's work in our communities.

In January of 2018, Sam became an official employee of TBDHU, working Tuesday afternoons in the Superior Points program assembling needle kits.. This opportunity came at the right time for Sam as her previous place of employment had recently closed down and she was in need of an income source.

“Sam is such a delight to work with and she consistently does a great job every week,” notes Lori Kuzminski, Sam’s co-worker with Superior Points. “She has

learned a lot in her role here but I would say that those of us who get the pleasure to work with her have learned even more! We always look forward to our Tuesday afternoons with Sam!”

Hiring people that experience disabilities empowers the person, enriches the organization and builds a stronger community. TBDHU has benefited greatly from this opportunity and look forward to ongoing growth and learning moving forward.

Community Collaboration Produces Greater Reach of Oral Health Programming



In June 2017, the Children’s Oral Health Program and Thunder Bay District Social

Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB) formed a partnership with the goal of encouraging families with

eligible children to access the Healthy Smiles Ontario (HSO) Program for children birth to 17 years.

TBDSSAB Caseworkers encourage families who do not identify as having found a dental provider to be contacted from the Children's Oral Health Program. The Children's Oral Health Program are connecting with families of eligible children and sharing information about the HSO program, offering registered dental hygiene preventive clinic services and fluoride varnish clinic services and/or help families to navigate in accessing a dental provider.

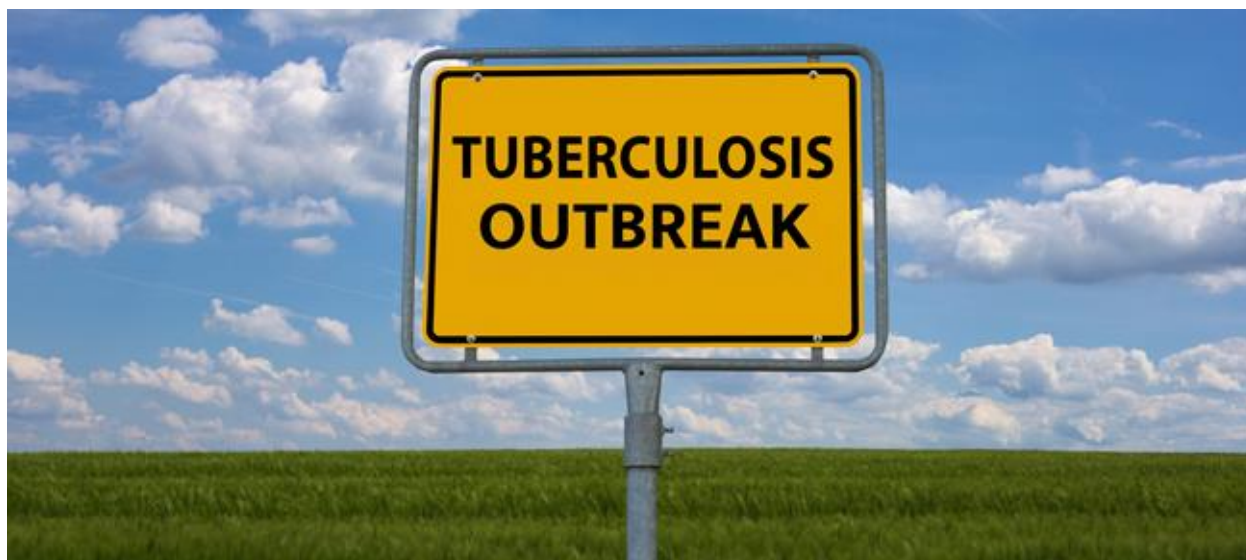
The caseworkers also provide families with age appropriate oral health information and a toothbrush for each eligible child. In addition, the Oral Health team also educated staff of TBDSSAB around the importance of good oral health for children, HSO program information, and data specific to the district's population. To date, TBDSSAB and TBDHU's partnership has been able to assist 518 children.

"The success of this collaboration has far surpassed our expectations. It is through the dedication and hard work of the TBDSSAB team that we have been so successful." notes Megan Puksa, Dental Health Educator. "Not only are

we more efficiently aligning needs with program service offerings, but we're also building capacity for future work between our organizations."

Due to the increased rate of eligible families receiving oral health care, the collaboration with TBDSSAB is expected to continue into 2019 and beyond.

Handling Tuberculosis Outbreak Tests Health Unit's Resolve



In March 2018, TBDHU declared a community outbreak of tuberculosis (TB). Over the course of 7 months 11 cases were identified - 73% of which were within the homeless or under-housed population. The outbreak was a huge strain on resources both human and financial. To mitigate some of the challenges this outbreak presented, the Incident Management System (IMS) was implemented allowing us to be able to share resources between programs and make follow up for the TB outbreak a priority.

With almost 300 contacts being identified, systems had to be developed that would capture all required data and enable prioritization of these contacts. To assist with developing these systems field epidemiologists were brought in

from the Public Health Agency of Canada's Canadian Field Epidemiology program and from Public Health Ontario.

Perhaps the largest challenge came as a result of the housing reality of many of the clients. Because many were homeless or under-housed, their locations were often undetermined, making it difficult to provide timely medication. To address this, TBDHU turned to community organizations such as housing agencies for help. As an example, the group "Homes for Good," comprised of St. Joseph's Care Group, TBDSSAB, Dilico and Alpha Court, focused on helping people in four priority areas find stable housing, including youth, Indigenous people, the chronically homeless, and those

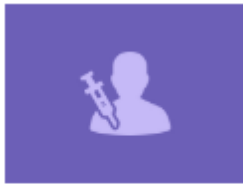
transitioning from provincial institutions, such as jails and hospitals.

With consent from clients, partnerships were also formed with various community agencies such that if a client were in their care, TBDHU would get a notification as to the client's whereabouts. Finally, TBDHU began to use unconventional methods of contacting clients, including through social media and holding a street fair BBQ, inviting clients out for a bit of food and strengthening relationships!

Although the TB outbreak has proved to be an ongoing challenge for the organization, it seems that through the help of industrious thinking, dedicated staff, and strategic partnerships with invested community groups and organizations, TBDHU has been able to keep the outbreak contained, ensuring limited infection throughout the community. It has surely been a community effort thus far and will continue to be so in 2019.

Fast Facts





133

immunization clinics held within schools.



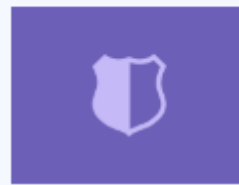
17,725

telephone client inquiries received through main reception



6,144

in-person/walk-in client inquiries received at main reception



136

annual fridge inspections completed with vaccine users



43

institutional outbreaks declared and managed

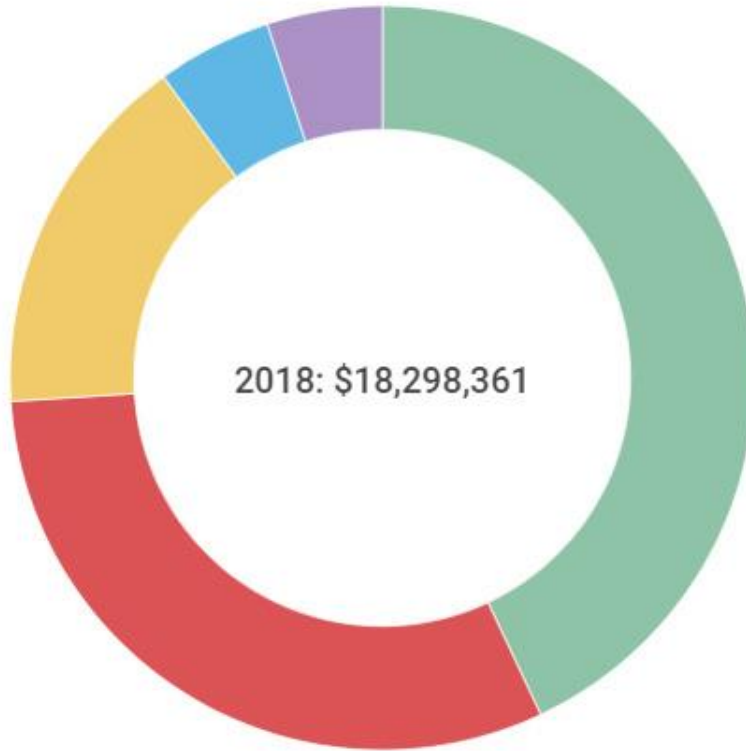







449

tobacco vendor enforcement inspections conducted

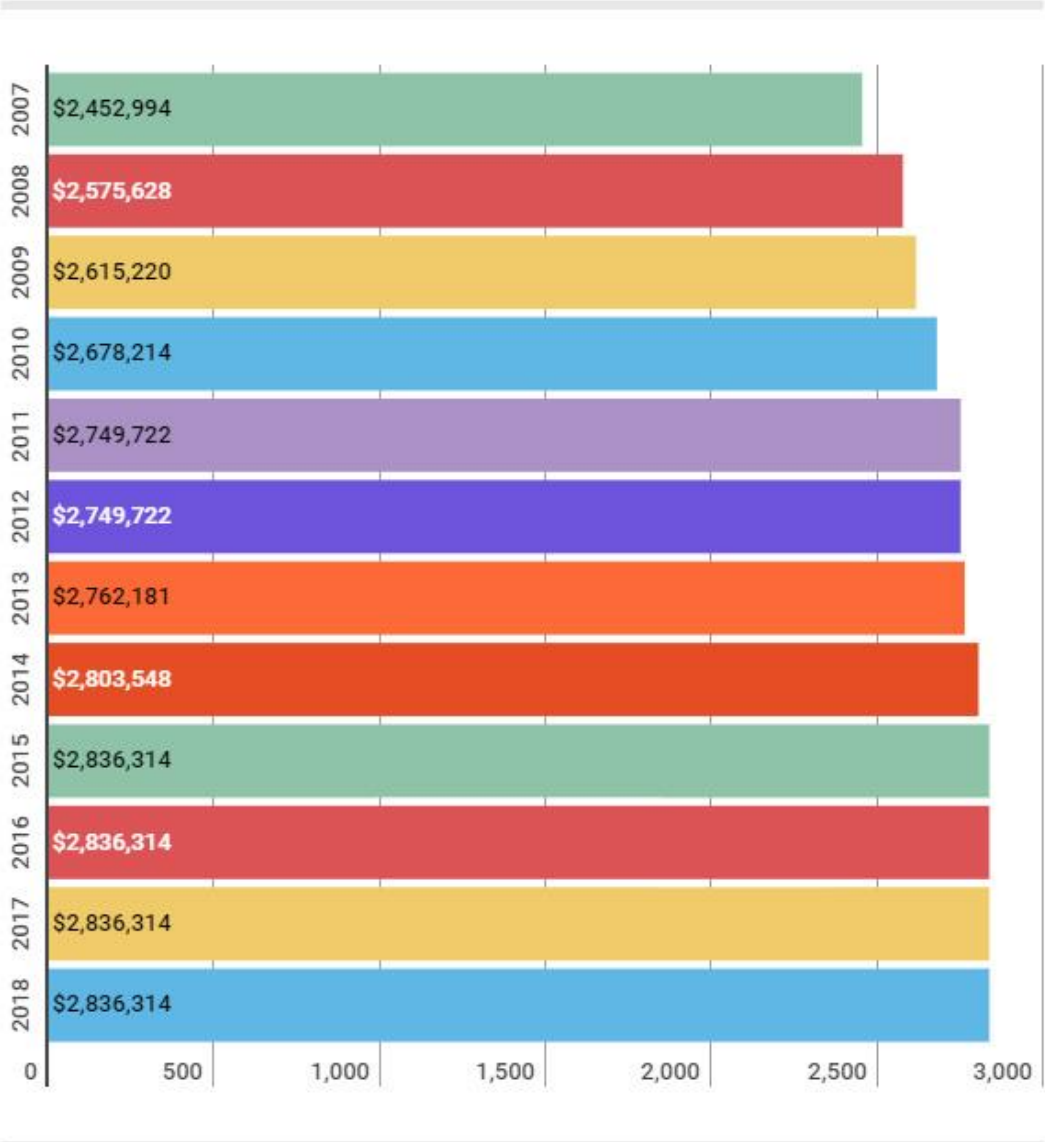
Financials

Total Revenues



	Provincial Funding for Cost-Shared, Mandated Programs	\$7,920,846
	Provincial and other 100% Funded Programs	\$5,670,791
	Municipal Levy	\$2,836,314
	Generated/Other Revenue	\$910,510
	Unincorporated Grants	\$948,900

Municipal Funding for Cost-Shared Mandated Programs



Vision & Mission

Vision

Healthy Lives Together.

Mission

We improve, promote, and protect the health and well-being of the population in the District of Thunder Bay by delivering high quality public health programs and services with our partners.

Guiding Principles

Excellence: Our population deserves the highest quality programming and the best health outcomes possible. We believe that all of our work should be evidence-informed. We demonstrate responsibility, accountability, transparency, and sound stewardship of resources. We are innovative, modelling and supporting healthy changes within our communities, our population, our organization, and our staff.

Commitment: We are passionate and dedicated to improving the lives of people in our communities. We adhere to the highest standards of professionalism, and integrity, as we strive to achieve the best possible health outcomes for the populations and communities that we serve.

Inclusion: We believe in dignity and respect for all. We work collaboratively with a diverse network of colleagues, partners and clients to achieve a community wide approach to improve health and well-being. We continuously seek out opportunities to form and strengthen meaningful working relationships, and to be responsive to population and community needs.

Area Served

The TBDHU oversees a geographic area of over approximately 230,000 square kilometres with approximately 146,000 residents.

Our main office is in Thunder Bay. Branch Offices and/or services are

located in Geraldton, Marathon, Manitouwadge, Red Rock and Terrace Bay. Visit our [Contact page](#) for a map of our region, with office locations, hours and contact information.

Communities

The following municipalities fall within the Thunder Bay District Catchment Area:

- Conmee
- Dorion
- Gillies
- Greenstone
- Manitouwadge
- Marathon
- Neebing
- Nipigon
- O'Connor
- Oliver Paipoonge
- Red Rock
- Schreiber
- Shuniah
- Terrace Bay
- Thunder Bay

Programs & Services

The Thunder Bay District Health Unit manages many programs and services that promote health, prevent disease and injury, and protect all residents throughout the district. As a leader in creating healthy communities and

healthy environments, the TBDHU's mission is to meet the public health needs in these three areas by delivering accessible programming of the highest standards.

Healthy Families	Safe Communities	Health & Well-Being
Early Prenatal Classes	Infectious Disease	Sexual Health Clinic
Oral Health Services	Monitoring	Tobacco Cessation
Breastfeeding Clinic	Public Health	School and Workplace
Fair Start Program	Inspections	Health
Nurse Practitioner	Flu Clinics	Substance Misuse
Clinic	Injury Prevention	Prevention
Parenting Programs	Emergency	Healthy Eating
	Preparedness	Active Living
	Immunization Clinics	