



2024 Annual Report

TBDHU.COM



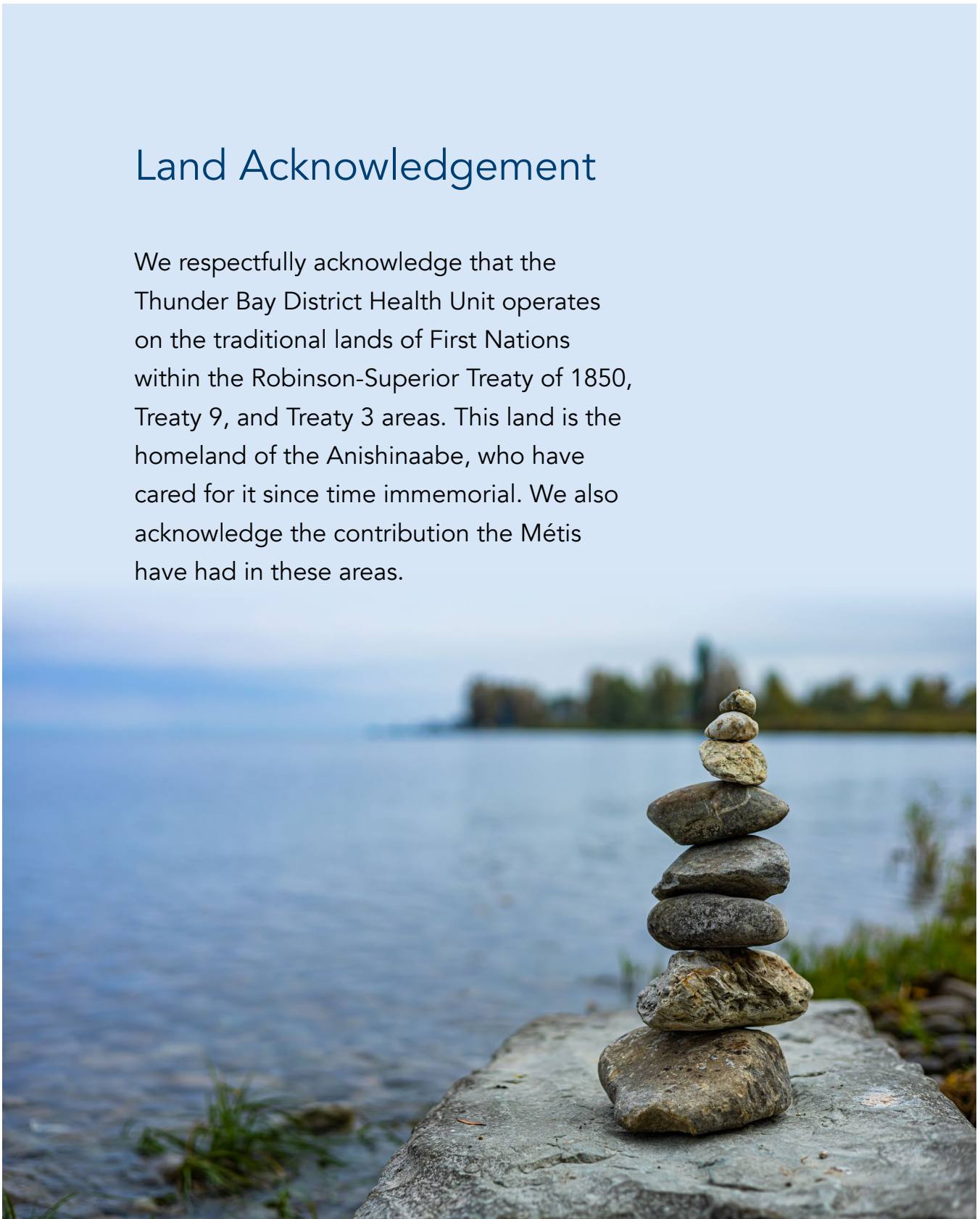
2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Table of Contents

Land Acknowledgement	2
Message from the Board of Health Chair	3
Message from the Medical Officer of Health and Chief Executive Officer	4
About Public Health	5
About the Thunder Bay District Health Unit	6
Area and Communities Served	6
2024 Board of Health	7
Vision, Mission, and Guiding Principles	8
2024 Highlights	9
• Strengthening Substance Use Health and Reducing Stigma	9
• Walk, Broc and Roll: Supporting Ontario’s Daily Physical Activity Policy	10
• Updated Strategic Plan for 2024-2027	11
• Street Outreach Implements SPRITE Project	12
• Tuberculosis Supports Across Northern Ontario	13
• Look Before You Book: The BodyWise Program	14
Fast Facts	16
Financials	18

Land Acknowledgement

We respectfully acknowledge that the Thunder Bay District Health Unit operates on the traditional lands of First Nations within the Robinson-Superior Treaty of 1850, Treaty 9, and Treaty 3 areas. This land is the homeland of the Anishinaabe, who have cared for it since time immemorial. We also acknowledge the contribution the Métis have had in these areas.



Message from the Board of Health Chair

As we reflect on the past year, I am proud to share the progress and impact of the Thunder Bay District Health Unit. This past year presented both challenges and opportunities, including the development of our updated Strategic Plan, which reaffirmed our commitment to our mission: Working together to promote, protect, and achieve healthier communities and reduce health inequities through high quality public health programs and services.

On behalf of the Board of Health, I want to thank our staff and partners for their dedication. Your commitment translates into healthier outcomes for the vulnerable among us, as well as for our neighbours, family, and friends. The achievements highlighted in this annual report are a direct reflection of your hard work and belief in our shared purpose.

The Board's role is to provide strategic oversight and ensure strong governance, financial stewardship, and long-term sustainability. Over the past year, we worked closely with senior leadership to strengthen organizational systems, support strategic priorities, and plan for the future.



Moving forward, the Board of Health remains committed to supporting healthier communities, stronger together. Programs such as the Northern Fruits and Vegetables Program, and Walk, Broc and Roll demonstrate the positive impact of these efforts, supporting healthier futures for youth in the strong and resilient communities that dot our northern landscape.

We will continue to ask thoughtful questions, listen carefully to feedback, and ensure that our decisions align with TBDHU's updated mission, vision, and values.

Thank you for your continued support and engagement. We invite you to explore this report to learn more about our work and impact across the Thunder Bay District Health Unit area.

With gratitude,
Don Smith

Message from the Medical Officer of Health and Chief Executive Officer



I am pleased to share the 2024 Annual Report. Our teams continued to respond to both ongoing and emerging public health needs while staying focused on our mission, never losing sight of our vision, and staying true to our values.

Over the year, TBDHU staff worked directly with individuals, families, and communities to deliver programs and services that make a difference. From disease prevention and health promotion to emergency preparedness and community outreach, the dedication of public health staff continues to make meaningful progress towards healthier outcomes while maintaining an importance focus on those most at risk. The results outlined in this annual report reflect the practical, on-the-ground work happening across our region.

The dedicated staff at TBDHU faced challenges head-on this year, including initiatives such as the Street Outreach Team improving testing for syphilis and HIV among some of the most vulnerable populations in the region, and the inspectors who help keep restaurants and body art salons safe for patrons of all ages.

Operationally, the past year was focused on strengthening core systems, supporting our workforce, and improving how we deliver services. This work also included the development of our updated Strategic Plan, which refreshed our mission, vision, and values and established strategic priorities to guide the organization's

work in the years ahead. We continued to adapt to a changing public health environment, ensuring resources were used responsibly and programs remained responsive, effective, and community-informed. Collaboration with the Board of Health supported strong accountability, sound decision-making, and long-term planning.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to working alongside and within our communities—stronger together—to address health inequities and emerging challenges.

Thank you for your continued trust and engagement. I invite you to explore this report to learn more about the work and impact of public health across the Thunder Bay District.

It is my pleasure to present TBDHU's 2024 Annual Report.

Dr. Janet DeMille

About Public Health

Public Health improves the health of an entire population while reducing health inequities so that everyone has equal opportunities to achieve their full health potential. Public health employs a proactive approach to protect and improve overall population health by promoting healthy practices and preventing the spread of disease.

Public health is diverse and targets multiple levels, including:

- » The **individual and family level**, to improve health and wellbeing while reducing disparities
- » The **community and setting level**, where we work with specific groups to create healthy environments and improve wellness
- » The **system level**, where we strategically collaborate across sectors to address complex public health issues.

The Thunder Bay District Health Unit (TBDHU) delivers many programs and services that promote health, prevent disease and injury, and protect the health of all residents throughout the district. As a leader in creating healthy communities and healthy environments, TBDHU's mission is to meet the public health needs by delivering accessible programming of the highest standard. Our dedicated team of public health professionals who lead and support this work is diverse and includes nurses, dental staff, public health inspectors, family home visitors, dietitians, nutritionists, outreach workers, planning and evaluation staff, epidemiologists, and finance, human resources, information systems, and communications staff. We collaborate closely with community partners to address health needs and deliver high-quality public health programs and services.

TBDHU PROGRAMS AND SERVICES INCLUDE

Healthy Growth and Development

- » Oral Health
- » Healthy Babies, Healthy Children
- » Lactation Services
- » Family Health
- » School Health

Chronic Disease, Substance Use, and Injury Prevention

- » Physical Activity
- » Nutrition
- » Workplace Health
- » Injury Prevention
- » Tobacco, Vapour, Smoke, Alcohol
- » Harm Reduction

Immunization

Emergency Preparedness

Infectious Disease Prevention and Control

- » Case and Contact Management
- » Outbreak Management
- » Infection Prevention and Control
- » Sexual Health
- » Outreach Services

Environmental Health

- » Food Safety
- » Safe Water
- » Healthy Environments
- » Land Development

Population Health Assessment

Health Equity, including Truth and Reconciliation

Effective Public Health Practice

About the Thunder Bay District Health Unit

AREA AND COMMUNITIES SERVED

The Thunder Bay District Health Unit covers a large geographic area of over 230,000+ square kilometres with approximately 153,000 residents. Our main office is in Thunder Bay with branch offices in Geraldton, Marathon, Red Rock, and Terrace Bay.

The following municipalities fall within the Thunder Bay District Health Unit catchment area:

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

There are also 26 First Nation communities in the TBDHU geography.

- Animbiigoo Zaagi'igan Anishinaabek (Lake Nipigon)
- Long Lake 58
- Aroland
- Namaygoosisagagun (Collins)
- Biigtigong Nishnaabeg (Pic River)
- Neskantaga (Landsdowne House)
- Biinjitiwaabik Zaaging Anishinaabek (Rocky Bay)
- Netmizaaggamig Nishnaabeg (Pic Mobert)
- Bingwi Neyaashi Anishinaabek (Sand Point)
- Nezaadiikaang (Lac des Milles Lacs)
- Eabametoong (Fort Hope)
- Nibinamik (Summer Beaver)
- Fort Severn
- Pawgwasheeng (Pays Plat)
- Fort William
- Red Rock (Lake Helen)
- Ginoogaming (Long Lake 77)
- Wapekeka (Angling Lake)
- Kasabonika Lake
- Wawakapewin (Long Dog Lake)
- Kiashke Zaaging Anishinaabek (Gull Bay)
- Webequie
- Kingfisher Lake
- Whitesand
- Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug (Big Trout Lake)
- Wunnumin Lake

TBDHU also provides services to many communities and locations in the Thunder Bay District unorganized area.

2024 BOARD OF HEALTH

Name	Municipality/Provincial Representative
	(Bold indicates appointing municipality)
Grant Arnold	Conmee and O'Connor
Lucy Belanger	Provincial Appointee
Cindy Brand	Dorion, Red Rock and Nipigon
Kasey Etreni	Thunder Bay
Paul Malashewski	Schreiber and Terrace Bay
James McPherson – Vice Chair	Greenstone
Allan Mihalcin	Provincial Appointee
Donna Peacock	Oliver Paipoonge
Mark Thibert	Needing and Gillies
Kristine Thompson	Thunder Bay
Jim Moffat	Manitouwadge
Don Smith – Chair	Shuniah
Todd Wheeler	Marathon
Cynthia Olsen	Thunder Bay

VISION, MISSION, AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES



Our Vision: Healthier communities, stronger together.



Our Mission: Working together to promote, protect, and achieve healthier communities and reduce health inequities through high quality public health programs and services.



Our Guiding Principles

Excellence: We strive for excellence through evidence-informed practice and by embracing a culture of innovation and continuous learning.

Commitment: We are passionate and dedicated in our work with clients and partners to reduce health inequities and achieve healthier communities.

Inclusion: We prioritize dignity and respect for all and we work collaboratively with a diverse network to provide culturally safer services and settings.

Transparency: We are accountable and communicate openly in meeting the public health needs across the District of Thunder Bay.

STRATEGIC PLAN PRIORITIES

Our strategic plan priorities from our current (2024-2027) strategic plan include the following:

Thriving Workforce: We will prioritize a thriving workforce through staff well-being, connectedness, and capacity building.

Organizational Resilience: We will proactively align our organizational processes and resources to remain sustainable and responsive to meet the changing needs of the communities that we serve.

Communities and People: We will deliver meaningful and impactful programs and services that meet the needs of the communities we serve.

Truth and Reconciliation: We will continue work to become a culturally safer organization.

Health Equity: We will increase organizational capacity for health equity action.

2024 Highlights

STRENGTHENING SUBSTANCE USE HEALTH AND REDUCING STIGMA

In September 2024, TBDHU received the inaugural Employer Allyship Award from CAPSA, a national organization committed to addressing stigma and promoting substance use health through education, research, and policy change. The award recognized TBDHU's leadership in addressing substance use stigma across workplaces and the community.

Substance use stigma is a significant barrier that contributes to increased harm for people who use substances. In 2021, TBDHU launched the "I Heart Someone Who Uses Drugs" campaign to challenge stigma and put a human face on substance use. Since then, the focus has shifted toward addressing structural stigma. Structural stigma describes inequities embedded in policies, practices, and workplace culture, which can result in the unfair treatment of people with lived and living experience of substance use.



I Heart Someone Who Uses Drugs Campaign Launch

Back row: Dan Hrychuk, Sumit Kumar, Rick Thompson, Ronda Mackie, Rupinder Kaur Anmol, Dana Wilson

Front Row: Dan DePeuter, Katrina Edey, Martha Hunter, Stephanie Diebolt, Samantha Renaud, Joshua Fraser



Stephanie Diebolt (centre), a Public Health Nurse with TBDHU's Injury Prevention and Substance Use team, accepted the award on behalf of the organization at the CAPSA Working On Wellness Festival in Ottawa, pictured alongside CAPSA CEO Anthony Esposti (left), and Program Manager Ashleigh Hyland (right).

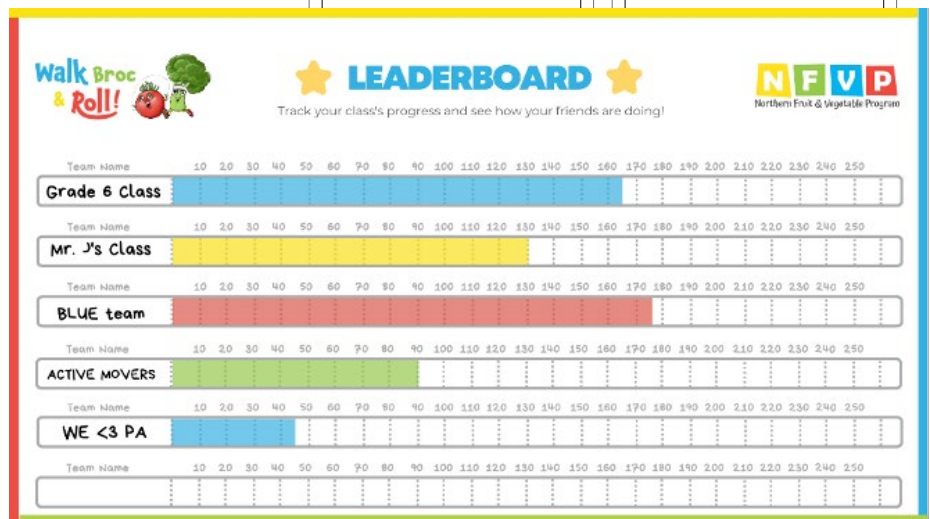
Understanding and addressing structural stigma requires engagement. With the Thunder Bay Drug Strategy, TBDHU hosted a free Challenging Structural Stigma workshop for health and social sector organizational leaders, supporting shared learning and leadership commitment to change. TBDHU then coordinated follow-up sessions with CAPSA to support a community of practice, focusing on improving policies, procedures, and practices related to substance use health through equity-based tools, reflection, and peer dialogue. TBDHU has also worked internally to integrate stigma-reduction education for staff and continues to use reflection and assessment tools to guide improvements to policies and practices.

Together, these efforts strengthened partnerships, increased organizational capacity, and reinforced substance use health as a public health priority. Next steps include continued collaboration with CAPSA and regional partners to expand policy-focused learning and sustain stigma-reducing practices across the Thunder Bay District Health Unit area.

WALK, BROC AND ROLL: SUPPORTING ONTARIO'S DAILY PHYSICAL ACTIVITY POLICY

Promoting physical activity is a key population-level health promotion strategy in public health. Walk, Broc and Roll (WBR) is a multi-component, school-based intervention developed in 2021 by TBDHU staff to complement the Northern Fruit and Vegetable Program (NFVP), while promoting daily physical activity (DPA) and food literacy. The WBR program supports elementary students in achieving Ontario's mandatory 20 minutes of DPA during instructional time. Using a supporting toolkit, teachers led students in physical activities and recorded daily minutes on school-wide leaderboards. In 2023, TBDHU embarked on an evaluation of the program's effectiveness with program data collected in spring and fall 2024.

Evaluation results identified opportunities to strengthen the WBR program through new and innovative ways to promote student DPA in schools, including through the NFVP. Program data showed that WBR effectively supports classrooms in meeting or exceeding the 20-minute DPA requirement during instructional time when implemented under certain conditions. Next steps include analyzing and presenting data to schools and reviewing publication opportunities to promote the program and its effectiveness. The intervention may be adapted and transferred to other regions, with the potential to improve health outcomes.



UPDATED STRATEGIC PLAN FOR 2024-2027

The renewal of the organization’s strategic plan was delayed due to the pandemic. Work to update the previous strategic plan (2017–2020) began in late 2023 and included an environmental scan, along with collaboration with the Board of Health and advisory groups. This process supported purposeful and meaningful engagement with staff, the Board, clients, partners and the public recognizing the pandemic’s impact on local public health and communities across the district.

The organization renewed its vision, mission, and values to guide both what it seeks to achieve and how it will work moving forward.



VISION

Healthier communities, stronger together.

MISSION

Working together to promote, protect, and achieve healthier communities and reduce health inequities through high quality public health programs and services.

VALUES

Excellence	Inclusion
Commitment	Transparency

Five key strategic priorities were identified, reflecting internal and external actions to advance the renewed mission and vision, with specific goals established for each priority.

The five strategic priorities are:

- **Thriving Workforce,**
- **Organizational Resilience,**
- **Communities and People,**
- **Truth and Reconciliation, and**
- **Health Equity.**

Together, these priorities demonstrate a commitment to strengthening the workforce, sustainability, and organizational capacity; fostering cultural safety and health equity; and delivering responsive, high-impact programs and services that meet the evolving needs of the communities served.

STREET OUTREACH IMPLEMENTS SPRITE PROJECT

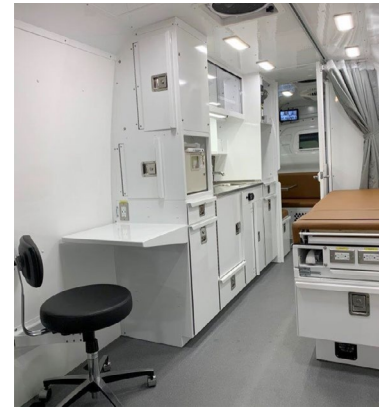
Infectious syphilis has risen sharply across the province in recent years, including locally in the Thunder Bay District Health Unit area. The increase has had a greater impact on underserved populations, such as people who use substances, individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness, and those living in rural and remote communities. Traditional clinic-based testing does not always reach these populations, leading to delays in diagnosis and treatment and allowing infection to spread.

The Thunder Bay District Health Unit's Street Outreach program built on its existing outreach work to deliver the SPRITE project and support real-world evaluation of the newly approved INSTI® Multiplex HIV-1 / HIV-2 / syphilis antibody test. This rapid test can detect both syphilis and HIV antibodies within minutes, making it possible to offer treatment during the same interaction. By bringing testing and treatment directly to places where people already access services, this approach reduces barriers to care, speeds up treatment, and supports linkage to follow-up services.

The initiative was also implemented in multiple other public health units across Ontario. Evaluation, grounded in implementation science, examined the reach, effectiveness, adoption, and sustainability, community engagement, and knowledge mobilization of SPRITE. The Street Outreach program continues to support the SPRITE project through a community of practice, with ongoing goals of improving early detection, advancing health equity, and contributing to syphilis control efforts among populations that face systemic barriers to conventional healthcare access.



Street Outreach Van



TUBERCULOSIS SUPPORTS ACROSS NORTHERN ONTARIO

In September 2024, the Infectious Disease team was notified of a case of active Tuberculosis (TB) linked to a First Nation community with connections to Thunder Bay. This prompted a coordinated public health response involving multiple partners and jurisdictions.

TBDHU partnered with Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), Northeastern Public Health (NEPH), and Matawa Health Co-operative to coordinate a comprehensive TB response. This collaboration aligned screening parameters to identify potential cases and contacts who required further assessment and follow-up in Thunder Bay. The Infectious Disease team coordinated care for affected children, adults and identified contacts requiring specialized follow-up.

A key component of the response was timely and accurate information sharing between Indigenous partners, NEPH, and TBDHU. Clear communication ensured continuity of care across jurisdictions, reduced duplication of efforts, and supported culturally respectful engagement with the community.

This response highlights the importance of strong inter-agency and cross-jurisdictional collaboration in public health practice, particularly in northern and Indigenous communities where health service delivery and governance structures may differ. Effective partnerships ensured that First Nation populations received timely and appropriate care despite geographic and system barriers.



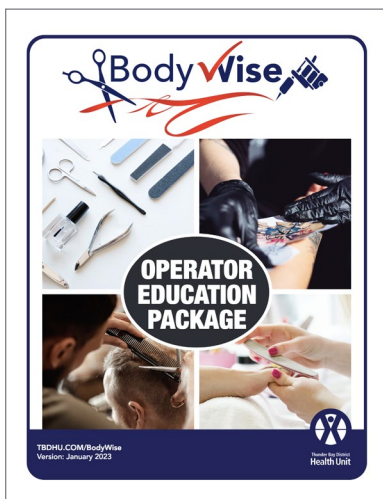
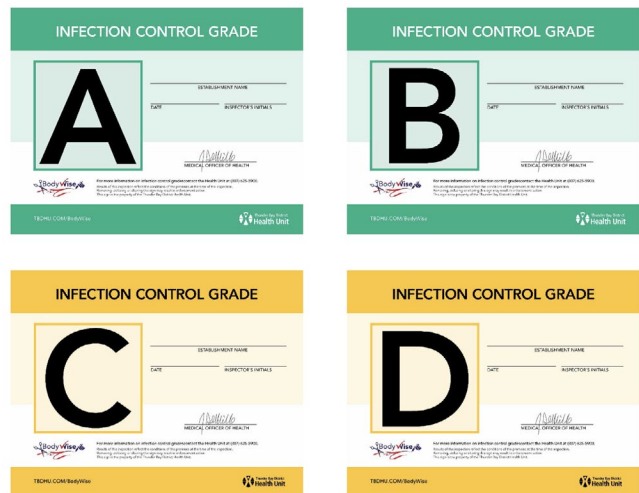
Infectious Disease team (left to right): Madison Jurjevic (LU student), Benjamin Kim (LU Student), Jennifer Deck, Tiia Ylinen, Susan Armstrong, Courtney Rive.

The coordinated effort resulted in the successful identification, investigation, and follow-up of multiple TB cases and contacts across jurisdictions. The impact extended beyond case management and contributed to strengthened relationships between public health and Indigenous partners, improved shared response capacity, and reinforced best practices for managing communicable diseases in complex, multi-jurisdictional settings.

LOOK BEFORE YOU BOOK: THE BODYWISE PROGRAM

The BodyWise program focuses on inspecting personal service settings to ensure they meet provincial infection prevention and control standards while supporting overall compliance and transparency to the public. The program applies to salons, tattoo and piercing studios, and other settings where blood-borne transmission of infectious diseases is possible. Public health inspectors visit personal service businesses to conduct compliance inspections. After an inspection, businesses receive a grade based on how well they meet the requirements. These results are then posted publicly at the business, so customers can easily see the inspection outcome before choosing a service provider. The purpose of the BodyWise program is to protect public health by improving hygiene and infection control and reducing the risk of disease transmission.

The program was initially developed in 2019, but was put on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic response. It was launched publicly in late 2023, and all personal services businesses had been inspected and graded by the end of 2024.



To view the BodyWise Operator Education Package, visit

www.tbdhu.com/bodywise

Fast Facts for 2024



450

Older adults (65+) who received dental care through the Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program



4,581

School-based student dental screenings



762

Dental clinic visits for children



291

Students who participated in the school-based varnish programs



3,481

Students reached with healthy relationship programming



250,220

Kilometres actively travelled during the Active Commute Challenge



4,187

Visits to healthy kids programming



411

People reached at Babies' Day Out sites



14,892

Students who received fruits and vegetables through the Northern Fruit and Vegetable Program



8,398

People trained and certified in food handling



2,456

Food premise inspections conducted



373

Animal bites investigated



142

Clients who accessed smoking cessation services through the Take Control Smoking Cessation Clinic



111

Tobacco and e-cigarette vendor inspections



2,548

Reportable disease cases investigated including sexually transmitted infections



4,115

Clients who attended sexual health clinic



2,191

Visits to the Street Outreach van



207

Clients tested for STBBIs through pop-up clinic testing events



93

Institutional outbreaks declared and managed



119

On-site infection protection and control (IPAC) preparedness and outbreak support visits to congregate living settings



6,858

Vaccines administered at TBDHU office or mass clinics (excluding flu vaccines)



123

School-based immunization clinics



5,551

Naloxone kits distributed directly through Superior Points Harm Reduction



1,954

People trained in the use of Naloxone by Superior Points Harm Reduction program



14,613

Telephone client inquiries received through main reception



5,536

In-person and walk-in inquiries received at main reception



346

Web inquiries through "Contact Us" form



16

Media releases published








48

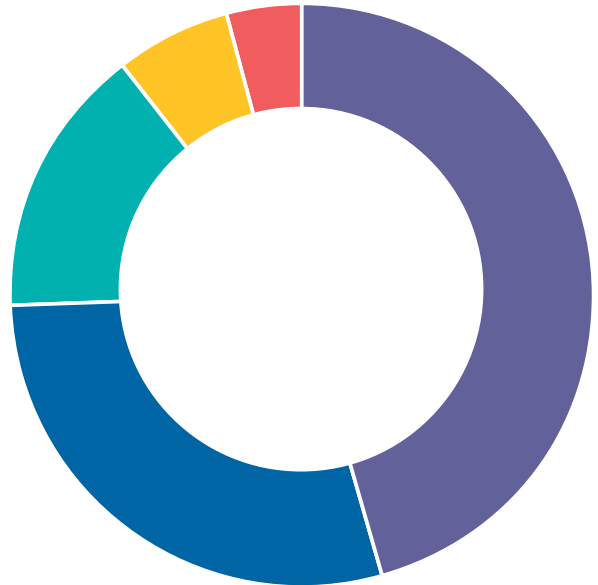
Media engagements (interviews)

Financials

TOTAL REVENUES 2024

\$23,673,564

	Provincial Funding for Cost Shared, Mandated Programs	\$10,847,331
	Provincial and Other 100% Funded Programs	\$6,781,400
	Municipal Levy	\$3,579,746
	Generated/Other	\$1,486,240
	Unincorporated Grants	\$978,847



MUNICIPAL FUNDING FOR COST-SHARED MANDATED PROGRAMS

