



Striking a Balance

ANNUAL REPORT

2022

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Message from the Board of Health Chair

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the lives of every person in the District of Thunder Bay, presenting new and amplified challenges to health and wellbeing across our region. From the outset, public health in our region has been at the forefront of the pandemic response, with invaluable support from partner agencies and the community as a whole. I am proud of the way the Thunder Bay District Health Unit (TBDHU) team confronted the challenges of the ever-evolving pandemic and with their ability to strike a balance between the ongoing response while also addressing the critical backlog of programs and services that are essential for promoting health, preventing disease and injury, and protecting health for all.

COVID-19 and the transition to recovery efforts across the region this year has underscored the importance of a strong and sustainable public health system. A strong public health system is essential to the health of all of us - particularly those who are most vulnerable. Public health works with local partners to improve health outcomes across the communities that we serve with a focus on those who face greater challenges to achieving their full health potential. The TBDHU Board of Health and staff are committed to partner and advocate to achieve the best possible health outcomes for everyone across our region.



As Board of Health Chair, I want to sincerely thank the TBDHU leadership, management and staff for all their hard work this year navigating the transition between continued pandemic response and public health recovery efforts. I also wish to express appreciation to the many volunteers, community partners, and municipalities who have worked alongside public health to support the vital COVID-19 response and vaccination efforts. Strong partnerships and collaboration across communities and sectors are fundamental to the work of public health in achieving our vision of healthy lives together.

It is my honour to present Thunder Bay District Health Unit's 2022 Annual Report.

James McPherson

Message from the Medical Officer of Health and Chief Executive Officer



The intensity and pressure of the COVID-19 pandemic response since early 2020 has had lasting impacts on individuals, families, and communities. Pressures continued in 2022 for public health with the first COVID-19 omicron variant wave hitting the region early in the year requiring additional case and contact management, facility outbreak management, and the urgent roll out of vaccine boosters. In 2022, we also worked to balance the ongoing COVID-19 response with the growing pressure to address other public health priorities. This involved reorienting our workforce to resume public health programs and services paused at the onset of the pandemic. Recovery efforts for TBDHU had to consider not only impacts on health and wellbeing across the region as a whole, but also on how to address health inequities that have deepened as a result of the pandemic. Highlights in this annual report include important efforts made by public health to support local priorities including Indigenous food sovereignty, healthy child development, youth mental health, and immunizations delayed due to the pandemic. The completion of much needed repairs to the physical exterior of our main office building is also included.

TBDHU efforts throughout the COVID-19 pandemic have demonstrated innovative leadership, flexibility, and unwavering dedication across the organization - from staff in all roles to the leadership of our Board - to adapt and respond to the real-time public health needs and challenges across the district. I am extremely grateful and proud of the dedication our staff showed in 2022, and recognize the sacrifices made since 2020, to support the health and well-being of individuals, families, and communities in the District of Thunder Bay.

I also want to acknowledge that the success of the pandemic response and the reorientation to recovery efforts would not be possible without the strong partnerships with many community agencies, service providers, health professionals, and municipalities. COVID-19 has underscored the impacts that can be made when we are working together to improve, promote and protect health and well-being.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the individuals, families, and communities across the District of Thunder Bay. You have continued to demonstrate remarkable resolve and resilience; following public health guidance, getting vaccinated, protecting the health of loved ones and the community overall, and stepping up to help one another during times of crisis and recovery.

It is my pleasure to present TBDHU's 2022 Annual Report.

Dr. Janet DeMille

About Public Health

Public Health works to improve the health of the entire population while focusing on reducing health inequities so that everyone can have equal opportunities to achieve their full health potential. Public health takes a proactive and upstream approach to address the public health needs of the population. We do this through health interventions focused on promotion, prevention, and protection. Public health work is diverse and targets various levels. Some of our work targets individuals or clients where we work directly with individuals and families to improve health and wellbeing while reducing disparities. Some of our work targets communities and particular settings where we work with specific groups to create healthy environments and improve wellness. Some of our work targets systems where we strategically collaborate across sectors to address complex public health issues.

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 environments, TBDHU's mission is to meet the public health needs by delivering accessible programming of the highest standards. Our dedicated team of public health professionals that lead and support this work includes nurses, dental staff, public health inspectors, family home visitors, dietitians, nutritionists, outreach workers, planning and evaluation staff, epidemiologists, and finance, 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

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

Effective Public Health Practice

Emergency Preparedness

About Thunder Bay District Health Unit

AREA AND COMMUNITIES SERVED

Thunder Bay District Health Unit covers a large geographic area of 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 service 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. TBDHU also provides services to many communities and locations in the Thunder Bay District unorganized area.

2022 BOARD OF HEALTH

Name	Municipality/Provincial Representative
Norm Gale	City of Thunder Bay
Deborah Harris-Shallow	Dorion, Red Rock and Nipigon
Rebecca Johnson	City of Thunder Bay
John MacEachern, Executive	Manitouwadge
James McPherson, Chair	Greenstone
Kevin Mullins	Schreiber and Terrace Bay
Karen O'Gorman	Neebing and Gillies
Rick Potter	Oliver Paipoonge
Don Smith, Vice Chair	Shuniah
Greg Vallance	Marathon
Jim Vezina, Executive	Conmee and O'Connor
Michelle Warywoda, Executive	City of Thunder Bay

VISION, MISSION, AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES



Our Vision: Healthy lives together



Our 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.



Our 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.

STRATEGIC PLAN PRIORITIES

Our strategic plan priorities from our current (2017-2020) strategic plan include the following:

Communities and People First: Serve the public health needs of the Thunder Bay District's diverse communities and people.

Mental Wellness: Promote and support mental health and well-being in our community.

Indigenous People: Work with Indigenous people and organizations to improve health outcomes and reduce inequities.

Organizational Effectiveness: Improve how we work and learn together.

2022 Highlights

INDIGENOUS FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

TBDHU is committed to serving the public health needs of diverse communities, including Indigenous communities and people. Our goal is to build trusting and respectful connections and relationships that will lead to collaborative opportunities that improve overall health and reduce inequities. In 2022, TBDHU's Healthy Living team focused on one path to reaching this goal through the Understanding Our Food Systems (UOFS) project.

The Healthy Living team works to prevent chronic diseases in Thunder Bay, district, and surrounding First Nation communities. The multidisciplinary team supports residents to achieve good health through active lifestyles, good food, mental wellness, and equity-driven programs.

The UOFS is a participatory project led by 14 First Nation communities in Northwestern Ontario. The goal of the project is to build a deeper understanding of Indigenous food security and sovereignty, and to support the communities and people we work with to determine their own food systems through community-led initiatives and projects.

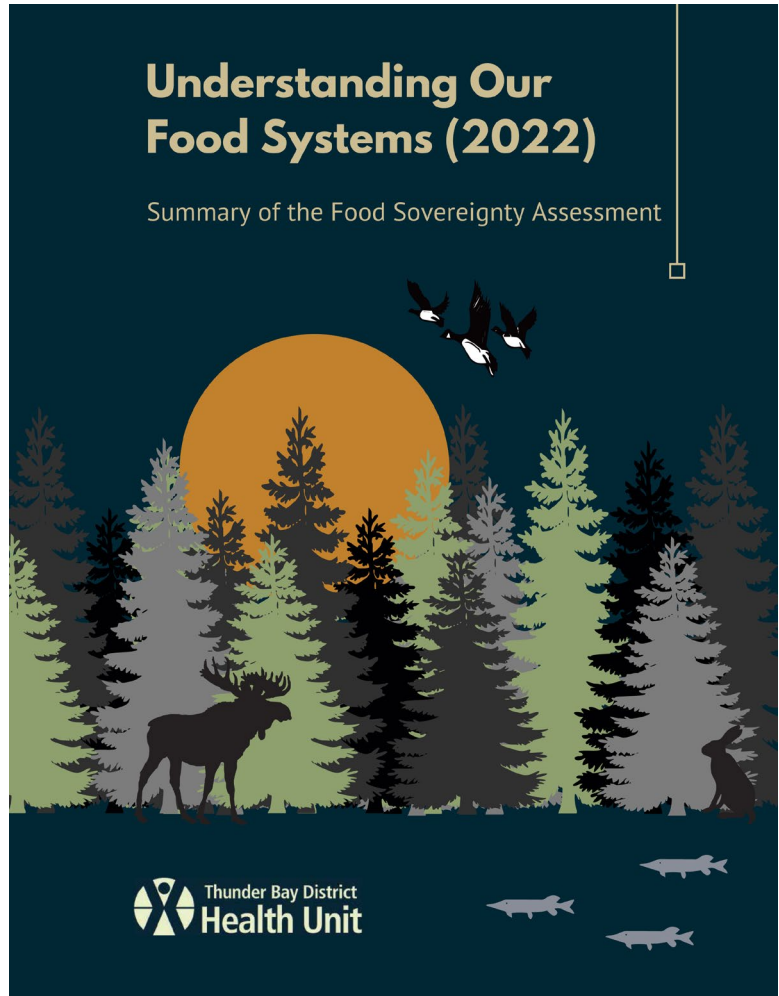
In 2022, UOFS undertook a collaborative, comprehensive, community-led food sovereignty assessment to understand community needs and develop recommendations to strengthen local and regional food systems for each of the 14 First Nation communities. The assessment tool collected input through large group discussions, smaller group discussions, and individual conversations. Nine of 14 partnering communities participated in one or more phases of the Food Sovereignty Assessment. In total, there were over 150 community members who participated in the assessment, including administrators, traditional harvesters, hunters, fishermen, trappers, youth, elders, and chief and council members. Six key themes and seven recommendations were identified to help support local Indigenous food sovereignty, which will guide the future work of the TBDHU as we collaborate with partner First Nations to achieve their goals.

From more information visit:

www.understandingourfoodsystems.com

UOFS Partner First Nations:

- Animbiigoo Zaagi'igan Anishinaabek
- Aroland First Nation
- Biigtigong Nishnaabeg
- Biinjitiwaabik Zaaging Anishinaabek
- Bingwi Neyaashi Anishinaabek
- Fort William First Nation
- Ginoogaming First Nation
- Kiashke Zaaging Anishinaabek - Gull Bay First Nation
- Long Lake #58 First Nation
- Namaygoosisagagun First Nation
- Netmizaaggamig Nishnaabeg
- Pawgwasheeng - Pays Plat First Nation
- Red Rock Indian Band
- Whitesand First Nation



BEST PRACTICES FOR ADDRESSING ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

Healthy child development is foundational for resilience, social, physical, and psychological health throughout the lifespan. TBDHU uses both targeted and comprehensive health promotion approaches to support healthy child development and reduce health inequities for pregnant individuals and families.

In 2022, TBDHU's Family Health team partnered with the City of Thunder Bay's Community Safety & Well-Being initiative, the Canadian Municipal Network on Crime Prevention, and Lakehead University to conduct a national scan of best practices for prevention and intervention to address adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) that can impact healthy child development. The

scan identified evidence-informed and promising prevention and mitigation practices currently being implemented across Canada. A summary report "Adverse Childhood Experiences: Prevention, Mitigation and Intervention Approaches", was prepared and the findings presented at the 2022 Canadian Municipal Network on Crime Prevention National Conference. The report was also distributed to the many organizations and partners who work alongside public health. The evidence and recommendations in the report supported TBDHU programming and also served as a foundation for local collaborative efforts, including efforts to raise awareness about the need for service provider education, advocacy, policy, and resource development.



SUPPORTING YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH IN SCHOOLS

TBDHU's School Health team focuses on engaging students, parents, teachers, school boards, and community partners to create supportive social and physical school environments, and improve student health and well-being. School boards are supported to develop policies and procedures, support parents, and deliver teachings on health related topics including nutrition, physical activity, personal safety and injury prevention, substance use prevention, healthy growth and development, mental health, and violence and bullying prevention.

Recognizing the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on child and youth mental health, TBDHU partnered with Lakehead Public School Board's Mental Health lead in 2022 to develop the Mental Health Plus Program (MHPP) to promote mental health among students in grades 4 to 8. The MHPP focused on stress and its impact on well-being and provided concrete coping strategies for students. From March to June 2022, TBDHU delivered 60 4-session MHPP workshops to 1200 students at Lakehead Public Schools. Feedback from the workshop series informed program revisions made over the summer of 2022.



The updated program was offered to all school boards in the District of Thunder Bay in the 2022-23 school year as a 3-session series of developmentally appropriate workshops for grades 4 to 8. From September to December 2022, over 2300 students participated in the locally developed MHPP programming. This initiative was acknowledged through an award from the Ontario Public School Board's Association for this work in 2023.

IMMUNIZATION CATCH-UP FOR SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Vaccines are essential in protecting individuals and communities from infectious diseases. The Vaccine Preventable Disease program at TBDHU reduces community members' risk of getting these diseases by providing weekly immunizations clinics for adults, children and youth, immunization clinics in schools, and ensuring child and youth immunization records are up-to-date according to the provincial *Child Care and Early Years Act* (CCEYA) and the *Immunization of School Pupils Act* (ISPA). The team also works with health care providers to distribute publicly-funded vaccines and to ensure vaccine storage and handling requirements are followed.

Many routine immunizations for children and youth were delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2022, TBDHU prioritized immunization services for children and youth who were overdue for their routine immunizations to ensure they were caught up as per provincial ISPA requirements. This included:

- Sending individualized notifications to parents and guardians of school aged students, regarding updating immunization records and advising of local immunization opportunities.



- Hosting vaccine clinics for children and youth across the District of Thunder Bay including 97 school-based clinics for students in grades 7 to 12, community immunization clinics, and clinics at TBDHU offices.
- Administering immunizations for vaccine preventable diseases such as meningitis, hepatitis B, human papilloma virus, tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis, measles and polio.
- Partnering with community health care providers, organizations who work with children and youth, child care centres, and schools to increase routine vaccine access and promote vaccination.



INFRASTRUCTURE MODERNIZATION PROJECT AT THUNDER BAY OFFICE

TBDHU's main office is in Thunder Bay with branch offices located in Geraldton, Marathon, Red Rock, and Terrace Bay. The physical infrastructure of the main office located at 999 Balmoral Street in Thunder Bay required extensive exterior repair and maintenance due to significant deterioration that had occurred over time. The extent of deterioration included damage to the building envelope and created a risk to the underlying structure of the building. The original building windows had also exceeded their projected lifespan and had become increasingly inefficient, allowing air leaks and moisture into the interior spaces.

In 2022, the Corporate Services division led an infrastructure modernization project to refurbish the exterior of the building along with the installation of new windows with the goal of creating an exterior impervious to moisture and external elements. The combined project resulted in reinforcing the structural integrity of the building, enhancing energy efficiency, and providing a visual revitalization of the building.

Fast Facts



322

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



220

People reached at Babies' Day Out sites



4,605

Participants in the Healthy Kids HOME program



14,067

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



20,562

Kilometres actively travelled during the Active Commute Challenge



8,744

Students reached with Mental Health Promotion programming



206

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



233

Tobacco and e-cigarette vendor enforcement inspections conducted



6,808

Food handlers trained and certified



2,084

Food premise inspections conducted



317

Animal bites investigated



15,177

Reportable disease cases investigated



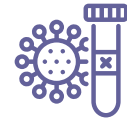
3,587

Clients who attended sexual health clinic



799

Clients who accessed Street Outreach van



254

Clients tested for sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections through testing events



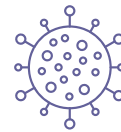
2,458

Naloxone kits distributed directly through Superior Points Harm reduction



787

People trained in the Use of Naloxone by Superior Points Harm Reduction



162

Institutional outbreaks declared and managed



86

On-site infection prevention and control (IPAC) preparedness and outbreak support visits to congregate living settings by IPAC Hub program



2,757

Vaccines administered at TBDHU office clinics (excluding COVID-19 vaccines)



97

School-based immunization clinics



36,537

Telephone client inquiries received through main reception








9,080

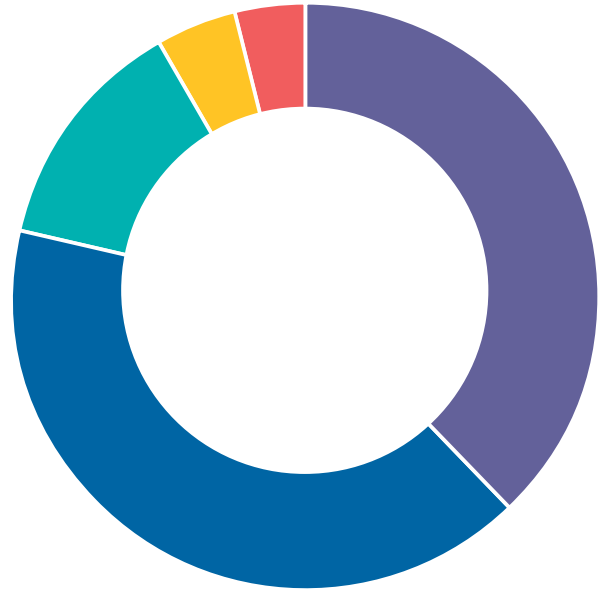
In-person and walk-in inquiries received at main reception

Financials

TOTAL REVENUES 2022

\$25,492,214

	Provincial Funding for Cost Shared, Mandated Programs	\$9,633,200
	Provincial and Other 100% Funded Programs	\$10,456,995
	Municipal Levy	\$3,309,949
	Generated/Other	\$1,143,170
	Unincorporated Grants	\$948,900



MUNICIPAL FUNDING FOR COST-SHARED MANDATED PROGRAMS

