

## Acknowledgments

Our work is made possible through the generous contributions of:



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## 2018-2019 Board of Directors and Staff

Board Member	Position on Board
Margot Cragg	President
Mike Connors	Vice President
James McCarthy	Treasurer
Cyrille Godin	Secretary
Tom Johnston	PHA Representative
Karen Tanner	Past President
Shawn Connors	Director
Valerie Edelman	Director
Megan Hill	Director
Diedre Smith	Director

Staff Member	Title
Matthew Smith	Executive Director
Keri-Ann Scott	Director of Operations
Steve Colwell	Prevention Programs Manager
Brady Hooley	Education Programs Manager
Emerson Hallihan	Miramichi Needle Exchange Program Coordinator
Cassandra Parsons	Prevention Programs Manager (resigned)
Natasha Glover	Director of Education Programs (resigned)
Sonia Levy	Miramichi Needle Exchange Program Coordinator (resigned)

## Mission Statement

**AIDS New Brunswick Inc. is a provincial organization that aims to promote and support the health and well-being of people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS while helping to reduce the spread of HIV, Hepatitis C and other sexually transmitted and blood borne infections in New Brunswick through the provision of prevention, education, and support initiatives.**

# Message from the Executive Director

In 1967 Justice Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau famously stated that “There’s no place for the state in the bedroom of that nation.” Through his Omnibus Bill, Trudeau began to draw attention to, among other things, same-sex relationships. In 1969, the newly elected Prime Minister Trudeau’s amendments were passed; serving as a significant marker in the fight for equality. Queer rights would still have a very long way to go, but this was certainly a step in the right direction.

We didn’t know that at that time our community was likely already being affected by an incurable, untreatable, and deadly infection.

When AIDS New Brunswick was first conceived of around Hal Heinz’s kitchen table in 1986 by Jim Goltz, Grace Getty, and Hal himself, their mission was to help and protect people living with HIV and AIDS. At that time, a diagnosis of HIV was grim with a very low long-term survival rate and we were losing many members of our community. In addition to the overall state of HIV, there were serious concerns about confidentiality and privacy when it came to HIV within our provincial health system. Many different Emergency Rooms were being provided with lists of people either living with or suspected of living with HIV, and unsurprisingly this was dissuading people from being tested for HIV.

The founders set to work ensuring that people living with HIV/AIDS had access to privacy, support, knowledge, and essential services. Volunteers drove people to Maine to be tested anonymously for HIV, and began educating the general public about HIV/AIDS; Grace Getty in particular was determined that it be discussed in a scientific and non-dogmatic way.

In the thirty-three years since its inception, AIDS New Brunswick has witnessed some monumental changes. HIV has moved from a near certain death sentence to being a manageable chronic condition. The advent of PrEP and PEP allows for highly effective methods of preventing an HIV infection, and most recently we now know that a person living with HIV who is on treatment and has an undetectable viral load cannot sexually transmit HIV to their partner. This is likely the most significant development to occur in the realm of HIV since the invention of antiretroviral therapy.

Our work is a testament to the foundation that our founders poured, and it is both the cause of, and product of all the advancement that we’ve seen.

In this past year AIDS New Brunswick has continued to evolve and grow. Our needle exchange programs again experienced their busiest year ever; serving a combined total of 858 people, 3 604 times, and distributing 346 304 sterile syringes. Our education programs conducted 23 presentations, and reached 1422 individuals. Our support programs continue to work in collaboration with the Fredericton Downtown Community Health Centre to offer a monthly hepatitis C drop-in group, and provide ongoing support to our members living with HIV. Thanks to funding from the Government of New Brunswick’s Department of Health, AIDS New Brunswick’s needle exchanges continue to distribute Naloxone kits for reversing opioid overdoses.

Currently, AIDS New Brunswick receives two federal grants from the Public Health Agency of Canada. These grants fund two education initiatives that focus on increasing knowledge about STBBIs and their prevention and treatment options,

and reducing the stigma associated with sexual health and injection drug use. The goal of both of these initiatives is to improve access to STBBI testing, treatment, and care.

Our accomplishments are the result of a team of dedicated people. In this last year we've welcomed some great team members, and have had some great team members leave us. Our educator Natasha Glover left to pursue a Medical Degree, James McCarthy left to clerk for the Chief Justice of New Brunswick, and Cassandra Parsons left to pursue a Master of Science. Before joining our team, new hire Brady Hooley got his start in the world of HIV working for the Desmond Tutu HIV Foundation in South Africa, while Emerson Hallihan spend his life working with vulnerable population for Correctional Services Canada. Finally, Steve Colwell has continued to be a valued team member, running our needle exchange programs with empathy and a true passion for helping our clients, and Keri-Ann Scott kept our operations running like a Swiss watch, truly flawlessly. I could not have run this agency as effectively without Keri-Ann by my side.

I began this message by reflecting on a significant change in Canadian queer rights because this year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the decriminalization of homosexuality, and HIV and the queer community have been intricately connected since the beginning of the HIV epidemic. Both queer rights and HIV have experienced some tremendous advancements, and some tremendous losses. While we have come a long way, there is still more work to do.

This will be my last Executive Director's Message for AIDS New Brunswick. I am moving on to begin a new adventure in law school. Currently I am bouncing between writing this message and preparing a transition plan for my successor. I joined AIDS New Brunswick in July 2010 as a needle exchange volunteer (after wondering into the office one day only to be greeted by Diedre Smith who did my volunteer intake), was hired to run the needle exchange program in February 2011, became Interim Executive Director in April 2016, and permanent Executive Director in April 2017. It has been an absolute pleasure to have worked with all the tremendous team members we've had over the years at this agency; and thank you so very much to the board of directors who trusted me to lead this agency. I am honoured to have been a part of such important work at such a significant time in HIV advancement and research. But there is more work to be done, and I cannot wait to see what the next AIDS New Brunswick team accomplishes.

Respectfully,



Matthew Smith  
Executive Director



# Events

## Red Scarf Campaign

The 4<sup>th</sup> annual Red Scarf Campaign took place during National AIDS Awareness Week, November 24 to December 1, in downtown Fredericton. This year, AIDS New Brunswick collected over 55 scarves from our community, bringing our 4-year total to 526 scarves! A big thank you to the Fredericton Public Library, and to the Knifty Knitters who have donated scarves each year.

The scarves were tied to lampposts and benches around the city and included information cards to explain the symbolic representation of the red ribbon in recognition of those lost to and still affected by HIV/AIDS. The scarves were taken by members of the public and worn in recognition of World AIDS Day.

Scarves were graciously donated by the following groups and members of our community:

- The Knifty Knitters
- Friends of AIDS New Brunswick



Mayor Mike O'Brien with Matthew Smith of AIDS New Brunswick



Christine Nash of the Fredericton Public Library, Knifty Knitters with Matthew Smith of AIDS New Brunswick



New Brunswick Legislative Assembly lit red in recognition of National AIDS Awareness Week



## World Hepatitis Day BBQ

The 2018 World Hepatitis Day campaign message was 'Finding the Missing Millions. On July 27<sup>th</sup>, AIDS New Brunswick, in partnership with UNB Nursing, hosted a World Hepatitis Day BBQ in Fredericton and Miramichi. This annual event is an opportunity to promote access to prevention, testing and treatment for people affected by hepatitis. This event also provides the community with the opportunity to learn more about the programs offered by AIDS NB.



## 2018 Smash Stigma Car Smash

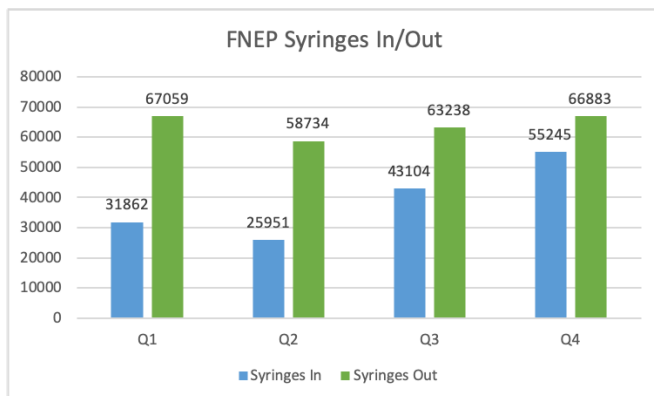
The 8<sup>th</sup> annual Smash Stigma Car Smash was held on October 14<sup>th</sup>. AIDS New Brunswick partnered with Aitken House to host the annual event in the quad at UNB with all proceeds going to AIDS New Brunswick. A big thank you to **Aitken House** for arranging the event, all those who came out to support it, and a HUGE Thank You to **Capital City Auto Parts** for donating the car for the event.



# Prevention Programs

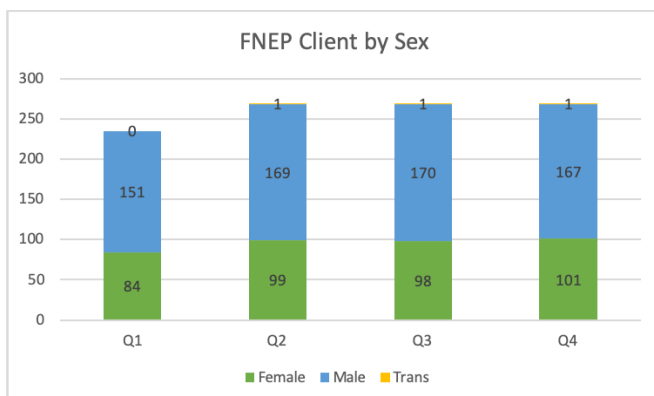
## Fredericton Needle Exchange Program

In its 19<sup>th</sup> year of operation the Fredericton Needle Exchange Program (FNEP) continued to grow in its distribution numbers and client load. This past year, the FNEP served 589 different people, with 255 of them being new to the program. The FNEP was accessed by all its clients a total of 2,739 times. The exchange program gave out a grand total of 255,914 sterile syringes, 4,095 safer smoking kits, and 11,934 condoms.



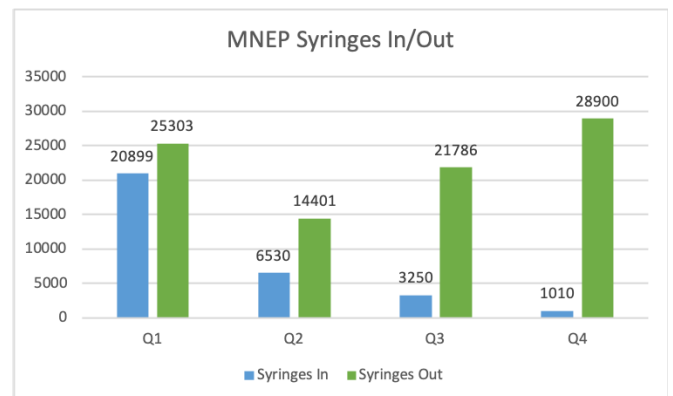
Comparing these numbers to the 2017-2018 fiscal year, there is an increase in most metrics:

- Syringes Up 9%
- Service Users Up 28%
- Visits Up 8%
- Safer smoking kits Up 18%



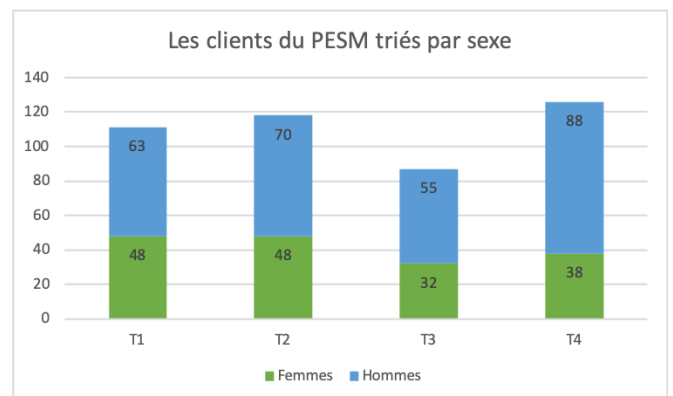
## Miramichi Needle Exchange Program

The Miramichi Needle Exchange Program (MNEP) is now in its 7<sup>th</sup> year of operation and continues increasing its impact on the community. This past year, the MNEP served 266 people, 120 of whom were new to the program. The program was accessed a total of 841 times with total distribution numbers of 90,390 sterile syringes, 973 safer smoking kits, and 1,746 condoms.



Comparing these numbers to the 2017-2018 fiscal year, there is an overall increase in all metrics:

- Syringes Up 37%
- Service Users Up 45%
- Visits Up 41%
- Safer smoking kits Up 56%





## Combination of FNEP and MNEP

The two Needle Exchange Programs, the FNEP and the MNEP, served a record number of 858 people, 375 of whom were new to the program. Overall, AIDS NB Needle Exchange Programs were accessed 3,604 times and distributed the highest number of safer injection and safer smoking tools yet; with a total of 346,304 sterile syringes and 5,068 safer smoking kits.

- Syringes Up 16%
- Service Users Up 33%
- Visits Up 16%
- Safer Smoking Kits Up 26%

The upward trend in numbers of service users, visits, and syringe and safer smoking kit distribution is correlated with reports of increased use of crystal methamphetamines in New Brunswick. Calhoun Research & Development conducted a survey of the needle exchange clients in Fredericton, Miramichi, Moncton, and Saint John which indicated that crystal methamphetamine is quickly becoming the drug of choice in New Brunswick because of its low cost and high availability.

## Naloxone

AIDS New Brunswick, Avenue B (formerly AIDS Saint John), and Ensemble (formerly AIDS Moncton) now receive funding from the Government of New Brunswick's Department of Health to purchase and distribute Naloxone opioid overdose prevention kits through our needle exchange programming. In the 2018-2019 fiscal year, 211 kits were distributed via our needle exchanges, and 19 were used on a person who was experiencing an opioid overdose. These kits are extremely valuable and we are so grateful to be able to dispense them to our clients.



# Education Programs

## Overview

There have been significant changes to the Education Program. The Education Program is presently funded by the Community Action Fund (CAF) and the Harm Reduction Fund (HRF) from the PHAC. The program is now primarily tasked with reaching healthcare providers and people who use drugs to assess and reduce any barriers to accessing HIV/HCV/STBBI prevention, testing, and treatment services.

In addition to our PHAC funded project, this year funds from a MAC AIDS Fund grant were used for continuing outreach to secondary schools and post-secondary schools throughout the province to continue to offer basic STBBI education.

## PHAC Initiatives

### *Community Action Fund*

AIDS New Brunswick is currently in a joint funding agreement with our sister agencies Avenue B (formerly AIDS Saint John) and Ensemble (formerly AIDS Moncton). This five-year agreement (2017-2022) issued by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) is known as the Community Action Fund (CAF). Together with our two sister agencies we developed a work plan designed to reduce the barriers faced by people who use drugs when accessing healthcare services.

Our approach is two-pronged; first we seek increase knowledge of healthcare workers about new advancements in the field of testing, treatment, and prevention of HIV and hepatitis; and second, we provide skills building activities to people who access our needle exchange programs to increase their knowledge, comfort, and ability to communicate with healthcare providers. Combined, this approach is meant to reduce the barriers to testing by educating healthcare providers with scientific information about STBBI transmission, testing, treatment, and prevention, while simultaneously empowering people who use drugs to also confidently communicate their testing, treatment, prevention, and care needs to healthcare providers.

### *Harm Reduction Fund*

AIDS New Brunswick received a two year funding agreement (2018-2020) through PHAC's Harm Reduction Fund (HRF). Using these funds, we developed a project designed to complement the project currently funded under CAF. Using a workshop borrowed and adapted from the Canadian Public Health Association (CPHA), we are working to address the social stigmas surrounding injection drug use and sexually transmitted and blood borne infections. Our goal is to increase comfort and confidence of people who use drugs to encourage testing, and to increase the understanding and knowledge of healthcare providers about social structure and stigma so that they feel more comfortable offering testing and treatment options to people who use drugs.

## **In-school, and Community Presentations and Outreach**

The education program conducted 23 presentations, and made 4 appearances at community events throughout the province, reaching an estimated 1,422 individuals. Of the 23 presentations conducted, 14 were STBBI 101 workshops, 7 were naloxone training workshops, and 2 were prevention services workshops.

For the first half of the 2018-2019 fiscal year, secondary students continued to represent a key demographic for our presentations. Presentations were conducted at 7 high schools, and 1 middle school throughout the province, in addition to several workshops provided to various UNB, STU, and NBCC classes.

In addition to students, our STBBI presentations and community information displays have reached a number of new audiences this year. We were invited to present booths at events aimed at the well-being of both senior citizens and new Canadians, in addition to having been invited to deliver our STBBI 101 presentation at the Pride in Education conference, and to a number of homeless shelter residents and staff; including those of the Miramichi Youth House, Chrysalis House, Grace House, and the Fredericton Men's Shelter.

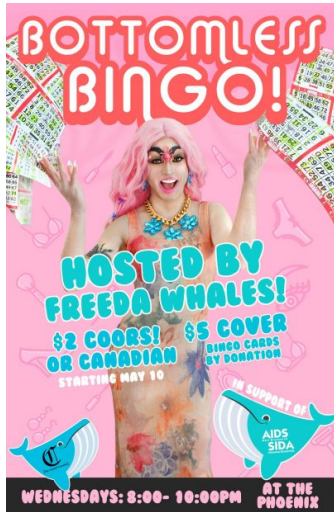
Continued community involvement includes assisting the Fredericton Downtown Community Health Centre with running their hepatitis C support group, and remaining a member of the Fredericton Regional Resource Network (FRRN)

The second half of the fiscal year saw the development of an STBBI workshop aimed at professionals on the subject of HIV, PrEP, and various options for HIV testing. This presentation has been delivered to 7 MD students from the Memorial University of Newfoundland, to the staff of the Fredericton Downtown Community Health Centre, and to the staff of the Miramichi Sexual Health Clinic. This presentation has been well-received, and audience members have appreciated the clinical relevance of its content.

# Support Programs

We've continued to work hard to ensure we're able to provide information, education, and support to those living with or affected by HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C, and other STBBIs.

We have achieved those goals in several different areas of programming. Our hepatitis C drop-in group in partnership with the Fredericton Downtown Community Health Centre has had a strong turnout throughout 2018 and into 2019. The group continues to see numbers between 10 to 15 people per session and has been revitalized by its new location at the spacious downtown clinic. Several guest speakers facilitated the group this year as well as several UNB nursing students.



As in previous years, AIDS NB has helped PLWHIV/AIDS to find appropriate healthcare providers in New Brunswick to help meet their needs, and we continued to offer our PHA Member Support Fund. The support fund was accessed four times throughout the year and dispersed more than \$700 in funds. These funds helped our PHA members to meet a wide range of needs; including housing security, food security, and medical needs, in addition to assisting in other special situations.

Thanks to the funds raised by Freeda Whales' (Adam Marshall's) Bottomless Bingo initiative, AIDS NB was able to once again able provide each of our members living with HIV with a \$50.00 holiday gift card in December 2018! Thank you so much Freeda, for all of your hard work and dedication!

Our toll-free support line continued to assist people all across the province by providing information to questions about STBBIs and navigating the proper healthcare channels. We received forty-eight phone calls in 2018-2019.



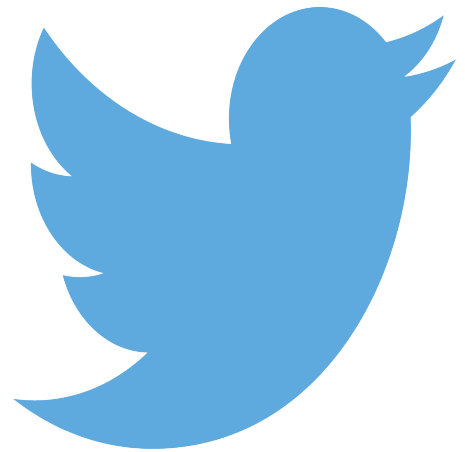
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