

SEXUAL HEALTH NOVA SCOTIA



ANNUAL REPORT 2022 - 2023

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Based in Mi'kma'ki, SHNS acknowledges that the lands on which we work are the traditional and unceded territories of the Mi'kmaq. We recognize and appreciate the ancestral and continued ties of Indigenous Peoples to the lands and waters in the region known as Nova Scotia. We cannot engage in the work of addressing health inequities without considering the ongoing and historical impact of colonialism and settler structures on the first peoples, including those who are Two-Spirit. We also need to recognize the historical oppression of African Nova Scotians, People of Colour and Immigrants in our province. As a community-based organization it is our responsibility to engage in anti-racist practices as we strive to support and make change for the people we serve.

We cannot celebrate the accomplishments of our last year without noting the ways we know we have more work to do. Serving our Indigenous and Black communities is an area that we are working to further prioritize through our programming, representation within our staff and volunteer positions, and in our educational content. We take full responsibility for our continued growth in this area, and are excited for a year full of deeper, wider, and more diverse programs and services.



FIG. 1.1 / MI'KMA'KI TANTU'U-KINANGENIK. TEACHING ABOUT THE MI'KMAQ

ABOUT SHNS

MISSION

Sexual Health Nova Scotia (SHNS) is a leading and expert voice around the issues of sexual and reproductive health. We champion positive sexual health throughout the lifespan for all Nova Scotians through the following core activities:

- Advocacy;
- Education;
- Navigation;
- Partnership.



VISION

We envision a province where positive sexual health is held in the same regard as any other area of wellness, and people can enjoy their sexuality free from shame and violence, with access to judgement-free services when and where they need them.

VALUES

Sexual Health Nova Scotia and its member-centres are:

- Sex-positive, open-minded, and non-shaming
- Respectful of individuals' confidentiality and autonomy
- Pro-choice
- Trauma-informed
- Committed to an evidence-based approach rooted in best and promising practices
- Mindful of equity and inclusion in all aspects of our work

We can do more together than we can alone!

AN INTRODUCTORY MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD CHAIRS

This has been a year of transformation for SHNS. In 2022 we welcomed Stella Samuels as our new Executive Director. We are sincerely grateful for Stella and the thought and care they put into their work with SHNS. Their depth of knowledge and breadth of experience have, and continue to be, a great asset to the organization, and we look forward to continuing our work together.

In 2022 SHNS received additional operational funding from the Provincial Government of Nova Scotia, which has allowed us to increase services at our five current member-centres. Over this past year we have also celebrated the success of the Transformation Closet, with over 400 pieces of gender-affirming gear distributed through mailouts, at our partner pick-up locations and at our outreach table at the Atlantic Sex Show and Dalhousie Gender-Affirming Care Day.

This year SHNS wrapped up the You+U=U initiative, bridging the gaps in HIV awareness in Nova Scotia. Additionally, SHNS participated in a wide variety of gender, sexual and reproductive health advocacy activities, including membership in a collaborative initiative to advocate for increased access to Mpox vaccines. The Mpox working group has since transitioned into a gender, sexual and reproductive health group, where SHNS is active in an advocacy campaign to the Province of Nova Scotia for a provincial gender and sexual reproductive health strategy.

In the past few months SHNS has welcomed three new staff members, hired as a part of a federal grant from Health Canada's Sexual and Reproductive Care Fund. SHNS received this grant to create a provincial sexual, gender and reproductive health registry and warmline. We were very lucky to welcome Leigh Heide back to SHNS, in their new role as Project Manager. We are also pleased to welcome Chrissy Merrigan, System Navigator, and Kelsey Benoit, Community Navigator. Additionally, we are pleased to have Shauntia Israel on board as our Summer Project Assistant. We are appreciative to all our employees for their dedication to furthering gender, sexual and reproductive health work in Nova Scotia. Thank you for all your hard work.

We are sincerely thankful to our executive, member-centre representatives, and board members for the time and commitment you dedicate to SHNS, we appreciate your service.

Thank you for your continued contributions to gender, sexual and reproductive justice in Nova Scotia.

Jenny Rand and Emma Van Rooyen

Co-Chairs, Sexual Health Nova Scotia

WHO WE ARE



MEMBER-CENTRES

CAPE BRETON CENTRE FOR SEXUAL HEALTH

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - VANESSA WALKER (she/her)

HALIFAX SEXUAL HEALTH CENTRE

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - ABBEY FERGUSON (she/her)

SEXUAL HEALTH CENTRE FOR CUMBERLAND COUNTY

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - RENE ROSS (she/her)

SOUTH SHORE SEXUAL HEALTH

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - JULIE VEINOT (she/her)

SHEET HARBOUR SEXUAL HEALTH CENTRE

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - HANNAH MACDONALD (she/her)

SHNS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

JENNY RAND - CHAIR, CHAIR ON LEAVE

EMMA VAN ROOYEN - VICE-CHAIR, ACTING CHAIR

BRYAH BOUTILIER - SECRETARY

SARA BRUSHETT - TREASURER

KATHY MCKAY - CHAIR HR COMMITTEE

SARAH RODIMON - MEMBER-AT-LARGE

COLLETTE ROBERT - MEMBER-AT-LARGE

LORRIE BOUTILIER - SHSHC REP

TRACEY WALSH - SHSHC REP

JULIE VEINOT - SSSH REP (acting)

ERIN CARR - SSSH REP

MADISON BENNETT - MEMBER-AT-LARGE

PHILLIP JOY - MEMBER-AT-LARGE

ROBERT ROBINSON - SHCCC REP

WINTER HILL - CBCSH REP

MARGARET LEWIS - HSHC REP

VANESSA WALKER - CBCSH REP (acting)

STAFF

STELLA SAMUELS - EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (they/them)

LEIGH HEIDE - PROJECT MANAGER (they/them)

CHRISSY MERRIGAN - SYSTEM NAVIGATOR (she/they)

KELSEY BENOIT - COMMUNITY NAVIGATOR (she/they)

SHAUNTIA ISRAEL - PROJECT ASSISTANT (she/her)

2022-2023 HIGHLIGHTS

Provincial Advocacy

SHNS kicked off what proved to be an exciting year for advocacy by attending the Standing Committee on Health and the Standing Committee on Public Accounts meetings at the NS Legislature to discuss access to birth control and sexual health services.

In a fruitful collaboration between a number of community members, non-profits organizations, and academic partners, the group successfully worked with the Province to increase access to the Mpox pre-exposure vaccination resulting in clinics at HSHC and CBSHC.

Having achieved what we set out to do, the Mpox working group transformed into a Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy group, chaired by SHNS. Our letter requesting a provincial Gender, Sexual, Reproductive Health strategy went to Premier Houston on February 9th, 22 and was released on social media. As a result, we were invited to speak with the office of Equity & Engagement and look forward to continuing the conversation in 2023.

We were pleased to support the initiatives of our partners and colleagues working tirelessly to improve access to SGRH services. A sample of our support includes:

- Supported Action Canada Position Endorsement: No new abortion law needed:
<https://www.actioncanadashr.org/news/2022-08-10-organizations-support-no-new-abortion-law-canada>
- Attended Action Hepatitis Canada Meeting with NS Ministries of Health and Justice to discuss Hep C treatment and testing in prisons
- Signed on to PrEP letter spearheaded by SHAG Labs at Dalhousie
- Signatory for the advocacy letter organized by Action Canada re: the 2023 budget requesting the continuation of the Federal fund which is funding our SRH Registry & Warmline project



2022-2023 HIGHLIGHTS

Transformation Closet

We were thrilled to receive a Kia Communities in Motion grant to scale the Transformation Closet provincially to provide free, low barrier access to gender-affirming gear to Nova Scotians, expanding on the successful South Shore Sexual Health initiative.

We rolled out the program in August 2022 with administrative support from Julie Veinot, ED, South Shore Sexual Health, creating the infrastructure to grow the program and selection of gear (with a special thank you to gc2b's Binder Donation Partnership Program). With support from pick-up locations, including the SHNS member-centers and community partners such as The Red Door and Acadia Students' Union, we increased availability to all areas of the province. To ensure the program was accessible, we mailed packages to underserved areas of the province and attended several events with our travelling T-Closet: the Atlantic Sex Show and Dalhousie GAC day.

We are pleased to report we had more than 265 orders and gave out more than 400 items to folks around the province. We are looking forward to continuing the program in 2023.



2022-2023 HIGHLIGHTS

SGRH Registry & Warmline

After three years conceptualizing the project with community partners in response to a gap in Nova Scotia we were excited to learn we recieved funding from Health Canada, Sexual and Reproductive Health Unit, under the Health Care Policy and Strategies Program for the SGRH Registry & Warmline: a project which will establish a virtual provincial database of service providers supported by system navigators to facilitate timely and early linkages to sexual, gender, and reproductive healthcare (SGRH) and build primary healthcare provider capacity on these services by increasing access to SGRH learning.

The project is currently funded from Jan 1, 2023 - March 31, 2024 with the Registry anticipated to launch in November, 2023. The SGRH Registry & Warmline is well underway with three new dedicated staff. We look forward to presenting our Registry at the next AGM!

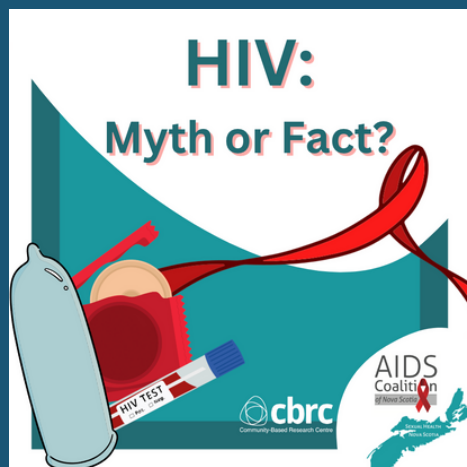


2022-2023 HIGHLIGHTS

YOU + U = U

SHNS and partners (CBRC and ACNS) set out to learn about the understanding in Nova Scotian communities of Undetectable = Untransmittable as an effective prevention method to reduce the transmission of HIV. We believe locally informed Knowledge Translation & Exchange resources are an effective way to reach specific populations and increase connection to care.

Generously funded by Gilead Sciences Canada Inc. through the Canada to Zero Program, we hired a Peer Coordinator and Peer Facilitator to conduct focus groups, produce a research report, launch a social media campaign, and host a webinar. This project allowed us to gain a better understanding of Nova Scotian perceptions of HIV prevention methods, specifically U=U, and created resources that can be used to increase communities' connection to care and encourage individual and community-based participation in the reduction of HIV transmission.



2022-2023 HIGHLIGHTS

Sexcellence Awards

In November we held a virtual celebration event for community educator, Rachele Manett, winner of the 2022 Sexcellence Awards, with guest speaker April Hubbard.

A donation was made in Rachele Manett's name to Sins Invalid, a disability justice based performance project that incubates and celebrates artists with disabilities, centralizing artists of color and LGBTQ / gender-variant artists as communities who have been historically marginalized.

We are excited to celebrate our 2023 Sexcellence Award winner, The Red Door: Youth Health and Support Centre, later this summer.



SHNS NETWORK *BY THE NUMBERS*

10,112

one on one contacts
made with
clients/patients



over

400

pieces of gender-
affirming gear
distributed



over

24,645

safer sex supplies
distributed



more than

3690

volunteer hours
contributed



approximately

10,512

folks who received
educational
programming



**COMMUNITY REACH
THROUGH
SHNS INSTAGRAM
ENGAGEMENT**



47

2,011

34

263

**POSTS
LIKES
COMMENTS
SAVES**

2022-2023 MEMBER-CENTRE HIGHLIGHTS



CAPE BRETON CENTRE FOR SEXUAL HEALTH

- Created and delivered our grade 4/5 program called Body Boss to 11 different schools throughout Cape Breton. We also received \$9000 in grant money to support this program through the Community Health Boards in our area.
- Invited to do consent training with the local hockey team, the Cape Breton Eagles.
- Partnered with Public Health to host the Mpox clinic for the CBRM.
- Travelled to Ottawa for the Action Canada Conference.
- Received \$20,000 in grant money from the Gender and Equity grant to put together hygiene kits for local youth.

HALIFAX SEXUAL HEALTH CENTRE



- Partnered with the NSHA and Public Health (DHW) to deliver Mpox vaccinations.
- Hired a social worker to offer free readiness letters and help HSHC begin our journey into offering informed consent model of gender-affirming care.
- Delivered 200+ HIV self-testing kits with the support of CBRC TestNow 2.0.
- Highlighted HSHC's work on HIV self-test kit delivery and Mpox response on a national level at CBRC's Summit in Vancouver.
- Scheduled and sustained almost a 100% clinical capacity over the year, thanks to our incredible team of physicians.

2022-2023 MEMBER-CENTRE HIGHLIGHTS



SEXUAL HEALTH CENTRE FOR CUMBERLAND COUNTY

- Facilitated our Safer Spaces workshops including our event for families last summer.
- Grand Marshalling the Pride parade.
- Reached hundreds of thousands with accurate sexual health information via our social media platforms.
- Piloted our first GSA summer program.
- Hosted students through partnerships with NSCC.
- Supported teachers and schools through our Sexual Health Matters program.

SOUTH SHORE SEXUAL HEALTH



- Received \$20,000 in partial funding for the project "Framework for Anti-Oppression Renewal" from the Rural Communities Foundation of Nova Scotia, which will help us rework our bylaws and policy manual in conjunction with another grant (announcement forthcoming!).
- Placed our gender diverse youth book on Amazon for sale as a "print to order" item (as well as ordered some to have in the office for cash purchase).
- Held our first post-Covid fundraiser, an Inclusive Winter Formal, which raised many menstrual products for our organization.
- Was highlighted, along with Sexual Health Nova Scotia, through Kia advertising related to the Transformation Closet.
- Piloted sexual harassment presentations for upper elementary.

2022-2023 MEMBER-CENTRE HIGHLIGHTS



SHEET HARBOUR SEXUAL HEALTH CENTRE

- First Annual Pride weekend took place in Sheet Harbour in July 2022. The center was able to conduct more activities that lasted the whole weekend. As in previous years, Pride was celebrated throughout one day. Now celebrations and activities run from Friday - Sunday. Our Second Annual Pride Weekend is going to take place this July 2023.
- The Sheet Harbour Sexual Health Centre received a community grant from HRM that allowed the Center to update our reading and educational material. The Center purchased over 120 new books for the community to be able to borrow and read. We are currently working on developing an online library that will allow community members to browse our reading list and request to borrow books.
- The Center received a grant from the Eastern Shore Musquodoboit Community Health Board. The grant allowed the Center to develop an eight week program that will be held after school hours for grades 8-12. The program focuses on talking to youth about body awareness, self-esteem, healthy relationships, gender identity while providing youth the tools to navigate difficult situations, conversations and decisions.
- SHSHC created a partnership with the Eastern Shore Memorials nurse practitioner. This has allowed us to hold monthly sexual health clinics.

THANK YOU!



We want to first thank the Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness and Public Health for providing SHNS' core funding. Our work would not be possible without your support, and the impact that these resources have on Nova Scotians should not be understated.

We want to thank the Health Canada, Sexual and Reproductive Health Unit, under the Health Care Policy and Strategies Program for the resources we were given to create the Provincial SGR Registry & Warmline. We are excited to have begun this project and look forward to bringing it into existence.



COMMUNITIES
IN MOTION



We thank Kia Communities in Motion for funding our provincial Transformation Closet Program. Kia Communities in Motion is made possible through the support of Kia Canada.

We thank Gilead Sciences Canada, Inc. for the *Canada to Zero* sponsorship that resourced You + U = U.



Lastly, we want to thank our entire community for the support, love, and solidarity we have felt over the past year. To our Board members, community partners, community members, volunteers, member-centres, government partners, and collaborators, we are so grateful to each and every one of you.