

ADVANCING THE PRIORITIES OF OUR COMMUNITY IN A SEASON OF CHANGE

On behalf of the board and management of Nine Circles, thank you to our members and supporters for your contributions over the past year.

This year has been truly challenging as Nine Circles worked to advance the priorities of our community and deliver our high-quality health and social services. This year was a period of significant organizational change, ending in a ground-up response to COVID-19. We could not be prouder of the Nine Circles staff for their resiliency and dedication through this challenging time.

A special thank you to staff members Lana, Suzy, Sarah-Jane, Leslie and Jordyn who have moved on to their next adventures. Thank you as well to Roger Procyk who completed his time with us this past year, retiring after 24 years of contribution to Nine Circles and Village Clinic.

This past year, Nine Circles continued to find success in priority areas including:

EXPANDING OUR COMMITMENT TO MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT & CULTURAL SAFETY

The Nine Circles and Manitoba HIV Program teams have successfully embedded Peer Research Associates and Peer Evaluation Assistants in client survey development, implementation and analysis. Peer leadership opportunities have expanded through our HIV/STBBI Collective Impact Network and will re-emerge in the fall.

Our Mino Pimatisiwin project team is completing a cultural safety workplan. This plan will be brought to Indigenous clients of Nine Circles for validation over the summer and guide our efforts going forward.



PROVIDING A SPACE TO FEEL SAFE, SUPPORTED AND WELCOMED

Our Front Area Safety Committee continues to work diligently to balance the needs of a diverse client population, and adapt how we host community to improve safety and comfort. This work will continue through the coming year and this team will take a lead in post-COVID re-opening strategies that build on client feedback.

Renovations to Nine Circles are in the planning stage, with an intended virtual client consultation coming soon. Client and staff priorities are guiding development. While additional financial investments will be required to complete this work, Phase One will prioritize client safety and comfort.

ADVOCATING WITH OUR COMMUNITY

Over the past year, Nine Circles has and will continue to advocate for a range of system changes to better meet the needs of the population we serve, including: Universal HIV Treatment coverage; improved access to PrEP, PEP, Naloxone and Narcan; managed alcohol programming; safe consumption and safe supply. Additionally, with the support of our Lived Experience Advisory and MACH Harm Reduction Project Peer group, we continue to challenge stigmatizing messaging in media. If you haven't yet sent a letter to advocate for Universal HIV Treatment, please go to bit.ly/TasPAdvocacy



L & R: Coming together and raising awareness at the Red Ribbon Walk & Run fundraiser

ENSURING EVIDENCE-BASED PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Big shout out to the Health Promotion and Education team (Tania, Shauna and Srinath) for the exceptional work in the development of the Standing Strong workshop series. Developed through consultation and feedback from Manitobans living with HIV, Standing Strong offers knowledge, support and an opportunity to connect through four key topics: the basics of HIV and HAART, prevention and harm reduction for sexual activity and drug use, the rights and responsibilities around HIV disclosure, and dealing with stigma in order to find support and continue HIV care. Our target audience is anyone living with HIV and their HIV negative supports (friends, family, partners.)

FUTURE PLANNING

Going forward, projects this year will explore more deeply how we can better serve People Who Use Drugs (Meeting the Moment); African, Caribbean and Black Women Living with HIV (Perspectives in HIV Care and Support) and Manitoba Two-Spirit, Gay, Bisexual and Queer Men (TSGBQ Men's Health Study).

Mike Payne, Executive Director
Ken Bristow, Board President

SMILING UNDER OUR MASKS: ADAPTING TO OUR NEW REALITY

BY TERI STEVENS

“Do you mind opening your mouth for me?” The STI nurse asks, her eyes smiling above a stiff blue medical mask. But this isn’t an STI exam, and the nurse is my coworker, wanting to take my temperature before I can enter the building.

It’s an incredibly surreal experience to walk into your workplace and be greeted by your colleagues dressed head to toe in personal protective equipment— coworkers you shared a small lunch table with the week before. I’m sure it’s surreal for our clients too. Regular programming is suspended, access to the building is restricted and those who do enter are guided through specific corridors by arrows taped out on the floor. But, in the interest of keeping both staff and clients safe while COVID-19 is a risk to all of us, adapting is the only option we have to keep our doors open.

When the coronavirus that causes COVID-19 came to Manitoba in early March 2020, Nine Circles had to make radical shifts to our programs and services in a short time frame. Workshops and groups were cancelled immediately, staff who were able to work from home left the office, the majority of appointments were transferred from in-person to by-phone, and everyone had to learn how to use Zoom.

It was important to us that we stay open and accessible to our clients, especially those who face the most barriers in our society. People who don’t have the means to stock up on pandemic food and toilet paper still needed to access our food bank. People who use drugs still needed to be able to access harm reduction equipment to reduce their risk of HIV transmission and naloxone to respond to overdose. And people still needed access to their caregivers, like their social workers, therapists, doctors and nurses,

especially at a time when everything was so tumultuous. So, we found a balance by testing things out, listening to public health leaders, and looking to our harm reduction philosophies for guidance.

Making this “new normal” work hasn’t always been easy. We know some of our clients can be quite isolated, so not being able to offer space for people to come together and connect has been challenging. Limiting routine STI screening so we can prioritize the most urgent cases is the opposite of our usual sexual health messaging. But there has been joy too, and a reminder that the work we do matters. We see what it means to people to have access to our building. Clients tell us what it means for them to be able to talk through their fears with someone and get support. And people have been so appreciative when our staff has delivered Food Bank hampers-- something that’s been a positive experience for staff too.

“In a time when I feel like there are such limited ways that I can help, getting to help out with Food Bank feels really great,” our Dietician says. “I am grateful for our team and that food bank is being prioritized as a service. Thanks to all who are keeping food bank running!”

It may be a long time before things get less weird, before the check points disappear and we can see our colleagues’ smiling faces without masks again. So many things have changed that it can make your head spin. But what hasn’t changed is just how much everyone who works at Nine Circles cares about our clients and our community.

On that snowy March day, after I passed the temperature screening and entered the office, a client came through behind me. They answered the screening questions and once they were granted entry, they headed down the hall to grab harm reduction supplies.

“Hey, how’s it going?” I heard one of the Health Education Facilitators say, exuding warmth and friendliness. She too was smiling behind her mask. “How can we help you today?”

Smashing stigma & getting the conversation started with our sex friendly photobooth for Pride Winnipeg



IN THE REARVIEW MIRROR: LOOKING BACK ON 2019-20

SHARING KNOWLEDGE & EMBRACING COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Last June, Nine Circles participated in two major events designed to encourage HIV/STBBI testing and decrease stigma around HIV (STBBI=Sexually Transmitted & Blood-Borne Infections). At the beginning of the month, we partnered with a national team led by the Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity to bring the **Positivity Campaign** to Pride Festivals across the country, including Winnipeg. We shared space with them at the Festival and encouraged Pride attendees to sign an anti-HIV Stigma pledge, participate in a stigma-challenging art project and pose in our sex-positive photobooth promoting our Sex Friendly Manitoba website.

Then, later that month, we organized activities for the second annual **National HIV Testing Day** in Canada. We hosted free testing, cupcakes, coffee, and a naloxone training group. Along with promoting getting tested, getting the word out about U=U or Undetectable = Untransmittable was another objective of the day. Lived Experience Advisory members Lisa and Christine acted as U=U ambassadors, greeting people and talking with them about what it means to be undetectable. Because proper treatment of HIV works to lower the viral load of a person living with HIV to a level where the virus is not detectable in their blood stream, someone who is undetectable cannot transmit the virus through sexual contact. That’s a fact more people should know about, and a reason why HIV medication should be easily accessible and affordable for all people living with HIV!



Nine Circles staff screen for COVID-19 symptoms

FINALIZING STANDING STRONG

This past winter, our Health Education team finished creating facilitation guides for our Standing Strong workshop series. Standing Strong was developed by Nine Circles to help people living with HIV and their HIV-negative supports build knowledge, skills and attitudes to address health, quality of life, well-being, and HIV prevention. We held facilitated focus groups after pilot modules were developed to gain participant feedback. Their insights influenced the name and logo used for the series, the duration and frequency of workshops, the topics covered, cultural components of the workshops, and services that would be useful to offer in conjunction with the workshops like childcare, snacks and bus tickets. We are grateful to the clients who gave their time and input during this process.

clients as Program Evaluation Assistants. They learned research methodology in order to lead the design, implementation and analysis of HIV program activities and helped develop a 91-question survey which they then administered one-on-one to participants.

HELPING HIV SELF-TESTING GET APPROVED IN CANADA

A key factor in decreasing the transmission of HIV is ensuring that more people are getting tested. Self-testing is not currently available in Canada but has proven to be an effective and convenient way to test for HIV in other parts of the world. Nine Circles joined a study funded by the CIHR Centre for Reach 3.0 and CANFAR to determine whether people could use the tests accurately and would access care if their test came back positive.



The Nine Circles Board of Directors with the Executive Director

RECOGNITION FROM THE WINNIPEG FOUNDATION

Nine Circles was honoured to receive a \$50,000 grant from The Winnipeg Foundation this year as part of their strategy to provide \$5.27 million to charities that work in mental health, addictions and community safety. Generally, The Foundation supports specific initiatives, but these grants are unrestricted because they recognize that the “challenges Winnipeg has been facing in the areas of mental health and addictions are complicated and inter-connected... and the current situation calls for a more immediate and coordinated effort.” Thank you very much to The Winnipeg Foundation for your generous support, and for trusting the expertise of front-line organizations!

LETTING THOSE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE LEAD

In order to inform our education and advocacy activities and provide a platform for HIV-positive individuals to lead efforts to decrease HIV stigma in Manitoba, Nine Circles undertook a Manitoba HIV Program client survey this year. The project aimed to train a group of five Manitoba HIV program

SAYING SEE YOU LATER

At the end of March, outreach worker Roger Procyk worked his last shift. His parting wisdom, in his own words:

“I was studying Journalism at Red River College in 1986-ish when I got involved in the HIV/AIDS epidemic. It became a calling and took me to the Swampy Cree Tribal Council AIDS Project and then to the National Aboriginal PHA Network, then to Village Clinic which amalgamated into Nine Circles in 2001.

In that time, HIV went from a death sentence to a chronic manageable disease. Just about the best we could hope for. The campaign was long and hard fought. Few Winnipeggers are aware of how many young people in Manitoba died in the early years—a lot. Thankfully the campaign was ultimately successful. Now, I am leaving the new campaign to a younger generation—a smart, capable & talented generation. Judging by the people I see around me at Nine Circles—a generation with caring and spirit and energy. Let us use the way forward to imagine and implement a better world.”

FAST TAKES



1433 CLIENTS:
679 FOR HIV CARE
754 FOR PRIMARY CARE

2,369 FOOD BANK CONTACTS



DR JEN CAMPBELL
HAD A PAPER
PUBLISHED IN THE
CANADIAN MEDICAL
ASSOCIATION
JOURNAL

7,688 CONTACTS
FOR SAFER DRUG
USE SUPPLIES



CBC'S NOW OR
NEVER VISITED TO
LEARN HOW TO USE
NALOXONE

1956 STI
APPOINTMENTS



157 SEXUAL HEALTH
QUESTIONS HAVE
BEEN ANSWERED
ON SEX FRIENDLY
MANTIOBA



Top: Co-hosting a community testing event for World AIDS Day. Bottom: Happy retirement to Roger!

THANK YOU

Adam & Eve
 All Charities Campaign
 APTN
 Banville & Jones
 Booke & Partners
 Canada Life
 CATIE
 City of Winnipeg
 Clear Concepts
 CN
 CUPE Manitoba
 DJ Danno
 Dr. Albert McLeod
 Dr. Amy Frykoda
 Dr. Gayle Restall
 Dr. John Kim & the National
 Microbiology Laboratory
 Dr. Linda Larcombe
 Dr. Marcia Anderson
 Dr. Rusty Souleymanov
 Dr. Sean O'Rourke & REACH 3.0
 Ecole Sun Valley School
 Energy 106 and Sara & Tyler
 Fame Nightclub
 Food Fare Maryland
 Francis Glen Pagaduan
 Gilead Sciences Canada
 GoodLife Fitness
 JD and the Sunshine Band
 Jim Kane
 Joan Costalotsa
 Ka Ni Kanichihk Inc
 Karen O'Brien
 Manitoba Harm Reduction Network
 Manitoba HIV/STBBI Collective Impact
 Stewardship Committee
 Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries
 Merck Canada Inc.

Nancy Vystrićil & Hillary Cooper
 (NRHA)
 Nine Circles Volunteers
 Nine Circles' Lived Experience
 Advisory, PRAs & PEAs
 Pamela & Bryan Harmer
 Payworks
 Pride Winnipeg
 Public Health Agency of Canada
 QHR Technologies
 Reel Pride-The Winnipeg Gay &
 Lesbian Film Society
 Robertson College Massage Therapy
 Rosa Colavito-Palao
 Safeway Sargent
 Save-on-Foods Bridgewater Centre
 Sexuality Education Resource Centre
 (SERC)
 Sisters of Fire
 Snowy Owl Monarchist Society
 St. Michaels Hospital
 Starbucks
 The Wellness Institute at Seven Oaks
 Hospital
 The Winnipeg Foundation
 The University of Manitoba
 Video Pool Media Arts Centre
 ViiV Healthcare
 West Broadway Community
 Development Corp
 Winnipeg Harvest
 Winnipeg Regional Health Authority
 Women's Health Clinic
 WRHA Healthy Sexuality & Harm
 Reduction

And Elder Velma Orvis, you will be
 greatly missed.



Above: Posing in the Nine Circles Photobooth at Pride; CBC's Now or Never learns how to inject a grapefruit with Naloxone. Below: Joan Costalotsa performs at the Red Ribbon Walk & Run; Lived Experience Advisory members & the Executive Director at a World AIDS Day event.



FOLLOW US:
 @ninecircleschc



GET OUR E-NEWS:
 ninecircles.ca/subscribe