

ANNUAL REPORT

CMHA Fort Frances

2023/24



Canadian Mental
Health Association
Fort Frances Branch
Mental health for all

Table of contents

3

Vision, mission, values

4

A message from the board chair and CEO

5

2022-25 strategic plan

6

Year-in-review

- 6** Out and about with DMHSOAP
- 9** Safe Bed and Mobile Crisis Response programs
- 10** Peer Support Program
- 13** Community Support Team
- 14** Psychogeriatric Resource Program
- 16** Mental health promotion

18

By the numbers

19

Financial report

Land acknowledgment

We begin by acknowledging that we are within Treaty 3 territory and that the land on which we live and work is the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe people and the homeland of the Metis Nation. As taught by Treaty 3 Ojibwe Elder, “When we speak about the land, we recognize that we ARE the land. The land is all of us, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous. The land is a collection of our history, our current experiences, and our future together.” We offer this land acknowledgment in the spirit of reconciliation, recognizing the historical and contemporary impacts of colonialism while committing to working together as Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to build a better future.”

Vision, mission, values



Our vision

Mental health and wellness in all communities.



Our mission

To be a leader in the provision of advocacy, education, research and client-centred recovery-based services in the Kenora and Rainy River Districts.



Our values

Collaboration

Empowerment and self-determination

Diversity and social justice

Accountability

Integrity and transparency

Innovation

Board of directors

Charlene Strain, *CEO*

Dana Cridland, *Chair*

Heather Johnson, *Vice-Chair*

Tara Tolley, *Treasurer*

Linda Rajala, *Secretary*

Lisa Devlin

Nicole LePine

Candace Green

A message from the board chair and CEO

We share the 2023-24 annual report with immense pride. It's a testament to the dedication and tenacity of our staff and board. We hope you enjoy reading about this year's many highlights, initiatives, and events, all resulting from their exceptional efforts.

In 2023-24, CMHAFF welcomed Dawn Redford, director of corporate development and finance, to the management team. Our small but mighty management team also includes CEO Charlene Strain and director of services Pauline Hyatt. Together, we're working toward making our collective vision a reality.

We want to recognize and thank the CMHAFF leadership team for embarking on a journey of development throughout this past year. Although this is challenging work, we're working toward clear leadership goals with a steadfast commitment to our mission of providing client-centred programming and services to those living with mental health and substance use issues in our communities. This commitment is unwavering and guides all our actions.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the front-line staff at CMHAFF, whose tireless efforts are the backbone of our organization. Their commitment to delivering high-quality programming and the creativity they bring to various activities and events is a true testament to their dedication. The astounding number of workshops, events and in-services, which all occur off the side of staff desks, promote health and wellness, connection and resiliency while profoundly impacting many lives. The commitment of the frontline staff is a source of pride and inspiration for all of us.


Thank you to our community partners for the ongoing collaboration in providing comprehensive care and support to those we serve. Together, we accomplish incredible things, and we look forward to our continued work to enhance mental health and substance use care in the Kenora and Rainy River Districts.

Many thanks to the CMHAFF board of directors for your expertise, support and commitment to this association. Most importantly, we want to recognize and thank our clients, families and communities for allowing us to serve them.




Dana Cridland
Board chair




Char Strain
CEO

2022-25 strategic plan



Addictions/addictions services

- Public education to reduce stigma
- Addiction education for all staff
- Advocate for additional programs and services



Communication

- IT support is critical
- Look at "how" we communicate
- Consider alternatives for team communications
- Crossover with education/training



Education and community awareness

- Create an education/trainer position
- Community presentations/participation
- Use of digital solutions
- Orientation to all programs for staff



Housing and homelessness

- Advocate for more safe/affordable housing
- Consider whether we should provide housing
- Work to raise community awareness
- Advocate for other forms of housing



Organizational supports

- Dedicated IT and HR staff
- Seek accreditation
- Maintenance support
- Consider supports when planning growth



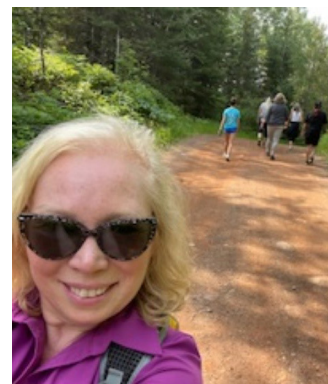
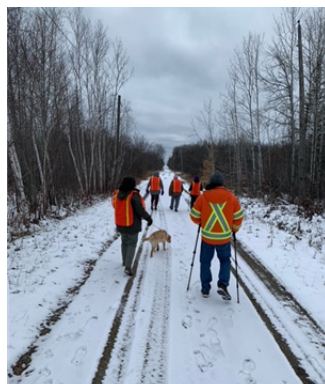
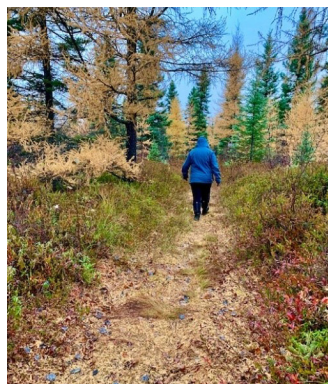
Transportation

- Partner with other agencies to provide transportation
- Review agency transportation policies
- Advocate for better options in our communities
- Increase knowledge of programs in different communities
- Support/develop innovative programs like "rent-a-bike"

Year-in-review

Out and about with DMHSOAP

DMHSOAP was getting out and about this past year, attending fairs, hosting booths and facilitating Mood Walks. The team has also been facilitating Understanding Mental Health and Well-Being in Later Life workshops, as part of its preventative programming goal. Staff have just as much fun at these events as participants do!



Norma Reather and Tamara Robson facilitated eight sessions of Mood Walks in the Fort Frances area starting in October. Each walk began with instructions on a mindfulness practice. Patricia Dunnet, geriatric mental health worker in Atikokan, enjoyed facilitating Mood Walks into the colder months as well.



In November, Levi Morris and Norma attended the Fort Frances Senior Centre Active Living Fair where approximately 50 district and community members attended, along with various agencies to learn about available local resources. There were door prizes, information to take home and short presentations about the agency programs, as well as longer information sessions from a local lawyer and fire department. Though it was touted as the second fair, they hope this becomes an annual event within the district.

Volunteers in the community were also recognized for the help and work they provide. Lunch was provided by the Royal Canadian Legion Women's Auxiliary.



In January, the Rainy River Seniors Club hosted an active living fair, inviting local agencies, volunteers and the public. Approximately 60 people attended the fair which included booths and prize draws, a panel of professionals, and small group working to discuss what the definition of a good partnership is, how do we work through obstacles (and what are they?), and how to welcome people with differences of opinions.

Also in January, Bonnie Tourond (geriatric mental health lead) and Taylor Judson (geriatric mental health worker) hosted an information booth at the Better Together Game for Mental Health at the Dryden Arena. This game was played between the Dryden GM Ice Dogs and community first responders (players from Dryden Ontario Provincial Police, Dryden Fire Service and Northwest Emergency Medical Services). The goal was to raise mental health awareness and money toward local mental health initiatives. The booth was attended by all ages.



Levi Morris and Norma Reather presented Understanding Mental Health and Well-Being in Later Life to residents of the Golden Age Manor in Emo in February. Mental health, mental illness, stigma, loneliness, addictions and staying well were all discussed with 28 participants while they enjoyed coffee and donuts. Participants enjoyed the mindfulness meditation, and it went so well that CMHAFF has been invited back monthly for several presentations on mental health.

In March, Levi and Norma presented to 21 residents of the Golden Age Manor in Emo on Understanding Depression in Later Life. An interactive session of scenarios, tips, analogies, questions and resources were provided to all those in attendance, as well as a draw prize which was drawn by participants Helen Allen and Kristine Carpenter. These mental health sessions will continue monthly until September 2024.



Nathalie Legros from the CMHAFF DMHSOAP in Dryden takes a moment to distribute cookies and to chat with older adults at one of the seniors' residences about this year's theme.



Rebecca Vallee, geriatric mental health worker, attended the Ear Falls Family Safety Night in May 2023.

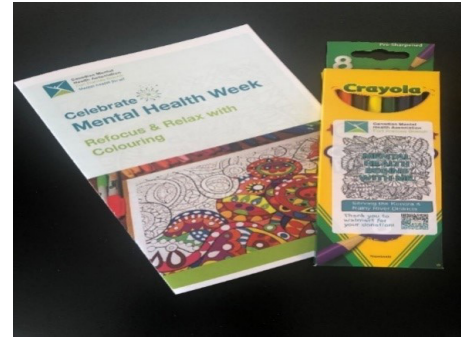


DMHSOAP facilitated a meaningful social connection in the community for this 97-year-old gentleman so he could pick up the snooker cue for the first time in over 60 years!

There is no age limit for colouring!

DMHSOAP created an adult colouring book that was promoted during Mental Health Week 2023. Colouring books and pencil crayons were distributed by CMHAFF staff in coffee shops and gathering places in many communities across the Rainy River and Kenora districts.

Mindfulness is a way of paying attention to the present moment to cultivate positive mental health. The colouring books serve as a good introduction to a mindfulness activity. Colouring can promote brain function, induce a meditative state, improve motor skills, improve sleep, improve focus, reduce anxiety and relieve stress. This community outreach helped to inform others of the potential benefits that colouring can add to our mental health.



Special acknowledgement to Norma Reather of DMHSOAP for initiating this innovative idea; to Walmart Branch #5806 for the generous donation that allowed us to purchase pencil crayons; and CMHA Ontario for helping with the design.

Safe Bed and Mobile Crisis Response programs

The Safe Bed Program had quite the year in 2023-24! Serving 35 clients with an average stay of 16 days, the Safe Bed Program and its staff worked diligently to provide client-centred care with a focus on recovery and achieving wellness. In doing so, many referrals were made to connect clients with community partners to strengthen their support networks. Feedback from clients during and after their stay continues to be positive, reinforcing the need for services like this in our communities.

One particularly successful event, hosted by CMHAFF's Safe Bed staff was the 'Christmas Together' events at the end of 2023. On five separate dates during Christmas time and through to New Year's, staff provided lunch, supper, snacks, games and entertainment to community members. There was cookie decorating, guitar playing, arts and crafts, Christmas movies and more! Those who attended enjoyed the opportunity to spend the holidays together with others.



The Mobile Crisis Response Team (MCRT) has been busy throughout 2023-24. With two full-time and one part-time staff, the MCRT had numerous crisis calls, many that included diversions from hospital. They provided support to individuals in crisis and connected them to appropriate community resources such as Safe Beds, Rapid Access Addiction Medicine (RAAM) clinic, counselling, case management, court support services, victim services and detox, among others. The MCRT was also busy in the community providing education on CMHAFF's various programs and services at numerous health and community fairs, and facilitating programs such as Living Life to the Full, In the Know and Talk Today.



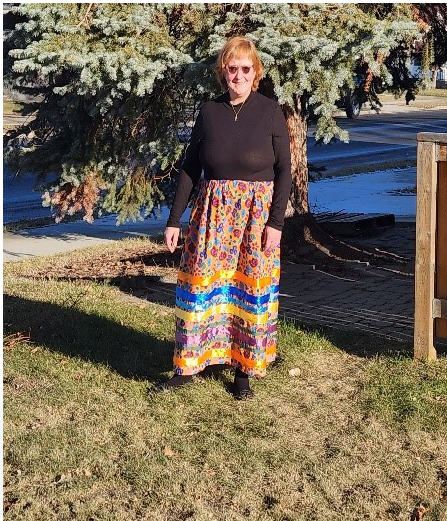
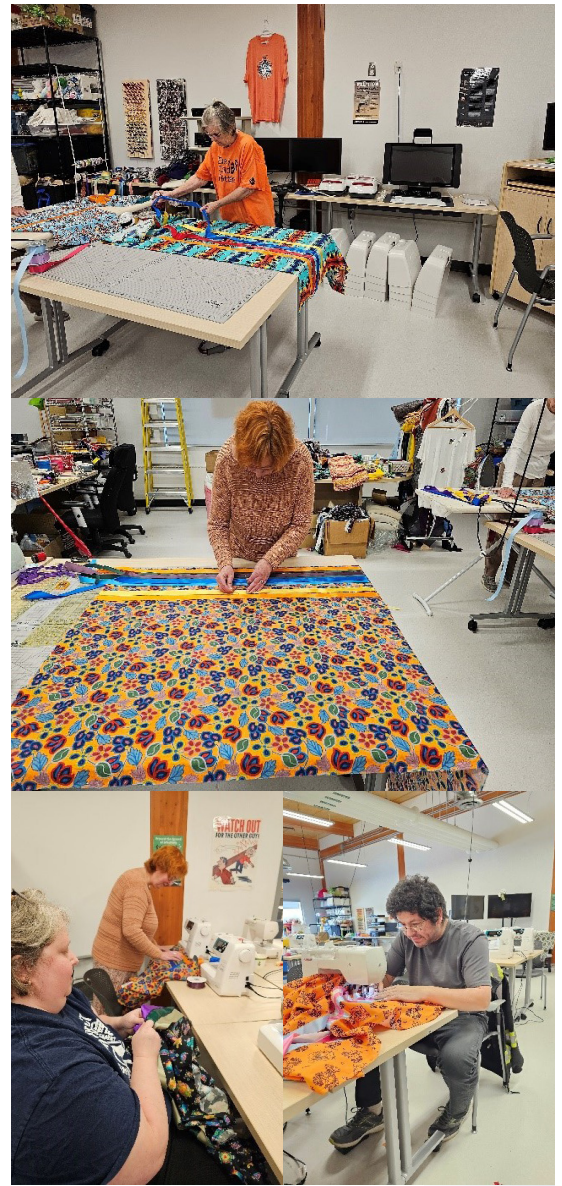
Peer Support Program

The members at the Fort Frances Peer Drop-In Program worked very hard to design and create their very own ribbon skirts this winter in our initiative called Ribbon Skirt Workshop: Colours for Change.

The ribbon skirt dates back as early as the 18th century. A ribbon skirt is a handmade, traditional garment that represents the sacredness of women in many Indigenous cultures across North America. The ribbon skirt represents cultural identity, but of pride, strength and resilience. Ribbon skirts get their name from the rows of colourful ribbons sewn along the bottom. They are worn at ceremonial events, Powwows or even incorporated into everyday wear.

With the leadership and knowledge from Elders at Seven Generations Educational Institute, members took their time choosing fabrics and coordinating ribbons, telling a story of who they are as individuals. After members picked fabrics and coloured ribbons that spoke to them, the hard work started. Each member measured, cut, pinned and sewed their skirts. They took special care in lining up seams, spacing their ribbon and adding a touch of their own personality and life experience into their designs. The time and effort put in to complete these beautiful skirts took weeks. Members put their hearts and souls into creating a personal tribute to honour our local history and this beautiful tradition.

A big thank you to Seven Generations Education Institute and Meggie for providing all the materials, sewing machines, makerspace and the knowledge to allow this to be possible.

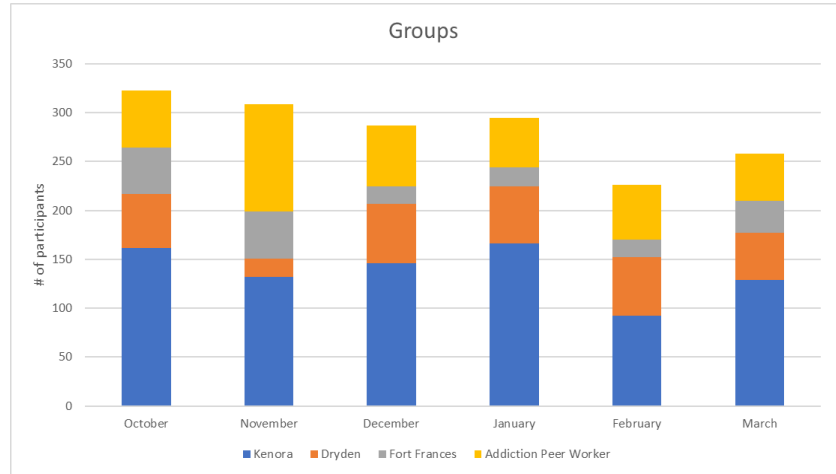


Jan. 4 marks the National Ribbon Skirt Day. On this day, Indigenous women across the country are encouraged to wear ribbon skirts to celebrate their culture, strength and connection as women.

Group programming

In October, CMHAFF's peer program started to collect our statistics differently and as part of that, decided to separately track groups facilitated within the program.

The stats shown are for the last six months of this fiscal year for groups only (October to March). CMHAFF facilitated 255 groups for 1,658 participants, not including groups convened at hospital or recovery homes.



Community gardens

The Fort Frances, Dryden and Kenora communities had a garden this year, teaching members to grow and harvest fresh vegetables. Most of the produce was used in the drop ins, with extras going home with members.



Indigenous engagement

Adrian Indian, our addiction peer support worker, presented at the Two-Eyed Seeing Conference in September in Kenora.

Adrian, as our addiction peer support worker, works with the RAAM clinic in Fort Frances, supporting clients that are accessing addiction medicine or thinking about accessing the RAAM clinic. Adrian often takes clients of RAAM and Safe Beds to sweats, drumming healing circles, rebuilding of sweat lodges and in gathering of medicines.

At our networking meeting in September, Adrian worked with an elder, Andrew to teach peer staff to make cedar bags.



Blue Lake

Dryden was able to participate for the first time since covid in the Annual Blue Lake trip. This annual event is in partnership with the Dryden Regional Hospital Group. Everyone had a blast.



Easter crafts

In March, volunteer Janis Wessel came in to help with the Easter crafts and lots of laughs and stories were told. CMHAFF has been very lucky to have Janis coming into the drop in throughout the year to do crafts with members.



Kenora

The Peer Support Program in Kenora has a great partnership with the Challenge Club, a program of Lake of the Woods District Hospital. One of the ways CMHFF partners with them is in sharing space. This shared space and many shared clients allows for celebrating events together such as Easter and Christmas. Everyone gathers to feast, socialize and participate in activities such as decorating the Christmas tree. This shares the workload and the expenses and ensures CMHAFF reaches as many people as possible.

In early November, a peer staff in Kenora requested to work with seniors at the hospital awaiting long-term care as she saw a need while she was visiting a member that was a patient on the floor. The hospital staff and management were very receptive, and Linda started visiting for up to two hours once per week. The patients loved having her there and the nurses were very happy to have her. Since then, she has also started a senior peer group, that runs one afternoon every two weeks. This is open to seniors only and is partnered with the Hospital challenge club. This group is well attended, and grows every time they have it, showing how much it really is needed. Another peer staff is also helping but if it continues to grow the group will need to move to another day when more staff are working.



Community Support Team

The Community Support Team (CST) once again expanded this year with the addition of the release from custody worker (RFCW) role. This role provides support to clients being released from custodial sentences and reintegrating back to their home communities. The RFCWs can assist with case management and refer clients to services the client recognizes as important to their ongoing recovery. This role is provided by our Court Diversion and Support Program workers, and we look forward to its further development in the coming year.

For the Case Management Program, in light of rural challenges with being rostered with a physician, we've eliminated the barrier of needing a formal diagnosis to qualify for services. We've also introduced a Case Management Program statement outlining services to clients upon intake. This, in concert with a goal agreement, allows for continued client-centred care and allows clients to track the progress made by both them and their case manager.

The Housing Program continues to make headway with the adoption of new subsidy processes allowing for assistance to clients through funding of utilities and technologies of connection. These occur mostly in the context of clients housed in rent-geared-to-income lodgings and assist with offsetting the cost of living for those on social assistance programs.

This year, CST saw a continuance of the Remote Care Management Program from its initial start in winter 2023. This program was made possible through the SeamlessMD app and also saw expansion of the referral pathways to include Riverside Community Counselling, the Atikokan Family Health Team, as well as self-referrals. The Ontario Structured Psychotherapy Program celebrates its second year with CMHAFF. The agency looks forward to the continuance of the program and its delivery throughout the districts of Kenora, Rainy River and Thunder Bay.



At a May 2023 event by Community Living and Rainy River District School Board, CMHAFF assisted with a booth sharing literature and services available for students and young adults with disabilities. Kayla Brady won our door prize, presented by housing worker Cortney Caldwell, which was a crock pot and Amazon gift card.



Ring the bell for the Salvation Army: CST lead Alastair Greig, addiction worker Caitlyn Morrison and director of services Pauline Hyatt helped raise funds for the Salvation Army to go toward the local food bank at Walmart in December.



During Mental Illness Awareness Week in October, all staff in Fort Frances participated in a free barbecue and provided literature for the community.

Here, housing support worker Mike Webb and peer support worker Kyleigh Ossachuk prepare 400 burgers for the barbecue.

Psychogeriatric Resource Program

The Psychogeriatric Resource Program (PRP) staff, also known as the Behavioural Supports Ontario (BSO) Mobile Team, have been very busy with ongoing referrals from the long-term care homes (LTCH) and acute care hospital settings they serve. While all psychogeriatric resource consultants (PRCs) are trained in the same way, the three community PRC staff, located in Atikokan, Fort Frances and Dryden, provide additional training to professional care providers, both regulated and unregulated in community care settings. Between the education sessions offered, and the consultation reports prepared, PRC staff along with their outreach personal support worker (OPSW) colleagues, allow for further understanding around why behaviours occur, encourage ongoing dialogue with respect to possible approaches and communication strategies, and build capacity with the care teams with which they work. Enhancing staff knowledge and skills is key, as the environment our PRP/BSO mobile teams face is challenging for several reasons, not the least of which is they're bearing witness to staff shortages, burnout and oftentimes low morale.

At this time, the team is made up of six PRCs and four OPSWs. Collectively, the team serves the communities of Atikokan, Dryden, Emo, Fort Frances, Kenora, Rainy River, Red Lake and Sioux Lookout. They continue to navigate the various outbreaks occurring in the different settings, doing everything they can to attend and continue their work.

The team has been working closely, wherever possible, with any of the newly embedded BSO staff members hired as part of a BSO initiative last year. While CMHAFF has seen some come and go, staff are jumping at the opportunities to provide orientation about our program and the work they do. In addition to this, some organizations have reached out and asked outreach PSWs to provide "shadowing" for embedded staff members.

The hybrid model is still a work in progress, but it has affirmed our role in the lives of the individuals referred and the care teams we work with daily.



Kenora PRP/BSO mobile team (Alyson Martin, Lianne Byram, Katey Thorburn, Tracy Katz)

Our PRCs continue to offer gentle persuasive approaches (GPA) training and have been busy across the region. Our community PRCs are working closely with Home and Community Care Support Services staff members, and are building connections with other community service providers. Requests for training, education and support are growing, and with that, essential relationships are being fostered. This is work that needs to be done in the context of a team, and "working in a vacuum" is not an option.

The OPSWs have seen family members, volunteers, and community presence increase in LTCH settings and while there are still checks and balances in relation to outbreaks and protocols to be followed, there's hope the "new normal" will include all of the individuals and allies, that make a facility a "home."

Team huddles, in-services, attendance at responsive behaviour meetings and multidisciplinary meetings continue to take place, allowing for problem identification and approaches to care to be named, assessed, trialed and mentored, all in the hopes of diffusing, mitigating and managing responsive and expressive behaviours.

The practice of “showing up” and “leaning in” are traits inherent in each of the staff members, and the compassion, commitment, determination and professionalism across the board is second to none. Client-centred care with a person-centred approach maintains integrity, autonomy and best practice, and this is what makes them exceptional professionals and ready to embrace whatever challenges come their way. They see the person before them, and help to bring them to life, not only for those providing direct care, but most importantly, for the resident/patient themselves. Putting and keeping oneself in the picture is key, and that is the challenge they face and embrace every day.



The Psychogeriatric Resource Program team (back row: Jackie King, Naomi Danco Jenn Nesbitt, Lianne Byram, Lori Russell, Lana Woodgate; front row: Katey Thorburn Stevie-Lee Kaemingh, Alyson Martin, Tracy Katz, Ange Eddison; missing: Colleen Kinnear)



In May, Older Adult Program staff moved into a new office space with the psychogeriatric staff. Pictured here are Alyson Martin, Patricia Dunnet, Jackie King, Jolene Morrisseau and Pauline Hyatt.



Atikokan: February 2024 Alyson Martin & Kristy-Lynn McQuay, Mobile Crisis Worker

Alyson and Lisa did the rounds, for Mental Illness Awareness Week (MIAW) in Sioux Lookout, delivering fruit baskets to the William A. George Extended Care Facility, Hugh Allen Clinic, and north and south pod nursing stations at Sioux Lookout Meno Ya Win Health Centre, as well as plants for our draws at Sioux Towers, Patricia Plaza and Cole Terrace – all apartments in each location are placed in the draw box. Information sheets and handouts about MIAW and taking care of oneself were also delivered.



The PRP/BSO Mobile Team said goodbye to one PRC lead Alyson Martin (right) upon her retirement, and welcomed another, Karleigh Wright, who is also a Gentle Persuasive coach trainer as well as a P.I.E.C.E.S. facilitator.

Mental health promotion

Mental Health Week

Mental Health week was May 1-7, 2023. The theme for this year's Mental Health Week was "my story" which is all about sharing our stories and experiences with mental health to help others see they're not alone. This was a time to support one another, stand up against stigma and improve our mental health. We did barbecues in Dryden as well as Fort Frances.



Mental Illness Awareness Week

Mental Illness Awareness Week (MIAW) was Oct. 3-9, 2023. The theme this year was "there is no health without mental health." CMHAFF is here to reduce the stigma. The branch did two events this MIAW, including barbecues in Fort Frances as well as Dryden. Both were very successful events, serving in total 600 hamburgers in the two communities. Atikokan, Red Lake, Kenora and Sioux Lookout all participated with distributing cookies, cupcakes, ribbons with posters and plants.



The second MIAW event was Steps against Stigma taking place at the Fort Frances waterfront. The glow walk had approximately 70 walkers/runners participate. Funds were raised for local programming within CMHAFF. Prizes were awarded for best glow group, glow pet and glow individual.



Leadership retreat

May 2023



Back row: Alastair Greig, Maria Marchant, Jolene Morrisseau, Char Strain, Karleigh Wright, Stacy Hahkala, Bonnie Tourond
Front Row: Dawn Redford, Pauline Hyatt, Tana Langtry, Alyson Martin



Our leadership retreat in May was focused on our design to be better together. These retreats give our organization's leaders an opportunity to:

- Building personal trust and deeper connection
- Regroup on what's important
- Take a breath and reflect
- Clarify that we're on the right track
- Reduce/eliminate time suck
- Focus on our shared purpose

By the numbers



Who has received services:

59.3%

female

40.4%

male

21%

Indigenous decent

63 years

average client age



Approximately **9%** of clients had a documented legal problem



Housing status

53%

private homes

6.49%

non-profit housing

1.12%

hospital

3.12%

supportive housing

.88%

family

2.08%

long-term care

.8%

justice facility

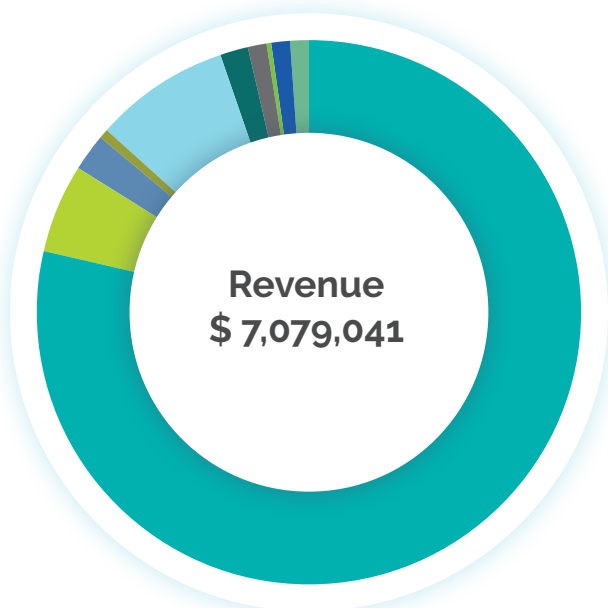
2%

homeless

Financial report

Statement of operations

For the year ended March 31, 2024



| | |
|---|--------------|
| Ontario Health North - operations | \$ 5,573,547 |
| Ontario Health North – one-time funding | \$ 378,254 |
| Ministry of Health - Rent supplement | \$ 148,079 |
| Sessional fees | \$ 37,127 |
| Grant revenue | \$ 573,223 |
| Ontario Structured Psychotherapy | \$ 122,249 |
| Other government funding | \$ 77,284 |
| Donations | \$ 11,728 |
| Interest income | \$ 15,679 |
| Other income | \$ 77,626 |
| Amortization of deferred contributions | \$ 64,246 |

| EXPENSES | |
|---|--------------------|
| Amortization | \$ 96,793 |
| Audit fees | \$ 35,587 |
| Automotive | \$ 14,042 |
| Branch initiatives | \$ 44,124 |
| Computer maintenance | \$ 30,128 |
| Employee benefits | \$ 1,172,551 |
| Insurance | \$ 23,617 |
| Membership fees | \$ 6,750 |
| Office supplies | \$ 68,821 |
| Professional fees | \$ 65,548 |
| Program costs | \$ 198,825 |
| Property taxes | \$ 7,526 |
| Rent | \$ 133,497 |
| Rent supplement | \$ 148,080 |
| Repairs and maintenance | \$ 45,568 |
| Salaries | \$ 4,597,310 |
| Sessional fees | \$ 37,127 |
| Ontario Structured Psychotherapy expenses | \$ 122,249 |
| Training and education | \$ 38,357 |
| Telephone | \$ 77,111 |
| Travel | \$ 116,459 |
| Utilities | \$ 26,148 |
| TOTAL EXPENSES | \$7,106,218 |
| Excess of revenue over expenses | (\$27,177) |

ANNUAL REPORT

CMHA Fort Frances

2023/24



Canadian Mental
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Fort Frances Branch
Mental health for all

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