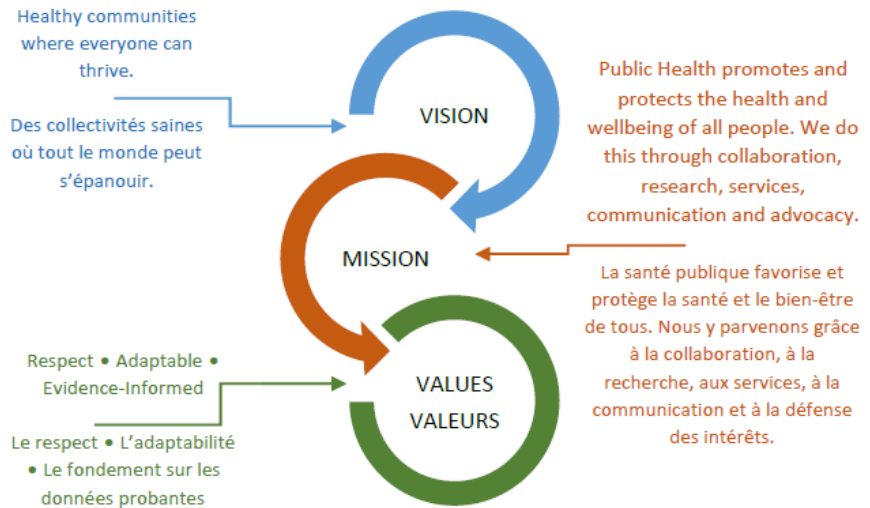


**Report Content**

- [Currently On Our Radar](#)
- [THU in Action - Our Stories](#)
- [Upcoming Events](#)
- [HR Update](#)



## Introduction

During the first half of 2022 Timiskaming Health Unit (THU) staff continued to support a robust COVID-19 pandemic response including mass immunization clinics while anticipating and navigating changes to Provincial COVID-19 guidance and vaccine eligibility.

The last two-plus years of an unprecedented and ever-changing pandemic has required extraordinary efforts of local public health resulting in great opportunity cost. In addition to the impact on our workforce, the reduction or suspension of many local public health programs and services is contributing to health impacts and consequences for communities, both immediate and some of which we have yet to see.

While the 2022 annual service plan request process in early 2022 provided an opportunity for local public health agencies to request recovery funding, funds were not granted to any Boards of Health. Notwithstanding this, with our local context and targeted funding for local public health COVID-19 (general and vaccine), staff turned their minds to begin recovery planning. Using a framework that includes 3 areas of focus; restore and resume, rejuvenate and rebuild, the management team began meeting regularly in March to focus on supporting recovery. As more staff were able to get back to non-COVID program areas of work programs carried out a prioritization and planning exercise for an evidence-informed approach to resuming and restoring non-COVID-19 programs and

services. In addition, a new organizational structure was launched in April integrating COVID-19 work within programs and the Incident Management System Structure for COVID-19 was replaced with a working group. Within a context of the need for workforce recovery, a desire to learn lessons for our pandemic response and uncertainties related to the pandemic, health human resources challenges and the provinces processes to transform Ontario's public health system, THU is committed to a continued COVID-19 response and to the extent that capacity allows, program recovery priorities that contribute to strong, resilient healthy communities where everyone can thrive.

The intense and fast-paced pandemic response along with public health measures presented us with a need to work differently - in a predominantly remote work environment. Upon review of other health units and other sector approaches as well as feedback from managers and front-line staff, a new work-from-home policy was developed and launched in June. In addition, we celebrated staff during nursing week (May) and the inaugural Canadian Public Health Week (April) which involved a staff appreciation lunch and social media posts highlighting local public health staff and the work they do. We also held a staff appreciation lunch and virtual trivia in June.

Additional highlights of Timiskaming Health Unit work from January to June of 2022 are further described below.

## Currently On Our Radar

In addition to sharing highlights of local public health work that occurred during the January to June period of 2022, staff have shared topics that are currently on our radar.

Staff are planning for under 5 COVID-19 and the 2022-23 Universal Influenza **Immunization** Program in collaboration with primary care providers.

Staff are analyzing **2022 Nutrition Food Basket** data and developing a knowledge exchange and communication plan to disseminate the results.

**Special project: Understanding the current situation of Food Insecurity in the Timiskaming District and Potential Actions.** Staff are conducting key informant interviews with local community agencies to collect local qualitative data on food insecurity and understand the current food insecurity impact since the pandemic (approx. 2020 – present). Findings will be used to inform THU program planning. The results will be disseminated to local partners and planning groups through knowledge exchange activities to inform decision-making.

Staff are exploring the [Icelandic Prevention Model](#) for **youth substance use prevention**.

**Workplace wellbeing:** Staff are implementing a workplace wellness survey with local workplaces to gauge interest and demand for additional training opportunities focused on mental health promotion and including other health

promotion topics. Staff are engaging in training to support the Psychological Health and Safety standard to support its promotion and implementation in Timiskaming workplaces, including THU.

As part of their work with the Temiskaming District **Road Safety** Coalition, THU staff are continuing advocacy efforts to improve Highway 11 safety, delivering a report to municipalities to inform speed designations on municipal roads and continuing to promote of Vision Zero principles among municipalities.

[Timiskaming Drug and Alcohol Strategy](#) collaborative work continues. The consultation period has concluded, findings will be shared in September and a one-year **Drug and Alcohol Strategy** will be drafted in October 2022.

**Municipal Election and public health.** Staff are working to develop a primer to inform municipal candidates and voters of locally relevant issues of public health importance that fall within the influence of municipal governments. The primer will be accompanied by a district-wide communications campaign that also encourages those who are eligible to vote.

**Canada's Low Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines** are being updated to reflect the best available evidence related to alcohol use. The Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction is carrying out a [public consultation](#) until September 23; THU staff will be sharing the opportunity to share feedback with the public through several communications channels. The consultation report is available online [here](#).

**Research Project related to COVID recovery.** In spring 2022, THU provided a letter of support for a University of Guelph-led research project titled *Exploring the experiences of small and rural municipalities during the COVID-19 pandemic to identify enabling supports and structures that will strengthen response to future disruption* and promoted the project among Northern Ontario health units. The project proposal has been funded in full by the Canadian Institute of Health Research. It begins in September 2022 and will conclude in August 2023. The project focuses on the experience of municipalities with populations smaller than 10,000 in Northern Ontario; THU's level of involvement will be determined by the participation of Timiskaming-area municipalities.

The [Northern Directions Conference](#) will be held November 16-18 2022 in North Bay. Hosted by the [Northern Policy Institute](#) and the [Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation](#), this conference will focus on several topics of public health importance including reconciliation, transportation and revitalization, specific to rural and remote communities. THU staff are submitting an abstract for consideration, to present the work done in Timiskaming to mitigate equity related impacts of the pandemic and foster learning to reduce the impact of future emergencies.

# Timiskaming Health Unit in Action

Our people – our stories.

## Foundational Standards

### Population Health Assessment and Surveillance Highlights

The team continued to provide ongoing support with data requests essential for the management and decision support of our COVID-19 and public health priorities. In the first half of 2022 these efforts included:

- maintenance of our COVID-19 surveillance reporting data summaries and reports on indicators such as cases, outbreaks, hospitalizations and deaths
- collaboration with partners to support the SARS-CoV-2 wastewater surveillance program. This included coordination and assistance with changing our analysis laboratory to Health Sciences North to decrease shipping time and improve surveillance.
- maintenance data on local COVID-19 vaccination metrics to support summaries and reports as well as internal planning
- essential work in non-COVID related analyses, including surveillance system data monitoring for other public health topics, support for creation of opioid surveillance system and dashboard, Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System module analysis, providing data to support internal and external program planning, evaluation planning, analysis and reporting support.
- beginning recovery planning work assessing outstanding population health and surveillance tasks there were temporarily paused during the pandemic.

### Health Equity Highlights

The following section highlights local public health work toward reducing health inequities such that everyone has equal opportunities for optimal health and can attain their full health potential without disadvantage due to social position or other socially determined circumstances

- Supported the Temagami First Nation Control Group related to COVID-19 response.
- Supported vaccination efforts for First Nations and Urban Indigenous community, priority populations, and congregate settings.
- Continued implementation of the COVID-19 [Timiskaming Connections Volunteer Line](#), including the provision of supports to those needing to isolate, continued through March 2022, then was put on hold pending future need.
- Recognized Black History Month, International Women’s Day, Day of Transgender Visibility, Pride Month, National Indigenous History Month, National Indigenous People’s Day, and St. Jean Baptiste Day.
- 2 THU staff participated in a key informant interview to inform a Decent Work Health Network [report](#), “Prescription for healthy pandemic recovery: Decent work for all,” to advocate for paid sick leave and decent work for all.
- Chaired the COVID-19 Timiskaming Collaborative whose aim is to prevent or mitigate health and well-being disparities due to COVID-19 and related response measures.
- Continued to support the [Closing the Digital Divide in Timiskaming Project](#):
  - Distributed 119 devices: 52 cell phones with prepaid package, 48 laptops, 19 tablets
  - Completed and disseminated a project [evaluation report](#) and [video story](#)

- Completed and provincial election primer re: gaps in digital equity access in Ontario
  - 1 campaign (newspaper, website, social media) on digital divide
  - Microgrant opportunity provide to partners to apply for funds that enable access to internet services, development and enhancement of digital literacy skills
- Developed and implemented a [campaign](#) to encourage engagement in the 2022 Ontario election, including the adaptation of a [public health election primer](#) and promotion of key messages to voters and to candidates. Staff also crafted and shared a [media release](#) and [Board of Health briefing note](#) summarizing the campaign.
  - Reached out to local Indigenous Communities to receive feedback on a draft land acknowledgement.
  - Established People with Lived and Living Experience Committee to inform development of Timiskaming Drug and Alcohol Strategy

## Effective Public Health Practice

The team continued to provide ongoing support for evidence-informed decision making. In the first half of 2022 these efforts included:

- Supported the development of criteria for prioritizing public health functions and topics for modified program planning for the remainder of 2022.
- Supported cross-divisional recovery planning (resume and restore) assisting with the identification of potential interventions and related resource needs for 2022.
- Conducted weekly evidence scan and summaries to support internal decision making and planning.
- Conducted an In Action Review with vaccine clinic nursing leads and planned for session with additional clinical and non-clinical staff. Began planning for a COVID-19 Phone Line final debrief.
- Supported evaluation research projects at various stages related to the Digital Divide Project, Northern Fruit and Vegetable Program, Timiskaming Drug and Alcohol Strategy, Food Insecurity.
- Supported continuous quality improvement steps related to THU's French Language Translation processes.

## Emergency Management

Work focused on COVID-19 specific response.

## Chronic Disease Prevention and Well-Being

During the first half of 2022, work in Chronic Disease Prevention and Well-Being focused on active living, healthy eating, mental health promotion and Seniors' Dental Care.

### Active Living.

- Collaborated with community partners for "Road Safety Education for Kids" in New Liskeard. THU set up a booth and promoted Cycling Safety and Share the Road resources at the family event. Over 120 people signed in.
- Collaborative program delivery and relationship building with the new Active Transportation summer student at the City of Temiskaming Shores.

- Launched [Walk 'N Roll Timiskaming website](#), developed with funding from [Ontario Active School Travel's Innovate Fund](#) and launched a Walk 'N Roll Communications Strategy, rolling out monthly social media plans promoting safe and active travel.
- Coordinated Temiskaming Shores [Community Bike Festival](#) on June 4, 2022. Event gave away 97 bicycles and helmets to happy new owners and raised \$367.00 for Jumpstart. Event included smoothie bike activity, bike decorating, and opportunity to try an adult tricycle.
- Participated in Temiskaming Shores [Road Safety For Kids event](#) (176 attendees), had booth with active travel resources. Helmet fit demonstrations and gave out lights, bells, and information.

### Healthy Eating

- Participated in the pilot testing of the 2022 Nutrition Food Basket updated tools and protocols. Data were collected from 10 stores using a hybrid model (6 in-person and 4 online). THU participated in the roll-out period and provided feedback to the Monitoring of Food and Affordability in Ontario.
- Drafted a Memorandum of Understanding for Community Fridge project in collaboration with the Community Food Action Network, including the City of Temiskaming Shores, Literacy council and Le Centre d'Éducation des Adultes and THU. The City of Temiskaming Shores purchased the fridge. Presented to the Temiskaming Shores Library Board.
- Compiled training resources and offered training to community partners on how to use the blender bike during community events: Beaver House First Nation, Bike exchange event.
- Developed and presented "*Fasting During Ramadan*" and to a group of 30 THU staff to increase awareness and cultural competence.
- Planned social media posts and promotional materials to provide evidence-based and accurate nutrition information to promote the health and well-being of the Timiskaming population for [Timiskaming Talks Nutrition Facebook Page](#).
- Adapted social media content from the Dietitians of Canada Nutrition Month Campaign Key "*ingredients*" needed to change our food systems for a healthier tomorrow; led Nutrition Month recipe contest for all THU staff.
- Supervised 1 Northern Ontario Dietetic Internship Program intern for 6 weeks and supported them in meeting population and public health competencies.
- Collaborated with Ontario Dietitians of Public Health to develop advocacy letter for inclusion of weight as a protected ground in the Ontario Human Rights Code. Letter to be submitted to the legislative assembly following municipal election.
- As part of [Healthy Eating in Recreation Settings Project](#), conducted monitoring tour of summer concession stand "Snack Shack" and offered resources to promote healthy eating.
- Provided bilingual resources to a community partner to support a children's cooking camp in Temiskaming Shores.
- Reviewed and drafted a Request for Proposal (RPF) for the Town of Kirkland Lake using updated nutrition standards.
- Drafted a report summarizing Ontario Dietitians in Public Health responses to highlight Ontario RD experiences during the pandemic: *Summary Report - Public Health Dietitians' Experiences during the COVID-19 Pandemic*.
- Provided content related to weight stigma/bias and Food Insecurity for [Healthcare providers \(HCP\) newsletter](#).

### Mental Health Promotion

- Promoted Five Ways Wellbeing in Nature Mental Health Week; delivered a social media campaign, hosted an internal staff event on the topic, and launched a workplace wellness challenge to area workplaces (0 entries).

### Seniors Dental Care Program (OSDCP)

The Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program continued to increase its capacity to provide free routine dental care as the pandemic response shifted during the first half of 2022. Partnerships were maintained with local oral health providers in the community.

OSDCP	Q1 Total	Q2 Total	Q3 Total	Q4 Total	Year Total
Applied at THU	44	60	0	0	104
Applied Online	0	6	0	0	6
# of Unique Seniors Served THU	30	77	0	0	107
# of Total OSDCP Preventive Appointments at THU	35	83	0	0	118
# of Unique Seniors Served by Providers	128	155	0	0	283
# of Total OSDCP Appointments by Providers	154	178	0	0	332

## Substance Use and Injury Prevention

### Alcohol and Drug Use

- THU successfully supported the Englehart Family Health Team in advocating for a publicly accessible sharps container in Englehart area in collaboration with community stakeholders.
- In addition to co-chairing and providing backbone support for the Timiskaming Drug and Alcohol Strategy, THU staff are directly leading planning and communication related to both the Prevention and Harm Reduction Pillars of TDAS, and participating in the Communications Working Group and supporting the Persons with Lived and Living Experience group.
- Submitted a Briefing Note [Decriminalization of Substance Use](#) to the Board of Health supporting several harm reduction actions at provincial and federal levels.

### Injury Prevention

- THU participated on Steering and Advisory Committees to support the development of a Community Safety and Wellbeing plan for the district of Timiskaming and municipality of Temagami. This included participating in the identification of priorities and potential evidence-based actions.

### Harm Reduction Program Enhancement (HRPE) and Ontario Naloxone Program (ONP)

- Due to staff redeployment to COVID-19 vaccination as well as case and contact management, capacity was limited to actively recruit new community stakeholders.
- THU has worked collaboratively with community stakeholders who requested support to begin the onboarding process for additional sites for HR supply distribution.
- As capacity was limited, minimal ONP training was provided.
- We continued to be the main distribution site while keeping inventory available for community partners.

### Needle Exchange Program (NEP) and Other Harm Reduction Supplies

- Inventory distribution tracking and monitoring maintained for needles, sharps containers, safer snorting kits, bowl pipes, straight stem pipes, and foil packages.

Internal Program						External Program				
Client Services	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total # Encounters NEP and Other HR Supplies	329	498	355	159	249	149	489	582	207	308
Total # of needles provided					19551					10473
Total # of bowl pipes provided					8551					5271
Total # of Naloxone kits provided					166					74
Total # of Naloxone refills provided					21					35

### Comprehensive Tobacco Control

- 122 vouchers for Nicotine Replacement Therapy redeemed by clients seeking support with tobacco cessation.
- Promoted National Non-Smoking Week, World No Tobacco Day, on social media and earned media in Temiskaming Speaker; promoted smoke-free patio.
- Updated and renewed tobacco cessation advertising on Temiskaming Transit.

### On- and Off-Road Safety

- Met with concerned physicians and started a campaign to renew advocating for safer highway measures through NL on Highway 11 (had a meeting set with MTO, then it was postponed – waiting for new date still).
- TDRSC sent in a report with recommendations to the Minister and MTO on highway improvements
- Delivered ATV safety messages via socials, lobby screens.



## Healthy Growth and Development

### Healthy Babies Health Children Program

Total Number of Live Births	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022 YTD
Timiskaming Health Unit Residents	355	329	334	318	319	154

HBHC Screens	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022 YTD
Prenatal	78.5%	71.3%	82.2%	65%	82.4%	74.7% (34.4% HR*)
Postpartum	101.8%	96.9	96.2%	70%	84.3%	76.6% (73.2% HR*)
Early Childhood	7.24%	6.19%	3.14%	2%	0.73%	1.4% (77.4% HR*)

*\*Clients who are considered high-risk as defined by the Healthy Babies Healthy Children Screen*

HBHC Client Visits	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022 YTD
Number of families with a family service plan (FSP) initiated	--	--	--	10	9	17
Total # of Home Visits	325	418	206	140	88	233
Family Resource Worker # of Visits (FRW)	158	254	116	51	24	121
Public Health Nurses (PHNs) # of Visits	167	164	90	68	52	74
FRW and PHN Joint visits	--	--	--	21	12	38

Early childhood experiences make a critical and long-term difference in children's early development and in their health and well-being during childhood and as adults. Identifying young children (prenatal to six years of age) who are at risk of poor social, emotional, cognitive and physical health, and intervening as early as possible can improve the health and future of these children. HBHC screens are a tool that help identify families who are considered high risk in order to help them access services such as lay home visiting. These services have been shown to be an effective way to identify risk, to meet the needs of high-risk children and their families, to encourage healthy child development, to link to professional home visiting and to prevent costly health and social problems. (Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care).

**Hospital Screening Liaison:** Daily liaison visits to Timiskaming Hospital were restarted and continued daily from January to May 2022. Due to staffing shortages, hospital visits have currently been reduced to 2-3 days per week.

**Breastfeeding and Infant Feeding:** THU continued to support clients with the breast pump program, lactation consulting support, and the Facebook Timiskaming Breast Feeding Buddies group has remained ongoing. Infant feeding surveillance continues during routine calls to new parents. Whereas active maintenance and support of the breastfeeding peer program remained on pause. The Baby-friendly initiative is currently on hold. As of June 2022, staff who required Level 1 & 2 breast feeding certificates have received certification. Certifying a second lactation consultant will be further assessed in the fall of 2022.

**Prenatal classes:** An online bilingual course continued to be available to THU residents offered by Public Health Sudbury and Districts. THU partnered with Brighter Futures during May-June for an online prenatal course. A total of 19 mothers and support persons attended either the Brighter Futures' classes or the online course offered by Sudbury.

**Well-baby visits:** As of January, full components of WBV have been offered, with COVID precautions in place. Staff will be providing COVID-19 vaccination clinics to children 5 and under.

**Mental Health Promotion:** Post-partum mood disorder screening and follow-up calls were continued in Q1 and Q2 of 2022. Screening using the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale is done prenatally, at 48 hours, 2 months and 6 months post-partum. From Jan-June 2022 eight referrals for support services were made.

**Road Safety and Car Seats:** Based on an assessment of need, 18 car seat inspections occurred between January and June 2022. Due to low staffing capacity, the CPSAC training program for staff has been deferred to the fall of 2022. Internal and external partners are past-due for certification as car safety inspectors.

**Healthy eating supportive environment and policy:** completed communication initiatives on the Timiskaming Talks Nutrition Facebook page as well as on THU's website to promote nutrition-related topics. Continued support for community organizations with resources as needed and a list containing information on different community programs and referrals is in development for the public. Continued to assess NutriSTEP community screening tool as a potential intervention.

**Timiskaming Children's Services Planning Table:** Timiskaming Health Unit has resumed meeting with TCSPT. Our first meeting was June 15, 2022. Partners have elaborated on their recovery plans and staff educational plans. We will plan to meet monthly beginning in September 2022.

## School and Childcare Health

### School and Childcare COVID

School PHNs provided ongoing support to all Timiskaming area schools and childcare centres as needed, including private schools within our Anabaptist communities. Completed School-Focused Nursing Initiative monthly reporting to Ministry of Health. THU continued to participate in regular meetings with the Porcupine Health Unit and with Directors of Education, school COVID-19 Leads and school transportation providers.

THU also continued to participate periodically in DTSSAB-hosted meetings with Timiskaming childcare providers to respond to questions related to COVID-19 measures.

### Oral Health Screening:

Oral Health - Dental Screenings								
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
<i>Pre-Kind/Kind &amp; Grade 2 In-School Mandatory Program</i>	555	937	800	---	---	---	---	0
<i>Pre-Kind/Kind, Grade 2, 4 &amp; 7 In-School Mandatory Program</i>	---	---	---	985	915	632	0	0
<i>Additional Grades In-School Screening</i>	1043	2217	1350	654	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
<i>Office Screenings</i>	292	238	248	231	193	105	150	151

*This program was impacted by staff redeployment to the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact of COVID-19 measures on school partners.*

### Vision Screening Program:

School Vision Screening Program					
Senior Kindergarten Students	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
<i>Number Screened</i>	146	143	0	0	0
<i>Number Referred to Optometrist for Vision Exam</i>	62	63	0	0	0

*Similar to oral health, resources being redeployed to the COVID-19 pandemic and the fact that schools were shut down at times and/or not allowing outside people in when they were open vision screenings were not completed in first half of year 2022.*

### School Health Immunization and Licensed Childcare

As of January 2022, we were able to return in schools to offer school-based immunizations. We supported regular vaccinations for the grade 7 and 8 as well as high school immunizations, including offering catch-up vaccines for all students affected by closures throughout the pandemic. We continue to defer enforcing the Immunization of School Pupils Act (ISPA). As we resume regular services, we are taking the opportunity to revise our ISPA process to better support non-medical exemptions. We are also working on updating the school immunization process.

The Childcare process was maintained throughout the pandemic. We are currently reviewing and updating our childcare process to help us better align with the Child Care and Early Years Act and create efficiencies with reporting and sharing of immunization information for our childcare settings.

### School Health – Other

The School Health team collaboratively responded to school and childcare requests for support:

- Facilitated [Playground Activity Leaders in Schools](#) program with one elementary school
- Supported two elementary schools grant-writing initiatives
- Participated in school council meetings
- Provided resources to support LGBTQ2+ community and student support
- Participated in collaborative meetings with Canadian Mental Health Association, Northeastern Ontario Family and Children’s Services, and school boards, and Porcupine Health Unit as Northeastern Ontario Mental Health Week Committee to plan and implement collaborate Mental Health Week campaign
- Supported implementation of [Northern Fruit and Vegetable Program](#)
- Collaborated with Porcupine Health Unit to develop and evaluate Northern Fruit and Vegetable Program [Activity Calendar, Fact Sheets & Recipes](#) and [Implementation Guide](#)
- Created school curriculum kits to support healthy sexuality teaching in schools
- Attended [Ontario Healthy Schools Coalition 2022 conference](#) and led knowledge exchange event for THU staff working in Comprehensive School Health and Healthy Growth and Development. Emily:
- Held biweekly sexual health clinics at one secondary school, co-taught sexual health in-class sessions in two schools
- Collaborated with Porcupine Health Unit to develop and distribute [Ready, Set, Kindergarten! Junior Kindergarten Resource](#)
- Participated in one elementary school JK registration day
- Adapted and promoted [Prom Toolkit](#) with local secondary schools and parents/caregivers
- Supported 5 local secondary schools with implementing [Youth Mental Health and Addictions Champions program](#)
- Responded to questions and provided resource materials to schools and childcare related to infectious/reportable diseases
- Encouraged all schools to participate in Winter Walk Day in March and Bike to School Week in May. Provided activity suggestions and participation incentives, provided extra supports to Englehart elementary schools for Winter Walk Day activities: winter scavenger hunt with draw prizes, student engagement activities, winter walk with the entire student body of both schools
- Successful proposal to Temiskaming Foundation, in partnership with Town of Englehart, for new bicycle racks at two schools
- [Launched Walk n Roll Project in Town of Englehart](#), created and displayed outdoor banners in support of active school travel at three schools, thanks to funding the [Ontario Active School Travel Fund](#)
- Updated Bike Rodeo resource kit for grade 5/6 students
- Participated in one elementary school open house
- Facilitated bike rodeos with two elementary schools
- Collaborated with Central Public School Parent Council to create [School Pick-up Planner](#)

## Infectious and Communicable Disease Prevention and Control

- **COVID-19 Case and Contact and Outbreak Management January to June 2022**
- The period of January to June of 2022 encompasses the tail end of wave 5, wave 6, and part of wave 7.
- With the new year came a new provincial direction that only COVID-19 outbreaks in highest risk settings were to be managed by Public Health. From January to June there was a total of 15 outbreaks in Timiskaming: 10 in long-term care/nursing homes, 3 in hospitals, and 2 in congregate living. In general, the outbreaks were severe in terms of the number of cases involved (see table below). Often, staff were required to isolate, which led to significant staffing pressures causing highest-risk settings to on-board agency staff.

	Number of outbreaks	Number of cases			Number of deaths
		Staff	Resident /patient	Visitor	
<b>Long-Term Care &amp; nursing homes</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Hospitals</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Congregate living</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>13</b>

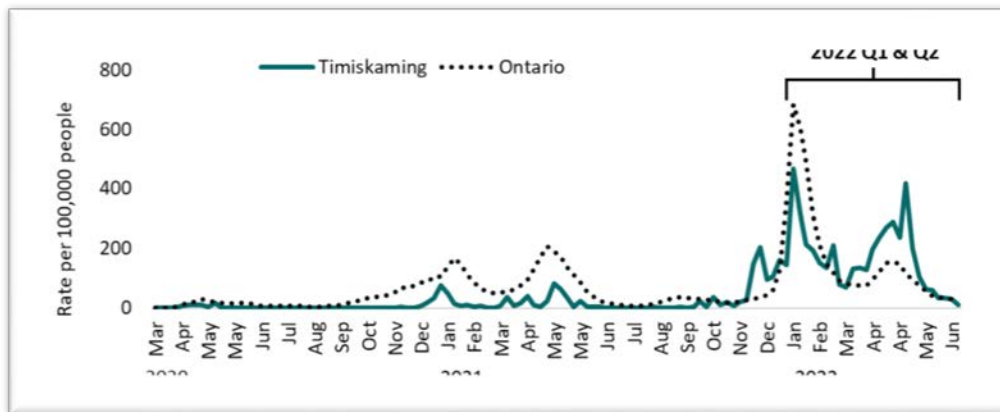
Unfortunately, during the first half of 2022 there were 21 COVID-19 deaths in Timiskaming residents. For 8 of these deaths, COVID-19 was the primary cause of death. For the other 13 deaths, COVID-19 contributed to the death but was not the underlying cause. Age-standardized rates can be used to compare deaths in Timiskaming and Ontario. Timiskaming's rate of 47.2 per 100,000 is statistically higher than Ontario's rate of 19.3 per 100,000 population.

Starting in 2022, testing was limited to the highest risk populations, therefore the number of cases underestimates the number of people with COVID-19. From January to June, we reached the highest number of cases that we had seen throughout the whole pandemic, a total of 1,379 probable and confirmed cases. At the highest peak, 160 cases were reported in one week.

Unlike THU's rate during 2020 and 2021, which were lower than Ontario's, THU's rate in 2022 during the first half of the year was 4,094.8 per 100,000 people, which was much higher than Ontario's rate of 1,829.8 per 100,000 people, showing that the THU had more cases per population than Ontario (both confirmed cases only).

The majority of the cases occurred in the southern part of the THU area (43%), followed by the northern area (41%) then the central area (15%). There were more female cases (63%) than male cases. Most cases were in the following age groups: 20-29 years (15%), 30-39 years (14%), 50-59 years of age (12%), and 60-69 years of age (12%). During the January to June period, only 11% of cases were under 20 years of age.

## COVID-19 rates in Timiskaming and Ontario



Source: Case Contact Management System. Accessed July 29, 2022

Ministry of Ontario, Capacity Planning and Analytics Division, Visual Analytics Hub - COVID-19 Cases, Accessed July 29, 2022.

## COVID-19 Communications

Below are some highlighted areas of work addressing COVID communication needs.

### Public & external

- Webpages were maintained to keep information current regarding local and provincial guidance for the public and various sectors, requiring approximately 138 website updates since January 2022. Each website update was made in both English and French.
- Letters were sent via an email listserve to local businesses. Letters are publicly available [here](#). 13 updates were emailed in January-June.
- Social media plans were created regarding public health measures with a total of 100 social media posts about the COVID-19 situation in January-June 2022. An additional 115 posts regarding COVID-19 vaccination were published. Some posts were published on multiple platforms (for example, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter). English and French text are typically included in each post so that posts are bilingual.
- MOH videos were created regarding major updates, like worsening COVID-19 situation in our district and vaccine Q&A. Videos were uploaded to Facebook, YouTube, and the website. 2 MOH videos were released in January-June. 7 additional video updates (COVID topics but did not feature the MOH) were uploaded in January-June, with the majority of these focused on families (for example, vaccine clinic tour for families, reminder to screen, etc.)

### Media relations

- Media releases were distributed to local media and media who requested to be on our media distribution email list. Media questions were fielded from media locally and across the province. 3 media releases were distributed in 2022; all three were about COVID-19 deaths and were released in January 2022.

- A weekly page in The Speaker ran in January-June 2022. All content was bilingual. The bottom half of this page is a calendar of upcoming COVID-19 vaccine clinics. The top half of the page consists of a short article, most often using the text from a recent social media post that has been deemed priority. The purpose of this page is to reach people, primarily seniors, who don't use social media.

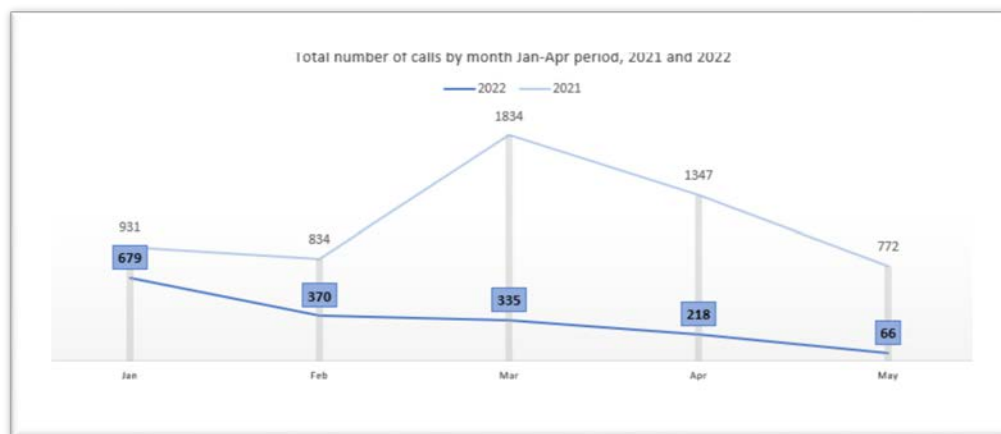
#### Internal

- Updates for our area and for the province were communicated internally via all-staff emails.
- Social media pages from other Ontario health units are monitored for internal planning.

### COVID-19 Liaison Support and COVID Phone Line

The COVID-19 phone line continued to be supported by a core team from January to June 2022. Facilitating testing and screening were stopped by THU prior to January 2022, which likely contributed to the decreasing call volume compared to the previous year for the same timeframe.

COVID-19 guidance changes also likely contributed to a decrease in public inquiries as the pandemic response shifted to outbreak management in highest-risk settings.



From all the calls received, the top three topics addressed were (*more than one topic could have been addressed on the same call*): Contact Tracing/Isolation (49%), Testing (incl. results and screening) (17%), Covid-19 vaccine (11%).

The decrease in calls, along with the debut of the Provincial Testing and Isolation Line (PTIL) led to the sunsetting of the dedicated COVID-19 phone line in early June 2022. More focus was placed on advertising the PTIL within the community while also allowing the public to leave messages at THU reception to be triaged and forwarded to the appropriate individuals.

### IPAC Hub

The THU IPAC Hub was integrated into COVID outbreak response with the goal of enhancing the current support we already provide to long term care, congregate settings, and other high-risk locations. This includes coordination of IPAC education, procedures, best practices and any other urgent needs that have been noted by the specific setting and IPAC professional.

With a more coordinated approach as a team, partners in need had streamlined access to additional support and more easily engaged. As the number of outbreaks increased (as noted below), the IPAC Hub continued to offer recommendations to each setting in outbreak.

Following some staff turnover, the Hub has plans to engage with current community partners of the hub to initiate a Community of Practice (CoP) where regular meetings can be scheduled, and education sessions tailored to general needs.

## Other Diseases of Public Health Significance

Reportable Diseases and Infection Control							
Client Services	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Reportable Disease Investigations (non-STI)	73	65	111	91	154	652	1,342 (1314 of them were COVID)
Outbreaks - Institutional	14	29	33	18	25	16	18 (15 were COVID)
Outbreaks - Community	0	0	0	0	2	23	0
Animal Bite Reporting	29	85	77	72	64	62	74
Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI)	82	61	78	67	75	69	28
Personal Service Settings Inspections <i>(hair salons, tattoos, piercings, aesthetics)</i>	47	50	52	49	31	10	5

## Sexual Health Program

Sexual health services at THU include:

- Information on sexually transmitted infections (STIs), free testing and treatment of STIs;
- Confidential and anonymous HIV testing;
- Pregnancy testing and information about Emergency Contraception Plan B, affordable contraception and free condoms. The OHIP+ program (2018) decreased the demand for THU contraceptives.
- Pap tests to those less than 25 years of age.



From Jan to May we did not have capacity to offer blood testing for BBI in-office as key staff continue to be redeployed to the COVID-19 program. We did offer clients requisitions to have the test completed at their local labs.

We offered 1-2 clinics per week throughout the district. Clients could also be seen on intake 5 days per week. From Jan to June 2022, 164 of the client interactions were in-office, with the remainder being virtual.

Sexual Health							
<i>Client Services</i>	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Male Clients	129	127	164	308	292	142	68
Female Clients	864	805	644	1014	690	295	137
% of clients between 12-24			66%	63%	56.3%	49.2%	x
Contraceptives (sold)	929	846	198	195	72	38	x
Contraceptives (prescribed)					138	47	37
Plan B	41	25	23	25	16	3	3
STI Tests	215	201	257	329	241	102	104
Pregnancy Tests	28	36	37	39	20	12	11
Blood-Borne Infection Tests	124	97	140	148	58	27	9
Treatment Prescribed for STI						29	16
Pap tests						10	5

### Vector Borne

During the priority heat mapping exercise in relation to our recovery process it was determined that vector borne mosquito trapping activities would be put on pause until 2023, as it has a low-level risk associated with it.

## Immunizations

### Immunization – Vaccine Safety and Vaccine Administration

#### COVID-19 Vaccine Program

**Communications:** Continued social and traditional media and building on partnerships with community organizations to reach specific populations. During Jan-June period, communications focused on eligibility and addressing hesitancy. The communications strategy was data-focused, using evidence related to vaccine hesitancy and confidence and adjusting according to local vaccine uptake by age group, geography and other factors. Accordingly, late spring saw an enhanced investment in targeted strategies to reach youth under aged 30 [including a youth Q&A video series with the Acting MOH.](#)

Other COVID-19 vaccine program highlights:

- Ministry reporting remained weekly on sharing COVID-19 vaccinations uptake and information.
- Weekly COVID-19 Vaccine Operational and Planning calls continued.
- The COVID-19 vaccine campaign opened booster doses for the 60+ population, including First Nation and Métis individuals, and their non-Indigenous household members 18 years of age and older (April 2022). We ramped up local clinics to help support vaccinating this group.
- COVID-19 vaccine clinics remained weekly from January to June 2022 throughout the district in New Liskeard, Kirkland Lake and Englehart.
- Vaccine uptake remained consistent.
- We continued to work and support our local pharmacies who helped continue to have COVID-19 vaccines available at local pharmacies throughout the district (New Liskeard, Kirkland Lake and Englehart).

### Routine Immunizations

Immunization Program				
Immunizations Administered in Office	NL	KL	ENG	Total 2022 (Jan to Jun)
# of clients receiving immunizations	458	186	66	710
# of immunizations administered	667	264	112	1043
<b>Note: These numbers do not include Influenza Vaccine</b> Generated from PANORAMA-R07090 Immunization Administered or Wasted at Health Unit				

Year	Vaccine Fridges - Cold Chain Inspections					
	KL		NL		ENG	
	Total inspections	Total failures	Total inspections	Total failures	Total inspections	Total failures
2017	12	10	28	7	5	2
2018	15	11	32	10	5	1
2019	15	7	30	12	10	2
2020	18	11	24	3	8	1
2021	19	4	28	3	9	0
2022 (Jan to Jun)	5	4	6	5	0	0

### 2021-2022 Universal Influenza Immunization Program

There was little activity in Q1-Q2 with respect to influenza in Timiskaming. Planning for the 2021-22 program is beginning.

## Travel Health Vaccine Program

Travel vaccine clinics remained on hold for the beginning of 2022. As the province started lifting mandates, we started seeing an increase in calls related to travel vaccines. Capacity remained an issue in Kirkland Lake as staff continued to be redeployed in supporting the COVID-19 vaccine clinics.

Travel Health Consultations								
Office	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022 (Jan-June)	
Kirkland Lake	272	259	210	208	109	0	20	
New Liskeard	595	620	695	611	324	64	145	
Englehart	<i>(included in New Liskeard Statistics)</i>							

## Land Control

Septic Systems	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
<i>Permits Issued</i>	131	111	124	38	66	76	106	42
<i>File Searches</i>	60	60	66	28	55	65	54	26
<i>Severance/Subdivision</i>	15	15	29	10	13	8	13	6

## Tobacco Enforcement

Tobacco Enforcement						
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Inspections	355	336	357	220	163	152
Charges	6	9	7	1	8	2
Warnings	103	82	166	73	136	76

## Safe Water

Safe Water Inspections						
<i>Drinking Water</i>	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Small Drinking Water Systems	19	13	48	2	3	3
<i>Recreational Water</i>						
Public Beaches ( <i>Seasonal Jul-Aug</i> )	16	17	17	19	0	0
Pools	25	18	28	8	13	4
Recreational Camps/Beachfront ( <i>Seasonal Jul-Aug</i> )	11	9	11	0	5	2

## Healthy Environments and Climate Change

The project work driven by the Northeast Health Unit Collaborative was being finalized during the first half of 2022. The final report will be completed on Climate Change and Health in Northern Ontario is in the final stages and will be released in the second half of 2022. Timiskaming Health Unit (THU) was a key partner in the project, which was led by Northwestern Health Unit. As the official project wraps up with the finalization of the report, the seven Northern Health Units aim to continue their collaborative work as they integrate next steps and actions into their regular Healthy Environment & Climate Change work. Moving forward THU and Porcupine Health Unit will jointly take the lead within the group as this important work continues throughout our district and Northeastern Ontario.

## Food Safety

Food Premises - Compliance Inspections								
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
High Risk	165	184	109	93	88	47	29	9
Medium Risk	206	110	187	214	192	96	60	34
Low Risk	149	204	160	129	135	62	58	39
<b>Total</b>	<b>520</b>	<b>498</b>	<b>456</b>	<b>436</b>	<b>415</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>82</b>

Food Handler Certifications								
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Englehart	63	26	23	75	58	3	24	6
New Liskeard	90	68	144	351	182	19	55	19
Kirkland Lake	70	41	58	127	15	34	5	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>223</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>553</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>84</b>	



## Upcoming Events

The following list contains *some* of the upcoming events and opportunities that THU staff are participating in or supporting.

- International Walk to School Month – October
- World Diabetes Day – November 14, 2022
- National Truth and Reconciliation Day – September 30, 2022
- Canadian Malnutrition Awareness Week - October 3 to 7, 2022
- National Addictions Awareness Week Nov. 20-26, 2022
- Treaties Recognition Week November 6 - 12, 2022

# Human Resource Update

## The comings and goings of our colleagues



### New Staff:

- Public Health Nurse, New Liskeard, Permanent (Jan 3, 2022)
- Program Manager, New Liskeard, Permanent (Jan 12, 2022)
- Public Health Nurse, Kirkland Lake, Permanent (Feb 7, 2022)
- Public Health Nurse, Kirkland Lake, Permanent (Feb 7, 2022)
- Epidemiologist, Remote, Permanent (May 2, 2022)
- Family Home Visitor, Kirkland Lake, Permanent (May 23, 2022)
- Public Health Inspector, New Liskeard, Permanent (Jul 11, 2022)
- Public Health Nurse, New Liskeard, Temporary (Sept 6, 2022-Aug 31, 2023)
- Dental Hygienist, Kirkland Lake, Permanent (Sept 12, 2022)
- Dental Assistant, Kirkland Lake, Permanent (Sept 12, 2022)

### Resignation:

- Public Health Inspector, Kirkland Lake, Permanent (April 29, 2022)
- Public Health Dietitian, New Liskeard, Permanent (Jul 29, 2022)
- Dental Assistant, Kirkland Lake, Permanent (Jul 25, 2022)

### Retirement:

- Program Assistant, New Liskeard (Aug 31, 2022)

### Current Vacancies:

- Program Assistant, New Liskeard, Permanent
- Program Evaluator, New Liskeard, Permanent
- Public Health Nurse-School Health, Kirkland Lake, Temporary
- Public Health Promoter-School Health, Kirkland Lake, Temporary
- Public Health Promoters-HG&D (2), District Wide, Permanent
- Public Health Registered Dietitian, District Wide, Permanent
- Public Health Promoter-Communications, New Liskeard, Temporary

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