



AIRN Blended Leadership Committee

Thursday June 9th from 9:30 – 10:40 am Atlantic

In attendance: Larry Baxter (Community), Michelle Bowden (PHAC), Stacey Burns (PEI DHW), Julie Dingwell (Co-Chair, AIDS SJ), Susan Kirkland (Co-Chair, Dal), Jo-Ann MacDonald (UPEI), Michelle Proctor-Simms (NSACA), Cybelle Rieber (AIDS PEI)¹

AIRN Staff: Caroline Ploem (Minutes)

Regrets: : Marni Amirault (CAAN and AHA Centre), Carla Densmore (HepNS), Jacquie Gahagan (Dal), Greg Harris (MUN), Lois Jackson (Dal), Michael Liddell (Community), Zack Marshall (RESIGNED), Jeannine McNeil (PHAC), Julez Thomas (HON)

Absent: Diane Bailey (Mainline), Gerry Mugford (MUN), Gerard Yetman (ACNL)¹

MINUTES

1) Welcome and check-in

- Susan welcomed everyone to the call.

2) Approval of current agenda and minutes from April 27th

- There were no additions to the agenda and the minutes were approved as circulated.

3) Draft Workplan: Review and discussion

- Workplan is good but we need to reframe the Background and Rationale piece for other discussions to more appropriately express our desire to move in the direction of Program Science if that is indeed where we want to go.
- Great workplan for the Manager; it is not the bigger picture plan for AIRN.
- We need to focus more of our efforts outside Halifax.
- While we try to do things across the region, the challenge has been doing things with no money. We need to be out in other communities and finding out what the issues and needs are and how AIRN can support that. We also need to expand our membership across the Atlantic.
- We may be able to explore potential sources of funding to meet with members across the region. Not sure if REACH would fund this, but there may be other potential sources.
- Discussion turned to our current reliance on REACH and how that impacts the work we do in the Atlantic. We talked about the need to have a face-to-face in the summer or fall.

Face-to-Face Meeting

- Logistics of meeting discussed. Agreed that we should have a 1-day meeting with two parts: Part A (AIRN) and Part B (with REACH).
- Timeframe: Needs to happen after responses are back from PHAC on the LOIs for CAF funding (mid-June).

¹ ACNL=AIDS Committee of Newfoundland and Labrador; AHA Centre=Aboriginal HIV & AIDS Community-Based Research Collaborative Centre; AIDS SJ=AIDS Saint John; CAAN=Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network; Dal=Dalhousie University; HepNS=Hepatitis Outreach Society of Nova Scotia; HON=Healing Our Nations; MUN=Memorial University of Newfoundland; NSACA=Nova Scotia Advisory Commission on AIDS; PHAC=Public Health Agency of Canada; UPEI=University of Prince Edward Island.

- Holding the meeting in the summer does not make sense because groups will be working on their proposals (turn-around will be 8-weeks after LOI response). Serious concerns raised over this timing as it will interfere with summer holidays.
- Makes most sense to consider early October. Many will be involved in Pride activities in July, August is prime vacation time, and AIDS Walks happen throughout September.

ACTIONS:

- ✓ Explore potential sources of funding to meet with members across the region to determine needs and potential initiatives.
- ✓ In advance of in-person meeting, prepare a document that is a framework of a strategic plan for AIRN to work within our priority areas and how we roll that out regionally. Unpack priorities – what is important in each of these areas, and how we are going to achieve it regionally. We need something concrete to work with.
- ✓ We will contact REACH to see when they are available for this in-person meeting.

4) ABLC Membership Update

- Caroline learned from Zack that he has accepted a tenure-track position at Renison College (University of Waterloo) and will be starting July 1st. Congratulations and all the best to Zack!
- Caroline met with Tasha Ramsey last week to explore potential areas for collaboration. Tasha is an Assistant Professor at Dalhousie’s College of Pharmacy and is the Clinical Coordinator of Infectious Diseases in the Pharmacy Department (QE II). She is interested in AIRN and being involved in harm reduction research involving community pharmacies. There are lots of potential research opportunities between PREP, naloxone, methadone, needles, condoms, POCT and lack of access to harm reduction services in many communities.
- When engaging new members, we need to consider how to engage them regionally (e.g. webinars).
- Another potential new member is Lisa Barret, an Infectious Disease physician who is doing a lot of interesting work in Nova Scotia and PEI. She is currently doing HCV treatment research in a PEI prison. Susan has been asked to speak with Lisa’s research team about her work and AIRN. There may be some potential opportunities to collaborate, as well as opportunities for AIRN to do some research in prisons.
- We should invite Sheila Sears or Carol MacKinnon to join AIRN, as they are the new leads for harm reduction in the province. If they have counterparts in other provinces, we should have them join as well.

ACTIONS:

- ✓ Connect with Sheila Sears or Carol MacKinnon to join AIRN (ABLC). Should do the same in other provinces.
- ✓ Caroline to prepare a regional breakdown of AIRN members by region and sector.
- ✓ Caroline to circulate the constitution of the ABLC.

5) Submitted Funding Applications (Updates)

- PHAC Community Action Fund (LOIs submitted Apr-16)
 - Michelle reported that the LOIs are still being reviewed and that they hope to have responses ready by mid-June. Although concerns about an 8-week turnaround over the summer have been voiced to national office, she does not think that it will change.

- CIHR Knowledge to Action (Lois) – “Moving towards integrated health and social service delivery for Aboriginal and marginalized populations” (Decision: Not Funded)
 - Disappointingly, this grant was not funded. There were 10 grants funded, 7 of which went to Ontario, 1 to QC, AB and BC.
- CIHR Project Scheme Grant (Jacquie) – “Testing Innovation: Bridging the Gaps to Sexually Transmitted and Blood Borne Infections (STBBI) Testing...” (Decision pending: July 15-16)
- NSHRF – Development and Innovation Competition 2016-17 (Matt Numer) – “PREP-aring for the New Age of HIV: Examining the capacity of Nova Scotia to prevent HIV among MSM through pre-exposure prophylaxis treatment” (Decision pending: July 29-16)
- Susan noted that the list above does not capture all of the work going on in the region, but just those that AIRN is directly supporting in some way.

ACTION:

- ✓ To better reflect the work going on in the region, Caroline will send a memo to Listserv members asking them to report on any research projects in which they are involved (i.e. Title, two sentence description and a link for more information).

6) Grants in Development

- MAC AIDS (Cindy MacIsaac) – “Halifax Area Network of Drug Users” (HANDUP) (Deadline: July 1-16)
 - A one-page summary of the proposal was circulated to the ABLC before the meeting. There is a strong rationale for the project and we have received very positive feedback from Direction 180 and Mainline. The proposal is almost ready to be sent out to others interested in reviewing.
- Catalyst Grant: “Moving Beyond Piloting POCT: A Social Ecological Exploration of Barriers and Facilitators to Scaling up HIV POCT in Canada” (Deadline: June 28) (Jacquie)
 - Jacquie is looking to conduct an environmental scan of HIV POCT pilot programs conducted in Canada since 2005 and the factors related to the scaling up from a pilot phase to an ongoing HIV POCT program. She is inviting anyone who wants to be involved on the research team in some capacity to let her know.

ACTIONS:

- ✓ Send MAC AIDS grant to Michelle for opportunity to review and provide input.
- ✓ Those interested in participating on the POCT Catalyst Grant submission to let Jacquie or Caroline know as soon as possible.

7) Research Funding/Proposal Development Opportunities:

- MACAIDS = <http://www.macaidsfund.org/thework/applications> – Deadline: July 1
- [CIHR Catalyst Grant: HIV/AIDS Community-Based Research](#) (Summer 2016 Competition) – Deadline: June 28
- CIHR Implementation Science Component 2 – Not yet released.
- Upcoming: [NSHRF](#) (REDI Team Development and Catalyst Awards; REAL Knowledge Sharing Support Award) – \$10,000 each, to be released in Oct/16.
- PIVHOT Grant (ViiV) – Focused on “improving health outcomes or the quality of life for patients living with HIV/AIDS in Canada” – early October for 2016 funding.

8) Ongoing Research Projects – Updates

- “Grinding Against HIV Prevention Discourse: A critical exploration of risk among user of mobile gay cruising apps” (Caroline via Matt)
 - Looking at how MSM construct their identities on social media apps and how these are related to their sexual communication, practices and risk taking behaviours.
 - The first meeting of the research team was held in May to talk about purpose, timelines, roles and ideas for the methodology.

- “A New APPROACH to HIV Testing: Adaptation of POCT for Pharmacies to Reduce risk and Optimize access to Care in HIV” (Caroline via Debbie Kelly)
 - Debbie reports that things are going well. They are in the process of submitting the ethics application to MUN and hiring a Research Assistant for the work. This info has been posted on the AIRN Listserv and on the REACH website.

- Mainline Evaluation KTE Component
 - Michelle reported that she was advised by Rob Strang and Elaine Holmes (Director of Communicable Diseases) that it would be more strategic to wait before officially releasing the report. A call is being planned in the near future between DHW and the NSHA around harm reduction priorities in Nova Scotia and how to adequately fund. The Mainline Evaluation is very timely for informing this work. Key people within DHW and NSHA (e.g. Rob Strang, Frank Atherton, Elaine Holmes, Sheila Sears, Carol MacKinnon) have the report. Things seem to be moving in a positive direction.
 - Sheila Sears (PH Director and New Harm Reduction Lead) is planning to convene a meeting in September with Rob Strang and other HR stakeholders in the province. Frank Atherton will no longer be working in Nova Scotia by then. Diane is recommending this meeting as ideal for officially releasing the evaluation report and presenting on key findings (Susan, Lois, others?) Diane is encouraged by her recent conversation with Sheila because she supports a substantial budget increase and a commitment from government for longer-term funding.
 - AIRN needs to think about how we can use this evaluation to promote harm reduction activities beyond Halifax and more regionally.

- Naloxone Demonstration Project
 - Training is ongoing in both Halifax and Cape Breton. To date, hundreds of PWUD and community staff have been trained and have received naloxone kits.
 - The positive results from this project in both Halifax and Cape Breton provide a great opportunity for scaling up to other provinces. Two kits have been used recently to save lives in Halifax. Kits have also been used in Sydney.
 - Mainline and Ally Centre staff will be providing naloxone training at the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia’s annual conference in October. The RCMP are also interested in getting kits and training but are still exploring options because of the cost involved (Direction 180 seeking cost recovery).

ACTIONS:

- ✓ Cybelle will contact Matt Numer to ask if the data collected will extend beyond Nova Scotia
- ✓ Contact Caroline for more info on any of the above projects.

9) Update on CBR Collaborative Centre and REACH 2.0

- Caroline reported that the REACH Leadership Team is meeting June 10th. The group is involved in the process of reviewing two grant submissions — one related to supporting positive Aboriginal women during pregnancy; the other is a pilot project to enhance treatment adherence for HIV+ children and teens.
- REACH has been busy with the PREP initiative and recently released the report (circulated through the AIRN listserv). They also held two teleconferences for questions and input. Larry was the only participant from across the country on the first teleconference and is not sure how the turnout was for the second. While not all ABLC members were aware of the opportunity, the information about the teleconferences was included at the bottom of the email that went out with the report. It was also circulated through the AIRN listserv.
- REACH sponsored a session at CAHR on the HIV Cascade and the UNAIDS 90-90-90 Targets. It was well received and has been posted on You Tube— <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iZJW5SvaDg4>
- Working Groups
 - Rapid POCT Working Group— currently focussed on the Catalyst Grant (environmental scan on pilot projects and factors related to scaling up)
 - PEER Working Group — currently focussed on an environmental scan (led by Greg) around PHAs engaged in employment roles in ASOs and related organizations. They are in the process of developing and strengthening the research team and are preparing the ethics applications to MUN.
- REACH 2.0 – Trans Priorities Project
 - They have hired peer researchers in 5 cities across Canada and have held focus groups and interviews with trans women. They are almost finished data collection, will be analyzing data this summer, and launching a survey to gather broader input.

ACTION:

- ✓ Send link on CAHR's session on the cascade via Listserv.

10) AHA Centre/CAAN updates (Marni)

- No update provided. Marni and Julez are currently in Montreal at the CAAN AGM and Skills Building Session.

11) Recently Held and Upcoming Conferences/Events:

- [CAHR Conference, 2016](#)
Canadian Association for HIV Research (CAHR) — May 12 to 15, 2016 [Winnipeg, MB]
 - Caroline and Larry attended. Caroline reported on some of the sessions she took in, including the symposia on HIV, Aging and Rehabilitation and the 90-90-90 Cascade, as well as a plenary on Community Mobilization and Structural Interventions with sex workers in India. She found the session titled From One Ally to Another: Practical Guidelines to Better Include People who Use Drugs at Decision-making Tables particularly helpful in terms of the HANDUP proposal.
- [2016 PLWHIV/AIDS Forum and the Canadian AIDS Society Annual Meeting](#) — May 16 to 18, 2016 [Winnipeg, MB]
- [CANAC Conference, 2016](#)
Canadian Association of Nurses in AIDS Care (CANAC) — May 19 to 21, 2016 [Halifax, NS]

- [Indigenous Health Conference, 2016](#)
University of Toronto — May 25 to 27, 2016 [Mississauga, ON]
- [Action Hepatitis Canada Atlantic Members Meeting](#) — June 6 to 7, 2016 [Halifax, NS]
 - Susan and Caroline attended this regional meeting, focused on how the regional work can tap into the national work and vice-versa. It was a great two days. We are at an interesting time in HCV work. We have new excellent treatments, we can talk about a cure, and ***eliminating*** HCV. The payment for treatment is the challenge and there are a lot of opportunities for advocacy. PEI is the only province in the country that is covering treatment for everyone.

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- [Public Health 2016:](#) Canadian Public Health Association — June 13 to 16, 2016 [Toronto, ON]
 - [Guelph Sexuality Conference](#) University of Guelph— June 23 to 24, 2016 [Guelph, ON]
 - [The Realities of Young People Living with HIV in Canada](#) — CATIE Webinar - June 23 at 3:00 pm Atlantic
 - [Overcoming the Challenges of Integrating New HIV Prevention Information for Gay Men Service Providers](#) — CATIE Webinar - June 29 at 2:00 pm Atlantic
 - [CAAN AGM and Skills Building 2014](#)
Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network (CAAN) - June 30 to July 4, 2016 [Montreal, QC]
 - [AIDS 2016, International AIDS Conference](#)
International AIDS Society — July 18 to 22, 2016 [Durban, South Africa]
 - [OHTN Research Conferences:](#) HIV Endgame: Closing Gaps in the Care Cascade — Oct 24-26, 2016 and Stopping the Syndemics that Drive HIV— Nov 21-22 [Toronto]

ACTION:

- ✓ Caroline to post the document titled *Practical Guidelines When Engaging People Who Use Drugs on Boards and Committees* on AIRN's website

12) Anything else?

Next meeting: July 14th from 9:30 – 11:00 am (Michelle sends regrets). There will not be a meeting in August.