

## ABLC Meeting December 13, 2018: 10:00 – 11:00 AM Atlantic

**Attended:** Marni Amirault (CAAN & AHA Centre), Susan Kirkland (Co-Chair, Dal), Michael Liddell (Community), Jo-Ann MacDonald (UPEI), Jeannine McNeil (PHAC), Caroline Ploem (AIRN), Michelle Proctor-Simms (NSACA), and Gerard Yetman (Co-Chair, ACNL).

**Regrets:** Diane Bailey (Mainline), Larry Baxter (Community), Donna Bulman (UNB), Stacey Burns-MacKinnon (PEI DHW), Julie Dingwell (Avenue B), Jacquie Gahagan (Dal), Greg Harris (MUN), Lois Jackson (Dal), Karen Pitts (Hep NS), Cybelle Rieber (PEERS Alliance), Dena Simon (ACNS), and Julie Thomas (HON).

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## MINUTES

### 1) Welcome and Check-in (Susan)

- Susan welcomed everyone and we began with a roundtable of burning issues/updates. Susan noted that CIHR extended the deadline for the REACH 3.0 proposal to Jan 10/19 without any clear explanation.
- **Marni** — See Agenda Item 3.
- **Jeannine** — See Agenda Item 3.
- **Michelle** — The draft report from the PrEP workshop held Nov 21/18 in Truro has been received from San Patten and is currently being edited.

Recommendations specific to PrEP emerged from the workshop, as did more general recommendations related to sexuality (e.g. need for Primary Health Care providers who are comfortable and competent dealing with sexual health issues).

Michelle is discussing with Dr. Strang how some of the recommendations can be addressed. The province has no current plan for universal coverage, but there may be some things that can be done in terms of Pharmacare and making PrEP more affordable.

- **Jo-Ann** — The PEI government did not make the hoped-for announcement on World AIDS Day around PrEP coverage. The PEERS Alliance will continue to advocate for coverage. Involved on the Atlantic COAST Study (led by L. Jackson & C. MacIsaac). They are still waiting for final ethics approval, and hoping to begin recruiting participants in Jan/19.
- **Gerard** — Preparing for their first provincial STBBI Strategy/Framework meeting in mid-Jan/19, which will be guided by new Public Health legislation. Gerard hopes that the NL strategy will be aligned with the national strategy. ACNL is recommending: New testing modalities, particularly in rural areas; extending the scope of practice for pharmacists (best point of access for testing in rural NL); and that the province adapts the HCV Elimination Blueprint when delivered by Action Hepatitis Canada and CanHepC in Montreal in May/19.
- **Michael** — See Agenda Item 3.

### 2) Review and Approval of Current Agenda and Minutes from November 19<sup>th</sup>

- These were approved as circulated.

### 3) National Organization Updates

#### PHAC update (Jeannine)

- Two, 2-year projects in our region received funding from PHAC's Harm Reduction Fund.
  - **John Howard Society of South Eastern New Brunswick** – A peer-led outreach project to disseminate educational materials re. HCV transmission and prevention and to increase access to information and harm reduction resources among people who use drugs and are homeless.
  - **Direction 180** – PALS (Peers Assisting and Lending Support) Project. Building on the peer strengths and experience of HANDUP, paid positions for members will be created to deliver harm reduction and health promotion services to their peers who are at high risk of engaging in unsafe drug use/sexual practices upon release from the Central Nova Correctional Facility.
- PHAC put out a targeted funding call to 16 national organizations for an anti HIV stigma campaign. Five proposals are moving forward for review (Dec 14/18) but only one will be funded. Gerard noted that all of the ASOs in Atlantic Canada have signed up to partner with CATIE should their proposal be funded. He thinks that the funding call prioritized anti HIV stigma in MSM and PWUD communities.
- If this PHAC anti-stigma work proceeds in Atlantic Canada, we will need to ensure clarity so that folks are not confused with the REACH HIV Stigma Index work we will also be launching. It will be important to see how the two projects might work together synergistically. Gerard is on CATIE's board, and offered to facilitate linkages between the projects in the event of funding.
- PHAC (Atlantic Region) is in the early stages of planning two webinars related to substance use and aimed at connecting some of the PHAC-funded organizations that may not normally connect (i.e. family resource centres and harm reduction services).

They have hired a consultant, Sobaz Benjamin, whose approach focuses on storytelling and art. Webinar #1 will lay the groundwork by talking about substance use issues; webinar #2 will focus on promising practices for dealing with substance use challenges.

#### **ACTIONS:**

- ✓ *Jeannine and Gerard will forward additional information re. the PHAC anti-stigma initiatives as available.*
- ✓ *Jeannine will share more information as the webinar initiative develops.*

#### AHA Centre/CAAN update (Marni)

- Elder Albert Marshall will be facilitating a workshop on "Two-Eyed Seeing" Jan 9<sup>th</sup> at MSVU. The workshop is free for faculty, staff and students of MSVU, and \$75 for people who are external.
- Volume 9 of the *Journal of Indigenous HIV Research* (formerly the *Canadian Journal of Aboriginal Community-Based HIV/AIDS Research*) was launched Dec 1/18. It includes four peer-reviewed articles and their first Commentary. The Commentary is based on the new concept of "HIV Olders" from a project led by Sheri Pooyak.
- An abstract on "HIV Olders" is being submitted to CAHR 2019.
- Busy with the REACH 3.0 proposal (led by Renee Masching and Randy Jackson). The focus this time will be to develop Indigenous Research methodologies that pay attention to the diversity within the community and the nuances that highlight the complexities.

#### **ACTIONS:**

- ✓ *Marni will send the links to the Two-Eyed Seeing Workshop and the Journal of Indigenous Research to Caroline for wider distribution to listserv. See <https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/two-eyed-seeing-etuaptmumk-workshop-tickets-52884687524> and <http://www.ahacentre.ca/about.html>*

### **Action Hepatitis Canada (Gerard)**

- Gerard is now the Chair of Action Hepatitis Canada (AHC) and provided an update. He noted that AHC had achieved its four directives over the past number of years, most notably the development of an HCV elimination strategy and bringing down the price of HCV treatment. This has involved a lot of lobbying with the federal and provincial governments.
- In December, AHC completed a 1.5 day strategic planning session resulting in a new direction. Moving forward, they will continue to approach their work from a national perspective. They will be lobbying the federal government to adapt the HCV elimination strategy; will be further promoting and encouraging all provincial governments to adopt HCV elimination strategies; and will be working with pharmaceutical companies to enhance testing, linkage to care and treatment.
- The amount of work they will be able to complete will rely primarily on the funding they will receive from their applications to pharmaceutical companies.
- CATIE is currently acting as the secretariat for AHC, but they are looking at moving that to an organization in Quebec who has been serving as the AHC Treasurer since the beginning.
- AHC also completed an impact assessment based on a member survey looking at the four directives and assessing the impact they have had on HCV over the past 3 years.
- Moving forward, AHC will be sending out the impact assessment and strategic planning report, which outlines the directives and activities over the next 2-3 years, to their membership.

### **CPPN (Michael)**

- Michael does not have a report to share, as he has resigned as the Atlantic representative on the board of directors. The organization is experiencing internal turmoil.
- An AGM is coming up and a new Atlantic representative will be selected. He remains a general member of CPPN.

### **REACH 2.0 (Caroline)**

- Caroline noted that much of the REACH-related work since the in-person meeting in Toronto in late Oct/18 has been focused on the development of two large grants:
  - CIHR HIV/AIDS Biomedical and Clinical Team Grant – Testing, Reaching the Undiagnosed and Linkages to Care: “REACHing” for impact? [Sean Rourke] – Submitted Nov 6/18
  - CIHR Centres for HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C and other STBBIs Research (aka REACH 3.0) [Sean Rourke] – Due Jan 10/19
- The team took time to reflect on the regional achievements of the past five years, as outlined in the agenda’s Appendix, noting the importance of information and knowledge sharing, political will, and the synergies we have been able to create.

### **4) HIV Stigma Project (Susan/Larry/Michael)**

- Michael reported that things are moving along, and that Larry, Susan and Caroline are also heavily involved in this project.
- We have garnered a lot of organizational support. The focus now is to develop support among PLWHIV and to build capacity so we can recruit PLWHIV who are interested in interviewing and/or being interviewed for the HIV Stigma Index. We are hoping to interview ~ 100 PLWHIV across Atlantic Canada.
- Michael noted some of the challenges in reaching marginalized communities (e.g. Indigenous, ACB, PWUD, MSM, etc.). Our intention in early 2019 is to engage four PLWHIV as Project Assistants on an honorarium basis to help us on the ground to make connections with various communities.

- Marni offered to help us make some linkages with Indigenous Communities, and suggested that social media reach is fairly wide – Facebook and Twitter are easy ways to get the messages out. Marni also agreed to speak with some of her colleagues at CAAN/AHA Centre (e.g. Monique Fong) to brainstorm other ways that we can capture the Indigenous voice.  
We agreed that hiring a Project Assistant from the Indigenous Community would be ideal.
- We then talked about reaching the ACB community. There is a PHAC-funded project (led by an alliance of three African Nova Scotian organizations).
- Lori Root from the Nova Scotia Advisory Commission on AIDS is linked to the ACB community through the project, but has been and will be on leave until mid-January. In her absence, Michelle has shared information about the project to some of her contacts (e.g. Dr. David Haase).
- While we know that there are PLWHIV in the ACB community in the Atlantic Region, no one is willing to identify as such. Nonetheless, it is important that we make sure that we are communicating the information. When Lori gets back, she will likely be able to strengthen that link and make sure that the ACB community is aware of the initiative.

#### **ACTIONS:**

- ✓ *Michael will send the Project Assistant job description to Marni once it is ready.*
- ✓ *Marni will distribute the information through her channels.*
- ✓ *Michael will contact Marni for some other potential suggestions for reaching Indigenous Communities*
- ✓ *Michael will reconnect with Lori upon her return.*

#### **5) Grant Updates**

##### **a) Recently Funded (since late Sept/18)**

- Halifax Area Network of Drug Using People (HANDUP) Peers Assisting, Lending Support (PALS) (C. MacIsaac)
- Others?

##### **b) Decision Pending**

- Project PEER Catalyst Grant: Uncovering the Impact of GIPA/MEPA and the Wise Practices of Informal and Formal Supports [Greg] – Decision: Feb 28/19
- CIHR HIV/AIDS Biomedical and Clinical Team Grant – Testing, Reaching the Undiagnosed and Linkages to Care: “REACHing” for impact? [Sean Rourke] – Decision: Mar 28/19]

##### **c) In Development**

- REACH 3.0 (Revised due date: Jan 10/19)

#### **6) Ongoing Research Projects**

- The COAST Study (formerly named “Preventing the spread of HIV: The critical role of addiction treatment services” (L. Jackson & C. MacIsaac)
- “New Technologies & Chem Culture: Examining Deployment and Effects among MSM” (M. Numer)
- The **PANACHE** study (**P**references **A**nd **N**eeds for **A**ging **C**are among **H**IV **E**lders in **C**anada)” (S. Walmsley & K. Murzin)
- “Harm reduction and addictions interventions among people hospitalized with injection drug use-associated infective endocarditis” (T. Brothers)
- Canadian Blood Services “ACB and MSM – it’s not an oxymoron” (O. Dryden)

- “Project PEER (People living with HIV Engaged in Employment Roles): Uncovering the Impact of GIPA/MIPA and the Wise Practices of Informal and Formal Supports” (G. Harris)
- “Additional Harm Reduction Services in two Sites in Nova Scotia: An Exploration of Advantages, Community Interest, and Methods of Delivery” (L. Jackson & D. Bailey)
- “The Canadian HIV Stigma Index CBR Project” (F. Ibáñez-Carrasco)
- Ending HIV Stigma in Canada: Adapting & Applying Contact-Based Interventions (S. Rourke)
- “Halifax Area Network of Drug Users Stands Up” (HANDUP Stands Up) (C. MacIsaac)
- Catalyst Grant: “Moving Beyond Piloting POCT” (J. Gahagan)

## 7) Recently Held and Upcoming Events (Oct/18– )

- [Stimulus Conference](#) — Oct 3-5 [Edmonton]
- [REACH Leadership Meeting](#) — Oct 18-19 [Toronto]
- [CATIE Webinar: Eliminating hepatitis C among people who use drugs: The latest research and its implications for the front lines](#) — Oct 30<sup>th</sup> [Online]
- Mainline “NEEDLES” Documentary Film Screening — Nov 8 [Halifax] – Aired on Eastlink Community TV Dec 2<sup>nd</sup>
- REACH Stigma Researchers Update Meeting — Nov 16 [Halifax]
- PHAC Webinar:

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- [CRISM Atlantic 2nd Symposium](#) — Nov 20 [Moncton]
  - HIV PrEP Stakeholder Engagement Workshop — Nov 21 [Truro]
  - [GotBlood2Give Halifax Training](#) — Nov 24 [Halifax]
  - Red Ribbon Flag Raising & HIV/AIDS Awareness Week Proclamation — Nov 29 [Halifax]
  - [World AIDS Day](#) — Dec 1 [Multiple locations]
  - [Health Canada Consultation on strengthening Canada’s approach to substance use issues: Updating the Canadian Drug and Substances Strategy \(CDSS\)](#) — Sept 5 – Dec 4 [Online]
  - [CATIE Webinar: Peer health navigation: mental health implications of working as a peer](#) — Dec 12 [Online]
  - [EduCATIE + Atlantic Regional Courses: Preventing the Sexual Transmission of HIV](#) — Jan 7–Feb 5/19 and Hepatitis C Basic Jan 14–Feb 11/19 [Online]
  - REACH/UWW Peer Researcher Learning Institute — Feb 5 to 8 [Halifax]
  - [CPHA Public Health 2019](#) — Apr 30 to May 2/19 [Ottawa]
  - [CAHR 2018](#) — May 9 – 12 [Saskatoon]
  - [8th Canadian Symposium on Hepatitis C Virus 2019](#) — May 24 [Montreal]
  - [Canadian Liver Meeting](#) — May 24-26 [Montreal]
  - [41st Annual Guelph Sexuality Conference](#) — June 21-22 [Guelph]

## 8) Next Meetings (every second Thursday of the month from 10:00 – 11:00 am)

- Jan 10 and Feb 14/1