



Regional  
HIV/AIDS  
Connection

SERVING PERTH, HURON, LAMBTON, ELGIN,  
MIDDLESEX AND OXFORD COUNTIES

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# STRONGER TOGETHER

ANNUAL REPORT  
2019-2020



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SERVING PERTH, HURON, LAMBTON, ELGIN,  
MIDDLESEX AND OXFORD COUNTIES

**Regional HIV/AIDS Connection (RHAC)** is community-inspired and dedicated to positively impacting the lives of individuals and diverse communities living with, at-risk for, and affected by HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C.

**With great respect**, we acknowledge the regions we serve as the traditional territory of the Algonquin, Anishinaabe, Attawandaron, Haudenosaunee, and Leni-Lunaape Peoples. The three First Nations communities closest in proximity to this agency are: Chippewa of the Thames First Nation, Oneida Nation of the Thames, and Munsee-Delaware Nation. We are grateful to collaborate with Indigenous communities and Indigenous knowledge as we foster healing together.

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# EXECUTIVE MESSAGE

**At this time of reflecting on Fiscal 2019/20**, it seems as though we've been navigating the global pandemic for much longer than in actuality. Prior to the provincial shutdown in March 2020, the amazing team at RHAC had already devoted eleven and a half months serving our mission. Then our world dramatically changed.

Pre-pandemic, our organization leveraged vital partnerships to reach and serve our community. The significant milestone associated with formally branding the Carepoint program was well-received by stakeholders and the program's impact was highlighted at the Mayor's Annual State of the City address.

Our partnership with Southwest Ontario Aboriginal Health Access Center strengthened RHAC's capacity to serve members of Indigenous communities. In complementary efforts, the RHAC board embarked on a learning journey with the organizational goal to action Truth and Reconciliation in the coming years.

Throughout the year, we advanced our work on many fronts including the launch of our HIV testing campaign *Find Your Reason*. This campaign, developed with *sagecomm*, reaches across our six-county catchment to educate folks on the importance of HIV and STI testing. This campaign, in part, serves migrant workers. In recent months, much has been revealed about the health inequities, employment vulnerabilities and inadequate accommodations impacting this racialized group.

John Gordon Home program remained at capacity throughout the year. Those staying at the "Home with a Heart" received stabilizing health care, quality accommodations and excellent nutrition. Each resident is supported to achieve a better state of wellness and preparedness for community independence.

Our long-standing commitment and deliberate actions to inspire the Greater Involvement of People Living with HIV remains core to our mission. This year, we launched an initiative funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation to address HIV stigma through the voices of lived experience—utilizing digital storytelling. Individuals living with HIV will be sharing their personal and powerful stories with the goal to address community stigma and strengthen self-resiliency.

As RHAC marks its 35th year of mission impact we are facing unprecedented realities and challenges. We brace for a possible second wave of COVID-19 and the uprising of Black Lives Matter will shape our response in the months and years to come. Our workplace has changed while community need, and priorities have shifted! What has not changed are the realities for many of the marginalized folks we serve. Living with HIV is still stigmatized, the opioid crisis continues to rage across the country, and the injustice of poverty and homelessness is illuminated by the pandemic.

RHAC exists to address these issues and so many others. 35 years in and RHAC's mission is as relevant as it was in 1985!

We appreciate your continued support.



**Kimberley Graham**  
Vice Chair




**Brian Lester**  
Executive Director


# HARM REDUCTION

According to Public Health Ontario, there were 1,509 opioid-related deaths in Ontario in 2019. Through our Counterpoint, Carepoint and outreach programs, RHAC continues to serve our community's growing harm reduction and overdose prevention needs.

This was a transformative year for RHAC's Consumption and Treatment Service (CTS). Formerly London's 'Temporary Overdose Prevention Site,' the CTS provides a safe and sterile space for people who use drugs and seek multiple supports, including links to recovery. Since opening its doors, no drug-related deaths or crime-related incidents have been reported at the site. In the summer of 2019, we extended CTS service hours to support harm reduction needs 12 hours a day, every day, including statutory holidays. In February 2020, RHAC revealed a new name and brand for CTS— *Carepoint*. As the program continues to grow and expand, we are ensuring stronger supports for people who use drugs.


 **23,859**  
total client visits  
to Carepoint

 **171**  
overdoses  
reversed

 **5,504**  
community  
support referrals

In 2019, our Harm Reduction and HIV/HCV Support Services teams represented RHAC at London's first-ever Housing Stability Week where we provided individuals with housing needs information and resources around health, harm reduction and Naloxone training.

 **2,227**  
Naloxone  
training sessions

 **54,699**  
harm reduction  
kits distributed


In July 2019, we celebrated the one-year anniversary of our Rural Mobile Outreach program, which continues to make inroads in Oxford and Elgin counties. This collaborative response to the opioid crisis takes into account the many barriers that clients face in rural communities. Thanks to our Mobile Outreach teams, we can go the distance to provide harm reduction equipment, life-saving information, and regular naloxone trainings.

## Harm Reduction staff on Overdose Awareness Day



Our needle and syringe program (NSP), known as Counterpoint, supported 28,781 client visits with the help of 16 satellite partners across 23 locations.

 **28,781**  
total NSP client  
visits

 **2,549,013**  
sterile syringes  
distributed

Throughout the year, our Harm Reduction initiatives continued to uphold our commitment to Truth and Reconciliation. In collaboration with the Ontario Aboriginal HIV/AIDS Strategy (OAHAS) and Southwest Ontario Aboriginal Health Access Centre (SOAHAC), we recognized Orange Shirt Day to acknowledge and raise awareness about the legacy of residential schools. In Summer 2019, we also shared a booth with representatives from OAHAS, SOAHAC, and Chippewa of the

Thames on Indigenous Solidarity Day, facilitating a record 70 Naloxone trainings in a single day.

Over the past year, we supported several research initiatives by building meaningful engagement with people with lived experience. These projects included: a Gender-based Intersectional Analysis of Women's Access to Supervised Consumption and Overdose Prevention Sites, the evaluation and development of educational resources to support Canadian Harm Reduction Best Practice Guidelines, and a photo study which shared the perspectives and lived realities of 12 Harm Reduction clients.



# HIV/HCV SUPPORT SERVICES

With support from community partners and local service agencies, RHAC remained focussed on connecting clients to the best care possible. This year, HIV Support Services supported 133 clients and ensured that 93% of our connected clients living with HIV were maintained in the care cascade to the point of HIV clinical care.



**1000+**  
HIV service  
Interactions



**314** hours  
volunteered  
by PLWHIVs



**6** staff with  
lived  
experience

People living with HIV (PLWHIVs) remained at the heart of our mission, making unmatched contributions to our work as volunteers, staff and valued collaborators. Clients met with our Executive Director and support team three times annually to inform our ongoing work. Our staff and Board also renewed our commitment to the Greater Involvement and Meaningful Engagement of people living with HIV during our annual GIPA/MEPA ceremony.

The John Gordon Home (JGH) program continued to provide a stable and healthy home base for people living with HIV/AIDS and HCV, maintaining full capacity during the year. We celebrated our JGH family through annual events like our barbecue, open house, and *A Heartfelt Evening*—which raised \$6,500 for the Resident Transition Fund that supports departing residents in their successful returns to the broader community.



**15** residents  
received care  
at JGH



**9,000+** meals provided to  
people living with HIV/AIDS/ HCV  
through JGH and food programs



**John Gordon Home**

During the year, client programming provided opportunities to build community and break down stigma and isolation with events like our annual Friends and Family Picnic, a Beach Day, and Annual Holiday Dinner and regular support programs. With the help of Heartwood Equine Connections, this was the first year we introduced equine therapy, where participants explored their journeys living with HIV, making meaningful connections with the horses, friendly facilitators, and each other. We also launched a new initiative funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation that is bringing 18 PHAs together to combat stigma in our community through digital storytelling.

Our services are designed to meet a diversity of needs, as people living with HCV and HIV (especially long-term survivors) can experience a range of unique challenges. We supported referrals to additional treatment, housing, social, mental health and addiction supports. Meanwhile, our Country Cupboard food and transportation programs were accessed a total of 426 times!

RHAC also recognized World Hepatitis Day, collaborating with London Intercommunity Health Center to engage over 200 people through our testing, treatment and awareness events during the month of July. During the year, we engaged 38 HCV treatment starts.



**5,000+**  
HCV service  
interactions

# COMMUNITY RELATIONS AND EDUCATION

Whether it was at an annual fundraiser or festival, a presentation or workshop, our Community Relations and Education teams were proud to connect with our supporters and collaborate with diverse communities. Summer festival season provided us opportunities to share health and wellness resources with community members at London Pride Festival and Sunfest. Meanwhile, events such as Black History Month's Opening Ceremonies, ACB (African, Caribbean and Black) HIV Awareness Day, and our very own Multicultural Health Fair allowed us to bring Black History and community health into focus with members from ACB communities.

Over the course of the year, we worked with 544 women at increased systemic risk for HIV and engaged women living with HIV to support women's health and wellbeing in our community.



**2,120** scarves donated to the 2019 Red Scarf campaign, and a total of \$39,923 raised.



**22** participating ATFL restaurants in 2019 and a total of \$42,500 raised.

Meanwhile, our annual fundraisers returned to bring community together in support of RHAC's clients—whether it was by dining out for *A Taste for Life (ATFL)*, celebrating a night louder than stigma with special guest *bülow* at Red Scarf, or with Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry students at *Tachycardia*.

Throughout the year, we relied on the support of 675 volunteers, including student volunteers from Western University (Brescia and King's University Colleges), Fanshawe College, and local area high schools. We are so grateful to each and every individual who shared their time and talents with us to support our clients and mission.



**18,789**  
volunteer  
hours served

Our work continued to increase access to safer sex options, including PrEP—a daily pill that can prevent HIV—through our PrEP Clinic program, in partnership with Speciality Rx Solutions. This year, we also helped in recruiting 17 participants in an Ontario-wide PrEP Cohort study.



**92**  
PrEP Clinic  
clients



**16,742**  
condoms  
distributed

In 2019, we proudly launched our Find Your Reason campaign on National HIV Testing Day. This dynamic and community-grounded campaign is working with guys into guys and seasonal migrant workers to identify their personal reasons to get tested and know their HIV status. Since launching, the campaign has seen 4,000+ unique users visit the websites, 423,260 digital ad impressions, and has delivered active engagements with 51 guys who are into guys and 200 migrant workers.

**"Open Closet is the one  
place where I can be  
and feel comfortable."**

– Open Closet youth



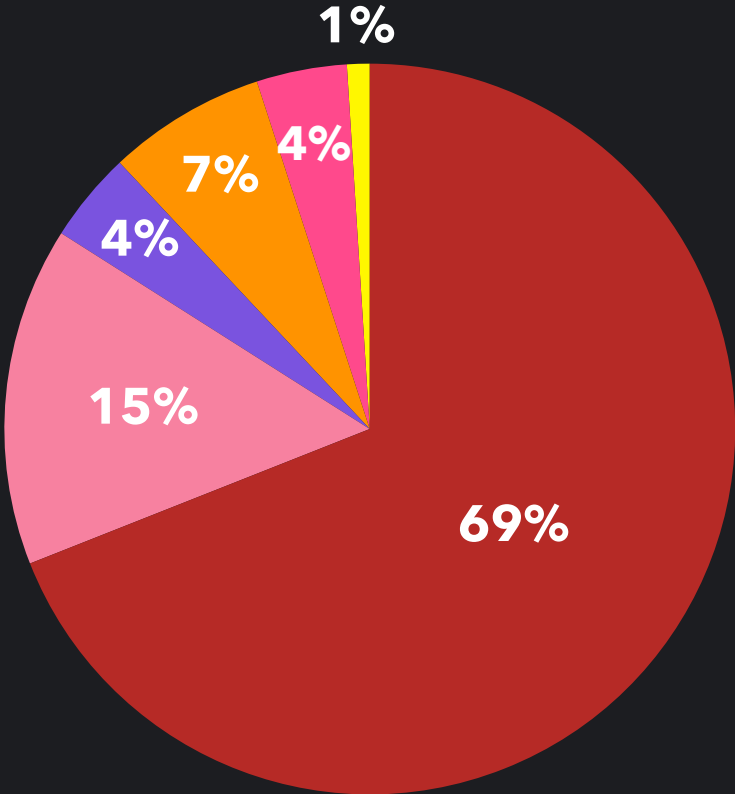
**47** LGBT2QIA+ youth  
supported by our  
Open Closet program

On Fridays, RHAC offered a safer space and support to LGBT2QIA+ youth through our Open Closet program.



**RHAC volunteers and staff at  
London Pride Festival 2019**

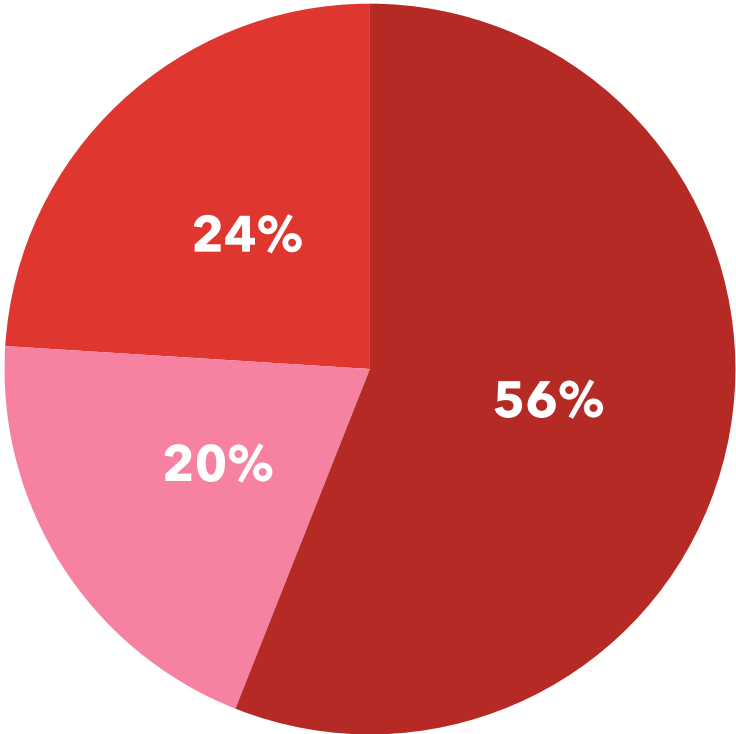
# FINANCIALS



REVENUE 2019/2020  
**\$4,850,783** TOTAL

Totals do not include in-kind donations.

- Provincial Funding: \$3,334,148
- Municipal Funding: \$727,109
- Donations + Fundraising: \$192,862
- Federal Funding: \$327,366
- Admin + Other Recoveries: \$219,673
- Occupancy Fees: \$49,625



EXPENSES 2019/2020  
**\$4,849,190** TOTAL

Totals do not include in-kind donations.

- Staffing: \$2,718,023
- Program: \$966,261
- Fixed: \$1,164,906

# THANK YOU

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## OUR FUNDERS

Public Health Agency of Canada  
AIDS Bureau, Ontario Ministry of Health  
and Long-Term Care  
Housing, Ontario Ministry of Health  
and Long-Term Care  
Southwest Local Health Integration Network  
Employment and Social Development Canada  
City of London  
Middlesex-London Health Unit

## OUR GRANTORS AND DONORS

Blue Core Coaching  
Gilead Sciences Inc.  
Government of Ontario  
Sisters of St. Joseph  
London Community Foundation  
Oliver & Associates (London) Realty Inc.  
Ontario Trillium Foundation  
Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry  
The Bray Family  
TD Bank Group  
The Johansen-Larsen Foundation  
The Law Society Foundation

## OUR 2019/20 BOARD

**Nuno Da Silva** - President  
**Kimberley Graham** - Vice President  
**Mariam Hamou** - Secretary  
**Shaun Brown** - Treasurer  
**Kelsey Adams**  
**Susan Hocking**

**Jennifer Lajoie**  
**Chris Moss**  
**Nancy Griffith**  
**Tina Ranta**  
**Kelly Muhsin**

We are so grateful to all of our partners and supporters for helping us to deliver care, support, and comfort to the people we serve. The work of our volunteers, the trust of our clients, the support of our community partners, and the generosity of our sponsors and donors make it possible to make a positive impact in our clients' lives.

Thank you.