

- Community-Based Collaboration:
- Improving Health Outcomes in
- Equity-Seeking Communities

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# Acknowledging the Land

For over 13,000 years, this land which this presentation is taking place on, has been a home and traditional territory of many Nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, Anishnabeg, Chippewa, Haudenosaunee, and Wendat peoples. Tkaronto is covered by Treaty 13 signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit and the Williams Treaties signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands, and is part of Dish With One Spoon Treaty Territory.

As public health professionals who work in a field that is deeply rooted in colonialism violence and broken treaties, we stand by the 94 calls of actions from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. We also recognize that Public health and research have not been a universal positive experience for many communities, including Indigenous communities, due to settler colonialism. We stand in solidarity with First Nations, Metis, and Inuit nations in their fight for reparations, both locally and globally, and support the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

# Taking Action:

## 1. Read



Educational Resources (  
for kids to adults)

Residential School  
History

## 2. Listen



Land Back, CBC  
Podcast with Angela  
Sterritt

## 3. Learn



National Centre for  
Truth and  
Reconciliation Exhibits



# Partnerships





HEALTH  
COMMONS  
SOLUTIONS  
LAB

# Health Commons Solutions Lab

Established in 2017 and situated within Sinai Health, supported by the Ontario Ministry of Health and the Toronto Central LHIN (now Ontario Health), our lab collaborates with various partners to jointly develop distinct solutions rooted in communities' intrinsic knowledge and expertise. These solutions challenge established conventions and contribute to enduring transformation.

As a “Commons”, we believe that new ideas and solutions need to be shared. We're committed to documenting our learning journey and building a free repository of tools that are available to anyone who wants to use them.



Canadian Mental  
Health Association  
Peel Dufferin  
*Mental health for all*

Association canadienne  
pour la santé mentale  
Peel Dufferin  
*La santé mentale pour tous*

# CMHA Peel Dufferin

For over 55 years, the Canadian Mental Health Association Peel Dufferin (CMHA Peel Dufferin) has been an innovator in providing services for people with mental illness and educating Canadians about mental health issues. As the leading client-driven, community-based mental health organization serving the Region of Peel and Dufferin County, they are innovative partners in proactively strengthening individual support, and developing a responsive mental health and addiction system.

CMHA Peel Dufferin offers services across the continuum of care, including crisis services, group programming, and immediate interventions. CMHA Peel Dufferin is committed to community development, mental health and addiction awareness and addressing the stigma surrounding mental illness.



# WellFort

Community Health Services

## WellFort CHS

WellFort is a community health centre that provides health services to individuals and families across the Region of Peel depending on their unique needs. WellFort strongly believes in the strengths of our clients and communities we serve, and the services we provide. As a not-for-profit, values-based organization, our services include:

- Primary health care provided by a Doctor, Nurse Practitioner and Nurse.
- Dental Care.
- Nutritional and mental health counselling, Diabetes, physiotherapy and chiropody services
- HIV & Hepatitis C Education Programs.
- Health Promotion and Education Programs.
- Working with local residents and partner agencies to build community health.

# High Priority Communities Strategy (HPCS): WHAT is it?

- Under the High Priority Communities Strategy, the government funded community agencies in 17 communities across the province with high rates of community transmission of COVID-19, racialization and/or material deprivation to implement or expand their local, equity-driven efforts aimed at addressing these issues and closing the gap in access and supports for those who were hardest hit by the pandemic.
- The Community Ambassador Program is part of the High Priority Community Strategy. During the pandemic, funds were provided to expand roles that previously existed in some communities and provided supports to ensure that Community Ambassadors were prepared and able to meet the specific needs of the communities they were serving.

# HPCS and Inclusive Justice in Practice

## 1. Planning and Startup



Health Commons Solutions Lab supported community agencies in developing proposals and action plans

## 2. Implementation Support



Tactical support to respond to emerging needs identified by the communities

## 3. Fostering cross-community learning



Creating a [repository](#) of over 350 tools and resources in over 45 languages,

## 4. Sharing back and reporting



Identifying emerging needs to decision-makers, while sourcing real-time feedback and information

A woman with long dark hair is speaking into a microphone at a community event. She is wearing a grey checkered blazer. In the background, several other people are visible, some wearing hijabs. One person is wearing a green t-shirt with the text "I HELP YOU?". The scene is set in a well-lit room with a whiteboard and a banner in the background.

# Innovation and Creative Community Response: The pivotal role of community ambassadors

# WHAT DO COMMUNITY AMBASSADORS DO?

Community Ambassadors are deeply **connected** to their communities. They provide **information, resources** and **wrap-around support** to marginalized communities. They help with **navigating** the healthcare system and follow-up to ensure the communities they serve get a warm hand-off to health partners and receive **appropriate and effective care**.

They take their **time** to **listen** with **empathy** and to build **trust**, which are the building blocks of **access** and **better health outcomes**. Community Ambassadors are situated within the **realm of prevention** and **ongoing health maintenance**, and do not diagnose, screen, provide clinical care etc.



# AREAS COMMUNITY AMBASSADORS SUPPORT

**The social determinants of health combine with a health need to create a unique complexity that requires a different approach in each community.**

Here are some specific examples of what Community Ambassadors do day-to-day, as part of their wrap-around support model. Each Community Ambassador is working in a way that meets the specific needs of the community they work within, and no two communities are the same.

# AREAS COMMUNITY AMBASSADORS SUPPORT

E.g., share information on local services and supports

E.g., provide culturally and linguistically inclusive care

E.g., provide accurate information on COVID-19 and other health information



E.g., referral and support with applying to financial and employment supports

E.g., hosted town halls and health educational events

# Unique Contributions of Community Ambassadors

**Wrap-around support + navigation  
+ follow-up  
=  
effective care.**

We support families to access support services that are tailored to their specific dynamics and unique needs.

We follow-up with the people we serve, to ensure they have been successful in accessing resources and support they are seeking.

**Empathy + time + listening  
=  
trust.**

***These are the building blocks of  
access and better outcomes***

We validate and listen to people to understand their needs, priorities, and concerns, to hear where they're at and what's in the way of moving forward.

We walk with empathy no matter what. We are patient and we give people time they can't find other places. We boost people up, reminding them what they're doing well.

# CORE COMPETENCIES

“ WE VALIDATE AND LISTEN TO PEOPLE TO UNDERSTAND THEIR NEEDS, PRIORITIES, AND CONCERNS, TO HEAR WHERE THEY’RE AT AND WHAT’S IN THE WAY OF MOVING FORWARD.

WE SUPPORT FAMILIES TO ACCESS SUPPORT SERVICES THAT ARE TAILORED TO THEIR SPECIFIC DYNAMICS AND UNIQUE NEEDS. ”





# HOW ARE COMMUNITY AMBASSADORS UNIQUELY POSITIONED TO DO THIS WORK?

# IMAGINING THE FUTURE

**Community Ambassadors understand the needs of the communities they work within because they are a member of the community.** Critical considerations when selecting who becomes a Community Ambassador include that they understand and are a part of the community; speak the language of the community, both linguistically and culturally; and know how to create a safer space for people to ask questions and seek support (by listening non-judgmentally and sharing resources that are culturally relevant and appropriate). All of this is critical to them working closely with health care providers, sector partners and communities to bridge gaps in access and trust.



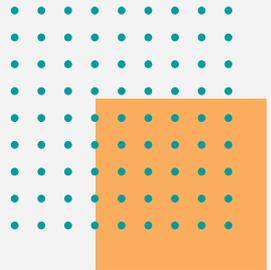
“

**YOU HAVE TO BE A PERSON WHO INSPIRES OTHERS IN THE WAY YOU GIVE INFORMATION. WE CANNOT TELL PEOPLE WHAT TO DO, BUT WE CAN INSPIRE THEM BY THE WAY WE TALK TO THEM.**

”



# Innovative approaches used during COVID-19: Spotlight on Community Organizations





# Community Health and Wellness Fairs

“Our Community Wellness Fair” was hosted in collaboration with The Region of Peel, WellFort CHS, Roots Community Services, LAMP-East Mississauga, Ontario Health, Moyo, Canadian Mental Health Association Peel Dufferin, Black Health Alliance, and the Black Physicians Association of Ontario, for Black, African and Caribbean communities.



# What was unique about this health fair?



## Representation

The healthcare providers and educators who hosted the health fair represent the community they are serving, including community ambassadors



## Culturally-informed programming

Programming tailored specifically to the cultural values and traditions of BAC community members such as heart health, cancer screening, and skin and hair health



## Intersectoral Collaboration

This fair bridges various community health centres across the Peel region who have a focus on Black health programming



# WellFort on Wheels



- In partnership with CMHA Peel & Family Services of Peel, we launched WellFort on Wheels
- Bringing culturally responsive health care services to the people
- Services provided on the health van: Pap testing, Diabetes testing & counselling, Cervical and Breast Cancer education & self exam demo videos

# WellFort's Evaluation of Community Health Ambassador Model



## The Evaluation of the CHA Model highlighted significant impact on:

- Fostering Partnerships
- Diverse, inclusive, culturally appropriate education & care
- Accessibility
- Creating lasting community connections
- Empowering marginalized communities
- Building trust & creating system navigation pathways



# CMHA's GoVaxx Vaccine Bus



After consulting with community ambassadors about how to design a culturally-informative way of delivering vaccines, CMHA Peel was able to bring a mobile vaccine bus to ISNA Masjid, to connect with community members to more information regarding vaccines, as well as an opportunity for this community to get vaccinated if they had not.

# Situating Healthcare Initiatives in the Community

Speaking the language of the community



Building trust with community members



Community based participatory engagement

Multi-sectoral collaboration across diverse networks





# Sharing Best Practices and Building Relationships



# The Gathering

The **Community Ambassador Gathering** was supported by Health Commons Solutions Lab and hosted at Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Center. The Gathering brought together a diverse group of Community Ambassadors serving **17 communities across Ontario**.

The aim of the Community Ambassadors Gathering was to **share best practices** and **build relationships** between Community Ambassadors, Health Commons and system partners through an in-person continuation of our regular virtual meetings.

Approximately **45 Community Ambassadors** from Ontario, **6 global special guests** in the peer and social support sector, and **4 system leaders** from Ontario Health, OpenLab, Closing the Gap and Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre attended the Gathering – along with most of the Health Commons team!

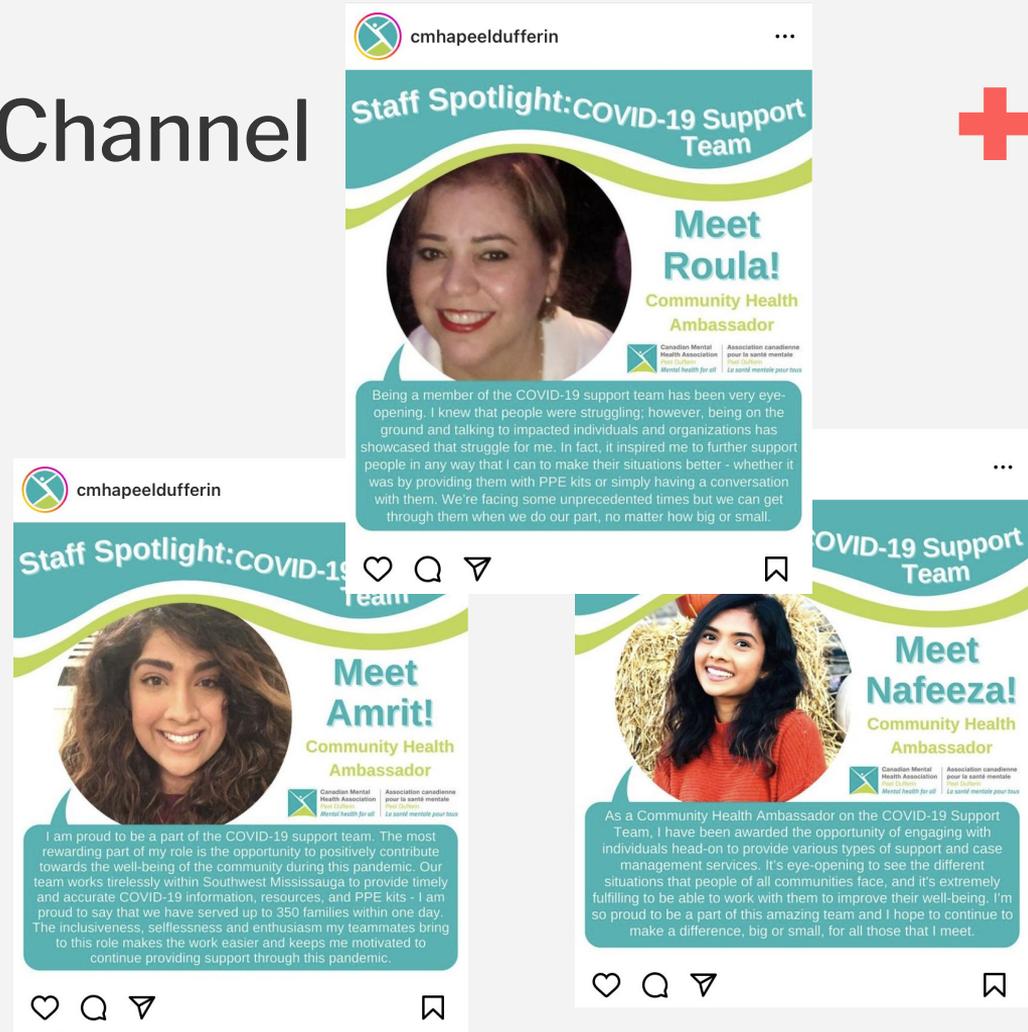
# THE GATHERING

**COMMUNITY** AMBASSADOR SYMPOSIUM

SHARING STORIES  
INDIGENOUS PROGRAMING  
ADDRESSING INADEQUACIES  
CODSIGN  
THROUGH AN INDIGENOUS LENS  
DRUM SOCIALS  
DIVERSITY SHARING EXPERIENCES  
VARIED GLOBAL PROGRAMING...  
APP FOR SENIORS  
INFRASTRUCTURE FOLLOW UP  
TRANSPORTATION  
ACCESS  
SUPPORTING COMMUNITY  
ACCESS TO FOOD APP  
COMMUNITY-BASED FOOD SHARING OUTREACH  
FOOD INSECURITY  
HELP WITH NAVIGATING THE HEALTH SYSTEM  
COLLABORATE!  
PEER CONNECTIONS TRAINING CHAT BOT  
SKILL BUILDING  
MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH  
NEED-BASED  
INFORMATION & RESOURCES  
TRANSLATION & LANGUAGE SERVICES  
COMMUNITY RESEARCH  
ALLYSHIP  
LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER  
EDUCATION OUTREACH  
MINDFULNESS  
ENGAGEMENT BRIDGE THE GAP  
STAYING IN TOUCH ESPECIALLY DURING THE PANDEMIC  
MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT  
COACHING  
HOPE  
SHARING FOOD, CULTURE  
BUILDING A BRAVE SPACE  
RECONCILIATION  
BUILDING AWARENESS  
HEALTH CARE  
BUILDING STRONG COMMUNITIES  
CONNECTING  
OUTREACH  
AN AWARENESS  
FEELING ROOTED IN THE PLACE WE ARE  
KNOWING WHO WE ARE!  
WE ARE ON LAND, CARED FOR and VALUED by the INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

# Social Media as a Channel

CMHA profiled Community Health Ambassadors on social media channels to help introduce them to the community, and to build trust and connection



A group of people in a meeting, with a quote overlaid. The background is a faded image of several people in a meeting room. One person in the foreground is wearing a blue surgical mask and a grey hoodie with 'DICKY KNY' on it. Another person is wearing a name tag that says 'Economic Services'. The quote is in large, bold, black letters with teal quotation marks.

“

**WE BUILD STRONG, TRUSTING  
RELATIONSHIPS. WE BECOME A  
HUGE RESOURCE TO OUR  
COMMUNITY. SOMEONE TOLD  
ME: ‘YOU ARE MY GOOGLE.’**”

**- Community Ambassador**



# Thank You!

Do you have any questions?

# Let's Stay Connected!



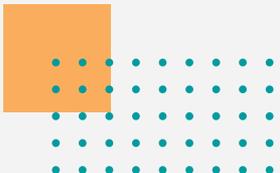
Health Commons Solutions Lab



CMHA, Peel Dufferin



Wellfort Community Health Services



# Community Consultations: Primary Care Access



Our team conducted over 45 primary care consultations, which allowed us to engage with community members across High Priority communities who are unattached to the healthcare system. These discussions helped us better understand the experiences of those who are unattached, and where there are potential gaps that can be addressed to better reach this population.

Mercury takes a little more than 58 days to complete its rotation, so try to imagine how long days must be there! Since the temperatures are so extreme, albeit not as extreme as on Venus, Mercury has been deemed to be non-habitable for humans

