

Local Public Health at Work in Algoma

2022 Report to the Community

Paving the Road to Recovery: Strategy and Partnerships



Vision

Health for all. Together.

Mission

We promote and protect community health and advance health equity in Algoma.

Values

Excellence, Respect, Accountability & Transparency, Collaboration

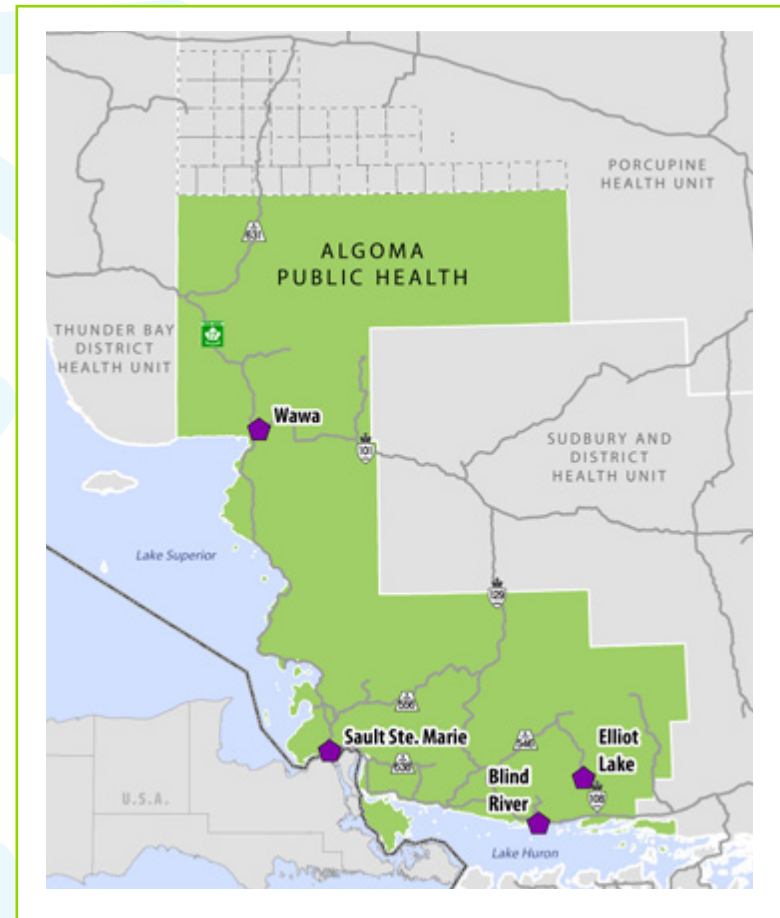
Land Acknowledgement

The land on which we gather is in the traditional territories of the Anishinabek, Ililiwak (Cree), and Wiisaakoodewiwiniwok (Métis Nation).

Algoma Public Health delivers services and programs within some of the Robinson-Huron Treaty, Robinson-Superior Treaty, and Treaty 9 territories, specifically within the traditional territories of the Michipicoten, Missanabie-Cree, Batchewana, Garden River, Thessalon, Mississauga, Serpent River, and Sagamok First Nations.

Algoma Public Health also delivers services and programs within the traditional territory of the Huron-Superior Regional Métis Community, represented by the Historic Sault Ste. Marie Métis Council and the North Channel Métis Council as part of the Métis Nation of Ontario.

We say miigwech to thank Indigenous Peoples for continuing to take care of this land from time immemorial. We are all called to treat this sacred land, its plants, animals, stories and its Peoples with honour and respect.



We commit to the shared goal of Truth and Reconciliation.

Message from the Acting Medical Officer of Health & Board of Health Chair

Whether working to protect the health of those most at risk during a global pandemic or working to promote and protect the health of everyone in our communities each day, public health is there for each of us in Algoma.

The public health professionals at Algoma Public Health plan and deliver evidence-informed programs and services that support wellbeing across the lifespan, from visits with new parents, to preventing falls among seniors, to advocating for healthy public policies that foster safer and healthy environments in our local schools, workplaces, and beyond.

We know that this support to our community has high value for its relatively low cost to residents. Every \$1 spent on immunizing children with the measles-mumps-rubella vaccine, saves \$16 in health care costs; every \$1 invested in tobacco prevention programs saves up to \$20 in future health care costs; and every \$1 invested in car and booster seats saves \$40 in avoided medical costs.* Investment in local public health yields strong returns in the wellbeing of our community, especially when working with partners to improve health for all, together.

We also know that addressing health inequity and advocating for policy change are investments in a better future. As the world changes, so do our programs and services in order to continue to advance priority public health needs and meet the needs of Algoma's diverse communities.

Through 2022, we continued to see significant change as pandemic response and immunization work continued, and public health took early steps towards pandemic recovery.

We're pleased to share this report with the community that gives some of the many highlights of 2022, and a glimpse into some of the routine work that resumed as part of recovery.



Sally Hagman
Chair, Board of Health



Dr. John Tuinema
Acting Medical Officer of Health/
Chief Executive Officer

*Butler-Jones D. The Chief Public Health Officer's Report on the State of Public Health in Canada: 2008, Addressing health inequalities. Ministry of Health, 2008. <https://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/cphorsphc-respcacsp/2008/fr-rc/pdf/CPHO-Report-e.pdf>

2022 Board of Health

Member	Appointed by
Sally Hagman <i>Chair</i>	Township of Blind River, Township of Spanish, Township of North Shore
Ed Pearce <i>1st Vice-Chair</i>	City of Elliot Lake
Deborah Graystone <i>2nd Vice-Chair</i>	Province of Ontario
Micheline Hatfield	The Municipality of Wawa, Township of White River, Township of Dubreuilville
Musa Onyuna	City of Sault Ste. Marie
Matthew Scott	City of Sault Ste. Marie
Louise Caicco Tett	City of Sault Ste. Marie
Brent Rankin	Town of Thessalon, Municipality of Huron Shores
Lee Mason	Town of Bruce Mines, Village of Hilton Beach, Townships of Hilton, Jocelyn, Johnson, Laird, MacDonald, Meredith & Aberdeen Additional, Plummer Additional, Prince, St. Joseph, Tarbutt Township

Strategic Directions

- 1 Advance the priority public health needs of Algoma's diverse communities.
- 2 Improve the impact and effectiveness of Algoma Public Health programs.
- 3 Grow and celebrate an organizational culture of learning, innovation, and continuous improvement.



Relaunch of our Strategic Plan & Aligning to Recovery

The strategic plan provides overarching direction to our work in local public health at Algoma Public Health.

Algoma Public Health's approval of the strategic plan was not followed by a traditional roll out in early 2020 due to the abrupt arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic that significantly shifted the work of our public health teams.

However, our work in COVID-19 response, immunization, and high-risk programming was retained as part of continuity of operations. This important pandemic work continued to advance the strategic directions and our mission to promote and protect community health and advance health equity in Algoma.

When COVID-19 recovery planning resumed in early 2022, it was quickly noted that plans for pandemic recovery remained closely aligned to the three strategic directions and that the work of our programs in recovery would further move us towards our mission and vision. Through a presentation to all staff in an internal Town Hall and to the Board of Health, there was resounding continued support for the strategic plan, to continue working towards our vision of health for all, together.

Learn more: [Strategic Plan](#)

Riding into Recovery

A Framework for Algoma Public Health

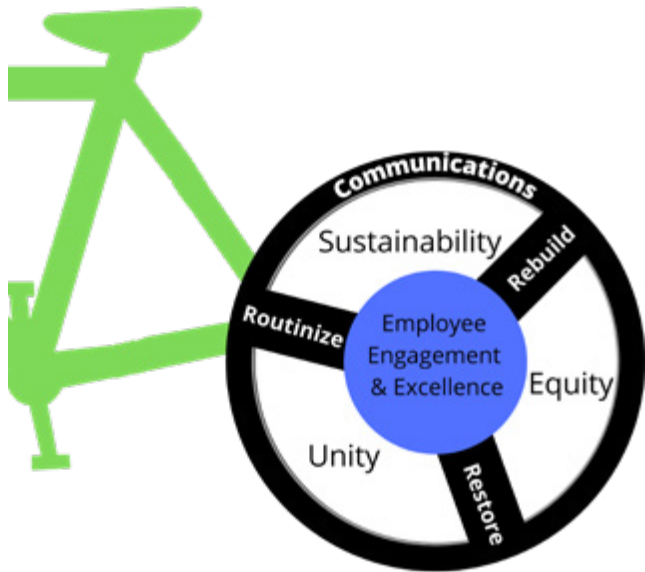
Throughout 2022, Algoma Public Health remained in its Incident Management System structure and continued with the pandemic response, administering COVID-19 vaccines, and supporting high-risk facilities. However, by the spring, most staff were able to return to core public health programs and the agency was able to kick start the roadmap to recovery.

Pandemic recovery involves addressing the impact of COVID-19 on our agency, including our employees that worked tirelessly to protect and promote health and wellbeing, and communities across Algoma.

In 2022, Algoma Public Health engaged in recovery planning, with the goal of effectively recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic using a collaborative, evidence-informed approach.

At the core of recovery was **employee engagement and excellence**, to revitalize the public health workforce through employees' lived experience, lessons learned, employee wellness, and organizational capacity development.

Framework For Recovery



Three spokes for planning and action included:

- **Routinizing** COVID-19 work for sustainable prevention, mitigation, preparedness, and response to COVID-19.
- **Restoring** public health programs and services considering lessons learned from COVID-19, alignment with Ontario Public Health Standards, and post-pandemic public health priorities in Algoma.
- **Rebuilding** local public health, with a focus on strategic policy and evidence to engage in change at local, provincial, and federal levels.

In 2022, many public health programs and activities resumed and began to address the backlog of priority services and support placed on hold to respond to the pandemic (e.g., school-based immunizations, seniors dental care, high-risk inspections).

However, there were still some activities yet to resume as part of a phased approach to recovery, which has been made more challenging by capacity limitations.

Our work in recovery will continue over the next several years with communication facilitating internal and external engagement and participatory action to keep us pedalling in the same direction.



Learn more: [*A brief introduction: Algoma Public Health's Framework for COVID-19 Recovery*](#)

Health Promotion

Health promotion includes public health actions to prevent disease, encourage safe behaviours and improve health through public policy, community-based interventions, active public participation, and advocacy or action on environmental and socio-economic determinants of health.*

Walking Together towards Truth and Reconciliation

Building meaningful relationships with Indigenous partners founded in principles of **trust, respect, commitment, and self-determination** is key to our work together towards Truth and Reconciliation and decreasing health inequities experienced by Indigenous peoples as a result of colonialism.

Recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic throughout 2022 presented new opportunities to build on our work with Indigenous partners and strengthen relationships for health for all, together.

In 2022, Algoma Public Health co-presented an abstract with Maamwesying North Shore Community Health Services Inc. at Canadian Public Health Association's [Public Health 2022](#) Virtual Conference. The abstract titled [Working Together: Collaborating with Indigenous Partners during COVID-19](#) highlighted our work together, actions that facilitated partnership, and lessons learned.



*Reference: Butler-Jones, D. 2008. [The Chief Public Health Officer's report on the state of public health in Canada 2008: Addressing Health Inequalities](#). Public Health Agency of Canada

With the support of Indigenous partners, Algoma Public Health also:

- Recruited an Indigenous Engagement Facilitator to continue to strengthen collaborative partnerships between APH, Indigenous communities, and local, provincial, and federal Indigenous health service organizations.
- Celebrated Indigenous History Month with the Indigenous Diabetes Health Circle to honour Indigenous culture by learning about traditional foods and relationships with food and wellbeing.
- Acknowledged National Truth and Reconciliation Day with Elizabeth Webkamigad, a knowledge carrier who led an all-staff session to spark awareness and reflection on Canada's relationship with Indigenous peoples and where one might sit in their work with Indigenous peoples.
- Supported the Board of Health's initiative to complete a Reconciliation Education course, alongside monthly meetings.
- Began the development of an Indigenous Engagement Strategy focused on Truth and Reconciliation.
- Supported the Maamwesying Community Health Services COVID-19 Task Force by sharing resources and updates on COVID-19 response and immunizations.

We recognize that there is much work to do in our journey towards the shared goals of Truth and Reconciliation and look forward to continuing this journey with Indigenous partners and Peoples in Algoma.

Strategic Direction #2D: Meaningfully engage clients, partners and communities based on shared goals and accountabilities.

Taking Steps with our Community to Address the Opioid Crisis

Throughout the pandemic and recovery, significant focus has remained on the opioid crisis that is disproportionately impacting families and communities across northern Ontario.

In collaboration with partners across multiple sectors, public health action occurred throughout the domains of harm reduction, treatment, community safety, and prevention.

The year 2022 brought specific focus to voices of those with lived and living experiences, through a client and community partner interview project. Reconnecting with the Algoma community allowed APH and partners to better understand facilitators and barriers to wellness across the continuum of substance use. In addition, the provision of naloxone kits and sterile drug use equipment continued through the Ontario Naloxone Program and Needle Exchange Program sites in Algoma.



Throughout 2022, Algoma Public Health:

- Issued 5 community alerts to inform the public of an increase in opioid-related harms.
- Issued 7 community bulletins to keep partners apprised of the local opioid response.
- Participated in the Sault Ste. Marie & Area Drug Strategy Committee.
- Distributed 5,942 nasal spray naloxone kits.
- Supported 913 new clients that visited the Needle Exchange Program for clean drug use equipment (6,092 interactions).

Working to address the opioid crisis remains a local priority for public health, as much remains to be done with community partners in harm reduction, treatment, community safety, and prevention to address the opioid crisis and its impact on families in Algoma.

Strategic Direction #1A: Strengthening population health assessment to improve understanding of the distribution and determinants of health and disease, including local disparities, and identify priority populations for public health and health equity action.

Starting the Journey for School and Routine Vaccination Catch-up

Administration of COVID-19 vaccines and booster doses continued in 2022, and Immunization and School Health programs were also able to shift attention to school-based, routine, and travel-related immunizations.

The team used data to inform the planning of clinics in communities and for priority populations with lower vaccine uptake or that may experience inequities through traditional approaches to vaccine delivery (e.g., pop-up clinics outdoors, supporting Indigenous-led clinics in First Nation communities, etc.).

Partnerships remained important to building community vaccine confidence and vaccine delivery, including those with pharmacies, primary care providers, and paramedicine.

We were also able to return to elementary and secondary schools across Algoma to immunize Grade 7-9 students, who missed immunizations during the pandemic due to school closures.

Throughout 2022, Public Health Nurses:

- Administered 24,933 doses of COVID-19 vaccine at public health-led clinics.
- Delivered vaccines to eligible residents in Algoma, with 83.1% receiving a first dose and 80.5% receiving a second dose of COVID-19 vaccine to complete their primary series by December 31, 2022.
- Hosted 75 in-school vaccination clinics across Algoma, with over 4500 doses of vaccine administered to school-aged children (i.e., Hepatitis B, Tetanus Diphtheria, Gardasil, etc.).
- Hosted 95 routine immunization clinics at APH offices across the Algoma district.

Learn more: [Immunization](#)

Strategic Direction #2: Improve the impact and effectiveness of Algoma Public Health programs.

Ringling Bells to Celebrate the Resumption of Healthy Growth & Development & Healthy Babies Healthy Children Programming

The focus of 2022 for Healthy Growth and Development was on re-orientation to the program, the population health approach, and health promotion with most staff returning from pandemic assignments and many new staff having joined the team during the pandemic.

The teams also re-engaged with community partners, such as the Sault Ste. Marie & Algoma Child and Family Network which is focused on supporting children born and growing up in SSM & Algoma to achieve their potential. This network celebrates successes and identifies issues and barriers that jointly affect children and families and works to combine efforts to ensure that service delivery across all of Algoma is integrated and responsive.

The Healthy Babies Healthy Children program was able to resume program delivery across Algoma, and parenting groups slowly shifted from virtual-only delivery to some in-person facilitation by the end of 2022, including a new program for dads and their children.

Throughout 2022, the team:

- Co-chaired the SSM & Algoma Child and Family Network, a network of over 25 partners in Algoma.
- Supported 91 new pregnant individuals in accessing the Canadian Prenatal Nutrition Program.
- Conducted 535 calls to families with newborns in Algoma.
- Completed 420 visits to high-risk families in Algoma, through a blend of in-person and virtual modes.
- Continued to offer sexual health services and supports, which included conducting 36 Intrauterine Device (IUD) visits at the APH clinic with the Nurse Practitioner for clients who do not have a primary care provider in Algoma. This was a new service offered as part of a health equity approach to healthy sexuality programming.

Learn More: [Pregnancy & Parenting in Algoma](#) ; [Healthy Sexuality](#)

Strategic Direction #2b, 3a: Meaningfully engage clients, partners and communities based on shared goals and accountabilities; Invest in our people and develop organization capacity to use evidence and data to build effective partnerships.

“ I want to take this opportunity to thank you for all the resources and information you have been providing since meeting you. Honestly, I did not know about all these avenues, and I really thank you for always guiding me and helping me with information. ”

- **Healthy Babies Health Children Client.**

“ I first met with [Healthy Growth and Development Public Health Nurse] when my infant was 3 weeks old. At the time, he wasn't latching properly, feeding was very painful, and I was ready to quit breastfeeding altogether. I was blown away by how friendly and knowledgeable [Healthy Growth and Development Public Health Nurse] was...She was so encouraging and enthusiastic; she inspired me to continue trying to breastfeed and gave me the knowledge and support I needed to succeed. ”

- **Healthy Growth and Development Breastfeeding client.**

Keeping Seniors Smiling with the Ontario Senior Dental Care Program

Oral health is an important part of overall health. The Ontario Senior Dental Care Program provides free, routine dental services for low-income seniors aged 65+. The goal of the program is to prevent chronic disease, increase quality of life, and reduce unnecessary trips to the hospital.

Algoma Public Health administers the Ontario Senior Dental Care Program at the local level through a blended service delivery model, delivering services at the Algoma Public Health office in Sault Ste. Marie, and throughout the district by contracting with dental professionals. The services include preventive (hygiene), treatment, dentures, and oral surgery.



Through 2022:

- Oral surgery services and a new denturist were added to the program.
- A panoramic X-ray machine was installed for improved diagnostics.
- 85 preventive clinics and 51 treatment clinics were held at Algoma Public Health.
- 385 treatment clients were supported across the district.
- 157 hygiene clients were supported at Algoma Public Health.
- 5 clients received care from an oral surgeon.
- 106 clients received dentures across the district.

Learn More: [Ontario Senior Dental Care Program](#)

Strategic Direction #2: Improve the impact and effectiveness of Algoma Public Health programs.

Keeping Kids Smiling - Healthy Smiles Ontario

Healthy Smiles Ontario is a provincial program that provides free dental care (i.e., check-ups, preventive care, and treatment) for eligible children and youth 17 and under.

Throughout 2022:

- 182 Healthy Smiles Ontario clients received care at Algoma Public Health with many more supported by community providers.
- The school screening program resumed for the first time since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, with 58 school screening clinics booked throughout the 2022-23 school year.



As pandemic recovery continues, we look forward to being able to resume other important oral health services like childcare centre screenings, preventive clinics in district office locations, and health promotion activities, all of which continue to be on hold as we work to meet demands to keep local seniors and children and youth smiling in Algoma.

Learn more: [Healthy Smiles Ontario](#)

Strategic Direction #2: Improve the impact and effectiveness of Algoma Public Health programs.

Health Protection

Health protection includes public health actions to ensure water, air, and food are safe, control infectious diseases, and protect community health from environmental threats, including those we experience as a result of a changing climate.*

Kickstarting our Emergency Response during an Oil Spill

In June 2022, a quantity of oil was released from Algoma Steel Inc.'s wastewater treatment plant into the St. Mary's River.

As part of our work to investigate potential health hazards and to ensure 24/7 timely, integrated, safe, and effective response to, and recovery from emergencies with public health impacts, Algoma Public Health mobilized with provincial and community partners to ensure public health and safety.

Algoma Public Health activated its internal Emergency Response Plan and implemented an Incident Management System structure, remaining in response until risk to public health was mitigated. Public Health Ontario's technical experts provided support to assess potential health related impacts resulting from the oil spill.

Our operations focused on health equity and residents most at risk, including residents with private drinking water systems downstream from the spill, members of Batchewana First Nation whose land and traditional fishing areas were impacted, and Echo Bay, whose municipal drinking water system was temporarily shut down given its proximity to the spill.

The Algoma Public Health team conducted risk assessments, provided guidance to partners, and shared risk communication with the public.

To inform the public, APH issued a public warning to users downstream, warning residents not to drink, swim, bathe, or shower with the water, along with other precautionary measures. Once sampling was satisfactory, the warning was lifted, and residents could resume activity safely.

Strategic Direction #2A, C:

Align programs to population health priorities and to the unique role of public health and meaningfully engage clients, partners, and communities based on shared goals and accountabilities.

*Reference: Butler-Jones, D. 2008. [The Chief Public Health Officer's report on the state of public health in Canada 2008: Addressing Health Inequalities](#). Public Health Agency of Canada.



Pedalling Together: The Infection Prevention and Control Hub & High-Risk Settings

As the designated Algoma Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) Hub, Algoma Public Health has continued to build capacity across high-risk settings to curb the spread of infectious diseases and protect those most vulnerable.

The goal of the Hub is to enhance infection control practices in community-based congregate settings (e.g., long-term care homes, shelters, hospices, Indigenous-led elder lodges, etc.).

Algoma Public Health worked towards this goal by:

- Conducting a situational assessment of high-risk settings to better understand Infection Prevention and Control needs and tailor Hub initiatives to meet the needs of facilities in Algoma.
- Providing education, training, and mentoring in Infection Prevention and Control (e.g., webpage, newsletters).
- Supporting the development of a Community of Practice to facilitate the sharing of challenges and lessons learned across facilities with the Hub and Public Health Ontario.
- Providing supportive visits and consults to facilities, such as through support for Infection Prevention and Control programs, policies, procedures, assessments, and audits.
- Providing recommendations to strengthen Infection Prevention and Control and supporting implementation.
- Supporting outbreak management planning with facilities.

Throughout 2022:

- 888 facility requests were responded to in 2022, either onsite or delivered remotely.
- 1 Community of Practice Meeting was held with participating facilities.
- 2 Newsletters were distributed to high-risk facilities in Algoma.

Learn More: [**Infection Prevention and Control Hub**](#)

Strategic Direction #2D: Meaningfully engage clients, partners and communities based on shared goals and accountabilities.

Gearing Up in Environmental Health to Get Back to Routine Work

While still supporting COVID-19 response efforts, such as education and outbreak management in high-risk settings, the Environmental Health team has gradually resumed some routine environmental health programming.

The goals of the Environmental Health team are to prevent or reduce the burden of food-borne and water-borne illnesses and injuries, reduce the burden of communicable and other infectious diseases of public health significance in high-risk settings, and reduce exposures to health hazards and promote the development of healthy built and natural environments.

Public health inspectors in Algoma are working through the backlog of inspections and support paused throughout the pandemic due to the prioritization of response efforts.

Throughout 2022, inspectors focused on priority activities to protect public health, including high risk food premises, high risk drinking water systems, and public pool and spa inspections, along with case and contact management.

Throughout 2022, Public Health Inspectors:

- Conducted 7 Food Handler Training Sessions with 257 individuals trained.
- Issued 182 special event permits.
- Issued 64 farmers market approvals.
- Followed-up on 230 investigations/complaints.
- Conducted 84 inspections of personal service settings.
- Conducted 135 inspections of pools and spas.
- Conducted 809 inspections of food premises.

The Environmental Health team is looking to get back to some key health promotion-based activities in 2023, including a Food Safety at Home campaign.

Strategic Direction #2A: Align programs to population health priorities and to the unique role of public health.

Learners Join the Team

Algoma Public Health is a teaching health unit, committed to offering learner opportunities that build core competencies for public health in the next generation of public health professionals. Numerous learners join our health promotion, health protection, and corporate service teams each year for an engaging and informative public health experience.

Opportunities have included job shadowing and placements for BScN students, public health and preventive medicine residents, medical residents in non-public health specialties, medical students, and graduate students.

Throughout 2022, Algoma Public Health staff mentored 14 learners that joined the APH team.



"My placement allowed me to learn about upstream approaches to health care and how the social determinants of health are vital to the overall health of the population. The agency's welcoming environment and engaging preceptors made it easy for me to participate in a variety of health equity projects and seminars so that I could be a contributing member of the team. I feel fulfilled and happy in my current role as a Public Health Nurse, and I highly enjoy taking the knowledge and experience I gained from my school placement and applying it to my work."

- Averi Thibodeau



"I am grateful that I had the opportunity to be able to complete my placement with Algoma Public Health as it introduced me to public health nursing. After completing a rapid review paper about climate change adaptation and mitigation for my third-year placement project, I was impressed by how many services and programs Algoma Public Health provided and wanted to learn more. I am excited to continue my new journey as a Public Health Nurse in the school health program."

- Taryn Gazankas

Learn More: [Learners](#)

Strategic Direction #3: Grow and celebrate an organizational culture of learning, innovation, and continuous improvement.

2022 Funding of Local Public Health

Municipal Levies (District of Algoma)

\$4,189,216

Public Health Funding (Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care)

\$13,993,704

Community Health Funding (Ministry of Children Community & Social Services, North East Local Health Integration Network, Algoma Family Services)

\$1,859,641

Fees, Other Grants & Recoveries

\$643,513

TOTAL \$20,686,074

Financial fact!
Did you know...



Local public health is funded by provincial and municipal taxpayer dollars. These dollars come from the same taxpayers.

In 2022, public health programs and services cost Algoma residents \$183/person for the year, or 50 cents/person/day, based on a 2021 census population of 112,764 for the District of Algoma Health Unit.

That's quite an exceptional deal to keep us safe and healthy as we recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Public Health in All of Us

Public Health is more than the choices we make about our health. It is the organized efforts of society to keep our communities healthy and safe. Our Public Health Champion awards honour Algoma residents or organizations that have helped to protect and promote community health and advance health equity in Algoma, whether through leading, collaborating, innovating, or fostering opportunities for *health for all, together*.

Our 2022 Public Health Champions were:

Connie Raynor-Elliott (Save Our Young Adults)

A little over 13 years ago, Connie Raynor-Elliott founded Save Our Young Adults (SOYA), a non-profit, grassroots organization that provides support services and direction to people and families living with addiction in Algoma.

SOYA consists of volunteers — some who are parents of children who have experienced drug poisoning — who help with food, clothing, driving, application to treatment, and finding housing. SOYA becomes an adoptive family to those in desperate need. They collaborate with many social services, forms of government, treatment centres, and anyone willing to help those struggling with addiction in our community.

Connie and SOYA are strong advocates for increasing the presence of local services with an emphasis on stigma reduction.



Harvest Algoma (United Way)

Harvest Algoma is a hub for food rescue, preparation, and production. Established in 2018, it is a centre that gathers food donations and distributes them across our community to over 70 partner agencies, including soup kitchens and food banks.

They also offer a Community Commercial Kitchen for food preparation, and large freezers and refrigerators for food storage, allowing fresh foods to be processed and saved as a healthy food source for those in need in our community.

The Food Resource Centre supports public health with activities that address food insecurity and access, improving the health of people in our community, protecting our environment, and preparing us for the future.



Learn more: [Public Health Champions Awarded](#)

Strategic Direction #3B, C: Engaging staff and external partners in the evolution of our public health role in Algoma communities and recognizing and sharing the stories of our people and partners.

Connect with Public Health

Join the Conversation



@algomahealth

Phone:

Blind River: 705-356-2551 or 888-356-2551

Elliot Lake: 705-848-2314 or 877-748-2314

Sault Ste. Marie: 705-942-4646 or 866-892-0172

Wawa: 705-856-7208 or 888-211-8074

Email: contact@algomapublichealth.com

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