



apss

*aids programs  
south saskatchewan*

**2019 - 2020 Annual Report**

# AIDS Programs South Saskatchewan

## Mission

Provide relevant and accessible services and programs, and foster connections for individuals families and communities affected by, living with or at risk of HIV/AIDS/HCV

## Vision

To be a trusted leader in HIV/AIDS, Education, prevention, support and care

## Values

We are **respectful** — recognizing the worth and dignity of each person

We are **confidential** —respecting each individual's right to anonymity

We are **accountable** – transparent in all interactions

We treat people with **integrity** — acting in an honest and ethical manner, doing what we say we will do and following through on commitments

We respond to people with **compassion** — we treat everyone with empathy, gentleness, acceptance and kindness

We strive for **excellence** — we provide reliable, quality service as informed by the people we interact with and through self-reflection

# AIDS Programs South Saskatchewan

## Board of Directors

Our versatile board of directors bring dedication and specialized knowledge to their support of this agency.

### Board Chair

Kirk Nordick

### Vice Chair

Pam Reimer

### Treasurer

Jennifer Martuo

### Secretary

Debbie Rodger

### Director

Tom Janisch

### Director

Pauline Streete

### Director

Ronnie Nordal

## Staff

Our passionate and team oriented staff are the key to providing optimum care and support

### Executive Director

Shiny Mary Varghese

### Client Care Coordinator

Morag Hurn

### Needle Exchange Coordinator

Lynette Flamont

### Program Coordinator

Sophie Pitman

### Education & Information Specialist

Vidya Dhar Reddy

### Education Outreach Coordinator

Amanda Sauer

### At Risk Support Group

Facilitator Danita Wahpoosewyan

Elder Janet Dufour

## Message from the Board Chair

The past fiscal year again presented a number of challenges for AIDS Programs South Saskatchewan (APSS). While some were known, others such as the current global pandemic were unexpected. However, as reflected in this year's report, APSS has met these challenges head on and continues to provide exceptional service to our communities.

As outlined in last year's report APSS experienced a substantial deficit in the 2018-2019 fiscal year. To help ensure that this did not occur again, this year saw APSS staff and the board refocus and increase their efforts on obtaining additional grants and other fundraising with a view to returning to a balanced budget position. I am very pleased to report that these efforts have paid off resulting in a modest surplus for the 2019-2020 fiscal year.

Faced with the onset of the recent global pandemic, APSS has had to rapidly adapt to challenges and changes in how the organization operates in this new environment. Again, our staff, with assistance from our partners, have adapted and APSS have continued to operate and provide services during these unprecedented times.

A huge thank you to our wonderful staff and volunteers and all of our exceptional funders, partners and donors. Without your support and perseverance, APSS would not continue to exist and with your continued efforts, we will get through these unrivalled times together.

In terms of the board of directors, I would like to thank our current board members who are continuing for the upcoming year, including those who have indicated their willingness to serve for another term. I would also like to extend our welcome to Ronnie Nordal who joined our board in March of this year and thanks to Jennifer Martuo who recently left the board in May. Jennifer has been involved with APSS for many years including most recently as a member of the board and Treasurer for the past few years.

As I am heading into my last year of my final term on the board, I will be stepping back from the chair position for this coming year. That being said I am not going anywhere and will still be actively involved with the board including the current APSS bylaws and articles review project to update and align the same to current practice and provincial governing legislation requirements. While no amendments are being proposed at this year's annual meeting given the board's recent focus on pandemic matters, I plan to have this project completed during the current fiscal year with a view to presenting for approval a set of amendments at next year's annual meeting.

In closing, I have enjoyed my time as the chair the past two years and look forward to continuing to work with APSS in my remaining time as a board member and continuing to support it in the years to come.

—*Kirk Nordick*

## Message from the Executive Director

In FY 2019-2020, APSS embarked on a journey with challenges, new opportunities and successes to enhance the impact of HIV/AIDS/HCV prevention, education and support, while mitigating stigma and discrimination of at-risk and people living with HIV.

### 2019-2020 Programming highlights:

- Provided HIV/HCV education to 97 youth at correctional centres in Regina
- Partnered with Outpost Health & Planned Parenthood to conduct 84 HCV & 44 STI's tests respectively.
- Partnered with Ranch Erhlo to have ongoing harm reduction education with 94 youth and Sask Abilities to assist APSS with packing supplies
- Provided naloxone training and kits to 675 people
- Presented to 30 medical students at the College of Medicine in Regina and Saskatoon on Harm Reduction that addressed stigma for those who use drugs
- Developed creative ways to promote education and awareness impacting 648 youth in Grade 7-9, 432 students in colleges and universities, 256 newcomers, and 393 Indigenous people through community events, workshops and presentations and 1,336 in the general public

**Financial sustainability:** Through new grants to cover increased expenses, generous donations, proactive fundraising with the hard work of staff — Morag Hurn, Vidya Reddy, Sophie Pitman, Lynette Flamont, Amanda Sauer & casuals whose dedication and strong commitment to the APSS mission and purpose of our organization helped the financial health of APSS improve with an increase in net assets after experiencing years of deficits. COVID-19 pandemic brought with it challenges but with the APSS resilience to pivot ideas & energy, we will overcome this adversity as our clients remain our priority.

**Amazing Race Against HIV:** On Aug 17, 2019, we held our second Amazing Race Against HIV fundraiser! Retaining our success with our outstanding corporate sponsors and adding new community partners, we raised a total of **\$11,208** for the Ric Ranger/Jerome Nagel Wellness Fund that supports people living with HIV.

Thank you to all the dedicated donors, funders, partners, APSS staff, the Board, volunteers and supporters of APSS. My sincerest appreciation to our generous donors especially Dr. Roberta McKay, Ronni Nordal, Laurie Sampson, Martine Proulx-Birchard, Avaughna Sanoir, GLCR, RSAR, Farm Credit Canada, Beverly Crossman, & Radville Regional High School.

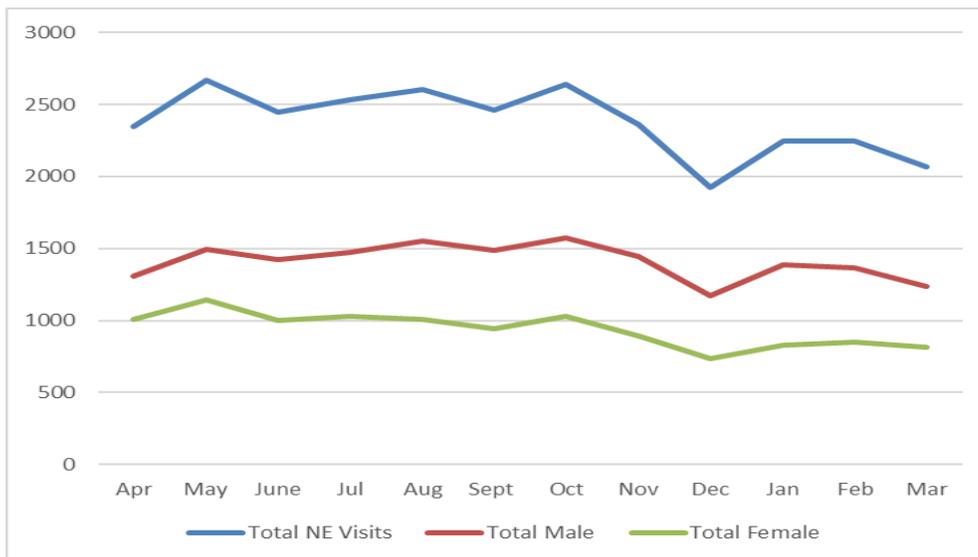
In the unprecedented COVID-19 environment, APSS continues on our journey with our resolve being even greater to prevent the transmission of HIV and end stigma for those living with and affected by HIV.

—*Shiny Mary Varghese*

# The Queen City Needle Exchange

AIDS Programs South Saskatchewan (APSS), in partnership with Saskatchewan Health Authority, operates one of the busiest Needle Exchange Programs (NEP) in the province. APSS is open Tuesday through Friday from 9am – 4:30pm and Saturday from 10am – 4:30pm. The NEP distributes clean needles, tourniquets, cookers, sterile water, alcohol swabs, cotton filters, crack/meth pipes, and condoms. The NEP also provides information and resources on harm reduction, HIV and HCV prevention. We also collect used or discarded needles from the community and return them to the office for a safe disposal. NEP clients may be referred to Methadone and Detox for addiction treatment, shelters, the Regina & District Food Bank, or to Carmichael Outreach for housing help. Our Needle Exchange Coordinator, who is also an addictions counsellor, is available daily. We also have peer supporters onsite to speak to anyone twice a month.

In 2019-2020, we conducted 2,466 information/intervention conversation sessions on topics such as harm reduction, overdose prevention, HIV/HCV/STIs, testing, and treatment in the NEP. These sessions lead to increased knowledge and referrals to testing and treatment.

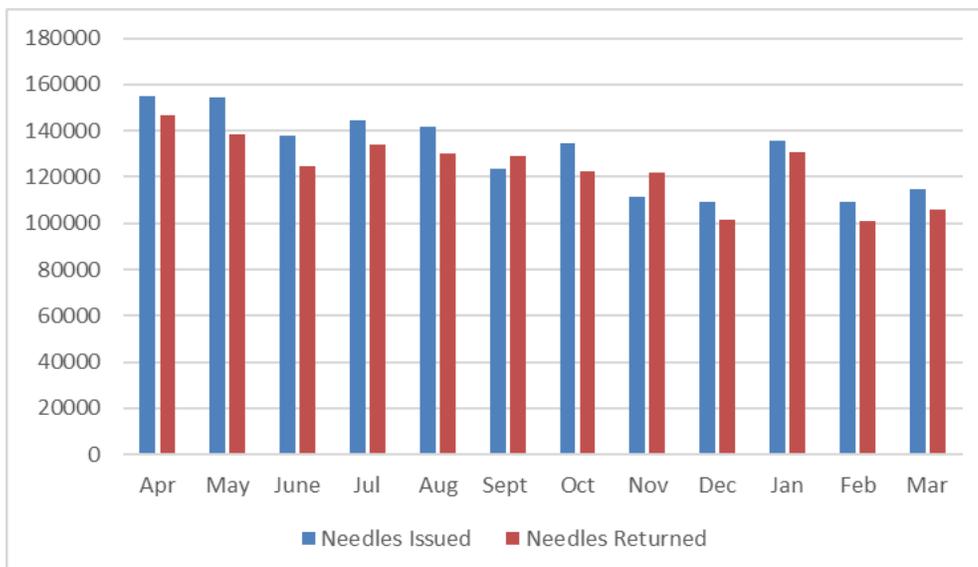


## Number of Visits

Female: 11,282

Male: 16,913

Total Visits: 28, 537



## Needles Distributed

Needles In: 1,485,389

Needles Out: 1,571,211

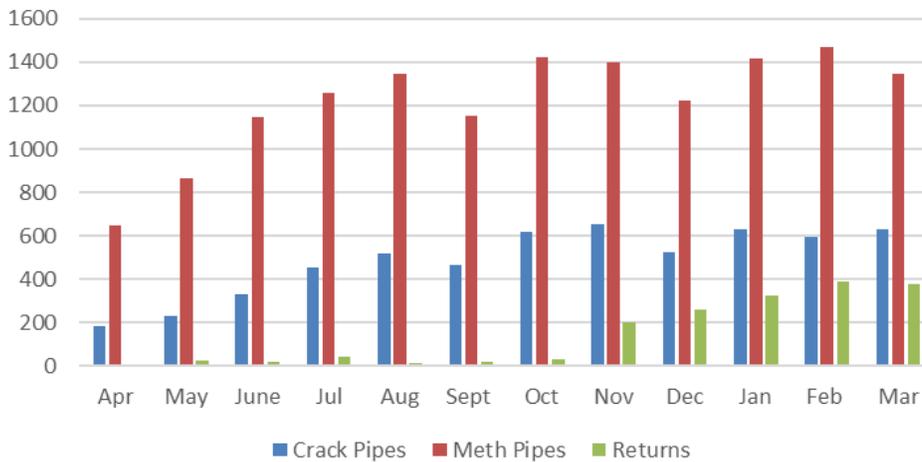
Return Rate: 94.5%

Condoms: 25,683

In March 2019, APSS started distributing safe inhalation kits in our exchange. Clients could receive one crack and meth pipe and were encouraged to bring back the pipes to reduce the number of pipes in the community. However, if they were brought back, we could not exchange returned pipes for new ones. We found that clients were not motivated to bring back the pipes as they did not receive an exchange and were using them to the point of shattering. On October 30th, 2019, our policy changed for pipes to be able to be exchanged. Our returns increased from 27 in October to 201 in November.

With the high levels of interest in Naloxone kits and training, APSS became a distribution site in November 2018. All APSS staff have been trained and will be able to train anyone interested in Naloxone. The training, depending on those being trained, takes 15 minutes and trains individuals on how to administer the drug, how to identify an overdose, and overdose prevention. January-March 2020 recorded increased number of overdoses in Regina which resulted in increased requests for naloxone training and replacement.

Crack & Meth Pipes



**Pipes Distributed**

Crack Pipes: 5,826

Meth Pipes: 14,694

Returns: 1,694

Naloxone



**Naloxone Kits**

Trained: 311

Used: 203

Kits Distributed: 675

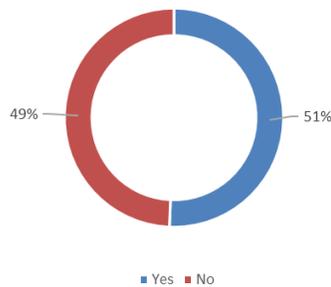
# Monthly IDU Survey

In 2019-2020, we surveyed Needle Exchange clients for 3 weeks every month. We asked an anonymous question to different people and then took down their answer and their Needle Exchange ID. This was done to ensure accuracy of results and avoid duplicated data. At the end of the three weeks, all data was collected and separated by gender, age, ethnicity, and location. (Graphs were made depending on relevance).

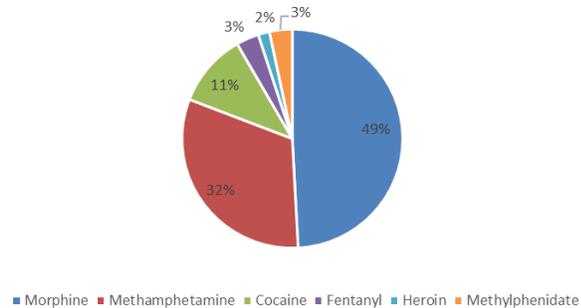
People were very open with their answers, even to the point of going into detail and telling our staff their story. By providing a safe space, being anonymous and having consistent staff, needle exchange clients are more likely to trust us.

The responses from our Needle Exchange clients have been informative which have helped in relationship building as well as enhance our programs to meet the needs of our clients. We will take this data as a needs assessment and turn what we have learned into where we need to focus. This could include: increased youth education on injection drug use, working with our NEP clients in a way they will understand, and creating awareness events for the public.

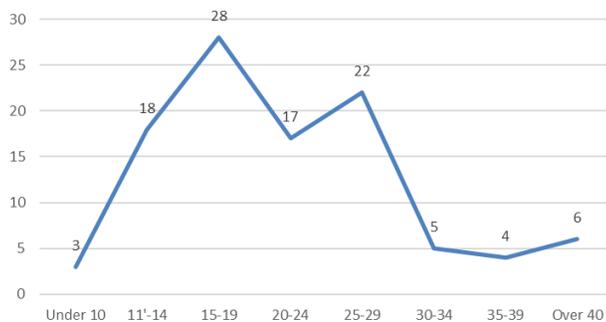
**Do You Reuse Your Needles?**



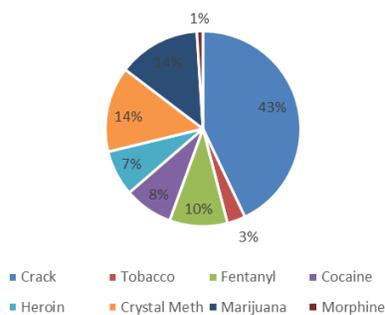
**What Do You Use Needles For?**



**What Age Did You Start Using Drugs?**



**What Substance Do You Use Crack Pipes For?**



The questions we asked were as followed:  
 April- What do you use needles for?  
 May- Do you own a Naloxone kit?  
 June- How many times do you use a cooker before you use a new one?  
 July- When did you start using?  
 August- What substance do you use a crack pipe for?  
 September- Do you practice safe sex?  
 October- How often do you use a day?  
 November- Do you share needles?  
 December- Have you been tested for HIV this year?  
 January- Do you share pipes?  
 February- Would you use a safe consumption site?  
 March- What do you do for needles/supplies when we're closed?  
 (All survey results can be found on our website)

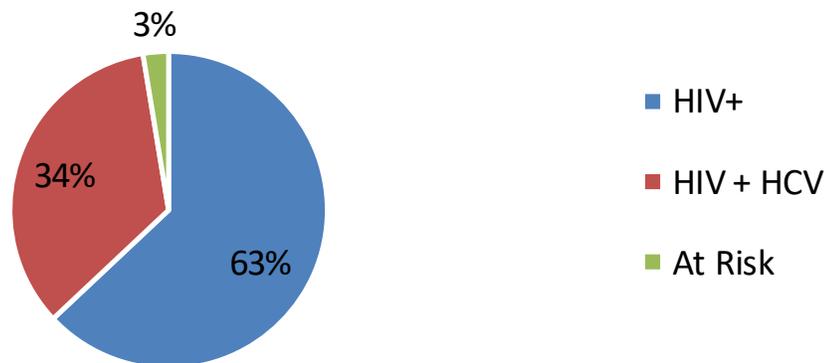
## Support Services

The goal of the Client Care Program is to assist HIV positive individuals in self-care so that they experience optimum health. Services provided include transportation to appointments, nutritional support, counseling with a psychologist or social worker, financial assistance with prescription costs, food bank deliveries for those needing assistance, one-on-one HIV and HCV education and support, and referrals to other agencies that provide care to HIV+ individuals. The Support Services' client base continues to grow, as such our Client Care Coordinator works closely with the Saskatchewan Health Authority case management team to provide integrated care.

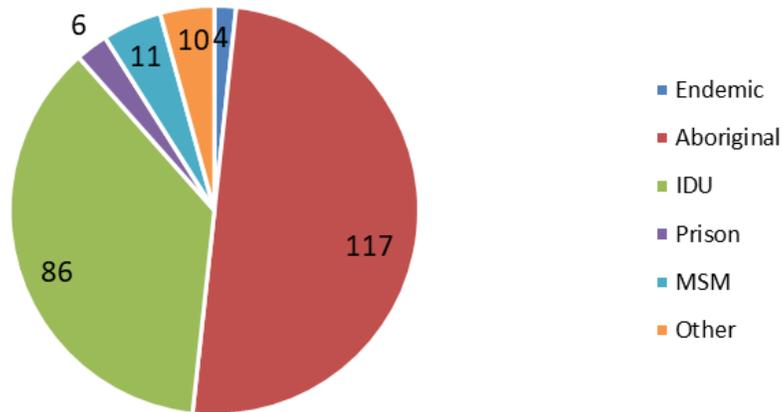
Sadly, we lost **twelve** of our clients this year, 50% were non-HIV related and were lost to the opioid epidemic. They will be missed but we are grateful to have been able to provide them with support and care throughout the years.

Our support would not be possible if it weren't for the tremendous ongoing support given to the Jerome Nagel/Ric Ranger Wellness fund by the Regal Social Association of Regina (RSAR), Gay & Lesbian Community of Regina (GLCR), the Amazing Race Against HIV, World AIDS Day, and a host of other donors. (See charts below for clients in care, client demographics and gender)

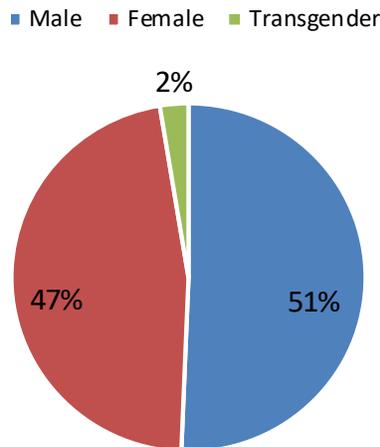
### HIV/HCV Status 154 Individuals in Support Services Program



### Client Demographics



### Client Gender



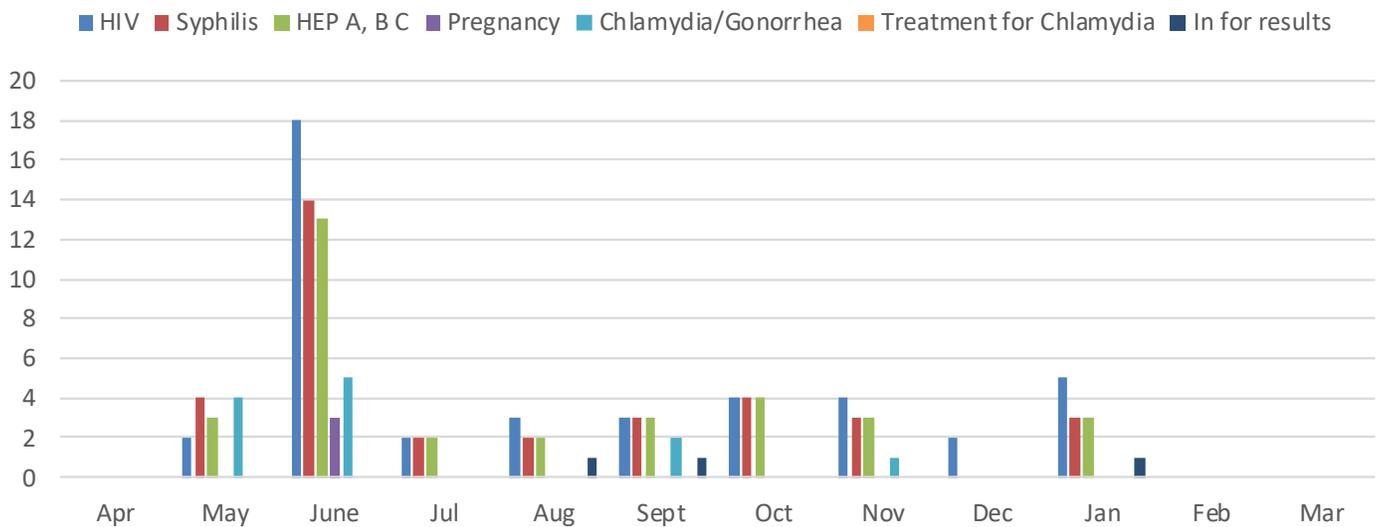
## Wellness Fund

The Jerome Nagel/Ric Ranger Wellness Fund was started to provide financial assistance for health care related expenses to people living with HIV and AIDS. The Jerome Nagel/Ric Ranger Wellness Fund is supported by many fundraisers hosted by community agencies and businesses. APSS is very pleased that the fund continues to provide financial assistance to pay for medications, massage therapy, medical/occupational therapy, transportation to doctor visits, baby formula, psychologist services and other needs directly related to HIV positive status. We are very delighted and so very grateful for the tremendous support received from Avaughna Sanoir, the Regal Social Association of Regina, the Amazing Race Against HIV and the Gay and Lesbian Community of Regina's annual AIDS Benefit. Their support allows us to continue to assist our clients.

## Drop-In Centre

The Drop-In Center continues to be a resource to the North Central community that offers programs and helpful answers to questions surrounding HIV and HCV. Our Needle Exchange Coordinator, who is also an addictions counsellor, is available to consult with clients daily. The Public Health Nurse from Saskatchewan Health Authority is also available on Thursday afternoons and provides testing and consultations as needed. A significant number of people were tested on site as illustrated by the following chart.

### Thursday Testing Stats

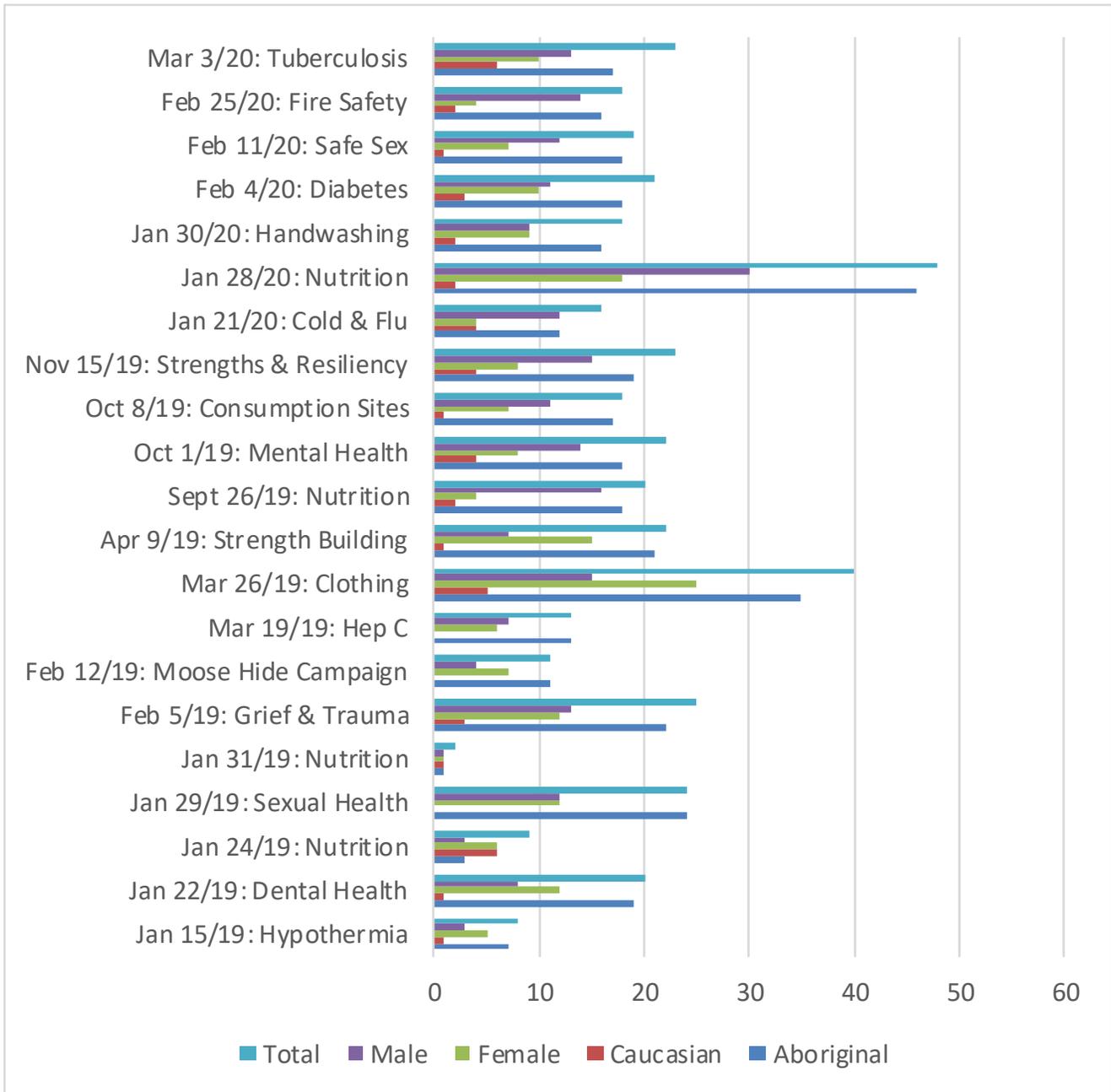


APSS also conducted their own HCV testing events with local community health professionals and community partner organizations. APSS held four HCV testing events; two of which were held in collaboration with the Newo Yotina Friendship Centre which supports the homeless/transient population. For events held at our office, a fibro scan was done, and a phlebotomist took blood samples for the lab from mainly an IDU population. A nurse tested through point of care 84 individuals and over 50% were positive for HCV. We were able to get everyone on treatment and connected to care.

In collaboration with Planned Parenthood Regina, APSS held two STI testing events. A nurse tested 44 individuals for HIV, Chlamydia, Gonorrhoea, and Syphilis.

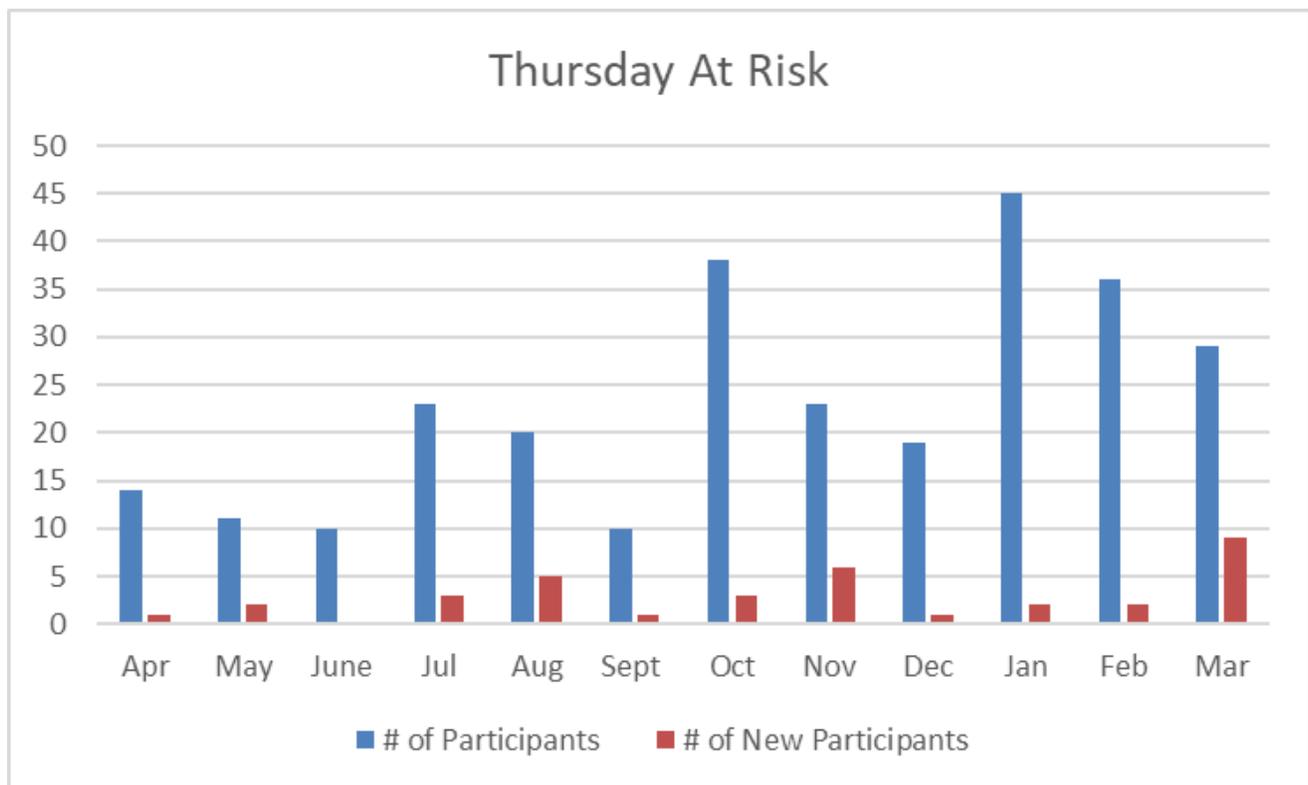
These events are vital for stopping the spread of HIV/HCV/STI's in our communities.

In addition, Tuesdays and Thursdays we provide drop-in clients with short targeted education and awareness (See chart below for topics)



## Anyone-at-Risk Support Group

Funded by the Saskatchewan Health Authority HIV Strategy, the “Anyone-at-Risk” support group meets at All Nations Hope each Thursday evening starting at 5pm. Participants are provided with a nutritious meal. Elder Janet Dufour and Danita Wahpoosewyan facilitate the group. The group functions in a talking circle that allows participants to share their experiences in a non-judgmental environment as well as cover topics on HIV+ participants, shared life experience, CD4 counts, needle use, HIV/HCV, the importance of getting tested, high risk behavior, self-care, triggers and “slips” and how these lead to high risk behaviors, and coping with grief. As seen in the chart below, the group continues to draw both regular attendees and newcomers. Over the past year the group averaged an attendance of 12 individuals. The group is open to anyone from the community who wants to participate.



## Education & Outreach

The Education Program has continued to improve relationships and collaboration with partner agencies, target populations and especially reduce stigma and discrimination among the general public. Over the last year, APSS has a stronger LGBTQ+ presence participating in the annual pride parade and local community events such as coronations and the Annual AIDS Benefit, a reoccurring segment on Prairie Pride (a local community access show), and sitting on a panel: Breaking Down Stigma on HIV in the LGBTQ+ Community. APSS also hit a record number of Newcomers to Canada presentations due to a partnership with the Regina Open Door Society.

APSS was able to present to youth between the ages of 12-17, many of them report using injection drugs and sharing needles with family members. With the introduction of pipes in our NEP, an increase in underage youth have tried to use the service. They have been turned away once they give us a year younger than 2001 (we have had children as young as 15 attempt) but as we do not check ID, it is hard to control this. We feel HIV/HCV and IDU education is vital among these groups.

Education resources are accessed through our website (4,397 unique visits) and Facebook (Likes 706 – 784 and Followers 690 – 778). We post relevant and current information on HIV/HCV/STIs and services available.

APSS continues to offer online learning resources about HIV and HCV. This free resource is intended for teachers in grades 5-9 and is aligned with the health education outcomes for each grade required by the Saskatchewan government. It provides teachers with accurate and current, Saskatchewan relevant information about HIV and HCV to benefit priority populations and target audiences. APSS is sharing knowledge about the online resource via a Saskatchewan community of practice for sexual health related matters.

Educational resources were created for Overdose Prevention/Naloxone Training, Overdose Prevention for “Uppers” and Crystal Meth (as Naloxone is not effective), and a Sexual Health Guide for Women, as well as specific presentations on Chronic Illness and Drug Use.

We were honored to have been chosen to come speak for the College of Medicine Regina and Saskatoon to future doctors on Harm Reduction. We were able to address the stigma our clients face as well as how to care for those who use drugs. We are confident that these future doctors will pave the way in Harm Reduction practices.

This year **5,127 people** benefited from the Education and Outreach program.

## Special Events & Donations

**APSS Events:** APSS hosted the annual **Amazing Race Against HIV** on August 17th. The event raised \$11,208. All proceeds support the Jerome Nagel/Ric Ranger Wellness Fund.

APSS was chosen as the charity of choice for the 2019 **Southland Mall's gift wrapping station**. Thank you to the help of amazing volunteers, APSS raised \$4266.50 in gift wrapping and donations.

### Our sincerest gratitude to our supporters:

Dr Roberta McKay, Ronni Nordal, Laurie Sampson, Martine Proux-Birchard, Farm Credit Canada, Beverly Crossman, Debbie Rodger, Pauline Streete, Pam Reimer, Kirk Nordick, Jennifer Martuo, Tom Janisch, Radville Regional High School, Angels4Warmth Inc. and Little Elves Foundation.

**World AIDS Day** was commemorated on Dec. 1st. **The Gay and Lesbian Community of Regina (GLCR)** hosted their **Annual AIDS Benefit** fundraiser and raised \$5,688 in one evening for the Jerome Nagel/Ric Ranger Wellness Fund.

**Saskatchewan Union of Nurses (SUN)** continued to sell their **Hillberg & Berk** one-of-a-kind registered nurse necklaces. SUN provided APSS with a cheque for \$2,500.

At her **Empress of Canada Presents Kickin It Old School Part 3** event, **The Empress of Canada, Avaughna Sanoir**, raised a total of \$1,854 for the Jerome Nagel/Ric Ranger Wellness Fund. This amazing night featured performers from Regina, Winnipeg, Calgary and Vancouver.

APSS was again one of the charities selected by the **Regal Social Association of Regina (RSAR)**. In September, the RSAR presented APSS with a cheque for \$1,500 for the Jerome Nagel/Ric Ranger Wellness Fund.

On April 20th **Treehouse Lifestyle Supplies** held Canada's first legal **420 Fundraiser** after the legalization of marijuana. They donated 5% of their profits that day and presented APSS with a cheque for \$500.

# Thank You!

## Our Funders



Public Health  
Agency of Canada

Agence de la santé  
publique du Canada



Saskatchewan  
Health Authority



Saskatchewan  
Ministry of  
Health



GILEAD

MAC  
AIDS FUND



Community  
Initiatives Fund



## Our Partners



## Community Partners

AIDS Saskatoon	Prairie South School Division
All Nations Hope Network	Planned Parenthood Regina
Carmichael Outreach	Queen City Pride
Canadian Diabetes Association	Rainbow Cinemas
COBS Bread	Regal Social Association of Regina
Cosmopolitan Learning Centre	Regina & District Food Bank
First Nation's University	Regina Catholic Schools
Gay and Lesbian Centre of Regina	Regina Public Schools
Industrial Love	Regina Provincial Correctional Centre
Infectious Disease Clinic	Regina Open Door Society
The Little Elves Foundation	Regina Transit
Moose Jaw HIV Strategy	SaskAbilities
Moose Jaw Pride	Saskatchewan HIV Collaborative
Newo Yotina Friendship Centre	Sask Polytechnic LPN Nursing Program
Outpost Health	Street Workers' Advocacy Project
Paul Dojack Youth Centre	University of Regina Nursing Program
The Peer to Peer Program	University of Regina Social Work Program



apss

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**AIDS PROGRAMS SOUTH SASK**

*[aidsprogramssouthsask.com](http://aidsprogramssouthsask.com)*



EDUCATION • SUPPORT • FREE TESTING • NEEDLE EXCHANGE