

Public Health Association of NB-PEI

2012-2014 President's Report

Welcome to the 43rd biennial meeting and conference *Health for All: Putting equity into practice*. We are thrilled to have developed productive partnerships with the National Collaborating Centres (NCC) for Public Health, in particular the NCC for Determinants of Health, NCC for Methods and Tools, and NCC for Healthy Public Policy, the Atlantic Summer Institute, the Public Health Association of NS, and the NS Health Promotion Clearinghouse who partnered with us to pull together this signature learning event.

It has been a great pleasure and honour to serve as the Association's President for the past two years. During my tenure, I have had the privilege to work with an incredible team of energetic and enthusiastic individuals on the Board of Directors. These amazing women are:

Secretary Treasurer: Anne Lebens

Past President: Dr. Cristin Muecke

Directors: Allison Holland

Pat Seaman

Laura Brennan

Alie Ross

Mary Beth MacDonald

Dr. Heather Morrison

They have contributed to all of the successes we've had during this time and their dedication and creativity deserves so much appreciation. **Thank you!** I look forward to continuing to work with you in 2014-16. I would also like to extend a special thank you to Pat Seaman, Dr. Cristin Muecke, and Dr. Heather Morrison, our outgoing Directors.

Overview of our Association

Our mission is to “support our provinces [NB and PEI] in the continual improvement of population and public health through leadership, advocacy and education, according to current public health principles”. We are part of a broader community of 11 provincial and territorial Public Health Associations in Canada, and we work closely with our national body, the Canadian Public Health Association (CPHA) to advance public health in our regions.

This biennial meeting is actually our first as the Public Health Association of NB-PEI as voted upon at our 2012 Meeting. In 2012, our Association devised a new Strategic Plan to guide our work for 2013-17 (attached).

As an Association, we strive towards the following goals:

1 - Leadership

Foster an interdisciplinary network of stakeholders and establish a strong voice for population and public health issues in NB and PEI.

2 - Advocacy

Engage in advocacy that strengthens population and public health in NB and PEI.

3 - Education

Enhance public health capacity in NB and PEI by providing stakeholders with quality educational opportunities.

Recognizing the limitations of being an entirely volunteer-driven organization, we aim to meet the following objectives in our efforts:

- Promote professional and personal development of those persons interested in community health;
- Promote positive health practices to the public, governments and industry;
- Encourage and facilitate measures for disease prevention, health promotion and protection and healthy public policies;
- Identify and become champions for issues related to public health;
- Provide an effective liaison and network both nationally and provincially in collaboration with various disciplines, agencies and organizations, on relevant community health issues;
- Provide liaison and partnership with the national office;
- Engage and encourage contribution from members through various mechanisms (e.g., surveys); and
- Clearly articulate who PHA of NB-PEI is, raise awareness of the organization and provide easy ways to become involved.

Overview of our Achievements in 2012-2014

Leadership - Fostering an interdisciplinary network of stakeholders and establish a strong voice for population and public health issues in NB-PEI

With a Board of Directors and Members spread over the geography of NB and PEI, we have attempted to create a fluidity of communications through optimal use of online opportunities. Our virtual office set-up is serving us well so far and we expect it to continue to do so.

We continue to liaise and partner with the CPHA. We appreciate the continued secretariat support the National Office puts to maintaining the Canadian Network of Public Health Associations which meet quarterly by teleconference or once face-to-face each year to share challenges we face as organizations, create synergies in our initiatives where possible and identify opportunities for collaborating.

In 2013, our member Gloria Merrithew, represented PHA of NB-PEI on a national research project of the Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing (CASN) to develop competencies that detail the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed in public health that all nurses should possess upon completing an undergraduate nursing degree at a Canadian school.

Advocacy – Engaging in advocacy that strengthens population and public health in NB and PEI.

Our ability to have a significant role in advocacy has been limited in some ways by our small size. That being said we've lent our organizational voice to various letter campaigns throughout the past two years. We also shared important reports on issues such as food security and in 2012, we widely promoted and had a webinar on the issues identified by member Dr. Eilish Cleary in her report on shale gas development in NB.

We have also posited to the Canadian Network of Public Health Associations that a joint initiative to develop a Framework for Advocacy would be an excellent way to provide a resource to members of Public Health Associations across the country in their respective efforts. We look forward to hearing if this will be on the workplan in the next calendar year at the face-to-face meeting of this group in May.

Our Association has also taken on a strong voice for health equity in the past 2 years in partnership with like-minded organizations to offer opportunities for dialogue and skill development in this complex arena. We've jointly hosted two forums on the issue, one in Charlottetown, PE in April 2013, and here in Moncton this year at this conference.

Education - Enhancing public health capacity in NB and/PEI by providing stakeholders with quality educational opportunities.

Our efforts in offering quality educational opportunities to our membership has overlapped with our advocacy activities. In promoting awareness and encouraging dialogue on important issues such as the impacts of shale gas development on health, the social determinants of health, etc.

Last year's health equity forum in Charlottetown and this year's conference on the same theme have been our largest efforts to promote face-to-face opportunities for members and the public health community at large to come together.

Over the past two years we also offered several webinars on topics such as *Global Public Health* (November 2012), *Shale Gas* (March 2013), and the *Social Determinants* (May 2013). We have also leveraged our partnerships and cross-promoted online learning opportunities from the Atlantic Summer Institutes, the Quach Inc, and our colleagues at the NCCs (Fall-Winter 2013-14).

We also maintain a presence on the NCC for Methods and Tools national *Public Health Knowledge Translation Network* to gain insights from our colleagues across the country.

Lastly, we've continued to provide our members with opportunities to attend the National CPHA Conference each year by offering a draw for early-bird registration subsidies. This year's winners are June Kerry (NB) and Jo-Ann MacDonald (PE). The Board also continues to ensure we are represented at the CPHA National conference to participate in the Canadian Network of Public Health Association's meetings and the national AGM.

Our Challenges and Opportunities

Our Past-President, Dr. Cristin Muecke, in her 2012 *President's Report* identified some significant challenges facing our Association, many of which continue today.

We continue to struggle in both attracting and engaging our members in meaningful ways. We look to our members for their passion and energy and strongly encourage all of you to lend your time and expertise to our cause. Please let us know what is of importance to you and how you would like to become more involved with your association. We look to you not only to consider joining the Board of Directors, but also to consider shorter-term, time-limited commitments such as assisting in position paper development, suggesting speakers or topics for future online learning, topics you would be interested in for future gatherings or conferences, or thoughts around more local networking ideas. Without you, there is no Association.

Leadership remains a concern and also a trend across the country. Again this year we are faced without no interest from members in taking on the roles of President or President-Elect on the Board of Directors. Ensuring these roles are filled are essential to continuity and sustainability of our Association. We have an excellent and dedicated group of people leading the organization now, but turnover is key to success.

Which leads me to think about one of the themes from this year's conference - **Collective Action** – in my view, this is where our greatest opportunity lies. I am so proud to be a part of this great organization. But, we cannot do this work alone.

I look forward to remaining involved, and especially to working with the incoming Board of Directors in my next role, as Past-President.

I hope each of you will consider your capacity to being more engaged and offer your hands in the amazing potential we have in this region. Thank you for being here and best wishes for a wonderful year!

Respectfully submitted,



Kathleen Brennan
President, Public Health Association of NB-PEI