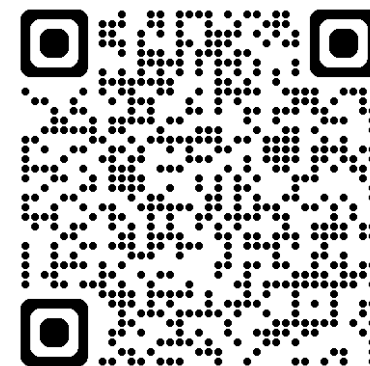


*Celebrating  
nursing  
action & impact*



**NURSING  
W E E K**

**MAY 12-18,  
2025**



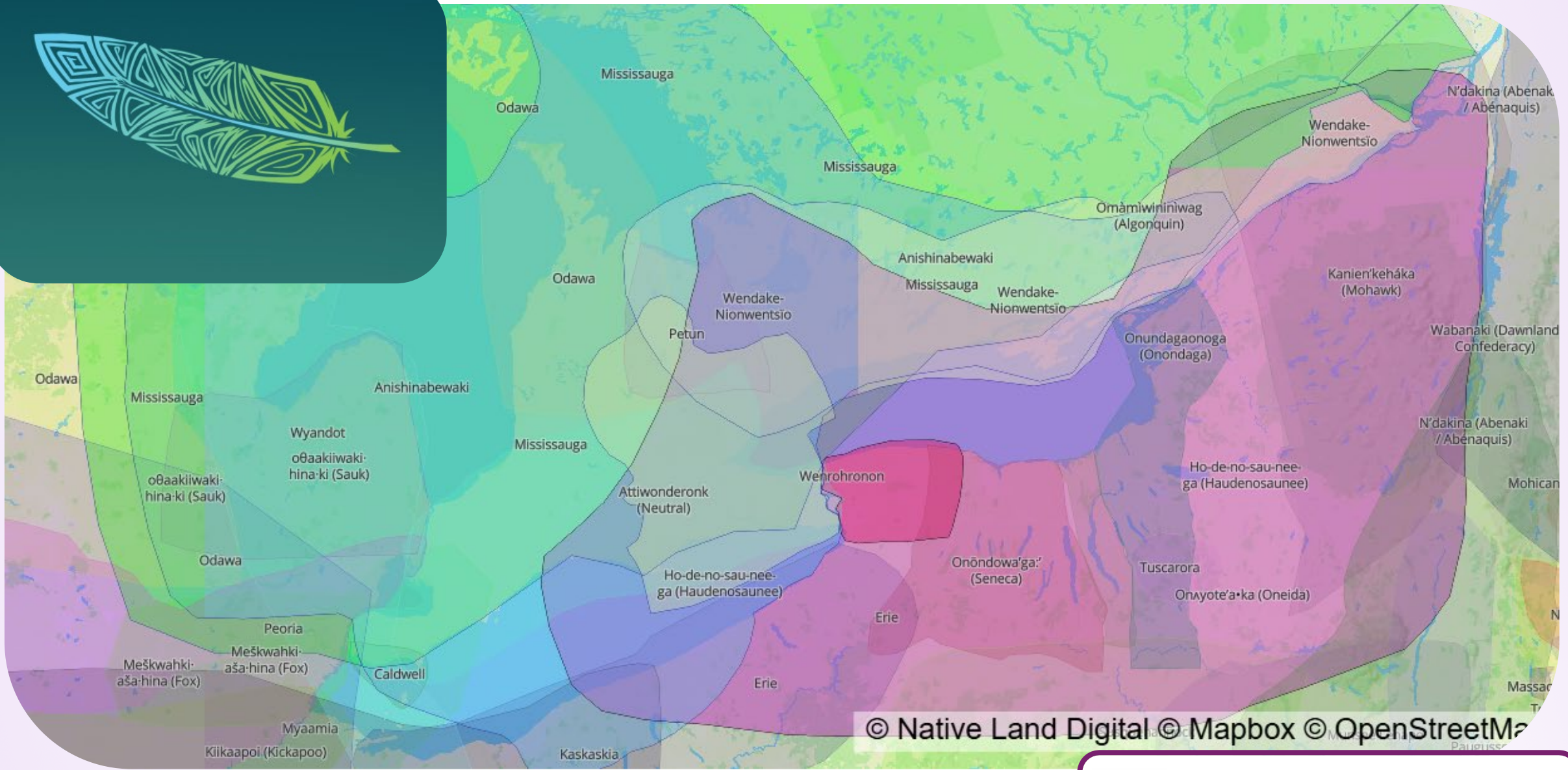
Check out the YWC  
Toolkit here



# Youth Wellness Champions

RNAO's innovative, peer-based program based on youth engagement principles







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# Today's Objectives



## Youth Wellness Champions

- Provide an overview of the program – including our recently–updated Youth Wellness Champions Toolkit
- Highlight resources that support local implementation
- Illustrate the ease and flexibility of YWC implementation
- Demonstrate the impact of YWC through an exemplar from a local implementation site
- Learn about opportunities for partnership with the RNAO BPSO program



# Registered Nurses Association of Ontario

R  
N  
A  
O



**RNAO**

Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario  
L'Association des infirmières et infirmiers  
autorisés de l'Ontario

*Speaking out for nursing. Speaking out for health.*





# What is YWC?

## Youth Wellness Champions

- An innovative, peer-based program based on youth engagement principles
- Designed to help youth develop knowledge and skills they need to cope with mental health and substance use issues
- Supports students to become Mental Health Leaders and Champions in their schools and community.
- Partnership between the RNAO, Health and Education Systems in Ontario





# Youth Wellness Champions

 RNAO





The  
YouthWellness  
Champions Program  
celebrates  
**10 years!**



Knowledge Institute on Child and Youth  
Mental Health and Addictions  
Institut du savoir sur la santé mentale et les  
dépendances chez les enfants et les jeunes

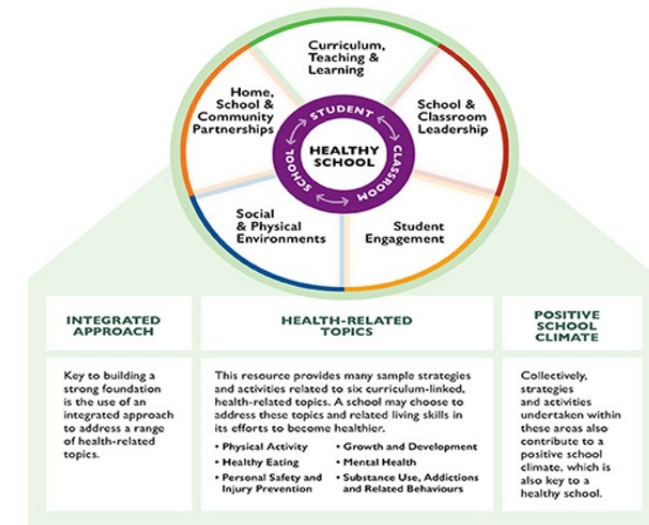
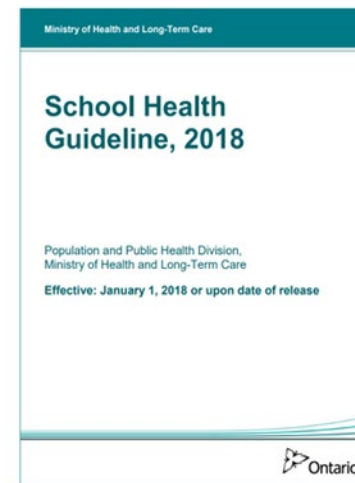
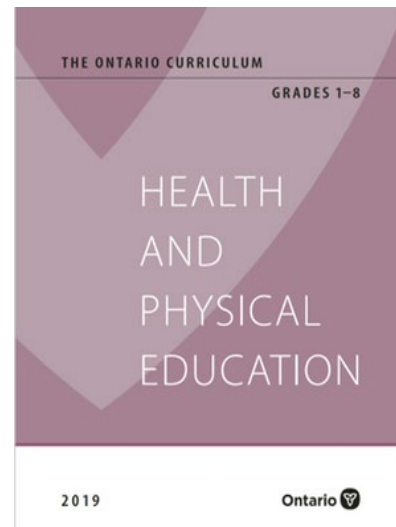
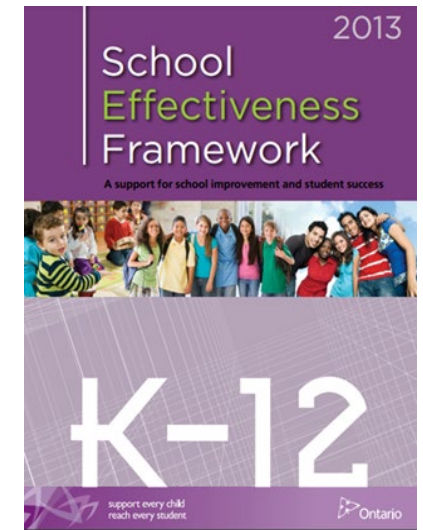
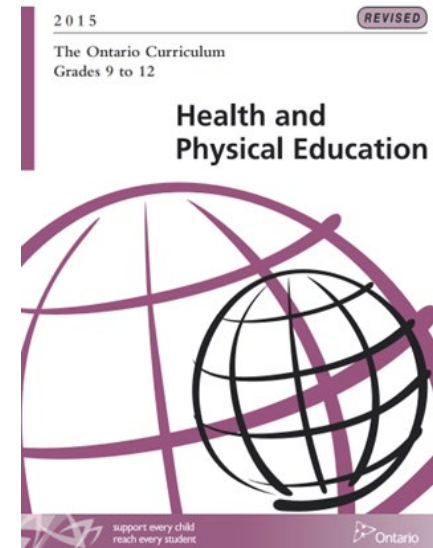
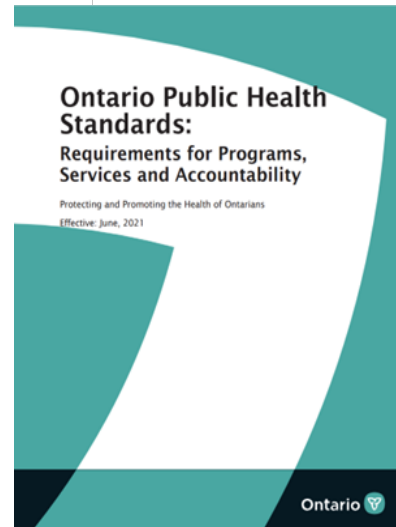


School  
Mental Health  
Ontario

# Approaches & Frameworks

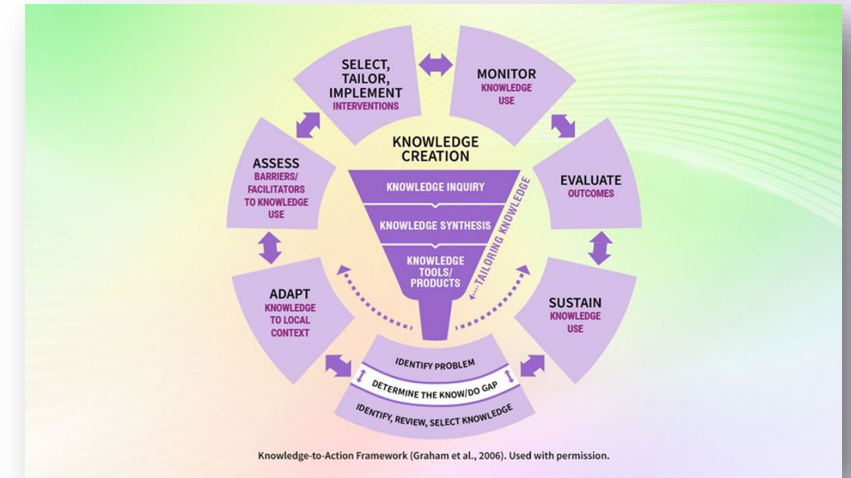
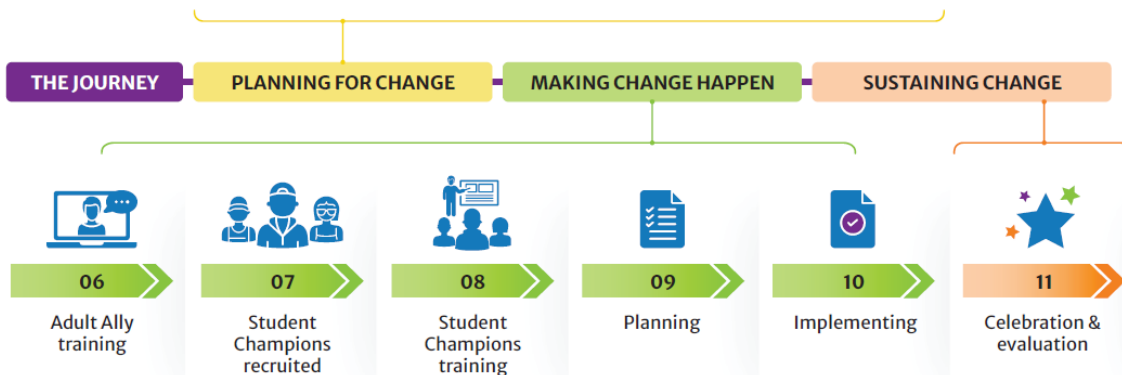
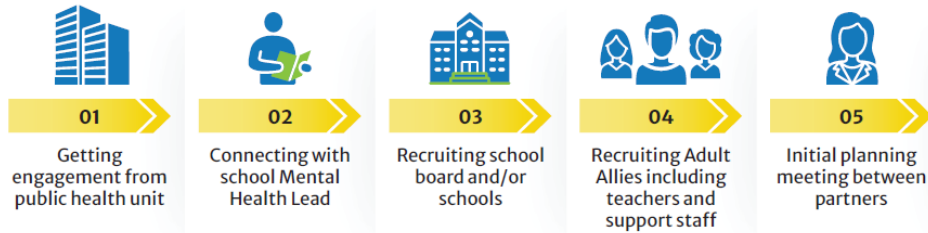


Access these resources online



# Youth Wellness Champions

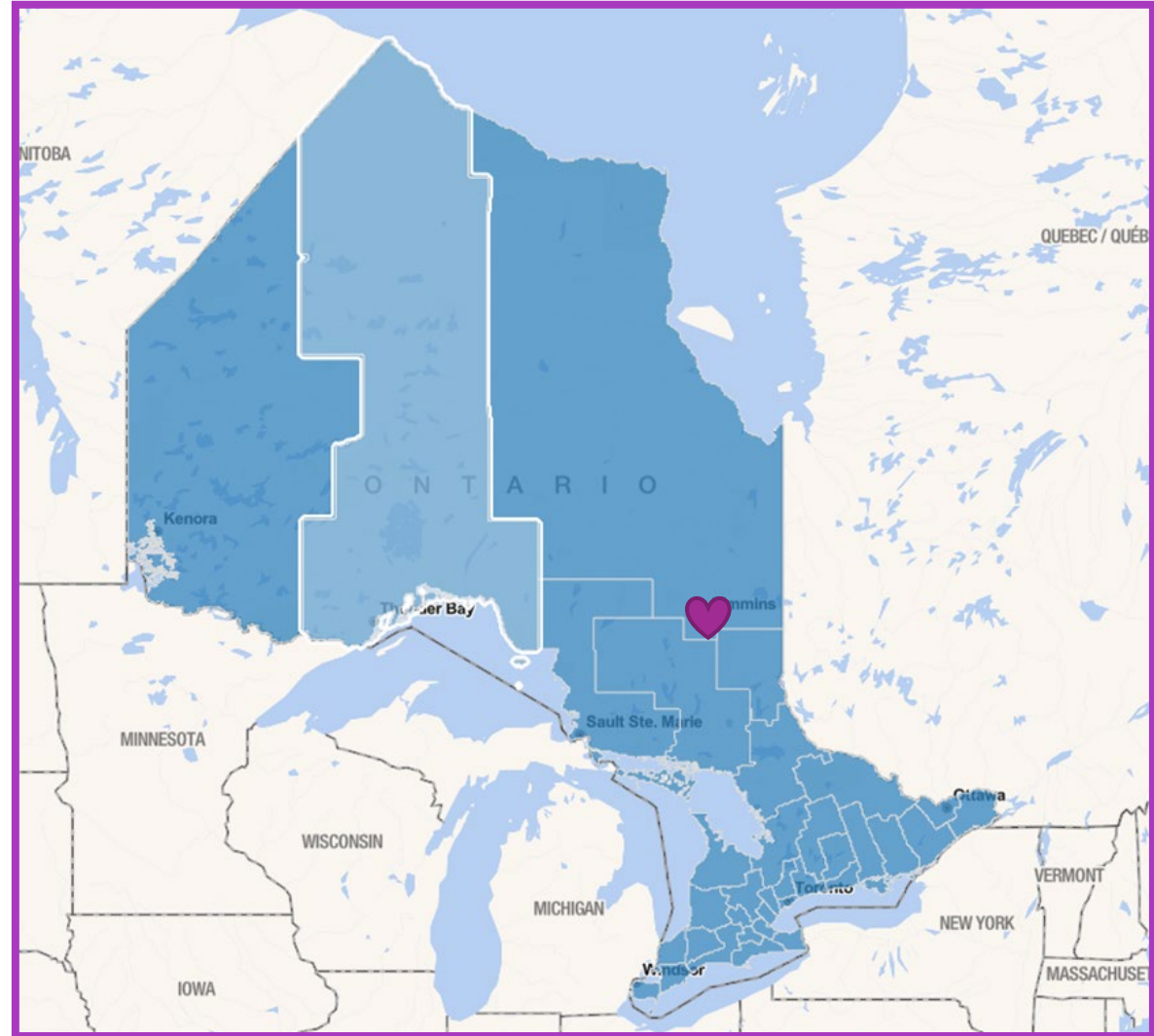
## IMPLEMENTATION JOURNEY



## Two complimentary Implementation Science Frameworks

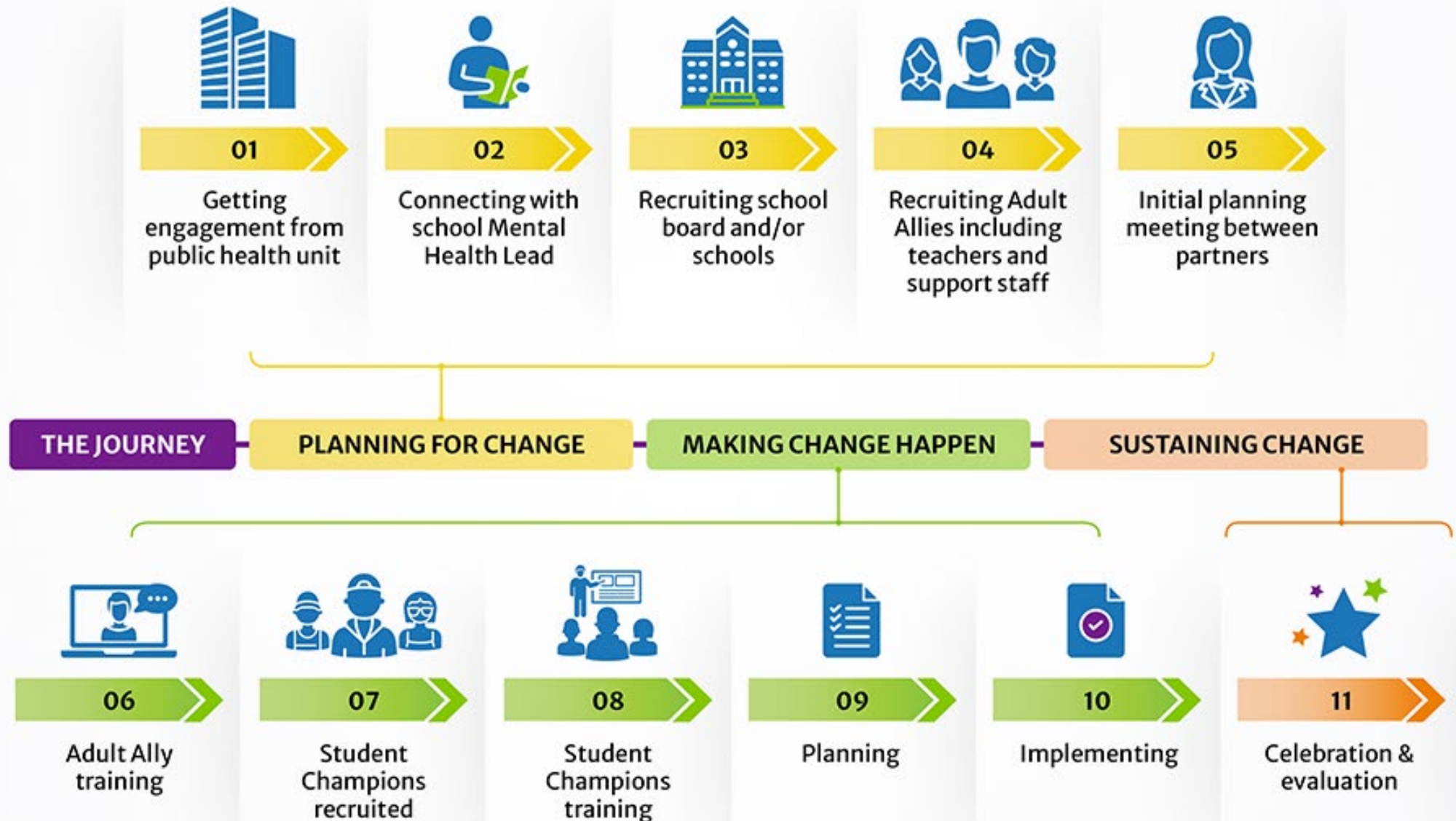


# Northeastern District Health Unit



# Youth Wellness Champions

## IMPLEMENTATION JOURNEY



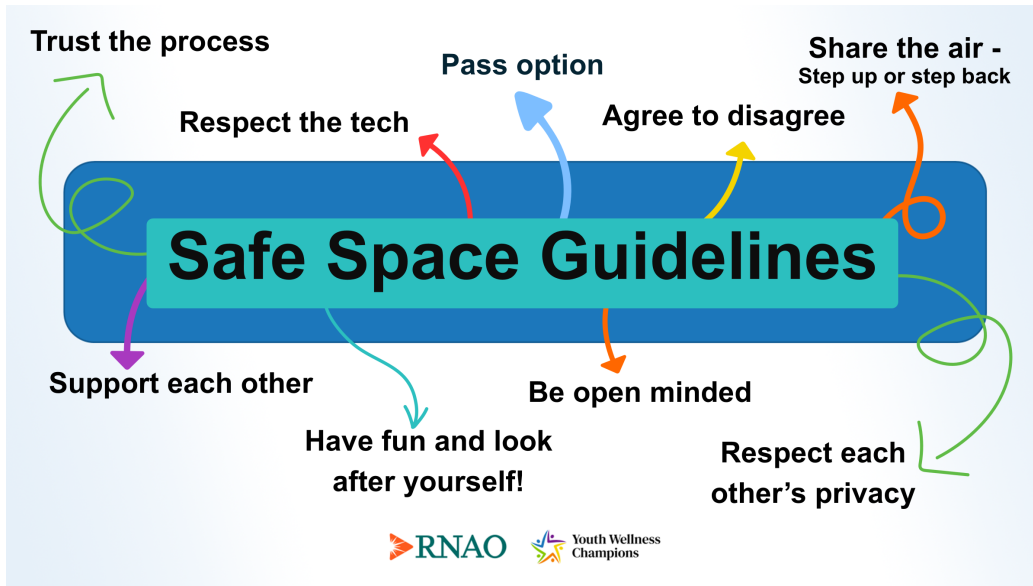


# MAKING CHANGE HAPPEN





# Centralized Training



**Why promote mental health in schools or community?**

Logos: RNAO, Youth Wellness Champions

- school can be stressful!
- you spend most of your day here
- there's lots of support in school
- staff can provide you with resources
- there's opportunities and friendships
- YWC is linked with school curriculum
- everyone could use a bit of help!

# Planning Steps



## Action Plan

1. Assess needs/gaps (Walk about)
2. Set YWC goal
3. Brainstorm ideas and choose activity
4. Action plan for Activity
5. Have fun holding Activity
6. Evaluate Activity
7. Celebrate and Share!



# Mental Health Promotion Activities

Contests,  
i.e. Media Literacy

Art-based Activities

Stress Reduction  
Activities

Physical Activity

Creation of Safe Spaces

Mental Health Care  
Packages

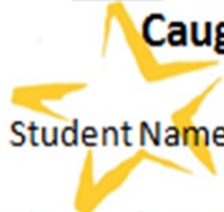
Mental Health Promotion  
Weeks

# School Based Initiatives

- “Chill Rooms”
- Puppy Rooms
- “Worry-Free Wednesday’s”
- Tree of Life
- Health Symposium
- “Caught You Caring”
- Pink Shirt Day
- Guest Speakers
- Yoga
- School Wide Mental Health Week
- Wall Mural



**Caught You Caring Voucher**

 Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

This student was caught caring when they...

\_\_\_\_\_

YMHAC Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

# SUSTAINING CHANGE



11

Celebration & evaluation



# Celebration & Evaluation





# YWC in the Community: A new model forward

## Why Community?

- Support reach of diverse populations in community
- Build knowledge and skill of youth and adults in community
- Support communities with regards to stigma of mental health and substance use

Ottawa Public Health is supporting YWC in 4 community sites

**Partnership & knowing local context in community is key!**  
**MODEL IS FLEXIBLE!**



# YWC Data: Outcomes Achieved

## Adult and Youth Collaboration

*“**Increase collaboration amongst youth and adult allies** regarding youth mental health, mental illness, local resources and how to support resiliency initiatives in local schools.”*

## Creating Safe & Welcoming School Environments

*“**Students are very happy** and thankful to have a room to relax and unwind. It is a great place to social and increase school climate.”*

*“Create opportunities for constructive use of time and **contribute to a caring school climate and school connectedness.**”*

*Made the school feel like an **inviting, positive environment** where the students feel good.”*

## Increased Mental Health Literacy

*“Training **increased mental health literacy** for Champions awareness about importance of promoting mental wellness in the school community.”*

*“YCs understood the goal of YMHAC and became **aware of mental health services and resources** available to them.”*

## Stigma Reduction

*“**Reduced stigma** around mental health issues and mental illness.”*

## Increased Coping Strategies / Supports

*“Participants **made new friends or improved their relationships** with their peers. They also put **positive coping strategies** into practice.”*

## YOUTH WELLNESS CHAMPIONS

# 10 years of provincial success 2014-2024

### Program goal

It is to Improve the health and wellbeing of children and youth through:

- ✓ Focus on enhancing mental health
- ✓ Increase mental health literacy and awareness of mental illness
- ✓ Stigma reduction
- ✓ Enhancement of supportive, inclusive and resilient environments for youth
- ✓ Increase in youth engagement



### Provincial partnerships - driving goals together



- 14 provincial partnerships: public health units (PHU) + health organizations
- 20+ funding grants
- 15 returning advisory members
- 120+ hrs advisory committee meetings

### Partners in action

 <b>258</b> PHU Staff	 <b>10,527+</b> hours invested	 <b>21</b> school boards	 <b>167+</b> schools
 <b>4</b> youth communities	 <b>3622+</b> Youth Champions	 <b>2418+</b> implementation activities	 Learn more

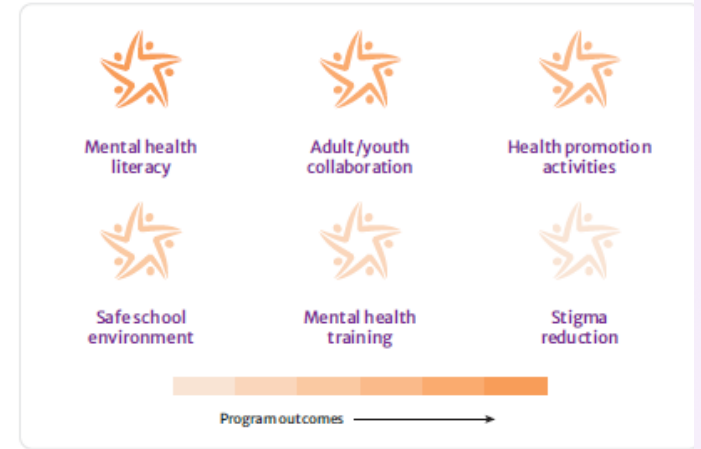
### Why we stand out:

- ✓ Free, evidence-based program
- ✓ Implementation toolkit based on best practices
- ✓ Strong, accessible expert support and advisory
- ✓ Program is adaptable to your local context
- ✓ Complies with Ontario ministry requirements in health and education

### Our impact over the past 10 years

**Achieved outcomes:** Our partners report that the YWC program has made a notable impact by promoting **mental health literacy**, fostering **adult-youth collaboration**, and creating **safer school environments**, among other positive results.

**Implementation activities:** Our youth champions have led various wellness activities, focusing on **stress management**, promotion of resources, **physical and mental wellness**, and the creation of **safe spaces**. These activities include Mental Health Week, chill zones, art, music, and yoga classes, school murals, school clubs, physical activities, mindful coloring, and meditation.



substance use resources, stress management strategies, mindfulness activities, mental health care packages, champion led initiatives, school clubs, art-based activities, safe spaces, stress reduction strategies, mental health care packages, champion recruitment, school murals, implementation toolkit, program tools, de-stress kits, safe spaces, stress management strategies, substance use content, school clubs, champion engagement, chill zones, mental health week, workshops, champion led initiatives, school clubs, champion engagement, chill zones, mental health week

### What our partners say

<p>We are <b>thrilled</b> with the positive reception we had with YWC in the community. The <b>flexibility</b> and <b>customizability</b> of the program not only supported our partners to <b>increase youths' knowledge</b> of mental health and substance use health but also was a <b>pathway to further engagement</b> with community services.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">-Public Health Nurse</p>	<p>It's okay, you can talk to people about it (mental health)</p> <p style="text-align: right;">-Student Champion</p>	<p>I believe the most significant change was with an individual lead who because of the training and support of the Champions program was able to take a <b>broader role</b> in mental health promotion at the high school level. This student became <b>more confident</b> and <b>aware</b> and was able to execute some great activities at the school.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">-School Teacher Ally</p>
<p>Lowered my stress level (YWC Activities)</p> <p style="text-align: right;">-Student Champion</p>		

*“...the school community is most students’ second home (sometimes first)”*

~ Teacher Champion

*“they felt a lot of pride in what they had done”*

~ Teacher Champion

*“more positive social interactions”*

~ Teacher Champion

*“... the school community, where each student feels like they belong”*

~ Teacher Champion

## The Impact:

Foster youth leadership

Mental Health remains on the radar

*“Lowered my stress level”*

~ Student Champion

*“it’s okay... you can talk to people about it”*

~ Student Champion

*“even small things can mean something big”*

~ Student Champion



# NEW YWC Online Toolkit!



**RNAO** Search keywords Search LOGIN

ABOUT MEMBERSHIP POLICY & POLITICAL ACTION BPG & BPSO NEWSROOM EVENTS IN FOCUS **JOIN/RENEW** MYRNAO

**Youth Wellness Champions** Resources About

Home Planning for Change Making change happen Sustaining change

Best Practice Guidelines Program

## Youth Wellness Champions

Sometimes we all need a little help from friends. This is especially true for youth in terms of their mental health and well-being. Good mental health is important for everyone, including youth.

Mental health, illness and substance use among youth is a very serious issue. The good news is that peer-support-based interventions such as the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO) Youth Wellness Champions (YWC) program help find solutions.

Whether you're an adult or a youth seeking to pave a brighter future for other young Canadians, our YWC Toolkit will help you be better informed, inspired and most important of all, involved in helping to create supportive, inclusive and resilient communities.

The Youth Wellness Champions Program (YWC Program) is an innovative, peer-based program based on youth engagement principles, designed to help youth develop the knowledge and skills they need to cope with mental health and substance use issues.

This work is funded by the Government of Ontario. All work produced by RNAO is editorially independent from its funding source.

**PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

**Planning for change**

Making change happen

Sustaining change

YWC is a multi-partner model, which means that getting started requires:

- the buy in of local public health units and school boards/schools



# Next Steps & Future Growth

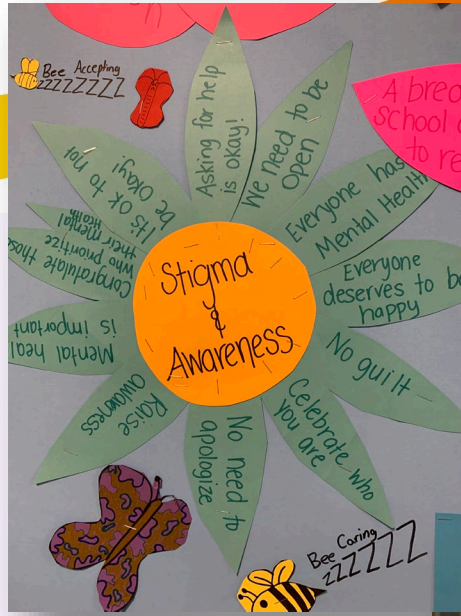
- YWC **Tool Kit Updates**
  - French language translation
- YWC program expansion and BPSO
- MHSU and BPSO
- BPSO Schools





# Questions?





Be a Champion for youth mental health and youth engagement

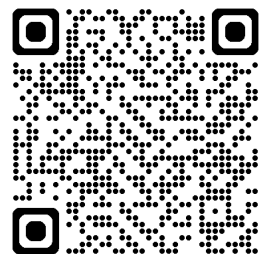
**JOIN  
TODAY**





*Celebrating  
nursing  
action & impact*

**NURSING  
W E E K**



MAY 12-18,  
2025



#NursingWeek2025

Thanks for attending this Nursing Week session!

## EVALUATION

- Evaluations can be completed anonymously
- If you want to be eligible to win a prize:
  - Enter your name and email on the evaluation
  - Complete your evaluation by 8 a.m. on Friday, May 23, 2025

# R

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# 100

1. Explore RNAO's 100th anniversary webpage



[RNAO.ca/RNAO100](https://RNAO.ca/RNAO100)

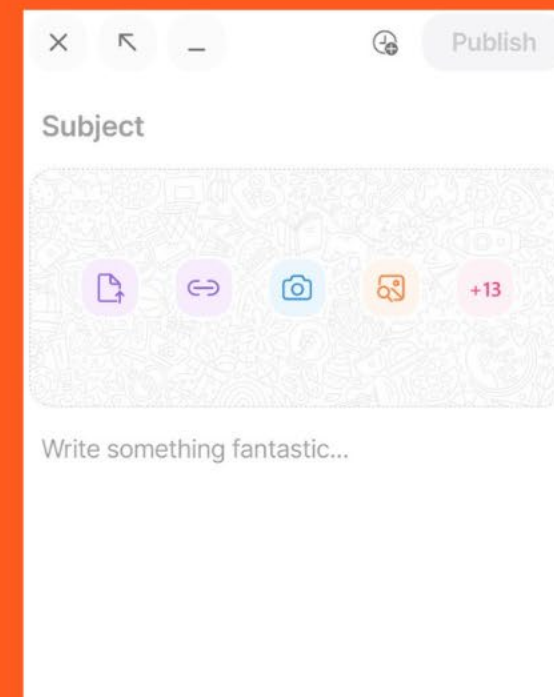
2. Sign the #RNAO100 virtual yearbook

- Share a special memory, celebratory message and/or a photo.



Virtual yearbook

## 1925-2025





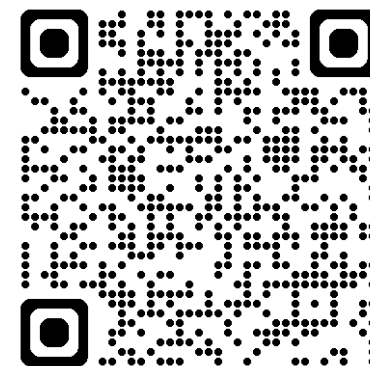
Solving challenges:  
**Building health care**



Join RNAO for only ~~\$256.36~~ **\$50** +HST

Join.RNAO.ca  
1-800-268-7199

*Celebrating  
nursing  
action & impact*



**NURSING  
W E E K**

**MAY 12-18,  
2025**

