



MUSKOKA  
COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION












# VitalSigns®

2018



Muskoka  
Community  
Foundation

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*Photo credit: Front and back cover courtesy of Heather Douglas Photography*

### Chair’s Message – Daniel Bradbury



Welcome to the first annual Muskoka Community Foundation Vital Signs® Report. We are grateful to the many local partners involved in creating this important tool for our community. This fascinating snapshot is about spreading awareness and inspiring action. These values are at the heart of a smart and caring Muskoka. This report blends new insights and data with existing evidence to inform a constructive debate about how we can work together towards ensuring that Muskoka is an attractive, supportive and sustainable region for everyone, residents and visitors alike. On behalf of the Board of Directors, thank you for reading and sharing our love for this exceptional community.

### Executive Director’s Message – Lynn DeCaro



Muskoka Community Foundation is pleased to present the Muskoka Vital Signs® Report 2018. Muskoka is a beautiful place to live and visit and holds a special place in the hearts of so many. At the first Muskoka Community Foundation symposium, ‘Building a Smart & Caring Muskoka’ held in 2014, participants suggested the foundation create a Muskoka Vital Signs® Report to identify the unmet needs in our community as well as its strengths and accomplishments. We hope that you will find this report an informative and inspiring snapshot of Muskoka and that it will spark conversations and encourage everyone to find ways to engage with and act on local issues. This is only the beginning of the conversation. As you will see on page 17

there are many more conversations to have. Please share the Muskoka Vital Signs® Report widely with your friends, family, colleagues and community. Together we can continue build a smart, caring and healthy Muskoka.

## Land Acknowledgement

The Muskoka Community Foundation would like to acknowledge that the District Municipality of Muskoka sits on land that has been inhabited by Indigenous Peoples from the beginning. In particular we acknowledge the traditional territories of the Anishinabek, Chippewa and Wahta Mohawk.

## What is a Vital Signs® Report

Vital Signs® is a community check-up that Community Foundations across Canada participate in to measure the health and vitality of our communities. Vital Signs® Reports identify significant trends in a range of sectors and areas that are critical to quality of life and maintaining smart and caring communities. Vital Signs® is coordinated nationally by the Community Foundations of Canada. Special thanks to the Toronto Foundation for developing and sharing the Vital Signs® concept.

For more information visit [VitalSignsCanada.ca](http://VitalSignsCanada.ca).

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## Methodology

In 2017 the Muskoka Community Foundation engaged community stakeholders in a Vital Conversation Series to begin laying the groundwork for the 2018 Muskoka Vital Signs Report. Participants were asked to identify what unique challenges their organization faced, share innovative approaches and highlight any pressing issues or gaps in the delivery of services in Muskoka. In addition, data was obtained from the 2016 Census Report released by Statistics Canada as well as multiple local sources.

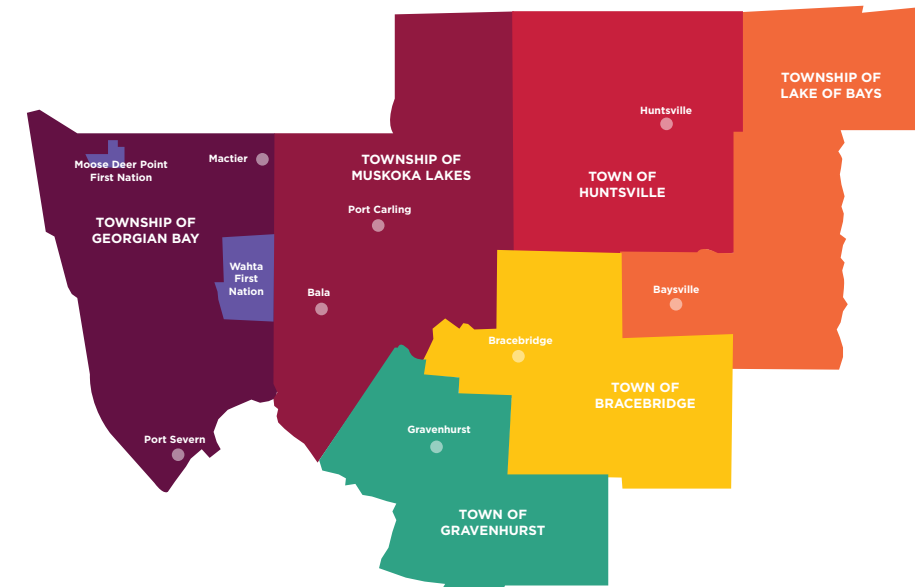
## Our Region

**Area**  
4,765 sq km

**Permanent Population**  
2011 = 59,220  
2016 = 60,599

**Permanent Population Projections**  
2041 = 84,000

**Seasonal Population**  
2016 = 81,907



## Age Distribution in 2016







Over **4,000 km** of trails in Muskoka

In 2011 and again in 2012, *National Geographic* declared Muskoka as one of the top destinations in the world to visit. Muskoka is known for its physical beauty, encompassing more than 1,000 lakes. The Muskoka watershed is unique and considered part of the “land between”, which runs between the Canadian Shield and the St. Lawrence River Lowlands. It is the northern limit for species such as White Oak, Woodchuck, Chorus Frog and the Common Crow. It is also the southern limit for species that include the Grey Wolf, Moose, River Otter, American Raven and the Common Loon. To learn more about ecological significance of the land in between visit [thelandbetween.ca/the-region/nature](http://thelandbetween.ca/the-region/nature)

The land in between is extremely sensitive and climate change is a growing concern. Muskoka’s economies are based on a healthy and diverse ecosystem. Indicators such as the number of days with ice cover indicate a warming trend. In 1975 there were on average 140 days with ice cover, as compared with 121 days in 2016, (Muskoka Watershed Council, 2018). Climate change will affect not only the environment but also the weather, economy, jobs and health. In 2017, the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit released “A changing climate: Assessing health impacts & vulnerabilities due to climate change within Simcoe Muskoka” examining the expected health impacts due to climate change in the region. In response to the increasing impacts of climate change, the District of Muskoka established a new position to coordinate climate change initiatives and develop a Muskoka Climate Action Plan.

**46 species at risk** in Muskoka

*Include:* Monarch Butterfly | Snapping Turtles | Eastern Small Footed Bat

**7** of Ontario’s **24 invasive species** of concern can be found in Muskoka

*Include:* Spiny Water Flea | Phragmites | Japanese Knotweed

**Impacts of Climate Change in Muskoka**

- Changing patterns of precipitation
- Increase in air and water temps
- Change in animal migration patterns
- Increased presence of invasive species and algal blooms
- Extreme weather events

**Muskoka is home to:**

250 species of birds

50 types of mammals

35 species of herpetofauna (reptiles + amphibians)

Dozens of fish species



Source: Muskoka Conservancy

**Recycling**



In 2016, Muskoka produced 25,000 tonnes of residential waste. 11,700 tonnes or 46% was diverted. Of the 11,700 tonnes of residential waste diverted;

- 64.7%** was recycled
- 23.9%** was organic waste
- 1.7%** was diverted through hazardous waste programs
- 9.7%** was diverted from landfills through other means

Source: The District of Muskoka

**Made In Muskoka Solutions**

Raising awareness of environmental issues and engaging a broad range of stakeholders has been identified as a priority. Various partnerships between environmental groups and private enterprise have been launched as a means of balancing tensions between economic growth and environmental stewardship.

Various community groups are working to address environmental issues in Muskoka. The **Muskoka Conservancy**, for instance, a volunteer-driven, staff-supported registered charity, works with community partners and private landowners to create and protect nature reserves. As of 2018, the organization protects 39 properties throughout Muskoka which encompasses more than 2,400 acres and over 40,000 feet of sensitive shoreline.

**Want to learn more about climate change?** The Muskoka Watershed Council has reported on climate change in its 2018 Muskoka Watershed Report Card, its 2016 Planning for Climate Change in Muskoka and its 2010 Climate Change and Adaptation in Muskoka Paper.

**The Muskoka Summit** on the Environment is a biennial event that promotes the use of research to ensure healthy ecosystems in Muskoka and beyond. Since its inception in 2010 the Summit has focused on discussions of science-based environmental research, as a means of raising awareness about environmental concerns. The Summit is a collaboration between multiple community, municipal and district partners.



Help support wildlife by planting only native species, keep areas natural and choose natural fibres over synthetic.

*For Further Information on Environmental Data:*

**Muskoka Watershed Council**

[muskokawatershed.org/programs/report-card/](http://muskokawatershed.org/programs/report-card/)

**Muskoka WaterWeb**

[muskokawaterweb.ca](http://muskokawaterweb.ca)



2016 - 3 million person-visits to Muskoka  
 July - September: 1.9 million person visits

Muskoka has often been identified as one of the best places to visit in Canada and also as one of the top vacation spots in the world. In addition to its natural beauty, Muskoka offers many cultural and recreational opportunities for visitors and residents alike.

\$	<b>2016 Total Visitor Spending</b>	<b>500 million</b>
	Food & Beverage	<b>212 million</b>
	Accommodations	<b>109 million</b>
	Retail	<b>52 million</b>
	Recreation & Entertainment	<b>36 million</b>

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016

Muskoka is home to 10 provincial parks, include Hardy Lake, Arrowhead and Six Mile Lake, and more than 10 conservation reserves. Georgian Bay Islands National Park, Muskoka's only national park, is a group of islands that has more reptiles and amphibians species, including the threatened Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake, than any other national park in Canada.

Muskoka's natural landscapes, wildlife, windswept pines and abundance of lakes, rivers, and waterfalls is the inspiration for many talented artists to create music, theatre productions, paintings, sculptures, jewelry, and wood and pottery pieces. Muskoka has a vibrant arts and culture sector and an array of craft markets, art shows and cultural events occur regularly throughout the district. Events range from theater productions, musical shows, food festivals to farmers markets, art galleries and cultural forums.



**Top Activities People Participate in When Visiting Muskoka**

- Boating & Canoeing
- Visiting Friends and Family
- Visiting Provincial and National Parks
- Hiking
- Camping
- Swimming & Beaches
- Viewing Wildlife

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016

**Did You Know?**

**Muskoka is home to:**

- 4 concert halls
- 10 museums
- more than 25 art galleries
- more than 15 golf courses
- more than 40 sports facilities  
*(arenas, soccer fields, baseball diamonds etc.)*
- And a wide network of municipal and provincial hiking trails. To learn more visit [mukokatrailsCouncil.com](http://mukokatrailsCouncil.com) and [discovermuskoka.ca](http://discovermuskoka.ca)

**Made In Muskoka Solutions**

Participation in leisure, cultural and recreation activities can have a positive impact on an individual's physical and mental health. Many individuals living in Muskoka face financial barriers when trying to access these activities.

The **Children's Foundation of Muskoka** helps children and families by providing funds to meet the recreational and cultural of the children in Muskoka.

The **Town of Bracebridge Recreation Department**, through The Leisure Access Program, is committed to providing affordable access to recreational opportunities for Bracebridge residents and households living in low income.

Farmers markets and agriculture are also central to the Muskoka experience. There are nine weekly farmers markets throughout Muskoka between May and Thanksgiving. Local merchants sell homemade goods, locally sourced foods, local art and other surprising treats. The North Muskoka Good Food Co-op is Muskoka's first locally owned food co-operative showcasing local products and goods.



Source: Gravenhurst Chamber of Commerce

As a four seasons destination, Muskoka also has a lot to offer during the winter months. As colder temperatures set in and the landscape freezes, snowshoeing, skiing, snowmobiling and skating opportunities abound.

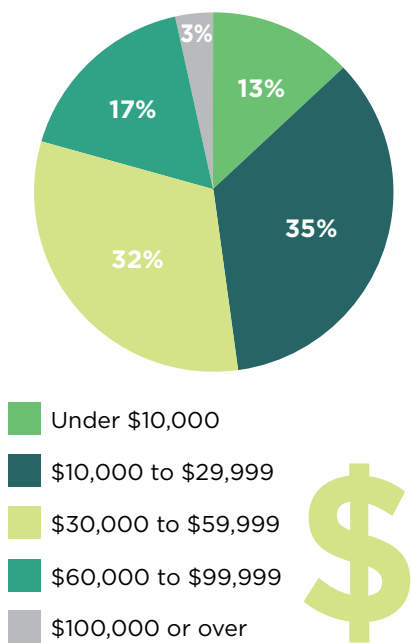
- 4 Ice Skating Trails
- 1 Downhill Ski Hill
- 1,600 km of Snowmobile Trails
- 100s of km of Groomed Cross Country Ski Trails



Photo credit: CTV News Barrie

As Muskoka becomes known as a four season destination, the tourism industry continues to play an important role in the local economy and a major source of employment. As noted previously there were over 3,200,000 person-visits to Muskoka with total visitor spending at more than \$500 million in 2016. While the tourism and service industries contribute significantly to Muskoka's economy, other sectors such as construction, public service and real estate continue to grow. However, the diversification of Muskoka's economy faces a challenge due to factors such as a shortage of affordable housing, high cost of food, limited access to public transit and accessible child care. These realities make it challenging for local businesses to recruit employees. Consequently, Muskoka is currently faced with a labour shortage. Employers face challenges in hiring credentialed and skilled labour, general labourers and also student positions. Sectors that are affected include construction, professional services, municipalities, hospitality, health care and tourism.

Individual After-tax Income in 2015 in Muskoka



Source: Statistics Canada, 2016

### Muskoka's Socio-Economic Challenges

Median **employment income** in Muskoka is **21%** lower than the Province.  
**Muskoka: \$26,918**  
**Ontario: \$33,946**

**18%** of residents have **not completed high school** or beyond

**13%** of Muskoka residents are living in poverty

**18%** of Muskokans are **self-employed**  
**83%** of all business have **less than 5 employees**

In 2016 **6,370 households** or **25%** were **spending more than 30%** of their total income on **shelter costs**

**43%** of all jobs are in **tourism, construction, service industries, arts and entertainment** and are largely **part-time and seasonal**

\*These numbers are based on permanent residents  
 Source: The District of Muskoka

Muskoka is often considered an affluent cottage/vacation destination, but this idyllic vision of the region obscures the economic reality among the population. Muskoka, like many rural communities, faces challenges in addressing poverty and helping the community's most vulnerable people. Given the vast expanse of the region, many people living on a low income find the lack of public transportation an insurmountable hurdle to finding employment, thereby exacerbating the labour shortages experienced by employers. Another barrier faced by many living in poverty is the reality that many jobs in the tourism, construction and service industries are part-time and seasonal. Combined with the high cost of housing, food, electricity, transportation and child care, these realities present many challenges for those living in Muskoka.

**31%** of Muskoka is made up of a vulnerable population which includes people living in poverty, seniors and people who have disabilities.

Children ages 0-19 make up **18%** of Muskoka's population.

There are **2,480** single-parent families living in Muskoka.

There are **7% or 739** children living in families in receipt of Ontario Works.

**849** households received Ontario Works in 2017.

**1,726** households received Ontario Disability Support Program assistance in 2017.

Source: The District of Muskoka

### Food Security

According to the 2017 Nutritious Food Basket Survey, a family of four in Muskoka, using the Canadian Food Guide spends the following amount on groceries.

**Weekly \$211.72 Monthly \$916.75 Annually \$11001.00**

Source: Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit



### Made in Muskoka Solutions

The **!IMPACT Café** addresses the needs of some of the most vulnerable in Muskoka through solutions that promote engagement, education, training, employment and nutrition. The Café has become so much more than a community kitchen - it has become a successful social enterprise that is achieving both social and community outcomes.

The cooks are members of our community who are experiencing substantial barriers to finding employment and are socially isolated. The !IMPACT Café works with a wide range of individuals who are trying to re-enter the workforce or simply find an inclusive way to participate in their community. The name !IMPACT stands for Individuals Making Positive Actions Together.

### Did You KNOW?

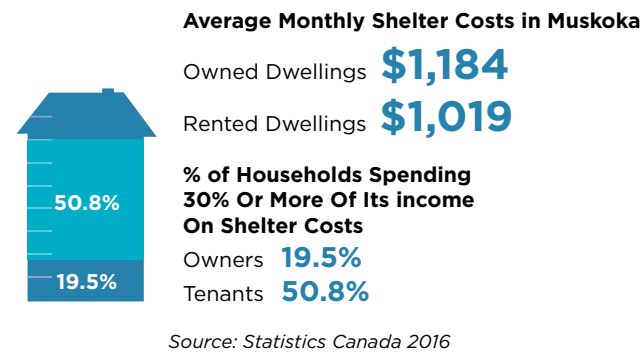
**11 Food Banks are located throughout Muskoka with 12-15 food programs** (operating at various times of the year)

There are a number of organizations that work to support those living in poverty and social isolation:

- Gravenhurst Against Poverty (G.A.P.)
- Poverty Reduction of Muskoka Planning Team (PROMPT)
- Getting Ahead and Bridges Out of Poverty (YWCA)
- Financial Assistance Partners Group (District of Muskoka)



According to the 2017 Second Home Study, seasonal dwellings or second homes account for approximately 47% of all households in Muskoka. These households contribute to Muskoka's robust seasonal economy. What may be less visible is the extent to which the accessibility of housing is becoming an increasing concern in Muskoka. House prices, as well as rents, are increasing at rates that outstrip average salaries. Spending more than 30% of income on shelter costs places a great strain on households and leaves fewer resources at the end of the month to spend on food, clothing, utilities and transportation. The nature of seasonal and often low-paying employment makes it difficult to afford housing costs. The vast geographic expanse of Muskoka, coupled with the lack of public transportation, contributes to the shortage of accessible housing.



The District of Muskoka has



In 2017 there was an average of  
**640 Applicants**  
on the waitlist

In the 2018 Homelessness Enumeration Report for the District of Muskoka, 35% of respondents identified affordability as the cause of homelessness. The report further noted the prevalence of hidden homelessness with 57% of respondents relying on temporary housing, such as couch surfing in the homes of family and friends or staying in motels/hotels when possible.

To learn more visit [muskoka.on.ca/housing](http://muskoka.on.ca/housing)

**Housing Continuum**



Source: The District of Muskoka

Homelessness and the importance of securing and maintaining safe, affordable and sustainable housing has been identified as a priority throughout Muskoka. A continuum of supports and programs have been created through the collaboration of several community partners. Initiatives include financial and social supports, assistance with securing and maintaining long term housing, as well as additional services to support health and well-being.

- Findings in the **2018 Homelessness Enumeration Report** included
- 44%** of respondents reported experiencing chronic homelessness
  - 11%** of respondents reported staying in make-shift shelters, vehicles or places not meant for human habitation
  - 58%** of respondents reported having a chronic/acute medical condition

Source: 2018 Homelessness Enumeration Report for the District of Muskoka



There is a growing shortage of attainable housing in Muskoka. The lack of affordable housing stock is one of the biggest barriers to home ownership. This results in an increased demand on local rental markets further compounding the lack of affordability.

**Made In Muskoka Solutions**

Local housing efforts involve not only considering the need for shelter but also acknowledging the significance of inclusion, access and preservation of dignity.

**Habitat for Humanity** in Muskoka is a non-profit organization working to break the cycle of poverty by building homes and promoting affordable homeownership, through the mobilization of volunteers and community partners. Since 2002 fifteen homes have been built throughout Muskoka.

The **YWCA Muskoka** December 6th Fund was established to provide interest free loans to help remove some of the financial barriers that prevent women from leaving abusive relationships.

The **Financial Assistance Partners Group** (FAPG) was formed in 2011 to assist Muskoka citizens in urgent need of assistance. Members include Rotary and Lions Clubs from across Muskoka, Muskoka Victim Services, Bracebridge Salvation Army, plus other groups and agencies across Muskoka who provide funds for granting.

The District of Muskoka oversees numerous housing programs supporting people in a variety of ways. The **Gateway Muskoka** program provides eligible families and individuals with down payment assistance for purchasing a home. By the end of 2018, this program will have opened up the possibility of home ownership to nearly twenty families with down payment assistance loans.

Since 2014, the **Muskoka Affordable Housing Initiative Program (MAHIP)** has committed to providing incentives for 79 new affordable units totaling \$1.18 million as well as over 300 monthly rent supplements.

**Average price of non-waterfront homes in Muskoka**

**Housing Prices 2016 \$244,377    Housing Prices 2017 \$388,454**

Source: The Lakeland Association of Realtors



**Attainable Housing**

- Adequate
- Appropriate
- Affordable
- Accessible
- Available

The more pieces that are missing, the more unstable housing becomes.

## Keeping Muskoka Safe

Muskoka's vast geographic area and fluctuating population in the summer months presents some unique challenges for district wide emergency services. One of the organizations working to keep Muskoka safe is the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP), which includes 108 staff, made up of officers and civilians. There are two detachments that serve Muskoka, located in Bracebridge and Huntsville. The two OPP detachments operate dedicated Snowmobile and Marine Programs, as well as an ATV program that patrols the trails in the fall.


-  **108** staff
-  **4** snowmobiles
-  **6** boats
-  **2** ATV's



Source: Muskoka OPP Detachments

The Muskoka Paramedic Service (MPS), which includes emergency response and non-emergency medical transportation services, is another organization that works to keep Muskoka safe. Muskoka has five paramedic stations located in Bracebridge, Gravenhurst, Huntsville, MacTier and Port Carling that operate 13 ambulances and 3 response vehicles. During the peak tourist season of July and August, on average there is a 25% increase in calls to MPS. During 2017, MPS responded to 11,087 calls compared to 10,215 calls in 2016. MPS also takes part in a number of community events and log over 600 volunteer hours.

  
**13** Ambulances  
**5** Stations  
 2017 Responded to  
**11,087** calls

  
**350** volunteer fire fighters  
**24** staffed and unstaffed  
 fire stations throughout  
 Muskoka

Local fire departments also contribute to increasing safety in Muskoka. Fire departments in Muskoka's municipalities are comprised of a blend of paid and highly trained volunteer firefighters. Given the diverse terrain on which they work, fire departments are equipped with a variety of equipment that includes, tanker, pumper and ladder trucks as well as ATVs and marine vehicles.

## Made In Muskoka Solutions

Building safe communities in Muskoka requires creative approaches due to the large geographic area and dispersed population. As a result, many collaborations have been established among local organizations, designed to increase access to personal supports and safety.

**Community Mental Health Association Muskoka Parry Sound**, OPP and local schools work collaboratively to provide supports that address mental health, addictions and homelessness. These partners work to provide proactive solutions to avoid crises.

**Muskoka Victim Services** supports victims of crime and tragic circumstance; they accept self referrals, referrals from the OPP and work in collaboration with community partners to meet the needs of the individuals served.

## Community Safety Stats

*In 2017 there were:*

- 479** drug-related charges in Muskoka
- 460** violent crimes
- 643** domestic complaints/calls
- 153** domestic incidents resulting in criminal charges
- 470** impaired (alcohol and drug) charges in Muskoka
- 317** drivers charged with impaired driving
- 70** reported sexual assaults

Source: Muskoka OPP Detachments



To learn more about creating an emergency preparedness plan visit [muskoka.on.ca/en/live-and-play/Emergency-Management.aspx](http://muskoka.on.ca/en/live-and-play/Emergency-Management.aspx)

If you need support, there are a number of organizations ready to help:

- Muskoka Victim Services 1-844-762-9945**
- Muskoka Parry Sound Sexual Assault Services 1-877-851-6662**
- Muskoka Interval House 1-800-461-1740**
- Chrysalis 1-866-789-8488**

Health care professionals in Muskoka strive to meet the unique needs of the local population. There are two family health teams in Muskoka with 48 primary care providers between the two locations caring for approximately 52,000 patients. In order to provide a comprehensive network of services, alternative deliveries of health care have been established. This includes the Nurse Practitioner Led Clinic in Huntsville that serves approximately 2,500 patients and the establishment of Community Health Hubs designed to support patients living in more rural locations throughout Muskoka.

### Made in Muskoka Solutions

**Muskoka Health Links** is an approach to better coordinated care for people living with complex health needs. Integrating the health care system with the social services delivery system in Muskoka ensures people are getting the right care at the right time. Fully 65% of health care costs in Muskoka are attributed to only 5% of Muskoka's population, or roughly 3,500 hundred people, due to the complexity of their health care needs.

**The Community Paramedicine Program** works to improve access to home care and community support services for seniors and other patients with chronic and complex conditions. The program works with teams of health care professionals, including Health Links, helping to reduce unnecessary emergency room visits and hospital admissions. Front line paramedics receive specialized training to identify patients that might benefit from support services, disease prevention, assessment and linking patients to community resources. In addition, a Home Visit Program allows patients to access primary healthcare through Community Paramedicine. The scope of care may include blood work draws and analysis, specialized assessments, treatments and wellness checks.

**B'Saanibamaadsiwin** translated means "living a good life". The program is offered by the Community Mental Health Association of Muskoka Parry Sound and is committed to practicing First Nation, Inuit and Metis mental wellness care that is culturally appropriate and safe. Services offered include assessment, referral, crisis, and counselling services.

### Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare

**2** Hospital sites:  
Huntsville and Bracebridge

**2017-2018 Fiscal Year**  
Hospital Admissions **5,009**  
Total Emergency Visits **45,541**  
Emergency Visits  
(June through September)  
**18,304**

Births **244**  
Employees **650**  
Active Physicians **85**  
Volunteers **340**

### Health Hubs

**3** Dorset, Port Carling and Wahta  
**1** Mobile Health Hub

*(travelling to Port Sydney, Vankoughnet & Severn Bridge)*

**2017-2018 Fiscal Year**  
**3,000** Registered Patients Served  
**500** Seasonal Residents Served



Community Health Hubs in Muskoka were started as a demonstration project to help enhance access to primary care and community programs and services in rural and remote communities within the District. Due to the overwhelming success Community Health Hubs in Muskoka now receive core funding.

### Long-Term Health Care

There are four long-term care facilities located in Huntsville, Bracebridge and Gravenhurst. Long-term care homes care for people with significant health challenges and cognitive impairment who need 24-hour access to nursing care and supervision. While homes are publicly funded by the government to provide primary health care and nursing care, residents also pay a fee for their accommodation. To learn more about waitlists visit [nsmhlin.on.ca/](http://nsmhlin.on.ca/)



**510** licensed long-term care beds in Muskoka

**43%** of Muskoka residents are 55+ compared to provincial numbers at 30%

**25%** of Muskoka residents are over the age of 65 compared to provincial numbers at 17%

**This number is expected to increase to almost to 50% by 2021**

### Hospice - End of Life Care

Muskoka is also home to two organizations that provide end of life care in Muskoka: Hospice Muskoka and Hospice Huntsville. More than 100 professionally trained volunteers provide clients with compassionate care and bereavement support in their homes, at Algonquin Grace and the soon to be opened Andy's House in Port Carling.

### Mental Health and Addiction Services in Muskoka

A number of organizations offer services in Muskoka to individuals and families with mental health issues. Community mental health programs provide a variety of services to help support people who have serious and ongoing mental health issues living in the community. Services offered include information and referral, advocacy, case management, housing advocacy, rehabilitation, employment assistance, counselling, support groups, addictions support, social and recreational opportunities and peer support services for consumers and survivors.

The increase in opioid related deaths and hospitalizations has been a growing concern across Canada and Muskoka is not immune from this crisis

**2012-2016** Average number of opioid related hospitalizations in Muskoka **10**

**2016** Opioid related deaths in Muskoka **6**



To learn more about mental health and addiction supports in Muskoka, visit the following websites:

Community Mental Health Association Muskoka Parry Sound: [mps.cmha.ca](http://mps.cmha.ca)  
Simcoe Muskoka Family Connexions: [familyconnexions.ca](http://familyconnexions.ca)  
District of Muskoka: [muskoka.on.ca/en/community-and-social-services/Addictions-and-Mental-Health-Support.aspx](http://muskoka.on.ca/en/community-and-social-services/Addictions-and-Mental-Health-Support.aspx)



For the sake of clarity, this report has been divided into several select topics. This is not intended to suggest, however that any of these issues can truly be understood without being connected to each of the other subjects.

For example, Muskoka's **economy** is largely dependent on tourism and related sectors. Filling job vacancies in those sectors, or more precisely, the ability for people in Muskoka to access those jobs is impacted by the lack of affordable **housing**, transportation, housing, child care and the high cost of living.

The overall health of Muskoka's **environment** is directly related to the number of visitors that come and spend time and money to enjoy the natural environment. As mentioned above and throughout the report, tourism in Muskoka is a large economic force. Climate change and increased pressures on the local environment impact water quality in the local watershed, the length and amount of snow and ice each winter as well as the biodiversity found in Muskoka. Significant changes to Muskoka's environment have adverse effects on the economy.

Environmental changes faced by Muskoka also has an effect of the overall **health** of people living here. There is a correlation between increased heat events and poor air quality and the physical health of individuals. These events, coupled with other extreme weather events, put increasing pressure on Muskoka's first responders and **health care** system.

These are only a few examples of how each of the topics presented in this report are interconnected.



We hope that this report not only demonstrates the issues impacting Muskoka but also shows the innovative ways in which local government, charities and not-for-profits are working to maintain a healthy and vibrant community.

We acknowledge that this report does not provide a comprehensive overview of all of the issues that need to be considered when assessing the overall health and vitality of the Muskoka community. This report presents a snapshot of Muskoka at a specific point in time, as it relates to the themes highlighted in the report. Rather than presenting the final word, the goal of this report is to begin a dialogue and encourage discussion about what needs to be done to strengthen the well-being of Muskoka.

Some issues that were beyond the scope of the current report include but are not limited to:

- **Poverty**
- **A focus on youth living in Muskoka**
- **The ageing population**
- **People living with differing levels of ability**
- **Food security**
- **Transportation**
- **Inclusion and a sense of belonging**
- **Reconciliation**

In future Muskoka Vital Signs® Reports, communications and events, our intention is to explore these and other issues. We look forward to engaging with members of the community to begin the conversation and learn about the initiatives already underway. Our hope is that this work will become part of a broader conversation and movement for change.

## Muskoka Vital Signs® Partners



## Vital Conversations Participants

Bracebridge Salvation Army

Muskoka Futures

YWCA Muskoka

The District of Muskoka

Manna Food Bank

YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka

Muskoka Algonquin Health Care

Hospice Muskoka

Canadian Mental Health Association

Muskoka Parry Sound

Alzheimer Society of Muskoka

Muskoka Conservancy

Watershed Council

Lake of Bays Cottage Association

Town of Bracebridge

Town of Gravenhurst

Town of Huntsville

Bracebridge Arts Council

Muskoka Chautauqua

Muskoka Women's Advocacy Group

Canadian Mental Health Association  
Muskoka Parry Sound

OPP Huntsville and Bracebridge

Muskoka Parry Sound Sexual Assault  
Services

Muskoka Victim Services

North Simcoe LHIN

Big Brothers Big Sisters Muskoka

Children's Foundation of Muskoka

Muskoka Family Focus

Elder Abuse Prevention

The United Way Simcoe Muskoka

Parry Sound Muskoka Community  
Network

Gravenhurst Chamber of Commerce

John Cowan, Cowan Family Fund  
(Muskoka Community Foundation)

Volker Hann, Wasan Island, Breuninger  
Foundation



## Muskoka Vital Signs® Project Team

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