

Martha's copy



Antigonish Women's Resource Centre



204B KIRK PLACE, 219 MAIN STREET, ANTIGONISH
NOVA SCOTIA, B2G 2 C1, PHONE 863-6221

November 23, 1993

Claire Edwards
Human Resources Development
Women's Programme
5281 Duke Street
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3M1

Dear Claire:

The staff and Board of Directors of the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre are in the process of elaborating our funding proposal for 1994/95. This year we have decided to develop a programme around Women and Community Economic Development and here are some of our preliminary thoughts. Any comments and suggestions you might have would be appreciated.

1. Background:

In the first decade of its operations (1983-1993), the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre has established a solid foundation in the local community for its research and education programmes on social justice issues as they relate to women and children. Poverty, sexual assault/harassment and housing have all been the focus of the AWRC's public education and action in recent years.

But one issue that affects the lives of all women in eastern Nova Scotia is the uncertain economic future of our communities. For many women in the Antigonish area the only jobs they can access are seasonal or 'dead-end'. The Antigonish Women's Resource Centre has drop-in statistics on women who want to know more about starting their own businesses. Given the predominantly rural base of Antigonish Town and County and the small-business base of the local economy, the AWRC proposes to make Women in Community Economic Development the focus of our programming in 1994/95.

2. Programme Goal:

To raise the awareness of the local community on the on-going achievements, current opportunities and prevailing obstacles to women's economic initiatives in Antigonish.

3. Programme Activities:

3.1 Conference (February, 1995):

The conference will be a focal point in bringing together a range of community-based resources to identify and explore short and long-term strategies for women in community economic development. This activity will include amongst others local women entrepreneurs, St. Francis Xavier University's Departments of Extension and Business Administration, low-income women, the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and the Antigonish Downtown Development Society.

The theme shall be: "Women in Community Economic Development: Profile and Prospects for the 1990's"

- guest speaker: local businesswoman, owner, etc.
- sharing experiences of local women entrepreneurs
- exploring key sectors: tourism, natural resources, services, arts and crafts, etc.
- community and co-operative initiatives
- a video on the conference process

3.2 Research/Presentations/Workshops: some of the possible ideas for innovative work in this area could include -

An assessment through focus groups of existing training opportunities for women entrepreneurs: from St. Francis Xavier University Business Administration to community colleges and vocational school. (i.e. to assess the relevance to women of training, the extent to which it fosters entrepreneurial development, awareness of gender issues, etc.)

Access to support services: a questionnaire appraising the access of women to local support services like credit and advisory services. i.e. to include policy and attitudinal aspects of organizational access.

Learning from failure: the silver lining. To compile a set of case histories on how and why some ventures failed. i.e. as lessons for prospective women entrepreneurs.

Rural Women's Involvement in the Informal Economy: a survey of innovative activities by women in the local area.

The Balancing Act: taking care of 'business' while taking care of the home. A survey of local women's experiences in dealing with the burdens of entrepreneurship in addition to

keeping a home.

Compilation of a simple reference kit (inventory of local resources) available for prospective women entrepreneurs.

4. ~~Programme Outputs:~~ ^{Outcome}

- Goal
- increased awareness/appreciation in the local community of the significant economic contributions and strengths of women entrepreneurs;
 - increased networking and information amongst local women about the options for taking economic initiatives;
 - increased awareness amongst providers of support services to entrepreneurs about the particular strengths and needs of women; *awareness leading to*
 - widespread publication and circulation of the outputs of the research (reports, information kits, etc.)
 - Network: possible formation of a semi-formal business mentoring group for women starting up new enterprises

As I mentioned at the outset, we are still in the process of elaborating this proposal. We are particularly hopeful that the theme of Community Economic Development and the related program of activities will not only meet a real community need but also enable the AWRC to broaden its profile within the community. Your comments and suggestions would be greatly appreciated.

We look forward to working with you on this proposal.

Sincerely,

Martha McGinn
Co-Director