

AWA Sexual Abuse Project Seeks Input

by Dawn Currie

The Antigonish Women's Association-sponsored project, A Community Response to Sexual Assault and Sexual Abuse in Antigonish, is looking to contact anyone who is a survivor of sexual assault or childhood sexual abuse. These persons must be willing to discuss the possibility of participating in an interview with the project staff, or would like more information about the project.

To participate or for information they are invited to call project staff members Lucille Harper or Ellen King at 863-2166, or drop by the project office at Suite 204A Kirk Place, 219 Main Street.

Project co-ordinator Harper explains that the two project staff members plan to interview survivors of sexual assault and sexual abuse in March and April. She says that they are hoping to interview 20-25 individuals with differing experiences and backgrounds, including sexual assault survivors, childhood sexual abuse survivors, women and men, students, parents of child survivors, survivors who have used services outside Antigonish and survivors who have never used services.

"The purpose of the interview is to ask survivors about their need for services. Survivors will not be asked to disclose the details of their abuse or any information about which they are hesitant to talk. All names will be kept strictly confidential," Harper stresses.

She adds that the information collected during the interviews will be summarized for the project advisory



ELLEN KING (left) and Lucille Harper are compiling research to develop a model for better addressing the needs of survivors of sexual assault and sexual abuse in Antigonish. They are currently involved in conducting a community needs assessment in which they are interviewing survivors of sexual assault and sexual abuse. They invite anyone who is a survivor of sexual assault or childhood sexual abuse to contact them at 863-2166.

committee and used to develop a model for better addressing the needs of survivors of sexual assault and sexual abuse in Antigonish.

Harper points out, "Across North America people are becoming more aware of the enormity of the problem of sexual assault and sexual abuse. Studies about sexual assault and sexual abuse underline the risk of sexual violence faced by women and children. The Badgley report in 1984 found that one in two women and one in three men have been victims of unwanted sexual acts. Four out of five of these acts were committed against the person as a child. Stories of sexual abuse abound in the media and more and more survivors of sexual assault and sexual abuse are finding the courage to speak out and to seek help."

She explains that the initiative for the current project was taken by the Antigonish Women's Association when a preliminary investigation indicated that, "in Antigonish, the need for more comprehensive services for survivors of sexual assault and sexual abuse has been identified by service providers, advocates and consumers."

Through the Antigonish Women's Association, a committee of community service providers and consumers developed and subsequently received funding from the Department of the Attorney General, Victims' Services Division, for the 22-month A Community Response to Sexual Assault and Sexual Abuse in Antigonish project.

The two project collaborators are currently involved in conducting a community needs assessment by interviewing survivors of sexual assault and sexual abuse as well as service providers, and representatives from referring agencies, organizations and institutions.

"The purpose of this research is to identify the service needs of survivors, the strengths of existing services and the gaps in existing services," Harper says.

She adds that the response to the project from service providers and referring agencies has been enthusiastic. "More than 50 individual therapists and representatives of community agencies participated in the needs assessment interviews," she notes.



The Children's Education Trust of Canada, the world's most FLEXIBLE R.E.S.P., welcomes our new neighbors born at St. Mar-