

Local

Waves of Change

AWRC-SASA receives funding for initiative focused on prevention of sexualized violence

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Sexual violence prevention was the focus of a recent informal discussion at the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre (AWRC).

More specifically, the Sept. 4 gathering centered on the progress of the initiative Waves of Change: Creating Campus Responses to Sexualized Violence, which continues to be implemented on every university and Nova Scotia Community College campus across the province.

"Training has been quite successful," Margie McKinnon, St. F.X. Director of Health Counselling and Accessible Learning Centre, said.

More than 75 facilitators have been trained on the Antigonish campus, ones that teach their peers about ways to intervene and prevent sexualized violence.

"It is about standing up and making positive change," she added.

McKinnon and Johannah Black, provincial coordinator for Waves of Change, touched on how "in-depth conversation and feedback" are keys to development. Students learn various techniques to intervene as bystanders, support victims and to create social change.

Black explained the five-module program includes workshops for groups of no more than 30 participants.

"There is more opportunity for engagement and conversation," she said of the idea to keep participant numbers lower.

Along with the morning conversation about the progress — and future — for the program, there was a federal funding announcement from Central Nova MP Sean Fraser.

"Our support for the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services Association is critical in helping this organization help students in Nova Scotia feel safe, secure and respected in their learning spaces," the Liberal government member said in a press release.

"I look forward to the organization's efforts to address sexual violence and to educate our local community on sexual assault on campuses. I thank them for their



Johannah Black (left), Waves of Change: Creating Campus Responses to Sexualized Violence provincial project co-ordinator, speaks about the initiative Sept. 4 at the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre. Margie McKinnon (center), St. F.X.'s Director of Health, Counselling and Accessible Learning Centre, and Central Nova MP Sean Fraser also participated in the informal discussion. COREY LEBLANC

important work."

Fraser echoed that sentiment during the conversation, describing the work of AWRC-SASA as

"remarkable."

"You have helped educate me and have given me incredible support," he said.

While providing what he described as "startling" statistics, when it comes to sexualized violence, Fraser said the system to deal with it is "completely broken."

"We have to change that," he added, noting organizations, such as AWRC and SASA, "know a lot of solutions."

On that day, Fraser unveiled \$197,622, over a two-year period, for those organizations and the Waves of Change initiative through the federal justice department's Victims' Fund.

"It will help set the stage," he noted of the growing initiative providing the basis for policies and change across Canada.

"We want to provide support to the experts," Fraser added of the long-term funding.

The two-year funding, which

will focus on developing an evaluation model and measuring success of the program, comes on the heels of two years of developing and rolling out the pilot.

AWRC-SASA executive director Wynne Sandler said they are "very pleased to receive continue support" from the federal department for Waves of Change.

"It is making a difference," Sandler said of the initiative.

In a press release, she noted, it has "proven to be a very successful and important program for preventing sexualized violence and making college and university campuses safer places for all."

"This funding will ensure the sustainability of the program by allowing us to continue to build capacity at each of the institutions involved across the province," Sandler added.

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