ANTIGONISH WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTRE
& SEXUAL ASSAULT SERVICES ASSOCIATION

Healthy Relationships for Youth Proposal
September 30, 2010

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The **Healthy Relationships for Youth (HRY) Program** is a school-based violence awareness and prevention program of the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services Association (the Women's Centre). The HRY Program delivers a series of twelve interactive, skills-building sessions within the Grade 9 Health curriculum. It is designed to reduce the risk of violence for youth through developing their knowledge about creating and maintaining healthy relationships. Facilitated by teams of adult and youth facilitators, HRY has been cited as a best practice program for the way it involves youth as peer educators in the classroom as well as in their schools and communities.

For the 2009-2010 school year, all ten schools with grade 9 students in the **Strait Regional School Board District of Nova Scotia** participated in the Healthy Relationships for Youth Program. The district includes Antigonish and Guysborough Counties on the mainland, and Richmond and Inverness counties on Cape Breton Island. The program trained 85 Youth Facilitators and 20 Adult Facilitators who facilitated the program with 752 grade nine students.

The 12 session curriculum developed and used by the HRY Program is cumulative, based on 'best practice' programs, and has been independently assessed and found to be in line with the learning outcomes of the Nova Scotia Grade 9 Personal Development and Relationships (PDR) Curriculum. The use of the program in the schools is supported by the Strait Regional School Board administration as well as by the principals of the participating high schools.

The Healthy Relationships for Youth Curriculum is participatory, interactive, and includes the following sessions and activities:

1. Introductory Session: Setting Group Standards; Defining Violence; Mapping Relationships
2. Diversity: Social Status Card Game; Circles of Self; Personal Power Brainstorm
3. Communication Skills: Types of Communication; Communication Responses and Role-Play
4. Gender; Separate Gender Groups; Learning from Each Other
5. Boundaries: Touch, Talk and Space Boundaries, Invaders and Defenders; Role Play
6. Conflict Resolution: Communication; Active Listening; Actor/Director
7. Stereotypes & Pop Culture: Gender Stereotypes; the Media
8. Gender Identity & sexual Orientation: Definitions Activity; Video – *One of Them*
9. Power & Violence – Part One: Cycle of Relationship Violence; Video – *Dealing with Teen Dating Abuse*
10. Power & Violence – Part Two: Relationship Needs; Expressing Our Needs; Healthy and Unhealthy Relationships
11. Cultural Storytelling: Story Circle
12. Where Are We Now: Relationship Jeopardy; Wrap-Up

HRY PROGRAM STRENGTHS

The Healthy Relationships for Youth Program has a **diversity focus** which helps students understand and make the links among issues related to different forms of oppression, exclusion and violence prevalence. It uses a strengths-based approach which encourages students to develop a deeper understanding of diversity and to recognize and challenge **sexism, racism** and **homophobia** as forms of violence that impact personal and social relationships.

In each participating school **youth teams** are recruited from grades 10 to 12 and trained in leadership and facilitation skills. Through intensive discussions and activities they develop a critical analysis of the issues discussed in the HRY curriculum. In turn, the youth facilitators together with the classroom teacher lead sessions designed to help students make positive decisions about their own behaviour and reduce the risk of violence in their lives. They promote students' critical thinking by reflecting upon and building awareness about the social context of their lives, the impact of social pressures on their lives, and how social factors that influence their decisions. They teach critical thinking, practical communication and conflict resolution skills to encourage healthy interpersonal communication, and positive decision-making. Each adult and youth team strives to reflect gender as well as other forms of diversity such as race, culture, and ability.

These HRY Teams highlight the connection between home life, school life and community life. In each school the youth teams are encouraged to organize a **violence awareness and prevention event or activity for their school community**. Over the years such activities have focussed on creating LGBT positive schools, December 6 Day of Remembrance for Violence Against Women, healthy relationships presentations.

HRY students **learn to identify and respond to different forms of violence**. In the classroom sessions they talk about physical, sexual, emotional, psychological and financial violence, as well as types of bullying and abuse. The HRY Program looks at how violence is already impacting the students' personal lives and explores the skills they can acquire to reduce the risk of becoming victims and offenders. Through discussion on issues which include sexism, racism and homophobia, it explores the roots of violent attitudes and behaviours and reveals that oppression is a form of violence. The students and facilitators discuss how to work together to prevent violence through community partnerships.

Healthy Relationships For Youth is based on the belief that communication which reflects **sexism, racism** and **homophobia** creates harmful stereotyping and discrimination and that these oppressions are forms of **violence**. These violent attitudes promote violent behaviours in our homes, schools and communities.

HRY PROGRAM OBJECTIVES:

* To engage Grade 9 students in ten school sites within the Strait Regional School Board of Nova Scotia, in a series of classroom sessions designed to promote healthy and respectful relationships.

* To assist youth in developing the attitudes, values and skills they need to build and maintain healthy relationships.

*To increase students' understanding of racial/cultural diversity specifically relating to the Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotian community.

*To increase students' awareness of issues related to violence prevention and social inequities from a gender based perspective.

*To foster youth development which includes: peer support, youth empowerment, youth-adult partnerships, meaningful contribution and experiential learning.

FUNDING HISTORY

The Healthy Relationships for Youth Program is based on the program model developed through the *Rural Youth Healthy Relationships Education Project*, which was provided by the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre from 2001-2006. Funding for the Rural Youth Project was secured through the **National Crime Prevention Strategy, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada.**

In 2006, the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre received one of four Multi-Year Violence Prevention Grants with Teens awarded nationally by the **Canadian Women's Foundation**, The Canadian Women's Foundation chose four programs from across Canada that they determined to be 'better' practice or 'promising practice' programs in order to further their understanding of the effectiveness of school-based violence prevention programs in which youth are involved as leaders. The Foundation conducted an extensive evaluation of the programs and found the HRY Program to be one of the most effective programs in developing youth leadership.

Since 2006, **the Nova Scotia Department of Education and the Nova Scotia Department of Justice** have contributed some funds to the HRY Program to help cover the costs of teacher and youth facilitator training expenses and youth-led violence prevention education fora for their schools and communities.

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT THE HRY PROGRAM

"The one thing that stood out for me was when we talked about what some signs of an abusive relationship was. I felt better knowing that I won't always have to live in an abusive relationships and that there is a way out". - Student

"I learned how to become more patient and deal with my problems better. I also learned how to be more positive." - Student

"Once I arrived in the classroom to teach, my eyes were truly opened up to the greatness of the Healthy Relationships for Youth program. Through lessons on Diversity, Sexual Orientation, Power and Violence, Respect and Storytelling, you could tell that many students were gaining respect for each other and were truly learning what healthy relationships consist of. Some students did not want to take part to their full potential, but others have really enjoyed the program and I am proud to say that I can see them as facilitators in the coming years. When speaking of harmful relationships between couples, the students have made it clear that they understand that the type of harmful actions that were discussed are wrong, and through sessions like the sexual orientation session, students have seemed to gain respect for others and their choices in life. Finally, the program is fun; we discuss serious topics, but we play fun games and add some fun twists to the subject matter." - Youth Facilitator

"I was shy! You wouldn't know that if you saw me today however! I do believe entirely that going through RYEP and continuing to stick with the Healthy Relationships Program has allowed me the chance to find myself and my way and give me the confidence I needed to do what I do now...by going into grade 9 classrooms and helping facilitate discussions and answering questions I am also now very active within our school community. I'm a heavy advocate for becoming involved in different activities and joining committees and helping out with Global Issues, locally and globally". - Youth Facilitator

"There was a very special situation in one classroom. There is a student with Autism who is in the class. There were some days that she shared more than any of the others. This was a very new behaviour for this student. She felt so safe and respected that she was willing to share, especially in the Folklore and storytelling session. This was such an emotional experience, letting her ysf teacher know the change in her social behaviour. What a unique opportunity to be able to witness this growth in her." - Teacher

"I feel like the program sets a tone with the grade nine students around expectations for behaviour now that they are in the high school. It also helps create that relationship of mutual trust and respect between myself and the students." - Teacher

"The excitement and sense of accomplishment from these young individuals who took ownership of the materials they provide their peers was clear. They were proud to be given the chance to take on the roles in which they were the purveyors of information that could assist friends and fellow students. A number shared stories of being approached by colleagues and asked for further information about how to deal with important relationships" (Tutty, external evaluator for the HRY program and three other models chosen by the Canadian Women's Foundation, 2009, p.135)

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS FOR YOUTH PROGRAM
Annual Budget

Salaries & Benefits		
• Program Coordinator: $20 x 35 hours x 52 weeks	$36,400	
• Bookkeeper: $20 x 2 hours x 52 weeks	2,080	
• MERC & Benefits @ 15%	5,772	
		44,252
Travel		
Coordinator site visits to participating schools	4,000	4,000
Facilities		
Office rent and related costs: $450 x 12 months	5,400	
Phone + internet: $100 x 12 months	1,200	
		6,600
Materials & Supplies		
Materials & Supplies: $75 x 12 months	900	
Photocopying: $50 x 12 months	600	
Program Development + Curriculum Printing	2,000	
		3,500
Teacher & Youth Facilitator Training		
Youth Team Training	15,000	
Professional Development – Teachers	9,300	
		24,300

Total Annual Cost for HRY Program: $82,652