

ANTIGONISH WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTRE
ANNUAL REPORT
1991-1992

Submitted to: Antigonish Women's Association &
Secretary of State Women's Program
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INTRODUCTION

What a year this has been! It was challenging, intense, exciting, and extremely busy. Katherine and I were working on overcharge and had to keep absolutely focused in order to manage the potentially overwhelming workload. It was with the unfailing support of the board and A.W.A. members that we were able to accomplish all that we did.

During this past year, usage of the Centre increased dramatically. This increase reflects both the hard times brought on by the recession and the acceptance of the Women's Centre in our community as an integral part of the helping agency network. Looking back over the year there were a number of highlights:

- through our work on sexual harassment, we raised the issue of sexual harassment in the workplace and assisted a number of small business employers and employees with developing sexual harassment policies for their workplaces
- by coordinating municipal election candidates' forums we were able to encourage public discussion around issues of poverty, the environment and community economic development - all of which are women's concerns
- we completed our study of rental housing in Antigonish and published the report, 'No Place For Home: Women and Housing in Antigonish'

- the Single Mother's Support Group fostered through the Women's Centre became independent and formed their own association, The Antigonish Single Mother's Association

We continue with our ongoing work of raising people's consciousness about poverty in our community, our province and our country. We recognize that women and children are the poorest members of our society and that they/we face systemic oppression and discrimination. This oppression must be named as a form of violence against women in order to be acknowledged and eradicated. We continue this work with a commitment to freeing women in our homes, on our streets and in our institutions from all forms of violence. We carry out this work on many fronts, working with individuals and community groups, and at all political levels through educational programming, peer counselling, advocacy and lobbying.

Women in poverty remains a grave concern of the Women's Centre. We recognize that women will never be free from violence until they achieve economic independence. As long as women's financial viability is dependent upon a partner's income or a male-designed social network, we will remain vulnerable to exploitation, violence and abuse. In order to create a just and equitable society we must continue to address issues related to economic dependence including gender bias and gender streaming in schools, sexual harassment in the workplace, pay equity, part-time work and labour exploitation.

This has been a year of sustained growth. Many more people used the services and resources offered by the Centre and more people participated in our programs and events. We saw an increase in referrals to the Centre by other community agencies and organizations and in turn our referrals to other agencies also increased.

• with the support of the Therapy Planning Group formed after our 'Working with Survivors Workshop', Lindsay Myers and Jean Collins began offering a Therapy Group for Adult Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse

We live in a conservative community which is not always comfortable with the issues we raise. This adversely affects our ability to do major fundraising within the community. Fundraising is a dilemma. Without it we cannot continue as an organization. Neither can we rely on donations from the Town and County

equally-seeking work of the organization. Fundraising leaving board members less time to devote to the past year, a disproportionate amount of their time was spent in limited time and energy to give to the work of the A.W.A. This However, we recognize that board members are volunteers and have board undertaken a huge fundraising effort this year to meet these expenses.

We must fundraise to cover all of these 'extra' expenses. The Centre, we have increased staff hours by 10 hours per week. materials and supplies. In order to meet the workload demanded of Our rent has increased as has the cost of utilities, and

chronic underfunding situation of the Women's Centre. work through these grants we have been unable to alleviate the While we have been able to take on some exciting and important funding body has its own set of guidelines and work requirements. sources. However, applying for grants is time-consuming and each funding bodies for grants in order to diversify our funding We have attempted to address this situation by applying to other

levels. Secretary of State operational funding remains frozen at 1987 the calls for our programs and services continues to increase our seeking women's organizations, is chronically underfunded. While The Antigianish Women's Resource Centre, like many equality-

FUNDING/UNDERFUNDING

- Participatory Action Research Workshop
 - Lucille Harper, Betty-Anne Fraser, Barbara Hayes, Susan Jewkes
- Self-Help Connection: Training of Trainers Workshop
 - Katherine Reed, Myrna Skakun
- Computer Connection Introduction to Word Perfect 5.1
 - Lucille Harper, Katherine Reed
- Self-Help Groups and Professionals
 - one-day workshop
 - Katherine Reed

development training sessions:

During the year, staff attended the following professional development training sessions:

Katherine's hours were increased to 30 hours per week which enabled her to respond to the increased demand for direct service to individual women coming to the Centre. Katherine is well respected for her work on poverty issues and has been invited to attend conferences provincially and nationally as a spokesperson.

Lucille worked full time - 35 hours per week. I have had more calls on my time this year to consult with agencies and groups across the province about issues of concern to women and about the work of our Women's Centre.

We were able to maintain increased staff hours this year.

a. Regular Staff

WOMEN'S CENTRE STAFFING

Councils. We asked each for a donation of \$1500 and were refused. We also asked the Bergengren Credit Union for a \$1,500 donation to enable us to update our library. We were refused. In order to survive, we must, therefore, organize several small fundraising events knowing that the more time we spend fundraising, the less time we have for the work we are committed to doing.

We could not carry out the work of the A.W.A. and the Women's Centre without the help of volunteers. Women have committed tireless hours to the work of our organization. Over the past year women volunteered 3,533 hours.

e. Volunteers

d. Summer Staff

With a challenge/SEED grant from Employment Canada we were able to employ Wanda Kontak for eight weeks during the summer. Wanda helped staff the Centre and worked on the housing report and the library.

We were approached by three organizations to provide women with on-the-job work experiences. We cannot offer women ongoing employment after their work experience but with this understanding are willing to offer women the opportunity to work with us. Carol Bowie worked with us on a ten week placement from a Johnson and Johnson computer training program. Denise Boudreau was with us for the month of May from the Community College: Antigoniash Module. Canada World Youth participants Bushra Farouqi and Genevieve Oulette spent five weeks with us in the fall.

c. Job Training/Work Placements

We were fortunate to have Myrna Skakun working with us on a twenty week Employment Canada training program. Myrna was an asset to the Centre. She was capable, competent, hard-working, insightful, self-directed and organized. We would love to be able to hire her as office support staff.

b. Project Staff

Susan Jewkes and Barbara Hayes worked on the Adolescent Health Project. The project was funded by Health and Welfare Canada. Project salaries paid 30 hours per week per person. The rest of the many hours they devoted to the project were volunteered.

RESOURCE CENTRE USAGE

a. Record Keeping

Resource Centre staff continued to use and elaborate upon the record keeping system developed by Connect! to standardize the statistics reported by women's centres in Nova Scotia.

This system has enabled us to more accurately reflect the concerns of women to ourselves, our community and our province. The daily statistics record all calls and visits to the Centre. We record attendance for meetings and workshops separately.

b. Publicity

We use several methods and media channels to inform the general public about our activities. These include:

- writing a weekly column in our local paper. We use the column to inform people about upcoming events as well as to educate them about issues

- advertising events through local media, i.e. radio and television community bulletins as well as paid newspaper advertisements

- posting notices of events in local businesses

c. Media

During the past year the media contacted us requesting interviews about women's centres, poverty and housing.

- Rich Schultz, CFTX Radio, interviewed us about the province's rejection of Connect! request for provincial funding for women's centres

- the Casket interviewed the Single Mother's Support group about their activities

- the New Glasgow Evening News called us for comments about the federal budget

- the release of our housing report, No Place For Home, was covered by CJFX Radio, CBC Radio, the Casket, the Evening News, and the Chronicle Herald

- when the Mayor announced a \$1 million tax exemption to Antigoniash home owners we were asked for our comments on housing and poverty in Antigoniash by CBC TV News, CTV News, CBC Newsmagazine, CBC Radio, CBC Information Morning, and the Chronicle Herald

d. Community Referrals

The number of women referred to the Women's Centre by community agencies and organizations continued to increase over the past year. While the majority of referrals came from community services, we also worked with women referred to us by the Naomi Society, St. Martha's Hospital, the Department of Mental Health, North Shore Drug Dependency, the Antigoniash/Guysborough Learning Centre, Justice of the Peace, doctors, lawyers and friends of individual women.

Many women come to the Women's Centre during a period of crisis or a period of transition in their lives. They are uncertain where to turn for help. They come to us knowing we will listen to their questions and take their problems seriously. By talking with us they are often able to sort through their issues and develop a plan of action. We act as an advocacy and referral service for women. We refer women to appropriate community agencies, accompany them upon request, advocate on their behalf and support them in carrying out their plans.

A large number of the service related calls we received were from women needing information and help with poverty issues, legal problems, sexual abuse or harassment problems, employment questions, violence issues and housing problems.

We referred women needing help with:

• poverty issues to Community Services
Food Bank
M.L.A./M.P./Municipal representative
Opportunity Shop

• legal problems to lawyers
Legal Aid
Dalhousie Legal Aid
Crown Prosecutor

• sexual abuse/ harassment to Department of Mental Health
St. F.X.U. Counselling Department
N.S. Human Rights Commission
psychologist/counselor
Services for Sexual Assault Victims
Self-Help/Support Group

• employment concerns to Canada Employment Centre
Labour Standards Board
Department of Small Business Development
Revenue Canada

• housing problems to Antigonish Housing Authority
Mik Makik Development
Housing Co-ops

• violence issues to Naomi Society for Battered Women
Tearmann Society

• other concerns to North Shore Drug Dependency
Canadian Cancer Society
Planned Parenthood Nova Scotia

Working with and through other helping agencies and organizations in our community, we are working to raise community awareness about systemic discrimination against women and the oppression of women. As more of the helping agencies become aware that the oppression of women in society is reflected within our community, the more able they are to address it. In this way, we are able to

use our direct service delivery work to continue our commitment of raising the status of women within our community.

e. Library

Our library continues to be well used by women from the community looking for information to help them sort through issues in their lives, as well as by high school and St. F.X. University students researching topics for papers and presentations.

With the help of a Canada Employment grant we were able to hire Myrna Skakun this year to organize our library and make the information it holds more accessible. Sue Adams volunteered endless hours to the task of working the kinks out of Bibliofrac, a library computer system. Entering the library data into the computer is an ongoing task. Once it is completed, our library should be more accessible and our computer system user-friendly. Keeping track of our books is a problem we need to address. We have lost over one hundred books that people have borrowed and never returned. Hopefully, our new library system will enable us to develop a better system for holding onto our books.

Up-dating our library resources is an ongoing challenge. We have no funding for our library. The Bergengren denied our \$1500 request for a donation to buy much needed new resources. However, Stora Forest Industries gave us a \$100 donation for this purpose enabling us to buy several new and badly needed titles. We are looking for ways to budget for new library books on an annual basis.

STATISTICS

Usage of the Women's Centre increased at such a rate this year that staff was often fully occupied with responding to daily calls and visits. It was difficult to balance our service

delivery work with our equality education programming. We worked many overtime hours in order to manage the two. Because we were often working at an almost frenetic pace, we felt unable to offer women coming into the Centre the open-ended counselling/check-in time we have in the past. This was frustrating for both Katherine and myself as we felt we had to zealously guard the precious time needed for accomplishing the too many tasks at hand.

We recorded the numbers of calls and visits to the Centre on a daily basis and tabulated them monthly. Table 1 indicates the monthly totals of individual calls and visits to the Centre. These calls reflect the business of the Centre. Statistics for workshop and meeting attendance are recorded separately.

TABLE 1

Calls and Visits to Centre Recorded on Monthly Basis			
MONTH	CALLS	VISITS	TOTAL
April	177	204	381
May	229	149	378
June	135	126	261
July/August	264	226	490
September	163	110	273
October	255	183	438
November	203	224	427
December	237	173	410
January	243	180	423
February	312	162	474
March	335	192	527
Total	2553	1929	4482

Table 2 shows the monthly breakdown of calls received at the Women's Centre. We recorded the numbers and types of calls

received and categorized them according to the nature of business they reflected.

TABLE 2

Breakdown of Centre Usage

Reason for Calling	Number of Calls
Board/Committee/Staff Business	990
Networking	603
Information	539
Check-Ins	497
Personal Problems/Complaints	415
Program Development	355
Board Fundraising	215
Use of Centre Facilities	211
Library	202
Requests for Interviews/Presentations	51
Other	404

Calls and visits to the Centre were further broken down into subject matter categories. This enabled us to assess which issue areas women were most concerned with over the year. As indicated in Table 3 women who called us this past year were clearly concerned with abuse/sexual assault issues as well as with social assistance and poverty concerns.

Table 3

Subject Matter of Calls to the Centre

Nature of Call	Number of Calls
Abuse/Sexual Assault	228
Single Mom's Group	213
Social Assistance	173
Poverty	172
Women's Centre	156
Finances	134
Housing	121

Year	Utilization Increase	
	Calls & Visits	Total
1984-85	410	0
1985-86	898	488
1986-87	1444	546
1987-88	1514	70
1988-89	1993	479
1989-90	2503	510
1990-91	3123	620
1991-92	4482	1359

Table 4

Over the past year we have seen a substantial increase in the numbers of people accessing the Women's Centre. During 1991-92, 4,482 people accessed the Centre. This was an increase of 1,359 people from 1990-91 which was more than double our increase over 1990-91. As Table 4 indicates the need in the community for the services of the Women's Centre continues to increase.

UTILIZATION INCREASE

Health/Reproductive	88
Legal	72
Parenting	70
Education & Training	70
Employment	65
Health/General	64
Childcare	12
Sexuality	6
Other	103

PUBLIC EDUCATION EVENTS

As a social change organization concerned with equality issues, we organize and/or sponsor public education events. This is one of the ways in which we work to increase the public's awareness of women's needs, issues and concerns.

We organized events in response to issues identified by women accessing the Women's Centre. Most of these events were open to the general public; a few were restricted to women. We continued to participate in national annual events such as Take Back the Night, December 6 Remembrance Day for Women, and International Women's Day. We organized for the first annual National Women's Centres Day.

Our severely restricted programming budget limited our ability to bring in outside resource people to facilitate workshops. We invited people who could facilitate workshops and/or make presentations as part of their regular work. Community resource people generously donated their time to leading workshops and facilitating events. Working under financial restrictions creates more work for staff in developing programming. However, people's willingness to contribute their time strengthens the community of women committed to working on equality issues.

Where possible, we co-sponsored events with other organizations. This permitted us to pool our resources and to reach out to a diverse group of participants. Working together with other groups builds a sense of working for the common good.

During the past year 1,395 people participated in AWA/AWRC organized events.

a. Workshops

Workshop

Pay Equity Workshop 3

- Laurie Hitcheson, C.U.P.E.

Income Tax Returns with Low-Income Women 32

- Leisha McIlroy and Agneta Sand

Humanizing Adoption: A Panel Presentation 25

- Debbie Ross; Marli MacIsaac; Iris Roach; Sr. Judith Breen,
Home of the Guardian Angel

Unlearning Racism 16

- Ann Bishop, Henson College; Valerie Carvery, Oxfam
* co-sponsored with Antigianish Affirmative Action Committee

Development of Sexual Harassment Policies for Small 20

Businesses (3 workshops)

- Lucille Harper
* nine businesses represented

b. Presentations and Discussions

Guatemala: Struggle for Justice 45

- Kathryn Anderson, Tatamagouche Centre
* co-sponsored with Coady International Institute

Evening with Pat Brennan 14

- Pat Brennan

School Board Candidates Forum 45

- Colin Stuart, Coady Institute
* co-sponsored with St. F.X.U. Extension Dept.

County Council Candidates Forum 15

- Rieky Stuart, Coady Institute
* co-sponsored with St. F.X.U. Extension Dept.

Town Council Candidates Forum 20

- Wayne Edgar, Extension Dept.
* co-sponsored with St. F.X.U. Extension Dept.

Municipal Candidates Forum: District 4 By-Election 45

- Dan McInnes, Sociology Dept., St.F.X.U.

Representation on Sexual Harassment to Chamber of Commerce 35

- Lucille Harper

- 10 Presentation on Sexual Harassment Policy Development to
Antagonish Crime Prevention Committee
- Lucille Harper
- 30 No Place For Home: AWA Housing Report Release
- Ella Gero, Betty-Anne Fraser, Donna MacDonald,
Lucille Harper
- c. Community Events, Demonstrations and Celebrations
- 150 Teatro Vivo: Ixoc
- a one woman portrayal of the struggle for liberty in
Guatemala
* co-sponsored by Development and Peace
- 55 Take Back the Night
- a street protest against sexual harassment/assault
* co-sponsored with Women for Social Awareness, St. F.X.U.
- 75 December 6 Day of Remembrance: Mid-day Meditation
- a community recognition of violence against women
* co-sponsored with the Naomi Society
- 75 International Women's Day Cabaret
- a celebration of women through song, dance and theatre
International Women's Day
- free coffee for women
* co-sponsored with 14 participating restaurants
- d. Films
- 29 Sandra's Garden
- NFB film with discussion facilitated by Sandra
Adolescent Health Issues
- preview of films about adolescent health concerns
- e. Support/Action Groups
- 168 Single Mom's Support Group
- met weekly and bi-weekly during the year
- published 2 editions of Shoestring Survival
- 6 Adult Survivors Therapy Group Planning Committee
- met three times to discuss survivors' therapy group

- f. Antigonish Women's Resource Centre/Antigonish Women's Association Meetings and Programs
- 35 Annual General Meeting: Single Mother's Survival - Brenda Thompson, author of Single Mother's Survival Guide
- 13 AWA Board Retreat: Who Are We and What Are We Doing? - an opportunity to introduce new board members to the AWA and to look at our goals for the organization
- 10 AWA Board Retreat: Policy Development - by-law and memorandum of association changes
- 5 Bill Gillis, M.L.A. - update on AWA/AWRC actions and concerns
- 7 Francis LeBlanc, M.P. - update on actions and concerns of regional women's groups including AWA, Women Aware, Voice of Women, Guysborough Learning Opportunities for Women, Adolescent Health Project
- 65 Coady Picnic - annual picnic with women studying at Coady Institute
- 15 Open House: National Women's Centres Day - opportunity for community to visit the Women's Centre
- 18 Christmas By-Laws Party - general meeting to pass by-laws
- 8 Christmas Open House - major snow storm
- 14 AWA Singers - singing as celebration and political action
- 265 I Hate You Beulah Claxton - an AWA fundraising theatre event
9. Community Education and Outreach
- 19 Antigonish/Guysborough Learning Centre - students visited women's centre to learn about services and programs we offer
- 6 Roots of Peace - discussion of women's issues - facilitated by Barbara Hayes, Lucille Harper

- Children's Place Daycare
- children visited the Centre during occupations week. They drew pictures of their mothers at work.
23
- General Conference of Congregation of Notre Dame
- Katherine Reed represented single mothers concerns on a social justice panel
30
- Follow-up to General Conference with Antigonish Sisters
of Congregation of Notre Dame
- Katherine Reed
13
- Perceiving the Future: Gender Issues
- workshop requested by St. F.X. Summer Academy
- facilitated by Lucille Harper
32
- Canada World Youth
- information session on violence against women
15
- December 6 Day of Remembrance: St. F.X. Art Gallery
- organized poster art display and discussed violence against women with visitors to show
- Janie Humphries, Beth Parker, Lucille Harper
45
- Antigonish District School Board
- informed district principals and administrative staff about work of AWRG
- presented by Lucille Harper
12
- Antigonish and Area Inter-agency Committee on Domestic Violence
- findings of AWA housing study, 'No Place For Home', presented by Lucille Harper
10
- Meet the Candidate: An Evening with Alena MacDonald
- AWRG information booth
- presented by Katherine Reed
25
- National Week of Reflection: Women for Social Awareness
- Food Is A Feminist Issue
- facilitated by Tish Langlois, Lucille Harper
23
- Women and Poverty
- facilitated by Katherine Reed
5
- Women and Self-Esteem
- facilitated by Lucille Harper
15

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Addressing sexual harassment in the workplace was part of the project component of our 1991-92 Secretary of State grant. Our objective was to inform employers and employees in Antigonish about sexual harassment and to make them aware of the very real occurrence of sexual harassment in the workplace. We organized and facilitated workshops to assist them with developing policies for the workplace addressing sexual harassment.

Our work on sexual harassment was developed in response to women coming to the Centre with complaints of sexual harassment and by the frustration experienced by the waitresses from the Venice Restaurant who brought their complaint of sexual harassment to the Human Rights Commission. Our work, coming on the heels of the well publicized Anita Hill/ Clarence Thomas case in the United States, was timely as people were aware of and concerned about sexual harassment. However, in spite of evidence to the contrary, there was a general feeling among businessmen in Antigonish that sexual harassment is not a problem here.

To educate employers and employees we sent approximately 200 letters to local businesses defining sexual harassment, naming it as a problem in the workplace, and inviting owners, managers and employees to participate in one of the three workshops we were sponsoring on sexual harassment. The workshops were designed to help employers and employees identify sexual harassment in the workplace and to develop a policy to address it. Ten businesses participated in the workshops. Union representatives from St. Martha's Hospital maintenance and cleaning staff attended in order to better influence the sexual harassment policy being developed by St. Martha's for all personnel.

I made presentations about sexual harassment in the workplace to the Chamber of Commerce and the Antigianish Crime Prevention Committee hoping to form a committee of small business employers and employees. Ideally, the committee would work to develop a plan for addressing sexual harassment in small businesses with only one or two employees. It would act as a monitoring committee and assist people with complaints of sexual harassment. Although some business people were enthusiastic about the idea, others were afraid of "interfering" with a colleague's business practices.

Betty Morris invited me to make a presentation about sexual harassment to her job re-entry computer class. I also met with Mac MacLeod of MacLeod Group and Marli MacNeil of Antigianish Downtown Development Society. To inform the general public about sexual harassment we wrote several articles for our local newspaper which published them in our weekly column. There is still a lot of work that remains to be done before people in Antigianish recognize the extent of sexual harassment in the workplace and take action to make it unthinkable. We will continue our work on sexual harassment in the upcoming year.

NO PLACE FOR HOME: WOMEN AND HOUSING IN ANTIGIANISH

With funding from the Secretary of State Women's Program and Canada Employment, we undertook a study of rental housing in Antigianish. Approximately 200 tenants were surveyed between November 1990 and January 1991 about their rental housing situation. From this survey a number of women who identified themselves as having housing difficulties shared their experiences with us through in-depth interviews.

The project staff gathered information about federal and provincial housing programs, conducted a literature review and put together a history of co-op and subsidized housing in Antigonish.

This past year the Housing Project Advisory Committee of the AWA completed and published the results of the housing study in a report entitled, 'No Place For Home: Women and Housing in Antigonish'. This was a challenging task.

Donna Macdonald spent many hours running numbers through the computer and analyzing statistical data. Her work has given us a factual picture of the rental housing situation in Antigonish.

Betty-Anne and I wrote and re-wrote the report. After consultation with several people who read the report and offered constructive criticism, it was ready for the final editing. Betty-Anne took on the task of editing and report lay out and with a collective sigh of relief from the committee the report was released to members of the community, the media, and the general public March 4, 1992.

The report clearly shows that tenants in Antigonish are paying a disproportionate amount of their income towards rent. Single mothers are the most disadvantaged group of renters, paying on average 60% of their income to rent. The information documented in the report forms the basis of the work on housing and poverty we will undertake in 1992-93. I will not include the findings of the report here. A copy of the report is available at the Women's Centre.

LIAISON

AWA/AWRC board members, staff and volunteers work within the community as well as at the regional, provincial and national levels to represent the concerns of women.

We recognize that women's concerns are not limited to specific issues but are integral to every aspect of our society. We understand the importance of establishing and maintaining respectful working relationships with other groups and organizations both within and beyond our community.

We strive to reflect the voices of the women in our organization and to reflect a feminist perspective in our work with community, regional, provincial and national groups.

a. Community Liaison

1. Community Use of the Centre

Many community individuals and groups have used the Women's Centre for meetings, research, committee work, an information depot, tutoring literacy students, studying, offering programs, resting, nursing their baby or simply meeting with a friend. Such groups include:

- Roots of Peace Planning Committee
- Community Services to offer the S.T.E.P. program
- Antigianish Downtown Development Society for Canada World Youth community project
- Antigianish Social Solidarity Committee
- Canadian Congress of Learning Opportunities for Women
- Teermann Society project staff
- Antigianish Recycling Committee for information depot
- French Immersion Parents
- Antigianish Food Co-op
- Antigianish Single Mother's Association

- St. F.X. Nursing Department for Teen Mother's Support Group

- Bank Workers Union

- Antigonish and Area Inter-Agency Committee on Housing and Poverty

- Brenda Thompson for research with single mothers

- Literacy tutoring

ii. Community Contributions

During the past year members of the community have responded to requests from the Women's Centre for help for families in need.

Donations included food, clothing, school supplies, household goods, meal coupons, furniture and money to cover power bills and university registration.

Local merchants generously donated items for our fundraising raffles including articles for our Feminist Christmas Stocking, a wooden rocking chair for the Antigonish Single Mother's Association raffle, and items for our Easter basket.

iii. Committee Work/Presentations/Networking

During the past year staff represented the AWA/AWRC at numerous meetings and events. Some of our community liaison work directly related to our concern with women and poverty; some of it was in support of actions taken by other organizations; some of it was general.

Committees we served on included:

- Antigonish and Area Inter-Agency Committee on Domestic Violence

Sub-Committee on Housing and Poverty

Sub-Committee on Protocol
- Katherine Reed

- Antigonish Social Solidarity Committee
- Lucille Harper
- Adolescent Health Project Advisory Committee
- Lucille Harper
- Our poverty work included:
- Town and County Councils: Presentation on Hunger Issues in Antigonish
- Lucille Harper, Katherine Reed
- Food Bank Committee: Presentation on Needs and Situations of Women Accessing AMRC
- Lucille Harper, Katherine Reed
- St. Vincent de Paul Society
- meeting with Paul O'Halloran about help for needy families
- Lucille Harper, Katherine Reed
- St. Andrew's Junior High School: Poverty Issues
- at the invitation of Jim Mulcahy I met with teachers to talk about poverty and how it affects young people
- Lucille Harper
- Community Services
- meeting with new District Supervisor, Maria Gaudet, about work of AMRC on poverty
- Lucille Harper, Katherine Reed
- Our support actions included:
- St. Martha's Health Care Walk of Concern
- we walked in support of nurses protesting health care cuts
- Public Service Alliance of Canada
- we walked with PSAC members striking for pay equity and job security
- Sister Mary MacLeod Bursary
- we offered \$250 bursaries to two women returning to school: Helen Richards entering St. F.X. and Shiela Lee Fields entering Strait Campus Community College. We offer this bursary annually.
- Other meetings and presentations included:
- Coady Students: Role of Women in Co-ops and Credit Unions
- Lucille Harper

Francis LeBlanc, M.P. - AWRC organized meeting with women's groups from Cape Breton Highlands-Canso constituency with Francis to inform him of our specific and common concerns. It was also an opportunity for him to solicit our views on upcoming legislation.

Networking and information sessions included:

- Community Health Promotion Fund Regional Committee
 - committee served to review and approve CHF grants
 - Lucille Harper
 - Winning Women Regional Conference Steering Committee
 - organized by the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women to bring a political skills conference to the Northumberland-Canso region
 - Lucille Harper
- Committee work included:

b. Regional Liaison

Regionally we participated in events, served on committees and met with other organizations working for social change and social justice. Our work with other groups has made us all more aware of our common struggles.

- Bill Gillis, M.L.A.
 - informed him about work of AWRC and concerns of women who use our services
 - AWRC staff, AWA board members
- Antigonish Literacy Council
 - represented needs of women accessing AWRC
 - Katherine Reed
- Naomi Society Project Staff
 - informed them about work of AWRC
 - Lucille Harper
- Naomi Society Outreach Project
 - presentation to St. Andrews community about AWRC
 - Lucille Harper
- met as key informants with Tony Scoggins
 - Lucille Harper, Katherine Reed

- AWA, AWRC, Guysborough Learning Opportunities for Women, Adolescent Health Project, Antigonish Chapter of Voice of Women representatives attended the meeting with Francis
- Will To Win: Nova Scotia Encounter on the Economy
 - discussion about Voluntary Planning Committee's paper, 'Our Province, Our Future, Our Choice'
 - Lucille Harper
- Way to Go Project
 - meeting with Allan Best and Terry Avery about the how-tos of setting up a resource centre in Guysborough
 - Lucille Harper
- Vocational Assessment Centre
 - met with Collette Sampson about programs they offer for women
 - Lucille Harper, Katherine Reed
- Women Aware
 - met with Marjorie Gills Macdonald about work of AWRC and Women Aware project
- c. Provincial Liaison
 - AWA/AWRC board members and staff served on board and/or committees of provincial organizations. Working together at the provincial level has led to a stronger voice of women in the province as well as a greater understanding among our organizations of the interconnectedness of our work and concerns.
- Board level participation included:
 - Family Benefits Review Board
 - Katherine Reed
 - Planned Parenthood Association of Nova Scotia
 - Lucille Harper
 - Connect! Steering Committee
 - Lucille Harper
 - Canadian Congress of Learning Opportunities for Women
 - Betty-Anne Fraser
 - Women's Action Coalition of Nova Scotia
 - Donna Macdonald

- Staff, board members and/or volunteers attended the following conferences:
- Connect! Consultation
 - Lucille Harper, Katherine Reed, Betty-Anne Fraser, Barbara Hayes
 - WACNS Annual General Meeting and Lobby
 - Lucille Harper
 - Women's Health Education Network
 - Betty-Anne Fraser, Oona Landry
 - Nova Scotia Social Solidarity Coalition: The Time Is Right Action Conference
 - co-facilitated by Lucille Harper
 - Marion MacDonald, Lucille Harper
 - Meetings included:
 - Diana Ginn, researcher for Law Reform Commission
 - Lucille Harper
 - Mary Jane Hampton, Executive Director, Provincial Health Council
 - Lucille Harper
 - d. National Liaison

We continued our equality work on a national level by presenting briefs and attending meetings focusing on AWRC concerns. Such activities included:

 - Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women
 - presented poverty as a form of systemic violence arising from a society which is divided by gender, class and race and which denies that violence against women exists. The AWRC participated with five other regional groups.
 - Lucille Harper, Katherine Reed, Barbara Hayes
 - Ensemble: National Conference of Women's Centres Steering Committee
 - Lucille Harper
 - Campaign 2000: National Strategy Meeting for Child Poverty Action (Ottawa)
 - Katherine Reed

CONNECT!

It has been an interesting year for Connect!. Member centres were challenged to find ways to work together across individual differences. Connect! members met for a visioning session in which we defined the differences in the ways individual centres organize themselves and their work and how we structure Connect! to allow for and build upon the strengths of these differences.

It has been a productive year in which we formulated and adopted a two-year plan for Connect!. In line with this two-year plan we applied for funding to undertake an internal-external impact study of provincial funding on women's centres. We propose to research, analyze and assess in a feminist context the implications of operational funding of women's centres; to design guidelines and parameters within a feminist context for provincial funding of women's centres; and to develop and implement a strategy that will prepare women's centres to address issues in the next provincial election.

Connect! developed a proposal for a national conference of women's centres. We had originally hoped to hold the conference in Halifax in October 1992. However, we underestimated the amount of work and the time needed to organize a conference of this scale. We have now postponed the conference until the spring of 1993.

OTHER GRANTS AND PROJECTS

a. Challenge/SEED Grant, Employment Canada

The AWA received funding to hire Wanda Kontak, a St.F.X. University student, for eight weeks during the summer. Wanda helped out with staffing the Centre as well as conducting a literature review on housing for the housing report. She also spent time organizing the library.

b. Job Creation Project, Employment Canada

Myrna Skakun worked with us for eighteen weeks during the fall and winter on a job training grant. Myrna's main task was cataloguing and organizing the library. She worked with Sue Adams to enter our library resources on a Bibliotrac computer file system.

Myrna was the backbone of two of our fundraising events. She quickly learned the Centre routine and was a diligent advocate for women. Although she continues to work with us on a volunteer basis, we would like to find a way to hire her as permanent office staff.

c. Adolescent Health Project, Health Promotions Directorate
The Adolescent Health Project staff undertook a needs assessment of adolescent health concerns in the community. A report of the project is attached to this report.

d. Single Mother's Support Group, P.L.U.R.A.
The Single Mom's Support Group decided they were ready to form their own association. Therefore, as they are no longer a project of the Women's Centre, Katherine's involvement with the group has changed. She is no longer acts as the facilitator of the group but as a resource/support person.

The group received a second grant from P.L.U.R.A. in the spring of 1991 enabling the Moms to continue to meet for mutual support and information-sharing, and to produce two editions of 'Shoestring Survival', a newsletter focusing on single mothers and poverty in Antigonish.

The group organized a number of events and workshops.
information-sharing sessions and 'fun nights', including:
• assertiveness training workshop facilitated by Alex Kell
• PMS presentation

Staff have struggled with an increased and overwhelming workload at the Centre. The service delivery aspect of our work can no

we do at the community level. support and information as well as in the equality-seeking work service work with individual women coming to the centre for barriers. This woman's way of working is reflected in our direct acknowledging our common struggle in breaking down societal of our individual strengths and challenges as well as women reflects women's philosophy of respect for and appreciation core to the women's movement today. Our approach to working with More and more I understand that the work of women's centres is

CONCLUSION

assistance, use of the AWRC, etc. Association support in the form of information, networking The AWRC will continue to offer the Antigonish Single Mother's acquired about social assistance. topics. They particularly benefited from the information they extensive use of the AWRC library accessing information on many themselves, learned to value themselves and each other. They made members said they had become more independent, felt stronger in group as well as from their regular contact with the AWRC. Group group members benefited from their direct involvement in the

- parenting skills workshop
- meeting skills and groundrules workshop
- information exchange evening with New Glasgow single mother's group, Taking Control Making Changes
- meeting with Lochaber UCW about Single Mom's Group
- Christmas party, movie nights, sailing excursion
- fundraisers

longer be seen as secondary or additional work to be dealt with in our spare time. It is through our service delivery work - our one-to-one meetings with women - that we keep in close touch with the needs of the community. Once a woman has taken courage and worked through a crisis period in her life she will often return to the Centre as a volunteer. In this way the women's movement continues to grow.

Funding remains our ongoing concern. Without adequate funding we are unable to stretch ourselves enough to meet the expectations of the project component of our Secretary of State grant and to also meet the expectations of the community for service delivery. It will be our challenge in the next year to secure provincial funding for the service delivery aspect of our work. We will work through Connect with the other women's centres to lobby the province for operational funding.

We look forward to working with the community on housing and poverty in the upcoming year. We hope to educate people in the community about poverty and to politicize them around poverty issues. We know that housing and poverty require a community response. We look forward to providing the necessary information and insight to act as the catalyst for that response.

We would like to extend our thanks to the board members and volunteers for their dedication to the work of the centre, untiring support, sense of humour in rough times, creativity, enthusiasm, inspiration and sisterhood. We would also like to thank Pat McInnes from the Secretary of State Women's Program regional office for her continued support of women's organizations in Nova Scotia.

WHAT IS THE ADOLESCENT HEALTH PROJECT

It is a participatory action research project which examines the health issues and concerns of adolescents 13-18 years of age through the eyes of the teens themselves.

GOALS OF THE PROJECT

1. To enable adolescents in Antigoniash town and county to identify their health care needs and to take responsibility for them.
2. To explore the health needs of adolescents in the Antigoniash community.
3. To provide information for parents and the community to empower them to assist adolescents with their identified health problems.
4. To work with other community agencies and institutions to develop strategies for working with adolescents in a self-enabling way.

PROJECT ORGANIZATION

The day to day work of the project was organized and directed by two staff: a research coordinator and a research director.

RESEARCH METHODS USED

The Adolescent Advisory Committee is composed of 11 teens, residing in Antigoniash town and county, consisting of males and females ages 15-18 years. This committee served to direct and focus the work of the project throughout the planning, implementation and ongoing evaluation of the project ensuring the target population's input and involvement throughout the project.

Adolescent Health Attitude and Behaviour Survey
A 14 page questionnaire was developed, designed, and administered by local teens. Over 400 teens in Antigoniash town and county completed this survey which began the process of identifying the primary health concerns of Antigoniash teens.

Teen Focus Groups

Thirty teens ages 14-18 participated in informal discussion groups which were designed to enhance and broaden the information gathered in the teen health survey.

Key Informant Interviews

Over 40 one on one interviews with community professionals and leaders were undertaken in an effort to gain an understanding of adolescent health issues in Antigonish as viewed by those who work with or make decisions affecting teens in our community.

Community Impressions Survey

A variety of community groups participated in completing a one page survey designed to elicit information and perceptions of parents and the larger adult community around teen health concerns.

Statistical Review.

Review of Community Health and Support Services.
Literature and Resource Review.

UP-COMING WORK

The Adolescent Health Project has revealed through its research that our teenagers want access to health information that will enable them to make responsible, informed decisions in their lives.
Teens are seeking adult role models within the community, and long for parental support and understanding.
Our up-coming work will focus on 3 of the most crucial health issues identified by both our teens and the larger community:

1. Alcohol Use and Abuse
2. Mental Health
3. Relationships

Three separate health promotion weeks will be organized around these issues. Our goal is to work with existing community resources in a spirit of partnership, together acknowledging the interrelatedness of teenager, family, and community to create an effective, positive response to the health needs facing our youth.

ADOLESCENT HEALTH ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIOUR SURVEY RESULTS

"Accept what goes on instead of closing your eyes, then begin to look for solutions"

- Teen Health Survey Response

The adolescents of Antigonish face a number of serious health problems:

ALCOHOL USE AND ABUSE

- * 83% of surveyed teens, 13 - 18 years old have reported using alcohol.
- * 87.5% of teens surveyed report having a friend or friends who abuse alcohol.
- * 46% of teens surveyed report taking 5 or more drinks at one drinking session.
- * 54% of surveyed teens report having been in a motor vehicle driven by an impaired driver.

"Organize something in Antigonish to convince teens to stop drinking - we're drinking our lives away."

- Teen Health Survey Response

MENTAL HEALTH

- * 74.5% of teens surveyed report having been seriously 'stressed out' due to personal problems.
- * 13.5 % of surveyed teens report having attempted suicide. 40% of these have NEVER received help from family, friends, or a professional.

"We need more talks about suicide and accidental death - too many are happening, teens need someone to talk to."

- Teen Health Survey Response

ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS

- * 20% of surveyed teens report witnessing physical abuse in their homes.
- * 17% of surveyed teens report having been physically abuse in their homes.
- * 15% of surveyed teens report having been sexually abused.
- 30% of these, report abuse by a family member, 36% by a family friend or neighbour, 16% by a dating partner, 16% by a stranger.

"We need information on how to deal with sexual abuse, very important since many girls I know - 4 friends and a lot of my family are abused. It has a very profound effect on your life."

- Teen Health Survey Response

SEXUALITY

- * 34% of surveyed 13 - 18 year olds in Antigonish report having had sexual intercourse.
- * 51% of surveyed 16 - 18 year olds in Antigonish report having had sexual intercourse.

"Don't pretend sexual activity and alcohol abuse do not exist. Don't be naive. Talk with your children adult to adult about this."

- Teen Health Survey Response

TEENS WANT INFORMATION - the top 6 topics about which teens report wanting more information.

- 1) Self esteem
- 2) Body Image
- 3) Teenage alcohol use and abuse
- 4) Suicide
- 5) Depression
- 6) Dating

"Help us to believe in ourselves and strive for our goals because if people support us we feel better about ourselves."

- Teen Health Survey Response