

ANTIGONISH WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTRE
ANNUAL REPORT 1994-1995

Submitted to: The Board of Directors, Antigonish
Women's Resource Centre

The Women's Program,
Human Resources Development Canada

The Department of Community
Services, Nova Scotia

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INTRODUCTION

During the 1994/95 year, the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre experienced changes, challenges and achievements. It was a year of adjustments due to our search for a larger facility, the renovations to the old Centre, and staffing changes. The months of September, October, and November were consumed with making these adjustments and keeping up with our administrative work and the delivery of service to women. Centre users, staff, and volunteers are delighted with the increased space and pleasing environment resulting from the renovations.

The Centre's newly expanded space was officially opened September 19th with an open house event. This coincided with National Women's Centres Day. New staff familiarized themselves with their roles and responsibilities and work at the Centre continued at its usual brisk pace of activities, meetings, and direct service. We continue to work closely with the Antigonish Women's Association projects and activities, and this cooperation works to broaden and strengthen our supportive relationships with other groups and institutions within the community.

Our work continues in all it's diversity, with the areas of major activity as follows:

- programming: federally-funded programming focused this year on Women and Community Economic Development
- annual events: such as the International Women's Day Cabaret and AWRC Open House, Black History Month, December 6th Memorial
- outreach and public education: we are called upon by organizations and institutions locally to provide workshops on women's concerns
- presentations and briefs to government on status of women issues, and other social justice issues
- direct service to individual women: peer counselling, information, referral, advocacy/accompaniment
- fundraising: our 2nd annual Direct Mail Appeal, and a few miscellaneous fundraisers (e.g. raffles)
- joint AWA/AWRC work: producing "AWAare" Newsletter, joint events, involvement with AWA projects, etc.
- community committee work: participation on community committees around specific projects and on-going networking purposes
- networking with other (primarily women's) organizations provincially and nationally
- volunteer training and work placements: began a training program for our Sexual Assault Crisis Line volunteers

The AWRC initiated a new program direction this year with our federally funded initiative, "Women and Community Economic Development". Three groups of women became involved in the project: current small business owners, rural women engaged in informal income generating activities, and women interested in creating their own jobs/setting up their own business or service. Activities included research through interviews, a one-day workshop, a follow-up planning meeting and the formation of a support group for women entrepreneurs. As well, a women's business directory was published.

The Centre's capacity to work with women's personal needs increased with our first year of provincial funding. Also, the number of women coming to the Centre for assistance increased. Our community liaison work this year was intense and varied. We participated in four different groups addressing the needs of mothers and children, women affected by the violence against women in family and intimate relationships, and the needs of survivors of sexual violence. As a result of this ongoing work, local and regional people working in community development, public education, and service provision have become more familiar with the Centre. Most new initiatives in community development have involved direct input from Centre staff. The positive shift in community attitudes towards, and acceptance of, the work of the AWRC continues.

We added many new titles to our Sister Isabel MacDougall lending library this year. Most of the new acquisitions deal with recovery from trauma, and with personal growth and healing. We also added books on economics and community economic development, women's history, and other miscellaneous areas of interest. We established a system of borrowers' library cards. Usage of the library continues to increase.

From the 1993/94 Year of Reflection, new plans of action have been implemented. For example, "AWAre" has taken on a new format. It has retained it's "not too slick" flavour, but is better organized. Also, the "Friday Brown Bag Lunch Series" was implemented in response to women wanting to meet informally around social and educational issues. This lunchtime gathering has become a popular event.

FUNDING

During the fiscal year 1994-95, the AWRC was funded by both the federal and provincial governments.

Federal operational funding, in the amount of \$38,966, was granted by the Women's Program of Human Resources Development. A separate grant for a conference on Women and Community Economic Development, was received in the amount of \$4,500.

Provincial funding, through the Department of Community Services, was approved in the amount of \$55,000. From this budget, \$5,000 was given to "Nova Scotia Women's Centres Connect!", the provincial association of women's centres in which the AWRC participates. This contribution enables Connect! to pay for a part-time staff person who coordinates provincial work.

STAFFING

a) Resource Centre Staff. It has been a year of changes in staffing. Lorraine Keating left the Centre in early September to pursue teaching opportunities in Halifax. Barbara Hayes was hired in her place, carrying on the job-sharing position with Martha McGinn. A part-time office support person was hired in mid-September, but she stayed only a week before taking up an opportunity for full-time work elsewhere. Vangie Babin was subsequently hired, and began working in mid-October.

Vangie began learning her new role during the height of the Direct Mail Appeal, our major annual fundraiser. This process called for considerable organization, a task which Vangie easily satisfied. Vangie is now responsible for bookkeeping, payroll, and statistical record-keeping, as well as providing clerical assistance to all other staff. She is also responsible for reception duties and assists with supervising volunteers and women in the Centre on work experience placements.

Katherine Reed has continued working with the AWRC since September of 1988. This continuity of staff is of major benefit to the Centre. Katherine has been responsible for financial administration, liaison at the local, provincial, and national levels, training and supervising new staff, presenting briefs to government, peer-counselling women in crisis, coordinating the Direct Mail Appeal fundraising effort, preparing Monthly Reports, and providing workshops on women's perspectives to other community groups.

Barbara was responsible for coordinating volunteers, organizing Centre activities and events, and peer-counselling women in crisis or with on-going needs for support and information. She worked with our Internal Activities Committee to organize events. She also worked with the Newsletter Committee to produce "Aware", the quarterly newsletter of the AWA & AWRC.

Martha focused the bulk of her work this year on the Women and Community Economic Development programming, which was federally funded by the Women's Program of HRD. Martha has written both the Federal and Provincial grant proposals and reports to funders for 1995 and liaised with Nova Scotia Women's Centres CONNECT!, federal and provincial officials.

Carmel Losier was hired as a temporary staff person to perform the duties of Barbara Hayes who took a compassionate leave for three-weeks in March. Carmel has been a transition house worker for many years and was a great help during Barbara's absence. She helped retrieve overdue library books and peer-counselled a number of women, and assisted with reception duties.

An ad-hoc committee of the AWRC Board met several times to consider hiring a therapist to work in-house assisting women with deeper issues than peer-counselling is intended for. The organizational readjustments necessary to take on this new area of work safely and responsibly were too far-reaching for us to manage immediately. The committee recommended to the board that provincial money allocated for this be diverted to augment the work-hours of both Barbara and Vangie. With Vangie taking on some of Katherine's duties and Barbara working a fuller week, we were able to put more emphasis on meeting the ever-expanding demand for peer-counselling and all of the necessary follow-up involved in this.

b) Work Placements: Two trainees performed a total of seven weeks' work between November and March. In November, Catherine Mae MacDonald worked for four weeks as part of the requirements for her Community Service Worker Diploma from the NS Community College. She helped with peer-counselling, keeping the library organized, fundraising and statistical analysis. In February, Sherry Munroe was with us for three weeks on a placement through a Nova Scotia Community College course on "Life Skills, Career and Job Options". Sherry's role was to gain general office experience and skills. Both of these women were a great support to staff during their work experience.

c) Volunteers: Volunteers continue to make many things possible for the Centre. They are the backbone of some AWRC activities and achievements. An incredible total of 2050 volunteer hours were logged this year. The role of the AWRC in involving women in equality-seeking work, and thereby acting as a catalyst for political change is significant. Women who volunteer in this work are not only giving to the women's movement, but they learn and receive support from each other in the process. Stereotypical attitudes about women being each others worst enemies quietly die in the exchanges that occur and the building of bonds through shared, often intense experience.

Volunteers' help in creating and mailing out the newsletter is absolutely invaluable, as it is in the annual direct mail fundraising campaign. Volunteers build shelves, paint the walls, and gather in-kind contributions for our use. They do clerical work, and represent the AWRC and AWA out in the community. All of the Board members for the AWA and the AWRC contribute their time and skills as volunteers. A woman used the AWRC in July to exercise her "Fine Option", a program through the Solicitor General's office which allows people to work in service to the community in lieu of payment of a fine. Increasingly this is occurring as well as the occasional placement of a young offender through the Alternative Measures program. This is a satisfactory arrangement for all concerned and the volunteer invariably learns a great deal by coming into the circle of the Women's Centre.

d) Summer Staffing: The AWRC received a Student Education /Employment Development (SEED) grant from CEIC, and hired Nadine Boudreau for an eight-week period in June and July. Nadine recruited volunteers for the Sexual Assault Crisis Line and served as the Centre's receptionist.

e) Professional Development: In July, Katherine attended a week-long training session entitled, "Adult Education and Program Design" at the Atlantic Christian Training Centre. The workshop enabled her to develop better quality workshops and other learning experiences. Barbara and Vangie participated in a workshop on sexual assault/abuse survivors provided by the Irondale Ensemble. This was sponsored by the Sexual Assault Project.

USAGE

At the end of each month, the AWRC tabulates the statistics it records daily. These statistics reflect the number of calls and visits to the Centre. Table 1 shows the monthly totals. These numbers are broken down according to the reason for the contact (see Table 2)

TABLE 1

Monthly Calls and Visits to AWRC

MONTH	CALLS	VISITS	TOTAL
April	172	125	297
May	221	155	376
June	237	126	363
July	222	158	380
August	104	91	195
September	81	67	148
October	180	169	349
November	250	231	481
December	156	128	284
January	243	173	416
February	271	155	426
March	336	239	575
Year's Total	2473	1817	4290

TABLE 2

Breakdown of AWRC Usage

<u>Reasons for Calling</u> <u>Calls</u>	<u>Number of</u>
Information.....	386
Board/Committee/Staff Business.....	870
Fundraising.....	152
Requests for Interviews/Presentations.....	19
Personal Problems/Complaints.....	397
Check-Ins.....	312
Networking.....	539
Use of Centre Facilities.....	339
Library.....	196
Program Development.....	515
Other.....	381

Calls and visits to the AWRC were further broken down into subject matter categories, to enable staff to assess which issue areas women were most concerned with over the year. This year's statistics reflect the increase in the AWRC's activities around issues of sexual assault and sexual abuse, and health. Calls relating to women and entrepreneurship increased this year due to the program focus on women and community economic development. Contacts relating to sexual abuse and sexual assault issues reflect the increasing awareness and activity within the community due to the work of the AWA Sexual Assault project.

These statistics reflect all of the contacts the AWRC receives, including those from women requiring services, people participating in and developing AWRC programming, board members, staff, AWA members, volunteers, the media, government representatives, and individuals from numerous local, provincial, national and international groups.

TABLE 3

Subject Matter of Calls to the Centre

Nature of Call

Abuse (relationship).....	232
Sexual Assault/Sexual Abuse.....	222
Sexual Harassment/Discrimination.....	47
Business.....	111
Childcare.....	10
Education & Training.....	370
Employment.....	118
Finances.....	101
Health.....	233
Reproductive Health.....	25
Housing.....	96
Legal.....	91
Parenting.....	116
Sexuality.....	8
Social Assistance.....	148
Women's Centre.....	292
Poverty.....	179
Sexrole Stereotyping.....	17
Single Parenting.....	65
Other	79

Utilization Increase

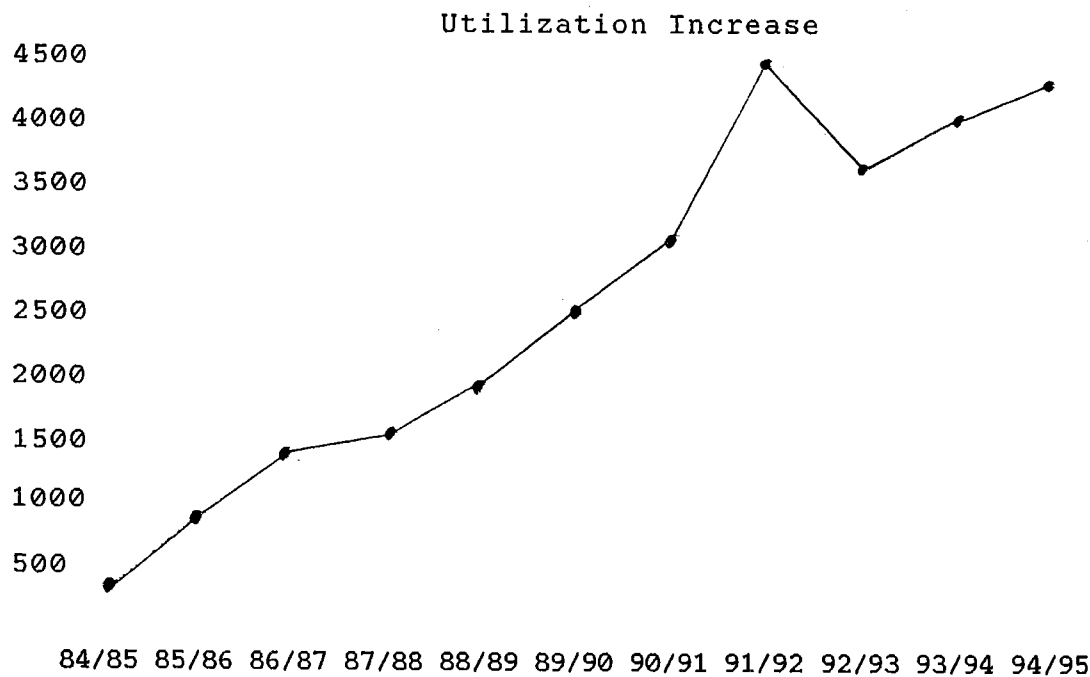
There continues to be an increase in the number of people using the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre. In 1994-95, 4,290 persons used the Centre, which is 346 more than the figure for 1993-94. Table 4 shows the utilization statistics for the past ten years, and Figure 1 plots the increase pattern.

TABLE 4

Utilization Increase

Year	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
1992-93	3610	-872
1993-94	3844	234
1994-95	4290	346

Figure 1



REFERRALS

The AWRC continues to receive referrals from The Naomi Society and Tearmann House, the Department of Community Services, St. Martha's Regional Hospital Department of Psychiatry Out-Patients, and Drug Dependency Services. Women are also referred by therapists in private practice and by local physicians, university faculty and adult educators. Women are often referred by their friends and/or family.

The AWRC makes referrals to other human service agencies. A woman may initially come to the Centre in crisis not knowing where to turn for help. Staff assist her in assessing her situation and then referring her on to places where she can receive the services she needs. The AWRC referred women with

poverty issues to: The Department of Community Services; The Opportunity Shop (used clothing); Community Food Bank; Antigonish Coordinated Services; St. Vincent de Paul Society,

legal problems to: N.S. Public Legal Education; local lawyers; N.S. Legal Aid; Provincial Court Office; N.S. Human Rights Commission; the Crown Prosecutor; Probation Services,

sexual abuse/sexual assault issues to: Chris Tragakis, psychologist; Shirley Burkett, therapist; St. Martha's Hospital, Department of Psychiatry Out-Patients; The Non-offending Parents of Sexually Abused Children Support Group,

relationship abuse issues to: Naomi Society; Tearmann House; Alena MacDonald, Department of Attorney General (peace bonds),

housing issues to: local housing coops; Department of Community Services; Department of Housing and Consumer Affairs; Antigonish Housing Authority; Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, and

health issues to: physicians; psychologists; Women in Recovery Support Group.

AWRC staff also referred women seeking parenting support to the Turnaround Education Centre, the Kids First Program and the Early Childhood Intervention Program. Other referrals include L'Arche, Revenue Canada, the Department of Labour and the RCMP. Women seeking information on entrepreneurship were referred to the N.S. Economic Renewal Agency.

WOMEN AND COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The AWRC initiated a new area of community outreach this year through its work with women entrepreneurs and women interested in becoming self-employed. The focus on Women and Community Economic Development was primarily educational, with the overall goal being to raise the awareness of the local community on the on-going achievements, current opportunities and prevailing obstacles to local women's economic initiatives.

Throughout October and November, research was carried out via open-ended interviews with twenty-six (26) women. The interviews were structured so that each woman reflected upon issues such as:

- * her experience in accessing support services for job creation and enterprise development;
- * her sense of self as entrepreneur;
- * to what extent her schooling and life experience had prepared her with the skills required for small enterprise management;
- * the domestic implications of creating her own job;
- * lessons learned from achievements and failures;
- * looking to the future - identifying opportunities and obstacles facing her own enterprises and formulating suggestions or recommendations as to how they might be shared with other women.

The needs identified by the women interviewed were:

- a need to access business and entrepreneurial information that is available at the local, regional and national levels. For example, government loan programs and alternative loan programs;
- more information about marketing and pricing;
- the formation of an on-going support network of community-based women involved in entrepreneurship at all levels;
- issues around business expansion;
- an economic profile of the community.

A February workshop on Women and Community Economic Development in Antigonaish was held, involving many of the interviewees as well as other interested women. Twenty women participated. A report was produced on this workshop, entitled "Women and Community Economic Development: A One-Day Workshop".

One of the outcomes of the workshop was the formation of a local support group and networking association for women entrepreneurs and women interested in community economic development. The group is called "The Antigonish Businesswomen's Network", and started meeting monthly in May, after the AWRC organized an initial planning meeting in April. The AWRC is a member, but is no longer responsible for coordinating meetings. With this new network the visibility of and awareness about the role of women entrepreneurs in the economy and in particular, has increased in the local community and hopefully the women entrepreneurs' sense of themselves individually and as a group has been strengthened..

A further outcome of the women and community economic development project was the June, 1995 publication and community distribution of a businesswomen's directory, the Antigonish Businesswomen's Network (the same name as the new support group). The directory is also on the Antigonish Community Network (<http://www.grassroots.ns.ca>).

The AWRC has increased its organizational effectiveness through liaising with women entrepreneurs. The Centre has developed a Women and Community Economic Development section in our resource library. The AWRC will continue to support women involved in community economic development by offering resource materials, the use of the Centre's space for meetings, and through ongoing efforts to connect women entrepreneurs with the network.

SEXUAL ASSAULT CRISIS LINE

We had hoped to set up a crisis line during the fall of 1994 for women who have experienced sexual violence. Due to the upheaval in physical facilities and in staffing, this was not possible. However, by February we had hired Shirley Burkett, M Ed to train a contingent of volunteers who would staff the proposed line. The service is to be offered on week-ends only. Barbara, Katherine and Lucille Harper worked with Shirley to detail what this service would be and what the training program would involve. A number of the volunteers recruited by Nadine Boudreau earlier in the summer had gone on to other things and decided not to pursue their interest in the Crisis Line, so new volunteers were recruited during early March, and the training program began in April. At the time of this writing, the training is complete and 10 volunteers are ready to staff the line which is to begin operations on the first weekend of August.

PUBLIC EDUCATION EVENTS

The AWRC continued to respond to requests for workshops and other types of involvement on an as-needed basis. The numbers in parentheses indicate attendance.

a) Workshops

Topshee Memorial Conference Discussion Groups and Workshops "Health Reform"
(no data)

- panel presentation and small group facilitation
- Lucille Harper

Information Session for organizers and volunteers of the university's "X Nite Line" (45)

- information session to students on crisis intervention
- Katherine Reed

Workshop on Social Programs Reform (6)

- sponsored by AWRC with support (kit) from the Nova Scotia Women's Committee on Social Reform to inform women about the federal government's social programs reform and its implications for women
- Martha McGinn and Barbara Hayes

Gender sensitization for RCMP Officers (35)

- sponsored by the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women
- Barbara Hayes presented information on the AWRC's role in the community and on gender issues

Discussion on the AWA Abortion Policy Statement (9)

- AWA members met to discuss and examine how this policy which was developed at the Spring Retreat and circulated to the membership via a mail-out

"Women in Education": a workshop for the Community Learning Initiative Class (Country Harbour) (7)

- participants examined the personal and situational reasons for their not continuing through high school to grade 12 graduation as adolescents, and did some personal goal-setting
- Katherine Reed

Women and Community Economic Development: A One-day Workshop for Antigonish-area Women Entrepreneurs (20)
(see page 12)

"Women and Poverty" (18)

- workshop for women participating in a training course sponsored by Leaside House in Port Hawkesbury
- women participated in a "case futures" exercise providing an analysis of women's poverty, and some strategies for escaping it
- Katherine Reed

b) Presentations and Discussions

Federal Government's Consultation on the Tax Treatment of Child Maintenance (no data)

- Katherine Reed represented AWRC

Friday Brown-Bag Lunch Series (103)

- Women from the community volunteer to talk on various subjects during the lunch hour. Topics included Women in Nepal; Community College Community Services Worker Training Program; Women in Recovery from Alcoholism; Coping with Money at Christmas; Environmental Illness; Women in the Church; Just Say No to Dieting; Karmic Astrology; Black Women's Poetry; Women's Prose and Poetry: A Read Aloud; Voice of Women for Peace; and a few "get-togethers".

Panel Presentation on "Working Towards Equality" for Women's History Month (60)

- Barbara Hayes spoke on the history of women's activism in Antigonish

Presentation to the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development regarding the reform of Canada's social programs
-joint presentation with other NS women's groups
-Lucille Harper

Various Interviews on local CJFX Radio and Bragg Cable Television stations re International Women's Day, National Women's Centres Day, women entrepreneurs and community economic development
-Katherine Reed, Martha McGinn and Barbara Hayes

Information Session on the role and activities of the AWRC (25)
-presented to members of Canadian Auto Workers' Union
(Bergengren Credit Union)
-Martha McGinn

Brief Presentation to "Town Hall Meeting" organized by MP Francis LeBlanc, regarding the reform of Canada's social programs. (30)
-Katherine Reed

Panel Presentation with Hon. Lloyd Axworthy, Minister of Human Resources Development regarding reform of Canada's social programs (200)
-attended by several representatives of AWA and AWRC. We questioned Mr. Axworthy regarding income security and funding of women's centres and other social justice groups.

c) Community Events, Celebrations

National Women's Centres Day and AWRC Open House (30)
-to celebrate the AWRC's renovated space while also providing an opportunity for the general public to learn more about the role of women's centres locally and nationally

December 6 Remembrance Vigil (34)
-a gathering to remember the Montreal Massacre and victims of violence against women everywhere

International Women's Day Open House (9)
-AWRC's Sister Isabell MacDougall Library was featured

International Women's Day Cabaret (60)
-an evening of celebration for women featuring local talent

Volunteer Appreciation Brunch (11)
-on International Women's Day, a volunteer appreciation event
-appreciation certificates given
-Barbara Hayes and Katherine Reed

d) Joint AWRC/AWA Meetings and Programs

Annual Coady/AWA Picnic (55)

- regular summertime get-together with women from the Coady International Institute

AWA and AWRC Fall Board Retreat (9)

- serves to "kick-start" the fall season and to orient new board members, set up committees, etc.

Annual General Meeting of the AWRC and the AWA (41)

- a dual AGM covering all business of both organizations

AWRC Volunteer Orientation (10)

- two sessions covering confidentiality policy, use of the log book and library, philosophy and purpose of AWRC, types of work volunteers perform

e) Films

"Come On In: Women's Centres in Nova Scotia" (26)

- premiered the video made through a Connect! project, directed by Lulu Keating

"Winning from Inside Out"; a video screening resulting from some "Women Helping Women participants' interest in starting a job-finders club (3)

- video was about unemployment and job search

f) Community Outreach/Meetings

"Women Helping Women" Project (28)

- two training sessions sponsored by The Self-Help Connection for women interested in starting self-help groups
- three new self-help groups for women resulted
- Katherine Reed and Lorraine Keating

"Women Helping Women" advisory committee meeting

- staff of participating women's centres met to discuss wrap-up of the project (participants' certificates, resource material development and distribution, future directions, evaluation meeting)
- Katherine Reed

"Women Helping Women" Evaluation Meeting

- meeting of participants and women's centre reps
- Katherine Reed with participant Alexina MacDonald

Lunenburg County Inter-agency Committee on Family Violence - information session on "Quincy Model" of responding to family violence

- Lucille Harper attended in order to gather information for the AWRC, the AWA Sexual Assault Project, and the Antigonish and Area Inter-agency Committee on Family Violence

The Maude Barlow ad hoc Planning Committee

- involved the AWRC, union locals, the university, and church and community groups.
- formed to bring Maude Barlow to Antigonish to speak on "Globalization and its Effects on Health Care, Education and Social Programs in Canada". 300 people attended.
- Katherine Reed and Lucille Harper

Community Economic Development Forum

- sponsored by the local Chamber of Commerce
- attempt to stimulate interest in intensifying economic development efforts in Antigonish Area.
- Katherine Reed

Inter-agency Committee on Family Violence representative Liz Gillis MacDonald of Port Hawkesbury met with Katherine Reed

- collected information about the Antigonish Inter-agency Committee and the role of the provincial Family Violence Prevention Initiative

Community Forum "Masters of Deceit: Unlocking the Myths of Treating Sex Offenders"

- Katherine Reed, Ellen King and Lucille Harper (Sexual Assault Project)

Annual Meeting with Francis LeBlanc, M.P., and his constituency's Women's Organizations (4)

- an opportunity to lobby our MP about the issues facing women and women's groups, and to update him on the AWRC's programming and activities. (previous cancellation and subsequent reschedule on short notice precluded many group's participation)

g) Services/Sponsorships

Sexual Abuse Survivors' Therapy Group

- discussions covered honouring coping strategies, forming /identifying a personal support network, self care, after-effects of sexual abuse in childhood, stress management, etc.
- Betty-Anne Fraser and Shirley Burkett facilitators

Sr. Mary MacLeod Bursary

- \$200 bursary awarded to a woman student who has demonstrated financial need and an intention to work towards gender equality (2 bursaries awarded)
- money raised by raffle
- organized by Fundraising Committee

Income Tax Preparation for Low-Income Women

- free service provided by volunteer tax preparers through the AWRC. Community volunteer Ed Dunbar did our tax form preparation and in total 32 low-income women and their families were served.

h) Community Use of AWRC

Non-Offending Parents of Sexually Abused Children Support Group

- ongoing, weekly support group, all mothers involved, result of support and education by "Women Helping Women" project and Sexual Assault Project

AWA's Sexual Assault Project Sub-committees

- Crisis Intervention, Criminal Justice and Children and Adolescents used Centre to develop and implement actions to address the gaps in services documented in the Project's Needs Assessment

Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women

- Marilyn Berry met with Guysborough rep. Wendy Panagopoulos

Accident Support Group

- group met weekly re dealing with the after-effects of accidents
- formed from Women Helping Women project

academic tutoring of a young woman high school student

Project Accompaniment

- met to organize a volunteer's trip to Guatemala

Women in Recovery Support Group

- for women dealing with substance abuse
- formed from Women Helping Women project
- meets weekly

Tearmann Outreach Project and a representative of the Solicitor General Department met with woman to discuss her court case.

Victim Services (New Glasgow)

- Corinne Popowich used Centre to help an Antigonish sexual abuse survivor develop a victim impact statement

Sub-committee of The Antigonish Community Family Support Society
-used AWRC for a project proposal development meeting

Kids First Regional Development Board sub-committee meetings
-Policy Development, Finance Committee and Human Resources Committee
-various tasks relating to development of new regional program
(AWRC a major supporter of this initiative)

Roseway Publishers (Kay Tudor)
-met with staff re. publication of book about sexual abuse
survivors' stories, and met with local survivor re. including her
story in new book

LIAISON

AWRC staff participate in local, regional and provincial organizations
in the interests of sharing information, working on joint projects and for
mutual support. The AWRC brings a feminist perspective to these other groups.

Community Liaison

The Antigonish Community Family Support Society
-parenting education and support for families (weekly meetings)
-Katherine Reed

Kids First Regional Development Board
-new initiative funded by Health Canada under CAPC concerned with
start-up of family resource centres and parenting education and
support in Antigonish, Pictou, and Guysborough counties for
children aged 0-6 years (monthly meetings)
-Katherine Reed

Sexual Assault Project's Crisis Intervention Committee
-AWRC participation has enabled staff to develop ideas about
AWRC's future services and improving its current services and
policies
-Katherine Reed

Sexual Assault Therapy and Counselling Committee
-examined ways to improve services to people affected by sexual
violence
-Barbara Hayes

The Antigonish and Area Inter-Agency Committee on Family Violence
-AWRC has been represented on this committee since its inception
in 1987
-chaired this year by Katherine Reed

Provincial Liaison

Atlantic Regional Conference, "Working Together in Today's Economy: Women, Men and Community Development"

- opportunity to network with different women's groups and organizations
- Martha McGinn

Fishnet Workshop

- one-day workshop for women in fishing households in Antigonish area
- Martha McGinn

Family Violence Prevention Initiative

- worked closely with Antigonish And Area Inter-agency Committee on Family Violence
- Katherine Reed

Maritime Area Leadership Training

- working to develop a training program for social justice groups through Tatamagouche Centre
- Katherine Reed

National Liaison

Oona Landry and Katherine Reed were delegates to "Ensemble" the first National Conference of Canadian Women's Centres. This took place in Winnipeg in September 1994 and was funded by the Women's Program, HRD. The delegates shared information and met in small groups to develop priorities. By the end of the weekend, committees were struck, issues and priorities identified, and concrete actions were decided upon. The main actions were

- * to establish a communication network for women's centres in order to promote access and equity,
- * to represent and promote women's centres to ensure that their vital contribution to the social development of their communities is recognized at the federal level through adequate funding, based on a process of regional consultation and collaboration, and
- * to coordinate the efforts of women's centres to address the erosion of services and federal social policies, and link with other social justice efforts such as the National Anti-Poverty Organization, and the National Action Committee on the Status of Women.

The AWRC is a member of "Ensemble" a national network of women's centres with Oona Landry serving as a Regional Rep for Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. Oona is a member of the Communications Committee which keeps centres appraised of events and issues of national significance. Oona is also on the Funding Committee, whose role is to pursue sources of funding to carry out the priorities of Ensemble, and the Core Committee which steers Ensemble's activities.

OTHER GRANTS AND PROJECTS

NB: These AWA projects did not appear in the 1993-94 Annual Report as they should have. As a result of this error, the time frame covered for all three AWA projects in this report is the two-year period, April of 1993 (or the month the project began in 1993) to March of 1995.

a) The Adolescent Health Project

As of April 1993, the Adolescent Health Project (AHP) was mid-way through its second year. A needs assessment had been conducted and the resulting report "A Community-based Needs Assessment of Youth in Antigonish" was written. A video, "Voice of Teens" was produced. These educational tools were taken to the community in various ways by the project staff, Susan Jewkes and Barbara Hayes, and the youth involved in the project.

A Community Health Promotion Fund project completed in August of 1993 explored issues around relationships. Some of the activities of this project were a multi-cultural festival called "Faces of Our Community", some workshops, and a poster entitled "The ABCs of a Good Relationship".

In the fall of 1993 a community forum for youth and adults was planned and implemented. "Straight Talk" involved over 140 members of the Antigonish community including over 90 students from the Antigonish and Guysborough school districts. The dialogue and information resulting from this event were presented periodically in a regular weekly column in the local newspaper. "Straight Talk" was organized in cooperation with the RCMP and Drug Dependency Services. It coincided with Drug Awareness Week.

A 22 month grant was obtained from the Canada Drug Strategy. The project ran from December 1994 to September 1995. The objective of this project was to develop and support a community based committee that will address issues identified by youth and community around drug use. The work of the project was conducted in partnership with the Antigonish Local Drug Awareness Committee and it included drama workshops focusing on teen health issues, peer education training for 12 teenagers, presentations to over 500 students in Antigonish Town and County on peer education, information displays and media coverage of issues and events.

Project staff and youth participated in an number of local, provincial, and regional conferences. Some of the highlights of these excursions were as follows:

- 3 young women involved in the AHP participated in the United Nations Preparatory Session for the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing;
- 8 project youth participated in a Public Health Association workshop on "National Health Goals for Children & Youth"
- a workshop presentation by project youth at the 11th Annual Topshee Conference. (The topic of the conference was health);
- 3 project youth attended the International Health Assembly in Vancouver (attendance funded by Health Canada); and
- workshop presentation by project youth at the Atlantic Crime Prevention Conference.

This work is ongoing into 1995/96 with a new 22 month project dealing with tobacco use. A new Youth Resource Centre which the project is now housed in will be developed as well with involvement of youth in all of its facets.

b) The Sexual Assault Project

The AWA Sexual Assault Project, funded by Victim's Services Division, the Nova Scotia Department of Justice is a two-year initiative which began in October of 1993. The main objective of the project was to bring together service providers and survivors of sexual violence in the community to create a model for a collaborative response to sexual violence. A comprehensive, community-based needs assessment of services available in Antigonish for survivors of sexual violence was completed in the first phase. A needs assessment document, "Beginning With Us" served as the basis for discussion from which some forty service providers and survivors serving on the Community Model Development Committee developed a model for addressing sexual violence. The project's main objective is manifest in a document entitled "Working Together to Address Sexual Violence in Antigonish County: A Community Model".

In the process of carrying out this work many survivors of sexual violence who were involved in the project were able to draw upon their experiences to educate others and effect change in the provision of services. New partnerships were forged among service providers, survivors and the AWRC as both a community development agent and point of service delivery. The project staff, Lucille Harper Project Director, Ellen King Researcher/Facilitator, and Doris Gillis Project Consultant collected up to date resource materials on many aspects of sexual abuse of children, adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse, and sexual assault in all of its forms (date and acquaintance rape, stranger assailant assault, sexual assault within intimate relationships, etc.). The scope of the project, (and as a result of the materials acquired) takes in the personal, legal, and societal aspects of this issue, as well as public education and community development around addressing root causes of sexual violence (i.e. prevention).

The effects of this work will be felt by the community and the AWRC for years to come. The project brought many people into contact with the women's centre for the first time, and in some cases renewed individuals' and agencies' involvement with us. Denial and ignorance around this issue have begun to give way to some clear thinking about healing and prevention. The project has set the stage for the current year's work at the AWRC which will bring project participants together to plan and implement education initiatives designed to enhance the understanding of sexual violence both in the community at large, and within specific sectors.

c) Women Survivors of Sexual Abuse Initiative in Antigonish

This is an AWA project that was created in the summer of 1993 by a committee of 3 AWA representatives and Katherine Reed of the AWRC. An outline of this project is omitted in last year's annual report (1993-94), except that two of the outcomes are documented there. The two goals of the project were to carry out a one-week public education campaign around issues of adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse, and to begin a directed therapy group for women who are survivors of childhood sexual abuse.

The public education effort involved four separate actions: 1) A mail-out was put together containing information about indicators of childhood sexual abuse as they appear in adult survivors and referral and material resources. This went to human service workers and health care providers in the Antigonish Area. 2) Three press releases were developed and run in the local newspaper. This information covered the same areas as the mail-out described above. 3) A panel presentation was offered which involved therapists specializing in survivors of childhood sexual abuse, a representative of the AWRC discussion the social context of this issue, a woman who spoke as a survivor and related some of her early experiences, some therapy options she pursued, and the feelings she experienced as an adult as a result of the abuse. A number of survivors and service providers spoke from the floor at this event which enriched the information-sharing. 4) An information booth was developed and set up both in the Antigonish Mall, and at the university during evenings when traffic was high.

The therapy group began in November with 5 women participating. The small size of the group allowed for the building of trust and mutual support.

d) Fundraising Strategies for Social Justice Organizations in Rural Nova Scotia

This project was funded by Secretary of State, Voluntary Action. Oona Landry, who has extensive experience with grassroots organizations and with fundraising was hired to carry it out. The project researched the effectiveness of different types of fundraising which are employed by rural social justice groups in these times of economic restraint and a significant increase in the requests for donations that individuals and corporations face. For equality-seeking groups fundraising potential is diminished by the groups' efforts at changing society, thereby alienating some donors whose attitudes and moral convictions have been challenged. The project surveyed the fundraising experiences of groups similar to the AWRC/AWA and researched alternative ways in which the community can support the work of women's organizations, e.g. with finding other sources of support and with in-kind donations. It also looked into the attitudes of 50 community residents and 50 local businesses toward donating to non-profit groups in general and to social justice and women's equality-seeking groups in particular. The project assessed what is a realistic fundraising goal for the AWA & AWRC, and developed a strategy based on that goal.

The strategy recommended was to identify the links between the work of the AWRC and community needs, and focus fundraising on this. In order to accomplish this, the research recommended developing a "case statement", which is an internal definition of the organization's purposes, programs, and priorities, and is aimed at the public. More public relations work would also enhance our fundraising capabilities. Again public relations would identify the link between our work and community needs using the case statement. Stress must be placed upon the uniqueness of what the AWRC is able to do.

CONNECT!

Negotiations for provincial funding for women's centres continued between women's centres and the Department of Community Services. Nova Scotia Women's Centres Connect! lobbied for adequate funding for member centres. The province's decision was to fund only the 3 oldest women's centres at \$55,0000 (AWRC, Pictou County Women's Centre and Second Storey Women's Centre), and the remaining centres at \$16,000. Connect! brochures and pamphlets have recently been published that describe in detail the funding criteria for women's centres.

Connect! presented a submission to the Standing Committee on Human Resources regarding the Social Programs Reform in December, 1994. The brief was written and presented by Laura Verner Baker, Connect! Project Coordinator. Lucille Harper presented on behalf of AWRC.

Throughout the winter Connect! members, with AWRC reps Lucille Harper and Oona Landry, continued to meet with one another and with representatives from the Province. The standardization of women's centers budgets, statistics-keeping, evaluation processes and policy were key discussions. Next year's programming was also on the agenda.

Connect! Coordinator Terri Whetstone, collected policy information from all seven member women's centres in order to begin to develop policies that could be adapted for use by each individual centre.

Connect! was advised by Community Services that 1995-96 provincial funding for member women's centres will be cut by 1.7% in fiscal 1995-96 the coming three years.

Community Services has requested that each women's centre send in an annual audit with its Annual Report. As well, an organizational flow chart has been requested from all centers, showing the relationship between staff, board, committees, etc.

CONCLUSION

The AWRC has continued to build its profile in the Antigonish area. Our base of support and involvement has broadened among local organizations and institutions. These trends have continued steadily since the Centre first opened its doors in 1983. Provincial funding has improved the Centre's ability to push this building process much further than would have been possible otherwise. Federal funding has allowed us stability and continuity which has been of great benefit. We are recognised in the community as a strong feminist voice and an agent for positive social, political and personal change. Hardly a day goes by without someone remarking that women's equality and social justice have a long way to go in the Antigonish area, and all over the globe; but we are making a difference, and we are encouraged, and more community leaders and individuals are joining the struggle. Because of our collective efforts at raising the issue of sexual violence, and our working to improve the services for survivors of sexual assault and sexual abuse, it is getting more and more difficult for offenders and all members of the community to ignore these crimes. It has gotten equally difficult to deny the needs of women living and raising children in poverty. Positive changes have occurred in this realm as well. In the face of the clearly discernable shift to the right in Canada and all over the world, this type of change gives us hope.

It has been frustrating to work without adequate funding for materials, advertising, and especially staff, and it is a great frustration not to be able to remunerate Centre staff according to the amount of effort they expend, the commitment they demonstrate, and the skill and tenacity required to do the job. In the face of more cuts, we despair that the prospect of a good wage and minimal employee benefits for staff is too optimistic, but we must hope.

It has also been frustrating to have to let go of worthwhile initiatives and face the constraints of not having enough staff to follow up on foundations we worked so hard to lay. The need for adequate, affordable housing is still largely un-met, not because it is economically impossible to provide it, but because there are just not enough work-hours available to bring it to life.

Many thanks go to Field Officer Pat McInnis and the Women's Program; and Dr. Patricia Ripley, Dr. Jim Smith, Shulomith Medjuck, Bridgette Newmann and the Department of Community Services for working with us to provide community development, education and support to women and our to community. We are grateful to Lucille Harper and Oona Landry and all the women who represent Nova Scotia Women's Centres Connect! and have directed the effort to secure provincial funding. Thanks also go to the AWA/AWRC Board of Directors for their steady support and hours of volunteer work given through the various committees, and to all the volunteers who do small and large tasks for events and for the day-to-day functioning of the Centre. An enormous amount of work has gone into building the Women's Centre and the AWA. We also gratefully recognize the financial and material "in-kind" support of members of the community, both individual and corporate, and local institutions. This support helps make up for funding shortages.