

**ANTIGONISH WOMEN'S
RESOURCE CENTRE
ANNUAL REPORT 2001-2002**

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

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INTRODUCTION

The Antigonish Women's Resource Centre (AWRC) is a community-based, feminist organization that is committed to creating a community and a world in which women participate fully and see their values, beliefs and ways of working reflected in the philosophies, policies and structures that organize and inform the social, political, economic and spiritual realms in which we live, work and raise our families.

The AWRC, known to most people in the community as "the Women's Centre", is a dynamic, multi-tasked organization that serves Antigonish Town, County and surrounding areas in a number of ways. Our primary mandate is to provide information and support to women and to work with women and the community to address issues that women face everyday - issues relating to poverty, violence, employment, education and re-training, housing, parenting, and health. Our understanding of the challenges and barriers women face as well as our experience in working with the community to address issues that adversely affect the lives of women and their families, make us a respected voice when speaking about these issues. The AWRC is a critical and unique link in the network of community agencies and government services. We are identified in the community and province as an initiator of and positive contributor to initiatives that address issues of concern to women.

This past year the number of people contacting the Women's Centre for information and support, or to participate in AWRC programs or community development initiatives increased by 1,285 contacts. We continued to provide Women's Centre programs that are unique to the community and that women and the broader community tell us are helpful. These programs included our employment readiness program, our therapy groups for survivors of childhood sexual abuse, our self-esteem and assertiveness programs for women, our income tax preparation program, our peer education program, our group for adolescent girls, and our youth social justice group. In response to requests from women and adolescent girls, we developed new projects and offered new programs. These included a Stage III Therapy Group for Adult Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse, and an after school program for teen girls identified as at-risk.

Our work to support women living with the impact of poverty and our work to eliminate poverty remains a primary focus of the Women's Centre. Poverty keeps women and their children marginalized, stigmatized, dependent, and vulnerable to violence and abuse. It is a complex social justice issue that requires a coordinated community/government/first voice response. Eliminating poverty requires systemic change along with tailored individual approaches. The AWRC works to address poverty on many levels. We work with women individually to sort through the barriers and challenges presented on a daily basis. As well we work with women to develop strategies for moving ahead with their goals for establishing personal and economic independence. For example, this past year the provincial government introduced a reformed social assistance program. To assess the impact of the reform on the lives of women affected by the new social assistance policy, the AWRC is collaborating with sister women's centres in New Glasgow and Sydney on a project, *Social Assistance Reform in Nova Scotia: Is It Working for*

Women? The project will interview women about the impact of the policy changes on their lives and involve them in making recommendations about policy content and delivery to the Department of Community Services.

The AWRG understands that for many women, gaining access to further education or to sustaining employment can be a daunting task - especially when their lives may be complicated by poverty, single parenting, family responsibilities, recovery from addictions, relationship changes, or lack of education and current job skills. This year we continued to offer our employment readiness program, *On the Road to Employment*. This has been a highly successful, holistic program that has seen more than 75% of the program participants find employment, pursue further education or enter re-training programs.

Our work on developing affordable housing solutions that involve women who are in need of affordable housing have continued through our work with the *Antigonish Affordable Housing Society*. An affordable housing need and demand study undertaken by the Women's Centre was made possible with financial support from the Sisters of St. Martha. Further, we were able to work with the community to develop a community plan for addressing the housing needs of youth in our *Assessing Youth Homelessness in Antigonish* project.

The sexual violence that women and children experience remains an ongoing focus for the work of the Women's Centre. Through our *Links Project* we are participating in a national initiative that is documenting the experiences of survivors of sexual violence as they proceed through the legal system.

Developing healthy relationships in the teen years is one approach to preventing the kind of violence that too many women experience in their lives. We are beginning a four year project, the *Rural Youth Healthy Relationships Education Project*, in which we will work with the East Antigonish Academy in Monastery and the Chedabucto Academy in Gysborough to deliver healthy relationships programs to students in grades 7, 8, 9, and 11. The program will use a peer education model similar to the one we developed for *Teens Take Action*. We anticipate that this program will have a significant impact on the lives of the youth involved with it.

Again this year, we trained a new group of grade 11 and 12 high school students as peer educators for our *Teens Take Action* program. They presented their dating violence and sexual assault awareness and prevention program to 15 classes of grade 8 students. The presentation helps younger students to recognize dating violence and sexual assault, to learn ways to respond to and to avoid potentially dangerous situations, and where to go for help. The program was once again made possible with a donation from Sable Offshore Energy Incorporated.

Increasingly, adolescent girls are coming to the Women's Centre for information and support. And we are expanding our programs for them. Our adolescent women's discussion and support group, *Young Women: Exploring Our Lives Together*, provided high school girls with a safe place to explore issues they face in their lives. The participants themselves determined the topics

for discussion. Our *Youth Social Justice Group* offered teen men and women a facilitated forum for looking at issues they experience or hear about in the larger culture. Through our *Stepping Forward* project, we developed and introduced *Inspire*, a program designed for young women facing particularly difficult challenges in their lives. All our teen programs emphasize healthy decision making, encourage discussion, and respect the abilities and diverse perspectives of the participants.

The PATH Project, *Applying Community Health Impact Assessment to Rural Community Health Planning*, worked with the Antigonish Town and County Community Health Board to develop a community health impact assessment tool that enables the Community Health Board to assess the impact on the health and well-being of the community of policies and programs proposed for the community.

Securing adequate funding is an ongoing challenge for the AWRRC. We expected this year that we would be entering into service contracts with the Department of Community Services. Not only did this not happen, but in the April 2002 budget funding to women's centres, transition houses and men's intervention programs was cut significantly and a re-design process for our services was outlined by the Department of Community Services. After considerable public protest, the funding cuts were put on hold and the redesign process was extended. Again, this leaves the AWRRC without adequate funding to maintain current staff levels and creates a tension and uncertainty about the upcoming year.

Maintaining current staffing levels is essential to keeping our doors open and our programs accessible to women. AWRRC staff are a knowledgeable, skilled and caring group of women. We are able to provide a high level of service and a high quality of service because of the expertise staff have developed in their primary areas of responsibility, their breadth of knowledge of the issues facing women and adolescent girls, their familiarity with community resources, and the trust relationships they have developed with women coming to the Centre. Staff continuity and the commitment of staff to their work has enabled us to develop an efficient, effective service. During the past year, AWRRC core staff worked a total of 489 hours of unpaid overtime to maintain and to meet the level of service and program delivery required by the community. Project staff worked 619 hours of unpaid overtime. In all, AWRRC staff worked a total of 1,109 unpaid overtime hours.

It is the intention of this report to provide an in-depth look at the work undertaken by the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre this past year.

CENTRE USAGE

Staff record the number of contacts, (calls and visits) made to the Centre daily and tabulate them monthly. We record separately the number of people using the Centre for meetings or other planned activities. During 2001-2002 incoming contacts totalled 10,891. Outgoing calls made by staff totalled 5,056 excluding outgoing calls made by volunteers. The number of people attending or participating in programs, presentations, and/or community development activities totalled 3,371. These numbers include the work undertaken by project staff. They may under-represent the actual work of the Centre because calls and visits can be difficult to log during busy periods.

Table 1 shows the monthly contact totals. In Table 2 these numbers are broken down according to the reason for the contact.

TABLE 1
AWRC Usage April 1, 2001 - March 31, 2002

MONTH	CALLS IN	VISITS IN	TOTAL INCOMING CONTACTS	OUTGOING CALLS	PROGRAMS, PRESENTATIONS, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PARTICIPATION
APRIL	498	397	895	431	486
MAY	625	520	1,145	504	359
JUNE	471	327	798	408	230
JULY	319	340	659	211	65
AUGUST	396	339	735	360	75
SEPTEMBER	544	342	886	467	247
OCTOBER	634	454	1,088	408	437
NOVEMBER	595	440	1,035	395	578
DECEMBER	405	234	639	294	192
JANUARY	658	358	1,016	584	188
FEBRUARY	470	439	909	457	114
MARCH	627	459	1,086	546	400
TOTAL	6,242	4,649	10,891	5,056	3,371

Breakdown of AWRC Contacts

Table 2 indicates the issue(s) with which an individual contacts the AWRC for direct service support. This helps us identify how the AWRC is being used and the issues with which women were most concerned during the year. This in turn helps us determine programming. This year's statistics reflect and support our concentration on poverty, education, violence, and health concerns. They also reflect the role the AWRC plays in providing women with access to a computer, a place to photocopy documents, leave and retrieve messages and to rest or wait for appointments.

These statistics **do not** include those requests for information, programming and community development participation coming from the community. Nor do they reflect people contacting the centre about committee work, or calls from board members, AWA members, and volunteers, the media, or numerous local, regional, provincial and national groups.

Our total contacts for the year number 10,891.

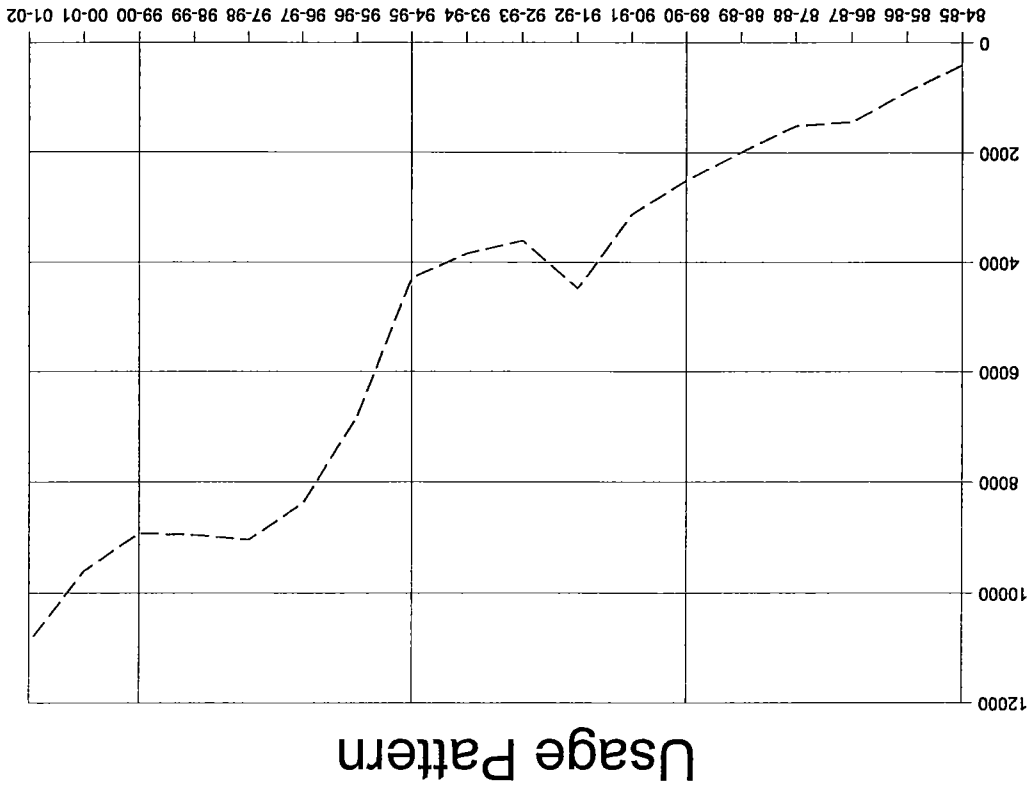
TABLE 2

Subject/Issue	Direct Service	Personal Support	General Info	Centre Services	TOTAL
20 Economics Total	212	199	22	247	680
(a) business/entrepreneur	1	1	1	2	5
(b) education/training	52	56	12	148	268
(c) employment	51	86	4	87	228
(d) financial management (personal)	106	53	2	7	168
(e) economics (macro)	2	3	3	3	11
21 Equity Total	23	10	2	64	99
racial issues, gender stereotyping, disability	23	10	2	64	99
22 Family/Social Relationship Total	110	38	2	36	186
(a) family/social relationship	62	28	1	15	106
(b) childcare	6	8	1	10	25
(c) parenting	42	2	0	11	55
23 Health Total	174	141	17	215	547
(a) general	55	69	14	71	209
(b) mental health	60	47	2	75	184
(c) reproductive health	29	18	0	47	94
(d) sexuality/orientation	5	0	0	3	8
(e) addictions	25	7	1	19	52
24 Justice Total	149	27	8	27	211
(a) divorce/separation	22	4	1	11	38
(b) custody/access	35	3	0	0	38
(c) maintenance enforcement	15	2	0	1	18
(d) legal issues	77	18	7	15	117
25 Poverty Total	575	147	32	127	881
(a) general	42	27	16	52	137
(b) housing	113	55	8	53	229
(c) social assistance	177	46	4	15	242
(d) poverty relief (clothing, furniture, food, baby)	243	19	4	7	273
26 Women's Centre Info Total	14	45	251	1,514	1,824
(a) general	0	27	4	615	646
(b) photocopying	2	0	1	217	220
(c) leave-retrieve messages/information	0	2	4	259	265
(d) rest/waiting place	0	2	0	112	114
(e) other organization/services	7	11	241	53	312
(f) equipment use (computer, fax, etc.)	5	3	1	258	267
27 Violence Total	113	9	2	48	172
(a) general	17	5	2	26	50
(b) abuse-spousal relationship	41	3	0	7	51
(c) sexual assault/abuse	29	0	0	7	36
(d) abuse - family relationships	16	1	0	2	19
(e) sexual harassment/discrimination	10	0	0	6	16
TOTAL	1,370	616	336	2,278	4,600

UTILIZATION INCREASE

During 2001-2002 Centre incoming contacts increased by 1,285 calls and visits over the previous year. These totals do not include program attendance. Table 4 shows the Centre usage statistics for the past ten years while Figure 1 plots the usage pattern.

Year	Incoming Contacts	Total Increase
1991-1992	4,482	1,359
1992-1993	3,610	-872
1993-1994	3,844	234
1994-1995	4,290	446
1995-1996	6,810	2,520
1996-1997	8,387	1,577
1997-1998	9,042	655
1998-1999	8,955	87
1999-2000	8,918	-37
2000-2001	9,606	688
2001-2002	10,891	1,285



REFERRALS

The AWRc offers women the information, support and assistance they need to effectively deal with concerns in their lives. Generally, we do not ask women whether they were referred to the Centre. We do not use intake forms, we do not keep personal records on women using the Centre. We, therefore, do not record the number of referrals made by other agencies to the Centre. This past year women who told us they were referred to the Centre were referred by the following organizations, agencies and individuals.

- Naomi Society
- Addictions Services
- Human Resources Development
- Antigonish Career Resource Centre
- St. F.X.U. Service Learning Program
- Antigonish Housing Authority
- RCMP
- Opportunity Shop
- physicians
- private therapists
- family
- friends
- Leaside Transition House
- Community Services
- St. Martha's Department of Mental Health
- Kids First Family Resource Centre
- St. F.X.U. professors
- Antigonish Town Councillors
- Antigonish Tax Services
- guidance counsellors
- lawyers
- clergy

AWRC staff record all referrals made to other agencies and organizations in the community, region and province. When a woman comes to the AWRc, staff assist her in assessing her situation, help her develop a plan of action to deal with her concerns, refer her to places where she can find the services she needs, and support her in accessing them. This past year we made 427 referrals to agencies, organizations, and government departments that fall under the following categories:

- charities - 159
- government services - 35
- mental health services - 27
- services for abused women - 19
- social housing agencies - 18
- economic development agencies - 6
- police - 3
- women's centres - 3
- service clubs - 61
- legal services - 31
- health care professionals - 20
- education & re-training programs - 19
- child & adolescent services - 17
- employment counsellors - 5
- addictions services - 3
- financial counsellors - 1

AWRC PROGRAMS

The AWRC offers a series of programs each year for women of all ages. Many of the programs offered this year are programs that have been offered in past years and that women have found beneficial. This year we introduced *Inspire*, an after-school program for young women experiencing significant challenges in their home, social and/or school lives.

1. Groups for Adult Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse

Facilitator: Barbara Hayes
Assistant: Amanda Workman
With funding support from Harlequin Enterprises Limited

The AWRC offers Stage One, Stage Two and Stage Three Therapy Groups for Adult Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse. The Groups are facilitated by a registered therapist who has training and experience specific to working with survivors of trauma and of sexual abuse. Group members are encouraged to work with an individual counsellor while they are attending the group. The Survivors Groups are scheduled to allow Stage I participants a minimum break of two months between groups to practice coping and grounding skills before beginning the emotional healing work on which the Stage II Group concentrates. The groups operate within a feminist framework and are offered when a minimum of 8 women have expressed interest.

• Stage I Group for Adult Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse

The Stage I Group is a seven week program that educates the participants about childhood sexual abuse and teaches them the coping and grounding skills they will need to carry through with their emotional healing in a safe manner. The objectives of the Stage I Group are to:

- create a safe group environment where women can begin to learn about sexual abuse and the effects of trauma-traumatic memory, triggers and flash backs;
- teach coping and grounding skills and how to be safe while coping with overwhelming feelings.

The Stage I Group was offered in the spring of 2001. Eight (8) women participated.

• Stage II Group for Adult Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse

The Stage II Group is a ten week program that is designed to support women to move into their personal healing work. The objectives of the Stage II group are to:

- build a safe healing environment in which participants begin to tell their stories;
- work on trauma within the support of the group;
- examine self-blame and self-esteem, body image and relational effects of the abuse;
- create pathways for anger, grieving, loss, and rebuilding and reclaiming self-worth.

The Stage II Group was offered in the fall of 2001. Eight (8) women participated.

Can't Say No?: An Assertiveness Program for Women is a three session program that was developed in response to requests from women who had participated in the *Embracing Ourselves* program. The participants wanted to work more intensively on learning and practising assertiveness skills. The program encouraged women to become aware of personal behaviours that needed to be changed and to practice those changes through role-playing in the group. Women learned new behaviours and were supported in incorporating them into their daily lives. They began by analyzing power and powerlessness, examining women's victimization and identifying the victim role. Participants practiced using their personal will and choice for change.

3. *Can't Say No?: An Assertiveness Program for Women* Facilitator: Barbara Hayes

Embracing Ourselves is a seven session program that is designed to examine and explore topics and issues related to low self-esteem in women. These topics include sex role stereotyping, early childhood conditioning, body image, depression, anger, addictions, sexuality and assertiveness. The focus of the workshops is to help women reclaim their power to assert themselves, to care for themselves, and to value and respect themselves. These sessions have proved to be extremely valuable learning experiences for promoting positive change and empowerment in women's lives. It was offered in both the spring and fall of 2001. Six (6) women participated in each program.

2. *Embracing Ourselves: Building Self-Confidence* Facilitator: Barbara Hayes

The Stage I, Stage II and Stage III groups were evaluated by participants at regular intervals. The evaluations informed the progress of the group and confirmed the achievement of the objectives of the group and the participants' personal healing goals.

The Stage III Group was offered in the spring of 2001. Five (5) women participated.

- evaluate group learnings.
- develop new emotional strengthening practices; and
- work with confronting anger;
- explore further healing of the "inner child", wounds of sexuality and shame;
- create an environment of safety and trust supportive of the continued learning process;

are selected by the participants. The objectives of the Stage III group are to:

The Stage III Group is a six week program that is designed to support women to work on a deep level and to complete specific aspects of their healing work. It builds upon the work of the Stage I and II groups and is open to women who have completed the earlier groups. Discussion topics

• *Stage III Group for Adult Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse* Facilitator: Barbara Hayes Assistant: Amanda Workman

They learned assertive communication skills and each woman identified and role-played scenarios which she identified as presenting her with a significant challenge in using assertive behaviour in her personal life. The program was offered in November of 2001. Six (6) women participated in the program.

4. Teens Take Action:

A Peer Education Approach to Dating Violence and Sexual Assault
Trainers: Amanda Workman, Lucille Harper, Jean Crosby

Funded with a donation from Sable Offshore Energy Enterprises Ltd.

Peer Educators (spring 2001): Candace MacKenzie, Jane Lee, Caitlin Mulcahy, Sarah MacKinnon, Nathan Boudreau, Terry Ray Armour, Krista Tulken, Briana Lynch, Kyle Gillis, Stephen Brosha, Amanda Mansfield, Matthew MacIntyre

Peer Educators (fall 2001 - spring 2002): Melissa MacMaster, Sabha Shafiei, Marian Turniawan, Maureen Armour, Amanda Mansfield, Willow McLean, Ashley Lee Cameron, Stephen Brosha, Kyle Gillis, Alex MacCaul, Noella Murphy, Breanna Lynch.

Teens Take Action: A Peer Education Approach to Dating Violence and Sexual Assault is sponsored by the AWRRC in cooperation with the Guidance Departments of the Dr. John Hugh Gillis Regional School and the St. Andrew Junior School. Each year we train a group of grade 11 and 12, female and male high school students as peer educators. They develop and facilitate dating violence and sexual assault workshops for grade 8 students attending local schools. The peer educators participate in 40 hours of training.

Teens Take Action uses a peer education model. The program recognizes that young people's primary source of information on sexuality, dating relationships, and sexual behaviour comes from their peers and that using a peer education approach increases the likelihood that students will be open to learning about the issues. The program provides information about dating violence and sexual assault -- how to recognize it, what to do about it, and how to prevent it.

In April of 2001 the 12 students trained during the 2000-2001 session presented to 85 grade 8 students at the East Antigonish Education Centre.

In the fall of 2001 we trained 12 new peer educators. This 2001-2002 group presented the workshops to schools and community organizations including the following:

- St. Andrew Junior School - 10 classes of grade 8 students, (250 students)
- Antigonish East Education Centre - grade 8 students (80)
- Chedabucto Education Centre - grade 8 students (59)
- Antigonish & Area Inter-Agency Committee on Family Violence (14)

On their student evaluation sheets, most students indicated that they found the skits helpful in presenting situations they have or are likely to face. They found the peer educators' presentations effective in delivering clear messages about appropriate dating and social behaviours.

5. Young Women: Exploring Our Lives Together

Facilitator: Pamela Fry

Young Women: Exploring Our Lives Together is a program that provides high school adolescent girls with an opportunity to come together on a weekly basis to talk about and to learn more about issues they face in their lives. The program promotes healthy decision-making. The program concluded in April for the 2000-2001 school year and, due to the lack of a facilitator, did not re-commence with a new group of participants until February 2002. This year, topics identified by the participants for discussion included relationships, body image, sexuality, values identification, belonging, harassment, childhood, experiences of sameness/difference, necessities for happiness, self-awareness and assertiveness. Over the year, weekly participation ranged from 6 to 9 girls.

6. Inspire

Facilitator: Pamela Fry

Inspire is a program specifically designed for at-risk girls between the ages of 14 and 17 that provides them with an opportunity to come together on a weekly basis to talk about issues in their lives. Participants to the group are referred by community agencies, school guidance counsellors and by the girls themselves. Each session begins with a check-in time where the participants can talk about what is going on in their lives. Often they use this time to talk about difficult situations they are facing and to problem-solve. As well, each session has a topic which has been identified by the participants as an issue about which they want more information. Topics included self-esteem, healthy sexuality, body image, friendship, love relationships, managing anger through assertiveness, sexual harassment, defining values and setting goals, and knowing and caring for your body. At the beginning of the program, each girl was presented with a journal and encouraged to use it to record her thoughts and feelings throughout the program. The group is limited to ten participants and a group of ten girls has been attending weekly.

7. Youth for Social Justice Group/Students Against Social Injustice

Facilitators: Christie Dyer, Robin Vernest, Jessica Patterson

The *Youth for Social Justice Group* is open to young women and men grades 10 through 12 who are interested in learning more about local and global issues that affect their lives. A group of 8-12 students began meeting in September 2000 and continued to meet weekly through May 2001. The group re-convened with new members in September 2001 and continued meeting bi-weekly

throughout the year. In January of 2002 the group took on a new name - Students Against Social Injustice. Particular areas of interest for the students were the impacts of globalization and working conditions for students in local places of employment.

8. Uncommon Sense for Parents with Teens

Facilitator: Chris Tragakis

The *Uncommon Sense for Parents with Teens* program continued to be offered on a monthly basis until May 2001 when it was discontinued for the summer. This monthly discussion and support group is for parents who are struggling to maintain healthy parenting practices with challenging teens. The group was facilitated by a therapist and provides problem-solving support and guidance. Each session had a structured education component with time for open discussion about issues and challenges any of the parents are experiencing with their teens. The group maintained an attitude of respect for teens as parents try to understand the tumultuous nature of their lives, and the complexity of issues they deal with on a daily basis (school, career, friendships, relationships, drugs, alcohol, safe and unsafe sex, AIDS, etc.). The group encouraged parents to be compassionate with their own difficulties in dealing with their kids' abuses and torment. The mutual support along with the facilitated discussion made this group useful and helpful to parents. The group was open to all non-abusing parents and had a regular attendance of 8-15 parents. The facilitator for the group was not able to continue with the group in September of 2001 and the program was not offered.

9. Income Tax Return Preparation Program

Volunteers: Carmel Gallagher, Service Learning Students, St. F.X.U.

Again this year, we offered our Income Tax Return Preparation Program for low-income women. This program saves people living on low-incomes the cost of paying a fee for service. St. F.X.U. Service Learning students completed the majority of the tax returns. We collected the information from people and the service learning students, under the supervision of their professor Norm Loosen, completed the forms. Carmel Gallagher and Jim McLaren completed returns that people brought in after the closing date for the service learning students. In total 155 income tax returns were completed in 2001-2002.

10. Women and Financial Planning Program

Facilitators: Betty and Len MacDonald, Hicks Financial Services

The Women and Financial Planning Program provides women with information about budgeting, investments, the use of credit, and retirement savings/taxation. Women are provided with useful written reference materials. This year 8 women participated in the program.

11. Women's Free Store

Volunteers: Lisa Greene

When St. F.X.U. students leave for the summer, they often have food, clothing, and furniture items that they do not want to take with them. A WRC volunteers in cooperation with university students collect these items and make them available without cost to women and families in the community who need them. In May 2001 approximately 1,000 pounds of clothing and household items were donated by students and members of the community and made available through the Women's Free Store.

PUBLIC EDUCATION EVENTS

The A WRC developed and/or provided workshops and presentations in response to requests from women who use the centre, as well as in response to requests from the general public. We cooperated with other organizations in planning and/or sponsoring community education programs and events. As well, we participated in workshops, focus groups and events at the invitation of other organizations.

1. A WRC Programming

Poverty, Financial Planning, Economic Concerns

- **Angela Miles** presented information on the **Gift Economy**, an alternative to the exchange economy, that is being developed by women who understand that exchange economy will always be based upon and produce scarcity. It was a thought-provoking discussion.

Health, Mental Health and Relationship Concerns

- A group of women who were recently divorced or separated from their spouses asked for the assistance of the A WRC in setting up a support group. Katherine attended the first few meetings to get the group started. They continue to meet on their own. Issues the group is dealing with are loneliness, financial concerns, moving on to new relationships, and managing children's issues.

- Community health nurses **Marian MacNeil** and **Cathy Novak** presented a **Breast Self-Examination Information Session**.

Violence Against Women

- A community presentation entitled **Date Rape Drugs: Is Anyone Really Safe?** was organized through the AWRG by Angie MacDonald, a Nursing Student, St. F.X. University, as part of her community work.

Young Women's Events

- Two of our high school student volunteers organized a **Young Women's Movie Night** where they showed "*New Waterford Girls*". Amanda Workman facilitated a discussion with the young women after the film.

2. AWRG/AWA Events

- **Annual General Meeting**
The AWRG/AWA held the **Annual General Meeting** in June and celebrated the work of our organizations. **Joanne Tompkins** was presented with the **AWA Peace Cup** for her contribution to organizing the Antigianish effort in the World March of Women 2000. Joanne spoke briefly about her work for peace and justice.

- **Annual Board Retreat**
The Board of Directors of the AWA and AWRG participated in a group building retreat. Frank Gallant, of Peak Experiences and Heather Mayhew, board member, generously donated their expertise, their home and their culinary skills to make the retreat an educational and enjoyable experience for all.

- **Sister Mary MacLeod Bursary**
The Sister Mary MacLeod Bursary is awarded each year to women returning to school. In August, bursaries of \$250 each were awarded to Dorothy Izzard and Janette Fecteau.

- **Coady Picnic**
Each summer we organize a gathering that brings together women from the Antigianish Women's Association with women from around the world studying at the Coady International Institute. This year Oona Landry graciously hosted the picnic in her lovely home and gardens in Bayfield. Some 75 women of all ages gathered to share stories, laughter and food.

• December 6th Day Of Remembrance

A *December 6th Remembrance* candle lighting gathering was held at the St. James United Church where women, men and children gathered to remember the 14 women murdered at L'Ecole Polytechnique. This gathering is a recognition that violence against women remains an everyday occurrence and that we must continue our work to create a just and peaceful world. Shahnaz Kahn spoke about the situation facing women and girls in Afghanistan.

- **International Women's Day**
AWA members, AWRRC staff, along with women from the community joined in a celebration of **International Women's Day** on March 8. There was food and drink, music, poetry, and reading from some interesting and amusing creative works. The celebration was extremely well-organized and well-attended.
 - **Volunteer Recruitment, Orientation, Training & Appreciation**
In our efforts to recruit volunteers, Amanda Workman and Angie Babin participated in the **St. F. X. University Society Night**, where they introduced potential volunteers to the work of the AWRRC.
 - A total of 9 women participated in our fall orientation session which prepared them to help with general duties at the Centre. Two Volunteer Orientations were held to accommodate youth and students who came to the AWRRC during the year to offer to volunteer. Amanda and Angie organized and facilitated the volunteer orientation sessions.
 - A **Volunteer Appreciation** celebration was held in March to recognize and honour the work of the many volunteers that are essential to the well being of the AWRRC. Certificates were handed out to show thanks and appreciation.
 - **Program Facilitation Training:** The Teens Take Action Peer Educators participated in 3 full day and 4 half day training sessions to prepare and practice their presentation on dating violence and sexual assault.
3. **AWRC Committees**
- AWRC staff participated on the following committees:
- The **Newsletter Committee** produced two AWRRC Updates which were sent to all AWA members as well as to people receiving the fall and winter direct mail fundraising letters. The committee also produced two AWA Newsletters. Committee members included Charlie tenBrinke, Katherine Reed, Amanda Workman, and Patti Martin
 - The **Personnel Committee** undertook the following tasks:
 - discussed hiring procedures and protocols in preparation for upcoming projects.
 - selected and interviewed applicants for the summer student "Research Assistant" position. Meghan MacIntyre was hired.
 - interviewed several qualified applicants for the position of **Project Coordinator** for the **On the Road to Employment Project**. Heather Carson was offered the position and accepted it.

- The **WORK Set** program invited Pamela Fry and Amanda Workman back to their program to discuss sexual violence. Program participants first watched a video entitled "Still Killing Us Softly" and then broke into separate male and female groups for discussion sessions.
- AWRC staff facilitated workshops/presentations on sexual violence and dating violence.

Violence Against Women

4. Outreach, Presentations and Training Sessions

- Board members along with core staff participated on the following project Advisory Committees.
 - **On the Road to Employment Advisory Committee** - Lucille Harper, Donna MacDonald
 - **The PATH II Project Coordinating Committee** - Lucille Harper
 - **Social Assistance Reform in Nova Scotia: Is It Working for Women? Steering Committee** - Lucille Harper, Katherine Reed
- The **AWA Social Action Committee** organized a public education event that provided an opportunity for families to discuss world events in response to the September 11 terrorist attack in New York City.
- The **Policy Committee** began revising and updating our policy manual.
 - Sue Adams, Elsa Arbuthnot, Lucille Harper
- selected and interviewed candidates for the Status of Women Canada project - **Social Assistance Reform in Nova Scotia: Is It Working for Women?** and offered the position to Maria MacDougall who accepted it.
- hired Jean Crosby as Project Coordinator for the **Rural Youth Healthy Relationships Education Project**. Jean began working full-time March 4, 2002. Jean worked on the project during its development phase.
- reviewed 18 applications and interviewed 4 candidates for the Office Manager position for the **Rural Youth Healthy Relationships Education Project** and hired Jackie Jacques.
- hired Isabel Gillis as **Crisis Support Worker**. Isabel will help with program planning as well as providing individual support to women.
- The **Policy Committee** began revising and updating our policy manual.
 - Sue Adams, Elsa Arbuthnot, Lucille Harper
- The **AWA Social Action Committee** organized a public education event that provided an opportunity for families to discuss world events in response to the September 11 terrorist attack in New York City.
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 - **On the Road to Employment Advisory Committee** - Lucille Harper, Donna MacDonald
 - **The PATH II Project Coordinating Committee** - Lucille Harper
 - **Social Assistance Reform in Nova Scotia: Is It Working for Women? Steering Committee** - Lucille Harper, Katherine Reed

- The X-nite Line, a crisis support and information line for St. F.X.U. students, invited Lucille Harper to facilitate a training session for their volunteers on responding to sexual assault disclosure.

- The Antigonish & Area Inter-agency Committee on Family Violence asked Lucille Harper to speak about violence towards women as the topic of their Education session. Her address, *Understanding Violence Towards Women*, provided a feminist analysis of violence towards women.

- At the opening panel discussion of the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre Legal Education Conference, Amanda Workman reflected on her role at the AWRRC as a women's advocate and spoke briefly about what she perceived as some of the challenges women negotiate concerning the reporting of sexual violence in rural Nova Scotia.

- At the Women's Resistance: from Victimization to Criminalization Conference Amanda Workman co-facilitate a workshop with Daisy Kler, of Vancouver Rape Relief and the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre entitled *Women's Centres as Organizing Centres: Organizing Against Violence Against Women while Resisting Co-option*.

Poverty

AWRC staff facilitated workshops/presentations on poverty and poverty-related concerns.

- Colleen Cameron's Nursing Program Students at St. F. X. University completed and presented a gender analysis of the AWRRC's action research project "*A Community Response to Women's Poverty*". Small groups of students applied a gender analysis to a couple of chapters each from the report and presented their findings to the rest of the class. Katherine attended and participated in the discussion following the presentation.
- At the National Youth Volunteer Summit held in April 2001 in Summerside, Prince Edward Island, Amanda Workman and Kim MacKinnon presented two 2-hour workshops on poverty in Canada for youth volunteers attending the summit. Feedback from the youth participating in the workshops indicated that not only did they have fun, but they gained a new insight into poverty issues facing youth and women in Canada.

Presentations to the On the Road to Employment Project

AWRC staff facilitated workshops or made presentations to participants in the *On the Road to Employment* Program about a number of issues and concerns.

- Katherine presented an information session on **women and housing** in the Antigoniash area to both *On the Road to Employment* programs. She presented some of the information she has been finding in the course of her work with the Women Examine Alternatives to Market Housing Project.

- Amanda facilitated a discussion about "**Sexual Harassment as Sexual Violence**". The group talked about how sexual violence and the threat of sexual violence works to control women's behaviour, in both their public and private lives. Women shared their experiences of sexual harassment in the work place and in their personal lives, and the group talked about how to address the issue in their personal lives.

- Lucille facilitated a workshop on **The Importance of Cover Letters** for the two *On the Road to Employment* Programs. The workshop stressed the importance of developing and including a well-constructed cover letter with applications to potential employers.

- Amanda facilitated a discussion with the participants entitled **Gender Role Stereotypes and Socialization**. The discussion was lively and women were encouraged to take opportunity to reflect on how socialization and gender role stereotyping processes impact on their own lives. A WRC staff attended the January 2002 graduation of participants in the "On the Road to Employment Program". Lucille Harper, Barbara Hayes and Pat Skinner were asked to say a few words to the graduates. It was an inspiring event in that the participants talked about their experience in the program and the difference it made in their lives. Staff in attendance included Lucille Harper, Katherine Reed, Vangie Babin, and Amanda Workman

As well A WRC staff attended the June 2002 the *On the Road to Employment* participants' graduation. The graduates spoke about what they gained from the program. Their presentations emphasized the importance of keeping this program going and available to women. Lucille was asked to say a few words on behalf of the Centre. Staff in attendance included Lucille Harper and Amanda Workman.

Youth

A WRC staff facilitated workshops/presentations on youth and youth-related concerns.

- Theresa MacNeil, Guidance Department, St. Andrew Junior School asked A WRC staff to facilitate a workshop with grade 6, 7 and 8 peer helpers. The full-day workshop was designed to help youth identify and provide support to marginalised peers. - Amanda Workman, Lucille Harper

AWRC Information Presentations

Each year we are asked by organizations to do presentations on the work of the AWRC. This year we presented to the following groups.

- **Elaine MacLean, Coady International Institute**, brought a group of 12 Coady Certificate Program students to the AWRC. They toured the Centre, found out about the work we do, and participated in a lively discussion about women's issues and community development and advocacy. One student returned the following week for an individual interview with Katherine Reed to delve into how the Women's Centre accesses alternative information and how it stays connected to other groups involved in the same issues with which the Centre is involved. - Katherine Reed

- **The Antigianish/Guyssborough Black Development Association** invited the AWRC to staff a booth at the **Employment Symposium** to provide information about our services and programs. Sherry Battiste participated on behalf of the Centre.

- **The Sociology/Anthropology Society** and the **Department of Sociology/Anthropology** at St. F.X.U. University held a Career Night in January 2002. Amanda Workman participated on behalf of the AWRC and talked about the ways in which the AWRC can be considered a community development organization. The event was well attended by students and community and government agencies.

5. Networking

AWRC staff attended and/or participated in individual and community meetings and discussions, where we presented concerns about poverty, violence and other issues facing women, as well as heard from others about their work and concerns. These meetings included the following.

- Joanne Tompkins and Ed Miller met with Lucille Harper to discuss the dynamics of her experiences with organizing political and social justice work in a small town community and rural area.

- **The Antigianish County Adult Learning Association** held an open house event to mark International Literacy Day. Anne Marie Pelly, a young single mom, newly enrolled in a stationary engineering program at the NS Community College and the only female student in the class, was a guest speaker. Katherine attended and was able to network with women for the benefit of the Women Examine Alternatives to Market Housing Project.

- **Shelley Ballantyne**, Manager of Customized Training, Nova Scotia Community College, Pictou Campus, met with Lucille to identify training programs that could be delivered to

- **The Antigoniash Town and County Community Health Board held a Focus Group in** March to evaluate the Community Health Resources Directory in order to make it more user friendly and accessible. - Vangie Babin

- **Rita MacCauly, a St. F.X.U. Human Nutrition student** interviewed Katherine Reed regarding food security in the Antigoniash area, how the AWRRC assists women with this issue, and how women who are poor cope with the lack of food security. Professor, Doris Gillis, thanked us for this assistance and remarked that the student found the AWRRC information very valuable.
- **Brenda Bradford, evaluator for the Circle of Prevention Project,** interviewed Lucille about her experience with and perceptions about the work of the Project.
- **Mary Simpson, evaluator for the Muriel McQueen Ferguson Centre for Family Violence Research Conference, Abuse of Women and Girls in Rural Communities,** interviewed Lucille about the effectiveness of the conference.
- **As part of her thesis research, Meaghan MacIntyre, Dalhousie student,** interviewed full-time staff members about the way in which they approach their work as feminists working in a rural community. - Amanda Workman, Katherine Reed, Lucille Harper, and Vangie Babin

following:

AWRRC staff participated in research interviews and agency evaluations which included the

6. Research Interviews and Agency Evaluations

- **Peggy Mahon and Roger Wehrell, St. F.X.U. Extension Department** met with Lucille Harper to discuss current AWRRC programs and projects, the current work of the Extension Department and to look at ways that we could work together. We agreed to discuss further a role for the Extension Department in our housing initiative as well as how they could take the women participating in the On the Road to Employment Program a step further. Subsequently, Peggy and Roger met with Lucille and Katherine Reed to discuss the possible involvement of the Extension Department in our work on housing.
- **Sally Murphy, SAAX Coordinator, and her co-worker, Theresa** brought to the AWRRC their concerns with the treatment St. F.X. students are receiving at St. Martha's Emergency Department when they go to ask for the morning after pill. Because some of the students have received a judgemental and disrespectful response, there is an impression among female students that they can't use Emergency Department services for any sexuality issue.
- **women in Antigoniash.** Lucille suggested that programs serving the needs of the oil and gas industry that develop skills for jobs that pay decent wages would benefit women in this area.

- Rana Taber, Community Economic Development Program Researcher, Concordia University, was in the province to interview selected organizations about capacity building. Concordia is doing case studies of organizations across Canada. One of the people she interviewed encouraged her to approach the AWRRC. She interviewed Lucille about the work of the AWRRC and how we have built the capacity of the Women's Centre.

7. Consultations, Information Sessions, Workshops and Conferences

AWRRC staff and board members participated in consultations, workshops and conferences addressing social justice concerns and status of women issues.

Consultations

- Wanda Thomas Bernard and John Yogis from Dalhousie University presented an overview of the Phase II Organizational Review of the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission. Topics discussed included mandate, leadership on human rights policy, optimal use of resources, partnerships, alternative models, equity groups, case management, and tribunals. This consultation is taking place across Nova Scotia. - Pamela Fry

- Men's Intervention Group Approaches was the topic of the Men's Groups Discussion Day hosted by the Department of Community Services. The purpose of the day was to explore best practices. Men's Program Coordinators introduced the approaches they find useful in working with men who abuse intimate partners. Approaches were to include Feminist Education Group Work and Narrative/Feminist Therapy. Unfortunately it was a stormy day and Bob Whitman, New Leaf, was unable to attend and present the Feminist Education Group Work. The Narrative/Feminist Therapy uses individual counselling as well as group work. It does not, however, require that men participate in the group work. Groups represented included Men's programs, Transition House Association members, Women's Centres Connect, the Department of Justice and the Department of Community Services. Lucille and Susan Ivany, Second Story Women's Centre, represented Connect! - Lucille Harper

- The Avalon Sexual Assault Centre organized a two-hour focus group, *Sexual Assault Legal Education Training: Improving the Service Provider's Response to Survivors of Sexual Violence*, to determine the training needs of service providers responding to survivors of sexual violence, to identify which community and government agencies would most benefit from such training and to identify gaps in and barriers to obtaining accurate sexual assault legal information. - Amanda Workman, Lucille Harper

- The Antigonish Town and County Community Health Board held a community key informant brainstorming session to identify what types of information the Community Health

- Board would need in order to assess the status of health in this community. The AWRRC was not alone in raising issues of poverty and affordable housing. - Katherine Reed
- The AWRRC was invited to participate in a provincial housing symposium which was organized by the Housing Services Division of the Department of Community Services. The main goal of the symposium was to help the Division set a new course, assuming that funding for new social housing will begin to come into Nova Scotia. It remains to be seen whether new funding will actually materialize and what the Division will identify as objectives - Katherine Reed
- The Affordable Housing Association of Nova Scotia asked the AWRRC to participate in a conference to identify recommendations for the current negotiations between the provincial and federal government. The recommendations would be used to establish an agreement for cost-sharing new federal funding for affordable rental housing and to set out a strategy for influencing government to move in that direction. - Katherine Reed

Information Sessions

- In an Antigonish presentation, John Young, Director General of Business Development Branch, and Rod Young, Field Officer, ACOA, informed people about the **Atlantic Investment Partnership, Strategic Community Investment Fund (SCIF)**. SCIF is designed to support community economic development initiatives. However, it has a rather limited definition of CED and does not fund projects of a primarily social or recreational nature. - Lucille Harper, Katherine Reed
- The Department of Community Services held an information session on the **Employment Support and Income Assistance Policy** for human service workers and volunteers who work with low-income people. A WRC staff raised a concern brought forward in an AWRRC participatory research project documenting low-income women's issues. Women identified their need to have a clear and simple message posted in the Community Services waiting room and/or interview offices about who social assistance applicants and recipients could contact if they felt they have not been treated with respect by caseworkers. Antigonish District Manager, Lisa Smith, agreed to take the suggestion forward to her office as well as to her colleagues at the provincial table. - Katherine Reed, Amanda Workman
- As part of the Women's Studies Colloquium Series organized by the Halifax universities, **Margrit Kennedy** presented an alternative model for structuring the economy. The presentation was based on her book *Interest and Inflation Free Money*. - Lucille Harper
- The St. F.X.U. Nursing Department Committee on Scholarly Activities and the **Guysborough Antigonish Strait Health Authority (GASHA)** invited staff, faculty, local Community Health Board members, District Health Authority staff, and community agencies

to their Local Networking for Health Research workshop. The purpose of the day was to identify and explore research opportunities and partnerships in the GASHA health district.

- Lucille Harper

Conferences

- The Nova Scotia Coalition of Women for Justice hosted a conference, *Justice for Women ~ Balancing the Scales: the Sequel* and held their Annual General Meeting in April 2001. After considerable discussion the Coalition members reached a consensus agreement that the Coalition would focus on addressing racism within the justice system. Recognizing that this was an extremely broad issue the Coalition agreed to advocate, in the short-term, for restored Legal Aid funding levels. - Amanda Workman

- *Strategies For A Just Society: Holding Government Accountable* was the focus of the 38th Annual Convention of the Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers. Speakers called upon social workers to work actively within their communities and spheres of influence to resist cuts to Public Services. In both the key note address given by Ed Miller and in the panel, the work and leadership of the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre was noted. Katherine was asked to speak to the group about the work of the Women in Transition 2000 project. - Lucille Harper, Katherine Reed

- *Everyone's Business: Making the Case for Social and Economic Inclusion* was a conference hosted by FemJEP in collaboration with the Maritime Centre of Excellence for Women's Health - Social Inclusion Project and Population and Public Health Branch, Atlantic Region, Health Canada. The goals of the conference were to build a common understanding about Social Exclusion and its social and economic impacts, and to consider the impacts that Social and Economic Inclusion could have on the public policy process in Nova Scotia. Panel presentations provided government, academic and community perspectives on social and economic exclusion and inclusion. Small group discussions identified challenges and opportunities in using social and economic exclusion and inclusion as an approach in the public policy process in Nova Scotia. - Lucille Harper

- The Learning and Innovations Institute *Democracy and Active Citizen Engagement* Conference sponsored by the Coady International Institute in August brought together, for three days, community organization leaders from different parts of the world to discuss and learn about citizen engagement, social advocacy and social transformation. Lucille Harper attended as a observer.

- Amanda attended the national conference entitled *Women's Resistance: from Victimization to Criminalization* from October 1-3, 2001. The conference, held in Ottawa, was sponsored by the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies and the Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres. It brought together a diverse group of approximately

- The AWRRC acts in support of initiatives that address issues relating to the status of women.
- Amanda met with women students from the Dr. John Hugh Gillis Regional High School to share information about teen pregnancy and youth sexual health. The women are working together on a presentation for their social studies class.
- Following the horrendous events of September 11, the AWRRC held **Noon Vigils** to join with community members in prayers, meditation and dialogue on the critical situation threatening world peace. - Barbara Hayes
- As part of FemJEEP's research the AWRRC facilitated two focus groups on what women on social assistance were finding useful, and not useful, within the employment supports aspects of the policy (e.g. funding for child care, transportation, courses, etc.). FemJEEP provided the focus group data was written into a report and forwarded to Susan LeFort, the FemJEEP researcher for this part of the project. - Katherine Reed

8. Support Actions

- The Avalon Sexual Assault Centre Sexual Assault Legal Education Conference for Halifax. A panel discussion entitled *Accessing the Legal Process After Sexual Assault*, included representatives from various sectors of the legal system. Amanda participated as a panelist talking about the support provided to women by women's centres. Facilitated workshops included Record Keeping Issues, Reporting, Victim Rights and Advocacy/Working with Other Service Providers. Brenda Zareski introduced the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners Program. Participants were provided with a binder containing workshop resource material. - Amanda Workman

9. Collaborative Initiatives

The AWRRC cooperates with sister organizations in developing and sponsoring collaborative initiatives.

- The three **Women's Centres in North Eastern Nova Scotia** - AWRRC, Pictou County Women's Centre and Every Woman's Centre, Sydney - met to further develop a joint proposal to Status of Women Canada, *Social Assistance Reform in Nova Scotia: Is It Working for Women?* The project will monitor the implementation of the new social assistance policy and evaluate its impact on the lives of women and children who access social assistance. The project was approved in January approved but not in the amount of funding necessary to carry out the original plan. The Centres met to re-configure the workplan and timeline and the project work began in February 2002.
- Katherine Reed, Lucille Harper, Bernadette MacDonald, Louise MacDonald

- Sr. Stella Chafe, Sr. Elizabeth Riopelle and Sr. Anne MacLellan met with Katherine Reed and Lucille Harper to discuss a housing project submitted by the AWRRC that would support the work of the Antigonish Affordable Housing Society in taking the first steps to develop affordable housing in Antigonish. Funding was approved for the research and production of a need and demand study as well as the development of a formal proposal.

- **Adrian Papanek, National Crime Prevention Centre**, contacted Lucille to discuss our application for funding for a project to work with youth. Rather than fund the AWRRC

proposed Pearl Project, he suggested we consider replicating a project, "Women and Violence: Education is Prevention", that is underway in Saltspring Island, British Columbia and sponsored by Saltspring Women Opposed to Violence and Abuse (SWOVA). After visiting the project on Saltspring Island, the AWRRC agreed to develop and submit a proposal that would involve us in collaborating with SWOVA on the project. The project will work with East Antigonish Academy and Chedabucto Academy in Guysborough to deliver healthy relationship programming to students in grades 7, 8, 9, and 11. The project was funded in February 2002.

- Pamela Fry, Jean Crosby, Lucille Harper

In preparing the proposal for the subsequent *Rural Youth Healthy Relationships Education Project*, Lucille Harper and Jean Crosby met with school administrators to introduce and to engage their interest and participation in it. They met with:

- Linda Dewar, Vice Principal, St. Andrew Junior School
- Elizabeth Mills, Principal, Guysborough Academy, and Miles MacDonald, Chedabucto Education Centre
- Sherman England, East Antigonish Academy
- Jack Beaton, Program Supervisor, Strait Regional School Board

The AWRRC is used by community groups for meetings, program delivery and other activities. It is also used by individuals who need a private space to study or to meet with a service provider, a tutor, a friend or a family member. The following groups used the AWRRC as a meeting space:

11. Community Use of the AWRRC

- The AWRRC was involved in a CBC Radio One broadcast for **Information Morning** on the issue of **homelessness in rural Canada**. Katherine Reed and Norma Haley were interviewed.
- Katherine was interviewed on CJFX Radio about **our housing project** and the **National Housing Strategy Day of Action**, which was spearheaded in Antigonish by the Antigonish Affordable Housing Society.
- CJFX Radio interviewed Amanda about the **Youth Centre Project** of the Crime Prevention Association. Amanda noted that the AWRRC has a variety of youth programs and that in the past, the young people in contact with the AWRRC have identified the need for a sustainable centre for youth in Antigonish.
- The AWRRC runs a regular **News From The Centre** column in the local weekly paper, **The Casket** and the **Casket** is asked to cover many of our programming events. The AWRRC is asked by the media to talk about current social and economic events affecting women locally, provincially and nationally. Media interviews included the following.

10. Media

- The AWRRC co-sponsored the book launch of **Ribsaunce** in which local writer **Pam MacLean** had a short story published. The launch provided a delightful evening in which community women read some of the stories and poems included in the book.
- The AWRRC was approached by a group of women from Guysborough who asked us to consider delivering AWRRC outreach services in Guysborough and possibly developing a satellite women's centre. While we are very interested in working with the Guysborough women to develop an outreach service, our staff and resources are already stretched to the limit. If we are able to secure increased hours for our crisis support workers, we will look seriously at such a service.
- On behalf of the AWRRC, Jean Crosby gave a presentation about the *Rural Youth Healthy Relationships Education Project* to the Guysborough Inter-Agency Committee to Address Family Violence.

- Lucille Harper met with **Maureen MacDonald and Gerry Pyc of the NDP** to inform them about the work of the AWRRC and our current financial situation. They were suitably impressed with the scope of our work, and our ability to 'grow' our budget.
- In March 2002, Lucille Harper participated in and represented the AWRRC as well as Connect! at the **NDP Roundtable on Women**. Maureen MacDonald, critic for the Status of Women, chaired the meeting. NDP staff present included Randy Henderson, Jim Bentz and Alice Sandall. While the organizations represented were largely Halifax based, the roundtable provided an opportunity for us to bring issues affecting women to the attention of the NDP. The common issues identified were housing, poverty, lack of government consultation with women's organizations on the Domestic Violence Intervention Act and the underfunding of women's services.
- In September, **Judy Jackson, Director, Community Outreach, and Nina Clarke, Regional Administrator, Northern Region, Department of Community Services** met with Lucille Harper and Bernadette MacDonald, Pictou County Women's Centre, to discuss our current financial situations as well as the likelihood of entering into service contract agreements in the next fiscal year. While the process for developing and negotiating service contracts was not yet clear, it appeared funding for Women's Centres would be status quo for the next year. Lucille suggested to Judy and Nina that the Department fund a part time staff position to enable us to develop and implement a corporate fundraising strategy. Judy agreed to discuss this with the Halifax office. Funding was not approved.
- **Caroline O'Connell, Board Co-Chairperson, and Lucille Harper, Director, met with Peter Mackay, M.P.,** to update him on our work, the financial situation of the AWRRC and to ask him to take our concerns forward to his colleagues at the provincial level.
- **The AWRRC Director and Board members met several times with Angus MacIsaac, M.L.A.** for Antigonish, to keep him apprised of our work, our funding situation, our need for a budget increase and to ask that he support our request for adequate funding at the Caucus table.
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12. Meetings with Political Representatives and Bureaucrats

- Divorce and Separation Support Group
- Community Spanish Class
- Dial-A-Ride
- therapist
- Youth members in the community
- Mothers Matter Support Group
- Community French Class
- WEB Society

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT LIAISON AND COMMITTEE WORK

AWRC staff and board members are actively involved at the local, regional and provincial levels with committees and organizations that address issues affecting women. The AWRC has been instrumental in the initiation of several of these committees and, in others, has been involved since their inception. This work provides opportunities for information sharing, community development, project development, and mutual support.

1. Community/Regional Level

1.1 Antigonish Committee to Address Sexual Violence (ACASV)

AWRC Representatives: Vangie Babin, Amanda Workman, Lucille Harper

The Antigonish Committee to Address Sexual Violence has a double mandate - community education and improving the response of local services and systems to adult survivors of sexual violence. The Committee spent some time in the spring of 2001 clarifying their mandate and formulating a workplan for the September to June months. At the November meeting, because of commitments for the winter and spring that would make it impossible for her to attend meetings, Lucille Harper offered her resignation as chairperson. Kim Hodgekinson and Amanda Workman agreed to act as co-chairs.

- The Education Subcommittee of the ACASV initiated the following actions. They:
- identified the need for community education about healthy sexuality across the lifespan and suggested that a discussion about healthy sexuality would provide an opportunity for discussion about sexual violence.

- invited the **Teens Take Action Peer Educators** to present their workshop on dating violence and sexual assault awareness and prevention to the Committee. Following the skits, members of the audience took the opportunity to ask the educators questions about their work and their experiences.

- held a sensitivity training workshop, **Working with Survivors of Trauma: Sensitivity Training Workshop** with facilitator **Barbara Hayes**. Topics that were covered in the workshop included: defining and identifying trauma; various stages of healing; flashbacks; appropriate responses when dealing with child sexual abuse; triggers; responding to disclosure; personal and professional concerns when working with survivors; supporting hope in the client's healing journey; help and hope for service providers; making appropriate referrals. Participants are requesting a day-long workshop.

- planned a workshop on *Sexual Assault Legal Education* that will be facilitated by Jackie Stevens, Avalon Sexual Assault Centre and held in April 2002.

- discussed the District Health Authority policy on sexual assault. Concerns of the group centred on the use of the term 'rape' when referring to sexual assault and procedures which could be more 'survivor oriented'.

1.2 Antigay and Area Inter-Agency Committee on Family Violence AWRC Representative: Amanda Workman

The Inter-agency meets monthly and is comprised of representatives from local government and non-government services who respond to victims of family violence as well as to perpetrators. The function of the Inter-agency is to monitor the community's response to family violence, to identify gaps in services, to network, to educate the public about family violence, and to lobby for change.

Inter-agency members agreed that every third meeting would include an educational/professional development component. Over the past year the committee undertook the following initiatives to educate committee members and the broader community about family violence and related issues.

- The Inter-Agency Committee sponsored a presentation on **Firearms Legislation**. Presenters included Martin Cramer, Chief Firearms Officer in NS, Craig Smith of the Westville Police Department and Peter MacKay, Member of Parliament.
- Cameron McDougall and Nancy MacDonald, co-facilitators of the group **Shifting Gears** presented information about their program to the committee.
- Marla Gaudet, coordinator for the **St. F.X.U. Service Learning Program**, spoke about service learning and the benefits of having service learning students within community.
- Lucille Harper, **AWRC**, provided a feminist analysis of violence towards women in her presentation **Understanding Violence Towards Women**.
- Katherine Reed, **AWRC**, provided a feminist analysis of poverty in a presentation entitled **Poverty is a Political Problem**. The presentation focussed on social policy in recent years and its impact on women.
- Debra Dithurvide, **Home Care**, spoke about elder abuse and the application of the **Adult Protection Act** for both the aged, and people with mental illnesses or disability.

Other initiatives of the Inter-agency Committee included the following.

- The Committee organized the **Purple Ribbon Campaign** which remembers the murder of 14 women students at Ecole Polytechnic on December 6, 1989 as well as all women who experience male violence. This year, the youth volunteers at the **AWRC** assisted with the Purple Ribbon Campaign by making ribbons.
- The Committee sent a letter to the RCMP, Nova Scotia Minister of Justice Michael Baker, and Federal Justice Minister Martin Cauchon, urging ongoing training for policing forces about woman abuse.

- Inter-agency Committee member organizations are in the process of developing a resource list of materials available at the various community agencies. The list will help identify community resource needs and facilitate access to the educational resources already available in the community.

1.3 Antigonish Coordinated Services AWRC representative: Katherine Reed

This committee, a network of local organizations who provide financial support to low-income people, has representation from the Department of Community Services, RCMP Community Policing, service clubs and charities working with people on low-incomes. A major initiative of Antigonish Coordinated Services has been the "Christmas Toy Program". The Committee decided there would not be a "Christmas Toy" program this year and subsequently a number of members stopped attending meetings and the Committee became inactive. The AWRC calls upon ACS member groups to provide financial assistance for women who came to the Centre with financial emergencies.

1.4 Antigonish Coalition for Economic Justice

AWRC Representatives: Katherine Reed, Krista DeCoste, Maria MacDougall

The Antigonish Coalition for Economic Justice (ACEJ) is made up of representatives of local groups and individuals who have a justice focus. ACEJ undertook the following initiatives in 2001-2002.

- ACEJ organized a May Day (May 1) pot luck supper where the delegates to the protest at the Summit of the Americas in Quebec City, Ed Miller, Krista DeCoste, and Sister Mary Eileen MacEachern, spoke about their experiences and discussed the proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas trade agreement.
- ACEJ hosted the visits of two caravans which toured the Atlantic region. The **Qatar Caravan** focussed on the World Trade Organization and, more generally, the impacts of globalization on people in Canada and around the world. They are part of an education and awareness campaign that was organized to correspond with the World Trade Organization talks in Doha, Qatar. The Caravan called for "fair trade for a better world."

The **Iraq Caravan** was touring the region to educate people about the humanitarian crisis in Iraq that has resulted from the United Nations' sanctions on that country since the Gulf War.

- In response to the Department of Community Services' plan to privatize part of its social assistance operations, ACEJ printed and handed out information leaflets identifying their concerns about this issue - namely, the cost of the program, profiteering from poverty,

degeneration of program quality, decreased ability to access emergency funding, and erosion of the public service.

1.5 Supporting Women at Risk

AWRC Representative: Katherine Reed, Amanda Workman

The Supporting Women at Risk committee was organized by the AWRC staff to begin to look for better ways to support women in the community with delayed learning, mental health, brain injury and other conditions that increase their vulnerability to poverty and sexual predation. We organized three meetings with service agencies in the community who also work with women in such situations. The group agreed that some type of supportive, independent living situation would be ideal. Discussion included a review of supported housing options in our own and other communities. Katherine agreed to investigate further alternative housing options.

1.6 Antigonish Affordable Housing Society (AAHS)

AWRC Representative: Katherine Reed

The Antigonish Affordable Housing Society (AAHS) had a busy year in which a great deal of organizational building has taken place. The Society now is made up of 18 people, approximately half of which are involved because they need housing, and half because they are concerned about the lack of affordable housing and want to help develop some new housing in Antigonish. This group strives to ensure that both types of members participate more or less on an equal footing - that neither dominate the group. This requires a conscious effort on the part of all members.

AAHS applied to PLURA for \$3,000 funding to cover the costs of child care and transportation for the members who need housing so they could attend AAHS meetings and other activities. A number of smaller grants were received from our municipal units, a service club, and some local businesses (total of \$1,300). Securing these small grants served as a way to inform people in the community about our efforts and cultivate their future support.

Also in the fall of 2001, the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Martha granted the AWRC \$15,000 to steer the development of a need and demand study for AAHS's first project, and to support the members of the group as they learned new roles and took on responsibility.

To date, these are the highlights of what AAHS has accomplished:

- carried out two raffles to raise funds to cover meeting expenses and incidental expenses (In March, the group sold \$645 worth of raffle tickets on 5 prizes - two of which were large prizes donated by Central Supplies.)

The Guysborough/Antigonish Dial-a-Ride Association (GADA) was a broad-based committee formed to advise the Nova Scotia Department of Housing and Municipal Affairs about the Inclusive Transportation Pilot Project. The project sought to address barriers to transportation for local residents in need of special and/or affordable transportation (people with disabilities, low-income people and seniors, etc.). As well, it sought to better link the users with existing services, to coordinate services, and to maximize the services' efficiency. Over the year, GADA undertook a number of initiatives and worked very hard to establish a public transportation system. In April

1.7 The Guysborough/Antigonish Dial-a-Ride Association AWRC representative: Katherine Reed

- went on a field trip to housing co-operatives in Sackville (NB) and Moncton (NB) and the headquarters of Atlantic People's Housing Ltd. and gathered information about how other housing co-ops are developed and operated
- hosted a meeting with Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation official Thomas Levesque to discuss ways CMHC might be able to help advance the group's housing objectives
- met with Assistant Manager of Bergen Green Credit Union, Neil Scribner to discuss how it might be able to support the group's objectives (not a productive effort)
- hosted an information session with a local builder, Dwight How, to learn about the cost of building and the factors that must be considered in planning a project
- formed a fundraising committee and a land search committee and held several meetings to plan and accomplish activities (land search activities, meetings with municipal planning officer, fundraisers)
- discussed the design of the housing development, how many units would be built, and what model of organization would be developed to operate the project, opted to adopt the rental housing co-op model of organization, and articulated all of these decisions in a flyer
- recruited AAHS members with particular areas of expertise and ability (a landscape architect and experienced municipal planning committee member, a lawyer, a credit union manager, and the owner of a well-established local business) which complements our original group of women who understand the problem from direct experience, and some other people with expertise (e.g. real estate appraiser, community development workers, municipal representatives)
- set up and operated an information booth in the local mall on November 22/01 for National Housing Strategy Day of Action in Canada
- held two workshops, planned and delivered by three St. Francis Xavier University Accounting Students, to help interested members learn the basics of financial record keeping
- identified a building site (owned by the Town of Antigonish) and began a process of attempting to persuade the Town to donate it to the project (pending!)
- received a letter from the Chair of the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission, James E. Dewar, Q.C. congratulating AAHS on our work to "respond to the identified need in your area to have available appropriate and affordable housing in particular for households headed by women."

2001, responsibility for the program was transferred from Guysborough Seniors 2000 to the newly incorporated Guysborough/Antigonish Dial-A-Ride Association.

- GADA developed policies, including a personnel policy, to guide the organization and worked on issues facing staff, volunteer recruitment, strategic planning for transportation services, and establishing sources of funding.
- The executive of the Dial-a-Ride Board met with representatives of the Province of Nova Scotia Community Transportation Program, Rene Frigault and Marvin MacDonald, who provided some assurances of continued funding, pending the submission of a business plan for Dial-a-Ride.
- In June 2001, at a meeting of the Board of Directors, Board members decided to disband the organization and cease operations. The decision came about after failed attempts to garner municipal government support for the project, to re-establish and build partnerships among transportation stakeholders in the two counties, to secure adequate funding to operate the service, and to gather and maintain a base of volunteer drivers to provide rides for people in need of this service.

1.8 PATH (People Assessing Their Health) Network AWRC Representative: Lucille Harper

The PATH Network kept the work of PATH moving ahead this past year. The PATH Network includes representatives from health services, community-based agencies and universities in the Eastern Health Region. The purpose of the Network is "to provide opportunities for people and communities in the Eastern Health Region to critically analyze issues in order to effect the changes necessary to build healthy communities." Over the year the PATH Network undertook the following activities.

- The PATH Network provided support to the PATH II Project - *Applying Community Health Impact Assessment to Rural Community Health Planning*. At Network meetings Project Coordinator, Susan Eaton, gave updates on the progress of the PATH II project. The Network cooperated with Nancy Peters, PATH II Project Evaluator, in the 10 month participatory evaluation of the Project.
- The Network sponsored a **Spring 2002 Forum on Health and Wealth**. The Forum Planning Sub-Committee received approval for a proposal submitted to the Community Health Promotion Fund for funding for the Forum. This enabled the Network to bring in Monica Townson as a key note speaker to discuss her work on the relationship between poverty and health. Health Canada provided support to the Forum through the PATH II project.
- Trudy Watts was contracted to evaluate the impact of the PATH I project. The evaluation, *Assessing the Impact of People Assessing Their Health (PATH) Project* was funded by the Nova Scotia Department of Health. (see project report)

The LMDA Youth Action Committee meets monthly to review grant proposal applications from the Northern Region that concern youth

- Amanda Workman attended a training and orientation session with representatives of the agencies partnered through the **Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA)**. The orientation provided opportunity to learn about the how the LMDA works, to identify the focus of each partner agency, and to review the mechanisms for examining proposals.

1.10 Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA) Youth Action Committee, Northern Region AWRC Representative: Lucille Harper Alternative: Amanda Workman

The Antigonish Youth Centre Coalition joined forces this year with the Antigonish Crime Prevention Association and established the Youth Sub-Committee. The goal of the Youth Committee is to establish a youth centre in Antigonish. Because the Crime Prevention meetings have full agendas leaving little time for sub-committees to meet, the Youth Sub-Committee decided to hold meetings separately from the monthly Crime Prevention Association meetings in order to focus more directly on their own agenda. Over the year the Committee undertook a number of tasks and made several key decisions.

- The Committee agreed that the proposed youth centre would be named in honour of "Ziggy" Jurgen Seewald, RCMP member and long-time community member killed in the line of duty. The youth centre would be suitable for the Cadets as well as other community youth groups.
- The sub-committee met with the Arena Manager, Bud MacInnis to explore the possibility of creating space within the Antigonish Building for Youth for a youth centre and Cadet drill space. The Arena Commission agreed to provide sufficient space for both the Cadets and a youth drop-in centre in their arena expansion plans.
- In July Central Supplies Ltd. hosted a fundraising event to support the Youth Centre Project. The fundraiser included an information table, an ice-cream stand, and a hot dog barbecue, with beverages available. CJFX Radio was in attendance and committee members spoke to Rhonda Howard about the Youth Centre Project and its importance to community.
- In October the Sub-Committee approved floor plans for youth centre space to be included in the arena addition.
- The Committee organized a cross-walk safety event for Halloween where youth volunteered to act as crossing guards for the evening.
- In January, the Committee hired Denise Wood as their youth program coordinator.

1.9 Antigonish Youth Centre Coalition/Antigonish Crime Prevention Association Youth Sub-Committee AWRC Representatives - Amanda Workman, Lucille Harper, Sherry Battiste

2. Provincial and Atlantic Regional Level

2.1 Women Leading Action on Violence Against Women (WLA)

AWRC Representative: Lucille Harper

Women Leading Action on Violence Against Women provided the forum for a group of feminists working on issues of violence against women to come together to find ways to put into action the recommendations identified in three reports on family violence in Nova Scotia published in 1995. The group produced *Sharing the Talk, Sharing the Work*, a resource published in 1999 for community organizations wanting to address violence against women in their communities. In 2001, the WLA organized a conference which saw the formation of the Nova Scotia Coalition of Women for Justice. The WLA disbanded in 2001 with some members participating on the Nova Scotia Coalition of Women for Justice.

However, the WLA (Women Leading Action) reconvened for one meeting this year to discuss the need to produce more copies of the *Sharing the Talk, Sharing the Work* resource. We decided to print another 100 copies, put the resource on disk and send it to the National Clearinghouse for distribution to interested organizations that want it.

2.2. Restorative Justice in Nova Scotia Project Advisory Committee

Connect! Representative: Lucille Harper

Restorative Justice in Nova Scotia: Women's Experience and Recommendations for Positive Policy Development and Implementation is a project sponsored by the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre and the Transition House Association of Nova Scotia on behalf of the Nova Scotia Restorative Justice Women's Research Coalition. The purpose of the project is to document women's perspectives on restorative justice initiatives as they affect women victims of sexual and intimate partner assault and as they affect women offenders. From the research data collected, the project will develop clear policy recommendations with respect to Restorative Justice as it affects women in these circumstances.

2.3 Feminists for Just and Equitable Public Policy (FemJEPP)

AWRC Representative: Lucille Harper

FemJEPP members include feminist, community-based, front-line, equality-seeking, women's organizations as well as women working on public policy that improves the status of women.

FemJEPP is developing an integrated public policy framework that will encourage and guide government collaboration with community in order to develop policies that reflect the concerns and recommendations of women living in poverty - women affected by the policy. An integrated

approach means taking into account the inter-related policy issues that impact on women's social and economic well-being such as housing subsidies, labour standards, accessible educational and skills training opportunities, quality regulated affordable childcare, transportation supports and health care. To guide their work, FemJEPF developed a vision statement, definition of well-being and principles. Along with developing an Integrated Public Policy Framework, FemJEPF designed a Social and Economic Policy Impact Assessment Tool. We agreed that the issue we would use to test the framework and tool is "access to education and training within the new social assistance legislation."

The AWRRC participated in the research end of the project by holding focus groups with women on social assistance and with women who have participated in the "On the Road to Employment Program". Other women's centres conducted similar focus groups. Susan LeFort took responsibility for writing a report of the focus group findings.

Over the year FemJEPF undertook other activities including the following.

- In collaboration with the Maritime Centre of Excellence for Women's Health - Social Inclusion Project and Population and Public Health Branch, Atlantic Region, Health Canada, FemJEPF hosted the **Everyone's Business: Making the Case for Social and Economic Inclusion** conference.

- FemJEPF presented a brief to the federal Custody and Access Consultation.

- Dr. Kurt Bierschock, a sociologist from the University of Bamberg, Germany, met with FemJEPF on his visit to Nova Scotia as part of his research project "Investigating New Avenues in Canadian Social Policies: The Reform Agenda for Social Policy in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia".

2.4. Maritime Centre for Excellence in Women's Health (MCEWH) "Nova Scotia Reference Group on Social and Economic Inclusion" AWRC Representative: Katherine Reed

The Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island Reference group worked the previous year on a document on social and economic inclusion. In June 2001, the Maritime Centre of Excellence for Women's Health held an "open space" workshop on **social and economic inclusion in Atlantic Canada**. The conference provided an opportunity for all the Reference Groups from around Atlantic Canada to come together to discuss the documents they produced, to network and share information. Some directions were set and working groups struck to follow-up on initiatives aimed at influencing government to improve social policies enhance the economic and social inclusion of all people.

WOMEN'S CENTRES CONNECT!

Women's Centres Connect! is the provincial association of Women's Centres. Currently there are eight women's centres across the province that are members of Connect!.

In the early summer, Georgia MacNeil, our Connect! Coordinator, took a disability leave and Connect! worked without a Coordinator for the rest of the fiscal year. This added to the workload of individual members who took on responsibility for organizing meetings and carrying out the week-to-week work of Connect!. Bernadette MacDonald, Director of the Pictou County Women's Centre, acted as our Chair in Georgia's absence. Georgia resigned from Connect! at the end of her six-month leave.

Connect! contracted Linda Furlough to facilitate the development of a strategic plan for Women's Centres. We thought a strategic plan would be useful when negotiating service contracts with the provincial government. While Linda helped us think through the value of developing a marketing strategy, we did not develop a strategic plan.

In December 2001, Connect! learned that the Department of Community Services would not be negotiating contracts for services with Women's Centres for the 2002-03 fiscal year. Our understanding at that time was that they would be negotiating with organizations/agencies receiving \$150,000 and more. We were led to believe that our funding would remain at the 2001-2002 level over the next fiscal year.

Over the year, specific Connect! involvements included:

i. Province of Nova Scotia/Women's Centres Connect! Joint Planning Committee

The Joint Planning Committee *Final Report and Recommendations* document completed in November of 2000 was distributed for review to the Deputy Ministers of each of the participating Departments - the Departments of Community Services, Health, Justice, Education, and Economic Development. The Deputy Ministers were to review the report and respond to Judy Jackson before the Joint Planning Committee proceeded with meetings to implement the recommendations and to further multi-department funding discussions. However, the final report was shelved. The Joint Planning Committee did not continue meeting. No action was taken to implement the recommendations or to secure the funding of women's centres.

ii. Meetings with Government Members and Bureaucrats about Adequate, Core Funding for Women's Centres

Connect! continued to call upon government for adequate, core funding as well as for funding for the two newly established women's centres - Central Nova Women's Resource Centre in Truro and the Tri-County Women's Centre in Yarmouth.

- In July, Connect! met with the Conservative Caucus to ask that the newly established Women's Centres in Truro and Yarmouth be funded and that Connect! be apprised of the government's timeline and documentation requirements for negotiating service contracts with community-based services.
 - Connect! asked the Department of Community Services to scale the salaries of women's centre staff to those of transition house and men's treatment program staff. We felt this would secure women's centre staff positions and address a good portion of our deficit problem. The Department refused to consider the request.
 - In January 2002, those members of Connect! who could brave a winter storm met with **Shulamith Medjuck and Judy Jackson, Department of Community Services** to discuss plans for the implementation of service contracts. They led us to believe that negotiations with women's centres would be held in September 2002 for the 2003-2004 fiscal year. Each Centre would be expected to submit a mission statement, a strategic plan and program outcome measures. Judy Jackson also suggested women's centres adopt a social work framework for keeping statistics - ie, to record new files, open files, and closed files on a monthly basis.
 - At the February 2002 meeting, the members from the Truro and Yarmouth Centres brought the news that their respective MLAs Jamie Muir, Truro, and Neil LeBlanc, Yarmouth, had indicated that their centres could expect some amount of provincial funding from the Department of Community Services in the upcoming provincial budget.
- iii. Presentation of Briefs to Government**
- Connect! submitted a brief to the federal Custody and Access Consultation.
- iv. Other Business**
- Connect! invited THANS (Transition House Association of Nova Scotia) to meet with us to develop a common vision for providing women's services in the province. The meeting will take place in the upcoming fiscal year.
 - Pam Rubin, Researcher, for the restorative justice project, *Restorative Justice in Nova Scotia: Women's Experiences and Recommendations for Positive Policy Development and Implementation* met with Connect! to outline the project objectives and work plan and to invite women's centres to refer women to the project "who have had some experience with their or their child's abuser or attacker being diverted from the regular justice system".
 - Peggy Mahon facilitated a meeting with Connect! where we identified more clearly our core services as a preliminary step in developing common outcome measures in preparation for negotiating service contracts with the Department of Community Services.

PROJECTS

1. ON THE ROAD TO EMPLOYMENT: A PRE-EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM FOR WOMEN FACING BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

Project Coordinator April 2001 - July 2001: Tracy Bulman
Life Skills Facilitator: August 2001 - March 31, 2002: Heather Carson
 April 2001 - March 31, 2002: Sherry Battiste

This program has helped me in amazing ways, and has given me the strength to find a way to succeed and meet my career goals. No one, and no barrier will stand in my way for long. I know I can do it and that I am worth it...Thank you for this incredible opportunity.

-Program Participant

INTRODUCTION

The On The Road To Employment program is an 18-week pre-employment program for women facing barriers to employment. The goal of the project is to provide women with the means of participating fully and successfully in the economic and social life of Nova Scotia by increasing their employability, and in some cases, reducing their long term dependence on Social Assistance.

This program recognises that limiting a training program to employment related skills will not necessarily help our participants find gainful employment. Many of our participants have lived in poverty, or near-poverty for most of their lives. Consequently, many entered the program with a great deal of stress concerning both their past, and their future. Most participants have faced one or more poverty-related barriers such as depression, addiction, childhood and/or spousal abuse, poor communication and interpersonal skills, and low self-esteem. Through teaching healthy coping methods, problem solving, and practical techniques to deal with future stress more effectively, this program equips the participants with life skills that serve them well in the workplace and in their personal relationships. For some of our participants, the workshops we provide on these very sensitive issues will be the only information and support they will ever receive to help them deal with their personal problems.

The program is designed in a holistic way and is divided broadly into two halves. The first half of the course is devoted to developing life skills such as self-esteem, communication skills, anger and stress management, parenting support, assertiveness, and healthy living. The second half of the program builds upon the first through providing practical skill development aimed at increasing employability. The job readiness component provides training and certificates in First Aid & CPR, WHMIS, Super Host, Prior Learning Assessment & Recognition (portfolio development), and Non-violent Crisis Intervention. Skills are also developed in areas such as career goal identification, basic computer skills, résumé writing, cover letters, interview

techniques, and job searching skills. Participants are provided with the information and support they need to develop realistic, attainable and time-specific employment goals and career plans. In this fiscal year, two groups of women have completed the program, and one group has almost reached the half-way point. Overall, the program has been overwhelmingly successful. All participants that completed the program have identified time-specific career and/or educational goals. Participants have very positive things to say about how the program has impacted their lives. What follows is a brief description, along with the successes and challenges of the three programs from this year.

ON THE ROAD TO EMPLOYMENT: A PRE-EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM FOR SINGLE MOTHERS ON SOCIAL ASSISTANCE - January 2001 - July 2001

Funded through a Memorandum of Agreement between Human Resources Development Canada and the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services, this program began with eleven participants, all of whom were single mothers receiving Social Assistance at the time of program delivery. One of these participants dropped out of the program following March Break. The ten remaining women all completed the program.

Successes

Overall, the participants responded very well to all program activities, workshops, and discussions. It was apparent that the participants were a very hard working and inspired group of women. They were eager to learn as much as they could and were extremely motivated to set goals and achieve them. Additionally, the group worked very well together making the days enjoyable and comfortable for all involved. Having participated in a needs and interest assessment at the start of the program, participants were able to select program components that were of personal interest, and had direct relevance to their lives. The limited disparity between the participants' abilities allowed the facilitators to move forward as a whole.

Participant-identified highlights of the program included the following: the workshops on self-esteem, values, and communication, the assertiveness training and computer training, the certifications in WHMIS, Non-violent Crisis Intervention, SuperHost, First Aid and CPR, portfolio development and job readiness preparation. Many participants commented that the most important things they got out of the program were: increased self-esteem and self-confidence, skill recognition, and personal and career goals identification.

The project had many strengths, some of which are outlined here. First, the terms of reference for everyone involved in the project (Advisory Committee, project staff, and participants) were clearly outlined at the start of the project so that everyone knew their responsibilities and levels of commitment. Second, because of the proximity between the project office and the Women's Centre, the Project Director and project staff were able to meet daily and could benefit from general office support from the Office Manager, Centre staff, and volunteers. In addition, crisis support from the Women's Centre was readily available to participants, and allowed the project

staff to concentrate on delivering the program as facilitators, not counsellors. Finally, the facilitators made efforts to create a balance between providing a relaxed and safe environment, and an environment with boundaries ensuring the professional and equitable treatment of all participants. Further, the Life Skills Facilitator and Project Coordinator supported and consulted each other in program decision-making, which ensured the cohesiveness of the program.

Challenges

Despite the many successes, there were a few challenges. First, classroom space was somewhat limited, and participants found that the air quality was problematic, especially in warmer weather. Second, there was not enough shelving and storage space for program resources and participant materials. Third, having only four computers for ten or eleven participants and two project staff made completing assignments and tasks a challenge.

Related to the program itself, the facilitators and participants found that having a number of emotionally intense workshops scheduled too closely together, did not provide an opportunity for participants to process the information. Project staff and the crisis support workers at the Women's Centre were able to provide the necessary support to participants. Nevertheless, it was recognised that program modifications would benefit future programs. Finally, the course shadowing component of the program was scheduled at a poor time of the year, and was not as effective as it could have been.

Outcomes

Six of the ten participants have found employment since the end of their program. One is attending part-time studies at university. Three are planning to further upgrade their skills with more education and training.

ON THE ROAD TO EMPLOYMENT: A PRE-EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM FOR WOMEN FACING BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT - August 2001 - January 2002

Following the same model as the previous On the Road to Employment Program, this project expanded its parameters to women facing barriers to employment. It was no longer limited to single mothers receiving Social Assistance. The project was funded through Human Resources Development Canada. Eleven participants were accepted into the program, and all of the women completed the program. Taking into consideration the recommendations of the previous program, an extra computer, two book cases, a couch, and more comfortable chairs were purchased. In addition, participants took a Food Handlers Certification course and extra information sessions related to the participants' interests were added to the program. Program modifications were made to ensure that emotionally intense topics were spread out over the length of the program, and the Parenting Workshop dealt with conflict resolution strategies.

Successes

Once again, participants expressed a high level of interest in all aspects of the program. They formed very close bonds of support and friendship with each other. Participant-identified

highlights were very similar to that of the previous program. In addition, they valued the opportunity to develop team-building skills and found strength and support in an all-woman group.

Many of the project strengths were similar to those of the previous project. In addition, offering a program for all women facing barriers to employment opened the program to women with a wide range of life experiences. It provided a positive learning experience for the women, as it broke down the stereotypes perpetuated in our culture. Having participants from a variety of backgrounds and experiences gave participants new perspectives, and raised the level of expectations for optimal learning and growth.

Challenges

Although we attempted to address all of the concerns from the first project, some of these concerns continued through the next project. For example, despite having one more computer than previously, computer availability continued to be a problem. Participants continued to find the classroom space and air quality inadequate.

Despite improvements from the previous project, the course shadowing component continued to present problems due to incompatibilities between the College and program schedules. Finally, snow storms in the latter part of the program resulted in several cancellations, and placed participants under enormous time constraints to complete all assignments.

Outcomes

Although this program ended only in January of this year, five participants have already found employment. Five are currently upgrading their education and/or computer skills. One participant plans to begin full time GED upgrading in September, 2002. One participant, who is currently working, plans to attend college in another year to further upgrade her skills.

ON THE ROAD TO EMPLOYMENT: A PRE-EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM FOR WOMEN FACING BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT - January 2002 - Present

The program that is running currently, and will run until the end of June, is also funded through Human Resources Development Canada and is open to women facing barriers to employment. It is clear to Project Staff that the success of previous programs has had an impact on the community. More than thirty women applied for or enquired about the program. Ten participants started the program, and all have remained thus far. The program continued to be based on the previous On the Road to Employment Projects. Minor changes were made to the program in order to modify the order of some presentations and weekly themes due to the availability of community resource people, and to meet the specific needs and interests of the participants.

Successes
Once again, the participants in the current program have demonstrated a high level of interest and motivation, and are working hard at increasing their knowledge and skills. The women report that they are learning a lot and are applying their new knowledge and skills in their daily lives. Weekly evaluation reports show that participants are finding the information useful and interesting. Because we have not yet completed our mid-program evaluation, there is limited information in regards to participant-identified highlights.

We have moved offices, and the office space seems to be meeting the needs of the group at this point. We will see what happens when the weather gets warmer. We now have six computers, and although not ideal, we have had fewer complaints about lack of computer availability. With both the Project Coordinator and Life Skills Facilitator having experience with previous On the Road to Employment Projects, overall organization and administration is running very smoothly. This allows the project staff to fine-tune the program facilitation and administrative duties to further meet the needs of participants.

Challenges
Once again, course shadowing has presented some difficulties. Because of the schedule of the college, we were only able to have one day of course shadowing at the Nova Scotia Community College, Strait Campus. Participants stated that it would be more beneficial to have a 10-15 minute introductions to each program in place of one or two days of course shadowing.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The On the Road to Employment Program is a well-established success recognised by many community members. Representatives from various community organisations and other individuals have often reported how beneficial this program is to the women who use their services. At least two organisations have used this program format to develop similar programs for different designated groups. Former participants keep us informed of what they are doing, and report how different aspects of the program has assisted them in reaching their career and educational goals. At the time of writing this report (mid-April), ten women had placed their name on a waiting list to be called for future programs that may run. In addition, we have had several enquiries from women in Cape Breton hoping to be able to participate in the program. Our hope is to be able to secure funding for two consecutive projects to run in the next fiscal year and eventually to make this program an on-going one serving the women of Antigonish and Guysborough Counties, and possibly beyond.

Report respectfully submitted by Tracy Bulman and Heather Carson

2. APPLYING COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENT TO RURAL

COMMUNITY HEALTH PLANNING (PATH II PROJECT)

Funded by Remote and Rural Health Fund, Health Canada

December 2000 - March 31, 2002

Project Coordinator: Susan Eaton

The **PATH II Project** was sponsored by the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre (AWRC), the Extension Department of St. Francis Xavier University (St. F.X.U. Ext.), and Public Health Services - Districts 7 & 8 (PHS). These three groups partnered with the Antigonish Town and County Community Health Board (ATCCHB) to expand the use of community health impact assessment at the community health board level and to develop, test, and evaluate the use of a *community health impact assessment tool* (CHIAT).

The project's goal was to "increase the capacity of volunteers by developing the process and tools for community health impact assessment, which will enable informed decision-making in community level health planning."

PATH II had three main components:

- **Research** regarding current health indicators that can be used by the ATCCHB to make evidence-based decisions
- **Creation of a CHIAT** (community health impact assessment tool) that serves the unique needs and priorities of the ATCCHB in assessing the effect(s) of policies, programs or projects on the health of the community
- **Communication** of what was learned in the process, including the development of a PATH web site.

In addition, the project included a **Participatory Evaluation** process that monitored the various activities, documented what is learned, and evaluated both the process and outcomes.

What was accomplished

- ♦ The project was staffed by a full-time *Project Coordinator* (Susan Eaton), who provided research support, facilitated the development of the community health impact assessment tool, and maintained communication between the various stakeholders. An *Evaluator* (Nancy Peters) followed the process from March 2001 to March 2002. A *Researcher* (Trudy Watts) was hired to compile a list of relevant health indicators. *Website design* was contracted to Katy Mahon and technical programming of the site was sub-contracted to Mark Munroe.

- ♦ Between February 2001 and October 2002, a Working Group of the Community Health Board designed and drafted the community health impact assessment tool. The Working Group also organized a Community Consultation on May 31, 2001 that brought together 22 selected

I believe it is fair to say that the PATH II Project has achieved its goals and significant interest has been generated in the process of community health impact assessment.

◆ The project evaluator has prepared a final evaluation report which includes lessons learned, conclusions, and recommendations for the future.

◆ Significant work was done to share the results and lessons learned in the project. Presentations were made to the Health and Development class at the Coady Institute (2001), as well as presentations to the Guysborough Antigonish Strait Health Authority (GASHA). A 1.5 hour "in-service" on community health impact assessment was held with the senior management team of GASHA and the District Health Authority has included the development of a "district-wide CHIAAT" in its strategic plan for 2002-2003. A joint meeting of the GASHA Board and senior staff plus the three Community Health Boards in the district will be held June 6 and includes a presentation on community health impact assessment.

◆ 200 copies of a resource package were produced (*PATHways II: The Next Steps – A guide to community health impact assessment*). These will be distributed to key stakeholders and interested groups. It will also be available on the website. A grant from the Atlantic Public Libraries Association will allow for the reprint of 100 copies of the resource which will be distributed to all public libraries in Atlantic Canada.

◆ A PATH website was designed and is now on-line (www.path-ways.ns.ca). Some work still needs to be completed to improve the design and recent documents must be added. The site will be maintained by volunteer members of the PATH Network.

◆ The researcher provided the Working Group with a series of documents and a list of relevant health indicators in July 2001. The Project Coordinator, with the assistance of a ST. F.X.U. Service Learning student and a senior Nursing Department student, organized the material into a more easily accessible format. Some work still has to be done to make the indicators research appropriate for posting on the website.

◆ The CHIAAT was "tested" at three workshops in November/December 2001: with the whole Antigonish Town and County Community Health Board ("What would be the impact on the health of the community if the province allowed Sunday Shopping?"), the Strait Area Breastfeeding Network ("What would be the impact on the health of the community if the Regional Hospital no longer provided free formula to newborn babies?") and with the Antigonish Town Council ("What would be the impact on the health of the community if the Town Council banned smoking in all public places?"). The revised and final version of the CHIAAT was received by the Community Health Board in February 2002.

participants who had knowledge and experience with particular issues, groups and services in the Town and County.

As Project Coordinator, I want to thank the many people and groups who provided support, expertise, commitment and good humour throughout the project. Special thanks are due to the Antigianish Women's Resource Centre and its staff for giving PATH II a "home". In particular, I am grateful to Lucille Harper for her friendship, unending encouragement and wisdom, and to Vangie Babin who not only taught me a great deal about multi-tasking, but also how to be warm and generous with the many people who pass through our lives each day.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Eaton, PATH II Project Coordinator
May 16, 2002

3. ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF THE PEOPLE ASSESSING THEIR HEALTH (PATH) PROJECT

Funded by: Nova Scotia Department of Health
Researcher: Trudy Watts

The People Assessing Their Health project (now known as PATH I) was a health promotion initiative funded by the Health Promotion Fund of Health Canada. It took place over an 18-month period, ending in October 1997. Through this project, members of three communities in northeastern Nova Scotia (Guysborough County Eastern Shore, St. Ann's Bay and Whitney Pier) identified factors determining their health and then developed community health impact assessment tools for assessing the impact of programs on policies on the health of their communities.

An evaluation of the project's effectiveness was completed in December 1997. It concluded that the PATH Project had been successful in encouraging the three communities to identify, assess, and begin to address all aspects of health in their communities and to strengthen participation in a decentralized health system.

In 2000, the PATH Coordinating Committee (made up of representatives from the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre, the Extension Department of St. Francis Xavier University, Public Health Services – Districts 7 & 8, the Antigonish Town and County Community Health Board, and the PATH Network) received funding from the Nova Scotia Department of Health to undertake an evaluation of the *impact* of the PATH Project. The primary reason for the evaluation was to assess the extent to which the community health impact assessment process and tools have been used within each community, and to identify barriers and opportunities encountered in applying community health impact assessment.

Trudy Watts was contracted to carry out the evaluation. In the first half of 2001, Trudy interviewed (or held focus groups with) 33 key informants in the original three PATH communities, in Antigonish, and within the boundaries of the former Eastern Health Region. Additional questionnaires regarding the project resource *PATHways to Building Health Communities in Eastern Nova Scotia* were sent to several people outside of the PATH Network who were not previously involved in the PATH Project.

A draft report of the impact evaluation was presented to the PATH Coordinating Committee in September 2001. Revisions and editing (involving the members of the Coordinating Committee, the evaluator, and the PATH II Project Coordinator) took place from November 2001 to January 2002. A final report was accepted by the Coordinating Committee at the end of January 2002 and is available at the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan L. Eaton
Project Coordinator, PATH II

4. LINKS PROJECT: VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres
Funded by Justice Canada
Site Researcher: Amanda Workman

Project Overview

The LINKS Project is a research project created by the Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres (CASAC) and funded by the Department of Justice Canada. The Antigonish Women's Resource Centre (AWRC) was invited to participate as part of the research team in April 2000, at the beginning of year three of the five year project. The project is designed to examine the impact of policies, procedures within the justice system on conviction rates in cases of male violence against women and determine the relationship of these impacts on women's inequality.

Data collection has been a dual approach. The first part of the process involved the interviewing of women who came in contact with the justice system after 1997, as a result of male violence. A woman consenting to be interviewed was asked questions pertaining to her experiences with regard to service provision and process at five points of contact, including but not limited to the following: emergency response (911), police investigation, crown attorney decisions, court and sentencing. Although a set of standard interview questions was developed, the interview process itself was flexible and women were invited to tell their stories in their own words, as much as possible.

The second part of the process involved the collection and review of documents relevant to women's experiences with the justice system. Documents collected consisted of policies, protocols and procedures from the various components of the justice system. They encompass everything from federal Justice Department directives to RCMP protocols for investigation of violence against women.

Activities

Interview data and analysis

Five interviews with women were completed this year, bringing the total number of women interviewed for the project to nine. Initially, the research team anticipated collecting approximately one hundred eighty interviews from across Canada, however the researchers and the research consultants consider the one hundred and twelve interviews actually collected to be adequate in providing reliable research data.

Analysis of the interview data analysis is still ongoing. The data has been collated and responses for each question in the interview schedule were combined in tabular form to allow researchers to scan the data for common responses and themes. Demographic information about the women

was collected but, to protect the confidentiality of the respondents, it is not included in the site data. That data set is being collated and analyzed by the project co-ordinator.

Interview analysis tools were developed by the research team, in consultation with research consultants, as follows:

- *911 Analysis tool* used to track operator response and reasons why women did or did not use 911.
- *Police/RCMP Analysis tool* used to monitor the application of appropriate investigative procedures and protocols.
- *Crown Attorney Analysis tool* designed to identify common practices and identify how decisions regarding charges were made
- *Court Procedures Analysis tool* used to record women's experiences within the court system.
- *Sentence Analysis tool* designed to identify how sentencing is carried out.
- *Charge Tracking Sheet* used to trace the progression of charges laid in the cases of violence against women. The charges laid by police/RCMP are compared with charges receiving conviction, if any, in each case.
- *Policy Tracking Sheet* used to help researchers identify policies relevant in each case and determine if all relevant policies were followed by staff at each point of the five points of contact with the justice system.

Document collection and analysis

Five documents related to the five points of contact with the justice system were collected over the past year, bringing the total number of documents collected for the project to thirty-four. A document analysis tool had been developed by the research team at the beginning of the project. However, this tool did not provide the expected insights. A second tool to be used on groups of documents connected by their relevance to each of the five points of contact with the justice system was developed by the research consultants and document review was begun anew and is ongoing.

Communication

Decisions regarding analysis techniques were made by the research team at the annual Links meeting, attended by ten Links site researchers, the project co-ordinator, Nicole Robillard and research consultants, Mary Crnkovich and Linda Arnold, in October, 2001. This meeting provided opportunity to develop themes for data analysis tools, generate time lines for the completion of the project and reconnect with the work being done in each of our centres. A mid-project evaluation form developed by the research consultants was given to the site researchers for completion and submission to the Department of Justice Canada at that time. Two subsequent conference calls, November and January, allowed opportunity for researchers to review and amend the interview data analysis tools produced by research team members.

Communication through out the year continued, mostly in the form of phone calls to individual team members and in the nine monthly reports submitted to the national project co-ordinator via the Links web page. A site methodology report detailing how data was gathered and is being

analyzed at each site was produced for the final project report and was shared with all other members of the research team. It was intended to provide information which would facilitate the replication of the research project and was therefore quite detailed.

Evaluating the Work

Last year, work focused primarily on the collection of documents and the securing of interviews with women. This year has been dedicated to completing data collection and determining how to best analyze the data gathered. Working on a collaborative project in which ones co-workers are scattered across the nation has proven to be both rewarding and challenging, particularly in the arena of data analysis, given that analysis tools had to be designed to be suitable for the diversity of research sites.

The document analysis tool designed at the beginning of the project did not prove to be useful, as reviewing individual documents did not provide the researchers with a comprehensive picture of how larger processes were intended to work at each of the five identified points of contact. The document review process is not finished. Reviewing groups of documents associated by their relevance to the five points of contact appears to be more efficient. Information from document reviews completed using the old form is being incorporated in the new review process.

Collating the interview data, reviewing it for common themes and then developing useful analysis tools has been a very intensive process, given the volume of material collected. Development of interview data analysis forms was challenging because of the one day time restriction on the annual meeting of the research team. This meant that a sub-group of researchers was charged with attempting to generate useful tools based on ideas provided by the larger group. These tools were then distributed via e-mail to all research team members, reviewed and resubmitted until a consensus was reached on the appropriateness and usefulness of the tools. This process was time consuming, meaning that the time available for actually implementing the analysis tools on the data has been limited. Design of the analysis tools would likely have been a more fluid process if the research team had been able to have a longer annual meeting.

The process of doing research as part of a national project has been advantageous as government policy change appears to follow trends, spreading from one province to another. Tracking how policy has evolved in one province is often indicative of how policy will develop in another. This national perspective has been useful in providing insight to AWRRC staff concerning how to address local issues and concerns. The AWRRC involvement in the Links project has provided the unexpected benefit of increasing national awareness and developing personal connections with like-minded women's organizations across the country.

Respectfully submitted by Amanda Workman, Site Researcher

5. WOMEN EXAMINE ALTERNATIVES TO MARKET HOUSING PROJECT
Funded by the Sisters of St. Martha to support work undertaken by the Antigonish Affordable Housing Society
Project Coordinator: Katherine Reed

In the fall of 2001, the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Martha granted the AWRCA \$15,000 to steer the development of a need and demand study for AAHS's first project, and to support the members of the group as they learned new roles and took on responsibility. Katherine Reed acted as project co-ordinator. It was easy to research and document evidence of the need for housing, but to show the demand (i.e. that there are people of varying income levels who will rent the new units at a particular price) is much more difficult. This would require estimating how much the project will cost. This is a problem because it is not yet known what the project will look like or where it would be built. Once more concrete plans are in place, this aspect of the study can be completed.

For a detailed description of the Antigonish Affordable Housing Society's activities over the past year see page 32.

At the conclusion of this initiative, AAHS had not yet achieved its goal of building a new housing co-op in Antigonish which houses, and is led by, members of the original core group of women. However, the Society consists of a very strong group of 18 people who are excited about advancing this project and about having some well-designed, well-constructed, aesthetically pleasing, appropriately located, and most importantly, *healthy* housing.

With the support of AWRCA made possible by the Sisters of St. Martha, AAHS members gained new skills and confidence in managing the organization and its activities. They were able to secure funding from Nova Scotia PLURA to cover their meeting expenses (child care and transportation). This has been absolutely indispensable in this process. The awareness in this group that it is important to strive to ensure that all members participate more or less on an equal footing has been reinforced through AWRCA-facilitated meetings and role modelling. This has required and continues to require a conscious effort on the part of all members.

Respectfully submitted by Katherine Reed,
Project Coordinator

6. ASSESSING YOUTH HOMELESSNESS IN ANTIGONISH

Funded by Supporting Community Partnerships Initiative,
Human Resources Development Canada
Project Coordinator: Katherine Reed
Assistant Researcher: Krista DeCoste

This participatory action research project took place in Antigonish Town and County over a four month period beginning February 2002 and ending in early June 2002. The goal of the project was to assess youth homelessness in Antigonish and to develop a community plan for addressing it. Twenty-four individual interviews were conducted with youth who had experienced housing problems and service providers who work with youth. Of the interviewees, six were youth and 18 were service providers. All of the youth were young women. For various reasons project staff were not able to secure any individual interviews with young men, although the focus groups included males. The service providers were people who worked in various counselling, advocacy, administrative, and educational roles with community and governmental organizations as well as two individuals who had provided shelter to homeless youth on an informal basis during the past several years.

For the two focus groups a guided discussion format was used. The two groups involved three service providers in one, and nine youth in another. Following this information-gathering process, a "Community Forum" was held with a total of 18 participants. The purpose of the Forum was to decide upon actions to be taken (a "Community Action Plan") to address the problems identified in the research.

The final stage of the project involved disseminating the information and recommendations for action to community stakeholders. At the time of this writing, municipal councils, the Antigonish Regional Development Authority, the Strait Regional School Board the Antigonish Town and County Community Health Board, and the Chamber of Commerce have either received presentations or are scheduled to do so. In addition to the presentations, many interested individuals and organizations received a copy of this report. The interviewees and participants in the Community Forum have received follow-up information, specifically, the interview/focus group findings and the proceedings of the Forum.

Youth Sub-groups Identified

Throughout this process it was clear that there are three distinct sub-groups within the target population of young people aged 16 to 29 years in Antigonish Town and County. These sub-groups were 1) teens; 2) independent adults; and 3) independent adults with mental health difficulties.

The first sub-group, made up of the youngest people in this study were in their teen years and living with, or not able to live with, their family of origin. Problems had arisen and either the youth felt very insecure in their housing situation and aware that they could not continue living with their family, or they actually had left the home. Respondents in this group reported a variety

of experiences such as living outside for a brief period, staying with a friend's family, leaving the community in search of options, or drifting from one friend's home to another ("couch surfing").

The second, and probably the largest sub-group of youth with housing issues are young adults who live independently, either in couples or as single people, and who are insecurely housed in a very tight and expensive rental housing market. Some of these young adults are parents. Due to very low vacancy rates for apartments and houses and the high cost of rent, landlords whose units are in the lower-priced range can be quite choosy about who they rent to. Young people report discriminatory practices on the part of landlords based on family status or marital status, source of income, and age. This is consistent with the results of "No Place for Home: Women and Housing in Antigonish," a study conducted by the Antigonish Women's Association in 1991.

The third sub-group is made up of young people, usually in their twenties, who have mental health problems and/or developmental delay. They are usually very poor (since their job prospects and education are limited and social assistance does not provide adequately for basic needs) and many of them tend to have difficulty with neighbours and landlords for various reasons, not all of them originating with themselves. They are often housed in poor conditions and they realize that with the high cost of rental housing in Antigonish, they have few choices. There is no structured, subsidized housing for people dealing with these issues, other than Celtic Community Homes and the L'Arche Community. For high functioning adults who are used to living independently, these options do not seem suitable.

Issues identified

Six categories of issues were identified by the respondents. They are as follows:

- poverty;
- difficult housing market;
- mental health issues;
- lack of support services, and lack of coordination among services
- family violence/abuse; and
- lack of job and educational/training opportunity.

In addition to these, a few issues were identified pertaining only to one of the three sub-groups. One example of this is teen pregnancy. Some respondents identified this as the cause of family breakdown and youth homelessness. Long-term mental health issues were another factor that did not apply to all groups, although individuals with this type of long-term problem faced the same issues that the entire group faced (e.g. tight housing market, poverty, lack of opportunities, etc.).

Solutions proposed to address issues identified

Many possible solutions were proposed to address the problems detailed in this research. Interviewees and forum participants offered these suggestions. At the forum, some people indicated a willingness to work on concrete actions. The suggestions were as follows:

- that the AAHS persist in their attempts to develop affordable housing in Antigonish and that the two municipal governments contribute some resources in the form of land, funding, etc. to this effort.
- that an emergency shelter for youth, or at least a network of people who would be willing to provide emergency shelter in their homes be established.
- that a long-term housing solution for young people be developed (a feasibility study being the initial step in this process), perhaps fashioned after the Phoenix House (Halifax) model, and perhaps as a part of a youth crisis shelter.
- that Naomi Society develop more second stage housing for women escaping abusive partners.
- that a supported housing initiative be developed to address the needs of youth who are affected by mental illnesses and developmental delay. (Again, a feasibility study would be needed as a first step.)
- that the minimum wage be increased to the point where it constitutes a living wage, and that it be attached to the Consumer Price Index just as Canada Pension and income tax brackets are, so that the wage keeps pace with inflation.
- that social assistance rates be increased to provide enough money to cover the cost of basic daily needs.
- that Employment Insurance be more generous and easier to access.
- that a national guaranteed annual income be instituted to eventually replace social assistance altogether.
- that a local group be formed to lobby for better social assistance policy in Nova Scotia, and for an improved appeals process.
- that an education campaign be undertaken to change negative attitudes toward people living in poverty and to promote understanding of the ways in which one can respond most helpfully to low-income children and youth
- that an affordable, accessible and inclusive transportation system be developed for Antigonish and Guysborough.
- that there be improved government funding for post-secondary education and training in the form of bursaries, grants and scholarships, and that financial support is directed at helping people to stay in school.

▢ that the public school system continue operating the program known as Recognizing Alternatives, Maximizing Potential which provides students who are not doing well in the regular high-school program an opportunity to work in a small group on some practical entrepreneurial projects as well as the usual academic courses.

▢ that a centre for youth be developed where youth could receive support, information, advocacy, programming, and generally have a location for gathering much the same as women have in the AWRC.

▢ that an education campaign directed at human service professionals to inform them about how they could be more effective be developed. The feeling was that some service professionals should learn to work with people "where they are" – meaning not refuse service because of substance abuse, or lack of an address or identification documents.

▢ that youth advocates be put in place, in the higher level public schools, who are not employed by the school system, and who are able to build a rapport with students and intervene effectively when a student is in crisis.

▢ that a newsletter be published which would maintain a connection among social work and mental health services, poverty relief and poverty-oriented services, and the people using those services.

It will become necessary for some of the people who were involved in this project to form a Community Plan Working Group to advance the suggestions the project identified. This aspect of the project is in progress at the time of this writing.

Respectfully submitted by Katherine Reed,
 Project Coordinator

7. SOCIAL ASSISTANCE REFORM IN NOVA SCOTIA: IS IT WORKING FOR WOMEN?

Funded by the Women's Program, Status of Women Canada
Project Coordinator: Maria MacDougall

Project Description:

Social Assistance Reform in Nova Scotia: Is it working for women? is funded by the Status of Women Canada and carried out in three areas of the province through the Pictou County Women's Centre, Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Every Women's Centre in Sydney. The purpose of the project is to influence institutional change in the area of social assistance policy in Nova Scotia. The project involves individual interviews and group meetings with fifteen women in each area to measure and evaluate the impact the new policy is having on women's lives. Through a participatory research method we are seeking to identify and provide recommendations to Community Services on the new Employment Support and Income Assistance program.

The objectives of the project are:

- ◆ to develop a critical analysis of the new legislation
- ◆ to monitor its implementation
- ◆ to evaluate its impact, and
- ◆ to build within the province knowledge about the policy and its affect on women and their children
- ◆ to build support within the province, and within the Department of Community Services for ensuring the policy supports women in establishing economic well-being and independence.

Women living in poverty and their families will benefit from this initiative by becoming more informed about the policy and their entitlement to benefits in the program. Voicing the thoughts, opinions and concerns of women on social assistance is essential to the development of a social assistance program that works.

Project Stages:

The project start date was February 14, 2002 and the finish date is October 15, 2002. The months of February and March involved a review and feminist analysis of the policy, research on women in poverty and social policy, a start on the development of a community profile and information resource regarding the new policy and a team project meeting to organize the project activities on a time-line. Those participating in the team meeting in March were the project researchers and their supervisors. The meeting established the focus of the project and outlined the steps required to reach our objectives.

Respectfully submitted by Maria MacDougall, Project Researcher

8. WHEN BULLYING BECOMES SEXUAL HARASSMENT: BUILDING A STUDENT-CENTRED PREVENTION APPROACH

Funded by Community Mobilization Program, Justice Canada
Project Coordinator: Pamela Fry

From September 11, 2000 until May 11, 2001, the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre (AWRC) conducted the action research project entitled *When Bullying Becomes Sexual Harassment: Building a Student Centred Prevention Approach*. The objectives of this project included examination of existing peer sexual harassment prevention programs, researching the incidence of peer sexual harassment among youth in the community of Antigonish by working with groups of local youth, and developing and disseminating an educational package on the topic of peer sexual harassment to local schools and youth-serving community groups - as well as to women's centres across the province of Nova Scotia.

Secondary goals included engagement with the Strait Regional School Board regarding their peer sexual harassment policies, and the delivery of peer sexual harassment awareness and education workshops at the middle school and high school level.

Our examination of peer sexual harassment prevention programs and policies across Canada revealed that overwhelmingly guidelines about sexual harassment among peers are subsumed under school board regulations and individual school policies regarding bullying. Furthermore, although peer sexual harassment is generally acknowledged as a problem for youth, there exists a reluctance to address the issue independently. Specifically, the issues of gender and sexual discrimination are rarely addressed in school based anti-bullying programs, regardless of the overwhelming significance of these issues as they relate to sexual harassment.

Our community-based research consisted of establishing two groups of young women (13-17) who were willing to meet weekly (November-May) to discuss this issue. One group of teens met weekly at the AWRC and discussed their personal experiences and observations. This group contributed significantly towards the educational program that was, at that time, under development.

At the middle school level, a group of girls met weekly over this same period in the counselling office at St. Andrews Junior School. This group participated in discussions and activities aimed at increasing awareness of peer sexual harassment and developing approaches to managing all types of bullying behaviour.

Students Acting Against Sexual Harassment: Educational Resource Kit on Peer Sexual Harassment, a comprehensive educational package, adaptable for all age groups, was distributed province-wide at the end of the program. Although meetings with the Strait Regional School Board did establish groundwork for future collaborations, the Board did not demonstrate an interest in discussing the possible amendment of policy to address gender-based, discriminatory, sexual harassment between peers.

In collaboration with Theresa MacNeil, Counsellor at St. Andrew's Jr. School, Mary MacDonald, Counsellor at J.H. Gillis Regional High School, and Elizabeth Teasdale, Principal at Guysborough High School, the project coordinator delivered numerous workshops and seminars for students in grades eight through twelve, on the topic of peer sexual harassment.

Respectfully submitted by Pamela Fry,
Coordinator/ Facilitator

9. STEPPING FORWARD:

AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS FOR PRIORITY YOUNG WOMEN

Funded by Northern Region Prevention Initiatives Fund, Department of Community Services
Project Coordinator: Pamela Fry

The philosophy of the Stepping Forward program is that young women in our community benefit from the opportunity to participate in youth-centred, after school programs. By providing young women with a safe, comfortable, women-only environment, where they may participate in discussions of issues that they feel are relevant to their lives, the Antigoniish Women's Resource Centre frees individuals to participate fully, and with the knowledge that their views are respected and their privacy is protected.

The program delivered between January and June 2002 consisted of two weekly after school workshops for girls: *Inspire*, a group specifically designed for at-risk girls 14-17, and *Exploring Our Lives*, for any young woman 14-17. Participants in *Inspire* were invited to participate by community youth workers and school guidance counsellors. The *Exploring Our Lives* program was advertised through a small poster campaign and by word of mouth through previous years participants. For each of these groups the participants themselves met to determine which topics they wished to discuss, and the types of activities they preferred. The Coordinator/Facilitator, Pamela Fry, provided information, directed group discussions, planned specific activities, and addressed personal issues as they arose within each group.

This model is proving to be highly successful. Attendance at both groups has been steady - and, for the *Inspire* group, participation had to be limited as each week more young women than we had space for hoped to attend. Participant evaluations show an overwhelmingly positive response to the program. Individual participants report that making new friends, sharing their feelings and experiences, and having an adult they trust to talk to, are all aspects of this program that they enjoy.

Participant input also enhances program development. By involving youth directly in decision making, and providing them with an opportunity to critique the program, we are able to plan for future workshops that will reach more youth and have greater impact overall.

Presently, a summer arts, crafts, dance, and music program for young women is in development. This has come about in response to the *Inspire* group's stated need for access to more extracurricular programs - particularly during the summer months. It is anticipated that participants in the 2002 Stepping Forward will continue their association with the Antigoniish Women's Resource Centre for as long as relevant programs are made available.

Program Objectives

The objectives of the Stepping Forward Program break down into three broad categories:

- i. Identification and selection of appropriate participants for each of three after school programs:
 - Inspire** for young women at risk, 14-17.
 - Exploring Our Lives** for any young woman, 14-17.
 - Stepping Forward** for young women in conflict with the law, 14-17.
- ii. Facilitation of weekly meetings
- iii. Evaluation of program success

Meeting the Objectives

i. **Selection of appropriate participants** was attempted through a number of channels. Local school counsellors, probation officers, police officers, and youth group leaders were asked to convey an invitation to young women they perceived as potential participants. A youth-friendly hand-out was made available to each liaison (see appendix), containing program information and a number to call for more information.

The response to this approach was varied. Young women at risk were easily identified within the local schools and were encouraged to attend by school counsellors. The **Inspire** group was formed out of these participants, and averaged 10 individuals per meeting. Young women who had previously attended Women's Centre programs required little encouragement beyond a small poster campaign to participate in **Exploring Our Lives**, a self-selected group composed of high-achieving young women. This group maintained a regular attendance of 6 young women, three of whom also volunteer at the AWRCC.

In spite of numerous attempts we were not able to identify any young women in conflict with the law. The planned **Stepping Forward** group was therefore put on hold. The project coordinator undertook community-based research to identify barriers young women face in accessing the program and how the program could be approached in the future to ensure its success. A copy of this report is available at the AWRCC.

ii. **Facilitation of weekly meetings.**

Number of meetings per group between January and June 2002:

Inspire: 15 meetings

Comments: Participants were very consistent in terms of attendance, and asked that an additional workshop occur during their spring break. I believe that two workshops a week could be offered to this population without a significant drop in attendance.

Exploring Our Lives: 11 meetings

Comments: Due to the demands of other extracurricular activities undertaken by participants in Exploring Our Lives, it would be unreasonable to expect attendance more than once a week. A few meetings had to be cancelled due to other commitments on the part of participants. However, participants did express regret at having to miss meetings on occasion.

General Remarks

Overall, facilitation of the after school programs requires a capacity for active listening, maintenance of appropriate behaviours, and the ability to redirect or guide conversations in productive/positive directions. Establishing trust is also a key aspect of the success of this program. For young women at risk, this part of the program takes slightly longer, but seems to result in an exemplary level of commitment to the program.

Certainly, smaller groups are more effective. These young women benefit greatly from individual attention, and respond to such attention in positive ways.

One of the challenges of facilitation is directing discussion away from the lives, traits etc. of individuals in the local community. The compulsion to 'gossip' seems to overwhelm young women at times. Turning the focus toward issues, as opposed to individuals, seems an effective remedy.

iii. Evaluation of program success

Participant Evaluations were conducted in anonymous written form halfway through the program. Examples of the comments of participants follow.

Inspire participants said:

"I feel this group helps me become better friends with people who didn't like me before, and, if I'm angry, I can express myself."

"I'm learning a lot about myself and others."

"It gives me a chance to discuss certain issues, and not wait until it just comes up in conversation."

Exploring Our Lives participants said:

"It was/is fantastic that they/we are able to go to this awesome place where everyone is supportive, wants to talk, wants to listen."

" I love Pam, and I love this group!"

" I feel like I can discuss all of my feelings with so many people and get opinions on them. It is the best."

" I really like the way I can trust everyone to keep secrets, not to judge me for my opinion."

Inspire participants held a group discussion on the final day of the program (May 27, 2002) to evaluate their experiences and to make suggestions for future programs. The following comments were noted:

- smaller group is preferred (maximum of 7)
- twice weekly meetings requested
- some outdoor activities requested
- participants prefer a balance between structured and unstructured group time
- greater maintenance of order might become the responsibility of participants, freeing the facilitator from a 'policing' role
- a 'talking stick' approach is requested for future sessions
- groups might be divided by ages in future (13-15 & 16-18)

Overall the participants expressed great satisfaction with their experiences as part of the group, and have all demonstrated an interest in continuing to participate in AWRRC programs for youth.

Parent Evaluations

A survey was sent home with *Exploring Our Lives* participants, asking parents/caregivers to share their views and suggestions regarding our after school program. It was determined by the young women in the *Inspire* program that they did not wish to involve their parents in this process. This decision was based on issues that include privacy, unstable parent/youth relationships, and in some cases, disinterest on the part of parents. Parent evaluations were favourable, and contained few comments beyond the wish to see after school programs continue at the Antigoniash Women's Resource Centre.

Concluding Remarks

The Stepping Forward program is clearly filling a gap in services to youth in the community of Antigoniash. Young women, and particularly those at-risk, are clamouring for a place where they are safe to discuss their lives, and expand their knowledge and experience of the world.

After school programs address issues that concern parents as well. Where are the kids after school? What are they doing? Who is looking out for them? The Antigoniish Women's Resource Centre is continuing to prove itself a committed advocate of youth, and a sanctuary for young women seeking alternatives to 'hanging out' or who, for many reasons, do not participate in more traditional extra-curricular options (sports, drama, band etc.), many of which are prohibitively expensive.

It is encouraging that more and more young women seem to be seeking out these alternatives, and dedicating themselves to participation. Clearly community and provincial support for these programs should continue.

A full project report is available at the Antigoniish Women's Resource Centre.

Respectfully submitted by Pamela Fry,
Coordinator/ Facilitator

10. RURAL YOUTH HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS EDUCATION PROJECT

Funded by Crime Prevention Investment Fund, Justice Canada
Project Coordinator: Jean Crosby
Office Manager: Jackie Jacques
Diversity Consultant: Sylvia Parris

INTRODUCTION:

The Rural Youth Healthy Relationships Education Project is a four year project which started in February 2002. The project implements a gender-based, violence prevention model which will provide youth with skills to build and maintain healthy relationships.

In September, 2001, the AWRRC was invited by the National Crime Prevention Centre (NCPC) to visit a CPIF project underway in British Columbia and to submit a proposal to replicate that model. The Saltspring Women Opposed to Violence and Abuse (SWOVA) Community Development and Research Society had obtained three years of CPIF funding for their project: "Women and Violence - Education in Prevention".

Jean Crosby and Pamela Fry travelled to B.C. to meet with SWOVA project staff, participants, school personnel and board members over a three day period (October 16 - 18). On returning to Nova Scotia, a proposal was researched and drafted. After several revisions and negotiations regarding the partnership with SWOVA, the proposal was accepted for consideration in December by NCPC. After delays relating to a change of Federal Cabinet Ministers, funding was approved for the "Rural Youth Healthy Relationships Education Project" in February 2002. The project work is being carried out with ongoing consultation and collaboration with SWOVA staff and in partnership with the Antigonish East Education Centre in Antigonish County and Chedabucto Place in Guysborough County. These rural schools reflect a diverse population with a significant percentage of the students coming from Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotian communities. Please refer to Appendix A for a project summary.

PROJECT ACTIVITY: March 4 - March 31, 2002

The first month of activity for the project involved establishing the office with the attendant tasks of acquiring furniture/supplies, telephone/internet hook up and computer installation. Guidelines were established for consultation/training with SWOVA for the length of the project which will involve ongoing communication and an annual visit by their staff for consultation and training. The curriculum documents were obtained from SWOVA and delivered to Jack Beaton of the Strait Regional School Board who then initiated the process of approval by the Department of Education.

Jackie Jacques was hired as Office Administrator and the hiring process was initiated for the Diversity Consultant position. An important connection was made with Percy Paris of Henson College, Dalhousie University, regarding diversity work and education. Dalhousie University

Diversity Initiative shares some common goals with the project regarding diversity issues. This relationship will be developed in coming months.

Initial exploration of additional funding supports for the project resulted in an application to the Family Learning Initiative Endowment Fund for an enhancement project to the Rural Youth Project - "Parents of Rural Youth Support Project".

NEXT STEPS:

A focus for coming months will be completing staff hiring: Diversity Consultant, Adult Facilitators (4) and Counsellor. Other immediate priorities will be achieving Department of Education approval of the SWOVA curriculum; implementation of the Advisory Committee, training of Adult Facilitators; initial consultation/training visit from SWOVA; and exploring additional sources of funding support.

Respectfully submitted by:
Jean Crosby, B.S.W., R.S.W.
Project Coordinator

STAFFING

1. AWRC Core Staff

This past year the Antigoniish Women's Resource Centre core staff positions included:

- Executive Director: Lucille Harper
- Crisis Support Workers : Katherine Reed, Amanda Workman, Isabel Gillis
- Office Manager: Angie Babin
- Financial Administrator: Christine Hanlon

As Director, Lucille Harper is responsible for overseeing the administration of the AWRC, staff supervision and performance evaluation, and providing direction for the work of the Centre, as well as for supervising projects, developing programming, writing grant proposals, liaising with government, working with Connect!, representing the Centre on community and regional committees, planning Centre fundraising, handling public relations, and presenting workshops as requested by community groups and organizations.

Our Crisis Support Workers work with women who come to the Centre for information and support on poverty issues, housing, social assistance, sexual violence, custody and access, child protection, separation and divorce issues and issues of concern to adolescent women. Amanda Workman organizes the peer education program, assists with the Therapy Groups for Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse, facilitates volunteer orientation sessions, supervises student placements, and represents the AWRC on local committees that address mental health concerns, youth issues and violence against women. Our Crisis Support Worker, Katherine Reed has been working extensively on addressing the need for more affordable housing in the community. In January, she decided to accept a position as Project Coordinator for the *Assessing Youth Homelessness in Antigoniish* project and to work full time on housing issues. In February, Isabel Gillis was hired as a second Crisis Support Worker. Isabel is taking on responsibility for program planning and organization.

Angie Babin provides essential office management. Angie is responsible for greeting women as they come into the Centre, handling the phone lines, bookkeeping, payroll, statistical record-keeping, clerical assistance, organizing fundraising events and library maintenance. She also assists with supervising volunteers and women in the Centre on work experience placements. Christine Hanlon, our much appreciated Financial Administrator, is responsible for the financial reports for core operations as well as for AWRC projects. Each project requires its own system of accountability making Christine's job complex and intensive.

The AWRC Director completed core staff annual performance appraisals as well as performance appraisals for the On the Road to Employment staff.

AWRC core staff met for day long planning sessions in June and December. These planning sessions provided an opportunity for staff to review existing programs, suggest new programs, bring up staff concerns and discuss staff workloads. During the year, project and core staff met monthly to keep each other informed about their work, to explore opportunities to collaborate on projects, to suggest new initiatives and to discuss staff concerns.

The workload of the Women's Centre continues to increase. To meet the demand for direct service, requests to participate in community development endeavours and the need for increased fundraising, AWRC core staff worked a total of 489 unpaid overtime hours, AWRC project staff worked a total of 619 unpaid overtime hours for a total of 1,109 hours.

Professional Development

Where funding permits staff are encouraged to take advantage of professional development opportunities. This past year staff took part in the following programs.

- Katherine attended three basic computer courses offered at no cost by the Antigonish Career Resource Centre. These short modules dealt with MS Excel, Windows, and MS Word software applications.

Accomplishments and Recognition

We would like to recognize and congratulate staff for the following accomplishments over the past year.

- Chris Hanlon is now a Certified General Accountant.
- Barbara Hayes launched her book *This Small Life*.
- Lucille Harper was awarded the Ron Stratford Memorial Award by the Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers in recognition of the accomplishments of the AWRC.
- The AWRC received a Leadership Award for Women's Health in Atlantic Canada from the Maritime Centre of Excellence for Women's Health. We were nominated by Doris Gillis and Colleen Cameron and were one of ten award recipients. Our co-chair, Heather Mayhew, and most of our core and project staff accepted the award collectively. Susan Eaton, Krista DeCoste, Katherine Reed, Heather Carson and Sherry Battiste wrote a song be-fitting the occasion and we sang our acceptance. It was a great evening and both wonderful and affirming to be nominated by women who themselves contribute so much to our community.
- The Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission sent the Antigonish Affordable Housing Society a letter congratulating them for trying to improve women's lives through affordable housing.

2. AWRC Summer Staff

The AWRC received a grant from the Summer Career Placement Program, HRDC, to hire a summer student. Meaghan MacIntyre was hired as Researcher for the project entitled Young Women at Risk. Meaghan researched information relating to issues faced by priority youth,

presented her finds to AWRG staff core and project working with youth and assisted with the daily operations of the Women's Centre.

3. Service Learning Students/Student Placements

The AWRG provides student placement opportunities for St. F.X. University students participating in Service Learning Programs, for students attending community colleges, as well as for students attending other re-training or re-entry programs. Students acquire practical skills and experience on the job that cannot be duplicated in the classroom. This year the following students came to the Centre for their workplace experience.

Nova Scotia Community College Placements

- **Melody MacInnes** completed her Nova Scotia Community College, Human Services Program student placement with the Centre in April 2001.

- **Lisa Green** completed her Nova Scotia Community College, Human Services Program student placement with the Centre. Lisa worked with Amanda on a wide range of projects, including the organization of a Women's Free Store.

- **Melissa Knocton** completed a one month student placement as part of her Human Services Program, Nova Scotia Community College. Melissa developed a resource manual with information on issues facing adolescent girls.

- **Isabel Gillis** completed her work experience for the Community Services Program, Nova Scotia Community College. Isabel worked with us through the summer during which time she provided support to women, assisted with program organization, and wrote weekly AWRG columns for the Casket.

St. F.X.U. Service Learning Student Placements

- The AWRG supported **Amber Logan**, St. F.X.U. student, in conducting research on *The Role of Food in the Lives of Adolescent Women* for her honours thesis. Amber invited the AWRG to attend a luncheon of thesis students.

- Service learning student **Kimberly Buckle** updated several fact sheets on women and poverty and related matters. As well, she put together a references list on materials pertaining to women, the law, and economic issues. This was a self-directed study for Kimberly (Inter-disciplinary Studies 306: Service Learning Theory and Practice), who is a fourth year honours student in the BA program at St. F.X.U. Katherine Reed supervised her placement and attended the presentation she gave to her class, instructor and the service learning coordinator, Maria Gaudet.

- **Rachel Hebb**, a 4th year student with the Department of Nursing, St. F.X.U. did her community placement with the AWRG. She worked with Susan Eaton on the PATH II project organizing community and health indicator resource information.
- **Michelle Jacobs**, a 4th year student with the Department of Nursing, St. F.X.U. did her 5 day community health nursing placement at the AWRG. She worked with Katherine Reed and Krista DeCoste on the homelessness project.

- Three students from the Business Administration Department's "Managerial Accounting 322" course provided two workshops to members of the Antigoniish Affordable Housing Society. The topic of the workshops was basic financial record-keeping for non-profit organizations. This is one of the skills that AAHS members need to cultivate in order to ensure their success. It was a good opportunity for the students to apply their knowledge and skill in a concrete way in a setting where there is a benefit to the community.

4. Community Hours

The AWRRC provides women with an opportunity and the support required to complete mandated community hours. This year one woman completed her community hours at the Centre.

5. Volunteers

As is the case with many community-based agencies, the AWRRC is finding that volunteers have less time to commit to volunteer activities. Many women are working full-time, caring for children and, often, aging or infirm parents, and trying to upgrade their education and/or job skills. They find they have less time for volunteer activities. Nevertheless, this year we have had an increase in the numbers of women wanting to volunteer with the AWRRC. In particular, we have had a core group of enthusiastic and committed high school students who have organized activities and participated in many aspects of the AWRRC.

Volunteers remain an integral part of the AWRRC. It is only through the work of our volunteers that we are able to accomplish all that we do. Amanda facilitated an orientation session for new volunteers in the fall of the year. Volunteers helped with office support, fundraising, library maintenance and the preparation of income tax returns for low-income women and their families. They also facilitated programs, served as board members and committee members. Volunteers logged a total of 2,487 hours.

The volunteer contribution of the members of our Board of Directors is substantial and very much appreciated by staff and Centre users.

During Volunteer Week, the AWRRC recognized and honoured the work of our many volunteers by hosting a luncheon at the AWRRC. Certificates (50) and flowers were presented in recognition and appreciation of all of their hard work.

FUNDING

During the fiscal year 2001-2002, the AWRC received core program funding from the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services. Both the provincial and federal governments provided funding for specific projects. While project funding enables the AWRC to undertake important pieces of work that contribute to the knowledge and well-being of the community, it does not support the core services of the Women's Centre.

The Nova Scotia Department of Community Services provided core provincial funding of \$100,000. Provincial funding covers our direct service work to women -- support, counselling, information, court accompaniment, advocacy, referral -- as well as our outreach services and community development work. From this budget, we contribute \$5,000 to Connect!, the provincial association of women's centres.

FUNDRAISING EFFORTS

- The AWRC needs to raise funds annually to cover programming costs associated with our adolescent programs, our sexual abuse survivors therapy groups, our women's programs, the Sister Mary MacLeod Bursary and other AWRC costs. This year we undertook fundraising efforts in both the community and the business sectors.
- The community response to our 2001-2002 spring and fall direct mail campaigns clearly demonstrated sustained community support for the AWRC and our work. Thank you to all who so generously supported us. We were able to raise \$5,185.
 - To help cover the costs of our programs the AWRC sought donations from labour as well as from the public and corporate sectors.
- The Canadian Auto Workers has been particularly supportive of our anti-violence work and the anti-violence work of women's organizations across Canada. Betsy MacInlyre, Canadian Auto Workers, and former AWRC Board member, presented the AWRC with a \$2,000 donation on IWD.
- Businesses also have been supportive of AWRC programming and responded positively to our requests for donations to support specific programs as well as to support our programming in general.
- Sable Offshore Energy Inc. donated \$3,610 towards our Teens Take Action Peer Education program
 - Harlequin Enterprises Ltd. donated \$2,500 towards our Therapy Groups for Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse
 - MacLeod Group Inc. donated \$100.

- Community service clubs and religious congregations also supported our work. Contributions included the following.
 - Congregation of Sisters of St. Martha donated \$15,000 to support our *Women Examine Alternatives to Market Housing Project*.
 - Corporation of Sisters of St. Martha donated \$400.
 - Sisters of St. Martha, Adsum Community donated \$50.
 - Antigonish Lions Club donated \$250.
 - Antigonish Local 9 CUPW donated \$125.
 - St. Andrew Junior School donated \$100.
- Individual artists and community businesses demonstrated their support of our work by donating items for fundraising raffles, gift certificates, and beverages and food trays for various AWRC events.
 - Philippe Babin donated "And to All a Good Night" Cross-stitch for the Christmas Draw which was won by Charles Richards. Angie Babin donated a winsome handmade Santa Bear which was won by Steve Smith. Ticket sales raised \$1989.66. The draw was made by Emily Chasson at CJFX.
 - For the Sr. Mary MacLeod Bursary fundraiser Alice Hoskins donated a spectacular Hibiscus Watercolour which was won by Carla Bryden. The Maritime Inn donated a \$50.00 gift certificate which was won by Malcolm MacAskill. The Sister Mary MacLeod Bursary raised \$1,064.
- Individual community members donated food, books, videos, clothing, seeds, school supplies, baby needs, children's games and toys, children's sports equipment, office supplies and equipment, kitchen and household items, furniture, Christmas decorations, and other items for the use of the Centre or for women who use the Centre.

CONCLUSION

Each day at the Women's Centre, we have the privilege of hearing the stories of women's lives, learning from their experiences, benefitting from their wisdom, and gaining inspiration from the strength they demonstrate in the face of adversity. Women confide their hopes, their pain, their tears, their anger, their frustration and their determination to create a better life for themselves, their children and their community. We share that determination.

Again this year, in the face of ongoing financial uncertainty, the AWRC continued to provide needed services and programs for women in our community. We took on new initiatives and continued our work on systemic issues that maintain barriers for women. In short, we accomplished a lot. We integrated the prevention and intervention aspects of our work in a way that allowed us to respond appropriately and effectively to the immediate needs of women in crisis, to work to address the underlying causes of the poverty, violence and health issues facing women, and to deliver and promote prevention programs for women and youth. In doing so, we continued to build and reinforce productive, collaborative working relationships with agency colleagues at the community, regional and provincial levels. We provided students with the opportunity to gain work experience in a feminist organization, using a feminist perspective, and welcomed the involvement of university service learning, community college and high school students.

And, although we were busier than ever, we managed to maintain an open, inviting atmosphere where women felt welcomed, listened to and valued.

We would like to acknowledge the support of the provincial government. We thank Department of Community Services staff Judy Jackson, Director of Community Outreach, Nina Clarke, Regional Administrator, Northern Region, and Lisa Smith and Erv Currie, District Supervisors, Antigonish, for supporting the work of our Women's Centre.

And, we acknowledge and thank our project funders - Nova Scotia Department of Community Services, Status of Women Canada, Health Canada, Justice Canada, and Human Resources Development Canada - for supporting us in making a difference in the lives of women and their families.

Thanks go to the AWA/AWRC Board of Directors for their inspiration, their commitment to women, their sense of humour and for the hours of work they have given to Women's Centre. And our thanks go to our volunteers who do the small and large tasks that contribute to the daily work of the Women's Centre and that make AWRC events run smoothly. We also greatly appreciate the financial and material "in-kind" support of individual community members, local businesses and institutions. Together we have kept the Women's Centre strong, responsive, healthy, and vibrant.

