

ANNUAL REPORT 2002-2003

**ANTIGONISH WOMEN'S
RESOURCE CENTRE**

Submitted to:

The Board of Directors,

Antigonish Women's Resource Centre

Submitted by:

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Antigonish Women's Resource Centre

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ANTIGONISH WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTRE
CORE SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

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 1,587 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, and our after-school programs for adolescent girls.

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 policy created and requires us to work at the community level as well as with different levels and departments of government to call for a social justice 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. This past year, the AWRC, in collaboration with sister women's centres in New Glasgow and Sydney, documented the impact of the social assistance policy changes on the lives of women affected by the policy, and produced and distributed fact sheets that provide information on the policy as well as on women's rights to assistance and to special needs. The project report, *Social Assistance Reform in Nova Scotia: Is It Working for Women?*, has been widely distributed.

The AWRRC understands that for many women, gaining access to further education or to sustaining employment can be a daunting task - especially when their lives are 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*. The Town Council is supporting AAHS in their efforts to create more affordable housing and has donated a piece of land for the housing development.

The sexual violence that women and children experience remains an ongoing focus for the work of the Women's Centre. Through the *Links* Project we participated in a national initiative that documented the experiences of women survivors of sexual violence and intimate partner abuse as they proceed through the legal system and made recommendations for policy change.

Developing healthy relationships in the teen years is one approach to preventing the kind of violence that too many women experience in their lives. The *Rural Youth Healthy Relationships Education Project*, completed their first year of in-class healthy relationships programming to students in grades 7, 8, and 9, in the East Antigonish Academy in Monastery and the Chedabucto Academy in Guysborough. The program is delivered by adult facilitators working collaboratively with youth facilitators. It has been well received by students, teachers and school administrators alike.

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 10 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 to identify where to go for help.

Adolescent girls come to the Women's Centre for information and support as well as to find ways to get involved with our work. This year, we offered two after-school programs. 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 *Inspire* program, designed for young women facing particularly difficult challenges in their lives, provided a supportive environment for girls to sort through personal and societal issues and to make the connections between the two. Our programs emphasize healthy decision making, encourage discussion, and respect the abilities and diverse perspectives of the participants.

Our most challenging issue this year was securing adequate core funding for the AWRC. In the April 2002 the provincial government cut some \$890,000 from the budgets of transition houses, women's centres and men's intervention programs. At the same time, the Department of Community Services released their Family Violence System Redesign Model in which they proposed the amalgamation of services provided by transition houses, women's centres and men's intervention programs. After considerable public protest, the funding cuts were put on hold to allow the organizations involved time to submit consultative redesign plans for the delivery of their services. This was an extensive, time and resource consuming process that not only created considerable extra work and stress for staff and board members, but it left the AWRC without adequate funding to maintain current staff and program levels. The AWRC made the decision to maintain staff and has been working intensively with our elected government representatives and provincial funders to establish adequate funding.

Maintaining current staffing levels is essential to keeping our doors open and our programs accessible to women. AWRC 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, AWRC core staff worked a total of 714 hours of unpaid overtime (an increase of 225 hours over 2001-2002) to maintain and to meet the level of service and program delivery required by the community. Project staff worked 1,003 hours of unpaid overtime. In all, AWRC staff worked a total of 1,717 unpaid overtime hours (an increase of 608 hours over 2001 - 2002).

It is the intention of this report to provide an in-depth look at the work undertaken by the Antigianish 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. For the 2002-2003 year we separated the contacts that relate to the core services offered by the Women's Centre from those relating to the different projects. This gives us a clearer picture of the workload associated with our core services.

During 2002-2003 incoming contacts for core services totalled 9,895. Outgoing calls made by core staff totalled 3,178. These numbers may not fully represent the work of the Centre because calls and visits are difficult to log during busy periods. Core services provided by the AWRC are:

- ♀ Direct Services
 - individual support counselling and crisis intervention
 - information and referral
 - individual advocacy and accompaniment
- ♀ Programs
 - ♀ Outreach
 - ♀ Community Education
 - ♀ Community Development Initiatives

For 2002-2003 we recorded the number of individual women using the AWRC for direct service. This includes individual women who come to the centre for counselling, advocacy, and accompaniment, information, and programs, women who drop-in for informal support, and women who use centre services such as the library, phone, message/pick-up box, photocopyier and for referral slips to the Opportunity Shop. This year we provided direct service to at least 724 individual women (not all women were individually identified and, therefore, were not included in the total). They contacted the AWRC anywhere from 1 - 32 times per month for a total of 3,995 contacts over the year. Women and adolescent girls came to the women's centre looking for information about or help with a wide range of issues. These issues included those associated with economic well-being, physical and mental health, violence, family and social relationships, legal rights, and education and equity:

Economic well-being issues including

- poverty
- homelessness
- transportation
- social assistance
- housing
- employment
- workplace relations
- budgeting
- bankruptcy
- maternity benefits
- financial aid
- childcare

Physical and mental health issues including

- addictions
- eating disorders
- reproductive health
- self-harm
- depression
- grief
- family illness
- anger management
- stress management

- Violence related issues including**
- woman abuse
 - sexual assault
 - sexual abuse
 - bullying
 - harassment

- Family and Social Relationships including**
- parenting
 - family dysfunction
 - social relationship dysfunction

- Legal Rights including**
- divorce/separation
 - custody/access
 - legal aid
 - tenancy issues
 - child protection
 - court preparation
 - maintenance enforcement

- Education and Equity issues including**
- education access
 - student loans
 - disabilities
 - employment equity
 - sexism
 - homophobia

AWRC core staff assist women with filling out forms for student loans, the housing authority, co-op housing applications, Canada Pension Plan, Old Age Security, Child Tax Benefit, income taxes, oil rebate. We help with writing letters, composing or updating resumes and cover letters, filing complaints and appeals. We accompany women to court, legal appointments, and medical appointments. We provide advocacy, referrals to other services and we assist women in making connections with those services.

The number of individual women participating in core programs totalled 278. The number of people attending or participating in AWRC presentations, events and/or community development activities/networking opportunities totalled 1,638.

Along with core services the AWRC sponsors projects that enable us to undertake specific pieces of work, provide re-entry programming and address social issues that impact women. Total incoming contacts for projects totalled 2,583. Total outgoing contacts from project staff totalled 3,487.

Table 1 shows the monthly contact totals. Table 2 shows the monthly contact totals for direct services. Table 3 identifies the reason for contact. Table 4 identifies programs and participation levels.

TABLE 1
AWRC Core Services Usage April 1, 2002 - March 31, 2003

MONTH	CALLS IN	VISITS IN	TOTAL INCOMING CONTACTS	OUTGOING CALLS	PROGRAMS	PRESENTATIONS, EVENTS, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES
APRIL	887	500	1,387	651	100	65
MAY	508	345	853	293	175	425
JUNE	418	267	685	191	13	37
JULY	434	240	674	275	0	24
AUGUST	286	207	493	127	0	248
SEPTEMBER	427	275	702	236	0	175
OCTOBER	565	343	908	363	45	95
NOVEMBER	514	338	852	308	209	141
DECEMBER	384	224	608	110	98	55
JANUARY	545	329	874	299	10	156
FEBRUARY	577	340	917	313	18	65
MARCH	516	426	942	282	23	152
TOTAL	6,061	3,834	9,895	3,178	691	1,638

Note:

The programs are core programs sponsored by the AWRC. The total number of individuals participating in those programs was 278.

The presentations, events and community development activities are those which were organized by the AWRC, with the AWRC or where the AWRC was invited to present. They do not include conferences, workshops or events in which we participated but did not have a sponsorship, organizing or presenting role.

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 project work, or calls from board members, AWA members, and volunteers, the media, or numerous local, regional, provincial and national groups.

Table 3 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.

Breakdown of AWRC Direct Service Contacts

PROJECT	INCOMING CONTACTS	OUTGOING CONTACTS
RURAL YOUTH HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS EDUCATION PROJECT	782	1,133
WAYS & MEANS: ANTIGONISH WOMEN SEEK STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS AFFORDABLE HOUSING NEED	276	472
SOCIAL ASSISTANCE REFORM IN NOVA SCOTIA: IS IT WORKING FOR WOMEN?	375	327
LIFE LITERACY	72	248
STEPPING FORWARD: AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS FOR ADOLESCENT GIRLS	64	172
ON THE ROAD TO EMPLOYMENT: A PRE- EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM FOR WOMEN FACING BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT	903	877
ASSESSING YOUTH HOMELESSNESS IN ANTIGONISH	111	258
TOTAL PROJECT CONTACTS	2,583	3,487

TABLE 2
AWRC Project Contacts April 1, 2002 - March 31, 2003

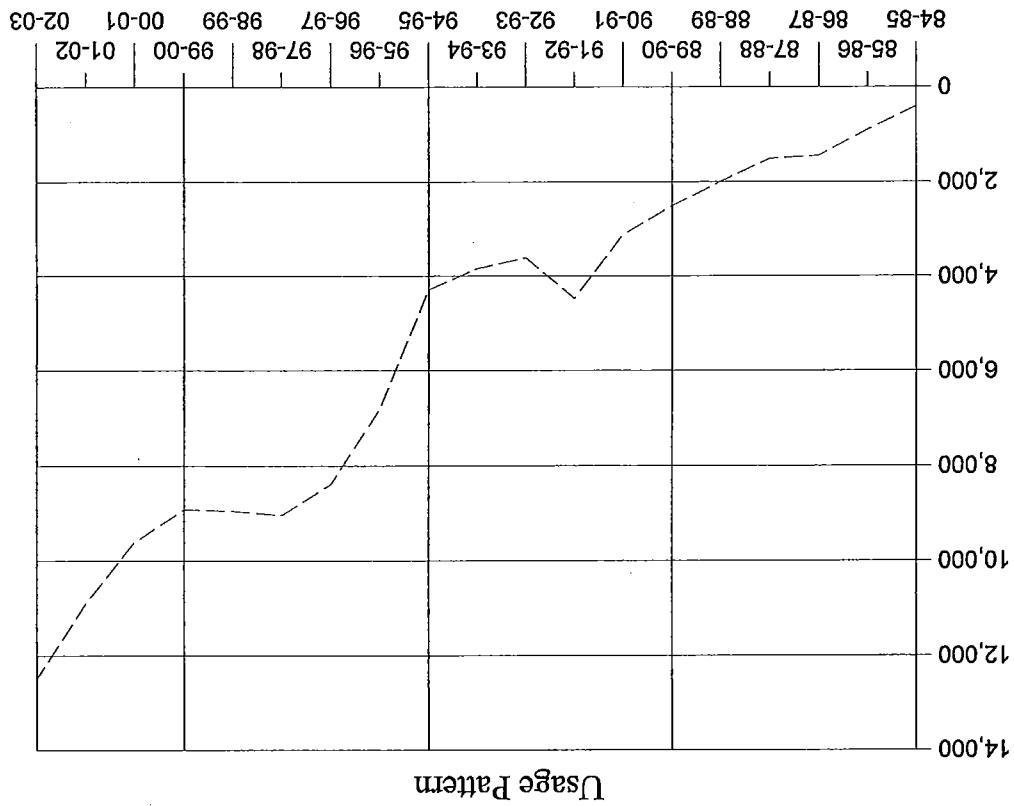
TABLE 3
Breakdown of Direct Service Issues 2002-2003

Subject/Issue	Direct Service	Personal Support	General Info	Centre Services	TOTAL
1 Economics Total	367	257	26	172	822
(a) business/entrepreneur	5	5	2	4	16
(b) education/training	150	126	14	78	368
(c) employment	65	58	5	28	156
(d) financial management (personal)	141	68	1	10	220
(e) economics (macro)	6	0	4	52	62
2 Equity Total	32	17	7	30	86
racial issues, gender stereotyping, disability	32	17	7	30	86
3 Family/Social Relationship Total	192	48	5	47	292
(a) family/social relationship	141	19	1	32	193
(b) childcare	24	16	4	5	49
(c) parenting	27	13	0	10	50
4 Health Total	493	217	20	77	807
(a) general	201	131	9	30	371
(b) mental health	225	53	2	16	296
(c) reproductive health	24	16	3	20	63
(d) sexuality/orientation	3	1	0	6	10
(e) addictions	40	16	6	5	67
5 Justice Total	334	65	8	14	421
(a) divorce/separation	41	8	0	2	51
(b) custody/access	126	5	0	1	132
(c) maintenance enforcement	19	4	0	2	51
(d) legal issues	148	48	8	10	214
6 Poverty Total	1,064	158	36	43	1,301
(a) general	159	49	20	8	236
(b) housing	188	40	3	26	257
(c) social assistance	335	39	6	6	386
(d) poverty relief (clothing, furniture, food, baby)	382	30	7	3	422
7 Women's Centre Info Total	309	53	215	1,413	1,990
(a) general	85	30	3	730	848
(b) photocopying	33	4	0	103	140
(c) leave-retrieve messages/information	92	1	1	224	318
(d) rest/waiting place	25	0	0	111	136
(e) other organization/services	11	14	210	20	255
(f) equipment use (computer, fax, etc.)	63	4	1	225	293
8 Violence Total	173	23	2	27	225
(a) general	16	4	0	12	32
(b) abuse-spousal relationship	35	4	2	6	47
(c) sexual assault/abuse	100	13	0	2	115
(d) abuse - family relationships	12	2	0	6	20
(e) sexual harassment/discrimination	10	0	0	1	11
TOTAL	2,964	838	319	1,823	5,944

Centre usage statistics for the past ten years while Figure 1 plots the usage pattern.

TABLE 4

Year	Incoming Contacts	Total Increase
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
	<u>Incoming Contacts</u>	<u>Total Increase</u>
2002-2003	9,895	1,587
	<u>Core Services</u>	<u>Total Contacts</u>
	2,583	12,478



REFERRALS

The AWRRC 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 and we do not record the number of referrals made by other agencies to the Centre. However, this past year women who told us they were referred to the Centre were referred by the following organizations, agencies and individuals.

- Community Services
- Addiction Services
- Naomi Society
- Career Resource Centre
- Diabetic Clinic
- Financial Institutions
- St. F.X. University Professors
- Physicians
- Friends
- Mental Health Services
- Probation Services
- Eastern Mainland Housing Authority
- Antigonish County Adult Learning Association
- Pictou County Women's Centre
- St. Vincent de Paul Society
- Therapists
- Family

The AWRRC is part of the network of services in our community. AWRRC staff make referrals to other agencies and organizations in the community, region and province. When a woman comes to the AWRRC, staff assist her in assessing her situation, help her develop a plan of action to deal with her concerns, when appropriate refer her to places where she can find the services she needs, and support her in accessing them. This past year we made referrals to:

- government services
- mental health services
- addictions services
- social housing agencies
- services for abused women
- economic development agencies
- police
- charities and service clubs
- legal services
- health care professionals
- child & adolescent services
- education & re-training programs
- other women's centres
- employment counsellors
- financial counsellors

AWRC PROGRAMS

The AWRC offers a series of programs each year for women and adolescent girls. Many of the programs offered this year are programs that have been offered in past years and that women have found beneficial. All 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.

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 2002. 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 not offered in this year.

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

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

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

While a Stage III Group was not offered in 2002-2003, a Stage III Workshop brought together some of the women who had participated in the Stage II Group to begin exploration of sub-personality work. The group reported that reconnecting with one another was a very positive experience and they emphasized to the facilitators the value of group work. Five (5) women participated.

2. Embracing Ourselves: Building Women's Self-Confidence
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. Embracing Ourselves was offered in the fall of 2002. Eleven (11) women participated.

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

Can't Say No?: An Assertiveness Program for Women is a three session program that provides women with an opportunity to work more intensively on learning and practising assertiveness skills. The program encourages women to become aware of personal behaviours that needed to be changed and to practice those changes through role-playing in the group. Women learn new behaviours and are supported in incorporating them into their daily lives. They begin by analyzing power and powerlessness, examining women's victimization and identifying the victim role. Participants practice using their personal will and choice for change. They learn assertive communication skills and each woman identifies and role-plays scenarios which she has identified

as presenting her with a significant challenge in using assertive behaviour in her personal life. The program was offered in Canso in the summer of 2002 at the request of a group of eight (8) women from Canso. It was offered in the fall of 2002 to a group of eleven (11) women in Antigonish.

4. Teens Take Action:

A Peer Education Approach to Dating Violence and Sexual Assault

Trainers: Amanda Workman, Jean Crosby

Peer Educators: Amy Amoulika-Toutour, Maureen Armour, Ashley Cameron, Peter Goldie, Keegan How, Sahil Kalghatgi, Emily MacDougall, Laura MacLellan, Sabha Shafei, Therese Stirling, Marion Turniawan, Lindsay Wall

Program Overview

The Teens Take Action program, a school-community partnership, was first developed six years ago to provide young people with critical information about recognizing violence and sexual assault, knowing what to do about it and having an awareness of prevention strategies. The program is designed to provide grade 8 students with accurate information about all types of violence that can occur in dating and acquaintance relationships. Role-modeling of effective communication skills is provided using a peer education model in which grade 11 and 12 students deliver the information in a manner appropriate to the grade 8 student understanding. As in previous years, the Guidance Department, St. Andrew Junior School provided consultation regarding content and current issues and students from Dr. J.H. Gillis Regional High School became peer educators.

Training

Although as in years past, the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre provided youth training and program co-ordination, there were differences in how the youth facilitators received the training this year. The opportunity to train youth facilitators from the Rural Youth in Healthy Relationships Project with the Teens Take Action group (TTA) allowed training facilitators to share resources and expand the training process for the Teens Take Action group.

- Recognized that teenager's primary source of information about social behaviors, such as dating, comes from other teens and the media.
- Provided 30 hours of training to Grade 11 and 12 male and female students to prepare them to deliver classroom presentations on dating violence and sexual assault.
- Facilitated the development by youth facilitators of presentations that used interactive activities, small group discussion and role-plays to convey information about dating violence and sexual assault.

Training included:

- Youth facilitators from three schools, Dr. JH Gillis Regional High (12), Chedabucto Education Centre (10) and Antigonish East Education Centre (10).

- Facilitation by Jean Crosby, Project Director, Rural Youth in Healthy Relationships Project and Amanda Workman, Crisis Support Worker/TTA Program Co-ordinator. Some adult facilitators from the Rural Youth in Healthy Relationships attended the training sessions and participated in discussions.
- A workshop with *Irondale*, a youth-oriented drama group. *Irondale* provided an opportunity for youth facilitators to interactively develop a variety of drama related teaching tools over a 1.5 day period.
- A two day workshop on recognizing and responding to violence and sexual assault.
- An additional 2.5 days of preparation time for the TTA group to develop classroom presentations, following the three days of joint training.

Program Evaluation

The evaluation process regarding the effectiveness of the TTA program is three fold. The youth facilitators provide feedback to the training facilitators; the Grade 8 students evaluate the TTA presentation; and, teachers informally respond to the TTA presentation.

Although the change in how training was provided was received well by the TTA peer educators, the process proved challenging for the training facilitators. They questioned the effectiveness of the two day workshop on recognizing and responding to violence and sexual assault given that the group size did not allow for in-depth discussions with the youth. This lack of opportunity for in-depth discussion was identified by the TTA peer educators as well. At the same time though they found that the opportunity to mingle with students from other schools was useful in broadening their perspective on diversity issues. In the future, it would be useful to do some of the training jointly, however, group discussions need to be facilitated in a different way.

The presentations by the TTA facilitators to the Grade 8s were well received. The teachers felt that the skits presented this year were particularly appropriate to the age group, and students responded well to the skits and classroom work. The following quotes from Grade 8 students were consistent with most feedback received and illustrate the value of both the teaching approach used and the content.

- *Comments* "I though it showed a lot and I totally got what you guys were trying to show. I think the most important thing was probably about the awareness you talk about."
- *What was the most important thing you learned today?* "That I don't have to be pressured into doing things with guys even if they're older and "cool"."

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. This year, topics identified by the participants for discussion included relationships, body image, sexuality, values

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 5 women participated in the program.

8. Women and Financial Planning Program
Facilitator: Betty MacDonald, Hicks Financial Services

Each year the AWRRC prepares income tax forms for low-income women and their families. This is a very popular program. It saves women the fee that would be charged if they went to a tax firm or an accountant. This year volunteers prepared forms for 158 individuals many of whom were senior women and women from marginalized communities.

7. Income Tax Preparation Program for Low-Income Women
Volunteers: Jim McLaren, Linda Marquis, Rob Cosh, Christine Hanlon

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 counselors 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 can accommodate ten to twelve participants and a group of five to ten girls has been attending weekly. (See Stepping Forward Report)

6. Inspire
Facilitator: Pamela Fry

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9. Women's Free Store

Volunteer organizers: Caitlin Hughes and Clare Mulcahy
AWRC Staff: Amanda Workman

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. AWRC 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 April 2002, the food goods collected were delivered to the Antigoniash Food Bank and all other items made available to the community at the Free Store. Approximately 100 people used the Free Store and 8 volunteers managed the very successful event.

PUBLIC EDUCATION INITIATIVES & EVENTS

The AWRC developed and/or delivered 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. AWRC In-Centre Presentations

- At an AWRC **Brown Bag Lunch**, Maria MacDougall and Katherine Reed presented information on the recent changes to Nova Scotia's social assistance policy and its impacts on women.

- **Akua Britwum**, a lecturer at the Centre of Development Studies, University of Cape Coast, Ghana, delivered a presentation titled *Unhealthy Prescriptions: The IMF and Africa*. In her presentation she talked about the impact of structural adjustment on the education and health sectors in Ghana. She identified the disproportionate negative impact of structural adjustment policies on women. **Colleen Cameron, Coady Institute**, facilitated a discussion that linked what is happening in Ghana with what is happening in here in Nova Scotia. The presentation was co-sponsored with CUSO and was co-organized by Donna Malone.

- Meaghan MacIntyre gave a presentation on her thesis, *The Zapatista Uprising and the Revolutionary Women's Law*.

2. AWRC/AWA Events

- **Annual General Meeting**
The AWRC/AWA held the Annual General Meeting in June and celebrated the work of our organizations. The AWA Peace Cup was awarded to Sr. Mary Eileen MacEachern for her tireless contribution to creating a healthy, caring and just world.

- **Sister Mary MacLeod Bursary**
The Sister Mary MacLeod Bursary, which is awarded annually to a woman returning to school to further her education, who shows financial need, and whose career plans include working toward improving the status of women was presented to Karen Kenny and Athena Negus by AWRC Board member Lynn O'Donnell.

- **Coady Picnic**
Each summer we organize a gathering that brings together women from the Antigonish Women's Association with women from around the world studying at the Coady International

Institute. Again this year Oona Landry graciously hosted the picnic in her lovely home and gardens in Bayfield. Some 65 women of all ages gathered to share stories, songs laughter and food.

• Take Back the Night

Our Take Back the Night March brought attention to the fact that the streets are not yet safe for women and children and that violence against women remains an everyday reality. Approximately 30 women and children participated. A smaller group returned to the Women's Centre for tea and discussion.

• December 6th Day Of Remembrance and Action

A December 6th Remembrance candle lighting gathering was held at the CACL. Members of the community came together to bear witness to the ongoing reality of violence against women 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.

• Season's Celebrations Open House

A Season's Celebrations Open House was held at the Women's Centre providing the public with an opportunity to learn more about our programs and services and to provide staff with an opportunity to pass season's greetings on to AWRRC volunteers, members, supporters and women who use our services.

• International Women's Day

The Celebration of Women's Contributions to Community organized for this year's International Women's Day was a wonderful event with great music, readings and reflections that demonstrated the many ways in which women contribute to our community.

3. AWRRC Committees

AWRC staff participated on the following committees:

- The Newsletter Committee headed by Charlie tenBrinke produced three AWARe Newsletters.
- The Personnel Committee undertook the following tasks:
 - interviewed and hired Sylvia Parris for the Diversity Consultant position for the Rural Youth Healthy Relationships Education Project.
 - interviewed candidates for the four Adult Facilitator positions for the Rural Youth Healthy Relationships Education Project. Augie Jones, Krista DeCoste, James Cameron, Colleen Pelly and Annika Peters were offered and accepted positions.

- interviewed four candidates and hired two male facilitators for the Rural Youth Healthy Relationships Education Project. Liam Timmons and Steve Wardrope were offered and accepted the positions.
 - reviewed 12 applications and interviewed 2 candidates for the summer student Research Assistant position. The position was offered to and accepted by Noline MacKinnon.
 - The AWRAC Ad Hoc By-Laws Committee met to propose revisions to the current by-laws for the review of the Board and approval of the membership at the AGM. - Donna MacDonald, Heather Mayhew, Leslie Buckland-Nicks, Lucille Harper
 - Peggy Mahon worked with AWRAC staff and Board members to develop a mission statement for the Women's Centre and to define our board governance structure and practice.
4. Outreach, Presentations and Training Sessions
- 4.1 Violence Against Women
- AWRAC staff facilitated workshops/presentations on sexual violence and dating violence as well as provided training information and resource materials to women from other organizations.
- Amanda met with **Molly Wheeler** of Trinidad, a participant in the Coady Women's Leadership program, to familiarize her with AWRAC programs being offered to survivors of childhood sexual abuse. Ms. Wheeler is gathering information in preparation for organizing a survivors program in her home community in Trinidad.
 - Amanda presented information to **Residence Assistants and the Residence Life Coordinators** from St. Francis Xavier University about sexual violence and responding to disclosure. Discussion focussed on issues of consent and coercion and information was provided regarding the legal and medical processes following a report of sexual assault.
 - Amanda spoke to **Residence Assistants and Residence Life Coordinators** about the *Role of Perceived Victim Participation and the Provision of Support Services in Cases of Sexual Assault*. Discussion focussed on how victim blaming, centred around alcohol consumption, affected how women were responded to in cases of sexual violence. Much debate arose around the issue of consent. Constable Downey Brocklebank, RCMP and Tammy-Lee Vautour, Naomi Society spoke about the role each of their organizations play in providing services to women and other victims of violence.
 - Amanda facilitated a discussion about sexual violence and sexual violence prevention at St. Francis Xavier University for women from **Burke and Fraser House**. Participants engaged in "brain-storming" strategies for staying safe. These strategies included the following: using

AWRC staff facilitated workshops/presentations relating to the status of women and to the contributions of women.

- The **Coady International Institute** invited the AWRC to be part of a panel discussion on women in leadership positions in community development. Katherine Reed was the presenter at this session, which was a scheduled part of the course. The difficulties that women face in leadership were considered, as well as the strengths women bring to leadership and the characteristics of a good leader. The other panelists were Linda Snyder of the Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women's Health, Mary Coyle, Director of the Coady,

4.4 Women

- Caroline O'Connell, formerly of Legal Aid, and Amanda Workman met with the **Single Parent Network**, St. Peter's. Carolyn responded to questions from the group about the processes involved in child custody and divorce proceedings, while Amanda offered support around coping with the emotional fallout of divorce and child custody. The group plans to put together a resource guide for parents dealing with the legal system.

4.3 Separation and Divorce

- Katherine Reed facilitated an educational workshop for Colleen Cameron's **Gender in Health Class**, St. F.X.U.. The focus was on social policy as it relates to women, and women's poverty.
- At the **17th Annual Topshoe Memorial Conference**, Katherine Reed was invited to be a participant in "Hyde Park," a participatory element of the conference which allowed participants to get up on soap boxes and talk about issues related to the conference theme: Reclaiming Democracy. Katherine's focus was on poverty issues, social assistance policy, and reduced access to post-secondary education for lower-income adults.
- Katherine Reed facilitated an educational workshop for Colleen Cameron's **Gender in Health Class**, St. F.X.U.. The focus was on social policy as it relates to women, and women's poverty.

4.2 Poverty

- Students from a **Women's Studies Gender class**, St. F.X.U. invited Amanda to speak on the topic of family violence. Also in attendance were Constable Downey Brocklebank, Community Policing Officer, and Danielle LeBlanc, Naomi Society. Amanda talked about the gendered nature of family violence and how sexual violence plays a significant role in the abuse of women and girls, both in a family and social context.
- clear language when communicating with a date, avoiding excessive alcohol consumption, going out in groups, having one sober friend able to watch out for the group, and talking about sexual violence with peers to increase awareness of the problem.

and Anne Simpson, St. F. X. University President was a participant in the class, and informally an extra panelist.

- At the Inclusion Initiative/Community Partners Workshop sponsored by the Department of Community Services, Lucille Harper participated in the panel where she presented the *Social Assistance Reform in Nova Scotia: Is It Working for Women? Project* as an example of an inclusive process. The purpose of the workshop was to look for ways for DCS to include women impacted by their policies in the development of those policies.

4.5 Other

- Isabel Gillis delivered a presentation on the importance of effective writing to Excel students at the **St.F.X.U. Writing Centre**. Dr. Gary Brooks and Professor Michelle Chisholm also participated in the presentation.

4.6 AWRC Information Presentations

Each year we are asked by organizations to do presentations or to meet to talk about the work of the AWRC. This year we met with and/or presented to the following individuals and groups:

- the **Port Bickerton's Women's Institute** - Katherine Reed
- Katie Dysart, St. F.X.U., who is interested in setting up a women's centre on campus and wanted to learn about AWRC services and programs and about how we got started. - Lucille Harper
- a **St. F.X.U. Resource Fair**, held for Residence Assistants, Residence Life Co-ordinators and Off-Campus counsellors to provide them with information about available community resources. - Amanda Workman
- a job fair sponsored by the **Antigonish Guysborough Black Development Association** where Sherry Battiste provided information about the AWRC and the On the Road to Employment Program.

- Department of Community Services, Antigonish, **Employment Support and Income Assistance staff** where AWRC Crisis Support staff along with the Executive Director and Site Researcher for the Social Assistance Reform in Nova Scotia, *Is It Working for Women? Project* familiarized DCS staff with the work of the AWRC, the role of our crisis support worker and to provide an opportunity for them to clarify their interpretation and implementation of policy.

- a **Health Fair** sponsored by St.F.X.U. where the AWRRC participated along with approximately 14 other community agencies. - Isabel Gillis
 - a **St. F.X.U. Counselling Centre** staff meeting provided an opportunity to enter into some preliminary discussion about programs the AWRRC might deliver on campus. - Lucille Harper, Amanda Workman
 - the **Department of Sociology and Anthropology** at St. Francis Xavier University Career Night which featured government and community agencies. Amanda Workman represented the AWRRC and presented it as an example of a women's community organization.
 - Nancy Lee, **Coady International Institute**, who organized the Women's Leadership Certificate program. - Lucille
 - **St Martha's Regional Hospital Mental Health Services** staff meeting to update each other about our services. The meeting was an opportunity to discuss the lack of services in the community for women with intellectual delays and other disabilities who do not fall within the mandate of Mental Health and who turn to the AWRRC for services and support. - Lucille Harper, Amanda Workman
5. **Networking**
- AWRRC 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.
- Lucille met with Tammy Lee Vautour, Executive Director, Naomi Society, to discuss the work of our organizations, how we might support each other and to revise the diagram of our services put together by Jean Crosby and Lucille several years ago. The diagram shows the linkages between as well as the distinctness of our services.
 - Lucille attended a 'meet and greet' session organized by the **Coady International Institute** to introduce the participants in the *Community Development Leadership for Women Certificate Program* to women involved with community organizations and initiatives.
 - Lucille attended the Annual General Meeting of the **Antigonish Regional Development Agency** which highlighted a youth filmmaker training project on which they partnered with *First Works*. The guest speaker was filmmaker Lulu Keating.
 - Nelda Armour, **Addictions Services**, brought the new Outreach workers with Addictions Services to the AWRRC to introduce them to our staff and our services. Karen Doyle is working with youth while Elizabeth Benoit is working with women with addictions.

- Marie Lovrod, St. Francis Xavier University, **Women's Studies**, introduced six of her students to the AWRRC to talk about community feminist activism. The students met with Amanda to talk about their areas of study and to identify how their studies and community development were related.
- 6. **Research Interviews and Agency Evaluations**
- AWRC staff participated in research interviews and agency evaluations which included the following:
 - Janet Shivley, Researcher for the **Rural Nova Scotia Research Project**, gave a presentation to staff about the scope and objectives of the project. The study is being conducted by a research team from St. F.X.U. lead by the Principal Investigator Doris Gillis, Department of Human Nutrition and the Co-investigator, Allan Quigley, Department of Adult Education. Janet asked the AWRRC to identify women she could interview for her research and she interviewed several AWRRC core and project staff.
 - In November 2002, the AWRRC participated in a focus group hosted by the **Health Literacy in Rural Nova Scotia Research Project**. The discussion was designed to identify how service providers see literacy as impacting health and in what way. -Amanda
 - The AWRRC was contacted by St. Mary's University Professor Arla Day inviting staff participation in a research project they are doing on emotional abilities of various types of workers and the emotional demands put on workers in a variety of jobs. A project staff member agreed to participate and completed a two-part survey.
 - St. F. X. University student and AWRRC volunteer Krista LeVangie interviewed Katherine Reed on the subject of women's poverty for a paper she is writing.
 - Carl Hennig, Department of Psychology, St. F.X.U., met with Lucille to familiarize us with the research he is doing on at-risk youth and to look for ways where we might support each other's work.
 - Clare Sampson, **Single Parent Network**, St. Peters, met with Amanda to gather contacts and resources for a directory and guide booklet the group plans to produce. The booklet will be designed to provide information to people going through court for divorce and/or child custody and maintenance.
 - **Janice MacLellan-Peters**, Masters of Nursing student, interviewed Amanda about the challenges facing young single mothers as they attempt to access health care. Poverty was

identified as the largest issue, as lack of financial resources impacts access to appropriate nutrition, safe housing, transportation, etc..

7. Consultations, Information Sessions, Workshops and Conferences

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

7.1 Consultations

7.1.1 Violence

- A community advocates session on the "Implementation of the Domestic Violence Intervention Act (DVI Act)" sponsored by the Court Services Division of the Department of Justice. The session was attended by representatives from organizations concerned with intimate partner violence, including transition houses, Halifax Police and Victim's Services, men's intervention programs, and women's centres. Discussion focused on who could be designated to make applications on behalf of the victim under the DVI Act and on the need for the development of a "primary aggressor policy" for use by law enforcement.
- Amanda Workman

- The Department of Justice hosted a third and final consultation with community in November 2002 regarding the **Domestic Violence Intervention Act** scheduled to be read at the April 2003 sitting of the Nova Scotia Legislature. The conference was attended by various representatives of the Department of Community Services (NS), the Department of Justice (NS), members of the Transition House Association of Nova Scotia, Carolyn Madden of the Justice Learning Institute, Metro Immigrant Services Association, and one representative of the Victim's Services Division of the Halifax Regional Police force. The AWRC was the sole women's resource centre present and no one from the RCMP or any men's treatment program was present. Discussion focussed on how recommendations from two previous consultations were incorporated into the Act and on how training is to be provided by the Justice Learning Institute to justice workers.
- Amanda Workman

7.1.2. Health

- **Blane Chisholm, Director, Celtic Homes**, met with the AWRC to discuss AWRC concerns about the need for supported housing for women with mental health disabilities. Blane is interested in pursuing with his board of directors ideas for establishing secure housing.
- Katherine Reed, Lucille Harper

- Evelyn Lindsey, Chair, Antigonish Town and County Community Health Board, suggested to the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre (AWRC) that the Community Health Impact Assessment Tool created by the Community Health Board be used to determine the impact that cuts in funding to the Women's Centre would have on the health of the community. The Women's Centre accepted the invitation. The gathering was convened by the Community Health Board and facilitated by Susan Eaton. People from organizations and institutions in the community that are knowledgeable about the work of the Women's Centre were invited to participate in the community health impact assessment. The community health impact assessment demonstrated that funding cuts to the AWRC would be detrimental to the health of the community.
 - The Antigonish Town and County Community Health Board held a focus group in March to discuss health issues in the community and what should be done to address them. Many local organizations were represented. Katherine Reed attended on behalf of the AWRC and raised issues of housing and poverty.
 - The Nova Scotia Roundtable on Youth Sexual Health held a series of community consultations seeking community input from which they will develop an action-oriented approach for youth sexual health in this province. The mission of the Round Table is to work collaboratively to ensure the promotion and protection of youth sexual health. Jean MacQueen, Larry Maxwell and Janet Bickerton facilitated the meeting. - Jean Crosby
- 7.1.3. Education and Training**
- The Dean of Health and Human Services, Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC), Picton Campus, conducted a Community Needs of Analysis. The NSCC has moved the Community Services and Human Services programs once offered in Picton to the Truro campus. Most community based organizations voiced their objections to the college's removal of the programs from the Picton Campus. - Amanda Workman
 - A second St.F.X.U. and Community Research Workshop brought together university faculty with community organizations to look at ways in which university-based and community-based researchers could collaborate on initiatives of common interest. - Lucille Harper
 - The Skills and Learning Branch of the Nova Scotia Department of Education held a consultation session on the future direction of the Branch where they invited input from organizations that deliver literacy programs. - Lucille Harper

- **Reclaiming Democracy: Pathways to Participation** was the topic of the 17th Topshee Memorial Conference. Stephen Lewis, Canadian and Special Envoy to the United Nations, gave the keynote address. A WRC staff played various roles in the Conference. Katherine was a soapbox speaker at the Hyde Park session. Her topic was globalization. As a panellist in the Town Hall meeting, Flora Murphy spoke about participatory democracy and questioned whether we use a democratic governance structure.

7.3 Workshops and Conferences

- The St. F.X.U. Women's Studies Department sponsored **Reading Romanow**, a presentation by Dr. Barbara Clow, Atlantic Centre for Excellence in Women's Health, where Dr. Clow presented an analysis of the implications of the Romanow Report for women and women's health. - Lucille Harper
- The St. F.X. Women's Studies Program sponsored a brown-bag lunch discussion with Dr. Barbara Clow on **"Primary Health Care Reform: What Does it Mean for Women?"** - Vangie Babin and Katherine Reed

- **Elizabeth MacDonald, Canada Volunteerism Initiative**, met with Lucille to encourage A WRC interest in and involvement with the Canadian Federation of Voluntary Sector Networks.

7.2 Information Sessions

- **The Public Legal Education and Information Society** held a community consultation in Stellarton, Nova Scotia, regarding a proposed web portal hosted by PLFI containing links to legal information from a spectrum of sources. The portal would most likely be used by professionals involved in the legal system, as well as community organizations and advocates. - Amanda Workman

7.1.5. Legal Issues

- The Atlantic Centre for Excellence in Women's Health hosted a **Social and Economic Inclusion Policy Luncheon**. ACEWH brought together policy makers, researchers and representatives from community organizations to identify current policy areas and concerns. The A WRC was the only women's centre represented as well the only organization from a rural area. We were able to bring those perspectives to the table. - Lucille Harper

7.1.4. Poverty

- Flora Murphy and Katherine Reed took part in a workshop on influencing public policy. "Taking Action Through Public Policy" was sponsored by the Community Animation Program (Environment Canada) and took place in the Museum of Industry in St. Lawrence. Many community organizations from Pictou, Antigonish, and Guysborough Counties were represented so it was a good opportunity for networking and information-sharing as well.
- **The Women's Restorative Justice Policy Forum** brought together women from across Nova Scotia who work with women who are survivors of male violence and/or who are women in conflict with the law. Together participants reviewed the draft research report prepared by Pam Rubin, Project Researcher, that described from the perspective of women and women's advocacy organizations across the province, the impact or potential impact of restorative justice for women who have experienced sexual assault, spousal/partner abuse or who are survivors of male violence and in conflict with the law. The research is detailed, extensive, and portrays women's voices. Forum participants worked for one and a half days in four small groups to develop an understanding and analysis of the research from a woman-centred perspective and to develop presentations on their concerns. They presented those concerns to Michael Baker, the Minister of Justice, Jane Purves, the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, and Justice Department staff. The presentations were articulate, insightful and powerful. The recommendations put forward to the Minister of Justice were to maintain the current moratorium on referring cases of sexual assault and spousal/partner abuse to restorative justice fora, to enter into a consultation process with women's groups to develop a model that better meets women's needs and to monitor and enforce the moratorium. Lucille was responsible for delivering the opening remarks and for facilitating the working group assigned the task of addressing the Role of Community in Restorative Justice.
- **The Pictou County Interagency Committee on Family Violence** hosted a community forum with Dean Dawn Russel and Professor Diana Ginn, authors of the Russell Report commissioned following the murder of Lori Lee Maxwell in 2000, and Judith Ferguson, Senior Solicitor, Department of Justice, in charge of the Domestic Violence Intervention Initiative. The day long session afforded representatives from a variety of community organizations opportunity to ask questions of the speakers regarding their work. - Amanda Workman
- **The Canadian Institute of Health Research Meeting, "Building a Sustainable Public Health Research Infrastructure in Canada"** brought together public health researchers, practitioners, community advocates, and policy makers from across Canada in order to facilitate the development of a network and infrastructure and to develop recommendations and an action plan to foster infrastructure development in Canada. - Lucille Harper

8. Core Staff Contributions to Project Related Work

Core staff participate in, support and contribute to AWRRC projects in several ways. They sit on project advisory committees, participate in workshops and project activities, and facilitate workshops or deliver presentations. This past year core staff participated in the following ways.

8.1 On the Road to Employment Project

Project Advisory Committee: - Lucille Harper, Donna MacDonald

Presentations and Workshop Facilitation

- AWRRC Tour of offices and overview of the services and programs - Amanda and Angie
- The Importance of Cover Letters workshop. (2 sessions) - Lucille
- Gender Role Stereotypes and Socialization presentation. (2 sessions) - Amanda
- Breast self-exam session. - Isabel
- Office Equipment training (2 sessions) - Angie
- Sexual violence and the continuum of violence against women - Amanda
- Mid-term evaluation of the program facilitation (2 sessions) - Lucille

Lucille Harper, Angie Babin, and Barbara Hayes attended the January graduation ceremony for the On the Road to Employment participants. Angie and Barbara gave 'inspirational' addresses. On behalf of the AWRRC, Lucille congratulated the students on their hard work and success.

At the June graduation, Lucille gave a few words of congratulations and Pamela spoke thoughtfully about the need for participants to embrace the more difficult experiences and aspects of their lives. Each participant spoke briefly about what the program meant to her and the changes she has made in her life. It was a very inspiring and emotional event.

8.2 Rural Youth Healthy Relationships Education Project

Project Advisory Committee: - Lucille Harper, Nancy Forestell

Presentations and Workshop Facilitation

- Lucille provided the adult facilitators with an overview of the work of the AWRRC.

Meetings & Consultations

- Lucille met with Linda Laushway and Meredith Knox, Saltspring Women Opposed to Violence and Abuse (SWOVA), as part of their consultation with Jean Crosby about replicating the SWOVA project through the Rural Youth Healthy Relationships Education Project.

- Lucille accompanied Jean Crosby to a meeting of the Strait Regional School Board where Jean presented an overview of the Rural Youth Healthy Relationships Education Project

- Lucille attended the Strait Regional School Board meeting with Jean Crosby where the School Board approved the Rural Youth Healthy Relationships Education Project.

Evaluation

- Lucille participated in an introductory evaluation information session with Jean Crosby and Auguste Barreau of Auguste Solutions. Auguste Solutions has been contracted by Justice Canada to conduct an external evaluation of the Rural Youth Healthy Relationships Education Project.
- Lucille participated in a two day evaluation framework development workshop with Auguste Solutions for the Rural Youth Healthy Relationships Education Project.

8.3 Assessing Youth Homeless in Antigonish Project

Project Advisory Committee: Lucille Harper

Community Fora

- AWRRC core staff attended the **Community Forum on Homelessness** organized by the Assessing Youth Homeless in Antigonish Project. A goal of the forum was to contribute ideas for a community plan to address homelessness. - Amanda, Lucille

- The "Assessing Youth Homelessness in Antigonish" project, coordinated by Katherine Reed, held community meetings to inform various community stakeholders about the recommendations put forth in the project report and garner ideas and support for addressing the issues. Meetings were attended by representatives from a wide spectrum of community-based service and business organizations, as well as individual community members interested in supporting the youth of Antigonish. - Amanda Workman

8.4 Social Assistance Reform in Nova Scotia Project

Project Management Committee - Lucille Harper

Meetings with Government

- Project Researchers for the **Social Assistance in Nova Scotia: Is It Working for Women?** project and the Directors from the three women's centres partnering in the project (AWRC, Pictou County Women's Centre, Every Woman's Centre) met with Tracy Williams, Executive Director, Income and Employment Support Services, Mike Townsend, Director, Employment Support Services, Bev Corben, Manager, Income Assistance, and Charlie MacDonald, Manager, Special Initiatives, from the Department of

Community Services to discuss concerns with the way in which the new social assistance policy is being delivered. - Lucille

- **Social Assistance Reform in Nova Scotia: Is It Working for Women?** project researchers Maria MacDougall and Doreen Paris along with Pictou County Women's Centre Director, Bernadette MacDonald, Every Woman's Centre Director, Louise MacDonald, and AWRRC Director, Lucille Harper, attended meetings with the Liberal and NDP Caucuses as well as with Department of Community Services Employment Support and Income Assistance staff. The purpose of the meetings was to provide an overview/update on the work of the project and to present the preliminary project findings and recommendations.

8.5 Path II Project

Coordinating Committee: Lucille Harper

Community Fora

- At their Annual General Meeting, the Antigonish Town and County Community Health Board discussed their work with the PATH II project and introduced the Community Health Impact Assessment Tool (CHIAT) they developed through that work. Susan Eaton, PATH Coordinator, had a display set up featuring the CHIAT. Guest speaker for the evening was renowned pediatrician, Dr. Richard Goldbloom, Dalhousie University. - Lucille Harper

8.6 Ways and Means: Antigonish Women Seek Strategies to Address Affordable Housing

Project

Advisory Committee - Lucille Harper

To support the request of the Antigonish Affordable Housing Society that the Town of Antigonish donate land for their proposed affordable housing development, Lucille attended the Town Council meeting.

9. Support Actions

The AWRRC acts in support of initiatives that address issues relating to the status of women.

- The AWRRC was involved in helping the St. F. X. U. Women's Caucus to take action on the issue of single mothers being disqualified from receiving social assistance if they are in, or planning to go to, university. The Women's Caucus circulated a petition to put pressure on government to change this backward and discriminatory policy. The AWRRC worked with a

university student who is a single mother and has been cut off social assistance to develop the background information for the Caucus.

10. Collaborative Initiatives

The AWRRC cooperates with sister organizations in developing, sponsoring or participating in collaborative initiatives.

- The three Women's Centres in North Eastern Nova Scotia, the AWRRC, Pictou County Women's Centre, New Glasgow, and Every Woman's Centre, Sydney, met to develop and submit a joint proposal to Status of Women Canada, *Social Assistance Reform in Nova Scotia: Making It Work for Women*. The project will complete the impact and implementation assessment of the Employment Support Program as delivered through the Department of Community Services offices within the areas served by the participating women's centres. It will monitor the implementation of the recommendations from the *Social Assistance Reform in Nova Scotia: Is It Work for Women?* Project and will develop with women a more comprehensive set of recommendations.
- Lucille Harper, Bernadette MacDonald, Louise MacDonald

- The Pictou County Women's Centre brought together staff from PCWC and the AWRRC for a one day session facilitated by Trudy Watts to outline content and a format for a "best practices" manual for re-entry programs for women. The resulting manual, *Starting Point - Pathways to Self Sufficiency and Economic Independence: A Job Readiness Program for Women*, includes elements of the models developed by women's centres in Antigonish, New Glasgow, Sydney and Truro. The manual credits and includes resources and workshops developed by Sherry Battiste and Heather Carson for the AWRRC On the Road to Employment Program. It has been distributed to all women's centres across the province. The AWRRC was represented by Sherry Battiste and Lucille Harper.

- The Directors of the three women's centres in Northeastern Nova Scotia, AWRRC, Pictou County Women's Centre and Every Woman's met with Nina Clarke, Regional Administrator, Northern Region, DCS, and Barb Moreton, Department of Education, to propose they work with women's centres to find funding to support the delivery of our re-entry programs.
- Lucille Harper, Bernadette MacDonald, Louise MacDonald

- The AWRRC increasingly is recognized as having expertise in economic issues. Katherine Reed was contacted by John Jacobs of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives in Halifax and invited to assist with the development of a paper on minimum wage being written by Tom Workman, a professor at Mount Allison University for the CCPA.

11. Media

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.

- **Steve Proctor**, reporter for the **Chronicle Herald**, interviewed Lucille for an article he was doing about the Antigonish community. The article was part of a feature series on small towns in Nova Scotia.
- Katherine was interviewed by **Dorothy Westerman of the Casket** regarding the new federal budget. She spoke mainly about housing, and to a lesser extent about poverty issues and social programs.
- **Dan MacIntosh of ATV** interviewed Katherine about the local housing market and the impact of students on it. He was doing a story on the influx into Antigonish of "double cohort" graduates from Ontario who are enrolling at St. F. X. University.

12. Community Use of the AWRRC

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:

- Addiction Services, Smoking Cessation Support Group meetings.
- SASI (Students Against Social Injustice) meetings.
- A Healthy Balance Focus Group: Unpaid Caregiving by Single Mothers meetings.
- Women's Support Group meetings.
- The Kids' First evaluator for a Kids' First Evaluation interview.
- Janet Shively, Health Literacy researcher, to conduct interviews.
- Claudia Jahn and Leslie Howk, Eastern Shore Family Resource Centre to conduct project research interviews.
- Theatre Antigonish to rehearse for a play staged in a women's health centre.
- Barbara Hayes for a workshop.
- Frank Gallant, Peak Experiences.

13. Meetings with Political Representatives and Bureaucrats

AWRRC staff and board members met with political representatives and bureaucrats to familiarize them with and inform them about the ongoing work of the Centre and to discuss with them AWRRC concerns.

- Katherine Reed attended a meeting between provincial elected representatives of the opposition parties, **Gerry Pye, NDP**, and **David Wilson, Liberal Party**, and affordable housing advocates. The purpose of the meeting was to urge the provincial government to find money to match the federal funding for new affordable housing development.
- The AWRRC Director and Board members met several times with **Angus MacIsaac, M.L.A.** for Antigonish, to apprise him of our work, our funding situation, and our need for a budget increase. He agreed to work to secure funding needed to maintain our crisis support services.
- A group met with **Angus MacIsaac** to raise the issue of reversing the policy that disqualifies single mothers from social assistance if they are in, or want to enroll in, university. The policy discriminates against women and thwarts the efforts of social assistance clients in their attempts to escape poverty and social assistance dependence. He seemed genuinely supportive of their request and promised to speak with the Minister of Community Services about it.
- Lucille met twice with **Peter Mackay, MP for Pictou, Antigonish, Guysborough**, to discuss the work the AWRRC is doing on affordable housing and to ask that he support our request to the Minister of Community Services for funding to enable us to maintain our full crisis support staff complement. Peter is very supportive of and interested in our work and would like to see us able to offer outreach services in Guysborough and Canso.
- AWRRC Board Co-Chair, Heather Mayhew, Nancy Forestell, Lucille Harper, and Bernadette MacDonald, PCWC Director, met with **Judy Jackson, Director for Community Outreach, and Nina Clarke, Regional Administrator, Northern Region, Department of Community Services**, to ask that Community Services cover our deficits for the 2002-03 fiscal year and provide funding to enable us to maintain our crisis support workers.
- **Bill Blaikie**, candidate for the leadership of the federal NDP, visited the AWRRC and discussed our work and current issues with AWRRC staff and Board members.

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: Amanda Workman

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 Antigonish Committee to Address Sexual Violence sponsored a **Sexual Assault Legal Information Workshop** in April 2002. Jackie Stevens, Coordinator of the Legal Education Project/Training for the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre, facilitated the workshop. Topics discussed at the workshop included definitions of sexual assault laws, consent/age of consent, reporting laws - under 16, adult sexual assault police and hospital procedures, as well as the role of the service provider regarding advocacy, confidentiality, record keeping issues, and victim's rights.

- In June the **Antigonish Committee to Address Sexual Violence** agreed to join the Antigonish and Area Inter-Agency Committee on Family Violence and to continue their work through a sub-committee. They reviewed the services that are available for survivors and developed a work plan for the fall.

1.2 Antigonish and Area Inter-Agency Committee on Family Violence

AWRC Representative: Amanda Workman

The Antigonish and Area Inter-Agency Committee on Family Violence meets monthly and is comprised of representatives from local government and non-government services who respond to victims of family violence and/or 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.

Over the past year the committee undertook several initiatives to educate committee members and the broader community about family violence and related issues.

The Inter-Agency Committee sponsored the following information sessions.

Much was accomplished this year toward our goal of developing AAHS's first housing project. The group made connections within the province and more recently with Canada's largest housing network, the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association. The groundwork is being laid in these early years for a vital and very productive organization that will make substantial changes to the housing market in Antigonish and to the lives of people who benefit from our housing projects.

1.3 Antigonish Affordable Housing Society (AAHS) AWRC Representative: Katherine Reed

- The Sexual Violence Committee wrote a letter to Carson Duncan, Vice President of Student Affairs, St. FX University to request a meeting to discuss how to best address the under reporting of sexual offences which take place on campus.
- 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.
- The School Liaison Subcommittee spoke with Theresa MacNeil from St. Andrew Junior School and made recommendations for the Committee's future involvement with the school.
- The Sexual Violence Committee wrote a letter to Carson Duncan, Vice President of Student Affairs, St. FX University to request a meeting to discuss how to best address the under reporting of sexual offences which take place on campus.
- 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.
- In response to a letter received from the Inter-Agency Committee regarding ongoing and appropriate training of RCMP with respect to family violence, Justice Minister Michael Baker indicated that the newly formed Justice Training Centre would address the concerns raised by the committee. Committee members wrote a letter to request further information about RCMP training and the Justice Training Centre.
- The School Liaison Subcommittee spoke with Theresa MacNeil from St. Andrew Junior School and made recommendations for the Committee's future involvement with the school.
- The Sexual Violence Committee wrote a letter to Carson Duncan, Vice President of Student Affairs, St. FX University to request a meeting to discuss how to best address the under reporting of sexual offences which take place on campus.
- 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.

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

- Carolyn Madden, Justice Learning Centre, and Maria MacDougall, Social Assistance Reform in Nova Scotia, Is It Working for Women? Project spoke about their work with their respective initiatives.
- Newly hired outreach workers from Addictions Services, Lisa Benoit, Women's Services worker and Karen Doyle, Youth worker were introduced to committee members and the supervisors for their programs, Katherine Côté and Karen Shea respectively, spoke about the new positions.
- Theresa MacNeil, Guidance Counsellor for St. Andrew Junior School met with the committee to discuss the challenges she sees facing youth in the community. Theresa noted that there is a significant group of youth who are struggling to succeed within the school system. These youth are often truant, lack access to extra-curricular activities and frequently come from single parent woman headed families wherein the mother has little respite. Often children who are struggling are diagnosed with "conduct-disorder". Poverty appears to be one of the root causes of many of the issues.

AAHS is also building upon its base of support and membership, recruiting people with experience, expertise, skills and energy to the organization.

In September, AAHS made a presentation to the Town Finance Committee, after which they decided to engage the necessary formal process to involve interested citizens in considering donating a 2/3 acre parcel of land to AAHS for its first development. Angus MacIsaac (MLA), Angus' Executive Assistant Bob Chisholm, and Tom Moore, Regional Administrator of Housing Services, participated in this meeting and were extremely supportive. In January, the Town unanimously voted to donate the land. There are conditions attached to this donation, but they are very reasonable. St. Vincent de Paul Society volunteers and about six Sisters of St. Martha attended the a public Town Hall meeting to demonstrate their support for the request.

Robert Day, a local architect, met with the group, helped to clarify the building "program", prepared preliminary sketches of the proposed buildings, and helped make the presentation to the Town Council's public meeting in January. His assistance helped to reassure the Town Council and the residents who were present at the meeting that what we are planning to build would be a positive addition to the neighbourhood.

Katherine was able to take advantage of a fully-sponsored training program for affordable housing developers, the "Certificate Program in Affordable Housing." It was co-sponsored by Mount St. Vincent University, Community Action on Homelessness in Halifax, and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. It is hard to overstate the value of this opportunity for AAHS. Skills deficit was partly responsible for slowing the progress of the housing development over the past several years. As a result of taking the program, Katherine was able to build important relationships with people in the provincial affordable housing development circles, which also will help in the coming years.

Several of the women on the AAHS Board participated in the Ways and Means Project sponsored by the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre. The women who participated benefitted from workshops in which they learned about all three levels of government, and about the scope and intensity of women's housing need in Antigonish and across the country. They also learned about how levels of funding and types of programs are decided upon, and who makes those decisions. A few of the participants met with Angus MacIsaac, Antigonish MLA, and later with Tom Moore, Regional Administrator of Housing Services, and Louis de Montbrun, Executive Director of Housing Services. Concerns about women's unmet housing needs were discussed thoroughly and government was pressed to make a larger investment in affordable housing and in the community groups who struggle to develop it.

The Women's Centre had access to the assistance of the Service Learning Program at St. F. X. again this year. Corrine Cheetham, a BA student, conducted an awareness and attitudes survey on AAHS and the housing project. Corrine Cheetham interviewed 39 men and 53 women, all of whom are residents of Antigonish Town and County. There was a high level of support for the project and almost universal agreement that more affordable housing is needed in Antigonish.

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

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* which was completed in April 2002. The PATHways II Resource has been completed and has been distributed across the province and beyond. Sue Adams secured a small grant from the Atlantic Provincial Libraries Association to allow PATH to print and distribute the resource to regional libraries in the Atlantic area. The Network asked and received approval from GASHA (Guysborough/Antigonish/Strait Health Authority) to host the PATH website.

- The PATH Network sponsored a **Spring Forum on Health and Wealth**. The keynote speaker was **Monica Townson**, author of *Health and Wealth: How Social and Economic Factors Affect Our Well Being*. Lucille participated in a panel *Exploring the Relationship between the Economy and Health*. The forum helped people make the links between social and economic well being. After reviewing the suggestions put forward by the Spring Forum participants Network members identified the potential for PATH to take on a stronger social advocacy role within the region.

- In November, the PATH Network sponsored **Making a Difference in Northeastern Nova Scotia: A roundtable on the economy, environment and health**. The Roundtable brought together people from around the region to build an understanding of the demographic, economic and environmental trends and issues in our region and to discuss how these relate to the well-being of communities. Doris Gillis introduced the day and provided some context for the Roundtable by presenting a brief history of the work of PATH to date. Provocateur Theresa MacNeil presented some demographic trends and their implications for the region while Parker Donham presented some thoughts on the political context in which we are working and questioned whether people in the region were living in a culture of dependency. In small group discussions, participants talked about what all of this means for the future of our communities and the region.

The following morning the PATH Network met to reflect upon the Roundtable and to do some follow-up planning. The general consensus was that PATH needs to do more education with communities about community health impact assessment and to build a regional analysis, voice and agenda.

- 1.5 Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA) Youth Action Committee, Northern Region
AWRC Representative: Lucille Harper

The LMDA Youth Action Committee meets monthly to review grant proposal applications from the Northern Region that concern youth. In June Lucille removed herself from active involvement with the Committee as the LMDA had very few funds left for youth proposals and it was unclear whether and when more funding would be made available.

2. Provincial and Atlantic Regional Level

- 2.1 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 (1) 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 and (2) to develop clear policy recommendations with respect to Restorative Justice as it affects women in these circumstances.

This past year the **Restorative Justice Project Advisory Committee** organized and held the *Women's Restorative Justice Policy Forum*. The Forum brought together over 60 women from across the province who were drawn from the project's research participants as well as from non-governmental equality-seeking women's organizations working with women in contact with the criminal justice system. The participants met for two days to discuss the impact of restorative justice for women and to develop recommendations for the Nova Scotia Minister of Justice. The recommendations were presented to Justice Minister Michael Baker, Status of Women Minister Jane Purves, representatives from the Department of Justice and the Restorative Justice Standing Committee on the morning of the third day. The Department of Justice agreed to extend the moratorium on referrals of sex offenses and spousal assaults to Restorative Justice and to consult with women's groups before implementing Restorative Justice in relation to these offenses.

2.2 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.

Along with developing an Integrated Public Policy Framework, FemJEPP designed a Social and Economic Policy Impact Assessment Tool, "Good Policy for Women. 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. The issue used to test the framework and tool was "Women's access to education and training within the new social assistance legislation."

Over the year FemJEPP undertook other activities including the following.

- **From Desperation to Inspiration! Women's Political Forum for Social and Economic Justice**, was held in November at St. Mary's University. The Forum brought together women from across the province to identify key issues facing women in Nova Scotia and to strategize together how to get them on the agenda of all the political parties during the next election. A primary focus of the forum was the cuts to our social programs and services. Key themes were identified from the small group sessions.

- FemJEPP took the lead in organizing a strategy to put women's issues on the agenda of all political parties in the upcoming provincial election campaign. The theme for the campaign is **"Women Matter! Women Vote!"**. Women will be encouraged to vote and to base their vote on issues of concern to women. A campaign advisory/steering committee with representation from women's organizations, unions and students put together a pamphlet that outlines some issues of concern to women and includes questions that women can ask their candidates.

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.

This year, 2002-03, has been a very intense year for Women's Centres in Nova Scotia in that they experienced increased demand for Women's Centres services, while at the same time addressed challenges related to funding and potential re-structuring of women's services in Nova Scotia imposed by the Nova Scotia government.

INCREASED DEMAND FOR WOMEN'S CENTRES SERVICES

Women's Centres remain strong and continue to grow after 25 years of development. There are eight Women's Centres in Nova Scotia providing services to women in communities from Yarmouth to Sydney. In 2002-03, the Central Nova Women's Centre in Truro received full funding from DCS, and, as of the writing of this report in May 2003, the Tri-County Women's Centre in Yarmouth has been informed that DCS will provide funding to them in the fiscal year 2003-04. In addition, Women's Centres are receiving requests for development of new Women's Centres or satellite centres from other communities in Nova Scotia.

The demand for Women's Centres services is growing. More women are coming to Women's Centres for direct services such as crisis intervention, individual advocacy and information and referral, as well as in-house programs and outreach services. Another area of increasing demand is for re-entry training. With three Women's Centres currently offering re-entry training, with an 80% success rate, Women's Centres are working toward delivering re-entry training across the province and developing standards for delivery of this program through Women's Centres. What is required is ongoing stable funding to deliver this program.

Over a one year period, Women's Centres provide services to approximately 15,000 women in rural Nova Scotia. Women's Centres cannot meet current demands for services with present levels of funding, leaving a severe toll on Women's Centres human and financial resources. It is not coincidental that two of the oldest Women's Centres have experienced particular difficulties with demand and for services this year and trying to meet those demands with current funding. Both Centres are working with the Provincial Government to try to find creative ways to address their funding issues.

FUNDING CHALLENGES - CONFRONTING POSSIBLE FUNDING CUTS AND RESTRUCTURING

In April 2002, the Provincial Government announced a budget reduction of \$890,000.00 to women's services in Nova Scotia. Neither the announced budget cut, nor the supporting Family Violence System Redesign Plan, which DCS used to support its rationale for the proposed cut, had been discussed in advance with Women's Centres CONNECT, Transition Houses member organizations (THANS), or Men's Intervention Programs (AMIP). In the face of overwhelming

community concerns, DCS indicated it would restore funding to the 2001-2002 level until such time as consultative redesign plan could be developed.

Given the significance of the planned cuts to Women's Centres CONNECT!, THANS and AMIP budgets and the potential restructuring of women's services, all three associations met together in June 2002 to find ways of working together to negotiate the future of women's services in Nova Scotia with DCS. At that meeting, the coalition developed a vision of women's services in Nova Scotia and clarified core services, populations served and entry points/issues.

After six months of discussion between DCS and the Coalition of Women's Centres CONNECT!, THANS and AMIP, DCS requested a plan to include recommended core services, service improvements, cost efficiencies and opportunities for cooperation and collaboration. The Coalition Planning Report, "Enhancing and Strengthening Women's Services in Nova Scotia", was presented to the Deputy Minister, Department of Community Services, on May 21, 2003.

The Coalition met on six occasions in 2002-03 to develop processes for negotiating with DCS with respect to "family violence re-design" and to develop the Coalition Planning Report. The Coalition met with DCS on three occasions, in October and December 2002 and in May 2003. In addition, the CONNECT Coordinator, THANS Coordinator and AMIP representative, met with DCS on a number of occasions to prepare for Coalition-DCS meetings.

The preparation and participation in meetings, as well as significant communication and correspondence between meetings, was both time consuming and challenging for CONNECT! One challenge was that DCS had framed the "re-design" process in the context of "family violence re-design". Women's Centres, therefore, needed to clarify their role and position in the consultation, because "family violence" programs is *not a primary entry point* and women are referred to transition houses member organizations for these services. Women's Centres also clarified the ways in which they provide community-based services that are distinct from Transition Houses, that they are an essential link in the network of community services, and are essential in the continuum of grass roots services for women throughout Nova Scotia.

WOMEN'S CENTRES DEVELOP PLANNING DOCUMENT

In the early months of 2003, Women's Centres worked together to develop a planning document for DCS, the "Women's Centres CONNECT Planning Report to the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services, May 2003". This planning process involved reviewing and analyzing various kinds of information and developing eight recommendations for DCS. Women's Centres are looking forward to being able to use this document to forward their strategic planning over the next year.

To develop the report, Women's Centres reviewed the Province of Nova Scotia/Women's Centre CONNECT! Joint Planning Committee Final Report and Recommendations completed in November 2000. This report was particularly helpful, because the survey results completed

during the development of the report clearly articulated how women who use Women's Centres services and other community agencies perceive Women's Centres services. Women's Centres reviewed and clarified their program approach and core services, current statistics and the current demand for services and programs. Each centre also developed a "map of services" for their community which shows the core services, other services in the area, their links with those services, and the gaps in both Women's Centres services and community services.

The following summarizes the findings of this review:

- In a recent one-month period, Women's Centres offered services and programs to over 1250 women – approx. 15,000 women per year are accessing services.
- Women's Centres are experiencing a significant increase in demand for services and programs, particularly for direct services, programs, outreach and new Women's Centres or satellite centres.
- With adequate, secure funding for Core Services, Women's Centres would be uniquely situated to meet current demands for services and programs - are accessible, flexible, versatile and situated in local communities where core services are designed to meet women's needs.
- Women's Centres use an effective multi-dimensional approach that ensures immediate crises are addressed, while investing in capacity building over the long term to prevent more costly, ongoing and recurring crisis intervention activities.
- Women's Centres are not only effective, but cost efficient in the short and long term.
- If Women's Centres were absent, there would be a significant gap in services or more costly government services would be called upon to fill the gaps.
- Women's Centres work closely and cooperatively with other agencies and are an essential link in the service network through quality services, high level of expertise and unique multi-issue entry points.
- Women's Centres see tremendous opportunities for women and their families in Nova Scotia and for the NS government to invest in the future of women in Nova Scotia.

The following summarizes the recommendations in the report:

Women's Centres Core Services

1. Recognition that Women's Centres Core Services are distinct, essential and integral to the community network of services provided for women.
2. Recognition for the list of Women's Centres Core Services.

- Addressing Current Demand for Women's Centres Core Services and Service Improvements
3. Full support and full funding for Women's Centres Core Services that enables the staff complement as defined by each Women's Centre in order to effectively deliver Women's Centre Core Services.
 4. Inter-departmental funding for Re-entry Training Programs to be delivered by Women's Centres.
 5. Full support and full funding for Tri-County Women's Centre in Yarmouth in 2003-04

6. Full support and full funding for new Women's Centres that are members of CONNECT! and providing Core Services as defined by CONNECT!

Cost Efficiencies

7. Support to find creative ways to effectively account for full benefits of the Provincial Government's investment in Women's Centres.

8. Full support and full funding for Women's Centres CONNECT!

Linkages and Cooperation

9. Recognitions for the strength of Women's Centres' current linkages and cooperation as integral to delivery of Core Services.

PROMOTIONAL STRATEGY

Another priority for Women's Centres this year was to build the profile of Women's Centres. Due to the efforts put into planning, there was less time to focus on the promotional strategy as originally intended for this year. CONNECT prepared a new information package, "Women's Centres CONNECTING Women", that includes five information sheets:

- ♀ Addressing Poverty, Social and Economic Issues
- ♀ Essential Services Based on Community Identified Need
- ♀ Women's Centres Services
- ♀ Women's Centres Working Together in Nova Scotia
- ♀ Supporting Women: Service Impacts and Outcomes

To strengthen understanding of their services, Women's Centres held a meeting with the Deputy Minister, Department of Community Services to discuss Women's Centres services and programs. They also met with the NDP Caucus and the Liberal Caucus to update them on Women's Centres services, programs and current issues.

PARTICIPATION IN PROVINCIAL PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

Throughout the year, Women's Centres CONNECT participated on a number of collaborative provincial projects and activities, in addition to the coalition work with THANS and AMIP. These collaborations included:

- ♀ Participated on FemJEPF's Women Matter Women Vote! Campaign Advisory Committee.
- ♀ Participated in FemJEPF's political forum, "From Desperation to Inspiration" (November 2002); Prepared a handout for the participants kit.

- ♀ Participated on the Restorative Justice Management Committee that developed the report: "Restorative Justice in Nova Scotia: Women's Experience and Recommendations for Positive Policy Development and Implementation".
- ♀ Participated in the Restorative Justice Policy Forum in October 2003.
- ♀ Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women Round Table on Women's Economic Security.

NEW COORDINATOR

In May 2003, CONNECT hired a new Coordinator, Peggy Mahon, who works part-time for CONNECT coordinating and facilitating CONNECT activities and meetings.

Peggy organized and facilitated fifteen CONNECT meetings between May 2002 and April 2003. As the contact person with the Coalition of CONNECT, THANS and AMIP, Peggy worked with the THANS Coordinator and the AMIP contact person to plan and carry out the seven coalition meetings, as well as the three Coalition-DCS meetings. She also facilitated two coalition meetings and developed a discussion paper used by the coalition to develop their process for interest-based negotiations. Peggy developed the report, *Women's Centres CONNECT Planning Report to the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services May 2003* and the information package, *Women's Centres Connecting Women*.

Prepared by Peggy Mahon, Coordinator, Women's Centre CONNECT! May 30, 2003.

ANTIGONISH WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTRE

PROJECTS

2002-2003

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

Funded by: Human Resources Development Canada, LMDA, Early and Middle Years
Project Coordinator Heather Carson
Life Skills Facilitator: Sherry Battiste

I would tell a potential participant that this eighteen-week program might help change her life because there is so much offered. If she has barriers to employment, this program will help her break down those barriers so that she can make her life more manageable and begin to live the life she really deserves. The environment is supportive and safe. The facilitation, knowledge, and skills are excellent. Everything she gets out of this will be useful at home, school, or work.

-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 and knowledge of existing support services that serve them well in the workplace and in their personal relationships. For many of our participants, the workshops provided 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, Occupational Health and Safety, Food Handlers, SuperHost, Prior Learning Assessment & Recognition (portfolio development), and Nonviolent 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 affected 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 WOMEN FACING BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT—JANUARY-JULY 2002

This program began with ten women, all of whom were facing barriers to employment. All ten participants completed the program.

Successes

Overall, the participants responded well to all program activities, workshops, and discussions. It was apparent that the participants were hard working willing to learn as much as they could. Additionally, the group worked very well together making the days very 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 the forward as a whole.

Participant-identified highlights of the program included the following: workshops/information sessions on self-esteem, communication, stress management, and PMS/Menopause; weekly participant presentations; assertiveness training; computer and grammar training; all the certifications (WHMIS, Nonviolent Crisis Intervention, SuperHost, First Aid and CPR, Food Handlers, Portfolio development; mock-job interviews, and résumé and cover letter writing. Many participants commented that the most important things they got out of the program were increased self-confidence and communication skills, 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 counselors. Having an all-

Once again, participants were extremely well motivated and took full advantage of every learning opportunity. They formed very close bonds of support and friendship with each other. Participant-identified highlights were very similar to that of the previous program. Participants were pleased with aspects of the program that had been a challenge in previous programs, most notably, the course shadowing component. Having strengthened the computer and writing skills components ensured that participants were kept busy throughout the program.

Successes

Once again, this program accepted ten women from the Antigianish and Guyaborough area who were facing barriers to employment. This time, seven women completed the program. The women who left the program did so for either personal or economic reasons. The program continued to build upon the recommendations to previous programs and minor changes were made. For example, course shadowing was modified to include a one day tour, and one day of course shadowing. The computer skills and writing skills components were increased.

ON THE ROAD TO EMPLOYMENT: A PRE-EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM FOR WOMEN FACING BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT—AUGUST 2002-JANUARY 2003

Five of the ten participants have found either full time, part time, or short term work contracts. One is attending university. Three are in the process of completing either their GED or Academic Grade 12. One is making plans to return to school in the Fall. One is actively seeking work.

Outcomes

Because of scheduling factors, participants were only able to attend course shadowing for one day. Most participants stated that having an all day introduction to all the courses at the Community College would be more meaningful. Also, some participants stated that there was an inequitable workload between the first and second half of the program. They suggested that there be more assignments in the first half of the program. They also noted that having more computers would enable further improvement in computer skills. They also suggested that feedback be provided to participants more frequently.

Challenges

women group allowed the participants to feel more safe and open to express their ideas. The new classroom space provided participants with enough room to work comfortably. Further, 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. Finally, the Life Skills Facilitator and Project Co-ordinator supported and consulted each other in program decision-making, which ensured the cohesiveness of the program.

Successes

Once again, most participants in the current program have demonstrated a high level of interest and motivation and are working hard to increase their skills. Weekly evaluation reports show that participants are finding the information useful and interesting. Based on the weekly program evaluations, the participant-identified highlights are as follows: workshops and information sessions on values, self-esteem, gender socialisation, sexual violence and harassment, and the

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. Almost thirty women inquired about the program, and of those, twenty were interviewed. In order to meet the increased demand, twelve participants were accepted into the program. One participant left the program for personal reasons. Four of the participants in the previous On the Road to Employment Projects with some minor changes. For example, at the request of participants, a time management workshop and information sessions regarding employment opportunities at Bethany was added. At the recommendation of previous program participants, the portfolio process started earlier.

ON THE ROAD TO EMPLOYMENT: A PRE-EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM FOR WOMEN FACING BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT—JANUARY 2003-PRESENT

Outcomes

All of the participants who completed the program have identified realistic and attainable educational and career goals. Of the seven that completed the program, two are currently working on either their GED or Academic Grade 12. Three are planning to return to school either to college or to obtain their GED. One is working full time and eventually hopes to return to school. One is actively seeking work.

Challenges

For the first time in this fiscal year, not all participants completed the re-entry program. This had some impact on several of the participants, and has caused project staff to examine the selection process. When selecting participants for the program, it is essential to find a balance between selecting women most in need of the program and selecting women that are not in any major crises in their lives. Also, the project staff decided to advertise each program fully regardless of how many people are on the waiting list prior to the program.

Participants found the work load of this program somewhat challenging, and made some suggestions for making the tasks more manageable, especially in regards to the portfolio assignments. They also recommended that there be more computers.

history of the women's movement; skills training sessions pertaining to computer skills and effective communication; and goal setting activities including course shadowing, career options exploration, and portfolio development.

With both the Project Coordinator and Life Skills Facilitator having experience with previous On the Road to Employment Projects, overall organisation 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. The life skills facilitator has put a lot of time and energy into organising the program resources so that it can be easily followed by others.

Challenges

The biggest challenge this program presented was that of trying to find a balance between setting high expectations that will enable participants to enter the workplace and accommodating for the needs of individual participants. As identified in the introduction, some of the barriers that the participants of this program face make it very difficult for them to meet the demands of the program. This reality speaks strongly to the need to retain the life skills component of the program. By helping them learn coping mechanisms that will enable them to successfully overcome some of these barriers, they will be more able to meet the challenges of both the program and those faced as they work to achieve their career and career goals.

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. Former participants keep us informed of what they are doing, and report how different aspects of the program have 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, a representative from the Afion Reserve has approached us in regards to beginning a re-entry program to run in Afion sometime in the future. It is our continual challenge to secure funding for programs to run within the town of Antigoniash to meet the needs of the women who need this type of program. Lucille Harper, Project Director, has put a lot of energy into promoting the program and working to secure long term funding. We can only hope that this pays off.

My goals were to have some clarity of what I would like to do with my life...and to have some confidence and self-esteem of which I had none when I began the program. I can already see a big difference.... You have already given me the tools to reach the goals I have set, and now I am setting new ones already because I improved a lot faster than I expected to. —Program Participant

Respectfully submitted by Heather Carson

2. 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 was a research project created by the Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres (CASAC) and funded by the Department of Justice Canada. The Antigoneish 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 was designed to examine how policies, protocols and procedures within the justice system, impact on conviction rates in cases of male violence against women and to determine the relationship of these impacts on women's inequality. The "Links" project was titled to reflect the potential for the growth of a strong national feminist presence as a result of the joint work efforts taking place at research sites across Canada.

Data collection was 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. All researchers used standard interview questions reflecting five points of contact including emergency services, police/RCMP, Crown Attorney, court and sentencing. The interview process itself, however, 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 and encompass everything from federal Justice Department directives, to RCMP protocols for investigation of violence against women.

Activities and Communication

Data collection was completed at the close of the last fiscal year leaving researchers with the substantial task of analyzing the data collected. All interviews were reviewed to identify and to enter into the interview analysis tools, quotes which supported the empirical data and highlighted any discrepancies between legislation and practice. Documents were sorted according to their relevance to the five identified points of contact (Emergency Services, RCMP/Police, Crown Attorney, court, sentencing) and reviewed for content to identify any gaps between directives and procedures within each institution. Documents collected which did not readily fit into the aforementioned categories required a separate review, including Victim's Services, provincial legislation, federal legislation and background literature. It should also be noted that emergency services documentation was not collected at the AWRC, as the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre had already gathered the necessary provincial information.

A conference call held in June, 2002 between available site researchers and the project coordinator focused on the effectiveness of the analysis tools and at what stage of completion each

of the researchers were with the work. Researchers discussed specific documents and decided where they "fit" in the document analysis and the Policy Tracking tool was tailored to identify if, at each point of contact, the appropriate protocol as dictated by legislation, standard operating procedure or common practice was followed. Following the conference call, all completed work was forwarded to Vancouver and changes were made as a result of suggestions from the research team and were incorporated as necessary.

The work responsibility for the final months of the project rested mostly with the Project Co-ordinator and the Project Director who organized and collated the data for all ten research sites involved in the project. A final meeting between researchers and project management staff took place March 28-30, 2003 in Ottawa to allow for planning of the final report presentation to government. The three days of meetings were intensive and daily discussions were organized around questions which focussed on the successes and challenges in the project process and how the research findings would be presented.

The final report to be written by Project Manager, Lee Lakeman with assistance from Project Co-ordinator, Nicole Robillard will be submitted to the federal Department of Justice in a standard research paper format, and will contain an introduction, methodology, interview data, document review, annotated bibliography, technical reports, a conclusion and recommendations. Recommendations include a suggestion that women's organizations not be viewed by government solely as service providers, but as women's advocacy centres and that changes be made with the way in which policing organizations investigate complaints of violence against women.

Evaluating the Work

The challenge of the final year of the project was the time required to input the data collected into the analysis tools. Each interview had to be read with a critical eye to determine if the members of the various legal systems performed their duties according to the policies, protocols and procedures outlined in the relevant documents gathered by researchers. Determining how a piece of information should be coded sometimes required frequent revisions and consultations with project management and other researchers via e-mail or phone. Furthermore, to allow project management to integrate the work from each research site, analyses were requested for submission by July 1, 2002, only three months into the final fiscal year

One of the successes of the final year was that all the work was completed in a timely manner and with a measure of consistency between research sites. This was in no small part due to the annual meetings and relatively quick communication afforded by electronic mail systems. Once data was submitted to the project management, the work of individual site researchers was essentially complete until the final project meeting in March 2003. This final meeting provided opportunity for review of the project as a whole and provided project management with direction on how researchers wanted to present recommendations based on their work.

3. Stepping Forward: After School Programs for Adolescent Girls

Inspire, Exploring Our Lives

Youth Program Coordinator: Pamela Fry

Executive Summary

The Antigoniash Women's Resource Centre after school programs have continued to grow and evolve throughout the 2002-2003 period. The objectives of the programs offered have been met and exceeded. Not only have many new participants become involved this year, but some of the participants have also become committed Women's Centre volunteers. I believe this is attests to the success of our programs for youth. Similarly, allowing the participants a degree of autonomy in program planning provides a sense of ownership and pride in programs, and in the Antigoniash Women's Resource Centre as well.

Degrees of success vary according to the situation of individuals, and we do not evaluate our participants in a statistical or formal way. Still, it is worth noting that a number of the Inspire participants have improved their grades this year. Similarly, the Exploring Our Lives participants have excelled in a number of school and related activities. Initially many participants were reluctant to talk about school work. Most participants are now eager to report their successes, and ask for help when they need it. I also notice increased confidence and maturity among all the participants throughout the course of the year. Through their participation individuals have become better able to express themselves in appropriate ways, and they discover the benefits of sharing experiences and ideas in a women-centered environment.

Summer Activities 2002

During July and August 2002, a program of summer activities called WORLDCRAFT was offered to participants in both INSPIRE and Exploring Our Lives. The objectives of the summer activity program were as follows:

- to provide young women with the opportunity to learn a variety of creative skills.
- to introduce young women to international craft traditions and creative cultural practices.
- to give young women the opportunity to connect with each other, and attain a sense of accomplishment through creative work.

The St. Andrews Junior School Multi-Purpose Room was used for most of the activities, which included a nutrition break. Six sessions were held between July and August with a total participation of 32.

Community support for this project was limited and the program ran on a very small budget. Still, all participants were enthusiastic and some have asked if there will be a summer program for 2003.

INSPIRE PROGRAM

Objectives

The objectives of the Inspire program are as follows:

- to invite young women at risk in our community participate in a positive, nurturing, and informative after school group
- to work with other community groups to identify potential participants and encourage them to attend INSPIRE
- to give each participant a weekly opportunity to discuss her circumstances and feelings with the support of peers
- to provide activities and information that interest the participants and enhance their capacity to cope with challenges

Participation

An average of five to eight young women per week attend INSPIRE. The group experiences some irregularity of membership. However, there are currently a core group of young women who have attended regularly since October. As well, a couple of young women who left the group in the late fall have now returned. In the last month or so, five new participants have joined INSPIRE. It is interesting to note that the new participants are somewhat younger than the original group members, and include a couple of girls who attend the junior school.

Special Activities

Participants in the INSPIRE group enjoy and benefit from structured activity. I have experimented with a number of different ideas, including writing projects, crafts, theatre and role playing, and talking stick discussions. Most successful are those activities that the girls can learn quickly and complete while they have a discussion - within the time frame of one meeting. Craft projects like collage-making, beading, and needlework have been particularly popular. The young women may not have access to the supplies or encouragement needed to create different types of art and craft at home, and take some pride in making things as part of their participation in INSPIRE.

Topics

Participants in the INSPIRE group select the topics they would like to discuss at the beginning of the program. When new participants join the group they are also asked for input into topic selection. I try to provide the girls with information that will enhance their discussion or knowledge of a topic, and this seems to be appreciated. As well, occasionally I will come up with an activity for the group that reinforces some of the ideas we are talking about.

Topics discussed this year have included:

- Body Image
- Listening
- Personal health and well-being.
- Study Skills
- World Faiths
- Nutrition
- Racism and War
- Media Representations of Women
- Looking Back: Creating a time line of your success.
- Relationships: family/friends/partners
- Setting Goals - Identifying Priorities

Challenges

Maintaining the attendance of participants in INSPIRE throughout the year has proven to be a challenge. Young women leave the group because of conflicts with friends, or parents, and because of practical difficulties they may encounter, such as a lack of transportation. This year we also had a few young women return to the group after some months away, which was very gratifying. Also, this year we allowed new members to join the group at any time throughout the year. This created some difficulties. Establishing an appropriate level of trust between the participants requires time. As well, younger participants require more time to become comfortable speaking and listening to each other.

Recommendations

INSPIRE facilitators may want to limit participation to a certain number of young women, and only allow new members to join halfway through the year.

EXPLORING OUR LIVES PROGRAM

Objectives

The objectives of Exploring Our Lives are as follows:

- to invite young women in our community participate in a positive, nurturing, and informative after school group
- to encourage participants to explore their full potential as members of this community
- to give each participant a weekly opportunity to discuss her circumstances and feelings with the support of peers
- to provide activities and information that interest the participants and enhance their capacity to cope with challenges

Participation

An average of five to eight young women per week attend Exploring Our Lives. Overall the attendance is consistent, and participants tend to remain with the group throughout the year. From April to June attendance becomes more sporadic as after school activities intensify and other responsibilities require the participants attention.

Topics

Participants in the Exploring Our Lives group select the topics they would like to discuss at the beginning of the program.

This year topics included the following:

- College and University Financing
- The Politics of Manners.
- Relationships Family/friends/partners
- Weight Prejudice
- Discriminatory Language
- Fund-raising and Community Service
- Personal Health and Well-being.
- Racism and War
- World Travel

Challenges

Maintaining the momentum and participation of EOL throughout the year is difficult. This is due, in part, to all of the extra-curricular activities that EOL participants are involved in. However, these lower participation rates also provide the opportunity for the facilitator to give more individual attention to each participant. This keeps participants interested in the group even when they are very busy with other activities.

Recommendations

It will be useful to involve EOL participants in recruitment efforts from the very beginning of the program. Word of mouth seems to be the best way to draw in new participants. Young women who have been attending for some time are often in the best position to invite new people.

Community Partners

Local community groups and individuals have continued to support the Stepping Forward concept in a number of ways. Notably, an informal discussion with a representative from the John Howard Society resulted in a participant referral. Similarly, we have continued to have referrals from Probation Services. These contacts are helping us to reach young women at risk in our community. Also, Nelda Armour donated her time and abilities to organize an important

fund-raiser which involved an afternoon of entertainment by local youth. Donations towards youth programs were received from RBC and from the McLean Foundation.

Participant Comments 2003

"I always like when we talk about women's problems."

"I like to find out what is going on in other people's lives and tell them about my life."

"I like working on the crafts during the group. Just something to work on while talking. The handouts are very informative."

"I like the relaxation after school."

"Check-in is the best part. You feel like you know everyone in the group."

"It's nice to be able to sit down and vent with nice, supportive girls."

Respectfully submitted by Pamela Fry

4. 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.

The final stage of the project involved disseminating the information and recommendations for action to community stakeholders, including 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. In addition to the presentations, many interested individuals and organizations received a copy of the final report. The interviewees and participants in the Community Forum received follow-up information, specifically, the interview/focus group findings and the proceedings of the Forum.

A full project report is available at the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre
Respectfully submitted by Katherine Reed,
Project Coordinator

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

Funded by the Women's Program, Status of Women Canada
Site Researcher: Maria MacDougall

Project Background

On August 1, 2001 the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services replaced the Family Benefits and the Municipal Social Assistance Act with a single tiered policy, *Employment Support and Income Assistance* (ESIA). The Social Assistance Reform in Nova Scotia: Is it Working for Women? Project proposed to evaluate the impact of the newly instated ESIA policy developed by the Department of Community Services (DCS).

The three women's centres in North Eastern Nova Scotia - the Every Woman's Centre, Sydney, the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre, Antigonish, and the Pictou County Women's Centre, New Glasgow - collaborated on the research initiative. The three women's centres were chosen because their distinctive economic and cultural characteristics reflect the diversity of rural Nova Scotia. In each area the Site Researchers together with a group of 15 women on social assistance reviewed and analyzed the new policy and determined its impact on women and their children's lives. The research identified the strengths and weaknesses in the operation of the policy and provided recommendations and conclusions relevant to all communities in Nova Scotia.

Goals/Objectives:

The overall objectives of the project were:

- To develop a critical analysis of the new social assistance legislation;
- To monitor it's implementation;
- To evaluate it's impact;
- To increase women's knowledge of the policies and their effect on them and their children, and
- 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

Work Undertaken/Accomplished

The research component of the project was designed using a participatory action research methodology. Adopting the principles of such a methodology meant the participants were included in the design, planning, implementation, and evaluation of project activities. The women provided an expert voice in the evaluation and monitoring of the new policy. Their analysis of their experiences guided the project from beginning to end. In addition to participatory action research the project also depended on a feminist analytical approach. The women's experiences were the focus of the analysis and the feminist research aimed to uncover and understand the roots and means of their oppression.

The 11 recommendations proposed to DCS are based in the experiences of the research participants and the analysis developed in the individual and group meetings with the participants and from the meetings with DCS staff. These recommendations were strategically chosen as concrete steps Community Services could take in making immediate changes to the policy to improve its impact on the lives of women and their children. They are first steps in the path to developing a social assistance program that "helps people reach a level of self-sufficiency". The need for continued research and collaboration is evident.

The women participating in the project strongly voiced their conviction that education is one of the main avenues to establishing economic independence. The policies lack of support for post-secondary education forces women into low paying employment which is not in line with the policies outlined objective of promoting "economic self-sufficiency". Of considerable concern as well to the women was that women's caring work is undervalued and early childhood development is not properly funded.

The research identified that the non-specific way in which the policy manual was written was a barrier to women accessing their entitlements. Often policy terms were open to interpretation by caseworkers providing them extensive discretionary power. This subjectivity exacerbated the power differential between client and worker and facilitated the sometimes disrespectful treatment of clients within entitlement determination processes. This has contributed to fostering an environment that is demoralizing for women.

The research identified that many participants were unaware of the ESIA policy changes and that the policy was not implemented or interpreted consistently across or within the areas studied. In some cases, caseworkers did not have adequate knowledge of the policy and this created a barrier to women attempting to qualify for entitlements. The Fact Sheets were created in response to the inaccessibility of the information contained within the policy. These Fact Sheet were distributed locally and provincially.

The Site Researchers along with their Director's met on three occasions with representatives of the DCS to discuss the findings of the research and implementation of the new policy. Local meetings with ESIA senior staff and caseworkers were also held to further discuss and clarify the new policy. Project recommendations were presented to representatives from the NDP and Liberal parties.

The Site Researchers conducted personal interviews, telephone interviews and group meetings with the participants. The qualitative information gathered from these meetings led to the development of 11 recommendations for the DCS. Policy Fact Sheets were developed in consultation with the research participants who reviewed the policy for (1) meaning and clarity, (2) reality (fact or fiction), (3) impact on women and their children (positive or negative) and (4) policy gaps.

Participant Outcomes/Evaluations

The women on social assistance who participated in the project completed evaluation forms. Their feedback indicated that the knowledge on the new policy acquired by participating in the project was very helpful. Women felt empowered and much more confident in their discussions with their caseworker knowing their rights, rates and entitlements. The majority of the women stated that they would like to participate in a project similar to this in the future.

Information Dissemination

Community organizations across the province were very interested in hearing about the project and its findings. The Research Project Coordinators made presentations to FemJEPF, the Community Action Program for Children (CAPC) annual conference, and local community groups like Kids First, Town Council and Inter-Agency members. The project was also featured in the Community Health Promotion Network Atlantic (CHPNA) Newsletter, and was represented on the panel of the Women's Political Forum for Social and Economic Justice held at St. Mary's University in November of 2002 as well as on the panel of the "Building a Framework to Support a Vision of Social and Economic Inclusion" organized by the DCS Special Initiatives coordinator.

The response from the Deputy Minister of Community Services, Marian Tyson, indicated that staff from all regions are to review the report and make comments on how it can be used to advance their work and that immediate activities were being undertaken to respond to the issues highlighted in the report regarding how services are delivered and the relationship among staff and ESIA recipients. The signage posted in DCS offices that warned of certain conditions (alcohol, weapons, abusive language) which would not be tolerated in the office were removed in response to the report highlighting the disrespectful, damaging affects of such signage.

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

Respectfully submitted by Maria MacDougall, Site Researcher

6. 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

BACKGROUND:

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 (NCPCC) to visit a Crime Prevention Investment Fund (CPIF) project underway in British Columbia and to submit a proposal to replicate that model. The Salt Spring 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". SWOVA recently received additional funding from NCPCC to extend the project by two years which will now conclude in July, 2005.

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 NCPCC. After delays relating to a change of Federal Cabinet Ministers, funding was approved for the "Rural Youth Healthy Relationships Education Project" in February/02. 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.

THE MODEL:

The model presents a gender-based, violence prevention approach for working collaboratively with teachers to deliver a core curriculum of 12 lessons to students in grades 7, 8, 9, and 11. It is designed to be presented as a multi-dimensional, multi-session, multi-year program. The multi-dimensional teaching approach is utilized to present the skill development and awareness of issues required to build and maintain healthy relationships.

This project will incorporate adaptations which will enhance the existing SWOVA curriculum, most notably in the area of diversity. Within Antigonish and Guysborough Counties there exists significant cultural/racial diversity with both First Nations and African Nova Scotian communities. Cultural diversity will be a priority and the diversity component will continue to

be developed and integrated throughout the project. In addition student workbooks and resources for teachers and parents will support and enhance the classroom lessons.

KEY COMPONENTS OF MODEL:

- School-based violence prevention programming
- Community based
- Collaboration with schools
- Linking forms of violence
- Gender based
- Interactive, discussion based education approach
- Facilitator teams represent diversity with dyads of female/male, adult/youth and also reflect the diversity of the community.
- Youth involvement
- Counselling Support

PERSONNEL:

STAFF LIST:

Project Co-ordinator: Jean Crosby

Office Administrator: Jackie Jacques

Financial Administrator: Christine Hanlon

Adult Facilitators:

• James Cameron June/02 to January/03

• Augy Jones June/02 to January/03

• Colleen Pelly June/02 to February/03

• Annika Peters June/02 to June/03

• Krista DeCoste June/02 to June/03

• Liam Timmons February/03 to June/03

• Steve Wardrope February/03 to June/03

• Flora Murphy February/03 to June/03

Research Assistant:

• Krista DeCoste June/02 to present

Diversity Consultant:

• Sylvia Parris May to October/02 (20 weeks)

This change in staff came at a critical time as classroom sessions were scheduled to start on February 4th. All efforts were directed to re-hiring and reorganizing the schedules of the remaining two facilitators to ensure all classes were covered. This was achieved, however, it created a lack of continuity with Facilitators which did effect some classes in this first month. By March, the two teams were established and continued to the end of the school year: Annika

In January, Augy Jones and James Cameron resigned due to conflicting commitments with other employment. A rehiring process started immediately and resulted in hiring Liam Timmons and Steve Wardrope. Also in January, Colleen Pelly advised she unable to continue in this position due to conflicting commitments. Flora Murphy was recruited to fill this vacancy.

In June 2002 we started with a conventional process of advertising in the local papers, distributing the advertisement to key people in the two counties and with HRDC. The advertisement included a statement of support for affirmative action and specifically encouraged application from the Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotian communities. Due to a lack of suitable candidates we then extended the deadline and readvertised as before but increased efforts to make direct contact with key people in these communities. Staff and board members also informally spread information about these positions. As a result of these efforts, we met our hiring goal. Due to the investment in training for these four and the possible need for a backup person during the year, it was decided to include training a fifth facilitator.

This process proved to be challenging. Our goal is to maintain in these positions : two men and two women with at least two of those individuals being either Mi'kmaq or African Nova Scotian. We initially achieved this goal but were then unable to maintain representation by an African Nova Scotian after January 2003. This is an ongoing process.

Hiring Process:

ADULT FACILITATORS:

Shanna Borden	Linda Wright
Jessica MacDonald	Danielle Pellerin
Daniel Muise	Lyle Munro
Nathaniel Hart	Kailyn Peart
Christina Connolly	Stacy Ash
Linda Peters	Beth Jackson
Angela Petrine	Janine Bernard
Matilda Tate	Lindsey Felix
Lindy DeCoste	Catherine Myette
Stephanie Gorman	

EAST ANTIAGONISH:

Youth Facilitators: CHEDABUCTO PLACE:

October to June/03

and Liam at East Antigonish and Krista and Steve at Chedabucto. Flora acted as relief facilitator at both schools as needed.

Training:

The first round of training occurred in June for all new staff. With new staff also starting in February, it became necessary to replicate the original training in a condensed form. There are also ongoing education sessions as required on various topics with Adult Facilitators. June: The original 5 adult facilitators received 8 days of training in June which covered the following:

• Initial Training: (three days)

Jean Crosby, Facilitator

Areas covered: needs assessment, orientation to project, orientation to AWRRC

(presenter: Lucille Harper), identifying expectations and strengths, socialization and sex-role stereotyping (presenter: Barbara Hayes), child abuse disclosures/reporting, dynamics of violence, working with youth, issues related to facilitation and curriculum delivery.

• Diversity Education Certificate Program - Level 1: Module 1 (two days)

Dalhousie University Diversity Initiative, Henson College

Co-Facilitators: Percy Paris, Barry Wambolt, Candy Palmater.

16 participants: 7 project staff, 8 AWRRC staff, 1 school staff

Diversity Education Certificate Program - Level 1: Module 2 (two days)

The second of the three modules was presented in October.

Co-Facilitators: Percy Paris, Candy Palmater

13 participants

These workshops proved to be challenging. With a diverse and knowledgeable group, the discussions were lively. It became clear that the Henson format was geared to the corporate world and did not fit completely with our group's needs. The facilitators and participants were also challenged by discussion which pushed for a deeper level of analysis of diversity issues. It was acknowledged that discussions about level of privilege and oppression are complex and need to be ongoing. The third and final module will be delivered in June 2003.

• SWOVA curriculum training with staff from BC Project: (three days)

- reviewed in detail curriculum delivery for grades 7,8,9, & 11.

These training sessions enabled the facilitators to try out the curriculum, do the exercises and games and discuss issues and strategies that have arisen in BC. Some important learning occurred through discussing diversity and the relevance of certain curriculum content to the students here. Specifically, the different level of awareness required when presenting to a class of all-white students versus a class with white, Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotian students. In discussing how some exercises could be modified and made more culturally

sensitive, it became clear that SVOVA staff were also aware that these "improvements" would also benefit their students.

February: To prepare the three new staff the following education sessions were held : These sessions were attended by all adult facilitators:

- Orientation to AWRRC (Lucille Harper), orientation to RYEP and position of Adult Facilitator, review of materials provided: Resource Material / Adult Facilitator Information / Scheduling Information, personnel issues reviewed, ongoing training issues.
- Review of curriculum material and workshoped several key exercises: Folktales Exercise and Diversity Wheel
- Session on Protocol & Procedures for Disclosure and Reporting of Child Abuse.

YOUTH FACILITATORS:

Recruitment/Hiring:

In September, both schools were actively engaged in recruiting Youth Facilitators. The role of the Youth Facilitator is to assist the Adult Facilitators in the classroom and to also attend regular meetings and education sessions. As these are paid positions, resumes and cover letter were required and interviews were held. The goal was to hire ten youth from each school from Grades 11 & 12 who represented the diversity of the student population and also represented a gender balance.

- At East Antigonish 9 girls were hired with two Mi'kmaq students. We were unsuccessful in recruiting boys.
- At Chedabucto Place 7 girls and 3 boys were hired with three African Nova Scotian students.

Training:

The Youth Facilitators received 4.5 days training in October and November. This training was held jointly with AWRRC's Teens Take Action Peer Facilitators. All the youth training was held in the Performing Arts Room at East Antigonish School. 32 youth were engaged in this process: 12 Teens Take Action, 9 East Antigonish and 10 from Chedabucto Place. Jean Crosby and Amanda Workman organized and facilitated the youth training.

- Irondale Theatre Ensemble provided a 1.5 days workshop:

These sessions introduced theatre as a tool for peer educators in providing information and raising awareness around issues of violence & prevention. There was a focus on diversity within the overall theme of developing and maintaining healthy relationships.

- 3 days training facilitated by Jean Crosby & Amanda Workman (held on consecutive Sundays)

These sessions include information and discussion on the following topics:

Definitions of violence, sex-role stereotyping and socialization, defining qualities of healthy & unhealthy relationships, diversity and relationships, dating violence/sexual violence, consent & coercion, choices & challenges, violence prevention strategies, working in schools,

strategies for engaging students in classroom.

Following this joint training each group, ie Teens Take Action; Youth Facilitators/Chedabucto Place and Youth Facilitators/East Antigonish continued with additional meetings/training specific to their own needs. The two groups of Youth Facilitators started regular weekly meetings with their Adult Facilitator team for ongoing support and learning, reviewing classroom schedules and addressing any issues arising from the classroom work. In February each student was assigned to a specific class for which they were responsible to prepare for, attend and complete a written evaluation. The Youth Facilitators were also challenged by the temporary lack of staff in February as well as their own changing scheduled and adjusting to work in the classroom.

DIVERSITY CONSULTANT:

Sylvia Parris has worked in the field of cultural diversity as a consultant, facilitator and trainer and also brings to the project over 20 years of experience in the field of education. The majority of those as a teacher at the secondary level in Guysborough County. She presently holds the position of Multicultural Education Consultant for the Nova Scotia Department of Education. Sylvia was born and brought up in Guysborough and has an intimate understanding of the challenges facing African Nova Scotian communities.

The main objectives of Sylvia's work, which will be ongoing throughout the project, are:

- To develop supplemental resource materials for the curriculum which will:
- address diversity issues relevant to a rural student population
- address cultural diversity issues relevant to African Nova Scotian and Mi'kmaq students
- be age appropriate for students in Grades 7,8,9 & 11
- To develop and deliver educational material to support diversity awareness leading to competency for Project and School staff.

The following work was completed in 2002:

- Grade 7,8, & 9 curriculum and student workbooks were infused with cultural diversity content.
- Video and written resource material was reviewed and recommended
- Facilitator training material completed and presented.
- Information provided to school staff
- "The Fit" document was developed which provides a detailed comparison of the learning objectives of the Department of Education curriculum for PDR (Personal Development and Relationships) and CLM (Career Life Management) with the SWOVA curriculum..

COUNSELLOR POSITION:

Family Services of Eastern Nova Scotia, a non-profit counselling service, have agreed to provide counselling support as required for the Project. Discussions are underway to formalize this

agreement.

SCHOOL BOARD APPROVAL:

In the very early stages of the RYBP, meetings had been held with Jack Beaton, Director of Educational Services, Strait Regional School Board and senior staff at both schools; Elizabeth Teasdale, Principal and Miles MacDonald, Vice-Principal at Chedabucto Place and Sherman England, Principal and Gerard Ryan, Vice-Principal at East Antigonish. From these discussions the RYBP gained the support of senior administration and school staff and encouragement to proceed to the School Board for approval. This meant that project work could proceed on some levels but that the School Board approval was required before the RYBP could move into curriculum delivery in the schools.

This proved to be a much longer and difficult process than originally anticipated. The cautious approach by the School Board was in part coming from an internal financial scandal that was consuming their time and attention. In addition, during July and August, a very intense e-mail campaign was focussed towards members of the School Board and was demanding that they not support the RYBP. During these months over 140 e-mails, all with lengthy attachments, were sent to all School Board members. This campaign originated with a group named S.A.F.E. (Stop Abuse for Everyone) which is based in Oregon. Members of this group support highly conservative notions regarding women's place in society and their e-mails forwarded a highly misogynist attack on feminist theory and practice.

Despite this significant challenge, the RYBP is now proceeding with the full support and co-operation of the School Board members and administration as well as staff at both schools.

TIMELINE:

March:

- Curriculum documents were received from SWOVA and delivered to Jack Beaton who then initiated the process of reviewing the curriculum as a first phase.

May/June:

- Meetings with Jack Beaton and Principals/Vice-Principals at both schools to discuss the process of implementing the Project in September.
- Curriculum completed by staff from both school sites with positive outcome.

July:

- Scheduled August presentation to School Board and information package mailed out to all members.

- July 22nd: E-mail campaign from SAFE started.

- Contact/lobby with School Board members and administration

August:

- School Board presentation rescheduled from August 7th - 20th.
- August 7th: E-mail campaign from SAFE stopped (over 140 e-mails received)

The next visit to Nova Scotia has been planned for June. Lynda will be coming with one Adult Facilitator. There will be two days of meetings relating to the curriculum and one day for consultation meetings.

As a result of ongoing communication with Lynda Laushway regarding the curriculum document and approval of adaptations made by the RYEP, it has been jointly agreed to by SWOVA and the RYEP that :

- there will be ongoing communication regarding adaptations to the curriculum proposed by RYEP.
- that both SWOVA and RYEP are providing their best advise and opinions when proposing or responding to any modifications.
- that when SWOVA's agreement/approval is not achieved on a particular adaptation that RYEP will document their position or rationale for the change and will proceed with the adaptation.
- that any failure by the RYEP will not reflect on SWOVA's work and vice-versa.
- that all documents originating with SWOVA and adapted by the RYEP, will carry the footer "Copyright SWOVA 2002: Adapted by AWRRC - Not for Distribution"

Consultation with SWOVA occurs on an ongoing basis and there are annual training and consultation visits. The first of these occurred in June and formed part of the Adult Facilitator training process. The SWOVA staff who travelled to Antigonish: Lynda Laushway, Project Coordinator, Meredith Knox, Advisory Committee Member and Adult Facilitators: Kim Davidson and Monty Bridgeman. Two days were spent in consultation meetings and the remaining three focussed on curriculum training.

The RYEP is funded to replicate the model and curriculum developed by SWOVA. It is also understood that adaptations will be made to accommodate the particular needs and challenges of our multi-cultural, rural East Coast environment.

SWOVA: CONSULTATION AND COLLABORATION:

- August 20th: Presentation made to the School Board with a request for their approval.
- Outcome of presentation: request for a letter of support from the Department of Education.
- September:
- Starting in classroom is delayed pending School Board approval.
- October:
- October 23rd - letter received from Minister of Education Jane Purves stating her Department's support for the RYEP.
- November:
- RYEP request for approval on the agenda for School Board meeting.
- November 13th: School Board approved the RYEP to proceed in the schools

CURRICULUM WORK:

The required work on the curriculum documents and workbooks for all four grade levels, proved to be more involved than anticipated. This following work involved four grade levels and related to curriculum document as well as a student workbook for each grade level. This process involved ongoing, extensive communication with SWOVA staff and the Diversity Consultant and included;

- reformatting curriculum text for continuity and clarity
- creating additional facilitator notes
- developing of indexes of exercises and sessions to facilitate use
- developing supplementary information for facilitators.
- submitting revised documents to SWOVA for approval and integration of feedback.
- integrating diversity components
- development of various games and presentation props required by facilitators.
- completing final drafts of Grade 7, 8 & 9 curriculum and Student Workbooks
- duplication and distribution of Student Workbooks.
- production and distribution of binders containing supporting information, curriculum and student workbooks for Adult Facilitators, Youth Facilitators and Teachers at both school sites.

As work started on the curriculum document, it became apparent that this work would require additional staff. Krista DeCoste was initially employed as a Research Assistant for July 2 - August 30 at 35 hrs/wk. It then became necessary to extend her work to the end of January at 15 hrs/wk to complete the necessary work required on the curriculum and student workbooks for starting in the classroom in early February. It is anticipated that there will be a need for the Research Assistant to be an ongoing position as curriculum review and development is an ongoing process for both SWOVA and the RYEP. There will also be additional layers of diversity material integrated in each school year.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE:

The Advisory Committee met six times in the past year with an average attendance of 12. Meeting location was rotated between the Project Office in Antigoni and East Antigoni School. The first meeting was held in May and during the past year met also in June, July, September, October and December. In this first year of meeting, the Committee was introduced to Project personnel and provided with an orientation to the project. A significant role played by Committee members, from July to November, was their engagement in the lobby to gain School Board approval.

MEMBERS:

- Justice Representative
- Project Co-ordinator
- Karen Swan, Senior Project Analyst, Atlantic Region
- Jean Crosby

- Diversity Consultant
 - AWRRC Director
 - AWRRC Board Member
 - East Antigonish School
 - Chedabucto Place
 - Afrikan Canadian Heritage & Friendship Centre
 - Guysborough Youth Health Services Centre
 - Black Educator's Association of Nova Scotia
 - Antigonish/Guysborough Black Development Association
 - Crime Prevention Association
 - Naomi Society for Victims of Family Violence
 - New Leaf: Intervention Program for Abusive Men
 - Department of Mental Health/Child Adolescent Team Member
 - Antigonish Town & County Community Health Board
 - Afton Band Council
- Sylvia Parits
Lucille Harper
Nancy Forestell
Gerard Ryan, Vice Principal
Mary Fisher, PDR teacher, Paul Long, CLM teacher
Wendy Campbell, Co-ordinator
Leona Purcell, Public Health Nurse
Joanne Reddick, Regional Educator
- Sheila Pelly, Employment Development Officer
Denise Wood, Youth Services Co-ordinator
Tammy Lee Vautour, Director
Ron Kelly
Wendy Digout, Psychologist
Evelyn Lindsay, Chair
Tanya Frances, Education Director

EXTERNAL EVALUATION:

In late November, we were advised that the firm of Auguste Solutions & Associates Inc.(ASA) had received the contract for the external evaluation of the project.

- December 4th: first meeting in Antigonish with Gus Barrieau of ASA, Lucille Harper and Jean Crosby.
- December 17 & 18: Two day workshop with Gus Barrieau and Jim Coffin of ASA and: 3 Project Staff, AWRRC Director, two Advisory Committee members and Karen Swan and Lucy Burke, Regional Managers with NCPCC for Projects and Evaluation respectively.

The focus of these two days was the development of a Theory of Change Model and other related discussions.

The delay in the evaluator being assigned resulted in time and work pressures for staff with the very short notice for both meetings, as well as a delay of one school year for the evaluation process to start with students.

As a follow up to the December meetings, requested documents were sent to ASA.

In March a number of major documents were presented by the Evaluator for review and

comments.

These included:

- Workshop Notes from December/02
- Literature Review
- Theory of Change Model
- Discussion Paper on Class Samples
- Discussion Paper on School Comparison Site

These are all preliminary to the development of the Evaluation Framework which is to be

distributed later this month for review and comments.

The Evaluation Advisory Committee was also developed this month and meetings will start in April.

OTHER ACTIVITIES:

PRISM PROJECT:

In September, Jean began participating as a member of the Steering Committee for the PRISM Project. The PRISM Project is funded by Status of Women Canada and sponsored by the Muriel McQueen Ferguson Centre for Family Violence Research. The goal of the PRISM Initiative is to identify and enhance conditions and resources that will help rural women and girls to live in relationships free from violence. Specifically, the intent is to document better practices and reflective approaches which address abuse of women and girls in rural/remote and socially isolated communities in Atlantic Canada.

As part of the PRISM research, eight sites were identified, within the Atlantic Provinces, as those which reflected best practices in violence prevention. The RYEP was one of the sites selected. Nancy Peters, a local researcher was contracted by PRISM to conduct the RYEP research which was completed in March. Jean and Nancy had initial meetings and discussions about how this work would proceed during the month. Questionnaires were completed by members of project staff, school staff and the Advisory Committee. Focus groups were held with a group of Grade 8 students, Grade 9 students and Youth Facilitators. Project staff assisted with these meetings. The Atlantic Conference, which will be the culmination of this phase of the PRISM Project, will take place in May.

ECOLE ACADIEENNE DE POMQUET:

In February, Flora and Jean conducted four sessions with 36 students from grades 7 - 10 which explored the relationship between gender stereotypes and bullying. The AWRRC was represented along with three other speakers; RCMF, a teacher presenting Bully Beware video, and school counsellor facilitating a mural project - all focusing on bullying. This was a very worthwhile experience with a high level of participation from the students.

YOUTH SEXUAL HEALTH CONSULTATION:

Jean attended a meeting in Antigonish on January 8th to participate in a discussion of issues related to youth sexual health. There were 13 in attendance with Jean MacQueen, Larry Maxwell and Janet Bickerton facilitating. The purpose of this meeting was to provide the N.S. Roundtable on Youth Sexual Health with community input from which they will develop an action-oriented approach for youth sexual health in this province. The mission of the Roundtable is to work collaboratively to ensure the promotion and protection of youth sexual health.

CANADA WORLD YOUTH :

As part of the Antigonish-Indonesia Exchange for Canada Youth Ada Pally and Novallana Tambunan completed a seven week work placement with the Project in November. Ada and Nova worked primarily on developing and organizing the Project resource material and assisted with a wide variety of other tasks. This was a very positive experience including attending various activities organized by the 18 participants of the Antigonish-Indonesia Exchange for the host families and host work placements.

HUMAN RIGHTS IN EDUCATION CONFERENCE:

In October, Krista attended this two day conference in Halifax. This conference was largely attended by teachers and school administrators from across the province. The focus of the conference was to raise awareness on issues of diversity and the need to present and respect diverse perspectives.

HEARTWOOD COMMUNITY YOUTH DEVELOPMENT MODEL WORKSHOP:

In March, Krista attended this day long workshop in Antigonish presented by Heartwood, a non-profit organization whose work focuses on supporting youth engagement in their community. This workshop identified best practices for youth programs and provided an evaluation tool for youth involvement. The workshop was very helpful and from it staff have identified some concrete steps the RYEP could take in order to provide a stronger role for the youth facilitators. Upcoming discussions are planned with the adult and youth facilitators to evaluate and discuss enhancing youth involvement for the Project.

PROJECT CHALLENGES:

- Scheduling in schools: for RYEP Sessions and Youth Facilitators
- Staffing for Adult Facilitator positions: maintaining continuity
- Evaluation Process Issues:
- late start of external evaluation process
- internal evaluation needs
- Obtaining additional funding

PROJECT SUCCESSES:

- Obtaining School Board approval
- Advisory Committee development
- Consultations/Negotiations with SWOVA
- Collaboration with School Board administration and school staff.
- Starting classroom sessions in February for all grades 7, 8 & 9 classes in both schools.
- Engagement of Youth Facilitators in classroom sessions

Respectfully Submitted:

Jean Crosby, B.S.W., R.S.W.
Project Co-ordinator

7. WAYS AND MEANS: ANTIGONISH WOMEN SEEK STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS AFFORDABLE HOUSING NEED

Funded by: Health Canada, Population Health Fund, Atlantic Region
October, 2002 to March, 2003
Project Coordinator: Katherine Reed

The AWRRC has long been aware of the difficulty women experience accessing affordable and suitable housing in the local area. In response to this issue, the AWRRC has been attempting throughout the past decade to source funding for affordable housing development. This has been impossible since all three levels of government have cut funding which used to support this form of community economic development. All three levels of government as well as community organizations, the academic community, and the public at large were aware of the critical need to address this problem.

Goals and Objectives

The overall goal of this project was to support women who need housing in their attempts to influence policy makers to respond to their need.

Project Overview

To attempt to influence more progressive and active responses by government to women's housing need in Antigonish, the Ways and Means Project brought together women who need affordable housing, and in a series of four workshops, developed with them an analysis of women's housing poverty and an understanding of the responsibility of all three levels of government to respond to women's need for affordable housing. The structures of government and the individuals within those structures (those who are involved in affordable housing) were examined, as well as the programs and services most relevant to the participants' housing needs. Meetings with officials of the provincial government were organized to allow project participants to bring their concerns, needs, and recommendations directly to them. Participants met with our MLA and representatives of the provincial government's Housing Services Division of the Department of Community Services. Through this education and action process, Antigonish Area women who need affordable housing were informed and empowered, and the participation of women who are involved in the Antigonish Affordable Housing Society (AAHS) was strengthened. Women who need affordable housing were encouraged to continue their pursuit of housing solutions in the community.

Objectives

Objective 1: to increase the knowledge base for program and policy development on population health by researching the structures, programs, and resources of all levels of government and developing a package of learning materials which convey that information to women who need affordable housing

Research was conducted and a package of four organizational diagrams was created. The

diagrams were adapted from more complex ones obtained from all three levels of government. They illustrate the organizational structures of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), Housing Services Division of the Department of Community Services, Nova Scotia, and the Municipalities of Antigonish Town and Antigonish County, and the names and roles of staff and administrators. Assistance was provided by staff in those agencies to ensure accuracy of the diagrams. The diagrams were used to educate workshop participants.

Web sites of both CMHC and Housing Services (NS) were examined and copies of relevant web pages were given to workshop participants. Information about programs and services was also gathered by telephone and relayed to workshop participants. There is now an up-dated collection information at the AWRCC on affordable housing programs and services.

Objectives 2 & 4 (combined): to develop, implement, evaluate and disseminate community-based models for applying the population health approach by using the learning materials developed to explore with eight Antigonish area women the possibilities for influencing government to apply public resources to the task of developing new affordable housing in Antigonish. The materials will be shared with other organizations after the project ends (Affordable Housing Association of Nova Scotia, Housing Services Division or the Department of Community Services, Feminists for Just and Equitable Public Policy, Nova Scotia Women's Centres Connect, Guysborough Antigonish Disabilities Coalition and the Guysborough Black Development Society).

The most significant achievement of this project was bringing together women who need affordable housing to learn about housing issues and resources, and to share their experiences. The workshops were well attended and participants were enthusiastically engaged in the process throughout. Between nine and eleven women participated in each workshop. There was a good mix of women in terms of educational attainment and cultural/racial backgrounds, but they were mostly in the same age group (20 to 30 years). Most (seven) were single mothers, three were parents with spouses, and two were single women who were not raising children. Six of the participants are board members of the Antigonish Affordable Housing Society.

The workshop plan was modified slightly. Initially it was planned that the first two workshops would focus on learning and last two on developing a strategy for bringing selected issues and recommendations to government to attempt to influence policy change. As the project coordinator developed the workshops it became obvious that more emphasis needed to be placed on developing an analysis with the women of housing issues from a social perspective. In order for participants to consider what they require from government, they would need a thorough understanding of the context women live in as they struggle in poverty and live in unaffordable and inadequate housing. In light of this, the third session was used to develop this analysis about women's poverty and housing poverty in Canada, in Nova Scotia, and in the Antigonish area, as well as governments' capacity to alleviate these problems.

Workshop participants' responses to evaluation forms following the workshops indicated that

the sessions were successful in meeting their needs. When asked how useful they found the learning materials, 9 rated them "very useful" and one rated them "somewhat useful." (rating was on a scale of 1 to 5, with five being "very useful"). One participant wrote

"I've always had difficulty grasping the structure of government. The materials helped to break down the levels of government in terms of authority and role in addressing affordable housing problems."

The comments on another evaluation form indicated increased awareness of the issues discussed:

"I didn't know that Nova Scotia has the highest need for affordable housing. I didn't know that most of people's pay check goes to pay their rent."

"I...was unaware that 50% of Nova Scotians had incomes under \$20,000 (renters)... (and) ...was not aware of 73% increase of people in 'core need' (in Nova Scotia 1991-96)."

Objective 3: to increase partnerships and develop intersectoral collaboration to address the need for more healthy physical environments by supporting the women involved in this project as they implement their strategy for accessing public resources for the benefit of the Antigonish Affordable Housing Society.

Three workshop participants joined the Project Coordinator for a meeting with Antigonish MLA, Angus MacIsaac. The group made recommendations and encouraged Mr. MacIsaac to work within Cabinet to improve the response of the provincial government to women's housing need in Antigonish. One workshop participant joined the Project Coordinator in a meeting with Louis de Montbrun, Executive Director of Housing Services, NS. The same recommendations were presented to him with a few additional and specific ones. Mr. de Montbrun requested a package of the educational materials developed in this project for distribution to people in his department who might find them useful.

It was significant that all of the women on the AAHS board of directors who are in need of affordable housing participated in most of these four workshops. One (a Co-chairperson of AAHS) was fully involved in the meetings with officials of government as well. AAHS has benefited from the information gathered through the research phase of the project and it will benefit from the strengthened relationships with representatives of government who are in a position to assist AAHS with its housing development.

Outcomes

As a result of this project we have an educational resource on housing that can be shared with people doing similar work. The four organizational charts which were adapted from materials and assistance provided by all three levels of government are on file as well as information on

funding sources and demographics. We now have a group of approximately 11 women in the Antigonish area who have new skills and confidence, and are firmly grounded in the issues around affordable housing and in the roles, structures, and processes of affordable housing-related segments of all levels of government. These women will be more capable now of advancing the work of AAHS and influencing affordable housing policy.

While the project has not directly resulted in any obvious or immediate policy changes, it is clear that, as a result of this project, relationships with policy-makers were strengthened. They are aware of our presence in the province, our monitoring of housing policy and programs, and our availability for consulting on policy. The project also helped increase the profile of the AWRC and its involvement in meeting critical affordable housing need in the community.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Clearly, the policy-makers in the government of Nova Scotia do not put enough emphasis on the value of addressing the housing needs of lower-income Nova Scotians. There is a need to make a forceful argument directly to elected officials of the province, and to high-level staff of the Department of Community Services that supporting community groups to develop affordable housing is a worthy investment which saves public funds that are now being spent dealing with the problems of families and individuals who are economically marginalized. It has been shown beyond any doubt that women are disproportionately affected by poverty and housing need. It is also clear now that women, and women's organizations, are capable of leading the efforts to address this need.

Other provinces, most notably New Brunswick, Quebec, and British Columbia take a very different approach to low-income citizens' housing need. New Brunswick spends more than Nova Scotia each year on affordable housing in spite of the fact that it has a lower population. Other provinces are well-known for their progressive housing policy. Researching the rationales those provinces offer for their more appropriate levels of investment in affordable housing and bringing that information to the decision-makers in Nova Scotia may have some impact on policy here.

The Project Coordinator and the Project Advisory Committee have made three separate groups of recommendations. A copy of the recommendations and the full project report is available at the Women's Centre.

Respectfully submitted by Katherine Reed

STAFFING

1. AWRP Core Staff

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

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

As Director, Lucille Harper is responsible for overseeing the administration of the AWRP, 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 AWRP on local committees that address mental health concerns, youth issues and violence against women. Isabel Gillis works part time as a Crisis Support Worker. Along with providing individual support and advocacy Isabel assists with program planning and fundraising and writes a weekly column for the Casket.

Vangie Babin provides essential office management. Vangie 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 AWRP projects. Each project requires its own system of accountability making Christine's job complex and intensive.

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

AWRP 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.

Although we had requests and have identified the need to provide outreach programs to Guysborough, Canso and Sherbrooke, staff are working to the maximum and are unable to provide outreach with current staffing numbers.

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, A WRC core staff worked a total of 714 unpaid overtime hours, A WRC project staff worked a total of 1,003 unpaid overtime hours for a total of 1,717 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.

- Isabel, Angie, and Pamela attended a **Sexual Assault Legal Information Workshop** facilitated by Jackie Stevens, Coordinator of the Legal Education Project/Training for the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre, and sponsored by the Antigonish Committee to Address Sexual Violence.

- A WRC staff attended the first two sessions of the **Diversity Education Certificate Program, Level 1**, with project staff from the Rural Youth in Healthy Relationships Education Project. The program was offered by Dalhousie University's Henson College and was facilitated by Percy Paris, Barry Wambolt and Candy Palmater. Core staff Angie Babin, Isabel Gillis, Amanda Workman, Lucille Harper attended the sessions.

- Amanda and Isabel attended an information session sponsored by **Addiction Services on Confidentiality and Dual Relationships** presented by Dr. Brenda Appleby where she spoke about and the challenges faced by service providers living in small rural communities.

- Angie completed a two-day **St. John Ambulance Safety Oriented First Aid course**.

- Katherine completed the **Certificate in Program in Developing Affordable Housing** program at Mount St. Vincent University. The program, sponsored by Community Action on Homelessness in Halifax and funded by a partnership of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and Mount St. Vincent University prepared approximately 15 community development workers from around the province (and one from St. John, NB) to act as professional real estate developers with a focus on affordable housing.

2. AWRC Summer Staff

The AWRC received a grant from the Summer Career Placement Program, HRDC, to hire a summer student. Noline MacKinnon was hired as an Administrative Assistant. Noline worked with a group of students to produce a youth oriented newsletter.

3. Service Learning Students/Student Placements

The AWRC 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.

- Lisa Pettipas completed a one month student placement as part of her Office Information Technology course, Nova Scotia Community College - Port Hawkesbury Campus.
- Robin Delorey did a one day job shadowing as part of the East Antigonish High School Career Life Management program.
- Amanda Teasdale did a day of Job Shadowing as part of her school project at John Hugh Gillis High School.
- Tracy Pettipas completed a two day job shadowing placement with the AWRC as part of her Human Services course, Nova Scotia Community College - Port Hawkesbury Campus.
- Two Canada World Youth participants, Novallina Tambunan from Indonesia and Ada Pally from Saskatchewan completed their work placements in the Rural Youth Healthy Relationships Education Project.

- Patricia Burke, a fourth year nursing student, St. F.X.U., completed her community nursing placement at the Centre. She gathered information about how and why emergency contraception is being accessed by women.

- Nicole Collins, St. F.X.U. Nursing student, completed the community placement component of her nursing program at the Centre. She continued with the work begun by Patricia Burke gathering information, and developing a questionnaire to assess where, how, under what circumstances, and with what result St. F.X.U. students access the Emergency Contraception Pill. The survey was not administered as there was insufficient time to get it approved by the St. F.X.U. Ethics Committee.

4. Community Hours

The AWRRC provides women with an opportunity and the support required to complete mandated community hours. This year three adolescent girls completed their community hours at the Centre.

5. Volunteers

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. However, 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 had a core group of women as well as a core group of enthusiastic and committed high school students who volunteered with the AWRRC.

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 2,479 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 2002-2003, the AWRRC 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 AWRRC 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.

The AWRRC 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 AWRRC costs. This year we undertook fundraising efforts in both the community and the business sectors.

- The community response to our 2002-2003 spring and fall direct mail campaigns clearly demonstrated sustained community support for the AWRRC and our work. Thanks to all who so generously supported us, we were able to raise \$7,872.

- To help cover the costs of our programs the AWRRC sought donations from labour as well as from the public and corporate sectors.

The Canadian Auto Workers Union in particular has been supportive of our anti-violence work and the anti-violence work of women's organizations across Canada. On International Women's Day they made a donation of \$2,000 to the AWRRC.

Businesses also have been supportive of AWRRC programming and responded positively to our requests for donations to support specific programs as well as to support our programming in general.

- The Royal Bank donated \$2,500 to the AWRRC for our Inspire Program.
- Harlequin Enterprise Ltd. donated \$2,000 for our Survivor's Groups
- Community service clubs and religious congregations supported our work. Contributions

included the following.

- Congregation of Sisters of St. Martha, Bethany, Adsum Community, and "The Heights" Community
- Sisters of Charity, Halifax
- Lions Club, Antigonish

- Individual artists and community businesses demonstrated their support for our work by donating items for fundraising raffles, gift certificates, and beverages and food trays for various A WRC events as well as other types of fundraising supports.

- Linda Johns donated a painting, "South Wind", for our Sr. Mary MacLeod Bursary draw and Lyghthesome Gallery donated the framing.
- Highland Home Hardware donated a 9 piece pot set.
- Arisaig Fisheries donated lobsters.
- Supervalu donated a gift certificate.
- Maritime Inn donated dinner for two.
- Yvonne Landry donated a massage.
- Cheryl's Place Family Haircuts donated two haircuts.
- Twilight Music donated music for our February dance.
- The Antigonish Branch of the Royal Canadian Legion donated the venue for our February dance.

- Jackie Jacques held a 2-day Discovery Toy event and a percentage of sales were donated to the women's centre.

- 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, benefiting 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. 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, District Supervisor, Antigonish, for supporting the work of our Women's Centre.

And, we acknowledge and thank our project funders - 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.

