

**ANTIGONISH WOMEN'S
RESOURCE CENTRE**

DETAILED ANNUAL REPORT 2008-2009

Submitted to:

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

Submitted by:

**Lucille Harper, Executive Director
June 2009**

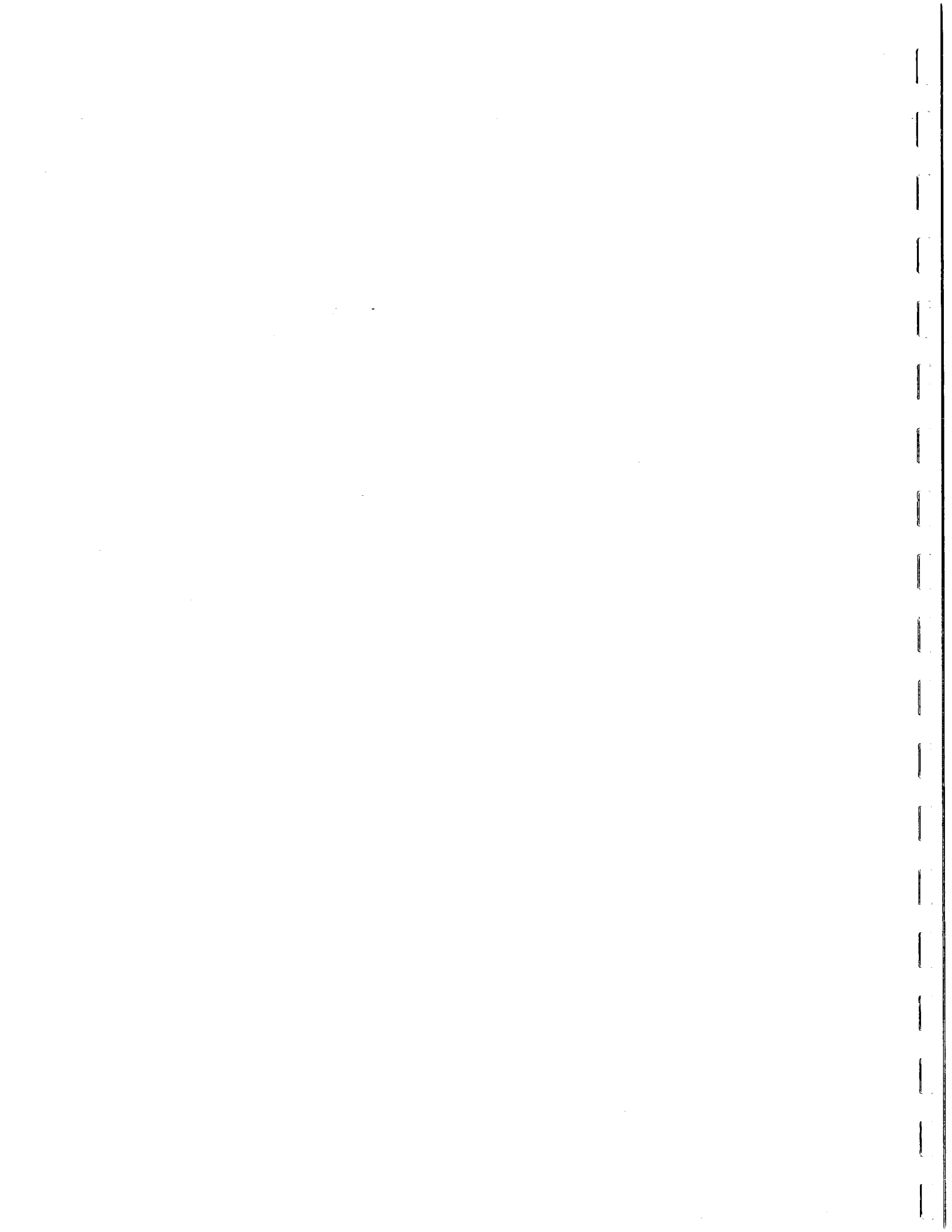


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INTRODUCTION

This past year has been one of both change and growth for the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre (AWRC). With generous support from the community, we were able to expand our physical space thereby providing a better facility for Lindsay's Health Centre for Women and for our counselling and support services. Women's art donated by local women artists welcomes women into the Centre and surrounds them with women's energy, creativity and warmth. The Centre is a wonderful, well-used, supportive place for women and adolescent girls to find information, problem-solving support, and advocacy. It is also a space where women come together to organize social action, to plan events, to sing, to rage, to learn and to laugh.

More than 1,200 women and girls used our services in 2008-2009 and calls and visits to our Women's Centre totalled 11,536. Through Lindsay's Health Centre for Women our amazing physician and nurse practitioner saw 609 women. With funding from the Law Foundation of Nova Scotia we continued to provide much needed outreach services and programs one day per week each in Canso, Sherbrooke and Guysborough. Our Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) program established a new examination site at the Strait Richmond Hospital making it possible to provide sensitive care and skilled forensic examinations to survivors of sexual violence at three sites in the Guysborough Antigonish Strait Health Authority (GASHA) district. Our Healthy Relationships for Youth program trained teachers and senior high school students to deliver healthy relationships sessions to grade nine students in all ten high schools in the Strait Regional School Board.

We worked collaboratively with organizations in our community as well as across the province on initiatives that focus on improving the lives of women and girls. In partnership with the Pictou County Women's Centre and Every Woman's Centre, we participated in a project looking at *Violence against Women and Girls: A Rural Response*. Our work is focussed on talking with and documenting the experiences of girls growing up in rural communities – looking in particular at their concepts of and experiences of violence and how they access support and then engaging with service providers in reflecting on the girls' experiences. In our local community we brought together individuals and organizations to think about heat poverty and to initiate a plan for helping people who were living on low-incomes deal with emergency fuel bills. In partnership with St. FX University and the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women we organized *The Hypersexualization of Girls and Women: Deepening Our Analysis and Understanding* Conference. We actively participated in committees tasked with addressing issues and concerns regarding poverty, violence against women, food security and women's health and well-being.

We are motivated, energized and remain inspired by the women and adolescent girls we work with each day – by their strength, resiliency, and determination to overcome the barriers they face. We remain committed to working for social and economic justice, for peace, for a safe and healthy world, for a world in which all women, all children, all men are valued, cared for and supported each for our uniqueness and our commonality.

ANTIGONISH WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTRE
CORE SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

CENTRE USAGE

Staff record the contacts (calls and visits) made to the Women's Centre daily and tabulate them monthly. Total calls and visits for 2008-2009 numbered 11,536.

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

This year we provided direct services to at least 1,200 individual women. Not all women were individually identified and, therefore, were not included in the total.¹ Each woman contacted the AWRC anywhere from 1-64 times per month for a total of 6,718 contacts over the year. On average each individual woman contacted the AWRC six (6) times 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 | • social assistance | • housing |
| • homelessness | • transportation | • employment |
| • budgeting | • bankruptcy | • workplace relations |
| • maternity benefits | • financial aid | • financial management/planning |
| • childcare | | |

Physical and mental health issues including

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

¹ Along with the 1,200 identified individual women who used our services over the past year, we recorded 348 visits and calls from women that we did not identify with full names. We do not know therefore, whether they made follow-up calls and visits and are included in the total of identified individual women.

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
- maintenance enforcement
- legal aid
- child protection
- court preparation
- tenancy issues

Education and Equity issues including

- education access
- student loans
- disabilities
- employment equity
- sexism
- lgbtq rights

AWRC core staff assisted 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, and heat rebate and emergency fuel programs. We helped with writing letters, composing or updating resumes and cover letters, filing complaints and appeals. This past year we accompanied women to court, legal appointments, and medical appointments 76 times. We provided advocacy as well as referrals to other services and we assisted women in making connections with those services. We referred 93 women and their families for services to the Kinsmen Poverty Relief program this year. The Kinsmen poverty relief efforts help women in emergency situations with such things as groceries or items of special need that are not available through other support services.

We identify both 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, use the phone, leave and retrieve messages and to rest or wait for appointments.

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

AWRC PROGRAMMING

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 as well as by the facilitators. The evaluations informed the progress of the group and assessed the achievement of the objectives of the group along with whether or not the participants felt they were meeting their personal goals.

1. Groups for Adult Survivors of Sexual Trauma

The AWRC offers Stage I, Stage II and Follow-up Groups for Adult Survivors of Sexual Trauma. The Groups are facilitated by a therapist who has training and experience specific to working with survivors of trauma and of sexual violence. Group members are required to work with an individual counsellor while they are attending the group. The 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 undertaken in the Stage II Group. The groups operate within a feminist framework and are offered when a minimum of 8 women have expressed interest.

1.1 Stage I Adult Survivors of Sexual Trauma: Developing Coping Skills

Lead Facilitator: Barbara Hayes Co-Facilitator: Amanda Workman

The *Stage I Adult Survivors of Sexual Trauma: Developing Coping Skills* program focuses on educating the participants about sexual violence and trauma and teaches them the coping and grounding skills they need to carry through with their emotional healing in a safe manner. It is designed to allow women who share similar challenges as a result of the experience of sexual trauma to make changes in their lives. The emphasis of this group is the development of healthy, practical coping skills that women can use in their daily life to help them manage overwhelming feelings, set healthy boundaries for themselves and develop a compassionate inner voice.

The Stage I Group provides a safe and supportive environment for women to begin to talk about the abuse they experienced. The group helps reduce feelings of isolation, shame and guilt experienced by many survivors. Weekly topics focus on building safety and support, managing overwhelming feelings, creating healthy boundaries, embracing nurturing, coping and creating a compassionate inner voice.

The eight week group “**Survivors of Sexual Trauma**” was offered to participants starting September of 2008. Eight women began the group with six women completing all eight sessions.

1.2 Stage II Adult Survivors of Sexual Trauma Group: Beginning Emotional Healing

Facilitator: Barbara Hayes

Assistant Facilitator: Amanda Workman

The Stage II Adult Survivors of Sexual Trauma Group: Beginning Emotional Healing is designed to be a ten week program designed to support women survivors of sexual trauma to move into their personal healing work. The objectives of the Stage II group are as follows:

1. to build a safe healing environment in which participants can begin to tell their stories;
2. to begin to work on specific effects of childhood trauma within a supportive group environment

The AWRC offered the Adult Survivors of Sexual Trauma: Beginning Emotional Healing program to 5 women in May 2008. Participants must complete the "Survivors of Sexual Trauma" group to participate in this second level group. This year, to coordinate participant and staff schedules, the ten week program was reorganized to fit the content into two Saturdays and one weekday evening session. Women reported that although the material was condensed, it suited their schedule and provided them the information and support they needed. Subsequent conversations with participants revealed that while this format was initially well received, upon further reflection, women felt that a ten week format would allow more time for the information presented to be digested. It is anticipated that a return to the ten week format is best.

2. Inspire

Facilitators:

Mica Francis: Chedabucto Place, St. Mary's Academy, Fanning Education Centre

Wyanne Sandler, Krista DeCoste: East Antigonish Education Centre

Wyanne Sandler: Paqtnkek First Nation

Amanda Workman: Paqtnkek First Nation

Inspire is a program for adolescent girls designed to provide them with a safe, non-judgmental and girl-friendly venue for developing life-skills and increasing their understanding of issues affecting their lives. Inspire seeks to provide positive mentoring and role modelling, and encourage self-care, healthy decision making and the development of critical- thinking and problem solving skills. The group setting fosters the development of effective communication and social skills and promotes an awareness of rights and responsibilities to community.

Inspire was created in 2001 when staff of the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre (AWRC) noticed that young women were seeking support services in increased numbers and for a complex range of issues and concerns. Inspire has since grown from one after-school program in Antigonish, to programs offered in the community of Paqtnkek and at four schools in Antigonish and Guysborough counties. The Inspire program continues to be very well received by students and to receive tremendous support from school administration.

Program Objectives

The program objectives were as follows:

- To provide a safe supportive environment for adolescent girls to access information and resources pertaining to their needs
- Foster healthy decision making and the development of problem solving skills
- Provide positive mentoring and role modelling
- Encourage self-care
- Facilitate the development of effective communication and social skills
- Cultivate critical-thinking
- Promote in girls a strong sense of self and an awareness of ones rights and responsibilities.

Program Structure

Inspire is designed to deliver weekly programming based on topics of interest to the participants, in line with the aforementioned objectives. The program is designed to be somewhat flexible in allowing participant input while maintaining a clear purpose. Participants were referred to the program by community agencies, school guidance counsellors and by the girls themselves. Each program was modified to meet the particular interests and concerns of the students involved. Topics were identified by the students in a needs assessment that was completed during the first session.

Although topics and activities covered in each program varied according to the priorities identified by the participants, they generally included the following: creating a safe space; fostering positive self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-concept; stress reduction; communicating with parents; violence against women; healthy relationships; gender stereotypes; homophobia; media analysis; hypersexualization of girls and young women; body image; addictions; and human rights. Where appropriate, resource persons were brought in to do workshops with the group. Some of the programs benefited from presentations from the Addictions Services Youth Outreach Worker; the Department of Mental Health Services Outreach Workers; presentations by Public Health Nurses on young women's wellness (i.e. puberty, sexuality, sexual health and decision-making) and from presentations on Yoga and Reiki as positive coping strategies for stress and anxiety.

During each session there is a "check-in" time to allow participants to talk about current issues in their lives, followed by a more focussed information and discussion period. A variety of techniques were used to assist participant engagement in focussed discussion. These included crafting, collages, and journal writing. Girls were surveyed at the end of the program to gather information about what was useful for them about the Inspire experience. They were also provided an opportunity to evaluate the facilitators and the program structure.

In the 2008-2009 year, the program was offered in five locations: (1) at the East Antigonish Education Centre, Monastery; (2) at Chedabucto Education Centre, Guysborough; (3) at St. Mary's Academy, Sherbrooke; (4) at Fanning Education Centre, Canso, and (5) at Paktnkek First Nation.

2.1 Inspire: East Antigonish Education Centre, Monastery

Facilitators: Krista DeCoste, Wyanne Sandler

The Inspire Program for the East Antigonish Education Centre was a 15 session program that began in October 2008 and was completed in March 2009. It was held after-school and students were able to take the second bus home. Eleven (11) grade 8 girls participated.

In their evaluation of the program, the girls reported:

- they were able to express themselves within the group;
- they were listened to by the group,
- they were supported by the facilitators and the group
- the topics covered helped them either some or a lot.

The girls reported that the program helped them communicate more clearly with family and friends. They told us they felt more able to say no to things they don't want, to ask for things they need, and are now more aware of how personal issues affect them. The girls told us through the evaluation that they loved the snacks, thought the meetings were fun and expressed there was nothing they would have wanted to change about Inspire.

"Inspire is really great." "You guys rock."

"I am very happy and grateful for all the help they've given me and all of us."

2.2 Inspire: Fanning Education Centre, Canso

Facilitator: Mica Francis, Justice Matters for Women

Inspire is held in Canso every Monday at Fanning Education Centre from 12:30pm-1:30pm. The school administration has made Inspire mandatory for all seven grade 8 female students, allowing them a half hour of lunch time and a half hour of class time for the hour long weekly Inspire session. The students are responsible for accessing any information they miss during class time.

2.3 Inspire: St. Mary's Academy, Sherbrooke

Facilitator: Mica Francis, Justice Matters for Women

Inspire is held in Sherbrooke every Tuesday at St. Mary's Academy and co-facilitated with Public Health Nurse Lynne Lukeman. The school administration at St. Mary's Academy in Sherbrooke has developed a similar program for the grade eight boys meaning that all grade eight students have an hour session each week during class time. There were 18 grade eight girls that participated in the program at St. Mary's Academy.

2.4 Inspire: Chedabucto Education Centre, Guysborough

Facilitator: Mica Francis, Justice Matters for Women

Inspire is held every Wednesday in the Youth Health Centre from 12:00pm-1:00pm at Chedabucto Education Centre and is co-facilitated with YHC Coordinators Rachel Chisholm and Leona Purcell. Students at Chedabucto were asked to sign up for Inspire as participation is optional. There were seven grade 8 girls involved with Inspire in Guysborough.

2.5 Inspire: Paqtnkek First Nation

At the invitation of Paqtnkek First Nation this past year two Inspire based programs were offered in Paqtnkek. Amanda Workman facilitated a program for grade 6 girls while Wyanne Sandler facilitated a program for older girls.

2.5.1 Inspire: Paqtnkek First Nation

Facilitator: Amanda Workman

In consultation with Terena Francis, Aboriginal Student Advisor, a weekly after-school program for girls from grade 6 was designed and delivered by Amanda Workman. Discussions with Terena helped shape the content of this program and provided the facilitator with an understanding of the expectations of the community for the program. Terena Francis identified that fostering self-reliance and providing information about healthy relationships, self-esteem, mental health and addictions were important issues.

Eight girls began the group (one moved away) and all participated regularly. This age group, 11-12 years old, required a more activities based program than the discussion style Inspire format used with older girls. The program ran from October of 2008 through March 2009. Because the participants were younger than any previous group, the evaluation was extremely brief in format. In the evaluation, participants said "I would tell girls that Amanda teaches us stuff that we didn't learn about before" and they identified puberty and nutrition sessions as noteworthy. Participants seemed to feel safe and enjoyed their time together; "I would tell other girls that Inspire is really fun and you can talk about anything...Really and there is a fun trip at the end." The girls identified that they wanted more activities, including sports to be available to them.

2.5.2 Paqtnkek Girls' Group: Paqtnkek First Nation

Facilitator: Wyanne Sandler

The Paqtnkek Girls Group came out of discussions at the Paqtnkek Interagency Committee meetings. Although the Inspire program was being offered to a younger group of grade 6 girls, some community members and the community health nurse felt that there were some older girls who would also benefit from having a group. Wyanne Sandler was invited to co-facilitate a Girls' Group with Dawn MacIntosh. Topics that were discussed included stereotypes, healthy relationships, young women's wellness and reproductive health, nutrition and healthy eating, and

media awareness. The girls also participated in various forms of arts, crafts, and creative expression, including dance, journal making, oil pastel drawing, and making collages. Between 6-9 girls participated. Overall, the group was successful; however, future groups would benefit from more clearly defining parameters and guidelines for the group at the outset. The group began in January 2009 and will run until June 2009 at which time an evaluation will be done.

3. Income Tax Preparation Program for Low-Income Women

Each year AWRC volunteers prepare income tax forms for low-income women and their families. This ensures people receive the full amount of their return as they do not have to pay the fee they would be charged if they went to a tax firm or an accountant. This year eight volunteers completed 180 income tax returns. Many of the people who benefited were seniors and women from marginalized communities. Katie Markotich, Canada Revenue CVITP Coordinator, provided a training session for some of the volunteers to allow them to complete the tax returns on line. The AWRC is very grateful to our volunteers for the many hours they give to preparing income tax returns.

4. Knitting Group and Creative Circle

This year we started a weekly Knitting Group in order to provide women with an opportunity to come together socially and to talk about issues in their lives and communities. The group reduces isolation and provides women with new challenges. The women created a 12 foot knitted scarf for the elm tree in front of the RK MacDonald Nursing Home as a way of thanking the tree for the gifts it offers everyone. Over the year the circle expanded to include women making other crafts and we changed the name of the group to "Creative Circle". Twenty-seven (27) women participated in the group.

5. Adopt a Family Program

The Adopt a Family Program sponsored 42 families for 2008. We received \$1,045.00 in cash as well as many toys and gift items. Two St. FX students organized a toy drive as part of a service learning project and we had more toys than we could use. Extra toys were given to the Kinsmen for their campaign. Isabel Gillis takes the lead in this event and did a great job again this year.

6. Women and Spirituality

The Women & Spirituality group was created to provide women with a space to talk about their spirituality and its meaning for them as women.

7. Young Feminist Collective

The Antigonish Young Feminist Collective was inspired by the participation of three community members in the Pan-Canadian Young Feminist Gathering in Montreal. The Young Feminist Collective began meeting in April 2009 and meets every second week. The group provides a space for young women (and their allies) to discuss topics and issues of importance to them, to debate what feminism means, to organize actions, and to have fun.

LINDSAY'S HEALTH CENTRE FOR WOMEN

Lindsay's Health Centre for Women opened in February 2005 with a focus on providing collaborative woman-centred primary health care programs and services for women and adolescent girls (especially those who experience barriers to access) that promote and support their health and well-being. Lindsay's Health Centre is a partnership of the AWRC, the Guysborough Antigonish Strait Health Authority (GASHA), and the practicing physician. Located in the AWRC, it is open Thursdays from 9:00 am to 4:30 pm.

Services are provided by a physician, a nurse practitioner, Mental Health Services, Addictions Services, Public Health Services, and the AWRC. The physician and nurse practitioner see women primarily on an individual basis; the AWRC provides organizational support as well as meets with women individually; Mental Health and Addictions Services both meet with women individually and provide programming; Public Health Services primarily provides programming. Both the staff from Mental Health and Addictions Services have provided AWRC staff with information that has been helpful for their work with the women they support.

Physician and Nurse Practitioner Services

Physician services were provided by Dr. Daphne MacLean while nurse practitioner services were provided by Connie Venedam-Marchand. For most of the year Connie was seconded to a position with GASHA and was only available to LHCW for 16 weeks.

Over the 2008-2009 fiscal year, the physician and nurse practitioner services of Lindsay's Health Centre services were used as follows:

- 259 women saw the physician 539 times;
- 53 women saw the nurse practitioner 70 times;
- a total of 346 women used the services of the physician and nurse practitioner 609 times.

Overwhelmingly the largest group of women coming to Lindsay's for physician and nurse practitioner services were in the age group 16-24 years (44% or N152). Women aged 25-35 years and 36-50 years each made up 18% (N62 and N63 respectively); women aged 51-65 years made up 12% (N40); with women over 66 years comprising 4% (N13); and girls under 16 years comprising 3% (N11).

Five Well Woman Clinics and a Flu Clinic were organized and held in:

- Havre Boucher Well Woman Clinic with 11 women attending April 2008;
- Paq'tnkek First Nation Well Woman Clinic with 11 women attending June 2008;
- Paq'tnkek First Nation Young Women's Clinic with 8 women attending August 2008;
- Paq'tnkek First Nation Well Woman Clinic with 8 women attending November 2008;
- LHCW Well Woman Clinic with 13 women attending January 2009;
- LHCW Flu Clinic with 9 women attending December 2008.

LHCW Programs

Programs organized and facilitated by LHCW Team members included the following:

- Two successful six session **Smoking Cessation** programs were delivered in March - April 2008 and October - November 2008 by Esther MacDonnell, Addictions Services.
- **Eating to Live or Living to Eat** was delivered in October 2008 by Brenda Harrop, Mental Health Services in partnership with LHCW team members.
- A five session **Getting Ready for Christmas** program was organized and co-facilitated in November - December 2008 by Donna MacEachern, Mental Health Services, and Esther MacDonnell, Addictions Services, in partnership with LHCW team members.
- A six session **Eating Issues: Ready for Change** program was co-facilitated in January - February 2009 by Brenda Harrop, Mental Health Services, and Isabel Gillis, StFX Counselling Centre, with support from Amanda Workman, AWRC. This is the third running of the program with over fourteen women expressing interest in participating. In total, eight women completed the program. The "overall rating" for the group was unanimously "excellent", with the most appreciated aspects of the program being "hearing what others had to say", "finding out other people are going through the exact same thing", "having a place to unload about an issue many people in my life don't understand". Participants also liked the homework, as it "made me stop and think", and it "provoked discussion". Another aspect was that facilitators "created a safe learning environment". There were suggestions for additional sessions, such as: what is normal eating - what is healthy eating; how to find a team of helpers and how to make it work; coping with bulimia; coping skills. Participants indicated in their evaluations that by group's end they were motivated to learn more.
- A five session **Good Hearted Women - Take Action for Your Heart Health** program was delivered in February - March 2009 by Public Health Services in partnership with LHCW team members.

Program Highlights

- **Cultural Sensitivity Training Session, May 2009**

In preparation for providing the Well Woman Clinic at the Paq'tnkek First Nation Health Centre, members of the LHCW program delivery team participated in a cultural sensitivity training session delivered by Toni Thompson. Toni provided an historical overview of the colonization of aboriginals peoples in Canada and the historical and current impact of that colonization. She led participants through a number of exercises designed to examine the oppression created by our own biases and stereotypical beliefs and talked about things to consider when working with First Nations people. Several AWRC staff providing direct services, programs and projects participated in the session.

- **Contexts and Models in Primary healthcare and their impact on Inter-professional Relationships (CoMPaIR)**

LHCW agreed to participate as a research site in a Nova Scotia-based primary health care (PHC) research initiative that proposes to explore the contexts within which inter-professional teams develop and sustain themselves in a variety of primary health care settings. This proposed research is part of the CoMPaIR program, a national program of research administered out of Calgary, Alberta by Dr. Cathie Scott, principal investigator, and a team of researchers and systems-based collaborators from across Canada. Dr. Charmaine McPherson, a faculty member at St. Francis Xavier University, will lead the Nova Scotia arm of the CoMPaIR program. Her area of research focuses on improving health service access for under-served populations through innovative inter-professional and cross-sectoral service design. One of the other four Nova Scotia sites will be the Men's Health Program. A Nova Scotia Health Research Foundation (NSHRF) research grant proposal was submitted in April 2009 to help fund the greater portion of the work.

LHCW Program Planning and Implementation Teams

Planning and development of Lindsay's Health Centre continued through the 2008-2009 year.

- On the first Thursday of each month, the Program Implementation Team met to discuss services, programs and ways to better facilitate and improve service delivery.
- In June 2008 the LHCW Program Planning and Implementation Teams talked through some of the challenges that Lindsay's has faced over the past year and to look at ways to strengthen our services and programs. Working groups were established to draft recommendations on 1) reaching women, 2) planning, 3) communication, 4) using resources to better link women.
- In September 2008 the LHCW Program Planning Team identified programs to be offered through Lindsay's over the next two years, who would offer them and when. The Team identified the need to offer more Well Woman Clinics and to reach out to under-served communities, the need to expand physician services to two days per week, and the need for administration support.
- In November 2008 the LHCW Program and Implementation Teams reviewed LHCW programs and services, the roles of each partnering agency and how well the partnership is working. We identified the need for a Coordinator, a revised pamphlet, updated website, and a terms of reference for the Implementation Team. The Terms of Reference for the Implementation Team were completed in January 2009.

AWRC BOARD ACTIVITIES

Over the year the AWRC Board meets monthly to provide overall direction for the work of the Women's Centre and to develop policies to guide our work.

The Fundraising Committee created and carried out a successful fundraising plan for renovations to the AWRC.

The Personnel Committee interviewed and hired for a number of positions. This year we hired:

- Angela Fougere for the SANE Program Coordinator position;
- Wyanne Sandler for the AWRC Site Facilitator position for the Violence against Women and Girls project;
- Krista DeCoste for the Healthy Relationships for Youth Program Coordinator position;
- Tiffany Hallett for the Women's Support Worker position.

The AWRC 2008 Annual General Meeting was held on June 12, 2008. Our guest speaker, **Norma Jean Profitt** spoke about *Women and Feminism in Dangerous Times*. Norma Jean identified the current and increasing threats to women's organizing and the depoliticizing of women's organizations through pressures to professionalize service delivery, removing women and equality from the political and policy agenda, and privatization of women's services.

The Board gathered community support in response to the motion to ban all AWRC programs for Strait Regional School Board schools put forward by school board member Frank Machnik. at the June 2008 school board meeting. The motion was directed specifically towards the Healthy Relationships for Youth and Inspire Programs. In the weeks before the meeting school board members received letters of support for the AWRC programs as well as letters supporting the motion to ban them. According to one school board member approximately 60% were letters of support for the program. At the meeting, Phonse Gills, Superintendent of Schools noted all principals in the schools in which the programs were offered saw value in the programs and supported having them in their schools. In a letter to the school board Ann Blackwood, Department of Education, expressed the Department's support for the HRY program. The majority of school board members agreed that it was the responsibility of the principal in each school to decide the fit of programs for their schools and the vote to ban AWRC programs was defeated.

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 agencies and organizations.

1. AWRC Events and Activities

1.1 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. The rain held off for the July 2008 Coady Picnic – our 24th Annual Picnic – and it was a lovely event again this summer. Charlie tenBrinke graciously hosted the picnic, created spaces for women to sit down to dinner together, and took food out of her freezer when it looked as though we might run short. The picnic provided a wonderful opportunity for women from the Antigonish community to welcome women from around the world who were participating in the Coady diploma program in community development. More than 70 women participated in the event.

1.2 Open House

On June 30 the AWRC held a very successful Open House in which we invited the general public to visit our newly renovated space and to learn more about the programs and services we provide to women and girls. Women's art generously donated by or on loan from community artists welcomed people to the centre. Short presentations about the work of the Centre were made by Maureen Shebib and Peggy Mahon, AWRC Co-chairs, Clare Mulcahy, summer student and former board member, Dr. Daphne MacLean, Lindsay's Health Centre for Women, and Liz Chisholm, Town Councillor and President, Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women. More than 120 people attended the Open House.

1.3 December 6th Day of Remembrance and Action

On December 6th, we remembered women in our communities who have experienced violence. Ten women gathered at the Centre to remember this day and each was invited to tie a purple ribbon on a tree and to say a few words about what it meant to her. We closed the evening by lighting a candle and singing a feminist version of "This Little Light of Mine".

1.4 AWRC 25th Anniversary

Women gathered on December 12 to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the AWRC. The first part of the event doubled as a Special Meeting of the AWRC where the membership voted to

change our name from the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre to the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services Association. The AWRC membership passed unanimously the revisions to the Memorandum of Association which now better reflects the sexual assault services we provide as part of our mandate as a women's centre and a sexual assault centre. It was a wonderful evening with full participation in an AWRC Trivia Game hosted by Jean Crosby and Nancy Forestell and in the creation and performance of songs limericks, haikus, and skits inspired by women's involvement with the AWRC. Betsy MacDonald provided live music and Philippe Babin provided recorded music. Thanks to Peggy Mahon for emceeing the evening, to the planning committee, to the women from the United Church who cooked a delicious meal, and to everyone who helped with the set up and clean up.

1.5 Sister Mary MacLeod Bursary

Each year the AWRC provides the Sister Mary MacLeod Bursary to women returning to school. In 2008 the bursary was given to Jennifer Desmond to support a group of five girls from Upper Big Tracadie to attend a Baptist Youth Conference in Halifax where they will look at the various factors that affect the youth.

1.6 International Day for the Eradication of Poverty

The AWRC invited representatives from community organizations to participate in planning and co-sponsoring an event for October 17, **the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty**. Together with Antigonish Sustainable Development, Nova Scotia Agriculture, Antigonish Regional Development Authority, Public Health Services, and Voices we hosted a lunch and learn event which focussed on heat poverty and a call to action for Antigonish. The Bergengren Credit Union sponsored the lunch. Over 100 people attended the event. Following a presentation by Lucille Harper about heat poverty, participants were asked to discuss and to contribute ideas about what we could do in Antigonish to help people living on low-income heat their homes over the winter. These suggestions were organized into three main themes – an emergency fuel fund, assistance with home winterization, and increased information and assistance with accessing existing sources of support. Out of this coalition the Antigonish Heat Poverty Initiative was launched.

1.7 International Women's Day

For March 8, 2009 the AWRC organized a celebration of women's creativity to mark International Women's Day. A group of over 50 women from all generations came together to creatively envision the world we want for girls and women. Activities included collaboratively painting a mural, felting, making friendship bracelets, balloon animals, face painting, card and journal making, activist sticker-art, and music. This event was organized in conjunction with over 25 other events across Canada to mark the young feminists' decentralized day of action.

1.8 Psychiatrization of Women

Lesley Marple, a Master's Student in psychology at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education provided a presentation on the *Psychiatrization of Women*. She talked about the issue from a historical and political perspective focussing on women's particular vulnerability to a system which tends to label and medicate women as a first response.

1.9 Hypersexualization of Girls and Women: Deepening Our Analysis and Understanding Conference

On March 18 - 19, 2009 the AWRC together with St. FX University and the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women sponsored the Hypersexualization of Girls and Women Conference. The purpose of the conference was to create a space for women to come together to broaden and deepen our understanding and analysis about the impact the current culture is having on the sexual practices, autonomy and agency of girls and women. We invited Gail Dines, Wheelock University, Massachusetts, to begin the conversation with a keynote presentation, *Sex(ism), Identity, and Intimacy in a Porn Culture*. In her keynote, Gail talked about the mainstreaming of pornography into popular culture and the impact it is having for both women and men with its creation and promotion of concepts and images of masculinity and femininity that are born out of and conform to a pornography culture.

The following day, a panel, *Hypersexualization - Perspectives and Challenges*, presented a number of observations and perspectives on hypersexualization. Panelists included Nancy Forestell speaking about *Pleasure politics - in search of female sexual autonomy*; Carole-Anne Tull speaking about *High School Girl Culture*; Maureen Armour speaking about *University Women Students – Fitting In*; and Rhonda Semple speaking about *If this is 'freedom' we've finally won: men negotiating the minefields of modern sexualities*. Participants working in small groups had an opportunity to reflect upon the presentations and to bring forward their own thoughts. In the afternoon, participants had their choice of five workshops through which they could further explore aspects of hypersexualization. These included: *Like fish noticing water: How to link hypersexualization with corporate profit and health* with Elizabeth McGibbon; *Seeking Authenticity: Young Nova Scotian Women's Construction of Sexuality* with Laura Barbour; *Female Sexuality - The (Young) Adult Years* with Nancy Forestell; *Young Women: Discussing Our Experience of Hypersexualization* with Betsy MacDonald and Maureen Armour; and *Coming out on top? guys reading gals reading guys* with Rhonda Semple.

Participants brought a range of perspectives and analyses to the conference and there was a general consensus that the conversation needs to continue – that the issues are complex, multi-faceted and reach far into our personal as well as our political understanding of ourselves and our world. Some 110 people from across the province and from many different sectors attended the conference with approximately 400 attending Gail Dine's key note presentation.

2. Outreach, Presentations and Training Sessions

2.1 Poverty

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

- In February 2009, Katherine Read led a session on the relationship between government policy and poverty (e.g. welfare, minimum wage, affordable housing, etc.) for Colleen Cameron's Gender and Health course at the St. F. X. University Nursing School.

2.2 Violence against Women

AWRC staff facilitated workshops and made presentations on issues related to violence against women.

- In October 2008 Amanda Workman facilitated a discussion about healthy relationships and boundaries for students from the **Strait to Work** program at the Nova Scotia Community College Port Hawkesbury Campus.

2.3 Health

AWRC staff facilitated workshops and made presentations on health and health-related concerns.

- Amanda Workman spoke about the impact of privatization on women at the **Nova Scotia Citizen's Health Care Network** evening presentation in April 2008. The Network is working to prevent the continued privatization of health care in Nova Scotia and is seeking to have chapters of the network in communities across the province.

2.4 Briefs to Government

2.4.1 House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women

On March 31, 2009 Lucille Harper appeared on behalf of the AWRC before the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women regarding *The Effects and Consequences the Current Employment Insurance (EI) Programs have on Women in Canada*. Our brief focussed on the how EI programs are failing women who are living on low-incomes in rural, East Coast communities and struggling to establish economic independence in a region where there are few opportunities for employment. The brief was developed in consultation with other women's centres and women's organizations. It contained recommendations for strengthening the social safety net by implementing a guaranteed livable income, developing a federal poverty reduction strategy and

revamping the EI system. The presentation was well received by MPs from the Liberal, Bloc Quebecois and NDP parties.

2.5 **AWRC Information Presentations**

Each year the Women's Centre is asked by organizations to do presentations or to talk about the work of the AWRC. This year we met with and/or presented to the following individuals and groups:

- several classes of Wendy Panagopolous's and Anne-Marie Dobbin's StFX Department of Nursing students. Discussion focussed on preventative health care provided by the AWRC and Lindsay's Health Centre for Women.
- the Antigonish Kinsmen Club and the Antigonish Lions' Club. It was an opportunity to thank them for the work they do to support people living in poverty and to recognize the support they have provided to women who access the AWRC.
- the Pomquet Women's Group.
- GASHA Health Fairs held in Canso and at St. Martha's Hospital.
- The United Sistaz Group facilitated by Stephanie Teasdale. After meeting with various AWRC workers, many of the girls expressed interest in working with us in the future through our projects.
- **X- Helpline** about the AWRC services.
- Dawn Robertson, Executive Director, Central Nova Women's Resource Centre, visited the AWRC to find out more about our programs and how we work with our community.
- Office Administration and Business Administration classes at NSCC in Port Hawkesbury.
- women participating in the **ACALA: ALP GAP** program.

3. **Consultations, Information Sessions, Workshops and Conferences, Research Contributions, and Agency Evaluations**

AWRC staff and board members participated in consultations, information sessions, workshops and conferences, research addressing social justice concerns and status of women issues. We also participated in the evaluations of other agencies.

3.1 **Consultations**

3.1.1 **Health**

- In September Amanda Workman represented the AWRC at an **Action Retreat on Women's Problem Gambling** hosted by the Nova Scotia Gaming Foundation. Participants at the retreat identified the need for the creation of a "task force" to help

women with problem gambling to get access to services and supports and encourage government to move away from their involvement with gambling activities.

- In September Lucille Harper represented the AWRC as a key stakeholder in a **Strategic Planning Session for Public Health Services**. The purpose of the session was to provide feedback about the components of the strategic plan. It was an opportunity to reinforce the importance of Public Health taking on a social advocacy role as part of addressing community health concerns.
- Family Services of Eastern Nova Scotia brought together organizations and agencies that respond to survivors of sexual assault to discuss the need for a service for male survivors and to support Family Services in developing services for men. This would fit well with the AWRC SANE Program and provide a service to which men and boys could be referred for support and therapy. Lucille Harper and Angela Fougere represented the AWRC.

3.1.2. Community and Economic Development

- GASHA and StFXU invited community-based organizations and academics to participate in a **Promising Practices in Community University Partnerships Workshop**. The purpose of the workshop was to provide a forum to share experiences and identify challenges for and ways of moving forward the development of community-university partnerships. Lucille Harper represented the AWRC.

3.1.3 Violence Against Women

- Becky Atkinson, researcher for the Family Law Information Project for Abused Women launched the book **Safely on Her Way: Child Custody and Access Information for Women Leaving Abusive Relationships and Their Service Providers** in Halifax on December 5, 2008. Amanda Workman represented the AWRC.
- In March 2009 Becky Atkinson, Project Coordinator for **Family Law Information Project for Abused Women (FLIPAW)**, organized a Think Tank which brought together people from across the province who work in the field of family violence to discuss the recommendations coming from the report and to look at next steps to address the challenges faced by abused women and their children in the context of custody and access. FLIPAW is looking for participation from women's organizations. FLIPAW has provided the AWRC with copies of the *Safely on Your Way* guide. Lucille Harper represented the AWRC.

3.1.4 Youth Services

- The Department of Community Services invited community-based organizations working with youth to a **Youth Services Review Northern Region Stakeholders Meeting**. The purpose of the meeting was to seek input on what non-Child Welfare, residential services and supports for vulnerable youth and young adults ages 16 - 21 years should look like in the future. There was general agreement that the largest gap for youth in the Northern Region is supportive housing. Lucille Harper represented the AWRC.

3.2 Information Sessions

- At the invitation of GASHA we attended a meeting with **Donna Deveau MacLeod, Child and Youth Strategy Eastern Region Specialist**, Department of Community Services, and **John Ure, Northern Region Specialist**, to learn more about the Child and Youth Strategy which is the government's response to the Nunn Commission Report. Because Antigonish is in the Eastern Region along with Cape Breton and Guysborough, the need has been identified to develop a local Antigonish Guysborough table as a way of putting local issues on the regional agenda.
- At the invitation of GASHA we attended a luncheon with **Minster of Health, Honourable Chris D'Entremont**. The Minister did a presentation on *Transforming Health Care* in which he stressed the importance of primary health care and made several positive references to increased privatization of some health services in Nova Scotia
- The **Department of Community Services, Northern Region** hosted an **Information and Networking Forum** in September 2008 in New Glasgow. The forum provided the Department with opportunity to review their business plan 2008-2009 with community agencies and explore services to vulnerable clients.
- The **National Housing and Homelessness Network** provides organizations concerned with housing a forum to share information about affordable housing initiatives and local and provincial developments. The economic downturn of late 2008 has prompted the federal government to stimulate the economy by way of an investment in "infrastructure", which is likely to include affordable housing development. At the time of the call, December 2008, not much information was available and people in provincial governments were not providing any information until they had a better sense of what the federal government will do. Participants on the call noted that donations from private sources are likely to decrease substantially as a result of the new economic situation. Katherine Reed represented the AWRC.

- Stephanie Hunter, researcher for the **Women and Pensions project**, provided the AWRC with an information resource *Retirement Pension (CPP), Old Age Security (OAS) Related Programs and Benefits – Quick Reference Guide, Version 1*.
- In March 2009, Marina Keeping from Department of Health presented to the public information about the **Nova Scotia Family Pharmacare Program** and the **Senior Pharmacare Program**. She provided information on the eligibility requirements for the programs, costs and what drugs are found on the formulary. Tiffany Hallett represented the AWRC.

3.3 Research Contributions

- In October 2008 the **Select Committee on Participation in the Democratic Process**, a tri-Party legislative committee, held meetings around the province to try to find out the reasons behind the decline in voter turnout over the past 20 years. The AWRC was invited to participate in a focus group held prior to the public meeting. Lucille Harper represented the AWRC.
- In October 2008 researchers with the **Nova Scotia Pro-Bono Study** group met with community-based organizations as part of their investigation of the level of need for pro-bono service provision in rural Nova Scotia. They are exploring options about how that service could be co-ordinated and delivered. Amanda Workman represented the AWRC.
- Marie White, Researcher, **Rural Nova Scotia Homelessness Initiative**, interviewed Lucille Harper and Katherine Reed about how our area is impacted by homelessness, what we, as a community, are doing about it and what could be done to eradicate homelessness.

3.4 Agency Evaluations

- The AWRC was invited to participate in the **Community Partners Focus Group, GASHA**, that provided comment to the external evaluation team reviewing GASHA.

4. Support Actions

The AWRC supports organizations and initiatives that address issues relating to the status of women. This past year we offered our support in the following ways.

- We attended the grand opening of the new **Health Centre at Paq'tnkek First Nation**. After some amazing traditional drumming and chanting, the centre was commemorated with speeches and traditional Miq Maw and Catholic blessings.
- In July 2008 on behalf of the LHCW/AWRC Vangie Babin participated in the health fair held for the beginning of the **2008 Heartland Tour**, a bike tour raising awareness about heart health under the banner *Unity in Community: Together We Make the Difference*. It was an opportunity to network with 16 agencies promoting heart health information. Premier Rodney MacDonald proclaimed the week of July 6-13 as The Heartland tour week.
- We attended the Opening of the Men's Health Clinic and are supporting Family Services of Eastern Nova Scotia in creating services for male survivors of sexual violence. As part of their effort to create counselling services for male survivors, in November 2008, Family Services hosted a presentation by Joe Andrew, a survivor of childhood sexual abuse. Joe shared his healing journey with the group.
- We participated in the "**Take Back the Night March**" organized in September by students at St. FX University.
- We attended Health Connection's Open House.

5. Collaborative Initiatives

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

- The AWRC and the Naomi Society worked together to organize an information session by Becky Atkinson for community organizations and local government service providers. Becky is the researcher for the Family Law Information Project for Abused Women (FLIPAW) and has produced a new book, **Safely on Her Way: Child Custody and Access Information for Women Leaving Abusive Relationships and Their Service Providers**. The event was well attended.
- In November 2008, the AWRC hosted a discussion, **Working with Women Around the World**, for women from different countries to share their experiences in working with women on community development initiatives. Six women who are studying at the Coady Institute and Lesbia Morales, a women's rights activist from Guatemala, attended the session. Much of the discussion was focussed on women's access to land, and on the importance of education.
- In February 2009 the AWRC collaborated with the Antigonish chapter of Development and Peace, and the Sisters of St. Martha's Social Justice Committee to organize an event to

mark the **United Nations World Day for Social Justice**. People gathered in front of the Town Hall at lunchtime, sang social justice songs, held posters indicating their concerns and their organizational affiliations, and afterward shared stories over lunch.

6. Media

The AWRC is asked by the media to talk about current social and economic events affecting women locally, provincially and nationally. This past year we did several print, radio and television interviews regarding events sponsored by the AWRC, heat poverty, sexual assault and issues of the day.

7. Community Use of the AWRC

The AWRC 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. Private therapists used the centre space to meet with their clients.

The AWRC was used as a meeting space for the following groups and workshops:

- Women's Drum Circle
- A Quaker group
- Breaking the Silence - Antigonish Committee
- Antigonish Therapeutic Riding Association
- the Victoria Order of Nurses
- Pictou Antigonish Regional Library cap site program for training purposes
- private therapists to meet with clients
- individuals from the community for meetings, tutoring, and such

8. Meetings with Political Representatives and Bureaucrats

AWRC 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 AWRC concerns.

- **Angus MacIsaac, MLA**, met several times over the year with Lucille Harper to discuss AWRC programs and service pressures.
- April 22, 2008, **Peter MacKay, Central Nova MP and Minister of Defence** came to the AWRC on behalf of Josee Verner, Minister for the Status of Women Canada, to announce

funding for the Violence Against Women and Girls: A Rural Response. Peggy Mahon, AWRC Co-chair, provided an overview of the project.

- In June 2008 Leonard Preyra, MLA, was in Antigonish for the nomination of Maurice Smith as the NDP candidate for Antigonish in the next provincial election. Leonard took the opportunity to visit the Women's Centre and to discuss with us issues facing women in our community.

8.1 Meet the Candidates

The AWRC invited the candidates for the October 2008 federal election to meet with women and to talk about issues impacting their lives. In one hour meetings with each of the candidates Louise Lorefice, NDP federal candidate, Elizabeth May, Green Party, and Peter MacKay, Conservative Party, answered questions put forward by those in attendance. It was an opportunity for them to highlight their party platforms and to answer questions from women in attendance. Some 20 women attended each meeting.

8.2 Open House for Town and Municipal Councils and School Board Candidates

In October the AWRC invited candidates running for Town and County Councils and the Strait Regional School Board to an Open House to learn more about the programs and services we offer. Seven school board candidates and one incumbent attended along with 2 candidates for Town Council and 7 candidates for County Council. The school board candidates were very interested in learning about our in-school programs.

8.3 Women's Centres and Department of Community Services Regional Meetings – Northern and Central Regions

Quarterly regional meetings take place with the Executive Directors for the AWRC, Pictou County Women's Centre, LEA Place Women's Resource Centre and Central Nova Women's Resource Centre and the DCS Regional Administrators and the Early Childhood Development and Community Outreach Specialists. They provide an opportunity to share information about new and upcoming programs, to identify current scope of the work of women's centres and pressures we are facing. This year meetings focussed on Child Welfare Programs and ways to work more collaboratively.

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 creation 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 and Area Inter-Agency Committee on Family Violence and Sexual Violence/ Inter-agency Committee on Relationship Violence

AWRC Representative: Denise Faccini Bowman, Isabel Gillis, Tiffany Hallett

The Antigonish and Area Inter-Agency Committee on Family Violence and Sexual Violence meets monthly and is comprised of representatives from local government and non-government services who respond to victims of violence and/or to perpetrators. The function of the Inter-agency is to monitor the community's response to family and sexual violence, to identify gaps in services, to network, to educate the public about family and sexual violence, and to lobby for change.

Over the past year, initiatives of the Inter-agency Committee included the following:

- monthly agency information sharing sessions;
- organized the Purple Ribbon Campaign which takes place in November in lead up to December 6 Day of Action and Remembrance on Violence against Women;
- organized a Silent Witness event for Family Violence Prevention Week held each year in February.

1.2 Paq'tnkek First Nation Inter-Agency Committee

AWRC Representative: Wyanne Sandler

The Paqtnkek Interagency committee meets at the Paqtnkek Health Centre on a monthly basis. It provides an opportunity for the various community members and service providers who are working in the community to discuss what they are doing, share information, and coordinate activities. The AWRC has been involved in providing Well Women's Clinics, Inspire, an older girls' discussion group, and has written a proposal for an after-school program in the community, so the Interagency was an important opportunity to keep community members informed about how each of these activities/programs was going and get feedback/input. It was also an important way to build relationships and stay informed about other events/programs happening in the community.

1.3 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." It is also a venue for sharing information about events that relate to primary health care and about the work Network members are undertaking in their particular communities and organizations.

This past year the PATH network received funding from the National Collaborating Centre – Healthy Public Policy (NCC-HPP) for a community-based research initiative, *Influencing Healthy Public Policy with Community Health Impact Assessment*. PATH contracted Susan Eaton to carry out the project. In this nine month project the PATH Network and the NCC-HPP worked together to investigate the following questions:

- What are the *conditions* that support the development and sustainability of community health impact assessment (CHIA)?
- Can CHIA influence the development of healthy public policy? At which levels?
- Might CHIA support the development of healthy public policy if done differently?

The project involved using the PATH process and the existing Antigonish Town and County Community Health Board's community health impact assessment tool (CHIAT) to work with local policy makers and community members on an important community issue to examine the impact of a proposed policy change or project implementation.

Project activities included the following:

- a scan of the related literature. Part of this involved a search of *Google Scholar* where PATH is referenced just over 40 times in academic articles. These are largely references made to an article published by Doris in the Canadian Journal of Public Health (Nov-Dec, 1999).
- a day long **Dialogue on Health Impact Assessment** in April 2008 where Susan Curtis did a presentation on *Frequently used Strategies for Health Impact Assessment*, Louise St-Pierre provided an overview of the NCCHPP and its view of Health Impact Assessment, Peggy Mahon and Susan Eaton presented the work of the PATH Network on community health impact assessment.
- a **12th Anniversary and Celebration Workshop** where people who had been involved with the various PATH initiatives over the years, policy makers and champions discussed the conditions which support community health impact assessment and existing opportunities to influence the development of healthy public policy in our area.
- soliciting agreement from the Antigonish County Council to examine the impact of the Keppoch Mountain – Beaver Mountain Park project using the Antigonish Town and County Community Health Board's Community Health Impact Assessment Tool

(CHIAT). Completing a three session community health impact assessment of the Keppoch Mountain – Beaver Mountain Park and providing a report to the County Council.

- organizing and holding a workshop in February 2009 on ***Developing Public Policy: The role of community health impact assessment***. The workshop brought together 50 public policy decision-makers from municipal councils, schools boards, district health authorities, community health boards, community-based organizations and people involved in community development and health promotion. Together they learned about the PATH process for community health impact assessment and its potential for gathering citizen input to inform and influence the creation of healthy public policy.

1.4 Antigonish Sexual Assault Response Team (ASART)

AWRC Representative: Lucille Harper, Angela Fougere

ASART members include the RCMP – Antigonish Detachment, Antigonish Crown Attorney's Office, the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre, Nova Scotia Department of Justice Victim Services, St. Francis Xavier University Health and Counselling Centre and Dean of Students, and the Emergency Department of St. Martha's Regional Hospital. ASART meets quarterly to work towards improving responses to survivors of sexual violence.

The ASART Protocol is a community driven document that outlines how our community will respond to victims/survivors of sexual assault who are 16 years of age and over, who choose to report the assault and to proceed through the criminal justice system. In addition to presenting clearly defined roles and responsibilities for all service providers, the protocol delineates the approach and agreed upon principles of responding to victims/survivors of sexual assault. The ASART Protocol was revised and re-approved on January 2009. The protocol will continue to be revised as the work of ASART proceeds.

One of ASART's challenges this year has been to find a way work more closely together to improve our response to survivors of sexual assault while ensuring we maintain the confidentiality of survivors and work within the ethical boundaries of our organizations, institutions and professions. The ASART Team would like to see more survivors coming forward. All partners were asked to prepare statistics on gender, age, known or unknown assailant, ASART services utilized, a new case, a historical case, and a general description of the case for the 2008 calendar year.

Over the year ASART undertook the following activities:

- Maureen Shebib, Lucille Harper and Debbie Cotton provided a presentation on ASART and the AWRC SANE Program to the Kings County Sexual Assault Response Team.

- Discussed and clarified our understanding of the federal legislative change that raises the age of consent to sexual activity from 14 to 16 years and the impact it may have for our work.
- Joe MacDonald, Dean of Students, StFX arranged for 10,000 ASART bookmarks to be printed. Funding for the bookmarks was provided by the Antigonish Crime Prevention organization.

1.5 **Antigonish Heat Poverty Initiative**

AWRC Representatives: Amanda Workman, Wyanne Sandler, Krista DeCoste, Lucille Harper, Isabel Gillis

The Antigonish Heat Poverty Initiative was organized to move forward some of the suggestions that were presented at the Heat Poverty Awareness Event on October 17, the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. Representatives from town council, local organizations, and service groups came together with other community members to develop action plans and timelines for a three-pronged strategy to address heat poverty in Antigonish. Three working groups were formed to work on winterizing homes, providing information and support on currently available programs and rebates, and establishing an emergency fuel fund.

The **Antigonish Emergency Fuel Fund** was set up to help people living on low-incomes who were facing emergency fuel shortages. An application form and process were developed; applicants were contacted and their situation assessed. In total 75 families were assisted with emergency heat (oil, wood, electricity) costs. Many more were referred to government programs.

The **Home Winterizing program** was set up to help people stop heat from escaping their homes through draughty windows and walls. In the months of January and February, 20 homes had either had a visit by a volunteer who helped apply some caulking and put plastic on windows, or according to preference, the homeowner was given the equipment and materials necessary to do the job themselves. It took between 6-8 person hours to complete each home. It also took considerable time to coordinate the volunteers and to contact and set up appointments with homeowners. The response from volunteers and from those who had their homes winterized was very favourable.

The **Public Education Committee** trained volunteers to complete government heats rebate program forms as well as the Antigonish Emergency Fuel Fund forms and volunteers completed forms for people attending flu clinics. The Committee also organized a *Welcoming Warmth Event* where people were invited to a free breakfast and to find out more about the Antigonish Emergency Fuel Fund, government heat rebate programs, and tips for winterizing their homes. A number of blankets were made available to those who needed them.

1.6 Housing Initiative for Youth in Antigonish (HIYA)

AWRC Representative: Lucille Harper

Representatives of community organizations that provide services to youth and members of the community concerned with youth homelessness formed HIYA in 2007 to try to address the need for supportive housing for youth in Antigonish with no place to live. HIYA developed a proposal for a supportive housing facility and submitted it to the Eastern Region Child and Youth Network.

Over the 2008 summer, Beth MacPherson, AWRC Social Research Assistant summer student, collected data on the extent of youth homelessness in the Antigonish and Guysborough area to support the HIYA proposal for supportive housing for youth in Antigonish.

Although HIYA continued to look for a way to move forward our proposal for supportive housing for youth who have no place to live, we were unable to do so. In November 2008 Arlene MacDonald, a member of the Pictou County Youth Homelessness Committee, provided us with information about the work they are doing to get their homelessness proposal funded. HIYA is concerned that people in Antigonish are not aware of the issues and identified the need to undertake a public awareness campaign in the new year. However, with other pressures facing HIYA members, and little hope of finding the required funding, HIYA became inactive in 2009.

1.7 Affordable Housing Network

AWRC Representative: Katherine Reed

The Affordable Housing Network was assembled by Father Syd Miffen in the summer of 2008 to bring together community and church groups and individuals to address the need for affordable housing. The Network identified a need for concrete evidence of lack of affordable housing in Antigonish. They decided to conduct a basic survey among organizations and agencies to find out how many households are expressing unmet housing need.

1.8 Antigonish Food Security Coalition

AWRC Representative: Lucille Harper

In February 2009 Voices Antigonish brought together organizations and individuals in the community who are concerned with food security to discuss the formation of a Food Security Coalition. The Coalition will support existing initiatives and undertake new ones. There is particular interest in starting and expanding community gardens with the hope of making more local food available to the community.

1.9 Bergengren Community Involvement Committee
AWRC Representative: Lucille Harper

The Bergengren Community Involvement Committee brings together representatives from the community to identify areas in which the Bergengren could support community social justice initiatives. The Bergengren is wanting to do more in and for the community. In June, the committee reviewed the *Humanity Loan Program* which provides low interest rate loans to families with incomes of less than \$25,000 and the Micro Credit pilot program which had been evaluated.

1.10 Antigonish Early Years Network
AWRC Representative: Lucille Harper

The Antigonish Early Years Network brings together community organizations working with children and/or parents of children ages 0 - 6 years. It provides a space to share information and learning that could benefit this age group. This year:

- Robert Wright, Director, Child and Youth Strategy, and Donna Deveau MacLeod, Child and Youth Strategy Regional Specialist, Department of Community Services, attended the June meeting of the Antigonish Early Years Network. They provided some background information about the Child and Youth Strategy and answered questions about projects currently approved for the Eastern Region and about the process for moving ideas forward to decision-makers.
- At the invitation of the Antigonish Early Childhood Intervention Program organizations that work with families attended a meeting organized to familiarize service providers with their *Parenting Journey Program*. The program was created to support parents with children 0 - 10 years of age whose families may be experiencing challenges and stresses that increase their vulnerability to dysfunction. The program will work with families to develop and achieve specific goals. The worker will do home-based visits. After the meeting, Maria Babin, the new Parenting Journey worker, dropped by the AWRC to learn about our services and programs.

1.11 Antigonish Guysborough and Strait Richmond Sub Committee for the Eastern Region Network for Children and Youth
AWRC Representative: Lucille Harper

In response to suggestions coming from at least two meetings that focussed on services and gaps in services for youth in the GASHA District, representatives from agencies and sectors who provide supports and services to children, youth and their families met to discuss and reconfirm

the need for a Sub Committee for the Eastern Region Network for Children and Youth. The sub-committee will provide a networking forum and would represent the concerns of those organizations providing services for children and youth in the GASHA and Strait Regional School Board districts. Such a network would potentially provide support for initiatives such as our Housing Initiative for Youth in Antigonish proposal. At the meeting Donna Deveau-MacLeod, Regional Specialist, Child and Youth Strategy Regional Specialist, presented the Nova Scotia Child and Youth Strategy. Unfortunately, at year end the sub-committee had yet to meet.

1.12 Welcoming Newcomers Network

AWRC Representative: Denise Faccini Bowman

The Welcoming Newcomers Network was organized to bring community organizations together to find ways to make Antigonish a more welcoming community for newcomers. Although the community was unable to sustain the Network, some activities over the year included the following:

- A presentation by Olivia Bornik of the Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association (MISA) focused on how to create a welcoming community for newcomers.

1.13 Antigonish Social Planning Council

AWRC representative: Lucille Harper, Wyanne Sandler

In November 2008, Bill Radford, St. FXU Extension Department, brought together a number of people from the community to talk about whether or not there is interest in developing a social planning council for Antigonish. The purpose of a Social Planning Council is to listen to concerns and ideas coming from the community, undertake research on social issues, develop tools and solutions on issues relevant to the community, and undertake social advocacy. People generally agreed such a council could be useful. However the Council did not get underway.

2. Provincial and Atlantic Regional Level

2.1 Feminists for Just and Equitable Public Policy (FemJEPP)

AWRC Representative: Lucille Harper

FemJEPP members include feminist, community-based, front-line, equality-seeking, women's organizations as well as women working on public policy that improves the status of women. FemJEPP works in a cross-sectoral, multi-faceted and multi-layered approach within the public policy arena for the betterment of women's lives and the lives of their families.

This past year FemJEPP was engaged assessing the impact of the Department of Community Services' Employment Support Services (ESS) Program on supporting women on income assistance who want to return to further their education. At the February 2009 meeting, Lori Neary and Alan Cuvelier, Department of Community Services, did a presentation on the Employment Support Services program and answered questions about it.

Stephanie Hunter, FemJEPP Coordinator, represented FemJEPP on the Nova Scotia Poverty Reduction Strategy Working Group. The Working Group was tasked with developing recommendations for a provincial poverty reduction strategy. The Working Group's report was submitted to the Ministers of Community Services and Labour in June 2008. Much work remains to be done in order to address poverty in Nova Scotia. FemJEPP is considering developing a women's social justice report card that will assess government action on issues that impact women.

Lucille was unable to attend many FemJEPP meetings this past year as her work commitments in Antigonish often conflicted with FemJEPP meeting times.

2.2 Nova Scotia Sexual Assault Services Planning Group

AWRC Representative: Lucille Harper

In October 2005, a meeting was organized by the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre with Carolyn Bolivar-Getson, the Minister Responsible for the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the lack of resources in rural areas for sexual assault services including counselling, support and SANE programs. Subsequent to the meeting the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women provided the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre with a small grant to develop a sexual assault services needs assessment proposal. Additional funding was sought and received from the Law Foundation of Nova Scotia.

Pam Rubin was contracted as the researcher. She conducted a province wide needs assessment with community-based organizations, service providers and survivors. Her report, *Suffering in Silence: An Assessment of the Need for a Comprehensive Response to Sexual Assault in Nova Scotia*, was completed in October 2008. The report is very comprehensive and is recommending that sexual assault services based on the Halifax model be extended across the province. Specifically the recommendation for the Antigonish area is: "A sexual assault centre, functioning as one of the family of service centres administered by AWRC, should be recognized and funded to provide core sexual assault centre services comparable to those of the enhanced Avalon model." The report was presented to Carolyn Bolivar-Getson, the Minister Responsible for the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women Act.

In June 2008 Pam Rubin organized a conference call with Angie Conroy, Policy Officer, South Essex Rape and Incest Crisis Centre. Angie talked about the efforts and the success of rape crisis

centres in the UK putting sexual assault on the government agenda and in securing resources for their services.

2.3 Women's Innovative Justice Initiative (WIJI)

AWRC Representative: Lucille Harper

The Women's Innovative Justice Initiative is composed of organizations in the province concerned with advancing justice initiatives that will positively affect the lives of women and girls. This past year WIJI has been working to create a case for establishing specialized family violence and sexual assault courts in Nova Scotia. WIJI is recommending the introduction of methods for reducing the criminalization of women; recognition of dominant aggressor analyses; specialized approaches or courts for sexual violence as well as specialized justice approaches for partner violence; and that new violence against women initiatives should not increase women's vulnerability to apprehension of their children. WIJI is concerned with the devaluing of feminist therapy and other approaches in favour of gendering violence and control in relationships.

WIJI activities included the following:

- Pam Rubin as the WIJI researcher presented comments to the Nova Scotia Law Amendments Committee reviewing Bill 81 calling for the establishment of a domestic violence prevention committee.
- In October 2008 Becky Atkinson, researcher for the Family Legal Information Project for Abused Women, presented an overview of the work she has been doing. She has prepared an extensive resource, *Safely On Your Way: Child Custody and Access Information for Women Leaving Abusive Relationships and Their Service Providers*, for distribution to women facing custody and access issues and for the organizations that work with them.
- Pam Rubin, the primary researcher, organized and held focus group meetings with people working in the justice system to review the research and to talk about the need for specialized justice system response mechanisms. In response to interest being expressed by some academics and some personnel at the Department of Justice in opening restorative justice options for adult offenders, WIJI has continued to take a position opposing opening restorative justice to adult offenders in cases of sexual assault and intimate partner abuse.

2.4 Community Coalition to End Poverty in Nova Scotia

AWRC Representative: Katherine Reed

The Community Coalition to End Poverty in Nova Scotia is made up of community-based organizations from across the province that are concerned with and are working towards ending poverty. The group focuses on raising awareness about poverty as well as influencing public policy.

To avoid confusion with the Provincial Poverty Reduction Strategy Working Group, the community-based Poverty Reduction Strategy Coalition changed its name in June 2008 to the Community Coalition to End Poverty in Nova Scotia. This year the Coalition has been reaching out across the province and informing people about their Poverty Reduction Strategy Framework. They continue to monitor and to speak out about the government's poverty reduction strategy and pressed the new Minister of Community Services, Chris d'Entremont, to take immediate action to implement the strategy.

Activities for the year included:

- developing a newspaper ad to be taken up by local community groups and run in local newspapers. It will make the case that poverty is costing the province a lot of money and the way to fix this problem is by our government developing and implementing a poverty reduction strategy. The ad will urge readers to contact their MLAs and push for action on this.
- sending a letter to the Minister of Labour and Environment and to the Minister of Community Services calling for a response to the Report of the Poverty Reduction Working Group (PRWG). The Coalition hoped that the government's response would be a solid commitment to immediately develop and implement a poverty reduction strategy that would be in accordance with the PRWG Report recommendations.
- presenting the CCEP's PowerPoint presentation "**A Framework for a Poverty Reduction Strategy**" to a public gathering hosted by the Sisters of St. Martha's Social Justice Committee. It was well-attended by the congregation and there were a few community members as well – most of them quite prominent in local efforts to alleviate poverty.
- supporting the Halifax Peninsula Community Health Board's campaign and distributing their pamphlet with a tear-off section, that urges the Premier of NS to "give immediate attention to the Report from the Poverty Reduction Strategy Working Group...[by including] the implementation of the recommendations of the Bill 94 Working Group in all 2009 - 2010 budget considerations and preparation".
- planning a provincial forum for the spring of 2009. The purpose will be to discuss how to continue pressing for a provincial government response and how to monitor and evaluate the response.

WOMEN'S CENTRES CONNECT!

AWRC Representative: Lucille Harper

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 past year Connect continued to push for provincial government action on poverty reduction, and for adequate salaries for women's centre staff and contributed to the Feminist Alliance for International Action's efforts to compel federal government action on compliance with the recommendations from the United Nations Committee on the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination against Women,. Peggy Mahon was contracted to undertake several pieces of work for Connect.

Our activities this year included the following actions and activities:

- Dr. Bev Leipert held a focus group in April 2008 with Connect members as part of her research about how rural women access women's organizations and why and how cutbacks to rural women's organizations impact the health and empowerment of women in community.
- We developed a position paper, *Women and Poverty: The Need for a Woman Positive Public Policy Agenda*, in preparation for meeting with the government Poverty Reduction Strategy Working Group in May 2008. It contained a number of key recommendations for reducing the poverty experienced by women and their families. Peggy Mahon wrote the paper for Connect and Louise Smith MacDonald, Every Women's Centre, presented it to the Poverty Reduction Strategy Working Group. In September 2008 we formulated a response to the report of the Poverty Reduction Working Group and sent a letter to the Ministers responsible for the Group, the Ministers of Community Services and Labour. In the letter we congratulated the Working Group for developing a solid set of recommendations and, in turn, we recommended that they apply an inter-sectional, gender analysis to the recommendations, that they ensure that the poverty of individuals without dependents is addressed equally with those who have dependent children, and that the recommendations be implemented according to the principle that no resident of Nova Scotia should be living below the low income cut-off (LICO) rate set for their community.
- We held a Connect Assembly, June 6-8, 2008, with staff and board members from the eight women's centres. Together we reviewed the work Connect is doing to address women's poverty and the Connect *Women and Poverty* position paper; discussed the work of the provincial committees and initiatives with which Connect is involved; and developed priority areas for Connect's work over the next three years. We agreed to focus on:
 1. Improving supports to Women's Centres
 2. Sustainability for Women's Centres
 3. Leadership & social change

4. Poverty elimination
 5. Sexual assault response services
- We brought together women's groups in order to formulate topic areas for a Nova Scotia submission to the NGO response document that FAFIA (Feminist Alliance for International Action) is submitting to the UN Committee on the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Peggy Mahon agreed to take submissions from NS women's organizations and to put together a NS response. The women gathered agreed that over the next two years it would be good to do a comprehensive feminist report card on the efforts of the provincial government to address women's equality.
 - Joanne Marriott Thorne, Director of Maintenance Enforcement for Nova Scotia, consulted in November 2008 with Connect about proposed changes to the Maintenance Enforcement Act. Changes would include making program enrollment voluntary on the part of the recipient rather than automatic at the time maintenance is determined by the court. Connect felt the changes would not advantage women, especially those leaving abusive relationships. We subsequently sent a letter to Ms. Marriott Thorne, copied to the Minister of Justice and the Deputy Minister stating our concerns and recommending the program not be changed from automatic enrollment.
 - Because women's centres were concerned about the potential for cuts to women's services in the 2009 spring budget and because the province had yet to address inadequate staff salaries, we developed an action plan for strengthening women's centres and for pressing for increased salaries. We discussed in some detail the current context in which much of the provincial focus is on services for children and youth, as well as current vulnerabilities and opportunities. We agreed to take our concerns to each of the party caucuses and to meet with the MLAs in our areas. Over the winter of 2008-2009 Peggy Mahon facilitated our process and put together a briefing note that we will use in meetings with the caucuses and with our MLAs. In our meetings we informed our MLAs about the work of our centres, current issues and pressures facing the women we serve and our centres. We provided information about the challenges of attracting and retaining staff when we are not able to offer competitive salaries and asked for their support for increased salaries for women's centre staff.
 - In March 2009 Connect met with four members of the NDP Caucus to inform them about the work of our centres and the current pressures we are facing. We asked that they make "support for women's services and fair wages for women" a part of their articulated party platform in the next election. We met with the Progressive Conservative Caucus and the Liberal Caucus in April 2009. All were supportive of our work. However, in a pre-budget press release, the Premier stated that there would be no increase in funding for women's centres and transition houses in the spring budget.

- Connect participated on several provincial committees – the Women’s Innovative Justice Initiative, the Nova Scotia Sexual Assault Services Planning Group, the Community Coalition to End Poverty, and the Domestic Violence Prevention Committee.

Domestic Violence Prevention Committee

Connect Representative: Lucille Harper

The Domestic Violence Prevention Committee (DVPC) appointed by Cecil Clarke, Minister of Justice, and Judy Streach, Minister of Community Services, began meeting in June 2008. The Committee is tasked with bringing forward “recommendations to the Deputy Ministers’ Leadership committee regarding the development of a Domestic Violence Prevention Strategy for the Province”. The recommendations are to address prevention, public education, victim-support services, treatment programs for abusers as well as legislative frameworks and appropriate progress measures and indicators. The time line for delivering the recommendations is June 30, 2009.

The Committee includes representatives from the Departments of Justice, Education, Community Services, Health, Health Promotion and Protection, the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women, the Office of Aboriginal Affairs, Public Prosecution Services, policing services, IWK Health Centre, women’s shelters, second stage housing, the Transition House Association of Nova Scotia, Women’s Centres Connect, men’s intervention programs, Family Healing Centres, and the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre.

At the first meeting, the community organizations represented on the Committee brought six items to the table for the consideration of Ministers Clarke and Streach. All of our requests were denied. This meant that (1) sexual violence would not be included in the title of the committee; (2) no other organizations would be added to the committee; (3) there would be no resources other than travel provided to organizations for doing the work; (4) a feminist philosophy and analysis would not be made explicit. There was no response as to whether or not the Ministers would support legislative status for the Committee.

Over the year the work of the Domestic Violence Prevention Committee included:

- developing guidelines for the work of the committee,
- defining domestic violence and other forms of related violence,
- creating a common vision and a common understanding of the issue,
- meetings with key informants from equity groups to take into account their interests, concerns and ideas for solutions,
- recommendations for a public education strategy and a prevention strategy,
- recommendations for services for victims.

The work will continue through the spring of 2009 with a report presented to the Deputy Ministers’ Committee by June 20, 2009.

ANTIGONISH WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTRE

CORE PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS

2008-2009

AWRC Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) PROGRAM

Program Coordinator: Angela Fougere

The SANE Program is a community based program sponsored by the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and delivered in partnership with the Guysborough Antigonish Strait Health Authority (GASHA) and Student Services, St. Francis Xavier University (St. FX).

The Avalon Sexual Assault Centre SANE program model was chosen as the service delivery model by the Antigonish SANE Program Partnership as the model to most effectively provide the essential services required to address the short term and longer term needs of sexual assault victims in the GASHA district. In this model, specially trained registered nurses (sexual assault nurse examiners) provide immediate, on-call emergency care at three sites in Antigonish and Richmond Counties. The Antigonish Women's Resource Centre (AWRC) is responsible for the administration and coordination of the program.

The SANE program is a "client centred" care model, where the victim/survivor directs all aspects of her/his care from start to finish. The victim/survivor is given medical and legal options for treatment, as well as follow-up options. Services are provided in a safe, supportive, non-judgmental and confidential environment to females and males who are 13 years and older. The three sites that are available for victims/survivors to be treated are Lindsay's Health Centre for Women, St. Martha's Regional Hospital and the Strait Richmond Hospital.

The SANE Program provides many specialized services to sexual assault victims/survivors. We provide emergency response, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to the emergency departments of the St. Martha's Regional Hospital and Strait Regional Hospital, and through Lindsay's Health Centre for Women, supportive follow-up care for victims/survivors, expert testimony in a court of law and storage of forensic evidence for up to six months. Along with overseeing the provision of program services, the Coordinator is responsible for the professional development of the SANEs and community education about the program.

The SANE Program is a member of the Antigonish Sexual Assault Response Team (ASART). ASART meets quarterly for the purposes of working towards improving responses to sexual assault in our community and providing better services for survivors. ASART members are key supports for the work of the SANE Program.

AWRC SANE Program Usage

The SANE Program provided services for 22 victims/survivors in 2008-2009. Twenty-one (21) of these individuals were female with one male obtaining service. The large majority of clients were between the ages of 17-25, with the assault usually taking place on the weekends. The busiest months for Program usage were April, September, and October 2008. The majority of survivors accessed the service through the emergency departments or RCMP, although some have used the toll free line directly. In most of the cases the perpetrator was known to the

survivor, even if only minimally. Many of the survivors told us that they were very appreciative that the services were available, professional and confidential. We are aware that many more sexual assaults are taking place in our area but they are not being reported. Fear and social stigma continue to keep people who have experienced sexual violence from coming forward. An increased effort will be made to inform the general public and local agencies about the SANE program and how to access it. We will continue to work with community partners to improve relationships and communication and will work to continue to improve our services.

AWRC SANE Program Staff Training and Support

Angela Fougere was hired and started work as the new AWRC SANE Program Coordinator on May 12, 2008.

In order to cover the 24/7 on call service provision to victims of sexual assault, a full roster of 13 - 15 SANEs is required. To bring our roster to 15 nurses, we hired three new nurses in August 2008. They were trained by Susan Wilson, Avalon Sexual Assault Centre SANE Program Coordinator. They received 40 hours of training and joined the on-call roster in October 2008.

The SANEs participate in continuous learning through monthly training sessions and through specialized training opportunities. This past year the SANES received additional education in forensic photography, cultural sensitivity for First Nations Communities, simulated patients, the role of support workers, quizzes on forensic/sexual assault topics, and examination kit reviews. Continuous education is important for the nurses to stay connected to their role and to be able to respond to sexual assault cases with the appropriate knowledge and analysis so to provide the best care possible. The SANEs also received some training in "Well Woman" assessment. This training is not yet complete.

The SANE Program Coordinator along with three SANEs attended the International Association of Forensic Nursing conference held in Texas in September 2008. It was a wonderful opportunity to network with others across Canada and the US to see how our Program compared to others, what we could learn from them and how they could learn from us. We came away with new knowledge around forensic examinations, best practices, the court process and how sexual assault is perceived in different communities and cultures.

The SANE Program Coordinator along with three SANEs attended the *Hypersexualization of Women and Girls* conference in March 2009. Through this we learned the importance of education for youth. They are learning from the media, the pornography industry and society how to be sexual, but are not learning enough about healthy sexuality. This increases their risk for sexual assault.

Working with St. Francis Xavier University

The SANE Program Coordinator focussed on working with staff at StFXU to establish a program presence on campus and to make the program more widely known and available to students. To this end she took the following steps:

- To increase awareness and make the SANE Program easily identifiable, a simple logo was created. This, along with the logo for the AWRC, is something that everyone, especially the student population, can easily identify. This logo is now put on all SANE information that is distributed to the student population. We have also updated the pamphlets and bookmarks with the logo.
- Working relationships were formed with Joe MacDonald, Dean of Students, and Angela Marshall, Director of Health and Counselling Centre, who both welcomed the Program and see it as a necessary service for the students. The Program was given a location in the Health and Counselling Centre for a half day per week and the SANE Program Coordinator was on campus weekly from November 2008 until classes finished in May 2009. She will be available to students on campus again in September 2009. This has enabled a broader group of students to have access to sexual assault information without having to leave campus.
- Education on the SANE Program at St.FX was provided to residence staff, Campus Police, security staff and The Inn bar staff. This was done in late August as part of regular orientation training. The SANE Program Coordinator also provided education sessions to some residences and classes. Our toll free number has also been placed on the St.FX website on the emergency contact list.
- A number of students from St.FX have been placed with the program as part of their course requirements. Fourth year nursing students have been assigned to work with the SANE Program one day per week for 5 week rotations. Classes of third year nursing students have come to the AWRC to learn about the services of the Women's Centre and the SANE Program. Service Learning students (two groups of two) have worked with the SANE Program and created a brochure for Drug Facilitated Sexual Assault and a flip chart for nurses regarding potential drugs used and signs and symptoms of these drugs.

Community Education

Information about the SANE program is also located throughout the community in such places as doctors' offices, Youth Health Centres, Public Health Services, Kids First, Leaside Transition House, Port Hawkesbury, and the St. FX Health and Counselling Centre. Education sessions about sexual assault and about the AWRC SANE Program were provided to the community through presentations provided to high schools, the Nova Scotia Community College and community and government organizations. Specifically, SANE Program presentations were provided to:

- students and teachers at the Dr. John Hugh Gillis Regional High School in Antigonish, St. Mary's Academy in Sherbrooke, and the Chedabucto Academy in Guysborough;
- students and staff at the Nova Scotia Community College.

- the Nova Scotia Emergency Nurses Association. This led to many inquiries as to how others could start up SANE programs in their own communities.

AWRC SANE Program Plans and Accomplishments

The SANE program is becoming increasingly well known throughout the GASHA District. Service providers are pleased to know they have a place to refer survivors and they have expressed enthusiasm and strong support for the program.

After learning “the ropes” one of the first objectives for the new SANE Program Coordinator this past year was to make it easier for survivors to access the Program. Accessibility to the program had been limited to calling or contacting the emergency departments of St. Martha’s Hospital, Strait Richmond Hospital, the AWRC or the RCMP. On August 1, 2008 a toll free number was established to enable anyone to have direct access to the services. This eliminated the need to contact numerous people before speaking to a nurse. Updates to policies and procedures, and inservicing to ER staff concerning these changes was initiated at that time.

In 2009-2010 we plan to continue to raise awareness and expand services. Plans are currently underway to establish a SANE examination site at the Guysborough Memorial Hospital for the summer of 2009 and at the St.FX Health and Counselling Centre for September 2009. We are discussing with the Pictou County sexual assault response committee the possibility of responding to calls at the Aberdeen Hospital in New Glasgow beginning in the fall of 2009.

For 2009-2010, the Coordinator has identified ways to improve the SANE Program. This includes the following:

- More time will be spent in the school system providing education to the students and schools will be contacted earlier in the school year.
- A continued community awareness campaign will focus on St.FX where we will continue to build on established relationships and create new ones. The half day per week at St. FX will be used strategically to reach out to more students and to increase awareness about consent, sexual assault and the SANE program.
- Increasing awareness in the First Nations Communities is also a goal. Efforts will be made to work with the health teams already established in those communities to provide care and service there.
- An evaluation tool will be developed to allow us to better evaluate SANE Program services.

This year has been exciting and busy for the SANE Program. We are proud of the services we provide and look forward to expanding to new areas. We are painfully aware of the amount of sexual violence that exists in our community, and are thankful that we are able to provide services to those who are in need.

Respectfully submitted,
Angela Fougere
SANE Program Coordinator

Justice Matters for Women: Rural Outreach in Antigonish and Guysborough Counties

Funded by: The Law Foundation of Nova Scotia

Outreach Worker: Mica Francis

The Justice Matters for Women Program continues to extend rural outreach in the form of law-related information, advocacy and support services to women and adolescent girls throughout Antigonish and Guysborough Counties. The following report is a review of the April 1, 2008 to March 31, 2009 program year and will describe the programs' objectives, structure and usage, the primary issues and challenges, and the upcoming activities of the program.

Program Objectives

The objectives of the Justice Matters for Women program are listed as follows:

1. To extend the advocacy and support services of the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre (AWRC) within Antigonish and Guysborough Counties by providing law-related information resources and one-to-one support for women and adolescent girls.

This is accomplished by continuing to provide Outreach services on a weekly basis in the communities of Canso, Sherbrooke and Guysborough; hiring and familiarizing the new Outreach Worker with AWRC policies and procedures; providing specific training for the Outreach Worker as required for successful completion of the job; identifying and gathering legal information resources; providing one-to-one support sessions for women and adolescent girls; and evaluating the full program.

2. To provide law-related information resources and one-to-one support for women and adolescent girls one day per week each in Canso, Guysborough and Sherbrooke.

This is accomplished by maintaining Outreach offices in each community and community schools; meeting with agencies and professionals in each community to familiarize them with the program and the new Outreach Worker; providing one-to-one support sessions for women and adolescent girls; providing law related workshops and/or presentations to women in each community; and evaluating the program.

3. To provide information resources to community organizations, agencies, and schools in each community in order to help them better address the needs of the women and adolescent girls with whom they work.

This is accomplished by contacting community organizations, agencies, and schools in each community to determine law-related information needs of organizations and clients, and assessing the need for specific law related workshops and/or programs in each community.

4. To extend the Justice Matters for Women Program and provide services to the community of Mulgrave.

Due to staffing changes and an increased need for direct services and support for women and adolescent girls in the original three communities of Canso, Guysborough and Sherbrooke it was decided that the Justice Matters for Women Outreach Program would not be able to begin offering services in Mulgrave at this time.

Program Structure

The Justice Matters for Women Program is offered to women and adolescent girls one day per week each in Canso, Guysborough and Sherbrooke as follows:

- **Canso** – every Monday morning in the Eastern Communities Youth Association Office in Canso Academy and every Monday afternoon in the Career and Job Counselling Centre.
- **Sherbrooke** – every Tuesday morning in the Healthy Active Lifestyles Team's office in St. Mary's Academy and every Tuesday afternoon in St. Mary's Memorial Hospital.
- **Guysborough** – every Wednesday in the old Provincial Building, 136 Church St. and at the Youth Health Centre located in Guysborough Academy.

In addition to providing direct service support and advocacy to 144 women and offering the Inspire program in each of the community schools to a total of 41 grade 8 girls, there were also law-related workshops and presentations organized in each community throughout the April 2008-March 2009 program year. Topics included legal issues such as wills and estates, estates and probate, power of attorney, and the legalities of common-law relationships.

A new Outreach Worker was hired in October 2008. Flyers, brochures, and business cards with the updated information for the Outreach Program were distributed in each of the three communities. Program information was also disseminated through direct visits with various community organizations, community notices, community and school newsletters and church bulletins. Information about the Outreach Program is also listed weekly in the two local newspapers. Current and updated resources and information on legal and other issues were gathered, compiled and made available to women in each community site.

In order to most effectively and holistically provide advocacy and support services to women across Guysborough county, collaboration and relationship-building with other service providers and community members is crucial. The Outreach Worker has participated in the following initiatives and committees in an effort to reach as many women and adolescent girls as possible:

- The Outreach Worker is a member of the Guysborough County Inter-Agency Committee on Family Violence.
- The Outreach Worker is a member of Healthy Active Lifestyles Team at St. Mary's Academy.

- The Outreach Worker sits on the Board of the Antigonish/Guysborough Black Development Association's MAGY (Mobilizing Antigonish/Guysborough Youth) Youth Engagement Project.
- In December 2008, the Outreach Worker organized a legal workshop on wills and estates with Sherbrooke Lawyer Carole Gartside.
- In March 2009, the Outreach Worker organized a series of workshops on wills and estates and the legalities of common law relationships with Lawyers Louise Campbell, Carole Gartside, and Meghan MacIntosh in Canso, Guysborough, Sunnyville, Sherbrooke, and Antigonish.
- Working in partnership with the Guysborough County Adult Learning Association, the Outreach Worker has been able to offer problem-solving support, advocacy, and law-related information to women currently enrolled in their GAP Adult Learning Program.
- The Outreach Worker is in regular contact with the Public Health Nurses from each community maintaining collaboration for the Inspire Program.
- The Outreach Worker has met with the Employment Support and Income Assistance caseworkers at the Department of Community Services Guysborough Office resulting in enhanced communication, understanding, and entitled benefits for women recipients accessing the Outreach Program. On occasion caseworkers will refer a client to the program as well.
- The Outreach Worker has made connections with the RCMP detachments in the communities resulting in several referrals.

Primary Issues

The priority issues in each community continue to be poverty, family violence, the legalities of various aspects of family law, harassment and bullying, awareness of individual rights and entitlements, child protection, housing, isolation and transportation issues, end-of-life issues (such as wills and estates and power of attorney), discrimination, and navigating the court system (which includes support with advocacy and accompaniment). The Outreach Worker continues to assess the needs of each community, through discussions with community organizations and community members, and organize legal workshops/information sessions accordingly. Although the main requests for legal workshops continue to be end-of-life issues, other areas of interest include telephone and internet fraud, property law, and the legalities around separation and divorce.

The administrators and staff of the high schools in each of the communities have continued to be immensely supportive of the Outreach Program. All three community schools ensure and prioritize regular space and time to connect with adolescent girls who are at risk and require law-

related support. A number of adolescent girls have been referred to the program by school administration and/or staff, some by friends and/or family members, a few have self-referred, and several have sought support from the Outreach Worker after having learned about individual rights and other issues through the Inspire Program. During the summer months, the Outreach Worker made contact with each of the schools, all of which remain very supportive and appreciative of the program and the services provided to adolescent girls.

Program Usage

Referrals to the program have steadily increased, as well as requests for legal workshops and information sessions. From April 1 2008 to March 31, 2009 the Justice Matters for Women Program has provided information and support to 144 women and adolescent girls, this includes the Inspire Program. The central issues addressed during these contacts are as follows:

- **Canso** – spousal and family abuse, Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA) support and advocacy, custody and access, separation and divorce, maintenance and enforcement, family law issues, Small Claims Court accompaniment and advocacy, advocacy with Legal Aid, mental health, addictions, grief and loss, poverty, human rights, addictions, sexual assault/violence, and sexual orientation.
- **Sherbrooke** – harassment and discrimination, sexual harassment and assault, spousal abuse, mental health, criminal law issues, Human Resources and Development Canada advocacy, ESIA support and advocacy, housing advocacy, poverty, wills and estates law, addictions, disabilities and physical health issues, and literacy support.
- **Guysborough** – housing advocacy, ESIA support and advocacy, poverty, human rights law, civil law, wills and estates law, custody and access, child protection advocacy, family law, addictions, and separation and divorce.

Justice Matters for Women Service Delivery Statistics April 1, 2008- March 31, 2009

Month	Individual Women	Information and Support Sessions
April	52	171
May	39	123
June	20	64
July	11	60
August	11	56
September	18	153
October	11	13
November	19	44
December	48	88
January	58	199
February	49	131
March	47	92
Total	144	1194

The gravity of the vast array of issues addressed and the increased number of referrals and contacts strongly indicate the tremendous need for such a program in Antigonish and Guysborough Counties. Much of the work conducted by the Outreach Worker supports the assertion of community members that women in these communities are in need of advocacy and support services, with a particular focus on law-related information and resources that inform women about their rights and entitlements. As an illustration of this, with the support of the Outreach Program, women in these communities have successfully appealed decisions of Employment Support and Income Assistance and gained benefits to which they were entitled but not receiving; have made successful complaints to human rights; have reported instances of violence and sexual abuse; have received resources and information related to their rights; have been supported in filling out forms and interpreting legal documents; have attended court hearings and have had their rights upheld; and have made contact with other community agencies from which they can receive support.

In addition to providing direct support services, the Justice Matters for Women Program has also offered workshops and programming to women in Antigonish and Guysborough Counties. In response to community-identified need, eight (8) legal workshops facilitated by local lawyers were offered in five communities throughout the 2008-2009 program year. A total of ninety-two (92) individuals attended these workshops:

- **Canso** – Lawyer Louise Campbell facilitated two legal workshops, one on the legalities of Common Law Relationships and another on End of Life Issues (Wills and Estates)
- **Guysborough** – Louise Campbell facilitated a legal workshop on the Legalities of Common Law Relationships
- **Sunnyville** – Louise Campbell facilitated a legal workshop on End of Life Issues (Wills and Estates)
- **Sherbrooke** – Lawyer Carole Gartside facilitated a legal workshop on End of Life Issues (Wills and Estates)
- **Antigonish** – Lawyer Meghan MacIntosh facilitated two legal workshops, one on the legalities of Common Law Relationships and another on End of Life Issues (Wills and Estates)

Due largely to the support of community agencies like the Antigonish Guysborough Black Development Association, the Outreach Program continues to establish positive connections with women from the Sunnyville community, a small, under-serviced African Nova Scotian community outside Guysborough. The issues that the Outreach Worker has been addressing in the community are law-related and the women with whom she has been working have had no previous recourse to legal support or information. As mentioned above the Outreach Worker, in collaboration with Lawyer Louise Campbell, presented a legal workshop on wills and estates in Sunnyville during the month of March 2009. Community members in attendance reported that the workshops are very helpful and are greatly appreciated.

Program Challenges and Response to Challenges

Guysborough County is the largest and most sparsely populated county in Nova Scotia. Employment opportunities are limited and often seasonal. As a result, unemployment is high in the area and the average income is low. It had been challenging difficult to find safe, anonymous, central, and appropriate sites out of which to operate the Outreach Program. Even though the program is offered in three communities throughout the county, women continue to have difficulty accessing services due to transportation challenges, disabilities, childcare issues, and geographical and social isolation. In response to these challenges the Outreach Worker maintains flexible working hours and continues to make home visits when possible and appropriate.

Given the rural nature of the area served, it continues to be difficult to find organizations willing to offer workshops and training in Guysborough County. Similar to previous program years many of the agencies contacted would not agree to travel to the area without a guarantee of at least 25 participants, numbers that cannot be guaranteed in such a widely spread and sparsely populated area. Additionally, it should be noted that community development organizations' programs (i.e. literacy, upgrading skills, and training programs) are often offered in one location in the county for residents of the entire county, however due to the lack of transportation and long travelling distances (up to 100km one way) many women who are accepted into these programs simply cannot participate.

It is critical that the Outreach Program secure long term funding in order to continue to serve the women and adolescent girls in Guysborough County. Women and adolescent girls need to be able to trust that they can build a relationship with the Outreach Worker without fear that the support will disappear within a short time. Also, it is essential that the Outreach Worker continues to organize and participate in community events in order to familiarize the communities with the worker and the program. The Outreach Worker continues to be involved with other community groups who are advocating and mobilizing for some type of public transportation for people living in rural areas. With respect to legal workshops and information sessions, lawyers Louise Campbell (Guysborough practice) and Carole Gartside (Sherbrooke practice) continue to voluntarily facilitate workshops throughout Guysborough County on various legal issues, and Antigonish based lawyer Meghan MacIntosh has also offered legal workshops in the Antigonish area.

Respectfully submitted by
Mica Francis, Outreach Worker

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS FOR YOUTH PROGRAM

Funded by: The Canadian Women's Foundation

Project Coordinator: Krista DeCoste

Introduction

The Healthy Relationships for Youth (HRY) Program is a school based violence prevention program which includes youth as peer educators in the classroom as well as in their schools. The HRY Program delivers a series of twelve cumulative sessions within the Grade 9 Health curriculum. The program is offered in all ten high schools in the Strait Regional School Board. It focuses on facilitating youth learning about developing and maintaining healthy relationships.

The HRY Program is based on the belief that sexism, racism and homophobia are forms of oppression which contribute to violence. Through enhancing awareness of the social context of their lives and providing skill development to promote healthy interpersonal communication, youth can make positive decisions about their own behaviour and reduce violence.

HRY Program Delivery

As a school based program, HRY programming follows the school calendar. The past twelve months represents the end of the second HRY program year for (April 2008 – August 2008) and the beginning of the third HRY program year (September 2008 – March 2009). During this third year of funding through the Canadian Women's Foundation, the HRY Program has continued in the ten schools of the Strait Regional School District and has expanded the number of PDR classes participating at J.H. Gillis Regional High from 20% to include all grade nine PDR students. This indicates the growing support the school has for the HRY Program. This year, 13 teachers, three community-based adult facilitators, and 75 youth facilitators delivered the program to a total of 585 students. As of March 31, 2009, four of ten schools had completed HRY Program delivery.

Three training days were held in September 2008. The teachers and community-based facilitators were trained on September 10 at the Mulgrave Professional Development Centre. Wynne Sandler co-facilitated the adult training component. Mainland youth facilitators were trained on September 24 at Chedabucto Place and Cape Breton youth facilitators were trained at Dalbrae Academy on September 25. The teachers and community facilitators also attended the youth training in order to build the relationships necessary to work well together.

The time commitment varies widely for the youth facilitators as the number of grade 9 classes in any given school ranges from one to six classes. Beyond the initial training day, the average number of hours a year required of a youth facilitator can be as few as 12 hours, and as many as 35 hours. A youth facilitator's role requires facilitating one or more of the 12 cumulative HRY sessions in one or more classes, individual preparation time, meetings with the PDR teacher, and seven monthly HRY Team meetings with the Co-ordinator.

HRY Program Changes, Presentations and Public Education Activities

Staff Changes: Kalysa Archibald left the position of HRY Program Co-ordinator and Krista DeCoste was hired to take over the position for the 2008/2009 school year beginning July 21, 2008.

Over the year, the HRY Program Coordinator was invited to make presentations about the HRY program and to facilitate education sessions. These included the following:

- eight bully prevention workshops to grades 7-9 for the *Stand Up Against Bullying Day – East Pictou Middle School*, January 30, 2009. Topics included developing, maintaining and respecting personal boundaries, defining violence, and identifying gender stereotyping and how this can result in violence. Mica Francis, AWRC Outreach Worker co-facilitated.
- a presentation in February 2009 about how the HRY Program uses peer education for violence prevention to Dr. Bosire Monari Mwebi's StFX Department of Education Health Promotion in Education class.
- a presentation on the HRY Program to the Guidance Counselors from high schools in the Strait Regional School Board district, March 6, 2009 at NSCC Strait Campus.

HRY Program Support

The HRY Program remains well supported by the students, principals and teachers of the ten high schools in which the program is delivered. It remains well supported by the Strait Regional School Board administration as well as by Ann Blackwood, Department of Education. When notice of a motion was put forward by a school board member for May 7, 2008, to ban AWRC programs from all schools in the Strait Regional School Board, parents, students, educators and members of the general public rallied to defend the program. The motion was defeated by the School Board.

HRY Program Evaluation

"*The Healthy Relationships for Youth Evaluation Report for 2007/2008*," was completed in July 2008. The report is a compilation of three evaluation groups: the grade 9 students, the youth facilitators and the adult facilitators who participated in the HRY program in 2007/8. The youth and adult facilitators acknowledged the facilitator training and support as strengths while offering recommendations for future training and support. All recommendations will be considered. Overall the evaluation report demonstrates the usefulness of the HRY Program to promote healthy relationships for youth.

- Of the 327 students surveyed, 82% rated the HRY Program as "good" to "very good".
- Over 90% of the students found the curriculum helpful and useful to varying degrees.
- 30% of the students surveyed reported that the HRY Program had created a positive change in their relationships, self-esteem, and school life.

Under the direction of Leslie Tutty, the external evaluator for Canadian Women's Foundation, East Antigonish Academy and Guysborough Academy administered surveys to their senior high population in June, 2008. The completed surveys were returned to Leslie Tutty.

As part of the internal evaluation, beginning in January 2009, student surveys were delivered to the schools to be administered to classes as they complete the HRY sessions. As of March 31, 2009, three sets of completed student surveys were collected.

HRY Program Funding

Funding for the HRY Program was provided primarily by the Canadian Women's Foundation. However, specific activities of the program were supported through other funding sources.

- The Canadian Women's Foundation extended funding to carry the program through until May 2010. New funding opportunities are being sought to continue program delivery.
- The Nova Scotia Department of Justice provided funding for a Youth Facilitator Orientation Day. It was held on June 25 and 26, 2008, and 21 youth were able to participate. This opportunity has enriched the HRY Program.
- The Strait Regional School Board covered half of the costs for the remaining media resources required to present the HRY Curriculum in all ten participating schools. Those media resources will stay with each school.
- The Department of Education provided financial support to cover expenses related to the school staff training which took place in September 2008.

HRY Program 2008-2009 Statistics for HRY Participation

Participating Schools	Number of Grade 9 PDR classes	Number of Grade 9 PDR Students
Dr. John Hugh Gillis Regional High School	6	184
East Antigonish Academy	2	39
St. Mary's Academy	1	13
Canso Academy	1	16
Guysborough Academy	2	37
CBHA - Cape Breton Highlands Academy	2	35
Inverness Academy	1	15
Dalbrae Academy	3	70
SAREC - Strait Area Recreation & Education Centre	4	80
Richmond Academy	6	96
Totals	28	585

Respectfully submitted by: Krista DeCoste, Program Co-ordinator

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS: A RURAL RESPONSE

Funded by the Women's Program Community Fund, Status of Women Canada

Antigonish Site Facilitator: Wyanne Sandler

Background

Violence Against Women and Girls: A Rural Response is a collaborative project of the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre, the Pictou County Women's Centre, and Every Woman's Centre in Sydney. It is a 24-month participatory action research project designed to assess and address issues of violence as experienced by women and girls living in under-served communities in rural Northeastern Nova Scotia. The project aims to explore the challenges facing girls and women in rural communities, and to work with them to develop and implement community education strategies, services, and supports that meet their needs. The Antigonish Women's Resource Centre is focusing on violence against adolescent girls and young women. Through this project the AWRC is working with girls in five diverse, rural communities in Antigonish and Guysborough counties to identify from their perspectives the forms of violence to which they feel vulnerable and their specific service and program needs. As well, the project is working with service providers, community leaders, and mentors to identify ways in which communities can reduce the vulnerability of girls to violence.

Project Advisory Group

An advisory group for the project was formed and met in August 2008. Nine (9) women attended the meeting. Subsequent meetings of the advisory group were planned, but were postponed due to weather and scheduling conflicts. Individual check-ins with members of the group did take place.

Focus Groups/Discussion Groups:

Focus groups took place in Antigonish, Guysborough, Sherbrooke, and Canso. A pilot group also took place in Antigonish. Each of these groups met at least twice, with forty-six (46) young women taking part. In addition, a focus group was conducted with twenty (20) young people from across Canada and Indonesia who were participating in a Canada World Youth exchange.

Lunch-and-learn sessions also took place in Antigonish and Guysborough, with twenty-four (24) young women taking part. At these sessions, girls were given information about the project and the opportunity to sign up to attend future events. They were also asked to identify what they liked about their community, what they didn't like, what services they knew about, and what services they would like to have.

In Paqtnkek, an on-going discussion group took place in lieu of a focus group. This was due, in part, to the particular importance of building a strong relationship with the girls and with the community. It was also a response to the younger age group that participated in the community. Although we did not focus specifically on violence, these ongoing groups did provide an opportunity for the site facilitator to develop a better understanding of the experience of growing up in Paqtnkek.

At the request of the girls who participated in the focus groups, on-going discussion groups also took place in Antigonish and Guysborough. Again, this allowed the facilitator to develop a more complex understanding of these communities.

Meetings/Networking with Service Providers:

The project has been discussed with and has received input from over 28 service providers in Antigonish and Guysborough counties. In-depth open-ended interviews were conducted with 17 of these, including representatives from Public Health, Kids First, the Antigonish Career Resource Centre, Addiction Services, Mental Health, the RCMP, the Strait Regional School Board, Eastern Communities Youth Association, Naomi Society, Youth Health Centres, Paqtnkek First Nation, and the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre.

Professional Development/Education

The project facilitator participated in a number of workshops and conferences over the year. These included a cultural sensitivity training at Paqtnkek, a workshop on youth engagement, the Native Women's Association of Canada's youth violence prevention toolkit training, the pan-canadian young feminists gathering, GASHA's cultural safety workshop, the AWRC's Hypersexualization of Women and Girls: Deepening our Analysis conference and the Looking Back, Thinking Ahead: Using Research to Improve Policy and Practice in Women's Health conference, sponsored by the Atlantic Centre for Excellence in Women's Health.

Research Products:

A literature review was completed and distributed. Due to the scarcity of studies focusing on rural girls' experiences of violence, the review looked at related themes in the literature. These included a number of issues related to girls' development, violence against and amongst girls, violence as experienced by rural women, and rural teenagers' experiences with violence.

A pamphlet on promising practices for violence prevention with rural girls was researched, written, and formatted. Lisa Garrett and Betsy MacDonald assisted with the writing, design, and formatting.

A preliminary research report was prepared with findings and analysis from the focus groups that have been completed to date. This report was distributed and presented at a workshop for service providers.

An issue-based resource directory for girls in Guysborough and Antigonish counties is in development. Additional funding for the resource directory has been received from the Department of Justice's Crime Prevention Initiative.

Workshops:

A three-hour workshop for service providers and people working with girls and young women was held on April 21, 2009. Thirty-eight (38) people attended the meeting, which focused on

presenting the results of the research and identifying promising practices. The feedback from the workshop was positive, and a number of the service providers in attendance have indicated a desire to continue working on implementing promising practices in their organizations.

Public Awareness and Presentations:

A press release was sent to the Casket and the Guysborough journal and an article about the project appeared in the Casket in August. Notices about the project have appeared in the St. Mary's municipal newsletter, the St. Mary's Academy newsletter, and the Guysborough Academy newsletter. I have made presentations about the project to the AWRC board of directors, a St. FX nursing class, and additional presentations are planned for the Guysborough and Antigonish Community Health Boards, and the AWRC Annual General Meeting. A poster and information sheet about the project was developed and distributed, as well as a website and a Facebook group.

Research Findings:

Both the methodology and the findings of the project were strongly shaped by the rural context. This emphasized the importance of recognizing how the context in which one lives, both physically and socially, may affect choices and vulnerability to violence. However, it is also important to consider how other elements of a girls' identity (including ethnicity, religion, class, ability, and sexual orientation) affect the experience of being rural. Girls who are perceived as "different" may face particular challenges in rural communities.

In identifying the causes of violence, the girls who participated in the project highlighted boredom, drinking and drug use, prejudice, learned behaviours and cyclical patterns of violence within families, the media, and the lack of places to go as some of the most important causes. These themes were echoed in terms of vulnerability, with a particular emphasis on drinking and drug use and the wide age ranges in social groups as problematic elements. In discussing their experiences of violence, girls' talked about rumours, gossiping and social exclusion in addition to physical violence. They also emphasized that relationship violence continues to be a problem, and that it does not receive enough attention in the school system where the focus has shifted to bullying. In terms of accessing services and supports, one of the major issues that came up was around confidentiality and the lack of outreach services. Youth health centres were identified as an important resource in communities where they existed, with consistency in hours and staffing being emphasized as a key element of their success or failure. The importance of programming for girls, resources and information around healthy sexuality, and support from the community were highlighted.

The solutions identified by the girls involved in the project are simple – they want something to do, a place to go, and someone to talk to. They need supportive adults in the community to help them achieve these things. Youth need to be meaningfully involved, without being expected to do it all themselves.

In summary, girls and young women in rural communities need:

- Inclusive gender-specific and co-ed programs that include young people in both design and delivery
- Accessible youth-friendly spaces in the community (ideally, this would be a youth centre or other designated room or building where youth are free to take part in organized and unorganized activities)
- To feel safe (no drugs, discrimination, or violence) without feeling like they are under surveillance
- Appropriate services and supports available in community which can be accessed confidentially and where there is a high level of consistency in service delivery

Successes:

We acknowledge that girls are the experts about their lives, and focused on allowing them to tell their stories in their own words. This has been a strength of the project and has made the findings more powerful and relevant. An unexpected outcome of this has been that in some of the communities the girls were so eager to have a space where they could talk about these issues and feel listened to that they wanted the groups to continue.

Another success of the project has been the level of interest and engagement from service providers. They have indicated a real desire for networking and learning opportunities, and have shown a commitment to implementing promising practices in their organizations.

Challenges:

One of the challenges of the project has been connecting with young women in racialized communities, particularly African Nova Scotian communities. It has also been a challenge connecting with young women in other marginalized groups, such as young women who are not in school and teen mothers. In order to access young women in rural communities, it was necessary to work through existing organizations and institutions where they are already gathering. However, those girls who are completely disengaged and isolated may not be connected with any of these groups. It is therefore necessary to find other ways to reach out to these individuals. In addition, for groups that have experienced discrimination it may take significant time or a liaison within the community in order to build up enough trust to discuss violence and its effects.

It has also been difficult to maintain contact with the girls who have participated in focus groups, who are often very busy with other activities. Although they often indicated a desire for follow-up meetings or a regular discussion group, scheduling and other commitments sometimes made it difficult for the same girls to attend consistently.

Weather and geography also proved challenging, with many meetings having to be cancelled over the winter months. This was particularly true for meetings of the advisory committee and the project partners.

Next Steps:

One of the major focuses over the next year will be on working with service providers to support the implementation of promising practices, and organizing the training and information opportunities that are necessary for that to happen. I will continue to reach out to communities and groups whose voices often go unheard to try to include their insights and perspectives in the research. I will also be taking part in community and regional initiatives that aim to meet some of the needs identified through the project. These needs include more and better information/education about youth sexual health, peer mentorship opportunities, and youth-friendly places to go and things to do in rural communities. Additional opportunities to raise awareness about the results of the research will be sought, including exploring creative ways to share the research findings (such as through theatre or the publication of a zine).

Respectfully submitted by Wyanne Sandler, Antigonish Site Facilitator

**STAFFING, FUNDING
AND CONCLUSION**

STAFFING

1. AWRC Staff

This past year the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre management and administrative staff included:

- Executive Director: Lucille Harper
- Bookkeeper: Jackie Jacques
- Financial Administrator: Christine Hanlon

Our direct services support staff included:

- Women's Support Workers : Amanda Workman, Denise Bowman, Isabel Gillis, Tiffany Hallett
- Outreach Worker: Melissa Arnott, Mica Francis
- Women's Services Coordinator: Vangie Babin

Our program and project staff included:

- Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) Program Coordinator: Marla Barton, Angela Fougere (May 2008)
- Healthy Relationships for Youth Program Coordinator: Kalysa Archibald, Krista DeCoste (June 2008)
- Violence against Women and Girls: A Rural Response Site Facilitator: Wyanne Sandler (May 2008)

As Executive Director, Lucille Harper was responsible for providing direction for the work of the centre, overseeing the administration, staff supervision, supervising projects, developing programming, organizing the development of grant proposals, liaising with government, working with Connect!, representing the AWRC on community, regional, provincial and national committees, planning AWRC direct mail fundraising campaigns, handling public relations, and presenting workshops as requested by community groups and organizations.

Our Women's Support Workers, Amanda Workman, Denise Faccini Bowman, Isabel Gillis, and Tiffany Hallett, provided information, support, advocacy and accompaniment to women and adolescent girls who came to the centre with concerns related to poverty, employment, housing, social assistance, sexual violence, custody and access, child protection, separation and divorce issues, and mental and physical well-being. They assisted with and co-facilitated the Therapy Groups for Survivors of Sexual Trauma and the Eating Issues groups, supervised student placements, represented the AWRC on local committees and at public consultations as required, recorded service delivery statistics, and participated in program planning.

Vangie Babin, our Women's Services Coordinator, provided essential office management and non-crisis support to women. Vangie was responsible for greeting women coming into the Centre, directing them to the person they needed to see, providing non-crisis support, answering

and directing phone calls, assisting with bookkeeping, payroll, statistical record-keeping, assisting with the supervision of volunteers and women in the Centre on work experience placements, and facilitating volunteer orientation sessions. As well, Vangie organized the Income Tax Program for Low-Income Women and their Families and facilitated the Creative Circle group.

Our Outreach Worker, Melissa Arnott and then Mica Francis, provided support services one day a week in each of the communities of Sherbrooke, Canso and Guysborough. As well she facilitated the Inspire Program and organized law-related workshops in those communities. Our outreach program, *Justice Matters for Women*, is funded through the Law Foundation of Nova Scotia.

Angela Fougere took over from Marla Barton as our SANE Program Coordinator. Angela is responsible for coordinating all aspects of the program, including the supervision of the 15 SANEs, examination site set-up, public education, and program promotion.

Krista DeCoste took over from Kalysa Archibald as our Healthy Relationships for Youth Program Coordinator. Krista coordinates the delivery of the program to grade 9 classes in all ten high schools in the Strait Regional School Board district. She provides training for the teachers and youth facilitators and provides support through monthly meetings at each school.

Wyanne Sandler is our site researcher for the Violence against Women's and Girls: A Rural Response project. Wyanne has been doing participatory action research with girls in five rural communities to find out how they experience violence and how they access support.

Christine Hanlon, our Financial Administrator, was responsible for maintaining the AWRC books and accounts, as well as preparing the financial reports for core operations and for AWRC projects. Each project requires its own system of accountability making Christine's job complex and intensive. Jackie Jacques did the bookkeeping entering most of the financial data.

Staff Turnover

There were several changes in staffing this past year.

- Denise Bowman's term of employment ended in August when Isabel Gillis returned from her study leave to her position as a Women's Support Worker. In December Isabel took a position with the StFX Counselling Centre. Tiffany Hallett took Isabel's place at the Women's Centre.
- When Melissa Arnott took a position as Schools Plus Coordinator with the Strait Regional School Board Mica Francis was hired as our new Outreach Worker.

Program Demands

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

Professional Development

Where funding permits staff are encouraged to take advantage of professional development opportunities. This past year staff attended the following staff development sessions.

- Vangie Babin attended web-site updating training sessions with James Smeaton;
- In November 2008, Isabel Gillis attended a two-day addictions training workshop entitled "Allied Training for Professionals" hosted by Addiction Services and sponsored by the Nova Scotia Gaming Foundation. The training included information on Motivational Interviewing as a form of addictions counselling, Addictions and the Teenage Brain, What's New in Prevention, Are You Asking the Right Questions? - Screening Tools and Brief Intervention, Common Threads-Working With Youth, and Prevention in Youth.
- In February 2009 Jackie Jacques attended an Excel Level 1 workshop and an Excel Level 2 workshop.
- In March 2009 Jackie Jacques participated in the income tax training session that was provided by Katie Markotich, Canada Revenue CVITP Coordinator.
- Amanda Workman attended an Action Retreat on Women's Problem Gambling hosted by the Nova Scotia Gaming Foundation.

AWRC Direct Services and Project Staff Planning Meetings

AWRC core and project 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. We used our June Staff Planning day to review AWRC programs and to plan for the fall. At our December Staff Planning Day we focussed on the services and programs we provide for adolescent girls, young women and youth. It was an opportunity to look at who are we currently serving; how has our work with youth been evolving; which parts of our work with girls/youth have been going well and in what ways; which parts of our work with girls/youth have not been going well and in what ways, whether there are gaps we can address/ should be addressing.

2. AWRC Summer Staff

The AWRC was able to hire three summer students. Their contributions were very much valued.

- Beth MacPherson, Canada Summer Jobs – Service Canada, did some background research and data analysis for the Housing Initiative for Youth in Antigonish. As well, she very

capably looked after the office management while the Women's Services Coordinator was on vacation.

- Anisa Loewen, Student Careers Skills Development Program – Office of Economic Development, formatted our annual report, updated our web site, revised our pamphlets and brochures, and helped organize our Open House.
- Clare Mulcahy, Millennium Scholarship summer student, identified and researched the contributions of women social activists to Antigonish.

3. Service Learning Students/Student Placements/Youth Program Placements

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

- Krista DeCoste completed a BSW student placement at the Women's Centre. She developed an evaluation tool for our counselling and LHCW services.
- Theresa Wallace, Human Service Program, NSCC did a one-week placement at the Centre.
- A participant from East Novability did a Job Shadowing placement at the Centre in October.
- Corinne O'Halloran, Nova Scotia Community College, Stellarton Campus, Human Services Program, completed two placements at the Women's Centre – one in November 2008 and one in April 2009.

Along with StFX student volunteers, we had the following StFX students doing service learning and course placements at the AWRC:

- Mallory Francis is doing a telephone survey on the amount of household income people are spending on heat. She will be working with Isabel Gillis.
- Alyssa Beddow, Sarah Brennan, and Kelly Cummings, psychology students, are creating pamphlets on the effects of date rape drugs. They will be working with Angela Fougere and the SANE Program.
- Carly Savoy is working with Krista DeCoste and the Healthy Relationships for Youth Program.
- Ashley Dungee and Ciara Lamoreau, nursing students, are doing a community placement with the SANE Program.

The AWRC hosted Elisa and Debbie Gordon, two Canada World Youth participants in the Canada and Indonesia program. While they were here they worked primarily with Wyanne Sandler and Krista Decoste on their respective projects and provided office and graphic design support for the Heat Poverty sessions. We were sorry to see them go. The Canad World Youth

group spent three months in Antigonish volunteering with local service organizations, living with local host families and learning about our community.

Lisa Garrett began an internship with the AWRC in March 2009. She will be working with us three days a week until the end of August. For the most part she will be working with Wyanne Sandler and Krista DeCoste on youth related projects and programs.

4. Volunteers

Volunteers remain an integral part of the AWRC. 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 AWRC 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, at the same time they are 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 (and one man) as well as a core group of enthusiastic and committed students who volunteered with the AWRC.

Volunteers helped with office support, fundraising, library maintenance and the preparation of income tax returns for low-income women and their families. They also helped facilitate programs, and served as board members and committee members. The volunteer contribution of the members of our Board of Directors is substantial and very much appreciated by staff and Centre users.

FUNDING

During the fiscal year 2008-2009, the AWRC received core program funding from the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services. From this budget, we contribute \$5,000 to Connect!, the provincial association of women's centres. Along with funding from GASHA and from the Law Foundation of Nova Scotia, we were able to cover our direct service work to women, including our outreach program. Our direct service work includes the provision of support counselling, information, court accompaniment, advocacy, referrals and programs as well as our community education and community development work. With funding from the Department of Health we were able to provide our Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program.

Both the provincial and federal governments provided funding for specific projects. While project funding enables the AWRC to undertake important pieces of work that contribute to the knowledge and well-being of the community, it does not support the core services of the Women's Centre.

AWRC FUNDRAISING EFFORTS

The AWRC needs to raise funds annually to cover programming costs associated with our adolescent programs, our sexual trauma survivors groups, our women's programs, the Sister Mary MacLeod Bursary and other AWRC costs. This year we undertook fundraising efforts in both the community and the business sectors. As well, we were the beneficiaries of several community fundraising endeavours.

- The community response to our 2008-2009 spring and fall direct mail campaigns clearly demonstrated sustained community support for the AWRC and our work. It brought us \$9,550. Our heartfelt thanks to all who so generously supported us.
- Mike Judson in cooperation with the Kinsmen undertook a Homelessness Awareness weekend through which he raised \$2,000. The Kinsmen donated the monies raised to the AWRC to support our poverty related work.
- StFX residences Chillis/Burke/TNT raised and donated \$1268.44 to the AWRC.

Over the years the AWRC has benefited from donations from labour as well as from the public and corporate sectors.

- For the past several years, the Canadian Auto Workers Union have provided consistent support for our anti-violence work and the anti-violence work of women's organizations across Canada. In recognition of International Women's Day, Heather Napier, National Representative for Canadian Auto Workers presented the AWRC with a cheque for \$2000.

- In the spring of 2008 we had the opportunity to expand our women's centre. In order to do this we turned to the community for help and were deeply touched by the overwhelmingly generous response. The community not only contributed \$38,130 to our campaign but fifteen women artists donated works that welcome women to the Centre and create warm, nurturing environment throughout our space.

COMMUNITY DONATIONS

We were sad this past year to lose on February 14, 2009 John Arther Murphy, a dear friend and long-time social justice activist and supporter of the women's centre. His family kindly and thoughtfully offered support to Lindsay's Health Centre for Women by designating it as a place where friends of John Arther could make memorial donations.

Each year individuals and community groups offer unsolicited donations to the AWRC. Donations of clothing, food, household items and such are passed on directly to women who access our services and programs. Financial donations are used to support our programs.

This past year individual community members donated food, books, videos, clothing, 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

The AWRC continues to provide much needed services and programs for women and adolescent girls in our community. In 2008-2009 we took on new initiatives and continued our work to address the issues that so negatively affect the lives of women and girls, and by extension, our community as a whole. By integrating the prevention and intervention aspects of our work we responded appropriately and effectively to the immediate needs of women in crisis, worked to address the underlying causes of the poverty, violence and health issues facing women, and delivered and promoted 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.

We expanded our physical space and made it more welcoming for women. We took our services and programs further out of the centre and into more communities. We established new relationships and worked hard to honour longstanding ones. Younger women are working with us and taking the lead in social justice initiatives. Our centre remains strong and vibrant and ready to continue working for broad social change.

We would like to acknowledge and thank the Department of Community Services for funding our direct services. We would also like to thank GASHA for supporting our direct service work and for partnering with us to provide Lindsay's Health Centre for Women. We would like to thank both GASHA and St. FX Student Services for partnering with us on the AWRC SANE program. Further, we would like to acknowledge and thank the Law Foundation of Nova Scotia for funding our outreach program, Justice Matters for Women; the Canadian Women's Foundation for funding our Healthy Relationships for Youth Program; and Status of Women Canada, for funding our Violence against Women and Girls project. We thank you for supporting us in making a difference in the lives of women and their families.

Thanks go to the 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 the 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.

