

Our Mission

The Antigonish Women's Resource Centre & Sexual Assault Services Association, is an independent, feminist, community-based organization. We provide information, support services and programs for women of all ages and backgrounds in an environment that is sensitive to women's needs. We recognize and address issues of concern to women and their families through community development, education and research. We work together with women in our community to create a just and equitable society.

**Cover art: *Soul Sisters*, by Anne Camozzi,
Report Formatted by Emily Gosse**

Antigonish Women's Resource Centre & Sexual Assault Services Association Annual Report 2009- 2010

A Message From the Executive Director:

The Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services Association (AWRC & SASA) is a well-used, friendly, supportive place for women and adolescent girls to find information, problem-solving support, and advocacy on the range of issues they face in their lives. It is a space where women come together to organize social action, plan events, sing, learn, laugh and share their daily challenges and successes. This past year the Women's Centre enjoyed a level of stability that allowed us to continue to provide our programs and services on which women have come to rely and to engage with our community in ways that better meet the needs of women, girls and youth.

More than 1,251 women and girls used our services in 2009-2010 and calls and visits to our Women's Centre totalled 11,138. Through Lindsay's Health Centre for Women our wonderful physician and nurse practitioner saw 676 women, an increase of 11% over last year. 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 new examination sites at the St. Francis Xavier University Health and Counselling Centre and the Aberdeen Hospital, New Glasgow, making it possible to provide sensitive care and skilled forensic examinations to survivors of sexual violence at five sites – three in Antigonish County, one in Richmond County and one in Pictou County. Through our Healthy Relationships for Youth program we trained classroom teachers and 85 senior high school students to deliver a series of healthy relationships sessions to 632 grade nine students in the ten high schools in the Strait Regional School Board.



Lucille Harper, Executive
Director of the Antigonish
Women's Resource Center and
Sexual Assault Services
Association

We worked collaboratively with organizations in our community as well as across the province. In partnership with the Pictou County Women's Centre and Every Woman's Centre, we completed our project, *Violence against Women and Girls: A Rural Response*. As the Antigonish Site we focussed on the experiences of girls growing up in rural communities – looking in particular at their perceptions of and experiences with violence and how they access support. We brought together service providers to reflect on the girls' experiences and together formed the Antigonish Youth Network. We organized a very successful provincial forum, *Girl Talk: Responding to Violence Against Women and Girls*. Over 140 girls, young women, service providers, educators, and community members come together to talk about the importance of finding ways to understand and to end the violence women and girls experience. Through the *Heat Poverty Initiative* we worked with members of our community to help 30 families living on low-incomes with basic home winterization and 30 households with emergency fuel bills. 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.

– Lucille Harper



Services to Women and Adolescent Girls

"Since coming to the Women's Resource Centre I am learning new coping strategies to help me deal with past abusive situations. The techniques being taught here are very useful in helping me to "re-find" the "all" of me and who I really am. The past can no longer harm me and I can learn to deal with many issues. I look forward to a happier, healthier future. Many thanks..."

The Women's Centre is guided in its work by women's experiences and knowledge. We recognize that women are experts on their own lives. Our role is to provide women with the information and support they need to make informed and healthy decisions for themselves and their families. Women and adolescent girls come to the Women's Centre for information, support, and advocacy for a broad range of issues and concerns.

Crisis Counselling and Problem-Solving Support

Women and girls come to the Women's Centre for many reasons. They may be struggling with concerns related to poverty; housing; sexual, physical and emotional violence; family breakdown; parenting; custody, access and maintenance enforcement; workplace and social relationships; access to education and training; and equity issues.

When a woman comes to the Women's Centre, we provide her with information as well as the short-term and ongoing problem-solving and emotional support she needs to make positive changes in her life. We assist her in assessing her situation, help her develop a plan of action to address her concerns, support her in carrying out her plan, advocate on her behalf, and when appropriate, refer her to other services she may need. Because our services are helpful and available to women when they need them, other agencies and institutions refer women and girls to the Women's Centre for support.



Women's
Support
Workers,
Amanda
Workman and
Nicole Rovers

Our Approach to Working with Women and Adolescent Girls

We believe:

- that all women and girls have the right to equal access, opportunity, and full and equal participation in society.
- that women and girls have the right to make informed decisions and to be treated with respect and human dignity.

We understand:

- that many of the problems faced by women and girls are determined by a range of inter-connecting social, economic and cultural factors.
- that these factors impact on women and girls in a gender-specific way, which must be understood, recognized and addressed.
- that helping women and girls strengthen their ability to lead healthy lives requires a combination of intervention, prevention and community development services.
- that we must work from a holistic perspective, which means we work with the 'whole' person, understand her issues to be inter-connected and address them as such.

We work:

- at an individual level, helping women and girls identify and work through their problems, by providing information, support, advocacy and referral.



Services to Women and Adolescent Girls

This past year, we provided services to 1,251 individual women and adolescent girls. They used our services 7,490 times.

- ◆ on average, each person accessed our services and programs 6 times
- ◆ each month, on average, 65 women and girls each accessed supportive counseling services. Over the year we met with them 1,621 times
- ◆ each month, on average, 129 women and girls accessed our programs
- ◆ 568 women accessed our programs and services for the first time
- ◆ women and girls were referred by health professionals, community and government agencies, and schools



Vangie Babin, Women's Services Coordinator.

Advocacy and Accompaniment

At a woman's request we will advocate for and accompany her to legal, medical and social service appointments, as well as to court and the hospital. As advocates, staff are able to help women find answers to their questions and negotiate systems that can be complex, confusing and intimidating.

This past year we accompanied women to court, legal, and medical appointments 57 times. We made 247 advocacy related calls.

Serving the Needs of the Whole Community

We work:

- at a collective level, collaborating with others in our community to provide educational and support programs for women, men and adolescents.
- at a community level, through community development and by providing workshops and presentations for the general public, schools, and service providers.
- at a systems level, addressing the structural barriers women face as they try to take control of their lives, by advocating with the system to remove these barriers and to implement woman positive public policies and programs.

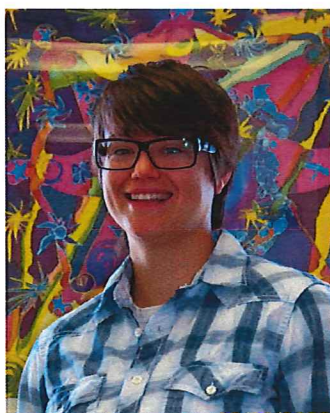


Services to Women and Adolescent Girls

Programs

The Women's Centre offers facilitated support programs as well as programs specifically for women and adolescent girls that benefit the community as a whole.

- ★ Justice Matters for Women: Rural Outreach in Guysborough and Antigonish Counties
- ★ Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) Program
- ★ Lindsay's Health Centre for Women
- ★ Survivors of Sexual Trauma Groups
- ★ Healthy Relationships for Youth
- ★ Inspire
- ★ Support Programs



Summer Student Vee MacKinnon



Youth Facilitators at HYR Training Session



Lisa Garrett, Intern



Coady Women's Leadership Program



Justice Matters for Women: Rural Out Reach in Guysborough and Antigonish Counties

"I don't know what I would have done if I didn't meet my Outreach Worker. I just wanted to give up completely. But with her support and advocacy I was able fight for what I was entitled to."

Justice Matters for Women was created in response to requests by women in Guysborough County to extend the services of the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre to their area. In April 2006, with funding from the Law Foundation of Nova Scotia, we began providing law-related information and workshops, as well as advocacy and problem-solving support to women and adolescent girls one day per week each in Canso, Guysborough and Sherbrooke.

Services

This past year women contacted our Outreach Program for information about and support for issues related to poverty, family violence, family law issues, harassment and bullying, 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.)

Through the Outreach Program, women have successfully appealed social assistance decisions and gained benefits to which they were entitled; reported instances of violence and sexual abuse; received resources and information related to their rights; been supported in filling out forms and interpreting legal documents; had their rights upheld in court hearings.

This year, 144 women and adolescent girls accessed our outreach program for support 1,221 times

A total of 30 grade 8 girls attending school in Canso, Guysborough and Sherbrooke participated in the Inspire program.

Mica Francis, Rural Outreach Worker.



Legal Education Workshops

In addition to providing one-to-one support, Justice Matters for Women offers workshops and programs. The outreach worker assesses the needs of each community and organizes workshops accordingly.

Seventy-five (75) individuals attended nine workshops organized in five different communities. The workshops were facilitated by local lawyers and offered in Canso, Guysborough Sherbrooke, Sunnyville and Antigonish. Topics included Power of Attorney, property Law, the legalities of Common-Law Relationships, Wills and Estates, Probate and others. Six of the workshops were offered as open legal information sessions where participants could ask questions about any legal issue of concern.

Women served by *Justice Matters for Women* very much appreciate that they can find support in their community. Many face geographic and social isolation, unemployment and poverty, a lack of transportation, and a steady decline in community-based government and non-government services



Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) Program

Sexual assault remains the most under-reported crime. Most sexual assaults taking place in our area are not being reported. Fear of reprisal, self-blame, shame and not knowing where to go for help still keep people from coming forward.

The SANE Program is offered by the Women's Centre in partnership with the Guysborough Antigonish Strait Health Authority (GASHA) and St. Francis Xavier University Student Services. Specialized on-call SANE Nurses provide:

- Emergency response, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week;
- Comprehensive medical examinations at St. Martha's Regional Hospital, the Strait Richmond Hospital and Lindsay's Health Centre for Women;
- Competent collection of forensic evidence;
- Referral to support services
- Expert testimony in a court of law



Angela Fougere, SANE Program Coordinator

AWRC SANE Program Usage

The SANE Program provided services for 16 victims/survivors in 2009-2010. All were female. The large majority of survivors were between the ages of 17-25, with about half of the assaults taking place on the weekends, and half taking place during the week. The busiest months for Program usage were June 2009 and January 2010. 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 know sexual assaults are taking place in our area and are not being reported. Fear and social stigma continue to keep people who have experienced sexual violence from coming forward. Our efforts to inform the general public and local agencies about the SANE program and how to access it are ongoing.

SANE Program Accomplishments 2009- 2010

- ✓ 14 nurses trained as sexual assault forensic examiners (SANEs) took calls in 2009-2010
- ✓ established an exam site on the StFX campus
- ✓ produced a 'zine' for StFX and high school students with information on sexual assault and services in the community
- ✓ facilitated numerous community information sessions
- ✓ SANEs received continuous education and additional training
- ✓ Signed agreement with the Aberdeen Hospital to deliver services to Pictou County.

The SANE Program Model

SANE Services are provided in a safe, supportive, non-judgmental and confidential environment to women and men, girls and boys who are 13 years of age and older. SANEs provide survivors with options for medical treatment options as well as for follow-up care.

The SANE Program can store forensic evidence for up to six months. Survivors 16 years of age and older are provided with information about their legal options and they determine whether and when they want to involve the police.



Survivors of Sexual Trauma Healing Groups

All women are vulnerable to violence and conservative estimates say that one quarter of all women will experience some form of sexual violence by the time they are eighteen.

Our Adult Survivors of Sexual Trauma Healing Groups continue to be an important part of the services offered to women in our community. They provide a supportive group environment for women who share similar challenges as a result of the experience of sexual trauma to make change in their lives. The facilitators have training and experience specific to working with survivors of trauma and of sexual violence.

Our Stage I Adult Survivors of Sexual Trauma: Developing Coping Skills program focus is educating survivors about sexual violence and trauma and teaching the coping and grounding skills needed to carry through with emotional healing in a safe manner. The emphasis of this group is the development of healthy, practical coping skills that women can use in their daily lives to manage overwhelming feelings, set healthy boundaries, and develop a compassionate inner voice. The program was offered in September 2009 with four women completing all eight sessions. In their program evaluations, all participants found the program helpful. One participant noted,

"The delivery, layout, progression, content are all exceptional. They work like a puzzle in helping me put so many issues and pieces of my own life back together."

Our **Stage II Adult Survivors of Sexual Trauma Group: Beginning Emotional Healing** program is designed to support women survivors of sexual trauma as they move into their personal healing work. In Stage II, the group builds a safe healing environment in which participants can begin to tell their stories and to work on specific effects of childhood trauma. Participants must complete the Stage I group to participate in this second level. The Stage II group will be offered in April 2010.



Amanda Workman (left) and Barbara Hayes,
Facilitators for Adult Survivors of Sexual Trauma
Healing Group



Lindsay's Health Centre for Women

"What I found most challenging was making the phone call to sign up! I'm so happy I made that call. ... I was so thrilled about the life changing information that I took home every week." – Emotional Eating group participant

Through Lindsay's Health Centre for Women we offer an integrated, woman-centred, primary health care program for women and adolescent girls, with a particular focus on those who experience barriers to access. Lindsay's is a partnership program of the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre, GASHA - Guysborough Antigonish Strait Health Authority, and the physician.

Lindsay's is offered each Thursday at the Women's Centre.

- ✓ Dr. Daphne MacLean, physician, and Connie Venedam-Marchand nurse practitioner, provide medical care.
- ✓ The Women's Centre provides one-to-one support and partners in program delivery as requested.
- ✓ Addictions Services and Mental Health Services offer programs and issue-specific support. Due to the H1N1 pandemic Public Health Services limited their involvement over the year.



Dr. Daphne MacLean, Connie Venedam-Marchand and Jean Crosby

Our Philosophy

- ♀ Every woman has the right to make informed decisions about her health.
- ♀ A woman's health improves when she has a greater sense of control over her life situation.
- ♀ A woman's health is dependent upon her physical, social, emotional and spiritual well-being.
- ♀ Gender is a key determinant of health as are social status, income, employment, education and social support.

This past year:

- ◆ a total of 327 women used our medical care services 676 times.
- ◆ 235 women saw the physician 491 times;
- ◆ 124 women saw the nurse practitioner 185 times
- ◆ 12 women attended our two *Well Woman's Clinics*: one was held in Havre Boucher and the other at Lindsay's. The H1N1 pandemic limited their involvement the number of clinics offered over the year.
- ◆ 17 women accessed a clinician from Mental Health Services.
- ◆ 16 women accessed a counsellor from Addictions Services.

We offered the following programs:

- ◆ *Smoking Cessation Programs*,
- ◆ a six session *Eating Issues: Ready for Change?* program,
- ◆ a six session *Eating Issues: Emotional Eating* program,
- ◆ a three session *Getting Ready for the Holidays* program, and
- ◆ *The Journey towards Menopause & Beyond: Information and Discussion (LHCW and Paqtnkek)*

In February 2010, Lindsay's began using the Nightengale electronic medical records management system. New computers were acquired with enough capacity to handle the system; key LHCW staff were trained



Support Programs

In response to the issues, concerns, and ideas that women bring to the Women's Centre, we offered the following support programs.

Income Tax Preparation for Low-Income Women and Their Families

Each year, we provide support to low-income women and family members needing help with completing their income tax returns. This ensures people receive the full amount of their return. For the 2008 tax year, our six dedicated volunteers completed 228 returns, an increase of 30% over the previous year. Many of the people who benefitted were seniors and women from marginalized communities. Because people continue to come for help with their income taxes after the program is officially ended, the volunteers have kindly agreed to continue processing them throughout the year.

Managing Anxiety: Understanding, Managing & Working with Anxiety.

In June 2009, we offered a four week Managing Anxiety program. Sessions provided participants with information about anxiety and its causes and effects and taught skills for helping to manage it in everyday life.

"The sessions helped us have some place to start to take overwhelming feelings and break them down into practical, realistic goals—baby steps to recovery. It assisted us to feel 'normal' or okay with where we are at." – Managing Anxiety participant

Adopt A Family Christmas Program

Each year, members of the community approach the Women's Centre with offers of assistance to families at Christmas. While it is not possible to meet the needs of all families in the community, we are able help some. This year a total of 50 individual women and family members received support

Creative Circle

Our Monday afternoon Creative Circle is an opportunity for women to come together and to talk about what is happening in their lives and in the world. Over the year 34 individual women attended with 8 to 12 women coming weekly.

*"It's great to feel part of the community." ...
"Here I feel like I belong." ... "I wouldn't give it up at all ... and it's close enough to walk to." –
Creative Circle participants*



Some artistic members of the Creative Circle.



Community Education and Community Engagement

The Women's Centre develops and delivers 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 cooperate with other organizations in planning and sponsoring community education programs and events. As well, we participate in workshops, focus groups and events at the invitation of other agencies and organizations.

Coady Picnic

Each summer we host a picnic where women from the community welcome women coming from other countries to study at the Coady International Institute. It is an opportunity to share stories, learn about each other's work and lives. This year over 80 women attended what was one of the liveliest picnics ever with much drumming, dancing, laughter and conversation.



Drumming at
the Coady
Picnic

December 6 Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women

For 2009 we partnered with the Naomi Society and the StFX Equity Office in organizing a December 6 event which was held at StFX. As well, St FX Service Learning students working with the Women's Centre and the Naomi Society developed a video presentation that was played at presentations for Dr. John Hugh Gillis Regional High School and StFX.

International Women's Day

On International Women's Day, March 8, 2010 thirteen (13) local restaurants participated in giving women a free cup of coffee in recognition of the many ways women contribute to their communities. The Women's Centre provided the restaurants with information sheets

about the history of International Women's Day and facts about the situation of women here and in other parts of the world.

Pregnancy and Birth: Forget What to Expect, Know What to Do Presentation, April 2009

At the request of the Midwifery Coalition of Nova Scotia, the Women's Centre organized a presentation on *Pregnancy and Birth: Forget What to Expect, Know What to Do*. Judy Norsigian, a founding member of the Boston Women's Health Collective, spoke about the increasing medicalization of pregnancy and birth and the role midwives can play in facilitating a healthy birthing process. The presentation was timely as Antigonish is one of the three midwifery pilot sites in Nova Scotia.

Meetings with Local Candidates for Provincial Election June 9, 2009

In anticipation of the provincial election, we invited the candidates from the Progressive Conservative, Liberal and NDP parties to meet with us over lunch hour. We asked each candidate questions about poverty, supportive housing for youth, specialized, integrated domestic violence courts, and services for rural communities.



Members of the Lochaber Sylvan Lakers Seniors Club working on a quilt to be donated to a woman or family who could use it.



Working With Youth: The Inspire Program

Over the years the Women's Centre has provided many programs for youth. Understanding the increased vulnerability of girls to the many forms of harassment, violence, exclusion, and discrimination, we have developed programs that help them develop resiliency, life skills and strategies for reducing their vulnerability and for actualizing their life goals.

Young women come to the Women's Centre for information about and support for handling a range of issues - relationship concerns, home troubles, sexual violence, dating abuse, sexuality information, school concerns, housing, anxiety, depression, and stress.

Our Inspire Program offers adolescent girls a safe space to explore issues that are affecting their lives. It is designed to reflect the learning needs of the girls participating in it and to provide them with a safe, non-judgmental and girl-friendly venue for developing critical thinking and healthy decision making and problem solving skills. Since it was developed in 2001, 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 girls determine topics they would like to focus on. Generally, these include self-esteem, body image, media awareness, stress and conflict management, communication and, relationships. Other topics are presented by community professionals, including staff of Addictions Services, Mental Health Services and Public Health Services. In two schools, parallel programs for boys have been developed by school personnel and are being delivered while the girls attend Inspire.

When youth are not supported in addressing the issues in their lives, their personal and academic worlds can suffer. When they are not supported in examining and addressing their issues, they are more likely to engage in risk taking behavior.

Girls have told us the program has helped them communicate more clearly with family and friends; they are more able to say no to things they don't want, to ask for things they need; and are able to think of better ways to handle difficulties in their lives. They also told us there was nothing they would have wanted to change about Inspire unless it was to have more sessions. When asked what they appreciated they told us:

*"I know now
how to deal with
some things."*

*"I like how we
could discuss
everything."*

*"I love
Inspire."*

In the 2009-2010 year, the Inspire program was offered in five locations:

- ★ East Antigonish Education Centre, Monastery;
- ★ Chedabucto Education Centre, Guysborough;
- ★ St. Mary's Academy, Sherbrooke;
- ★ Fanning Education Centre, Canso, and



Working with Youth: Healthy Relationships for Youth Program

"The program's success comes in students teaching students. Both we as youth facilitators and the grade nines are learning and teaching each other. The binds that hold the student body together are tightened and reinforced when we interact with each other on a positive level."

– Youth Facilitator, Dalbrae Academy

Healthy Relationships For Youth is based on the belief that sexism, racism and homophobia are forms of oppression which contribute to violence. By learning about the social factors affecting their lives and by developing healthy interpersonal communication skills, youth can make positive decisions about their own behaviour and can reduce violence.

Healthy Relationships For Youth (HRY) is a school-based, diversity-focussed program designed to reduce the risk of violence for youth through facilitating youth learning about developing and maintaining healthy relationships. It involves youth as peer educators in the classroom and within their schools and communities. The HRY Program is offered in all ten high schools in the Strait Regional School Board district.

The program pairs the classroom teacher with two youth facilitators. Together they facilitate a series of twelve cumulative sessions within the Grade 9 Health curriculum.

The Youth Teams in each school are recruited from Grades 10 to 12 and trained in leadership and facilitation. Each team strives to reflect gender as well as student population diversity.



Krista DeCoste, Healthy Relationships for Youth Program Coordinator

What stands out this year for the HRY Program is the unique role it plays in promoting understanding and acceptance of LGBT identified people in the schools, and within families and communities.

Accomplishments for 2009-2010

All 10 high schools with grade 9 classes in the Strait Regional School Board implemented the HRY Program.

12 teachers, one community-based adult facilitator, and 85 youth facilitators delivered the program to a total of 28 grade 9 classes reaching 632 students.

In an evaluation of the program 82% of the students surveyed rated the HRY Program as "good" to "very good"; 30% of the students reported an improvement in their self-esteem; 31% reported a positive change in their behaviour as a result of the program; and 89% reported an increased understanding of diversity and racism.

In November 2009 LEA Place Women's Resource Centre adopted the HRY program and is running it at the Duncan MacMillan High School in Sheet Harbour.

The Nova Scotia Department of Education provided support for school staff training and Youth Team training. The Nova Scotia Department of Justice provided some funding for training through the Lighthouse Program.

The Canadian Women's Foundation conducted an external evaluation of the HRY program, found it had a strong, positive outcome and extended funding for the program to March 2011.

In March 2010, Minister of Education, Marilyn More, commended the HRY Program for its work with youth.



Working for Change: Raising Awareness

The AWRC organizes community events and participates in provincial and national events that raise awareness about issues that affect women. This past year we spoke out about women's poverty, housing, violence, access to education, human rights and discrimination.

♀ We participated in the **Community Coalition to End Poverty in Nova Scotia** which is a collaboration of women's organizations as well and anti-poverty organizations. The coalition informs Nova Scotians about the extent and impact of poverty in Nova Scotia, monitors and presses for government action on poverty reduction, and advocates for public policy that better addresses the needs of those living in poverty.

♀ For the **October 17 International Day for the Eradication of Poverty** we organized a Lunch and Learn that focussed on the ways poverty and food insecurity affect our community. Presentations included an overview of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, an update on last year's Heat Poverty Initiative, information about Food Security in Antigonish, and an overview of Antigonish Efforts Regarding Food Sustainability. At small tables, groups discussed issues related to poverty and food insecurity and identified one action they personally would take in the next year towards ending poverty. The pledges were linked together creating a chain of commitment. We co-sponsored the event with Kids First, Voices and the Bergengren Credit Union. Approximately 60 people attended.

♀ For May 17, the International Day against Homophobia, we worked with members of our community to organize a public awareness event, **Making Our Community a Positive Space**. It was an opportunity to raise awareness about LGBTQ inclusion and to look at ways we could make our community a safer and more positive space for LGBTQ people. The panel presentations were thought-provoking and the panelists shared poignant, personal experiences.

♀ The **Antigonish Heat Poverty Initiative**, a community collaboration of the Women's Centre working with community members, the town council, local organizations and service groups, focused on the Home Winterization Program and the Emergency Fuel Fund. With a major donation from the Bergengren Credit Union and several smaller donations from community individuals, we were able to provide basic home winterization kits (window caulking and plastic sheeting) to 30 homes and to use the remaining funds to help 30 families address home heating crises. Through the Emergency Fuel Fund a total of 71 people (42 adults with 17 children) were assisted with emergency heat costs. The average household income was \$13,838.09.

- ✓ In the town of Antigonish we assisted 17 homes, 8 with oil and 9 with electric heat.
- ✓ In the county of Antigonish we assisted 13 homes, 6 with oil and 7 with electric heat. Many people were referred to government programs.

Call for an End to Poverty and Food Insecurity!

International Day for the Eradication of Poverty 2009

Eliminating poverty and food insecurity is not difficult – it does require thoughtful and deliberate policy changes. It does mean making the connection that the well-being of the most advantaged of us is tied up with ensuring the well-being of the least advantaged of us. We have a responsibility as Nova Scotians and as Canadians to call for policy changes that will have an immediate and positive impact for all.



Working For Change: Social Development Projects Violence Against Women and Girls: A Rural Response

Conferences which Women's Centre staff attended included the following:

- **Women, Social Justice and the Environment**, November 2009, CRIAW Nova Scotia together with the Sociology and Women's Studies Departments of St. Mary's University
- **Modern Challenges in Sexual Violence: Responding to the Issues**, May 2009, the third annual conference from the Atlantic Partners in Sexual Assault Response
- **The face of sexual violence in the 21st Century: naming the unspoken**, November 2009, Muriel McQueen Ferguson Centre for Family Violence Research
- **Cross Cultural Perspectives in Sexual Violence**, December 2009, the Pictou County Women's Centre
- **Violence Against Senior Women ... More Than Physical Abuse**, February 2010, Every Woman's Centre
- **Women and Public Pensions**, November 2009
- **Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives conference**, *Visioning Nova Scotia in 2020: Advancing research and policy for sustainability*

Presentations provided by Women's Centre staff were many and included the following:

- Law Day Lunch and Learn, Dr. JH Gillis Regional High School
- Public Services Alliance of Canada, Atlantic School
- Lochaber Sylvan Lakers Seniors Club
- Guysborough Community Health Board
- Antigonish County Adult Learning Association Gap Program (delivered 30 days of programming)
- St James United Church Social Justice Committee
- StFX University classes – Nursing, Women's Studies, Marketing.

Consultations in which Women's Centre staff participated included the following:

- Northern Region Youth Homelessness Workshop and Sharing, April 2009
- Sustainable Food Systems forum, June 2009
- Affordable Housing Association of Nova Scotia roundtable, February 2010
- Atlantic Regional Network meeting, Women's Worlds 2011, March 2010
- Ending Rape in Nova Scotia: A Community Strategy Session, March 2010



Working For Change: Social Development Projects Violence Against Women and Girls: A Rural Response

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-serviced communities in rural Northeastern Nova Scotia. We are exploring the challenges facing girls and women in rural communities, and working with them to develop and implement community education strategies, services, and supports that meet their needs.

The AWRC & SASA's focus is violence against adolescent girls and young women. We are 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, we are working with service providers, community leaders, and mentors to identify ways in which communities can reduce the vulnerability of girls to violence.

In the first year of the project (2008-2009) we gathered girls' stories, documented their service needs and recommendations for improving services. More than 60 girls participated in focus groups and lunch and learn sessions held in Antigonish, Guysborough, Sherbrooke, and Canso. At the request of the girls on-going discussion groups took place in Antigonish, Guysborough, and Paqtnkek First Nation. Through these groups the facilitator developed a more complex understanding of the lives of the girls and the communities in which they live.

The second year of the project (2009-2010) focused on community education and bringing the girls' stories and recommendations forward to their communities.



Wyanne Sandler, Rural Girls
Project Site Facilitator

Accomplishments 2009-2010

- ◆ In April 2009, 38 people attended a three-hour workshop for service providers and people working with girls and young women. Participants discussed the results of the research and promising practices for working with girls. A number of service providers indicated a desire to continue working on implementing promising practices in their organizations.
- ◆ In late 2009 the **Antigonish Network for Youth** formed providing a forum for service providers to share ideas and opportunities, plan events, and work collaboratively.
- ◆ The preliminary **research report** documenting findings and analysis from the focus groups was widely distributed and presented to many community groups, services and agencies, municipal councils, and campus organizations.
- ◆ A **pamphlet on promising practices** for violence prevention with rural girls was produced.
- ◆ We developed a girl-friendly, issue-based **resource directory for girls** in Antigonish and Guysborough counties; 550 copies were printed and distributed. The directory contains information on local organizations and services as well as web-based information and useful internet sites.



Working For Change: Social Development Projects Violence Against Women and Girls: A Rural Response

- ◆ In August 2009, in response to a need identified by youth we organized a four-day **social justice youth camp** in Antigonish and a two day camp in Paqtnekek. Nine (9) youth between the ages of 15-19 participated in Antigonish and eleven (11) youth between the ages of 8 - 14 participate in Paqtnekek. Using creative writing, theatre, and dance, the youth explored ablism, sexism and racism in the media, homophobia and transphobia. Feedback from participants, community members, and facilitators was very positive.
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- ◆ In August 2009, the site facilitator was part of a delegation to the Youth Assembly at the United Nations in New York. Her presentation on rural girls using media (particularly zines) as a tool for communication and empowerment was attended by a group of young professionals from around the world.

For copies of our project reports and resources see
www.antigonishwomenscentre.com

Girl Talk: Responding to Violence Against Women and Girls

In February 2010, a one and a half day forum brought together over 140 girls, young women, service providers, educators, and community members dedicated to ending violence against girls.

It began with a cultural competency workshop attended by 36 service providers working with youth it was facilitated by Shawna Hoyte, Dalhousie Legal Aid, with a presentation by Jane McMillian, St. FX Research Chair in Indigenous Peoples and Sustainable Communities. A workshop with 25 girls and young women under 21 years helped build their participation and community prior to attending the conference the next day.

Dr. Helene Berman, Scotiabank Research Chair at the Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children delivered the keynote address, "Context Matters: Trajectories of Violence in the Lives of Girls". Approximately 130 people attended the presentation.

The forum itself included a panel presentation, 11 concurrent workshops, a spoken-word performance by El Jones, talking circles and action-planning/reflection, and a musical performance by the Wandering Menstruals.

The conference was an opportunity for participants to share what had been learned through the project, discuss what is happening in other Nova Scotia communities, share stories, challenges, successes and ideas, and to take away some strategies for eliminating violence against girls that could be applied to their particular context. One of the successes of the conference was the participation of girls and young women who brought such insightful analysis and enthusiasm. The evaluations indicate the conference was much needed, had a significant impact on many of the participants, and needs to be held annually.



Working Together for Change at the Community and Provincial Levels

The AWRC & SASA works at the community and provincial levels with committees, organizations and initiatives that address the well-being of women and girls. We initiated and/or been involved since the inception of several of these committees. Together we share information, develop programs, and collaborate on social change and community development initiatives.

At the **Community Level** we are involved with:

- **Antigonish and Area Inter-Agency Committee on Family and Sexual Violence**
- **Antigonish Heat Poverty Initiative** to provide emergency support for people unable to heat their homes.
- **Antigonish Food Security Coalition** to support existing and undertake new food security initiatives.
- **Antigonish Sexual Assault Response Team** in providing a coordinated community response to victims/survivors of sexual violence.
- **Housing Initiative for Youth in Antigonish (HIYA)** to establish a supportive housing facility for youth
- **Northeastern Network for Children and Youth** to make recommendations regarding Child and Youth policy and program initiatives that support Child and Youth program outcomes
- **Paq'tnkek Inter-Agency Committee** to better meet the needs of their community.
- **People Assessing Their Health (PATH) Network** to create tools and processes for people and communities to effect the changes necessary to build healthy communities.

At the **Provincial Level** we are involved with:

- **Women's Centres Connect**, the provincial association of women's centres.
- **Feminists for Just and Equitable Public Policy** to promote the social and economic well-being of women and their communities.
- **Nova Scotia Sexual Assault Services Planning Group** to promote the expansion of sexual assault services across the province
- **Community Coalition to End Poverty in Nova Scotia** to raise awareness about poverty and to work to end it.
- **Women's Innovative Justice Initiative** to advance justice initiatives that will positively affect the lives of women and girls
- **Youth Sexual Health Core Team** to update and create a plan to implement the Nova Scotia Youth Sexual Health Strategy.



Funding Support

The work we do at the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre would not be possible without the support of our community and without the support of the foundations and departments of government that provide us with funding.

**WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK ALL WHO PROVIDE SUPPORT
FOR OUR SERVICES AND PROGRAMS.**

Direct Services are funded by:

- Nova Scotia Department of Community Services
- Guysborough Antigonish Strait Health Authority (GASHA)
- community donations

Justice Matters for Women is funded by:

- Law Foundation of Nova Scotia

Healthy Relationships for Youth Program is funded by:

- Canadian Women's Foundation
- Nova Scotia Department of Justice

Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program is funded by:

- Nova Scotia Department of Health through GASHA

Violence against Women and Girls: A Rural Response was funded by:

- Status of Women Canada

Community Support

It is with the generous, ongoing support provided by our community that we are able to do all that we do.

♥ **Thank you** ♥

to

our many individual donors
and

Sisters of St. Martha

Antigonish Kinsmen Club

Canadian Auto Workers Social Justice
Fund

Burke House & MacIsaac House, StFXU



Financial Overview

This past year the work of our financial office remained steady. Jackie Jacques, our bookkeeper, and Christine Hanlon, our financial administrator, continue to develop more efficient and effective ways of sharing the work load and completing the financial reporting requirements of the various funding agencies. The concentration for the upcoming year will be on providing forecast reporting while maintaining the budget updates and historical information.



Although in 2008-2009, women's centres were provided an approximately 3% cost of living budget increase in core funding from the Department of Community Services, there was no increase for the 2009-2010 fiscal year. GASHA continues to support our direct service work with a contribution to our women's support services and with funding for the SANE program. In the summer of 2009 we secured funding through HRSDC Summer Jobs Program for one summer student.

Our work is well supported by the larger community. Along with the grants we receive to deliver our services, Figure # 1 shows the financial support we received from the community over the past year. Over half the community contributions come from individuals, largely through our direct mail campaign. The remaining community funds come from the support of community groups for programming and initiatives offered through the Women's Centre.

project with the Pictou County Women's Centre and the Every Woman's Centre in Sydney was completed March 2010. The project ended with a small surplus and approval was granted to carry it forward to the upcoming year to fund an initiative related to the project.

During the past year the AWRC & SASA continued to administer a number of projects. The combined funding for the projects totaled over a quarter of a million dollars. Figure # 2 shows the breakdown by project. The Center was very pleased to receive a fourth year of funding from the Nova Scotia Law Foundation for the rural outreach program, Justice Matters for Women. This past August the Healthy Relationships for Youth Project completed the original three year project. Additional funding from the Canadian Women's Foundation has enabled this project to be extended for another school year. Financial support from the Nova Scotia Department of Justice for the Lighthouse Grant has added an additional component to the Healthy Relationship Project which will be carried out over the next year. The Status of Women Canada two year partnership

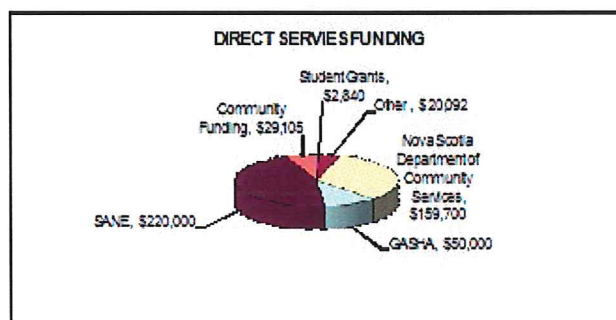


Figure 1

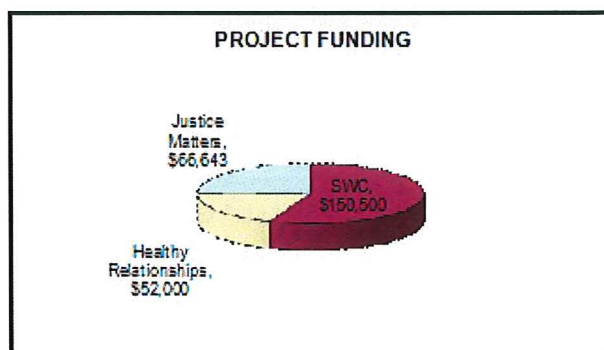


Figure 2



The Women Behind The Work 2009- 2010

Executive Director

Lucille Harper

Financial Administrator

Christine Hanlon

Bookkeeper/Admin Assistant

Jackie Jacques

Direct Services

- ♀ Women's Services Coordinator:
Vangie Babin
- ♀ Women's Support Workers:
Amanda Workman, Nicole Rovers,
Tiffany Hallett
- ♀ Summer Student:
Vanessa MacKinnon

Survivors of Sexual Trauma Support Group

- ♀ Facilitators:
Barbara Hayes
Amanda Workman

Managing Anxiety

- ♀ Facilitators:
Barbara Hayes, Tiffany Hallett

Justice Matters for Women

- ♀ Rural Outreach Coordinator:
Mica Francis

Healthy Relationships for Youth Program

- ♀ Program Coordinator:
Krista DeCoste

Violence against Women and Girls Project

- ♀ Antigonish Site Facilitator:
Wyanne Sandler

Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program

- ♀ Program Coordinator:
Angela Fougere
- ♀ **SANES:**
Marla Barton
Debbie Cotton
Mena Enxuga
Felicia Farmer
Marlene Graham
Marilyn Grant
Shauna Grant-Smith
Sherry Jackson
Jocelyn Landry
Lynn MacDonald
Patricia MacKenzie
Suzanne Munroe
Cindy O'Halloran

- ♀ SANE Summer Student:
Erin MacDonald

Lindsay's Health Centre for Women

- ♀ Physician:
Daphne Maclean
- ♀ Nurse Practitioner:
Connie Venedam Marchand
- Staff from:
- ♀ Addictions Services:
Esther MacDonnell
- ♀ Mental Health Services:
Jean Crosby
Donna MacEachern
- ♀ The Women's Centre Staff



Visionary Women

Our Board of Directors

2009-2010

Jean Crosby, Co-Chair
Nancy Forestell, Co-Chair
Nelda Armour
Nancy Breen
Catherine Gillis
Elizabeth Glinz
Donna MacDonald
Janet MacDonald
Meghan MacGillivray
Meaghan MacIntyre
Heather Napier
Wendy Panagopoulos
Margot Sadler
Carole Van de Weil

Volunteers with the Women's Centre

It is only through the work of our volunteers that we are able to accomplish all that we do.

This year a dedicated group of women and men as well as a group of enthusiastic and committed students helped with

- ✓ office support
- ✓ the preparation of income tax returns
- ✓ fundraising
- ✓ library maintenance
- ✓ facilitating programs
- ✓ organizing events

Antigonish Women of Note

Katherine Reed, long-time feminist, social activist was awarded the Marie Gillen award for her work as a Master of Adult Education student who is fostering, through her masters program research, the development of women in Canada.

Nancy Forestell, Department of History, StFX, and long-time community activist and board member of the AWRC & SASA was honoured with StFX University's annual Outreach Award. The award recognizes outstanding contribution to the wider community.

Missing Our Friends

We were very sad this year to lose two dear friends and tireless advocates for social justice.

August 15, 2009, **Dr. Bill Gillis**, former MLA for Antigonish, dedicated community member and supporter of the Women's Centre passed away.

On August 22, 2009, **Muriel Duckworth**, founder of the Voice of Women Canada, defender of peace and advocate for all who suffered injustice, passed away at 100 years of age.

Contact Us

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B2G 2C1

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