

ANTIGONISH WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTRE

& Sexual Assault Services Association

Annual Report 2016-2017



Our Mission

The Antigianish Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services Association – an independent, feminist, community-based organization works to create personal, community and social change for women and their families through direct services, community development, education, and celebration.



A Message from the Executive Director



This has been a year of action, adaptation and accomplishment for the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services Association as we addressed issues affecting women, youth and our communities. Poverty reduction, violence prevention and fostering youth leadership remain key components of our work. We secured sustainable funding for our sexual violence trauma therapy services, a key component of our collaborative, integrated, trauma-informed, community-based services. Our *Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) Program* is celebrating its 10th anniversary. Working with provincial committees we contributed to the development of sexual assault response and prevention policies and recommendations for post-secondary institutions and called for more services for survivors across the province. When the NSTU work to rule job action kept us out of the local schools, we adapted our programs to make sure youth still had support and safe spaces to meet.

Our services make a difference in the lives of women, their families and our communities. In 2016-2017, close to 1,500 women and girls accessed our services and programs; overall calls and visits totalled just under 12,000. Over the year 500 women accessed our one-to-one support services 1,781 times. A further 870 individuals accessed Women's Centre programs 3,279 times. Our *Lindsay's Health Centre for Women's Health* care team saw 364 women and adolescent girls 798 times. Our *Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) Program* provided specialized sexual assault forensic exams to 36 survivors in six examination sites extending from Port Hawkesbury to New Glasgow and responded to many more calls for support. This is an increase in cases of 56% over last year. Our specialized sexualized violence trauma therapists provided therapeutic counselling to 121 individuals, ages 17 - 74 years, who were seeking therapeutic counselling to heal from sexualized violence.

Through *Justice Matters for Women* we provided 84 women in Canso, Sherbrooke and Guyssborough with 384 one-to-one law-related information and support counselling sessions; 190 people participated in legal information sessions and workshops. Through our *Antigonish Guyssborough Immigrant Support* program we provided support services to 48 newcomer individuals and families in Antigonish and Guyssborough. As well, we worked with sponsorship groups helping Syrian families settle in our community.

We partnered with the Paqtnkek and Wacocabah Health Centres on the *Responding to and Preventing Sexual Violence – Paqtnkek and Wacocabah* project. The communities involved youth, elders and many community members in developing and implementing plans of action for responding to and preventing sexualized violence. They organized programs and events to help their communities begin a healing process.

Our work with youth is an exciting part of our programming. Through our *Healthy Relationships for Youth* program we trained 299 senior high students as classroom youth facilitators; they delivered a series of healthy relationships sessions to 973 grade 9 students in 17 high schools across the province, including all 10 Strait Regional School Board schools. Along with our Inspire Program for grade 8 girls, we offered groups for girls as community as well as school-based programs. The participants took on creative, social media and school-based social action initiatives with the goal of creating safe spaces for girls to talk about their lives. We remain inspired by women's strength and resilience in the face of adversity and injustice. We continue to work for social and economic justice, peace, and a safe and healthy world in which all are valued, cared for and supported both for our uniqueness and our commonality. Thank you to all who have supported and made our work possible. With your support, we continue to grow, take on new initiatives, and work collaboratively with our community.

– Lucille Harper

Lucille Harper
Executive Director



Programs & Services for Women and Adolescent Girls



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

Emotional and Problem-Solving Support Counselling

Women and adolescent girls come to the Women's Centre for numerous and varied 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.



Mica Francis and Leslie Lynch,
Women's Support Workers

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 find helpful. Because our services are useful and available to women when they need them, other agencies and institutions refer women and girls to the Women's Centre for support.

*I'd be lost without the women's centre ...
trying to move through the system...*

— woman using our services

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, and

♀ 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.

Programs & Services for Women and Adolescent Girls



This past year 1,481 individual women and adolescent girls accessed our services and programs a total of 11,952 times. We responded to 5,665 calls and 6,287 visits.

- Over the year 500 women received support from our Women's Support Workers. Our Women's Support Workers met with them 1,902 times.

- Over the year 870 women and girls accessed our in-centre programs with a total of 3,279 visits over the year.

- Over the year 1,082 Individuals accessed centre services 393 times for a total of 4,720 visits over the year. They came for general information, referrals to the Opportunity Shop, to use our public access computer, check in with the Women's Services Coordinator and access the library.

- Women and girls were referred by health professionals, community organizations, government agencies, and schools.

The most prevalent issues for which women sought support services were:

- Poverty & Employment Support
- Income Assistance
- Mental Health: depression, anxiety, addictions, grief
- Sexualized Violence including Abuse, Harassment, and Intimate Partner Violence
- Family & Social Relationships & Parenting
- Law-related Concerns: Family Law, Non-Family Law, Child Welfare
- Physical Health & Reproductive Health
- Employment, Education & Training
- Housing & Tenancy
- Immigration/Newcomer Support
- Equity: Disability, Human Rights, Sex/Gender

Serving the Needs of the Whole Community

We work:

- at a collective level, providing educational and support programs for women, men and adolescents.
- at a community level, through community development initiatives and community consultations 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.

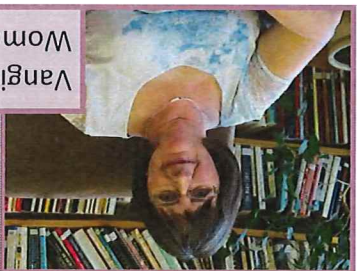
Advocacy and Accompaniment

At the request of women who come to the women's centre, Women's Centre staff advocate for and accompany them 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.

There is no such thing as 'I can't' when I come

here-only 'I can', - Woman using our Services

Vangie Babin, Women's Services





Women's Centre Programs

Programs

As a Women's Centre and Sexual Assault Centre, we offer programs that benefit the community as a whole as well as facilitated support programs specifically for women and adolescent girls.

- Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) Program

- Specialized Sexual Violence Trauma Therapy

- Lindsay's Health Centre for Women

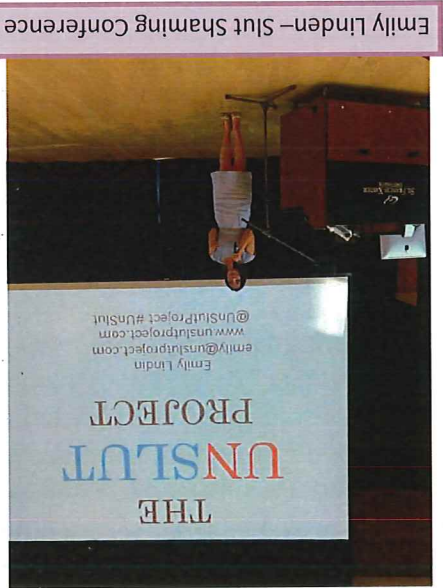
- Justice Matters for Women: Rural Outreach in Guysborough and Antigonish Counties

- Antigonish Guysborough Immigrant Support Program

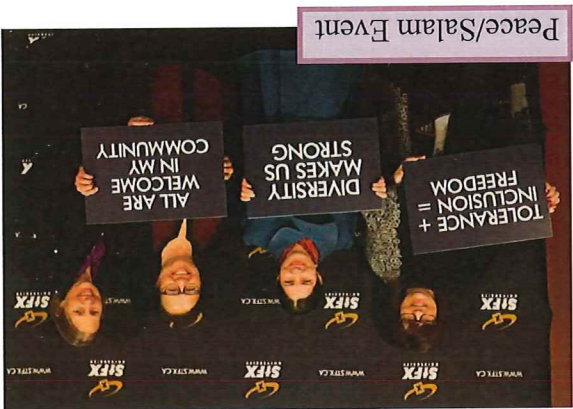
- Healthy Relationships for Youth

- Inspire and Girls Groups

- Emotional and Problem-Solving Support Programs



Emily Linden– Slut Shaming Conference



Peace/Salam Event



Inspire Group Sherbrooke



Sexual Assault Services and Programs

SEXUAL ASSAULT SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

The AWRCSASA provides a continuum of services to people in our communities who have been subjected to sexualized violence. Our response services include problem-solving and emotional support, Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner care, and specialized sexual violence trauma-specific therapy. Our programs are collaborative and connected with the broader community of care providers. We provide a welcoming, trauma-informed environment for those reaching out for support.

We worked diligently this year to ensure that our services continue to meet the needs of people in our communities who have experienced sexual violence, that our staff were able to access the training they need to continue to advance their skills and learning, and that our funding was adequate and sustainable. We were able to provide a high standard of services and programs, our SANE Program funding was stable, and we were able to secure a commitment of ongoing funding for our therapy program.

Provincial Consultations, Committees and Action on Sexual Violence

Over the year, we participated in consultations, committees and social action on sexualized violence.

Nova Scotia Sexual Violence Services Network

The intention of Nova Scotia Sexual Assault Services Network is to improve access to sexual assault services through a provincial approach that supports and strengthens an inclusive community-based, feminist, trauma-informed response to sexualized violence. The work of the Network is informed by the experience, skills and knowledge of the many diverse interests and communities in Nova Scotia. It provides a space for sexual violence response and prevention services and programs to come together to share information, support each other and look at ways to better collaborate across the province.

Sexual Violence Prevention Committee – Department of Labour and Advanced Education

The Department of Labour and Advanced Education on behalf of the Partnership [composed of university presidents and several Deputy Ministers] brought together government representatives, elected student representatives, first responders on campuses, faculty, administration, and representatives from community-based organizations with expertise in sexual violence prevention to form the Sexual Violence Prevention Committee. We worked collaboratively to examine the issue of sexual violence on campuses in the Nova Scotia context and develop a report, with recommendations, to advance sexual violence prevention on Nova Scotia university campuses.

StFX Sexual Violence Prevention Committee

Following the approval of the StFX Sexual Violence Policy, the Implementation Committee Co-Chairs established the StFX Sexual Violence Prevention Committee to develop strategies for ensuring that the StFX Sexual Assault Policy is widely communicated and implemented and that sexual violence prevention is a priority at StFX.

Sexual Assault Services and Programs: SANE Program



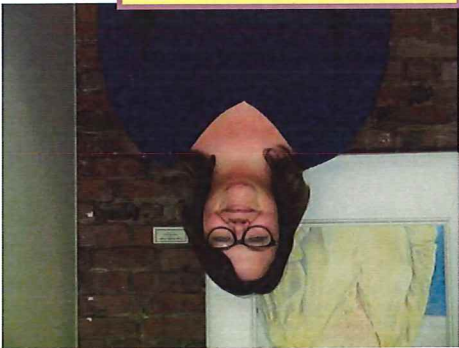
The Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) Program is a community based program of the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services Association delivered in partnership with the Nova Scotia Health Authority (NSHA).

We know our SANE Program has made a difference in lives of those to whom we have provided care. This past year we saw a 56% increase in the call for our SANE services. Nova Scotia has one of the highest rates of sexualized violence in Canada, it is perpetrated across our communities and most assaults are not reported. We remain committed working to end sexualized violence, to changing the culture in which it is perpetrated, and to supporting individuals who have been subjected to sexual assault begin to move forward in their lives. Our collaborative work with schools, colleges and university communities helps individuals and groups understand sexualized violence, recognise it in our community and our culture, and access services specialized in caring for the unique needs of victims. The SANE Program Coordinator provides education and training with the goal of strengthening the skills and abilities of the SANE program and SANE nurses. Health care providers, agencies, and organizations in the province contact us for information, guidance and support in their efforts to care for victims of sexual assault. Rural communities look to our program for guidance in providing care for survivors. We have supported the efforts in both Cape Breton and Western Nova Scotia as they developed their SANE programs

Congratulations SANE!
SANE Program - 10 year anniversary

The SANE Program Model

The SANE Program provides emergency response, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to our exam sites, Lindsay's Health Centre for Women, St. Martha's Regional Hospital, the StFX Health Centre, Strait Richmond Hospital, the Aberdeen Hospital and the Guysborough Memorial Hospital. SANE Services are provided in a safe, supportive, non-judgmental and confidential environment to individuals of all genders 13 years of age and older. SANEs provide survivors with medical treatment as well as options 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. They determine whether and when to involve the police.



Heather Blackburn,
SANE Program Manager

Sexual Assault Services and Programs: SANE Program



SANE Skills Building and Training

SANEs received *ongoing education* and review in the following areas:

- *Skill Development and Maintenance.* SANEs completed a competency checklist to maintain personal development and skill and an annual medication competency quiz; reviewed forensic documentation through mock case reviews; reviewed principles of cultural competency; reviewed SANE testimony preparation; were trained on a new Body Swab technique requested by the forensic RCMP lab.

• *Current Research and Information on Social Trends.* Each month one SANE presents a recently published, peer reviewed research article to the team in the areas of sexual/gender based violence,

sexual assault investigation and forensic nursing science.

- *Vicarious Trauma, Compassion Fatigue and Work-life Balance.* The SANE team discussed balancing on-call with other demands and adapted scheduling practices to minimize burnout; reviewed information on vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue.

• *International Association of Forensic Nurses - Forensic Nursing Conference*

September 29 - Oct 3, 2016. Heather Blackburn, Program Manager, and Jill Leon, SANE Nurse, attended sessions and brought information back to the team on giving expert testimony in court, toxicology and drug facilitated sexual assault, injury assessment and documentation, identification of potential victims of human trafficking, and assessment of injury patterns in elder populations.

Over the past year, the SANE Program:

- Provided services to 36 victims of sexual assault, all identified as female.
- The majority (22) were between the ages of 17 - 25 years; 9 individuals were between the ages of 26 - 40 years; 3 individuals were between the ages of 41-65 years.
- Two individuals were under 16 years of age. The majority of the assaults took place on the weekends with August and September the busiest months.
- The majority of survivors accessed SANE services through emergency departments or RCMP, although some used the toll free line directly.
- Responded to 15 cases at Saint Martha's Regional Hospital; 14 cases at the Aberdeen hospital; 4 cases at the StFX Health Centre; 2 cases at the Strait Richmond Hospital, and 1 case at the Women's Centre.
- Received and responded to calls to the SANE crisis line from survivors who were recently sexually assaulted, but fell outside of the 120 hours post assault time frame; family and friends of survivors looking for advice and support; and professionals from areas without access to SANE services. requesting consultation on appropriate management and care, referral options for supportive services.

Sexual Assault Response Teams

The SANE Program Coordinator brings her expertise to the following committees:

- ASART (Antagonish Sexual Assault Response Team)
- PSART (Pictou Sexual Assault Response Team)
- Strait Area Community Support Network Working Group
- Strait Area Inter-Agency Committee on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault



Sexual Assault Services and Programs: SANE Program

Presentations and Training Sessions for Health Care Providers

The SANE Program presented SANE Program and sexualized violence information sessions.

- **Current Trends in SANE Practice** for Emergency Room physicians and staff in our catchment area. We provided information on drug facilitated sexual assault, understanding consent in BDSM relationships, and strangulation injury and assessment, clearly describing the scope of SANE practice and where ER physicians would be required to assist. 25-30 people attended. April 2016.
- **SANE specific professional development** for SANE nurses in Bridgewater. April 2016.
- **Improving Outcomes for Victims of Sexual Assault**, a full day session for Sexual Violence Services for Lunenburg Queens and the Second Story Women's Centre. 25 people attended. April 2016.

Sexual Assault Awareness Month: *Prevention is Possible, April 2016.*

A Sexual Assault Awareness Month proclamation event was held at the Antigonish Town Hall. Throughout the month local media played PSAs with information about sexualized violence.

I learned a lot about how common sexual assault is, I will be working with victims in any nursing job I have. – nursing student

Working with StFX

Over the year, we worked with StFX to increase awareness about sexualized violence, work to prevent it, and support students, staff and faculty in improving responses to it.

SANE Presentations to StFX Students included:

A Frosh Week panel, the *Sexual Violence Symposium for Freshman Students*, addressing sexual violence, victim blaming, consent, and available supports both on and off campus. 900 students attended. September 2016.

Resource Fair for Student Leaders and

International Students 50 students. August, 2016.

Residence Life Staff information sessions on supporting disclosures of sexual assault and abuse

residence life staff. August, 2016.

Consent Presentations for 5 residences on campus. November 2016.

Sexual Violence and 'Rape' Culture for a 300 level Psychology class.

StFX School of Nursing Professional

Development Day presented on opportunities for forensic nursing practice in Canada and the role of SANE nurses, our community-based model. 80 students and faculty attended. October 2016.

StFX School of Nursing Community Health Course

sexualized violence and trauma-informed approaches to Nursing. December 2016.

I will be more aware of how bias and stereotypes can effect my patients.

-Nursing Student

Sexual Assault and Services Programs: Feminist Trauma Therapy Program



Nancy Gray and Laurie Sutor
Feminist Therapists

The AWRCSA specialized sexual violence trauma therapy program offers a tri-phase, relational approach, grounded in feminist scholarship and neurological research citing best practices in relation to trauma and the aftermath of sexualized violence. We offer services to individuals of all genders, 16 years of age and older who have been subjected to acts of sexualized violence. We work with survivors of childhood sexual abuse, recent sexual assault, and assault through the lifespan. This feminist, trauma therapy program is embedded in the continuum of services at AWRCSA.

We were able this year to secure a commitment of sustainable funding from the province. This has provided us with some program stability and allowed us to continue to offer therapy services at the AWRCSA as well as provide some outreach in Port Hawkesbury through the Strait Area Women's Place. Over the year, we worked with 121 individuals, most of whom identified as women, seeking therapeutic counselling for:

- historical sexual assault occurring more than 1 year ago: 46 women, 1 man ages 30-40 years.
- childhood sexual abuse plus historical sexual assault: 40 women ages of 17 - 74 years.
- childhood sexual abuse occurring before the age of 16 years: 21 women ages 16 - 50 years.
- recent sexual assault that occurred within past 12 months: 15 women ages 17 - 32 years

I've been able to attend most of my classes without having to leave because of being triggered. You have given me so many tools to help with my anxiety and control my panic attacks. I'm so happy I found this place! – woman accessing therapy services

Program Impact for Adult Women Who Have Experienced Sexual Violence

Our Sexual Violence Trauma Therapy Program has helped survivors begin to regain control over their lives. There is a reduction in PTSD symptoms, greater social engagement, improved parenting skills, progress in achieving goals such as returning to school or work, and healthier relationships. As survivors go through their healing process and gain a sense of stability and well-being, we are able to close files.

I would not have believed six months ago that I would feel this well. I knew I was better when a show came on television about sexual abuse survivors, and I was able to turn the show off with the thought 'that is no longer where I am at'. I have never felt that way, and I am so grateful that this support is here. – woman accessing therapy services

Sexual Assault and Services Programs: Feminist Trauma Therapy Program



Therapy Group: Exploring New Territory

Nancy Gray, AWRCSASA, and Catharine Chambers, private therapist, facilitated an initial stage therapy group that supported women in practicing grounding and mindfulness skills in a safe, calm environment. The group was structured to include grounding through visualization and exploration of images that help to establish and anchor body safety. Using art based therapy, women explored safety and learned new grounding practices. Six women completed the group.

I used to think I was broken, because of what happened to me, and that everyone could see that brokenness. But when I look at other women in group I see strong women, not broken women. This has helped me realize that what I have been through has not broken me. – group participant



Exploring New Territory
Participant Artwork



Tri-phase Sequential Model for Sexualized Violence Trauma Therapy

The tri-phase sequential model offers a step by step and flexible approach to increasing safety and for collaboratively charting a path to recovery from trauma.

Initial Phase of Trauma Therapy

The initial phase of trauma therapy (1-10 sessions) involves focussing on safety, grounding, collaboratively developing knowledge and skills in response to triggers, and supporting women to counter misogynist messages that have contributed to misplaced shame and victim blame. The tri-phase approach is flexible and the initial phase of therapy can be extended to ensure there is a foundation of safety before proceeding to the next stage.

Second Phase of Trauma Therapy

The second phase of trauma therapy (1-20 sessions) is offered once a person has shifted from the hypervigilance and dissociative patterns developed in the aftermath of sexualized abuse and assaults, and is ready to begin processing traumatic responses and acknowledge losses. This stage involves looking back at trauma from a different place, working to create a sense of restoration and reconnection, particularly when those who experienced repeated victimization developed post traumatic dissociative splits and a strong sense of powerlessness. For those with complex trauma and additional experiences of oppression, this stage involves profound turning points. When possible, group therapy helps further integrate these crucial aspects of recovery from trauma and creates links around shared themes that support a movement away from the isolation and internalized shame that many women identified in early stages of therapy.

Third Phase of Trauma Therapy

The third phase consists of workshops related to themes of integrating new therapeutic gains into increased autonomy and post-traumatic growth related to self and community.

Justice Matters for Women: Rural Outreach in Guyssborough and Antigonish Counties and the Strait Area



Helping women access legal information, or being a supportive advocate often is the catalyst that leads to change. Many factors hinder a woman's ability to access legal information in smaller rural communities; legal fees, ineligibility for Legal Aid, a sense of shame about not understanding the law, low levels of literacy, lack of public transit or taxi, cost of internet and poverty all contribute to create multiple barriers.

Through the Justice Matters for Women Program the outreach worker provides women with information, advocacy and confidential one-to-one support counselling and problem solving that allows women to find solutions that are right for them. She apprises women of their individual rights and entitlements and works to ensure their rights are upheld within the systems they are navigating. Through the program, students are better prepared for leaving high school and transitioning into the next stage of their lives. Seniors and parents have more information about wills and estate planning and how to access benefits and entitlements.

Life changing. I would not know where I would be today without Marcia's help in getting me set up with other support, and her continued support. – woman accessing services

We recognize the diverse nature of rural communities and collaborate with community organizations, agencies and education centres throughout Canso, Guyssborough, Sherbrooke and rural areas in between to bring law-related information to county residents and students that address their explicit needs.

Legal Education Workshops

Hosting legal information workshops in rural communities gives residents access to information and law-related support and advocacy. Through discussions with community organizations and community members, we determine community interests and provide workshops and information sessions that meet explicit needs.

Justice Matters for Women organized 10 law-related information workshops in communities throughout Guyssborough and Antigonish Counties from Havre Boucher to Canso to Sherbrooke. Topics included tenancy rights and property law, wills and estate planning, benefits and entitlements – CPP, OAS and GIS for seniors, sexualized violence, and general legal information.

Services to Women and Adolescent Girls

This year, Justice Matters for Women:

- provided legal supports and direct services and advocacy to 84 individual women and adolescent girls in a total of 384 sessions.
- delivered the Inspire Program to grade eight girls in two schools Tammarac Education Centre, Port Hawkesbury and St. Mary's Education Centre.
- organized 10 law-related community information sessions which were attended by 190 people.



Marcia Connolly,
Outreach Support Worker

Antigonish GuySBorough Immigrant Support Program



The Antigonish-GuySBorough Immigrant Support Program (AGISP) provided settlement and integration support to immigrants living in Antigonish and GuySBorough towns and counties. This included one-on-one support with general orientation and settlement planning, obtaining/understanding documents, applying for government benefits, navigation of systems, personal financial management, employment and self-employment, transportation, translations, networking and social relationships, family settlement, legal issues, health care, and changing immigration status.

In addition to serving a preexisting immigrant population, the Immigrant Support Program has taken a leadership role across our service area in

response to the resettlement of refugees. This includes supporting sponsorship initiatives, building community awareness and providing direct support to new permanent residents arriving under private and government assisted programs. The program has built expertise and a network of support to address a flexible range of needs.

Over the year, our Newcomer Support Worker:

- provided direct support to a total of 48 adults and adolescents who met the program funding criteria. A large number of children benefited from family settlement support, as did visitors to Canada who sought information about immigration.
- saw 15-20 individuals per month.
- assisted the broader community, answering questions related to hiring foreign workers, settlement, family sponsorship, and general support with clarifying the immigration process.
- produced a *Newcomers' Guide to Antigonish* resource booklet and printed 200 copies printed for distribution throughout Antigonish. Plans to have it translated are underway.

We have continued to fulfill a commitment to providing direct support to newcomer families, while also expanding our programming over the past year to provide more workshops and group events. This program continued to be an important resource for newcomers trying to navigate sometimes complex and difficult issues. Settlement in rural areas and small centres holds particular challenges and the Newcomer Support Worker position gave immigrants in the region trusted counsel and someone to connect with for support. There continues to be a unique role for the AWRCSASA to play in newcomer settlement, focusing on our strengths in direct support, program development and in the advancement of women and families. – Newcomer Support Worker



Wynne Sandler
Newcomer Support

...the help you
have provided
can never be
forgotten -
newcomer using
our services

We wanted to say
thank you so much for
all your support and
guidance through this
process. We are very
appreciative indeed.
- newcomer using our
services



Refugees Welcome Here

Antigonish Guysborough Immigrant Support Program



Over the year, the Newcomer Support Worker organized information workshops and welcoming events for newcomer families, the organizations supporting them, and the community.

- *Settlement and Integration Workshops* included sessions on cars and auto insurance, family law, family reunification, basic banking, and preparing and filing income tax returns.

- *Conversation and Social Group* activities provided opportunities for newcomers to connect with one another and with the broader community. They included:

- *Girls Talk*, a girls group for newcomers and girls looking to make new social connections.

- A newcomer *Women's Conversation Group* which in the new year became the *Arabic English Women's Tea* organized with volunteers from SAFE, CARE, and Tri-Heart private sponsorship groups.

- Five *Antigonish International Potlucks* organized with Cultural Connections and bringing together 70-100 participants. Each potluck was organized with a different collaborating community – the Coady participants, the Indian community and the Francophone community.

- Two *Regional gatherings of Syrian families* were organized with SAFE and other sponsorship groups. The first in Creignish with 5 Syrian families attending, the second at the St. Andrews Community Centre with 8 families attending, totaling close to 70 people.

- Two *Support for Sponsorship Groups* networking meetings provided opportunities for:

- The 3 local private refugee sponsorship groups to meet and share learning with respect to successful family settlement.

- 7 sponsorship groups from across the northeastern region to identify barriers, needs and successes. Twenty-six (26) people attended and committed to working together to improve capacity to support refugees (particularly those who have experienced trauma) as well as doing shared advocacy around immigration policies related to refugees.



Gathering of Syrian Families



Lindsay's Health Centre for Women

Lindsay's Health Centre for Women provides collaborative, woman-centred, primary health care programs and services for women and adolescent girls. Lindsay's is a partnership of the AWRCSASA, the Nova Scotia Health Authority (NSHA), and the practicing physician

- Lindsay's is offered each Thursday at the Women's Centre.
- Services are provided by a physician, a nurse practitioner, Mental Health Services, Addictions Services, and the Women's Centre.
- The physician and nurse practitioner see women primarily on an individual basis.
- The Women's Centre meets with women individually and provides organizational support.
- Mental Health and Addictions Services meet with women individually and provide programming.

A total of 364 women accessed Lindsay's 798 times.

♀ 144 women saw the physician 303 times.

♀ 220 women saw the nurse practitioner 380 times.

♀ 46 women met with a Clinical Social Worker from

Mental Health Services 79 times.

♀ 11 women met with a counsellor from Addictions

Services 40 times.

Programs and Highlights

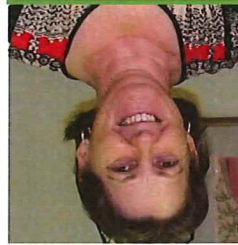
- Just before Christmas we offered a two session *Self-Care for the Season* program to support women in addressing the choices and challenges of maintaining healthy routines and positive self-care. 12 women attended.
- A 7 week *Stop Smoking Program* supported 5 women in understanding tobacco addiction.
- *Well-Woman Clinics* were held in Paqtnkek and Hare Boucher with 9 women accessing care.

Makes you feel like whatever you experience – others have the same difficulties. -Self-care participant

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 supports.

Jean Crosby
Mental Health



Dr. Daphne MacLean
Physician



Jessica Heidebrecht
Addiction Services



Kathryn Boyd
Nurse Practitioner



Support and Education Programs: In-Centre Support Programs



Support and Education 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 from February through April, we complete income tax returns for low-income women and their family members. This ensures people receive the full amount of their return. Many of the people who benefited were seniors and women from marginalized communities.

During and post income tax season, we completed a total of 217 income tax returns. Most were for the 2016 taxation year. Some dated back to the 2011 taxation year.

The majority of people who come for help with their income taxes are women who are living well below the poverty line. This year we found:

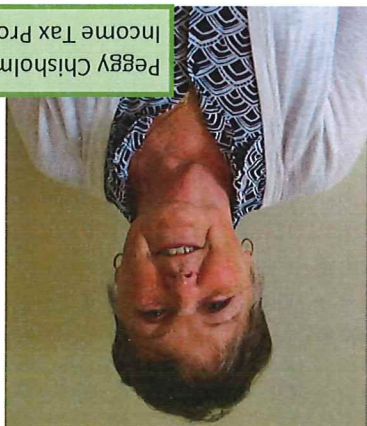
- 82% are women; 18% are men.
 - 41% report as single; 22% married; 18% divorced or separated; 11% common-law; 8% widowed.
 - 26% had an income between \$15,000 - \$19,999 annually; 54% had an income less than \$10,000 which is a 20% increase over last year.
- Distressingly 16% had an income of less than \$4,999.

Managing Anxiety Group

Our four session *Managing Anxiety Group* for women focussed on learning about symptoms of and treatment for anxiety as well as learning skills and approaches for managing anxiety. Feedback provided during the sessions was positive and the resource materials provided and skills taught were helpful in managing anxiety symptoms. November 2016.

Legal Aid Outreach

The Women's Centre partners with the Antigonish office of Nova Scotia Legal Aid to provide law-related information, resources, summary advice and advocacy to women who come to the Centre. Legal Aid Lawyer Nicole Rovers offers Legal Aid Outreach services to women on a monthly basis, with the exception of the summer months. Over the year, 14 women accessed the program for support with family law issues including separation/divorce, common-law relationships and custody/access, property and estate law, health and injury, and discrimination and harassment. Although not all women who want to access the program are eligible due to Nova Scotia Legal Aid parameters and regulations, many women reported their appreciation of being able to access legal help in an environment that feels familiar, safe, supportive and private, and at no cost.



Peggy Chisholm
Income Tax Program



Support and Education Programs: In-Centre Support Programs

Pagtnkek Mi'kmaq Nation Outreach Services

The AWRCSASA, at the invitation of the Pagtnkek Mi'kmaq Nation Health Centre, has been offering outreach services on a weekly basis to women and girls in Pagtnkek since September 2010. We facilitated an Inspire program and provided information, problem-solving support, and advocacy. At the end of August 2016, in consultation with the Pagtnkek Health Director, we agreed we could support ongoing work in Pagtnkek without providing outreach services.

Creative Circle

Every Monday afternoon, September through June, our Creative Circle provides women with a space to come together and to talk about what is happening in their lives and in the world. Again this year Creative Circle was one of our most popular programs. Circle participants worked on knitting, crocheting, embroidery, and more. Over the year, 45 women participated with 11-16 attending monthly.

Nurture Night

Nurture Night focussed on self-care and nurturing through creativity and art and sharing and connecting with others in the community. Two dogs from the St. John's Ambulance Therapy Dog Program provided pet contact. 50 attendees.

Poverty Alleviation Partnerships

The AWRCSASA partners with the Antigonish Kinsmen Club and the Sisters of St. Martha to help women manage emergency expenses. This year 66 women were helped through the Kinsmen fund and 86 women through the Sisters of St. Martha fund with emergency power/oil bills, prescriptions and medical needs, food, rental, insurance and phone bill arrears.



Women's Appreciation Lunch

We hosted a Women's Appreciation Lunch for 20 women who are regular visitors to the Women's Centre and do not have a large support network to see them through the holiday season. We provided a hot lunch, gave each a small gift bag, and offered an individual appreciation of their positive attributes. December 2016.

Working With Youth: The Inspire Program



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.

Over the years the Women's Centre has provided many programs for youth. Understanding the increased vulnerability of girls to 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.

The Inspire Program

Inspire is a multi-session 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 is based on the belief that when youth are supported in addressing the issues in their lives, they are more likely to make healthy choices and less likely to engage in risk taking behaviour. Inspire explores and encourages healthy relationships, self-care, and the development of critical thinking and problem solving skills. Gaining awareness and understanding of individual rights and responsibilities helps reduce the girls' vulnerability to sexual harassment, dating abuse, and sexual violence.

Inspire invites young women to engage in open and broad discussions on issues that impact their lives. The girls in each program decide which topics they want to talk about in Inspire. Each session consists of a "check-in" time for the girls to talk about what is going on in their lives, followed by a more focussed information sharing and discussion period. Inspire topics include consent, healthy relationships, violence prevention, healthy sexuality, communication skills, diversity and positive space, conflict resolution, healthy coping strategies for stress and anxiety, self care, and media analysis. Inspire addresses the negative messaging with which adolescent girls are inundated and provides a more critical analysis and perspective. Girls leave the program more knowledgeable and resilient and less vulnerable to violence. They have a greater understanding of themselves and the world around them.

In the 2016-2017 year, Inspire was interrupted by the NSTU work-to-rule job action. We offered Inspire in four locations to grade 8 girls.

- St. Andrew Junior School, Antigonish
- Tamarac Education Centre, Port Hawkesbury
- Paqtkek Mi'kmaq Nation
- Strait Area Women's Place

In their evaluations of the Inspire Program, participants shared the following:

- ♀ This group made me feel more confident. I liked that I got to learn about the other girl's opinions on things.
- ♀ What I like most about Inspire is... they taught us about issues that we will have to face in life.
- ♀ I want to tell the facilitators that... They did an amazing job and had a huge impact on my life.

Working with Youth: Girls' Groups



The Women's Centre offers girls' groups, girl - directed social action opportunities and support throughout the year. We are well respected in our community for our work with youth.

Girls Taking Action

Girls Taking Action, as a social action focussed, after-school program was offered at Strait Area Women's Place, Port Hawkesbury, for grade 9 girls attending the Strait Area Education and Recreation Centre. The participants initiated a number of actions over the year.

- To resist and counter hypersexualization they designed and ironed a slogan or image onto t-shirts and gave them out at their school's health fair. – *Be you bravely – You are Beautiful* (in multiple languages)

- To show how labels negatively affect girls' lives and the importance of loving and embracing who we are, the group created and directed a short video, *More Than Labels*.
- To encourage people to re-frame how they think about themselves and know that they are not alone in their struggles, they created a poster project finishing the sentence, *I wish I could tell....*



Girls Taking Action Group



Girls' Group "Girl Talk"

At the Dr JH Gillis Regional High School, we facilitated a girls group that focussed on welcoming newcomer youth to Antigonish and building support, friendship, and connection. Unfortunately, the program was interrupted after 5 sessions as work to rule began and we were unable to be in the school for programming purposes.

Girls' Group "Hot Topics"

At the request of the Dr. JH Gillis Regional High School we offered a program again this year for grade 9 and 10 girls struggling with issues in their lives. In *Hot Topics*, an 8 week group, the girls developed community standards to guide their discussions on mental health, sex, relationships, healthy eating, stress, body image and sexuality. The group offered a safe and supportive environment where the girls could feel comfortable to share and learn from each other.

Working with Youth : Healthy Relationships For Youth Program



Healthy Relationships for Youth (HRY) is a school-based violence prevention program offered in partnership with the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre & Sexual Assault Services Association and various communities, schools and school boards around the province of Nova Scotia. Many of these schools serve predominantly rural areas. The HRY program consists of a series of twelve cumulative sessions delivered by trained youth facilitators within the grade nine health curriculum. The interactive sessions are designed to reduce the risk of violence for youth through developing their skills and knowledge about creating and maintaining healthy relationships.

Healthy Relationships for Youth

HRY incorporates an intersectional lens which allows students to understand and make the links among issues related to different forms of oppression, exclusion and violence. It uses a strength-based approach helping students to develop a deeper understanding of diversity and to recognize and challenge sexism, racism, transphobia and homophobia as forms of violence that impact personal and social relationships. HRY has been cited as a best practice program for the way it involves youth as peer educators in the classroom, schools and communities.

Program Delivery

Program delivery was interrupted in the late fall and early winter by the NSTU work-to-rule job action that prevented teachers from supporting external or extra-curricular programs. In some schools, the full HRY program was delivered, in others it was partially delivered or presentations were substituted. Nonetheless, for the 2016-2017 school year, HRY trained 299 youth facilitators to deliver the program in 17 schools.

- HRY was delivered to 973 grade 9 students in 42 classes.
- Youth facilitator training took place around the province. Discussions focused on cyberbullying, hypersexualization, consent, healthy and unhealthy relationships, facilitation techniques, and gender identity and sexual orientation.
- HRY coordination is provided by 4 community-based coordinators in the different areas of the province. Overall provincial coordination is provided by the AWRCSASA.

During the 2016-2017 school year the HRY program was delivered in schools in the following areas:

- Strait Regional School Board – 10 schools
- Chignecto/Central Regional School Board – 4 schools
- South Shore Regional School Board – 1 schools
- Annapolis Valley Regional School Board – 2 schools



Arwen Sweet—HRY Provincial Coordinator
Faye Fraser—Violence Prevention Educator
Erin Wynn—SRSB Coordinator



Working with Youth : Healthy Relationships for Youth Program

What Difference Does HRY Make?

Each year, HRY Program staff do an extensive internal program evaluation over the summer. Recommendations for program changes and improvements are incorporated into the curriculum and training for the following year. The HRY program evaluation for 2015-2016 found the program is meeting its objectives with regard to grade 9 student engagement and peer facilitation/leadership development.

What students are saying about the HRY

Program

Grade nine student evaluation responses demonstrate that, on the whole, students participating in the HRY program are increasing both their knowledge and skills related to creating and maintaining healthy relationships. In particular, they self-identify a high level of ability to understand and identify different forms of violence, traits of healthy and unhealthy relationships, and knowing where to get help if they experience violence. They indicated they need more support to use assertive communication in conflict situations. The majority of students value healthy relationships education, embrace peer facilitation, and find the topics interesting and relevant.

I understand relationships better and feel more able to say 'no'. – Grade 9 Student

I liked the session when we talked about different genders because I watched as other minds were open about discussing LGBTQ and it opened my mind as well. – Grade 9 Student

I feel and act better in my friendships and I am more open to sharing me feelings. – Grade 9 Student

Student



Mount St. Vincent
Girls' Conference

Facilitator

It reminds me how much older students are actually role models for the grade 9s, whether or not you even know them. – SRSB Youth

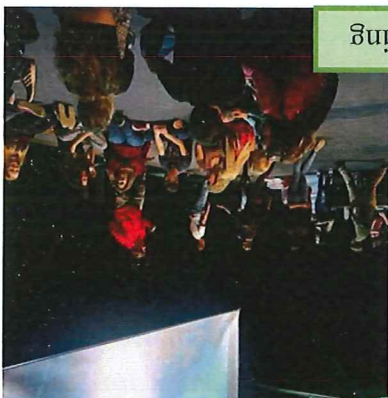
Facilitator

I developed public speaking, team building and leadership skills. I am a lot more comfortable talking with people I don't know. – SRSB Youth

Youth facilitators are an integral part of the HRY program. Their willingness to work in partnership with each other, the teacher, and the grade nine students provides a unique opportunity to engage with others and make a difference in the lives of their peers. Youth leaders reported increased confidence in their skills; especially public speaking, leadership and communication. Their knowledge of topics – especially diversity, hypersexualization, and hypermasculinity – has increased. They noted positive changes in their awareness of and attitude toward issues, self-awareness as role models, and ability to stand up against discrimination. This shift toward pro-social thinking and behaviour is an important outcome of the HRY program.

What the Youth Facilitators are saying about the HRY Program

HRV Training



Working with youth: Spark the Change



Spark the Change Retreat, April 2016

The *Spark the Change* Retreat focused on areas where HRY youth facilitators had requested more information to become better facilitators. Over two, 32 youth

facilitators and 9 HRY Program Coordinators from across the province gathered to talk about social justice, leadership, and LGBTQ+ inclusion. Workshops included *The Elephant in the Room: Diversity and Inclusion* with Shakira Weatherdon, *Self-Care as Warfare* with Charlotte Kiddell, *LGBTQ+ allyship in Nova Scotia* co-led by a grade 11 youth facilitator with Betsy MacDonald and Samantha Ross, and sessions on mental health and gender norms.

The youth appreciated opportunities to explore these topics further violence prevention, feminism, LGBTQ+ groups, and other social justice issues. In their evaluation more than half of the youth participants indicated that they were taking additional knowledge on the topics covered back to their communities.

Here is what some of our HRY Youth Facilitator Participants had to say:

This experience has helped me as a person and furthered my knowledge in actually making this world an equal place.
The most important thing was how feminism works and impacts each gender feels from gender roles.

Spark the Change Junior, March 2017

The theme for the *Spark the Change Junior* Antigonish March Break camp for youth ages 8-12 years was social justice action and change. Youth engaged in discussions, art projects, games and community-building focussing on oppression, liberation, inclusion, healthy relationships, racism, environmentalism and animal rights. There was a very positive response from the 18 youth who attended the camp as well as their parents.



Here is what some of our HRY Regional Coordinator Participants had to say as the most important thing they took away from Spark the Change:

- [This event] helped me as a coordinator to hear more of what youth are living across NS at their schools. I gained ideas for HRY trainings.*
- This weekend offered youth a space to dig in deeper than they regularly get to. The value of having several days together to build relationships, develop analysis, and share our opinions was enormous. So often youth relay to me that they don't have these spaces in their home communities – that feminism, social justice, or battling homophobia can often be looked down upon and silenced. For those youth to come to a space where their engagement and enthusiasm is not just acknowledged but celebrated is really special. I believe that Spark the Change is a unique camp, one that works hard to establish safe, brave spaces for teens to come together and have difficult conversations. The relationships built across these few days add resiliency and community to the lives of our youth facilitators, and support them in the multiple battles they are fighting daily. I believe this is a space where youth feel seen, heard, honoured, and valued.*



Youth Related Work

Canadian Women's Foundation National Strategy on Teen Healthy Relationship Programs

The HRY program is completing the third and final year of funding through the Canadian Women's Foundation's (CWF) National Strategy on Teen Healthy Relationship Programs. The AWRCSASA is a partner with and participates on the CWF Leadership Roundtable that is working on a 3 year project, *Building the National Field for Teen Healthy Relationships*.

The CWF brings together grantees to share information and build organizational skills on issues related to teen healthy relationships programs. This year we participated in the following webinars and gatherings.

Canadian Women's Foundation – Maritime Grantees Gathering

- Representatives of the CWF Maritime Grantees Teen Healthy Relationship projects gathered in Halifax to our work we, our commonalities, and how we might work more closely together. Organizations participating included Partners for Youth, New Brunswick, HRY – AWRCSASA, Nova Scotia, Leave Out Violence Everywhere – LOVE, Nova Scotia, and Women's Network and Family Violence Prevention Services, PEI. June 2016.
- CWF webinars in which we participated**
 - Cultural Competency*, February 2017 with Richard of LOVE
 - Rape Culture*, April 2017, with Kayella (SAVIS) and Bre (SERC).



CWF Grantee Regional Meeting, June 2016



Erin Wynn-Spark the Change



Student Performance – Slut Shaming Conference

- HRV staff presented at the following events:
 - Nova Scotia Auxiliary Health Authority.** HRY presented the basic building blocks of healthy relationships, how to support gay and queer youth, how to honour youth voice and community supports for young people. 200 attendees. October 2016.
 - STFX B.Ed Professional Development Day.** HRY Staff presented two workshops for pre-service teachers:
 - how to have difficult conversations and hold space for youth* provided space to share experiences of navigating difficult conversations with youth and learn activities to create safe, trust-based spaces with youth. Participants felt better equipped to handle issues of sexism, racism, and homophobia in classrooms and felt they had more tools to use.
 - consent* made connections to media and its impact on gender stereotypes and hypersexualization, consent and coercion, slut shaming and victim blaming, and cyber violence. Participants gained resources and information and acquired skills to support students and disclosures. 30 people attended. February 2017.

Youth Related Workshops, Programs and Collaborations



Consent and Sexualized Violence Presentations

- At the Chedabucto Education Centre, Guysborough, we first met with teachers and provided an overview of the presentation on consent we then did with students in grade 9-12. We encouraged teachers to continue discussions about consent with their students. April 2016.
- At Strait Area Education and Recreation Centre, we facilitated a lunch and learn for grade 9 students on *building a consent culture within peer groups and community*. Students noted they need more safe spaces for these discussions as they face these situations throughout their high school years. November 2016.
- *Waycobah Health Fair* presentation on consent to grades 9-12 classes.

Mental Wellness, Self Acceptance, Gender Norms and Healthy Relationships

For the **Tamarac Education Centre's Youth Health Fair** we facilitated workshops for grade 7 and 8 students on *Mental Wellness and on Body Image*. The sessions focused on developing a critical analysis of media and advertisements, the impact on the self-esteem of youth, and on creating and protecting mental wellness. 60 grade students participated. May 2016.

At the **MSVU Girls Conference: New Horizons, New Challenges – Girls Making a Difference**, we hosted a workshop, *Self love in Action*, that focussed on challenging the many barriers that exist when trying to develop self acceptance. In a collective activity, the participants identified barriers and then came up with ideas to address them. 40 participants. Halifax. March 2017.

For the **StFX Development Studies Department's Youth Activism Conference** we facilitated a *Gender Norms and Healthy Relationships* workshop focussed on socially constructed gendered expectations and their effects on ourselves, our communities, and our relationships. The workshop allowed participants to think deeply about gender policing, manipulation, violence, and prevention. March 2017.

Slut Shaming: Naming and Unmasking the Violence Forum

With funding from Justice Canada, we organized a *Slut Shaming: Naming and Unmasking the Violence* forum to talk about and combat slut shaming. Emily Lindin of the UnSlut Project gave an evening keynote presentation where she spoke about slut shaming and sexual bullying in colleges and high schools across the United States. On the following day, she spoke about many issues connected to slut shaming and how to respond to slut shaming incidents.

Forum presentations included: *The hypersexualization of women in sports* by Charlene Weaving, *The hypersexualization of indigenous and racialized women* by Robyn Bourgeois, *Addressing Cyberviolence and Cybermisogyny* by Dee Doley, and *Community reactions and discussions about SLUT – The Play*, facilitated by its director Ryane Chisholm and cast member Catherine MacIntyre. A diverse youth panel discussed the impacts of slut shaming and sexual bullying and what we can do about it. Youth from the HRY program at Dr. JH Gillis Regional High School produced a short video depicting some of the many stereotypes that are placed on people who are labelled “sluts”. Their drama class created and performed a powerful piece on the impact of slut shaming with first voice narratives. 60 participants. June 2016.

An outcome of the forum was the request to facilitate a workshop on combatting slut shaming and sexual bullying during the **Leader's Forum at StFX**. The workshop reached residence life staff, student athletes, volunteers within StFX and Residence Advisors and engaged them in developing a personal action plan to combat slut-shaming. 150 students attended the workshop. August 2016



Youth Related Workshops, Programs and Collaborations

New Brunswick Community College/StFX Research Project

We are participating in a SSHRC grant project, *The Contribution of Pro-Social Modelling and Peer Mentoring to the Development of Self-Esteem and Positive Social Skills in Young Females: A longitudinal study on the creation and implementation of an intervention program* with members of the New Brunswick Community College - St. Andrews campus nursing faculty and Chris Gilham, StFX Faculty of Education. The purpose of this research is to determine effective interventions to strengthen pro-social skills in pre-teen and teen girls and to determine the effectiveness of peer-to-peer mentoring in this process.

YWCA Halifax Safety NET Project

The Safety Net project, coordinated through the YWCA Halifax, engaged female-identified youth in conversations about cyberviolence and cybermisogyny with the goal of creating a provincial strategy to address online violence against young women and girls. Several resources were created.



Amplify brought together youth program facilitators from across Canada to share practices and knowledge and engage in dialogue and facilitated conversations about funding, evaluation, engagement, justifying gendered spaces, and inclusive practices. Jovenue, Quebec. November 2016.

Zoom in on Girls, August 2016

The *Zoom in on Girls* event, held annually by the Girls Action Foundation, focussed on addressing the challenges and vulnerabilities of girls living in the Atlantic Provinces, how service providers meet these challenges, and the pressing concerns of girls programming. Facilitators reflected on how they could create more inclusive practices that are representative of the diverse populations we all serve. At the conference, the Women's Centre presented two workshops:

- *Self Love is Radical* included activities grade 8 girls in inspire have found helpful. 8 participants.
- a *sex education workshop* focussed on ways to deliver inclusive, comprehensive sexuality education to youth. We spoke of pleasure narratives, queering sex ed, and incorporating sex positivity into our lessons. Participants said they found the session useful and left feeling they had a deeper analysis around sex education as a social justice issue. 20 participants.

Sharing Our Knowledge and Experience



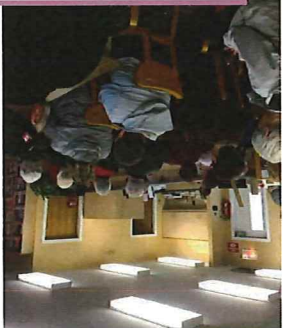
The Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services Association has an in-depth knowledge of the issues impacting women in our community and province and expertise in providing feminist, woman-sensitive services and programs. We receive many community requests to share our knowledge and experience. Over the year we provided tours of the Women's Centre, participated in discussions about issues impacting women's lives, and showcased our services at events. We discussed with students and visitors poverty, sexualized violence, and other issues we see in our community and the ways in which they are connected with the community health and well-being.

♂ We provided tours to four classes of StFX nursing students where we talked about our services and programs, the issues we address and the approach we take to our work. The students begin to see the ways in which mental health, poverty, and sexualized violence are intricately interconnected and addressed in our work.

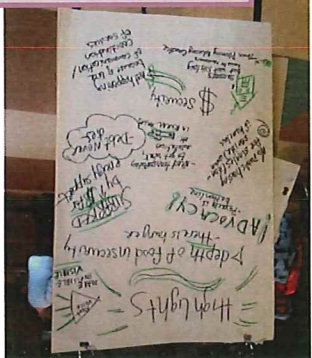
♂ We staffed booths at several community events where we featured the work of the Women's Centre. These included the 55+ Volunteer Fair, Have Boucher Luncheon and Fashion Show (a fundraiser for the *Justice Matters for Women*), and the Antigonish Highlands Street Fair.

♂ We hosted 7 women leader research fellows visiting the International Centre for Women's Leadership, Coady International Institute. It was an opportunity to talk about our work and to hear about the work they are doing on women's empowerment and community development in Tunisia, Nigeria, Cameroon, India, Krygyz Republic, Nepal and Zimbabwe. November 2016.

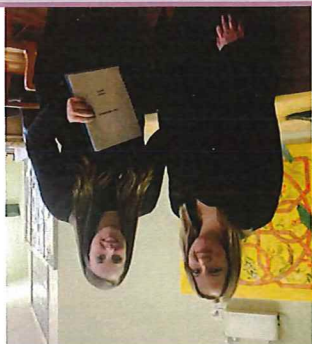
♂ We met with the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women and their newly appointed Council members and provided a presentation of the work of Women Centres in Nova Scotia. We talked specifically about the work of the AWRCSASA and the issues facing girls and women accessing our Centre. November 2016.



Legal Information Session



APRC IDEP 2016 Insights



Student Placement
Leslie Lynch and Katlyn Cameron,

Women's Equality, Feminism and Community



The Women's Centre celebrates the work of women and, in response to requests from women who use the centre as well as the general public, develops and delivers workshops and presentations that focus on aspects of women's lives. We cooperate with others in planning and sponsoring community education programs and events. We participate in workshops, focus groups and events at the invitation of other agencies and organizations.

International Women's Week, March 6-11, 2017
To celebrate International Women's Week, the Women's Centre together with community organizations and STFX hosted a series of events and activities. This year's theme, *Creative Resistance*, engaged feminists, activists, scholars and communities in arts-based acts of resilience and resistance – art installations, dance pieces, storytelling, and workshops focussed on issues of sexism, racism, and homophobia. Businesses supported the week by offering venues and/or free coffee. Local media coverage events extensive. Attendance during the week exceeded 760.



Women's Equality, Feminism and Community



International Women's Week events included:

- ♀ **Sonita**, a documentary of a young Afghan refugee in Iran who resists forced marriage. Sponsored by the Antigoniish International Film Festival. 75 people attended.
- ♀ **Melinda by the Sea Paint Party**, an afternoon of painting (with women ranging in age from 16 to 80) 18 participants.
- ♀ **Pizza and Poster Making for IWD March**, a poster making evening for the IWD March. A collective banner celebrated the theme "Creative Resistance". 30 participants.
- ♀ **Wellness: We All Need It**, engaged participants in creative activities focussed on mental health and wellbeing. 25 participants.
- ♀ **International Women's Day, March 8**
 ♀ **Free Coffee for Women**. Fifteen (15) local businesses offered women a free cup of coffee and a card with a woman positive affirmation
 ♀ **Women's March**. On a rainy afternoon, 100 people gathered outside of the Coady for a rally to start the IWD March. Wyanne Sandler emceed, Robyn Bourgeois sang the *Strong Women's Song*, speakers included Mayor Laurie Boucher, Naima Chowdhury, Coady International Institute, and Lucille Harper, AWRCSASA.
- ♀ **Creative Resistance: Art Exhibition**, the feature event for IWD, was a powerful, collective exploration of the ways 36 female-identifying artists understand and engage with gender, resistance, and joy. The evening, co-hosted by Arwen and Abena from Stories n' Stanzas, included spoken word performances, interpretive dance, and ended with El Jones performing several honest and raw spoken word pieces. The StFX Art Gallery was standing room only packed with 200 people.
- ♀ **Black Women's Lives Matter: Panel Discussion**, began with *Women, Walking*, a dance performance by Lillona Quarmyne. Lorraine Reddick moderated a panel discussion with Sylvia Paris and El Jones speaking to ongoing challenges, forms of resilience, and positive changes taking place in the lives of Black women in this province. 100 participants.
- ♀ **Women's Breakfast: Creative Resistance**, honoured Alice Hoskins, Tila Kellman spoke to Alice's life and work. Janette Fecteau, poet and visual artist, Sally Clarke, Antigoniish Creative Dance Association, and Emmy Alcorn, Director, Mulgrave Road Theatre reflected on their work as acts of resistance and what it has meant in their lives. 65 participants.
- ♀ **Feminist Hive: Femininity and Sexuality**, organized by Women and Gender Studies
 ♀ **Family Singalong**, an intergenerational event where families sang and played together.
- ♀ **Feminist Cabaret! Resistance!**, an evening celebrating women. Jenn Laudadio and Lillona Quarmyne emceed and entertained along with 20 different performances from women and allies in the community. A dance party followed featuring some great female artists. 150 people attended.

Working for Change: Engaging with Government



The Women's Centre engages with all levels of government on policy issues and government direction with respect to issues impacting women in our province and, especially, in our rural communities. This past year we participated in the following consultations and events.

Status of Women Canada – Campus Violence Projects

Status of Women Canada hosted 2 conference calls with organizations funded to promote equality and reduce violence on post-secondary campuses. SWC shared their preliminary findings report on the outcomes achieved through the grants and what they identified as 'the learnings'. The AWRCSASA/StFX partnership project, *Engaging Young People to Prevent Violence against Women at StFX*, met outcomes similar to others across Canada. April 2016.

Engagement on a Federal Strategy against Gender-Based Violence

Patty Hajdu, Minister for Status of Women Canada, hosted a roundtable discussion to inform the development of a federal strategy against gender-based violence. She met with representatives from 20 Atlantic Canada, community-based, front-line service organizations addressing gender-based violence – primarily coming from sexual assault centres, transition houses and shelters and women's centres. Participants identified key and emerging issues, what is working, and priority areas for federal government action. Issues identified were children and youth access to pornography, human trafficking and sexual exploitation of women and girls, challenges for rural women accessing services, better education for lawyers, judges and police about sexual violence, the increasing complexity of the issues women bring to services, how gender and racial biases are perpetuated by policies, and the breadth of gender-based violence perpetrated against women, girls, trans and individuals coming from minority and marginalized groups. July 2016.

Nova Scotia's Action Plan for an Aging Population

The Department of Seniors invited community organizations and community members to join the conversation to inform Nova Scotia's action plan for an aging population. It was an opportunity to speak to some of the needs we see with older women in the community. July 2016.

House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women

The House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women invited Lucille Harper to contribute to their work on *Violence against Young Women and Girls in Canada*. She spoke to five issues and made five recommendations: address the culture in which sexualized violence and cyber-violence: slut-shaming and slut-blaming are perpetrated; implement an opt-in system to restrict children's access to pornography; look at the Swedish model for ending the luring and trafficking of women and girls; amend immigration policies and legislation to ensure the secure status and protection of non-status, refugee and immigrant women in Canada, and train police and crown's to work from a trauma-informed approach. November 2016.

Employment Support Income Assistance (ESIA) Transformation Session for External Stakeholders

We provided comments to the Department of Community Services at an external stakeholders meeting seeking input on ESIA programs and supports, financial benefit approach, and income security options for *Designing the New System*. November 2016.

Provincial Deputy Ministers' Reception

The Province of Nova Scotia and StFX invited people from the community and the university to a reception with provincial Deputy Ministers as part of their meeting at StFX. Tareq Haddad and Majd Al Zhourti spoke about their experiences leaving Syria as refugees and coming to settle with their families in Antigonish. We connected with some of the Deputy Ministers in departments connected with our work. November 2016.