

Working Together for Change: Raising Awareness, Taking Action on Violence Against Women and Girls, and Gender-based Violence

Circles of Support and Change: Transferring Rural Indigenous Practices to Other Rural Contexts

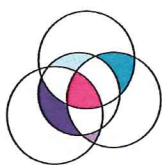
We provide support by:

- ◆ Establishing *partnerships and building connections* for survivors in our communities to find, access, and navigate formal and informal resources.
- ◆ Strengthening the *capacity and resiliency of leaders* in our communities to work towards grassroots change.
- ◆ Creating spaces for *healing from all forms of trauma* in our communities and encouraging all people to create *inclusive communities* free from violence, prejudice, shame, and oppression, like racism and sexism.
- ◆ Raising *community awareness* of gender-based violence, consent, and healthy relationships.
- ◆ Upholding our unique *community values* while understanding and acting upon the *Mi'kmaq sacred teachings* of Bravery, Love, Honesty, Wisdom, Truth, Humility, Patience, and Respect.
- ◆ Equipping survivors in our communities with *skills to guide them in their healing journeys*, as well as their supporters with skills to help restore wellness.
- ◆ Supporting *self-care practices for survivors* in our communities to uplift themselves and to help guide one another.



The Circles of Support and Change team enjoyed a retreat at Union House in Canso. This was a much needed opportunity to reconnect after a very difficult year of doing community development work during a pandemic. Despite the challenges, the team was able to find many creative ways to support their communities. Taking activities and events outdoors, using virtual platforms and online events, creating Facebook groups to share information and updates, and having small groups and one-on-one discussions were among some of the strategies that the community facilitators employed. In addition, the pandemic allowed for continued learning and professional development for the team, and a deepening of the knowledge and connection to Indigenous teachings and practices that provide a foundation for the approach and promising practices being tested in the project.

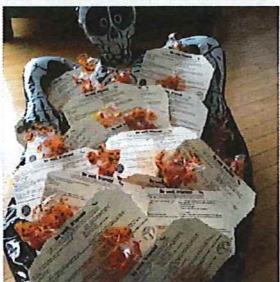
From the top: Project Coordinator, Karla Stevens; African Nova Scotian Community Facilitator Tara Reddick, Retreat Facilitator Andrea Currie, Strait Richmond Community Facilitator Danielle Martell, Canso Community Facilitator Michelle Newell, Project Evaluator Nancy O'Regan, African Nova Scotian Community Facilitator Tonya Pelley.



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- ♦ *African Nova Scotian Communities: Lincolnville, Sunnyville, and Upper Big Tracadie*
- ♦ *Canso and surrounding communities*
- ♦ *Strait Richmond communities*



African Nova Scotian communities

One of the events that stood out this year for Community Facilitators Tara and Tonya was an online event, *Soulful Words on Love*, a multi-generational poetry event that brought people together to celebrate love and talk about what is important in healthy and loving relationships.

"We've been building that trust and letting her know we care; we're there; we want to hear her story. This made an impact, she knew she had a support system to go to. A circle for her." - Tonya Pelley

"People are opening up and we're gaining trust, and talking with survivors. Even if it's just one person feeling empowered and taking a leadership role, we're encouraging survivors to move at their own pace, making sure they are safe and can access services." - Tara Reddick

Strait Richmond Communities

Danielle had the opportunity to represent the COSC project in a community event called "Trunk or Treat", where community organizations decorated their trunks and handed out treat bags with mental health and wellness resources. The focus of the project in this region changed from being based at the NSCC to being based in community. Danielle spent much of the year building relationships and doing an informal needs assessment with small groups to guide the development of the next steps of the project in this region.

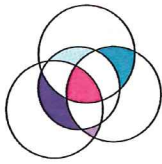
"This program is so needed in Richmond county; you don't understand how this will impact the community." - Richmond County community member

Canso and area communities

The Canso steering committee remained active throughout the year, with monthly meetings, events, and action planning. One such action was the Community Garden Path Creation Sessions where community members created their own garden stone to contribute to a path that will be used as a space for healing, support, centering, and grounding. The final stone was placed as part of the community's recognition of the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women on December 6th. An office for the COSC project in Canso was also established at Union House this year, which has had a great impact in the community.

"Community members are taking part in tasks; it creates encouragement for survivors to lead events and creates inclusion for people to feel like a part of the whole project." - Michelle Newell





Working Together for Change: Raising Awareness, Taking Action on Violence Against Women and Girls, and Gender-based Violence

Minister's Advisory Council on Gender-Based Violence

Wyanne Sandler, and former AWRCSSA ED, Lucille Harper, are members of the *Minister's Advisory Council on the Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence*. This group was established in 2016 and is currently providing input into the development of the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence*. The National Action Plan will address the root causes and systemic issues that perpetuate gender-based violence and the factors that act as barriers to accessing supports, services, and protections.

Community Consultations for the National Action Plan to End GBV

To inform the development of the National Action Plan, members of the Advisory Council were asked to consult with individuals and organizations in communities across the country. In our area, we focused on the opportunity to bring a rural, intersectional, social determinants of health lens to the discussions.

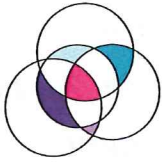
In February and March, we hosted 11 consultations with diverse participants speaking from community-specific and provincial perspectives, including:

- ◆ Women's Centres Connect, the Nova Scotia Association of Women's Centres
- ◆ Antigonish Poverty Reduction Coalition, focusing on Antigonish County
- ◆ Canso Women, a small very rural community
- ◆ Mi'kmaw Women, Paqtnkek, a rural Indigenous community
- ◆ Senior Women, with participants from across Nova Scotia
- ◆ Newcomer Women, immigrant and refugee newcomers living in Antigonish
- ◆ Post-secondary students and staff concerned with sexualized violence, StFX University
- ◆ AWRCSSA staff and board
- ◆ Strait Area Women's Place and Leaside Society, Port Hawkesbury, Strait Area
- ◆ African Nova Scotia Women, Upper Big Tracadie and Guysborough County
- ◆ 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals living in the Antigonish area

The discussions focused on the specific issues, concerns, and perspectives of the respective group. Each group was invited to talk about different aspects of personal and systemic violence perpetrated against women and girls and members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, services and supports available in their areas, accessibility of those services and supports, prevention programs and initiatives, and the ways in which living and working in rural Nova Scotia impacted their experiences with gender-based violence. Groups were invited to make recommendations to the federal government that would inform a national strategy. An extensive report was compiled and shared with participants as well as with the policy-makers working on the National Action Plan.

Federal Roundtable on GBV and Covid

Wyanne Sandler participated in a provincial roundtable with Nova Scotia MPs and Minister Maryam Monsef on gender-based violence and the impacts of COVID-19. She emphasized some of the systemic barriers and issues that can make it more difficult for women to leave abusive relationships, such as the lack of affordable housing, economic insecurity, and punitive responses within justice and child protection systems.



Working Together for Change: Poverty Reduction Work

Antigonish Poverty Reduction Coalition

The Antigonish Poverty Reduction Coalition (APRC) is a group of individuals and organizations working together to eliminate poverty in Antigonish Town and County. The AWRCSSA has been a key voice at the APRC table since its inception, and Wyenne Sandler currently chairs the group.

This year, the APRC engaged with elected representatives at all levels of government to advocate for more sustainable income supports as part of economic recovery plans emerging from the pandemic. The APRC met with MP Sean Fraser and Senator Mary Coyle to advocate for a basic income program, and prepared submissions for the federal and provincial departments of finance in advance of their budgets. The coalition also prepared and submitted a brief around quality of life indicators.

For the International Day to Eradicate Poverty (IDEP) on October 16th, the APRC organized a municipal forum poverty, coinciding with the municipal elections. This was an important opportunity to build relationships with municipal councils and get commitments from them on actions to reduce poverty. The event had good participation from candidates and the general public.

The AWRCSSA also provided data collection support to the CCPA-NS (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives Nova Scotia) for the updating of the livable wage calculation for Antigonish.

In early 2021, the APRC submitted a successful proposal for a Building Vibrant Communities to hire a community navigator and to support the creation of community pantries in Antigonish.



Antigonish Poverty Reduction Coalition

CANDIDATES FORUM ON POVERTY

JOIN MUNICIPAL CANDIDATES FOR A
CONVERSATION ABOUT THEIR PROPOSED
ACTIONS FOR ADDRESSING POVERTY IN
ANTIGONISH TOWN AND COUNTY

Friday, October 16th
12:00-1:30 PM

Please see the APRC facebook page for
the invite link or email
aprc.awrc@gmail.com

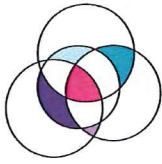
This event will be also livestreamed on
facebook

Antigonish Food Security Association

The Antigonish Food Security Coalition (AFSC) brings together individuals and organizations in the community who are concerned about food security to share information and collaborate on activities that raise awareness about and help address food security. This year, food insecurity increased significantly due to the pandemic. With so many community programs that people rely on (such as the hot lunch program) closed this year, the work of the AFSA took on even greater importance. Our work included:

- the **Food Box Program**, a cost-shared program which saw more than **25 lower-income families** receive a subsidized box of produce and eggs from local producers at less than half the regular cost;
- the **Community Garden Box** program provided people with community garden boxes;
- the AWRCSSA partnered with **Kids First** and the **Antigonish Farmer's Market** to provide **market money** to families in need; and
- the AWRCSSA engaged in **research and advocacy** about food centres, school lunch programs, and a national food policy.

Our IDEP event was a Forum on Poverty



Working Together for Change: Supporting the Well-being of Women and Community

The Women's Centre takes a social determinants of health approach in looking at issues that impact the health and wellbeing of women, families, and our communities. We work with our communities, the province, and at a national level to create a healthier and more just world.

Women's Centre Connect

Through Women's Centres Connect, we work collaboratively as nine women centres across the province to advance the concerns of women who use our services and programs. Connect provides an important opportunity for us to network, share information and support, engage in shared advocacy, and support one another as executive directors.

Trafficking and Exploitation Services System (TESS)

The AWRCSSA participates in the Guysborough/Antigonish/Pictou (GAP) Regional Committee for TESS. This is an opportunity to engage in shared advocacy, networking, and problem-solving to support the needs of women and youth who are victim to commercial sexual exploitation. This year, we contributed to the TESS services directory as well as engaged in mapping systems and services in our area to identify gaps we can collectively address.

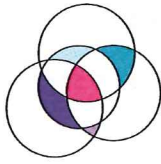
The Women's Centre participated in **Community Initiatives and Events** related to our work.

- ♦ Annie Chau, Tara Reddick, and board member Laura Pickersgill were part of the organizing committee for the **Black Lives Matter** march and rally in June, and many AWRCSSA staff participated. It was estimated that between 3,000-5,000 people took part.
- ♦ The AWRCSSA partnered with **X-Project** and **A Roof Over Your Head** to secure funding from the United Way for Chromebooks and phones for community members without access to this communication technology.
- ♦ Wynne Sandler was one of the panelists for the **Women's Voices for Peace E-conference** for a session on responding to sexual and gender-based violence in the COVID era. The conference was organized by women leaders who are graduates of the Coady International Institute on the 20th anniversary of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.
- ♦ Sheila Booth and Olivia Landry shared skills and ideas about **youth engagement** with colleagues at the **Réseau-Femmes Colombie-Britannique** in Vancouver. The sessions took place over a series of two webinars.
- ♦ A number of AWRCSSA staff participated in the **SPARK a Connection** event. This was a learning event to address social isolation in our communities in partnership with the Community Health Boards of Antigonish, Guysborough, and Richmond-Strait, and the Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library.
- ♦ Annie Chau participated in providing feedback and analysis to **Engage NS** about their **Quality of Life Survey**.

We participated on community and regional committees:

Strait Area Inter-Agency Committee on Domestic and Sexual Violence meets monthly in Port Hawkesbury. Organizational updates and emerging issues are identified at each meeting. Circles of Support Community Facilitator Danielle Martell co-chairs the committee.

Outreach Worker Marcia Connolly attends the **Rural Strategic Care Network** and **Community Service Providers Network** in Guysborough. Service providers in rural communities are able to network and find



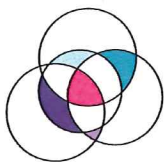
Working Together for Change: Supporting the Well-being of Women and Community

Other **Community Initiatives and Events** related to our work include.

- ♦ The AWRCSSA partnered with Women's Wellness Within and the Paqtnkek Health Centre to hold a free doula training for Paqtnkek community members in September. The event was sponsored by the Eastern Community Health Board. All spots were filled. There is interest to hold more trainings in the diverse, underserved, rural communities in our area and to support the development of an Indigenous doula curriculum.



- ♦ The AWRCSSA supported the second phase of funding from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research to look at Indigenous gender and wellness via community-based research in Paqtnkek, building upon years of work in these areas. The project is guided by Paqtnkek Health Director Juliana Julian, Master's student and Paqtnkek community leader Molly Peters, St.FX professor Jane McMillan, and Annie Chau. With COVID-19, intergenerational and gender-inclusive gatherings to conduct this research on gender and sexual wellness across the life stages were put on hold. The research aims to shed light on Indigenizing consent. The project will continue into next year.
- ♦ Over this year, the AWRCSSA made several public statements condemning systemic racism, i.e. white supremacy, and violence locally and around the world and uniting with others to take a stand. We recognize the power we have as an organization to amplify voices that have been made marginalized.

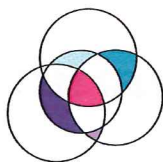


Our Commitment to Learning

The Women's Centre supports staff in attending workshops, conferences, training sessions, and webinars that increase their knowledge about issues facing those they work with and build their capacity to respond effectively. This year, our focus for personal and professional development was on worker wellness and racial justice. We engaged and planned for internal conversations and work on these themes, as well as took advantage of the many opportunities for online learning that were available this year.

Some of the personal and professional learning opportunities that staff engaged in were:

- **Wellness Wednesdays:** Karla Stevens organized a series of workshops for the Circles of Support and Change and AWRCSSA staff focused on maintaining and exploring our own personal wellness during the pandemic. They took place from May to July 2020, with topics that included yoga, coping with the pandemic and anxiety, mindset assessments, grounding, nutrition, and guided meditation.
- **Hollaback Bystander Intervention Training:** Several staff members attended online trainings organized by Hollaback on bystander intervention (particularly in cases of anti-Asian racism), implicit bias, and conflict de-escalation.
- **Anti-colonial Approach to Gender Based Violence with Indigenous Communities:** Moraig Macgillivray participated in a webinar that looked at colonization as a form of gender-based violence. Presenters discussed differences between decolonization and anti-colonialism, highlighting that decolonization can tend to be performative and symbolic only and can actually perpetuate systemic injustices by allowing the status quo to persist.
- **A Therapist's Path for Exploring Implicit Bias and Racial Trauma:** Pam Rubin and Nancy Gray participated in three two-hour workshops. Themes covered in the first two sessions were: definitions and examples of implicit bias; implicit bias specific to the therapy context; microaggressions and their impacts; and exploring the meaning of why "race is always in the room."
- **Developmental Evaluation:** The Circles of Support and Change team took a continuing education course in Developmental Evaluation from October to November through the Coady International Institute. Developmental Evaluation is an exciting new approach to evaluation that enables social innovators, policy and program managers, and community leaders to design, monitor, and adapt social change initiatives in complex and uncertain environments. Our team was generously provided with full bursaries through the Women's Leadership program at the Coady.
- **Honoring Anti-Violence Workers:** Pam Rubin participated in the first two days of this Ending Violence Association BC's four-day conference. Sessions included sophisticated self-care workshops addressing COVID issues, a presentation on assessing and managing danger from stalkers (including the stalking of helping professionals), and inspiring keynotes from national leaders.
- **Anti-Racist Organizational Change at the AWRCSSA:** Many conversations were held with staff, board, and outside facilitators as we began to map our process of anti-racist organizational change at the AWRCSSA. We know that anti-oppression and justice work are part of our own wellbeing as individuals and as an organization, and we are committed to engaging in some deep learning and unlearning to make our organization more inclusive. Our conversations and planning culminated in a series of racial justice sessions to take place in the spring and summer of 2021, as a way to begin and ground this ongoing, lifelong work.



Funding Support

The work we do at the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services Association would not be possible without the support of our community, foundations, departments of government, and private donors.

We would like to thank all who provide support for our services and programs.

Direct Services are funded by:

- Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women
- Nova Scotia Health Authority
- Women and Gender Equality Canada
- Community donations

Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program is funded by:

- Nova Scotia Health Authority

Specialized Sexualized Violence Trauma Therapy Program is funded by:

- Nova Scotia Health Authority

Justice Matters for Women is funded by:

- Law Foundation of Nova Scotia

Antigonish Guysborough Immigrant Support Program is funded by:

- Nova Scotia Office of Immigration

Healthy Relationships for Youth Program is funded by:

- Public Health Agency of Canada
- Nova Scotia Department of Justice Community Grants
- Leacross Foundation

Girls Taking Action is funded by:

- Antigonish/Guysborough/Strait Richmond Community Health Boards

Circles of Support and Change: Transferring Successful Rural Indigenous Practices to Other Rural Contexts is funded by:

- Women and Gender Equality Canada

Increasing Awareness of the Criminal Justice System through Bystander Intervention Training is funded by:

- Department of Justice Canada

Summer Student positions are funded by:

- Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Advanced Education; Canada Summer Jobs Program through Employment and Skills Development Canada

Community Support

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

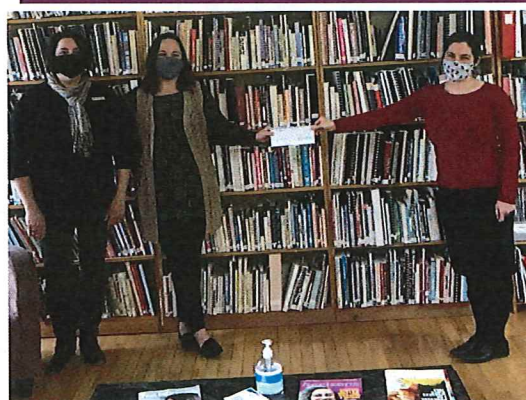
♥ Thank you ♥

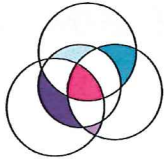
to our many individual donors
and

Sisters of St. Martha
Antigonish Kinsmen Club
Unifor Social Justice Fund
CUPE

St. FX University
St. FX Facilities Management
St. FX Athletics
Scotia Bank

East Coast Credit Union
Municipality of the Town of Antigonish
Guysborough Municipal Councilors
Shopper's Drug Mart
Tall and Small Café
Ticklegrass Records
United Way
Community Links

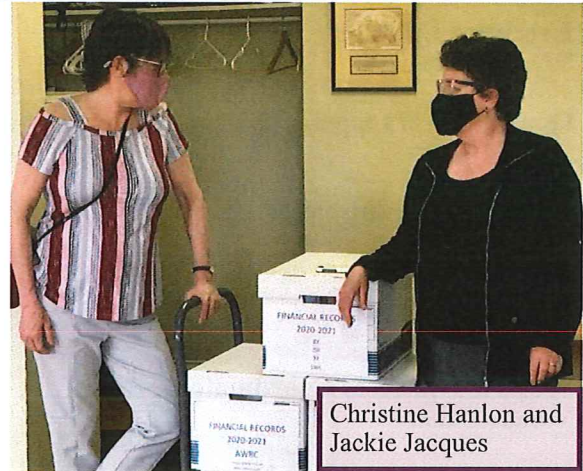




Financial Overview

The finance office accounts for funding and expenditures in a timely and efficient manner along with reporting the finances to the board and various funding agencies. The pandemic created a need to shift many of our financial duties from a paper-based system to a variety of online and electronic platforms. Adopting this new approach enabled the Women's Centre to continue providing the much needed support to women and their families.

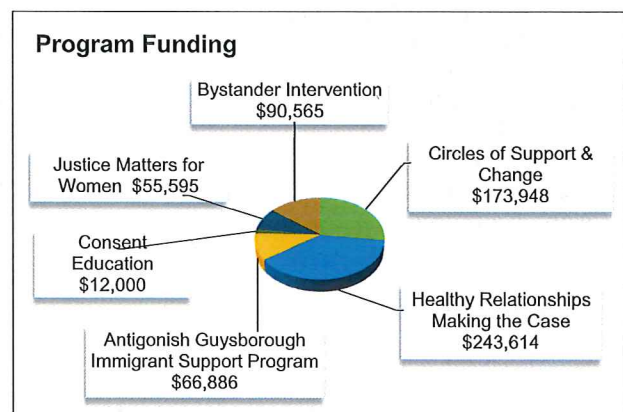
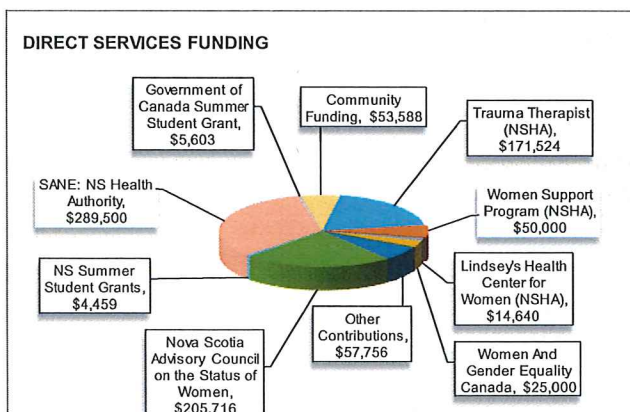
Funding for our direct services comes from the Department of Community Services through the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women. The Women's Support Services and Lindsay's Health Center for Women is funded by the NS Department of Health and Wellness. This department also funds our Sexual Assault Services, which provides the expertise and resources needed for our SANE and Trauma Therapist programs. The federal government contributed \$25,000 for COVID-19 emergency relief through Women and Gender Equality department. This year, we were overwhelmed by the incredible support from our community. Donations came through our annual direct mail campaign as well as via emails and our online form (CanadaHelps). This year, we saw a 100% increase in these donations. We are always indebted to the community for its support for the work we do. Our commitment to youth employment provides us with the benefit of having students work with us during the summer months. This is made possible through student funding programs run by the Canada Summer Jobs Program and the Nova Scotia Department of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism. It is federal, provincial, and community funding that supports the ongoing work of the Women's Centre. (Figure #1).

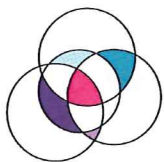


Christine Hanlon and Jackie Jacques

We also ran six projects/programs this year. The Nova Scotia Office of Immigration continues to provide funding for the Immigrant Support Program. The Nova Scotia Law Foundation has been a steadfast funder, helping to provide stable support for our rural outreach program, Justice Matters for Women. This year, we completed the final year of funding for the "Bystander Intervention" program funded by the federal government's Justice Department. The Public Health Agency of Canada along with a generous contribution from the Leacock Foundation supported the third year of the "Healthy Relationships for Youth" program. Women and Gender Equality (WAGE) Canada is in its second year of five-year funding for "Circles of Support & Change". Financial reports for all were completed and submitted as required by the funding agencies.

A more detailed accounting of AWRCSSA finances is available in our annual financial report.





AWRCSASA Staff and Board

2020-2021

Executive Director

Wyanne Sandler

Operations Manager

Annie Chau

Financial Administrator

Christine Hanlon

Bookkeeper

Jackie Jacques

Women's Services Coordinator

Vangie Babin

Women's Support Workers

Mica Francis

Gisele Carpenter

Justice Matters for Women

Outreach Worker: Marcia Connolly

Specialized Trauma Therapists

Nancy Gray

Pam Rubin

Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program

Program Managers: Felicia Felix-MacDonald/

Pamela Reyes

Response Site and Staff Coordinator:

Kendra MacEachern

SANE Nurses

Kari-Lee Chisholm MacDonald

Felicia Felix-MacDonald

Marilyn Grant

Kendra MacEachern

Heather Mosher

Suzanne Munro-MacLean

Kyla Neary-Griffiths

Pamela Reyes

Maggie Smith

Jessica Bisson

Heather Brander

Leonna Wilneff

Anne Cameron

Heather Blackburn

Summer Students

Diane Scott

Jasmine Mabsut

Lindsay's Health Centre for Women

Physician: Moira Maclean

Nurse Practitioner: Kathryn Boyd/Brittany Francis

Mental Health: Cianna MacKeigan

AWRCSASA Women's Support Workers

Medical Administrative Assistant:

Richelle MacLaughlin

Healthy Relationships for Youth Program

Provincial Coordinator: Moraig MacGillivray

SRCE Program Coordinator: Olivia Landry

CSAP Program Coordinator: Sheila Booth

Antigonish Guysborough Immigrant Support Program

Program Coordinator: Najlaa Alzaanin

Sexual Violence Prevention and Education

Consent Education Coordinator: Faye Fraser

Bystander Intervention Project

Project Coordinator: Johannah May Black

Project Assistant: Speireag Hendra

Circles of Support and Change

Project Coordinator: Karla Stevens

African NS Communities Facilitators:

Tara Reddick and Tonya Pelley

Canso Community Facilitator: Michelle Newell

Strait Richmond Community Facilitator:

Danielle Martell

Income Tax Program

Peggy Chisholm

Board of Directors

Jean Crosby, Co-Chair

Nancy Forestell, Co-Chair

Naima Chowdhury

Thea Clark

Petra Cross

Olivia Hasler

Christina Holmes

Christine Johnson

Cianna MacKeigan

Meaghan MacIntyre

Laura Pickersgill

Hina Shehzadi

Melaney White

To all our dedicated staff and board members — Thank you!

Contact Us

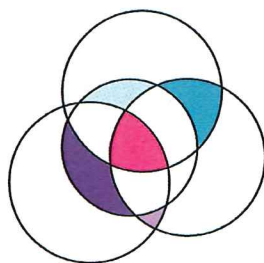
Antigonish Women's Resource Centre & Sexual Assault Services Association

204 Kirk Place, 219 Main Street
Antigonish, Nova Scotia B2G 2C1

Telephone: 902-863-6221
Cell: 902-318-2211

Email: info@awrcsasa.ca

www.awrcsasa.ca



Antigonish Women's Centre
& Sexual Assault Services

