

10th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION, NOVEMBER 27, 1993

ANTIGONISH WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION
ANTIGONISH WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTRE
HERSTORY

It is an honour to be here tonight among you, the women of the Antigonish Women's Association - THE REMARKABLE WOMEN of the Antigonish Women's Association. I know we are remarkable women because I hear remarks being made about us all the time.

It is my privilege tonight to give a short herstory of the AWA and the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre. I will do my best to keep it brief.

THIS IS OUR LIFE

It was in 1975, International Women's Year, that women in Antigonish first came together with the specific purpose of examining women's place in society. They formed **Women in Transition** and were a group of community women of all ages, income levels and religious affiliations.

Women were ready in 1982 for **Women Today**, a non-credit course in women's studies taught by Angela Miles through St. F.X. Continuing Education. 51 women participated in that class analyzing women's lives, - our lives - delving into issues of economics, sex-role stereotyping, media images, pornography, aging, sexual assault, wife-battering and the workforce. Discussions were intense and animated, often carrying over after class into the midnight hour at the local tavern.

When the class ended in the spring of '83, women wanted a means of continuing our learning and analysis and a forum for taking action on some of the issues. This sparked the birth of the Antigonish Women's Association in May 1983. The original AWA members included women from the town and county, women working outside the home and full-time home-makers, single women, grandmothers, Sisters, 'come-from-aways', welfare mothers and university professors.

The AWA's first major project was to open the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre in November 1983.

Over the past ten years we have:

- **presented briefs** to assorted Task Forces, Panels, Royal Commissions and ministries about
 - pornography
 - AIDS
 - Health Concerns
 - Housing
 - Poverty
 - Violence Against Women
- **protested**
 - the display of pornographic materials in areas accessible to children in our local stores
 - the war in the Persian Gulf
 - violence against women with Take Back the Night marches and December 6 Day of Remembrance
- **called for**
 - the removal from the bench of a local judge guilty of wife-assault
- **organized**
 - a Rural Women's Conference
 - Municipal, Provincial and Federal Candidates' Forums
 - a Well-Women's Clinic
 - a Free Trade Panel Debate
 - JUST Women discussion and action group
- **worked on addressing issues in our community such as**
 - Poverty
 - Sexual Harassment
 - Workplace Discrimination
 - Sexual Abuse
 - Housing
 - Adolescent needs

- **sponsored**
 - Babysitting Courses
 - Parenting Classes
 - Single Mother's Support Group
 - Therapy Group for Survivors of Sexual Abuse
- **acted as a catalyst** in the development of
 - Society for Affordable Community Housing in Antigonish
 - Antigonish recycling Committee
 - Food Bank
 - Women for Social Awareness
- **participated in the formation of provincial organizations**
 - Women's Action Coalition of Nova Scotia
 - Connect!, the provincial association of women's centres
 - Low-Income Women's Network
- **involved in**
 - women's national lobbying campaign for the re-instatement of Secretary of State Women's Program Funding
 - the Banner Project
- **lent moral support to**
 - CIBC bank workers local and the Bergengren Credit Union local when they were on strike
- **celebrated women and fostered involvement with women through**
 - International Women's Day Cabarets
 - Coady Picnics
 - Canada World Youth
 - Crossroads International

- **sponsored**
 - 3 Rural Outreach Projects
 - Housing Study and the Housing Report
 - annual Sister Mary MacLeod Bursary to a woman returning to school
 - Sexual Assault and Sexual Abuse Project
 - Voluntary Action Project
 - Adolescent Health Project which produced
 - the Adolescent Health Report
 - the Voices of Teens Videoand was responsible for initiating
 - Faces of Our Community, a multicultural festival
 - Straight Talk

To quote a remarkable and dearly loved AWA member, Sylvia Parris

We are women who are courageous, inspiring, playful, scandalous, loyal, fierce, devoted, talented, passionate, rebellious, loving, kind, nurturing, impassioned, prayerful, responsible and many accolades not echoed here. Together we form the soul of the Antigoniish Women's Association.