

# Tri County Women's Centre

## Annual Report

April 1<sup>st</sup>. 2006 – March 31<sup>st</sup>. 2007

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**Summary**

The Women's Centre has had another exciting and busy year. More women are accessing the services and more community and government partners are seeking out the Women's Centre to partner with on specific initiatives. Besides the direct service work with women we also offered a number of programs to women and girls. Our community development work and social advocacy has been accomplished primarily through project initiatives.

In the last year we offered personal support and advocacy to 175 individual women and adolescent girls. It is important to note and recognize for the majority of these women it required many hours of staff time to offer the support and advocacy required. It is not uncommon to have 20-30 contacts with an individual woman as we assist her out of the crisis and have the situation resolved so she was no longer in need of our services.

This past year we were very busy delivering programs that are described later in the report. Within our program delivery 162 women and girls participated in the various programs we offered.

It has been both a challenging and transitional year for both Board and Staff. The commitment and determination of the staff enabled the transition to go smoothly and did not interrupt the delivery of services and programs as well as our other commitments in the community. Part of that transition has been the relocation of the centre to the downtown core where it is now located in the storefront on Main Street.

We have also been very involved in a number of exciting community and provincial initiatives. These are further described in the report. Between all of this we have been able to put together a quarterly newsletter as a way of keeping women and the community at large updated on our services, programs and initiatives. Over the last year we had 10 women on staff or contract assisting us in meeting our mandates.

The last year has been particularly difficult for an organization like ourselves as the mandate changes within Status of Women Canada (SWC) will not enable us, in the future, to address public policy. As we know from our history and the history of other equality seeking organizations, being able to address public policy has been fundamental to having a positive impact on women's equality. This leaves us in a conundrum as we attempt to address women's equality. We will be keeping abreast of these changes at SWC and how the challenges and work we know needs to be done, fits into their priorities and direction.

With all the direct service work, community development and public policy work we endeavor to deliver and carry out, we are still struck by what still needs to be done. We would like to highlight areas of work we would like to address, to the best of our capacity, over the coming year.

- ❑ Addressing our funding priorities for the centre through our Association Connect!
- ❑ Coordination of Services for female victims of sexual violence
- ❑ Youth Homelessness and Affordable Housing
- ❑ Longer term funding for our Job Readiness/Re-Entry program for women
- ❑ In depth programming for adolescent girls
- ❑ Women and Pensions
- ❑ Creative programming for women dealing with gambling addiction
- ❑ Clear language information for Mental Health Consumers
- ❑ Smoking Cessation and Pregnancy
- ❑ More connections with our ethnic minority populations
- ❑ Programming and needs assessment/analysis with Women in Business
- ❑ Adolescents and Addiction issues
- ❑ Public Transportation
- ❑ Update our Policy & Procedures Manual

## **Projects and Programs over the last year**

**Girl Power** - This was our most successful year yet. We had 48 girls participating in 5 different locations (Beacon, Lion's Club, Burrige Campus, Pubnico and Port Maitland). This year we received funding from Service Canada and the Office of Economic Development for our Girl Power summer students.

**Our Place Needs Assessment** - Through funding from the Office of Economic Development and the National Public Safety Council we were able to complete a needs assessment of Youth Homelessness in the town of Yarmouth. Focus groups and surveys were completed in the community along with visits to other homeless shelters for youth in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. The findings from the project are available in a final report.

**Smart Start Re-entry Program** - Service Canada and the Department of Community Services (DCS) partnered with the Tri-County Women's Centre to offer the 2<sup>nd</sup> Smart Start program. This was a 20 week program designed to get participants back into the paid workforce or develop an educational goal to achieve economic independence and volunteering in the community. This was a very successful program which incorporated job skills, self-esteem, communication, anger and stress solutions, volunteer placements and community speakers. Ten women completed this program.

**Voices**- Voices is a self-esteem, self-discovery and empowerment program for girls between the ages of 12-17. TCWC partnered with DCS to offer this program to girls in 7 junior highs in the Tri-Counties; Barrington, Shelburne, Lockport,

Yarmouth, Maple Grove, Drumlin and Digby. This program was very well received in the schools. In total 62 girls participated in the program.

**Self-esteem Program** - With the funding from our Voices program we offered a self-esteem program in Digby for the first time (since we were in Digby for Voices). We partnered with the Women's Place Resource Centre in Bridgetown for this program. We had 10 participants in this program. We also offered 2 self-esteem programs in Yarmouth, afternoon and evening.

**Community Garden** - The community garden had all the plots used again this year. We received the Mayflower award for the second year.

**K.I.P.P. (Knowledge is Power Program)** - In partnership with DCS we were able to run the participant driven program KIPP. This program gave women the opportunity to design their own program. We covered topics like nutrition, global warming, crafts, parenting, writing, stress, and legal issues.

**Vagina Monologues** - For the fourth year the Tri-County Women's Centre presented the Vagina Monologues. It was a great show and a lot of fun. We are looking forward to organizing the 5 year celebration next year.

**Women and Pensions** - We are a partner on this provincial project that has conducted some dynamic and interesting research on the topic. We are hoping to continue the project over the next year to promote the information on pensions so women understand their entitlements.

### **Community Partnerships**

The Centre has also been involved on several advisory committees, boards and community initiatives.

- Yarmouth Centre for Sexual Health – This is housed in the Women's Centre so our symbiotic relationship goes without saying. Having the centre housed within our centre makes for a win-win situation as we are able to keep the Sexual Health Centre open and provide backup as the paid hours are limited.
- Unity In Community – An informal network of youth, community members and agency representatives are working on developing capacity in the Yarmouth area to address the overall needs of youth
- Youth Health Centre Working Group (Department of Public Health) – This group is focused on the development of a sexual health centre in the community
- Factors of Youth Pregnancy Project (Dalhousie University) – Working with the researchers to access youth as informants for the research project
- Southwest Community Network – The Interagency meets to discuss social, justice, and equality issues and is a place for the Women's Centre to meet community partners to address gaps and challenges.

- ❑ Yarmouth Learning Network – We work closely with the adult learning group and a staff member represents the Women’s Centre on their Board.
- ❑ Women’s and Business Network – We work with the Women’s Business Initiative (WBI) to address needs of women in business and promote the women’s networking activities
- ❑ Food Security (Public Health) – Initiated through nutritionists at Public Health we are working with them and a number of community partners to develop programs and address peoples food security concerns
- ❑ School for Warrior without Weapons – Initiated through the Shire this is an International Exchange program for youth. We assist with promoting the program and referring youth.
- ❑ Roundtable on Youth Sexual Health (Prov. of NS) – This is a provincial roundtable under the Department of Health that is developing a provincial framework to ensure equitable and consistent delivery of services to youth
- ❑ South West Shore Development Authority – Keep abreast of their initiatives and this year participated in their strategic planning sessions
- ❑ South West Community Justice – We work with young women who are going through the program and we sit on the community justice forums to discuss their criminal actions and what needs to happen to address the harm.
- ❑ Tabitha Centre – This community outreach centre works with high risk people. We work with them to address crisis situations when working with women
- ❑ Boys and Girls Club – We work with the club to address youth programming and refer youth to the programs we are both offering
- ❑ Dalhousie School of Nursing – We offer a community work placement for students in their last year of study.

**Staff Training** - Staff at the Centre has been involved with many training and conference opportunities including:

Sexual Assault Training  
 Atlantic Summer Institute on Healthy and Safe Community  
 Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder  
 Immigrants Meeting  
 MAD-Making a Difference (Halifax)  
 Beyond the Streets Conference (NFLD)  
 Art of Hosting  
 Silent Witness  
 Methamphetamine/Oxycontin & Cocaine Conference (Halifax)  
 Invest in Youth Workshop  
 Marketing Workshop (Women in Business)  
 Gambling Workshop & the Gaming Foundation Roundtable  
 Uncommon Law (NS Barristers Society)

**Provincial Networks** – Our relationships with our provincial associations are central to our ability to address our core funding priorities and public policies that impacts women’s equality.

**Connect! The Association of Women’s Centres in Nova Scotia** - As a member in our Association we make it a priority to participate in the monthly meetings. Our main funding priorities which were articulated in the 2006 report have still not been addressed by the provincial government and will be of utmost importance over the next year.

**Feminists for Just & Equitable Public Policy (FemJEPP)** – As an active member of our provincial coalition of equality seeking women’s organization, we work through FemJEPP to address women’s equality.

**Women’s Innovative Justice Initiative (WIJI)** - We are represented on the provincial coalition through Connect. WIJI is working on a number of fronts dealing with the justice system; moratorium on restorative justice for adult perpetrators, specialized courts for domestic violence, training for hospital and justice personnel, and justice response to violence against women.

We look forward to the new opportunities and partnerships the next year will bring for the centre. Thank you to the board for their continued support and guidance.

Respectfully submitted,

Michele Archibald-Hattie

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