



Tri County Women's Centre

Annual Report

April 1st. 2009 – March 31st. 2010

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Summary

We had an extremely busy and exciting year. Establishing our Outreach Offices in Digby and Shelburne has enabled us to truly reach women in the three counties we are mandated to serve. Our statistics show our services and programs are being accessed by more women and girls each year. Partnerships and opportunities to collaborate with our community and government partners continue to expand, in particular through our social and community development initiatives.

This year we moved to our new location at 12 Cumberland Street and are now homeowners. Having a warm, homey, and roomy workspace has been amazing for everyone. Core staff members have their own office and counselling space to do their work and have their own confidential space to meet clients. Women who come to the Centre for services and programs comment on how friendly and welcoming the space is. We and other community groups use the Board Room extensively. Most evenings there is something going on here at the Centre and the new space is appreciated by many.

This past year was our ninth year of operations and we continue to grow and capitalize on opportunities to take on more social and community development work. We have been successful in achieving some significant funding to address; housing services for youth placed at risk, engaging with youth and community on illicit drugs in our community, continuing to address sexual violence prevention and intervention, programming needs for women dealing with gambling addictions, awareness about food security, and development of our Outreach Services.

We continue to ensure people know about our services and have made our modest but effective communication tools a priority. They being, a web site that is updated monthly, toll-free phone line, and a quarterly newsletter.

As with any Community Based Boards updating and revising our Policy & Procedures Manual is on-going.

With our growth the need to have our operational funding increased is apparent. It is imperative that we continue to show our elected representatives the positive impact our services, programs, and community engagement work contribute to the lives of women and their families in the Tri Counties. At the very least we need a cost of living increase added to our annual grants contribution, for our core operating budget, from the Province of Nova Scotia.

It has been another good year.

Direct Services

One of our two mandates, and central to our work, is the provision of direct services to women, adolescent girls, and youth. Our direct services are a combination of prevention & intervention services and programs. Our flexibility in making our services accessible and responding to community needs makes for a service that is appreciated by service users and other service providers.

Support Counseling and Advocacy Services

Our approach of ensuring this one-on-one service is accessible to women, adolescents and youth is central to its success. We can usually address the need immediately, and if it doesn't require an immediate intervention, a support counselor will see the person within a few days. Being put on a waiting list is not how we provide this service. In this fiscal year we have provided support counseling and advocacy to 360 individual women and girls. When we combine that with the women / girls who require follow up services, we worked on average with 80 women and girls/month. A number of these individual women have very complex situations that required the support staff to have many contacts and appointments with her. This represents a tremendous number of hours of work with individual women to resolve their situation.

Programs

The other part of our direct service work is programming. The sharing, education, friendships and social supports are the important outcomes that make programming so essential to our overall services. Some programs we offer under our operational funds and others we were able to offer due to specific project funding.

Programs for Adult Women

Moving Forward: A Self-Empowerment and Self Esteem Program

We were able to offer this program two times last year. The program covers a variety of topics including self-esteem, communication, goal setting, societal expectations, and anger as a positive force, coping with change and stress management. The program focuses on women empowering women to take control of their life and to start their journey. Eighteen women participated. Both programs were offered at the Women's Centre location.

We also offered several sessions on self-esteem, healthy relationships and communication with a group of women involved with SASI (Shelburne Association Supporting Inclusiveness). Our *Women Moving Forward Program* was adapted to fit the needs of this group of women. There were approximately 15 women attending this program on a regular basis.

STEP – Systematic Training for Effective Parenting-

This interactive parenting program, that was for both female and male parents/guardians, proved to be a catalyst for good discussions and learning moments for the parents and guardians who participated. We completed one program the first of this year and offered another one over the winter/early spring.

Programs for Young Women/Girls

Girl Power Day Camps

Is a weeklong self-esteem day camp for girls aged 9-12 years of age. A total of thirty-five girls participated in 5 camps that were offered over the summer. They were hosted twice in Meteghan, and once each in Yarmouth, Port Maitland and Shelburne. This was funded in part under the Summer Student Employment Program where we were able to hire two students.

Funded in part by the Shelburne and Clare Community Health Boards and Clare Recreation.

Voices

We always enjoy delivering this 18-week school based self-awareness program for high-risk girls between the ages of 12-17 who are identified through the participating school. This year we were able to offer the program to all the Junior High Schools in the Tri County area and 10 of the 11 schools responded. We have never been able to reach so many schools at once. This also includes offering the program in French at Par-en-Bas and Clare. We worked with 100 young women through this program.

Funded in part by the Department of Community Services.

Voices Retreat

At the end of the Voices program delivery last year we were able to offer the young women who participated a two day retreat at the Y camp and 25 were able to participant.

Funded by N.S. Department of Justice Youth Development Initiative and Health Promotion and Protection.

Youth – both female and male
Queer & Questioning Youth Group

Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/ Transgender Youth Group

In co-operation with Mental Health Services, we provide space and refreshments for the youth group to meet.

Projects

It is primarily through project work that we are able to direct and carry out our community development mandate, and through these projects have a positive impact on women’s equality and social justice.

Health Canada Project – Youth Truth Matters

We have just completed the first year of this three-year project. The project has been very successful with engaging youth, developing their leadership and interest in being a voice for change and encouraging their peers not to get involved in illicit drugs. We hosted a one day forum for 275 grade nine students who came from all the junior high schools across the three counties. We hosted one “Take Back our Community” event in Yarmouth in June 2010 and had 45 youth and citizens attend.

Funding is through Health Canada -Drugs and Tobacco Initiatives Program

I’m a Woman and Have I Got a Story to Tell:

We have been able to offer this program, to women dealing with gambling addiction, in both Yarmouth and Shelburne in the last year. Part of the funding will be to develop a Facilitator’s Guide for the program *I am Woman and Have I Got a Story to Tell* and deliver the program in Digby in the next fiscal year. This is being offered in partnership with Addictions Services.

Funding is through the Nova Scotia Gaming Foundation.

Addressing Sexual Violence Prevention through Civic Engagement and Resource Development:

Following up from the previous project, *Sexual Violence against Women and Girls in South West Nova: Reducing the Harm/ Reducing the Violence*, this project will enable us to carry out important community development work in the area of sexual violence, and continue the momentum to address sexual violence prevention and intervention, engage with young women and men on hypersexualization and how we de-construct these messages to make it healthy and safe for girls. Our intention is to establish a Sexual

Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) Program model, in coordination with a Sexual Assault Response Team (SART), combined with targeted prevention programs. This project started near the end of this fiscal year.

Funded under Status of Women Canada (SWC).

Mental Health Outreach Services

We have been fortunate to be able to strengthen our outreach services in Digby and Shelburne. This has enabled us to provide our support counselling, advocacy and programming to women and adolescents girls. We have outreach offices in both counties and part time staff in each location. The cost to provide our outreach services would have been financially prohibitive if it wasn't for the support from the Canada Post Foundation for Mental Health.

Funded through the Canada Post Foundation for Mental Health.

Youth Rant about Sexist Messaging

This project started in the last fiscal year and was completed in the first quarter of this year. Youth were trained to facilitate discussion with other youth on sexist and hypersexualized messaging directed at youth and for youth to identify strategies that would assist them and their peers to challenge and address the impact this negative messaging was having on youth, both female and male. We will be using that report to continue to address sexual violence prevention services directed at youth.

This project was funded under the Youth Secretariat- Province of Nova Scotia.

Supportive Housing Youth Focus Team (SHYFT)

We have been the proponent for a Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) project over the last year. We were able to purchase and renovate a house – 6 Trinity Place – for the purposes of establishing a safe housing option for homeless youth. The service was open early in the New Year. Due to our continued struggle to secure long term operating funds, we were awarded funds to hire an additional staff position called Community Outreach Worker under this strategy. We were also able to apply to the HPS Transitional Funding to assist us with other expenses in the next fiscal year. Meeting with the Department of Community Services to address our operational funding requirements continues.

Funded under the Federal Homelessness Partnering Strategy

Tri County Local Food Network (TCLFN)

We are an active member of the network and have been very busy this past year developing promotional materials and a web site on Buying Local and supporting local Farmer's Markets. We hosted a very successful Fall Fair to give local producers an opportunity to sell their wares, provide a forum for education on food production and preservation and promote the local food network. Funded under Public Health - Healthy Eating Nova Scotia Strategy.

New Horizon's Project

As part of the work under the TCLFN, and based on the community interest in learning the old ways in food production and preservation, we partnered with eight community organizations to develop community gardens and create opportunities to share in producing and preserving local food. The locations are Carleton Community School, Barrington Community Gardens, Lockport Community Garden, Shelburne School Community Garden, Acadian Historic Village, SHYFT Community Garden, Parent's Place Community Garden, and Digby/Clare Mental Health Association. We will have funds remaining for the following year to assist in more development. Funded under the Federal New Horizon's Program.

Regional Process

We continue to meet with the community liaison worker for the Department of Community Services in our Western Region. It is an opportunity for the department to hear about the activities at all three women's centres in the region. It is also an opportunity for the department to share with us anything that is going on and would be of interest to our centres.

Special Events

Christmas Tea and Grand Opening were both very successful.

International Women's Day (IWD)

In recognition of the 100th Anniversary of IWD we hosted an amazing banquet where we honoured seven incredible women who have made a difference. They were; Ada Fells, Marilyn Francis, Dr. Shelagh Leahey, Doris Landry, Joan Semple, Elaine Smith, and Edith Tufts.

Work Placements

Job Creation Partnership

We were able to have a staff position funded under the JCP program, enabling us to have an Office Manager position filled.

Student Placements

Every year we try and accommodate student placements, primarily from the School of Nursing and NSCC. This past year we had two Nova Scotia Community College students and one student nurse.

Summer Student Program

We were able to have two students this past summer. They co-facilitated the Girl Power Program.

Community College –Carpentry Program

We provided a worksite experience for the first and second year students. They fixed the room upstairs, completed the foundation work on the extension to our house for the Women's and Youth Wellness Clinic.

Community Partnerships/ Networks/ Collaborations

Besides some of the agencies and groups already mentioned in the report, the Centre has also been involved on several advisory committees, boards and community initiatives.

- ❑ Yarmouth Centre for Sexual Health – Continues to be housed at the Women's Centre, which enables some of their services to be available while the Women's Centre is open.
- ❑ Women and Tobacco Advisory Committee – This committee is focused on the promotion of resources and services for women dealing with tobacco cessation.
- ❑ Restorative Justice Process – We sit on the committee when there is a youth in conflict.
- ❑ Health Promoting Schools - A joint effort between Public Health, Tri-County Regional School Board and community organizations. The purpose is to strive to support schools, strengthening their capacity to create a healthy setting for learning, living and working.
- ❑ Yarmouth Learning Network – We work closely with the adult learning group and a staff member represents the Women's Centre on their Board.

- ❑ Chamber of Commerce – We co-hosted a public debate with the candidates in Yarmouth for the provincial by-election. We used the opportunity to have all the candidates come into the Centre and discuss our priorities and funding for SHYFT.
- ❑ Women’s Fishnet – Shelburne/ Lockport – We are in regular communication and continue to make connections and create possibilities to work together.
- ❑ Western Counties Regional Library – We assisted them with a program they were offering called Technology & Employment Readiness for women.
- ❑ West Nova Inclusive Employment Society – This agency works with the disabled community and we have a representative on the Board.
- ❑ SHYFT Youth Services Society – This agency is overseeing the day-to-day operations of the house and will be given the SHYFT House in April 2012 when they take over full responsibility for the service.
- ❑ Youth Health Centre Working Group (Department of Public Health) – Working to establish community and school based health services for youth.
- ❑ YWCA – Halifax – We are developing a partnership with the Y to deliver two programs in the coming year – Encore & Baby Steps.
- ❑ Canadian Rural Partnership – We participated in a three part process facilitated through CRP looking at what is needed in our rural communities to sustain them.
- ❑ Harmony Bazaar – A Women’s Festival in July in Lockport. We were the official sponsors for the volunteers and supplied all the T-shirts for them. Our name was printed across the back. Looked great.
- ❑ Hospital Hullabaloo – Assist the Hospital Auxiliary with their major fundraising event.

Provincial and National Associations

Our provincial and national associations make it possible for us to be more effective in our work. Whether it is our ability to address our core funding priorities or public policies that impact women’s equality, we are better and stronger due to these relationships.

Connect! The Association of Women’s Centres in Nova Scotia

We are active members of our Association. Our engagement with the Department of Community Services through Connect on Service Level Agreements is completed. Our association is also one of our avenues

to address public policy that impact women and our operational funding priorities.

Women's Action Coalition of Nova Scotia (WAC-NS)

We have been very involved in the developed of this re-invigorated social advocacy voice for women across the province.

Feminist Alliance for International Action (FAFIA)

We continue to be a community voice and through our associations (Connect/ WIJI/ FemJEPP), we contribute to FAFIA work and analysis. FAFIA monitors our federal and provincial governments' compliance to United Nation's International Treaties. These are treaties our governments have signed to advance women's equality in our country. We assist FAFIA in being a strong voice at the International table.

Priorities for the Next Year

Building on the current work and other gaps we see in services, there is a need to be working with our many community and government partners on these priorities:

- Have our operational funding priorities addressed
- Continue to address sexual violence services; development of a SANE (Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner) program, a SART (Sexual Assault Response Team), and the hypersexualization of women and girls
- Continue to update our Policy & Procedures Manual
- Continue to develop the Tri County Local Food Network as part of our pro-active efforts to address greenhouse gases and support our local economy
- Pursue the option of a Women's & Youth Health Clinic within our services
- Build on the work done in the Financial Literacy Project and expand it more widely across the province.
- Creation of women led cooperatives & small businesses
- Affordable & Supportive Housing for young mothers
- Strengthen our outreach capacity - providing our services and programs into our more rural and isolated communities.
- Adolescents
 - Supportive housing for youth
 - Programming such as Voices in all the schools
 - Youth Health Centre
 - Community development process to engage with youth – hypersexualization, housing, illicit drugs and addiction issues

- ❑ Creative programming for women dealing with gambling addiction
- ❑ Smoking Cessation for women

Core and Project Staff

Name	Position
Bernadette MacDonald	Executive Director
Michele Archibald - Hattie	Program Coordinator/ Support Counselor
Karen Stewart	Financial Coordinator
Kirsta Morris	Youth Truth Matters Project Coordinator
Marlene Surette	Office Manager
Krista Dunn	SHYFT (HPS) Project Manager
Noreen MacPherson	SHYFT (HPS) Community Outreach
Arron Allen	SHYFT (HPS) Community Outreach
Doris Landry	Sexual Violence Project
Patricia Vanaman	Sexual Violence Project / Shelburne Outreach
Gayle Allen	Sexual Violence Project
Jenny Milligan	Digby Outreach

Board of Directors

Lynn Comeau – Chair	Debbie Roberts (part of the year)
Fleurette Surette – Treasurer	Wanda Doucette
Kathleen d’Entremont Mooney – Secretary	Ashley Cameron
Tasha Smith	Ann d’Eon
Renee Meuse-Bishara	Heather Ackles

Staff who participate in Board meetings

Karen Stewart, Bernadette MacDonald, Michele Archibald-Hattie