



Tri County Women's Centre

Annual Report

April 1st. 2011 – March 31st. 2012

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Summary

We have gone through another busy and exciting year, providing services and programs to women and their families and working with our many community and government partners on community development initiatives, to improve the lives of women and their families in South West Nova. This past year was our tenth year of operations.

At our main location in Yarmouth we have been under a year of construction. We now have the house wheelchair accessible and the addition on the side of the house for our *Women's Wellness and Youth Health Clinic*. We anticipate the clinic being operational in the coming year, enabling us to expand our programming and services.

Our Outreach Offices have gotten more established over the last year and are being used more by both women and the community. Combined with the significant projects and programs that cover all three counties, we are doing a fairly good job of serving this large rural area.

The number of women who accessed our services for one-on-one support and advocacy continues to be very steady. We continue to offer a number of diverse programs both in the communities we serve and in the schools throughout the tri counties.

Our main community development initiatives in the past year have been addressing the service needs for at risk and homeless youth, developing sexual violence prevention tools and enhanced intervention services, engaging with youth and community on illicit drugs, and developing and piloting a harm reduction program for women dealing with gambling and other addictions, and getting our Women's Wellness & Youth Health Clinic built.

Keeping our web site updated, putting out our quarterly newsletter, maintaining our location in each county, and having a toll-free phone line are important communication tools for us, ensuring that women and the broader community are aware of our services, programs, and initiatives.

As we continue to grow, we do require additional operational funding to address the service and programming needs across the tri counties.

The following is a summary of the activities we have carried out and the partners we have worked with over the last year.

On behalf of TCWC Board and Staff we want to thank the Department of Community Services, Province of Nova Scotia for on-going operational funding. As well, all the other funding sources enabling us to carry out a number of programs and initiatives. We are thankful for the ongoing support.

We know we would be incapable of doing any of this work if it wasn't for the incredible community and government partners we work with on a daily basis, and a remarkable group of women who know when there is a need for their fundraising skills. We look forward to continued and strengthened relations in the coming year.

Direct Services

Our direct services are a combination of prevention & intervention services and programs. The provision of individual support and advocacy with women, adolescent girls, and youth is central to our work. We continue to ensure that our services are both flexible and accessible, enabling us to respond to the needs of women, girls, and the community. We feel this is one of the reasons why our service is appreciated by both service users and other service providers.

Support Counseling and Advocacy Services

This is the largest part of our direct services work. This individual, one-on-one, service is accessible to all females. If the female seeking our services requires an immediate intervention we will meet with her immediately. If the need isn't immediate a support counselor will see her within a few days. Being able to maintain our service so it is accessible within a short time frame is central to how we do our work.

In this past year we have provided support counseling and advocacy to 368 individual women and girls. The amount of time it takes with individual women / girls can vary from one visit to many support counselling sessions and advocacy to other appointments outside the Centre. We do not limit the number of times a woman can use our services and, from our experience, she knows when she is in need of services and knows she can access our services at any time.

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

Yarmouth

Moving Forward: A Self-Empowerment and Self Esteem Program

We offered this program in the spring 2011. 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. When the program was completed, the seven women who participated continued to meet on their own bi-weekly at the Centre.

Encore

After taking specific training from the YWCA –Canada, who developed the program, we were in a position to offer this program. This is a gentle exercise program specifically designed for women recovering from breast cancer surgery

and/or women who have had breast cancer at any time in their lives. We hope to be able to offer the program on an on-going basis. *Funded under YWCA Canada.*

Shelburne Outreach Office

Info'n Action

In partnership with the Shelburne Family Resource Centre we offered a discussion and a walking tour. Local food was purchased and lunch was prepared by the group.

In Conversation

This was a weekly support group for women to meet, share, and support each other.

Community Wellness in Motion

In partnership with Women's Fishnet organization, a walking program was offered to women that covered a variety of locations.

Pre-Natal Support Network - Shelburne

In partnership with a number of agencies in Shelburne a network was formed to support women, and in particular, low income women to participate in the group. *Funded under the Shelburne community Health Board*

Digby

Cooking Nutritiously on a Tight Budget

This program was offered to women on fixed and low incomes. *Funded under the Digby Community Health Board.*

I'm a woman and Have I Got a Story to Tell

This harm reduction program for women coping with gambling and other addictions was offered twice this past year. *Funded under Gaming Awareness Nova Scotia.*

Programs for Young Women/Girls

Voices

We were able to offer this 18-week school based self-awareness program for high-risk girls between the ages of 12-17 who are identified through the participating schools. Within this fiscal year we completed the program delivery in the 11 schools and hosted a week-end retreat for the girls who participated. We also started a new program in October 2011 and offered the program in 6 schools (two in each county). There was interest from other schools but we were limited by the funding available. On average there are 8 girls per program. In the 11 school program we had 94 girls and in the 6 school program we had 50 girls. *Funded under the Youth Development Initiative – Dept. of Community Services.*

Voices Retreat

In late June, 2011 we were able to offer the Voices Week-end Retreat for the participants. Thirty –five girls participated. This was a camping week-end at a local provincial park. *Funded under dept. of Justice.*

Projects

We had a number of interesting and exciting projects over the last year. These projects enable us to work on the broader social issues that impact women's equality across the three counties.

Health Canada Project – Youth Truth Matters

We have now completed the second year of this three-year project. The project is engaging youth and developing their leadership and interest in being a voice for change on illicit drugs and the drug culture that youth are dealing with. The project encourages youth (both female & male) to learn about what drugs do, and the youth in turn pass the information on to their peers. This past year the project expanded to the development and piloting of a program for parents/guardians called "Talking to your Kids about Drugs". Community events called "Take Back our Community" were organized in each county as well. *Funded under Health Canada.*

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

We offered this program twice in Digby as we continued to pilot the harm reduction program we developed for women coping with gambling and other addictions. From the delivery of the program we developed a Facilitator's Guide for the program *I am Woman and Have I Got a Story to Tell*. We will be looking for opportunities to promote the resource across the province. This was offered in partnership with Mental Health & Addictions Services. *Funded under Gaming Awareness Nova Scotia.*

Addressing Sexual Violence Prevention through Civic Engagement and Resource Development:

The project focus is on prevention of sexual violence and intervention services for victims of sexual violence. Youth involvement has been central to the development of the content for the prevention tools that will make up the Sexual Violence Prevention Tool Kit that will be given to every school in the tri counties. We have developed the Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) protocol and engaging with all relevant stakeholders. We are also working with a group of interested volunteers who will be part of the first responders when a sexual assault is reported within 72 hours of the crime. We will be in a very strategic position to have a SANE (Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner) Program in the near future. *Funded under Status of Women Canada.*

Supportive Housing Youth Focus Team (SHYFT)

As the proponent for the second Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) project over the last year we worked closely with the SHYFT Board to provide a 24/7 service to at-risk and homeless youth. Referrals came in from government departments, schools, other services providers, families, and youth themselves. We were able to prove the need for a "housing first approach" for this youth population as well as for the service providers who work with this population of youth. Over the last year, with financial assistance from the Department of Community Services, we were able to operationalize the service for the full year. *Funded under Service Canada, Federal Government and the Department of Community Services, Province of Nova Scotia.*

Tri County Local Food Network (TCLFN)

We continue to be an active member of the network as we promote the Buy Local message. As part of the TCLFN, we had a very successful **Fall Harvest** event in September hosting a Big Community Picnic and had hundreds of people and vendors attend. As a partner in the network we are administrating the CURA (Community University Research Alliance) project that is based in the Shelburne and Lockeport communities and focused on local food security. *Funded under Public Health -Healthy Eating NS and Community-University Research Alliance (CURA) & Mt. St. Vincent.*

New Horizon's Project

We were able to continue this project into December and strengthen the capacity of the Community Garden sites to be successful the following spring (2012). All six sites are expanding and there is lots of cross generational involvement in growing food and developing gardening skills.

Outreach Offices in Digby & Shelburne

We were able to have our Outreach Office open part time (20 hours/ week) for part of the year. The hours had to be reduced in November due to reduced funding. *Funded under the Canada Post Foundation for Mental Health.*

Baby Steps

We were one of the sites for promoting Registered Educational Savings Plans (RESP's), targeting low income families in particular. *Funded through YWCA – Halifax.*

Women's Wellness & Youth Health Clinic

With the assistance of the NSCC –Burrige Campus, Carpentry Program that provided all the free labour, we were able to get the addition on the side of our house and the other room re-furbished for the Clinic. A number of other funding sources were also instrumental in assisting us in being able to pay for the other costs related to capital expenses and clinic supplies. A group of dedicated community volunteers also organized some amazing fundraising events for the

clinic expenses. *Funded through Community Volunteers, Public Health, Yarmouth Community Health Board, and NSCC –Burrige Campus.*

Accessibility Project

With the assistance from a special accessibility fund and NSCC –Burrige Campus, Carpentry Program that provided all the free labour, we were able to get a new step and ramp built as well as the downstairs washroom made wheelchair accessible. *Funded through Department of Housing – Province of NS and NSCC –Burrige Campus.*

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

Celebrations

Christmas Tea

Our event was well attended and provided us our one opportunity in the year to invite the community and our partners to come by the Centre, have fun, eat, and be merry.

Black History Month

This year we invited poet and artist Shauntay Grant to come and share her stories with the community. While here she also worked with a group of youth involved in the Youth Truth Matters and Sexual Violence projects.

International Women's Day (IWD)

A remarkable evening of women's music and talents were showcased at an evening event in Shelburne.

Strategy Sessions

We were fortunate to have two opportunities this past year to bring Board and Staff together to look at where we are and where we are going, setting some strategic directions for the coming year or so. In the first strategy session we focused on the broad areas of our work; who we are, what we have, what we need.

With the second opportunity, we participated in a process under Connect, where we worked with the other seven Centres across the province at a provincial forum in Pictou on diversity and social enterprise. From this we had the opportunity to have a facilitated strategy session in Digby with our Outreach Staff and Community Partners, and one large strategy session in Yarmouth with all the Staff, Board, and representatives who participated in the Pictou event.

This strategy session enabled us to get very specific with our priorities, develop timelines, and how we are going to achieve them.

Work Placements

Targeted Wage Subsidy

We were able to complete our Job Creation Partnership (JCP) and access the Targeted Wage Subsidy (TWS) as we moved into the development of the Women's Wellness and Youth Health Clinic, over this past year. *Funded under Workforce Development – Province of NS.*

Youth Corp

We were able to hire a young woman to assist us in a number of areas over the summer, especially on the Sexual violence project. *Funded under the Department of Health & Wellness.*

Student Placements

Every year we try and accommodate student placements, primarily from the School of Nursing, NSCC, and the Social Worker Program at U. St. Anne.

Community College –Carpentry Program

The students were back this past year and completed the extension to our house for the Women's Wellness and Youth Health 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.
- ❑ Schools Plus – We are on the two advisory committees where the program is being offered – Digby Junior & Senior High and Par-en-Bas.
- ❑ 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.
- ❑ Chamber of Commerce – We are a member and participate in events that are relevant to the Centre.
- ❑ 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 – As part of our contribution from the previous year, 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 we work in close collaboration.
- ❑ Youth Health Centre Working Group (Department of Public Health) – Working to establish community and school based health services for youth.
- ❑ 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.
- ❑ FOCO (Federation of Community Organizations) – We participated in a provincial and local forum organized by them, looking at the research they completed on the NGO (Non-Government Organizations) / Not for Profit sector that we are in and the importance and contribution we make to the economy and community.
- ❑ Yarmouth Citizen’s Health Care Coalition – We co-sponsored an event to bring attention to the Health Accord our Federal and provincial governments will be negotiating in 2014.
- ❑ Yarmouth Women in Business group – We assist with the organizational details for their annual “Women’s Winterlude” event that attracts about 500 women from across the three counties.
- ❑ IODE - The local chapter use the Centre for their monthly meetings.
- ❑ Intergenerational & Gender-based approach to enable full community Participation for Diverse, Rural Women in NS – is a project we are doing with three other Women Centres across the province. The goal is to increase women’s participation in decision making.

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. Included in this report is the Annual Connect Report that goes into more details of the work we are part of under our Association.

Women's Alliance for Change -Nova Scotia (WAC-NS)

As a founding member of the Alliance we participated in the founding Assembly and continue to participate, as much as possible, in the ongoing activities. A very successful engagement with our elected representatives on three key social policy areas that impact women – housing, violence, and economic security – was organized and policy direction articulated on how government can make changes to improve women's equality in Nova Scotia

Feminist Alliance for International Action (FAFIA)

We continue to be a community voice and through our associations (Connect and WAC-NS), we contribute to FAFIA's 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 prevention and services; development of a SANE (Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner) program, a SART (Sexual Assault Response Team), and Sexual Violence Prevention Tool Kits.
- ❑ 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
- ❑ Operationalize our Women's Wellness & Youth Health Clinic
- ❑ Address women's economic insecurity by creating a community plan for women; investigating women led cooperatives & small businesses, the potential and possibilities of Social Enterprises for women.
- ❑ Affordable & Supportive Housing for young mothers & low income women
- ❑ Strengthen our outreach capacity - providing our services and programs into our more rural and isolated communities.
- ❑ Adolescents
 - Supportive housing option for homeless youth
 - Programming such as Voices in all the schools
 - Youth Health Centre
 - Community development process to engage with youth and develop their leadership to address the issues – sexual violence/ hypersexualization, housing, illicit drugs and addiction issues
- ❑ Creative programming for women dealing with gambling and other forms of addiction
- ❑ Creative programming for women dealing with broad mental health issues (depression, anger, isolation, grief, self-esteem).

Core ,Project, and Program 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/ Voices Facilitator/ I'm a Women.....Program Facilitator
Marlene Surette	Clinic Manager
Sandra Hubbard LeBlanc	Support Counselor
Nicole Hattie	Sexual Violence Project & Youth Truth Matters Project Youth Worker/ Digby County/ Voices Facilitator
Amy MacKinnon	Youth Truth Matters Project Youth Worker/ Shelburne County
Doris Landry	Sexual Violence Project/ Yarmouth County
Patricia Vanaman	Sexual Violence Project / Shelburne Outreach Worker
Roberta Journey	Digby Outreach Worker
Debbie Roberts	Baby Steps Facilitator
Lisa Dulong	Voices Facilitator
Helen Paquette Aaron Allen	SHYFT - Project Manager SHYFT – Outreach Worker

Board of Directors

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

The staff who participate in Board meetings –
Karen Stewart, Bernadette MacDonald, Michele Archibald-Hattie