



Tri County Women's Centre

Annual Report

April 1st. 2012 – March 31st. 2013

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Summary

As we sum up our work for our eleventh year of operations we are mindful of the women and girls who have accessed our services and programs, the community volunteers who have assisted us in so many ways, and the community and government partners we have worked with to create an even better community across the tri counties for women and their families. All of these people have been an integral part of our work and success.

Our three locations; main office location in Yarmouth and our Outreach Offices in Shelburne and Digby, enable us to be accessible to women, girls, the broader community, and our partners/stakeholders. All three locations are well used by both women and the community.

Central to our work is the one on one support counselling we provide women and girls. It is from this work that we identify our programs and the community development work we undertake.

Our main community development initiatives in the past year have been; developing a community plan to address women's economic security, developing youth leadership and community engagement on illicit drugs, continuing our work on sexual violence prevention and intervention services, beginning the process of understanding Social Enterprise development within the Women's Centre structure, and getting our Women's Wellness & Youth Health Clinic equipped.

Communicating about our services, programs, initiatives and insuring we are accessible are essential to how we approach our work. Our quarterly newsletter, updated website, a toll-free phone line, and our Outreach Offices are important communication tools for us.

Our operational funding to maintain our service and community development initiatives across the tri counties is extremely tight. This makes it very difficult to broaden our services and community development work as it gets identified. Some of this gets addressed through project funding, but to sustain the work requires our core operational funding be increased.

The following is a summary of the activities we have carried out and the partners we have worked with over the last fiscal 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, the other funding sources that are listed have enabled us to carry out a number of programs and initiatives. We are appreciative of everyone's support.

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. This is one of the reasons 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 391 individual women and girls. This number means nothing without a context. The issues women come in for can vary from serious eating disorders, separation and divorce, sexual assault, losing custody of their child(ren), to anger and depression concerns. 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 that she can access our services at any time. On average we work with 45 individual women/girls each month across the tri counties providing this service.

Programs

The other part of our direct service work is programming. The sharing, education, friendships and social supports are 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 fall and winter 2012-13. 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. We had 8 women participate.

Path to a Healthy Lifestyle

This walking/ jogging program attracted a diversity of women and girls. Besides the physical activity there were related sessions on nutrition, relaxation, and accessing other services.

Encore

This program is for women who are survivors of breast cancer. It 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 had 7 women participate. We have funding to continue the program in partnership with the YMCA – Yarmouth. *Funded by the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation and Yarmouth Community Health Board.*

Re-Entry Program for Women

We were able to offer an abbreviated re-entry type program to 12 women that focused on enhancing their computer and workplace skills. Many of these women are considering going back to school or looking for other employment opportunities. *Funded by Department of Community Services.*

Shelburne Outreach

Our Outreach Office is used for both support work and community projects. As part of the Community University Research Alliance (CURA) Food Security project, the office has been used by the project staff as well as other projects and programs that we are doing like Voices and Youth Truth Matters.

Pre-Natal Support Network - Shelburne

We are one of a number of partners on this project that continued into this year. Spearheaded by Public Health and Health Beginnings, an extensive research project is being undertaken, and recommendations developed to ensure pre-natal support is available in Shelburne County. *Funded by the Shelburne Community Health Board.*

Digby Outreach

From our Outreach Office, we provide services to women across the county. The staff is well connected to other services and individual and family needs get addressed quickly and to the best of everyone's abilities and resources. We are starting to invite the community to come together to discuss affordable and supportive housing needs. The office is also used by our project staff involved in the delivery of the Voices Program and Youth Truth Matters project work.

Crock Pot Cooking Program – This Back to the Basics program started in this fiscal year and is being well received. We are offering the program in partnership with the Women’s Institute and the Digby & Area Recreation Department. *Funded by Digby Community Health Board and NS Women’s Institute.*

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 in six schools, two in each county. We also hosted a week-end retreat for the girls who participated. On average we have 8 girls in each program. This year we had the Voices Retreat at a lovely retreat space outside Bridgewater and 35 girls participated. *Funded under the Youth Development Initiative, Dept. of Community Services and Girls Action Foundation.*

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

This 3 year project was completed at the end of this fiscal year. The project was very successful in developing youth leadership and community engagement around illicit drugs. We worked with 104 youth in developing their leadership on the topic. They created workshops and information on illicit drugs and presented to their peers. Through this project, and with additional funding from other sources, we were able to take nine youth leaders to Ottawa for a youth conference. We also had two other young women participate in a National Girls Conference in Montreal. From all the project activities we developed a *Youth Truth Matters Tool Kit* which we will be promoting and distributing across the tri counties and the province. The YTM Toolkit is in both languages. We have applied for another project to take our work to the next level of engagement with youth and community. *Funded by Health Canada, Girls Action Foundation, Public Health.*

Addressing Sexual Violence Prevention through Civic Engagement and Resource Development:

This project was just finishing up at the first of this fiscal year. Under this project we carried out a number of community consultations on sexual violence prevention and intervention. We developed a draft Sexual Assault Response Protocol with key service providers and it is still in development. We have a lot of work to do to improve sexual assault intervention services. We met with hundreds of youth who suggested workshops on specific topics that would be helpful in a Sexual Violence Prevention Toolkit. We developed the toolkit and distributed it to Women's Centres across the province and all the school in the tri counties. A part of the toolkit was translated into French as well. There is a tremendous amount of work to do to address sexual violence prevention and intervention services. *Funded by Status of Women Canada.*

Women's Economic Security – Developing a Community Plan:

This three year project is enabling us to work with women who are dealing with economic insecurity, as well as other stakeholders, to develop and implement a community plan to address women's economic insecurity. The central part of the plan will be the implementation of a Mentorship Program to help women of various backgrounds and educational levels achieve the most that they can in order to become self-sufficient. The five pillars for the Mentorship Program are; Personal & family stability, Personal well-being, Referral program, Education & training, Employment & career planning. Women who choose to come into the Mentorship Program will work with a mentor who would advocate for them and help them access the necessary services to enable them to move forward with their lives. The mentor would; advocate for the woman, help her navigate and access the existing programs & services, create a self-sufficiency plan, and monitor her success. A life plan tool will be developed and used with the woman as she moves through the steps to achieve economic security. The time lines would be different for each participant as their life situations will be different. The process could take from one to five years, depending on the woman's circumstances and goals. *Funded by Status of Women Canada.*

Social Enterprise - An exploration:

To begin the exploration into social enterprise we undertook an initial overview of the concept, highlighting some examples within the not for profit sector and potential social enterprise ideas for south west nova. *Funded by NS Department of Economic Development.*

Senior Women's Program

One of the populations of women we found who did not access the Women's Centre are senior women who are more economically secure. A survey tool was used to assess the need and a program was developed and started in this fiscal year. We are hoping to do a cross generational activity with the group of senior women and some young people. *Funded by the Department of Seniors -Province of N.S.*

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 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 by Public Health and Community-University Research Alliance (CURA) & Mt. St. Vincent.*

Women's Wellness & Youth Health Clinic

This past year we worked on getting the clinic equipped with the necessary supplies and gadgets. Our request to the South West Nova District Health Authority to have Nurse Practitioner hours allocated to our clinic was refused. The Health Clinic at Acadian First Nation is also in need of a clinician. We are working on putting forward a joint request to have Nurse Practitioner or Doctor for a few days a week that can be shared with both locations. *Funded through Community Volunteers, Public Health, and Yarmouth Community Health Board.*

Special Events/ Opportunities

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. This was also a fundraiser to the fuel bank fund.

One Billion Rising

This was a global movement to raise awareness about violence against women. We worked closely with Juniper House and Acadia First Nation's Women's Association to have students across the tri counties involved in this awareness campaign and we hosted a public event in front of Yarmouth Town Hall.

Fundraising

Community volunteers worked with us to host a few fundraising events over the last year. We also had our first Golf Tournament that was a success. Shopper's Drug Mart in Digby chose our Outreach Office for their annual fundraiser drive.

Youth Take the Lead Conference

Through our Women's Centre Association, Connect, we hosted a one day forum on the work some Women's Centres are doing on youth leadership as well as a program called Health Relationship for Youth (HRY) Program that some school boards across the province are supporting. We were able to showcase our Youth Truth Matters and Sexual Violence Prevention Toolkits and the seven youth we took with us presented the materials. Ultimately we want all school boards to support a hybrid HRY program that can get at the social issues that youth are faced with.

Housing Brief from TCWC to Nova Scotia Housing Strategy

As affordable and supportive housing options are desperately needed in our community, we submitted a brief to highlight the housing needs and support to sustain the not-for-profit sector to both develop and manage the housing for our vulnerable populations.

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.
- ❑ Tri County Women's Health Coalition (formally the Women and Tobacco Advisory Committee) – The coalition is focused on the broad determinates of women's health; addiction, housing and violence against women.
- ❑ 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.

- ❑ 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.
- ❑ Harmony Bazaar – An annual Women’s Festival in Lockport. We continue to be an official sponsor for the volunteers. Our banner is displayed with the other sponsors and we are included in the promotional materials and on the volunteers’ t-shirts.
- ❑ Hospital Hullabaloo – Assist the Hospital Auxiliary with their major fundraising event.
- ❑ Yarmouth Women in Business group – They have asked us to hold their funds and to be the lead organization in organizing their annual “Women’s Winterlude” event. This attracted approximately 275 women from across the three counties.
- ❑ Nova Scotia Women’s Institute – We partnered with them to deliver the Cooking Program in Digby.
- ❑ IODE - The local chapter uses the Centre for their monthly meetings. We also partnered with them to raise funds for the fuel bank.
- ❑ Intergenerational & Gender-based approach to enable full community Participation for Diverse, Rural Women in NS – We are partnering with three other Women Centres across the province. The women who have been involved in our part of the project are from across the tri counties. They want to look at Labour Standards in particular workplaces.
- ❑ Health Fairs – We participated in a number of school and community health fair events across the tri counties.
- ❑ Bikes for Kids Program – There are a group of local adult volunteers who work with this program, taking kids on supervised bike rides on well-maintained bikes. They try and reach disadvantaged kids who often don’t have good bikes, if any. We will be partnering with them to enable the program to be available in this area.

Provincial Associations

Our provincial 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. We have been very active over the last year meeting with elected representatives and senior government officials on a number of public policy areas that impact women and girls as well as our operational funding

needs. 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 continue to participate in the work the Alliance is doing in three main policy areas that impact women and girls; housing, violence, and economic security.

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; a support worker to work directly with female victims of sexualized violence, development of a SANE (Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner) program, a SART (Sexual Assault Response Team), and implementing prevention programs using the Sexual Violence Prevention Tool Kit.
- ❑ Continue to develop the Tri County Local Food Network as part of our pro-active efforts to address food security issues address. Look into the concept of a Food Centre as a model for addressing immediate food needs while strengthening the skills and knowledge for making nutritious food choices.
- ❑ 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.
- ❑ Work with all stakeholders to establish affordable & supportive housing for young mothers and 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/ HRY in all the schools
 - Youth Health Centre within our clinic space
 - Create youth leadership opportunities to address social 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).

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 |
| Marlene Surette | Office Manager |
| Lisanne Turner | Digby County Sexual Violence Project & Youth Truth Matters Project Youth Worker/ Voices Facilitator |
| Amy MacKinnon | Shelburne County Youth Truth Matters Project Youth Worker/ Voices Facilitator |
| Doris Landry | Sexual Violence Project/ Yarmouth County |
| Patricia Vanaman | Shelburne Outreach Worker/ Sexual Violence Project |
| Roberta Journey | Digby Outreach Worker |
| Carmen Phinney | Senior Women's Program Facilitator |

Board of Directors

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| Fleurette Surette – Treasurer | Wanda Doucette |
| Jennifer Kemp - Secretary | Christine Comeau |
| Cynthia Duncan | Brenda Doucette |
| Renee Meuse-Bishara | Lisa Bowden |

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