



# Tri-County Women's Centre

Toll Free: 1-877-742-0085 | Fax: (902) 742-6068

## **DIGBY OUTREACH**

126 Water Street, Unit 2  
PO Box 1291  
Digby, NS B0V 1A0  
(902) 874-4777

## **YARMOUTH OFFICE**

12 Cumberland Street  
Yarmouth, NS B5A 3K3  
(902) 742-0085

## **SHELBURNE OUTREACH**

25B King Street, Box 1103  
Shelburne, NS B0T 1W0  
(902)742-0085

## Tri-County Women's Centre

### Annual Report

1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021

**Tri-County Women's Centre**  
**Annual Report**  
**1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021**

**Summary**

The COVID-19 pandemic has of course had a significant impact on how services were accessed, and to some extent what supports were needed at different stages. Programming is another part of our direct services and this year we offered a number of programs and services to women, girls, and youth, remotely mostly via text, online platforms like Facebook and Zoom, as well as in-person. We also held most of our staff, community development and Board meetings over Zoom. Our largest fundraiser had to move from an in-person walk to a virtual event. And our awareness campaigns became mostly social media and/or online streaming events.

The Tri County Women's Centre (TCWC), incorporated in 2000, began providing services in 2002. This was our eighteenth year of providing services to women and their families, and being a strong voice for social change, as we work to achieve equality for women across the tri-counties, the province, and our country.

Central to our work are our two mandates; 1) the provision of direct services, and 2) initiatives to address women's economic & social well-being. Framing our work around these two mandates enables us to work with incredible women and men and be involved in projects and initiatives with a diverse group of stakeholders, women, youth, and families. It is through these relationships that we develop our strength, direction, and purpose.

Between programs, projects and direct services, there is a steady flow of women, youth, and community stakeholders through our three locations. These are strong indicators that we are an accessible, supportive, and dynamic place for many.

As a tri county service, it is essential we have our services and programs accessible across all three counties. Our main office in Yarmouth is full and our locations in Digby and Shelburne are suitable at this time, but do not allow for growth. Having a physical space and staff presence in

all three counties enables us to be accessible, and to carry out our core services and project work across the tri-counties.

Over the last year we assisted hundreds of women, adolescent girls, youth, and families through our support services, projects, and medical clinic.

It is very difficult to measure the difference our services make to the overall health of our community but we know from observation that our work contributes to change and has a positive impact on people's lives.

Again, this year our project work, special events, community development and social advocacy initiatives concentrated on

- affordable housing across the tri-counties
- access to primary health care for our most vulnerable
- therapeutic intervention services for victims of sexualized violence
- the implementation of the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) program
- a youth leadership approach to drug use prevention
- working with Indigenous Women across the Maritimes toward reclamation of language and culture and rekindling of right relations
- expanding our capacity in responding to sexualized human trafficking and prostitution
- providing support services to victims and survivors of sexualized violence
- celebrating women and advocating for every individual to fight for equality with the International Women's Day #ChooseToChallenge campaign
- Ending violence against women participating in the #StartByBelieving campaign

Our operational funding from the Department of Community Services, under the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women (NSACSW), presents a challenge as the demand for our services continues to grow. We cover a significant geography, and it is imperative that we have outreach offices in Digby and Shelburne to ensure that our services are accessible. This is an added but necessary expense to us, and we continue to work with the NSACSW, and our elected officials, to try to ensure sustainable funding. It is because of our fundraising efforts that we are able to provide Outreach services in Digby & Shelburne at the cost of approximately \$50,000/year.

Provincially, through Women's Centres Connect, our association of women's centres, the NS

Sexual Assault Services Network, Nova Scotia Trafficking Elimination Partnership, the Nova Scotia Association of Community Health Centres, and the Tri County Women's Health Coalition, we have helped to shape public policies that have a direct impact on women, adolescent girls, and early childhood development.

Our success is based on the positive working relations we have with stakeholders across the service spectrum here in the tri-counties and across the province.

We would like to thank all our funders, staff, other service providers we have worked with, board members, community supports, Friends of the Women's Centre, and other volunteers that have enabled us to do our critical work across the tri-counties and the province.

The following is a summary of the activities we have carried out, the partners we have worked with, and a list of the Board Members and staff, who contributed to our success.

## Direct Services

### Support Counselling and Advocacy

Every year, requests for our support and advocacy services increase. ***This year we provided direct support services and programs to approximately more than 250 individual women and girls over the course of approximately 3000 contacts.*** This demand for one-on-one support counselling and advocacy services continues to speak to the need for another support worker/program coordinator position and additional hours for our outreach staff. For many of these women and girls we have provided services that require multiple appointments, phone calls, emails, and correspondence that represents many hours of staff time. Depending on the complexity of the situation, we can be working with an individual for many months and, at times, years. While we do not maintain a waiting list, our group programming has been reduced considerably because of our capacity due to the high demand for one-on-one support in increasingly complex situations.

The Women's Centre is a multi-issue entry point; we work with women and girls on a broad range of issues and concerns. **Poverty, violence, and social isolation continue to be the root**

causes of the reasons women come through our doors. *This year that presented as mental health support, housing insecurity and sexual violence being the most prevalent issues we addressed.* Other common issues that women present with are mental health, parenting, affordable housing, legal supports, sexual assault, discrimination, and access to primary health care.

## Programs

We try to reach as many women and girls as possible by providing programming to meet their needs. The following are the programs we offered in the last year:

- **Breast Pump Program (all sites)** - Breast pumps with kits and educational support, available in all three locations, are loaned to nursing moms. *Funded by Yarmouth Community Health Board Wellness Funds*
- **Yoga Breathing Meditation (Yarmouth)** – Meditation and yoga-based program facilitated by a local instructor.
- **Yoga & Active Seniors Program (Digby)** - Facilitated by local instructors and staff in Digby. *Funded by Digby Care 25 and Shoppers Drug Mart.*
- **Building Confidence with Art (Digby)** – An art program for beginners, facilitated by a local instructor.
- **Income Tax (all sites)** – We have three staff trained by Revenue Canada under the Community Volunteer Income Tax Program (CVITP), who provide tax filing for those who meet the CVITP criteria.
- **Christmas Crafts (Digby)** – A creative program focused on social connection and handcraft skills, facilitated by our Digby support worker and other local crafters. *Funded by Digby Care 25*
- **Women’s hygiene kits (all sites)** – providing sanitary napkins and other supplies for women in need. *Sponsored by Shoppers Drug Mart Yarmouth*
- **Project stocking (all sites)** – providing stockings to selected clients of the TCWC. *Supported by many local small businesses*
- **School supply drive** –providing school supplies, backpacks and lunch kits to families in need. *Sponsored by Staples Yarmouth, Thistle Hyundai, Yarmouth Nissan, Sobeys*

## **Social Advocacy**

Over the past year, we have advocated for progressive social policies in a number of areas that have a direct impact on women's social and economic safety:

**Social Assistance System Reform** - The Department of Community Services is restructuring the Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA). Through Connect, and other social policy networks (ie. Community Society to End Poverty and Community Agenda for Social Assistance Reform) we are connected to; we try to keep informed on the reforms being suggested and speak up on behalf of women in our local communities at both an individual and systems level. It is imperative that people who access this social safety system are provided more income to meet their basic needs.

**Affordable Housing** - This is a serious issue for women across the age span and we have been working with stakeholders across the tri-counties and province to have more financial resources made available, and better coordination of policies across our provincial and federal governments, so affordable and supportive housing needs can be adequately addressed.

**Sexualized Human Trafficking and Prostitution** - We continue to find opportunities to work with others, like the Trafficking and Exploitation Services System (TESS), operated by the YWCA Halifax. We work to further our collective understanding of this issue and how to both prevent the crime and ensure adequate provision of the services victims need.

**Trauma Specific Counselling for Sexualized Violence** – In collaboration with The Nova Scotia Sexual Assault Services Network and Women's Centres Connect, we advocated for trauma specific therapists for sexualized violence to be established, in community, across the province. This is a need in the tri counties and demand continues to increase.

**Media appearances:** TCWC was interviewed by CBC radio, Eastlink cable, CJLS and the Yarmouth

Vanguard about various women's issues throughout the year.

### Projects and Community Development Initiatives

Our community development projects & initiatives over the last year have been significant. For some of the work we have specific funding, while other parts of the work fall within our day-to-day operations, as we continue to make our communities a safer and better place for women and their families.

#### ∇ **Trauma Specific Therapy for Sexualized Violence**, *funded by the NS Department of Health & Wellness*

On behalf of a community of stakeholders, we received funding to carry out the priorities that the community of stakeholders identified. The priorities are:

- Trauma Specific Therapy for victims
- Coordination/Navigation/ Delivery of inclusive and culturally appropriate support services for victims
- Capacity building to build safer spaces and more informed service providers in this fiscal year, we provided the Trauma Specific Therapy Program in all three counties, which saw **41 individuals over 250+ sessions, with a wait list of 12.**

#### ∇ **Rural Truth Matters (RTM) Project - Cannabis Education and Substance User Supports** - *funded by Health Canada*

Inspired and informed by the prior Youth Truth Matters project, the focus of Rural Truth Matters is youth leadership, peer education and community education on cannabis and substance use. With a harm reduction focus, the project provides information to the community on cannabis and substances, as well as pilots a rural model of support that makes connections between trauma, mental health, and substance use. This project is 3 years into a 3.5 year project.

▽ **Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) Program for Western Nova Scotia** - *funded by the Nova Scotia Health Authority (NSHA).*

Tri County SANE launched in September, providing 24/7 medical and forensic response, by SANE trained nurses, to sexual assault at Yarmouth Regional Hospital, Roseway Hospital (Shelburne) Valley Regional Hospital (Kentville), South Shore Regional Hospital (Bridgewater), and Fishermen's Memorial Hospital (Lunenburg). We continue to work on additional sites in Digby, Middleton, and elsewhere. Our SANE Coordinator provides community engagement and education to various stakeholders and service providers. **Approximately 3 cases/month or 36 cases/year.**

▽ **TCWC/Leahey Wellness Clinic** – *funded by the Nova Scotia Health Authority (NSHA)*

We have extended our Partnership Agreement with NSHA for Tri County Women's Centre (Leahey) Wellness Clinic funding again this year. Our clinic is for gynecological services for women and girls, and women who do not have a family doctor; PAP/STI screening clinics for all; and a PRIDE Health clinic. There were **751 appointments at the Leahey Clinic** up until December 2020, when Dr. Leahey closed her practise. We also held a flu shot clinic providing **100 flushots** via drive-thru clinic. Ending with a patient waiting list of 43 individuals.

In November we began some new clinic offerings including: **PRIDE Health** (Dr. Tessa Boudreau): **20 appointments**; **PAP/STI Screening** (Jenille MacDonald, NP): **60 appointments**; and **Women's Wellness** (Dr. Madeline Arkle): **54 appointments**.

We are a member of the Canadian Association of Community Health Centres and the Nova Scotia Association of Community Health Centres.

▽ **Righting Relations / Apaji-wla'matulinej: Strengthening Adult Education for Social Change** – *funded by the Catherine Donnelly Foundation*

Apaji-wla'matulinej is led by Indigenous women. As women reclaim the language and culture, we are empowered to strengthen the foundations of our families and

communities. Strong women working together to create radical change and rekindle right relations. TCWC provides administration for this project.

## ▽ Gender-based... – funded by WAGE?/CFW?

### ▽ Affordable & Supportive Housing

In each county, we co-chair coalitions that address the need for more affordable and supportive housing: Digby Area Affordable & Supportive Housing (DAASH) group, Community Housing Options Initiative through Collaboration and Engagement (CHOICE), and Shelburne County Housing Coalition (SCHC). Since the Pandemic, this group has reconvened as one joint committee, chaired by TCWC, meeting over Zoom. We are working to identify and prioritize actions to address the housing needs in their county for the most vulnerable.

## Other Events/ Activities

### ▽ Educational Presentations

Over the last year, we participated in a number of events and educational presentations on a full range of topics (ie. consent, professionalism, mobility, parent information, sexualized human trafficking, the baby-friendly initiative, and general TCWC information) in communities and schools across the tri-counties.

### ▽ TCWC Events

Each year we host events that pertain to our work and continued relationships with other service providers and our community.

- o **Holiday Tea** - Each December we host this event as part of the festive season and combine it with a fundraiser – due to COVID the Tea was not able to take place, however, we offered a boxed tea as a fundraiser that sold out.

- o **International Women’s Day - March 8<sup>th</sup>** – TCWC hosted a boxed lunch fundraiser and awareness event in recognition of the international event and participated in the IWD campaign #ChallengeforChange. We held several virtual activities including an art class, coffee talk panel discussion on gender bias & inequality, and a music performance by Alex Rodgerson. We reflected on the status of women’s equality and how much work is left to be done to improve equality for women around the world and locally.
- o **National Canadian Film Day** – Participated in this national celebration of Canadian cinema by screening a Canadian film at the Digby office.
- o **Sexual Assault Awareness Month** – Several events including #StartByBelieving pledge signings, information sharing, and social media engagement.

∇ **Student and Work Placements** – Each year, when approached by learning and employment institutions to provide placements for their students and participants, we do our best to accommodate these requests. This year we had students and work placements from Nova Scotia Community College and Yarmouth Consolidated Memorial High School Co-op Program.

∇ **Fundraising** - We are very grateful to the community for their generous financial support. We worked in partnership with SHYFT Youth Services for our major annual fundraiser Coldest Night of the Year in February. This fundraiser takes place nationally and supports organizations who serve and support individuals who are homeless or precariously housed.

### Communication about Tri-County Women’s Centre

We maintain a website, newsletter, Facebook page, Instagram account, toll-free phone number, and use our local newspaper/radio to promote our events and work.

### Local Partnership and Collaborations

We do not do our work alone, and it is only through our partnerships and strong working relationships with a number of agencies, that we are able to create positive change in our communities. Below are the agencies/ groups we are most connected with:

- **Tri-County Women’s Health Coalition** – The coalition is focused on the broad determinants of women’s health, addiction, housing and violence against women. They are also the Advisory Committee to our work on sexualized violence.
- **Juniper House** - As a sister agency, working to address violence, inequality, and social injustice for women across the tri-counties, we value their support and work together when it is possible.
- **SHYFT Youth Services Society** – We have a close working relationship with SHYFT and collaborate on joint projects whenever possible.
- **Public Health** – The Community Health Promoters at Public Health are particularly supportive and helpful in a number of areas of our work. We are very thankful for their abilities and our strong partnership.
- **SchoolsPlus** – We work with the SchoolsPlus programs across the tri- counties and collaborate on program delivery wherever possible.
- **South End Kids Community Garden** – We administer the funds and activities of the garden.

## Provincial Partnership and Collaborations

### **Connect – Nova Scotia Association of Women’s Centres**

Our membership in Connect is central to our success in obtaining operational funding, addressing public policies pertaining to women, and being a strong voice for women in the province and across the country. Connect membership consists of nine women’s centres located across the province, who are autonomous organizations that identify their own priorities based on community needs. Attached is a year-end report of the activities undertaken by Connect.

### **Nova Scotia Sexual Assault Services Network**

Members include a number of key agencies from across the province that provide services to victims of sexualized violence. It enables all of us to stay connected, share resources, and advocate for the identified priorities within the Nova Scotia Sexual Violence Strategy.

### **SANE Program Expansion across Nova Scotia**

We are working closely with the NSHA and the other SANE sites to ensure access and consistency of SANE services across the province for victims of sexual assault.

### **Community Society to End Poverty (CSEP) and Community Agenda for Social Assistance Reform (CASAR)**

We stay connected to poverty coalition work being done provincially and nationally. The Transformation Process the provincial government is undertaking to re-design the Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA), the social safety net for many women and families in the province, is one public policy area we are giving our attention to.

### **Nova Scotia Action Coalition for Community Wellbeing**

We participate in Zoom meetings of the Coalition and also represent our local housing coalitions at the Housing Working group table of this coalition.

### **Our appreciation**

On behalf of Tri County Women's Centre Board and Staff, we want to thank the provincial government for on-going operational funding. As well, the other funding sources, highlighted in the annual report, enabled us to carry out a number of programs and initiatives. The agencies we worked with over the past year in the tri-county area and across the province have been vital to our successes. We are appreciative of everyone's support.

A special thank you to Dr. Shelagh Leahey for 8 years of service to the community at Tri County Women's Centre!

### **Funding partners, grants and other financial contributions**

- Province of Nova Scotia – NSACSW, Department of Community Services
- Province of Nova Scotia – Dept. of Health & Wellness
- Province of Nova Scotia – NS Health
- Health Canada
- Municipality of Argyle
- Municipality of the District of Yarmouth
- Municipality of Barrington
- Municipality of Digby
- Canadian Association of Community Health Centres
- Canadian Women’s Foundation
- Catherine Donnelly Foundation
- JRB Fund
- Digby Care 25
- Shoppers drug Mart Digby

## Staff

Angela Goudey - Rural Truth Matters Yarmouth County Navigator

Bailey Schrader - Support Worker/Program Coordinator (2021)

Bethany Surette - Medical Office Assistant (TCWC/Leahey Wellness Clinic)

Colette Melanson Rural Truth Matters Shelburne County Navigator

Faith Stoll - Tri County SANE Coordinator (2020)

Ishbel Munro - Righting Relations Project Coordinator

Joan Donaldson - Rural Truth Matters Project Coordinator (2020)

Judy Greene - Rural Truth Matters Project Therapist

Kelly Foxton Rural Truth Matters - Digby County Navigator / Project Coordinator

Kimberly Brooks - Support Worker/Program Coordinator (2020)

Rebecca Cottreau - Financial Coordinator

Raelynn Deveau - Bookkeeper (2020)

Roberta Journey - Digby Outreach Worker

Shana Vidito - South Shore/Valley SANE Coordinator (2020) – Western Zone Coordinator

Shannon Watkins - Centre Coordinator

Terri Pitts – Sexual Violence Specific Trauma Counsellor

Trish McCourt - Executive Director

### **Board of Directors**

Juanita Bruneau - Co-Chair

Danielle Denton - Director

Lynn Comeau - Director

Donna Frison-LeBlanc - Director

Suzanne Guy - Secretary

Dar Purdy - Treasurer

Alex Doyle - Co-Chair

Nancy d'Entremont – Director

Nikki Telford - Director

**Appendix**

**Women's Centres Connect Annual Report 2019/2020 – PDF attached**

