



Tri County Women's Centre

Annual Report

April 1st. 2013 – March 31st. 2014

Tri-County Women's Centre Annual Report April 1st 2013- March 31st 2014

Summary

This year marks our twelfth year of operations and our maturity is starting to show. We continue to carry out our two mandates; 1) the provision of direct services & 2) initiatives to address women's economic & social well-being. More and more we are involved in projects and initiatives that enable us to work with a broad section of stakeholders, women, youth, and families. It is through these relationships that we develop our strength, direction, and purpose.

There is nothing slow about the day to day operations of the Centre. From projects to programs to the day to day running of the Centre, there are always women, youth, and community stakeholders coming in and out. These are strong indicators that we are an accessible, supportive, and dynamic place for everyone.

This past year, at our main location in Yarmouth, we had a big expense in re- shingling the roof, which the community came together and fundraised for us. As a tri county service it is essential that we have a presence in all three counties. There is a significant cost to this, but one we have to consider for both our accessibility and credibility. Our Outreach Offices in Shelburne and Digby are small and have a number of challenges which we need to focus on over the next year. Our Outreach Offices are well used by women and the community, and enable us to be accessible and carry out our core services and project work in these counties.

The request for our *one on one support counselling* is very high and we need to increase our staff compliment to address this service need. Again, this is an indicator that women, youth, families, and other service providers have confidence in our service.

Our community development projects & initiatives over the last year have been significant pieces of work. Some we have specific funding for and others are part of our overall mandate as we work to make our communities a better place for women and their families.

Under our *Community Plan to Address Women's Economic Security* project, we carried out a process to identify potential social enterprise ideas. As well, we have done extensive ground work in Yarmouth County on affordable & supportive housing, childcare needs, youth engagement, and employment for women.

We continue to take the leadership role in our community on sexualized violence and through stakeholder engagement developed a *Collaborative Model of Practice to Address Sexual Violence Prevention & Intervention*. From that work we have been chosen as one of six Demonstration Sites in the province to address sexual assault services in our community.

With renewed funding near the end of this fiscal year, we have been able to continue:

- our youth leadership on drug use prevention,

- pilot our Youth Truth Matters Toolkit across the province and in Nunavut,
- and develop the capacity of community to work with youth to prevent drug use.

In Digby County our work in forming the Digby & Area Affordable & Supportive Housing (DAASH) group has enabled the community to identify and prioritize actions to address the need. In Shelburne, our support has enabled the Food Security Project to carry out community based research and organize forums to engage the community on this very topical issue.

Our two big achievements this past year was getting our Leahey Wellness Clinic open and operating and being able to transfer the SHYFT House over to the SHYFT Board as they were able to secure operational funding.

We continue to make our services, programs, and projects accessible to the broader community by producing our quarterly newsletter, keeping our website updated, maintaining a toll-free phone line, and keeping our Outreach Offices open as much as possible.

Our operational funding was increased slightly but not enough to address our staffing pressures. It is imperative that our operational funding be increased to enable us to provide our services & programs across the tri counties. More and more other services are referring their clients to us for our services. Simply put we need more staff.

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.

The following is a summary of the activities we have carried out and the partners we have worked with over the last fiscal 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. 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 406 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. Our one on one support counselling and advocacy services are also provided to individual women and girls we meet through projects and programming. Taking into consideration all our support counselling and advocacy, average we work with over 60 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 2013. 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 6 women participate.

Path to a Healthy Lifestyle

A self-esteem focused program it incorporates walking/ jogging program and attracted a diversity of women and girls. Besides the physical activity there were related sessions on nutrition, relaxation, and accessing other services. We had 9 women participate.

Learn to Run for Beginners

We created a safe place for women/adolescent girls to come and get comfortable with light running/walking. We had an average of 12 women/ girls participate.

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 were able to offer this program three times and encouraged by the funder to re-apply. We had on average 7 women participate in each program. We offer this program in partnership with the YMCA –Yarmouth. *Funded by the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation and Yarmouth Community Health Board.*

Re-Entry Program for Women

Started in the last fiscal year and continuing into this year, 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, the extensive research project on pre-natal support in Shelburne County was released with a number of recommendations. *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. The office is also used by our project staff involved in the delivery of the Voices Program and Youth Truth Matters project work.

From our humble beginnings last year, in bringing the community together to discuss affordable & supportive housing issues, a group called Digby & Area Affordable & Supportive Housing (DAASH) group has been formed and has carried out extensive research and community engagement work.

Cooking Program – Using a Blender – This is the second year we have offered a cooking program and it proving to be very successful. *Funded by Digby Community Health Board and Shopper's Drug Mart (Digby) Community Fund..*

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 seven schools; one in Yarmouth, and three in each of the other two counties. *Funded under the Youth Development Initiative, Dept. of Community Services.*

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 (YTM)

Our evaluation from the initial YTM project showed that the development of youth leadership & youth engagement was a positive and effective approach to drug use prevention. Over this fiscal year we submitted another project to Health Canada (HC) to broaden the work that was started under the initial Youth Truth Matters project. In our next submission we wanted to reach younger youth about the YTM message, continue to strengthen our youth leadership, enhance the youth Truth Matters Toolkit to include a number of social issues that impacts youth and drug abuse, and develop the capacity of youth and adults to work together to prevent drug abuse. We were fortunate in receiving the funding for this next stage that started near the end of this fiscal year. *Funded by Health Canada under DSCIF (Drug Strategy Community Initiatives Fund)*

Addressing Sexual Violence Prevention & Intervention

Building on the work we carried out the previous few years, we were able to secure provincial funding to carry out community and stakeholder gatherings across the tri counties to discuss sexualized violence. From those engagement opportunities we were able to introduce a *Collaborative Model of Practice to Address Sexual Violence Prevention & Intervention*.

From this work we were able to secure additional funding to begin to address the service delivery gaps in both intervention and prevention of sexualized violence. *It needs to be noted that, due to the death of Rehtaeh Parsons, a young woman from Nova Scotia who died after being sexually assaulted & bullied through social media, the provincial government responded with financial resources to communities to help prevent and address the harm from sexualized violence.*

We were also able to support through the NS Advisory Council to print us some more Sexual Violence Prevention Toolkits, enabling us to continue to distribute the resource.

Through the Tri County Women's Health Coalition, we carried out a number of activities over Sexual Violence Awareness Month (May).

Funded by Province of Nova Scotia/ Nova Scotia Advisory Committee on the Status of Women

(NSACSW)

Women's Economic Security – Developing a Community Plan:

Over this last fiscal year we completed our second year of activities of the three year project. The funds are 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.

As the project work unfolded, we were able to identify funding opportunities to implement our Community Plan and the project activities were tweaked to take advantage of these opportunities. The staff and Board carried out a lot of work on Social Enterprise development, identifying potential business ideas, and the financial viability of these. From this work two Social Enterprises are being planned – 1) Home Support Services for Seniors & Others Less Able 2) A Jewelry business.

The project continues to focus on other social areas that impact women's economic security; housing/ childcare/ employment/ transportation/ and opportunities youth. *Funded by Status of Women Canada.*

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. We also hosted a Community Picnic in September. *Funded by Public Health and Community-University Research Alliance (CURA) & Mt. St. Vincent/ Select Nova Scotia.*

Leahey Wellness Clinic

We were finally successful in getting our clinic open with the support and interest from Dr. Shelagh Leahey. We hosted an official opening and public announcement about this new service that is open to women, men and youth. It will also be a clinical community site for the medical students who will be doing their internships in the area. It is being well used just like we knew it would. *Funded through Community Volunteers, Public Health, and Yarmouth Community Health Board.*

Special Events

Christmas Tea

Hosting this annual event provides us an opportunity 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.

Women & Business Group - Winterlude

We continued to work with a group of business women to help organize Winterlude this past winter. This is an opportunity for business women to showcase their business to the broader community who are invited to come for a fun day of learning about the businesses and taking in some special events.

Fundraising

“Friends of the Women’s Centre” came through again with some incredible fundraising to assist us with the necessary roof repair and other expenses related to being able to carrying out our work.

With the assistance of the Yarmouth Women’s Golf Association we also had our second Golf Tournament that was a success.

Shopper’s Drug Mart in Digby chose our Digby Outreach Office for their annual fundraiser drive again this year.

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 – Our Outreach Office staff is in regular communication and continues 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 450 women from across the three counties.
- ❑ IODE - The local chapter uses the Centre for their monthly meetings. We also partnered with them to raise funds for the fuel bank.
- ❑ Health Fairs – We participated in a number of school and community health fair events across the tri counties.
- ❑ Trips 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. In particular, we have been promoting our *Sexual Violence Business Case* to have sexual violence prevention and intervention services provided through Women’s Centres across the province.

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

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 intervention 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.
- work with stakeholders on pornography as a public health issue.
- ❑ Continue to develop the Tri County Local Food Network as part of our pro-active efforts to address food security issues address. Have more community dialogue with other stakeholders as we look into the concept of a Food Centre as a model for addressing immediate food needs.
- ❑ Have our Leahey Wellness Clinic used more.
- ❑ 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
 - Sexual Health Education in schools and community
 - More programming such as Voices/ HRY in all the schools
 - 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
Marlene Surette	Office Manager
Kirsta Morris	Youth Truth Matters Project Coordinator/Voices Facilitator
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
Patricia Vanaman	Shelburne Outreach Worker/ Sexual Violence Project
Roberta Journey	Digby Outreach Worker
Ann Hazelton	Sexual Violence Project

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