



## Tri-County Women's Centre

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Tri-County Women's Centre

Annual Report

April 1, 2019 - March 31, 2020

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**Summary**

The Tri County Women's Centre (TCWC), incorporated in 2000, began providing services in 2002. This was our sixteenth 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. Programming is another part of our direct services and this year we offered a number of programs to women, girls, and youth.

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 positively impacts people's lives.

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

- ∇ working with Indigenous Women across the Maritimes toward reclamation of language and culture and rekindling of right relations
- ∇ 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
- ∇ 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 #EachForEqual 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 adequate 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.

It has been another very successful and impactful year.

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 450 individual women and girls over the course of 2503 contacts, across all three counties, up from 250+ last year.*** 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 supports in increasingly complex situations.

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

the reasons women come through our doors. 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:

- ▽ **Encore (Yarmouth)** - An aquatic, light exercise and social program offered in a supportive environment for women recovering from breast cancer. *Funded by the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation (Atlantic Branch) in partnership with the YMCA.*
- ▽ **Breast Pump Program (all centres)** - Breast pumps with kits, available in all three locations, are loaned to nursing moms. *Funded by 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. *Funded by the Digby Area Community Health Board.*
- ▽ **Income Tax (all centres)** – We have four staff trained by Revenue Canada under the Community Volunteer Income Tax Program (CVITP), who provide tax filing for those who meet the CVITP criteria.
- ▽ **Body Positivity Workshop (Yarmouth)** – Information and discussion about body positivity and celebrating all bodies, Facilitated by an NSCC Social Services Student
- ▽ **Financial Literacy (Yarmouth)** – Three sessions covering the topics of basic budgeting, debt smarts, and fraud prevention. *Facilitated by Coastal Financial Credit Union*
- ▽ **Trauma Support Group (Yarmouth)** – A psychoeducational support group for women who have endured sexualized violence. Co-facilitated by our trauma-specific therapist and Yarmouth support worker. *Funded by the Sexual Violence Strategy*

- ▽ **Kindness Rock Painting (Shelburne)** – A creative, mindfulness-based program facilitated by our Shelburne support worker. *Funded by JRB Friends Remembering*
- ▽ **Wellness Wednesdays (Shelburne)** – A multi-week group focused on various skills and wellness-related topics, facilitated by our Shelburne support worker.
- ▽ **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*
- ▽ **Ornament Painting (Shelburne)** - A creative program focused on social connection and handcraft skills, facilitated by our Shelburne support worker.

### 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 Nova Scotia Trafficking Elimination Partnership (NSTEP) that has disbanded and become the Trafficking and Exploitation Services System (TESS), and Nova Scotians for the Prevention of Prostitution and Human Trafficking. 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 could increase with the launch of the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program.

**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, via Community Support Network (CSN) - Breaking the Silence: A Coordinated Response to Sexual Violence in Nova Scotia**  
*- funded by the NS Sexual Violence Strategy, Department of Community Services, Nova Scotia Health Authority*

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 51 (compared to 35 in 2018-2019) individuals over 363 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 2 years in to 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, Valley Regional Hospital (Kentville), South Shore Regional Hospital (Bridgewater), and Fishermen's Memorial Hospital (Lunenburg). We continue to work on additional sites in Digby, Shelburne, Middleton and elsewhere. Our SANE Coordinators provide community engagement and education to various stakeholders and service providers.

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

We have extended our Partnership Agreement with NSHA for Leahey Wellness Clinic funding again this year. Our clinic is for gynecological services for women and girls, access to primary health care for at-risk youth, and anyone who does not have a family doctor. There were 1028 (up from 803 in 2018-2019) appointments at the clinic this year. We also held flu shot clinic providing ### flushots. 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 and Canada 150 Community Fund.*

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.

▽ **Affordable & Supportive Housing**

In each county, we participate in 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). The three stakeholder groups are working to identify and prioritize actions to address the housing needs in their county for the most vulnerable.

▽ **Fresh Food Box** – *funded by Halifax Mobile Food Market, Public Health Services (NSHA) and Community Health Board Wellness Funds*

A community partnership between Conway Workshop, Public Health Services, Halifax Mobile Food Market, Driftwood Greenhouse, Ridgeview Farms and Superstore, Fresh Food Box provides nutritious, fresh, affordable produce to people in our community who might find it hard to put fruits and vegetables on their tables. TCWC provides administration for this project.

▽ **Vibrant Homes** – *funded by Nova Scotia Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage*

Vibrant Homes provides basic repair and maintenance to homeowners in Yarmouth County. Homeowners provide materials and the project provides the labour. The carpenter worked with some youth apprentices, and youth were also hired for snow removal. Resources for housing funding programs were created and shared with participants. This project moved onto a second Phase in a social enterprise model under the umbrella of SHYFT Youth Services.

### 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.

▽ **Harmony Bazaar**

This musical event in Lockeport promotes women in the music industry, primarily from across the province and Atlantic region. It also provides creative spaces for young women to learn and explore their talents. We are pleased to sponsor this fun and essential event.

▽ **TCWC Events**

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

- **Holiday Tea** - Each December we host this event as part of the festive season, and combine it with a fundraiser for a community cause that is outside our work. We invite stakeholders and community to share some food and fun. This year we raised funds for the Salvation Army.
  
- **December 6<sup>th</sup> National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women** - We collaborated with Juniper House and the South West Labour Group to host an evening vigil at Frost Park.
  
- **International Women's Day - March 8<sup>th</sup>** – TCWC hosted a luncheon in recognition of the international event, and participated in the IWD campaign #eachforequal. We heard from a guest speaker about her non-traditional role as a craft brewer of Cider in the Tri-Counties. We reflected on the status of women's equality and how much work is left to be done to improve this for women around the world and locally.
  
- **National Canadian Film Day** – Participated in this national celebration of Canadian cinema by screening a Canadian film at the Digby office.
  
- **Sexual Assault Awareness Month** – A number of events including pledge signings, information sharing, social media engagement, a ConsentFest film screening and a CJLS interview.
  
- ▽ **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, Université Sainte-Anne, 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. NSCC Social Services provided the majority of our volunteer support on Coldest Night of the Year. Each year, Shopper's Drug Mart Digby chooses a community agency for their community drive and we were the recipient again this year.

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

We maintain a web site, 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.
- **Acadia First Nation Native Women’s Group** - We have a close working relationship and always welcome the opportunities to work together for the benefit of Mi’kmaq women and their families.
- **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 have recently joined 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.

**Staff**

Name	Position
Kimberly Brooks	Support Worker/Program Coordinator
Rebecca Cottreau	Financial Coordinator
Brittany Deveau	Vibrant Homes Project Coordinator (2019)
Raelynn Deveau	Bookkeeper
Joan Donaldson	Rural Truth Matters Project Coordinator
Terry Doucette	Vibrant Homes Project Carpenter (2019)

Judy Greene	Rural Truth Matters Project Therapist
Roberta Journey	Digby Outreach Worker
Amy MacKinnon	Shelburne Outreach Worker (until January 2020)
Ishbel Munro	Righting Relations Project Coordinator
Courtney Phillips	Rural Truth Matters Digby County Navigator (until fall 2019)
Terri Pitts	Trauma Specific Counsellor
Brittany Pothier	Rural Truth Matters Yarmouth County Navigator (until fall 2019)
Carmen Phinney	Tri County SANE Coordinator (until November 2019)
Shana Vidito	South Shore/Valley SANE Coordinator
Michaela Smith	Rural Truth Matters Shelburne County Navigator (until fall 2019), Rural truth Matters group co-facilitator
Bethany Surette	Medical Office Assistant (Leahey Wellness Clinic)
Marlene Surette	Office Manager (until August 2019)
Lisanne Turner	Executive Director (until October 2019)
Colette Melanson	Rural Truth Matters Shelburne County Navigator (began Sept 2019)
Kelly Foxton	Rural Truth Matters Digby County Navigator (began Sept 2019)
Angela Goudey	Rural Truth Matters Yarmouth County Navigator (began Sept 2019)
Faith Stoll	Tri County SANE Coordinator (began Nov 2019)
Shannon Watkins	Centre Coordinator (began January 2020)
Trish McCourt	Executive Director

## Board of Directors

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>
Juanita Bruneau	Co-Chair
Danielle Denton	Director
Lynn Comeau	Director
Donna Frison-LeBlanc	Director
Suzanne Guy	Secretary
Heather Mulock	Director until 2019
Dar Purdy	Treasurer
Fleurette Surette	Director
Alex Doyle	Co-Chair

**Appendix**

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