

ANNUAL GENERAL
REPORT

2016-2017

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contents

Mandate and Vision	3
A Message from the Board Chair	4
A Message from the Executive Director	6
Direct Service	8
Social Change	11
Programs and Projects	13
Public Education and Events	17
In The News	20
Staff and Board of Directors	21
Special Thanks to Donors and Funders	22

Mandate and Vision

Pictou County Women's Resource and Sexual Assault Centre offers support and advocacy to individual women and unites women, community, and government to strive towards equality.

Our vision is a world of justice, equality and peace for all people. We see an end to sexism, racism, poverty, classism, ageism and all other forms of oppression.

We see a society where there is self-determination, both individually and collectively.

As feminists we are committed to justice and equality for all people. This means liberation of women from oppression and an affirmation of the right of all women to dignity and autonomy. We support the struggles of all women to live in loving, non-exploitative relationships free from violence. We believe in freedom of choice.



Candace Slater calls for social action

A Message from the Board Chair

It has been another memorable year for the Pictou County Women's Resource and Sexual Assault Centre. In addition to the vital direct service work our staff engage in everyday to support the women in our community, we also saw MORPH, our joint project with Tearmann Society and the Pictou County Centre for Sexual Health, get underway. We are so pleased to be able to be a part of providing much needed services to those who have experienced sexual violence in our community. We were also very excited to bring *Slut: The Play* to our community. This moving and thought provoking theatre piece looks to raise awareness of the impact of sexual violence and slut-shaming on individuals and communities, specifically the impact it has on young women. It was wonderful to participate in the discussions with audience members following the play, and hear their opinions on how sexual violence affects our communities and how we can work together to stop it. It was a humbling experience to get to work with the amazing women who made up our cast and crew; on behalf of the Board, I would like to extend our sincerest thanks to them for being a part of this project.

As Board Chair, I would also like to extend my appreciation to the women who serve on the Board of Directors alongside me. It is a privilege to sit on the Board of Directors for this wonderful organization. Thank you to the women who volunteer

PICTOU COUNTY WOMEN'S RESOURCE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT CENTRE ANNUAL GENERAL REPORT 2016-2017

their time and energy throughout the year to help our Centre continue to thrive.

We have several board members who are leaving us this year, and we wish them all the best, and we are excited to have a new group of fantastic women joining our board for the upcoming year.

Finally, on behalf of the Board, I would like to extend our deep gratitude to our Executive Director and staff. These women work tirelessly every day to improve the lives of the women and girls of Pictou County. It would be impossible to list all the ways in which they make a difference in our community, and so much of the work they do goes unrecognized. This year, we had two long time staff members leave the Centre, Marg Macintosh and Candace Slater, and I would like to thank them both for all the work they have done over the years. To Shelley and the staff, thank you for all you do. Know that you are changing the lives of women in our community every single day.

In solidarity,

Meghan Breen

Board Chair

A Message from the Executive Director

Building upon our 40 years of strength in the community we have continued to work on raising awareness about women's issues, including sexual violence. In the past year our message has reached over 900 people. This reach is made possible through the dedicated work of 22 volunteers including the Board of Directors, 2 student placements, 4 permanent staff and 8 term staff. We stand united as a team with our partners and allies in our call for equality and empowerment for women and girls. Together we can make a difference both in women's lives and in our community.



Pictou County Women's Resource and Sexual Assault Centre is for many women a safe place to share their stories and receive services. Our door is open Monday to Friday 9 – 4:30pm. Women come and share their stories, challenges, and resilience, receiving information, support, advocacy and referrals on a wide range of issues. Empowerment is the central theme of all of our programs and services.

Over the last year we have focused on the policies and procedures of the Board of Directors, which has included strengthening our financial practices. Our goal is always to follow the best practices possible. We are trusted by our stakeholders to ensure accountability and effectiveness.

PICTOU COUNTY WOMEN'S RESOURCE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT CENTRE ANNUAL GENERAL REPORT 2016-2017

Our Board of Directors have offered their expertise, support and commitment to the governance of our Centre throughout the year. You are all a valued resource for our Centre. Thank you for your dedication.

Our reach into community has been enhanced through partnerships including the Community Support Network and the Sexual Assault Response Team. These partnerships have allowed us to focus on raising awareness and offering services related to sexual violence in our community. We are focused on building capacity and offering supports so that survivors will have safe, reliable places to turn to help with healing. We have named this initiative MORPH – Mapping our Road to Power and Healing.

Each and every member of the team at the Centre is connected by our work with women, by women, for women. Together we are moving forward towards our shared goal of empowerment, equity, and equality, working both locally and provincially towards social and economic justice. I am humbled by the opportunity to work within this team with experienced staff, partners and committed volunteers. I look forward to embracing the challenges ahead and moving towards our future together.

Respectfully Submitted,
Shelley Curtis-Thompson,
Executive Director

DIRECT SERVICE

Direct Service

Sometimes women need a place to meet with other women, share ideas, and learn from one another. Our door is open Monday to Friday 9 – 4:30 pm. Friendly staff offer information, referrals, resources, support, and services on a broad range of issues. Our Centre received 1430 calls during the year and provided services to 65 new women and offered services to 123 women and girls.

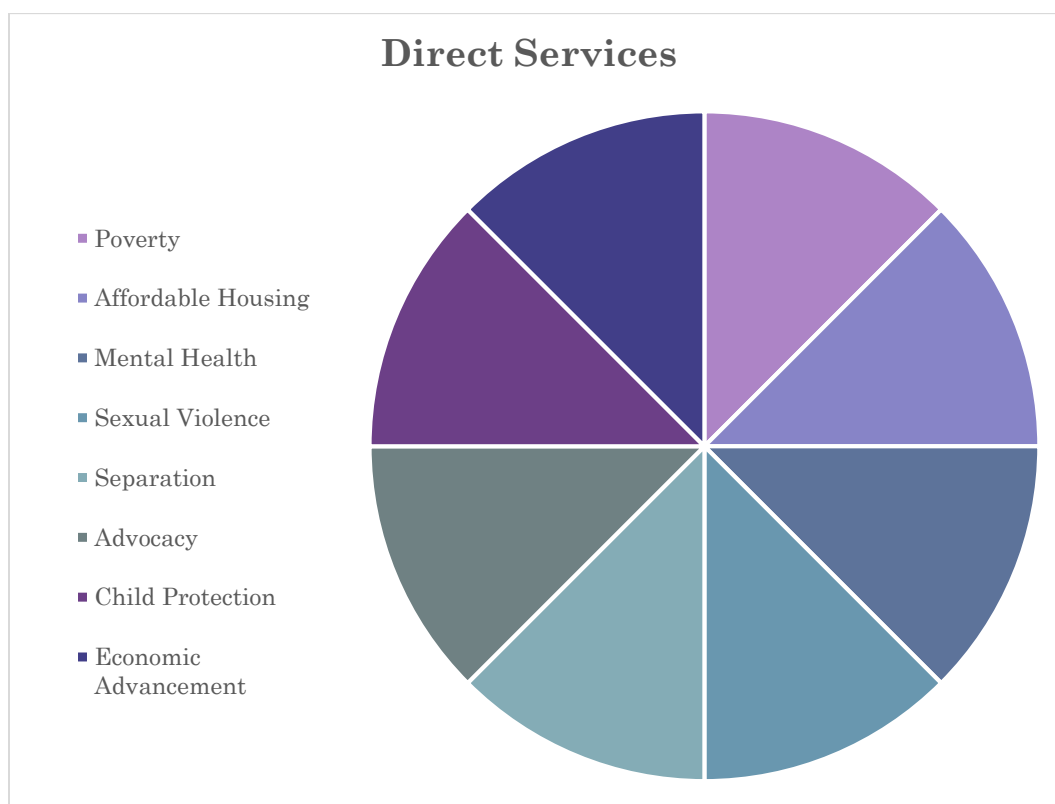
In addition to drop in services, our Support Workers Doreen Paris and Karen MacKay are available to book appointments that offer an opportunity for women to receive supportive listening and counseling. Appointments are scheduled promptly. Women comment that it helps to be heard and to share in a confidential environment. On average, 40 women receive services each month from our experienced staff who, when combined, held 673 support meetings with women this year. Some of these women may be seen briefly or over a longer period of time, depending on each individual's needs and circumstance. We recognize that each woman is unique and we treat every woman with respect and compassion.

Our Support Workers are also experienced advocates that can assist women in navigating housing, social assistance, policing and court systems. As many as 12 women receive advocacy services every month. A total of 108 advocacy related

DIRECT SERVICE

appointments were offered during the year. This can mean the difference between knowing what to ask for, who to ask, and what to expect for individual women.

For many women, PCWRSAC offers a social safety net. Women are welcome to drop in to our Centre at any point. Our Joanne Kohout Memorial Library gives women a reason to stop by, offering over 300 feminist based texts at a number of different reading levels. Thanks to a grant supported by the Municipality of Pictou County on top of many new resources we have a laptop available for women to use to do online research or access the Internet.



DIRECT SERVICE

Group Programs

Support groups offer woman an opportunity to come together, share experiences, and learn and grow together. It helps to know that you are not alone.

Over the course of the year, 46 sessions were offered to 86 women on a range of issues including self-esteem, yoga, anger management, and sexual violence. Participants note the value of group programs and support. For example a participant said the sessions gave her strength, skills, and self-confidence.

Girls Day Camps

Our girls day camps are offered to girls ranging from 9 – 12 years old. They are an opportunity to have fun and explore important issues including learning about safety and social media. We ran three day camps lasting for four days each with 12 girls. We are thankful for our community partners including Kid's First and NSCC.

Many participants wished they could attend camp for longer than four days, saying “we had lots of fun.” Learning was built into games and crafts so each day was full of energy and fun things to do. This year's camps will be held in July, for more information contact Lauren Delaney at (902) 755-4647. Additional funding from donors, Municipality of Pictou County helped make these camps free of charge to participants.



Larissa LeBlanc (2016)

SOCIAL CHANGE

Social Change

Pictou County Women's Resource and Sexual Assault Centre works towards equity, equality, and empowerment through direct service and community engagement using the community development model and working with partners to address gaps in service.

Locally, PCWRSAC serves on the following committees:

- Aging Well Coalition
- Pictou County Chapter of Silent Witness Nova Scotia
- Pictou County Food Security
- Pictou County Hope and Care Committee
- Pictou County Interagency on Family Violence
- Pictou County Partners
- Pictou County Sexual Assault Response Team
- Multicultural Association of Pictou County

Provincially, PCWRSAC serves on the following organizations:

- Womens Centres CONNECT
- Sexual Assault Services of Nova Scotia

SOCIAL CHANGE

Connect Celebrates Funded Coordination

Womens Centres Connect, the Provincial Association of Womens Centres in Nova Scotia, unites the nine community-based Womens Centres. Connect is a strong, supportive, collective feminist voice on issues of concern to women and adolescent girls. Connect provides leadership in the struggle for women's equality and articulates women's concerns to the public and policy makers. Since its formation in 1988, 2016 is the first year the association has been directly funded through the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

With funding, our Coordinator Georgia Barnwell is able to expand our reach to include Sexual Assault Services of NS, Affordable Energy Coalition, Community Society to End Poverty, Home warming Advisory Committee, EVA Canada and participation in the Department of Community Services (DCS) "transformation" process of the Employment and Income Assistance (ESIA) programs.

Women's Centers are an essential component to programs and services for women in rural communities across Nova Scotia. We are unique with our open door policies encouraging women to access our Centres without a need to identify a concern, making our Centre truly accessible and open.

PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS

Starting Point

Starting Point is an original program developed through the Pictou County Women's Resource and Sexual Assault Centre (PCWRSAC) that has been offered in our community for more than 15 years. This 12 week, pre-employment program for women facing barriers to employment offers a safe starting point for the journey towards employability. Each journey is rich in teamwork, diversity and self-discovery.

11 women completed a session of this program, funded through Nova Scotia Government Labour and Advanced Education Department and staffed through PCWRSAC. Working towards employment honors women's experiences and helps them apply these experiences to future education and employment opportunities.

Candace Slater, Jane Fraser and Katie Williams offered Starting Point their experienced facilitation supporting the women throughout their pre-employment journey. Women learn basic employability skills and complete a number of various certificate programs. In addition, women gain experience conducting research, using computerized systems to organize presentations and deliver reports on educational and employment opportunities.

The program includes the following components:

PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS

Life Skills and Personal Development – Explores topics including self-esteem, healthy relationships, time and stress management, problem solving, assertiveness, self-care and goal setting

Introduction to Information Technology – Introduction to basic computer skills and internet navigation

Literacy and Numeracy – Reading comprehension, grammar, numeracy including budgeting

Employability and Career Planning – Offers resume and cover letter writing, mock interviews, transferable skills identification, labour market and career goal information

Certifications -First Aid/ CPR, WHMS, Self Defense, OH &S, Super Host and Safe Food Handler

Community Information Sessions - Women's Health, Mental Health & Addictions, Nutrition, Human Rights, Self-Care, Communications, Food Mentors, Women's Resource and Sexual Assault Centre, Tearmann Community Supports

PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS

These skills assist women to overcome barriers as they strive to enter the workforce or pursue further education in order to establish economic independence.

Women gain confidence in their strengths and are able to apply an increased self-awareness and self-esteem to their resume, cover letter writing, mock interviews, and job placement experiences. Since 2001 countless Pictou County women attribute their participation in Starting Point as central to their employability and education plans and outcomes. Women discover tools to help break down some of the barriers they face in their journey towards employment through Starting Point.

We want to thank all the staff and especially Candace Slater for her 15 years of service with Starting Point Program. We wish her well in living her retirement life fully.



Katie Williams and Candace Slater display the Starting Point logo

PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS

MORPH (Mapping Our Road to Power and Healing)

As the administrator and a grant partner on the Community Support Network, the Pictou County Women's Resource and Sexual Assault Centre has been working diligently to address the needs of sexual violence survivors through the MORPH initiative. We are focused on building capacity and offering supports so that survivors will have safe, reliable, and culturally competent supports to turn to help with the healing journey.

As of March 2017, one support group for women in the community had been completed and was followed by a group for men at the Northeast Nova Scotia Correctional Facility which began in April. We are hoping to complete one more group for men and women by the end of the 2017, as well as a group for youth and LGBTQ+ sexual violence survivors. We will also work to develop further dialogue with the African Nova Scotian and the First Nation/Aboriginal community related to sexual violence. In addition we will offer an educational group for allies and loved ones of survivors.

In addition to groups, MORPH along its partners has provided counseling sessions, educational workshops on sexual violence, and workshops on trauma informed training. Our website and Facebook page offer the most up to date information on our programming, and our radio campaign to raise awareness about sexual violence is in full swing. For more information please visit our Facebook page or our website at www.morphpictoucounty.ca.

PUBLIC EDUCATION AND EVENTS

Slut, the Play

Pictou County Women's Resource and Sexual Assault Centre strives towards equality, equity, and empowerment through direct service and community engagement. We work towards social change through our committee work and through theatre.

Through funding from the United Way of Pictou County and the cast and crew of *Slut, the Play* by Katie Cappiello PCWRSAC engaged the community through theatre. We had five performances during the year including a taste of the play at our 40th Staff and Board Appreciation night reaching over 750 people.

Social activism theatre raises awareness and dialogue, in this case about sexual violence. It draws in the audience and makes them consider how each of us can be a part of social action and create a world without violence one step at a time.

Half of all women in Canada have survived at least one incident of sexual or physical violence. While most people who are sexually assaulted are women, and many of them are between the ages of 14 to 24, anyone can be sexually assault. Women have a right to safety and as a community we need to consider ways that we can work towards a safety for all. It is critical that survivors receive support and that perpetrators are held accountable.

Sexual violence involves controlling another person and leaving them powerless. Sexual violence is not about sexual desire. It is about control, exposing an individual at their most vulnerable state, and taking away any trace of power by

PUBLIC EDUCATION AND EVENTS

intimately violating them. Survivors need us to stand up, speak out and work towards power and healing.

Special thanks to our Director Dawn Peters who kept us focused and encouraged each of us to learn and grow along the journey. This dynamic team including Devon Greene, Deanna Mann, Cameron Smith, Maggie Daley, Graci Young, Emma Diamond, Amanda Jess, Hanna Conrod, Jordyn MacMillan, Jillian Hennick, Cassandra Munroe, Ian Grant, Meghan Breen and Shelley Curtis-Thompson made it possible for community to talk about painful topics and consider the ways we can each make a difference.

For up to date information please follow us on Facebook, and remember, our door
is always open



The cast of Slut, the Play pose for a promotional picture

PUBLIC EDUCATION AND EVENTS

At a Community Level:

- Take Bake the Night
- Women's History Month Event
- Interagency on Family Violence Share Fair
- Volunteer Fair
- Sessions on Sexual Violence
- Engaging with 1023 followers through social media on issues important to women.
- Trauma Informed Culturally Competent Training
- 100 Women Who Care
- Preparations to bring Healthy Relationships for Youth program to youth.

Inspired by the story of the Lavender Menace, Betty Mae Madden designed the winning logo for our Centre that was revealed at our Staff and Board 40th Appreciation Event.



IN THE NEWS

100 JUSTICE

Women's Centre board chair says more sexual assault awareness needed

BY AMANDA JESS
THE NEWS
NEW GLASGOW

The chair of the local women's centre board says more awareness and education is needed following the acquittal of a taxi driver in a Halifax sexual assault case on Wednesday.

Bassam Al-Rawi was charged after police found a woman passed out and almost naked in his cab in May 2015. Judge Gregory Lenehan, who said "clearly a drunk can consent" during his decision, has come under fire for the ruling.

Meghan Breen said the Pictou County Women's Resource and Sexual Assault Centre is disheartened and would support further investigation into the decision.

"We would obviously disagree with those comments. Women's centres and women's organizations work very hard to bring more awareness to consent and when people ... are able to give consent. We certainly don't feel that somebody under the effects of alcohol or somebody who is intoxicated would be able to give consent."

While different amounts of alcohol affect people differently, Breen said if somebody has consumed enough that their judgment would be impaired, they, in most cases, wouldn't be able to give full consent.

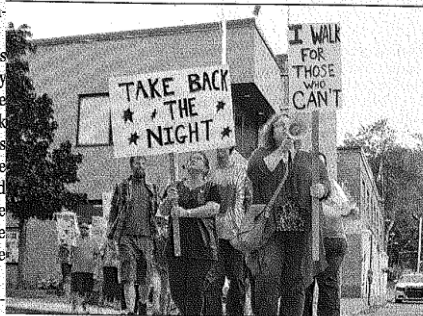
Lenehan said while it was clear she was unconscious when police saw her, it's not known when she passed out. Her pants, that the court heard Al-Rawi was trying to hide,

were also soaked with her urine and her DNA was found on his mouth. Since the ruling, a petition has been launched for a formal inquiry against the judge and protests have been organized in Halifax.

"I think our role as a women's centre and as people in society is to not be silent when these things happen and to speak out.... The women's centre does a lot of work to bring more awareness to these issues and advocate for women in these situations, however, things like this make it apparent that we need to be louder."

She said the centre understands how difficult it is for victims of sexual assault to continue to come forward when faced with outcomes like the one in Halifax Wednesday, but

added speaking out brings more awareness to the issue. The centre provides support for survivors who want to take their case to court through counselling



Participants in the Take Back the Night March make their way through New Glasgow to protest sexual abuse and violence against women.
INSET: Taylor Fraser prepares her sign for the Take Back the Night March in New Glasgow last week.

(Brimicombe photo)

Taking back the night

March has mission of ending sexual, relationship and domestic violence in all forms



Starting Point graduated its 11 most recent students on Friday during exercises at the Museum of Industry in Stellarton. From left, front row are: Lori Jackson, Rachael Snyder, Emily Roarke, Lily Fisher and Alecia Sutherland. Back row: Chaylene Samantha Walsh, Roxanne Smith, Hayley Wilson, Paula Fraser and Jennifer Smith.

Starting Point adds 11 grad

By Steve Goodwin
steve@pictouadocate.com

STELLARTON — and testimonials on highlighted a Startu graduation.
Eleven graduates v eured last Friday at the of Industry, Nova Scot Advisor, March 11

and Advanced Education finances the program, which the Pictou County Women's Resource and Sexual Assault Centre sponsors. Tributes, ... It also receives federal funding.

(and) we are glad to share it with you." A former Starting Point graduate is the event's guest speaker, and this time Charlotte Johnson

hard on my self-esteem keep doing it, and it pushed she encouraged. Paula Fraser was this valedictorian and touched

Heather Brimicombe
heatherbrimicombe@pictouadocate.com

Residents of Pictou County publicly called for an end to sexual violence and abuse of all kinds last week as they marched through downtown New Glasgow in protest.

The Take Back the Night rally, one that is also held in many different cities nationally, united women and allies to bring attention to the fact that one in four women will be sexually assaulted in their lifetime.

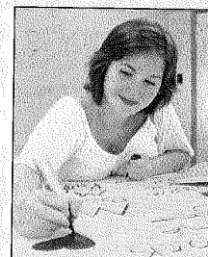
"Take Back the Night is a march that started in the 1970s," said Shelley Curtis-Thompson, executive director of the Pictou County Women's Resource and

tre, as well as other community groups, is currently working toward creating a resource network for women.

Preparing for the march, there was a poster making party for those who wished to put their own slogan or flare on the signs they would be carrying during the protest.

Before the march began, a member of the community stepped forward to share their personal experience with childhood sexual abuse. The room remained silent as she recounted some of the things said to her by the perpetrator and others whom she told about the abuse.

Through a choked up voice at the end of her talk, the woman asked the audience to



statements, to enforce that everyone is worth something. "I want victims of sexual violence to know that there is a community of people that care," Curtis-Thompson said.

"We stand together to take

Group awards \$13,000 to Women's Resource and Sexual Assault Centre

THE NEWS
PICTOU

Shelley Curtis-Thompson, executive director of the Women's Resource and Sexual Assault Centre, walked out of the Trinity United Church on Wednesday night with a commitment of close

to \$13,000 in funding from 100 Women Who Care.

"I feel like I've been walking on air ever since," she said during an interview Friday.

Curtis-Thompson was presenting on behalf of her agency alongside Bob Bennett from Summer Street Industries and

Heidi Sinclair from the Y Strong Kids Campaign.

"This was the closest vote we have had so far," says Crystal Murray, one of the members of the organizing committee. "Each presentation was very emotive. It is difficult to choose between the charities because we know that each one is worthy and will direct the funding towards a meaningful project."

The meeting on Wednesday evening marked the first full round of funding for the new chapter. 100 Women Who Care chapters follow a set of rules designed by the originating group that was initiated in the United States several years ago.

"It is a simple premise," says Susan Higdon, one of the newest members of the organizing team. "We are a group of a minimum 100 women. We meet four times a year and we vote for charities in our community that we nominate ourselves when we join. A few weeks before our meeting we do a random draw of three charities from all of the nominations. They each make a five-minute presentation, the members vote, we announce the winner. It is as simple as that."

Members attending the meeting each bring a self-addressed envelope with their donation and the winning agency

collects the money at the end of the night. If a member cannot attend the meeting they send their donation with another member or they mail it directly to the winning agency.

Curtis-Thompson is both a member and was a presenter for the Women's Resource and Sexual Assault Centre. She said she is very thankful for the funding and what it will enable them to do.

The plan is to use the money for a school-based program called "Healthy Relationships for Youth."

The program was developed in Antigonish and has already been held in various parts of the province. The goal of the program is to give youth a better understanding of healthy relationships, intervention and prevention of violence.

While it's still a work in progress and will involve more conversations with the school board, Curtis-Thompson said she'd love to see the program start in Pictou County this school year.

"These funds go a long way to enable us to get started," she said.

The Pictou County Chapter of 100 Women Who Care has grown to 138 members since its first meeting last October. Membership is always open. For more information you can visit www.100wwcpc.com.

Kinsmen TV Bingo

Due to technical difficulty, TV Bingo could not air on July 28.
Cards for that date will be in play for August 4 Bingo.

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STAFF AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Special thank you to all staff and volunteers who help make a difference every day
in the lives of women in Pictou County.

Farewell and the best to Marg MacIntosh who has moved on to new opportunities
after a decade of dedicated work with the Centre.

SPECIAL THANKS TO DONORS AND FUNDERS

Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women



Nova Scotia Department of Community Services



Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Advanced Education



Our community enhances our service through support and donations. Here are some of the donors who have supported PCWRSAC over the past year. Thank you for your valuable support.

SPECIAL THANKS TO DONORS AND FUNDERS

Other donors:

Municipality of Pictou County



United Way of Pictou County



100 Women Who Care

Individual donors

Start by Believing

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