

ANNUAL GENERAL REPORT

**APRIL 1, 2023 –
MARCH 31, 2024**

The background of the entire page is a soft-focus image of lavender flowers in shades of light purple and white. In the lower right quadrant, there is a purple oval logo with a green border. The logo is partially framed by a sprig of lavender flowers and green leaves that curve around its left and bottom edges.

**Pictou County
Women's Resource and
Sexual Assault Centre**

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MANDATE & VISION

Pictou County Women's Resource and Sexual Assault Centre (PCWRSAC) offers support and advocacy to individual women, as well as uniting women, community, and government to achieve equality. As feminists we commit to justice and equality for all people. This means freedom from oppression and affirms women's rights to dignity and autonomy. We are here to support women, girls and survivors of sexualized violence of all genders.

We envision a world where every person is treated with respect, dignity and equality. By advocating for gender equality, we strive to eliminate gender-based violence, poverty and discrimination, working collaboratively to achieve a just, equitable and inclusive society.



A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

As the newly appointed Chair of the Pictou County Women's Resource and Sexual Assault Centre (PCWRSAC), it is with a profound sense of commitment and optimism that I embrace the opportunity to support our Centre's mission to eradicate gender-based discrimination and violence. Believing in a world grounded in fairness, equity, and safety, I am deeply honoured to contribute to shaping our future towards these ideals.

First and foremost, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the staff, current volunteers and members of our board, as well as those who are stepping down, for their dedication. Our board members play a critical role in sustaining the Centre through their governance and policy-making efforts, which are instrumental in driving our mission forward. Meghan Bragg, a member of our board, passed away in July 2023. We continue to honour her in our collective work together as we carry on in her absence. She is remembered for her community work and commitment to wellbeing and equity.

This year, we celebrated International Women's Day with an inspiring event that was attended by 160 participants. We were privileged to have Tonya Francis, a board member and respected knowledge keeper, inaugurate our luncheon with the Honour Song, setting a poignant tone for the day. The meal catered by the Wellness Centre, facilitated a warm atmosphere. Our distinguished guest speaker, Katherine Salter, illuminates the intersections between the gig economy, gender-based violence and the importance of workplace protections. Highlighting the significance of early intervention which is at the heart of our Centre.

Our fundraising committee has achieved success with our letter and basket campaign establishing funds to revitalize and enhance our program room. Our refresh plans underscores our commitment to providing welcoming and comfortable space for all our programs and services, ensuring those we serve feel truly valued and supported.

Under the feminist leadership of our Executive Director, our staff team continues to engage with individuals with empathy, respect and an appreciation for their lived experiences as guiding truths.

I firmly believe we have the power to transform our world for the better, one conversation and connection at a time. My involvement with the Centre is not just a duty but a profound privilege that allows me to live out my dream of real equality. Together with resilience and unity, we advance towards a more just and equitable future for all.

Thank you all for your continued support and commitment to the Pictou County Women's Resource and Sexual Assault Centre. Let's move forward, inspired by the belief that change is possible and that every step we take brings us closer to our vision of a gender equal world for all.

Warmest Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Moira".

Moira MacDonald
Chair



A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

We continue to grow, collaborate, and be resilient through teamwork at all levels. Our work is made possible by our dynamic team of staff, board and volunteers. Thank you for all your support and efforts! Our community work reinforces our belief that ending inequality and gender-violence requires a unified effort across all sectors. We bring our non-profit experience and the voices of the women, girls and survivors of sexualized violence to these discussions locally, provincially and nationally.

The Mass Casualty Report highlighted the necessity for a significant investment into the National Strategy to End Gender-Based Violence, a remedial measure long overdue. Our culture of victim-blaming only serves to perpetuate sexualized violence by silencing survivors, inhibiting opportunities for connection and healing, making places like ours a critical part of the solution. At the Why Here? Why now? conference opening panel I spoke about equality. Equality does not exist in a vacuum; it is intertwined with the society around us. Our society persistently undervalues women, girls, and gender-diverse individuals, underscoring the urgent need to prioritize equity in our efforts. Women are the backbone of our families, communities and workspace.

Our commitment to early intervention, meeting people where they are, and attentively listening to their needs lays the foundation for building a more equitable and supportive community. Through the accessibility project we built a new covered ramp with a seating area means those with mobility issues can now access our services on site. With construction over most of the year our building improvements are significant steps making our facility more sustainable and efficient. These improvements align with our commitment to providing a welcoming and inclusive space for all who come through our doors.

Our team is here to support. Our open-door policy offers safe, trauma informed access to support, enabling a healing journey. 935 participants engaged in our services, each interaction centered on empowerment and resilience. Social change requires both individual and collective initiatives raising awareness and mobilizing towards gender justice.

Inspired by concepts of financing our feminist future we developed new programs for girls and seniors that we plan to pilot in this coming year. In addition, we developed a new program in collaboration with Yreach focused on boundaries and consent. Boundaries are key to every healthy relationship. Working with a phenomenal group we are founding members of the newly formed Pictou County Affordable and Supportive Housing Association. This organization works within a housing first approach to positively impact the housing crisis in our community. We have also begun a MORPH Capacity Building Initiative to increase services and awareness about sexualized violence.

I want to express my deepest gratitude to all our community, volunteers, team, funders, and donors who have supported us along our journey of empowering women and girls, enhancing their well-being. We offered 1710 services to individuals and the community. We have remained resilient, adaptable, and committed to our mission to empower women and support survivors. We are steadfast in our commitment to a gender equal world.

In light of our accomplishments, I am reminded of the strength and resilience that lie at the heart of our organization. We are more than a service provider; we are a beacon of hope and source of strength for women, girls, and survivors. Our work continues as we remember our esteemed board member, Meghan Bragg who passed away after a short battle with cancer this summer. Her dedication and passion for our cause will always be remembered and cherished. We are steadfast in our commitment to a gender equal world. Our commitment to creating a safer, more equitable world remains unwavering.



Respectfully,

Shelley

Shelley Curtis-Thompson
Executive Director

A MESSAGE FROM OUR RESILIENCE PROJECT

This project is ongoing to the end of June 2024. It aims to enhance and support organizational structures, policies, and strategies. The project has four phases, each with specific goals and outcomes. During the first phase, we designed our strategic directions, which included a review of our vision statement, core values, and policies. Based on the assessment, we established goals and objectives for our strategic directions. Additionally, we conducted a knowledge synthesis of the Mass Casualty Commission Report, Reclaiming Power, and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence, and the Provincial Equity and Anti-Racism Strategy. During our strategic planning process, which is grounded in participatory approaches and asset-based learning, we created numerous opportunities to connect, collaborate, and share perspectives, insights, and lived realities.

The second phase was focused on the assessment of the salaries and benefits plan. As a feminist and trauma-informed organization, we are committed to fostering a diverse, inclusive, and equitable workplace where staff, board members, and volunteers feel valued, safe, heard, and respected regardless of their gender, race, age, language, ethnicity, nationality, identity, ability, and education. We assessed the current salaries and benefits of our employees to identify pay discrepancies and gaps in the benefits plan. This included an analysis of wages and benefits offered at other provincial Women's Centre's and local non-profits. Our Executive Director along with Connect continue to advocate for the needs of our Centre. In the spring, our core funder Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women announced an increase to their investments into the Women's Centre's.

Currently, we are working on bringing all these phases together as we move on to the final phases. The third phase focuses on establishing a comprehensive business continuity plan to ensure uninterrupted operations and identify potential risks and threats that could disrupt the organization, such as natural disasters, technology failures, or key staff absences. This includes establishing a backup strategy for key

leadership roles, creating an emergency plan, and ensuring that backup leaders have the necessary knowledge, skills, training, and access to essential resources to effectively fulfill their roles.

The fourth phase involves evaluating the governance model and designing the training goals. This includes developing and delivering specific governance model training and defining governance roles and responsibilities as boards of directors and advisory committees. Through the Resilience Project, we designed a strategic plan that is informed by our organizational strengths to prevent gender-based violence and address the needs of women, families, and communities we support. We developed strategies related to staff retention and recruitment of new talent by evaluating our benefits and salaries. Furthermore, establishing a business continuity plan that includes succession planning at all levels of the Centre. We will evaluate our governance model during the final phase of the project to provide additional training to the board regarding their roles and responsibilities. This final phase will be completed under the leadership of our Executive Director who is working with Pink Larkin on phase four.

Regards,



Hina Shehzadi

Term Director Organizational Development and Strategy
Resilience Project



DIRECT SERVICES

We offer low barriers to access our Centre which creates opportunities to drop by without an appointment. Our open door offers a safe haven for women and survivors of sexualized violence seeking solace, support and engagement through a broad range of programs. Our services are designed to meet the needs of those we serve, spanning from mental health and sexual violence support to addressing financial insecurity and system navigation challenges.

OUR IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS - VARIETY OF SUPPORTS AND SERVICES

295 individual 1019 contacts for support counseling services as many as 11 drop by's in one day.

155 individuals received 77 contacts for advocacy including divorce kit support, housing appeals and more.

197 individuals received 98 contacts - information and referrals helping people get the right services at the right time.

402 participants in 15 programs including a new collaboration with Youtreach.

457 participants benefited from 16 training programs and events.



WE ARE HERE TO SUPPORT AND ASSIST WITH PROGRAMS, TRAINING AND NAVIGATION

The range of issues leading individuals to our services mirrors the complexity of their lives – mental health concerns, sexual violence, financial insecurity, and the daunting task of system navigation. For our clients being seen, heard, validated and supported is a significant part of their healing journey.

The profound effects of trauma demand a range of support, with a recognition that repeated trauma exacerbates the need for therapeutic interventions. Our trauma informed team offers a robust combination of social work, social services and counseling support to address these issues. Early intervention is key.

Our skilled team is here to help people figure out the best resources that are the best fit for them. Resources are needed for our clients and our Centre to offer more wrap-around support. With funding we are now able to offer some emergency food relief, period products, sexual health and hygiene products. Meeting these basic needs is an essential step to our services.

With funding from the March 8th fund, we have begun our MORPH – Mapping Our Road to Power and Healing Capacity Initiative strengthening our response with a full-time counsellor on site. We have offered new programs on mindfulness, self-esteem, boundaries, consent, self-defense and survivor programs. We are dedicated to the well-being and empowerment of each individual who walks through our doors. In memory of Doreen Paris, we offered our first in person Speaking Up and Speaking Out Assertiveness Program giving voice to women. Doreen was a strong advocate for women speaking up and voicing concerns and solutions with care. As we reflect on this past year, we are reminded of the strength, resilience and trust placed in us by those we serve. Our mission continues to be driven by the impact our services can have on improving the lives of women and survivors in Pictou County.

**TOGETHER, SIDE BY SIDE, WE FORGE AHEAD INTO A
FUTURE OF EMPOWERMENT, HEALING AND HOPE FOR
GENDER JUSTICE AND AN END TO DISCRIMINATION.**

MORPH - MAPPING OUR ROAD TO POWER AND HEALING

As a beacon of hope and healing, MORPH extends a range of services tailored to aid survivors of sexual violence in developing healthy coping mechanisms, reclaiming control over their lives. Through collaborative effort with community partners, notably the Pictou Sexual Assault Response Team (PSART), MORPH actively engages in intervention and prevention activities including public education and events. We strive to have a unified approach to combat sexual violence. Eradicating gender-based violence will take all of us working across sectors.

MORPH offers vital services including trauma informed mental health counseling which was funded by the Canadian Women's Foundation and is now funded through the March 8th Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women Fund. Stabilizing financial resources for this work is critical to responding to sexual violence in Pictou County.

Our services include counseling, safety planning, information, referrals, programing, public education and professional training. MORPH supports and empowers survivors living in Pictou County. MORPH coordinated and provided services to survivors helping them develop healthy coping tools to manage and reclaim control of their lives.



PROGRAMS	SESSIONS	LOCATIONS	PARTICIPANTS
Lunch & Learn, Mindfulness & Self Esteem Book Reviews	15	Pictou County	11
Using Mindfulness to Cope	5	Pictou County	4
Healthy Relationships - Boundaries	5	Pictou County	4
Be Your Own Superhero - Self Defence	1	Pictou County	5
Sexual Assault Awareness Month	4	Online	53
Take Back the Night (TBTN)	1	Stellarton	52
TBTN Prep	2	NSCC & Centre	35
Training Professional Education & Public Education	4	Stellarton & New Glasgow	122

Over the last year, we have completed thirty seven (37) sessions with two hundred eighty six (286) participants.

Future MORPH opportunities include programs for youth, survivors' families, and all genders. If you are interested in learning more about services and programs offered, email Melissa Fanning:

MORPH@WOMENSCENTRE.CA



PROGRAMS INCLUDE:

- Creative Healing for Youth Survivors of Sexual Trauma
- Mindful Process Recovery Group for Sexual Trauma
- Moving Forward: Reconnecting and Reintegrating
- Skill Building Support Group for Adult Women Survivors of Sexual Trauma
- Using Mindfulness to Cope – Male Survivors
- Healthy Relationships and Boundaries
- 2.5 Yoga Survival Program
- Using Mindfulness to Cope for Survivors of Sexual Abuse
- Mindfulness & Self Esteem Lunch & Learns

PUBLIC EDUCATION INCLUDING:

- Sexual Exploitation/Human Trafficking
- Skill Building Program for Supporters of Survivors of Sexualized Violence
- Finding Me School Based Program
- Ins and Outs of Consent

“

**GROUPS OFFER A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY FOR
HEALING, LEARNING AND GROWING TOGETHER
AS WE COMBAT AN EPIDEMIC OF GENDER
BASED VIOLENCE BREAKING DOWN ISOLATION
AND BUILDING RESILIENCE**

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GIRLS EMPOWERMENT

Empowering girls to realize their full potential and become catalysts for change is a cornerstone of our mission. These programs are more than a service – more a journey towards an equitable and just world.

Our work with girls emphasizes the importance of empowerment as a multifaceted process grounded in self-awareness, self-esteem, compassion and confidence. Through a supportive environment, we encourage girls to explore their value and resources. This equips them to express themselves, assert their rights, and chase their dreams with confidence and compassion.

These programs promote gender equality and confront stereotypes, biases and discrimination that restrict girls' opportunities. By empowering girls to challenge these barriers, we nurture their capacity to become leaders and advocates for social change.

Our camps aimed at girls aged 9 – 12 provide a platform for personal growth and empowerment. This year, we successfully conducted four camps in Ward One New Glasgow, Pictou and Pictou Landing First Nations with 41 girls. Girls brought home stories of fun and girl power leading to ongoing conversations about empowerment.

International Day of the Girl is celebrated to raise awareness on girl's rights and issues, our event this year delved into the theme "Because I am a Girl" distributing 80 books to local schools to inspire and educate. We hosted an event with girls at the Centre giving voice to their ideas for our gender equal future.

Finding Me, a school-based program initiated in 2018 in partnership with New Leaf's Changing Male Conversations concluded in June 2023. This year we worked with one school and 132 grade 7 girls. Finding Me fostered gender equality and mutual respect from an early age. We are grateful for all the girls who we have worked with over the years. As we move forward, we are excited to introduce a new initiative focused on educating girls on financial literacy and independence as we advocate for a feminist future.

Our achievements this year were made possible thanks to the support of our NSACSW and special funding with United Way of Pictou County, providing healthy snacks and lunches for our girls programs and events. Their support underscores the importance of community efforts in driving our mission forward.

We are committed to empowering girls and our belief in their potential to shape a better world for all. Together we continue to support and uplift the voices of young women and girls, for they are the architects of our future.



ENABLING ACCESSIBILITY PROJECT

This transformative project now allows women to roll up to our door and receive our services. It is truly heartwarming to open our door wider for on-site services. Funding for this project was made possible by Enabling Accessibility Project, Municipality of Pictou County, Watts Wind, Trueline Design and Anonymous Donor. Thank you!



YEAR IN A GLIMPSE:

SERVICES	TOTAL PARTICIPANTS	PROGRAMS	SOCIAL CHANGE
1710	935	35	28

SERVICES	PARTICIPANTS	# OF CONTACTS	ADDITIONAL INFO
Support Counselling & Crisis Intervention	295	1019 Services	<p>Open door allows for barrier free access to services including in person, by text, by video and phone.</p> <p>Text: 902-921-4647 Call: 902-755-4647 Email: info@womenscentre.ca</p>
Advocacy & Accompaniment	155	77	System navigation is one of the many critical services offered at our Centre.
Information & Referrals	197	98	Ensuring women and survivors have the right information at the time when they need it most.
Programs with Girls	4 Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 121 Participants - International DAY of the Girl • 4 Camps in 3 Locations • 4 Schools 	Investing in today builds stronger tomorrows

SERVICES	PARTICIPANTS	# OF CONTACTS	ADDITIONAL INFO
Programs	402	516 Sessions	<p>Our programs help increase awareness, empower, and work towards a gender equal world.</p> <p>Programs include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food Security • Walking • MORPH • Self Esteem • Speaking Up & Speaking Out Assertiveness Program • Healthy Relationship Boundaries
Public Education & Events	457	16 Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International Women's Day • Sexual Assault Awareness Month (4) • NSCC Expo • NSCC Consent • Take Back the Night • Trauma Informed Training (3) • Assist • Safe Talk • West Branch Self Esteem • Financing Our Feminist Future • Housing Crisis
Social Media Campaigns	3041 Followers	4 Platforms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual Assault Awareness Month • Pride Month • Women's and Mi'kmaq History Month • 16 days of Activism • African Nova Scotia History Month

SERVICES	PARTICIPANTS	# OF CONTACTS	ADDITIONAL INFO
Social Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 local Collaborative Networks • 5 Provincial Networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pictou County Partners • Founding member, Pictou County Affordable and Supportive Housing Association • Pictou County Housing Coalition • Aging Well Coalition • Pictou County Sexual Assault Team • Pictou County Interagency on Family Violence • Pictou County Executive Director Round Table • Pictou County Social Workers Community of Practice • Silent Witness Pictou County • Regional Alcohol Policy Table • Nova Scotia Women's Centre's Connect • CSEP • ESIA Working Group • TESS • Quality of Life Index Advisory Table 	<p>Collaboration and Partnerships are essential to achieving our mission and creating positive social change in our community.</p> <p>We are committed to building strong relationships sharing our commitment to social justice and gender equality.</p> <p>We strive to create lasting partnerships grounded in a shared commitment to promote well-being, equity, and equality.</p> <p>Attended Domestic Violence Policy Conference, Why Here? Why Now? Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness National Conference and Equal Futures</p> <p>We participated in 14 public policy and advocacy including IPV survey's, WCB review and represented Nova Scotia with Western University regarding sexual harassment in the workplace</p>

SOCIAL CHANGE

Our dual mandate ensures we provide both direct services and work for social change. As long as we have inequality, we will have gender-based violence, poverty, and a lack of access to the social determinants of health. Equality is the path forward to a gender equal world. To achieve this, we all need to work together towards a secure and resourced community.

We are in a public health crisis, with most women experiencing gender-based violence in their lifetime. It is our hope we can work within the national action plan to end gender-based violence to increase awareness, resources, and strategies to end gender-based violence.

“

EVERYTHING THEY’VE DONE FOR ME HAS BEEN HELPFUL. I REALLY APPRECIATE THAT THEY MEET ME WHERE I AM AND HELP WITH WHAT I NEED. THEY DON’T JUDGE. THEY DON’T ASK ME TO BE ANYTHING OTHER THAN MYSELF. THEY LISTEN. THEY PROVIDE SOUND FEEDBACK AND OPTIONS. THEY DO EVERYTHING IN THEIR POWER TO HELP ME.

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WOMEN'S CENTRES CONNECT

Connect is our provincial association of Women's Centre's. Connect unites nine Women's Centres from across the province to offer a gendered analysis on policy and speak up about women's issues provincially. Connect member Centers serve and respond to the issues of women and girls in our communities. Our activities are rooted in a feminist analysis informed by an intersectional, non-oppressive, and trauma informed approach..

POLICY & ENGAGEMENT & ADVOCACY

Connect and each of the nine women's centers participated in a number of policy engagement and advocacy opportunities over the last year. As Connect acts on consensus, we offer a formidable voice on issues and solutions related to the social determinants of health, equality and equity. We continue to uphold Connect's advocacy through engagement with several organizations with similar missions. Through Connect we were involved in several research projects related to Communications, Governance, Gig Economy and National Action Plan to End Gender Based Violence.

FOLLOW & CONNECT ON FACEBOOK, LINKEDIN AND ACCESS THE FULL CONNECT REPORT: [HTTPS://WOMENCONNECT.CA](https://womenconnect.ca)

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**EMPOWERED WOMEN CAN
TRANSFORMS THEIR OWN LIVES
AND THE LIVES OF THOSE
AROUND THEM**

Pictou County Women's Resource and Sexual Assault Centre

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GENERAL INQUIRIES

info@womenscentre.ca

902-755-4647 or text 902-921-4647



WEBSITE

www.womenscentre.ca



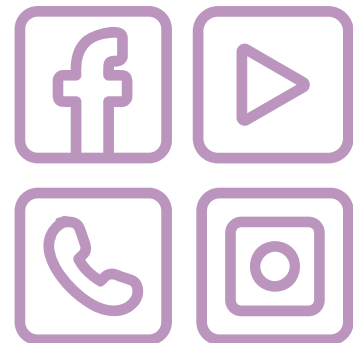
SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook:

www.facebook.com/pcwomenscentre

Twitter: @PCWomensCentre

Instagram: PC Women's Centre



MORPH (MAPPING OUR ROAD TO POWER AND HEALING):

Website: www.morphpictoucounty.ca

General Email Inquiries: morph@womenscentre.ca

Facebook: www.facebook.com/MORPH-Pictou-County-288324954932004

STAFF & BOARD OF DIRECTORS

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Shelley Curtis-Thompson

SUPPORT WORKERS

Melissa Fanning
Felicity McGraw

BOOKKEEPER

Liz MacIntosh

MORPH CAPACITY BUILDING INITIATIVE

Counsellor: Dorothy Cassidy

RESILIENCE PROJECT

Director of Organizational Strategy:
Hina Shedzadi

STUDENT PLACEMENT

Student Placement:
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Kelsey MacQuarrie
Olivia Johnson

SUMMER STUDENT & CASUAL SUPPORT WORKER

Gabrielle Frosst

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Moira MacDonald

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Dawn Green

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Allison Avery

SECRETARY

Makayla Morrell

DIRECTORS

Tonya Francis
Jocelyn Dorrington

NEW DIRECTORS

Cindy DeCoste
Sherri MacDowell
Kate Matheson Prest

FORMER DIRECTORS

Maxine Mann
Kyla LeBlanc
Meghan Bragg (deceased)

SPECIAL THANKS TO FUNDING & GRANT PARTNERS

Canadian Women's Foundation
United Way of Pictou County
Canadian Summer Student Grants
Department of Community Services
Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women
Red Cross Recovery Fund – Resilience Project
Canada Summer Student Program
Enabling Accessibility Grant
Aberdeen Health Foundation
Municipality of Pictou County
Community Foundation of Nova Scotia



**SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR TEAM, COMMUNITY AND FUNDERS FOR
MAKING OUR WORK WITH WOMEN AND GIRLS POSSIBLE!**

DONORS

Anonymous
Access to Justice
Association of Fundraising Professionals
Canada Helps
Carrie Stewart – Art of Divination
Deborah Harder
Don Mingo
Della Curtis & “the bridge girls”
Efficiency One
Facebook Fundraiser with Moira MacDonald
Joycelyn Dorrington
Lindsay Morton
Kinette Club of New Glasgow
Town of New Glasgow
Watts Wind II Limited Partnership
Women's Sexual Assault Centre – Renfrew

IN KIND

Anne Camozzi
Andy Thompson
Bev and Gordon Sutherland
Johnny MacDonald
Julie Leggett
Karen Doyle

**SPECIAL THANKS TO ALL
INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE SHARED
THEIR TALENTS AND ENERGY WITH
US THROUGHOUT THE YEAR.**

**ALL INDIVIDUAL DONORS'
CONTRIBUTIONS ARE APPRECIATED
AND HELP US DO ALL WE DO!**