

**Annual General Report
April 1, 2017 – March 31, 2018**

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Mandate and Vision

Pictou County Women's Resource and Sexual Assault Centre (PCWRSAC) offers support and advocacy to individual women and unites women, community and government to achieve equality.

As feminists we are committed to justice and equality for all people. Ultimately 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. And see women as experts in their own lives.

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.

A Note from the Board Chair

It has been another wonderful year at the Pictou County Resource and Sexual Assault Centre. Looking back on our year of work, I feel that we have much to celebrate. Our staff continue to work tirelessly each day to support and empower the women of our community. We were able to expand our offerings of group programming, work towards social change on issues such as gender based violence, sexual violence and gender equality. We raised awareness of issues that directly impact the women of our community through engaging events such as our International Women's Day breakfast with Sen. Wanda Thomas Bernard, the production of the Vagina Monologues, Take Back the Night and Denim Day. We have a lot to be proud of.



It is an honor to sit on the Board of Directors with such a dedicated group of feminists. Thank you so much for another year of commitment to improving the lives of girls and women in our community. It is a bit bittersweet writing this note this year as I will be stepping down as Board Chair, however, I am confident that the remaining board, as well as new members, will continue to strive for change and empowerment for women of Pictou County.

Lastly, enough thanks cannot be given to our staff and Executive Director, Shelley Curtis-Thompson. One could not imagine the dedication these women have to their work. I know

that they would say that they do not do it for the recognition, however, I feel that this is a time to celebrate all that they do every single day to make our community a safer, happier, and more equitable one. Thank you so much for your commitment to women.

In Solidarity,

Meghan Breen
Board Chair

A Message from the Executive Director

Pictou County Women's Resource and Sexual Assault Centre is the oldest Women's Centre in Nova Scotia, formed through the collective passions of women. Our non-profit is led by women, for women and about women. Feminism and a gender based analysis inform our work together. We see violence against women as a pertinent issue and a gender based crime.



Elaine Craig author of *Putting Trials on Trial; Sexual Assault and the Failure of the Legal Profession* states;

Imagine a society – one that purports to be a rule of law society – in which a segment of the population regularly engages in harmful acts of sexual violation against another segment of the community with almost complete legal immunity. Canada is such a society.

80% of women will experience physical and / or sexual violence in her lifetime. This is an epidemic and will not be tolerated.

The *Me Too Movement* around the globe gives voice to survivors shifting the culture around sexual violence with more and more survivors coming forward. We are here to listen and support all women's voices, reaching out together to eradicate violence against women. The Centre is committed to both providing services and preventative interventions to work towards an end of violence against women in all its forms. Some of the ways in which we do this include direct services, programs, raising awareness and responding to address the needs of our community.

The work of our Centre is made possible through the work of many women including staff, Board of Directors, community partnerships and the many women who walk through our doors. Our operation is supported through funding by the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women and the Department of Community Services.

Support and programming is focused on empowerment of women. Women come to share their stories and we embrace their resilience and celebrate their strengths with them. Every voice matters. Centre services offer support, information, advocacy, referrals, public education and programs. Our open door allows women to drop by for a vast number of reasons and receive support in a welcoming, non-judgmental and confidential environment, leading to early intervention.

We are now the proud owners of our Centre located at 503 South Frederick Street, New Glasgow. We have invested into significant maintenance including a new furnace and oil tank giving us a strong foundation for our work.

I am humbled to work with PCWRSAC and engage with our team and community. Special thanks to all the staff and board, past and present, who make it possible every day for our Centre to provide services and work towards social change. We couldn't do it without you. I look forward to the year ahead and moving together towards our future.

Respectfully submitted,
Shelley Curtis-Thompson, BA, RSW
Executive Director

Group Programs

Women need a place to meet with other women, share ideas and learn from one another. As a result, we have created a weekly open group program called *Women Together*. Although we know anonymity may be an issue for some. We also know groups offer a unique opportunity for women to come together. It provides a safe environment to combat social isolation and connect with internal strengths like resilience.

Our sexual violence community initiative, Mapping Our Road to Power and Healing (MORPH), focused many of our resources on the development and delivery of group programming for survivors. Over the course of the year, ten group programs were offered involving 59 participants of all genders.

Group offers a unique opportunity to learn and grow through group experience. Evaluations of programs were positive. For example, MORPH program survivors learned strategies and skills for decreasing anxiety and increasing self-awareness. Members shared they felt inspired by witnessing the healing journey of others through the group process. Many participants noted feeling stronger and more connected.

The Community Support Network contributed to the development of six different MORPH group programs, leading to stronger partnerships and capacity to deliver programs together. Co-facilitators worked with Nakita Archibald, MORPH therapist. They included partners from Tearmann, Pictou County Centre for Sexual Health, Pictou County Women's Resource and

Sexual Assault Centre, and community volunteers from schools and the Department of Health. Group services will continue to be offered to survivors with these programs acting as guides.

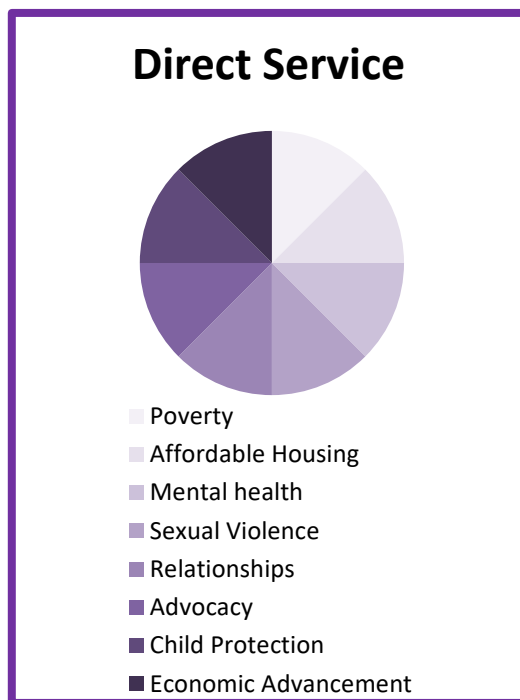
In addition to our work regarding sexual violence, PCWRSAC continues to offer groups to women. Two self-esteem programs involving 11 women in two locations were offered as well as a Grief Group with nine women participating. Furthermore, we joined Pictou Landing First Nations Women's Association for a Spa Day involving programming with 30 women.

Direct Service

PCWRSAC's services offer a social safety net. Women drop by for many reasons. As many as 22 women drop by per month to have a cup of coffee, conversation or borrow one of over 300 feminist based texts from our Joanne Kohout Memorial Library.

Direct services offer women a safe environment to unpack concerns and work towards goals on a broad range of issues including poverty, relationships, violence, economic security, housing and much more.

Support workers, Karen MacKay and Doreen Paris offered 715 direct service sessions with 123 advocacy sessions this year. For many, advocacy means the difference between knowing where to go and what to ask and feeling isolated and trapped. Over the course of the year, 109 new women accessed our support services. An average of 42 women receive direct services each month. Some women may be seen briefly or over a longer period of time, depending on each individual's needs and circumstance.



I raise up my voice—not so I can shout, but so that those without a voice can be heard...we cannot succeed when half of us are held back.

Malala Yousafzai



Girls Day Camps

PCWRSAC is a community based not-for-profit working to achieve equality and positive change through providing education, information, referrals and community based programs. Three times a year, we reach out to girls ages 9 – 12 and invite them to take part in our day camps. 23 girls took part in fun, engaging and empowering camps. Many participants said they would love to add science experiments to camp and we are working to incorporate these ideas into this year's summer camps in Pictou, Stellarton and New Glasgow. All camps are offered free of charge.

Pictou County's First International Day of the Girl Celebration

Since 2012 International Day of the Girl has been celebrated around the world. It is a day to celebrate and empower girls. On October 11, 2017, Pictou County Women's Resource and Sexual Assault Centre hosted our first International Day of the Girl event. With 14 girls, two horses/teachers, 2 facilitators, staff and volunteers, we were empowered to all be leaders.

We spent the day at Sumac Farms with Seabreeze Leadership and explored communication and leadership. We determined that leaders are courageous, supportive, and respectful, they dream big and inspire, and they are humble and brave. Everyone discovered more about their personal leadership style and the "me" became "we".

Much of our day focused on communication as a central quality of Leadership. The girls used gestures and touch to communicate with their horses and team, gaining confidence and problem solving experience. By stepping outside their comfort zones the girls discovered that no matter the task, if you think, take turns, communicate and stay patient, even the most difficult task can be accomplished.

We look forward to hosting more leadership opportunities this year.



Healthy Relationships for Youth

Healthy Relationships for Youth is a 12 week program developed through Antigonish Women's Centre with youth leaders from grades 11 and 12 delivering the program to grade nines on various topics related to healthy relationships. This year, we supported two pilots of this program in Pictou County.

With 35 youth leaders, two schools and 6 classes of grade nines, 16 sessions of Healthy Relationships for Youth were offered at Northumberland Regional High School and North Nova Education Centre. The program is engaging and fun and opens up difficult conversations about consent, cyber violence, drugs, alcohol and decision making in a safe and interactive way. We look forward to continued opportunities to engage with youth.

Human Trafficking

Human trafficking targets many girls and women every year. We often perceive this as a city problem and not one that impacts rural communities. With news of local girls being trafficked, and a trafficker being charged with this offence, PCWRSAC wanted to host an event to start the conversation in our community.

In a collective effort we reached 85 participants and hosted the first Human Trafficking Workshop in Pictou County. Expert facilitators from across Nova Scotia came and presented on the issue. The workshop shared about the Canadian perspectives on Human Trafficking Laws, the Nordic Model, resources available, and the signs of trauma and human trafficking.

Hearing a real life story from a first voice perspective helped increase awareness and hear about the importance of meeting the person where they are at without judgment. Participants noted ways they planned to continue to gather information and acknowledge human trafficking as a concern that impacts community. Pam Rubin, Facilitator, kindly donated a number of books on the topic to share through our Joanne Kohout Memorial Library.

After a day together with facilitators Bernadette MacDonald, Linda MacDonald, Jean Sarson, Wanda Taylor, Pam Rubin and Michelle (first voice), participants agreed that we need to continue to educate and learn more to address human trafficking.

Feminism isn't about making women strong. Women are already strong. It's about changing the way the world perceives that strength.

G.D. Anderson

Social Change

Pictou County Women's Resource and Sexual Assault Centre works towards equity, equality and empowerment through direct service, community engagement and partnerships to address gaps in service.

Locally, PCWRSAC serves on the following committees:

- Aging Well Coalition
- Community Support Network Working Group
- Leave a Legacy
- Pictou County Chapter of Silent Witness Nova Scotia
- Pictou County Food Security
- Pictou County Interagency on Family Violence
- Pictou County Partners
- Pictou County Sexual Assault Response Team
- Multicultural Association

Provincially, PCWRSAC serves on the following organizations:

- CONNECT Women Centres of Nova Scotia
- Sexual Assault Services of Nova Scotia

Committee Highlights from Doreen Paris, Support Worker

Doreen Paris, Support Worker, offers direct services to many women over the course of the year. Doreen was one of several women featured in the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women 40th Anniversary video. She says their collective work focused on “what was in the best interest of women and children.”

She also represents Pictou County Women's Resource and Sexual Assault Centre as an active member of Silent Witness Pictou County. Over the last year, Silent Witness hosted a Walk to Remember in October which unveiled Barb's Bench in New Glasgow on the Waterfront.

In addition, Doreen works with the Aging Well Coalition whose members are active in the delivery of services to seniors in Pictou County. The committee is actively developing programming and recommending ways to improve accessibility as it relates to age friendly communities.

Committee Highlights Karen MacKay, Support Worker

Karen MacKay, Support Worker, offered direct services to many women over the course of the year.

Karen represents PCWRSAC at Pictou County Food Security Coalition which continued to meet throughout 2017 to discuss various food related issues: a mobile food market, vegetable coupon program, and 4-H conference at St. F. X, Community Services tightening food requirements, collective impact training, local community gardens and food mentoring. The coalition also connected with the Ecology Action Centre, Halifax and Food Secure Canada to present a School Food Policy brief to caucus through Hon. Lawrence MacAulay, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food. At present, the group is considering its future and next steps.

In addition, Karen represented PCWRSAC at the Multicultural Association of Pictou County, which provides education to the entire community as well as assists in the integration of newcomers to the community. MAPC hosts pot-lucks to celebrate special days and introduce these celebrations to the community at large, such as Norooz, Garba Dance Festival, Christmas Season Gathering, Lunar New Year, and Ramadan, to name a few. The Fusion Festival has become the signature event for MAPC. Members present at schools, accept speaking engagements, and appear at public functions. MAPC has a strong partnership with the New Glasgow library, and this year helped select and take part in the launch of 100 Books to Promote Diversity.

In May 2018 Karen left her work with the Centre and PCWRSAC wishes her all the best in her future endeavors.



International Women's Day

The Honourable Wanda Thomas Bernard, who was appointed to the Senate in November 2016, is a highly regarded social worker, educator, researcher, community activist and advocate for social change. In 2016 she was appointed Special Advisor on Diversity and Inclusiveness at Dalhousie University and became the first African Nova Scotian to hold a tenure track position. She is a founding member of the Association of Black Social Workers, and has also served as an expert witness in human rights cases and received many honours for her work, including the Order of Nova Scotia and the Order of Canada.

On International Women's Day the honour was all ours as we started the day with guest speaker Senator Wanda Thomas Bernard who inspired us to be the change.

The Board of Directors hosted a presentation of Vagina Monologues later in the day, with a committed group of volunteers, as a fundraiser for the Centre.



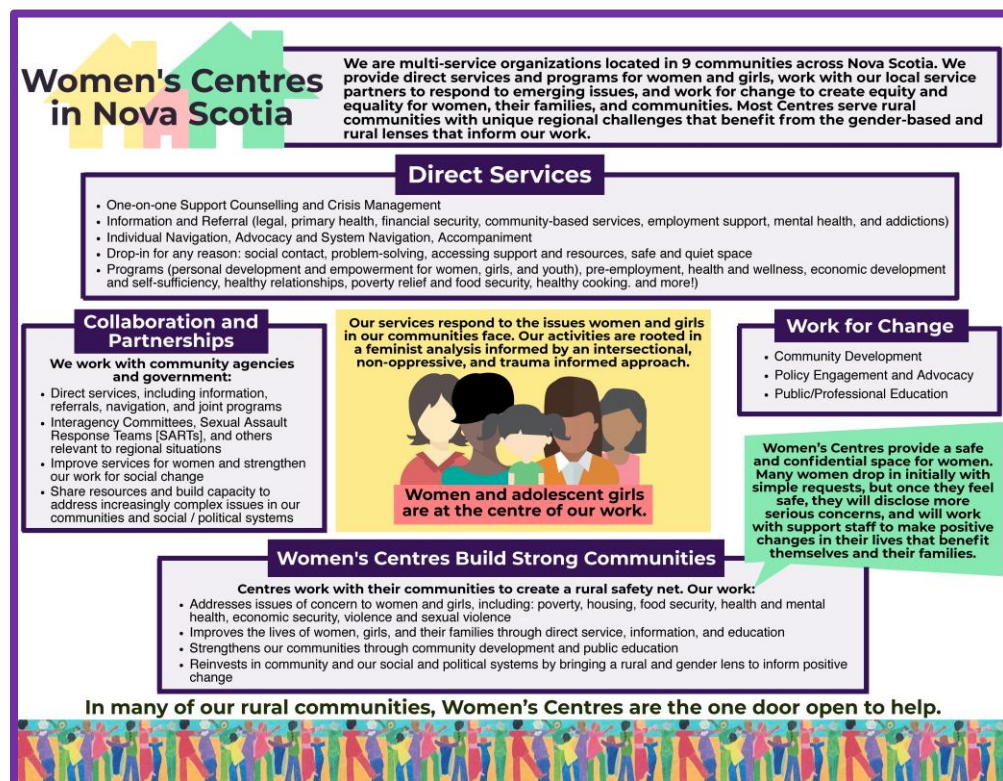
Women's Centers Connect

Connect unites nine Women's Centers from across the province in offering a gendered analysis on policy and provincial needs. Our coordinator represents Connect and has a lead role at various tables including:

- Domestic Violence Court Program and Metro Interagency Committee on Family Violence
- Restorative Conversations Group
- Home-Warming Advisory Council
- Community Society to End Poverty (CESP)
- Halifax based Community Agenda for Social Assistance Reforms (CASAR)
- Sexual Assault Network of Nova Scotia

As SASNS members, Connect is encouraging government to develop a legacy for the Sexual Violence Strategy, which ended March 2018. It is obvious that sustainable support is needed across the province to support survivors. The network developed a vision for services across the province and has identified the key priority as the need for specialized, trauma-informed counselors across the province and here in Pictou County.

Over the last year, we have been working closely with our funders to develop a logic model to illustrate our services. As a provincial association, we continue to strive for equal and sustainable funding for all Centres.



Mapping Our Road to Power and Healing (MORPH)

Mapping Our Road to Power and Healing (MORPH) started as a two-year community-based collaborative project administered through PCWRSAC. The funding from the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services, Sexual Violence Strategy Community Support Network Grant, Breaking the Silence: A Coordinated Response to Sexual Violence in Nova Scotia will roll forward into this current fiscal year and is enhanced through new funding by the United Way of Pictou County.

We know that this work must continue and PCWRSAC is invested in continuing to address sexual violence in Pictou County. We will continue to work with community partners towards prevention, increased capacity and interventions.

Over two years, MORPH offered 34 events with 1,374 participants, including 456 youth. Events included performances of Slut the Play, educational workshops on sexualized violence and a Take Back the Night march. This year's Take Back the Night doubled in attendance, with approximately 60 participants.

Our focus on increasing capacities involved both working together and providing training sessions on Trauma and Sexual Violence. A total of three trauma-informed training sessions and one Human Trafficking Workshop involved 281 service providers and community members over the two years.

Some of MORPH's strengths included increasing awareness of sexualized violence and its impact, creating community conversation and safe places for dialogue about sexualized violence, and increasing the visibility of supports and services available. Our strategic communication campaign included radio ads, radio, newspaper and TV interviews, use of Facebook and Twitter, articles and letters to the editor, posters, and pamphlets, with 1840 posters and 804 radio ads. Over a six month period, our Facebook had 7,375 views and a total of 16,278 views on events. Furthermore, our new website services act as a resource of valuable information for those inquiring about MORPH.

Peggy Mahone was contracted to complete an evaluation of MORPH and her findings state;

MORPH has built a compassionate service for survivors and allies that provided trauma-informed, non-judgmental support, and safer spaces. It is evident from the evaluations that those who participated benefitted immensely as follows:

*I made some new connections
inside and outside of my being.
Bonus.*

*I feel like I have more tools to
cope when my feelings
overwhelm me.*

Anonymous survivor

- The women expressed how safe they felt in the group environment and increased their sense of self, sense of connectedness, self-awareness, and their ability to self-soothe (relax). Those who participated in the Stage 2 process recovery group strengthened their coping skills, increased their trust and confidence to share experiences, and were starting to let go of past guilt and look forward to the future.
- The men benefitted from the group experience, giving them a sense of connectedness, hope and belonging. They increased their self-awareness, using mindfulness to regulate themselves around reactions or “trigger points.” Another common benefit was using deep breathing as a way of self-soothing (relaxing) and many shifted their mindset to be more positive. The men were transferring their skills to their environment within the correctional facility and expressed an interest in transferring their skills upon release.
- The young women appreciated learning to deep-breathe to self-soothe for anxiety and panic when triggered, increased their connection with other group members, and felt supported by the facilitators.
- Participants gained knowledge, insights, and skills in the skill building program for non-offending friends and family (allies). While only a small number participated, it was a good opportunity to pilot this program and to learn from the participants’ experience.

With two years of experience, strong partnerships, passion and determination we will continue to move forward together.

Public Education and Events

At a Community Level:

- Sexual Assault Awareness Month Events
- Take Back the Night
- Women’s History Month – Hidden Figures School and Public Events
- Volunteer Fair
- Healthy Relationships for Youth
- Participated in Pride Week
- Pictou Landing First Nations Lunch and Learn

Ongoing Learning: put in alphabetical order

- Doing it Better
- Evaluation Training
- Public Relations
- Dialogue for Peaceful Change
- Strategic Marketing
- Leading the Way, Cherry Brook
- Tec Class
- Domestic Violence Forum
- Todd Leader Presentation on Mental Health
- Trauma-Informed Training
- Trauma-Informed and Sexualized Violence Trainings
- Trauma-Informed Refugee Migrant
- PTSD and bringing in the bystander
- Porn Diet
- Out of the Shadows, Yarmouth

Author shares insights about human trafficking

By Steve Goodwin
steve@pictouadvocate.com

NEW GLASGOW — People need to be more caring and more vigilant in reducing human trafficking, Wanda Taylor says.

The author, producer and human rights advocate was a guest speaker recently during a day-long forum on human trafficking at Summer Street.

She is also executive director of Stepping Stone, a charitable organization that supports sex workers, trafficked people and those at risk of entering the sex trade.

"I was invited to do a presentation on human trafficking and the people we support," Taylor said. "We have developed extensive transition programs for people trying to exit the sex industry. There are so many challenges that keep beating them back as they try to exit the sex industry."

She said she is constantly astounded by the barriers placed on people trying to escape and avoid the sex trade.

"Before I got into this work, I didn't realize how difficult it is to get out of it," she said. "It's an almost insurmountable challenge, but I think that, the more I get out and speak about people and their complexities, that's a



From the left, Oonagh Enright, Bernadette MacDonald, Joanne Sarson, Linda MacDonald, Wanda Taylor and Pam Rubin were presenters at a forum on human trafficking recently in New Glasgow.

(Goodwin photo)

step forward — tiny baby steps."

Her latest book, *Ride or Die*, is a story of a 15-year-old black girl trafficked into Ontario. It is a fictionalized character based on what has happened to people, she said.

Taylor has been writing from a young age.

"I have always written," she said. "In junior high school, I would write little novels and my fellow students started to ask me for them."

Her full-time occupation is with Stepping Stone, while still finding time to write.

Taylor was among a series of presenters that included former Pictou County resident Bernadette MacDonald, Jeanne Sarson, Linda MacDonald, Oonagh Enright and Pam Rubin.

Bernadette MacDonald's presentation was based on the consequences of legalizing prostitution in European countries that include the Netherlands, Germany and Sweden.

She described the Nordic Model of equality being applied by Swedish police that women and children being bought and sold for sexual purposes is unac-

ceptable in a modern society and a violation of human rights. She also showed images of high-rise brothels in Cologne, Germany to illustrate how mainstream prostitution has become.

"Decriminalization and legalization of prostitution has been a failure," she said in her presentation. "It is imperative that we read and listen to the experiences and the reality from women who have been prostituted, have been able to exit and are not living the trauma of being sexually violated to make a living."

Stand with survivors

To the Editor:

It is that time of year again, when snow is starting to fall and stay on the ground and the community waits in anticipation for more time to spend with our friends and family. People are looking forward to enjoying great food, decorating and attending the traditional slew of holiday parties.

With all of the holiday festivities, this is also a prominent time of year for women to receive constant reminders not to drink too much, to dress "appropriately" and to watch their drinks. This is my reminder to all of you: that it is not a woman's responsibility to prevent sexual assault and sexual violence by following a list of arbitrary precautions. It is the responsibility of men, and others in positions of control and power, to be decent human beings and prevent themselves from committing sexual violence on their peers.

Rape culture teaches girls

from a young age that sexual violence against women is inevitable, if they are "good" and take care of themselves, they won't be the one to experience it. We need to be teaching our boys that women and girls are people who are deserving of respect and safety in every situation. Not just because they love their mothers or their daughters or their sisters, but because no human deserves to be violated. For those of you who know and believe this, and still promote the idea that women and girls need to take steps to protect themselves because "society just isn't there yet", I want you to consider the 2017 Statistics Canada report stating higher rates of sexual assault for those that took precautions for their safety, and that over half of sexual assaults were perpetrated by someone known to the victim/survivor.

Sexual violence does not happen because the victim/survivor was negligent. Sexual violence is

committed to exert power and control, or because someone is ignorant as to how to recognize consent. Neither of these is an excuse to be a perpetrator and take away someone's sense of safety and security.

So this holiday season, let's take the responsibility of not getting assaulted off of the victims/survivors. Educate yourselves on consent and sexual violence to ensure that you can recognize if someone else is feeling unsafe and respond appropriately. Make it known that you stand with survivors. Encourage others to do the same.

For individuals and workplaces looking for information on consent and sexual violence, please do not hesitate to reach out. I can be contacted at navigator.morphpc@gmail.com, or by calling 902-755-4647.

Delaney Collins
MORPH Navigator
Pictou County Women's
Resource and Sexual Assault
Centre

Pictou County women join worldwide march

BY FRAM DINSHAW
THE NEWS

Women from Pictou County marched alongside their sisters from across Nova Scotia in Halifax Saturday, part of a worldwide movement pushing back against sexism and bigotry.

Shelley Curtis-Thompson joined hundreds of others at Halifax's Grand Parade to celebrate their fight against sexual harassment and discrimination, personified for many by Donald Trump's presidency, now a year old.

"I wanted to come to Halifax to march with women for women, in awe of their wisdom and voices, and be part of a celebration that encompasses women in all forms and variety," said Curtis-Thompson.

She attended the march as a private citizen, but back in New Glasgow, Curtis-Thompson serves as executive director of the Pictou County Women's Resource and Sexual Assault Centre.

Curtis-Thompson said that speaking out against sexist behaviour and abuse is vital to stopping it.

In the last year, millions of women across the world have indeed spoken up about their experiences of assault and harassment under the #MeToo campaign.

The online movement was sparked last year by accusations of sexual harassment levelled against Hollywood film producer Harvey Weinstein. Actress Alyssa Milano suggested that if every woman who suffered assault or harassment wrote "Me too," as a status, it would force people to see how widespread the problem was.

Since it began in October, women from all walks of life have spoken out on social media and elsewhere, turning #MeToo into a discussion about the behaviour of many men and how few women are in positions of power.



Shelley Curtis-Thompson (front right in black coat) holds aloft a Women's Centres Connect banner with Gail Clarke (front left) from Pictou County at the 2018 March on Canada in downtown Halifax on Saturday.

Weinstein was soon fired from his own film company and is now facing a criminal investigation by police.

The #MeToo campaign has also exposed harassment in other industries from music to politics. The campaign has also targeted Trump, who has boasted of sexually assaulting women, using crude language to do so.

For Curtis-Thompson, bringing more women into leadership roles in politics and other fields is part of the solution to ingrained sexism.

The time for such action was ideal and she said, "we are in a climate of interest."

"Women as leaders are creative and have a lot to add," said Curtis-Thompson.

Women and their allies in at least 38 Canadian communities joined the 2018 March on Canada one year after Trump's inauguration.

The Halifax march included a separate gathering of transgender and other people who felt the main movement had shut them out.

Marches were also held in cities

across the United States, where women are being encouraged to both vote and run for political office in the Congressional midterm elections this November.

As in 2017, marches took place in cities across the globe such as London and Rome.

While the international movement against sexism and other forms of prejudice gathers steam, the Trump presidency is mired in a federal government shutdown, as lawmakers cannot agree on legislation including immigration reforms.

BUDGET

Lack of opportunity holding women back: spokesperson

BY FRAM DINSHAW
THE NEWS

A lack of opportunity is holding women back in Pictou County and preventing them from achieving full equality both locally and across Canada, says one local advocate.

Speaking one day after the provincial budget was released, Shelley Curtis-Thompson at the Pictou County Women's Resource and Sexual Assault Centre said that more needed to be done to help female workers find full-time jobs.

Key to this is greater child-care support, which would allow mothers to better juggle work commitments and caregiving.

"I think women in Nova Scotia and across the country need to have an investment in a national child-care program," said Curtis-Thompson, who serves as the centre's executive director.

The budget released Tuesday promises \$15.5 million for new child-care spaces, plus subsidies to make it more affordable, plus \$3 million to double the poverty reduction credit to \$500 per person and \$3.4 million to fully exempt child support payments from income-assistance calculations.

The Liberals will also hire two prosecutors to tackle sexual offences and some funding for services such as sexual assault centres

and specialized nurse examiners to help survivors.

"These are wonderful steps in the right direction," said Curtis-Thompson.

However, she said there was much more work left to do, citing the 2018 Alternative Budget released by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives on March 19 pertaining to Nova Scotia.

This includes serious action to tackle poverty that the CCPA says was created by the government's own income-assistance support program, a last resort for people in poverty.

Curtis Thompson said that

women are particularly affected by poverty, owing to many of them being stuck in part-time work. Income inequality is also an ongoing concern nationwide.

The Alternative Budget proposes an investment of half the cost to reduce poverty — \$300 million — including a major increase for income supports. This includes a plan to reach the market poverty line, adjusted for household income with additional support for persons with disabilities.

According to the CCPA, the measures will provide a substantial increase of at least \$100 per month for all income assistance

recipients.

The Alternative Budget proposes to end the child support clawback, allowing recipients to keep the first \$500 of earned income per month, and will only take back 30 per cent of remaining earnings. The earnings exemption/retention income is also averaged over six months.

Further, it offers income support to top up the base support with substantial increases to the poverty reduction credit and income eligibility level, as well as the affordable living tax credit.

"We need a lot more," said Curtis-Thompson.

letter

N.S. women forced into sex trade

To the editor,
Recently there has been a story published across virtually all Canadian news sources regarding the human-trafficking ring targeting Nova Scotian women.

I think I can comfortably speak for all Nova Scotians when I say that this is something we never want to have to worry about happening to our children, partners, siblings, or neighbours. And yet, we are now hearing that a number of Nova Scotian women have been identified as victims, and survivors, across Canada.

It is upsetting and scary to think about the odds of this happening to someone you know, but the odds are there. Human trafficking and sex trafficking can happen to anyone, however, adult women and female children represent a large part of vic-

tims and survivors.

Actions like this still exist in our communities because of the ways in which our society perpetuates the idea that certain groups inherently deserve more power than others. We are failing so many communities, including women and girls, Indigenous peoples, African Nova Scotians, and the queer and trans communities, who experience sexualized and violent crimes at intolerable rates, when we fail to teach our youth to treat one another with respect.

Furthermore, we need to escape from the impression that victims and survivors of human trafficking are at fault for their realities. Human trafficking is a result of coercion, exploitation, physical force, financial control, manipulation, and other dishonest actions on the part of traffickers, and not the mere result of poor decision making.

While we all need to do our part

to encourage the systemic change needed to truly end the cycle of violence, in the meantime we also need to know the signs of human trafficking, and how to respond, to effectively protect ourselves and our loved ones.

In response to this need, the Pictou County Women's Resource and Sexual Assault Centre will be offering a free, one-day workshop on human trafficking to residents of Pictou County, on Nov. 10, 2017, through the MORPH initiative. Anyone looking to prepare themselves for responding to human trafficking can follow Pictou County Women's Resource and Sexual Assault Centre or MORPH Pictou County on Facebook for updates, or contact Shelley Curtis-Thompson at ed@women-scentre.ca.

Stay safe, Pictou County.
Delaney Collins
MORPH Navigator

RALLY

Local women ready to march again

Pictou County women going to Halifax event in fight against sexism

BY FRAM DINSHAW
THE NEWS

Women from Pictou County are marching once more this Saturday to celebrate the ongoing fight against sexism and mark one year of resistance against Donald Trump.

The 2018 March On Canada is taking place in both Halifax and Lunenburg, building on the success of last year's worldwide Women's March, which drew millions onto the streets against both Trump's agenda and sexism in general. Fourteen marches are planned this year in Canada.

"I think that we are stronger together when we support one another's right for basic equality and gender equality. That's how we build healthy communities," said Shelley Curtis-Thompson, executive director of the Pictou County Women's Resource and Sexual Assault Centre, who will be attending the Halifax march.

Over the past year, Pictou County women have made steady advances with the centre's help.

In 2017 the centre launched Map Our Road to Power and Heal-

ing, a local partnership with the Centre for Sexual Health, police, government and other organizations to help assault survivors.

Curtis-Thompson said that under MORPH, the centre offers a part-time therapist and navigator to help women access needed services.

Another key plank of MORPH is awareness and education, including over harrowing issues such as human trafficking.

"It's significant that the survivors of sexual violence have a program that provides an opportunity to come together with other survivors and be supported in the healing journey," said Curtis-Thompson.

However, there is still much work to do before women have full equality, both in Pictou County and around the world.

Harassment and misogyny are problems worldwide, but the #MeToo movement has finally started to topple powerful abusers such as Harvey Weinstein.

Donald Trump, whose election sparked last year's Women's March, was caught on film crudely boasting about sexually assaulting women. The current president has faced other accusa-

tions of harassment and assault.

While the #MeToo movement has highlighted the problem of sexist violence and harassment, the problem has not gone away.

Women from First Nations, African Nova Scotian, or other minority communities remain especially prone to not only violence, but also workplace discrimination, unemployment and poverty.

Another key issue is pay equality, with women still consistently earning less than men in the same job, despite decades of progress in other areas, according to Georgia Barnwell at the province-wide Women's Centres Connects! network.

Rural women in Pictou County and elsewhere in the province also face limited resources and opportunities, compared to their urban counterparts.

"I don't think life has really improved for them over the last 50 years," said Barnwell.

Nonetheless, both Barnwell and Curtis-Thompson remained optimistic in the run-up to this year's march.

"We're going to pause and think and celebrate all these voices," said Curtis-Thompson.

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Thank you everyone, for all your contributions.

"Each time a women stands up for herself. She stands up for all women"

Maya Angelou