

**PEI RAPE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT CENTRE
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
ORGANIZATIONAL REPORT**

It's time again to highlight and celebrate some of the organization's activities over the past year, as we continue in our work to provide support to survivors and create a society free from sexualized violence.

Over the past couple of years the conversation about sexual assault has gained more and more attention. Starting with the Gimeshi trial and the unfounded cases expose, which highlighted the inadequacies of the justice system to effectively respond to reports of sexual assault; and continuing with the recent Me Too and Times Up social media campaigns which expose the widespread occurrence of sexual assault and harassment and the pervasive attitudes that perpetuate sexual violence. We hope that this attention results in cultural changes around consent and gender equality, improved responses in social, health justice and education, and increased support to organizations that provide effective, affordable, timely and specialized services to survivors.

Providing trauma informed, relational therapeutic service to survivors of recent and historic sexual assault and childhood sexual abuse continues to be a cornerstone of the Centre's activities. Best practices in the trauma recovery therapy field show that the three phased therapy model we use is the most effective, particularly for persons who have been exposed to prolonged and repeated trauma such as childhood sexual abuse. Our therapy team, including Lorna, Pam, Eileen and Petra, are skilled and dedicated practitioners, and the organization is proud to have therapists of such a high calibre.

In the past fiscal year, we provided counselling to 146 persons. The majority of clients (72%) were seen in Charlottetown, 19% in Summerside and 9% in Alberton.

This year 112 persons requested counselling. As has always been the case, 61% of those requests were from survivors of childhood sexual abuse. The majority (69%) of requests were from Charlottetown, 27% were from Summerside and 4% from West Prince.

Persons requesting therapy are often self-referred, but many are referred by a whole range of other service providers. 40% of persons requesting service last year had been referred from Mental Health and Addiction Services as well as other health care providers. Referrals from other organizations reflect an acknowledgement of the specialized services we offer, and the trust the community has in us. Sadly, it also reflects the high need for our service.

Unfortunately, the demand for service outstrips our ability to respond as quickly as we would like, and therefore results in wait lists. Currently this wait time is 3-4 months in Charlottetown,

and longer in Summerside and Alberton. This is discouraging and frustrating for us and for clients who expect and deserve more timely access. We continue to advocate for increased funding in order to fully fund a new position which would help us meet the unmet need. In March 2018 we were awarded a one- time only grant of \$75,000 by the Department of Family and Human Services, and are very grateful to the persons who advocated on our behalf. Unfortunately, one time only grants do not allow for addressing long term planning needs.

We have recently added a few hours to the schedule of one of our therapists, so we now have two full-time and two part-time therapists. This results in the equivalency of just over 3 full-time positions, covering offices in Charlottetown, Summerside and Alberton.

Although our counselling is available for women and men, the vast majority of clients have always been women. Of our 112 new requests for individual counselling this past year, only 7 were from men. Although statistics tell us that up to 1 in 6 men will experience sexual abuse, we know that men face additional barriers in seeking help, arising from societal expectations about how men should behave and deal with problems. Efforts to raise awareness about the realities and impacts of male sexual victimization and to engage men in recovery from the effects of abuse in their lives are on- going. For historical purposes, I have written a brief summary of the steps taken to create a male centered program for male survivors in PEI, and you will find a copy of this in the back of the report. The phased group program established here in 2015 is called Men Matter, and we manage the program. This past year we ran 4 ten session groups. Reviews from men who participate in the groups are all extremely positive.

Although we continue to update our website, which provides information and resources, we have improved our visibility and community connection by developing a facebook page. Thanks to Eileen for setting this up and monitoring it for us, and bringing us into the 21st century.

We continue to work with other organizations and committees in enhancing responses to survivors and in prevention work. Either Eileen or I represent the organization on the following committees:

- Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence Prevention (PAC)
 - PAC Administrative Committee
 - Sexual Assault Response Committee
 - Youth Engagement Committee
 - Policies, Protocols and Legislation Committee
- Charlottetown Mayor's Purple Task Force on Family Violence Prevention
- Atlantic Network of Sexual Assault Centre (ANSAC)
- PEI Child Sexual Abuse Advisory Committee

- Victim Services Advisory Committee
- Atlantic Network of Sexual Assault Centres (ANSAC)

Much of the work in these committees, and other groups across the Island, has been focused on improving responses to survivors and targeting prevention activities towards perpetrators, potential perpetrators and those who can intervene (such as bystander interventions). I will mention some of the initiatives from the past year:

- The PEI Department of Justice and Public Safety staff and police agencies have been meeting to discuss findings related to the PEI rate of sexual assault cases deemed unfounded, and the procedures and practices related to sexual assault investigation. Some areas of discussion have included alternative reporting methods, coding practices, and trauma informed training for justice personnel. One initiative that came out of those discussions was the creation of a special prosecutor to deal with all cases of sexual violence.
- The Department of Justice Canada provided funding to help organize a trauma informed training workshop for police and Crown on PEI in November 2017. Understanding the neurobiological responses to trauma, and its impacts on memory and behaviour, is important information for all persons in the justice system. The workshop was well attended and reviewed and has led to continuing discussions about the need for on-going training.
- The Sexual Assault Response Committee (a working group of the Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence Prevention) has been working for several years with police and hospital Emergency Department staff to improve responses to victims of sexual assault presenting at hospital Emergency Departments. The Enhanced Emergency Sexual Assault Services (EESAS) protocol and training was finally completed and the QEH Emergency Department has fully adopted the program.
- UPEI has been enhancing its sexual assault response protocol. As well, students from UPEI Student Union have formed a chapter of Our Turn, a national student led movement to end sexual violence on campus. The group submitted a letter to the PEI Government requesting them to legislate the development of sexual violence protocols in Island colleges and Universities.
- The Department of Education, working with members of various community organizations (including us) and government personnel has re-designed the Grade 9 health curriculum, with modules on consent, gender norms and stereotypes, sexual assault and bystander Intervention. Kinley's music video and song Microphone is featured in the modules.

- There is an increased understand of the neurobiological responses to trauma and the long term impact on survivors, and many services providers in PEI are adopting a trauma informed approach in their practices. Therapists working in the mental health field in PEI are receiving training to respond appropriately to survivors of trauma.

All of these efforts by so many have led to a discussion about the need for a provincial sexual violence strategy which would coordinate the delivery of prevention and support services.

We completed a project, funded by the Interministerial Women's Secretariat, to develop a client profile and conduct a client satisfaction survey. The client profile included demographic details as well as information about the impacts of abuse on the lives of 118 clients seen during a one year period. Some of the information collected will be of value in directing future education/prevention work. The client survey, completed anonymously by clients, indicates that they believe the therapy received at PEIRSAC has made a contribution to their healing.

We also led a project, funded by the Department of Justice Canada, to conduct a survey of Canadian jurisdictions offering the Third Option to survivors of recent sexual assault. (Third Option concerns the collection and storage of forensic evidence after a sexual assault has been committed. As it stands now, persons who have been sexually assaulted in PEI have the option of going to the hospital and having evidence collected and reporting the crime to police immediately, or not having evidence collected and released to police. The Third Option offers victims of sexual assault another choice, to have evidence collected and stored for a period of time. This gives them time to decide whether they want to proceed with a report to police while securing crucial evidence they may need in the future.) By conducting the survey we hoped to gain some understanding of the perceived successes and challenges in offerings this program, as well as the value of the programs to survivors of sexual assault. This will be useful in determining whether such an option would be of benefit here and how it might be delivered.

Finally, I cannot end without mentioning the value of our volunteer Board of Directors, who provide guidance and oversight to the activities of the Centre. I thank each of you, past and returning, for your contributions and support.

The challenges for our community over the upcoming year are to ensure that the movement for social change continues, to continue in efforts to enhance our community's responses to sexual violence across sectors and to ensure that the support needs of survivors are met. The challenge for PEIRSAC will be to address our long term planning needs and the on-going deficit we face in covering our operating expenses.

Sigrid Rolfe

