



AVALON
SEXUAL ASSAULT CENTRE

Stronger Together

Dartmouth North
Violence against Women and Girls
Prevention Project

Evaluation Report

Prepared for
Avalon Sexual Assault Centre
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Executive Summary

This is a summary of the evaluation report for the *Dartmouth North Violence Against Women and Girls Prevention Project* undertaken from March 2013 to December 2015. The project was sponsored by Avalon Sexual Assault Centre (Avalon Centre) and funded by Status of Women Canada. The project partners were Avalon Centre, Dartmouth Family Resource Centre and the Dartmouth North Boys and Girls Club. Alice Housing, John Martin Junior High School, Bicentennial School and Dartmouth High School agreed to be community partners.

The original project goal was as follows: *To support women and community partners in working together to develop and implement community strategies to address the issue of violence against women and girls.* The specific population intended to ultimately benefit from this project are girls and young women aged 12 to 25 who are living in Dartmouth North.

The project involved 52 different community organizations, agencies and government representatives; and, 1,554 individuals: 179 youth and 1,375 adults. Key project activities included:

- 1) Engaging and establishing working relationships with girls/young women and women, boys/young men and men, community organizations, community leaders, service providers, and other potential allies;
- 2) Developing and implementing a needs assessment process that provided an opportunity for youth and community members to talk about key issues, identify priorities and recommendations; and
- 3) Designing and piloting a strategy to address the key priorities and recommendations.

The needs assessment was carried out with 52 participants, 30 adults and 22 youth. The adults included community members and service providers. The needs assessment process engaged community members, both adults and youth, to talk openly about the violence they experience in a safe, confidential environment. The adults also raised the issue of the normalization of violence in the community. The process identified three priorities, sexualized violence being the first priority.

The prevention strategy was designed to use an asset-based community development (ABCD) approach to build on community assets and to address key recommendations from the needs assessment. The goal of the broad prevention strategy, *Stronger Together*, was as follows: *To be a catalyst in the Dartmouth North area for communication and collaboration with emphasis put on connecting services, people and places, as well as helping to coordinate all the actions taking place in the community.*

The strategy implementation provided more opportunities for both informal and formal conversations at various tables and in various venues. These included the more formal Community Meetings for service providers and community groups; navigation support and fun family events at the Community Hub; public awareness and community education activities; and, engaging youth at a youth conference, school-based sessions, and community arts-based sessions.

This developmental process throughout the project opened up dialogue, named the violence, brought the issue to the forefront, and put it on the community agenda. The open dialogue continued to raise awareness about real issues that girls, young women and women were dealing with. By the end of the project, people were starting to be more open to voice their concerns and opinions, including youth. Youth were noticing unacceptable behaviours and were more comfortable talking about it and naming the behaviour.

Another outcome is an increased understanding of the supports and resources available by the community groups and service providers who participated in three Community Meetings. The meetings were designed to identify community assets, strengthen collaboration, and develop a communication strategy. The face-to-face meetings enabled connections among agencies and groups, strengthened relationships and improved communication. Service providers reported changes in how they saw their work as being part of a bigger picture or part of a team. They were feeling less isolated and more motivated. These connections enabled them to do their work better and to connect people better to services and supports. They told stories of how this had benefited their organization and the women, young women and girls they worked with. Ultimately, this resulted in improving coordination among services and supports. Some described this as breaking down silos and having opportunities to talk about what their clients need and to strengthen current services to meet those needs.

Another project outcome was increased opportunities for community members to access supports, services and programs in safe, accessible spaces. This was accomplished through a partnership with Take Action Society to bring eight (8) organizations into the Community Hub, co-hosting eight (8) fun events for families, and through the Coordinator offering navigation support as a representative of Avalon Centre. Another partnership with the MacPhee Centre increased opportunities for youth to access programs in a safe accessible space. Related to broader community safety, the Dartmouth North Association established a Safety Subcommittee to address safety and violence prevention.

The project increased communication of services, supports and programs available through distribution of Avalon Centre resources, talking individually with almost 1,200 community members, the development of a Facebook page and Twitter account, and development of a Community Assets booklet for distribution throughout the community.

The evaluation concludes that this project has achieved the two goals it set out to accomplish. It is evident that the ABCD approach has built on and strengthened community assets to respond to and prevent sexualized violence. The project strategy was successful in partnering with community organizations, service providers and government agencies with a focus on strengthening the initiatives and the work of those organizations, as well as communication and coordination among them. It has increased knowledge and understanding of sexualized violence among participating youth and adults.

Community members and service providers made recommendations for continuing and strengthening youth mobilization activities and the important communication and coordination activities. These are included in the last section of the report.

1. Introduction

This is the evaluation report of the project, *Dartmouth North Violence against Women and Girls Prevention Project* sponsored by the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre (Avalon Centre). This was a two-year project that began in March 2013 and was completed in December 2015. The project was funded by Status of Women Canada.

The project grew out of a concern that young women in Dartmouth North were facing risks of violence and gender/societal barriers that were impacting their safety and limiting their potential. The Dartmouth North Family Centre and the Dartmouth North Boys and Girls Club had contacted Avalon Centre to see if there was potential to explore opportunities to address violence against women, young women and girls in Dartmouth North. Together, they developed the project proposal with the following goal:

To support women and community partners in working together to develop and implement community strategies to address the issue of violence against women and girls.

To achieve this goal, the project proposed to undertake the following key activities:

- Engage and establish working relationships with girls/young women and women, boys/young men and men, community organizations, community leaders, stakeholders and potential allies (e.g. government agencies, service providers, legal institutions and law enforcement agencies.).
- Develop and implement a needs assessment process to provide youth, community members, and service providers with an opportunity to share what they believe are the key issues of the community and to identify priorities and recommendations for action;
- To design and pilot a strategy to address the key priorities and recommendations.

The specific population intended to ultimately benefit from this project are girls and young women aged 12 to 25 who are living in Dartmouth North. This included those attending two local junior high schools and Dartmouth High School, as well as program participants at the Boys and Girls Club of Dartmouth and Dartmouth Family Centre where many users are teenage mothers.

The project partners were Avalon Centre, Dartmouth Family Resource Centre and the Dartmouth North Boys and Girls Club. Alice Housing, John Martin Junior High School, Bicentennial School, and Dartmouth High School agreed to be community partners.

An external evaluator was hired to assess the effectiveness of the project in meeting its goal. The evaluator worked with the Project Coordinator and the Avalon Centre Executive Director to complete the Results Framework and Performance Measurement Plan that would guide the evaluation. Anticipating all the evaluation outputs and outcomes ahead of time was limited by the project design, which was that the strategy was not identified until partway

through the project. The actual outcomes included in this report only became apparent once the strategy and the key activities were identified and implemented.

This report provides an overview of project activities and outputs, the reflection of participants in various project activities, and the extent to which the project has met its goals. The report is organized into the following sections:

1. **Introduction**, this section, which introduces the project, the evaluation methodology and implementation, as well as evaluation scope and limitations.
2. **Project Implementation & Outputs**, which outlines a description of project activities and a summary of outputs.
3. **Project Outcomes**, which presents project outcomes.
4. **Conclusions & Recommendations**, which provides conclusions drawn from the evaluation findings and makes recommendations to continue to improve response to and prevention of sexualized violence in Dartmouth North.

1.1 Evaluation Planning and Methodology

The Results Framework and Performance Measurement Plan, a framework provided by Status of Women Canada, anticipated the key project activities, outputs, result statements, indicators, and data collection methods. As noted above, the outcomes for the strategy phase were determined once the strategy and resulting activities were known.

The evaluation intended to gather information from participants in various project activities including youth, parents, community members, community organizations, service providers, and other organizations and agencies involved in the project.

The Results Framework and Performance Measurement Plan has guided the evaluation information gathering and analysis. The evaluator worked with the Project Coordinators and the Executive Director of Avalon Centre to develop and administer data gathering tools. The methods and tools for gathering information were as follows:

- Tracking participation in project activities;
- Participant evaluation questionnaires for needs assessment focus groups for youth and adult participants;
- Participant evaluation questionnaires for the Community Meetings;
- Participant questions for facilitating evaluation with participants in the youth-based art sessions;
- Final focus group questions for the participants in the Community Meetings;
- Interview guide for end of project interviews with project partners, project participants and Coordinators;
- Review project reports, plans and summaries.

1.2 Evaluation Implementation

The evaluator worked with the Project Coordinators to design all evaluation forms and questions based on the objectives of each session being evaluated. All evaluation forms were administered by the Project Coordinators. Completed forms were put into an envelope at the end of each session, sealed and returned to the evaluator. To ensure confidentiality, all participant evaluations were completed anonymously. No individual names have been used in the report.

For final project reflection, the evaluator conducted a focus group with three (3) participating community organizations and agencies; ten (10) interviews with community organizations, agencies and youth leaders; and three (3) interviews with the Executive Director of Avalon Centre and the two Coordinators.

The evaluator reviewed all progress reports, the Needs Assessment Report, the strategy document, Community Meeting reports, and other related reports. The Coordinators provided lists of participating agencies and groups and statistics for the Facebook page.

1.3 Evaluation Scope and Limitations

The evaluation allowed for keeping track of participation in project activities. However, it was not always possible to keep exact numbers of some of the community education and public awareness events. The Coordinator, who participated in all the awareness activities, estimated to the best of her ability how many people she talked with and how many resources were handed out. The participation in events that had been ongoing within the community, such as the Walk Against Violence, were not included in the participation numbers. However, where the Project Coordinator supported the planning or implementation of the event, the event itself was included. It was not within the scope of this evaluation to do a broader survey of the community to assess whether this project had an impact on broader community awareness of this issue.

The evaluation intended to capture the reflection of youth participants. Youth reflection was captured for the needs assessment focus groups. Unfortunately, the evaluation was not able to capture youth reflection of their experience with the strategy activities. The evaluator was able to capture some observations through the interviews with two youth leaders involved in the youth activities and in interviews with the two Coordinators.

2. Project Implementation and Outputs

This section describes the various activities to implement the project and the project outputs. Outputs are the key accomplishments or “products” of an activity such as meetings or educational sessions. They also include the people involved or reached such as youth, community members, community organizations, and service providers and, where possible, participation in activities.

It is organized in the following sections:

- 2.1 Community Development Approach
- 2.2 Engaging Partners and Building Relationships
- 2.3 Planning and Implementing the Community Needs Assessment Process
- 2.4 Identifying Needs, Gaps, and Recommendations for Change
- 2.5 Identifying Promising Practices and a Strategy for Dartmouth North
- 2.6 Implementing the Strategy: *Stronger Together*
- 2.7 Project Challenges and Opportunities
- 2.8 Summary of Project Outputs

2.1 Community Development Approach

The impetus for the project came from the community, where community members and community organizations contacted Avalon Centre because they were concerned that young women in the neighbourhood were facing risks of violence and gender/societal barriers that were impacting their safety and limiting their potential. Therefore, Avalon Centre and the project partners wanted to use a community development approach to engage the community in the project.

Community development involves working with communities to support them to mobilize and take collective action in order to address sexualized violence and enhance the quality of life as a long term focus. Community development encourages participation, community control over development processes, and the development of leadership for planning and action. It promotes a set of principles or values as the basis for practice as follows:¹

- Promote active and representative citizen participation, so that community members can meaningfully influence decisions that affect their lives;
- Engage community members in learning about and understanding community issues, and the economic, social, environmental, political, psychological, and other impacts associated with alternative courses of action;

¹ Community Development Society <http://www.comm-dev.org/>

- Incorporate the diverse interests and cultures of the community in the community development process; and disengage from support of any effort that is likely to adversely affect the disadvantaged members of the community;
- Work actively to enhance the leadership capacity of community members, leaders, and groups within the community; and
- Be open to using the full range of action strategies to work toward the long term sustainability and well being within the community.

During the strategy phase, the Coordinators proposed to focus on a particular approach to community development called Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD). The ABCD approach is described in the project strategy document, *Stronger Together* (p. 2) as follows:

Building on the skills of local residents, the power of local associations and the supportive functions of local institutions, asset-based community development draws upon existing community strengths to build stronger, more sustainable communities for the future.

This project used a combination of the above approaches through various project activities outlined in this section in order to work toward the overall project goal.

2.2 Engaging Partners, Community Members and Building Relationships

The first step in any community development process is to connect with those most affected by an issue as well as grass roots community organizations who work with those affected by the issue, in addition to other community and government organizations who have resources (people and other resources) to help to address community issues.

The project started with a number of key partners and stakeholders who work with girls and young women ages 12 to 25. This included the Dartmouth Family Centre, the Boys and Girls Club of Dartmouth, Alice Housing, Dartmouth High School, Bicentennial Junior High School and John Martin Junior High School.

As the project moved forward, the Project Coordinators continued to engage individual residents and organizations to support both the needs assessment and strategy implementation as described more fully in the following sections.

Hundreds of individual community members were involved in the project including girls/young women, boys/young men, single mothers, and service providers who live and work in the community.

In general, organizations involved ranged from grass roots community organizations to government initiatives and departments. These included schools, youth groups, youth organizations, community centres, the transition house, second stage housing, organizations that support sex workers, the adult learning network, legal aid, police, the health authority, municipal counsellor, local MLA, local MP, and the Nova Scotia Department of Education. The full list of organizations involved is included as Appendix A.

2.3 Planning and Implementing the Community Needs Assessment Process

Prior to carrying out the needs assessment, the Project Coordinator conducted a Literature Review of a number of community efforts and reports that had identified the need for measures to prevent violence in the community. These are outlined in the Needs Assessment Report as follows:

- A community town hall to discuss violence in the community, specifically related to weapons;
- A workshop with students to discussion violence organized by LOVE (Leave Out Violence);
- A Federal Brief on Dartmouth North (2008);
- Dartmouth North Association (DNAN) Pathways Eligibility project (2012);
- Suffering in Silence, An Assessment of the need for a comprehensive response to sexual assault in Nova Scotia (2008);
- Exploring Service Options for Youth Victims/Survivors in Halifax Regional Municipality (2011).

While the recommendations and models suggested in the above reports were very useful, there were still gaps in the information. The needs assessment was designed to build on these initiatives and information already gathered in order to further understand the needs of the community related to violence against women, young women and girls.

In planning the needs assessment an attempt was made to ensure a diverse range of community members and organizations were involved in order to provide people in the community with a voice. Where it was not possible to talk to girls and young women directly, the Coordinator planned to interview group leaders and service providers as a secondary source.

The needs assessment involved designing an interview guide and a focus group process with questions, and consent forms. Various organizations and groups were asked to participate including youth groups, grassroots organizations (housing projects and support for sex workers), school guidance counsellors and administration, community police officers, community volunteers, and religious organizations.

As shown in Table 1, a total of fifty-two (52) individuals were involved in either a focus group or an interview. Of those, three focus groups were held with youth for a total of 22 participants. Two youth focus groups involved girls/young women with (16) participants, and one involved boys/young men with six (6) participants. Three focus groups and nine interviews were conducted with adult community members for a total participation of thirty (30).

Table 1: Participation in Needs Assessment

Information Gathering Method	Number of Focus Groups/Interviews	Number of Participants
Youth Focus Groups - Girls/Young Women	2	16
Youth Focus Groups – Boys/Young Men	1	6
Adult Focus Groups	3	21
Interviews Service Providers & Community Members	9	9
Total	15	52

2.4 Identifying Needs, Gaps and Recommendations for Change

The Coordinator analyzed the results of the focus groups and interviews, and presented the analysis to the project partners who identified key priority themes for action. The issues identified by youth and adults were compared and it was found that youth identified similar issues as community members although stated them in different ways. The needs assessment confirmed that women, young women and girls experience violence differently. The key priorities that emerged from the needs assessment were:

1. Sexual assault and sexualized violence (normalization of sexual violence, date rape, and exploitation of girls and young women).
2. Violence associated with necessary survival (sex work, weapons) and related to poverty.
3. Verbal and physical abuse, often in the form of domestic abuse.

In addition to these three priorities, it was identified that many factors affect the way violence is experienced by different community members. These factors include education, poverty, racism, parenting, and police presence in the community. With respect to police presence, some participants felt police had a good relationship with community members, while others felt police could do more to decrease violence. Overall, community members were positive about the presence of a community police officer, and in particular a female police presence was identified as a positive factor by female participants.

Needs assessment participants also identified barriers to community collaboration. These included the following:

- Lack of communication among organizations is a concern and a contributing factor to additional barriers;
- Lack of awareness of agencies and services available within the community;

- Duplication of services at times;
- Barriers to participation and access to services including transportation and low income;
- Resources need to be those that the community requests and will use;
- Lack of community cohesion; people sticking to their own street or networks and not the greater community;
- Rigid programming that doesn't meet community needs.

There were four recommendations for what could be done to improve safety for women, young women and girls in the community as follows:

- Increase involvement of teaching staff, parents and youth in the schools;
- Strengthen community collaboration and communication among service providers and between service providers and youth;
- Increase access to services by community members;
- Service providers should move toward a more trauma-informed approach to service provision. While it was recognized that some services are already working toward this, there needs to be an effort for all services to learn more about and adopt a trauma-informed approach.

The Needs Assessment Report was prepared and distributed to partners and other organizations involved in the project to date, as well as to Status of Women Canada.

2.5 Identifying Promising Practices and a Strategy for Dartmouth North

The next phase of the project involved selecting and piloting a strategy to address the priorities identified and the recommendations to improve safety for women, young women and girls in the community.

The first step was to research promising practices from other similar communities. This research was partly carried out by the first Project Coordinator who conducted the needs assessment. When she left the position, this activity was continued by the two Coordinators hired to complete the project. The two new Coordinators researched online and consulted with community members and organizations. Through this process they identified two promising practices that influenced the development of the strategy, *Chebucto Connections* in Spryfield, Nova Scotia (located within Halifax Regional Municipality) and *A Community Plan Addressing Relationship and Sexual Violence in Golden, BC*.

The next step was to design a strategy based on the needs assessment recommendations, the promising practises research, and consultation with community members and partners. This process took a considerable amount of work and time, partly due to the fact that the Coordinators had to orient themselves to the project, although one of the Coordinators

was one of the original partners and had been involved in the needs assessment focus group process. Through the above review and consultation, it was determined that strengthening communication and coordination would be the broad priority strategy. In the strategy document, *Stronger Together*, the Coordinators outlined their approach and what they planned to do to move the strategy forward as follows:

- The strategy will use the following approaches: a gender-based approach; an asset-based community development (ABCD) approach in order to positively reflect and build on community strengths; and, Avalon Centre’s approach, which uses a feminist lens and focuses on empowerment and mobilization.
- The strategy will address key recommendations made by the community through the needs assessment process. The strategy document refers to the common themes from the needs assessment including the need for better communication and collaboration, the need for access to information and about services available, and the need for a space or spaces that are safe and accessible for community members to access services and programs.
- The strategy will build on the work that has already been undertaken by groups and services providers to address violence against women, young women and girls. Two groups that were particularly noted were the Dartmouth North Association (DNA) and the Take Action Society as well as the support by United Way for the local neighbourhood hub that was emerging.

As outlined in the strategy document (p. 3), it was proposed that “this strategy will be a catalyst in the Dartmouth North area for communication and collaboration with emphasis put on connecting services, people and places as well as helping to coordinate all the actions taking place in the community.” To carry out the strategy, one Coordinator planned to work with women, community groups, service providers and agencies; and, the second Coordinator planned to work with youth and supportive adults through the schools and in the community.

2.6 Implementing the Strategy: *Stronger Together*

This broad prevention strategy involved implementing five key strategies that are described in this section. It is important to note that these strategies did not exist in isolation and are linked with each other and informed each other to work toward the overall project goal.

- 2.6.1 Creating networking opportunities among community groups and service providers;
- 2.6.2 Connecting community members and services through the Community Hub;
- 2.6.3 Promoting public awareness and community education;
- 2.6.4 Engaging youth;
- 2.6.5 Developing and implementing a communication strategy to connect people and services.

2.6.1 Creating Networking Opportunities Among Community Groups and Service Providers

Three community meetings were held in April, June and September 2015 with the goal of increasing communication and collaboration among services and groups in Dartmouth North.

The first meeting focused on mapping the services offered by the agencies present at the meeting. The resulting asset map was compiled and circulated to participating agencies. Toward the end of the project, a “Dartmouth North Community Assets” resource booklet was prepared and distributed to participating agencies.

The second community meeting focused on opportunities for collaboration. This started with information about the new Community Hub that was recently developed by the Take Action Society. Following a presentation by the Take Action Society, participants in the meeting made a list of potential programs and services that they felt would be wanted and needed at the Hub.

The third community meeting focused on discussion of a broad communication strategy to raise awareness about upcoming events and services available. Participants were encouraged to post on the new Facebook page and to use the Twitter set up through this project. Many ideas were proposed for working together to continue to promote awareness and communication.

A total of twenty-six (26) *different* organizations participated in the meetings. Participating organizations ranged from grass roots community organizations, to schools, community centres, and government agencies (See Appendix A). Organizations and individuals representing those organizations attended more than one meeting.

Table 2 shows the number of participants in each meeting, with a total of 44 participants in the three meetings.

Table 2: Participation in Community Meetings

Community Meetings & Topic	Individual Participants at each Meeting
Meeting 1: Asset Mapping	21
Meeting 2: Community Hub	7
Meeting 3: Communication Strategy	16
Total	44

2.6.2 Connecting Community Members and Services through the Community Hub

As noted above, the second community meeting focused on generating ideas about services and programs that could operate out of the new Community Hub organized by the Take Action Society. The intent was that the community will have a safe place to attend programs and activities that are wanted and needed by the community, including access to information and services for women and families. These were two of the recommendations made by community members through the needs assessment process.

The Coordinator partnered with the Take Action Society to bring eight (8) services into the Hub in order to make services more accessible to community members. These services include: Mental Health and Addictions Services, NS Legal Aid, the Farrell Benevolent Society, the Dartmouth Community Health Team, Alice Housing, Schools Plus, Family SOS, the Dartmouth Learning Network.

On Wednesdays each week, the Coordinator acted as a community navigator representing Avalon Centre at the Community Hub. Here, she met with residents and supported them to access services. She connected with approximately 48 residents providing information about services, including Avalon Centre’s services. For eight (8) of the 48 individuals, in addition to providing information, she made five (5) referrals to Avalon Centre, and connected and/or accompanied three (3) individuals to other services.

The Coordinator co-hosted community events at the Community Hub that engaged the broader community in events at the Hub. Eight (8) events were held, which included 6 family movie nights and 2 family potlucks. About 40 different families attended each event for a total participation of 320 families in these events.

Table 3 shows the number of agencies brought into the Community Hub, Avalon Centre providing navigation support, and participation by families in community events.

Table 3: Supporting Access to the Community Hub

Activity	# of Organizations/ Agencies	# of Adults	# of Youth	Total Participation
Engaging Agencies to Participate	8			
Support Navigation to Services	1	46	2	48
Organized Events (8)		*320	--	320
Total	9	366	2	368

* This is the total number of *families* that participated.

2.6.3 Promoting Public Awareness and Community Education

As part of the broader strategy of coordination and communication, the Coordinators engaged in a number of activities related to promote public awareness and community education. These included the following:

- *Speaker at a conference, Promising Practices and Innovative Approaches: Women and Men Stopping Gendered Violence.*”
- *Information and Project Feedback Opportunity at the Community Carnival.* The Community Carnival is an annual event where the Dartmouth North community comes together to meet their neighbours and have a fun day. The Coordinator was on the planning committee for this event for two years. In first year, the project created an opportunity to engage with the community about the Needs Assessment findings and to generate ideas for potential strategies. The Executive Director of Avalon Centre was there to discuss Avalon Centre’s services and programs. Based on the number of handouts given out, for the two events, approximately 300 people stopped to discuss the project and to learn more about Avalon Centre.
- *Information tables at several community events.* These provided opportunities to talk about the project and Avalon Centre services. Over the two years, there were seven (7) events with about 75 people at each event for a total of 525 people who received information (based on the number of handouts provided).
- *Poster Campaign.* As part of Avalon Centre’s poster campaign, *It Doesn’t Mean I Owe You*, the Coordinator distributed posters in the community and at the youth health centres at the schools.
- *On the Planning Committee for the Walk Against Violence.* This is a high profile annual event where Dartmouth North comes together to speak out against violence, with about 375 – 400 community members participating each year.
- *The Purple Ribbon Campaign.* The Coordinator participated in the Purple Ribbon Campaign as part of commemorating the Montreal Massacre on December 6.

Table 4 (next page) shows the number of public awareness and community education events and the number of people who engaged at the information tables organized through this project at the Community Carnival and other community events.

The participation numbers for the poster campaign are not included because it is not known how many people the campaign reached. The numbers for the Walk Against Violence and the Purple Ribbon Campaign are not included because these have been ongoing community events to raise awareness about violence.

Table 4: Participation in Public Awareness and Community Education

Activity	# of Events	# of Participants
Speaker at Conference on Promising Practices	1	--
Community Carnival	2	300
Information Tables at Community Events	7	525
Poster Campaign	1	--
Walk Against Violence	2	--
Purple Ribbon Campaign	1	--
Total	14	825

2.6.4 Engaging Youth

One focus of engaging youth was to use a creative component to create conversations with youth around their thoughts and feelings about sexualized violence in their community. It was originally planned to do arts-based sessions with existing youth groups and committees in the schools. However, it was decided to begin this work with community-based youth groups through the connections made with the Demetrious Lane Girls Group, the Association of Black Social Workers, and an art centre in the community, the MacPhee Centre for Creative Learning.

The Coordinator worked with the Acting Executive Director of the MacPhee Centre to host two facilitated art sessions in the art studio space. The first was with the Demetrious Lane Girls Group, which included 8 girls/young women and 2 youth leaders. They had a discussion about how they see themselves in the community, how others see them, and their vision for the community. Then they created a collage with key messages and shared their art and messages with each other. After this session, the group invited the Coordinator to attend at day trip with them which was an opportunity for further relationship building.

The second session was with the Association of Black Social Workers summer day camp with 17 youth and 6 young adult leaders. This group discussed things they consider to be violence and then they were asked to create positive messages that would be encouraging to someone experiencing violence. They made buttons with these messages so they could “wear” their anti-violence messages to promote conversations with others about anti-violence.

The Coordinator hoped that the youth would learn more about the potential of art as a creative way for youth to engage in discussion about themselves, their community, and

violence prevention. She also hoped that process of developing positive messages and talking about them with each other would enable the youth to have the language and ability to be able to talk about these things more with others.

The Coordinator intended to do at least one more arts-based session in each of the three schools in the fall. Unfortunately, these sessions didn't take place. She noted in her report that there were some additional future opportunities:

- The connection of the Demetrious Lane Girls Group to the MacPhee Centre has "opened the door" for them to return to use the space.
- There is potential for the community leaders associated with the group and the girls/young women themselves, who are now in high school, to be trained to facilitate similar sessions with junior high youth.

Because of the connections made with schools and youth-serving organizations, such as CeaseFire Halifax, there were opportunities for the Coordinators and Avalon Centre to work with schools and groups to support planning and delivery of educational sessions for junior high and high school youth.

One of these opportunities was helping to plan and facilitate a youth conference on preventing violence called, *Youth Conference on Violence 2015*, sponsored by CeaseFire Halifax. Eighty (80) youth participating in the conference from 4 different high schools in Dartmouth, one of which was Dartmouth High School in Dartmouth North.

The goal of the conference was to help youth develop an understanding and awareness of violence in their community and to provide a space for students to engage with the organizations involved. One of the Coordinators facilitated a session called "*WE GOT NEXT! Youth identity and culture*" and the Avalon Centre Education Coordinator facilitated a session called, "*Beyond He Said, She Said – An Exploration of Gender and Violence.*" All youth had the opportunity to attend each of the sessions offered; therefore, all the youth had an opportunity to learn more about the Dartmouth North Project and about the work of Avalon Centre.

Two school-based class sessions at the John Martin Junior High School were organized through the project. The Avalon Education Coordinator facilitated these sessions focusing on sexualized violence, consent, relationships and sexual justice (respectful boundaries and communication in relationships).

Table 5 shows the participation in the three activities described above. Note that Column 3 shows the number of groups and schools involved in planning, participating and facilitating the activities for a total participation of 11 groups and schools involved. Column 4 shows the number of youth involved, while column 5 shows the youth leaders involved for a total individual participation of 163. School Support Workers were also involved in the Youth Conference, but the numbers are not known.

Table 5: Participation in the Engaging Youth Strategy

Activity	# of Events	# of Groups/ Schools	# of Youth	# of Youth Leaders	Total Individual Participation
Arts-based Sessions	2	3	25	8	33
Youth Conference	1	8	80	--	80
Sessions in Junior High Classes	2	1	50	--	50
Total	5	11	155	8	163

2.6.5 Developing and Implementing a Communication Strategy to Connect People and Services

Part of the overall strategy was to increase communication among agencies and with the general public about services available in the community and community events. The community meetings, discussed above, were part of this strategy by creating opportunities for face-to-face communication. A Facebook page and Twitter account were started in June 2015. Both agencies and community members were encouraged to post on the Facebook page. By the end of November over 800 people were reached through the Facebook page. Of those, 230 were within Dartmouth. At the time of writing this report, there were 37 followers on Twitter.

In addition to these specific activities, the Coordinators met with community agencies and organizations, government departments, and politicians to discuss the project, invite them to participate and/or to discuss potential linkages and collaboration. In some cases, a Coordinator attended regular group meetings to support ongoing communication between the project and the group; for example, attendance at meetings of the four School Advisory Councils and meetings of the Dartmouth North Association (DNA). The Coordinators represented Avalon Centre at many community events such as open houses, community meals, arts and cultural events, and fundraising events.

The Coordinators also met with government officials who were leading initiatives, such as the Nova Scotia Sexual Violence Strategy and *Between the Bridges* initiative. *Between the Bridges* involves five provincial government departments: Education, Community Services, Health, Labour, and Justice. The intent of this initiative is to support a new approach to collaboration to change how programs and services are delivered to children and families.

As a result of these connections, the DNA started a sub-committee on safety and violence prevention in Dartmouth North. One Coordinator participated on that committee representing Avalon Centre. The *Between the Bridges* initiative linked directly with this

project through participation at the Community Meetings and referred to the Needs Assessment Report in their community consultation process.

2.7 Project Challenges and Opportunities

The project faced some challenges that had a ripple effect for the project. The first challenge was the crisis situation Avalon Centre faced in April 2013 after the sexual assault and suicide of Rehtaeh Parsons. The increased demand on the organization to respond to clients and a community in crisis delayed the hiring process and project start date. The second challenge was related to changeover in Coordinators on two occasions. This turnover delayed the needs assessment process and the transition to strategy development and implementation because the new staff had to orient themselves to the project. Every effort was made for a smooth transition and one of the Coordinators had been very involved in the project; however, there is still a learning curve whenever someone takes over work from another person. Challenges can turn into opportunities. The two new Coordinators were from the community and this was an asset for strategy implementation as they knew the community well.

The above delays created timing issues particularly for the Coordinator who was going to work with the schools. By the time she was able to make the connections, it was getting close to year-end and activities were already planned with the students. The decision was made then to start with youth-serving groups and initiatives in the community over the summer to pilot the arts-based sessions. This would have an advantage of introducing youth to a new creative space in the community that they could access on an ongoing basis. This also created connections between the art space and the youth leaders. Other connections that the Coordinators had made with youth-serving groups led to the opportunity to be part of the Youth Conference held in the spring of 2015 and created another opportunity for youth dialogue around violence in their communities and for youth to hear about the Dartmouth North project.

2.8 Summary of Project Outputs

This section summarizes the project outputs, including participation in project activities. Table 7 (at the end of this section) shows a total of 118 outputs from the needs assessment, strategy development and strategy implementation phases of the project. The last output, the communication and connections made with 52 different community organizations, agencies, and government representatives were key to all phases of the project (see Appendix A). The outcomes of these connections are discussed further in the next section, Section 3 Project Outcomes.

Table 6 (next page) provides a summary of participation in project activities. Column 1 shows the key project initiatives; column 2, the number of activities within each initiative; column 3, the number of *different* agencies/groups involved in each initiative; columns 4 and 5, the individual participation of adults and youth; column 6, total individual participation; and column 7, online participation.

As reported above, 52 *different* organizations and agencies were involved in the project. The total participation of 106 at the bottom of column 3, indicates that some organizations and agencies were involved in more than one activity. The total *individual* participation is 1,554 with 1,375 adults and 179 youth involved. Individual adult participation included community members, representatives of community groups, youth leaders, service providers, school principals, and government representatives. The online participation of 851 includes the *total reach* of Facebook and Twitter followers. Participation from Dartmouth on Facebook was 230.

Table 6: Summary of Participation in Project Activities

Initiatives	No of Activities	# of Agencies & Organizations Involved*	# of Adults	# of Youth	Total Individual Participation	Online Participation
<i>Needs Assessment</i>						
Focus Groups & Interviews	15	8	30	22	52	
<i>Strategy Implementation</i>						
Community Meetings	3	26	44	---	44	
Community Hub: Engaging Services, Navigation Support, and Family Events	10	9	**366	2	368	
Public Awareness and Community Education	14	---	825		825	
Engaging Youth: arts-based sessions, school-based sessions and youth conference.	5	11	8	155	163	
Communication: Facebook and Twitter	2	---				851
Communication: presentations to and/or collaboration	52	52	102		102	
Total	101	106	1,375	179	1,554	851

- This column identified the number of *different agencies* involved in each of these initiatives.

Table 7: Summary of Project Outputs

	Outputs	Total Outputs
<i>Needs Assessment</i>		
	Literature Review	1
	Focus Groups	6
	Individual Interviews	9
	Needs Assessment Report with Identified Needs, Priorities and Recommendations	1
<i>Strategy Development</i>		
	Identify Promising Practices	2
	Strategy Document	1
<i>Strategy Implementation</i>		
	Community Meetings	3
	Community Asset Map	1
	Dartmouth North Community Assets Booklet	1
	Services offered out of the Community Hub	9
	Supporting navigation to services through the Community Hub	1
	Events at the Community Hub	8
	Promoting Public Awareness and Community Education	14
	Engaging Youth: arts-based sessions, conference and school-based sessions	5
	Communication Strategy	1
	Safety Sub-committee of the DNA	1
	Facebook Page and Twitter	2
	Connections, communication and/or collaboration made with and among groups, organizations & agencies (see Appendix A).	52
Total Outputs		118

3. Project Outcomes

This section reports on the project outcomes. Outcomes usually focus on what changes have occurred as a result of the project or what difference the project has made. This can include short term outcomes such as increase in knowledge and skills; and medium term outcomes such as changes in behaviour, practice and policies. The longer term impacts, such as reduction of sexualized violence in the community, would not be achievable with a short term project and, therefore, were not considered as part of the evaluation process.

As noted in the strategy document, “this strategy will be a catalyst in the Dartmouth North area for communication and collaboration with emphasis put on connecting services, people and places as well as helping to coordinate all the actions taking place in the community.” The outcomes, then are intended to address the following questions:

- Did the project increase community dialogue and awareness about violence against women, young women and girls?
- Did the project increase connections between people (youth and adults), services/supports and places?
- Did the project increase opportunities to access services and supports?
- Did it increase communication and collaboration among community organizations and service providers?

This section reports on the outcomes based on evaluation of the needs assessment focus groups and the community meetings; as well as interviews with women, youth leaders, community members, service providers, partners, and the Coordinators. It should be noted that, while the youth needs assessment focus groups were evaluated by the youth, unfortunately the engagement strategy activities were not directly evaluated with the youth themselves. Evaluation interviews with youth leaders and Project Coordinators captured their observations based on their work with youth in the community.

The outcomes are organized in the following sections:

- 3.1 Opened up dialogue, named the violence and brought the issue to the forefront;
- 3.2 Increased understanding of supports and resources available; feeling less isolated and more motivated;
- 3.3 Strengthened relationships; improved coordination and communication among organizations and services;
- 3.4 Increased opportunities for access to supports, services and programs;
- 3.5 Increased communication of supports, services and programs;
- 3.6 Strengthened capacity within the community;
- 3.7 Moving forward – sustaining the effort.

3.1 Opened up Dialogue, Named the Violence and Brought the Issue to the Forefront

One clear outcome of the project was that it opened up the dialogue related to violence against women, young women and girls; clearly named the issue; and brought it to the forefront or made it safe to talk about it. This was evident in the evaluations of the needs assessment focus groups and in the interviews conducted with community members, service providers and youth leaders at the end of the project. The dialogue and ongoing communication were part of an ongoing process throughout the project with adults and with youth; therefore, this section describes this outcome in five sections:

- 3.1.1 The Needs Assessment: Engaged Community Members and Reflected their Perspectives.
- 3.1.2 The Needs Assessment: Engaged Youth and Reflected their Perspectives.
- 3.1.3 The Needs Assessment: Named the Normalization of Violence as an Issue
- 3.1.4 Strategy: Connected Youth to New Experiences, Spaces and Relationships
- 3.1.5 Strategy: Continued to Increase Dialogue and Awareness of the Issue

3.1.1 The Needs Assessment: Engaged Community Members and Reflected their Perspectives

The community development approach of engaging community members to talk about the issues as they see them and to identify solutions supported this outcome. In the evaluation interviews, the adult community members talked about the history of projects coming into and “doing to” the community and that this process was different. They said it enabled community members, both adults and youth, as well as service providers to talk about their lived experience. As a result, they said the Needs Assessment Report reflected the way violence is experienced in the community and had an impact on those who read it. The following comments by long time community members reflect what people said:

What worked well was coming into the community and asking what the needs were rather than coming in with totally preconceived ideas.

Community Member & Service Provider

They did a lot of focus groups. ... Having that piece was most definitely beneficial. The report was very comprehensive. And it very much pinpointed on what people are saying. They sat with those who are living the experience. It made a big impact on people who read the report.

What worked well was coming into the community and asking what the needs were rather than coming in with totally preconceived ideas.... This community has a history of organizations and agencies coming in and “doing to” the community without really finding out: Is this a problem in the community? Does the community see this as a problem? What do they see as the solutions? ... That is what we, as an organization

look for – projects that involve residents and respect first voice. So that approach works well and this project did that.

These comments were reinforced by the adults who participated in the focus groups who self identified as parents, community members or representatives of community organizations. Of the 21 participants in the adult focus groups, 12 or 57% completed the evaluation form. Here is what they reported:

- Three-quarters or 75% (9 of 12) of adult respondents *agreed or strongly agreed* the session was useful in identifying what violence looks like in the community,
- All respondents (100%) *agreed or strongly agreed* the session was useful in identifying how girls, young women and women experience violence.
- Eighty-three (83%) of the respondents *agreed or strongly agreed* the session was useful in identifying priorities for action.

Furthermore, when asked about what they appreciated about the sessions, the adult participants said they appreciated the opportunity to provide input, reflect on the issues, and to share their experiences in an open group format that was safe and confidential. The following are some of their comments:

Everyone was welcomed to give input. Very useful in recognizing violence in the community from the perspective of the community.

Community Member

The openness you felt and being able to share at your own comfort level. Not having to speak if you didn't want to (parent.)

Everyone was welcomed to give input. Very useful in recognizing the violence in the community from the perspective of members of the community (community member.)

That it was one big group discussion (community member).

I enjoyed the specific conversation with co-workers – good to hear from others' experience, thoughts and ideas (community organization).

Non judgmental approach by the facilitator (community organization).

Being able to share openly and in confidence (community organization).

When asked if they had any final comments, a number commented on the process:

Good questions, good process, very thought provoking (parent).

Wonderful, very thought provoking (community organization).

Thanks for taking on such a complex role – a truly difficult and emotional topic (parent).

3.1.2 The Needs Assessment: Engaged Youth and Reflected Their Perspectives

Separate focus groups were held with youth, both girls/young women and boys/young men, to capture their experience with violence in the community. In the Needs Assessment Report, the Coordinator pointed out that the analysis of priorities was done separately for youth to determine if youth identified issues differently. It was found that they identified similar priority themes as the adults, but talked about those issues differently.

It is evident that the needs assessment created an opportunity for an open dialogue among the youth who participated. The Needs Assessment Report indicates that the youth talked openly about their experiences, were able to name and describe different types of violence, and that racism was an important topic for youth. Along with the adults, the youth identified sexualized violence as the most critical issue.

Listen to us about the situations we are going through.
Youth

Only 36%, 8 of 22 youth participants, completed the evaluation after the focus groups. The following are the results related to identifying their experience with violence and identifying priorities:

- Only 3 of 8 or 38% of respondents *agreed or strongly agreed* that the session was useful in identifying what violence looks like, and 5 of 8 or 62% indicated they were *neutral or somewhat disagreed*.
- *Similarly*, only 3 of 8 or 38% of respondents *agreed or strongly agreed* that the session was useful in identifying how girls, young women and women experience violence, and 5 of 8 or 62% indicated they were *neutral or somewhat disagreed*.
- Three quarters or 75% of the youth respondents said they *agreed or strongly agreed* that the session was useful in identifying priorities for action.

While only a small number completed the evaluations, their response related to identifying priorities for action supports the Coordinator’s report that the youth had an open discussion about priorities for action.

Their low rating related to identifying violence could be related to a point made by the Coordinator in the report that, in the discussions of sexual violence, youth had many questions about what constituted sexualized violence and expressed an interest in learning more. She noted there were “teachable moments” but there wasn’t enough time to fully discuss what constituted sexual violence and recommended that future focus groups include this as a component. She also noted that, while youth recognized that sexual assault was related to actions of the perpetrator, there was a tendency to blame the victim, in particular how girls/young women dressed or the promiscuous behaviour of “certain girls.” Therefore, it is possible that the youth were recognizing that there was more to learn

about sexualized violence hence the session was not as successful from their perspective in identifying what sexualized violence looks like.

This is further supported by what youth said they appreciated about the session. They said appreciated the information and learning new things. One youth reminded the adults that it is important to listen to what girls have to say about what is going on. This is reflected in the following comments:

The information about violence about girls.

That I learned about new things.

The session was really fun. I would like to do it again.

Listen to us about the situations we are going through.

I learned about new things.

Youth

The information about violence about girls.

Youth

3.1.3 The Needs Assessment: Named the Normalization of Violence as an Issue

The relatively low youth rating above related to identifying violence, compared to the adult response, could also be related to *normalization of violence* in the community which was identified as an issue by the adults who participated in the needs assessment. They talked about how the youth were “used to” the violence and failed to recognize when sexualized violence was occurring or the full spectrum of sexualized violence, such as name-calling or pressure for sexual acts. Therefore, the low rating could be seen as a positive sign that youth were beginning to understand that some things they saw as “normal” were in fact sexualized violence, that there was a broader definition of sexualized violence, and more to learn.

The adults realized, through this discussion, that they were also habituated to violence because “everyone deals with it,” and, therefore, the definition of violence becomes skewed by this experience. In addition, with few resources to address trauma, everyone deals with it in their own way which increases normalization as residents are expected to “deal with it.” When the priorities were named, addressing the normalization of violence was identified as a key priority.

3.1.4 Strategy implementation: Connected Youth to Further Opportunities for Dialogue and Connection to Spaces & People

Youth had more opportunities to develop an understanding and awareness about violence in their communities through the Youth Conference for high school students, the school-based sessions at the junior high school, and community arts-based sessions.

In their report on the youth conference, CeaseFire Halifax noted that youth evaluations indicated that the conference did meet the goals of increasing understanding of violence and creating a space for students to engage with the speakers and the organizations.

The arts-based sessions enabled youth to learn about the potential of using art as a way to engage in discussion about themselves, their community, and violence prevention. It also enabled them to have the language and ability to talk about these things more with others.

One group who participated was a mixed group of girls/young women and boys/young men. They created positive messages that would be encouraging to someone experiencing

- *Being you, is being real*
- *Stay up princess*
- *Keep your head up and stay strong*
- *No enemies*
- *Show Respect*
- *Love yourself*
- *Be Love*
- *Don't Give up on your dream*
- *No Violence*

Youth Anti-violence Messages

violence. Then they made buttons with their messages so they could wear the messages and promote anti-violence. Some of the positive messages are shown in the box to the left.

Their youth leader pointed out the importance of creating the messages and then wearing them:

Being able to display them on them personally. ... Having something they stand up for be a part of them, like the button. Knowing that they can express that in that way, but then being able to explain what it means. They are also then explaining what they learned and getting into who they are. A lot of these kids they see violence and they see the effects of it; and, just to learn about the kind of issues, how to deal with it, and how to respond to it properly. And how to stand up for it instead of just accepting it. This activity had value.

Another group involved girls/young women. They were asked to reflect on how people in the community see them, how they see themselves, and their vision for the community. Some of the key messages on the collage they created are shown in the box to the right. Their youth leader said the session built on the discussions about violence that they were having with the girls/young women and it helped them to see themselves in a different way.

(The session was held) in an artistic space and what (the Coordinator) did with them was an art project that helped them look at themselves in a different way. And I think that whole experience for them was good. They remember it. It was something that they brought up again.

- *Smart woman*
- *Healthy person;*
- *Beauty*
- *Love;*
- *Flirty*
- *Diva*
- *Fabulous*
- *Canadian Black*
- *Can't stop me now.*

Youth Collage Messages

The arts-based sessions were offered in an art studio, a space in the community that the students hadn't accessed previously. The Coordinator had hoped this would be an opportunity to connect the youth to an accessible space they could use in the future. The youth leaders commented that this connection was positive for the youth as follows:

They made connections with the MacPhee Centre. it was the first time the girls got to go there and see what happens there and that was really positive for them.

And the environment was really good because it was an art studio. (It) was really enlightening for them as well. It allowed them to look at the artwork displayed on the walls and they were having debates and conversations about what the pictures meant.

The youth leaders and the Coordinator talked about the importance of reaching out to youth and developing relationships as follows:

They connected well with (the Coordinator), so that was good and they connected with the MacPhee Centre which was good. (youth leader)

I see (the Coordinator's) vision as allowing our youth to fully appreciate and value all the opportunities and experiences that are out there. I think that a lot of the opportunities that are available now were available (when I was younger), but they weren't as accessible and there weren't as many people stepping out and reaching out for those kids to draw them in. (The Coordinator) is very proactive and involved and she is very passionate about education, culture and enrichment. (youth leader)

I am from the community and I saw one of the girls at the store. ... We are able to put each other into context now because we have done some work together. That allows for the relationships to be deepened (Coordinator).

3.1.5 Strategy Implementation: Increased Dialogue and Awareness of the Issue

One component of the strategy was to continue the communication around this issue, at the Community Meetings, at information tables at community events, and informal one-to-one conversations with the Coordinators.

In the evaluation interviews, it was evident that these conversations in various venues continued the dialogue about the issues and continued to raise awareness about how women and youth experience sexualized violence.

People are voicing their concerns more and voicing their opinions more. And it is even the youth. A lot of youth are noticing the unacceptable behaviours.... It's great to hear them getting their voices heard.

Coordinator & Community Member

When interviewing one of the Coordinators at the end of the project, she was asked to comment on the normalization of violence and whether anything had changed from her perspective as follows:

I think it has changed a little bit, not as much as I would like. People are voicing their concerns more and voicing their opinions more. And it is even the youth. A lot of youth are noticing the unacceptable behaviours. ... At the Community Hub they have family potlucks and movie nights and so I am around youth there and some of them are making comments on the consultation held by the Between the Bridges Graffiti Wall and some of them were making comments about bullying and violence and not feeling safe. Just the words they were using and I was talking to them about it. It's great to hear them getting their voices heard. They are more comfortable talking about it and naming that behaviour.

She also pointed out that the Safety Sub-committee, set up by the DNA, was just starting to have conversations about increasing community safety. She noted that trafficking was discussed as a big issue, including what could be done about it.

A number of community members and service providers pointed out that the strategy had supported open dialogue and continued to raise awareness about the real issues facing women, young women and girls. The following are two of these comments:

Sometimes I don't think about those issues and just being at the table hearing about them opened your eyes a little more and you go "oh right."

Bring to the forefront the issues facing young girls today - this generation of young girls. We have some knowledge around that, but I don't think it had been brought specifically to the forefront and it fit well within the current climate, like the sexual violence strategy that the province has adopted ... And I think the Rehtaeh Parsons case opened up a lot of awareness and dialogue around what is happening. Even though we had started on all of this before these things happened, it really worked together. I feel like there was an awareness that this was a bigger problem than we thought before and there was more support for it than if it had been just a one-off through Avalon.

One youth leader said the opportunity for ongoing dialogue and communication was very beneficial. She said it was important to be able to bring the information to the table for discussion at the Community Meetings because girls/young women are not always being heard. The following are her comments:

A lot of the information that we have, just because we are working with them, is not always information that is brought to the table. Even though (organizations) are offering programs for young people, they don't always get to have the intimate relationship to hear what they are really doing. We hear what they are really dealing with and so, from that point of view, I think it is beneficial to tell their stories because they are not always being heard. (Then), when we know what the real picture is, we (as a group) can deal with it on that level and not kind of what we as older people think what their risks are. (We can say) this is what they are doing, what they are saying and what they think about it. And so it was beneficial to tell their stories in that environment.

3.2 Increased Understanding of Supports and Resources Available, Feeling Less Isolated and More Motivated

An important outcome of the project is the increased understanding of the supports and resources available by community groups and service providers. This increased understanding resulted in changes in how service providers saw their work and how they felt about their work.

The impetus for facilitating this understanding was one Community Meeting devoted specifically to creating an asset map of services and supports in Dartmouth North. There were 18 different organizations and 21 people at the meeting.

Of the 21 individuals who attended the Community Meeting, just under half, 9 or 43% completed evaluations. All nine respondents (100%) said they *agreed or strongly agreed* that they had increased understanding of each other’s services, supports and resources. This was further supported by comments participants made about what had been helpful for them the session as follows:

Was very helpful to get a sense of what is happening around violence against women and girls and the approaches being taken, the relationships that currently exist in addressing the issue from an education, prevention, intervention and ongoing support.

Several service providers noted that this increased understanding helped them to see that they were not alone, that it broadened the net, and they were part of a bigger picture of what is happening in the community related to violence against women, young women and girls. Some of these comments are as follows:

It highlighted that there are so many of us talking about things trying to work within community in our areas, not necessarily knowing what is happening (in other places). So many people having the desire to do the same things that it just broadened the net.

It always feels good just to feel like you are not alone. You are in your own office in your own centre you have people coming through the door, high needs, you are trying to figure it out – is there an end to this? Are we accomplishing anything? When you are at a table surrounded by people who are all taking care of a different piece of the pie and everyone is trying to do the same thing that you are from an organizational perspective and like morale – you feel like you are part of a bigger team of people who are all trying to achieve the same thing.

It always feels good just to feel like you are not alone
Service Provider

There are so many of us talking about things trying to work within community in our areas, not necessarily knowing what is happening (in other places). So many people having the desire to do the same things that it just broadened the net.
Service Provider

A number mentioned that learning more about and sharing ideas was motivating, inspiring and refreshing. Some commented that they would like to see a plan for how to collaborate more or work together.

(It is) really inspiring to see and hear the cool solutions that people have developed to address challenges and the passion in the room. Would love to be part of developing an action plan or roadmap for how we hope to collaborate/work together.

So, you leave (the meeting) feeling a little bit inspired, a little less discouraged about the level of need of some people in our community and so we leave feeling a little more pumped up and this is exciting and great. And then when someone comes in and says, "I need this," instead of trying to figure it out, we have an excited "I know someone who can help you with that and let's connect you with that person." So from a morale perspective for agencies on a shoe string trying to make a difference, it is good for the spirit to be sitting with like-minded people who are after the same thing – you feel part of a community.

Always coming together with other like-minded people and people who are all working toward a similar goal ... the sharing of the all the work and finding the common thread is refreshing, motivating and you know that you are not alone working in the community. Sexual violence is part of so many other things and issues in the community and just knowing that other people are doing other parts of the work is comforting.

3.3 Strengthened Relationships; Improved Coordination and Communication

Service providers and leaders of community groups indicated that meeting others face-to-face made connections with people, strengthened relationships, and improved communication among agencies and groups. This, in addition to having a better understanding of services and supports available, started to change how they were doing their work. Many said these connections enabled them to do their work better and to connect people better to services and supports. They told stories of how this was a benefit to their organization and to women they worked with.

Actually sitting down at the table once a month and seeing and getting to know individuals face to face and getting an update... it allowed us to do our jobs better in terms of supporting the clients that we have.

Service Provider

But actually sitting down at the table once a month and seeing and getting to know individuals face to face and getting an update ... it allowed us to do our jobs better in terms of supporting the clients that we have. ... When we are in a staff meeting and talking about an issue, (the staff member who attended the Community Meetings) was able to relate the issue to a group in the community and say, "I met someone at a meeting last week and that is exactly what they do. So let me give them a call and we

can figure out how to connect these two people.” So, it connected us (as a staff group) to what is happening in the community.

I helped a woman who was abused at home and knew who I needed to contact and the approach I could take with her to get her out of that situation that she was in. And that is a result of attending those meetings with Avalon and the resources that I gathered from the other providers in the neighbourhood. It gave me that connection. I was able to say, “If you don’t have a place to sleep tonight, why don’t you give these people a call. I know you can call (name of service provider) at this place and tell her you were talking with me.” It creates that open dialogue. If anything, that is a big benefit (of this project).

So one of the things after the first meeting is that we had a wellness panel here (at our centre). We invited three agencies who were at the Dartmouth North Project Community Meeting to talk to (our clients) about their programs. So, instead of us saying (to clients) “Here is where you go and here is where their office is,” we brought them into our space and we brought them to our centre and they explained what they do and who they are. It put a face to face, hoping to encourage the women (and they) might feel less awkward going into the space. That was very helpful and the agencies were more than happy to come to us and it was inspired by the Dartmouth North Project connecting our agencies.

This also resulted in stronger connections and improving coordination among services and supports. Some described this as breaking down silos and having opportunities talk about what their clients need and to strengthen current services to meet those needs.

I can connect with folks that we are working commonly with and talk about how can we collaborate verses being in silos saying, “I will work on my piece but I am not going to talk with you about your piece.” That really broke that down.

There is a benefit in seeing what each other is doing and how I can refer people to other service providers in the community that are doing programming that is better suited to them than what I am doing.

Everyone offered something a little bit different and a different level of accessibility. So instead of us trying to figure out how to do this here, we stopped trying to do all the programming here and to get people through the doors in the places that are already doing this kind of free programming. ... And it gave everyone an opportunity to get some community feedback about what they are doing. We would say we have clients who are wanting this and people would say well we could do that easily or we could tweek that easily.

I can connect with folks that we are working with commonly and talk about how we can collaborate verses being in silos.

Service Provider

Others pointed out that they met people they would not normally meet because of the history of the community sticking to their own street or networks.

I feel like there were connections that I had made in the community prior to being part of this project; and, when I was invited to be part of it, there were more connections than I would have made otherwise. I had no other means of sitting around a table with some of the organizations. So then that connection we made (and we learned) we were having a crossover of the the youth we were dealing with, and that alone made it worthwhile. And so now I know what they are doing and they know what we are doing and it's been a ripple - a lot of other connections were made after that.

So then that connection we made (and we learned) we were having a crossover of the the youth we were dealing with, and that alone made it worthwhile. And so now I know what they are doing and they know what we are doing and it's been a ripple - a lot of other connections were made after that.

Service Provider

3.4 Increased Opportunities to Access to Supports, Services and Programs in a Safe Place

The strategy provided several opportunities to improve and/or to strengthen access to supports, services and programs in safe, accessible places.

One strategy was working to connect people and services at the Community Hub by supporting eight agencies to offer programs and services there and co-hosting family events there.

It is not known how many people accessed programs and services organized through other agencies as a result of locating there. It is known that approximately 320 families, many single parent families, participated in 8 events during the summer months co-hosted by the project and Take Action Society. In addition, over 48 individuals accessed information and support provided by the Coordinator at the Hub. Having the Coordinator acting as a community navigator for Avalon Centre one day a week increased access to Avalon Centre's services and to other community agencies and supports.

One community member talked about the benefits of having the navigator and Avalon Centre at the Hub as follows:

When people have been assaulted they need reassurance that people care. And we would be there to help them. We can tell them to talk to (Coordinator from Avalon Centre). (We would say), "Don't let that scare you. Here is what they do."... (The Coordinator) opened my eyes a lot. I had a few people who had been assaulted and were scared and didn't know where to turn. I didn't know where either and she helped

them and sent them in the right direction. Amazing. She is very knowledgeable and the knowledge and help (she gave). She blew me away. I was like well... If she came back again, we would love to have her here. We would have Avalon here.

One downside mentioned in the evaluation interviews is that not all community members would see the location of the Hub as accessible for them due to the historical invisible boundaries that many community members will not cross. Their suggestion was to consider other similar hubs in other locations in the community.

I had a few people who had been assaulted and were scared and didn't know where to turn. I didn't know where either and (the Coordinator) helped them and sent them in the right direction.

*Community Member
working at the Hub*

A number of youth were introduced to the MacPhee Centre as a safe, accessible space to engage in creative learning. The Coordinator indicated during the final interviews for the evaluation that some of the girls/young women have continued to go to the centre.

Two presentations were organized through the project and facilitated in one of the schools by the Avalon Centre Education Coordinator. While the Coordinator had hoped to offer the arts-based sessions in the schools, this wasn't able to be organized for this project. One of the principals interviewed for the evaluation indicated that, in the future, having groups for students in the schools would be ideal for both boys/young men and girls/young women. She pointed out:

A lot is kept silent and there needs to be more of an outlet in an environment where youth feel comfortable to talk about their situation and their experiences.

3.5 Increased Communication of Supports, Services and Programs Available

The project has increased communication of supports, services and programs offered in the community. Throughout the project, the Coordinator distributed project information and Avalon Centre resources and talked individually with almost 1,200 community members through public awareness activities and at the Community Hub. The community assets have been made into a booklet that will be distributed throughout the community for use by community members and service providers to support access to services.

The Coordinator set up a Facebook and Twitter account with the intent that agencies would post their programs and services on the site and direct people they work with to the site. It was also hoped that community members would post on the site and it would become a positive message board about community activities.

The statistics show that that agencies, groups and individuals are starting to use the Facebook site. The evaluation interviews at the end of the project identified both opportunities and potential challenges for this social media strategy. Some were

concerned about access as not all community members have access to the internet or are computer literate. Some felt positive that the site had potential for continuing to raise awareness and for some community members who might be hesitant about accessing a service, they could find out more about what to do or who they could talk to by accessing that information in the privacy of their home or a library computer.

Of the 14 participants who attended the Community Meeting devoted to discussing the communication strategy, only four (4) completed the evaluations. Their responses indicated that they were more aware of the strategy and felt confident that the tools would help them to direct people/clients to the services they need. They also indicated that they had identified ways to work toward sustaining the strategy, and could see ways that their organization could contribute to sustaining the strategy.

3.6 Strengthened Capacity within the Community

One of the principles of a community development approach is that it works to build the capacity and leadership of community members. One of the outcomes is that the the knowledge gained and skills developed does not leave the community when the initiative is over.

The knowledge, skills and experience that the Project Coordinators brought to the community, how they transferred those into the project and continued to build on them was mentioned often in the evaluation interviews with community members and service providers. The Coordinators, themselves, indicated how much they were learning from their involvement in the project.

The connections made among leaders of community organizations, service providers and other agencies and increasing their understanding of community assets has strengthened their knowledge which will benefit the broader community. One Coordinator pointed out that the work with youth and the youth leaders has developed relationships that will continue to grow and develop and move this work forward:

The youth felt the genuine commitment to each other and to the community and we just know each other better and that just allows us to move it forward. This project was an additional burst of mobilization for the community.

The following comment provides a thought provoking perspective on how the Coordinator framed the discussion and engaged people so that everyone gained something:

She has a passion for it. She is there to say, how can we make this community the best it can be? And from a safety point of view as far as violence prevention, how do we make sure that people have access to what they need? And, what are the deficits and how do we band together? And that was really the

We all came away with something from it and that will hopefully add to the big picture for Dartmouth North.

Service Provider

goal that I heard and it's hard. The project is faced with a lot of history and barriers and how do we do this? She kept bringing back the idea of a community strategy, but I think that is going to take more than the duration of the project. And there is a lot more at play here, but the information is there. And she came away with some stuff and we all came away with something from it, and that will hopefully add to the big picture for Dartmouth North.

3.7 Moving Forward –Sustaining the Effort

Throughout the project, the Coordinators worked to build on what was already available in the community, by connecting community members and services into the Community Hub, by supporting current public awareness campaigns, by supporting the new Safety Subcommittee of the DNA, by building connections between youth and community spaces that they hadn't accessed, and by developing communication mechanisms that could be used by all community members.

Community groups and service providers interviewed at the end of the project expressed concern about continuing this focused work, particularly the aspects that supported *communication and coordination*. They were concerned that, now that the groundwork has been undertaken, who or what group will pick up this piece of the work. When asked for suggestions as to what would help to keep the work moving forward, people pointed out that it would be good to continue the following:

- That it would be very beneficial to continue the monthly or quarterly meetings of groups and agencies as an opportunity for people to connect specifically around the issue of violence against women, young women and girls. They noted that this could inspire other partnerships and initiatives. One individual suggested this could be a subcommittee of the DNA and be possibly chaired by Avalon Centre.
- That the asset map/directory will need to be updated to keep it current and relevant for use by women, youth, community groups and service providers.
- That, while everyone can post on the Facebook page, an individual will need to continue to monitor it and keep it relevant.
- That the navigator position focusing on individual advocacy related to violence against women, young women and girls at the Community Hub was an important asset to the community and should be continued if possible, at least one day a week.
- That, in the future, having groups for students in the schools would be ideal for both boys/young men and girls/young women because there needs to be more of an outlet in an environment where youth feel comfortable to talk about their situation and their experiences.

The *Between the Bridges* initiative, which was linked into this project, will be moving forward and a number of people wondered if there would be potential within that project to continue some of these initiatives.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of evaluation is to assess the effectiveness of a project in meeting its goals. The goal of this project, as stated in the project proposal, is as follows:

To support women and community partners in working together to develop and implement community strategies to address the issue of violence against women and girls.

To achieve this goal, the project proposal and the Results Framework and Performance Measurement Plan outlined key activities to be accomplished, outputs and results anticipated. As noted in the introduction to the report, it was difficult to fully anticipate project outcomes at the beginning of the project as the strategy hadn't been identified. The outcomes became more apparent once the strategy was identified and the key activities associated with the strategy were undertaken. The goal of the strategy, as outlined in the strategy document (p. 3) was:

To be a catalyst in the Dartmouth North area for communication and collaboration with emphasis put on connecting services, people and places, as well as helping to coordinate all the actions taking place in the community.

It is evident from the description of the activities and outputs in Section 2 of this report and the outcomes described in Section 3, that project has achieved both of the above goals.

This section draws general conclusions and recommendations for next steps to strengthen response to and prevention of sexualized violence in Dartmouth North.

4.1 Conclusions

The conclusions are organized around the short and medium term results outlined in the Results Framework and Performance Measurement Plan prepared for Status of Women Canada and the project outcomes identified in Section 3 of the report as follows:

- 4.1.1 Youth and Adult Community Members Identified Priority Issues and Made Recommendations for Action;
- 4.1.2 The Strategy Implemented Reflected Promising Practices and Community Recommendations for Action;
- 4.1.3 Opened up Dialogue and Increased Awareness of Sexualized Violence;
- 4.1.4 Strengthened Communication and Coordination Among Community Organizations, Groups and Agencies;
- 4.1.5 Increased Opportunities to Access Supports, Services and Programs;
- 4.1.6 Strengthened Community Capacity to Respond to and Prevent Violence Against Women, Young Women and Girls.

4.1.1 Youth and Adult Community Members Identified Priority Issues and Made Recommendations for Action

The project has achieved the following three results identified in the performance measurement plan as follows.

- Needs of women, young women and girls in the community were identified;
- There was evidence of a process for building consensus on a priority issue.
- Community stakeholders and partners collaborated to clarify needs, opportunities and a priority systemic issue;

These results are well documented in the Needs Assessment Report, including the process used to facilitate sessions, to clarify priority issues, and to suggest recommendations for strategies. The project partners collaborated to support youth engagement and community engagement in the needs assessment process, as well as the analysis of the results.

A key outcome is that community members pointed out that the needs assessment process engaged community members to talk about their lived experience and that the report reflected the way violence is experienced in the community and had an impact on those who read it.

4.1.2 The Strategy Implemented Reflected Promising Practices and Community Recommendations for Action

The project has achieved the following four results as outlined in the performance measurement plan.

- Promising practices that address violence against women, young women and girls were identified;
- Potential strategies for addressing gender-based violence were identified;
- The strategy was selected through a collaborative community process.
- Effective evidence-based promising practices that address violence against women, young women and girls have been piloted.

The first three results are documented in the strategy document, ***Stronger Together*** and in Section 2 of this report. The *Stronger Together* document describes the promising practices that informed the selection of the strategy. The selection of the strategy was also informed by the key recommendations made by the community members and service providers involved in the needs assessment process and through further consultation with community members and project partners.

The project piloted five key activities to implement the strategy by engaging youth, youth leaders, community members, community leaders, and service providers as documented in Section 2.6 of this report.

4.1.3 Opened up Dialogue and Increased Awareness of Sexualized Violence

Both the needs assessment process and strategy implementation created opportunities and safe spaces for youth, adult community members, and service providers to talk more openly about how women, young women and girls experience violence. The approach of engaging community members to talk about the issues as they see them and to work together on solutions supported this result. Over 1,554 individuals participated in discussion about this topic, 179 youth in youth-focused sessions and 1,375 adults in a variety of project activities.

Junior high and high school youth had several opportunities to engage in discussion about violence in their community and topics such as consent, relationships and sexual justice. The arts-based sessions enabled youth to learn about the potential of using art as a way to engage in discussion about themselves, their community, and violence prevention. The sessions also enabled them to have the language and ability to talk about these things more with others.

By the end of the project, people were starting to be more open to voice their concerns and opinions, including the youth. Youth were noticing unacceptable behaviours and were more comfortable talking about it and naming the behaviour.

This developmental process throughout the life of the project brought the issue to the forefront for youth, women, community groups, service providers and other agencies and initiatives that were involved in the project. The ongoing conversations at various tables and venues continued to raise awareness about real issues that girls, young women and women were dealing with.

4.1.4 Strengthened Communication and Coordination Among Community Organizations, Groups and Agencies

The discussion and documentation of the community assets increased understanding of supports and resources available in the community. It resulted in changes in how service providers saw their work. They started to feel they were part of a bigger picture or part of a team. They were starting to feel less isolated, more inspired and more motivated.

Service providers and leaders of community groups said that face-to-face connections strengthened relationships and improved communication among agencies and groups. Service providers talked about this as “broadening the net” and creating a “ripple effect” with one connection leading to more connections. For some service providers, it enabled them to connect with people they hadn’t connected with before.

These connections enabled them to do their work better and to connect people better to services and supports, which benefited their organization and the women, young women and girls they worked with.

As a result, positive relationships were formed and strategic networks developed within and across neighbourhoods within Dartmouth North. These were two of the medium term results identified in the performance measurement plan.

Ultimately, it resulted in starting to break down silos. It improved coordination among services and supports, which had the potential to strengthen current services to meet the needs of women, young women and girls.

4.1.5 Increased Opportunities to Access Supports, Services and Programs

The project increased opportunities for community members to access a range of services and programs in safe, accessible spaces. This was accomplished through the partnership with Take Action Society and connecting more agencies and organizations to the Community Hub and co-hosting family events there. Having the Coordinator supporting navigation to services one day per week at the Hub increased access to Avalon Centre's services and to other community agencies and supports. Connecting youth to the MacPhee Centre enabled them to engage in creative learning in a safe, accessible community space. The connections and relationships that developed have enabled youth to return to the centre.

Furthermore, the communication strategy facilitated opportunities for community members and service providers to access information about services and programs offered in the community. This was accomplished through through the Facebook and Twitter account, the development and distribution of the Dartmouth North Community Assets booklet, and the distribution of Avalon Centre resources.

4.1.6 Strengthened community capacity to respond to and prevent violence against women, young women and girls

Using an asset-based community development (ABCD) approach, this project aimed to build on the assets of the community to strengthen the capacity of the community to respond to and prevent sexualized violence.

Part of building capacity is strengthening knowledge and skills, and a number of project activities strengthened the knowledge and skills of community members. The activities that engaged youth increased their knowledge and understanding about sexualized violence and, for some youth, what they can do to prevent sexualized violence. The project strengthened the knowledge, skills and leadership capacity of the two Coordinators. It strengthened relationships, communication, and understanding of services and supports available among service providers and community organizations across neighbourhoods. Facebook, Twitter, and the resource booklet of community assets will also support increased knowledge of services and programs when used by community members and service providers.

During the strategy phase, the Coordinators worked with community partners to build on and strengthen the initiatives and the work of those organizations. This included working with Take Action Society to increase services and programs at Community Hub; working with the DNA and the newly established Safety Sub-committee; and, working with the MacPhee Centre to introduce youth and youth leaders to their creative learning centre. The Coordinators built relationships with and linked the *Between the Bridges* initiative into the project.

All of the knowledge, skills and relationships described above will stay in the community once the project is over and will help to continue what has been gained from this work.

4.2 Recommendations

As just described in the previous section, the project strategy was successful in partnering with community organizations, service providers and government agencies with a focus on strengthening the initiatives and work of those organizations as well as communication and coordination among them.

That being said, because of the success of this project, community members and service providers made recommendations for continuing the important communication and coordination activities, as well as the youth mobilization activities as follows:

- That, the mobilization of youth begun in this project should continue in partnership with youth-serving groups and schools.
- That the meetings of groups and service providers should continue either on a monthly or quarterly basis as an opportunity for people to connect specifically around the issue of violence against women, young women and girls. This would continue to strengthen the response to and prevention of sexualized violence and inspire additional partnerships and community initiatives.
- That the navigator position focusing on individual advocacy related to violence against women, young women and girls at the Community Hub was an important asset to the community and should be continued at least one day a week.
- That the asset map/directory will need to be updated to keep it current and relevant for use by women, youth, community groups and service providers.
- That, while everyone can post on the Facebook page, an organization will need to take the lead to continue to monitor it and keep it relevant.

APPENDIX A: CONNECTION WITH GROUPS AND AGENCIES

The following 52 community organizations, agencies and government officials were involved in the project. Some were project partners, others collaborated in project activities, and others were involved in presentations or consultations about the project. A number were involved in more than one activity. Some participated in needs assessment and/or strategy activities such as the youth engagement activities, the Community Meetings, the Community Hub, or the DNA Safety Sub-committee.

Those in the left column attended the Community Meetings which focused on bringing community organizations and service providers together to identify community assets, ways to strengthen collaboration and a communication strategy.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adsum House/Adsum Court • Alice Housing • Avalon Sexual Assault Centre • Bryony House • Bicentennial School • Boys and Girls Club of Greater Halifax • Dartmouth Community Health Team • Dartmouth Family Centre • Dartmouth Learning Network • Dartmouth North Association • Dartmouth North Community Centre • Dartmouth North Echo • Dartmouth North MLA Constituency Office • Demetrious Lane • Family SOS • Farrell Benevolent Society • First Baptist Church • Halifax Regional Municipality, Municipal Councillor • Halifax Regional Police • John Martin Junior High School • Mental Health and Addictions • Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development – <i>Between the Bridges Initiative</i> • Nova Scotia Legal Aid • Schools Plus • Take Action Society • United Way Halifax 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brave Space • CeaseFire Halifax • Community Justice Society • Dartmouth Community Health Board • Dartmouth North Community Food Centre • Demetrious Lane Girls Group • Girls Action Foundation • Heartwood Centre for Community Youth Development • IWK Health Centre, Wellness Navigator • Leave Out Violence • MacPhee Centre for Creative Learning • Member of Parliament, Assistant • Municipal Councillor, Dartmouth North • Neighbourhood Watch • Nova Scotia Association of Black Social Workers • Nova Scotia Sexual Violence Strategy • 4 School Advisory Councils • 3 Schools: Bicentennial, John Martin and Dartmouth High School (Administration, Teachers, Student Support Workers) • The Stepping Stone Association • Supportive Housing for Young Mothers (SHYM) • Wonder’neath Art Studio
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