

ANNUAL COMMUNITY REPORT



AVALON

20
23

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Avalon Sexual Assault Centre



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ANNUAL COMMUNITY REPORT

AVALON SEXUAL ASSAULT CENTRE: 2023 REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY

Avalon Sexual Assault Centre is a feminist organization working to eliminate sexual assault and abuse with the goal of changing the current socio-political culture. A culture that fosters sexism, social injustice, and other forms of oppression.



OUR COMMUNITY

We believe collaboration with communities helps us achieve more. We work closely with partners and community members at the local, provincial and national levels.



AVALON CENTRE'S MAIN OFFICE IS
LOCATED IN K'JIPUKTUK ON
UNCEDD MI'KMAQ TERRITORY.

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

2022-23 marked a year of significant change and growth at Avalon Centre. We kicked off the fiscal year by finalizing our negotiations with the Province of Nova Scotia, and by the end of spring were thrilled to announce the launch of our new provincial model for sexualized violence trauma therapy. Over the next five years, our Community-Based Sexualized Violence Trauma Therapy Program will build Nova Scotia's capacity to support survivors by decreasing barriers to accessing care for all, with a focus on better supporting the needs of underserved communities. We'll be working closely with community members and partners across the province, whose expertise and lived experience will shape the way our therapists show up in their communities. This shift in our services is the result of decades of work by local leaders and community members who have dedicated their lives to addressing the needs of survivors in Nova Scotia. We're here to lean into that history, to learn from one another, and to work together to provide better supports for the folks who need it the most.

While a cornerstone of our work, we know that trauma therapy isn't a part of everyone's healing journey, and that sexualized violence occurs at the intersections of other social issues and systems of inequality. This year our Community Navigation and Legal Support programs saw more clients than ever, providing wraparound supports and bridging survivors to the services they need. Through our Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) program, we provided direct response to hundreds of individuals having recently experienced sexual assault. All of these successes are thanks to the hard work and dedication of our exceptional frontline staff, who are committed to building a stronger community of support for all survivors.

As our programming grew and evolved, so too did our staffing model. Over the past year our trauma therapy team welcomed nine new therapists, an intake staff, two program coordinators and a program manager. Recognizing the need for more operational support, we introduced a director of operations role to support the management team in ensuring the day-to-day functioning of the organization. With yours truly off on maternity leave from October to August, we also hired an interim executive director to lead Avalon in my absence, with management staff also taking on extra leadership tasks to support the organization.

Of course, with big change comes big challenges. Over the year Avalon experienced considerable staff and Board turnover. Along the way, several longstanding members of our team moved on from Avalon, and their contributions to our work cannot be understated. While we can't anticipate every departure, we can learn from each one, using them as opportunities for reflection and growth. As we look toward the future, Avalon's leadership is committed to refining our organizational structure, strengthening our governance framework, investing in our workplace culture, and deepening our relationships with community partners.

As we close out the year, I want to express my immense gratitude for our staff, Board, donors, funders, partners and community members. Thank you for everything that you do. **I look forward to continuing our work together to ensure that everyone impacted by sexualized violence has access to the services they need to heal and to thrive.**

With care,

Dr. Sarah Rodimon

At full capacity, the CB-SVTT team will be comprised of **24 trauma therapists** from across the province, a leadership team to provide coordination and therapeutic supervision, an intake team to steward survivors into the therapeutic work, and a program manager to oversee all aspects of the program. In our first year, Avalon **hired and onboarded a leadership team** comprised of a program manager and two program coordinators, as well as an **intake coordinator** and **12 community trauma therapists**.

SERVICES AND PROGRAMMING

COMMUNITY-BASED SEXUAL VIOLENCE TRAUMA THERAPY

This marked the first year of Avalon's province-wide Community-Based Sexualized Violence Trauma Therapy Program (CB-SVTTP), an initiative that aims to provide trauma-specific and culturally responsive sexualized violence trauma therapy (SVTT) for communities across Nova Scotia, with a goal of addressing and eliminating access barriers among our most underserved communities.

Our primary focus for year one of the program included community engagement, program planning, and foundation setting for the provincial expansion—all while ensuring a seamless transition for clients already accessing trauma therapy services.

Throughout the year, the Avalon CB-SVTTP leadership team held a total of **43 meetings with 16 communitybased organizations (CBOs)** across the province, with the goal of setting up partnership agreements for Avalon to provide SVTT in their communities. This is part of the Avalon's longstanding approach and commitment to engaging with stakeholder organizations, and the commitment to ensure that the tailored knowledge, skills, and approaches that CBOs have developed over their many years are integrated into the CB-SVTTP service delivery model.



SERVICES AND PROGRAMMING

At Avalon, our community trauma therapists provide supports for survivors of sexualized violence aged 15+ living in Nova Scotia. We welcome people of all genders, sexual orientations, races, ethnicities and abilities. Our services are provided online, on the phone, at our main office in Halifax, and in community spaces across the province.

In the 2022-23 fiscal year, we provided a total of **1,452 therapy sessions** including:

- **593** in-person sessions
- **536** virtual sessions
- **316** telephone sessions

We also provided **125 advocacy support sessions** including:

- **111** advocacy support sessions for survivors
- **14** sessions for support persons

Finally, our team provided a total of **120 intake sessions**, which represents the number of new individuals who accessed Avalon's trauma therapy program in the past year.

Over the next year, we will be continuing to build our capacity to provide SVTT across the province. This includes increased efforts for community consultation, collaboration, and partnerships to ensure SVTT is offered in more community spaces, especially within rural and remote communities that have historically been underserved. We will continue our work to hire a diverse team of community trauma therapists to increase our reach and impact.

Finally, we look forward to investing in opportunities to increase the cultural relevancy of our services, so that we may better meet the unique needs of our communities in Nova Scotia.

By the end of 2022-23, the Avalon CB-SVTT team had signed **3 partnerships agreements** with:

- Antigonish Women's Centre and Sexual Assault Services (Antigonish)
- Tri-County Women's Centre (Yarmouth, Digby and Shelburne)
- South Shore Sexual Health (Bridgewater)

In an effort to share information about the CB-SVTT model and hear feedback from community members regarding their unique needs and lived experiences, we also:

- provided **9 presentations**
- held **17 partnership meetings**
- attended **11 community events**
- hosted **2 community of practice meetings**
- organized **3 advisory committee meetings**



SERVICES AND PROGRAMMING

SEXUAL ASSAULT NURSE EXAMINER (SANE) PROGRAM

The Avalon SANE Program is a 24/7 emergency response provided by specialized nurses to individuals of all ages and genders who have experienced sexual assault within the previous seven days. This year, our team was comprised of two program coordinators and an administrative assistant, as well as a roster of registered nurse consultants who are trained in the assessment and treatment of sexual assault victims, including medical and forensic exams and evidence gathering. Avalon SANEs respond to the core four emergency departments within Halifax Regional Municipality: QEII Health Sciences Centre, IWK Health, Dartmouth General, and Cobequid Community Health Centre.

In the 2022-23 fiscal year, the Avalon SANE team responded to a total of **336 calls**, including:

- **Medical & forensic exams and treatment for 161 individuals** following sexual assault
- **Information and support calls to 175 individuals** and healthcare professionals pertaining to acute sexual assault

In addition to hospital response, SANEs are also required to provide fact or expert testimony when called upon, should a case proceed to court. This past year Avalon SANES have:

- Received **26 subpoenas**
- Testified in **5 court cases**

We continue to foster growth among our team by engaging in education and training initiatives, developing policy, collaborating with provincial SANE teams, investing in community partnerships, and nurturing our relationships as a team.

As in past years, retention of registered nurses is an ongoing challenge as we face increasingly high demands for our services. As we continue to invest in new strategies for recruitment and retention, our goal is to increase the number of SANEs on our roster to ensure a healthy work-life balance for everyone on our team.

"THE TWO NURSES WHO SHOWED UP WERE AMAZING. THEY ENTERED THE ROOM LIKE THEY WERE OLD FRIENDS COMING TO CHECK ON ME. THEY WERE VERY GOOD AT TAKING THE TIME TO EXPLAIN EVERYTHING – MAKING SURE I KNEW I WOULD ALWAYS BE IN CHARGE."

– SANE CLIENT

In the 2022-23 fiscal year, Avalon's Community Navigator

sessions, and increased the number of survivors we supported by 45%.

Each support session tends to cover a wide range of concerns. Of the 459 that were provided:

- 20% included a focus on **food security**
- 10% on **safety planning**
- 9% on **housing**
-

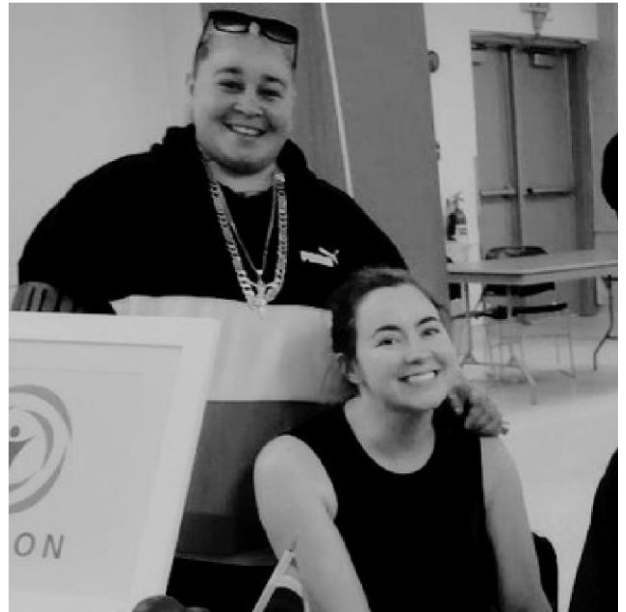


SERVICES AND PROGRAMMING

COMMUNITY NAVIGATION

For the past four years, Avalon has been developing, piloting, and testing its Community Navigation Model as a promising practice, as part of a five-year project funded by Women and Gender Equality (WAGE) Canada. The goal of our Community Navigation Model is to increase service accessibility for survivors from traditionally underserved communities, increase partnerships and collaboration across sectors to better support diverse survivors, and increase available learning opportunities for trauma-informed and community-based approaches to working with survivors.

provided **459 support sessions for a total of 106 survivors** of sexualized violence. When compared to the previous year, we provided **more than double the number of** 4% on **employment**



As our work shows, individuals' experiences of sexualized violence are often interconnected with other systems of inequality and harm, including but not limited to issues of racialization, poverty, housing and homelessness, domestic and interpersonal violence, job security, and so on. By working at these intersections, we hope to increase our collective capacity to meet survivors where they are by providing them with support services that reflect the diverse needs of their communities.

As the demand for our Community Navigation program continues to increase, we are committed to securing the resources needed to sustain this work into the future. We look forward to what the next year has in store.

SERVICES AND PROGRAMMING

COMMUNITY LEGAL SUPPORT PROGRAM

Avalon's Legal Support Program is run by a Community Legal Support Worker who helps survivors ages 15+ to understand and navigate the legal system. This work encompasses a wide range of supports, such as providing information and referrals; accompanying survivors to meetings, appointments, and court; helping to fill out forms or prepare for court proceedings; talking to legal professionals; offering practical and emotional support; and providing a safe space to talk about survivors' experiences with the legal system.

With demand far exceeding capacity, we have introduced a waitlist for community members seeking legal support services. We have also narrowed our focus to the criminal legal system and are prioritizing individuals who have reported to police and have trial proceedings scheduled within a six-month period. As we move into the next fiscal year, we aim to increase organizational capacity to offer legal support so that we may better serve our community.

This year our Community Legal Support provided **short- and long-term support to over 45 individuals navigating the legal system**. During this time, the Community Legal Support Worker also supervised a practicum student, oversaw the Dalhousie Law Pro-Bono partnership, facilitated trainings to the RCMP and Family Court staff, and participated in various community committees geared toward social justice.

IN THE COMMUNITY

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

This year Avalon launched a Community Advisory Committee to bring forward key recommendations to our work. The committee is comprised of **8 community members who meet once a month** to discuss different topics relating to Avalon's services, including but not limited to Avalon's services, programming, events, and operational structures. The recommendations made by the committee are used to inform and strengthen Avalon's work, and to hold our organization accountable to the evolving needs of our community.

COMMUNITY BBQ

Avalon once again hosted its annual Community BBQ on August 26, where we engaged with **over 400 individuals**, providing them with a warm meal, back-to-school supplies, and some fun in the sun! We also used this as an opportunity to bring community partners together to set up information booths, where folks could learn about the important work we do in the community, from housing and food supports to sexualized violence supports and sexual health education. Organizations in attendance included The Native Council of Nova Scotia, Colchester Sexual Assault Centre, Halifax Sexual Health Centre, Healing our Nations, New Start, Shelter Movers, Third Place, Transition House Association of Nova Scotia, and Welcome Housing.



IN THE COMMUNITY

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM

Avalon staff led a social media campaign and education initiatives while handing out purple ribbons in the community during the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence. The campaign focused on the voices and recommendations of survivors who shared with Avalon staff their recommendations for the Mass Casualty Commission to consider in their final report. Their recommendations were compiled in a report written by Avalon and the National Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF) “We Matter and Our Voices Must be Heard”. On December 6th, 2022, Avalon partnered with the Halifax Central Library to hold a December 6th Candlelight vigil to honour the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. A group of staff and community members gathered at Victoria Park for opening remarks followed by a candlelight walk and event at the Halifax Central Library to remember the fourteen women who were murdered at L’Ecole Polytechnique de Montréal in 1989. The event acknowledged all lives lost and currently impacted by gender-based violence and called for continued action to end gender-based violence in all its forms.



on themes including consent, trauma, sexualized violence, access supports through Avalon, and peer support skills. Approximately 27 youth participated in this art project, bringing information from all three workshops together into the form of a “Thumbprint Tree,” that featured messages of care and support for themselves as well as the survivors in their lives. As is so often the case when working with youth, this project left our team feeling inspired and hopeful for a future free from violence.

SURVIVOR LED ART PROJECT

This year, Avalon worked with Peer Outreach Support Services & Education (POSSE) on a survivor-led art project. The project included three educational workshops with highly vulnerable youth

SOC

MASS CASUALTY COMMISSION

This past year, Avalon played a leading role in the Mass Casualty Commission (MCC) through its coalition with the National Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF) and Wellness Within. The MCC was formed as an independent public inquiry into the events of April 18-19, 2020 in Portapique, Nova Scotia, with the goal of providing meaningful recommendations to improve community safety. Represented by Erin Breen of Sullivan Breen Defence, our coalition worked to ensure that the MCC recommendations responded directly to the harms of gender-based violence in this case and more broadly.

As part of this work, Avalon's Shi Gordon, Kristina Fifield, Sarah MacGillivray, and Leticha Lucas led an engagement with marginalized survivors impacted by the perpetrator of the mass casualty events in 2020. Knowing that these voices would otherwise be left out of the MCC's work, our team submitted and proposal to the MCC that highlighted the need for a safe, confidential, traumainformed, and culturally responsive approach, led by Avalon, to ensure that survivors' voices were not missed in the commission's work.

Throughout August and September, Avalon led four sessions in community, creating a safe space for survivors to openly share about their experiences about the perpetrator and provide recommendations for our work with the MCC. The stories shared with us in these sessions amplified the systemic power dynamics and intersectional forces associated with the violence that survivors experienced from the perpetrator, as well as the institutional failings that enabled such violence to occur.

Avalon's ability to facilitate this safe space, which directly connected survivors' voices to key decision-makers as part of the MCC, was made possible through the work of our Community Navigator, Shi, who has worked tirelessly to build trust with and decrease barriers for survivors from diverse communities.

Following these meetings, Kristina worked with LEAF to develop and submit a report to share our coalition's learnings with the MCC. The report, titled "We Matter and Our Voices Must Be Heard," highlighted survivors' stories of violence at the hands of the perpetrator, as well as the systemic injustices that they continue to experience as marginalized survivors. Through these pages, we brought together insights from survivors' experiences, along with their recommendations for building safer communities across Nova Scotia. Kristina presented this important work to the commission with consent from all survivors who participated.

On March 30th, 2023, the Mass Casualty Commission released its final report, Turning the Tides Together, which included 130 recommendations for the future. The report crucially emphasized the role of gender-based violence in mass casualties, and the need for a cultural shift to address violence to make communities safer. It characterized gender-based, intimate partner, and family violence as a "public health emergency that warrants a meaningful, whole of society response," and highlighted the need for new, community-based systems that reflect the needs of marginalized survivors.

Our team is proud to have meaningfully contributed to this process, and looks forward to continuing to advocate for survivors, hold leadership accountable, and work collaboratively to address and eliminate gender-based violence in Nova Scotia.



SPOTLIGHT ON SOCIAL CHANGE

ADVOCACY AGAINST THE MISUSE OF NON-DISCLOSURE AGREEMENTS

This year, Avalon developed a new partnership with Can't Buy My Silence, a campaign committed to end the misuse of non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) in silencing survivors of sexualized violence by raising public awareness and advocating for legislative changes.

- **April 7:** Avalon trauma therapist, Kristina Fifield joined NDP Leader Claudia Chender, survivors of sexualized violence, and other gender-based violence advocates at a press conference at Province House, where the NDP tabled Bill #144 to restrict the misuse of NDAs in Nova Scotia.
- **April 28:** As part of Sexual Assault Awareness Month, Avalon co-hosted a webinar with Dr. Julie Macfarlane, co-founder of Can't Buy My Silence and author of *Going Public: A Survivor's Journey from Grief to Action*. The webinar explored trauma impacts of NDAs in sexualized violence cases, and featured talks from Avalon's Legal Advocate Coordinator, Sarah MacGillivray, local community educator and GBV prevention advocate, Dee Dooley, along with Kristina and Dr. Macfarlane.
- **November 7:** Our team participated in an event co-sponsored by Can't Buy My Silence, Equity Watch Nova Scotia, and Access to Justice and Law Reform Institute, where Kristina spoke on a panel to share the harmful impacts of NDAs when used as a tool to silence survivors.
- **February:** We collaborated with Can't Buy My Silence to launch a petition for the support of Bill #144.
- **March 28:** NDP Leader Claudia Chender tabled our petition in the legislature, calling on the provincial government to pass legislation banning the use of NDAs to buy survivors' silence.



FINANCEREPORT

In fiscal year 2022-23, our organization was privileged to receive a total revenue of \$1,647,630, marking a remarkable 32% increase from the previous year (\$1,248,082 in 2021-22). We are profoundly grateful for the substantial support that we have garnered, with over 70% of our funding coming from the Province of Nova Scotia.

In the spring of 2023, Avalon secured a generous annual allocation of \$2.8 million for the next five years from Nova

Scotia Health. Our primary goal with this funding is to extend access to our trauma services for survivors of sexual

assault across the province. This marked the first year that we received funding for this program, which is

demonstrated in our increase in revenue. In addition to this vital contribution, we are humbled to have received grants from esteemed organizations such as Women and Gender Equality Canada, Department of National Defence, Women's Foundation of Canada, Law Foundation of Nova Scotia and Mental Health Foundation.

Our SANE program continued to receive invaluable funding amounting to \$372,800 for the 2022-23 year from the Department of Health and Wellness. These funds play a pivotal role in enabling us to make a lasting impact in our community year after year, as our SANE team provides direct care in hospital to individuals following sexual assault.

We would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to our steadfast community donors and commendable fundraising efforts. This year, these contributions stood as the third largest source of income, reaffirming our ability to provide essential services to our community.

Turning to our expenditures, the total expense for fiscal year 2022-23 amounted to \$1,498,735, reflecting a 47% increase from prior year (\$1,021,868 in 2021-22). The principal drivers of expenses for both Avalon and SANE are salaries and rent, particularly with the expansion brought about by the Sexual Violence Trauma Therapy Program, which necessitated the hiring of additional therapists and program leadership. Despite the increased expenses, we closed the fiscal year with a surplus of \$143,085. Of this, \$100,000 will be added to Avalon's contingency fund, while the remainder will support the extension of our Director of Operations' contract, which will allow us to continue improving internal efficiencies so that we may better serve our community.

Finally, Avalon concluded the year with \$446,947 in organizational equity and \$2,465,992 in total assets. The largest driver of total assets is deferred revenue from our funders at WAGE, DND and Nova Scotia Health, which means that we need to incur some expenses related to that programming in fiscal year 2023-24 before we can include that amount in revenue. Our fiscal responsibility and accountability are at a high standard and our financial statements have gone through an independent audit. Based on our audited financial statement, we received a clean report with a qualified opinion due to the insufficient verification of money received from fund raising activities. This is very common among non-profit organizations.

As we look ahead, we remain steadfast in our dedication to making a positive and meaningful impact in the coming year. Our mission to combat sexualized violence and other forms of oppression through education and advocacy remains unwavering. We aspire to continue driving social and systemic change, empowered by the generosity and support of our community and partners.

Natcha Wannaklang, CPA

Board Treasurer

STATEMENT OF REVENUES
AND EXPENDITURES

Revenues

PROVINCE OF NOVA SCOTIA		
HALIFAX SEXUAL ASSAULT COMMUNITY SUPPORT NETWORK (NOTE 4)		
DONATIONS, FUNDRAISING AND OTHER		776,924
DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENSE	1,212,775	228,576
ADMINISTRATIVE FEES (NOTE 7)	191,978	27,455
CANADIAN WOMEN'S FOUNDATION	42,680	48,612
LAW FOUNDATION OF NOVA SCOTIA	39,189	58,737
MENTAL HEALTH FOUNDATION	39,082	71,250
SEXUAL VIOLENCE NEW BRUNSWICK	36,528	36,528
	10,000	-
	1,647,630	1,248,082

Expenditures

ADVERTISING AND WEBSITE		
BOARD AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT		
CAPITAL EQUIPMENT AND MAINTENANCE		
CONSULTING FEES	43,047	
EQUIPMENT RENTAL AND REPAIRS	31,432	2,112
INSURANCE	1,919	44,536
INTEREST AND BANK CHARGES	74,851	-
MEMBERSHIP FEES	1,730	20,650
MISCELLANEOUS OFFICE	39,483	1,483
PROFESSIONAL FEES	1,123	25,914
RENTAL	7,028	1,275
SALARIES AND WAGES (NOTES 8, 10)	10,728	6,375
TECHNOLOGY	43,335	6,180
TELEPHONE	62,007	10,054
TRAVEL	105,851	32,121
	1,014,532	100,794
	45,092	730,421
	4,233	34,062
	12,324	4,715
		1,176
	1,498,735	1,021,868

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

SANE

STATEMENT OF REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES

Excess of Revenues Over Expenditures
from Operations

148,895	226,214
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Other Income Expenditures

SANE REVENUES(SCHEDULE 1)
SANE EXPENDITURES(SCHEDULE 1)

327,800	372,800
(378,610)	(361,622)
(5,810)	11,178

Excess of Revenues over Expenditures

\$143,085	\$237,392
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Revenues

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Expenditures

ADMINISTRATION EXPENSES(NOTE 7)
EDUCATION AND TRAINING(RECOVERY)
MEMBERSHIPS
MISCELLANEOUS
OFFICE
ON CALL NURSES
SALARIES AND WAGES
TELEPHONE
TRANSPORTATION

\$372,800	\$372,800
39,189	58,737
4,238	(518)
439	342
240	134
5,106	2,020
149,329	158,609
164,308	131,891
12,760	10,003
2,801	404

378,610	361,622
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\$(5,810)	\$11,178
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Excess of Revenues Over Expenditures from Operations

FUNDERS

2022-2023



Health and Wellness



Women and Gender
Equality Canada



Défense Nationale
national Defence

AND A SPECIAL
THANK YOU TO ALL
OF OUR DONORS,
WHOSE CHARITABLE
GIVING MAKES OUR
WORK POSSIBLE!



THANK YOU!

TO ALL OF OUR CLIENTS,
STAFF, VOLUNTEERS, FUNDERS,
DONORS, PARTNERS AND
COMMUNITY MEMBERS IN
HALIFAX AND ACROSS THE
PROVINCE:

THANK YOU. WE BELIEVE A
WORLD WITHOUT VIOLENCE IS
POSSIBLE, AND ARE
COMMITTED TO BUILDING THAT
WORLD TOGETHER.



TO ALL SURVIVORS,
EVERYWHERE:

WE BELIEVE YOU, AND WE
SUPPORT YOU.