

# Breaking the Silence

A Coordinated Response to Sexual Violence in Nova Scotia

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## *February 2016 Update*

As many of you know, the response to the call for Prevention Innovation Grant proposals under the Sexual Violence Strategy was phenomenal! We received approximately 100 applications from all over the province. As a result, the selection process has taken longer than anticipated. Please be assured that we will inform all applicants on the status of their grant as soon as possible. There will also be a public announcement of all recipients in the near future. On behalf of the selection committee, thank you for your understanding.

## Community Support Network Grants

All of the hard work in the fall is about to come to fruition. After some back and forth conversations with all 9 Community Support Network (CSN) regions, the CSN Grants have now been approved and projects will be able to begin shortly. This is an exciting time as communities across the province further their work in coordinating counselling services, helping to improve visibility, enhancing navigation support for survivors and fostering safer and nonjudgmental spaces. Stay tuned for updates on what is happening in your area!

## Mi'kmaq Community Engagement Gathering

Indigenous women and girls are 3 times more likely to be sexually victimized than non-indigenous women. Racism, sexism, intergenerational trauma, the impacts of residential schools and ongoing colonization further compound the experience of sexualized violence. As a response to this staggering reality, we will co-host a gathering this spring, in collaboration with the NS Native Women's Association, under the guidance of a steering committee. This gathering will provide space to share knowledge, strategies for prevention, and an opportunity to build collaborative and compassionate service responses for victims.

## Phone Lines

In January, the staff of the 211 phone line were provided training on trauma-informed practice specific to sexualized violence. 811 phone line staff were offered 2 sessions in the Fall and we will continue to work with these and other existing phone lines to provide professional development opportunities. Although these lines are not designed to offer counseling services, they are critical to ensuring 24/7 support for victims. A compassionate, trauma-informed response to a disclosure can have a tremendously positive impact on the healing journey of a survivor.

## Interdepartmental Committee

On January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2016, the inaugural meeting of the Sexual Violence Strategy's Interdepartmental Committee was held. A process was established for how the committee will operate and achieve our goals. The Interdepartmental Committee will meet monthly to align policies and funding for programs, services, and prevention approaches that support the actions of the Strategy, and build relations amongst government and service providers. Enthusiasm for the work ahead was unanimous and all members reiterated their Department's commitment to this important and complex issue.

As a government wide commitment to addressing the complexity of sexual violence, we must rely on inter-departmental collaborations and partnerships to ensure continuing engagement of key institutions and mandates. Government will play a leadership role in shaping a policy environment where all Nova Scotians understand that sexual violence is unacceptable, victims and survivors receive support services they need, and importantly, we work towards preventing sexual violence from occurring in the first place. Comprehensive and multi-faceted solutions, which complex issues such as sexual violence require, necessarily mandate a coordinated government approach. There needs to be collaboration among departments to promote alignment, coherence, and regional equity in the policies that facilitate supports and service delivery for victims and prevention initiatives.

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### Committee Goals

- Develop an inventory of all policies and processes relevant to sexual violence
- Align policies and processes as necessary to support prevention and support services
- Identify potential legislative and regulatory measures in support of improving services and supports for victims and preventing sexual violence from occurring in the first place.

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### Interdepartmental Committee Membership

#### Department of Community Services

Leonard Doiron, Executive Director,  
Child, Youth and Family Supports  
Sarah Granke, Specialist,  
Sexual Violence Prevention and Supports

#### Department of Health and Wellness

Christine Gibbons, A/Chief,  
Policy and Intergovernmental Affairs

#### Department of Justice

Valerie Pottie Bunge, Executive Director,  
Policy and Information Management

#### Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

Steve Machat, Director,  
Personal Development and Wellness  
Joanne Syms, Anti-bullying &  
NS Youth Advisory Council Coordinator

#### Department of Labour and Advanced Education

Ava Czapalay, Senior Executive Director

#### Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Stephanie MacInnis-Langley, Executive Director

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