



**Western Regional Coalition to End Violence
Regional Coordinating Committee, Violence Prevention
Initiative**

Budget Submission 2015

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March, 2015

Introduction

Western Regional Coalition to End Violence (WRCEV) is one of ten Regional Coordinating Committees working in partnership with the province's Violence Prevention Initiative. As such, WRCEV is committed to the betterment of our communities through addressing and raising awareness of the root causes of violence, as well as eliminating the acceptance of violence. Our role encompasses public awareness and education initiatives, community capacity-building, outreach, partnership development, resource development, advocacy and the coordination of innovative, evidence-based programs to address violence in the context of our homes, schools, workplaces, communities and society.

WRCEV is comprised of representatives from government agencies, community groups, schools, service organizations, and volunteers who live and/or work in Western Newfoundland. Working from a community-driven perspective, WRCEV works collaboratively to achieve our goal of increasing awareness of all forms of violence, their impact, service needs, and how we can work together to promote safe, violence-free communities.

WRCEV employs a full-time Executive Director, as well as a part-time Administrative Coordinator. There are three volunteer-based, Local Coordinating Committees (LCCs) operating under the umbrella of our Coalition throughout Western Newfoundland. They exist in Deer Lake, Bonne Bay North, and Bonne Bay South.

Our ongoing accomplishments within Western Newfoundland and Labrador are outlined under the following three subtitles; Public Education, Training and Outreach, Information and Referral, and Community Leadership, Coordination and Accountability. We are cognizant of the fact that despite these accomplishments, we are faced with the presentation of new and existing needs, challenges and gaps that complicate and frustrate the violence prevention efforts of the WRCEV. These issues will be discussed in the final section of this submission.

Mission Statement

Western Regional Coalition to End Violence will provide leadership throughout the Western region of Newfoundland and Labrador to reduce violence against vulnerable populations through education, awareness, advocacy and support in our communities.

Public Education, Training and Outreach

Western Regional Coalition to End Violence has worked to develop a public profile within Western Newfoundland and Labrador and have successfully positioned ourselves as a leader in violence education and awareness. We pride ourselves on our ability to develop and maintain collaborative partnerships with both government and community groups. In 2011, we partnered with Western Health and Communities in Schools to develop and launch a series of *Bullying Prevention Toolkits* in schools and community organizations throughout the Western region. In 2012, we received over \$120,000 in funding from Status of Women Canada to launch Project P.E.A.C.E. (Promoting Equality and Accountability through Community Engagement), a 2-year project that involved the development of a needs assessment and subsequently, a comprehensive regional strategy to address gender-based violence through primary and secondary intervention and community response. This strategy reflects the concerns and lived experiences of women and girls throughout the region and addresses service gaps for victims of gender-based violence. As a result of this project, we have created and strengthened partnerships with our government and community partners. We continue to utilize the regional strategy in planning future initiatives and programs and when engaging our partners and stakeholders.

In 2013, WRCEV was engaged by the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary upon development of the new Domestic Violence Unit to join a stakeholder group dedicated to addressing issues specific to domestic violence. Because of this collaborative partnership, we have witnessed the development of concrete initiatives proposed by the RNC to tackle the complex issue of intimate partner violence. This strengthened relationship has facilitated the sharing of information, resources, and perspectives and an increased awareness of the root causes of violence. We believe that it is partnerships like this that mobilize organizations and government and build the capacity of communities to address and prevent violence against vulnerable groups.

Western Regional Coalition to End Violence continues to place considerable emphasis on the importance of public education, training, and outreach in enacting and instilling any type of social change within Western Newfoundland and Labrador. Through region-wide workshops and presentations in community, academic and employment settings, we have dedicated time and resources to ensuring that violence prevention education reaches as many people as possible. This involves working with our local and regional partners to develop and deliver violence prevention programming that meet the needs of the target group while respecting the unique social and cultural context of each population group and community. The verbal feedback and formal evaluations of these education sessions reveal that we are indeed making a difference and opening eyes and minds to the issue of violence

in our society and ways in which to prevent it. Upon follow-up to organizations that we had presented to in the past, it is often conveyed that our public education efforts are making a tangible difference. For example, WRCEV has been consistently invited to facilitate 3-hour workshops on violence against women and the impacts of domestic violence on children to the participants of the Employment Transitions program offered by the Department of Advanced Education and Skills. We also receive invitations to speak and to deliver presentations in schools throughout the region on topics such as healthy relationships, dating violence and youth violence/bullying. These are only two of many examples of the type of education that we provide to individuals and groups within Western Newfoundland and Labrador. We are confident that we have positioned ourselves as well-respected and knowledgeable leaders in violence prevention education throughout the region. We believe that our continued efforts in this area, paired with the powerful social marketing campaigns developed by the Violence Prevention Initiative, will play a central role in reducing and preventing violence in our region and the rest of the province.

WRCEV is responsible for the coordination and implementation of Violence Awareness and Action Training (VAAT) within Western Newfoundland and Labrador. This invaluable training increases the awareness of the factors that contribute to violence and its impact upon society. Our most recent VAAT session was delivered in February and was attended by employees of Western Health, as well as numerous front-line workers from community agencies. The current waitlist for VAAT in this region, as well as the feedback that has been generated by the training sessions completed to date, has highlighted a defined need for this type of education and individuals from government and community agencies are benefiting because of it. The Royal Newfoundland Constabulary detachment in Corner Brook has recently expressed an interest in offering VAAT to all of their front-line constables and have requested information on further workshops and presentations offered by WRCEV.

Outreach through partnership development is essential to adequately address the problem of violence in our society. WRCEV has made progressive efforts to approach and engage other departments and organizations to discuss possible collaborations, partnerships, and to educate about violence prevention and training opportunities. Because of these efforts, WRCEV has addressed existing gaps in board membership and has formed partnerships with other community groups with similar goals and mandates. Currently, our Coalition shares a close, collaborative partnership with the Committee on Family Violence, Corner Brook Status of Women Council, Public Legal Information Association of Newfoundland and Labrador, among other groups and sub-committees. It is through these partnerships, as well as our relationships with our Local Coordinating Committees, that we build a

dominant public presence within the region and educate more individuals and groups about the factors, effects and impacts of violence.

Information and Referral

Western Regional Coalition to End Violence has utilized tracking templates to track client referrals to government and community agencies. Since the introduction of these templates, it is clear that our efforts to fortify our public profile and to heighten the need for violence awareness, education and prevention have proven successful. There has been an increase in requests for education and professional training sessions and an increased volume of client referrals to other agencies. There has also been a defined increase in the volume of clients who contact us to access personal support for violence issues (supportive counselling, education). Some of these individuals have been waitlisted for other support services and are desperate to access support in the meantime.

WRCEV has ensured that community and government agencies, as well as our Local Coordinating Committees, have access to updated information regarding violence prevention and intervention. In addition, we frequently update and revise existing information resources where the need exists. We have developed information packages for the general public and for schools and community organizations, to educate them about WRCEV and the types of education and awareness that we provide as well as information resources published by the Violence Prevention Initiative. We believe that in order to adequately address violence in our communities, we must be armed with updated information and knowledge.

An important part of our work is working with schools and other organizations to help mark important annual events and to prompt others to plan activities and events around these dates. Annual events often attract media coverage and thus, help to raise awareness about violence against vulnerable populations. For example, many schools and organizations within the region recognize Violence Prevention Month. WRCEV has assisted these groups in planning activities and obtaining the necessary resources by way of our Community Outreach Grants. Each year, WRCEV distributes small grants (up to \$200.00) to schools, groups and organizations across Western Newfoundland to organize their own activities and initiatives for Violence Prevention Month. WRCEV also partners with the Corner Brook Status of Women Council to organize and promote the annual Take Back the Night March and Rally, and the Montreal Massacre Memorial which takes place December 6th each year. Where resources permit, WRCEV plans and coordinates our own activities during annual events. It is activities and events such as these that function to raise

awareness of issues of violence and ways in which to address them. Providing schools and organizations with the knowledge and tools necessary to implement events and programs meets the capacity-building goals of the Coalition and aids in the overall success of any violence prevention initiative within the community.

Community Leadership, Coordination and Accountability

WRCEV shares a collaborative partnership with each Local Coordinating Committee to ensure that current and future initiatives are reflective of the unique context of each locale within the Western region of Newfoundland and Labrador. We respect the diversity of attitudes, needs and services within our region and are dedicated to developing resources and outreach initiatives that are reflective of local needs and perspectives. However, because of the obvious limitations of our annual funding and of having a single full-time staff person, there are barriers to maintaining in-person contact with our partners throughout the region.

The Executive Director of WRCEV organizes bi-monthly board meetings to address and determine the nature of regional supports needed. In addition to planning and coordinating the work of the Coalition, the Executive Director has successfully engaged new Coalition members where identified gaps in membership exist to ensure equal representation of government and community agencies. Further, the Executive Director is involved in many equality-seeking, anti-violence committees throughout the region and works with each LCC to offer support, resources, and to ensure that the actions undertaken locally continue to correspond with the objectives of the Violence Prevention Initiative and of the community. In regard to office and administrative duties, WRCEV has employed a part-time Administrative Coordinator to manage administrative duties, track the finances and provide financial reports where necessary. This format enhances the financial accountability of WRCEV and allows the Executive Director more time to dedicate to other projects and initiatives.

WRCEV has been extremely successfully in providing community leadership in violence prevention throughout the Western region. It is through public education, awareness, outreach, partnership development, and the sharing of resources and information that WRCEV has built a dominant public profile as a leader in anti-violence work. It is clear from the feedback and evaluations of our public education sessions and professional training, as well as from the increase in requests for violence-related support, education and initiatives, that we have established ourselves as a dominant, respected anti-violence organization within the region. We are confident that our efforts will continue to enlighten others about

the factors, effects and impacts of violence and ways in which we can reduce and prevent violence within our communities.

Needs/Gaps

(Please note that excerpts of the following section were adapted from a commentary titled 'Key Messages', compiled and written by Nicole Kieley, Executive Director of the Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Assault Crisis & Prevention Centre)

Violence against women and our most vulnerable, at-risk populations in Newfoundland and Labrador is an epidemic and a detriment to our communities' health, wellness, safety and economy. Violence against women remains the most prevalent form of violence in our province; meaning 1 in 2 of our province's girls and young women over the age of 16 (our sisters and daughters) will experience some form physical and/or sexual violence. In addition to the prevalence of gender-based violence, Indigenous populations, older adults, children, gender and sexual minorities are 3 to 4 times more likely to be at risk of violence compared to the overall population. The epidemic of violence costs our healthcare and judicial systems millions each year. The cost of violence on the lives of victims and their loved ones is immeasurable. A person's employment, mental health, family, housing, children are all negatively impacted. The impact is normally long-lasting and sometimes permanent. As the work of our partner organizations have demonstrated, and as national research continues to support, violence prevention and feminist-based organizations working with targeted groups such as women, youth, older adults and other vulnerable populations are the key mitigating factor in effectively supporting victims and preventing the social and economic costs of violence.

Supporting anti-violence work is now paramount as our province enters into a difficult economic period with a possible looming recession. Without any uncertainty and as countless social trends have verified, a difficult economy leads to job losses, an increase in poverty, housing instability, mental health and addiction issues, and a significant spike in violence prevalence and severity. **In preparation for these trends and to prevent such a devastating ripple effect, one of government's priorities in this budget must be to ensure that the Violence Prevention Initiative and the Regional Coordinating Committees, Status of Women Councils, Transition Houses, Sexual Assault Crisis and Prevention Centre and other anti-violence, equality-seeking groups in the province are adequately resourced and funded to effectively undertake violence prevention and intervention efforts.**

Despite our accomplishments within the region, we are faced with the presentation of new and existing needs, challenges and gaps that complicate and frustrate our violence prevention efforts. Majority of our anti-violence work is planned and implemented by a single staff person. The Western region spans from Corner Brook to Daniel's Harbour, inclusive of White Bay South; much too large of an area to be adequately addressed by a single individual. The needs of each locality within the region are complex, unique and tapered very much to the economic and social climate of the area. It is essential to increase or, at the very least, maintain operational funding to each Regional Coordinating Committee to continue to strengthen existing partnerships with regional stakeholders as well as to create new partnerships where the need exists. These collaborative efforts will continue to build the capacity of each group and each community to undertake their own violence prevention initiatives.

Now is the time to invest in the prevention and support work of anti-violence groups with a mandate of violence prevention, intervention and support for victims and survivors. It is essential that we recognize and redress the fact that diminished or no access to basic and supportive services because of underfunding or budgetary decisions places the lives of women and other vulnerable groups at risk and, by extension, their children, families, and their communities. Further, efforts to strengthen the social safety net must be paired with increased resources to educate others about the factors, effects and impacts of violence. The precursor to any social change is, after all, knowledge. In order to enhance the wellbeing of our people during difficult social and economic periods, we need to respond to the current gaps and needs of our region, as well as growing social issues such as the mental and social wellbeing of our province's youth and the rising epidemic of violence against women, Indigenous groups, gender and sexual minorities, and older adults in the province. By investing only fractions of the millions spent on the aftermath and devastation of violence would not only confirm the government's commitment and leadership to eradicating violence and inequality but also to ensuring the health, safety and lives of vulnerable populations of our province.