

# tearmann society

ending violence against women and children

## Annual Report 2014-2015

### Chairperson's Message

Over this past year it has been my honour to serve as chairperson on the Board of Directors of Tearmann Society for Abused women. The Board is made up of very dedicated individuals who are committed to the Vision and Mission of the Society to ensure there is a safe place for women and children in need of shelter, support and empowerment.

The work of the Board this year has centered around the action plans of the Strategic Plan that was developed in March 2014. The action plans have helped committees and staff focus their work to enhance Board member's orientation, improve our programs and environment, ensure sustainability and expand public relations to better serve our residents and clients. Board members and staff have attended school and charitable events and different venues in the community to raise awareness about the problems and challenges faced by many who have been the victims or at risk of experiencing violence. Our 30th Anniversary was celebrated with a weekend event which started off with a Gala featuring renown guest speaker Dr. Michael Kaufman and an entertaining auction. High school students as well as community partners were treated to educational workshops on "Engaging Men and Boys".

The Board secured a three year union contract with staff and we finished the year with a balanced budget! As you read through the many reports you will learn much and marvel as I do at all the work that is done by the volunteers and Tearmann staff under the leadership of Lambrini Soulos. They have broadened their horizons and opened their minds to be inclusive and progressive in the services they provide.

My time over the past 3 years serving on the Board has been educational, informative, challenging and rewarding. Thank you to fellow Board members for all that you do. A special thanks to our executive director whose tasks are endless and to staff, your passion for this work is inspiring.

Jane Cameron,  
Chair, Board of Directors.

### Some interesting facts about our services 2014-15:

- We received 1100 crisis & information calls
- 101 individuals stayed at our shelter. 69 women & 32 children
- Of the women & children staying at our shelter 64% stayed up to 30 days 36% up to 120 days.
- 64% identified psychological & physical abuse for their stay
- 85% of the children knew and expressed they were at shelter due to family violence
- We received 81 Police referrals
- We accompanied 40 women to legal appointments including Provincial and Family Court.
- Outreach Counselling Services worked with 72 women individually
- Follow up services worked with 50 women individually

### Executive Director's Message

"Building on our Strengths" has been Tearmann's focus this past year. It has been an exciting year of growth, collaboration and evaluation.

With over 30 years of providing safe relevant services to women, children and families in our community through a variety of programming; this year we consciously examined what are we doing well, how do we strengthen what we do well and how do we bridge any gaps with the support of our community partners?

As a team we identified and have been working diligently at complimenting our foundation of feminist practice with the implementation of trauma informed practice. Staff have been attending various professional development training sessions to increase their skill sets as well as engaging in dialogue of trauma informed practice throughout the organization. Our team has updated our resources and support programs to better serve the needs of women and children in our community by increasing access and inclusion.

Board and staff began the process of revising operational and human resources policies to better reflect our current and future practice.

Tearmann continues to strengthen its community presence by participating in a number of speaking engagements, community networks, partnerships and round tables. We continue to work hard at representing a voice for those who use our services locally, regionally and provincially.

As evidenced in our work over the last year I truly believe that together we build brighter futures for our communities and ourselves.  
Lambrini Soulos, Executive Director.



## Governance Committee Report

As part of the Governance Committee’s mandate on an annual basis, a workshop was held this past Fall for all board members to familiarize themselves with the Complimentary Model of Governance. We express our thanks to Board Member Jayne MacCarthy and to Linda Boudreau for their time, expertise and facilitation throughout this process. Understanding how we function as a Board is directly related to working effectively and efficiently.

The major focus of the Committee this past year has been the revision of the Society’s Board Orientation Manual. This initiative sought to consolidate the materials in an updated and concise format to serve as an instructive support for our board members. We are pleased to report that the task has been completed with board members receiving the new manuals during the May General Meeting.

Our thanks are extended to Committee Members Joni Roper, Jayne MacCarthy and Linda O’Brien for their diligence and commitment throughout this year.

Dianne Hack & Sue MacIntosh  
Co-Chairs



Dianne Hack, Lambrini Soulos, Sue MacIntosh, Michael Kaufman, Joni Roper & Rachel Tree

## 30 Years ~ Celebrate Tearmann

Between October 17th -20th, 2014, the Board of Directors and staff of Tearmann Society proudly celebrated 30 years of service to communities in Pictou, Antigonish and Guysborough Counties. We were able to honour the many who have made Tearmann House a much-valued presence in our area. Of special significance, was the recognition of Mrs. Mary Fraser, for her many years as a valued volunteer. This celebration was not only an opportunity to recognize local support but also to reach out to many service providers and students by providing an educational component.

On Friday at the Pictou County Wellness Centre, our friends and supporters came together for a special evening celebration with Dr Michael Kaufman, educator and advocate for violence prevention. We were very pleased to have many past board members and volunteers in attendance for recognition. The following Monday, a workshop with Dr. Michael Kaufman was well attended by a cross-section of Pictou County service providers at Summer Street Industries. Later that morning, in partnership with the Celtic Family of Schools and a one-time Crime Prevention Grant from the Nova Scotia Department of Justice, grades 10-12 students from all three Pictou County High Schools were present for a presentation by Dr. Kaufman. He engaged the students in strategies for developing healthy relationships.

Our successful celebration, with such amazing community support, has provided renewed energy for the Society as we plan for efficient and effective strategies in the years ahead. Respectfully submitted,

Dianne Hack & Sue MacIntosh  
Co-Chairs, 30th Celebration Committee



Honored Volunteer Mary Fraser with her daughter Meredith Fraser



Live stream presentation at North Nova with Michael Kaufman

*“Congratulations! 30 years of service to women and children. 25 years ago I was one of those women, Tearmann House changed my life by helping me create and dream a new life free from violence.” - SM*

## Finance Committee Report

The Finance Committee has completed several projects during the year. One of the biggest achievements has been the ratification of an updated Investment Policy. Investment policy advice was sought out and strategies researched. The result was a comprehensive and conservative Investment Policy. In addition, there has been success recruiting individuals to participate in an Investment Committee, which will begin active work in September 2015.

During the year the Board also received a Financial Statement Education presentation. Other work completed includes, reviewing newly ratified Donor Rights and Fundraising Policies, and reviewing the annual budget and quarterly financial reports.

Heather Maddigan, CA  
Treasurer

## Tearmann House Counsellors

Another year has passed by and our team of House Counsellors have been privileged to work with many strong women and their families as they journey through a most difficult time. Arriving at Tearmann House, often with little in hand but a bag of personal belongings, residents find the strength to make the transition from living with abuse to starting anew and creating a new sense of home. Sometimes, women chose to return to their partners hopeful of change, and they return with a knowing that they are not alone and have the skills and knowledge they learned at Tearmann House to help if change does not occur.

Our team of House Counsellors work hard to create an atmosphere that promotes comfort and safety, allowing women and their children to feel at home and discuss their current situations and challenges. We promote a non-judgemental approach to meet the women where they are within their journey. Our feminist philosophy encourages women to make their own choices about their lives and the direction they will take. Our one-on-one counselling, group programs and life-skills education help empower women building on their self-esteem and resources.

House Counsellors are available 24/7 to answer the crisis line. We receive approximately 1100 calls per year from women accessing services as well as women inquiring about our services. Many calls are from women seeking a listening ear to help sort through a crisis situation, dealing with suicidal thoughts or interested in accessing other programs of Tearmann Society such as Outreach, Child and Youth Services, Follow-Up or Brenda Place (Second Stage Housing). The crisis line in many ways is a gateway to support services and our team answers each call with the utmost care and consideration. House Counsellors connect with women through the crisis line when following up with police referrals and high risk designations. Although the front line work allows us to bear witness to traumatic situations, it also provides us with the opportunity to observe a great deal of growth. It is through this growth and empowerment that we remain motivated and committed to the work of the Tearmann Society.

Donna Smith, Patricia Perry & Sharon Maloney  
House Counsellors



Sharon Maloney & Lori Miller

***"I moved along way to get away from an abusive relationship. Without the help and supports I received from Tearmann House I'm not sure that I would not have gone back in to that situation I left. Every step I have made all the staff have been supportive but also truthful. Living here at second stage is very hard but if you are willing to do the work you will benefit from the experience."***  
-Tearmann Resident 2015

## Follow Up Program and Brenda's Place

The Follow Up program is a transitional program for women who have resided at the shelter and are now living independently. Women and families are provided with individual supportive counselling, advocacy for access to community services and accompaniment to legal appointments and court.

Brenda Place Second Stage Housing in partnership with Eastern Mainland, provides six safe and affordable units for women and children. Four 3 bedroom units and two 2 bedroom units. Brenda Place provides supportive programs for women and children who have left their homes due to physical, emotional, verbal, sexual or financial abuse. Group is held weekly with topics like self esteem, support maps, budgeting, starting over and more. Periodically guest speakers are invited for informational and some hands on learning. Some of these include Public Health, Pictou County Solid Waste, New Leaf, Financial planning and the Centre of Sexual Health. We have painted masks and had a speaker come to Second Stage for a demonstration on skin care. In the past year Brenda Place has housed 10 families composed of 10 women and 20 children.

Paula Gerrior Follow-Up Counsellor  
Brenda Place Second Stage Coordinator

***"Second Stage has helped me grow and discover. It has helped me to learn to believe in myself. It has tested me in so many ways through the rules and boundaries that are enforced. In that it has taught me a new level of patience."*** - Brenda's Place Resident

## Tearmann Outreach Program

Individual clients may meet with outreach for six months or more working on personal goals related to her experiences of abuse within her relationship. Safety planning is explored and considered. Our individual work with women is client focused and involves assessing goals, needs as well as, and resources to help her within the community. As outreach counselors, we have the honour of witnessing women grow, make decisions and accomplish goals.

Upon individual closure, one woman said: ***"Thank you for all the support with helping me deal with such a difficult time in my life. It was great to have the external support besides my family."*** Another client said, ***"Thanks so much for providing me and my family with the skills and information for a happy loving home and life."*** Clients have commented intake appointments were prompt. Our service model provides women with the option to call our 24 hour crisis line for support at any time which is a real asset and enhancement for outreach clients.

Shelley Curtis-Thompson and Lori Miller  
Outreach Counsellors



## Experience of a Night Support Worker

The night shift responsibilities include being a support to women dealing with high stress issues through the crisis line and one on one support to residents at Tearmann House. The night shift provides quiet time to connect with the residents and share experiences that can be humorous. One such experience involved a resident deciding to bake a cake for her friend's birthday. The process went very well until she tried to put the two layers together with icing. She finished icing the cake and as we stood in the kitchen engaging in conversation the top layer of the cake began to slide off the bottom layer. I suggested that the cake go into the refrigerator and proceeded to clear space on a shelf to put the cake platter. The resident carried the cake towards the refrigerator while also trying to keep the top layer from sliding. We began to laugh uncontrollably as we ended up with lopsided layers and covered in icing attempting to save the cake. The end result was we did manage to get the cake inside the refrigerator, line up the layers and retouch the icing. The cake was saved and we enjoyed a moment of humor; which can be an effective stress reliever.

Louise Crocket and Liz Acker, Night Support Workers



Dream catchers made by youth.

## Child and Youth Program

Tearmann House Child and Youth Program offers shelter, counselling, support and therapeutic program with children and youth. We offer a child care program and individual counselling, through various mediums – verbal dialogue, art and play. Children and Youth accessing the shelter have an opportunity to share their experiences of being a witness/victim of violence in a safe and supportive environment. Children need the opportunity to express their feelings and understand that the violence happening within the family is not their fault. We also access resources and fun activities within the community.

We offer ongoing parental support to mothers whilst at the shelter; supporting moms with behaviour modification, consistent discipline techniques and encourage moms to access parenting support within the community. We offer a weekly moms group meeting to discuss issues and concerns as well as parenting information such as the Family and Children Services Act, and the effects of children witnessing violence. We also actively discuss ways to build your child's self-esteem, and decreasing separation issues. Parenting topics are discussed based on the issues that occur in the house.

## Child and Youth Follow-up Program

When families leave the shelter, children and youth are offered three to six months of counselling. Some families reunite while other families may live independently. Many topics are addressed such as safety planning, coping with separation, feeling identification, behaviour issues, and ongoing discussion about violence within the family. The follow-up appointments are bi-weekly within their school or at Tearmann. There is also support for moms in the form of parent meetings and discussions regarding their child or youth's progress. We have supported youth through advocacy to various agencies, Provincial Court, income assistance, and case conferencing with Child Welfare.

*"I like the things we get to do. I just wish it wasn't over so soon and we had more time. It makes me feel good and beautiful, thank you so much."*

- Participant ME I AM project



## Child and Youth Services Outreach Program

The children and youth program offers crisis support, counselling, information and advocacy with youth. We offer counselling to children ages four to eighteen for three to six months depending on counselling goals. We receive referrals from community agencies, parents, school personnel, teen health coordinators from North Nova Education Centre and Northumberland Regional High School. We offer a safe place for children and youth to access services which can include sessions within their school and/or appointments scheduled at Tearmann House.

We offer dating violence presentations to students throughout our catchment area in partnership with New Leaf. We believe youth have the right to information and support regarding healthy relationships. Sometimes students will come forward to access individual support and information following one of our presentations.

*"We talked about bullying and to be careful online...what you say or do online can change your whole life and to be careful. But other than that talking about different bullying and how it can change and what you say could/would hurt someone. We had a lot of fun."*



## “ME I AM” Celebrating Me Art Therapy Project

Thank you to the generous support of the Aberdeen Health Foundation Children’s Aid Society of Pictou County Endowment Fund. We were fortunate to receive funding to offer the “Me I Am” Project. This project delivers client-centered and holistic support groups to children and youth, using various creative mediums (such as, journaling, photography, scrap-booking, and more) to facilitate healing among the children and youth who have or are experiencing violence. Through one on one support and within the group environment, children and youth share and reclaim their stories allowing a depth of healing and understanding of the multi-faceted impacts of violence in their lives. This project has enhanced Tearmann Society’s ability to further support children and youth in the shelter and in the greater Pictou County community as well as provide victims of violence a safe forum that is creative and participatory to express them selves.

Each week a topic is presented with warm-up exercises for the children/youth that they focus their art, narrative, etc. for that week. Topics include: family, healthy relationships, self-esteem, about me/letter to me, future me/celebrating me. We have completed group with eight to ten year old children. We have also completed a group with 16 to 18 year old young women at North Nova Education Centre. We have received wonderful support from our community. We partnered with Frank H. MacDonald Elementary School and offered our art group to young girls age 11 and 12.

I believe everyone has benefited from this amazing art experience.

Stephanie Duggan, Child and Youth Counsellor

*“I felt comfortable today, welcomed, accepted and creative. I made some cool crayon art! They made sure you knew that no matter what you can find something cool upon your art! Thank you! J XOXO”*



*“I felt amazing. I loved what I made, it made me feel good. I love art and I love learning new things.”*  
- Participant ME I AM project



*“It was hard to talk about emotional abuse, and I loved doing the magazine pictures!”*  
- Participant ME I AM project

## Celebration of Art

The Celebration of Art was a huge success again this year. It was well attended with this being our biggest year in ticket sales. The committee members, board members and volunteers all worked hard to make it a fun and enjoyable evening as well as a successful and profitable fundraiser. Our thanks to all the artists who make this night possible each year with their generous donations of art.

Donna MacDonald, Co-Chair  
Celebration of Art Committee

## Special Events Committee

Special Events Committee was struck this year as a new committee to look after events the board is hosting or contributing to. This committee is replacing the Residents Christmas party Committee to expand on the opportunities within the board.

The Residents Christmas Party was a huge success. 17 women and 33 children attended. The music was provided by the Dock Gang and Bob Whitman played Father Christmas. A good time was had by all that attended and we would like to thank all the board members and staff who donated items and/or volunteered their time for the event.

Rachel Tree, Chair Events Committee



Ruben Irons

Strachan MacKay

*“The Celebration of Art is the event of the year. I see people annually at this event that I do not get to see at other times of the year.”*

*“The art work is fantastic. Every year you see the incredible talents of our community...”*

**Thank you to all the artists, volunteers and supports of our annual fundraiser.**

## Joint Occupational Health & Safety Committee

The JOHS Committee consists of three staff members, one board member and the Executive Director, and meets monthly. With the use of an updated Safety Checklist, the shelter is assessed monthly for safety hazards and all identified issues have been addressed. Staff members regularly conduct fire drills and check panic alarms. The committee reviews all accidents/incidents that occur at the Shelter. The Committee also reviewed fire inspection reports completed by the municipal Fire Inspector and the Provincial Assistant Fire Marshall. Recommendations made during these inspections have been completed. The committee works cooperatively to ensure the safety of all staff and residents.

Joni Roper, Board Member



## THANK YOU!

It is our community that makes an impact daily in the lives of women and children. Your generosity has co-created opportunities to build brighter futures for all women, children and families at risk of or experiencing violence.

Thank you!

### A few of our Supporters:

Anchor Motors  
Bickerton Women's Institute  
Canadian Women's Foundation—  
Shop for Hope  
Charlie & Marilyn Parker  
Crombie  
David and Joan Wallace  
CUT Foundation  
First Presbyterian Church AMC  
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Patricia Duggan  
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Pictou Lions Club  
Sobeys  
Sue & Bruce MacIntosh  
Sutherlands River Presbyterian  
St. Davids Ladies Aid  
St. George Presbyterian Church  
St. Luke's Presbyterian - Ladies Aid  
The Union of NS Municipalities  
Tim-Br Kids Charitable Foundation  
Women's Issues Com. of NSGEU

**Many thanks to all our supporters who wish to remain anonymous.**

### Thank you to our funders:

NS. Department of Community Services

### Special Grants:

Aberdeen Hospital—CAS  
Endowment Fund  
Crime Prevention— One Time Grants  
Shelter Enhancement Fund—  
Department of Housing  
Nova Scotia Summer Student Grants  
Canada Summer Student Grants

## Highlights from a few Community Collaborations and Partnerships

### Pictou County Interagency Committee on Family Violence

The committee hosted a successful December 6th event at Northumberland Regional High School with Pictou County Silent Witness Chapter. We also developed and produced an intervention and prevention poster campaign named "Real Men and Real Women". The campaign was launched at our Family Violence Awareness Community Fair on Feb. 19, 2015.

### Transitional House Association of Nova Scotia

Over this past year, a revision of our by-laws was completed and a Training Conference for staff was planned.

THANS met on several occasions with the Department of Community Services to be part of the provincial research into services for victims of sexualized violence.

The NSACSW partnered with THANS to fund and create the *We Can Just Talk* VAW campaign, which focuses on non-physical violence. THANS was on the planning committee for and participated in the Dec 4th Learning Day, *Promising Practices and Innovative Approaches: Women and Men Stopping Gendered Violence*.

THANS has also participated, along with its Member Organizations, in focus groups and other activities that informed the new *Sexual Violence Strategy*. Last June we hosted a two day Forum on Restorative Justice at the Atlantic School of Theology, with participants from all of our shelters and most of the organizations working with perpetrators of Intimate Partner Violence.

### Gifts and Donations to Tearmann

We are deeply moved by the generosity of the Pictou County community.

This year many groups held events to gather gently used and new items to donate to Tearmann. Those items included basics needs for the women and children we serve such as toiletries, bedding, blankets, towels, small appliances, dishes, pots and pans, clothing, books and even furniture. Over 30 families were provided with start up appliances, linens and cleaning supplies when they ventured into their independent homes.

Thank you to those who provided the many Christmas gifts for the women and children using our services and to the corporations and businesses that sponsored families during the holidays. We do appreciate you.

## THANK YOU

### To Our Most Valued Volunteers

Without you we could not answer the telephone 24/7, purchase groceries, make small repairs, file, run support groups, provide childcare, host amazing fundraisers and provide caring holistic services to families in need.

You are amazing!

### News for 2015-2016

The funding portfolios for the Transition Houses of Nova Scotia including Tearmann Society for Abused Women were moved to the Nova Scotia Action Committee on the Status of Women from the Department of Community Services on May 19, 2015. Thank you to DCS for decades of work together. We look forward to working with our new funder NSACSW.

### Website

We are working on a website. Stay tuned.



Amanda and Cheryl. Volunteering at our Celebration of Art Fundraiser.

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