



**RURAL YOUTH  
EDUCATION PROJECT**

**INTERIM INTERNAL  
EVALUATION REPORT**

**Prepared by**

**Peggy Mahon B.A. M.Ad.Ed.  
Internal Evaluation Consultant**

**February 2005**

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**Submitted to**

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A particular thank you to **Patrick Taman**, RYEP Adult Facilitator, who developed and conducted the Appreciative Inquiry portion of the evaluation. The insights and stories provided through this reflective process have been invaluable to the evaluation.

I wish to acknowledge **Nancy Peters** and **Jean Crosby**, who developed the original In-House Evaluation Framework (2003). Nancy Peters also conducted the PRISM RYEP Project research (2003) which has been used to provide the community context and background information in this report.

I wish to acknowledge and thank **Jim Coflin** of Auguste Solutions and Associates Inc. (ASA) who is conducting the external evaluation. We are working together to ensure cooperation between the internal and external evaluation processes.

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*Peggy Mahon, Internal Evaluation Consultant*

### *About the Internal Evaluation Consultant*

Peggy Mahon has 25 years experience in community development and organization development, including program evaluation. She has conducted extensive research and worked in a community development capacity on issues related to violence against women since 1987. Formerly a staff member of the Extension Department StFX University for 15 years, Peggy has worked in her own community development consulting business since 2002.



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## **EVALUATION HIGHLIGHTS**

This is an interim evaluation report of the In-House Evaluation of the Rural Youth Education Project (RYEP), a four-year project offered in Antigonish and Guysborough Counties and delivered by the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre. The project is funded by Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada through the Crime Prevention Investment Fund (CPIF) of the National Crime Prevention Strategy.

The RYEP implements a gender-based, violence prevention model intended to provide youth with the knowledge and skills to build and maintain healthy relationships. The core curriculum, consisting of 12 lessons, is delivered to students in Personal Development and Relationship (PDR) classes in Grades 7, 8, 9 and in Career Life Management (CLM) 11 classes. The two project schools are Antigonish East Education Centre in Antigonish County and Chedabucto Place in Guysborough. Two teams of Adult Facilitators work collaboratively with classroom teachers to deliver the curriculum. The program involves a team of Youth Facilitators from high school who assist with the delivery of the classroom sessions.

The RYEP is approved by the Strait Regional School Board and supported by the Nova Scotia Department of Education. The curriculum has been developed by the Salt Spring Women Opposed to Violence and Abuse (SWOVA) Community Development and Research Society in British Columbia and has been adapted for use in rural Nova Scotia, particularly in the area of diversity. In the two project schools, the student population is diverse with a significant percentage of students coming from the African Nova Scotian and Mi'kmaq communities.

The Antigonish Women's Resource Centre administers and coordinates the program, with ongoing consultation with SWOVA, in partnership with the Antigonish East Education Centre and Chedabucto Place, and with support of an Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee is made up of administrators from the two schools and the Women's Resource Centre, representatives from the African Nova Scotian organizations, the Paq'tnkek First Nation, and key community-based organizations.

The In-House Evaluation is intended to enhance the external evaluation being conducted by Auguste Solutions and Associates Inc. (ASA). Internal evaluation participants included students taking the program, Youth Facilitators, Adult Facilitators, teachers and school administrators, and Advisory Committee members.

The interim evaluation report covers the first two school years of the RYEP (2002-03 and 2003-04) and is intended to provide insights into the progress related to the six evaluation themes which include the impact on youth and five features of Best Practices in Violence Prevention as follows: (1) feminist understanding of violence and abuse; (2) a focus on gender and diversity; (3) strategies to enable people in rural and remote areas to access violence prevention programs; (4) safety strategies that enable women and girls to access services and give them options; (5) multi-dimensional, interactive approaches to intervention; and (6) Impact on Youth Participants.

The following is a summary of the evaluation findings. These are reported, along with suggestions for next steps, in the Conclusions and Suggestions for Next Steps section of the report.

## **1. FEMINIST UNDERSTANDING OF VIOLENCE AND ABUSE**

- ◆ Both the Youth and Adult Facilitators identified a number of strategies that worked well from their perspective in addressing gender stereotypes, as well as challenges.
- ◆ There were mixed results as to whether teaching gender stereotypes was having an immediate impact, with some feeling it was either too soon or too difficult to know what the impact would be, and others indicating that some impact had occurred or would eventually occur. The long list of stereotypes identified by the Youth Facilitators is a clear indicator that they Youth Facilitators recognize the stereotypes for both boys and girls. Also, their ability to identify both strategies and challenges indicates their understanding of the complexities associated with creating change related to gender stereotypes and to addressing associated violence and abuse.
- ◆ In the student survey, a few students indicated that what they appreciated about the course were some of the broader concepts such as gender, sexism, racism, and sexual harassment; most of those students were in CLM 11.

## **2. A FOCUS ON GENDER AND DIVERSITY**

- ◆ The RYEP program is making a conscious effort at every level of the program to model gender and diversity through multiple strategies. This is reinforced by the principle that diversity must be visible which was mentioned by teachers, Advisory Committee members and facilitators.
- ◆ By the start of the third year of the program, male and female, African Nova Scotian and Mi'kmaq are well represented on the youth team.
- ◆ While most defined the focus on gender and diversity as achieving a gender balance and cultural diversity among the adult and youth teams, it is clear that as the program evolves, other dimensions of diversity are being included such as age, sexuality, rural-urban (from here; come-from-away), and difference of perspectives and opinions.
- ◆ There have been difficulties in retaining adult male facilitators from year to year, and to recruit an Adult Facilitator from the African Nova Scotian community. Reasons given for this include: it is a part-time position with an erratic schedule that makes it difficult to complement with other work; the position is not well-paid; it is located in a rural community with a relatively small population and therefore fewer qualified people.

## **3. STRATEGIES TO ENABLE PEOPLE IN RURAL AREAS TO ACCESS VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAMS**

- ◆ Teachers, school administrators, Advisory Committee members and Adult Facilitators identified strategies that have been successful in supporting access by youth to various aspects of the RYEP program.
- ◆ Efforts have been made to ensure that the opportunity to become a Youth Facilitator is as accessible as possible to students in the schools. Part of this strategy was asking for *and* acting on youth input into how to make the position more accessible to students.
- ◆ The realities of offering programs in rural communities have been considered from an administrative and curriculum point of view including: practicalities of getting people together, the time and distance to travel for meetings and program activities, and

recognizing the uniqueness of different rural communities and schools particularly related to cultural diversity and geography and to adjust the curriculum accordingly.

- ◆ There has been recognition of the need for sensitivity to traditionally held attitudes and values that may be held by student's family or community members, and sensitivity to safety and confidentiality for students and Youth Facilitators.
- ◆ Both the Adult and Youth Facilitators have worked toward establishing a trust relationship with students in the classroom.
- ◆ Positive working relationships have been established between Adult Facilitators and teachers and between Adult Facilitators and other in-school programs.
- ◆ Both Adult Facilitators and teachers acknowledged the need for more clarity of the teacher's role in the classroom.
- ◆ Program partners, many of whom are also Advisory Committee members, have played a role in supporting and advocating for the program with the School Board, in the schools, in the community, and with parents.
- ◆ There needs to be more work on building relationships between the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and the African Nova Scotian communities to strengthen understanding of the Women's Centre's role in this initiative and its broader work with youth.
- ◆ The Advisory Committee members wanted more role clarity, to strengthen the diversity component, and a different way to involve committee members.

### **3. SAFETY AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

- ◆ Evidence indicates that various mechanisms and support procedures are in place to address safety and confidentiality for the students, Youth Facilitators, and Adult Facilitators.
- ◆ Both teachers and Adult Facilitators agreed that the relationship between the students and facilitators, who are not authority figures, and separate gender sessions were important to safety, particularly in enabling students to open up and talk more comfortably.
- ◆ There were some indications that boys and girls might behave differently when feeling safe and that boys may initially tend to be aggressive when they are starting to feel safe, with the suggestion that, if followed through effectively, it could be turned into a positive learning experience.
- ◆ A number of students taking the program and Youth Facilitators were able to identify the need for self care and when to seek help.
- ◆ In the student survey, some students identified that they had learned ways to deal with or cope with violence or to prevent violence. Other students identified increased self esteem, differences in ways of behaving in their relationships or at the school that they were looking after themselves more.

### **4. MULTI-DIMENSIONAL, INTERACTIVE APPROACHES TO INTERVENTION**

- ◆ The RYEP program fits with the PDR curriculum and it enhances the current curriculum by adding an element of being current and relevant for the students.
- ◆ By its association with PDR, the students may not treat the program seriously. The school system does not treat PDR as a serious subject and it is often relegated to

whenever it can fit into the program, which creates scheduling difficulties for the RYEP. There are also challenges with scheduling the RYEP into Grade 11 classes. There is a fit with the CLM 11 curriculum; however, due to the need to focus on required academic courses in Grade 11, Grade 10 students make up the majority of students in CLM classes.

- ◆ The program is currently not an integral part of the curriculum, although many of those interviewed stated the program should be sustained and should continue because of the benefits to the students and to the Youth Facilitators.
- ◆ The majority of students in the program preferred interactive techniques such as discussion, small groups, role play, and separate gender sessions over written materials and workbooks. This was supported by the observation of the Youth Facilitators and Advisory Committee members.
- ◆ Youth Facilitators identified the need to improve and energize some curriculum activities. Teachers indicated that the success of interactive techniques varied to the degree to which the facilitators were able to engage students.
- ◆ The ideas that were hardest for students to accept were related to sexuality, dating violence, gender stereotypes, racism, bigger picture analysis, and that the small things you say (e.g. jokes, etc.) can affect people.
- ◆ Both the Youth and Adult Facilitators identified three key elements of the program that help to overcome resistance to change: (a) the Adult Facilitators putting the issues out there, willing to discuss the tough issues or raising awareness through videos; (b) a safe environment where students can say what they need to say; and (c) interactive techniques, particularly the separate gender groups, sharing stories, and information and support about where to get help.
- ◆ The Adult Facilitators play a pivotal role in program delivery through modelling their relationship related to gender and diversity; in gaining buy-in and trust to deliver the program from students, Youth Facilitators, teachers, school administrators, and other in-school programs; and in ensuring safety and confidentiality policies and procedures are followed. In the classroom the Adult Facilitators work as a team and with the Youth Facilitators to deliver the curriculum. They also debrief with Youth Facilitators who are teaching in the classroom, and facilitate youth team meetings.
- ◆ Adult Facilitators report that working with the youth team is both rewarding and challenging. They are continually working to improve the youth team, to strengthen the Youth Facilitator's role in the classroom, and to improve the focus of youth team meetings. They asked for training in how to run a youth group, particularly how to make it more engaging.
- ◆ Youth involvement is an important dimension of the program and it has grown. Youth Facilitators are taking a more active role in the classroom. They requested more involvement in training and for youth team meetings to be used in a more focused way to plan classroom sessions, improve their facilitation skills, and to plan other activities such as presentations for the Youth Health Fair, the program display board, etc. They would like to be more involved in a mini youth team in the classroom setting.
- ◆ Teachers and Advisory Committee members commented on the importance of having the youth team component to the program and its value to the students and to the leadership development of the youth themselves.

## 6. IMPACT ON YOUTH PARTICIPANTS

- ◆ The *Youth Facilitators* have expanded their knowledge, developed new skills, changed their attitudes, and “improved their values” by acting differently than they did before as follows:
  - Youth Facilitators are more open to difference and diversity through understanding difference, accepting others, valuing and respecting difference, and being more respectful of others.
  - Youth Facilitators are changing their behaviour and making conscious choices to act differently. This was particularly noted related to decreasing violent behaviour.
  - Youth Facilitators stated they have increased confidence in public speaking and communication skills. They are more open to talk about personal experiences, with some students able to address their own healing through this avenue.
  - Youth Facilitators find working with new people to be a positive experience.
  - Youth Facilitators said that teaching is both a positive and challenging experience, as is being looked up to as a role model.
  - Youth Facilitators reported helping to influence change outside the classroom and having a positive impact on the students overall made them feel positive about their role in the program.
  
- ◆ The program is having an impact on *the students*, judging from their own comments and the comments made by the Youth Facilitators, by teachers, Adult Facilitators, and Advisory Committee members who work in the school or live in the community.
  - The majority of the students or 57% said that they found the program helpful, fun or interesting overall. In 2003-04, when asked what they appreciated most or what stood out to them, 83% offered positive comments about the program, commenting both on the various methods used to engage students as well as the content.
  - When asked what they had learned about violence, 68% of those surveyed in 2002-03 and 2003-04 offered positive comments about what they had learned. Of those about 80% said they had learned more about violence (different types, etc) while 20% said they learned strategies for dealing with violence or to prevent it.
  - With respect to self esteem, the Grade 7 classes experienced the greatest increase in self esteem.
  - Between 30 and 40% of the students in three grades - 7, 8, and CLM 11 – said that there are differences in their relationships, with some mentioning having learned how to deal with problems or about people, and others noting different ways they are behaving with others in relationships.
  - With respect to differences in the school, students in Grade 7 noticed a change, which could be due to their increased awareness of what constitutes violence. Those who offered comments on changes indicated either changes in their own behaviour or changes they were observing in others.



## **SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION**

This is an interim evaluation report of the In-House Evaluation of the Rural Youth Education Project (RYEP), a four-year project offered in Antigonish and Guysborough Counties and delivered by the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre. The project is funded by Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada through the Crime Prevention Investment Fund (CPIF) of the National Crime Prevention Strategy.

The RYEP implements a gender-based, violence prevention model intended to provide youth with the knowledge and skills to build and maintain healthy relationships. The core curriculum, consisting of 12 lessons, is delivered to students in Personal Development and Relationship (PDR) classes in Grades 7, 8, 9 and in Career Life Management (CLM) 11 classes. The two project schools are Antigonish East Education Centre in Antigonish County and Chedabucto Place in Guysborough. Two teams of Adult Facilitators work collaboratively with classroom teachers to deliver the curriculum. The program involves a team of Youth Facilitators from high school who assist with the delivery of the classroom sessions.

The RYEP is approved by the Strait Regional School Board and supported by the Nova Scotia Department of Education. The curriculum has been developed by the Salt Spring Women Opposed to Violence and Abuse (SWOVA) Community Development and Research Society in British Columbia and has been adapted for use in rural Nova Scotia. The project has incorporated adaptations to enhance the SWOVA curriculum particularly in the area of diversity with the assistance of a Diversity Consultant. The student population in the two project schools is diverse, with a significant percentage of students coming from the African Nova Scotian and Mi'kmaq communities.

The Antigonish Women's Resource Centre is responsible for administration and coordination of the program. The project is being carried out with ongoing consultation with SWOVA and in partnership with the Antigonish East Education Centre and Chedabucto Place. An Advisory Committee to the project is made up of administrators from the two schools and the Women's Resource Centre, representatives from the African Nova Scotian organizations, the Paq'tnek First Nation, and key community-based organizations.

The RYEP is being evaluated by an independent external evaluator, Auguste Solutions and Associates Inc. (ASA). The external evaluation utilizes the Theory of Change Model which describes the general hypothesis of behavioural changes that the project expects to occur including the constraints and external drivers, beliefs, assumptions, theories and values; inputs; outputs; and expected outcomes. The objective of the external evaluation is to test the general hypothesis (theory of change model) that the RYEP program delivered to Grades 7, 8, & 9 students with a follow-up year in Grade 11 that will result in the desired behavioural changes in the targeted population. The theory of change model identifies early, intermediate, and long-term outcomes.

Once the scope and timeline of the external evaluation was determined, the RYEP decided to enhance the external evaluation with internal evaluation processes. The purpose of the internal evaluation was fourfold: (a) to provide information required for project management; (b) to

contribute to knowledge of Best Practices in violence prevention; (c) to promote the CPIF mandate; and (d) to complement the external evaluation process.

Internal evaluation participants included students taking the program, Youth Facilitators, Adult Facilitators, teachers and school administrators, and Advisory Committee members. Because the internal evaluation was intended to inform ongoing project management, some information was gathered and reported on an ongoing basis to monitor progress and to guide decision-making. Other information was gathered at the end of the second year of the school cycle from April to July 2004.

All the information gathered and reviewed through the internal evaluation process has been analyzed to assess the progress on six themes which include the impact on youth and five features of Best Practices in Violence Prevention as follows: (1) feminist understanding of violence and abuse; (2) a focus on gender and diversity; (3) strategies to enable people in rural and remote areas to access violence prevention programs; (4) safety strategies that enable women and girls to access services and give them options; (5) multi-dimensional, interactive approaches to intervention; and (6) impact on youth participants.

This interim evaluation report details the results of this assessment, including quantitative evidence gathered through the student surveys, as well as qualitative evidence gathered over a one-year period. It is organized into five sections followed by references and appendices. Section 1, this section, introduces the project and evaluation methodology. Section 2: the RYEP Context describes the development of the RYEP, the community context, and the PRISM Project and development of the internal evaluation themes. Section 3: Implementing the RYEP Program provides an overview of what has happened in the key aspects of the model since the project began. Section 4: Progress on Best Practices in Violence Prevention and Impact on Youth, is the largest section of the report and offers a reflection by various evaluation participants on the evaluation themes. Section 5, Conclusions and Suggested Next Steps summarizes the results and suggests next steps for the next phase of the RYEP.

## **EVALUATION PLANNING AND METHODOLOGY**

In August 2003 the In-House Evaluation Framework was developed by Nancy Peters, Consultant, and by Jean Crosby, RYEP Project Coordinator. This framework detailed the purpose and approach to the evaluation, the evaluation themes and data collection processes. The overall approach to the evaluation proposed to use the following processes and elements:

- ◆ Qualitative approach to data gathering and analysis;
- ◆ Use of questions to help to analyze and code data;
- ◆ Use of open ended questions to uncover factors that shape Best Practices;
- ◆ Use of participatory processes with staff and Advisory Committee members playing a lead role in collecting, analyzing and reporting data on an ongoing basis;
- ◆ Opportunities for reflection by staff and partners on issues of particular interest to themselves;
- ◆ In-house evaluation management committee composed of staff, partners and project stakeholders will support monitoring and evaluation processes.

One constraint for the evaluation has been that there is no provision for an in-house evaluation and, therefore, there are limited funds for it. This limits the scope of the in-house evaluation. To initiate the in-house evaluation RYEP staff worked cooperatively with the regional staff of the National Crime Prevention Strategy and the external evaluators to identify overlapping areas such as teacher support and to ensure students, parents or teachers are not approached twice to provide similar kinds of information. Peggy Mahon, the Internal Evaluation Consultant, met with Jim Coflin of Auguste Solutions in October 2004 to discuss cooperation between the external and internal evaluation.

One component of the internal evaluation was a process of self reflection and realization called Appreciative Inquiry (AI) (Taman, 2004b). Through a process of reflection and analysis, the AI process intended to engage participants in identifying positive experiences with the program in order to discover the best of what the RYEP program does or best practices. Patrick Taman, one of the RYEP Adult Facilitators, developed and facilitated the Appreciative Inquiry portion of the internal evaluation from February to June 2004. The AI process originally proposed to include interviews and workshops with as many people involved in the project as possible. Due to time constraints, the AI process focused on the Youth and Adult Facilitators as participants. The information from these interviews has been integrated into the overall results and is included throughout this report. It is particularly evident in Section 4, #6, Impact on Youth Participants.

In March 2004, Peggy Mahon was contracted as the Internal Evaluation Consultant to continue with the internal evaluation planning and implementation. The Evaluation Framework was updated with input from the members of the Internal Evaluation Steering Group who provided advice to the planning and implementation of the evaluation. Appendix A includes the list of the Evaluation Steering Group members. Appendix B shows the Evaluation themes, anticipated outcomes and methods used to gather information for this evaluation report.

The methods for gathering information included a literature review, the AI process, surveys, evaluation forms and reflecting on “lessons learned”, focus groups, and interviews with key stakeholder.

- ♦ *A Literature Review* on Best Practices in Violence Prevention was included in the In-House Evaluation prepared by Nancy Peters and Jean Crosby (August 2003);
- ♦ *The AI process* gathered stories that highlighted positive experiences in the RYEP program from the Adult Facilitators (4 interviews) and Youth Facilitators (16 interviews). The interviews were conducted by Patrick Taman in April 2004. Follow-up sessions were held with each youth team to reflect on their stories in May 2004.
- ♦ *Student surveys* were administered by the teachers to the student participants in the program in 2002-03 (99 students) and in 2003-04 (120 students). In 2002-03, surveys were distributed to 5 classes: Grade 7 (1 class); Grade 8 (1 class) and Grade 9 (3 classes). In 2003-04, the surveys were distributed to 6 classes: Grade 7 (1 class); Grade 8 (1 class) and Grade 9 (2 classes), and CLM 11 (2 classes). The surveys were coded and entered into a data base by RYEP staff. The student survey for 2003-04 was revised to improve the information gathered from the students. Therefore, some information is only available for 2003-04 school year. This is outlined in Section 4, Progress on Evaluation Themes, Impact on Youth Participants.

- ◆ *Youth Involvement Survey* was conducted with Youth Facilitators, with the results written into a report called “Youth Involvement Report” (May, 2003).
- ◆ *Youth Facilitator and Adult Facilitator Evaluation Forms and Lesson’s Learned*  
Youth Facilitator and Adult Facilitator classroom evaluation forms were completed at the end of/during each session. These forms assisted in assessing and revising curriculum. At their team meetings the Youth Facilitators and Adult Facilitators reflected on “lessons learned,” which were documented in the Adult Facilitators’ monthly reports.
- ◆ *Focus Groups* were conducted with teachers/administrators and with the Adult Facilitators in March and May 2004. Focus groups were facilitated by Peggy Mahon.
- ◆ *Interviews with Key Stakeholders* who are also members of the Advisory Committee (8). Interviews were conducted by Peggy Mahon between May and July 2004.

In order to ensure confidentiality, all surveys were anonymous. The AI interviews, focus groups, and interviews with key stakeholders were taped with permission of participants and transcribed. All tapes will be destroyed at the end of the evaluation. No names have been used in the report. Titles (e.g. Youth Facilitator, Advisory Committee member) have been used to provide clarity with respect to various perspectives.

As part of the AI process an analysis workshop, the “AI Summit,” was planned to include those who had participated in the interviews – Youth and Adult Facilitators - as well as Advisory Committee members, teachers and administrators. The purpose of the workshop was to discuss and analyze the stories gathered during the AI Interviews. Unfortunately, the workshop was cancelled due to workloads and time constraints. This meant some of the evaluation information and analysis, intended to be gathered through this process, was not gathered. This particularly affected the first evaluation theme, Feminist Understanding Violence and Abuse.

The Internal Evaluation Consultant reviewed the transcripts, reports, and survey information, summarized key points, and organized them under each evaluation theme. Based on this summary analysis, the interim evaluation report was drafted. As mentioned in the introduction, this is an interim evaluation report that covers the first two school years of the RYEP and is intended to provide insights into the progress related to the six evaluation themes. The next section of this report provides the context for the development and delivery of the RYEP.

## **SECTION 2: THE RYEP CONTEXT**

This section provides a context for the Rural Youth Education Project (RYEP). It begins by describing the development of the Rural Youth Education Project (RYEP) by the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre. This is followed by economic and demographic information of the area where the project is located, in Antigonish and Guysborough Counties. The last portion of this section briefly explains the PRISM project and the five lenses for examining best or "better" practices in violence prevention programs which informed the development of the internal evaluation themes.

### **DEVELOPMENT OF THE RURAL YOUTH EDUCATION PROJECT (RYEP)**

In the fall of 2001, the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre (AWRC) submitted an application for a violence prevention program focused on social development of "at-risk" young women in rural areas to the Crime Prevention Investment fund, National Crime Prevention centre, Department of Justice.

Shortly after submission, the National Crime Prevention Centre invited the AWRC to visit a project in Saltspring Island, British Columbia. The project had been developed and carried out by the Saltspring Women Opposed to Violence and Abuse Community Development Research Society (SWOVA). The AWRC was invited to submit a proposal to replicate the SWOVA model.

The SWOVA project is based on six core beliefs that are congruent with the Women's Centre's experience in developing programs with and for youth. These are:

1. Violence to women and children is an abuse of power learned in childhood and youth and maintained by elements of our culture.
2. Most violence to women and children takes place in the context of intimate relationships.
3. Prevention, rather than deterrence or punishment, is the best route to reducing violence against women and children.
4. Childhood and adolescence present a unique and important "window of opportunity" for prevention work.
5. Prevention with children and youth should focus on building respectful relationships in the present, especially dating relationships, as a foundation for healthy, (non-violent) adult relationships.
6. Teens themselves are a valuable resource in program planning and delivery and have a special ability to convey positive messages to peers and younger children.

The National Crime Prevention Centre approved funding for an adapted version of the SWOVA model, the Rural Youth Healthy Relationships Education Project (RYEP). The RYEP was funded for four years from February 2002 to March 2006. The Crime Prevention Investment Fund (CPIF) mandate aims to:

- ◆ Conduct independent evaluations of (violence prevention) models to determine key components of successful programs and the extent to which they can be replicated across the country.

- ♦ Identify and support promising, innovative, community-based crime prevention models in high-need, under-resourced communities and population groups.
- ♦ Promote long term savings by building on best practices in crime prevention to achieve integrated, cost-effective approaches to crime prevention through social development.

Working closely with SWOVA and within the CPIF mandate, the AWRC moved forward to develop and implement the RYEP within the context of rural Nova Scotia and its diverse, unique communities.

## COMMUNITY CONTEXT

This information was adapted from the PRISM Rural Youth Healthy Relationships Education Project, Background (2003).

The RYEP activities take place in two rural areas in north eastern Nova Scotia, Antigonish County and Guysborough County. Antigonish and Guysborough counties are ethnically diverse areas that encompass a number of smaller, unique communities. In one partner school, East Antigonish, 16% of the student population are of Mi'kmaq First Nations ancestry. The other school, Chedabucto Place, is located in Guysborough, which has the second largest African Nova Scotian community in the province. Other ethnic groups in the two counties include people of Dutch, Scottish, English extraction as well as French speaking Acadians.

In Nova Scotia, 45% of the population lives in rural areas. Antigonish County has a population of about 15,000 and Guysborough has about 6,000 residents. It can take up to one hour to travel from Antigonish town to the outskirts of the county or to Guysborough County. There is no public transportation system in either county which is a significant barrier to mobility to low income families. Travel from Halifax to the two schools and surrounding communities is from three to four hours.

With the exception of Antigonish town, the rural population is shrinking. Guysborough County has seen a 24% decline in population since 1986. Also, the population is ageing and a higher than average number of residents are senior citizens.

Historically, fishing, farming and forestry have been a way of life in the area. Today, many communities are struggling economically due to low fish stocks, migration of youth to urban centres and lower levels of education among those who traditionally depended upon forestry and fishing. A 2002 study by the Guysborough Antigonish Strait Health Authority (GASHA) revealed that the unemployment rate in these two counties is 12.5% compared to the provincial rate of 9.7% and the national rate of 7.2%. Unemployment rates for youth aged 15-24 are even higher at 21.9% (The Casket, Vol. 150/45, June 5, 2002, p. 1a). According to the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services, unemployment ranges from 50-90% in some Aboriginal Communities.

Poverty is an issue for children and families in the RYEP areas, especially those in Aboriginal and African Nova Scotian communities. A recent study of Nova Scotian households by the Atlantic Research Group (Legge, 2001) shows that rural Nova Scotians are among the poorest in

the country, particularly women and young women with children. Fully 15% of all families and over 40% of single people in the Guysborough Antigonish Strait area are low income. Statistics from the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services suggest that 70% of families in First Nations communities live below the poverty line.

Antigonish has always been a major service centre for many outlying rural communities. Major employers for Antigonish and surrounding communities include Saint Francis Xavier University, St. Martha's Regional Hospital, Antigonish Mall, National Philatelic Centre, Sobeys's Food Warehouse, and the Strait Regional School Board. A new retail complex is being developed on the outskirts of Antigonish town. A greater number of financial and service sector jobs are available in the town of Antigonish such as banks, insurance companies, restaurants and retail stores.

Some consumer and government services are available in Guysborough town; however, many Guysborough county residents travel to Antigonish or to Port Hawkesbury to access health and other services. A Community Health Resources Guide (2001) compiled by the Community Health Board listed over 130 social service providers and community organizations. Many community organizations are non-profit, voluntary organizations which report difficulty in obtaining adequate funding for core activities, while at the same time the need for their services is increasing. The Antigonish Food Bank was established twelve years ago; and in 2002, the food bank reported a 10% increase in demand. The Food Bank Manager says that "last year was the first time in twelve years that we (gave) out more than we had coming in" (The Casket, Vol. 151/28, February 12, 2003, p. 1a). Almost half of the Antigonish Food Bank users were children.

## **PRISM PROJECT AND DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNAL EVALUATION THEMES**

The RYEP is a member of the PRISM Research Network sponsored by the Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research, University of New Brunswick. PRISM aims to identify conditions that enable rurally and socially isolated women and girls to lead violence free lives (Janovicek, no date). Specifically, the intent is to document better practices and reflective approaches which address the abuse of women and girls in rural/remote and socially isolated communities in Atlantic Canada. As part of the PRISM research, the RYEP was selected as one of eight sites in Atlantic Canada as those which reflected better practices in violence prevention.

As reported by Peters and Crosby (2003), a review of the literature on violence prevention (Campbell, 2003; Tutty, 2002) and the "Probing Rural Issues: Selecting Methods to Address Abuse of Women and Girls (PRISM) project (Janovicek, no date) identified that successful violence prevention initiatives share common features including:

- ♦ Feminist understanding of violence and abuse
- ♦ A focus on gender and diversity
- ♦ Multi-dimensional, interactive approaches to intervention

The PRISM project identified two additional themes as important features of violence prevention.

- ♦ Strategies to enable people in rural and remote areas to access violence prevention programs
- ♦ Safety strategies that enable women and girls to access services and give them options.

The following offers a more detailed description of the five PRISM research "lens" for investigating violence and understanding violence prevention.

- ♦ A Framework for Understanding Abuse / Violence, grounded in feminism, explores the relationship between power relations and violence in diverse contexts and settings. This lens promotes ways to empower victims of violence to make their own decisions.
- ♦ A Gender and Diversity lens looks at how the historical, social and political context shapes different experiences with abuse. In particular, this lens highlights gender diversity, cultural diversity and diverse sexual orientations.
- ♦ A Rural and Remote lens recognizes the way in which geographic location affects people's understanding about violence as well as their access to information and services related to violence prevention.
- ♦ A Safety lens explores how communities create options and choices that reduce rather than enhance risk. It looks at ways that communities overcome physical and social isolation and address the dangers that people face when they report abuse.
- ♦ An Approaches to Intervention lens examines specific practices related to the design and delivery of violence prevention programs, what works and why in different settings and contexts.

Because the goals of the PRISM Network are highly compatible with CPIF's mandate, these five lenses were adopted as themes for the internal evaluation framework. Recognizing that valuable data about participant behaviour is often lost unless it is recorded soon after it is observed, Impact on Youth Participants, was added as an evaluation theme. The six evaluation themes are:

1. Feminist understanding of violence and abuse;
2. A focus on gender and diversity;
3. Strategies to enable people in rural areas to access violence prevention programs;
4. Safety and confidentiality;
5. Multi-dimensional, interactive approaches to intervention;
6. Impact on Youth Participants.

## **SECTION 3: IMPLEMENTING THE RYEP PROGRAM**

This section provides an overview of the RYEP program implementation. It offers a description of *what happened* from start-up to June 2004 in the following areas:

1. An Inclusive Educational Approach
2. School Based Violence Prevention Programming
3. Curriculum Development
4. Diversity Component
5. Counselling Support
6. Adult Facilitators
7. Youth Involvement
8. Community-Based and Collaborative
9. Promoting RYEP
10. Evaluation

### **1. AN INCLUSIVE EDUCATIONAL APPROACH**

The RYEP Program uses a gender-based, violence prevention approach for working collaboratively with teachers to deliver a curriculum of 12 lessons to students in grades 7,8, 9, and 11. It is a multi-dimensional, multi-sessional, multi-year program. The inclusive teaching approach is intended to positively influence attitudes and values, and to increase knowledge, and skills required to build and maintain healthy relationships. The project intended to increase students' understanding of racial and cultural diversity, specifically related to the Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotian community. Another project objective was to increase students' understanding of the differences between interpersonal and systemic violence and the effect it has on their lives. The specific RYEP objectives are included as Appendix C.

The project is administered and coordinated by a community-based organization, the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre, and is being carried out with ongoing consultation with SWOVA and in partnership with the Antigonish East Education Centre and Chedabucto Place. The project has incorporated adaptations to enhance the existing SWOVA curriculum, most notably in the area of diversity. As noted in the Introduction to this report, within Antigonish and Guysborough Counties, there is significant cultural and racial diversity with both First Nations and African Nova Scotian youth attending the schools. In addition, student workbooks and resources for teachers and parents have been developed to support and enhance the curriculum. The Parent/Guardian Guide is being implemented in the 2004-05 school year, therefore is not included in this evaluation.

In each school a male/female team of Adult Facilitators deliver and facilitate the classroom sessions and are responsible for providing leadership, information, and support to a team of up to ten Youth Facilitators in each school. The Youth Facilitators assist with the delivery of the classroom sessions, and play a role in mentoring and peer support with other students both inside and outside the classroom. The team of adults is intended to role-model healthy adult male/female relationships, and the model of adults and youth working together is intended to role-model cooperative adult/youth relationships.

## 2. SCHOOL-BASED VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAMMING

Almost 700 students have received the 12 classroom sessions in the two school years that the RYEP program has been offered. Tables 1 and 2 show student participation in 2002-03 and 2003-04 respectively. The RYEP sessions are scheduled within the existing PDR class times in Grades 7,8, and 9. In 2003-04, at Chedabucto Place, RYEP sessions were scheduled within the CLM 11 class time. The CLM course is intended for Grade 11 students. Due to scheduling difficulties, in 2003-04, the CLM course in Chedabucto Place was offered to Grade 10 and some Grade 12 students. Of the 52 students in 2 CLM 11 classes, 45 were Grade 10 students; 5 were Grade 11 students, and 2 were Grade 12 students.

**Table 1: Student Participation 2002-03 School Year: 320 students**

<b>Chedabucto Place</b>				
February- June	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Totals
Class	7-1 (24)	8-1 (23)	9A (22)	
	7-2 (24)	8-2 (22)	9B (23)	
<b>Totals</b>	<b>2 classes (48)</b>	<b>2 classes (45)</b>	<b>2 classes (45)</b>	<b>6 classes (138)</b>
<b>East Antigonish</b>				
February-June	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Totals
Class	7-2 (18)	8-2 (20)	9-2 (32)	
	7-1 (20)	8-1 (21)	9-1 (32)	
	7-3 (18)	8-3 (21)		
<b>Totals</b>	<b>3 classes (56)</b>	<b>3 classes (62)</b>	<b>2 classes (64)</b>	<b>8 classes (182)</b>

**Table 2: Student Participation 2003-04 School Year: 377 students**

<b>Chedabucto Place</b>					
	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	CLM 11	Totals
Class	PDR 7-1 (20)	PDR 8-1 (23)	PDR 9-1 (24)	CLM 11-1(25)	
	PDR 7-2 (21)	PDR 8-2 (25)	PDR 9-2 (23)	CLM 11-2(27)	
<b>Totals</b>	<b>2 classes (41)</b>	<b>2 classes (48)</b>	<b>2 classes (47)</b>	<b>2 classes (52)</b>	<b>8 classes (188)</b>
<b>East Antigonish</b>					
	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	CLM 11	Totals
Class	PDR 7-1 (22)	PDR 8-1 (19)	PDR 9-1 (21)	Not offered	
	PDR 7-2 (22)	PDR 8-2 (20)	PDR 9-2 (21)		
	PDR 7-3 (22)	PDR 8-3 (19)	PDR 9-3 (23)		
<b>Totals</b>	<b>3 classes (66)</b>	<b>3 classes (58)</b>	<b>3 classes (65)</b>		<b>9 classes (189)</b>

## **2. CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT**

One of the first activities of the project was to hire a Diversity Consultant to advise on the enhancement of the SWOVA curriculum to include the diversity component, and to assess the fit with the Personal Development and Relationship (PDR) and Career Life Management (CLM)11 curriculum.

Sylvia Parris of SV Parris Consulting acted as the Diversity Consultant for the RYEP program. She is a facilitator and trainer with over 20 years experience in the field of education, the majority of those as a teacher in the secondary level in Guysborough County. She is currently employed as Multicultural Education Consultant for the Nova Scotia Department of Education.

The Diversity Consultant has worked closely with the project on an ongoing basis with the following objectives for her work:

- ♦ To develop supplemental resource materials for the curriculum which will: address diversity issues relevant to a rural student population; address cultural diversity issues relevant to African Nova Scotian and Mi'kmaq students; be age appropriate for students in grades 7,8,9 & Grade 11.
- ♦ To develop and deliver educational material to support diversity awareness leading to competency for project and school staff.

During 2002-03, "The Fit" document was developed. This document provides a detailed comparison of the learning objectives of the Department of Education curriculum for the PDR and CLM with the SWOVA curriculum. The Grade 7, 8, & 9 student workbooks were infused with cultural diversity content. Video and written resources were reviewed and recommended. During 2003-04, an "Introduction to Diversity" session was developed for all grades and recommendations for changes were made. Resource lists were updated. The Parent/Guardian Guides for Grades 7, 8, 9, and 11 were developed for distribution in the 2004-05 school year.

The curriculum is reviewed on a yearly basis by the coordinator and Adult Facilitators. Each session by grade level is discussed with recommendations for revision becoming the basis for discussion with SWOVA staff each year. This is followed by curriculum adjustments each summer for the next school year. In January 2003, the Grade 11 curriculum was reviewed with revisions to the most recent SWOVA Grade 11 sessions and workbook.

## **4. DIVERSITY**

As noted in the curriculum development, the significant application being made to the SWOVA curriculum is the infusion of other elements of diversity, particularly racial and cultural diversity. As reported by Jean Crosby, Project Coordinator in the Report to the Working Committee of the Strait Regional School Board (2004),

"this has become a process which brings critical attention to all aspects of the project, particularly those related to: the curriculum and student workbooks; the delivery of the curriculum; all phases of the hiring process for the Adult and Youth Facilitators; staff education; and Advisory Committee membership."

A basic principle of the program is to “reflect and make visible the racial/cultural diversity of the African Nova Scotian and Mi’kmaq communities in Antigonish and Guysborough” (Rural Youth Education Project, 2004).

The goal of the hiring process of the four Adult Facilitators is to maintain two men and two women with at least two of those individuals being either Mi’kmaq or African Nova Scotian. This goal was initially achieved, but the program was unable to maintain representation by an African Nova Scotian after January 2003. Another goal is to strive for a balance of male and female and inclusion of Mi’kmaq and African Nova Scotian youth on the Youth Facilitator teams. The gender and diversity component on the youth team is growing as shown in Table 3.

A major component of staff education was the Diversity Education Certificate Program offered through Henson College, Dalhousie University, taken by seven staff of the RYEP and the Antigonish Women’s Resource Centre. Participants received their Level One of the Diversity Education Initiative (comprised of three two-day modules). In 2002-03, facilitator training material was completed and presented as well as information was provided to school staff. In 2003-04, further diversity training was delivered to RYEP staff and school staff. RYEP staff focused on strategies and challenges in discussing oppression and privilege, and school staff explored the process of building competency in relation to diversity.

The Diversity Consultant is a member of the project Advisory Committee as well as representatives from the Afrikan Canadian Heritage and Friendship Centre, Black Educator’s Association of Nova Scotia, the Antigonish/Guysborough Black Development Association and the Paq-tnkek First Nation.

**Table 3: Composition of Youth Facilitator Teams 2002-2005**

<b>2002-03</b>	<b>2003-04</b>	<b>2004-05 (as of Sept. 2004)</b>
Chedabucto Place: (10) 3 boys/ 7 girls 3 African Nova Scotian students	Chedabucto Place:(10) 3 boys/7 girls 2 African Nova Scotian students	Chedabucto Place (9) 5 boys/4 girls 3 African Nova Scotian students
East: (9) no boys/ 9 girls 2 Mi’kmaq students	East: (9) 2 boys/ 7 girls 3 Mi’kmaq students	East: (10) 5 boys/5 girls 3 Mi’kmaq students

## **5. COUNSELLING SUPPORT**

Counselling support is offered to students and their families as well as the Adult and Youth Facilitators to address any issues that may arise as a result of the RYEP sessions. Family Services of Eastern Nova Scotia, a non-profit counselling service provides this support, as required, according to a contract agreement and an established protocol.

Specific protocols have been put in place to support students who disclose violent or abusive experiences. The RYEP educates project staff regarding their duty to report child abuse to the Child Protection Services, Nova Scotia Department of Community Services. Students also receive a “where to get help” contact list.

## **6. ADULT FACILITATORS**

The Adult Facilitators are hired by the Antigonish Women’s Resource Centre. They are responsible for the delivery of the curriculum in the schools. This role requires ongoing coordination and communication with all school staff including administration, teachers, and support staff. They are also responsible for maintaining the team of Youth Facilitators.

Each year the Adult Facilitators undergo an orientation and training program prior to the delivery of the program in the schools. In 2002 and 2004, the training program was eight days and five days respectively. It included an orientation to the project, working with youth, diversity education, and the SWOVA curriculum training with staff from the SWOVA program. The diversity training has been outlined under Diversity in this section (page 11). In February 2003, a condensed training program was provided for three new staff in the RYEP. Adult Facilitators have attended other educational sessions related to developing their facilitation skills or to improve their knowledge of issues they are teaching. Some of these included: conflict resolution skills; facilitation skills; and the role of men as co-facilitators in mixed gender teams.

The Adult Facilitators work as a two-person team in the classroom and one team works in each school. The full adult team (4 members) meets weekly with the Project Coordinator. The purpose of these meetings are to check-in, share experiences, discuss scheduling, and report any issues.

Working with the youth team involves working with the youth in the classroom, holding regular debrief meetings with students who are working in the classroom, and in facilitating the youth team meetings. Each team of Adult Facilitators takes responsibility for developing the youth team in their school.

## **7. YOUTH INVOLVEMENT**

The role of the Youth Facilitator is to assist the Adult Facilitators in the classroom and to attend regular meetings and education sessions. There can be up to ten Youth Facilitators in each school with the objective of achieving a gender balance as well as racial and cultural diversity. Although initially the teams tended to be dominated by girls, this objective has been achieved by the start of the school year 2004-05 (see Table 3).

The Youth Facilitators position is a paid position. Students submit resumes and are interviewed for the position. At first students were recruited from Grades 11 and 12; however, this has been expanded to include students from Grade 10. Youth Facilitators from the 2002-03 school year were involved in recruiting students for the next year and those in Grade 12 were invited to reapply to provide consistency on the youth team.

All Youth Facilitators participate in a training program. In 2002, the training was 4.5 days that involved 32 youth (some youth from the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre Teens Take Action Peer Facilitators were also involved). In 2003, the training was 4 days. All training was held at the East Antigonish school. In 2002 the training involved theatre as a tool, peer education and information, and discussion on a variety of topics included in the curriculum. In 2003, the training had more focus on youth involvement, Youth Facilitator roles and responsibilities, interactive techniques in the classroom, teambuilding, and the Youth Involvement Survey results.

Youth team meetings are held weekly with the Adult Team in each school. The meetings are held after school to allow for a one-hour meeting to provide ongoing support and learning, reviewing classroom schedules and addressing any issues that arise from classroom work. In 2002-03, after the RYEP sessions concluded, the Youth Facilitators continued to meet in each school in weekly meetings and held an end of year pizza party. In 2003-04, some additional activities included: video and discussion; cross-cultural experience of students; involvement in one group in developing a presentation at a Youth Health Fair; recruitment of new Youth Facilitators; internal evaluation reflection on "lessons learned" and the Appreciative Inquiry process interviews and workshops; and end of year pizza party. The death of a student and the impact on the community was also addressed in the youth team meetings.

## **8. COMMUNITY-BASED AND COLLABORATIVE**

The Antigonish Women's Resource Centre, a non-profit community-based organization is the sponsoring organization for the RYEP Program. The Antigonish Women's Resource Centre has a twenty year history of offering programs for women and adolescent girls in Antigonish. Some initiatives that have specifically focused on youth have been: the Adolescent Youth Health Project (1992); Teens Take Action, a peer education approach to violence and sexual assault (1997); Preventing Sexual Violence, a rural outreach approach (1999); and When Bullying Becomes Sexual Harassment: building a student-centred approach (2001). In youth oriented programs, the Women's Centre has worked positively with local school authorities and in collaboration with other service providers and community organizations.

The Antigonish Women's Resource Centre is responsible for overall management and coordination of the project. The RYEP Project Coordinator, Jean Crosby, is hired by the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre, and is responsible for planning, implementation and evaluation of the program. Other project staff include an Office Administrator, four Adult Facilitators, the Diversity Consultant.

The RYEP program has received the full support and cooperation of the Strait Regional School Board, and is carried out in partnership with the Antigonish East Education Centre and Chedabucto Place. The RYEP Project Coordinator works closely with the administration of the

two schools with respect to scheduling and implementation of the program in the schools. The Antigonish Women's Resource Centre works collaboratively with SWOVA to replicate the model and curriculum developed by SWOVA. This relationship is one of ongoing collaboration that is facilitated by annual June visits by SWOVA staff to Antigonish.

The RYEP Advisory Committee provides ongoing support and advice to the ongoing work of the project. The Committee meets regularly through the school year. The meeting location is rotated between Antigonish, East Antigonish School and Chedabucto Place in order to facilitate attendance. Committee membership is intended to represent the diverse communities and services that can provide consultation to the project. Members include principals and teachers from the partner schools, African Nova Scotian organizations, Paq'tnkek First Nation, intervention programs for men, programs for victims of family violence, justice, mental health and the community health board. Appendix D is the list of current Advisory Committee members.

## **9. PROMOTING RYEP**

Another component of the program has been to raise awareness about the program in the community through displays at conferences, articles in local newspapers and the Women's Centre newsletter, and presentations to various community agencies. Presentations have been made to the Antigonish Town and County Community Health Board and the Local Network for Health Research: A Focus on Youth workshop. The project has also distributed information about the project to school staff, school advisory councils, parents and students. The introduction of the Parent/Guardian Guide should add another dimension to the promotion of the program in the school year 2004-05.

RYEP staff attended conferences and workshops to strengthen their connections to local, provincial and regional groups who are involved in youth development activities. The RYEP Coordinator is a member of the Steering Committee for the PRISM Project sponsored by the Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research. The purpose of the PRISM project is to identify and enhance conditions and resources that will help rural women and girls to live in relationships free from violence.

The RYEP has provided three-month work placements on two occasions for Canada World Youth. The young women who worked on these projects brought a global perspective to the work, and presented to the Youth Teams on cross cultural understanding.

Meetings have been held with the staff of the National Crime Prevention Strategy, the Nova Scotia Department of Education, and the Strait Regional School Board.

## **10. EVALUATION**

As referred to in the Introduction to this report there are two evaluation components to the RYEP. The first is an independent external evaluation component which is being implemented by Auguste Solutions & Associates Inc (ASA). The second has been an internal evaluation process which is the subject of this evaluation report.



## **SECTION 4: PROGRESS ON EVALUATION THEMES**

This section reports on the progress on the six evaluation themes which include the five Best Practices lens and the impact on youth participants. These themes are:

1. Feminist understanding of violence and abuse;
2. A focus on gender and diversity;
3. Strategies to enable people in rural areas to access violence prevention programs;
4. Safety and confidentiality;
5. Multi-dimensional, interactive approaches to intervention;
6. Impact on Youth Participants.

The information reflects perspectives on the program for its first two years of operation from September 2002 to June 2004. While Section 3 presented an overview of what has happened in the program, this section presents a *reflection* on what has happened by various evaluation participants related to how well the RYEP program has addressed the six themes. This section specifically reports on the lessons learned during the first two years of the program about what strategies have worked well and what the key challenges are to addressing each theme.

### **1. FEMINIST UNDERSTANDING OF VIOLENCE AND ABUSE**

This theme was to have been explored through the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) analysis. As reported in Section 1 of this report, due to time restrictions in the AI process and the inability to hold the final AI workshop, this theme was not addressed as thoroughly as originally anticipated. One area that was examined was gender stereotypes, which is one component of a feminist understanding of violence and abuse.

#### **1.1 Gender Stereotypes**

The Youth and Adult Facilitators identified strategies that work well in facilitating discussion of gender stereotypes. They also identified a number of distinct challenges in changing traditional attitudes and values.

The lessons learned about what worked well in addressing gender stereotypes focused on four areas: strategies in the classroom, showing by example, how the program is delivered overall and strategies within the broader school environment. These strategies emerged during the Appreciative Inquiry interviews with the Youth and Adult Facilitators.

In the classroom, one strategy mentioned was helping to create space for girls and women to talk about the issues, to recognize that there are gender stereotypes, and to be aware how they feel when they encounter those stereotypes. Another was putting forward the understanding that stereotypes exist for both boys and girls and that boys need to know it is all right to talk about it, that they don't have to be a "stereotypical man." Finally, helping youth to develop a sense of respect for their bodies and other peoples' bodies, how to set their boundaries and to feel justified in defending their own boundaries were also areas that supported addressing gender stereotypes. Another strategy was to focus on gender equity as an issue whether African Nova

Scotian, Mi'kmaq, or Caucasian. Some specific program activities that supported these strategies that were identified by Adult and Youth Facilitators were: having separate gender sessions where boys “take down their guard” and girls “open up more”, and “making it fun for them so they don't feel awkward about identifying boundaries”.

Some said the RYEP is working toward addressing stereotypes by showing by example. The Youth Facilitators described this as follows:

*Youth Facilitators*

“We're just trying to show by example, like when we take the skills that we learn in class and we are trying to go out there and show people that it is possible to change and it is possible to be interactive with people outside your race or outside your gender and just be comfortable and not have to feel that sexual pressure or racial pressure.”

“We are trying to show people that like that's the wrong way. Everyone deserves respect, and we try to show people how we should respect each other.”

Two other strategies for addressing gender stereotypes are related to the overall approach taken by the program. The first is having a community-based organization that has both the knowledge and the experience in dealing with gender stereotypes and abuse deliver the program in the school. The second, mentioned by this Youth Facilitator was teaching younger grades where kids are at an age where they are picking things up.

*Youth Facilitator*

“We are getting to the younger grades and teaching them about like accepting everyone...we are teaching them these valuable lessons: be assertive; don't be a bully; don't be aggressive. All these things that make (them) more able to come together and speak. We're opening up the floor for them to talk with each other about their personal feelings so maybe when we are not there they have the open floor for themselves to talk amongst each other...I find that we softened up the young grades. If they keep this at heart then maybe when they go through high school and they remember it, it will come through.”

Some Adult and Youth Facilitators mentioned keeping the school aware of the issues and ensuring policies in the school system help to support changes related to gender stereotypes as this Youth Facilitator describes:

*Youth Facilitator*

“The school system does a lot of that now too...no bullying in the school, like a policy...things in the past where you would go, ‘ah kids stuff,’ just let it go and that really bothers people. It scares people for life and, now with these changes, I think it is making it better, stronger people are coming out of this in the end. I think they will make a better impact in the future.”

Youth mentioned activities in the school that support and strengthen different roles for boys, such as drama, in addition to sports also help to support changing gender stereotypes. The challenges faced by Adult and Youth Facilitators in working toward changing attitudes and values about gender stereotypes fell into five general categories: it is long and slow process;

community factors; students' sense of control over gender stereotypes; male resistance; and use of the term feminism.

With respect to this being a long, slow process, Adult and Youth Facilitators mentioned that it is hard to change people's ideas and that many people are "stuck" in their thinking, that it is difficult to challenge the traditional ways that people live their everyday experience and gender stereotypes are very pervasive in our culture. As an illustration of the latter, when asked to identify the gender stereotypes that exist, the Youth Facilitators identified a long list of stereotypes.

*Gender Stereotypes Identified by Youth Facilitators*

- Girls are weak – can't do anything for themselves; need guys to support them.
- Boys can't be sensitive or cry, show their feelings.
- Men always have to be the aggressive one in the relationship.
- All women belong in the kitchen.
- All guys are good at sports.
- Just because college or university football players are in the game...they think those players are dumb because they are only in that school because of the sport.
- All girls should do what guys tell them to do.
- Guys shouldn't cry.
- Girls who wear short skirts are asking to be raped.
- When girls go out and have fun, they are seen as sluts.
- Girls can't do what guys can
- If a male cries around males around here don't really talk about their feelings as much and people stereotype them because if they do that they're gay.
- Guys are good at sports.
- Girls have to be skinny.
- Guys are allowed to have as many girls and they are cool and they are a pimp, and if a girl was with more than one guy or ever then she is a slut.

Community factors are another challenge. Facilitators noted that it is harder to change ideas when people are older, when people live in a small community with traditional values, or when people simply don't want to change. They said that if the students don't get reinforcement at home or in the community related to what is being taught in the school, then what is learned might not have as much impact on them. Related to this is another challenge. Facilitators said that it is hard for students to feel they have control over doing something about gender stereotypes when it conflicts with the attitudes and values that they experience at home or in the community.

Male resistance to change was identified as an ongoing challenge. The discussion of resistance and strategies to overcome resistance is discussed further in relation to the fifth theme, multi-dimensional, interactive approaches to intervention. Related to this challenge, however, one adult male facilitator offered this comment:

*Adult Facilitator*

"I wish that the men in general in the school and in the community were more interested in healthy relationships and, like I said before, maybe part of it is a question of language

or a question of your approach to make people not feel like it's unmanly to be discussing these kinds of things.”

The facilitators indicated that, for the most part students agreed with the approach until the word feminism was introduced into the discussion. They said it is a big leap to make the connection to the word feminism because there are too many stereotypes associated with the word. They noted that students had no problem with thinking that there should be more female lawyers, but to connect it to a different way of thinking about relationships and to a more just society is a challenge.

A number of facilitators said that due to one or more of the challenges they identified, it was either too difficult or too soon to know what the impact would be. Others were optimistic and felt that, due to this program, either change will *eventually occur* as people become more educated or they had observed changes that *had already occurred* as stated by these Youth Facilitators:

*Youth Facilitators*

“I think it has definitely created more open mindedness for students and even the teachers.”

“Yeah, I do even some of the people that came into the project had different viewpoints and I see them walking out with different values.”

“I think it's going to be hard, but with a lot of determination and more of what we are doing already, I think it's possible.”

“I think the younger generation is going to do a lot of change...I think it is making it better, stronger people are coming out of this in the end. I think they will make a better impact on the future.”

“It is going to take a while because women and Blacks have their rights and everything, but there are still people out there totally against it and you can't change that, but I think they need education more.”

One Adult Facilitator commented that, while stereotypes might not change easily, the program affects individual behaviour. Examples offered were how girls feel when they encounter a stereotype or how they respond to the stereotype, or convincing some boys that the stereotype is not really true.

## **2. A FOCUS ON GENDER AND DIVERSITY**

Within this theme, evaluation participants discussed how they saw gender and diversity being addressed, including challenges and outcomes of focusing on gender and diversity. The broad areas are: modelling gender and diversity using multiple strategies, youth engagement, role of the Adult Facilitators, addressing diversity in the classroom, and through overall leadership and training within the program. A particular challenge has been the recruitment and retention of Adult Facilitators, particularly male facilitators.

## 2.1 How Diversity is being Addressed

What stood out to some evaluation participants was the RYEP program was making a conscious effort at every level of the program to model gender and diversity through multiple strategies. A number of respondents pointed to the importance of having a principle that diversity needs to be visible. What this meant for them was that, when it wasn't visible, there was an onus on the program to make it visible as indicated by this member of the Advisory Committee.

*Advisory Committee member*

“If we are promoting diversity, let's put our money where our mouth is. I didn't see that in the project in the beginning. They rectified that and starting this September, there will be four African Nova Scotian students and maybe they will be able to explore more around diversity. To build the leadership skills and to take the workshop outside these walls.”

*Teacher/Administrator*

“Something that happened really early in the program at the school was that they saw that there were no racially visible students as student leaders and they actually hired more students to address that so they themselves actually model what they would expect in terms of inclusive approach so I thought that was very good.”

It is evident from the focus groups and interviews with evaluation participants that diversity is viewed in different ways. Most viewed diversity as working toward achieving a gender balance and cultural diversity among the Adult and Youth Facilitators. Others added other forms of diversity among Youth Facilitators such as different ages among the youth team and different perspectives that represent different groups in the school such as “jocks, student union people and others”. One Advisory Committee member, who also works in one of the schools, commented on the importance of engaging different youth in the project as facilitators:

*Advisory Committee member*

“Having different youth involved in the project. Having an example of someone representing a different cultural, ethnic background that is actually involved, participating in it, and delivering it is really valuable. And this year they have won this over even more so, even gender-based. There had been more females than males and this year, in (our school); they have a perfect complement of males and females. That is really important ...as far as the diversity piece, because then it is spoken about. It is talked about and we have to talk about relationships in that respect and we have to embrace (it).”

The Adult Facilitators added another dimension – how they modelled their relationship. They noted that, in their role, the ability to disagree with each other and yet still get along was a way of role modelling respecting differences in viewpoints, perspectives, and opinions. Also, some being from the community and some being “from away” added to this aspect. They said that being from the community and from away enables the opportunity to discuss very different examples and experiences.

*Adult Facilitator*

“The fact that we come from different places and have different opinions that worked really, really well, because people were always surprised by, you know, what she said

compared to what I said and how we could have a debate, but always (be) still laughing at the end.”

*Teacher*

“The strength of the program is the individuals that we have had as facilitators and how they modelled their relationship within the school.”

Some respondents referred to what was being taught in the classroom. For example, the teachers noted that that diversity was covered in a range of topics such as learning about respect and relationships, and was more than racial or gender diversity. The Adult Facilitators stated that whenever possible, they reinforced the curriculum by having discussion or pointing to issues within the school culture or taking advantage of “teachable moments.” (see 5.5 Taking Advantage of “Teachable Moments” to Reinforce Curriculum Messages).

In addition to the principle of “visibility” and modelling diversity, respondents noted the degree of “conscious effort” put into ensuring diversity by the project, under the leadership of the Project Coordinator. They also noted a number of important strategies that helped to strengthen the diversity component. These were:

- ♦ Having a diversity consultant to ensure diversity is included in the program content and modelling diverse aspects of the program;
- ♦ Having staff go through a diversity training program in the first year that emphasized sensitizing facilitators on diversity as it relates to gender, race, culture, and sexual orientation.
- ♦ The program leaders are actively and visibly working toward modelling diversity throughout every aspect of the program;
- ♦ Providing educational opportunities; for example, a Canada World Youth Workshop with the youth teams helped them to realize that differences are much broader than within the school setting. It broadened it out to a global scale.

Another aspect, mentioned by an Adult Facilitator is being open to and continually re-thinking diversity and understanding that it is complex and challenging.

*Adult Facilitator*

“I am amazed at the effort that has been put into the diversity component. I am continually re-thinking all the different variations of how to include people and how to give attention or to value the experience of different groups...it is a very complicated thing...it is a huge challenge.”

In the classroom, challenges were identified related to gender and race. Some pointed to challenges that occur when girls are intimidated, don’t want to say anything, and pull back in the larger group discussions. Others pointed out challenges with race and racism when students would say that there is no racism.

By the start of the third year of the program (just after this evaluation), both male and female, Mi’kmaq, and African Nova Scotians are well represented among the Youth Facilitator teams in both schools. Also, there is a mix of age (grade level) and representation of groups in the school.

This indicates youth are seeing both the value of the program and want to be seen as a leader and role model in the program as reported by these Advisory Committee members:

*Advisory Committee members*

“This is an indicator that students feel that the program is speaking to their concerns and they can have a role as a Youth Facilitator...see themselves as role models, participants, leaders, and begin to claim it (the program) as their own.”

“I think you had to run it for a while and the boys needed to see how it was working. (This) has been a helpful added aspect to making it more diverse.”

Some reported spin-offs in the school such as a display board where diversity aspects are celebrated. Others noted differences in the broader community. For example, one community member said she has noticed that there is not as much name-calling, particularly related to racial and cultural issues. Another community member indicated that the program has made a difference in an African Nova Scotian Youth Facilitator:

*Advisory Committee member*

“When I saw him before and afterward, there are differences. ... He knows he has the ability now to work with people. It gave him a leadership role and he feels he is able to do more. It builds his self esteem. Lots of kids don’t even think about what they can do for their community ... Even thinking “I can do that”, instead of saying “I don’t want to be bothered with that”. Just the feeling that they can now apply themselves makes a big difference.”

## **2.2 Recruitment and Retention of RYEP Staff**

Achieving diversity on the Adult Facilitator team has met with limited success. While there has been a focus on having a male/female team in each school, ensuring some consistency in the teams from year to year and cultural diversity has been a significant challenge.

It has been particularly difficult to recruit and retain adult male facilitators from the Mi’kmaq and African Nova Scotian communities and to keep male facilitators for more than one year. Some reasons offered are that the work is not well-paid and, therefore hard to use as a core salary, and is erratic part-time which makes it difficult to complement with another part-time job. In addition, being in a rural community, there aren’t the Mi’kmaq or African Nova Scotian men with the skill sets who would also be willing to work part time. Also, many men see this position as a transition to another job in their career rather than an end goal.

Geography and scheduling have required there be two teams working part-time rather than one team working full-time. Other challenges identified for retention of Adult Facilitators, both male and female, are related to working in a rural community which demands that someone have a vehicle and be willing to travel up to two hours each day. Also, a whole day could be spent at the school due to the scheduling, but the workday is only recorded as part-time.

A number of suggestions were offered to improve the working environment for the Adult Facilitators. One suggestion is to consider different method for recording hours of work. Another suggestion is that the facilitators have an office or designated area in the school where

students can find them. This would strengthen contact with students and the program's visible presence in the school. Adult Facilitators felt this would be the difference between being seen as credible and legitimate or secondary to what is going on in the school. A third suggestion was to have training include three components: (a) curriculum; (b) facilitation skills (handling difficult situations; what to do when someone challenges you); and (c) discussion and analysis on critical issues such as feminism, racism, and men's role in helping gender roles become more balanced.

### **3. STRATEGIES TO ENABLE PEOPLE IN RURAL AREAS TO ACCESS VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAMS**

The third theme is related to the ability to ensure access to programs in rural areas. In relation to this theme, evaluation participants reflected on what has worked well to gain buy-in and trust to deliver the program, for promoting the program, and to ensure effective program delivery in rural communities. Partnership development and the role of the Advisory Committee are also explored.

#### **3.1 Gaining Buy-In and Trust to Deliver the Program**

When asked what has worked to gain buy-in and trust to deliver the program in a rural community, teachers, administrators, Advisory Committee members and Adult Facilitators offered a number of positive aspects that have been instituted as well as some challenges they have had to overcome.

The first aspect focused on overall management and coordination of the program, including having a coordinator who is knowledgeable, who can work with the school system and teachers, and who can help them to see this program as an asset to the schools and the students. Teachers and administrators identified a number of benefits for them including: the opportunity to continue with some topics raised during this program; being able to step back and view the students in a different light; learning different techniques and approaches; and an overall positive experience for the school. For example, one participant in the teacher/administrator focus group noted:

*Teacher/Administrator*

“I think it brings a lot to the school, I think that as a teacher it allows us to go into conversations that we typically find difficult to approach with our kids sometimes. So I think having someone else who's kind of a third party helps a little bit.

Another aspect has been the positive working relationship that has developed between the Adult Facilitators and the teachers and school administrators. For example, Adult Facilitators reported that, for the most part, the teachers that they worked with directly were supportive, helpful, and provided encouragement, but let them facilitate the class. Teachers also reported a positive relationship and viewed their role as supporting the facilitators, observing the program, evaluating the students, and discipline issues, otherwise not to intrude. Both Adult Facilitators and teachers identified that while, for the most part their working relationships are positive, continuing to clarify their mutual roles in the classroom is an ongoing challenge, particularly related to student behaviour in the classroom. Adult Facilitators wanted more clarity with respect to when teachers should step in and student discipline. Teachers identified repetition, scheduling (not enough time to deliver some aspects of the program), and the delivery techniques as

challenges related to student participation and for Adult Facilitators in handling difficult situations such as students making inappropriate comments, trying to dominate the class, or going quiet. Neither teachers nor Adult Facilitators had easy answers to address the challenges. They suggested ongoing communication, improved orientation, opportunities for informal discussion in addition to task-oriented sessions related to scheduling, and finding ways that teachers can effectively support the facilitators. Both teachers and Adult Facilitators recognized the importance of the Adult Facilitators having the skills to handle difficult situations and professional development in facilitation skills. The turnover rate with the Adult Facilitators, identified earlier as a challenge, is also a factor that adds to this challenge.

Positive relationships have also been developed with other supports within the schools such as the Youth Health Centre and the Afrikan Canadian Heritage and Friendship Centre as illustrated by these comments:

*Advisory Committee members*

“Racism was a big thing and last April (there was) the big racism issue with the students walking out. (The Adult Facilitators) have allowed me to explain from the African Nova Scotian perspective what happened and what is needed; and we went way back to issues from 20 years ago. I believe that these conversations helped them to have a better understanding and be sensitized to the issues and would take a different approach to dealing with the issues.”

“It was a nice fit with what we do at the Youth Health Centre. I am within the school, but I am separate from the school. It allows a different look at things. It was a natural fit with what we want to do here.”

Some Adult Facilitators felt that their relationship to other teachers and staff at the schools could be improved, although this varied from facilitator to facilitator, as some were very familiar with the school and teachers because they had lived and gone to school in the community. Those who had not lived in the community faced more challenges in this respect. They also wanted to have more orientation to school policies and practices, particularly related to students with special needs (e.g. sensitivity with students with autism), and the role of the Student Support workers.

A third aspect that has helped to facilitate trust has been the role of the Adult Facilitator in the classroom, who has flexibility and a different comfort level with the students. The teachers noted that the students have a different relationship with the facilitator who is not viewed as an authority figure. Also, having open minded facilitators who are not judgemental was seen to be very important as indicated by this Advisory Committee member who works in the school:

*Advisory Committee member*

“(It is important) to have open-minded facilitators who are not judgmental and (who are) youthful enough and genuine because you have to believe that you want to make a difference. Kids sense those things and they need to feel that they can trust and approach someone. (They may) have an issue that they wouldn’t want to talk with me about, but they may go talk with the facilitator. The Adult Facilitators play the most major role and when they are approachable and easy, the kid’s attitudes change.”

The role of the Youth Facilitator was also seen to be important in gaining the buy-in and trust of the students. The teachers noted that having Youth Facilitators in the classroom is working well and provides an excellent role modelling activity for the students.

*Teachers/Administrators*

“They feel comfortable with the students that they see every day that are coming in and helping.”

“They are looking up to them that they are taking part in this program...and enjoy having them in there. (They) interact with them really well, especially I noticed in the smaller schools like (our) school. Everybody knows everybody, even somebody in Grade 11 or 12. They know every kid in Grade eight as well too. It is a comfortable feeling for them.”

The Advisory Committee members have played an important role in supporting and advocating for the program in the community, with the School Board, and in the school. Finally, presentations and good working relationships with the School Board and the Department of Education and with SWOVA have been very valuable in the ability to deliver the program.

### **3.2 Promoting the Program**

What has worked well to promote the program in many respects is very similar to what has worked well to gain buy-in and trust to deliver the program. For example, the Adult Facilitators stated that they promote the program within the community and through their role as facilitators in the classroom, as a role model with the students, and in their relationship with the teachers and school administrators. They viewed themselves as “ambassadors” for the program

Advisory Committee members indicated that what has worked well has been promoting the program within the school, within their communities, within their organization and other community agencies, as well as educating, lobbying, and ongoing communication with the School Board, the Department of Education, and SWOVA. They also indicated that they promote discussion on the topic generally in their communities. They also felt strongly that encouraging youth to get involved as Youth Facilitators has been very valuable in promoting the program.

### **3.3 Program Delivery in a Rural Area**

Evaluation participants identified a number of important elements and associated challenges that need to be considered for delivery in a rural area: delivering as an in-school program; ensuring the Youth Facilitator position is accessible; understanding the realities of rural communities; the need for sensitivity that the program challenges traditionally held attitudes and values; safety issues for the students;

The first element is the most obvious, delivering the program as an in-school program which means that all students have access to it. The second element was ensuring that the Youth Facilitator position is accessible to everyone and that everyone is given a fair chance to participate. This has been particularly challenging in rural communities where youth are balancing their participation with other activities they are involved in (after-school job or recreational activities) and the particular challenges in a rural community with access to transportation and distance to travel. The project addressed this by ensuring that youth had input

into what makes it possible for them to be able to participate effectively. This input was solicited through the internal evaluation processes such as the Youth Involvement Survey and the reflection on “lessons learned” at monthly youth team meetings. As a result of this input, suggestions made by youth to build on current strengths and improve access to the position were recorded and acted on. These included (a) the timing of youth team meetings; (c) recruiting and hiring sooner with more advertising; (d) finding the right forum for students to learn about the position; (e) being more proactive in recruitment of young men, youth from different cultural backgrounds and with different experiences; (e) opening the position to Grade 10 and higher; and (f) hiring previous facilitators to provide consistency and support to new recruits.

The third element relates to the importance of understanding the realities of rural communities from an administrative and curriculum development point of view which included three aspects. The first aspect is the need to recognize the uniqueness of different communities and schools, particularly related to the elements of cultural diversity and geography and to adjust the curriculum accordingly. The second aspect is the need to make an investment in a philosophy that delivery in rural communities means costs of time and distance to travel for facilitators and program coordination. The third aspect is the need to be practical with how to get people involved and together for meetings and other program activities. The latter has been a challenge in opportunities for Adult Facilitators and teachers and administrators to find time for the more informal networking referred to in the previous section, 3.1 and for attendance at Advisory Committee meetings which is discussed in 3.4. It is also a challenge related to parent engagement because it is more difficult to draw parents into the program due to scattered population, particularly in Guysborough County, and due to the distance to travel. Although one Advisory Committee member mentioned promoting the program to parents in her community:

*Advisory Committee member*

“We live in a small community and at our community development meeting I was able to talk to parents about the program and that it was a good idea.”

Another element is the need for sensitivity to the fact that the program challenges attitudes and beliefs that may be traditionally held by some community members. This was evident in the discussion of gender stereotypes in section 1.1 of this report. This would be required no matter where the program is delivered. In a rural community, however, evaluation participants noted that this becomes an even more sensitive and challenging endeavour because communities are small, families are intertwined, and everyone knows everyone else. As one evaluation participant noted, “the whole dynamic requires some risk-taking”. For some Adult Facilitators it has been a challenge to work in schools where they went to school or, in some cases, where they had the same teachers. The Adult Facilitators recognized the complexity of and understood that they needed to be available to support Youth Facilitators who might be facing complicated situations in their communities or in their own homes related to racism, homophobia or violence. They recognized the need to work with Youth Facilitators who come to realize that there are some significant issues at home that may not be addressed. Also, they recognized that this adds some pressure to the Youth Facilitator’s role as a “role model” and that their own behaviour is under more of a microscope. As one Adult Facilitator who grew up in an urban environment described this as a particular challenge in a rural area compared to his own experience, but he also saw a positive aspect to it which he described as having a ripple effect.

*Adult Facilitator*

“Growing up in elementary school I might have known the parents of two or three of my friends that came on class trips, but otherwise I would have no clue whatsoever the social background the economic background (of the families). ... and, you know, we just sort of assumed things about each other but we never really knew whether or not it was true. We were close at school which was totally separate from your home life, so you could basically be who ever you wanted to be at school and nobody could say hey that’s not who you really are because your parents are actually like this....and it looks like its much more challenging to create change here, but the up side of it would be if change is created it is changed through the whole community, through the families, through all the connections.”

Similarly, evaluation participants pointed out the importance of being aware of personal safety issues for students, noting that students are aware that there are issues in community that are neither being addressed by the adults nor by the police. Some felt this could leave students to wonder why they should believe they can make a difference by changing their own behaviour. Furthermore, how students are able to connect and socialize outside of the school, due to realities of distance, access to transportation, and traditional ways of socializing, could affect their ability to practice what they have learned in the classroom. Others, on the other hand, noted that small changes are making a big difference. An Advisory Committee member who lives and works in the community pointed out some of these realities as well as the positive aspects in her interview.

*Advisory Committee member*

“If they can learn how to handle things, not to be so aggressive and how to take care of themselves, then they can take it back to their community and help others. I think the kids are able to communicate better. ... We don’t have much unity with our communities. In the Black communities, our kids play mostly with kids from other Black communities. ... (so) I don’t see how they interact with other kids. I mostly see how they interact with their own culture. ... They go with friends anyway; stay at someone else’s in another community.... (It is) part of life in the rural community. Everyone accepts it.

### **3.4 Partnership Development**

Advisory Committee members reflected on the extent of partnership development and its role in supporting the program. Of the Advisory Committee members who were interviewed almost all indicated that partnerships had developed, although a number indicated that there was more work to be done to strengthen those partnerships. They also identified positive outcomes for the project directly related to partnership development.

Positive outcomes of partnerships developed through the project has been the increased networking and communication between the community and school administration and teachers, increased visibility and credibility of the Women’s Centre with the School Board and the school, and positive spin-offs in the school.

*Advisory Committee member:*

“The Women’s Centre is getting respect from the School Board and running an excellent program. It shows that community agencies can deliver something in the school in a

superb way. And that has to spin off in the school, not just at the policy level. There is a feel-good attitude about the project.”

Some Advisory Committee members said that stronger connections had been created between the Antigonish Women’s Resource Centre and other community organizations, the Paq’tnekek First Nation and some members of the African Nova Scotian communities. Others indicated that African Nova Scotian communities have little understanding of the Women’s Centres’ role, and while some know it is an initiative of the Women’s Centre, most make the connection with the Adult Facilitators or with the Youth Facilitators and the project itself, “the rural youth project”. They noted that the first step has been learning more about and how to approach the issues and to get the youth involved as Youth Facilitators. They suggested that more work needs to be done to reach out to the communities in different ways and, if possible, to have an African Nova Scotian Adult Facilitator.

### **3.5 Advisory Committee Role**

Interviews with Advisory Committee members indicated that the committee has played an effective role in bringing together different perspectives, expertise and experience, in providing opportunities for education and networking, and in an advocacy and support role which has been critical at various points in the project’s progress. They noted that meetings are well organized and informative with good reports, and that the Coordinator is approachable and willing to connect between meetings.

They also identified some challenges facing the committee, the most critical of which is low attendance at meetings despite efforts to rotate meetings to different locations. Members come from a large geographic area and some find it hard to attend monthly meetings. Members felt that low attendance results in less collective process related to suggestions and ideas.

To improve the committee’s effectiveness, members suggested that efforts should be made to ensure representation from partners at meetings and to strengthen the diversity component of the Advisory Committee particularly from the Mi’kmaq and African Nova Scotian communities. Some wanted more role clarity and/or a different way for the committee to work together in order to make the best use of members’ expertise and experience. One suggestion was a smaller committee with an ad hoc group of advisors that one can call on when problem-solving support is required. Another suggestion was to find ways for committee members to feel more actively engaged rather than listening to reports.

## **4. SAFETY AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

Within the theme of safety and confidentiality, three areas are explored: what makes the classroom a safe place to discuss issues related to healthy relationships; differences in male and female safety needs, and the ability to identify the need for self care.

### **4.1 Making the Classroom a Safe Place for Discussion**

It is evident from the interviews and focus groups with the RYEP Staff (including Adult Facilitators), Youth Facilitators, and students are made aware of legal parameters regarding

disclosure and the duty to report. Other support procedures have been established that offer short term and longer term confidential counselling support for Adult and Youth Facilitators. In the classroom and in youth team meetings, the “community standards” include safety and confidentiality.

The Adult Facilitators pointed out that one way to offer safety is having male and female facilitators which means one can take a student out if need to with respect to emotional safety of student (male-male; female-female). The teachers added that having a teacher in the classroom is a safety net. If something happens the teacher can take it to the next level.

The Adult Facilitators indicated that another safety mechanism is making it clear to students that the program is voluntary and a student can sit out if not comfortable. They also attempt to create a comfortable environment where students feel their opinions are valued. They often use discussion in a circle format to create a more informal and friendly environment. Participants in the teachers/administrator’s focus group noted that students were very comfortable with circle because elementary teachers or have used the talking stick and circle format. Another point, however, was that a circle might, at times, hinder discussion. An open circle implies that everyone is expected to carry on a discussion and if the topic is difficult for students, some people will go quiet and others will go the other way to the extreme and try to dominate the conversations with “ridiculous behaviour.” The teacher making this point wasn’t sure if there was any way to avoid this from happening.

Adult Facilitators pointed out that having a friendly relationship with students and being less of a disciplinarian, enables a safer environment for students. Teachers pointed out that it was good that the facilitators are not a teacher, the authority figure, and that, because of that, the students enter into a different relationship with them, as illustrated in this comment by one teacher:

*Teacher*

“They don’t necessarily see the Adult Facilitators as a teacher which means they have a different relationship with them in terms of the conversations that they may enter into as opposed to a teacher, someone who carries that title.”

Both the Adult Facilitators and teachers agreed that the separate gender sessions were very important for safety, particularly for the girls. One teacher indicated that girls noted in the journals that they did for the class that they appreciated the separate gender sessions, because they are able to talk more comfortably. Another teacher pointed out that separate gender sessions enabled *both* the boys and girls to talk more comfortably.

*Teachers*

“A lot of girls in the journal entries made the point of how they liked that, especially if they got a chance to talk amongst themselves and not have the boys there.”

“I think the boys and the girls both really liked the separation. They were able to talk more comfortably.”

Advisory Committee members commented on the professionalism of the Adult Facilitators in that no names were ever used in discussion of issues at any level of the program, nor did they

single out any student in discussion. Others stated that they were aware that there have been issues, but no names have been used. Another Advisory Committee member who works in one of the schools indicated that nothing has come forward in a negative vein where a student has indicated they have felt unsafe in the program.

A key challenge, and one which has already been raised related to delivery in a rural area, was raised in the teachers/administrators' focus group. They noted that it is hard to be confidential and safe in a class of 25 students; therefore, one cannot expect complete openness.

## **4.2 Female and Male Safety Needs**

While separate gender sessions have already been identified as one way to ensure girls and boys feel comfortable to open up and discuss issues, the Adult Facilitators suggested that boys behave differently than girls when feeling safe. One Adult Facilitator noted that boys tend to come out in an aggressive way when they are starting to feel safe. This facilitator went on to say that what started out as an argument or disruptive behaviour could end up in a good learning experience if followed through effectively.

### *Adult Facilitator*

“There were certain things where they just got really deep into certain issues and again not always in a very constructive way ... they wouldn't have gotten that deeply into those issues if we had not made them feel safe and comfortable ... what starts off as an argument that you're like, 'What does this have to do with anything?' and it ends up that one of them jumps in and really acts like a facilitator and takes a learning and translates into something else....(so) although it doesn't always appear like they are doing it in a constructive way, I still think it is resonating a lot more deeply than they are letting on.”

## **4.3 Ability to Identify the Need for Self Care, When and How to Seek Help**

During the appreciative inquiry interviews, the Youth Facilitators were asked to tell a story about what most challenged or most engaged them. Two youth told stories of being Youth Facilitators playing a role in personal healing for them. Some comments from two stories are retold here. These two students told these stories when asked what had challenged or most engaged them in the program. These are clearly an illustration of the impact of this program on the youth who took the program and then decided to take on a leadership role to heal themselves and to support other students.

### *Youth Facilitator's story*

“I had an experience happen to me, so I thought that it as actually part of my healing process. I thought that if I could make a difference or if I could prevent something from happening to another person then that's what made me do it (become a member of the youth team).... It was really a good feeling. You didn't feel so, like uncomfortable, and like you are able to discuss anything. And when we had our group discussions like at first everybody was just really quiet; nobody really wanted to say anything. Then after it just got so intense and it was like a really big rush.”

### *Youth Facilitator's story*

“Probably the part where we had that movie about different kinds of abuse. They had those different students in the school and they all had different relationships and like friends or boyfriends or girlfriends. And ... most of them I experienced myself. I thought it was okay, you know, and I didn't just notice it was me. It was everybody else. ...

I can actually help myself to help others by understanding how I can do it. This project here helped me a lot. Like I am in a current relationship myself and a lot of things are going on with me and him and it really hurt and I couldn't get out of it. And he kept on telling me like, 'oh I love you' and stuff like that and I believe him, I really do ...but sometimes he like all of a sudden he turns just mean and one day I told him, it's either you are going to change or help this relationship or I'm out of here ...

I knew a couple and...one day at a dance he was aggressive with her and they went their separate ways...and he wanted to be with her all the time, like he wouldn't let her hang around with her friends or nothing. They are always fighting, so I told him off. Well, not really tell him off, but since this happened during this project at a dance, I was monitoring. ...I noticed she was crying and I told her, 'you really don't need somebody like that, like if he's going to hurt you and call you names ... I mean you have a life too. You need to go your own way, if that is going to be it.'...

People (used to) put me down a lot when I was little... I go to other people and talk this out to get it off my chest and stuff now that I'm more open with it. I can get help if I'm stuck on something. I don't know what to do and I'm in trouble. I have more openness to go talk with someone.”

## **5. MULTI-DIMENSIONAL, INTERACTIVE APPROACHES TO INTERVENTION**

Within this theme the strengths and challenges of the various approaches to intervention are explored. These approaches are: the fit with the existing curriculum; the use of interactive techniques; strategies that help to overcome resistance to curriculum topics; taking advantage of teachable moments to reinforce curriculum messages; school and community factors that can facilitate or challenge the delivery of the curriculum; adult facilitators and youth involvement.

### **5.1 Fit with the Existing Curriculum**

The program curriculum is an easy fit with the PDR curriculum for Grades 7, 8 & 9. Teachers, Advisory Committee members, and Adult Facilitators noted that it enhances the current PDR curriculum.

#### *Advisory Committee member who works in the school*

“I think it is introducing topics that they cover in PDR in a very healthy way. It is a conversation and interactive. ... We are reaching the kids in the Junior High grades and it is a natural fit. It is also a benefit for the school, PDR and guidance teachers. The curriculum is wonderful and it matches the outcomes. It is a very, very well done project.”

In the teachers/administrators focus group, participants noted that the students like the topics and this program adds an element of being current, relevant as illustrated by the following comments:

*Teachers/Administrators focus group*

“I taught the PDR and I really think the PDR program, as it was, needed a shake up and with regard to a change, a creative change in things like that, certainly in our school having provided a nice twist to make it a little more current and coming at the students from a different angle with regards to dealing with issues and the methods that are used... We’ve all been educators and we know that there is an academic success but there is also you know other successes I always say you have to educate the body, mind, and soul. Do all three so you can be...probably most of us know students that have gone on to university or whatever with a 95% average and left after two weeks because they couldn’t handle some of the outside situations or whatever they chose to do in life so a course like this is needed for the kids.”

Some stated that this program has been more successful in having the students see it as meaningful, however, it is problematic because of the way the system sees PDR. A number of evaluation participants indicated that because PDR is not considered a priority for the schools and it is not part of academic learning, the course is not treated as a serious subject. They stated that because PDR is not treated seriously by the system, therefore it is not treated seriously by the students.

*Advisory committee member*

“I think the program is a good thing...The negative is that it is mixed in with what the Department of Education says we must deliver and it may interfere with the success of this program. It is a better forum ... We have to start looking at what is the best way to deliver this program....some kids view it as another PDR class, and kids have a present notion around PDR ...by Grade 9, the kids say, “oh not PDR again”...It is not the fault of the (RYEP) program. It is the reality of PDR.”

*Teachers/Administrators focus group*

“PDR is just kind of seen as the filler course maybe for a lot of people especially in smaller schools where you have teachers you don’t want to do PDR you have to do this and I think that sometimes reflects back to the students because the students are able to read the teachers sometimes.”

The last comment raised another difficulty. PDR is often relegated to whoever will teach it and is plugged into the schedule after everything else is scheduled. This means ongoing orientation for new teachers, which creates some challenges for them and for the program. There have also been some difficulties in determining how the program will fit into Grade 11. In the project schools the CLM 11 program was delivered to Grade 10 because of the need to focus on required academic courses in the schedule in Grade 11. As a result, most of the students in the class were Grade 10 students (45 out of 52) with a small number of Grade 11 students (5) and a few Grade 12 students (2).

Many of those interviewed stated that they felt the RYEP should be sustained and should continue.

*Youth Facilitator*

“I hope that our project continues on for other years...I hope it lasts because what I see, I’ve taught grade seven twice and every year they are filled with excitement and stuff.”

They are learning and when you talk to them in grade eight they remember the lessons they learned in seven so it seems it's sticking. I think it is great.

*Youth Facilitator*

“The project continues and goes all over the place, like in different schools everywhere. ...grab people's attention on it more so they know about it.”

*Teacher*

Working on this project has been a very positive experience for our school. I think that as a teacher it allows us to go into conversations that we typically find difficult to approach with our kids sometimes. So I think having someone else who's kind of a third party helps a little bit.”

*Advisory Committee member*

“I hope the program is going to continue. I hope we can sell to the School Board. I hope they feel about it the way that we do. It does make a difference in the community ... If they could see the youth in the same manner that we see them, that they have more self respect and they know that they can play a role in their school, that they know they can play a role in the community. ... If we are going to make better people, then why just do a little bit then quit it, let's keep it on and make everyone better people – make every person a better person – that's my thought.”

## **5.2 Use of Interactive Techniques Helps Learning**

When asked in the student survey which techniques they preferred, most students preferred discussion, small groups and role plays over written material and workbooks. In addition, most students in all grades preferred videos over written material and workbooks. Tables 4 and 5 show these figures for 5 classes in 2002-03 and for 6 classes in 2003-04.

When comparing interactive techniques, of the 11 classes shown in Tables 4 and 5, 7 classes preferred small groups over “discussions”, 2 classes gave the same rating to small groups and discussions, and 2 classes (CLM 11) rated small groups lower than discussion. With the exception of 2 classes, most students preferred discussion and small groups over role plays.

Role plays had the most variance. In 5 of 11 classes less than 50% of the students indicated a preference for roles plays; in 5 of 11 classes 55-70% of students indicated a preference for role plays, and in 1 of 11 classes 100% of students indicated a preference for role plays. This variance could be due to different individuals' comfort levels with role plays as a technique or due to the facilitators' comfort levels with using and processing role plays as a technique.

Teachers noted that success rate of interactive techniques varied to the degree to which the facilitators were able to engage the students' participation. Advisory committee interviews offered insights to support what students reported related to experiential, interactive techniques.

*Advisory Committee member*

“Small groups, role playing, activities, that is important because the kids really learn from that. Just talking about it doesn't engage the kids.”

**Table 4: Student Survey 2002-03: The Percentage of Students Indicating Methods Were “useful” or “very useful”**

<b>CLASS</b>	<b>DISCUSSION</b>	<b>SMALL GROUPS</b>	<b>ROLE PLAY</b>	<b>SEPARATE GENDER</b>	<b>VIDEO</b>	<b>WRITTEN MATERIALS</b>	<b>WORKBOOK</b>
<b>7-3 EAST</b>	93%	100%	100%	73%	100%	86%	93%
<b>8-3 EAST</b>	60%	67%	33%	60%	53%	60%	80%
<b>9-1 EAST</b>	72%	62%	34%	75%	62%	28%	24%
<b>9-A CHEDABUCTO</b>	85%	85%	70%	80%	55%	50%	40%
<b>9-B CHEDABUCTO</b>	73%	82%	64%	73%	59%	32%	32%

**Table 5: Student Survey 2003-04: The Percentage of Students Indicating Methods Were “useful” or “very useful”**

<b>CLASS</b>	<b>DISCUSSION</b>	<b>SMALL GROUPS</b>	<b>ROLE PLAY</b>	<b>SEPARATE GENDER</b>	<b>VIDEO</b>	<b>WRITTEN MATERIALS</b>	<b>WORKBOOK</b>
<b>7-3 EAST</b>	70%	70%	55%	80%	50%	50%	50%
<b>8-C EAST</b>	63%	69%	37%	58%	63%	31%	37%
<b>9-2 EAST</b>	53%	67%	67%	66%	67%	13%	14%
<b>9-1 CHEDABUCTO</b>	50%	68%	28%	54%	55%	18%	14%
<b>CLM 11-1 CHEDABUCTO</b>	52%	61%	56%	65%	56%	30%	35%
<b>CLM 11-2 CHEDABUCTO</b>	52%	39%	30%	48%	48%	30%	22%

*Advisory Committee member*

“They like doing some of the activities rather than having someone speak at them. It’s interactive; they speak of different games; they like the more interactive approach.”

In their reflection on lessons learned, the Youth Facilitators said that activities which engage students to challenge what they think they know about violence worked well. In the Youth Involvement Survey, when asked what works well in the classroom, the Youth Facilitators identified “student involvement”, interactive sessions, discussion, games, working in pairs or groups, and separate gender sessions. They suggested the need to improve and energize some activities that do not engage as well. They also identified interactive techniques as important to overcoming resistance to new ideas and change as pointed out in Table 3 in the next section.

### **5.3 Strategies to Overcome Resistance**

When the Youth Facilitators were asked to identify what ideas were the hardest to accept, either among the students in the classroom or for themselves, they identified a list of issues (see Table 6, column 1). One set of issues was related to sexuality such as homosexuality or lesbians. Another was related to racism, and the Youth Facilitators indicated that students had a hard time understanding racism and would deny that it exists. Dating violence was another area including the range of types of violence, sexual abuse, and sexual harassment. Gender stereotypes were also hard to accept (see 1.1 Gender Stereotypes). Other ideas that were hard to accept were related to the role of women, how women and minorities are treated, and resistance to the term “feminist.” Ideas related to the bigger picture analysis were resisted such as the gap between the rich and the poor. Another idea that the Youth Facilitators said was resisted was that small things you say can affect people.

A small number were not sure if they were resisting ideas. They also indicated that students resisted the ideas if they felt they had done something before or they felt that they already knew it. This latter could also be a form of resistance to change, for example, saying that they know something already means they don’t have to deal with it. Therefore, in Table 6, “knew it already” has been listed in the first column and the second column.

When asked what form resistance takes, Adult and Youth Facilitators identified four key behaviours: (a) students refuse to participate; (b) students make jokes so they don’t have to listen or to shut themselves out; (c) students go quiet; (d) students escape or leave the classroom; (see Table 6, column 2). This Youth Facilitator talks about what happens when some students don’t want to listen.

*Youth Facilitator*

“(We were talking about) sexual harassment and stuff, a lot of people there were just shutting themselves out. They would make sexual harassment jokes while we were teaching them about sexual harassment... Instead of taking in what we were trying to tell them, they were trying to show us how extra they knew or they were just trying to throw it off scale. I think that was maybe... because they didn’t want to hear it. They are like, ‘no, I’m going to make my noises when I want.’ So that’s a prime example that they were not listening at all.”

What helped to overcome resistance to change is similar to some of the themes for best practices (see Table 6, column 3): the curriculum using a gender-based feminist approach; safety and confidentiality, and multi-dimensional, interactive techniques. Adult Facilitators said the curriculum and being gender-based and feminist, is important in helping to overcome resistance to change, because it “puts the issues out there.” The Youth Facilitators also indicated that “the Adult Facilitators putting the issues out there” and “willing to discuss tough issues” were important to addressing resistance to ideas. Youth Facilitators also indicated information and support about where to get help were useful. This Advisory Committee member supports the idea that students liked the challenge.

*Advisory Committee member*

“They liked that it was difficult at times and not always comfortable. It might spill out over lunch time. It might challenge their way of thinking or what their parents are thinking. It started that process. It tells me, wow that is really working. I have had one-to-one talks with young women. They will say we talked about that in the RYEP program, so it is useful to me. It is interesting because they have talked about healthy relationships and decision-making and they are hearing it again.”

Both the Youth and Adult Facilitators indicated that interactive techniques such as discussion, games, talking about issues, and sharing stories were important to helping overcome resistance to change. Youth Facilitators also mentioned separate gender groups and raising awareness through videos as interactive techniques that helped to overcome resistance. From their perspective, the

**Table 6: Overcoming Resistance to Change**

<b>IDEAS THAT WERE HARD TO ACCEPT</b>	<b>FORM THAT RESISTANCE TAKES</b>	<b>WHAT HELPED TO OVERCOME RESISTANCE</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Sexuality</i>: homosexuality, lesbian, gay.</li> <li>- <i>Dating Violence</i>: (range of types of violence, sexual abuse, sexual harassment, statistics on violence)</li> <li>- <i>Gender Stereotypes</i>: role of women; how women and minorities are treated; identifying stereotypes and dispelling them in my own situation; the term feminism</li> <li>- <i>Racism</i>: understanding racism saying it doesn't exist.</li> <li>- <i>Bigger picture analysis</i>: gap between the rich and poor.</li> <li>- Knew it already.</li> <li>- Small things you can say can affect people.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students refuse to participate.</li> <li>- Students make jokes, are not listening, and shut themselves out.</li> <li>- Students go quiet.</li> <li>- Students leave the classroom.</li> <li>- Knew it already.</li> </ul>	<p><b>What Youth Facilitators said:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Curriculum</i>: Adult Facilitators putting issues out there; willing to discuss the tough issues.</li> <li>- <i>Interactive techniques</i>: separate gender sessions; talking about issues/sharing stories, games, videos; information and support about where to get help; adult and other Youth Facilitators can offer support.</li> <li>- <i>A safe environment</i>: confidentiality; felt comfortable in an environment with people who are not teachers or parents; community standards enabled people to speak out or say they didn't want to be involved.</li> </ul> <p><b>What Adult Facilitators said:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Curriculum</i>: puts the issues out there; gender-based and feminist.</li> <li>- <i>Interactive techniques</i>: discussion and willingness to hear everyone's opinion and to express opinions.</li> <li>- <i>A safe environment</i>: for students to say what they need to say.</li> </ul>

Adult Facilitators' indicated that willingness to hear everyone's opinion and to express opinions were useful.

Both the Youth and Adult Facilitators referred to the importance of a safe environment where students can say what they need to say as helping to overcome resistance to change. Youth Facilitators referred to confidentiality and a safe environment with people who are not teachers or parents. They indicated that the community standards enabled people to speak out or say they didn't want to be involved. They also pointed out that support from the Adult Facilitators and other Youth Facilitators was helpful.

#### **5.4 Taking Advantage of “Teachable Moments” to Reinforce Curriculum Messages**

The Adult Facilitators pointed to examples where they were able to reinforce the curriculum by having discussion or pointing to issues within the school culture. One example was being careful not to reinforce hanging out with cliques, but rather a different pattern of engagement and supporting hanging out with someone who is different, reinforced through modelling by Adult Facilitators. Another example was taking advantage of an opportunity for students to discuss a student walkout that occurred the previous year. This enabled the African Nova Scotian students in the class to discuss the positive aspects of their participation in a non-violent walk-out which was validating for those students. A third example was related to someone making a joke about homosexuality and the Adult Facilitators calling the student on the joke.

The Adult Facilitators indicated that these teachable moments enable students to open up more and can be used as an opportunity to explore the issue and why the behaviour was or was not appropriate. This is supported by the Youth Facilitators' points that “the Adult Facilitators putting the issues out there” and “willing to discuss tough issues” were important to addressing resistance to ideas.

#### **5.5 School and Community Factors that Facilitate and Challenge Delivery of Curriculum**

Factors that facilitate or support curriculum are anti-bullying club membership, after-school groups, community organizations, policy of zero tolerance in the church, and knowing that there is help/resources in the community to help. Youth Facilitators are from different communities and groups of friends outside school and can influence friends.

The program is coming from the community (from members outside the school) and is being promoted by youth in the school.

*Advisory Committee member*

“I could not see this program being offered by the teachers. You are not going to get the same compassion or energy. It is coming from the community, from members outside the school and being promoted by kids in the school who have an interest (in the program). They wouldn't take it as seriously, and wouldn't get the same enthusiasm or energy. They gain more out of it when someone brings it from the outside.”

When delivering it from a community-based perspective there is no evaluation of the students in the context of “pass” or “fail”. Rather the program is helping them think through issues, develop a larger social perspective, and develop new skills to lead healthy lives.

Some of the community factors identified by the Youth Facilitators that challenge the curriculum have already been raised in the discussion of other themes, particularly the community factors affecting changing ideas about gender stereotypes (see 1.1, Gender Stereotypes) and the realities of rural communities (see 3.3, Program Delivery in a Rural Area). Briefly, these factors are: the level of violence in the community and families, the level of neglect of violence issues by the police and others; the minimization of or desensitization to violence due to exposure to violent video games; the racism that exists in the community with segregated communities; the difficulty of changing gender stereotypes in small communities; and distance to travel in rural communities.

Within the school, the youth mentioned peer pressure as a factor, particularly, boys who “don’t want to look bad” or who “have a reputation to look up to” - the “coolness factor”.

*Youth Facilitator*

“When you are a male adolescent you have to put up with this coolness thing. There is a dynamic in the school that makes it harder for people to come forward and say ‘yes, I’m 100% behind healthy relationships.’ So, if we looked at the evidence we would say ‘no, this project is having no effect on them.’ I would say just the opposite and even if they look...the more resistant they look probably the deeper impact we are having...they disagree with everything we say because we are making them think.”

Some also mentioned that segregation within the school with cliques and the difficulty of changing these patterns. They noted that there are too many followers in the school. Some students glad to be in a group so will take whatever is coming to them (story).

## **5.6 The Adult Team**

The Adult Facilitators had several opportunities to reflect on the progress of the project from their perspective through the “lessons learned” in their monthly reports, through the Appreciative Inquiry interviews, and through a focus group discussion. A good portion of their reflection on their role and strategies related to the evaluation themes have already been included in this report; for example: modelling their relationship in relation to gender and diversity (see 2.1); their role in gaining buy-in and trust for program delivery, and in promoting and delivering the program in a rural area (see 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3); strategies for ensuring safety and confidentiality (see 4.1 and 4.2); and strategies to overcome resistance to change, factors that facilitate or challenge the curriculum, and using “teachable moments” to reinforce curriculum messages (see 5.3, 5.4 and 5.5). This section focuses on the Adult Facilitators’ reflection on program facilitation, working as a team, and working with the youth team.

### Program Facilitation Skills and Approaches

In both their own reflection on their “lessons learned” and, when asked what they had learned through the program, the Adult Facilitators referred to understanding group dynamics and facilitation skills. In particular, they referred to what to do about group dynamics as a facilitator, handling resistance to change and the various ways students respond, and improving their ability to name issues when they surface in the classroom and outside the classroom. They also reported increased confidence in handling different situations with students, school administration, teachers, and guidance counsellors. Some noted they had learned to be more sensitive to use of language such as slang expressions that can be racist, sexist or homophobic and the need to use

plain, accessible language when trying to get ideas across to students, particularly for the first time. They also realized that their process in the classroom is as important as the material that they deliver; therefore, the need for flexibility, not to force discussions that are not working well, and that buy-in is important from the beginning.

The Adult Facilitators wanted more strategies for taking a positive approach to their facilitation efforts and to actively work on the skills that they teach such as assertiveness and reflective listening. To improve their program facilitation, they identified some items such as how to make the classroom a safer environment for girls to express themselves, more methods and experience in dealing with disruptive behaviour, handling difficult situations, and how to get more buy-in from some students. The Adult Facilitators also wanted more discussion and analysis on critical issues such as feminism, racism, and men's role in helping gender roles become more balanced.

#### Understanding and Comfort with Content

The Adult Facilitators pointed to the importance of having a good understanding of the content. In particular, they mentioned some of the more challenging aspects of the content such as sexism, racism, and sexual orientation; and the potential challenges they face in addressing these, not only through the curriculum with the students, but in their own workplace and in working toward a team approach. Some also pointed to the importance of understanding how the curriculum content applies to self and one's own resistance to change which can inform facilitation of the content with the students. They also pointed to the importance of a willingness to learn, the ability to try new things, and having passion for the topic and the work.

#### Teambuilding and Cooperation

The Adult Facilitators pointed to several factors that contributed to working positively as a team: cooperation; knowing when to let go of some things to be part of the team; appreciating what different people bring to the table; and patience. One team described being able to openly discuss issues while still being respectful of each other's opinions. The other team talked about developing a comfort level with each other and their experience together enabled them to refine their technique as co-facilitators. This team also mentioned that, once the Adult Facilitators can be more comfortable with each other, they were able to bring in Youth Facilitators more.

The Adult Facilitators mentioned three strategies that helped to strengthen their teamwork. The first was self evaluation. The second was adequate time for preparation and debriefing. They said this is essential to self improvement and to strengthen a co-facilitation style; and, while external factors may make it difficult to check-in and debrief, it is important to prioritize this and make it possible. The third strategy is being aware of how power is shared inside and outside of the classroom; and to discuss and address any power imbalances in the team.

#### Working with the Youth Team

The Adult Facilitators identified three components to working with the youth team: in the classroom; debriefing with students who are teaching in the classroom; and facilitating youth team meetings.

The Adult Facilitators said that the classroom sessions are the biggest component, but it hasn't been the component that the youth team feels most engaged in. The Adult Facilitators stated that

they are continually looking for ways to improve involvement of youth in the classroom through the curriculum; however, the youth role in the classroom could be more active and could still use more guidance. They suggested this would make youth team meetings more meaningful, the youth would take more initiative, and would feel more ownership of the classroom activity. The Adult Facilitators noted that to facilitate effective participation the youth need to have a clear notion of what is expected of them, they need to feel part of a team, and it is important to help youth understand they are role models. Finally, it is important to continually be aware of their perspective, “being aware of perspective of youth team members keeps me focused on where our purpose needs to be.”

The Adult Facilitators stated that the youth team meetings are quite different than the classroom work as there is no curriculum and no set plan. They continue to work on a clear focus for these meetings as well as what resources and skills are required for Adult Facilitators to facilitate the youth team meetings more effectively. They noted that the youth team benefited from more structured activities at the youth team meetings. Helping to plan and organize activities outside the classroom helped, such as the Youth Health Fair, helped to engage the youth positively. Although they have had some positive experiences, the Adult Facilitators want an intensive training in how to run a youth group to make it more engaging. Two Adult Facilitators describe positive experiences in facilitating youth participation.

*Adult Facilitator*

“I’m leading the process, but yes...I think, yeah, it was their input. It was like it was the issues that they were able to identify, like boundaries, setting boundaries and that sort of thing. We did eliminate some of the ideas and that was sort of challenging, but that was a group decision. We did it by group democracy.”

*Adult Facilitator*

“We were talking about youth homelessness...what I brought to the experience was sort of a leadership by taking the group through the whole process, I just sort of prompted people through it ...and (the other Adult Facilitator) brought her ability to help people understand their own experiences and the (youth) team brought their curiosity, their interest in the subject and, really, just their willingness to talk about serious issues. So without committing to having this discussion, without having planned it, we just naturally went into it...everyone on the team (was) using their best skills and using their best experiences to help each other learn.”

## **5.7 Youth Involvement**

All the evidence points to the youth involvement as facilitators as being an important dimension of the RYEP program. Over the course of the two years, this component of the program has grown. The sheer numbers of youth that have shown interest in being involved as Youth Facilitators has grown over the two years (change in numbers of applicants). The youth have participated in youth team meetings, training programs, in classroom facilitation, and in broader school and community activities.

The Youth Facilitators have had an opportunity to reflect on their involvement through the Youth Involvement Survey in 2003, through their reflection on “lessons learned” at their team meetings over 2003-04 (reported in the monthly reports prepared by the Adult Facilitators), and through

the Appreciative Inquiry interviews (May 2004). Through these processes they have identified what is working well, where the gaps are and have offered suggestions for ways to improve the program for the students, to improve their involvement in the classroom, to strengthen the youth team, and to promote healthy relationships in the broader community.

This section focuses on the Youth Facilitators' perspectives on their involvement in the program and their suggestions to strengthen their involvement in the program. These are grouped into six areas: (a) Youth Facilitator role in the classroom; (b) training; (c) youth team meetings (d) activities outside of the classroom; (e) teambuilding and (f) evaluation.

### Youth Facilitator Role in the Classroom

The role of the Youth Facilitator in the classroom has evolved over the course of the program. In the Youth Involvement Survey (2003), when the youth reported on what was working in the classroom, they noted that the Youth Facilitator as a resource, having consistent Youth Facilitators for the class and the students' recognition of a "peer helper" was important to the classroom dynamic. When asked for gaps in the classroom sessions, they reported the need to improve student's comfort in the classroom and to increase students' participation in their own learning. This suggestion was intended to address their observations that, at times, students were bored, inattentive, disruptive, or didn't seem to get the point. The Youth Facilitators also suggested that they have a bigger role in the classroom. They wanted more information on ways to help them relate to the students, to develop relationships with the students, and to make students more comfortable.

Because this has been part of the ongoing internal evaluation, the Youth Facilitator recommendations in the Youth Involvement Survey have been considered by the RYEP Coordinator and the Adult Facilitators. Steps were taken to revise the curriculum, based on suggestions made by the youth, and to continue to strengthen the Youth Facilitator's role in the classroom. These changes were noted by the students who continued as Youth Facilitators the next year and who commented on feeling part of the classroom team:

#### *Youth Facilitator*

"In the classroom, it's better this year than last year. Last year it was more sitting (and) less in contact. But now, you are part of the class. You'll do part of the section ...or a role play. I find doing that makes you part of the team."

In the school year, 2003-04, through their reflection on "lessons learned", the youth continued to reflect on their involvement in the classroom, noting insights into their facilitation skills such as the need to listen closely and understand what others are asking before responding and that respect needs to be taken seriously, "if you want respect, you have to respect others." They were also very aware of some of the differences in how girls and boys respond in the classroom to the curriculum, and that facilitating sessions with the higher grades (CLM 11) was more challenging than with the younger grades.

### Training

Training for Youth Facilitators was a component of the Youth Involvement Survey in May 2003. Through this survey, Youth Facilitators identified aspects of the training that had been helpful

such as the interactive activities, tips on different types of learning, the binder with information, and meeting new people.

The youth also identified gaps and opportunities for training. Related to the gaps they identified, the youth suggested more engagement of youth in the training program, more clarity of the youth role in the classroom, and more support for how to integrate their training into the classroom situation. Other suggestions included more interaction with the Youth Facilitators in the other school and sessions to expand their knowledge and to experience different ideas and perspectives. Based on their recommendations, steps were taken to revise the training program.

### Youth Team Meetings

Youth team meetings are the primary way for the youth teams in each school to connect with each other on a regular basis as a group, to discuss the program, and their role as Youth Facilitators in the classroom. Their reflection is reported here within the following three themes that surfaced: classroom sessions; communication; and meeting organization.

With respect to classroom sessions, youth identified that discussion of curriculum, planning, problem solving, and discussion of issues that the students are dealing with related to the curriculum were working well. They suggested, however, that there was too much talk about what could be done and not enough follow-through. They suggested that there could be a bigger focus on designing activities for them to carry out in the classroom, and that youth team meetings be used to plan upcoming sessions, to improve their facilitation skills, and to plan other activities for the Youth Facilitators to carry out. With respect to communication, the youth reported that interpersonal communication was working well between Adult and Youth Facilitators and listening when others speak. The suggested improvements in communication related to feedback on issues and posting the class schedule. With respect to meeting organization the youth reported that some aspects were working well; however, they wanted clearer goals and to address the timing of youth meetings, conflicts with other engagements/activities, and issues of starting on time, some coming late, and others coming and going during meetings.

### Other Activities Outside of the Classroom – Promoting the Program

As the Youth Facilitators became involved in their role in the program they became interested in having a broader role in their school and in the community related to the topic of healthy relationships. As a result, they became involved in school projects such as a Team Bulletin Board in the school, a display for Women’s Heritage Month, and doing a presentation for the Youth Health Fair. These activities had the effect of increasing the visibility of the RYEP program and of the Youth Facilitators. In the Appreciative Inquiry interviews, when asked for one small change in the program that would have a big impact, many of the Youth Facilitators identified the need for “more action,” for getting the community more involved, to promote the program more, “let more people know what we are doing.”

### Building the Youth Team

In the Appreciative Inquiry interviews, when asked to describe positive experiences related to teamwork, Youth Facilitators told stories about putting together the display for Women’s Heritage Month, the team bulletin board, and working together on the Youth Health Fair presentations.

*Youth Facilitator's story*

“At the Women’s Heritage Month and as a team, we worked on a display for the front of the school and I felt really part of the team at this point because it was the first time our school saw that we were a team. We got to put information on what our project was about – about healthy relationships. We were doing the women’s side and women came through. It was really good because there were so many comments going around the school, asking more about what our team was about. I felt that we all learned. We all brought parts to our presentation and our display, so I felt we were part of a team.”

*Youth Facilitator's story*

“At the Health Fair, I was with (another Youth Facilitator) and I really enjoyed that because I like working with people and I like having somebody out there (working with me). It was neat to have someone my own age. ...It felt more independent, being away from the (Adult Facilitators). It went well. ... For the most part they (the students) seemed to have a great deal of respect for me standing up there .... We split it up so I wasn’t talking all the time and he wasn’t either. We just did role playing and stuff together; we made it just fun.”

*Youth Facilitator's story*

“During the meeting before Christmas we had a meeting with all these Adult Facilitators and it was to come up with a different – a something to do with the semi and Christmas concert; like something we could do so that people would know a kind of part that we teach and stuff like that. And I thought that day we really worked good together as a team because we knew our ideas. Like we put in all our ideas and they were all taken. Like they weren’t blown out. ...we work good together as a team and, like, we all talk, we got along.”

They also identified the youth team meetings as important to teambuilding.

*Youth Facilitator's story*

“Um, I really like the meetings, the after-school meetings because I found it was a really good way to get to know other people. I knew who they were because we go to school together, but I really didn’t know about them...even though you were friends before, you become better friends. You understand each other more and, like, what your likes and dislikes and what kind of person you are.”

The Youth Facilitators also suggested ways to improve their youth team. Based on their experience in the Health Fair presentations, where they worked in teams to do the presentations, the Youth Facilitators suggested having a miniature youth team in classroom.. They also suggested the need for all youth to attend their team meetings. Another was having a gender balance (more boys on the team) to balance ideas and to reinforce equality issues. Their suggestions for improving recruitment of Youth Facilitators were taken into consideration (see 3.3. Program Delivery in a Rural Area).

A number of Advisory Committee members, who played a role in encouraging youth to participate in the program, and teachers commented on the importance of the Youth Facilitator involvement in the program. They noted the importance of opportunities for leadership

development, training, being a role model, and the potential for students to open up more to the program content and learn more.

*Advisory Committee member*

“Encouraging Youth Facilitators to think about applying. I see it as a leadership opportunity and it has a training component.” If it was just the Adult Facilitators, you would be missing a big component of the potential of the program. ... That component is very important. Having the youth in the classroom is a role model. I think there is a better learning. (The students) connect with it. They hear it. Maybe it is someone in the class who is only interested in playing hockey, especially the young males. If they see another young male talking about this... who also plays hockey ... oh they are good at that and they still want to come and talk with me about this... it is the sell value.

*Advisory Committee member*

“Having the Youth Facilitators emerge and having a role model for the other kids in the school. You get 10 kids and 10 or 20 behind them. It has a domino effect.”

*Advisory Committee member*

“The kids themselves are teaching the other kids. They are hearing from their peer group rather than from an authority figure. I think they leave it more open. I also think the groups themselves (adults and youth) it is important that they meet and go over the exercises and role plays.... Youth Facilitator is the biggest part of that project and strengthening that component is very important.”

*Teacher*

“Well even if they...if students don't feel like they have maybe as close a connection with the Adult Facilitators, they feel comfortable with the students that they see everyday that are coming in and helping.”

The next section focuses on what the Youth Facilitators say they have learned through their involvement. The Youth Facilitators had an opportunity on an ongoing basis to describe what they were learning through their involvement in the program, including reflection on their own skills and group dynamics.

## **6. IMPACT ON YOUTH PARTICIPANTS**

This section of the report focuses on the sixth evaluation theme, the impact on youth participants. Because of their very different involvement in the program the impact on the Youth Facilitators is discussed separately in this section from the impact on the students taking the program.

### **6.1 Youth Facilitators**

Sixteen students participated in the Appreciative Inquiry interviews. The youth were asked what they had learned in the program, what knowledge they have developed, what skills they have developed, what attitudes have changed, and what values have changed. Table 7 shows the responses of the 16 youth. Note that some offered more than one response to each question.

*Column 1* shows what the youth said they learned. It appears that what they learned was fairly individualized, although 5 or 31% indicated they learned to accept others and to value others' opinions, values and actions. *Column 2* shows what knowledge the students said they developed,

**Table 7: Youth Facilitators: Learning, Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes and Values (16 Interviews)**

WHAT YOUTH SAY THEY HAVE LEARNED	KNOWLEDGE	SKILLS	ATTITUDES	VALUES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Accepting others/value their opinions/values/actions (5)</li> <li>- Teamwork (3)</li> <li>- Broader world view (2)</li> <li>- Learned more about myself and others; changed my life and the way I think about others (2)</li> <li>- Empathy (1)</li> <li>- Changed views (e.g. Homophobia) (1)</li> <li>- More considerate (1)</li> <li>- More open (1)</li> <li>- People look up to me (1)</li> <li>- Listening more important than giving advice (1)</li> <li>- Healthy relationships (1)</li> <li>- Need to get together to make a difference (1)</li> <li>- Friendship (1)</li> <li>- Helped with roles outside of the school – leadership (1)</li> <li>- Support by others (1)</li> <li>- Stand up for myself (1)</li> <li>- How to identify boundaries (1)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Facts about racism and homophobia; healthy relationships (8)</li> <li>- Understanding difference; others’ opinions; not to judge others. (3)</li> <li>- Boundaries (1)</li> <li>- Empathy (1)</li> <li>- How to talk with others about problems (1)</li> <li>- How to teach people (1)</li> <li>- How to express myself (1)</li> <li>- How girls open up in separate gender (1)</li> <li>- Everyone will come together (1)</li> <li>- Don’t know (1).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Public speaking; talk in front of people; (10)</li> <li>- Communication skills; listening (6)</li> <li>- Critical thinking (2)</li> <li>- Teaching; passing on knowledge (2)</li> <li>- More respectful (1)</li> <li>- Relate to others more/open up (1)</li> <li>- Organizational (1)</li> <li>- Leadership (1)</li> <li>- Acting (1)</li> <li>- No answer (1)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Have to do something; can’t brush it off/can’t joke about issues; (4)</li> <li>- Understanding different cultures and people; value different opinions (3)</li> <li>- Not as judgemental (2)</li> <li>- More confidence (2)</li> <li>- Changed attitudes about sexual harassment (1)</li> <li>- More positive; less negative (1)</li> <li>- More respect (1)</li> <li>- Restrained myself from acting out; thought about my actions and the consequences; (1)</li> <li>- More cautious in relationships – the need to do something/take action; (1)</li> <li>- Changed when I became part of the youth team; (1)</li> <li>- Don’t know (1)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Don’t think my values changed but they improved – e.g. <i>act differently in different situations</i> (8)</li> <li>- More respect for difference; value difference and diversity; less sceptical. (6)</li> <li>- No change (4) (one said “hurts too much”)</li> <li>- Being able to accept what I believe; (1)</li> <li>- Self respect has improved (1)</li> <li>- Value peace; no violence (1)</li> <li>- Had strong values already (1)</li> <li>- Don’t know (1)</li> </ul>

with about ½ or 50% of the students saying they had learned facts about racism, homophobia and healthy relationships and 3 or 19% indicating understanding difference and other's opinions.

*Column 3* shows that 10 or 2/3 or 63% of the youth indicated they had developed skills in public speaking or how to talk in front of people, with 5 or 31% indicating they had developed communication skills. *Column 4* shows that attitudes did change, but not one single attitude change stands out more than others, other than the first one where 4 youth indicated that they have to respond or do something about issues.

*Column 5* shows that when youth were asked what values changed, ½ or 50% indicated that they didn't think their values changed, but they "improved", with a number of these same youth saying they now "act differently" than they did before. Six or 16% of the youth said they have more respect for difference and value difference and diversity.

When looking across the columns and the students' responses to the five questions, some themes emerge related to change such as: (a) difference and diversity, (b) change in behaviour, and (c) increased confidence in public speaking and communication skills. These three themes also emerged through the youth talking about the lessons learned in their youth team meetings. Additional themes emerged through the youth's stories told in the Appreciative Inquiry interviews as well as on review of their "lessons learned". These themes are: openness to talk about personal experiences, working with new people, teaching as a positive and challenging experience, looked up to as a role model, influencing others outside of the classroom and having an impact on the students.

#### Openness to Difference and Diversity

When looking at Table 5, difference and diversity shows up in all categories whether it is understanding difference (cultures, people, opinions), accepting others (not as judgemental), valuing and respecting difference (opinions and values), or being more respectful and relating to others. When asked to describe a positive experience in facilitating learning that leads to change, some Youth Facilitators told a story related to accepting and respecting difference. These are two of the stories.

##### *Youth Facilitator's story*

"The day (the Adult Facilitator) said, 'it's not bad to be gay'. Like, I made jokes myself about people, like 'that's so gay, why are you wearing pink?' It's pretty disrespectful, you know. If there was somebody in the room trying to figure out their sexual orientation and then I said that, then they think it is completely bad.... When people say it now, I say, what the (Adult Facilitator said), 'it's not bad to be gay'. I used to try and bite my tongue and not say it, but now I don't even think about it. Some people are kind of quiet when it happens, like they get red-faced and embarrassed that they said it. Education seems to do that to people. I feel good in a way that kind of made them think about it, the way that (the Adult Facilitator) made me think about it."

##### *Youth Facilitator's story*

"I've learned that there's a lot of situations that we did in the classroom, like different role plays and stuff like that just made me learn that everyone is different and that everyone brings something to the table. You can't really tell a person by looking at them.

The quiet people usually had a lot to contribute when we were in the separate gender sessions, so I've learned a lot about people."

### Change in Personal Behaviour

The Youth Facilitators also reported changes in their personal behaviour related to attitudes and values, where students state they are making conscious choices to act differently by either taking action to address an issue or to restrain themselves from acting out or to be more cautious than they might have been previously. A number of Youth Facilitators reported that they are more aware of violence in the school and react differently now. They are more assertive, less violent, and don't fight anymore. One Youth Facilitator describes this as follows:

#### *Youth Facilitator's story*

"Violence. I used to be really snappy, especially with my little sisters. And it really helped me see that it's not right, that violence isn't nice. So I slowly stopped. Sure, I get mad still, but I'm not like I used to be. I really calmed down."

### Increased Confidence in Public Speaking and Communication Skills

Another change that stands out is the increased confidence to speak in front of others, to "teach", to communicate effectively, identified both as knowledge and skill development. This is illustrated in the following comments.

#### *Youth Facilitator*

"I am more confident and willing to speak in front of people and, when I'm asked my opinion I'll give it. If it's not what other people think, I will deal with it respectfully."

Increased self confidence and maturity were also observed by others, as noted by a number of Advisory Committee members, from their contact with the Youth Facilitators in their role in the school or in the community. These two comments illustrate these observations.

#### *Advisory Committee member*

"You see those kids grow. That is the big one and I know. Looking at some of the kids who put their names in this year, I know for a fact that, if they get it, it will be tremendous for them. And you can track these. I can see changes in those kids, a tremendous change (in) self confidence, leadership. They are very proud about this and they see it from a different perspective. They get to see it from the teacher's perspective. I really see a confidence thing. Some of the kids that have been involved in this program, I thought they might fall on their face... It is like they had a lead role in a play... they take that lead role and the next thing you know you are a different person."

#### *Advisory Committee member*

"I see more maturity of them handling themselves in a different way. Our community doesn't offer workshops on these issues. They want to grow, learn and be somebody and this program has given them an opportunity to absorb it and they have absorbed more than they realize. The attitude is changing about different issues and they are coming into their own."

### Openness to Talk about Personal Experiences and to Healing

Some youth found the project was an opportunity to reflect on their own experiences and to learn from sharing those experiences.

#### *Youth Facilitator's story*

“The meeting where we met the two girls from Canada World Youth and we were talking about racism and just different things like that. That was the best part...I could relate a lot to what other people were saying too and how some of their parents were racist and their values were different. That's the most I talked during a meeting. Everybody had their own opinions and everybody said what they thought.”

As already indicated in section 4.3, some Youth Facilitators indicated that being a Youth Facilitator had played a role in their personal healing and was enabling them to play a leadership role in supporting other students.

#### Working with New People

Simply working with new people was a positive experience for some youth. Some referred to getting to know and developing friendships with others, as described by this Youth Facilitator:

#### *Youth Facilitator's story*

“The chance to get to work with a bunch of youth that you don't know. I think that's a great experience to come to get to know them and stuff like that.”

#### Teaching as a Positive and Challenging Experience

A number of Youth Facilitators talked about their positive or challenging experiences in the class as being important for them.

#### *Youth Facilitator's story*

“I really enjoyed being in the classrooms...when I would talk that they would really listen. They would really understand what was going on. It kind of made me feel good that they had a certain respect for me. One day we were doing personal boundaries and I had a couple people get up and do their presentation. They were all kind of listening and understanding and you just get really interactive...It was then that it was starting to get more comfortable. I felt good. It was nice to know that I could have a big impact on someone.”

#### Looked up to as a Role Model

Some youth pointed to the importance of being a role model and how that affected them in both challenging and positive ways.

#### *Youth Facilitator's story*

“Around the school, talking to kids that I taught...they, it's like they look up to you. They respect you for what you're doing. But they always keep a close eye on you, you know what I mean? You know, like we talk about in our meetings. If they catch you doing stuff, they're like, 'you're a Youth Facilitator, (and) you shouldn't be doing that.’”

#### *Youth Facilitator's story*

“Well there was this little boy...he was in our class and he has no friends and no one likes him, and they all make fun of him and we went to a dance while I was still in the classroom and there was a dance at the school. So I was dancing with him and all his little friends. Well he didn't have any, but all the little girls were like, ah, you danced with (the boy). I was like, I don't care, 'he's cool, (and) he's with me.' He felt better about himself.”

### Influencing Others Outside of the Classroom

Youth Facilitators reported that they are helping to influence changes outside the classroom, based on what students are learning in class or what they have learned as facilitators. For example, one student reported that she has influenced the way people use some words. Others told stories of their involvement in facilitating at the Youth Health Fair.

#### *Youth Facilitator's story*

“I think I’ve changed the way people use the words commonly, like ‘retarded’ and ‘so gay’, and stuff like that. I didn’t realize how much people around me talked like that and just kind of, like telling them and talking (using those words) myself was a change.”

#### *Youth Facilitator's story*

“The Youth Health Fair...I thought it was really good because we actually got to use our skills that we learned. We actually got to be the leader. I felt the students felt more comfortable sharing at this session than in the classroom, because it was us that initiated every conversation, and so it kind of gave me a feel of what was expected or what they could contribute.”

#### *Youth Facilitator's story*

“(At) the youth health fair, because we were right up in front of the class...I felt like I accomplished something, like I got something out of the project, because before I felt like I was just facilitating in the classroom, doing what I was told. But I knew what I was doing then, and I was doing it now by myself. I was in charge.”

This point was also made by several Advisory Committee members. This Advisory Committee member referred to it as being a resource to their peer group.

#### *Advisory Committee member*

“One of the real strengths of this program is that the Youth Facilitators are key because they are in their communities 24/7. They might be in the classroom for about 12 hours (overall), but what they are doing outside of that is huge. They are taking their knowledge and skills into their peer group on an ongoing basis. They become a resource to their peer group.

### Having an Impact on the Students

The Youth Facilitators talked about the impact that they are having on the students which made them feel positive about their role in the program. Some also mentioned that while the students may not be looking like they are paying attention, they are taking it in.

#### *Youth Facilitator*

“A little fella from our grade seven class came in and he had a friend with him and he came up to talk with me. It was interesting to see that he was engaging me and stuff and he was talking about the things we were talking about in class, like not pressuring people and boundaries and stuff. He was trying to show me and his friend that wasn’t in his class what he had learned and I found that great because he was enjoying it and he was trying to express it to other people. What we were teaching them wasn’t going over their head. Like wow, realization, wow. This kid actually took this stuff in. That’s awesome. I was really happy....Wow, and then you sort of think, well maybe other people in the class like gather in this too, so what we are doing is actually having an effect on the way they are

thinking and it is a more positive way to be and it is sort of great. Like where we pass on the boundary rule and empathy, and being aggressive, assertive, passive, to be better to be assertive. They are learning all this, so it is sticking pretty well. It's all good lessons for life, so I thought it was really rewarding."

## **6.2 Students Taking the Program**

This section reports on the students' assessment of the program as reported in the student surveys completed by selected classes in 2002-03 and 2003-04. The students reported what they most appreciated about the course or what stood out to them, what they learned about violence, and any differences they have noticed in their self esteem, their relationships or in the school. They also indicated their overall impression of the session. Some reflections of teachers and Advisory Committee members have been included.

### What Was Most Appreciated or What Stood Out

In 2002-03 students were asked, "Was there something that stands out for you?" Table 8 shows the students' responses. The results show that over half of the students didn't comment and 33 or 33% offered positive comments. Because the question was a closed question, if nothing particularly stood out for them, students answered "no", "not really", or "nothing." In 2003-04, the question was revised to read, "What part of the sessions did you appreciate and why?" Table 9 shows the results of these questions for the two years. This question generated more comments from the students. In 2003-04, 83% of the students offered positive comments. Only a small portion of the students, 8 of 120 or 6%, indicated "don't know," or "none" indicating there was nothing that they appreciated.

Despite some problems with the question in the first year, it is interesting to compare the comments made by students over the two years. For example, of the students who offered positive comments, the separate gender groups and interactive activities were noted as standing out or most appreciated, followed by specific content or topic areas. Separate gender groups and interactive activities being at the top of the list supports earlier observations by teachers, Adult Facilitators and Youth Facilitators that the separate gender classes are well-liked by the students and interactive activities engage the students more. The students themselves also rated these quite high when rating their preferred methods (see Tables 4 and 5).

#### *CLM 11 student*

"Having separate gender, because we could say things that we wouldn't (say) in front of the guys."

#### *Grade 9 student*

"Mostly I appreciated the group discussions. They allowed us to open up and share our thoughts and opinions through healthy arguments and debating."

#### *Grade 8 student*

"The part when they separated the guys and the girls, because you didn't have to worry about boys/girls thinking about what you say."

#### *Grade 7 student*

"I thought the best part of it was doing the little role plays and games because you learn stuff when you're doing something you kind of like."

**Table 8: Student Survey 2002-03: What Students Said Stood Out**

What Students Said	Number of Students (Percentage)	2002-03 “what stands out”		
		Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9 (3 classes)
Positive comments	33 (33%)	3	5	25
<u>2002-03</u> : no; nothing stood out; not really; don’t know	52 (53%)	7	8	37
Not much help; boring	2 (2%)			2
No response/spoiled	12 (12%)	4	2	6
Total	99 (100%)	14	15	70
<b>Positive Comments</b>	<b>Number of Comments (Percentage)</b>			
Separate gender groups	13 (39%)		2	11
Interactive activities: role plays; games, group discussion; speaking out	9 (27%)	2		7
Content: sexual harassment, bullying, date rape, drugs, gender; racism, sexism; anger; healthy relationships.	4 (12%)		2	2
Video	1 (3%)			1
“all”	1 (3%)		1	
Facilitators	3 (9%)	1		2
No bookwork/writing	0 (0%)			
Other	2 (6%)			2
Total	33(100%)	3	5	25

**Table 9: Student Survey 2003-04: What Students Appreciated**

What Students Said	Number of Students (Percentage)	2003-04 “what did you appreciate most?”			
		Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9 (2 classes)	CLM 11 (2 classes)
Positive comments	100 (83%)	17	15	31	37
None; none really; don’t know.	8 (7%)	1	1	3	3
Not much help; boring	4 (3%)	1	2		1
No response/spoiled	8 (7%)	1	1	3	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>120 (100%)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Positive Comments</b>	<b>Number of Comments (Percentage)</b>				
Separate gender groups	32 (32%)	10	5	7	10
Interactive activities: role plays; games, group discussion; speaking out	35 (35%)	4	7	14	10
Content: sexual harassment, bullying, date rape, drugs, gender; racism, sexism; anger; healthy relationships.	14 (14%)	1	2		11
Video	4 (4%)			3	1
“all”	4 (4%)		1		3
Facilitators	1 (1%)	1			
No bookwork/writing	4 (4%)			4	
Other	6 (6%)	1		3	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>100 (100%)</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>37</b>

Of the students in the CLM 11 classes, 11 or 25% of the 44 CLM 11 students appreciated the content. Sexual abuse and sexual harassment were mentioned most often by the students.

*CLM 11 student*

“I appreciated the separate gender sessions the most, but also the sexual harassment part, because I didn’t know so many things were considered sexual assault or harassment.”

A few students in other grades also appreciated the content as indicated by this grade 9 student:

*Grade 9 student*

“Date rape that stands out the most because it will be part of my life in high school to look for that stuff.”

What Students Learned About Violence

In 2003-04, students were asked, “what have you learned about violence?” Table 10 shows their responses to this question. Of the 120 students in who responded, 81 or 68% of the students offered positive comments. Another 10 or 8% did not respond or spoiled their response; 9 or 7% said they already knew the information; and another 20 or 17% indicated that they didn’t learn much or nothing. It is worth noting that, of the 20 who indicated that they learned nothing, just over one-third or 7 were in one class.

**Table 10: Student Survey 2003-04: What Students Said They Learned About Violence**

What Students Said	Numbers (Percentage)
Offered comments	81 (68%)
Already knew; not new	9 (7%)
Nothing much; nothing; not much really.	20 (17%)
No response/spoiled	10 (8%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>120 (100%)</b>

Overall, the students’ comments tended to fall into two categories. Table 11 shows these categories and the more specific kinds of comments in each category. The first category is learning more about violence; for example, it is wrong, types of violence, statistics, safety, and it doesn’t solve anything. The second category is learning strategies to deal with violence by doing something to address it or by doing something to prevent it. The first category constitutes 80% of the responses and the second category 20% of the responses.

Because some students offered more than one comment on what they had learned, the total number of comments was 90. Of those who offered comments, 22 or 24% said they had learned that violence is not right, while 16 or 18% indicated they had learned there were different types of violence.

Grade 7 student

“I learned that it is not right no matter what the problem is.”

Grade 9 student

“Violence does not have to be physical and can hurt someone, no matter what kind of violence it is, physically or emotionally.”

Thirteen (13) or 14% said it is everywhere or it happens too much, while 11 or 12%, pointed to personal safety stating that violence hurts someone else or can hurt you.

CLM 11 student

“(I learned) what is considered violence and how many people are affected.”

Grade 9 student

“It is harmful to people and their self esteem.”

Grade 8 student

“I learned that it is very dangerous and must be dealt with.”

**Table 11: Student Survey 2003-04: Students Comments on What They Learned About Violence**

Category	Specific Comments	Numbers (Percentage)
<b>Learned More About Violence</b>	<i>Wrong</i> : “bad”, “wrong”, “not right”	22 (24%)
	<i>Types &amp; Reasons</i> : different types of violence; different reasons.	16 (18%)
	<i>Statistics</i> : “it is everywhere,” “happens too much,” “a lot.”	13 (14%)
	<i>Safety</i> : “it hurts someone”, “you get hurt” personal safety	12 (13%)
	<i>Doesn’t solve anything</i>	5 (6%)
	<i>Other</i> : has consequences, not reported, relationship cycle	4 (4%)
	<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>72 (80%)</b>
<b>Learned Strategies to Deal With Violence or to Prevent It</b>	<i>Can do something</i> : “can change it”, “can talk it out”, “assertive”, “how to deal with it”	13 (14%)
	<i>Prevention</i> : “don’t have to use it”, have a choice	5 (5%)
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>18 (20%)</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>90 (100%)</b>

A number of students, 13 or 14%, mentioned different strategies to do something about it, such as talking it out or being assertive. Another 5 indicated that they learned it can be prevented, that you don't have to use it, that you have a choice.

*Grade 9 student*

"I learned that it is better to be assertive rather than aggressive."

*CLM 11 student*

"I learned there are ways to prevent or predict it, and you should always pay attention.

Differences in Self Esteem, Relationships and in the School

In the 2003-04 student survey, students were asked to describe any differences in their self esteem, their relationships, and in their school compared to before they participated in the healthy relationship sessions. Table 12 shows the students response to these questions. One outcome is that some students in all grades identify differences in the three categories.

**Table 12: Student Survey 2003-04 Differences in Self Esteem, Relationships, and In the School**

IMPACT AREA	RATING	GRADE 2003-04			
		Grade 7 (20)	Grade 8 (19)	Grade 9 (37)	CLM 11 (44)
<b>Differences in Self Esteem</b>	No change	25%	58%	67%	61%
	Increased (lower)	65%	42%	14% (3%)	20%
	No response/ not clear	10%	0%	16%	18%
<b>Differences in Relationships</b>	No change	70%	63%	81%	61%
	Improved	30%	37%	5%	32%
	No response/ not clear	0%	0%	14%	7%
<b>Differences in the School</b>	No change	40%	84%	78%	66%
	Some effect (more)	55% (5% more violence)	11%	5%	18%
	No response/ spoiled	5%	5%	16%	16%

With respect to self esteem, the Grade 7 students have the largest number (65%) who indicated an increase in self esteem, followed by Grade 8 students where 42% indicated in increase in self esteem. A number of CLM 11 students indicated that they felt they already had good self esteem, while others simply indicated that they hadn't noticed any changes. Some of the comments made by the Grade 7 and Grade 8 students are:

*Grade 7 student*

"I am better to myself and appreciate me more." "I stand up for myself more," and "my self esteem is stronger than before."

*Grade 8 student*

"I learned to control my temper and how to be assertive." And "it made me feel better about myself."

With respect to differences in relationships, Grades 7, 8 and CLM 11 were similar with 30-37% stating there is a difference in their relationships. This still leaves a high number in all grades where no change in relationships was identified. Of those who noticed a change, some mentioned *learning things* such as how to deal with problems, learning more about people, and healthy relationships; and a number added that there have not been many changes yet, there is minimal change, or things are somewhat better. Others noted *different ways that they are behaving* as a result of the program. Some of these differences are:

- Not telling people what to do as much;
- Respecting people more;
- Apologizing for a fight and walking away;
- Talking things out more;
- Thinking before acting;
- Being more assertive;
- Not tolerating sexual harassment.

With respect to differences in the school, students in Grade 7 noticed the biggest difference, with just over half indicating there has been "some effect" in the school; and about 5% noticing an increase in violence. This latter observation could be that they are more aware of different kinds of violence and, therefore, are noticing those more. Some students in Grade 8 and CLM 11 noticed changes, and only a few in Grade 9 noticed changes. Students in Grade 7 and CLM 11 offered comments on changes they had noted. Some changes were *differences in how they were behaving at school* with others and others were changes *they were observing in others*.

- Trying to help people more often;
- Being more assertive;
- Respecting the teachers, students and the school more;
- When someone is making fun of someone, I go over and stay stop;
- Listening more;
- The school is learning more about it;
- Don't pay attention to bullies;
- Less sexual harassment; more respect;
- Less use of language such as "wife beater."

### Overall Impression of the Program

Table 13 shows the responses of the 219 students who completed the survey to the question, “What was your overall impression of the healthy relationships sessions?” The majority of the 219 students, 124 or 57%, were very positive stating that the program “helped” or was “good”, “fun”, or “interesting”. A few used terms like “awesome”.

*Grade 9 student*

“It made me think about stuff and helped me to understand how to resolve problems.”

*Grade 7 student*

“I thought it was good because you learn a lot about relationships, violence, and more.”

*CLM 11 student*

“I liked it. It helped me to understand how you can get out of the relationships. Also helped me understand how people are different.”

Another 21% indicated that it was okay or all right, with a number of students offering suggestions for improvements.

*Grade 8 student*

“Needs more games.”

*Grade 9 student*

“The sessions were okay, but I did not like presenting the role plays.”

About 8% gave no response, said they didn’t know, or spoiled their response. Another 21% indicated that it was boring, uninteresting or that they disliked it.

*Grade 8 student*

“I think it was somewhat boring and not much fun.”

*Grade 9 student*

“I was kind of bored. I didn’t really get into it at all.”

Ten (10) of the 44 CLM 11 students indicated that they already knew the information, with most indicating they had learned it previously. Some said it was good to be reminded, while others indicated that other kinds of information would have made it more interesting or more useful. Others indicated that, in the Career Life Management program, they would have preferred discussing choosing a career than discussing relationships.

*CLM 11 student*

“I think that we did them before, but it’s good to be reminded.”

*CLM 11 student*

“My overall impression of the health relationships session was I learned very little new information, because we did it in Grade 9.”

*CLM 11 student*

“It will not help me in choosing a career. Career Life Management, I thought that this was for a job, not relationships.”

**Table 13: Students' Overall Impression of the Program  
2002-03 and 2003-04**

What Students Said	Total Number of Students (percentage)	2002-03 No. of Students (percentage)	2003-04 No. of Students (percentage)
Helped, good, fun, interesting,	124 (57%)	61 (62%)	63 (53%)*
Okay, all right, needs something, already knew it.	30 (14%)	7 (7%)	23 (19%)*
Boring, uninteresting, disliked	46 (21%)	22 (22%)	24 (20%)
No response/spoiled	19 (8%)	9 (9%)	10 (8%)
Total	219 (100%)	99 (100%)	120 (100%)

\* 10 CLM 11 students indicated they had learned this material previously. 3 students said the program was good; 7 said that because of the repetition, it was not useful or they didn't learn new information.

Observations by Teachers and Advisory Committee Members

Both teachers and Advisory Committee members have observed changes such as being more assertive, talking about seeking help, and thinking before acting. The following are some observations made by Advisory Committee members and teachers:

*Teacher*

“Kids will say stuff like that’s my personal space like they will throw out terms that they have learned in their conversations.”

*Teacher*

“The kids have talked about using the numbers in back of the workbook, and they have mentioned that to me personally. I have to assume that they are telling the truth so they say oh I called this number on the weekend because I was being bullied ... one piece of information comes through. You know that it is important that they know this.”

*Teacher*

“I guess we would like to think that they are being a little more reflective before they act... it is still relatively new, but I think that to some extent we put ideas out there that they may stop and think about now. Whereas before, without having that kind of experience, they probably wouldn’t have taken the time to think about it. That’s not to say that they are going to voice that or that they are going to change their actions, but at least they are thinking about things that before never crossed their minds.”

*Advisory Committee member*

“I think they are getting something out of it. They are able to control themselves better. They are more assertive. They know where they are going. They handle themselves in a different manner.”

*Advisory Committee member*

“I see a lot of Grade 8 students and they enjoy the project. They like having the youth in the classroom.”

*Advisory Committee member*

“Kids are embracing it more now. Having the gender balance in the Adult Facilitators is important. There is more recognition of the program and that has some value to it. It will be more of a gradual process, but it is influencing, providing food for thought and when I am talking one on one with someone, and they can set it somewhere because they heard it somewhere else.”

## SECTION 5: CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR NEXT STEPS

This interim evaluation report has examined how well the RYEP is addressing best practices in violence prevention, including the strategies and challenges in five areas: feminist understanding of violence and abuse, a focus on gender and diversity, strategies to enable people in rural areas to access violence prevention programs, safety and confidentiality, and multi-dimensional, interactive approaches to intervention. It has also examined an important and sixth evaluation theme, the impact on youth participants.

This section summarizes the results for each theme and suggests some next steps for the RYEP. Many of the suggested next steps were offered by the evaluation participants.

### 1. FEMINIST UNDERSTANDING OF VIOLENCE AND ABUSE

Both Youth and Adult Facilitators identified a number of strategies that worked well from their perspective in addressing gender stereotypes. In the classroom, strategies include creating a space for both boys and girls to talk about gender stereotypes, to build an understanding that they exist for both boys and girls and regardless of race or culture, and to be able to recognize and deal with gender stereotypes when they encounter them. Other strategies are showing by example, inside or outside of the classroom, having a community-based organization with experience and knowledge with these issues deliver the program, starting with the younger grades, and having school policies and activities that support and reinforce what is being taught in the program.

The Youth and Adult Facilitators identified a number of challenges in addressing stereotypes: it is a long, slow process due to the difficulty in changing traditional and long-held ideas and attitudes about males and females and their roles, particularly in small, rural communities; how to help students feel they have some control over doing something about creating change, particularly where they may be facing traditional attitudes within their families or communities; male resistance to change; and stereotypes associated with use of the word feminism.

There were mixed results as to whether teaching gender stereotypes was having an immediate impact, with some feeling it was either too soon or too difficult to know what the impact would be, and others indicating that some impact had occurred or would eventually occur. The long list of stereotypes identified by the Youth Facilitators is a clear indicator that they recognize the stereotypes for both boys and girls. Their ability to identify both strategies and challenges indicates their understanding of the complexities associated with creating change related to gender stereotypes and to addressing associated violence and abuse. In the student survey, a few students indicated that what they appreciated about the course were some of the broader concepts such as gender, sexism, racism, and sexual harassment; most of those students were in CLM 11.

#### *Suggestions for Next Steps*

- ♦ Continue with the strategies identified by the Youth and the Adult facilitators and continue to support the facilitators in their role in addressing the challenges with this theme.
- ♦ Build in indicators to the evaluation framework to assess other components of this theme.

## **2. A FOCUS ON GENDER AND DIVERSITY**

The RYEP program is making a conscious effort at every level of the program to model gender and diversity through multiple strategies. This is reinforced by the principle, that diversity must be visible which was mentioned by teachers, Advisory Committee members and facilitators.

Key strategies that have strengthened the diversity component have been having a diversity consultant for the program, diversity sensitivity training related to gender, culture, and sexual orientation, other educational opportunities to continue to broaden thinking about diversity, and program leaders actively working toward modelling diversity. In the classroom, teachers noted the range of topics, in addition to gender and culture, particularly noting the learning about respect and relationships, and the Adult Facilitators talked about the importance of taking advantage of teachable moments to reinforce curriculum messages. Another important aspect has been the adult teams modelling respect within their relationship, both cross-gender or cross-cultural which was evident to both teachers and Advisory Committee members who work in the schools.

While most defined the focus on gender and diversity as achieving a gender balance and cultural diversity among the adult and youth teams, it is clear that as the program evolves, other dimensions of diversity are being included such as age, sexuality, rural-urban (from here; come-from-away), and difference of perspectives and opinions. By the start of the third year of the program, male and female, African Nova Scotian and Mi'kmaq are well represented on the youth team. There is also a mix of youth representing different groups and different ages within each school. With respect to the adult teams, gender balance was achieved by the second year for both adult teams (in the two schools), and one team was culturally diverse. There have been difficulties, however, in retaining adult male facilitators from year to year, and to recruit an Adult Facilitator from the African Nova Scotian community. The nature of the position as a part-time position with an erratic schedule that makes it difficult to complement other work, as well as the fact that it is not well-paid and the location in a rural community with a relatively small population were reasons given for these difficulties.

Important outcomes have been a display board in the school where diversity is celebrated and changes in behaviour among students noticed by Advisory Committee members who live in the community or work in the schools.

### ***Suggestions for Next Steps***

- ◆ Consider the issues and possible strategies to address the high turnover rate of adult males and to ensure diversity on the adult team.
- ◆ Consider different method for recording hours of work for Adult Facilitators. Various activities could take the whole day, but when recording “hours” can only record the actual time in each of these
- ◆ Consider the option of one full-time team rather than two part-time Adult Facilitator teams.

### **3. STRATEGIES TO ENABLE PEOPLE IN RURAL AREAS TO ACCESS VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAMS**

Teachers, school administrators, Advisory Committee members and Adult Facilitators identified strategies that have been successful in supporting access by youth to various aspects of the RYEP program. Delivering the program as an in-school program ensures accessibility to the program by all students. Efforts have been made to ensure that the opportunity to become a Youth Facilitator is as accessible as possible to students in the schools. Part of this strategy was asking for *and* acting on youth input into how to make the position more accessible to students.

The realities of offering programs in rural communities have been considered from an administrative and curriculum point of view including: practicalities of getting people together, the time and distance to travel for meetings and program activities, and recognizing the uniqueness of different rural communities and schools particularly related to cultural diversity and geography and to adjust the curriculum accordingly. There has been recognition of the need for sensitivity to traditionally held attitudes and values that may be held by student's family or community members, and sensitivity to safety and confidentiality for students and Youth Facilitators.

Both the Adult and Youth Facilitators have worked toward establishing a trust relationship with students in the classroom. Positive working relationships have been established between Adult Facilitators and teachers and between Adult Facilitators and other in-school programs such as the Youth Health Centre and the Afrikan Canadian Heritage and Friendship Centre. Many also noted the importance of having a knowledgeable Program Coordinator who can work with the schools and teachers in the provision of overall coordination and program management.

Both Adult Facilitators and teachers acknowledged the need for more clarity of the teacher's role in the classroom. The Adult Facilitators wanted more opportunities for informal discussions between teachers and Adult Facilitators and to be able to develop relationships with other school staff. They felt that an office space in each school would help to raise the visibility of the program and accessibility of the students to the Adult Facilitators.

Program partners, many of whom are also Advisory Committee members, have played a role in supporting and advocating for the program with the School Board, in the schools, in the community, and with parents. A number, who work in the school or in community agencies, also played a role in encouraging Youth Facilitators to become involved in the program. There needs to be more work on building relationships between the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and the African Nova Scotian communities to strengthen their understanding of the Women's Centre's role in this initiative and its broader work with youth. Also, the Advisory Committee members wanted more role clarity, to strengthen the diversity component, and a different way to involve committee members.

#### ***Suggestions for Next Steps***

- ◆ Continue to clarify the role of the teacher in the classroom
- ◆ Provide opportunities for Adult Facilitators and teachers to have more informal discussion about the program.

- ◆ Strengthen the orientation sessions for Adult Facilitators related to school policies in general and in relation to children with special needs.
- ◆ Provide opportunities for Adult Facilitators to develop positive relationships with other staff in the schools.
- ◆ An office or designated area where students can find Adult Facilitators will strengthen contact with students and the visible presence of the program in the school.
- ◆ Clarify the role of the Advisory Committee. Consider a smaller committee with an ad hoc group of advisors that one can call on for problem-solving support;
- ◆ Review reasons for low attendance at Advisory Committee meetings. Improved attendance would make participation more meaningful to members who are attending. It would strengthen partnerships and diverse perspectives, particularly from the Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotian communities. Consider input/representation from School Board on this committee.
- ◆ Work toward more involvement of Advisory Committee in meeting agendas.
- ◆ Continue to build and strengthen the relationships and partnerships with the African Nova Scotian communities and Paq'tnekek First Nation.
- ◆ Strengthen parent and community involvement in the RYEP to continue to address the community factors that can both facilitate and challenge the delivery of the program and the curriculum.

#### **4. SAFETY AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

It is evident that various mechanisms and support procedures are in place to address safety and confidentiality for the students, Youth Facilitators, and Adult Facilitators. Both teachers and Adult Facilitators agreed that the relationship between the students and facilitators, who are not authority figures, and separate gender sessions were important to safety, particularly in enabling students to open up and talk more comfortably. Advisory Committee members pointed out the professionalism of the Adult Facilitators in handling safety and confidentiality issues.

There were some indications that boys and girls might behave differently when feeling safe and that boys may initially tend to be aggressive when they are starting to feel safe, with the suggestion that, if followed through effectively, it could be turned into a positive learning experience.

A number of students taking the program and Youth Facilitators were able to identify the need for self care and when to seek help. Some Youth Facilitators told stories related to self care and healing which, for them, was their most challenging or engaging experience with the program. In the student survey, some students identified that they had learned ways to deal with or cope with violence or to prevent violence. Other students identified increased self esteem, differences in ways of behaving in their relationships or at the school that they were looking after themselves more.

##### ***Suggestions for Next Steps***

- ◆ Continue with the current mechanisms and procedures to address safety and confidentiality for all participants and staff.
- ◆ Continue with separate gender sessions and facilitation approaches that enable students to feel more comfortable to discuss topics.

## 5. MULTI-DIMENSIONAL, INTERACTIVE APPROACHES TO INTERVENTION

Many of those interviewed stated the program should be sustained and should continue because of the benefits to the students and to the Youth Facilitators. The RYEP program not only fits with the PDR curriculum, it enhances this curriculum by adding an element of being current and relevant for the students. One drawback is that, by its association with PDR, the students may not treat it seriously, as the school system does not treat PDR as a serious subject and it is often relegated to whenever it can fit into the program. This creates scheduling difficulties for the RYEP. There are also challenges related to scheduling the RYEP into Grade 11 classes. There is a fit with the CLM 11 curriculum; however, due to the need to focus on required academic courses in Grade 11, Grade 10 students make up the majority of students in the CLM classes.

The majority of students in the program preferred interactive techniques such as discussion, small groups, role play, and separate gender sessions over written materials and workbooks. This was supported by the observation of the Youth Facilitators and Advisory Committee members. The Youth Facilitators identified the need to improve and energize some activities, while the teachers indicated that the success of interactive techniques varied to the degree to which the facilitators were able to engage students.

Both the Youth and Adult Facilitators identified three key elements of the program that help to overcome resistance to change. These three elements are a combination of: (1) the Adult Facilitators putting the issues out there, willing to discuss the tough issues or raising awareness through videos; (2) a safe environment where students can say what they need to say; and (3) interactive techniques, particularly the separate gender groups, sharing stories, and information and support about where to get help. The ideas that were hardest to accept were related to sexuality, dating violence, gender stereotypes, racism, bigger picture analysis, and that the small things you say (e.g. jokes, etc.) can affect people. The Adult Facilitators also pointed to examples of being able to reinforce the curriculum by having discussions or pointing to real issues within the school culture or within the community.

The Youth Facilitators stated the school and community factors that facilitate the curriculum are clubs and after-school groups such as anti-bullying groups, community agencies such as churches with zero tolerance policies, and knowing there is help and resources in the community to help. They said that, because they are from different communities and different groups of friends, they are able to influence friends outside the school. The program being delivered by a community agency *and* promoted by the Youth Facilitators helps to facilitate the curriculum. Factors that challenge the delivery of curriculum are the level of violence in the community and families; the level of neglect of violence issues by police and others; the minimization or desensitization to violence due to exposure to violent video games; racism that exists in the community; difficulties of challenging gender stereotypes in small communities, and distance to travel. Within the school, youth stated that peer pressure or the “coolness factor”, particularly for boys, challenges delivery of the curriculum.

The adult team play a pivotal role in program delivery. As has already been noted, they play an important role in modelling their relationship related to gender and diversity, in gaining buy-in and trust to deliver the program from the students, Youth Facilitators, teachers, school administrators, and other in-school programs, and in ensuring safety and confidentiality policies

and procedures are followed. In the classroom the Adult Facilitators work as a team and with the Youth Facilitators to deliver the curriculum. The Adult Facilitators have strengthened their skills in facilitation, increased their confidence in handling different situations, and reported having more sensitivity to use of slang expressions that can be racist, sexist or homophobic and to the use of plain language to explain concepts. They also emphasized the importance of understanding and being personally comfortable with the content in order to be able to deliver the curriculum and to handle challenges from students and within their own team. An important component of being able to do this work effectively is teambuilding and cooperation among the Adult Facilitators and they identified a number of factors that contribute positively to effective teamwork. They were looking for opportunities to continue to strengthen their facilitation skills, particularly in handling difficult situations and to continue to improve the classroom as a safe environment, particularly for girls to express themselves. They also work with the youth team in the classroom, debriefing with students teaching in the classroom, and facilitating youth team meetings. They report that working with the youth team is both rewarding and challenging; and they are continually working to improve the youth team and to strengthen the Youth Facilitator's role in the classroom, and to improve the focus of youth team meetings. They wanted intensive training in how to run a youth group to make it more engaging.

Youth involvement is an important dimension of the program and it has grown. Not only has the youth team become more diverse over the last two years as reported earlier, but the youth are also taking a more active role in the classroom. Along with this, they also requested to be more involved in training and to use the youth team meetings in a more focused way to plan classroom sessions, improve their facilitation skills, and to plan other activities such as presentations for the Youth Health Fair, the program display board, etc. They would also like to be more involved in a mini youth team in the classroom setting. Both Advisory Committee members and teachers commented on the importance of having the youth team component to the program and its value to the students and to the leadership development of the youth themselves.

### ***Suggestions for Next Steps***

- ◆ Continue to build on and strengthen the youth role in the classroom and in other activities that can help to promote and reinforce the curriculum messages, such as youth health fairs and a school display board.
- ◆ If scheduling permits, consider the feasibility of a miniature youth team in classroom (similar to Health Fair presentations).
- ◆ Continue to build and strengthen the focus of the youth team meetings.
- ◆ Continue to ensure accessibility of youth to the Youth Facilitator position.
- ◆ Revisit ways to deliver the curriculum in Grade 11.
- ◆ Continue to build on and to strengthen the strategies that help students to overcome resistance to change through the three components identified: putting the issues out there through the curriculum; interactive techniques; and providing a safe environment.
- ◆ Continue to work on ways that girls and boys can open up to discussion of important issues.
- ◆ Ongoing training for the adult team should be in the following areas: (1) curriculum; (2) facilitation skills including handling difficult situations and actively working on skills that are taught in the curriculum that are also important to facilitation such as assertiveness and reflective listening; (3) how to run a youth group to make it more

engaging; (4) discussion and analysis of critical issues such as feminism, racism, and men's role in helping gender roles become more balanced; and (5) teambuilding.

- ♦ As one training opportunity for the Adult Facilitators, consider an 'apprenticeship' experience with New Leaf, an intervention program for abusive men.
- ♦ Continue to strengthen strategies for teambuilding within the adult team and with the youth team.

## **6. IMPACT ON YOUTH PARTICIPANTS**

The Youth Facilitators have expanded their knowledge, developed new skills, changed their attitudes, and "improved their values" by acting differently than they did before. As a result of their experience as Youth Facilitators, the youth are more open to difference and diversity through understanding difference, accepting others, valuing and respecting difference, and being more respectful of others. They are changing their behaviour and making conscious choices to act differently, in particular to decreasing violent behaviour. They stated they have increased confidence in public speaking and communication skills. They are more open to talking about personal experiences, with some students being able to address their own healing through this avenue. They find working with new people to be a positive experience. Teaching is both a positive and challenging experience, as is being looked up to as a role model. Youth Facilitators reported helping to influence change outside the classroom and having a positive impact on the students overall made them feel positive about their role in the program.

The program is having an impact on the students judging from their own comments and the comments made by the Youth Facilitators, by teachers, Adult Facilitators, and Advisory Committee members who work in the school or live in the community. The majority of the students or 57% said that they found the program helpful, fun or interesting overall. In 2003-04, when asked what they appreciated most or what stood out to them, 83% offered positive comments about the program, commenting both on the various methods used to engage students as well as the content. When asked what they had learned about violence, 68% of those surveyed in 2002-03 and 2003-04 offered positive comments about what they had learned. Of those about 80% said they had learned more about violence (different types, etc) while 20% said they learned strategies for dealing with violence or to prevent it.

With respect to self esteem, the Grade 7 classes experienced the greatest increase in self esteem. Between 30 and 40% of the students in three grades - 7, 8, and 11 – said that there are differences in their relationships, with some mentioning having learned how to deal with problems or about people, and others noting different ways they are behaving with others in relationships. With respect to differences in the school, the students in Grade 7 noticed a change, which could be due to their increased awareness of what constitutes violence. Those who offered comments on changes indicated either changes in their own behaviour or changes they were observing in others.

### ***Suggestions for Next Steps***

- ♦ Continue to build on and strengthen the interactive techniques that engage the students and interest them in the topics.
- ♦ Continue to develop the Grade 11 curriculum, particularly related to perceived repetition, identified by the CLM 11 students.



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## **APPENDIX A: Internal Evaluation Steering Group Members**

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Dave Bance, PDR teacher, East Antigonish

Linda Peters & Thomas Melong, Youth Facilitators, East Antigonish

Nancy Peters, Evaluation Consultant, Coady International Institute, StFX University

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Lucille Harper, Executive Director, Antigonish Women's Resource Centre

Jean Crosby, RYEP Coordinator

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## APPENDIX B: In-House Evaluation Themes, Outcomes and Methods

INTERNAL EVALUATION THEMES	ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES	SOURCE OF INFORMATION	METHODS
1. Framework for Understanding Violence and Abuse	1.1 The difference that the gender-based approach makes; 1.2 Why it is important to know about/be aware of differences in understanding and experiences of violence 1.3 Why violence and abuse should be framed as a systemic not individual problem	part of overall analysis and conclusions of the evaluation - AF/SF and teachers literature	AI analysis AI analysis Literature review
2. A Focus on Gender and Diversity	2.1 What aspects of diversity are important to address; 2.2 The effects of modelling diversity on what students and Youth Facilitators learned; 2.3 A gender-based approach makes it easier to address other forms of violence. 2.4 What supports recruitment and retention of RYEP staff.	RYEP staff, AF/YF teams; teachers/admin. AF/YF teams (relates to 1.2) Youth involvement; AF; Advisory Cttee; School Administrators.	AI – Interviews; focus group (teachers/ administrators T/A) AI – Interviews AI analysis Youth involvement survey; Stakeholder interviews
3. Strategies to Enable People in Rural Areas to Access Violence Prevention Programs	3.1 Strategies and challenges for delivery of RYEP in a rural/remote area. 3.2 What worked and what could work to gain buy-in and trust to deliver RYEP 3.3 Roles and strategies for promoting awareness and success of the program. 3.4 Positive community partnerships have developed.	Teachers/administrators; RYEP staff; Adv Committee; Youth Involvement Administrators/teachers; RYEP staff; Adv Committee Teachers/administrators; RYEP staff; YF/AF; Adv Committee Teachers/administrators; RYEP staff; Adv Committee	AI analysis; stakeholder interviews; T/A focus group Stakeholder interviews; T/A focus group T/A focus group; Stakeholder interviews Stakeholder Interviews

### APPENDIX B: In-House Evaluation Themes, Outcomes and Methods

INTERNAL EVALUATION THEMES	ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES	SOURCE OF INFORMATION	METHODS
3. Safety and Confidentiality	4.1 What makes the classroom a safe place to discuss violence and abuse. 4.2 Female and male safety needs are compared for similarities and differences 4.3 Ability to identify need for self care and when and how to seek help	Students, YF/AF; teachers/administrators. Students, YF/AF. YF/AF	AI Interviews; Student surveys; T/A focus group. Student survey; AI analysis AI Questions
4. Approaches to Intervention	5.1 Why important to deliver over several years; 5.2 Themes, topics and skills that are most important; 5.3 Links between RYEP curriculum and existing curriculum; 5.4 Use of interactive techniques helps learning 5.5 Strategies to overcome resistance to some topics. 5.6 School and community factors that facilitate and challenge delivery of curriculum 5.7 Best practices for taking advantage of “teachable moments” to reinforce curriculum messages. 5.8 Supports and barriers to youth involvement. 5.9 Benefits and challenges of youth involvement. 5.10 Requirements to learn more about issues, strategies, resources and supports to help the youth role in the program.	Literature Students; YF/AF; teachers/ administrators; classroom evaluation; youth involvement; Diversity consultant Students YF/AF YF/AF; Administrators; Adv. Committee; RYEP staff. YF/AF Youth Involvement Report; Monthly Evaluation Reports Youth Involvement Report; Monthly Evaluation Reports Youth Involvement Report; Monthly Evaluation Report	Literature review AI Questions ; T/A focus group; Document analysis Student survey Document analysis Student survey AI Interviews AI Interviews; Stakeholder interviews. AI Interviews Document analysis Document analysis Document analysis

**APPENDIX B: In-House Evaluation Themes, Outcomes and Methods**

INTERNAL EVALUATION THEMES	ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES	SOURCE OF INFORMATION	METHODS
5. Impact on Youth Participants	<p>6.1 Increased students' &amp; YF <u>knowledge, attitudes, and values</u> toward key elements of healthy relationships:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- need for self respect &amp; assertiveness</li> <li>- equality and mutual respect</li> <li>- empathy</li> <li>- effective communication</li> <li>- racial and cultural diversity</li> <li>- role and gendered nature of power;</li> <li>- differences between interpersonal and system violence</li> <li>- the effects of interpersonal and systemic violence on their lives</li> </ul> <p>6.2 Increased students' and YF <u>skills</u> in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- problem solving;</li> <li>- conflict resolution</li> </ul> <p>6.3 Increased YF knowledge and skills in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- program planning</li> <li>- facilitation</li> </ul>	<p>Students</p> <p>Youth Facilitators</p> <p>Youth Involvement Report</p> <p>Classroom evaluations</p> <p>Monthly Evaluation Reports</p>	<p>Student Survey</p> <p>AI Interviews</p> <p>Document Analysis</p>



## **APPENDIX C: Rural Youth Education Project Objectives**

1. To engage all students in grades 7, 8, 9, & 11 in two school sites: Antigonish East Education Centre/East Antigonish Academy and Chedabucto Education Centre/Guysborough Academy, in a series of lessons designed to promote healthy and respectful relationships.
2. To increase students' knowledge and understanding of key elements of intimate relationships; the role and gendered nature of power; the need for self respect and assertiveness; equality and respect; and empathy and effective communication.
3. To influence students' attitudes and values by creating a positive appreciation of the benefits of self respect and assertiveness, equality and mutual respect and empathy and effective communication in relationships.
4. To increase students' skills in establishing and maintaining healthy and respectful relationships including such things as problem solving and conflict resolution in the context of friendships and intimate relations.
5. To increase students' understanding of racial/cultural diversity specifically related to the Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotian community.
6. To increase students' understanding of the differences between interpersonal and systemic violence and the effect it has on their lives.
7. To decrease reported incidents of violence or abusive behaviour in the school setting.
8. To decrease reported incidents of violence or abusive behaviour in friendships and dating relationships; and
9. To involve high school students in a meaningful way in program planning, guidance, and delivery.



## APPENDIX D: RYEP Advisory Committee Current Members

- |                                                        |                                                                                                 |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ♦ National Crime Prevention Strategy                   | Karen Swan, Senior Project Analyst, Atlantic Region                                             |
| ♦ RYEP                                                 | Jean Crosby, Project Co-ordinator                                                               |
| ♦ Antigonish Women’s Resource Centre                   | Lucille Harper, Director                                                                        |
| ♦ AWRC Board Member                                    | Maureen Shebib, Equity Co-ordinator, St. Francis Xavier University                              |
| ♦ East Antigonish School                               | Darryl Breen, Vice Principal                                                                    |
| ♦ Chedabucto Place                                     | Paul Long, Principal                                                                            |
| ♦ Strait Regional School Board                         | Kathy Rhodes-Langille, Race-Relations, Cross-Cultural Understanding & Human Rights Co-ordinator |
| ♦ Afrikan Canadian Heritage & Friendship Centre        | Wendy Campbell, Co-ordinator                                                                    |
| ♦ Guysborough Youth Health Services Centre             | Leona Purcell, Public Health Nurse                                                              |
| ♦ Black Educator’s Association of Nova Scotia          | Joanne Reddick, Regional Educator                                                               |
| ♦ Antigonish/Guysborough Black Development Association | Sheila Pelly, Employment Development Officer                                                    |
| ♦ Paq’tnkek First Nation                               | Tanya Frances, Education Director                                                               |
| ♦ Naomi Society for Victims of Family Violence         | Tammy Lee Vautour, Director                                                                     |
| ♦ New Leaf: Intervention Program                       | Ron Kelly, Facilitator, for Abusive Men                                                         |
| ♦ Department of Mental Health                          | Wendy Digout, Psychologist, Child Adolescent Team Member                                        |
| ♦ Antigonish Town & County Community Health Board      | Evelyn Lindsay, Chair                                                                           |