



## SUMMARY EVALUATION REPORT

*Mapping Our Road to Power and Healing (MORPH)* was a two-year community-based collaborative project administered by the Pictou County Women’s Resource and Sexual Assault Centre. The project was funded by the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services as a Sexual Violence Strategy Community Support Network Grant, *Breaking the Silence: A Coordinated Response to Sexual Violence in Nova Scotia*.

The MORPH project team included the project partners and the Community Support Network. The project partners were the Pictou County Women’s Resource and Sexual Assault Centre (PCWRSAC), Tearmann Society for Abused Women, the Pictou County Centre for Sexual Health, and Family Services of Eastern Nova Scotia. The Pictou County Sexual Assault Response Team (PSART) formed the Community Support Network (CSN) for this project and was expanded to include additional members, for a total of 29 members.

As outlined by the Sexual Violence Strategy, the overall purpose of the Community Support Network grants was as follows:

*To build a collaborative and compassionate service response for victims/survivors of sexual violence through more coordinated counselling and supports, better navigation and visibility of supports, and non-judgmental services and safer spaces.*

This Summary Evaluation Report provides an overview of project implementation and outputs, as well as evaluation results and recommendations. Evaluation results are reported in the four *Outcome Areas* outlined in the MORPH Evaluation Framework (sections 2 to 5 below).

### 1. Project Implementation & Outputs

To reach survivors and achieve the overall purpose of the grant, MORPH undertook a number of key activities to raise awareness and create community conversations about sexualized violence; to develop services and programs for survivors and allies; to engage organizations, agencies and communities; and, to strengthen community capacity to respond to survivors of sexualized violence as outlined in this section.

***Engaging Partners, Agencies and Organizations:*** The partners and community members formed the CSN Working Group which provided overall leadership and support to the project. The PSART/CSN met regularly throughout the project, received regular updates, and participated in project activities. Regular project updates were provided at two other community agency networks, the Interagency on Family Violence and Pictou County Partners (a network of youth agencies). MORPH also engaged partners and community members in a collaborative effort to plan and co-facilitate programs for survivors and allies. Through an 80-

member email list, organizations and community members were invited to participate in training workshops and other MORPH activities.

***Reaching out to Engage Marginalized and Underserved Communities:*** An important aspect of the project was to reach out to marginalized and underserved communities. Early in the project, MORPH staff reached out to have conversations with individuals from Pictou Landing First Nation, the African Nova Scotian community and the Multicultural community. Project staff learned through this process and from other referral sources, that survivors were uncertain about joining groups due to the lack of anonymity. In rural Nova Scotia, with small communities where “everyone knows everyone,” there was concern about maintaining privacy. Also, in some communities, individuals tend to reach out to those they feel safe with, through informal networks within their own community. Taking this into consideration, there were further efforts to reach out to find out the best way to work with and support communities that face barriers to participation. Community leaders were invited to participate in training opportunities and the CSN Working Group. Focus groups were held with the LGBTQ2S+ community, Pictou Landing First Nation, and African Nova Scotian youth. Specific pamphlets were developed for the LGBTQ2S+ community. Groups for men were offered at the correctional institution. At the time of writing the evaluation report, there was a collaborative effort to deliver the program, “Doing It Better: Healthy Sexuality Education and Sexual Violence Prevention for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities.”

***Promoting Visibility of Supports and Services:*** To raise public awareness about sexualized violence and its impact and to raise visibility of supports and services available, MORPH undertook a strategic communications campaign. This included radio ads, radio and TV interviews, use of Facebook and Twitter, articles and letters to the editor of two local newspapers, posters, information pamphlets, and presentations to local organizations. Distribution included almost 3000 pamphlets, 1840 posters, and 804 radio ads. Over a six-month period, Facebook had 7,375 views and a total of 16,278 views on “event pages.”

***Community Education & Creating Conversations.*** Another strategy for raising awareness was to offer community education events and create community conversations about sexualized violence, its prevalence and consequences. Over the two years, this involved 34 events with 1,374 participants, including 456 youth. Events included performances of Slut the Play, educational workshops on sexualized violence, a sexual violence forum, consent workshops, and “Safer Space” workshops. MORPH organized Take back the Night marches and public information sessions for Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM).

***Strengthening Capacity to Respond to Sexualized Violence.*** MORPH organized three Trauma-Informed Practice training events and a Human Trafficking Workshop, with 281 service providers and community members in attendance. PSART updated their sexual assault response protocols and conducted an asset mapping exercise.

***Offering Programs and Navigation Services for Survivor and Allies:*** MORPH offered trauma-informed groups for survivors that were developed and facilitated by the Sexualized Violence

Therapist in collaboration with partners and community members. Nine groups were offered with a total participation of 59. These included four adult women’s groups, four men’s groups and one youth group. A skill building program for non-offending friends and family of survivors was offered with two participants. Navigation services included general information, system navigation, referral, and accompaniment. Survivors, community members, and service providers took advantage of this service.

**2. Outcome Area: Creating Community Conversations & Increased Awareness**

One strength of MORPH was that it increased awareness of sexualized violence and its impact; created community conversations and safe places for conversations about sexualized violence; and, increased visibility of supports and services available.

The performances of Slut the Play and the conversations created after the play impacted a very broad audience of Pictou County residents. The young women who were part of the cast, not only increased their understanding of sexualized violence, but their understanding of rape culture, how that impacts on everyday lives, and the extent to which various forms of violence are normalized. Audience members who were interviewed commented on the impact of the play in increasing their understanding of what happens to those who are sexually assaulted, particularly the isolation and shaming and blaming that occurs.

*It seemed like it was just a conversation everywhere and it seemed like every organization, every person, every part of Pictou County all seemed to have their own little bubble of Slut the Play.*

*Young Woman*

Both the young women cast members of Slut the Play and high school staff indicated the play had an impact on youth in the schools. The play created opportunities for a different conversation about sexualized violence, created a space for young women to talk about sexualized violence, and brought more advocacy skills around consent and sexualized violence to the schools.

In addition to impact on the schools, Slut the Play and the post-play discussion sparked conversations in homes, workplaces, coffee shops, on the street, and in social media. A follow-up sexual violence forum deepened discussion about the impacts of trauma associated with sexualized violence. Training events, community education workshops, and updates and discussion at agency network meetings continued to spark conversations about sexualized violence and its impact. These events and meetings provided safe places for conversations, which enabled people to open up and not feel like they had to keep quiet about the issue.

At about the same time as the above activities, the radio and social media campaign increased awareness of issues associated with sexualized violence and carried a message to believe survivors. This created a space to “see the side of the survivor,” all of which occurred in the context of the #MeToo movement. The radio campaign, posts on social media, and distribution of MORPH pamphlets increased visibility of project activities, services, and supports available.

All of this has shifted the way community members and service providers are thinking about sexualized violence and is changing the way they act/respond – creating a culture shift in the community. These changes were observed by the young women cast members in Slut the Play, by community members, and by service providers. These were changes they noticed in themselves, in colleagues, and in their communities.

Another result is that more people, who decided to seek support, knew where to go. There were increased calls for navigation support, increased use of the Tearmann Crisis Line, increased calls for SANE program services, and an increase in referrals to the women’s centre related to “recent” sexualized violence incidents, rather than historical sexual abuse. Tearmann Society for Abused Women reported an increase in the number of young women accessing the Child and Youth Worker at the schools.

The increased awareness motivated other actions and change. Slut the Play audience members indicated it changed the way they approached their children on the subject or motivated them to take action to advocate for change. Cast members were more confident in their relationships and in their ability to stand up for themselves, to support others, and to advocate for women and women’s rights. A significant outcome is their insight that this experience has been transformational for them as individuals. It has changed every aspect of their lives from changing the way they think to being able to put thoughts into words and action.

**3. Outcome Area: Strengthening Community Capacity to Respond to Sexualized Violence**

The provision of skill building and knowledge exchange activities has strengthened community capacity to respond to survivors of sexualized violence. It is evident from the evaluation of the sexual violence forum and the trauma-informed practice workshops that participants felt more able to support survivors with empathy, compassion, and understanding. They learned more about trauma, trauma-informed practice, and practical application. They increased their understanding about how services may unknowingly re-traumatize survivors. They learned more about the need for attention to client safety and creating safe spaces; as well as nurturing hope, compassion, and resilience in working with survivors. Furthermore, many indicated they planned to change their practice and/or share what they learned with others.

*The difference that training makes in people’s perspectives. It makes such a difference in the way survivors are treated, which makes such a huge difference in their healing and recovery that they are treated with dignity (and) that they are not blamed.*

*Service Provider*

The importance of this training was re-iterated several months after the events, indicating that what was learned has been retained and is being applied in practice. During evaluation interviews, those interviewed mentioned several lasting benefits for them as community members and services providers, as well as for their agencies and communities. These benefits

included the knowledge and insights they gained, the conversations that occurred about how to apply what was learned, and the resulting change in their practice/response. Furthermore, learning more about services available resulted in a better understanding of capacities and resources available and knowledgeable referrals.

The trauma-informed training included a cultural competency component. While participants appreciated conversations about cultural competency, this topic needs to be further explored in relation to trauma-informed practice. There should be more diversity in speakers in future sessions to provide an opportunity for sharing and learning more about diverse experiences.

An inclusive approach to reaching out to involve a range of service providers and community members from all areas of Pictou County enabled a diverse group of service providers and community members to learn more about sexualized violence, human trafficking, and trauma-informed practice. One community benefit is that this strategy has the potential to continue to improve the overall community response to sexualized violence. If and when a survivor discloses to a service provider or a community member they trust, who has had trauma-informed training, they are more likely to have the knowledge and skills to respond appropriately and know where to direct them. This was seen to be particularly important in communities where individuals may first turn to someone they trust, who may be a community member, rather than first going to an agency.

The accessibility fund addressed barriers and facilitated access to and inclusion in training programs and services for those who would not have otherwise been able to participate.

The PSART sexual assault response protocol update and asset mapping exercise were important steps in strengthening the way team members work together to provide a seamless and coordinated community response to sexualized violence. The protocol review clarified the response process. It resulted in a more common understanding of the role of PSART, each member's role, and policies and procedures. It helped members to better inform clients of what to expect with a referral to a PSART member agency. The asset mapping exercise enabled members to clarify community assets that support survivors and will assist with referrals.

#### **4. Outcome Area: Supporting Survivors of Sexualized Violence & Allies**

Overall, the project was successful in building a collaborative and sustainable service response. The project developed and delivered evidence-based, trauma-informed groups for survivors and a skill building program for allies. A collaborative approach to group facilitation and program development, as well as group manuals for facilitators, has helped to build capacity for sustainability and leadership of these programs. Also, the collaboration to promote a range of community support services for survivors has contributed to building this response. Finally, the role of the Navigator was integral to information sharing and navigation to services which benefitted survivors, agencies, organizations, and the broader community. The position was also key to supporting programs for survivors and allies, visibility of supports and services, training programs, community education, and collaborative activities.

MORPH has built a compassionate service for survivors and allies that provided trauma-informed, non-judgmental support, and a safe environment. It is evident from the evaluations that those who participated benefitted immensely as follows:

- The women expressed how safe they felt in the group environment and increased their sense of self, sense of connectedness, self-awareness, and their ability to self-soothe (relax). Those who participated in the Stage 2 process recovery group strengthened their coping skills, increased their trust and confidence to share experiences, and were starting to let go of past guilt and look forward to the future.

*I made some new connections inside and outside of my being.  
Bonus.  
I feel like I have more tools to cope when my feelings overwhelm me.*

*Survivors*

- The men benefitted from the group experience, giving them a sense of connectedness, hope and belonging. They increased their self-awareness, using mindfulness to regulate themselves around reactions or “trigger points.” Another common benefit was using deep breathing as a way of self-soothing (relaxing) and many shifted their mindset to be more positive. The men were transferring their skills to their environment within the correctional facility and expressed an interest in transferring their skills upon release.
- The young women appreciated learning to deep-breathe to self-soothe for anxiety and panic when triggered, increased their connection with other group members, and felt supported by the facilitators.
- Participants gained knowledge, insights, and skills in the skill building program for non-offending friends and family (allies). While only a small number participated, it was a good opportunity to pilot this program and to learn from the participants’ experience.

The planning and delivery of programs for survivors and allies was hampered by a number of challenges that meant groups were slow in getting started and participation was not as high as originally anticipated. Among these challenges some key factors included: (a) a low level of pre-project community engagement in determining program needs of survivors; (b) the preference for individual counselling over group programs; and (c) the need to reach out to build trust and relationships with Pictou Landing First Nation, the African Nova Scotian community, and the LGBTQ2S+ community.

MORPH was both responsive and creative in addressing challenges. Staff reached out to work with and engage marginalized and underserved communities. Groups were re-designed and re-offered in new formats when there was a lack of referrals or based on concerns and needs identified by group members. Some groups were not offered in some locations, as outlined in the original proposal, due to feedback from communities. Other groups were offered on location - for men in the correctional facility and for youth in the schools - to support referrals and participation. There were benefits for participants and for the correctional facility and the school in offering programs in these locations. The need for individual therapeutic counselling services remains an important concern in being able to effectively address needs of survivors of

sexualized violence. This is crucial for those not ready or able to participate in group programs from a therapeutic perspective and, for those in rural areas and small communities, who have concerns with maintaining anonymity and privacy.

**5. Outcome Area: Engaging Organizations, Agencies & Communities**

MORPH strengthened cooperation and collaboration among agencies and organizations and made efforts to reach out to and work with marginalized and underserved communities. The results of these collaborative efforts are as follows:

- Community members and those who volunteer or work with marginalized and underserved communities indicated that efforts to reach out, engage, and support marginalized and underserved communities did have some success. This is clearly an area that will require ongoing commitment to continue to collectively build and strengthen relationships and trust, to support approaches that are community driven, and to find resources for community-identified strategies to address sexualized violence.
- The intentional collaboration to facilitate group programs helped to build capacity for ongoing sustainability and leadership of group programs. It also helped to build trust and strengthen cooperation and communication among the agencies involved.
- Participation in training events and discussion of MORPH updates at various interagency network meetings strengthened connections and information sharing related to sexualized violence. It also increased understanding of resources and services available and provided opportunities to learn more about the experience and perspectives of other organizations and agencies.
- The collaboration among the three active project partners involved sharing ideas and pooling resources to implement the project. This resulted in strengthened relationships and shared ownership of the work.
- MORPH enabled PSART members to meet on a more regular basis and to have a clear focus. Discussion of MORPH updates, the protocol review, and the asset mapping exercise strengthened relationships, connections, and communication among agencies around the table. Members affirmed and reaffirmed the commitment to collaborative work. They also identified the need to fully utilize partnerships in order to continue to strengthen their individual and collective response to sexualized violence, as well as to address potential threats to services and resources.

*I think this was done relatively well and I think those gaps are starting to close a bit and there is more inclusion in events.*

*Community Member*

Project partners, PSART members, co-facilitators, project staff, and community members who assisted with outreach to marginalized and underserved communities indicated they had built or strengthened relationships with MORPH and through MORPH. Almost all were satisfied or very satisfied with their involvement in MORPH and with project activities. They indicated an interest in continuing the cooperative and collaborative activities initiated through MORPH.

## 6. Recommendations

It is evident from the project outcomes that MORPH has generally met the overall purpose of the Community Support Network grant. It is crucial, however, to continue the momentum built through this project and to address needs identified. Those most involved with MORPH offered thoughtful suggestions for next steps which assisted with developing the following evaluation recommendations:

- Advocate for funding for continuation of the Navigator position. It has been demonstrated that this position is integral to the success of awareness, prevention, and the collective community response to sexualized violence. Specifically, the position supports information sharing and navigation, organization of group programs, education workshops, training opportunities, visibility strategies, and collaborative activities.
- Advocate for funding for a specialized therapeutic counsellor to address this gap in services, clearly articulated by individuals seeking services, service providers, and community members.
- Continue to provide training and education opportunities for agencies and communities to build and strengthen capacity to respond appropriately and effectively to survivors of sexualized violence. Build in cultural competency with diverse presenters to provide opportunities to hear their stories and experiences. Consider offering or advocating for trauma-informed training for all police, lawyers, Crown Prosecutors, judges, and teachers.
- With the program manuals developed through this program, continue to implement the Stage 1 groups for women, men, and youth and Stage 2 groups as identified. Support collaboration and co-facilitation in group delivery.
- Continue to collaborate with the schools in delivery of group programs and prevention programs focusing on consent, boundaries, and respect.
- Continue to build relationships with Pictou Landing First Nation and support strategies they identify as being helpful to addressing sexualized violence. Pending community decisions, this could include implementation of the “Mi’kmaw Community Engagement Toolkit on Sexual Violence” and programs for youth.
- Continue working with the African Nova Scotian community and consider developing partnerships with African Nova Scotian organizations and groups to identify needs and potential supports and services that will benefit the community.
- Continue outreach and collaboration with adults with intellectual disabilities and outreach to the LGBTQ2S+ community.
- Continue with using “MORPH” as the vehicle for sexualized violence prevention and response strategies and activities. MORPH has been effectively branded as an inclusive initiative where survivors, community members, and service providers can access a range of supports and services depending on their particular needs.

The Summary Evaluation Report was prepared by Peggy Mahon, MAdEd., Evaluator, May 2018.