

# Communities Connecting

Violence Prevention Newsletter

## Being United for A Better World for Women

Spring 2009

### Upcoming Events

The next Provincial Partnerships in Action meeting will be held at the Days Inn in Oromocto on **May 26-28, 2009**. The meeting will start at 1:00 p.m. on May 26 and end at noon on May 28. The theme of this session will be Women's Safety.

Check the **Silent Witness Project Hosting Schedule** on page 9.

#### **"Reducing Crime: Bridging the Gaps"** **April 15 & 16, 2009**

Fredericton, New Brunswick  
This conference is a learning opportunity, focusing on proven successes that bring together members of the community development and crime prevention fields.

This newsletter provides a forum for resource and information sharing – primarily between regional networks of the *Provincial Partnerships in Action* committee and other stakeholders invested in women's issues in New Brunswick. You, the readers, are also contributors as you have the opportunity to share new programs, community events and other information relating to women's issues and service provider wellness. Please take this opportunity to share this newsletter by forwarding it to others in your own networks!



### Family Violence Awareness Initiative

On February 13, in Miramichi, Public Legal Education and Information Service of New Brunswick in partnership with the Miramichi Family Violence Prevention Network launched a **Family Violence Awareness Initiative** called *Safer Families ... Safer Communities*. As the minister responsible for the Status of Women, I was invited that day to lend my voice and support to the development and pilot of a family violence awareness initiative. Regrettably I was unable to attend due to weather conditions.

I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate the Public Legal Education and Information Service of New Brunswick and the Miramichi Family Violence Prevention Network for spearheading this work and for their leadership. It is important to speak out on that violence against women and children is *not* okay ... is not to be tolerated ... is in, fact, wrong ... all the time and in all places, regardless of the circumstances.

Creating awareness is a cornerstone of all of our initiatives. Changing social attitudes and beliefs around violence against women is fundamental to ending such violence. This is a priority issue we will be working on over the next several years. I encourage everyone to make *Safer Families ... Safer Communities* the success it will be – and must be. The most vulnerable members of our society – women and children who have been abused – deserve no less.

Sincerely,

Minister Responsible for the Status of Women

# News from Women's Issues Branch

## We Heard You!



Do you ever wonder what happens to the feedback forms you fill out at the end of the PPA meetings? We want you to know that we read them all. They let us know what worked, what didn't work, what you liked and what you want to see in the future.

To ensure your comfort, we know there are some things we can improve on including the temperature and set up of the room. We will try to ensure that the translation is clear and the Power Point presentations are large enough for people to read. We will also make our best attempt to have all the materials in French and English. We understand these items would make things more enjoyable and more productive. Some people remarked that others were talking through the presentations – please keep this in mind and be respectful of the presenters and your colleagues.

Most people responded that they enjoy the self-care portions of our meetings – we'll make sure we keep this coming and will hopefully come up with an innovative idea for keeping ourselves healthy – mentally, physically and spiritually. Please do not hesitate to let us know what works for you – maybe it would be something that could work for the group!

So, what did you like best about the PPA meeting? Networking! You're right – these meetings are an opportunity to meet your counterparts around the province, have group discussions, share information, find out what others are doing and explore the challenges of providing service. Many enjoyed sitting with others they had not met before and appreciated that everyone was encouraged to take a turn reporting back to practice public speaking skills and to be an active participant. We'll do our best to facilitate networking at our next

meeting and make sure you have ample discussion time!

As for workshops and presentations, many of you enjoyed the Mental Health Presentation, and others suggested it would be helpful to have a presentation on Mental Health including the links to woman abuse. You expressed your interest and excitement with the Wage Gap initiative – hopefully we can keep you updated on this great work. The Silent Witness Project was well received and many enjoyed the brain storming session for the upcoming year of travelling for the Witnesses. In addition to having some of the Silent Witnesses present, many enjoy opening and closing of the meeting with "I'll Stand in the Rain". As requested, we will also try to keep you up to date on the Sexual Assault Strategy. And last but not least, most participants felt it was useful to assess their own biases when looking at diversity.

From our point of view, it was very rewarding to read your comments about how much you enjoyed the meetings and that you appreciate the work that went into it. We've been busy planning our next meeting, taking into consideration your feedback and we hope it will be just as rewarding as previous ones. Please keep your feedback coming, so we can make these meetings meaningful for you.

## Meet the Branch



Jennifer Kelly came to the Women's Issues Branch in January 2008 as an intern for the St. Thomas University Bachelor of Social Work Program. She has been employed with the branch since April 2008 as a Research and Planning Officer in the Violence Prevention initiatives Unit. Jennifer actively participates on various committees and brings her passion and dedication to women's issues to the table. She is facilitating the next Provincial Partnerships in Action Committee meeting – planning is underway; is instrumental in bringing the Women and Girls at Risk Committee together to begin the development of a strategic framework; works on the Violence Prevention newsletters as well as the Violence Prevention Unit website; and lastly, she is responsible for processing the *Moving Forward* Children's Program renewals. Jennifer has always been interested in women's equality and social justice in general as well as environmentalism. All her qualities and knowledge make her a wonderful team member to the Unit.

Prior to returning to university for her Social Work degree, she studied Philosophy and Psychology at the University of New Brunswick. Jennifer took time off school and work to start a family of her own (2 kids-ages 5 and 6). She loves to be outdoors; and also dancing, music, cuisine and reading (especially with her children). If you have not had a chance to meet or talk to Jennifer, give her a call or drop her an email.

# What's New? *Highlights from the Violence Prevention Unit*

The Violence Prevention Unit, within the Women's Issues Branch, continues to implement the commitments of a Better WORLD for Women: Moving Forward 2005-2010 action plan. The following are the updates at a glance:

- The Outreach Program and Intervention Program for Children Exposed to Woman Abuse and their Mothers funding applications were submitted to the Women's Issues Branch and are being processed. We thank the organizations for their continued hard work.
- The Community Action Fund program funded many initiatives on violence prevention across the province. Close to \$ 55,000 was awarded for these projects for fiscal year 2008-2009.
- The last Provincial Partnerships in Action three-day workshop took place November 4-6, 2008 in Edmundston. The theme of the workshop was "Assessing and Transcending our Biases" to explore why it's important to look at our biases and their impact on women and the work we do. Thank you to all the participants and presenters.
- Colour, a marketing and communication firm, has been hired to support the Women's Issues Branch in association with the Violence Against Women Public Awareness Campaign Steering Committee in the development of a public awareness campaign framework. An initiative that will serve to drive awareness and shift behaviours associated with violence against women.
- "Women and Girls at Risk" Committee, co-chaired by the Women's Issues Branch and the Department of Public Safety with representation from government and community stakeholders, wrapped up its work in

February. The mandate of this committee was to map out a coordinated approach while identifying ways to streamline services and supports that currently exist and to identify future areas of investment. Their contribution will be furthered as a strategic framework is formalized in the coming months.

- There have been changes at the Women's Issues Branch. Suzanne Blaney Tremblay left the branch in January to start a new job at the Department of Public Safety as a policy analyst. We would like to thank Suzanne for her good work, dedication and commitment to violence prevention and wish her success in her new role. The branch sure misses her. As we said goodbye to Suzanne, the Violence Prevention Unit welcomed two additional members to the planning team. Sara Mitchell and Lindsay Manuel joined the unit as a project officer and a research and planning officer respectively.



## Sonja's Corner



### Introduction of the Senior Policy Coordinator on Aboriginal Women's Issues

My name is Sonja Perley. I started working at the Women's Issues Branch on January 12, 2009 as the Senior Policy Coordinator

on Aboriginal Women's Issues. I was born and raised on the Tobique First Nation in New Brunswick. I attended St. Thomas University and received both a Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Social Work Degree. I recently completed my Masters Degree in Education at UNB concentrating my research on First Nations issues specifically the representation and participation of First Nations women in online media forms.

I have worked in various capacities with New Brunswick First Nations as a Child Protection worker to an Aboriginal Human Resources Coordinator. As a Senior Policy Coordinator my primary focus will be working on actions to implement some of the priority

recommendations outlined in the "Strategic Framework to End Violence against Wabanaki Women in New Brunswick" developed in collaboration between the Women's Issues Branch and the New Brunswick Advisory Committee on Violence against Aboriginal Women.

If anyone has information to share or an event to post, please contact me:

[Sonja Perley](#)

Senior Policy Coordinator on Aboriginal Women's Issues

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# Newsbytes from the Wage Gap Reduction Initiative

## Pay Equity work begins for Transition House Workers -

The provincial government, in the *Charter for Change* framework, made a commitment to implement a pay equity program targeting Transition House workers, Second Stage House workers and Community Outreach workers. Information sessions were provided in various regions across the province, and consultation has now begun with transition house workers. For more information, visit <http://www.gnb.ca/0012/womens-issues/wg-es/pe/transition-e.asp>

**Newsletters** for Child Care Staff and Home Support Workers are available online.

**Wage Gap Action Plan Scholarships due May 31** – Learn more about the Wage Gap Action Plan Scholarships for training in a non-traditional field. Visit [www.nbcc.ca](http://www.nbcc.ca)

**Promo Cards promoting career exploration, non-traditional careers and wage gap scholarships now available** – Promo cards for youth are now available in schools and for download online. The series of promo cards provide links to

the NB Career Surf Website while raising awareness of non-traditional careers for women and men, and our Wage Gap Action Plan Scholarships.

**Subscribe to the NB Career Surf e-newsletter** by emailing us at [cs-info-nc@gnb.ca](mailto:cs-info-nc@gnb.ca) with 'SUBSCRIBE Career Surf e-newsletter' in the subject line. Visit the website – [www.gnb.ca/youth](http://www.gnb.ca/youth) (Click NB Career Surf).

**For more information on the Wage Gap Reduction Initiative and its programs, click [www.gnb.ca/wagegap](http://www.gnb.ca/wagegap).**

## In the Loop

### La Fondation Muriel McQueen Fergusson Foundation Public Service Announcement:

#### Muriel McQueen Fergusson Foundation call for award nominations

*The Muriel McQueen Fergusson Foundation is calling for nominations for the Muriel McQueen Fergusson Foundation Award.*

The Award was created in 1992 to recognize outstanding contributions toward eliminating family violence. In the name of the recipient, the Foundation will make a donation to a registered charity of the recipient's choice, whose objectives further the goals of the Foundation.

Individuals, organizations or corporations whose achievements have advanced the elimination of family violence are eligible for nomination.

**All nominations for the award must be received by March 20, 2009**

Past award recipients include:

1993	June Callwood
1994	Dr. Peter Jaffe
1995	Hon. Margaret Norrie McCain
1996	Sister Cecile Renault (Posthumously)
1997	Dr. Donald Dutton
1998	AMaking Waves@
1999	The Body Shop Canada
2000	Fredericton Sexual Assault Crisis Centre
2001	Dr. Sandra Byers
2002	Rina Arseneault
2003	Canadian Red Cross RespectED Program
2004	Senator Sharon Carstairs and Margaret Newall, Founding Members of Prairieaction Foundation (PAF)

2005	Hourable Margaret-Ann Blaney "A better world for women"
2006	Penny Ericson
2007	Madeleine Delaney- LeBlanc
2008	Bernard Richard

The award will be presented at the Foundation's 2009 Award Ceremony this spring.

For more information please visit our website: <http://mmff.ca/en/award.php>

For additional information on application procedures, please contact:

Muriel McQueen Fergusson Foundation  
P.O. Box 50 000  
Phone: (506) 472-5085  
Fredericton, NB  
Fax: (506) 472-5084  
E3B 6C2  
[mmff@unb.ca](mailto:mmff@unb.ca)

## The Beauséjour Family Crisis Resource Centre

**The Beauséjour Family Crisis Resource Centre** in Shediac and the region's outreach worker organized several activities this year. Here is an overview, which we would like to share with you:

**Presentations given in the community on spousal abuse, family violence, healthy relationships and the services offered at the Centre:**

#### Schools:

- Université de Moncton social work course: Femmes et



changements sociaux (Women and social change)

- Course to develop social skills, given by the Department of Social Development
- Family violence course, UNB
- Presentation on healthy relationships, given to all Grade 10 students at Louis-J.-Robichaud high school
- Presentation given to Grade 10 students at Louis-J.-Robichaud high school, followed by the presentation on healthy relationships and screening of the video *Un amour assassin (A Love That Kills)*
- Family relationships course, Louis-J.-Robichaud high school

#### Businesses:

- Two presentations for UPS employees
- Presentation for Aliant employees

#### Government agencies:

- Booth for DSS Staff Wellness Day (retirement benefits)
- Presentation given to staff of the Shediac post office

#### Other:

- Presentation given as part of the Marriage Preparation course
- Two presentations given to the employees of Villa Providence

## An overview of the Northwest...

The staff of the Comité de la violence familiale du Nord-Ouest, Inc. (North-West Family Violence Committee Inc.)



Julie Lizotte, sexual assault services coordinator, Martine Thériault, outreach services worker, and Mélanie St-Onge, coordinator of Moving Forward, are proud to present the new CVFNO banner.

Julie Lizotte, with the support of the members of the **Réseau communautaire Nord-Ouest - Réponse au problème de l'agression sexuelle** (Northwest community network - Response to sexual assault) sub-committee, and with local funding, is working on implementing the project to extend services. Consequently, a community forum will be held in the spring, and discussions are under way regarding the implementation of a help line for victims of sexual assault. The CVFNO is proud to encourage and support this program because sexual violence has devastating impacts on women, their families, and the entire community.

Mélanie St-Onge, with the support of the members of the **Moving Forward** subcommittee, will offer community groups for children exposed to woman abuse starting in February 2009. In addition, in cooperation with Denise Nadeau, Mélanie is working on setting up a series of nine free workshops on personal growth for women victims of sexual abuse who wish to start the healing process. The workshops, entitled **Le pouvoir d'y croire** (The power to believe), will begin in February 2009. Martine Thériault, **outreach services worker**, is offering support services for women who are victims of violence. As 2009 promises to be very busy because these women are seeking more and more help and the service is growing in popularity, the CVFNO will increase the number of hours for outreach services to 40 as of April. In fact, demand for Martine's services nearly tripled in January compared with the preceding months, confirming the need for a full-time outreach services worker in the region.

Providing support and assistance for women and their families will remain the priority for the CVFNO for 2009-2010.

The offices of the North-West Family Violence Committee, Inc. are located in the Édifice Maillet building in Saint-Basile.

For further information about our services, contact:  
Martine 263-0888 [Martine.th@live.ca](mailto:Martine.th@live.ca)  
Mélanie 263-1119 [melanielstonge@hotmail.com](mailto:melanielstonge@hotmail.com)  
Julie 263-8868 [julie.lizotte@hotmail.com](mailto:julie.lizotte@hotmail.com)

# Victim Services Celebrated Milestone Anniversary

Victim Services provides a range of services to victims who come in contact with the criminal justice system. New Brunswick's Department of Public Safety's Victim Services is the oldest in Canada and celebrated twenty-five years of service in 2008. To commemorate this milestone anniversary, a number of activities and services occurred.

In April, a TV commercial promoting Victim Services was launched at a lovely reception held at Government House. Representatives of the non-government partner agencies and organizations which included Executive Council Office - Women's Issues Branch, received certificates of recognition, to show gratitude for the continued support given to Victim Services throughout the province. Following the reception, a staff appreciation dinner was held at the Delta Hotel.

Victim Services arranged for Dr. Jacqueline Campbell from John Hopkins University to come and train staff on Danger Lethality Assessments for domestic violence cases. Last fall, Victim Services hosted the Federal/Provincial Territorial Working Group of Victims of Crime held in Saint John. In December, a DVD was developed and launched entitled, "You're Not Alone" to assist adolescent victims and their families. Services are continually enhanced to meet the ongoing needs of New Brunswick's crime victims.

*Below is a group picture taken in the music room of Government House. Back Row: Anne-Marie Hood, Anne Richard, Theresa Higgins, Manon Breau-Sivret, Margot Albert, Marc Léger, Hon. John Foran, Brenda Thomas, Eva LeBlanc, Denise Dupéré, Staphan Comeau, David McLean, Jackie Ferguson. Seated: Linda Blacquièrre, Nancy Feeney Barrett, Sophie Pelletier, Joan Despres, Gabrielle Maillet, Tracy Ozark, Marisa Pelkey. Absent: Lisa Godin and Rhonda Flewelling.*



## NEWS FROM THE PROVINCIAL STRATEGY ON SEXUAL ASSAULT SERVICES

### Provincial Sexual Assault Awareness Campaign



The Provincial Strategy on Sexual Assault Services recently launched a provincial awareness campaign encouraging everyone to talk about sexual assault. The campaign is called "Let's Talk About It" and its Web site is [www.lets-talk-about-it.ca](http://www.lets-talk-about-it.ca).

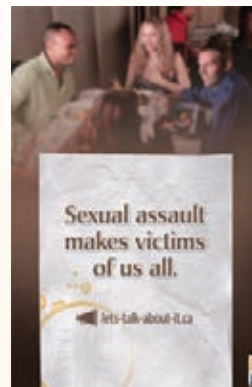
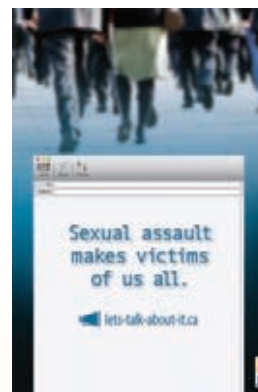
The central message of this campaign is that sexual assault harms individuals, their family and friends, and society as a whole. Therefore each and every member of a community will be affected by this at some point in their life. In other words, sexual assault makes victims of us all.

It's difficult to say how many people in New Brunswick are affected by sexual assault because few people come forward and talk about it for fear of causing family discord, of not being believed, or for fear of retribution. The Provincial Strategy on Sexual Assault Services wants to dispel the myths and misconceptions associated with sexual assault by making it socially acceptable to talk about it. It is essential to keep the dialogue open and make it easier for those affected by sexual assault to step forward and seek the help that's there for them. The more people talk about sexual assault, the more we can counteract the shame, the guilt, victim blaming and fear that is often associated with it.

The campaign, launched on February 17, 2009 consists of TV and radio ads, billboards, transit signs, etc. throughout the province. The **violence prevention networks** across NB are participating in the provincial awareness campaign using many of the campaign materials and also by holding their own activities in conjunction with the provincial campaign. Community network representatives also participated in Media 101, Spokesperson Training and Action Planning workshops in January 2009 to prepare them for them for the roll out of the campaign.

The campaign was designed by Bristol – a leading communications and marketing firm with offices throughout Atlantic Canada – during its annual FreeThink event. FreeThink is a 24-hour work-a-thon the company holds once a year to help out charities that could not otherwise afford to benefit from their expertise in the fields of communications, marketing and online.

Samples of the posters:



## Sexual Assault Crisis Intervention Training (SACIT)

The Fredericton Sexual Assault Crisis Centre (FSACC) in collaboration with the *Provincial Strategy on Sexual Assault Services* and *Branching Out* project has delivered three successful training sessions in sexual assault crisis intervention in September, October and November 2008. This training, delivered in both French and English, is based on the successful volunteer training program at FSACC, is delivered during a five day session presenting such topics as: the societal context of sexual violence, medical and legal issues related to sexual assault, and sexual assault crisis intervention and counselling. In keeping with the provincial strategy's goal to build community capacity, the fifth day provides training on facilitation so that those trained can return to their communities to train others as sexual assault crisis interveners.

As a result of the three original SACI training sessions, sexual assault crisis interveners have been trained in the Acadian Peninsula and will soon be trained in Saint John, Sussex and Moncton.

For more information on Sexual Assault Crisis Intervention Training, contact Jenn Richard, Anglophone Community Facilitator at 452-6986 or [j.richard@nb.aibn.com](mailto:j.richard@nb.aibn.com) or Magali Berthiaume, Francophone Community Facilitator at 850-0566 [m.berthiaume@nb.aibn.com](mailto:m.berthiaume@nb.aibn.com).

# Silent Witness Project

## HOSTING SCHEDULE

### 2008-2009

<b>October 2008</b>	<b>November 2008</b>
Hosting organization: <b>CAAR</b> Location: <b>Moncton</b>	Hosting organization: <b>MMFF</b> Location: <b>Fredericton</b>
<b>December 2008</b>	<b>January 2009</b>
Hosting organization: ( <b>DEDICATION CEREMONY</b> ) <b>Women's Committee, Moncton and District Labour Council</b>  Location: <b>Moncton - December 6<sup>th</sup></b> (one day only – 3 silhouettes for remembrance event and Pam Alexander dedication)	Hosting organization: Location:
<b>February 2009</b>	<b>March 2009</b>
Hosting organization: <b>Miramichi Family Violence Prevention Network</b>  Location: <b>Miramichi</b>	Hosting organization: <b>Restigouche Family Crisis Intevenors</b>  Location: <b>Restigouche Gallery – Campbellton,</b>
<b>April 2009</b>	<b>May 2009</b>
Hosting organization: <b>L'Escale Madavic</b>  Location: <b>Edmundston</b>	Hosting organization: <b>Table de concertation pour contrer la violence conjugal et familiale dans la PA</b>  Location: <b>Péninsule acadienne</b>
<b>June 2009</b>	<b>July 2009</b>
Hosting organization: <b>Table de concertation pour contrer la violence conjugal et familiale dans la PA</b>  Location: <b>Péninsule acadienne</b>	Hosting organization: Location:
<b>August 2009</b>	<b>September 2009</b>
Hosting organization: Location:	Hosting organization: Location:
<b>October 2009</b>	<b>November 2009</b>
Hosting organization: <b>CAAR</b> Location: <b>Moncton</b>	Hosting organization: <b>Muriel McQueen Fergusson Foundation</b> Location: <b>Fredericton</b>
<b>December 2009</b>	
Hosting organization: <b>Patricia Owens, Coordonnatrice, Table de concertation pour contrer la violence conjugale et familiale dans la Péninsule acadienne Inc.</b>  Location: <b>Péninsule acadienne</b>	

# Wellness - *Laughter is the Best Medicine*

When is the last time you laughed? I mean a real belly laugh. Think about how you felt afterward. It felt great, didn't it?

We have heard that laughing is good for the soul, but it turns out that it is good for our bodies as well; there are physiological benefits to laughter. Studies have shown that laughter produces healthy or positive emotions and exposure to laughter can improve and strengthen your immune system. In both anticipation of humour and after exposure to humour, "stress" hormones were generally decreased. In addition to stress hormones being decreased, so is dopamine which is associated with elevated blood pressure.

Laughing is a cardiovascular workout which some liken to "internal jogging". It is also a wonderful aerobic workout for the diaphragm and increases the body's use of oxygen. Many experts believe that laughter can reduce pain and aid in the healing process. Another benefit of laughing is muscle relaxation.

After a good laugh, we can often think more clearly, be more creative, release emotional pain, see the bigger picture, have a deep connection with other human beings, draw ourselves into the present and increase intellectual performance and information retention. It sounds like we should be laughing much more than we currently do - imagine how productive we could be!

How can you use laughter in your work? Laughter helps connect us with other people. Sharing a laugh with a client can be a "bonding" moment and can help our client feel like we're on the same team. Sometimes our laughter is contagious and our client might catch it. Although they might not feel they have anything to laugh about, laughing just feels good. Will laughing change someone's situation or the challenges they may face? Of course not, but it might help how they deal with them.

Sometimes we use humour in crisis situations to provide perspective and to help us deal with emotional turmoil. However, we must remember that some people in crisis find it difficult to differentiate their feelings about the crisis from their personal identity, so we have to make sure humour is not experienced as insensitivity. Generally, the greater the distance between the individual and the crisis, the more likely humour will be therapeutic and not taken personally. We don't want someone to feel laughed at; we want someone to experience the benefits of laughing.

If you feel you have nothing to laugh at then "fake it until you make it". Even a fake or forced laugh can bring about positive

physiological effects and what's even better; it can lead to real laughter. And who doesn't want to have a good laugh. Try it now – laugh – go ahead. Now did you just laugh because you're laughing? I hope so!

And remember – If you are too busy to laugh, you are too busy. If you want more information, check out these websites:

<http://www.teehee.com/>

<http://www.laughtertherapy.com>

[http://www.holistic-online.com/Humor\\_Therapy/humor\\_therapy.htm](http://www.holistic-online.com/Humor_Therapy/humor_therapy.htm)

<http://www.rire-et-sante.com/>

<http://www.ecolederire.com/sante.htm>



# Outreach Corner



## GIRLS CIRCLE

Family Violence Outreach of Charlotte County in partnership with the Children's Support Worker of Fundy Region Transition House, Charlotte County Boys & Girls Club and Milltown Elementary School ran its first Girls Circle group entitled "Friendship" to 9 elementary school girls ages 9-11.

Girls Circle is a model of structured support groups for girls from 9-18 years. It is designed to foster self-esteem, help girls maintain authentic connection with peers and adult women in their community, counter trends toward self-doubt, and allow for genuine self-expression through verbal sharing and creative activity.

Each week, a group of six to ten girls of similar age and development meet with a facilitator for a couple of hours. During this time the girls take turns talking and listening to one another about their concerns and interests. The girls can express themselves further through creative or focused activities such as role playing, drama, journaling, poetry, movement, drawing, collage, clay, and computer and so on. Oftentimes, themes are introduced which relate to the girls' lives- such as being a girl, trusting ourselves, friendships, body image, goals, competition, and decision making.

To participate, girls need only to have the desire, make a commitment to attend meetings, and agree to follow the circle guidelines; no put downs or interruptions, offer experiences – not advice; keep the focus on oneself; and keep what's said in the group private. Girls are free to share at their own pace. Through listening and respect for themselves and others, participants can reflect on and express their own their own thoughts and feelings with peers. The Girls Circle does not aim to provide advice, but encourages girls to share experiences that are helpful to one another.

When girls voice their ideas and opinions in a safe environment, it strengthens their confidence and encourages them to express themselves more fully. By examining cultural expectations in a safe and supportive setting, girls gain greater awareness of their

options and strengthen their ability to make choices that are consistent with their values, interests and talents.

The Girls Circle model has been applied to programs in areas such as, schools, peer leadership, health education, economic literacy, outdoor adventure, positive youth development, athletics, pregnancy prevention, boys and girls clubs, scouting groups, school advisory groups, gang-prevention and substance abuse prevention - wherever girls come together!

The Girls Circle purpose it to encourage the development of strength, courage, confidence, honesty, and communication skills for girls. Our goal is to enhance girls' abilities so they are able to take full advantage of their talents, academic interests and healthy relationships with peers.

Girls Circle will hold its next eight week program to middle school girls grades 6-8. Two consecutive groups will be held at the St. Stephen Middle School entitled "Body Image" and "Being A Girl" beginning the second week of January 2009. A third group is anticipated to begin in May of 2009. This group will be offered to teen moms who attend high school.

The Girls Circle model and materials can easily be adapted and used for women's groups as well. Training in Girls Circle will be offered in April of 2009 in St. Stephen, New Brunswick. Participants may register for this training at [www.girlscircle.com](http://www.girlscircle.com) or call Vicki Cosgrove, Family Violence Outreach Coordinator at 466-4842 for more information.