

Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women's Health
'Social and Economic Inclusion Project' Workshop

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the last several years, the social and economic situation of many women, children and communities in Atlantic Canada has worsened. In an effort to address some of the key issues that have resulted in this decline, the Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women's Health embarked on a project entitled the 'Social and Economic Inclusion Project'. This project focuses on identifying the key social and economic issues facing women, children and communities in Atlantic Canada; fostering links, networks and partnerships across research community sectors throughout Atlantic Canada; developing an understanding of what is happening in Atlantic Canada in regards to policy development approaches; and building on this work to develop healthy public policy.

As part of the 'Social and Economic Inclusion Project', Women's Network PEI was asked to host a workshop focused on social and economic exclusion/inclusion. The workshop was designed to increase awareness of the dynamics of social and economic exclusion, and the costs of exclusion; expose participants to the principles/practices of social inclusion and the benefits of inclusionary policies and procedures; and provide participants with the opportunity to reflect on the issues and network with others interested in topic.

With social and economic inclusion being a concern for so many community groups and government sectors on PEI, a wide variety of organizations and individuals (80) were invited to attend the workshop. Overall, 34 people attended with good representation from various community organizations and government sectors - e.g. Anderson House, AIDS PEI, Council of Disabled, DAWN, Regional Cooperation Development Centre, Federation of Labor, Cooper Institute, PEI Citizen Advocacy, etc.

The workshop was started with a welcome address from Laurie Ann McCardle, Executive Director of Women's Network PEI, and a presentation from Dr. Ron Colman, founder and executive director of GPI Atlantic. Dr. Colman discussed in-depth the costs of social and economic exclusion, and the benefits of being socially and economically inclusive. He also discussed some of the problems with the measurements we currently use to measure economic and social growth; the Genuine Progress Index; social and economic trends in Canada; the various populations most at risk of social and economic exclusion; and the

social and economic successes of PEI.

After Dr. Colman's presentation, Linda Snyder from the Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women's Health, Marie Burge of Cooper Institute, Susan Birt from the Department of Health and Social Services, and Julie Devon-Dodd of the Circle of Prevention project each provided a short presentation outlining the work they do, and how their organizations are working towards social and economic inclusive practices and policies.

Upon completion of the presentations, a small group activity was carried out to provide workshop participants with the opportunity apply what they learned to a practical situation; discuss issues of social and economic exclusion and inclusion; and network with others. Workshop participants were divided into six groups of 4-6 people, and given one of three case scenarios focused on women living in abusive relationships. Each small group was asked to review their individual case scenario, and answer questions on how the woman outlined in the scenario was being excluded, reasons for exclusion, and changes that could be made in government policies/programs and at the community level to help achieve social and economic inclusion. Each group was then asked to present their top three priorities to the whole group.

At the end of the workshop, all participants were asked to complete an evaluation questionnaire. Overall, the evaluation findings were very positive. All participants that completed the evaluation noted that they enjoyed participating in the workshop, felt the workshop was well organized and facilitated, and were satisfied with the type of information shared at the workshop. Most workshop participants also indicated that the workshop helped increase their awareness of the dynamics of social and economic exclusion (93%), the cost of social and economic exclusion (93%), and the benefits of social and economic inclusive practices and principles (96%); exposed them to the principles of social and economic inclusion (90%); and helped them better understand some of the challenges of working towards social and economic inclusion (81%). In addition, the majority of participants noted that participating in the workshop made them more aware of what other organizations on PEI are doing in regards to social and economic inclusion (85%), and introduced them to useful tools and information on social and economic inclusion (86%).

As far as workshop participation, the majority of workshop participants noted that they felt comfortable sharing their thoughts and ideas (96%), and had adequate opportunity to participate in the workshop (96%). They also felt that the workshop provided them with

good opportunities to network with others interested in, and concerned about, issues related to social and economic inclusion (96%).