

ANNUAL REPORT

2022

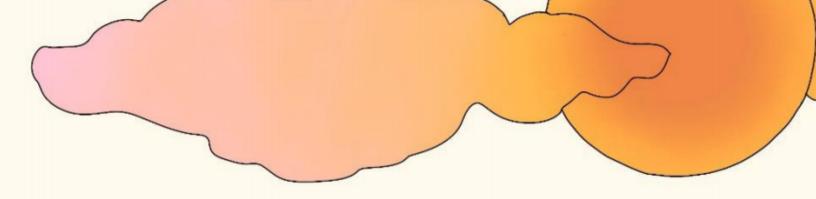


WHERE WE ARE

Wellness Within recognizes it works in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People who have lived on, cared for, and protected this land for over 13,500 years. This territory is covered by the Peace and Friendship Treaties, which were first signed with the British Crown in 1726. The treaties did not include the surrender of lands and resources, but recognized Mi'kmaq and Welastekwiyik (Maliseet) title and established the rules for what was to be an ongoing relationship between nations. We call on all people to read the 94 calls to action as outlined by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and to act to meet these calls. We are all treaty people.



Wellness Within recognizes that African Nova Scotians and Indigenous Blacks are distinct peoples with collective rights tied to over 52 communities in Nova Scotia. For over 400 years, these communities have enriched and contributed to the province's culture, heritage, and history. Throughout this period, African Nova Scotians have faced ongoing inequalities due to systemic racism in Nova Scotia that persist to this day. We are committed to supporting Black communities and actively working towards rectifying the inequities and injustices that exist.



WHO WE ARE

Wellness Within (WW) is a registered non-profit organization that advocates for prison abolition and provides support to women, gender diverse and trans individuals who have experienced criminalization and are pregnant or parenting young children in Nova Scotia. The group began working together in 2012 and we served our first incarcerated client in 2014. WW's 90+ members include formerly incarcerated people, doulas, health care providers, lawyers, students, researchers, and mentors. WW volunteers have security clearance to provide support at the Nova Institution for Women Federal Prison, the Central Nova Scotia Correctional Facility Provincial jail, the Nova Scotia Youth Facility and in the community. WW works in partnership with the Chebucto Family Centre, the Elizabeth Fry Societies of Cape Breton and Mainland Nova Scotia, Coverdale Courtwork Society, East Coast Prison Justice and other community organizations across the province to protect human rights for people experiencing criminalization.



2.

WHAT WE DO

SERVICE

WW supports individual clients who have experienced criminalization or are currently incarcerated while pregnant or parenting young children. WW facilitates workshops twice a month on health and parenting issues with people incarcerated at the Central Nova Scotia Correctional Facility in Dartmouth.

EDUCATION

WW leads seminars for health professionals and students and speaks publicly to raise consciousness of the rights and reproductive health experiences of people who experience criminalization. WW sees criminalization through a health lens and aims to improve general understanding of how health intersects with the experience of criminalization, and how this process can be redressed.

ADVOCACY

WW advocates for access to housing, income, resources, and health care for criminalized women, gender diverse and transgender people. Our advocacy campaigns emphasize the need to develop alternatives to incarceration to advance reproductive justice.

RESEARCH

Women, gender diverse and transgender people who have experienced criminalization face barriers to access access to basic health services inside and outside carceral facilities. There is a gap in evidence about these issues and WW collaborates to conduct research that generates evidence to guide clinical practice and policy development.

Art: Julia Hutt



A Message from the Chair

2022 was another huge year for Wellness Within. Our members and volunteers showed up for us as they always do. Members published papers in academic journals (for example submissions from our 2021 Annual Conference were featured as a special section of the *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons* (Vol. 31, no.2)); our doulas continued to support clients; we trained cohorts of Indigenous Doulas; we organized an absolutely stellar conference in November under the banner "Pathways to Community Care and Collective Liberation"; and we made crucial submissions with our partners at Avalon Sexual Assault Centre and the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund to Nova Scotia's Mass Casualty Commission.

Our Board saw huge changes in 2022 with two new Doctors (PhDs) in our midst. Dr. El Jones and Dr. Martha Paynter published books of their own in 2022. Dr. Jones's Abolitionist Intimacies and Dr. Paynter's Abortion to Abolition: Reproductive Health and Justice in Canada serve as signposts for our collective action and remind us of the importance of the individuals behind the work we do. El and Martha's works deftly place empathy at the centre of our work. They reposition the narrative and readjust the focus to the individuals, celebrating their successes and their individual places in the movement. Cheers to you both; we are so proud.

As 2023 begins, I want to thank our donors, members and, most notably, our volunteers for their contributions to the work of Wellness Within. We wouldn't exist without you.

In solidarity,

Claire Rillie, Chair



As part of our core educational mandate, WW works with community partners to host doula training for systemically excluded people including Black, Indigenous and queer people. Doulas are non-clinical support people for the perinatal period including prenatal education, labour and delivery, and newborn care and feeding. The research evidence demonstrates the presence of a doula improves patient outcomes and satisfaction. However, there are very few doulas in certain communities such as Black, Indigenous and queer communities.

We have worked in partnership with the Elizabeth Fry Society of Cape Breton, the Mi'kmaq Legal Support Network (MLSN) of Eskasoni First Nation, the Mi'kmaq Child Development Centre, Paqtnkek First Nation, Nova Scotia Public Interest Research Group, Tegan and Sara Foundation, the Community of Black Nurses Students and Promoting Leadership in health for African Nova Scotians to host doula trainings with these communities in the past few years.



2022 Doula Trainings

MCDC Indigenous Training - May 5-6 & 12-13, 2022 Chebucto Family Centre - June 2, 3,4 and 5, 2022 Cape Breton - November 5, 6, 19 and 20, 2022



ANNUAL CONFERENCE:

PATHWAYS TO COMMUNITY CARE AND COLLECTIVE LIBERATION

9 November 2022

Presentations

- Dr. Justin Piché, <u>University of Ottawa</u> How and Why the Canadian Carceral State is Building Cages, Instead of Communities: A Case for Decarceral Futures
- Dr. Lorie Goshin, Housing Works Housing as an alternative to incarceration
- Dr. Jen Peirce, Post-Doc, <u>University of Toronto Centre for Criminology and Sociolegal</u> <u>Studies</u> Measuring prison conditions and perceptions of fairness through research
- Emma Halpern, Elizabeth Fry Society of Mainland Nova Scotia Banning drycelling
- Emilie Coyle, <u>Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies (CAEFS)</u> Banning drycelling
- Emma Cameron, <u>Centre for Sex and Gender Health Equity</u> Migrant justice as reproductive justice: Global structural violence and its impact on the sexual and reproductive health outcomes of refugee and asylum-seeking women
- Dr. Alana Cattapan, <u>University of Waterloo</u> & Dr. Holly McKenzie, <u>University of Saskatchewan</u> Child welfare, Carcerality, and Mobilizing Change in Saskatchewan
- Sara Tessier, <u>Northpine Foundation/Coverdale</u> Advancing Coverdale through investment
- Kristina Fifield, <u>Avalon Sexual Assault Centre</u> Alternatives to police response to gender violence
- Dr. Lianne Yoshida, NSWCC Abortion Access in Nova Scotia: Serving the Underserved
- Paula Pinzón Hernández, <u>Contraception and Abortion Research Team, UBC</u> Abortion Access for Incarcerated People
- <u>Melissa McLetchie</u>, York University Fighting For Love: Prison Families, Resistance, and State Violence
- Dr. Martha Paynter, UNB: The Contemporary Landscape for Abortion Access

Junior Artist In Residence

Aleemah Thompson

Reading

Dr. El Jones reading from Abolitionist Intimacies in conversation with special guests.

Art: Aleemah Thompson



Queer perinatal health care and doula support

In collaboration with NSPIRG, we conducted interviews with key stakeholders in the field of queer perinatal health, including participants in our Queer Doula Training program, with the aim of understanding priorities for key queer community stakeholders to address the needs of queer patients/families and to identify potential roles for doula support in improving care. Analysis is complete and a manuscript is under review.

Identifying abortion access barriers and facilitators for people in prison

We conducted a scoping review, a geospatial analysis, and a policy review in order to identify existing barriers and facilitators for people in prison. Results of the scoping review and mapping project have been published and the policy review is under analysis. Results of all three projects were shared at the National Abortion Federation Annual Conference and the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada Annual Scientific Meeting.

Community based models of healthcare for formerly incarcerated people

We published the results of a scoping review identifying different types of transitional, community-based health interventions for formerly incarcerated women, trans and nonbinary people.



Incarceration Violates Reproductive Autonomy

Canada has one of the highest incarceration rates in the Western world.\(^1\)
Incarceration is founded on colonialism and racism\(^2\) Black people, Indigenous people, newcomers to Canada, people with disabilities, and 2SLGBTQIA+
communities are hyper-criminalized and hyper-incarcerated.



Incarceration violates reproductive autonomy through:

- Denial of and barriers to care People in prisons designated for women report being denied access to basic reproductive care.³
- Prisons are often in rural areas, creating geographic barriers to care. Exposure to sexual violence
- People in prisons are subject to personal (strip) searches and are at increased risk of sexual assault.²
- 3 Separation from children People in prisons are separated from their families, children, and communities, causing intergenerational harm. ^{1,6}
- Delay and disruption of fertility

 Being in prison prevents people from forming families and having children when they are ready.

INCARCERATION VIOLATES REPRODUCTIVE AUTONOMY

Our 2023 Reproductive Justice Intern, Aishwarya Heran, created a poster infographic about how incarceration violates reproductive autonomy.

TOOLKIT FOR DOULAS

This project was led by Carrie Low, an accomplished and acclaimed advocate for survivor's rights in the criminal justice system in Nova Scotia.



All publications available at wellnesswithinns.org/publications

WORLD JUNIOR ICE HOCKEY CHAMPIONSHIP AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Wellness Within is concerned about lack of public education, preventative action and victim support to address the potential increased risk of sexual violence in our communities during the World Junior Ice Hockey Championship. The lack of accountability shown in response to prior incidents of sexual violence associated with men's hockey is alarming and demonstrates lack of willingness to address past, current and future systemic harm.

Sexual violence results in trauma with intergenerational consequences. It is a root cause of criminalization and social exclusion in our society. The vast majority of incarcerated women have experienced sexual assault.

In response to the potential increased risk of harm, there should be increased resourcing of supports for victims and extensive public education about what sexual assault and consent really mean.

It is critical that the public know the contact number for the SANE (Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner) Program in Nova Scotia is 902-425-0122. The number is staffed 24/7. Victims can also present at their closest Emergency Department for treatment and to be connected to a SANE nurse.

Hockey and men's sporting events are an opportunity to educate men and boys about their individual and collective responsibilities for preventing sexual violence. The International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF), Hockey Canada, Hockey Nova Scotia and individual teams must acknowledge the need for and dedicate resources to education and violence prevention.

WELLNESS WITHIN DEMANDS IMMEDIATE REMOVAL OF HRP FROM SUPERSTORE LOCATIONS

Wellness Within is deeply troubled by recent reports of armed Halifax Regional Police officers patrolling Superstore locations across the city. The outsourcing of publicly funded policing resources to private, for-profit corporations is misguided, dangerous and unnecessary. Wellness Within demands the immediate removal of armed officers from local grocery stores and demands transparency from HRP on their extra-duty programs. The addition of armed officers is an act of intimidation that comes as the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly increased food costs, food insecurity, and police presence, causing additional risk and stress for women, trans, nonbinary and racialized Nova Scotians.

In 2019, Nova Scotia had the highest share of severe food insecurity at 4.6 percent of persons. This was higher than the national average of 3.2 percent of persons experiencing severe food insecurity.

Policing in Canada is founded on colonialism and is characterized by racism, misogyny and homophobia/transphobia. Since 2020, there has been a significant increase of police presence nationally in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In Halifax in 2020, Santina Rao was violently arrested in front of her children at a local Walmart store. In response to her arrest, Wellness Within released demands for gender sensitivity in arrests. Grocery shopping is itself a gendered activity, with women therefore more likely than men to face police intimidation.

As noted in January 2022, Wellness Within welcomes and fully endorses the recently released report Defunding the Police: Defining the Way Forward for HRM, prepared by the Board of the Police Commissioner's Subcommittee to Define Defunding Police. We urge the Halifax Regional Municipality council to adopt all recommendations put forward in this report.

AVALON, LEAF, AND WELLNESS WITHIN CALL FOR AN END TO VICTIM BLAMING AS MASS CASUALTY COMMISSION PROCEEDINGS TURN TO GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Victims are not responsible for the violent actions of the perpetrators who harmed them, says Avalon Sexual Assault Centre, Wellness Within, and the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF).

Over the next few weeks, the Mass Casualty Commission will hear about the role gender-based violence played in the killings of 22 people, including a pregnant woman, in Nova Scotia on April 18-19, 2020.

As part of this work, Lisa Banfield will testify before the Commission. Ms. Banfield was the common law spouse of the perpetrator of the mass casualty. Throughout their relationship, the perpetrator controlled, emotionally abused, and violently assaulted Ms. Banfield. Despite this, Ms. Banfield has often wrongly faced blame for the violence unleashed by the perpetrator in April 2020.

"In the face of unfathomable trauma and loss, looking for someone to blame is understandable," says Erin Breen, Counsel for Avalon, LEAF, and Wellness Within. "But Lisa Banfield is not responsible for the perpetrator's violence."

Victim blaming is far too common. One in five survivors of sexual assault has been made to feel responsible for their victimization, most often by the perpetrator, their family, or their friends. Victim blaming is also deeply harmful. Blaming survivors tells them that they are responsible for the abuse that they have faced. It discourages people in abusive relationships from seeking help. It also discourages those who witness violence from stepping in.

Avalon, LEAF, and Wellness Within call on all members of the media to responsibly and accurately report on Ms. Banfield's testimony and experiences. To assist, we have put together an outline of key Commission documents. We have also compiled a list of resources on gender-based violence and the dangers of victim blaming.

"Put simply, the victim blaming Ms. Banfield is being subjected to is rooted in misogyny," says Breen. "Lisa was, without a doubt, another victim of the perpetrator's violence. Her experiences clearly point to the broader pattern of intimate-partner violence and mass killings being closely linked."

WELLNESS WITHIN DISAPPOINTED BY PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT'S NEW STRATEGIC PLAN FOR HEALTH

Wellness Within is disappointed by the Provincial government's Action for Health: A Strategic Plan for Nova Scotia, released last week, which fails to include sexual and reproductive health.

"Nova Scotia urgently needs increased access to reproductive care, and it is a significant and shameful omission from the new provincial health plan," said Martha Paynter, Wellness Within Chair. "Reproductive health is foundational to wellbeing, and should be a foundational element of any progressive health plan given it affects the entire population throughout their lifetime. Reproductive health is fundamentally an issue of gender equity, and a plan that fails to address pregnancy and pregnancy prevention is quite simply discriminatory."

Birth is the number one reason for hospitalization in Canada, ahead of heart attacks and heart failure. In 2021, COVID-19 ranked the seventh most common reason for hospitalization. Midwifery care results in fewer interventions, reduces system costs associated with surgical births, and improves health outcomes for parents and babies. Midwifery is fundamental to primary health care and a service to which all Nova Scotian families should have access. And yet, expanding access to midwifery goes unmentioned in the premier's new plan.

Evidence shows that when people plan their pregnancies, they can better care for their families, complete their education, achieve employment, and are less likely to experience intimate partner violence and poverty. The cost of contraception is one of the most significant barriers to reproductive health equity in the province. Providing universal access to free contraception would result in significant cost savings and improvements in population health, with governments saving approximately \$7 and \$10 dollars for every dollar invested. The premier's plan fails to address this potential return on investment.

One in three people with a uterus will have an abortion in their lifetime: abortion is a very common reproductive health service. Although abortion access has drastically increased in Nova Scotia since the introduction of the toll-free self-referral line (1-833-352-0719) and primary care provision of Mifegymiso (medication abortion), two serious issues persist: there is no access to surgical abortion on Cape Breton island, and no access to elective abortion beyond 16 weeks gestation anywhere in the province. These restrictions place significant burdens on patients to travel within and beyond the province for basic care. The new plan will not remedy this situation.

During the Speak Up for Healthcare Tour facilitated by the Provincial government, we called for investment in reproductive health. Despite this, reproductive health continues to lack appropriate attention and funding. We call on the Province to amend their plan to invest in reproductive health. 1) Hire more midwives to increase capacity for primary care in pregnancy. 2) Universalize access to free contraception. 3) Support improved access to surgical abortion.

IMMIGRATION DETENTION IN NS

East Coast Prison Justice Society and Halifax Refugee Clinic, in coalition with Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, have been campaigning to end immigration detention in NS jails since the spring.

Immigration detention has egregious effects on the psychosocial and physical health, and basic dignity, of migrants seeking refuge in Canada — and provincial jails afford the harshest form of detention in Canada.

We congratulate Nova Scotia on becoming the second province in Canada to give notice that it is ending its immigration detention contract with the federal government, through which migrants are incarcerated in provincial jails based on their immigration status.

ENDORSEMENT OF THE DEFINING DEFUNDING THE POLICE REPORT

Wellness Within welcomes and fully endorses the recently released report Defunding the Police: Defining the Way Forward for HRM, prepared by the Board of the Police Commissioner's Subcommittee to Define Defunding Police.

Wellness Within's work and advocacy is deeply rooted in our commitment to decarceration and defunding the police. We have called on Halifax to defund, disarm, and dismantle the Halifax Regional Police and Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Policing in Canada is founded on colonialism and is characterized by racism, misogyny, and homophobia/transphobia. Too often police are responsible for violent arrests of parents in front of their children, and the mishandling of sexual assault files.

We urge HRM council to adopt all recommendations put forward in this report. The recommendations to create and fund a third-party reporting program to refer survivors of sexual assault to a non-police community organization and to address funding gaps in sexual assault prevention and response programs are especially welcome and should be a high priority for council.

We look forward to collaborating with HRM council to envision a future beyond policing for our city.



@LEAFHalifax



RCMP were 'careless and calculated' in charging partner of N.S. mass shooter: lawyer

Lisa Banfield's lawyer tells inquiry her client's rights were violated by police



https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/novascotia/rcmp-were-careless-andcalculated-in-charging-partner-of-n-smass-shooter-lawyer-1.6591309

ending criminalization and policing



https://www.saltwire.com/atlanticcanada/news/halifax-non-profit-to-hostseminar-on-ending-criminalization-andpolicing-100719752/

Incarcerated mothers in Nova Scotia deserve better





https://rabble.ca/feminism/incarceratedmothers-in-nova-scotia-deserve-better/

MARTHA PAYNTER: Pandemic proving disastrous for women in Nova Scotia federal prison





https://www.saltwire.com/atlanticcanada/opinion/martha-paynterpandemic-proving-disastrous-for-womenin-nova-scotia-federal-prison-100677098/

Calls grow for inmate releases as COVID-19 caseloads climb in jails and prisons

re are now COVID-19 outbreaks in 8 federal institutions



https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/callsgrow-inmate-release-covid-outbreaks-1.6304878

N.S. prison reform groups call for inmate releases as COVID-19 spreads



https://globalnews.ca/news/8483490/nsprison-inmate-release-covid-19/

FINANCIAL

Statement of Financial Position as of January 1, 2022: \$20,316.85

REVENUE	
Member Fees	\$1,650
Conference Registration Fees	\$1,585
Donations	\$3,797
Grants & Other Funds	\$10,952
TOTAL REVENUE:	\$17,984

EXPENSES	
Administrative and Legal	\$799.07
Events & Trainings	\$477.98
Conference/Travel	\$518.61
Research	\$4,087.52
Donations	\$4,544.87
Projects	\$3,142.37
Gifts	\$97.74
TOTAL EXPENSES:	\$13,668.16

Statement of Financial Position as of December 31, 2022: \$24,633.09

THANK YOU!

Our work would not be possible without the deditated team of volunteers, members, and partners.

PARTNERS





















SPONSORS









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18. Art: Julia Hutt