



# WOMEN'S WELLNESS WITHIN

AN ORGANIZATION SERVING  
CRIMINALIZED WOMEN

2017 ANNUAL REPORT

@WITHINWOMENS

[WWW.WOMENSWELLNESSWITHIN.ORG](http://WWW.WOMENSWELLNESSWITHIN.ORG)



## WHO WE ARE

Women's Wellness Within (WWW) is a registered non-profit organization that provides support to criminalized women and trans individuals who 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. WWW is a registered non-profit organization. WWW's 70+ members include formerly incarcerated women, doulas,

health care providers, lawyers, students, researchers and mentors. WWW 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 for women on bail and parole in the community.

# WHAT WE DO

First and foremost, WWW supports individual clients who have experienced criminalization or are currently incarcerated while pregnant or parenting young children. We provide doula support, lactation support, and navigation of health and community services. WWW facilitates monthly workshops on women's health for imprisoned women at the Central Nova Scotia Correctional Facility on topics determined by the women inside.

Education is an important part of WWW's mandate. WWW leads seminars for health professionals and students and speaks publicly to raise consciousness of the rights and reproductive health experiences of criminalized women. WWW 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.

WWW works in close partnership with the Chebucto Family Centre, the Elizabeth Fry Societies of Cape Breton and Mainland Nova Scotia, the IWK Health Centre, and the Halifax Branch of the Women's Legal Education Action Fund. WWW has received grants and funding from NSPIRC, the Canadian Association of Perinatal and Women's Health Nurses, the Canadian Nursing Student Association, the Nova Scotia Health Coalition, the Chebucto West Community Health Board and the Dartmouth Community Health Board.

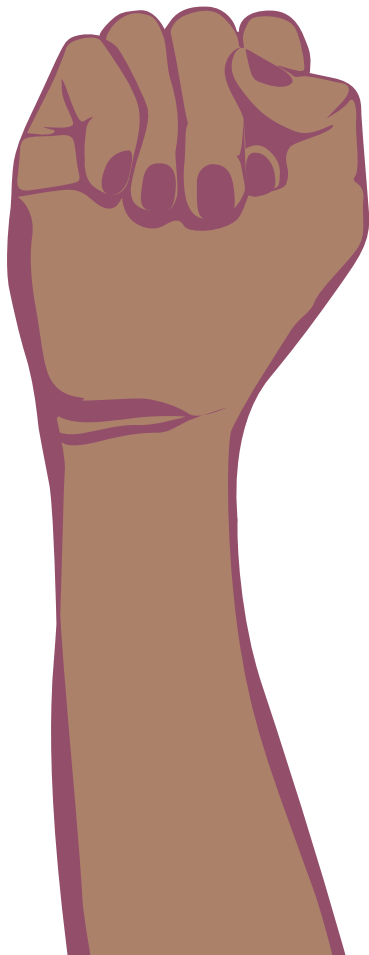
# TRAINING TOOLS & RESOURCES

WWW develops training modules and manuscripts about the perinatal and reproductive health and parenting of criminalized women. WWW encourages First Voice presenters and collaboration. In consultation with imprisoned women, WWW annually updates a practical and comprehensive Community Resource Guide, available in hardcopy or as a PDF on our website.

## ADVOCACY

WWW advocates politically for access to housing, income, resources and health care for criminalized women and trans individuals. Current advocacy campaigns include:

- Banning solitary confinement of women
- Providing access to internet for incarcerated women to improve communication with support people and to develop health literacy
- Removing barriers to telephone use
- Ensuring dignity and respect for imprisoned transgender individuals
- Allowing federal parolees to apply for income assistance in Nova Scotia
- Ending all deportations of criminalized individuals who came to Canada as minors.
- Redressing racism in the justice and health systems.
- Improving access to prenatal care and education and perinatal health services
- Improving housing available to women transitioning from provincial incarceration
- Removing remand (pretrial custody) of mothers



# 2017 OVERVIEW

interviews, stories & events

- In partnership with Chebucto Family Centre, we facilitated 10 workshops with women imprisoned at the Central Nova Correctional Facility on themes including sexual health, self-care, and parenting skills. 95 women attended these workshops.
- We presented guest lectures and panels 7 times, including for the Dalhousie University Schools of Nursing and Social Work.
- We presented at 3 regional and national academic conferences, and were invited to present a keynote at the Canadian Association for Perinatal and Women's Health Nurses 7th Annual National Conference in Halifax, NS.
- We received grants from NSPIRG (Nova Scotia Public Research Interest Group) and donations from the Canadian Nursing Students Association, the Canadian Association for Perinatal and Women's Health Nurses, and the NS Doula Association.
- We received clearance for the first time ever to support clients incarcerated at the NS Youth Facility in Waterville, NS.
- We supported many clients at the Central Nova Correctional Facility, the Nova Institution for Women Federal Prison, The NS Youth Facility and in the community.
- We participated in Community Resource Fairs at the Nova Institution for Women in March and October.
- We re-issued Version 2 of the Resource Guide, with important expansion to include employers who do not require criminal record checks and a section on Truro (link <https://www.womenswellnesswithin.org/resources-1/>).



**MAR  
11**

.....

**"Organization launches to provide support for pregnant incarcerated women."**

- SHAINA LUCK, CBC NEWS NOVA SCOTIA

**AUG  
18**

**"Breastfeeding Support for ..... Criminalized Women in Canada."**

PAYNTER, M & SNELGROVE-CLARKE, E. JOURNAL OF HUMAN LACTATION. 33(4), 672-676.

**OCT  
16**

.....

**"Staff person's harmful comments about trans inmate remain unaddressed."**

- REBECCA ROSE, THE NOVA SCOTIA ADVOCATE

**NOV  
6**

**"A violation of their rights: Advocates call for better phone, ..... internet access for women prisoners."**

- YVETTE D'ENTREMONT, HALIFAX METRO

**NOV  
8**

.....

**"Advocates say female prisoners need better phone access."**

- CBC INFORMATION MORNING NOVA SCOTIA

**NOV  
9**

.....

**"Let's Talk – Bell Canada makes calling from prisons needlessly difficult for incarcerated women."**

- ROBERT DEVET, THE NOVA SCOTIA ADVOCATE

**NOV  
25**



WWW held its first member training conference, co-sponsored by the Mount Saint Vincent University Nancy's Chair in Women's Studies and the Chebucto Family Centre. The objective of this conference was to provide WWW members with information on issues of reproductive health for criminalized women so they feel more knowledgeable as volunteers and advocates.

Hosted at the Chebucto Family Centre in Spryfield, the training conference was attended by 25 members and provided a full-day of topics, starting with a presentation by Martha Paynter, WWW President, on the background and mission of Women's Wellness Within and an overview of the impacts of criminalization on women's health and the need for reproductive justice advocacy in Nova Scotia and beyond. Other topics included:

- Board Member, Poet & the Nancy's Chair in Women Studies at MSVU - El Jones
- Scope of the volunteer doula role - Erin Fair, Coordinator, Volunteer Doula Program
- Methadone Maintenance program - Cathy Shanks, Direction 180
- The conditions of confinement in prison - Emma Halpern, Executive Director, Mainland Nova Scotia Elizabeth Fry Society
- Identifying core personal values in volunteering and advocacy work - Lindsay McVicar, Leadership Consultant and Coach
- Trauma-informed care and professional boundaries - Hazel Ling, Dalhousie University Student Health & Wellness Centre Social Worker & Case Manager
- Peripartum mental health - Cynthia Mann, Clinical Nurse Specialist
- Partner at Nijhawan McMillan Barristers - Nasha Nijhawan



# "A Prison Pregnancy."

- MAGGIE RAHR, THE DEEP MAGAZINE

DEC  
5

"Bianca Mercer spent six months pregnant in Nova Scotia's Burnside jail. How the corrections system failed her, and an ad-hoc group of advocates changed her life.



Photo Darren Calabrese

In the stillness of an exam room at the IWK Health Centre in Halifax, Bianca Lynn Mercer, 24 years old, smiles in the dim light. It's early April 2017, she's seven months pregnant, and as she lies on the crinkling white paper, waiting to catch a glimpse of her daughter on an ultrasound monitor, she feels something she hasn't known during her pregnancy, spent almost entirely in jail: peace."

DEC  
8

WWW received the 50th Anniversary of the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission Award for an organization working to advance human rights in the province.





# PARTNERS



Women's Legal  
Education and  
Action Fund | Fonds d'action et  
d'éducation juridiques  
pour les femmes

Elizabeth Fry Society  
of Mainland Nova Scotia



IWK Health Centre  
Foundation



chebucto  
family | centre

# SPONSORS



NOVA SCOTIA  
DOULA ASSOCIATION



CAPWHN



CNSA | AEIC

# CONTACT US



(902) 292 7082



womenswellnesswithinns@gmail.com



@withinwomens



womenswellnesswithin.org



facebook.com/womenswellnesswithin

**"WE ARE THE  
HEARTBEAT OF THE  
NATION.  
WE ARE MOST OF  
THE NURSES AND  
THE EDUCATORS.  
WE ARE THE WOMEN  
IN PRISON RAISING  
THEIR BABIES."**

EL JONES

"STILL WE RISE"