



# HeartWood

CENTRE FOR COMMUNITY YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

ANNUAL REPORT 2016 - 2017



# CONTENTS

- 03 Letters
- 04 About Us
- 06 Special Projects
- 08 Public Professional  
Development Workshops
- 10 Youth Leadership Programs
- 16 Partnership Initiatives
- 18 Our Stories
- 19 Staff, Board, and Associates
- 20 Finances

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*"Imagine if all youth were viewed as community leaders... and all youth knew of this to be true."*

I see this line every day because it is on a HeartWood poster hanging in my office. Every time I see this I think of all of the people that this organization has reached and how many more lives can benefit by the programs and training sessions that HeartWood provides. I think now more than ever our young people are at risk of not seeing their incredible potential and that HeartWood is as necessary as ever to tackle this issue.

I have always felt that the work that HeartWood does serves our community on so many levels. Whether it is a youth in a program who finds their confidence and place in the world, an adult whose perception on young people has changed, or a government or organizational system wanting to change the way they do their work to better include the perspectives of all our community members, HeartWood staff and programs have the ability to transform our communities and to lead us to a better future.

Being on the Board of Directors for HeartWood is always humbling learning experience. The work the staff do on a daily basis is so integral to creating and supporting vibrant and healthy communities across the province and the commitment of the staff to developing leaders is second to none. I learn from them all on a daily basis and while the work they do is not easy, they give their hearts and souls to this work. We are so lucky as a community to have our future generations in the care of these wonderful people.

The Board has always been made up of an incredible group of community leaders and while we have lost a few of our members to cross-country moves and new jobs we are so lucky to have such intelligent and compassionate people behind the scenes of HeartWood. I would like to thank all of the outgoing members of the Board and we look forward to what the coming year brings!

Lastly, I would like to thank the Executive Director, Laura Swaine. Her passion, energy, insight, dedication, and drive has taken HeartWood to the next stage of our history and I am excited to see what the future of the organization holds. It is a pleasure to work alongside you and appreciate everything you do!

**Thank you,  
Sarah Coley  
Chair, Board of Directors**

# HELLO HEARTWOOD COMMUNITY!

We had another amazing year this year and I am so glad to share it with you. We had some exciting new programs start up (Heart and History, CYVIC) that are rooted in our Youth Action Team model. We made many new partnerships, and continued to value and engage with the others which are longstanding.

Throughout the year we continued to focus on ways that we could support the youth sector in this province, as well as ways we could offer to drive change, innovation, and capacity development. There continues to be a strong interest in youth engagement, youth voice, and youth leadership at many levels in this province and we are so honoured that HeartWood is a part of that movement.

There have also been moments of reflection for us this year. Local communities and our community partners continue to be impacted by violence, racism, sexism, discrimination and hate. As a result we have spent time this year thinking about how we engage, care for, honour, and privilege the knowledge that comes with speaking truth and experience into what "community" means for people and the challenges that come with it. We also were not spared from the ripples sent out from the US election and how important it is to create space and opportunity for people to feel heard, valued, and needed in the decision making processes of our local, provincial, and national governments. HeartWood has more reflecting, growing and learning to do when it comes to all of these areas but we move forward with open hearts and curious minds at the possibilities and the ways we can strengthen our way of being in this work.

We look forward to the coming year and all it has to bring.

**Warmly,  
Laura Swaine  
Executive Director**

# ABOUT US

HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development is a non-profit, registered charity that has been serving the province of Nova Scotia since 1988.

We work directly with youth, adults, youth-serving organizations, and broader systems to build stronger communities through youth engagement and leadership.

Our programming is structured on the "HeartWood Way" where our focus is on creating a culture of empowerment and support through youth-adult partnerships, peer relationships, meaningful contributions, and experiential learning.

We offer three streams of programming aimed at:

1. Helping youth to positively engage in their communities through systems, services, and organizations, to develop their skills and capacity to take action and make change.
2. Training and coaching adults in youth engagement strategies and tools.
3. Working directly with larger systems over an extended period of time to improve their youth engagement strategies and inform their policies to better serve youth.

Over the past 29 years, HeartWood has worked with thousands of youth and adults across Nova Scotia. We have tested, honed, and evaluated our approach to youth engagement so that the services we provide are adaptive, flexible, and suited to the needs of those we are serving. We continuously aim to be forward thinking, engaging, and supportive to achieve long-term impact over an extended timeframe.

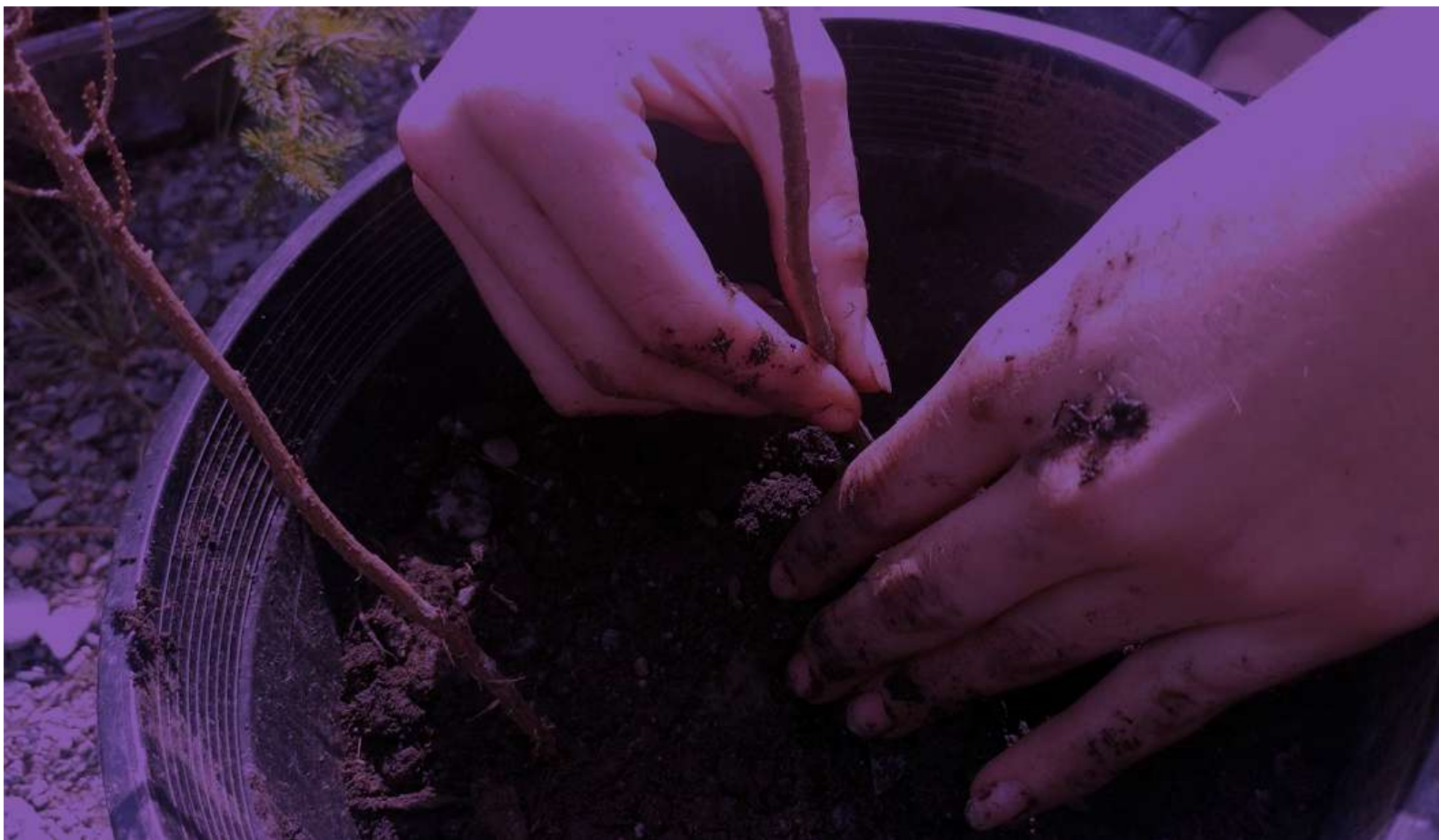


# OUR MISSION

We work directly with youth, adults, youth-serving organizations, and broader systems to build better communities through youth engagement and leadership.

# OUR VISION

We believe that young people possess the passion, skills, and insight to be powerful community leaders and, together with supportive adults, can take action to create vibrant and caring communities.



# SPECIAL PROJECTS

## WORKING TO BUILD A MORE COMPASSIONATE MASCULINITY

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES, MOVEMBER FOUNDATION // HALIFAX, TRURO, LUNenburg COUNTY

Building on the trainings Mentoring and Engaging Boys and Young Men, which HeartWood has co-delivered for a decade, we have taken leadership to increase the attention on work in Nova Scotia that strives to build a more compassionate masculinity in boys and young men.

We are doing this with the support of funding through a Sexual Violence Strategy Prevention Grant in which we have:

- delivered direct programming for cis- and trans-boys within junior high and high schools,
- hosted and supported the development of a Community of Practice for professionals who are doing gender-based programming in multiple contexts. This was carried out through hosting a number of meetings, managing a Listserv, and hosting a full-day symposium
- and investigated other opportunities and contexts—sports teams and university residences, for instance—in which this kind of work can happen.

In addition, HeartWood received a six-month development grant in the summer of 2016 to build a proposal for the Movember Foundation's, Social Innovators Challenge. HeartWood was selected as one of fifty out of an original pool of 440 organizations from Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom to develop a full proposal for the Foundation.

We conducted focus groups with men and boys in Halifax, Chester, and Kentville to help us develop our proposal in which we put forward a series of group trainings and individual coaching for adult men who work with teen guys (e.g., sports coaches, teachers, recreation staff, youth workers, violence prevention workers, etc.) to disrupt unhealthy forms of masculinity that can have harmful impacts on the mental, physical, emotional, and relational health of men and boys and subsequently on their communities.

**Students** were able to share their **experience** through a fishbowl process and were recognized as **leaders** and **advocates** of this work in schools. Numerous adult participants expressed that this was the most **impactful** part of the training.

Unfortunately, we were not successful in our bid for one of Movember's grants. However, we are actively working to find alternative sources of funding to continue our work in building a more compassionate masculinity throughout Nova Scotia.



# RURAL YOUTH MATTER

## EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT SERVICES

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY  
SERVICES // HALIFAX

HeartWood has been working with Employment Support Services of the Department of Community Services since 2005 primarily delivering workshops on youth engagement for their staff. This year in March, ESS and HeartWood collaborated to deliver 3 workshops for Halifax based ESS staff, management, youth, and community partners to investigate opportunities for deeper youth engagement. Each workshop consisted of training on community youth development and youth engagement, followed by a participatory process eliciting direction from participants regarding future approaches and improvements to support ESS involved youth in obtaining meaningful and sustainable employment.

## YOUTH SERVICE INITIATIVE

EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL  
DEVELOPMENT CANADA // HALIFAX

HeartWood participated in a youth engagement process, hosted by Employment and Social Development Canada, wherein we gathered young people and supported their story sharing and feedback to the Federal Government related to youth volunteering and employment opportunities. The feedback and stories were compiled as part of a national research and engagement process to inform how the Government of Canada will invest in youth volunteer and service programs moving forward.

NS RURAL COMMUNITIES  
FOUNDATION // MUSQUODOBOIT  
HARBOUR, SHEET HARBOUR,  
WOLFVILLE, KENTVILLE,  
GREENWICH, ESKASONI,  
ANTIGONISH

HeartWood connected with over 90 students, parents/guardians, service providers, elders, teachers, and local residents in 6 rural communities across Nova Scotia to reveal insight into the barriers youth face to community engagement.

Participants were supported to discuss and develop strategies and solutions to minimize and eliminate these barriers, including: improving access to transportation, creating youth-centred spaces, offering mentorship and skill development opportunities, and involving youth in decision making. These recommendations bespoke the participants' belief that supporting youth engagement is essential to building stronger, more vibrant communities.

# PUBLIC PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS

Leading Innovative and Engaging Youth Programs is an essential training for individuals who work directly with youth or those interested in developing innovative programming with youth.

In it, we immerse participants in experiential learning of the theories and activities we employ to create rich, engaging, positive experiences for youth. Participants practice designing program components in small teams, integrating new elements of their learning in a multi-layered, iterative approach. Initial elements include Tatamagouche Centre's ASPIRE model for transformational program design and delivery as well as a Servant Leadership approach to facilitation, with participatory introductions to community-building and assessment tools based on HeartWood's Framework/ Circle of Awesomeness.

LIEYP provides a stimulating learning environment as participants join us in an intensive, multi-day, overnight training with a group of people mostly unfamiliar to each other, bringing varying perspectives and approaches. These conditions consistently remind our facilitation team of the complexity and richness in supporting learning communities through challenging experiences. These conditions are part of the unexpected learning available to participants in this program - as we model the engagement and community development skills we must invest in and practice to support adults and youth navigating different leadership and working styles, conflict, and various strengths and needs in community.

## LEADING INNOVATIVE AND ENGAGING YOUTH PROGRAMS

PARTICIPANTS REPRESENTING: UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA, PATHWAYS TO EDUCATION SPRYFIELD, CHEBUCTO CONNECTIONS, MEMORY LANE FAMILY PLACE HOME (YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMMING), THE YOUTH PROJECT (2SLGBTQIA+), MLA TONY INCE'S YOUTH ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE, CENTRE FOR WOMEN IN BUSINESS (MOUNT SAINT VINCENT UNIVERSITY), HARBOUR HOUSE, CENTRE FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT, AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CANADA, FAMILY SERVICES OF EASTERN NOVA SCOTIA, HEARTWOOD CENTRE FOR COMMUNITY YOUTH DEVELOPMENT // TATAMAGOUCHE

**"This was magic!"**

We are thrilled that LIEYP continues as one of the longest running and widely recognized trainings in youth engagement in the region. It is especially excellent to continue to receive feedback from past participants about the impact this training has made in their youth engagement and community development practices. This year was another successful partnership between HeartWood and the Tatamagouche Centre contributing to a province where youth are valued as important actors in their communities, and adults are equipped and adept at creating opportunities for youth to participate and contribute their wisdom and gifts.

**"My biggest learning has been from all the participants and our experiences here together"**



# ALL IN!

PARTICIPANTS REPRESENTING: MLA TONY INCE'S YOUTH ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE, ART THERAPY PRACTICE, CHEBUCTO FAMILY CENTRE, NOVA SCOTIA SEA SCHOOL, CLEAN NOVA SCOTIA, ENGAGE NOVA SCOTIA, ASSOCIATION OF BLACK SOCIAL WORKERS, PHD RESEARCHER FROM YORK UNIVERSITY (YOUTH LEGAL CONSCIOUSNESS RELATED TO SEXUAL VIOLENCE), DARTMOUTH FAMILY CENTRE, TEAM WORKBRIDGE (YOUTH EMPLOYMENT), STRAIT REGIONAL SCHOOL BOARD (AFRICAN NOVA SCOTIAN STUDENT SUPPORT WORKERS), ADVENTURE EARTH CENTRE, HOMEBRIDGE YOUTH SOCIETY, BOYS & GIRLS CLUB OF GREATER HALIFAX, MEMORY LANE FAMILY PLACE HOME (YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMMING) // SPRYFIELD

The All In! two-day workshop is a core HeartWood public training that focuses on building a deeper understanding of how to effectively guide youth through the stages of group development.

Rooted in a combination of group development theory and HeartWood's Framework for Community Youth Development, this program used a variety of teaching methods but heavily featured experiential learning. Education on inclusive games, team-building activities, HeartWood's Youth Engagement Spectrum and trust-building were encompassed within this professional development workshop.

Participants learned strategies and knowledge of how and when to use fun, active and appropriate games and initiatives while increasing their capacity to support youth facing physical, mental, and emotional challenges.

"The training helped me to **reflect** on all aspects of how a youth finds their place in their experience of being part of a **group**. I never considered a person who was not engaged in a group may not have the skill set needed to be **involved**."

# YOUTH LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS

## HEART & HISTORY

HEARTWOOD YOUTH PROGRAM // HALIFAX

Heart & History is a two-year cultural program bringing young people (ages 14-24) from diverse communities together to explore, express, and share culture, identity and history through art-based approaches.

This first year of the program consisted of weekly experiential programming to build community and connection amongst youth participants, build the flow of programming content based on participants' interests, begin sharing/exploring identity, culture, history, and heritage, and attend relevant community events that contribute to participants' learning and connection to community.

The program is now shifting into its art and action project phase, where youth participants will be supported to design and lead community art/action projects connected to issues they are passionate about.

OF HEART & HISTORY  
AU CŒUR DE L'HISTOIRE



Themes and topics explored include: Creating Welcoming Spaces; Creating our Care Teachings (Community Standards, how we will care for one another); Program Brainstorm and Participant Patch Making; Community Event with Guest Speakers and Poets Vivek Shraya and Chase Joynt; Four Lands Experiential Art Project with Jumblies Theatre; Self Care Workshop and Creating Self Care Kits; Justice Pottery; Surviving the Holidays: Self Care, Spirituality and Affirmations; Intentions and Dreams for 2017; The Importance of Self Learning; African History Month Launch; African Learner's Institute Discussion on Race and Education; Internalized Oppression; Decolonization and Canada 150; Black and Indigenous Solidarity; Northern Indigenous Communities; Treaties; Allyship Personal Work; Mental Health and Disability Justice.



# CELEBRATING YOUTH VOLUNTEERS

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES // HALIFAX

On May 30th HeartWood Centre worked in partnership with the Volunteerism and Non-Profit sector Division of the Department of Community Services to facilitate the "Celebrating Youth Volunteers" Event. This event has been hosted for the past several years in order to honour the hard work and dedication of the many youth who give their time to community through volunteering throughout the year. Hosted by two HeartWood Staff (Andre Amiro and Michael Coolican) and a team of four youth facilitators (Kaliegh Skinner, Emma Martel, Patrick Andreou, and Braden Newell). The event welcomed parents and guardians as well as some representatives from the government (including Minister Tony Ince) throughout the day. There were approximately 12 youth who participated in the day.

# KAMP KUJICHAGULIA: TEAM BUILDING & LEADERSHIP COURSE

ACADIA UNIVERSITY // WOLFVILLE

In partnership with Acadia University, HeartWood facilitated a team building session at Kamp Kujichagulia, a summer camp for youth of African descent. HeartWood supported 23 participants to improve interpersonal relationships, work collaboratively to build trust and confidence, identify their individual strengths, and to reflect upon the impact of the camp on their personal and community growth.

# TAKING BACK CAMPUS

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES, MOUNT SAINT VINCENT UNIVERSITY, SAINT MARY'S UNIVERSITY // HALIFAX

Taking Back Campus was a year long exploration into local Universities and their approach to RA training when it comes to the concepts of Consent, Healthy Relationships, and Sexualized Violence.

Taking Back Campus was funded through the NS Sexual Violence Strategies Prevention and Innovation Funding Stream.

The project was led by, designed and created by Alex Coley, Cameron Ure, and Zoe Bordeleau-Cass, and hosted at HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development.

Zoe, Cam and Alex worked together to reach out to Universities and hear from current RA's about their experience with these concepts. While this was not a HeartWood Centre program, we supported the facilitators from the proposal stage to the facilitation stage to report writing. We felt like it was an excellent example of youth-led initiatives and action. More detailed reports can be found with the SVS Prevention and Innovation team or HeartWood Centre



# SEXUAL VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND INNOVATION YOUTH WORKSHOPS

SEXUAL VIOLENCE STRATEGY, DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES // PROVINCE WIDE

Adding to the youth engagement work HeartWood has led with the Sexual Violence Strategy of NS over the past three years, we hosted project development workshops across the province to support youth in developing their ideas and applying for funding to lead innovative sexual violence prevention projects.

A youth engagement process was both important and necessary to make the grant application process as accessible as possible for young people ages 14-25, many of whom were applying for a grant and developing a project idea/corresponding budget for the first time. The voices, ideas and leadership of young people are essential in leading the way forward towards the elimination of sexual violence.

In support of this we created space where young people were able to:

- learn about the granting process and receive guidance in completing specific forms, steps, requirements, etc.;
- brainstorm/create prevention projects informed by direction given by youth in year one of the Sexual Violence Strategy, regarding contributing factors to rape culture in NS
- submit a completed grant application for a project based on their own passions and ideas, with feedback and support from facilitators and other workshop participants.

## GLOBAL YOUTH LEADERS: YOUTH ENGAGEMENT WORKSHOP

COADY INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE // HALIFAX

Continuing our partnership with Coady's Global Youth Leaders Program, HeartWood hosted an afternoon workshop as part of the program's learning journey. Centering on our Framework for Community Youth Development, participants mapped their own stories of engagement work onto the framework and shared reflections of how to continue applying the theory in their leadership work as young people.

Coady staff who coordinate this program share that participants, **year after year**, point to **HeartWood's workshop** as a key experience and **meaningful learning opportunity** that is continually referenced and centered throughout their 7 week program.

**we need YOUTH to help prevent sexualized violence**

come develop projects for your community where youth take the lead on prevention efforts

**\$5000+**  
AVAILABLE FOR YOUR INITIATIVE

HEARTWOOD IS HOSTING PROJECT & PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS FOR YOUTH 14 - 24 YEARS OLD ACROSS NOVA SCOTIA

oct 15 ANTIGONISH	oct 19 YARMOUTH	oct 23 WAGMATCOOK	oct 28 LUNenburg
oct 16 SYDNEY	oct 22 SHEET HARBOUR	oct 23 AMHERST	nov 5 HALIFAX

contact [rena@heartwood.ns.ca](mailto:rena@heartwood.ns.ca) or visit [www.heartwood.ns.ca](http://www.heartwood.ns.ca)

# YOUTH PEER MENTORSHIP

## LAING HOUSE // HALIFAX

HeartWood excitedly partnered with fellow youth serving organization, Laing House, to support their members in developing and leading a peer mentorship program for the organization that contributes to Laing being an engaging and welcoming place. Our work with Laing spanned two workshops where we explored the idea of mentorship, connected the development of this program to the HeartWood Framework, supported members to asset map peer mentorship in the context of Laing House, engaged in collective visioning of the program, and supported young people to step into their leadership and take on actions towards the implementation and practice of peer mentorship. This work centered the wisdom and leadership of Laing members and used experiential learning through games, conversation, art, and action planning. HeartWood's role in this work was part of a 7-module peer mentorship training program for Laing House members.

## CHILD & YOUTH STUDIES: YOUTH ENGAGEMENT WORKSHOP

### MOUNT SAINT VINCENT UNIVERSITY // HALIFAX

HeartWood connected with students in Child & Youth Studies at MSVU to facilitate a ½ day workshop on our Circle of Awesomeness and support students to apply the principles and stories to their work and experiences as child and youth care workers.

## SEXUAL VIOLENCE STRATEGY: MIDDLETON

### MIDDLETON REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL // MIDDLETON

One of the first recipients of the NS Sexual Violence Strategy's Prevention Innovation funds was Middleton Regional High School. Their Appreciative Inquiry (AI) project aimed to support LGBTQ youth to identify "recommendations for practices that would have a positive impact on the nature of sexual violence among and toward the LGBTQ population."

Recognizing the value of HeartWood's approach and expertise in Youth Engagement initiatives, MRHS staff leaders for this project engaged us through direct training and coaching of staff and youth involved. We began the work in the autumn of 2016 with an initial training for youth leaders, supporting their understanding of the project and developing their own capacity to be engaged while engaging their peers in their exciting work. With a strong work plan and the foundations for ongoing support from the adult staff team, the youth leadership team began conducting peer-to-peer interviews using through an iterative and reflective process. They were aiming towards presenting their findings and conducting a larger AI conversation with a gathering of GSA representatives in the valley region for early Spring.

Unfortunately the labour dispute between the NSTU and Department of Education was a barrier to the continuation of the project and we were unable to continue the work.

# ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION: YOUTH ENGAGEMENT WORKSHOP

DALHOUSIE SCHOOL FOR RESOURCE AND  
ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES // HALIFAX

As part of our ongoing partnership with the Dalhousie School for Resource and Environmental Studies, HeartWood facilitated a workshop centering our Framework for Community Youth Development and Youth Engagement Spectrum. This workshop engaged environmental education students in their experiences with youth engagement by mapping their stories and experiences onto HeartWood's Framework, and gave students an opportunity to dig deeper into their own research and studies as related to community youth development.

## AFTER THE BELL: MUNICIPAL PHYSICAL ACTIVITY LEADERS

AFTER THE BELL // FUNDY REGION

HeartWood delivered a day-long workshop for 9 physical activity conveners in the Fundy Region communities. The workshop explored the theory and practice of incorporating community youth development into new and existing community programs.

Throughout the workshop, the wisdom and experience of attendees was explored via the HeartWood Framework, and shared to deepen an understanding of community youth development and its place in active living strategies. Participants left excited and inspired to apply their learnings in their communities.

## HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS FOR YOUTH LUNENBURG TRAINING SESSION

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS FOR  
YOUTH // LUNENBURG

On April 21, 2016 Healthy Relationships for Youth youth facilitators from 3 different schools in the Lunenburg area gathered to strengthen their leadership skills, hear from guest speakers in the community, and network and have fun with facilitators from other schools. HeartWood was excited to join them and support their important work by facilitating a session on leadership and communication skills during the skills building component of their day.



# THE RED ROAD PROJECT

## THE RED ROAD PROJECT // DARTMOUTH

On March 9th HeartWood had the pleasure of facilitating a leadership workshop to 15 Indigenous youth from different Mi'kmaq communities across the province. The focus was on leadership, both individual and community.

Youth began the workshop with a super fun icebreaker that encouraged them to communicate by acting out words and phrases. Similar to broken telephone except with movement and miming. This activity lead us into discussion how we show up in our communities as leaders and what makes a good leader.

The group was then pair in teams of two. Both participants asked questions about the other individual and with that knowledge, ascertained what qualities the other person saw in their team mate that made a great leader. These qualities were celebrated as a larger group at the end of the activity.

We talked about the barriers as a result of the colonized legislation and policy Canada has placed on us that restrict us; including financial barriers, programing opportunities, and the lack there of and the need for Youth participation in Band governance. The group as a whole talked about the dire need to have basic programing for youth and elders in their community's reflection, culture, development and education; however issues such as infrastructure, money/funding were all difficult to access.

In the second half of the workshop, we broke out into groups again and work-shopped different programs that the youth wanted to see in their communities. Following, each group choose one program idea and with the model HeartWood provided, outlined how to make this dream a reality.

We closed the workshop with a passionate celebration of the ideas and plans each team creatively came up with.



## CYVIC

### THE DEANERY PROJECT, IMOVE, THE UNIACKE CENTRE FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, YMCA CENTRE FOR IMMIGRANT PROGRAMS // HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

Historically, HeartWood's Youth Action Team approach was a flagship program demonstrating our Community Youth Development model, facilitated across Nova Scotia in several communities. However funding for that model and organizational priorities shifted such that we were no longer able to host these teams in the way we had, and the program was shelved until conditions changed.

Over the last few years, we've fielded abundant inquiries and interest from community organizations wanting develop and hone their capacity for youth engagement. Many of these conversations nudged us to consider how we might reinvigorate a Youth Action Team model under different conditions - particularly where there seemed to be a deficit in financial capacity to invest in this critical work.

A call for proposals from the United Way in 2015 appeared to be the tipping point. We jumped at the opportunity to support other community organizations to engage more youth in leadership positions through a Youth Action Team approach and reached out to several community organizations to gauge their interest. The United Way funding priorities further nudged us to consider how we might develop capacity for Community Youth Development using a Youth Action Team model, while mobilizing our interest in bridging geographic and experiential barriers across communities. With this opportunity at our doorstep, we dove into the work of creating a project model that would foster and transform opportunities for youth within and across their communities, while strengthening networks of support in the region.

After receiving news that our funding application had been successful (even if for slightly less than we'd asked), we were delighted to be once again working in the realm of supporting Youth Action Teams in Nova Scotia. In the Spring of 2016 we eagerly began our work to support our partners, IMOVE through the Uniacke Centre for Community Development, The Deanery Project, and the YMCA Centre for Immigrant Programs.

In our first year, our most significant investment was in establishing the conditions and strengthening the foundation for groups of youth to work together and take action in each community. It was nuanced and interesting to navigate the different contexts and communities of each of our partnering organizations: we were committed to working with them to establish paths forward that responded and built on their realities... and struggled with how that complicated the way we had imagined convening the three groups to share experience and support building relationships amongst them.

That challenge aside - it was a brilliant first year. At the conclusion of the first year of this project, a vibrant group of newcomer youth at the YMCA Center for Immigrant Programs is conducting an asset map, using film to document interviews with community members about the strengths and challenges of their geographic community, and the ways those same community members believe a group of youth could make a positive impact. Looking forward into this next year, they hope to present their footage to different community partners to advocate for change, as well as implement a project based on the direction from their interviewees.

The Deanery Project continues to navigate the challenge posed by transportation limitations on the Eastern Shore, but is forging ahead with recruitment and community building efforts with related organizations in the area. This includes connections to an inspiring group of youth leaders in an HRM leadership program, and a program in development to connect youth and elders through historically significant and culturally relevant agricultural practices.

Finally, IMOVE has established a small but mighty Youth Action Team, diving into the transformative work of challenging negative misconceptions and stigma against their community through a photo voice, music, and dance project. This team of youth meets weekly to amplify their own voices, build their skills, and contribute to a narrative that reflects the strength and beauty of their community. A team of young adult supporters contribute their passion and skill in support of these youth and their community.





# INITIATIVES

## FUTURE START

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES, DIGITAL FUSION // HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

FutureStart.ca is a website that has been researched, written and designed by young adults between the ages of 16 and 26 years, from Lunenburg County, Nova Scotia. To design and build the site they worked in collaboration with Digital Fusion, a local Marketing and Communications company.

The site is intended to provide some basic skills and resources for teens, young adults and adults as you look for employment or move towards more living more independently from family and/or social assistance.

This project is a unique collaboration which involves the young adults; HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development as project manager and facilitator; Employment Support Services, Lunenburg District Office of Nova Scotia's Community Services as funder and co-facilitator; and other community partners and expertise as required.

In 2017, we added more resources to the section on Living Independently. The topic areas included: Buying and cooking food on a budget; Wellness; and Getting Organized. Brian Braganza of HeartWood and Gail Moore of DCS LDO, co-facilitated a 10-week employment skills development program for eight young adults connected to the Department of Community Services. Participants again researched and designed activities, resources and workshops. They used creative means such as producing a short video on buying and cooking food; a board game and a power point to share their knowledge with other young people. Please visit [www.futurestart.ca](http://www.futurestart.ca) to learn more about this innovative work.



## YOUTH OUTREACH PROGRAM

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES // PROVINCE WIDE

We are continuing to develop our partnership with the Department of Community Services Youth Outreach Program. Currently, there are 12 organizations across Nova Scotia running this important program. The Youth Outreach Program (YOP) is a community-based program designed to improve the immediate and long-term social, educational/vocational, economic and health outcomes for vulnerable youth. Priority is given to youth between the ages 16-18 who are facing multiple challenges with limited support.

This year HeartWood hosted a series of regional reflection sessions with the staff of the YOP to help identify areas of strength, challenges, and opportunities. This information was summarized in a report that was shared and presented to the YOP staff. We also facilitated their annual staff training, which built on some of the things that were identified during the reflection sessions. Finally, we supported a series of photoshoots with staff and youth so we can begin to support the development of some YOP promo materials in the coming year. We are looking forward to our continued partnership with the folks at the Department of Community Services and the Youth Outreach Program.

## SVS COMMUNITY SUPPORT NETWORK

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES // HALIFAX

In collaboration with the Department of Community Services, HeartWood hosted Steering Committee meetings throughout the year to nurture the growth of a network of service providers within the provincial Sexual Violence Strategy initiative. Asset-mapping and check-ins at support meetings allowed for service providers to share challenges, issues, and request help as needed. This led to the creation of more inclusive, trauma informed, and culturally competent services, as well as an increased awareness of best practices and potential gaps in service provision.



# OUR STORIES

Being a part of Heartwood's program Of Heart and History over the past couple of months has been such an incredible experience. This program allowed me learn and connect with communities within Halifax that I never would have had the opportunity otherwise. Meeting and learning from the many guests that were brought in was always a learning opportunity, giving me a true sense of allyship and the ways in which it could be implemented. Being able to share aspects of my identity and learning about that of others enlightened me by opening up my mind to get a better sense of what a community actually is. Meeting weekly with such amazing, diverse peers with equally amazing facilitators truly became a highlight of my last year of high school.

**Fatima Beydoun**  
**Heart & History Youth Participant**

Heartwood has played an active role in the Sexual Violence Strategy by engaging youth in communities, building support networks and working towards the collective prevention of sexual violence. We admire Heartwood's commitment to the well-being and leadership of youth and their efforts to foster stronger and more resilient communities.

**Sarah Kay Granke, MSW**  
**Sexual Violence Prevention & Supports**  
**Department of Community Service**

Heartwood Centre for Community Youth Development is an essential resource and a leader in developing vital programming skills for those of us dedicated to youth engagement. What is exciting about the development process of the engagement skills introduced to us by Heartwood's dynamic facilitation teams, is that not only do we come together to learn about young people's needs, but we also learn so much about one other, and purposefully about ourselves. It is this organic magic in learning that will enable us to effectively engage young people. These learning opportunities should be made a part of every youth programming professional's and school teacher's training repertoire so that more of us are able to share the Heartwood philosophy of self-worth with as many Nova Scotia youth as possible. We need to bring the creativity of Heartwood's engagement and facilitation techniques to more classrooms as well! Excellent work and thank you, Heartwood!

**Marisa De Marco**  
**Community Advocate**

## GATHERINGS

Roots and Branches: Gender Violence Prevention Network	Chebucto Connections Network
Zoom in on Girls, Newcomer Experiences: Girls Action Foundation	YWCA SafetyNET Conference
Halifax Living Together Symposium: Canadian Race Relations Foundation	#TalkJustice Story Circle
	Engage NS

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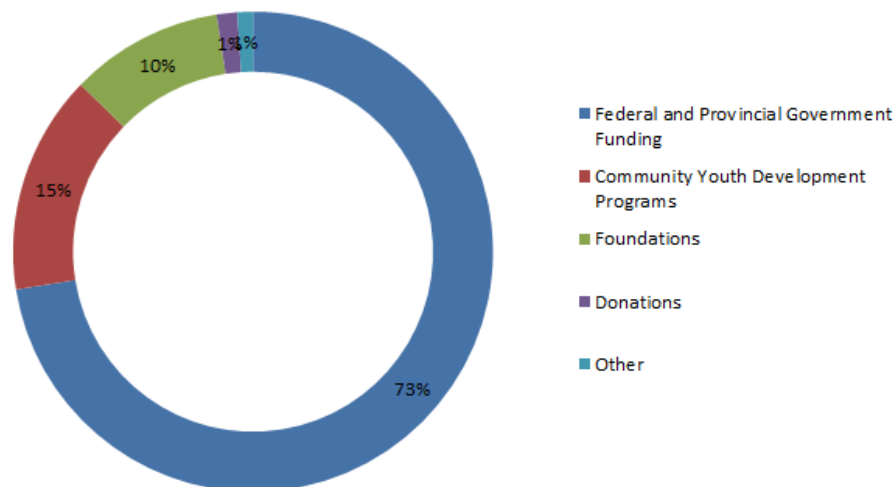
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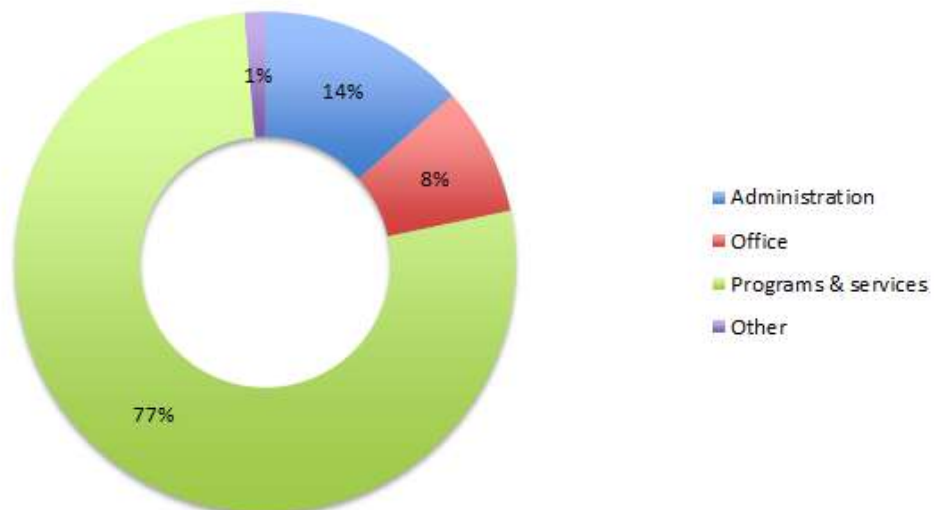
A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO ALL THOSE WHO CONTRIBUTED IN SO MANY WAYS TO HEARTWOOD. YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS ARE INVALUABLE. IN ADDITION, ANOTHER SPECIAL THANK YOU TO ALL THE VOLUNTEERS NOT LISTED WHO PROVIDED THEIR TIME, ASSISTANCE, AND EXPERTISE.

# FINANCES

**Total Revenue: \$443,722**



**Total Exepenses: \$ 394,522**







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