

# Strategic Plan

2019



# Becoming Our BEST

## Foreword

On October 17th and 18th, 2019, the Coverdale board and staff came together to reflect on the work of the agency with a focus on developing new strategies that will move us forward. Prior to this retreat, a needs analysis was conducted with staff, volunteers, clients and community members at large to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and direction for the agency. We watched the documentary film "Conviction" to ground us in the voices of those with lived experience. *In Conviction "Bianca, Treena, Laura, and Caitlin are a stark reflection of the troubling worldwide tendency to criminalize and imprison the most vulnerable in society—those most affected by poverty, addiction, childhood trauma, and mental illness. Together with long-time prisoners' rights advocate Kim Pate and others, these women collaborate with the filmmakers to answer a deceptively simple question: What would you have needed to avoid incarceration? Through art, photography, filmmaking and poetry, the women inside envision a more ideal world on the outside."*

The purpose of this strategic planning retreat can be outlined as follows:

- 1. To build relationships as a board;**
- 2. To delve into the work of Coverdale together;**
- 3. To imagine where and how we want to strengthen, shift and grow;**
- 4. To clarify the purpose, principles, people, and core work;**
- 5. To develop strategic priorities for the next 3 years; and**
- 6. To clarify and distinguish board and staff roles**

## A Brief History

Coverdale was founded in 1923 as the Interprovincial Home for Young Women by the Anglican, United Baptist, Presbyterian and United Churches. The Home was located across the river from Moncton in Riverview, N.B. on Coverdale Road. It served as a minimum security correctional facility for women 16 and older from the Maritime Provinces who were sentenced to terms of less than three years. Educational and rehabilitative programs were provided to the women. At the time, the only other facility for women was the prison in Kingston, Ontario. The establishment of Coverdale made it possible for women to receive services a minimum security facility closer to home. For many years the Home was a pioneering venture in working with women in the justice system. Eventually, with the rise of provincial correctional facilities, and the withdrawal of government support, it was no longer possible to continue the work of the Home. In 1976 it split into two independent associations, one in Saint John, NB and the second in Halifax, NS. Coverdale changed from an institution based to a community based service focusing on intervention and prevention. In 1996, Coverdale Courtwork Society was incorporated after changes to the funding structures of the two agencies occurred. Now Coverdale plays a pivotal role in the development and implementation of innovative support programs and is one of the only agencies providing court support in the provincial criminal courts in the Halifax Regional Municipality. *In 2023 we will celebrate 100 years of service provision in the Maritimes!*

# PROCESS

## Land Acknowledgment

We gathered on Mi'kmaki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq people. This territory is covered by the "Treaties of Peace and Friendship" which Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet) People first signed with the British Crown in 1725. The treaties did not deal with surrender of lands and resources but in fact recognized Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet) title and established the rules for what was to be an ongoing relationship between nations.

## Location

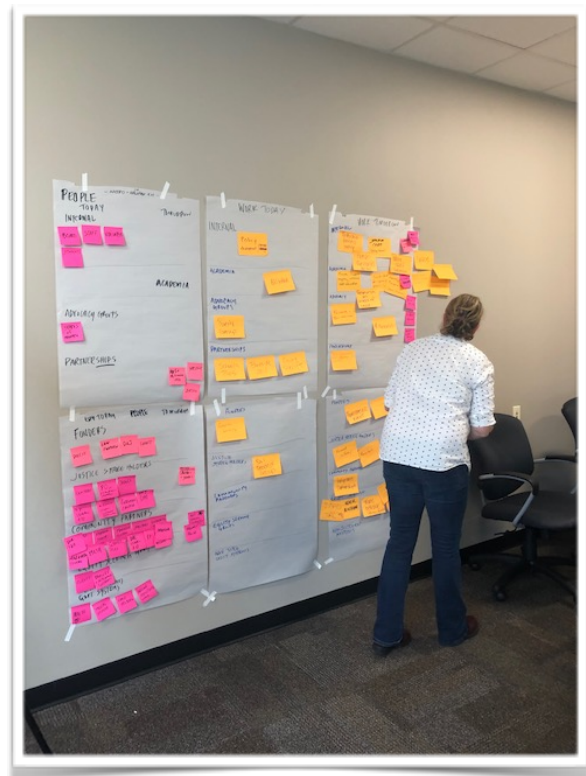
NSCC Institute of Technology  
5685 Leeds Street  
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3K 2T3

## Attendees

Ida Armstrong-Whitehouse - Chair  
Valerie McDonald - Vice Chair  
Kathy McKay - Director and Past Chair  
Brittany Sutherland - Secretary  
Anna Sadofsky - Director  
Ashley L. Avery - Director  
Maha Raghavan- Director  
Hilary Murphy -Women & Youth Services Coordinator  
Ashley Avery -Executive Director

## Facilitator

Sera Thompson  
New Leaf  
17 Dahlia St. Dartmouth, NS  
B3A 2R8

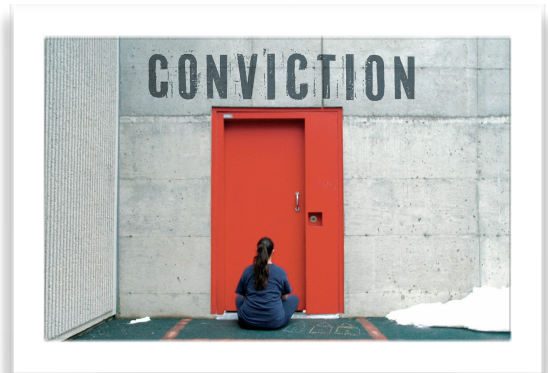


*Sera Thompson is a social innovator and master facilitator whose work is focused on building capacity for participatory leadership and creating movement around complex issues. Her work creatively engages a diversity of players and stakeholders in finding shared clarity and timely actions. For more information please visit <http://www.a-new-leaf.ca>.*

# AGENDA

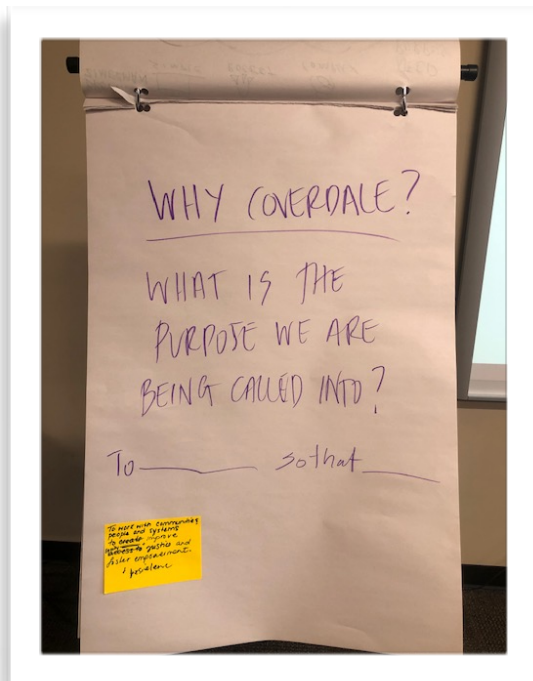
## Friday- Tuning into NEED

- Land Acknowledgment & welcome
- Presentation on Coverdale
- Documentary screening- Conviction
- Needs Assessment & #TalkJustice
- Exploring an Inclusion Lens



## Saturday- Building an Emergent Direction

- Land Acknowledgement & Welcome
- Check in- reflections on last night, unique value
- Breakout- Power of Why | Clarifying Purpose
- Share & Discuss - Principles, How we work, what we believe about the world
- Who do we serve? What is our work?
- Break outs to sharpen the work
- Converge on shared clarity
- Board and Staff roles



# WHY COVERDALE?

## What is the purpose we are being called into?

To decrease barriers within the criminal justice system and provide comprehensive supports so that all women, girls, trans and non-binary individuals can achieve healing and equity. We strive to empower women, girls, trans and non-binary individuals through a trauma informed, inclusive lens. Our client centred approach strengthens emotional, cultural and social well-being through prevention, innovation, support, reintegration and advocacy.

## What are our principles?

- Communicate with compassion
- Understand the prevalence and impact of trauma
- Share power
- Pursue the person's strengths, choice, and autonomy
- Respect human rights
- Provide holistic care
- Embrace diversity
- Earn trust
- Promote safety

## What is the core work?

- Court Support and Navigation
- Programming
- Individual Support
- Prison in-reach
- Advocacy
- Fundraising

## Who are the people involved?

**Coverdale:** Board, Staff, Students, Volunteers

**Funders:** Law Foundation of Nova Scotia, Nova Scotia Department of Justice, Churches, Grants

**Non-profit Organizations:** Elizabeth Fry Society, Stepping Stone Society, Shelter Nova Scotia, Adsum House, MLSN. Native Friendship Center, Marguerite House, Schools Plus, THANS, Dalhousie Legal Aid, LISNS, Women's Wellness Within, East Coast Prison Justice Society, Seventh Step Society, Mobile Outreach Street Health, Mainline Needle Exchange, D180, Access to Justice and Law Reform Institute

**Government/Quasi-Government Stakeholders:** Department of Health and Wellness , Department of Education, Department of Community Services , Department of Justice, Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women, Housing Nova Scotia, Metro Regional Housing Authority, Nova Scotia Barristers Society, Lawyers, Probation Officers, Parole Officers, Judges, Court Services, Corrections Services Canada, Nova Scotia Legal Aid, Department of Corrections, Corrections Services Canada, Provincial Government, Municipal Government, Federal Government.

# Strategic Pillars

## 1. Build Internal Capacity

### What's already working?

- Currently have strong staff
- Staff are supportive of one another
- Have successfully recruited board members
- Office is accessible and affordable

### Where do we need to grow?

- Ensure staff have adequate mental health training
- Support continued education
- Build comprehensive orientation for all staff/ students/volunteers/board members

### What will move us forward?

- Update policy re: training, education & staff wellness
- Increase involvement of board on committees
- More core funding for education & training
- More facilitated team building activities
- Increase staff (\*secure funding)

### Measures

- Complete regular staff check-ins and offer support as needed
- Do staff feel that there are programs needed that we cannot offer?



### Draft Initiatives

1. Create HR committee
2. Hire another staff member: define their role
3. Activate policy committee

### Questions?

- How many more staff are needed? What is their role?
- How much more space would be ideal?
- Do we need a volunteer coordinator?

## 2. Become an Inclusive Organization

### What's already working?

- Board and staff are becoming more diverse in representation
- Law barrier access
- Accessible office space

### What will move us forward?

- Update organization documents to reflect trans inclusive language
- Revisit core values
- Provide training and education for staff and volunteers
- Programs and groups for racialized individuals

### Questions?

- Are there funding implications? (More funding)
- What are the best practices re: language?
- What will services and programming look like?

### Draft Initiatives



1. Update mandate to be inclusive of all trans and non-binary people
2. Build intersectional policies into the organizational structure to reduce systematic barriers
3. Develop programming for LGBTQ, African Nova Scotian and Indigenous people
4. Collect disaggregated data

### Where do we need to grow?

- Recognizing the intersecting barriers within communities based on ethnicity, gender, ability, sexual orientation, etc.
- Offering African Nova Scotian and Indigenous focused programming and resources
- Intersectional policies and inclusive language (trans)
- Cultural competence and cultural humility

### Measures

- Are we reflecting diversity?
- Do we have strong partnerships?
- Is our client base diverse?

## 3. Secure Sustainable Funding

### What's already working?

- Core funding is relatively stable
- We have good relationships with long-term grantors
- Staff have been creative in finding new funding opportunities
- We have a healthy reserve fund

### What will move us forward?

- Develop new substantial fundraising opportunities
- More staff or volunteer capacity specifically for financial matters
- Set a fundraising goal

### Questions?

- What are our financial goals? (how much)
- What are our financial priorities? (what will we do with the extra \$?)
- What competency needs to be added to the board to increase financial capacity?

### Draft Initiatives



1. Activate fundraising committee
2. Have one significant fundraising event per year
3. Secure another core funder

### Where do we need to grow?

- Financial stability
- More staff
- Increased capacity

### Measures

- Did we meet fundraising goal?
- Has core funding increased?
- Have we required any reserve funds this year?



# 4. Advocate for Systems Change

## What's already working?

- Voices- Youth prevention
- Bail and remand committee
- Government meetings (DM Justice)
- Hep C coalition
- Anti-poverty coalition

## Where do we need to grow?

- Peer inclusion- first voice
- Continue meetings with government
- Research: CLARI and other academic institutes
- Support for mothers and families

## What will move us forward?

- Training volunteers and students to deliver Voices program (increase prevention)
- Strengthening relationships with organizations that support mothers/caregivers
- Being involved in research projects that address access to justice issues
- Developing an action plan on advocacy issues

## Questions?

- What are our broad advocacy goals?
- What is the history of the issue? i.e. racism; gender based violence

## Draft Initiatives



- 1.Develop an action plan
- 2.Train students and volunteers to deliver Voices program (increase Voices delivery)
- 3.Conduct advocacy research and use media advocacy
- 4.Collect data on barriers (prison/court) to assist in advocacy initiatives

## Measures

- Are we responding to the access to justice problem in deliverable ways?
- Are experts/those with first voice included and involved in our work?
- Do our stats represent an increase of advocacy?
- Are volunteers more involved in frontline activities?

## Our Commitment

Having board members and staff participate in the strategic planning process fostered collegiality and created an opportunity for discussion on the direction of Coverdale. Our strategic planning retreat resulted in a cultural transformation grounded in a collective vision for our forward plan of action. The process promoted an open and creative exchange of ideas as we worked out effective solutions to the significant areas in need of attention. Coverdale Courtwork Society is committed to utilizing the recommendations of the plan as a priority for our work from both board and operational levels. Coverdale will align evaluation processes to ensure that the recommendations of the 2019 Strategic Plan are incorporated into our data collection processes so that we can report annually upon our progress.



Women are fastest growing prison population, esp. Indigenous and other racialized women, and women with mental health disabilities. Most women involved in the criminal justice system are mothers; and, most are solely responsible for their children. Many of their children end up in state care while they are imprisoned. Increased criminalization of battered women, sexually abused and exploited women and girls, poor women, women with addictions, and queer and trans individuals are realities that we are responding to. As outlined in our plan, we are committing to a concentrated focus on supporting equity seeking groups through service delivery and advocacy. We recognize the importance of aligning our agency structures towards Indigenous and Africentric world-views and

strengthening relationships with Indigenous and African Nova Scotian networks in order to increase our capacity in addressing the access to justice issues that impact equity seeking groups.

We have also committed to shifting our mandate to be inclusive of transgender and gender non-binary people. This change is inspired by extensive evidence demonstrating that LGBTQ folks, particularly people of colour and poor people, experience high levels of policing and criminalization, leading to arrest and incarceration. Once inside prison, LGBTQ people are subjected to discrimination and violence. In December of 2017, Correctional Service Canada (CSC) rolled out new policy guidelines which stated that "CSC has a duty to accommodate based on gender identity or expression, regardless of the person's anatomy (i.e. sex) or the gender marker on identification documents" (Canada, 2017). In order to better serve LGBTQ+ populations, an inclusive mandate is necessary. This next phase will be one of laser focus and a dedication to building a community within Coverdale, one with a focus on addressing the access to justice crisis by reducing barriers for our cities most marginalized and criminalized folks. This is undoubtedly a significant undertaking, but we are up for the challenge.

On behalf of Coverdale Courtwork Society,

Ashley Avery  
Executive Director

## Goals at a Glance



**Coverdale**  
strength of spirit

QUESTIONS  
WHAT'S ALREADY WORKING?  
WHAT WILL MAKE US THROU?  
WHAT INSPIRES?  
MEASURES

# Our Strategic Pillars

2019-2022

<b>BUILD</b> Internal Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>ENSURE STAFF HAVE ADEQUATE MENTAL HEALTH TRAINING</li><li>SUPPORT CONTINUED EDUCATION</li><li>BUILD COMPREHENSIVE ORIENTATION FOR ALL STAFF/STUDENTS/VOLUNTEERS/BOARD MEMBERS</li><li>INCREASE STAFF + VOLUNTEERS</li><li>BUILD UP RESOURCES FOR STAFF WELLNESS</li></ul>
<b>BECOME</b> an Inclusive Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>UPDATE MANDATE TO BECOME TRANS INCLUSIVE</li><li>UTILIZE AN AFRICENTRIC AND INDIGENOUS WORLD-VIEW</li><li>PROVIDE TRAINING AND EDUCATION FOR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS</li><li>BUILD PARTNERSHIPS WITH AFRICAN NS &amp; MI'KMAQ NETWORKS</li></ul>
<b>SECURE</b> Sustainable Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>DEVELOP NEW SUBSTANTIAL FUNDRAISING OPPORTUNITIES</li><li>MORE STAFF OR VOLUNTEER CAPACITY SPECIFICALLY FOR FINANCIAL MATTERS</li><li>SET A FUNDRAISING GOAL</li></ul>
<b>ADVOCATE</b> for Systems Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>DEVELOP AN ADVOCACY ACTION PLAN</li><li>INITIATE AND SUPPORT RESEARCH PROJECTS</li><li>COLLECT DATA ON BARRIERS (PRISON/COURT) TO ASSIST IN ADVOCACY INITIATIVES</li><li>DELIVER EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOPS ON ACCESS TO JUSTICE ISSUES</li></ul>