FINAL REPORT

"A Just Society, Where Everyone Counts":
Social and Economic Inclusion in Atlantic Canada

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1.   Introduction

This report represents the fruit of a long and productive partnership between the Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women's Health (ACEWH) and the Regional Office of the Population and Public Health Branch, Health Canada (PPHB).   Beginning in 1998, ACEWH and PPHB have worked together on a number of projects centred on the development of tools and opportunities to "influence the development and orientation of public policy that fosters social and economic inclusion" (SEI) (Kishchuk, 2001: 9).   PPHB Regional Directors had "assumed the role of champions of the population and public health approach" and the Atlantic regional office initiated efforts to mobilize this approach through a case study on "social and economic inclusion/exclusion and the pivotal role of policy" (Kishchuk, 2001: v).   The first stage of the project, entitled "Toward Social and Economic Inclusion: Breaking the Cycle of Poverty in Atlantic Canada", drew to a close in Spring 2000 with a workshop, the development of a resource kit and the dissemination of four papers dealing with various dimensions of social and economic exclusion in the region (Kishchuk, 2001).

In the Fall of 2000, PPHB and ACEWH together moved on to the next stage of the work, entitled "A Just Society, Where Everyone Counts": Social and Economic Inclusion in Atlantic Canada." Consultations and collaborations during the first phase of the project demonstrated the need for more intensive effort to explore and elaborate the meanings of social and economic exclusion and inclusion in the Atlantic provinces in order to develop a shared vocabulary, research agenda, and policy perspective.   Through a contribution agreement with PPHB, ACEWH provided coordination and leadership for a range of activities focused on increasing understanding of the concept and encouraging organizations and individuals to incorporate the principles of SEI into their work and workplaces.   The remainder of this report summarizes the "Just Society" project under the following categories: project objectives; budget; chronology of activities; SEI network and inventory; research agenda; project evaluation, and; key learnings.

2.   Project Objectives

The goal of this second phase of the project was "to enhance the health and well-being of Atlantic Canadian women and their families who live in disadvantaged circumstances" by understanding the impact and costs of social and economic exclusion and by promoting social justice and collective empowerment.

Specific project objectives include:

    a.   assessing theory and practice around social and economic exclusion/inclusion;

    b.   contributing to the development of inclusionary strategies and ways of working to assess inclusion/exclusion;

    c.   increasing knowledge about the impact of exclusion on vulnerable or marginalized communities in Atlantic Canada and elsewhere;

    d.   providing opportunities for those most affected by exclusion to voice their ideas and concerns about inclusionary and exclusionary practices;

    e.   broadening networks of policy makers – from community, government, labour and private sectors – who support and promote social and economic inclusion;

    f.   supporting policy makers committed to social and economic inclusion, particularly in their work in the political sphere, and

    g.   sharing knowledge about social and economic exclusion and its impact on health as well as knowledge about practices and policies that ensure inclusion.

As a result of amendments to the contribution agreement, ACEWH also undertook to:

    h.   identify research gaps relevant to social and economic exclusion/inclusion in the Atlantic provinces;

    i.   develop a preliminary research agenda on social and economic inclusion in the Atlantic region, and;

    j.   engage more researchers, policy makers, and community-based organizations in the work of mainstreaming social and economic inclusion.

3.   Social and Economic Inclusion Budget
**   Contribution: Population and Public Health Branch – Atlantic Region**

Date	Project Title	Budget
1999-2000	Social and Economic Inclusion of Women, Children, and Families	$ 213,500
2000-2003	A Just Society, Where Everyone Counts: Promoting Social and Economic Inclusion in Atlantic Canada	$ 201,700

4.   Chronology of Activities

Over the course of two and a half years – from October 2000 to March 2003 – ACEWH undertook a variety of activities, as outlined in the original proposal and in subsequent amendments to the contribution agreement.   We have also advanced the SEI project in a number of ways that were not prescribed by our agreement with PPHB and that were, in some cases, unanticipated outcomes of the work.

Following is a chronology of events and activities.   Those that were funded through the contribution agreement with PPHB are marked with an asterisk '*' while those that ACEWH accomplished beyond the project's workplan are marked with a cross '†'.

2000

*November   Distribution of educational materials developed during the first stage of the project began in November.   Materials distributed included: books, social and economic inclusion education kits, assorted one-page descriptions, brief articles for newsletters, information folders.

*   ACEWH established a listerv which participants could choose to join.   It was set up for the purposes of communication and sharing information.

2001

* February   Centre staff made a co-presentation on SEI with PPHB Staff in Newfoundland to the Premier's Council on Social Development and the staff of the Strategic Social Planning Unit.   This presentation was part of the preparation for a more intensive workshop on SEI.

* March   The New Brunswick Social Inclusion Reference Group hosted a New Brunswick SEI Workshop that brought together approximately 80 participants from a variety of government departments and community organizations across throughout the province.

†   Centre staff attended a Nova Scotia Black Women's Health Network workshop, taking part in a panel presentation on social and economic inclusion principles.

†April   Between April and July, the SEI Project Coordinator assembled and distributed information packages in conjunction with events hosted by the African United Baptist Association and the Black Women's Health Network, Nova Scotia.

* June   The Nova Scotia Reference Group and FemJEPP co-hosted a Nova Scotia Workshop on SEI.   More than 50 participants from across sectors attended the workshop.

†July	Centre staff, in consultation with Reference Group members from the four provinces, developed a Letter of Intent for the Voluntary Sector Initiative, to support and sustain the extension of a regional Social and Economic Inclusion Network

*November	Centre staff were invited to present on SEI at a national conference entitled "A New Way of Thinking? Towards a vision of social inclusion", hosted in Ottawa, ON by the Canadian Council on Social Development.

*December	A Newfoundland-Labrador Workshop was co-hosted by the Social Inclusion Committee of the Premier's Council on Social Development and the Strategic Social Planning Unit of the Premier's Council on Social Development. The workshop served as a resource for the six health regions in Newfoundland and Labrador.

2002

* January	ACEWH Staff, in consultation with PPHB Staff, developed an amendment to the Project contribution agreement to include the creation of a research agenda.

† February	The SEI Project Coordinator made a presentation to undergraduates and graduates in the School of Nursing, Dalhousie University, explaining the principles of social and economic inclusion and the need for SEI in policy planning, development, and implementation.

†March	The Project Coordinator developed an agenda and a participant list for a series of four policy meetings, one in each province. The focus of the meetings was social and economic inclusion as a framework for policy development. These meetings were part of an annual regional series of events hosted by ACEWH and brought together senior policy officials.

†April	The SEI Project Coordinator acted as a small group facilitator at the Health and Wealth Conference, Cape Breton, NS. She also distributed SEI materials to conference participants.

†	Centre staff engaged in preliminary discussions with Community Services, NS regarding the possibility of collaboration on an SEI Initiative.

*	The Project Coordinator, with PPHB Staff, made a presentation on SEI at the National Health Promotion Conference, Victoria, BC

†May   The Project Coordinator contributed to the development of a funding proposal designed to facilitate work on social inclusion in NS with government and community.   This proposal was not funded.

*   The Project Coordinator, with PPHB staff, presented a workshop for managers in the Employment Support and Income Assistance Division, Community Services, NS.

†May   The Project Coordinator made a presentation to students in the Women and Leadership diploma programme at the Coady Institute, St. Francis Xavier University, Antigonish, NS.

* June   The Project Coordinator contributed to the development of the Social Inclusion Lens, participating in the working group that designed the lens as well as helping to review and test the lens.

*August   The Project Coordinator organized a workshop aimed at developing a Research Agenda on Social and Economic Inclusion, with participants from all four Atlantic provinces.

†September   Centre staff developed a research grant application for further policy research related to social and economic inclusion.   This proposal, submitted to the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, was not funded.

†October   Between October and December, Centre staff made presentations on social and economic inclusion to the Progressive Conservative, NDP, and Liberal caucuses in NS.

*   The Project Coordinator commissioned GPI Atlantic to develop a PowerPoint® presentation on social and economic inclusion in Nova Scotia.   This presentation was shared with politicians from all parties as well as copied to a CD and shared widely as a resource for groups in Nova Scotia and elsewhere.

*   Anne Martell finished the interviews for an evaluation of the Project and its impact in four provinces.

†November   The Project Coordinator contributed to the women's election issues forum in Nova Scotia and, with the support of ACEWH, contributed to the development of educational materials.

*   The Project Coordinator participated in a conference on the Social Determinants of Health Across the Life Span, York University, Toronto, ON.

*	The Project Coordinator organized a regional meeting in Halifax, for key participants from each of four provinces. Using 'Open Space' techniques, the participants discussed further plans for collaboration and development of the SEI work.

2003

*January	The Project Coordinator supervised the development of a database of Atlantic researchers working in areas of potential interest to those striving for greater social and economic inclusion in policies and programmes throughout the region.
*February	The SEI Project and the PEI Women's Network co-hosted a Prince Edward Island Workshop on SEI. More than 40 representatives from all sectors attended and contributed to the workshop.
†	The Project Coordinator made a presentation to undergraduates and graduates at the School of Nursing, Dalhousie University, regarding social and economic inclusion and policy development.
*	ACEWH developed general information kits that included a printed excerpts from the education kit and a CD with copies of: the SEI papers, the SEI lens developed by Malcolm Shookner for PPHB – Atlantic, and the SEI PowerPoint® presentation for Nova Scotia. To date, more than 250 kits have been distributed across the region and country, with financial support from ACEWH.
†	The SEI Project Coordinator provided information and resources, and prepared a presentation for the Nova Scotia Department of Health's Diversity and Social Inclusion Conference, held in March 2003. She and other Centre staff continue to work on the committee that is planning regional workshops with the District health Authorities in the province.
* March	A series of four provincial meetings were set up, between January and March, to bring together community, academic and government policy people to focus on issues that are especially important to community-based organizations that want to implement a social and economic inclusion framework in their provinces. These meetings were funded under a separate grant, but are included here because they are closely integrated with the SEI Projects.
†April	The Project Coordinator entered into a six-month contract with the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services to assist with a Social Inclusion Initiative. She joined the planning committee and helped to orchestrate the community forum and focus groups, and to develop reports and materials for the Initiative.

†   Beginning in April and continuing through to at least the end of the year, the Project Coordinator has been instrumental in developing research teams for grant applications to the Canadian Institutes for Health Research, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, and the Nova Scotia Health Research Foundation.   These proposals focus on research related to the social and economic exclusion of single mothers and their children in Atlantic Canada and Ontario.   The applications are currently under review.

†   The SEI Project Coordinator joined the staff of ACEWH – after the culmination of the contribution agreement with PPHB – in order to provide a more permanent home for the work.

5.　　SEI Network and Inventory

Among the many objectives for various phases of the Social and Economic Inclusion Project, creating opportunities for contact and collaboration among researchers, decision makers, advocates, and service providers has been one of the most important.   Relationships are key to process of advancing the social and economic inclusion agenda, just as they are key to more inclusive policies and programmes.   The formation of the Reference Groups and the organization of papers and workshops in the first stage of the project created a solid foundation upon which to build a vibrant and dynamic network of individuals and organizations committed to the principles of social and economic inclusion.   Many of the aforementioned activities were designed specifically to foster new relationships and to strengthen existing ones.   We also found that many people gravitated toward the project because their own work complements or intersects with ours.

Because community-based organizations and the government bureaucracy tend to have relatively high turnover – albeit in different ways and for different reasons – the network has tended to be somewhat 'fluid': people and organizations come and go as a result of changing agendas, jobs and assignments, and capacity.   Nonetheless, we have been able to bring together academic and community based researchers, service providers and decision makers, elected officials and constituents by means of a listserv as well as through workshops, conferences, referrals, etc. (See Appendix 1: Listserv Membership) ACEWH has thus been able to act as an "honest broker" for the SEI project, linking like-minded individuals and organizations to discuss social and economic inclusion and matching people with opportunities.   While the role of facilitation has been crucial for the success of the SEI project, we would be remiss if we did not acknowledge the tremendous benefits that accrued to ACEWH as a result of this opportunity.   In 1998, the Centre was still in its fledgling stage and the project opened up many doors across the region.   We also learned a great deal along the way about our own understanding of poverty and other forms of disadvantage.   As a result, we have a much more sophisticated approach to social and economic inclusion and we are part of a vibrant network of like-minded individuals and organizations, many of whom continue to work together.

In addition to networking activities, the Project Coordinator has also created an inventory of researchers and research organizations in the Atlantic region that could or do contribute to the social and economic inclusion agenda (See Appendix 2: Research Inventory).   This inventory not only captures the contact information of prospective collaborators, it also helps to identify research strengths and gaps in the area of social and economic inclusion.

6.   Preliminary Research Agenda: SEI

Throughout the life of the project, we have sought to identify research gaps as well as research priorities related to social and economic inclusion.   Ongoing discussions with workshop participants and network members have served to highlight research themes that require further study, but it is important to bear in mind that the following agenda is *preliminary*.   It has been distilled from workshop proceedings, from the original papers produced for the SEI project, from the research inventory, and from the project evaluation, rather than from a systematic survey of experts, broadly defined, working in the area of social and economic inclusion and exclusion. The following subjects and issues undoubtedly require further study, but they are not the only aspects of social and economic inclusion that remain unexamined or under-conceptualized.

a) The Language of Social and Economic Inclusion
During our evaluation, many respondents noted that the concepts of social and economic inclusion/exclusion were circulating widely prior to the inception of the project and had already been embraced by some organizations and individuals.   Nonetheless, many felt that the vocabulary of SEI had given them a new, shared, and powerful way to talk about poverty and other forms of exclusion.   Other respondents felt that terminology was still not well-understood, particularly by people in government and the community.   "When I'm out in the world of Food Banks," noted one respondent, "this new label seems to muddy the water. ... People in the big wide world talk about poverty and class, not social and economic inclusion."   One observer went so far as to suggest that the language of social and economic inclusion could be appropriated for the purposes of exclusion. Sometimes "including" people, she noted, was really a cover for "downloading" government responsibility to the community and/or the individual.   Although the terminology is frequently characterized as "academic", researchers do not uniformly embrace the concept or the vocabulary.   For example, at a recent conference on the Social Determinants of Health Across the Lifespan, held at York University in Toronto, some researchers were clearly uncomfortable with the language of inclusion and exclusion, even when discussing vulnerable populations.

Although a good deal of effort has gone into raising awareness about SEI – within and beyond this project – we must continue to monitor and analyze the ways in which the language of social and economic inclusion is being interpreted and used.   As one person interviewed for the evaluation noted, "There's a basic principle of communication – keep repeating the message".

b) Measuring Social and Economic Inclusion/Exclusion
One of the most important areas for research involves identifying and/or developing appropriate methods to measure exclusion and inclusion. A decade or more of research on health indicators and on measures of progress has clearly established the dangers of relying on the GDP or on mortality and morbidity statistics to gauge the vigour of our society. Yet critiques of existing indicators have not led to the development of better measures of wellness, generally, or inclusion and exclusion specifically. Other models for assessing inclusion and exclusion are available internationally and we need to evaluate their suitability or adaptability for Canada.

Once we can agree upon appropriate ways to measure exclusion and inclusion, we need to develop methods to link this data to health statistics. Some new surveys, such as the Canadian Community Health Survey, may improve our understanding of social and economic exclusion and the health of Canadian society, but we need to evaluate their merits before we accept them. Moreover, we may find that other models for measuring inclusion and wellness are more useful. In British Columbia, for example, provincial administrative databases are linked with federal census data to allow for statistical correlations of health status and health service utilization with ethnicity, socio-economic status, occupation, etc. We should be looking across the country and outside of the country to find the best ways of gauging and improving both inclusion and wellness. As one respondent for the evaluation concluded, we need to "profile some indicators of inclusion – we need benchmarks".

c) SEI and Vulnerable Populations
It seems obvious that vulnerable populations suffer most from social and economic exclusion precisely because many of the disadvantages with which they live arise from marginalization based on one or more factors: race, ethnicity, language, gender, age, ability, geography, economics, sexual orientation, religion, etc. Nonetheless, we still have a limited appreciation of the ways in which exclusion affects specific populations or the extent to which inclusion can ameliorate a plethora of health and wellness issues. In the United States, for instance, much data has been collected on the health of African Americans as compared with the health of white Americans. In Canada, we need to begin documenting the exclusion experienced by lone mothers, by children, by language and religious minorities, by those with disabilities – among others – if we hope to devise inclusive and sustainable public policies and programmes. Research on exclusion among vulnerable populations would be especially timely, not only because national funding agencies have begun to focus on these issues, but also because new policies are being formulated with scant regard for the realities of exclusion. For example, The Healthy Living Strategy launched by federal Minister of Health Anne McLellan focuses explicitly and exclusively on individual responsibility for healthy body weight and healthy diet, ignoring systemic barriers and, by implication, social responsibility for eliminating those barriers.

d) SEI in Atlantic Canada
In the course of the SEI project, we have realized that the Atlantic provinces face some specific challenges in relation to social and economic inclusion.   For example, residents of the region are vulnerable – economically marginal – simply by virtue of living in one of the 'have-less' provinces.   At the same time, Atlantic Canada enjoys a reputation as a caring society, allegedly endowed with enough   "social capital" to insulate residents from the effects of exclusion. Yet we have little data to support either contention or a framework for evaluating innovative initiatives, such as the Strategic Social Plan in Newfoundland and Labrador.   Perhaps it is not surprising that researchers have skirted these issues: we risk much in holding such cherished notions up to the light. But if we hope to have a healthier, more inclusive society in Atlantic Canada, we must take a closer look at perceptions of our strengths and weaknesses as compared with the rest of the country and other countries.

e) SEI, Globalization, and the Atlantic Canada
During the last few years, researchers have paid more attention to the impact of globalization, specifically trade and international agreements, on health.   In Canada, we have become increasingly aware that some trade agreements have the potential to compromise our health and well-being by imposing restrictions – on our economic development, on our publicly funded health care system, on our natural resources and environment.   While all Canadians stand to be affected by new global arrangements, Atlantic Canadians need to pay especially close attention to the implications of international agreements because our economies are heavily dependent on natural resources and because global weather patterns put us at greater risk of illnesses related to environmental contaminants.   But vulnerable populations across the country are most likely to be adversely affected by trade and other international agreements because they are already socially, culturally, economically, politically, and/or geographically marginal. As a result, any research agenda on SEI must include investigations of the dangers of globalization for vulnerable populations inside and outside of Atlantic Canada.

7.   Project Evaluation
In the summer of 2002, ACEWH contracted Anne Martell, an independent consultant, to undertake an evaluation of the SEI project.   She reviewed appropriate documentation for the project and, in consultation with the Project Coordinator, identified key informants in the four Atlantic provinces.   Through the summer and fall, Ms. Martell interviewed people who had been associated with the project in various capacities and at various times: six from Nova Scotia; three from Prince Edward Island; four from Newfoundland and Labrador; four from New Brunswick; and one each from PPHB and ACEWH.   She submitted transcripts of these interviews and a final report in October 2002.

Before we consider the results of the evaluation, it is important to place the remarks of respondents in the larger context of government and community activity in the area of social and

economic exclusion.   Many organizations and individuals associated with SEI Project had been working, implicitly or explicitly, with the concepts of social and economic inclusion long before PPHB launched the initiative or ACEWH took on the role of coordinating the work.   Although most of the respondents felt that the SEI Project had helped them in one way or another, we know that their insights, experiences, energy, and commitment are responsible for developing and sustaining work of trying to build a more inclusive and just society in Canada.

Following is a discussion of the impact of the SEI project as reported during the evaluation.

a)   Concepts and Language

Although most respondents had been working with concepts of social and economic inclusion for many years, a large proportion felt that the SEI project gave them a new and powerful vocabulary with which to approach the issues. "I think what clicked for me in the concept of social exclusion," observed one respondent, "was that it describes a dynamic rather than a condition, ... it creates a very different way of seeing the phenomenon of poverty." Other respondents noted that the terminology enabled them to approach new audiences.   As one observed, "It's enriched my ability to describe poverty in ways that make better connection for people who are middle upper income earners. ... I remember being able to describe to them – and I'm not sure I would have done it four years ago in that way – I might have been able to talk about poverty, but to describe to them why a child is excluded ... I think that it has changed how we describe poverty because it isn't just about poverty.   It's about exclusion, lacking opportunities, or being excluded from opportunities, ..."

Not everyone was enamored with the new terminology: "Some feel that by using the language of social inclusion it sidesteps the reality of poverty."   Others argued that the vocabulary was very "academic", neither suitable for nor acceptable in community work. One respondent noted that some government officials felt threatened by the language of exclusion and the implicit criticism of government policies. "The language initially was a barrier to us because ... the government people were upset because they were accused by the community people of being exclusionist".

But, by and large, respondents regarded the language used in the Project as helpful   "The articulation of inclusion and exclusion", concluded one respondent, "has clarified our own programs. It has been significant".

b) Understanding and Awareness

Even though most respondents had been active in anti-poverty or anti-discrimination work for many years, some felt that the Project had provided or cultivated a valuable, new perspective on the issues.   "The Project put a new slant on things for me", concluded one respondent.   "I wasn't quite as aware as I became of the cross-cutting of issues and how collaboration can enable people to be included. ... I'm not sure whether the Project came first, but [it] clarified any thoughts I had on being excluded."   Another observed that "It

has helped me to listen better to women in poverty and to understand how economic security is key to many, many issues. Economic security is the way to deal with social inclusion – the Project helped clarify that for me”. One respondent concluded that a new appreciation of the scope of exclusion was the first step towards new or renewed relationships. “The think that clicks around inclusion is that it's the common issue, it's the encompassing issue, it's the unifying issue that we all face.”

c) Relationships and Networking
The concepts and language of social and economic inclusion thus contributed to new relationships and greater trust within relationships. As one respondent observed, “We got to know each other and we learned to speak a common language and so we grew along together. So I think the Project has been an invaluable vehicle for building those partnerships and building that sense of trust”.

Many people commented on the advantages of a regional perspective and opportunities for regional collaboration afforded by the project, though some were also frustrated by the regional approach because it tended to distract them from could or needed to be done in their own province. Some respondents noted the benefits that accrued from bringing together a spectrum of people, from across disciplines and sectors. According to one, the Project had helped in “pushing our thinking and bringing together different players to look at our common values and common interests”. Another remarked that the Project had helped her to identify a “group that was supportive our what we were doing, ... The collaborative piece was very encouraging. Some respondents felt that the Project was too “top-down” while others felt that the inclusion of people who are normally excluded was a major accomplishment.

In addition to bridging the divide between provinces and between government and community, some respondents noted that the Project facilitated collaboration across government departments. “We often are in our own areas,” she said, “with our own pile, with our own budget that we have to spend before the end of our fiscal year, all of these kinds of things don't improve, don't encourage trust and understand and that's what this project has done.”

Finally, some respondents noted that ACEWH had been important to the SEI Project because it acted as an “honest broker”, at arms length from government funders.   It helped to ensure the credibility of the Project and to foster trust among participating organizations, agencies, and individuals.

d) Evaluation and Planning
At the same time, some respondents felt that the Project had encouraged and enabled them to evaluate the inclusiveness of their own policies and programmes as well as of their own attitudes and behaviours. One respondent remarked, “I was challenged by the marginalized people there [at one of the workshops]. And I carried through. Now when

I'm asked to evaluate work with Aboriginal communities I always ask if there is an Aboriginal person who could do the work".   Another remarked, "I'm still thinking about how to involve people without being patronizing; learning what their interests are and giving them opportunities to develop skills that are in line with their own interests.   And also what to give them so when they return to their own community they are not accused of having sold out."

In some cases, involvement in the Project did not lead to change because some organizations and individuals felt they had already done the work of self-reflection. Indeed, one respondent reported that, "At times we felt the work already being done or completed by the community was not being recognized by the Project."   At the other end of the spectrum, some respondents felt that the Project had been instrumental in personal or institutional change   As one respondent said, "We're thinking about developing a strategic plan for the department and we're looking at how to be inclusive when developing the plan.   The Social Inclusion Project really challenges us to continue to strive to be inclusive".

e) Resources and Sustainibility
On the one hand, the most critical comments dealt with the lack of adequate resources to undertake a project of this magnitude.   As one respondent reported, "it was a pittance amount of money to do an incredibly big job.   I mean high expectations with limited resources, ... and I mean we succeeded but at what cost." Comments like these were frequent and directed both at the funders, PPHB, and at ACEWH.

On the other hand, many respondents felt that the project had produced valuable resources such as the SEI lens, the educational kit, and the concept papers.   "Well," concluded one respondent, "I've certainly used the reports and the booklets and other things to spread the news so that's good.   There's more tools.   Even that inclusion overhead thing, that a nice little package."   In a few cases, the SEI Project gave people the concepts and principles to create healthier more inclusive policy.   As one respondent reported:

There were inklings of discontent in our department about how we provide services to victims of violence.   Women's groups were saying people were falling through the cracks. ... So, following the inclusion principles model, we formed a community-government group to develop policies to address the shortcomings that were identified.   We involved clients, shelter staff, Status of Women, relevant government departments ... and that group over 6 months developed about 20 policy issues. ... we took that report and government accepted all the policy recommendations.   Now we've developed agreements with Transition Houses ... We are focusing on how to get better services for people in need.

Finally, many respondents worried about the sustainability of the work in the face of a variety of economic, political, social, and geographic barriers.   Changes in government

or among bureaucrats often means the need for re-education on the ideas and issues of social and economic inclusion. Even without regular transition between staff and governments, the process of change is slow. "I think this is an evolutionary as well as a developmental process," concluded one respondent. It is a question – we recognize it's a question of changing the way we do work, ... the way we do business. ... And that's a long, slow process of changing attitudes." Many respondents felt that this kind of transformation could not be accomplished without adequate resources of personnel and money and sustained commitment.

8. Key Learnings

a) Networking
Building and maintaining networks requires concrete, practical tasks for the members to acquire shared experiences. Some resources are necessary to nurture and grow the network – though these could be relatively modest. Someone needs to take the lead to provide coordination, build information into websites, identify opportunities on behalf of the network and to be the contact or lead when other agencies and organizations reach out. We also need to find ways to continuing shared analysis, new information, and the evolution of thinking on issues if we hope to reap the benefits of a dynamic and innovative network. Networks must have something to do.

b) Building trust
Building trust and respect among colleagues and across sectors, departments and provinces is essential. As with networking, fostering trust requires stable staffing and funding of an SEI secretariat.

c) Ownership is critical
The need for participants to take ownership and make their own contributions is very important. Organizations that have participated in the SEI Projects can and should help to shape thinking about SEI and the application of these concepts. Participating in workshops and committees of the project is not enough. Participants were most effective when they were given opportunities to internalize SEI, both as process and content.

d) Role for knowledge translation and knowledge brokering
Effective knowledge translation requires mutual trust, credibility, and respect as well as significant opportunities. It is important to build relationships among all sectors and departments and to communicate about meetings, conferences, media events, and other opportunities to make the public, policy makers, providers, and others aware of social and economic inclusion issues.

e) Importance of capacity building at the community level
Community-based and non-governmental organizations are often working with meager resources, which seriously impeded effective participation in the network or other SEI

activities.   When government staff and academic researchers attend conferences and workshops, their expenses and time is usually covered. Often when community or NGO people participate, it is on their own unpaid time and perhaps some of them have even had to take unpaid leave. Resources must be set aside to support the involvement of community-based and non-governmental organizations and additional resources provided to facilitate participation in workshops, conferences and committee work

f) The voice of experience must be heard
Inclusive programmes or policies are only possible when we hear the voices of those who experience the effects of exclusion and poverty.   In many cases this means changing the way government does business - the process of consultation should be transparent, respectful, and genuinely inclusive. The resultant programmes and policies must show that these voices were heard and valued.

g) The language of social and economic inclusion
The language of social and economic exclusion and inclusion provides a forum for the broadest level of participation.   It enables anti-poverty, health, and women's organizations to engage with departments of economic development, as well as education, health, community services, and environment.   At the same time, it encourages discussions about potential solutions that address the full range and complexity of issues affecting excluded populations and increases the degree of ownership and responsibility that all feel.

h) Social and economic inclusion is about both process and content
SEI is not a quick fix.   It takes time to build new relationships, to develop new ways of thinking and working, and to foster the willingness to enact inclusive measures.   It also take time to acquire a new perspective on poverty, exclusion and inclusion and an understanding of the complexity and connectedness of social and economic issues.

i) Politics and advocacy
Changing the process of public policy development is in itself a political activity: it requires a shift in power.   It is also dependent on re-framing the issues of social and economic issues, often with the aid of those outside of government who are generating new knowledge, presenting information in new ways, and having shared discussions that are not always comfortable for the decision-makers.

j) Social and economic inclusion is not an add-on
This work must already be on the agenda for participants. If the work is not of importance and not timely, there is not enough support to make it happen. The timing needs to be right. The work must be important. There must be capacity for the organization or department to carry out the work and the follow-up.

k) The activities must evolve and not be imposed
Two activities were particularly difficult to implement in this project: (i) the listserv proved difficult to sustain beyond the first few rounds of information exchange; (ii) the research agenda was not identified by the reference groups or any of the workshops as essential. Over the course of 12 months, this activity did not develop its own momentum as other project activities had in the past. We had to recruit new participants for this activity and still the question of the research agenda could be eclipsed by a concern to be doing something more than studying inclusion and exclusion. In retrospect, more general involvement of the 'network' would have made this exercise more effective, timely and focused.

8.   Conclusion

In the past two and a half years, we at ACEWH have been privileged to work closely with the staff of PPHB and with community and government throughout the region. Our own work has been strengthened immeasurably by the intelligence and generosity people brought to the Project and we have been honoured by their willingness to collaborate with us. As the staff of PPHB – Atlantic continue to promote the social and economic inclusion agenda in and across government agencies, we at the Centre are trying to find ways to sustain the project. Linda Snyder has joined the staff of ACEWH as the Social and Economic Inclusion Program Officer, in an effort to create a 'home' for the SEI work. We have also been developing a series of research grants to study the ways in which policies and programmes affect the health and well-being of lone mothers and their children in Atlantic Canada (See Appendix 3). Our desire to learn from international initiatives on the cutting edge of social policy have led us to begin organizing an exchange with senior policy advisors in Scotland. In these activities and proposals, we are building on the principles of social and economic inclusion outlined in the Project and on the collective insight of participants in the Project. We are excited to be moving in fresh directions and look forward to strengthening existing relationships and building new alliances for women's health.

9.   Appendices

Appendix 1: Social Inclusion Listserv
Appendix 2: Research Inventory
Appendix 3: Research Proposal