



Year in Review: 2006



Remember and act: A women's 'clothesline' at the Queen's Park launch of the Step it Up! Campaign was a stark reminder of why we demand that government take faster and better action to end violence against women. Pictured are a very few of the 288 names of women and children murdered in Ontario since 1995.

Federal changes hurt women

On October 5, 2006 Beverley Oda, federal Minister for the Status of Women, declared women 'equal'.

The House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women was questioning the Minister about Government decisions to cut Women's Program funding and staff, and to rewrite its terms and conditions to eliminate the "equality" goal and deny funds to groups for research or advocacy.

Under questioning about whether all Canadian women enjoyed equality, she clarified that women had equal *opportunity* and that "we make sure we can stand up for ourselves." It's just that women have different abilities to do this, that some women are "weak" and so they may need our help.

"It is a total mischaracterization to say that by redesigning the terms and conditions, we are automatically saying that women are not weak, that all women are strong. That's not what we're saying," the Minister insisted.

According to Minister Oda, what women apparently don't need, however, is "just speaking about their rights and telling them they have rights".

Are women all talk, no action?

The federal Minister is interested in making a "real" difference in the lives of women by funding local action. By "real" she means "not artificial," as she explained to the Committee.

For example, she wants to give money directly to women's shelters, she said.

In Ontario, Conservative MPs have called OAITH members and others to encourage them to apply for Status of Women funding, funding that has been taken from OAITH and other women's shelter associations, and from critical national women's organizations.

It is time once again for us to remember, and to remind government, that in our lifetimes, women haven't "just" talked about our rights. We've fought for them, and we'll fight for them again.

Growing support for new campaign to 'step up' election action on VAW

October 10, 2007. For the first time in Ontario, we know just when we'll vote for our next provincial government.

Party campaigning has already started. Politicians are competing for public attention and Parties are considering candidates.

Party platforms are forming. The decisions Parties make about what goes in them will tell us if they really care about violence against women, or only about the issues in media 'lead' stories.

Their ideas on how to end violence against women, if they mention them, will affect the lives of women, children and communities all across Ontario.

Our work demands that we raise our voices for women and children. The *Step it Up! Campaign* is doing just that, and it will only grow stronger as the election nears.

Amazing committee guides anti-racist/anti-oppressive goal

Women on the Anti-Racism/Anti-Oppression Committee have worked over the past year to raise the profile of ending violence against women from an equity based framework. We have engaged in dialogue on issues of racism and oppression impacting women institutionally, systemically and globally and continued to critically examine strategies to ensure shelter services are delivered from an integrated ARAO framework.

The committee recognizes all forms of racism and oppression as violence and believes services must be accessible to all women. The committee continues to look at issues of access and strives to remove barriers to ensure shelters are accessible for all women.

We are committed to being responsive to the needs of marginalized women and to challenging systemic oppressions, raising awareness of strategies to create ARAO organizational change and working to achieve social justice for all women.

Accomplishments 2006

Advanced ARAO training

Laverne, Valeska, Cindy and Rebecca acted as the Project Reference Group for the *Advanced Anti-Racism/Anti-Oppression Training* project. Beth Jordan has hired to develop the ARAO Advanced Training curriculum and Vania Sukola was hired as Project Coordinator.

In partnership with Assaulted Women's Helpline, Verlia Stephens was seconded as the lead trainer. Training was provided to frontline staff, managers, volunteers and board members using the Advanced Training module.

The project was piloted in Toronto. Toronto based shelters where trained

with the goal of ensuring that all women who are marginalized by racism, classism, homophobia, ableism, transphobia are able to access and receive responsive and effective services and supports from shelters.

Train the trainers

A two-day 'train the trainer' was developed and facilitated by Beth and Verlia for members of the ARAO, SJAC, staff and Board. There was one board training and seven shelter trainings facilitated in Toronto. The curriculum is available in written, Braille and audio cassette formats.

Thanks to Beth, Verlia and Vania for all the hard work and dedication that made this project successful!

Ongoing ARAO training

Jess, Laverne and Nadia facilitated five ARAO trainings across the province using the *Creating Inclusive Spaces* manual. The goal of this training is to assist member shelters in creating organizational change from an ARAO framework. Five strategic ARAO priorities are developed during the training with the hope that member shelters will continue the work to implement the strategies.

Alliance with Aboriginal women

Our priority for 2006 was creating alliances and working in solidarity with Aboriginal Women. We organized the training workshop for the AGM "Aboriginal Women Speak Out".

The workshop promoted creating alliances and solidarity work with Aboriginal Women and Children. Thanks to women who presented during the workshop, Gloria Harris, Sherry Lewis, Laura Williams, Leesie Naqitarvik-Goupil and Percy Lezard. A resource package was provided to all participants at the workshop.

Evaluations were extremely positive and showed the workshop increased worker knowledge on how to ensure services are accessible, raised awareness on the specific barriers that Aboriginal women face and raised awareness of the effects of colonialism.

Working with SJAC

The ARAO/SJAC committees held



Raising our public profile: Jaseth Purcell and Rebecca Rogers show OAITH support for the December 10th rally against the federal government cuts to Status of Women. ARAO members carried our banner in a number of other social justice events this year.

joint meetings to review the OAITH Strategic Plan, prioritize actions and delegate tasks to ensure coordinated response.

We created the poster for Woman Abuse Awareness Month titled "Make the Connections" to show the links between Global and Local violence and oppression of women.

We raised the profile of OAITH by participating in social justice events: IWD, the Dyke March, the Walk, Wheel, Ride for Dignity Campaign, No One is Illegal Rally and Rally to End Poverty.

Policy development work

Using the OAITH Policy Development Policy, a feedback form was developed and distributed to membership.

Responses will be used to update the current OAITH Anti-Racism Policy. We received 5 responses and would like to thank the women who took the time to provide input. Discussion and feedback on the policy was facilitated during the AGM and feedback will be used when revising the policy.

Goals 2007

- ❑ Develop a three year committee work plan based on the OAITH strategic plan and ARAO implementation plan.
- ❑ Organize and facilitate in partnership with Assaulted Women's Helpline a 'train the trainer' using the *Creating Inclusive Spaces (CIS) Training Manual*. Develop training sub-committee to facilitate CIS training to shelters that have not yet received it.

(See **ARAO Work** next page 3.)



ARAO at AGM: Valeska Gomez, Danielle White, Laverne Blake, Nadia Powell and Heidi Klett made sure the AGM training workshop went off without a hitch.



ARAO Work continued from pg. 3

- Apply for funding to Status of Women to develop a project entitled "Survivors Speak Out". The focus of this project will be to work in collaboration with survivors of violence in defining and directing service delivery and access to services primarily with the shelter system. In addition, the project will address survivors experience within boarder structural systems (Child Protection, Justice, Health Care and Social Service).

The project will engage survivors of violence to find out how they want to be involved in determining services, identify changes needed to enhance issues of access to service and service delivery to marginalized women (Racialized women, First Nations Women, Deaf Women, Women with Disabilities, Poor Women, Young Women, Senior Women, Immigrant and Refugee Women and Lesbians) and their children.

- A service evaluation tool will be developed and distributed to shelters to complete with women accessing services. The evaluations will be summarized and feedback from women will be used combined with

the Advanced ARAO training curriculum to develop information sessions and format for regional meetings.

- Develop follow up support/accountability process for shelters which have taken the CIS training and send letters to shelters which have not yet taken CIS training to ask if they would like to participate.
- Review and revise CIS training package, the package to be made available on the OAITH website.
- Provide information to membership on social justice events and significant dates that mark equity rights issues. A calendar will be created and posted on the website and regular updates provided to membership.
- Committee will continue to identify and participant in public events such as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Refugee Rights Day, International Women's Day, Pride, Take Back the Night, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Person's with disabilities and World Aids Day.
- Revise the OAITH ARAO Policy using membership feedback and provide

draft at the AGM 2007.

- Develop survey to solicit feedback from membership on AGM training day and based on results from survey organize training for membership.
- Update Terms of Reference for committee and Job Description for committee members.
- Outreach to youth and survivors of violence by encouraging active participation within OAITH and invite youth and survivors to present at AGM 2007.

It has been a privilege and honour to work alongside amazing, dedicated and passionate women on the ARAO committee. Thanks to Jessica Soto, Heidi Klett, Nadia Powell, Winsome Miller, Joanna Shawana and Danielle White for their ongoing work and dedication to ending violence against women. We would like to welcome new members in 2007, Jehan Chaudhry, Aline Belec, Kamal Grewal, and Albany Stock.

We are always looking for new women to join the committee. If you are interested please contact Rebecca Rogers or Laverne Blake at arao@oaitth.ca.

Rebecca Rogers and Laverne Blake
Co-Chairs ARAO Committee ◆

Struggle for women's equality is both local and global

The struggle for women's freedom from violence is both local and global. This year OAITH connected with two international efforts for ending violence against women.

Rwandan Women's Network

The Rwandan Women's Network is a non-governmental organization working to achieve economic and social equality for women after the Rwandan genocide of 1994.

It is estimated between 20,000 and 250,000 women experienced sexual violence in that conflict. Rape is a common weapon of war used to intimidate, conquer and control women and societies.

The Women's Network has provided housing for rape victims, grants for women to create independent means of survival, training on legal, economic and social issues and education on AIDS, among other supports.

The Network needs the solidarity of international women's communities to continue this work. Check in to the Network's website to see what you can do to help sisters in Rwanda continue their fight at: <http://www.rwanda-womennetwork.org/>

Murders in Juárez, Mexico

We also made a connection with the women in Juárez, Mexico where hundreds of women have been murdered or disappeared since 1993.

Juárez, a city with less than half the population of Toronto, is a border city right across from El Paso, Texas where

number of women at 450 bodies found and another 450 missing. This group provides emotional and financial support for families, organizes locally and internationally and raises money for women's groups in Juárez. For more information about these femicides, contact the group at: <http://www.amigosdemujeres.org/>

Casa Amiga Centro de Crisis (Casa Amiga Rape and Crisis Center), a non-profit agency in Juárez working with women who experience violence, has also been working on ending the murders. Their web address is: <http://www.casa-amiga.org>.

Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa (Bringing Our Daughters Home), a group of family, friends and supporters of the murdered and missing women, is also leading this fight for justice.

Mexican authorities have failed to take meaningful steps to protect women. Despite the many unsolved murders, the federal court dropped its investigation in August 2006. Many of the women are from low-income communities working in the assembly plants. Often they are murdered on their way home from work. The owners and managers of the plants have taken little action to protect the women or bring the killers to justice. ◆

November is Woman Abuse Prevention Month
Make the Connections

- VIOLENCE is: War, Imperialism, Poverty, Racism, Classism, Homophobia, Ableism
- 1.3 billion people live in POVERTY; 70% are women
- FORCED TRAFFICKING of women
- 486 AMERICAN WOMEN MISSING AND MURDERED in the Ciudad Juarez over the past 10 years
- RAPE is a tool of WAR: EVERY MINUTE a woman is SEXUALLY ASSAULTED
- RACIAL PROFILING and increase in national border security
- 235 WOMEN and 35 CHILDREN murdered by partners in the last 10 years
- WOMEN on social assistance are forced to choose between PAYING THE RENT OR FEEDING THEIR KIDS
- CRIMINALIZATION and JAILING of violence survivors
- 1 in 2 WOMEN will experience SEXUAL VIOLENCE
- RACISM and DISCRIMINATION in the Immigration system

Women's Rights Are Human Rights

OAITH
The Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses

hundreds of assembly plants for industrial owners (maquiladoras) have mushroomed in recent years.

According to Amnesty International, as of 2005 more than 370 bodies had been found and over 400 were still missing.

Amigos de las Mujeres de Juárez, a non-profit organization supporting the women of Juárez since 2001, puts the

Step it Up! support growing

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Launched at the start of Woman Abuse Prevention Month in Ottawa and Toronto, the Campaign sprang from an OAITH sponsored meeting last June.

The Campaign has a terrific website that features some of the activities where women took pictures to inspire us and others to keep the campaign going.

The website lists almost 100 groups and coalitions of groups that endorse the 10 Steps to End Violence Against Women that are the centrepiece of the campaign.

Setting our own agenda

Activists in the women's anti-violence movement have often found ourselves reacting to government agendas.

We want to be "pro-active" but end up scrambling to fit into sometimes arbitrary and even contrary 'initiatives' announced without, or against, our advice. Even then, we are not provided with adequate resources to implement the latest 'innovative strategy' coming from policy decision-makers.

The Step it Up! Campaign is one action-like the successful Emergency Measures Campaign in 2000--that instead sets out our agenda for political Party reaction.

The Campaign is an opportunity for women to take the lead in setting out some of our priorities, based on issues that women and children face when they want to take their own action on violence in their lives.

The Campaign goal is to support women's ongoing work and to connect with campaigning political Parties about reaching our ultimate objective: *ending* violence against women.

It places violence against women in the context of an integrated anti-racist, anti-

oppression framework for women's equality.

The Campaign is not intended to create another exhaustive list of recommendations. It will be promoting actions for the next government term. Parties will be asked to support these if they are sincere in their often stated intolerance for violence against women in Ontario.

We've been busy

OAITH members have been very supportive of Step it Up! Some examples:

- ❑ OAITH Ottawa members have helped organized many Campaign actions since even before the Campaign was formally launched.
- ❑ Women at New Starts in Red Lake have responded to all of our calls to get involved and have planned public action, written to local news outlets and sent letters to the Ontario Government and local politicians.
- ❑ In North Bay, Ojibway Family Resource Centre distributed Step it Up! materials during IWD activities.
- ❑ Alternatives for Women in Picton, Sandgate Women's Shelter in Jackson's Point, Mattawa Women's Resource Centre, Ingamo Family Homes second stage program in Woodstock, Interim Place in Mississauga, Ernestine's Women's Shelter in Rexdale, Women in Crisis, Algoma, Chadwic Home in Wawa, Women and Children's Shelter in Barrie, Women's House of Bruce and Grey, Women's Centre (Owen Sound).

These are only some of the members that have participated in action on Step it Up! Some are part of ongoing planning and campaign decision-making. Others have included their names on our Endorsements list.

There is something for everyone to do before the election date.



Carrying the banner for change: Women have raised the Step it Up! banner and distributed campaign materials across Ontario. At the Toronto IWD March OAITH members distributed hundreds of buttons and stickers and 'Dailing for Dalton' flyers.



Messaging the Members: Women in Red Lake signed a message of support for the Campaign 10 Steps during IWD festivities, one of a number of Red Lake women's shelter support actions for Step it Up!

The best is yet to come

A lot of work has gone into building this pre-election campaign. We're halfway there. There's growing excitement about our work so far. But there's also a lot more to be done before October 10th.

Go to the Step it Up! website at www.stepitupontario.ca and get involved. We need **your** political voice for women in the upcoming election! ♦



Dialing for Dalton: Women in Ottawa organized to call Premier Dalton McGuinty's constituency office during IWD to talk about their concerns.



No more silence! Women in Sault Ste. Marie held weekly actions in November at the court house, organized by Women 4 Social Justice. On November 22nd, they organized a moving T-shirt action marking the deaths of 305 women and children, that received very good media coverage.



Federal cuts turn back the clock

Continued from page 1

Women's shelters, rape crisis centres, women's centres, groups and programs for racialized women and women with disabilities--all of these and more were created only with the social justice activism of women.

Programs for children were established through advocacy by women's anti-violence activists. So was the housing priority for abuse in Ontario, challenges to systemic responses, the creation of second stage housing, crisis lines, public education and outreach programs...we could all add to this list.

Any public funding shelters have was first won with advocacy and activism. That struggle is still important today.

So much for innovative ideas

The Harper Government now wants to support "direct assistance for women delivered more locally," according to the Minister.

If this theme sounds familiar, it is. This was the same direction taken by the Harris government when it introduced its "more with less" plan and stopped funding public advocacy in Ontario.

The shelters the federal government is now so eager to help need the money because the same men cut their funding in 1995 and then froze their core budgets for eight years.

That approach didn't work for us then and it won't work for us now. We need **both** frontline women's services **and** activists to end violence against women.

You are not alone

OAITH members have received ongoing information about the federal changes.

You know Status of Women cuts are not the only example of federal government moves to undercut equality rights in Canada. Harper has also:

- ❑ Eliminated the Court Challenges Program that provided support to marginalized groups to take legal cases to the Supreme Court under the *Charter*. One case could cost up to \$250,000 to complete.
- ❑ Replaced the \$5 billion National Child Care Program with a \$100/mth. taxable payout to families with children under six that comes nowhere near paying for child care and creates no new child care spaces.
- ❑ Refused to implement a recommended proactive federal pay equity law.
- ❑ Failed to provide funding for a national housing or poverty reduction plan.

"New government"

It makes sense that "Canada's new government" would want to silence advocacy with a program like that. But it flies in the face of the "democratic values" they boast about.

Governments that claim to be democratic are supposed to value dissenting voices and act--both as a matter of principle and with taxpayers' money--to support marginalized and minority groups that work for progressive change.

Furthermore, the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, and numerous international agreements signed by Canada, promise to progressively move towards the elimination of all forms of discrimination and inequality with legislation, policy and publicly funded programs.

Could it be the "new government" that is 'all talk and no action' on behalf of women, rather than women's groups?

Now, more than ever

Since the mid-90s, there has been backlash against feminist women's anti-violence activism.

Gender neutralization, cuts and freezes in women's services funding, hostility toward feminist policy advocates, medicalization and criminalization of survivors: all of these and more have created serious challenges for women working to end violence against women.

As the backlash has taken root, public policy makers like those at the federal level have moved to divide us and silence dissenting voices.

Now more than ever, we need strong voices and alliances offering a clear vision and an integrated, feminist, anti-racist/anti-oppression analysis of political and social policy.

We need to be active and visible with, and on behalf of, all women who experience violence and their children.

We're not going back

Women's advocates have been organizing against the Harper changes since they began. We know many OAITH members have joined in, and we hope you continue to do so.

OAITH is part of the Coalition for



Silencing women's voices: December 10th, women from all over Canada gathered on Parliament Hill to protest cuts to Status of Women and the Court Challenges Program. Statues of the 5 women who fought to have women declared "persons" in Canada were 'gagged' to symbolize the impact of the cuts on women's equality and human rights in Canada.

Women's Equality and Human Rights, which has been planning and connecting women on federal actions.

Unlike the provincial election, we don't have a federal election date. We just know it could be called at any time. And we have to be ready.

It is tiring to think of working on two levels at the same time. But there are women organizing on both fronts that are working to support you, and who need your support back to make a difference.

It is critical that all political Parties at **both** levels know you will fight for your rights. Watch for federal election actions to get equality back on track at www.womensequality.ca and at www.statusreport.ca. ♦



Equality matters: Hamilton women protest closure of their Status of Women office, one of 12 out of 16 offices across Canada cut by the Harper government. Minister Beverley Oda refused to respond to the women and officials locked down the building.

Aboriginal women's panel the highlight of OAITH AGM

The 2007 OAITH Conference offered a full agenda of looking at *Our Vision, Our Work and Our Fight*. For me, the highlight of the four-day conference was teachings, sharing and training provided by a panel of Aboriginal women.

Gloria Harris started our first morning with the opening ceremonies. She taught us about and gave us the gift of tobacco to enhance communication with nature and the spirit world.

Panel share their expertise

Day two was an in-depth workshop, *Aboriginal Women Speak Out* with five panellists who promoted creating alliances and solidarity work with Aboriginal women and their children. Gloria Harris, of the Marathon shelter started the day with an opening prayer and a dedication. She talked about the historical impact, realities of the First Nations People, quoted the First Ministers Conference, and presented the many faces of Aboriginal Women. She shared the barriers to working with First Nations communities and offered a tool for understanding native philosophy in the Creator Wheel.

Stolen Sisters

Laura Williams spoke about the Stolen Sisters Campaign. This campaign was co-ordinated with Amnesty International to recognize the 500 Native women who have been murdered or gone missing in Canada. Over the past 20 years, these women have died or gone missing without

recognition or reaction from government, media or society.

Inuit women welcome alliance

Leesie Naqitarvik-Goupil from Pauktutit, the national Inuit women's organization, presented the National Strategy to Prevent Abuse in Inuit Communities and the National Inuit Women's Shelter Association. Her moving presentation reminded us of the struggles of shelters and services in the far North that are in their infancy.

She requested support, information and resources from OAITH members to continue to assist Inuit women in these remote regions.

2-Spirited women best practices

Percy Lezard started the afternoon with the History of Aboriginal People in North America, Structural Implications of 2-Spirited Community Members as a Result of Colonization/ Oppression, and 2-Spirit Clients (best practices). Her informative and energetic presentation included pamphlets, material on 2-Spirited women and Trans Fact sheets.

Advocacy on the federal level

Sherry Lewis, of the Native Women's Association of Canada, wrapped up the day discussing issues facing Aboriginal women at the federal level. Sherry shared the challenges Native women

face with language, and the need to reconcile with the term "feminist". She spoke to the matrimonial real property issue, the Caledonia land crisis and Native women's involvement to make it a peaceful and open process. She also addressed the Sisters in Spirit Campaign, and the lack of basic human rights for women on Reserves.

An excellent, excellent workshop! From the opening ceremonies and the medicine of tobacco to the powerful sharing and teachings throughout the day, communication, understanding and solidarity unfolded. It was an honour to receive the small colourful bundles of tobacco from Gloria that will remind us to carry forward their message in our vision, our work and our fight.

Linda Ivsins, Regional Rep for OAITH Central Region. ♦



Aboriginal Women Speak Out: (Clockwise) Leesie Naqitarvik-Goupil of Pauktutit, Percy Lezard from 2-Spirited People of the First Nations, Gloria Harris of Marjorie House, Laura Williams of the Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA) and Sherry Lewis from the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) provided excellent presentations on the experiences of First Nations and Inuit women, including on the Sisters in Spirit campaign.

2007 AGM to celebrate 30 years of shelter activism

In 1977, a small group of women met to share their experiences of creating safe spaces for women and children escaping 'wife batterers'.

With the knowledge of survivors and the activism of early feminist advocates, women had created their own alternatives to woman-blaming systems.

There were 10 shelters either open or in the planning stages. The shelter movement and OAITH had begun.

Help highlight our herstory

At the next AGM, we hope to showcase our work over the last 30 years. We hope you will help us collect pictures and media clips of both OAITH's growth or

the early years of your shelter's life.

If you have 'old' photos or clips that you think would make a great graphic or tell the story of an important moment in shelter movement herstory, please let us know.

With scanners and digital technology, it's easy to send pictures and clips without giving them up. We can also do that work for you, if you prefer, and return your mementos in good shape.

Join us in telling the story of women's shelter activism in Ontario--a story that has changed women and children's lives all across the province. Contact Eileen Morrow at oaith@web.ca if you have material you would like to share. ♦



Naming it: At the 1988 lobby of MPPs, OAITH members 'paper' the walls, ceiling and tables of the room with lists of 'names' representing the thousands of women turned away from shelters that year because there weren't enough spaces.



Our Vision, Our Work, Our Fight: Report from the OAITH Board

The OAITH Board worked hard this year. In 2006, we began the first year of the Association's new Strategic Plan.

The planning process reviewed our mission and confirmed our commitment to a strongly political, integrated feminist, anti-racist/anti-oppression framework to affect social change for women.

This 3-year plan, developed with membership, provides the vision, priorities, direction and action for the provincial Association until March 2009.

The Board of Directors and Board Committees of OAITH have set their work plans for this year in accordance with Strategic Plan directions.

The Plan focuses on two broad areas:

- ❑ Government Advocacy, Public Education and Research
- ❑ Membership Support and Internal Strengthening of OAITH.

Some highlights of work in these areas include innovative strategies, working as always with broad-based activist and women's groups, to affect issues facing women.

Social justice commitment

The Step It Up! campaign, an OAITH initiative, has renewed energy and the fight for equality rights in the province. This campaign will run through to the provincial election in October. (For more on Step it Up! see page 1.)

We have also increased membership participation and presence within the community. OAITH works in partnership and now has a greater presence in the community in social justice initiatives.

ARAO focus

We are actively implementing our ARAO implementation plan within the Association and will soon have a new OAITH ARAO Policy developed for the Association based on consultation with our members.

The new advanced anti-racist/ anti-oppression training curriculum for shelter staff and Boards was piloted in Toronto and was very successful. The project produced important and critical learning. This new training is an important tool in supporting ARAO organizational change work within our membership and movement.

We have continued to maintain and build leadership at the Board and on Committees. I really want to say that



Women at work: Board members (sitting L to R) Paula Valois, Winsome Miller, Cindy Cowan, Linda Ivins, (standing) Karen MacInnes, Patti Lessard, Liz Westcott, Jehan Chaudhry, Laverne Blake and Rebecca Rogers. Kathy Campbell is 'offstage' in Red Lake. Board members meet for a two-day session every two months.

the new and emerging leadership in the Association on the ARAO and Social Justice Committees is moving and pushing the Association. It is an honour to work with a really talented, committed energetic group of women activists. This year, joint meetings and initiatives between these committees were planned to integrate and coordinate our work.

Appreciations

We want to thank all our members, friends, supporters and volunteers in the membership. You are OAITH, and together we are strong. Many thanks to our Northern sisters who helped organize the AGM in North Bay.

The highlight of the conference was the training on Aboriginal women's experience. Many thanks to the wonderful panel of women who shared their stories, knowledge and expertise with the membership. (For more on the Annual Meeting training, see page 6.)

I also want to thank Eileen Morrow for her heart, courage, dedication and skills. She is the driving force that supports all of us as volunteers. Eileen has worked tirelessly over the years to eradicate violence in the lives of women. Her contribution both to OAITH and the larger women's and social justice movement is significant.

30 years on the frontline

This coming year is our 30th

Anniversary! We have big plans to mark and celebrate 30 years of being on the frontlines of fighting for social, political and economic equity and justice for all women.

We want to acknowledge the support of funders for this past year, including Status of Women Canada and the Ministry of the Attorney General. We also want to thank the Assaulted Women's Helpline, which continues to be a partner in our work and in raising much needed funds, and also all our sisters in Labour who support OAITH in so many ways.

Challenges ahead

As we enter 2007/2008, the Board will have many challenges as our major funder, Status of Women Canada is under attack. It is ironic that just as we have a Plan that positions us to move and grow into the future, we are once again faced as a provincial Association with a threat to our work. Yet as an Association, we are strong and well placed to meet this issue head on and to secure OAITH's future with planning, membership support and focus on our goals.

OAITH will continue to be a very strong voice for women facing violence in the Ontario.

Justice & Peace
Cindy Cowan, For the
OAITH Board of Directors ◆

Social Justice and Action Committee a place you belong

Are you frustrated by the slow pace of change in violence against women? Do you want action on the concerns you hear from women in your community?

Then you have the commitment for us. And we have the committee for you.

The Social Justice and Action Committee (SJAC) is the permanent committee of OAITH that plans and carries out social justice action for the Association in partnership with the ARAO Committee and the Board of Directors.

OAITH Coordinator, Eileen Morrow, assists SJAC and also carries out social justice and advocacy activities of the Committee and Board.

We need you

As cuts and shifts in social policy have reduced opportunities for public advocacy, it has been harder for shelter advocates to carry on critical thinking and analysis of social policy and to create strategies needed to make government policy accountable to women.



Ground work: Women at the *Shifting the Ground* meeting in June set priorities for issues, messages and actions that would form the basis of Step it Up!

The SJAC is one place you can still go to plan action to press for change. It's a place to make the connections between social policy and the lived experiences of women, and to bring their shared issues to the provincial level. And it's a great place to learn action strategies.

"You've got to rattle your cage door. You've got to let them know that you're in there, and that you want out. Make noise. Cause trouble. You may not win right away, but you'll sure have a lot more fun." Florynce Kennedy

Women's shelters are part of the global women's movement. The SJAC is one way to make sure things move. But we need more women to join the committee to make it happen.

Some things we've done

SJAC has worked with the OAITH Coordinator on numerous issues. Here are a few examples:

- ❑ The development of the first "funding formula" for shelters in Ontario.
- ❑ Planning of large caucus lobbies of provincial MPPs at yearly OAITH provincial meetings.
- ❑ Development of suggestions for recommendations to the juries in both the May-Iles and Hadley inquests, a majority of which were supported by both of the juries.
- ❑ Creation of *In the Interests of Children and Mothers: the Model Child Welfare Response Model* that was created with input from all regions of OAITH.
- ❑ Creation of the OAITH *Training for Change* CD to support learning for women within

shelters to do social justice and action work.

- ❑ Development of the *Shifting Ground* project to examine, with shelters from all Ontario regions, the shifts in our work and analysis over the years. The project also laid the foundation for the Step it Up! Campaign. (See page 1.)

Some things we want to do

In the coming year SJAC will be working on a number of things:

- ❑ Sharing work on the Step it Up! Campaign actions as part of a province-wide coalition of women's activist groups. This will be a big part of our work towards the next provincial election.
- ❑ Planning ways to implement a project we've been hoping to do for some time now. The project would engage women survivors in developing their ideas for getting involved in policy and social justice work and for assisting shelters in finding ways to develop survivor engagement and involvement.
- ❑ Working in partnership with the ARAO committee to build alliances with Aboriginal women and to take forward policy issues in solidarity with Aboriginal women's groups.
- ❑ Planning our part of the OAITH 30th anniversary celebrations in October.

Check out the OAITH website for more information and documents on OAITH's positions and actions.

Join us!

SJAC meetings take place once a month, and you can join us by telephone, paid by OAITH. For in-person meetings, we pay expenses, but not time.

Get in touch. To find out more about the SJAC and to join, please email us at sjac@oaitth.ca. ♦

OAITH continues to respond to legislative and policy issues

In spite of our small staff (1) and an increasingly overworked group of volunteers, OAITH responds to legislation and policy issues when they arise.

Legislation

This year, we have responded to:

- ❑ Bill 107: The Human Rights Code Amendment Act, 2006
- ❑ Federal Government of Canada: Pre-Budget Consultations
- ❑ Ontario Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs Pre-budget consultations
- ❑ Bill 210: An Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act.

- ❑ Bill 27: An Act to Amend the Arbitration Act, the Child and Family Services Act, the Family Law Act and the Children's Law Reform Act.

Consultation

OAITH continues to be part of the Family Law Advisory Committee of Legal Aid Ontario, the committee for Ontario Women's Directorate conference planning, and the LAO Training Steering Committee.

OAITH also participates with other women's anti-violence advocates in quarterly meetings with the Ministry of the Attorney General.

OAITH also consults informally with government officials.

Action solidarity

OAITH supports alliances with many social justice advocates.

This year, we have continued to participate in the Hands Off Campaign, be partners in Campaign 2000, support Code Blue for Child Care and participate actively in Step it Up!

On the national level, we are members of the Feminist Alliance for International Action and the National Action Committee on the Status of Women.

We actively participate in the national ad hoc Coalition for Women's Equality and Human Rights.

OAITH also endorses campaigns that are working for social justice that benefit women and children as they arise. ♦