

OAITH 2003

The Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses

Child welfare VAW response ongoing challenge

As the deadline for signing mandatory collaboration agreements with child welfare nears, shelters still tell of ongoing issues for women and children reported to the system.

Despite training of child welfare workers across the province, OAITH continues to hear reports that abused women are held accountable for children's exposure to violence, while abusers too often escape responsibility. A small tracking project undertaken by OAITH within 18 shelters across the province indicates that abusers may most often be warned in a letter and receive fewer directives to take action for the protection of their children than the women they have abused.

At the same time, shelters continue to work within the mandatory collaboration process to inject greater protections for women and children and more accountability for abusive partners. The OAITH proposed response model outlined in *In the Best Interest of Children and Mothers*, was completed in March. It has been a resource for many shelters at the collaboration tables. In addition, some specific communities are interested in taking this model further. They want to get beyond the protocols for intersectoral points of contact outlined in the collaboration agreements to the development of a differential practice response within child welfare for all women and children reported as a result of child exposure to woman abuse.

At the provincial level, OAITH, the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS) and the Ministry of Community and Social Services have been meeting to discuss the possibility of forming a provincial 'working group' to discuss a differential practice, but so far progress is slow.

The three parties have met twice and are currently discussing Terms of Reference that might guide the work. The working committee was struck primarily to discuss Recommendation 40 of the Gillian Hadley inquest recommendations, which called for OAITH, OACAS and MCSS to develop a specific response to VAW within the child welfare system.



OAITH representatives hold press conference at Queen's Park Media Studio after Annual Meeting. From left: Margaret Alexander, Debbie Ball, Rhonda Roffey and Eileen Morrow, OAITH Coordinator

Queen's Park visit takes issues to new government

OAITH has challenged the new Liberal Government to make changes women and children need to escape violence.

After the November Annual General Meeting, OAITH representatives Margaret Alexander, Debbie Ball, Rhonda Roffey and Eileen Morrow met with Michael Bryant, Attorney General, and Laurel Broten, Parliamentary Assistant to the Premier, as well as political and civil service staff from the offices of Sandra Pupatello, Minister of Community and Social Services and Minister Responsible for Women's Issues, and Marie Bountrogianni, the new Minister of Children's Services.

Issues raised at the meeting were developed at the Annual Meeting the day before and broad messages were conveyed to the government officials. Specifically, OAITH focussed on the following issues: the need for restoration of the funding cut from shelters in 1995 and the inquest recommendations for a review of funding for women's shelters; the need to shift the primary approach to addressing VAW from the 'victims

rights' and criminal justice system direction under the Tories to a balanced approach giving current funding and coordination priority to community-based, social development approaches that address root causes of violence against women; the need to respond to the broad prevention issues of income security (especially social assistance) and housing for women and children.

OAITH also discussed the lack of meaningful consultation under the previous government and suggested that shelters need to be consulted on the decisions that affect abused women and their children, as well as on decisions about where funding (and specifically the millions of dollars in the Victim's Justice Fund) will be spent in the future.

OAITH also specifically asked the government representatives to look into the lack of funding for Oshki Kizis Lodge in Ottawa, which has been struggling with little to no funding for the only Aboriginal women's shelter in the Ottawa region.

(See Queen's Park page 2)

Queen's Park visit continued...

Shelter reps congratulated the new government on its victory in the election and for its promise to restore funding to second stage housing programs. We also express thanks for the Liberal government support of the inquest recommendations and said that we look forward to their implementation.

Media conference

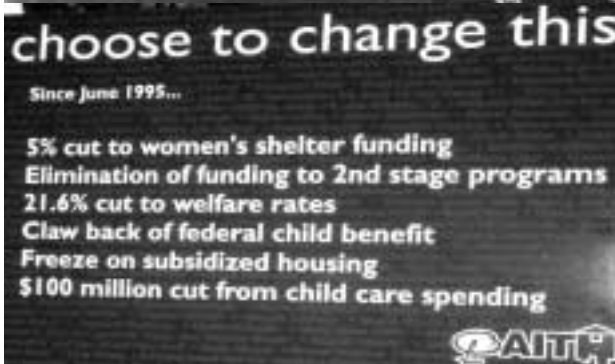
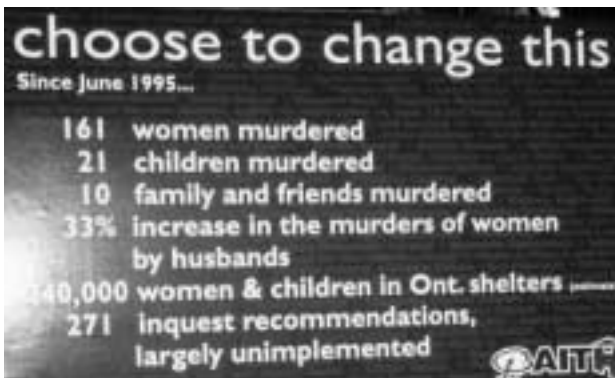
After the meeting with government officials, OAITH held a press conference at the Queen's Park Media Studio to repeat the messages delivered during the meeting and to release our lobby document, *Choose to Change This*, compiled for the press conference and meetings with government.

Posters (pictured below) were created to give the media a short course on the links between violence against women and children, and the policies that affect them.

A number of OAITH members also attended the media event, either before or after meeting with their own MPPs for the lobby day. Government staff and political reps, along with Laurel Broten, also attended to hear OAITH statements.

Later in the day, Premier Dalton McGuinty announced that Ms. Broten was being assigned to act as the Premier's designated lead to develop a plan of action for the government to address 'domestic violence' in Ontario.

Press coverage following our media conference was very positive.



Choose to change this

OAITH members contributed to the release of our 12-page 'choose to change this' document on lobby day by providing important information on the poverty facing abused women and children using shelters, as well as the poor state of shelter funding itself. Shelters responded to brief questionnaires on the issues.

Highlights of the response summaries included:

* 92% of responding shelters reported that social assistance is a factor in women's decisions to remain with or return to an abusive partner, with almost three-quarters saying welfare affects the decision 'often' or 'most of the time' for women in their agencies.

* 90% of shelters reported that lack of housing was similarly a factor with 44% indicating 'most of the time' and 35% reporting that it 'often' affected women's decision to remain with or return.

* 90% of shelters said women were turning to the shelter for food and 87% said women were eating less and going without needed medicine and dental care as a result of social assistance rate cuts.

Shelters also reported on pay equity, shelter demand increases and staff decreases or freezes, while reporting little increase in government funding to cover rising costs of energy, insurance and human resource costs.

Some shelters also distributed a form to women using their services inviting them to 'tell the government' what they thought was needed to support women and children. Their comments are also included in the document, and many confirm the shelter reports on the impact of poverty and lack of housing on women.

The title is a take-off on the Liberal Party election slogan of 'choose change'. Copies of the document were distributed to all OAITH members and to all members of the Ontario Legislature on the day of our lobby. Members were able to use the information in meetings with their local MPPs and some women's groups also used the information during November Wife Assault Prevention Month activities and other contacts with government and community partners.



Choose to change this, released at our press conference, has been distributed widely to women's and community groups. It is available in pdf format. Email oaith@web.ca for a copy.

Meeting with Broten

Along with many other groups and individuals, OAITH reps met with Laurel Broten as part of her consultation with stakeholders. She will report directly to the Premier with suggestions for changes to address violence against women.

The OAITH Board discussed messages to send to Ms. Broten at the meeting and decided to focus especially on shelter funding, the need for an equality rights analysis and the need for the support of independent women's community-based services. In addition, we talked about women's poverty, housing and the need to support advocacy--both individual and systemic advocacy for women and children. We touched on concerns regarding child welfare intervention and concerns about the implementation of pay equity to proxy comparator agencies.

OAITH asked that the government restore the 5% cut to shelter funding in 1995 and immediately begin a review of shelter funding, as directed by the inquests. We expanded on messages given to the government at our November lobby day, as well as speaking to any questions from Ms. Broten and government staff. There were many issues that we couldn't cover in the scant hour-long meeting, but we were also aware of and supported many other women who had previously met with Ms. Broten on issues of family law and poverty, as well as housing and restoration of funding to second stage programs. We only hope that the first budget of the Liberals will demonstrate the government's promises to listen and act.

OAITH members approve work to develop shelter funding framework

At the November Annual Meeting, members passed a motion to support work being done to develop a shelter funding 'model'. The work is meant to guide OAITH representatives in any discussions that might arise as a result of inquest recommendations for a shelter funding review.

The approved motion gives support to a group of women in OAITH who have been meeting since November 2002 to review the kinds of programs shelters provide and to do a 'blue sky' exercise to imagine what women and children need from women's shelters. The committee has then addressed what funding would be required to adequately provide all needed services--without onerous fundraising pressures.

The model will include both residential services for women and children, as well as community outreach and advocacy, public education and other non-residential services for women and children.

Suggested funding numbers for the 'first phase' of the model--the residential shelter component--were provided to all OAITH members prior to the Annual Meeting, along with the motion to support further work by the committee. Members also supported a motion for the funding committee to include some guidance on appropriate funding for second stage programs.

The funding guide is not meant to suggest specific structures or program components to shelters or the government, but to look at program areas and regional adjustments, and then come up with a suggested funding framework that, if delivered by government, would allow for flexible and comprehensive services and advocacy needs.

Inquests call for review of shelter funding adequacy

The use of the framework requires, of course, that the Government of Ontario proceed with the inquest recommendation to conduct a review of shelter funding, as indicated in the Arlene May inquest, and to adequately fund women's services, including shelters, as recommended in the Gillian Hadley inquest.

The final work of the ad hoc committee will be provided to all OAITH members for feedback and comments before it is used in discussions with the government. This process is expected to be completed in the next few months.

Shelters hear need to be engaged and inclusive: experts

Speakers share access experiences for women of colour in both urban and rural services

Women's services must be involved with the world and respond to material realities for all women if we are to end violence against women, say inspirational speakers who brought their insights and expertise to the OAITH AGM.

Punam Khosla, a long-time activist and educator on issues of equality and women's rights, spoke to the membership on the opening day of the AGM.



Punam Khosla, activist and author of *If Low Income Women of Colour Counted in Toronto*, a report on experiences and issues of women in low-income Toronto neighbourhoods.

Punam spoke of women's shelters as a place where dedicated women struggle to do their important work, while outside the windows of the house, the world is more and more creating oppressive conditions for the women and children we serve. She talked about

the need to take our action for change beyond the house to the world outside.

Ending root causes of VAW critical to our work

Responding day to day to the impacts of violence is demanding work. But although it's tempting to focus inward on all of the efforts needed to keep services going and still do good work with women and children, Punam cautioned that we can never neglect work on the root causes of issues facing the women and children who come to our doors.

Without the work to support public advocacy and activism on the larger root causes, pressures within will only become more frightening and more difficult to overcome.

Punam also referred to the work she has recently completed with low-income women of colour in Toronto neighbour-

hoods, where she spoke to groups of women about their ideas for change and about the isolation they experience in their daily lives.

The results of this work are available in her report: *If Low-Income Women of Colour Counted in Toronto*. Although focussed on low-income neighbourhoods in the city of Toronto, the issues are equally relevant to communities across Ontario and provide valuable information to women's services and policy makers.

In the report, women outline their lack of access and understanding within systems, including ongoing concerns about access to women's shelters. To receive the report in pdf format, contact OAITH at oaith@web.ca.

Feminism linked with equity in rural shelters

Working to end violence against women means working to end all forms of inequality, as well as respecting and celebrating the diversity of our movement. On the second day of the AGM, OAITH members heard from Radha Bhardwaj.

Radha has worked in social services in both Simcoe County and York Region. Her commitment to issues of access and equity stems from her experiences working with immigrants and refugees in rural settings.

Her talk focused on the links between feminism and Anti-Racism/Anti-Oppression practice as well as looked at the implications of working toward an equitable organization.

She spoke about her work in rural contexts and the ways in which all shelters can work on improving equity and access for women of colour in their services.



Radha Bhardwaj shared her work and expertise on equity and access for women in rural settings.

OAITH members who heard the presentations by Punam and Radha took away a richer analysis of violence against women, along with new ideas for making shelters welcoming for all women.

Public advocacy project travels Ontario



On the road: Lobby Committee members travelled to six regional meetings. This road leads to Mindemoya on Manitoulin Island.

OAITH travelled around the province this year to move forward with work that started at the 2002 AGM. At that meeting, shelter reps discussed the future of shelter work and the gaps developing in analysis, action and advocacy.

Building on those discussions, the Lobby Committee developed a two-year action plan to enhanced public advocacy action on behalf of abused women and their children. The first step was to travel the province in six regional meetings to talk about the role of public advocacy in ending violence against women and the

needs of members for future work in that area.

During May and June, Lobby Committee members held six meetings in Thunder Bay, Mindemoya, Orillia, Guelph, Ottawa and Toronto. Eighty-nine women attended the workshops to outline their ideas on the tools and skills shelters need to improve public advocacy work, as well as the barriers preventing it.

Using notes from the six meetings, Lobby Committee members further developed areas that were common to all of the regional groups and created a plan for a day of group discussions on the most needed areas of development.

November workshop builds on regional work

Members of OAITH gathered on the day before the this year's AGM to expand on the work started in the spring.

In a rotating group process, women defined their ideas for four general areas where members wanted assistance from OAITH: training workshops on public advocacy, tools such as issue factsheets and media tips, external coalition building tools and internal shelter support for public advocacy work on behalf of women and children.

The session on workshops looked at different topics and formats of workshops based on the requests during the spring workshops for training sessions. A "tools" session outlined technical assistance resources that could be developed and sought reaction on their usefulness to advocacy by shelters.

External coalition building discussions centred on what shelters were doing currently and how they could expand their action, as well as link with other women, especially survivors, to make changes in their communities. During the Internal

skills and development session, members talked about how shelter organizations can support shelter staff, volunteers and Boards to do this important work despite time and funding barriers.

Out of many ideas and suggestions contributed, participants were asked to select their priorities for OAITH assistance and development in the spring of 2004.

The workshop day was funded by the Canadian Women's Foundation. The overall two-year project is funded by Status of Women Canada.

Spring training starts soon

Now that priorities have been chosen, the Lobby Committee is working on the next phase, the development of six two-day workshops back in the regions.

Included in the two-day training sessions will be a refresher on the foundation and vision of ending violence against women. Then participants will work on issues identified by regional participants while incorporating ideas and suggestions chosen at the November meeting.

Priorities chosen in November for further training were: Legislation, policy and systemic advocacy, working with the media and consciousness raising.

Training in these areas will dovetail with the priorities for tools, such as a 'lobbying guide.' The two-day sessions will also help members build the campaign development skills prioritized in discussions on external coalition building, as well as ideas for including survivors in planning and actions for advocacy within local communities.

The Lobby Committee hopes that the upcoming training work will go beyond the two-day session to ongoing action and coalition building between regional shelter services and other advocates for



Margaret Alexander, VP of Lobby for OAITH, records insights and ideas at the Orillia meeting held at Casino Rama.

Public advocacy continued...

women and children. Ideally, we will be able to start the building process during the two-day workshops and provide OAITH support as shelters continue to work on the issues in the future.

OAITH website part of project plans

As a support to ongoing advocacy work and sharing of information and tools for action, OAITH is again researching ways we can create an OAITH website that will support advocacy work for member shelters. Development of an OAITH website has been a wish of members, but our limited budget for site creation and maintenance has been a barrier.

We are hoping during the advocacy project timeframe to find a solution that allows us to build a website that is current and supportive to shelter staff, volunteers and Boards that want to work on systemic advocacy issues.



At the November workshop day, OAITH members choose priorities for skills development in coalition building between shelters, with other community advocates and with survivors of violence.

Lobby Committee values your voice

Being a member of the Lobby Committee is an enriching experience. To be quite honest, my first meeting with the Lobby Committee was intimidating. The members were discussing a variety of different things happening around Ontario and within the government. I was at a loss. I felt that I had limited understanding of the political issues facing women in Ontario, particularly shelters.

So I sat back, listened and soon came to realize that I do have important opinions to offer. My views and opinions are always respected. Being a member of the Lobby Committee has increased my understanding of the atrocities that are happening to women across Ontario. I

Campaign on poverty of abused women next step

In the coming months, the project will incorporate more action on raising the issues of poverty for abused women and their children.

Building on work done for this year's lobby of Queen's Park, as well as the results of the welfare and woman abuse research project, on which OAITH is an advisor, the Lobby Committee will be developing a campaign for action by all interested OAITH members. (See sidebar story on the research project.)

We hope that OAITH members, who have expressed increasing interest in learning and doing public advocacy work, will put their skills to work in this project on regional and provincial issues, but especially on work to end the poverty that traps so many women and their children in abusive situations.

Woman abuse and welfare research completed

Advocates gather to look at policy areas

For the past three years, OAITH has been a community partner with three university researchers working on the impact of welfare on woman abuse survivors.

In February, the research team finished a draft report outlining the results of 65 interviews with woman abuse survivors who had received social assistance, as well as questionnaires sent to local welfare administrators across Ontario.

A focus group meeting in Toronto brought together women's and anti-poverty advocates to review the key findings of the research and to make recommendations for policy change based on information received from survivors and their own work with women on welfare.

The research report provides a rich, in-depth look at the ways in which the welfare system adds to women's victimization and oppression. While women express gratitude that welfare is there to give them some assistance, they also point out many ways in which treatment by Ontario Works mirrors the abuse their experience from their partners.

Women interviewed for the research discussed a number of areas: welfare rates, workfare, attitude of welfare workers, abuse of welfare system by their partners as a method of control, helpful community systems, such as women's shelters, and the emotional impacts of being on welfare for survivors, including stark similarities between welfare system treatment and the abuse of their partners.

Preliminary results of the research were released to officials in the new Liberal government, including directly to Laurel Broten, the Premier's special designate on 'domestic violence.' Researchers have also held discussions with officials at the Ontario Women's Directorate. A final release of the report to media is expected sometime early in March. To receive a copy of the report after its release date, contact OAITH at oaith@web.ca

Women Today of Huron have also released a report on the impacts of welfare on abused women in rural communities that looks at the same issues. (Both research teams used the same interview guide with survivor participants.) Their final report: *Woman Abuse and Welfare in a Rural Community* is now available. Email: womentoday@hurontel.on.ca

In celebration and memory of our sister, Lyallen

As many of you know, OAITH suffered an incredible tragedy on June 30, 2003. We lost our President, our friend, and our sister: Lyallen Hayes. Lyallen was President of the Board of Directors of OAITH and Executive Director of Interval House of Ottawa-Carleton. At the time of her death, the following messages were sent out by the OAITH Board; they are repeated here in honour of the woman who gave us leadership.

Lyallen was involved with OAITH first as an ARAO committee member, where she worked with us on producing the "Creating Inclusive Spaces for Women" Manual. She was also part of the team who traveled across the province providing training and support to shelter workers in making our own organizations more accessible to women and children. As an anti-racism activist, Lyallen knew that we will not end violence against women as long as racism and oppression exist. "If we are looking to end all violence against all women, then we need to work with aaalll women," she used to say.

In 1999, Lyallen was elected OAITH President and unanimously re-elected for a second term in 2001. Lyallen was President in deed as well as word. She took seriously her role as leader of a provincial organization that spoke on behalf of women and children.

For those of us who had the privilege of working with Lyallen, we know what we have lost; for those of you who did not have that privilege, it is important to us that we tell you about the woman who worked on your behalf.



Lyallen loved music and fun. She brought joy to us as we did our difficult work to end violence against women. She knew how to laugh and play.



"Lyallen came into my life three years ago when I joined the Board of Directors of OAITH. She made it easy for me to overcome my lack of skill in the social setting department, connecting me graciously with the other women on the Board and the work done on behalf of women and children whose lives have been impacted by violence. Lyallen had an amazing sense of humour, a passion about the work she was committed to, and an amazing ability to recognize and validate others. She was a genuinely giving person, always going out of her way to make life easier for others. She taught me how to buy roti's, laugh at myself, and simply enjoy life. I will miss her presence and am grateful to have had the experience of knowing and working with her." Thelma Beaudry, OAITH Secretary

"In my brief contact with Lyallen, she was generous and welcoming. I especially enjoyed her wonderful sense of humour. I feel very disappointed and saddened that I will not have the continued privilege to work with her. I extend my condolences to her family and friends." Carol Latchford, Metro Toronto Regional Rep.

"It is still hard to take in that Lyallen will be with us now only in spirit. On a personal level, I will miss the many special gifts she brought to our work together-her unfailing dedication to women and children; her anger against injustice; the way she would make us laugh and bring us down to earth; her gentle persuasion; her attention to caring words and actions and all her welcoming, supportive ways. In the words of Maya Angelou, she was a "Woman. Phenomenally. Phenomenal Woman." Eileen Morrow, OAITH Coordinator

"I can't believe this has happened....but I saw Lyallen as a dedicated and tireless advocate for women, who performed her life's work with joy and enthusiasm that she shared freely. She had this incredible ability to remove barriers and create an atmosphere of safety, which was a precious example of living anti-racism and anti-oppression. She truly believed in the ability of people." Marg Philp, East Central Regional Rep

"Lyallen was a role model and teacher for me. She supported and encouraged me to sit on OAITH board. I often watched her in meetings. She had a way of making you feel comfortable and validated. I always looked to her for support. She would wink at me, reassuring me that I was doing a good job. She encouraged me with her eyes and her smile. To me she was a universal mother, bringing up the ones who had potential and gently mentoring them to come into their own. She definitely was a presence in the Ottawa VAW community. I was always



Lyallen Hayes was President of OAITH from 1999 to 2003. She loved working for women and children at the provincial level.

seeing her and her sister co-worker Erin at meetings. They attended everything. If one couldn't attend then the other one would trade off. They both have their individual gifts but put them together and they were an awesome team...Lyallen has made a difference in the lives of women and children and I am a better person for having known her. I thank the creator for your life and your love. Your determination will never fade because the work will be carried on, in your memory, by the rest of your sisters." Irene Compton, Eastern Regional Rep



Erin Lee-Todd, Lyallen's closest friend, receives the eagle feather for Ottawa Interval House from Gloria Harris of Marjorie House during the OAITH AGM opening ceremony in honour of Lyallen.

"I am overwhelmed with sadness because I lost my friend. I think Lyallen was one of the kindest people I ever met and I admired her spirit. She sincerely believed and cared about people--I never heard her say an unkind word about anyone who didn't work for the government, CAS, Housing, Ontario Works...I carry a picture of her laughing in my heart." Margaret Alexander, VP Lobby

"Though Lyallen is no longer with us in body, her beautiful spirit will live with us forever. What a great loss for everyone that was blessed to know this amazing woman. A wise, joyous and spirited being, full of love and hope and positive energy. A woman who had something great to say about everyone, especially Erin, the great women of interval House-Ottawa and OAITH. An individual who genuinely cared and wanted to give and had so much to give to our community's, our sisters, the world. Lyallen was the glue on the ARAO Committee and supported Rebecca and I every step of the way, giving us praise and encouragement. Thank you Lyallen, for giving me hope, for listening, for encouraging, for

supporting, for believing, for amazing work, for making an impact, for being my mentor and teacher and for being you!" Karan Mann-Bowers, Co-VP ARAO

"I have had the opportunity to work with Lyallen on both the Anti-Racism/Anti-Oppression committee and the Board of Directors. I was new to the ARAO Committee this year and Lyallen was always so encouraging and supportive. She gave so much of herself to others and was always striving to achieve social justice for all women and children. She was inspiring...a woman filled with GOODNESS. I will miss her very much." Rebecca Rogers, Co-VP ARAO

"When I joined the OAITH Board two years ago, one of the first things Lyallen asked was what our working style was. I was very clear that I was task oriented, needed meetings to start on time, follow an agenda and to stay on topic if the work was to get done. Lyallen said that we could work with that. Well, for anyone who has ever worked with Lyallen you know that this was never to take place. Although our work did somehow get completed, something just as important was created, relationships. Through Lyallen's quiet leadership of bringing out our strengths and spirit, a force to be reckoned with has been formed. It is said that to have touched another's heart, your life has been a success. Lyallen, it's obvious that your life has been a mega success." Pat Yellina, Central Regional Rep., VP. Membership

"I have known Lyallen for four years but in the last two (since I joined the Board of OAITH) Lyallen became a dear friend. I often say to people, "I make no friends in this field" and Lyallen's comment to me, because she knew I wasn't kidding, was "I'm your friend". Lyallen, she was kind, so very kind. Her kindness was most exemplified to me while riding elevators. Most of you don't know me but I have a fear of elevators and Lyallen would take the elevator with me at the office especially on Saturdays when you need the elevator key to get to the 14th floor and at the hotel. When her room was on another floor, she would ride up with me and then let me off safely take the elevator to her floor. I never asked her to do this, she just did it. Yes she was very kind. She was funny and she never took anyone too seriously including herself. She could read people well. She had strong intuition and used it wise-



Erin Lee-Todd and Lyallen led the OAITH contingent at the 2000 Women's World March.

ly. She saw strengths in us we never knew existed but I think her greatest quality was she lead by quiet example. I thank God, for the time Lyallen was in my life, the impact she has had on me was great. I miss her." Debbie Ball, Treasurer

Because she loved space and possibility, OAITH has named a star after Lyallen. We will honour our sister Lyallen by continuing on the struggle to liberate all women from oppression and violence. Her heart and warrior spirit will live on through us. --OAITH Board of Directors



Many OAITH members travelled to Ottawa for a celebration of Lyallen's life with her friends, family and colleagues.

Members meet on child welfare model and family law changes

Spring was travelling time last year. OAITH held six regional meetings to present and discuss our child welfare response model and to outline proposed changes to the *Divorce Act*, called *Bill C-22*. Meetings were held in Toronto, Lindsay, Ottawa, Sudbury, Thunder Bay and Guelph. A total of 113 shelter representatives from over 40 shelters attended.

Women talked about how changes suggested by shelter workers for the child welfare model could work into current collaboration agreements and how to protect women from being re-victimized by child welfare.

The positive and negative aspects of the proposed *Divorce Act* changes were dis-



Susan Conway (Algoma), Paula Valois (Wawa), Lynne Cheliak (Haileybury) and Ruth Bobiwash (Blind River) at the Sudbury spring meeting on OAITH child welfare model and *Bill C-22*.

cussed at the meetings and the feedback helped to inform OAITH's brief to the federal standing committee assigned to

study the bill. Unfortunately, this work has been scuttled because *Bill C-22* was automatically withdrawn when the House of Commons closed its last session. Now, there are indications the Martin government will not re-open consideration of the *Divorce Act* for some time to come. One reason floated by officials was the government's need to first resolve the same-sex marriage question.

Our work may still find a place for expression on the provincial level. As the new government reviews its ministries' work, we will still press for the changes in provincial family law recommended by the two Coroner's inquests, as well as those we sought for the federal *Divorce Act* legislation. So stay tuned.

ARAO Committee supports OAITH commitment to equality

By Karan Mann-Bowers and Rebecca Rogers, Vice-Presidents of Anti-Racism/Anti-Oppression for OAITH

Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses will hold shelters accountable to ensure they are working within an Anti-Racism/Anti-Oppression framework. It is crucial to adopt ARAO principles within all levels of your agency. It is time to refocus our work on the needs of the women and their children.

The Anti-Racism/Anti-Oppression committee recognizes that violence and abuse against women and children occurs due to unequal status of women and children in society. The committee also recognizes that all racism and oppression of women is a form of violence. Our aim is to ensure the equal civil, human, social, economic, political, spiritual and sexual rights for the women and children we serve are guaranteed.

What must you do to support ARAO work?

Schedule the committee to come into your agency to facilitate a 2-day training as is required and join the

ARAO committee. We challenge your agency to ensure that your services are inclusive.

Accomplishments of ARAO in 2003

- ▶ We have updated new terms of reference for the committee
- ▶ We have all received the training package and have been available to facilitate the ARAO training to member shelters
- ▶ We have followed up and taken action on a proposal to Heritage Canada
- ▶ Recruited new members
- ▶ We have prepared for the AGM
- ▶ Developed a plan for 2004



OAITH Co-Vice-Presidents of Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression, Karan Mann-Bowers and Rebecca Rogers, bring tireless enthusiasm and dedication to building inclusive services for all abused women and their children.

Goals for 2004

- ▶ OAITH to hold shelters accountable for ensuring that their practices and services follow the principles of ARAO work.
- ▶ Increase 100% of membership to demonstrate their strong commitment to ARAO work, by completing the mandatory 2 day Creating Inclusive Spaces Training.
- ▶ Develop a budget plan, which would reduce barriers for Northern Shelters to attend and accommodate any childcare needs.
- ▶ Begin our commitment to ARAO work by providing one day training in June to the board members of OAITH.
- ▶ Develop a full day presentation on ARAO work for the OAITH annual general meeting in October.

On behalf of the ARAO committee, we look forward to your renewed commitment to Anti-Racism/Anti-Oppression work. Please contact Karan Mann-Bowers at 519-653-2289 x 229 or Rebecca Rogers 519-836-6831 x 222.

Join!!



Join!!