



**Highway 17 revisited:** Wawa was a perfect place to participate in Take Back the Night. A visit to the Chadwic Home shelter the next day helped to get the journey back home off to a great start. Thanks to the welcoming women of Wawa for their hospitality and for their ongoing dedication to women.

# Ground shifting for women

**A**ction to end violence against women was created by women for women. The story has been a truly inspiring one.

Women have changed our communities and ourselves in new and liberating ways.

In just over 30 years, women have made stunning progress against gender inequality that is hundreds of thousands of years old. We have reached miraculous goals in awareness and services for women who have experienced violence.

Many of us thought our challenges could be won by now. But there are always new ones to face and new changes to make.

As OAITH nears 30, feminist shelter advocates want to celebrate our gains and move forward in solidarity with each other and we want to protect our progress against increasing erosion of our grassroots vision.

## Shifts for women and children

The past year brought a number of changes for women and children.

Some of the funding promised by the Ontario government has started to flow to community services that support women. Some systems are now starting to receive basic training on how to better respond to women and children—legal aid, housing, judges and health professionals.

There has been some improvement to shelter and second stage agency funding. And small changes have been made to improve Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program.

At the same time, steps by the Ministry of Community and Social Services to cut off access to the special dietary allowance has left many women desperate to find healthy food for their children and themselves.

Neither the provincial nor federal governments have any overall strategies for ending the entrenched poverty and oppression that affects women and children in marginalized communities.

Although child welfare authorities now recognize some of the flaws of the current system in addressing child exposure to woman abuse, in 2003 fully 24% of women in abusive relationships were charged by child welfare with “failure to protect”.

By now, women know that the long-awaited national day care program, one that would have helped so many women, will likely be scrapped by the new federal government.

Federal and provincial social housing plans, already moving slow, are now up in the air. Fears that social programs may again be at the mercy of the very Ontario politicians who cut them in 1995 are not unreasonable.

## Shifts for women’s services

Women’s services—from shelters to rape crisis centres to women’s neighbourhood centres have seen many changes over the years, especially at the whim of social policy.

Shelters have seen a number of key shifts: from early gains in core funding to the cuts in 1995, from grassroots organizing to institutional practices, from public disbelief to a measure of community awareness and from exclusion to a growing integrated, feminist anti-racist/anti-oppression understanding of violence against women.

While there have been many positive changes for the women’s anti-violence movement, there are emerging new challenges to overcome. Many women’s advocates are now questioning the “gender mainstreaming” of violence against women, shifts to gender neutrality, and focus on psychological models of response. Funding continues to be inadequate, and government more focussed on service systems than on equality rights.

New energy is rising and new activist voices are calling for a renewed focus beyond our struggles for more and better services, to our goal of preventing and ending violence against all women and their children.

We have not yet won our equality. Until we do, violence against women will go on. ■

# Action a focus of OAITH social justice work

Without social change work, our efforts to end violence against women cannot succeed.

OAITH is committed to taking social change action and to encouraging all OAITH member shelters to participate locally, provincially and federally on all social policy issues that affect women and children.

This year, despite our small resources, we have broadened our action in this area.

The Lobby Committee of OAITH had a name change. The 'new' Social Justice and Action Committee (SJAC) will make our role more clear to members, government and the public at large. We hope that the change will be more inviting for women in the network who want to do social change work but don't want to be a "lobbyist" as defined in public circles.

## Change work has many faces

This year, social justice and action work covered a lot of ground.

SJAC worked with the Board on policy development within OAITH, for example to develop draft policy positions on coordination, funding for VAW work in gender neutral agencies and government relations.

OAITH also worked with other equality-seeking groups on joint efforts.

For example, we participated in the Hands



**Walking their talk:** Members of the OAITH Social Justice and Action Committee hold our new banner at the OAITH organized November 28 *Walk the Talk* rally in front of Queen's Park Legislature.

Off! campaign to press the Province to end the clawback of the federal Child Tax Benefit Supplement (CTBS) for children on social assistance programs. Many shelters in the OAITH network took part by ordering campaign postcards and endorsing this ongoing campaign online.

We hope this year, Premier McGuinty will honour his pre-election promise to stop the clawback of support from the poorest children in Ontario.

OAITH also supported and promoted the Walk, Wheel, Ride for Dignity organized to rally at Queen's Park for a raise in OW and ODSP rates. We are a member of Campaign 2000 and have been active in bringing women's issues of poverty and violence to the campaign.

OAITH was an endorsing member of the No Religious Arbitration Coalition and supported the work of the coalition to end the legal effect of religious arbitration decisions.

## November WWPM

Woman Abuse Prevention Month was busy, as usual.

Working with Carrol Anne Sceviour from Ontario Federation of Labour, as we have done in the past, OAITH Board and Committee members created a poster marking this year's International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, Nov. 25th.

The OFL generously paid for printing of 10,000 copies of the poster.

Posters were distributed at the October AGM and throughout Ontario unions, as

well as through requests. It is now available on our website at [www.oaith.ca](http://www.oaith.ca).

## Walk the Talk

November also saw us joining with sister provincial anti-violence networks to plan a meeting of women's activists to discuss and evaluate the Domestic Violence Action Plan and public policy directions on violence against women.

The meeting took place on the first day of the *Finding Common Ground* provincial conference and over 60 women from rape crisis centres, shelters, francophone and community based women's groups attended.

Organizers included OAITH, the Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres, Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes and the Ontario Women's Justice Network (METRAC).

Women issued a press release from the gathering urging the Province to support organizing efforts of women's policy networks with funding and recognition.

The meeting was titled *Walk the Talk* in solidarity with an OAITH-organized rally at Queen's Park of the same name, designed to remember 231 Ontario women and children murdered since 1995 and to have advocate voices "open" the conference.

We are so impressed with and grateful for the crowd that came to the rally from OAITH shelters, students, labour representatives, provincial women's coalitions, and the community at large, despite teeming rain.

Brief reports of both the activist meeting and the rally are on the OAITH website, along with the press release issued by the activist group.



**Murdered women remembered:** Women hold signs with the names of 231 women and children murdered in Ontario since 1995, and listen to Linda Ense speak on behalf of the Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA). Linda is also Executive Director of the Native Women's Centre in Hamilton.

All rally photos courtesy of John Bonnar.



See Rally page 3

## Rally continued from page 2

We are grateful to the Ontario Federation of Labour, the Ontario Nurses Association, the Canadian Auto Workers and the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario for the financial support that made the rally possible.

### Finding common ground?

After the activist meeting and rally at Queen's Park, OAITH representatives attended the Ontario Women's Directorate sponsored conference *Finding Common Ground: Working Together to Reduce Domestic Violence*.

At the conference, women supported by the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty tried to enter the hotel ballroom to ask for a meeting with Sandra Pupatello, Minister Responsible for Women's Issues and Minister of Community and Social Services.

Police were called and the Minister quickly scooted out the back door to avoid contact with the women.

OAITH participated in and supported calls by women's community-based anti-violence advocates to stop the police action and invite the women into the ballroom to present their concerns directly to the conference plenary.

The women took the podium and politely

thanked the group for the opportunity to talk about the special dietary allowance that they had received until the Minister cancelled it, calling poverty activists and doctors who approved the allowance for welfare recipients "rogue advocates".

The women talked about how grateful they had been for the allowance; how much it meant to them to be able to feed their children properly. They talked about the worry for their children now that the allowance had been cut. They asked for support to reverse government's new restrictions.

The women received a standing ovation from the women's advocates present and a rousing escort from the hall as they left.

The delegates to the conference also donated almost \$700 to OCAP after the presentation and some of the presenters also donated their speaking fees to carry on a campaign to reverse the decision on the dietary allowance.

OAITH, the Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres and the Ontario Women's Justice Network issued a joint press release to the women, urging the Province to reverse its restriction of the allowance, but to date, no action has been taken to change the Minister's previous decision.

At a conference that had its ups and downs, and one where lots of food and drink were



**Shelter support:** Women from Muskoka Interval House joined the crowd among banners and signs with too many women's names.

provided for the lucky participants chosen to attend, the Minister's treatment of women pleading for healthy food for their children had to be the lowest point. One violence survivor who was present at the conference later characterized the Minister's response as "losing common ground". ■

# OAITH contributes to public policy and training efforts

Although OAITH, like other women's public policy networks, gets no government funding support for providing advice and expertise, this year we have supported systemic change and government policy work in many areas.

### Legislative processes

OAITH has provided government committees and policy workers with responses to:

- The Standing Committee on Social Policy regarding *Bill 118: Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*.
- The Standing Committee on General Government regarding *Bill 27: Family Statute Law Amendment Act, 2006*. This Act requires family law decisions to be made only under the laws of Ontario. It also requires judges under the *Children's Law Reform Act* to consider 'domestic violence and abuse' in custody and access cases, an important recommendation of the Arlene May and Gillian Hadley inquests.
- The Standing Committee on Social Policy regarding *Bill 210: Child and Family Services Statute Law Amendment Act, 2005*, which makes changes to child welfare legislation.
- The Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs regarding government's pre-budget public hearings.

OAITH members had an opportunity to provide comments and suggestions on drafts

of the responses. All are available on the OAITH website.

### Ongoing advisory work

The Association is one of the most involved provincial women's groups supporting changes and training of systems in Ontario.

In the past year, OAITH has been represented on a number of ongoing committees that met regularly:

- The Working Group on the Special Priority Policy on Housing. Carol Latchford, OAITH Treasurer represented us at this committee of women's advocates and housing representatives to review the policy.
- The Steering Committee on Legal Aid Ontario (LAO) 'Domestic Violence' Training. This Committee oversees the development and delivery of the 3-year training project for legal aid offices, clinics and certificate lawyers. LAO received funds from the DVAP to conduct this project.
- The Family Law Advisory Committee of Legal Aid Ontario. OAITH has been on this committee for a number of years. It currently meets twice a year.
- The Advisory Committee of the National Judicial Institute (NJI) for education of Ontario judges on issues of 'domestic violence'. The NJI received funds from the DVAP for this two-year project to create education for judges

from criminal and family court.

- The Advisory Committee on planning for the Finding Common Ground conference. This committee is now meeting to provide follow-up feedback and suggestions for future improvements.
- OAITH also participates with other women's advocates in quarterly meetings with staff and Ministerial aides at the Ministry of the Attorney General on issues primarily concerned with family law at this point. These meetings were arranged at the request of OAITH and METRAC.

### Other consultations

OAITH also participated in short-term consultations with government officials on these issues:

- Dual charging of abused women--which is primarily sole charging--with the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services. The meeting advised on plans for training of police to reduce 'dual' charging.
- Evaluation of the Domestic Violence Courts--OAITH participates in the provincial focus group to review the research in the site communities.
- One meeting with MCSS on the VAW Policy Framework and Capacity Building initiative. A promised second meeting was cancelled by MCSS. ■

# Full access for all women goal of ARAO work

## Hard working committee continues member trainings

The Anti-Racism/Anti-Oppression Committee (ARAO) has worked over the past year to raise the profile of ending violence against women from an equity based framework.

Women who have experienced violence and access shelter services are often further marginalized due to racism, classism, homophobia, ableism, colonialism and heterosexism. The committee recognizes all forms of racism and oppression as violence and believes services must be accessible to all women.

### Accomplishments 2005

The ARAO Committee has supported the activities of OAITH in many ways:

- Joint work with the Board to develop an ARAO Implementation Plan for OAITH. Developed goals to ensure the association had ARAO embedded at all structural levels.
- Fifteen trainings for shelter staff participants facilitated across the province.
- Worked in partnership with 519 Trans Anti-Violence Project to develop training on accessibility of shelters for Trans Women. Training was provided to both the OAITH Board of Directors and to membership at the October Annual General Meeting workshop.
- Created a poster for Woman Abuse Awareness Month titled "Break These Barriers." The poster was distributed at the OAITH AGM and to all members by email. It is still available on the OAITH website at [www.oaith.ca](http://www.oaith.ca)
- Participated in the provincial *Finding Common Ground* conference on "domestic violence." Developed a presentation on *Creating Inclusive Services: Practical strategies to incorporate an integrated feminist anti-racism/anti-oppression framework*.
- Assisted with the creation of an information flyer for OAITH members and other groups interested in basic information about OAITH structure, principles and work.
- Updated the training resource package and training materials.



**Trans Accessibility presentation:** At the OAITH AGM, the 519 Trans Access Project provided information and policy advice on access to services for transgendered women. Clockwise from top left: Jazzmine Manalo, Christina Strang, Shannon Soropia, Monica Forrester, and Yasmeen Persad.



**Grounded in equity:** ARAO Co-chairs Rebecca Rogers (front left) and Winsome Miller (front right) present a workshop on *Creating Inclusive Spaces* at the provincial *Finding Common Ground* conference in November.

- Educated members on specific survivor communities facing additional barriers to access and involvement in women's services and action, in particular women from Aboriginal and marginalized communities.
- Working with the Social Justice and Action Committee to plan for Woman Abuse Prevention Month.
- Recruitment of new members, including secession planning for Co-Chair's of the committee for 2007.

### Training information

The ARAO Committee continues to provide shelters with training on "Creating Inclusive Spaces": How to incorporate an integrated, feminist, anti-racism/anti-oppression framework.

For ARAO change to be effective, there must be full commitment from all levels within an organization. Therefore, Board members, Executive Directors, Program Managers, Frontline Staff and Volunteers are all encouraged to attend the training.

The training works with participants to examine current practices and procedures and to provide the opportunity to discuss practical strategies in working towards creating inclusive services in shelters for women and children.

Key areas covered include: Governance, Employment Practices, Programs and Services and Training.

Throughout the training, participants develop strategic ARAO priorities that their agency can implement after the training. All participants are provided with an extensive training package.

We have received consistent positive feedback through the evaluation process and

### Goals 2006

The coming year will be exciting for OAITH member shelter anti-racism/anti-oppression growth. Some current plans include:

- Eight training scheduled for shelters throughout the province.
- Assisting with our new project to create advanced trainings for shelter Boards and staff. (See page 5 for more information.)
- Raising the profile of social justice events and significant dates that mark equality rights issues.
- Focus on Global Feminism and Advocacy.
- Assisting with development of a one-day training to

See **Training Information** page 5

# Funding for new ARAO training development

## Ministry of Attorney General grant supports Toronto trainings

For the first time since the Tories eliminated all of our provincial funding in 1995, OAITH has received a project grant from the provincial Ministry of the Attorney General to support development of our anti-racism/anti-oppression work.

The funding will allow OAITH to develop an advanced training module for women's shelter service staff, volunteers and Boards based on existing OAITH anti-racism/anti-oppression training work, in particular with regard to implementing direction in the OAITH guide: *Creating Inclusive Spaces-A Practical Guide to Implementing an Integrated, Anti-Racist, Feminist Service Delivery System*.

This project is a partnership effort with the Assaulted Women's Helpline. AWHL trainer, Verlia Stephens, will be providing her considerable expertise to deliver training in collaboration with the OAITH ARAO Committee.

Curriculum for the project was created by Beth Jordan of Adobe Consulting Services. Many of you know Beth from her former work as Director of Programs and Services at AWHL and her current training and inclusive organizational development work.



**Working together:** Verlia Stephens (left) of the Assaulted Women's Helpline, delivers the trainings in partnership with the ARAO Committee, while Vania Sukola coordinates the project.

The training will be coordinated by Vania Sukola, who we are pleased to welcome to OAITH to organize the training sessions over the next few months. You can reach Vania at the office or at [oaith2@web.ca](mailto:oaith2@web.ca).

Between March and June, when the project must end, we will deliver customized training modules to frontline staff and Board members in a "pilot project".

The goal is ensuring that all women who represent the diversity of women in Toronto are able to access services and support

from Toronto Region shelters, including racialized women, First Nations women, Deaf women and women with disabilities, poor women, young women, senior age women, immigrant and refugee women, lesbians, bi-sexual women, transgendered women, women with addictions, women who are consumer survivors, women who work in the sex trade who are facing violence.

The training will be first delivered and evaluated in Toronto because the city represents approximately one quarter of the provincial population and has the greatest diversity of women.

The project hopes to deliver four trainings specifically designed for Boards of Directors and eight two-day sessions for frontline shelter staff.

Marginalized women and children who use violence against women shelters will be the primary beneficiaries of the project.

Our purpose is to create inclusive, anti-racist/anti-oppressive shelter experiences for women and children escaping violence and to promote the equality rights both of women and among women.

We are grateful to the Ministry of the Attorney General and to the Toronto Region grants review committee for providing OAITH with the funding for this important work. ■

### Training Information from page 4

constructive criticism has been used to adapt future training sessions. Feedback from the training suggests that participants have been provided with the information and resources necessary to implement ARAO organizational change. Participants have expressed how effective the training resource package has been in providing tools to implement the integrated anti-racism/anti-oppression framework.

### Join a terrific group of women

If you are interested in joining the ARAO committee, or would like to schedule a training for your shelter, please contact Rebecca Rogers or Winsome Miller at [arao@oaith.ca](mailto:arao@oaith.ca).

The committee continues to challenge systemic oppression, raises awareness of strategies to create anti-racist/anti-oppressive organizational change and works towards achieving social justice for all women.

### Thanks

Thanks to Valeska Gomez-Castillo, Jessica Soto, Laverne Blake, Heidi Klett, Julia Smith, Joanna Shawana, and Nadia Powell for their ongoing work and dedication to ending violence against women. ■

Rebecca Rogers and Winsome Miller  
Co Chairs, ARAO Committee

## Mark these times with education and action

February

Black History Month

March 8  
March 21

International Women's Day  
International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

May  
May 14

Sexual Assault Awareness Month  
Mother's Day

June  
June 21

Pride Month  
National Aboriginal Day

September

Labour Day

October  
October 17

Women's History Month  
International Day for the Eradication of Poverty

November  
November 25  
Nov 25-Dec 10

Woman Abuse Prevention Month  
International Day for the Elimination of VAW  
16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence

December  
December 3  
December 6

Universal Human Rights Month  
International Day of Disabled Persons  
National Day of Remembrance on VAW

# Shifting Ground project looks at shelter changes

## June roundtables ground work of SJAC Committee

The Social Justice and Action Committee (SJAC) has been working for almost a year on the *Shifting Ground* project.

The project looks at the history of the shelter movement in Ontario and the shifts in services, programs, work with women and children, analysis of violence against women and the development of community services and systemic response in the province.

Beyond updating and sharing information, however, the project aims to create action with other women's anti-violence advocates to bring change on those issues where concerns emerge and to promote identified positive shifts in our work.

In particular, the goal is to analyze changes affected by public policy and to suggest directions for future action and advocacy.

### Phases of the project

There are a number of parts to the project that take place between June 2005 and March 2007:

- June Roundtables 2005: We sponsored five roundtables this year in Toronto, Brockville, Red Lake, North Bay, and Woodstock. The day-long discussions included shelter worker perspectives on a number of areas: Shelter Programming, Service Development, Community Development and Coordination, Shelter and Community Analysis of Violence Against Women and Leadership of Women's Advocates. Participants also considered how public policy had affected those areas of the work in Ontario.
- Survey Questionnaires: Two surveys were mailed to all shelters in Ontario, both members and non-members of OAITH in the summer of 2005. One survey was for all staff and one was for agency administrators. This part of the project was not successful, and we received very few returns. Many shelters found the surveys too long or were not able to provide the requested information.



**Roundtables:** Women from shelters in the Greater Toronto Area and surrounding regions came together in Toronto to talk about the changes they've seen in their work over the years and to set the foundation for further work on the *Shifting Ground* project.

- Report to OAITH AGM: The Social Justice and Action Committee (SJAC) presented a PowerPoint summary of some recurring themes in the roundtables to member shelters in October.
- Key Informant Interviews: During the past few months, SJAC members have been conducting interviews with women from shelters in Ontario who have been in the shelter movement for a long time.
- Meeting of Activists: In May we will hold a meeting to invite up to 70 women activists working on women's equality rights issues to discuss the main themes and outcomes of the roundtables and interviews. A preliminary report of the information will be provided as a catalyst for conversation. We hope to identify concerns that resonate for other anti-violence advocates and to discuss action that we can take collectively to address them.
- Report to OAITH AGM 2006: By the next AGM, we will be reporting on the activist meeting and presenting our final report of the roundtables, interviews and results of the May meeting.
- November Action Days: Based on our conversations with women's activists,

### Some roundtable themes

We heard many comments during the roundtables. Here are just a few examples of common threads.

- Shelters have more stable funding but are increasingly expected to fund core programs with private fundraising.
- There are more service options for women and children within shelters and more shelters are making a commitment to inclusion and full access for women.
- Shelters have stronger administrative skills and strong links and support among the public in their communities.
- Women using shelters come from a more diverse population in many communities, and many more women know their rights, but they come with more complex issues, especially poverty.
- Some women now using shelters stayed there as children.
- There is concern about the loss of the grassroots approach that focussed on women's equality, and about increasing "credentialism" and clinical therapy approaches within VAW programs.
- There is increasing government micro-management of women's services, funding of programs, not services, and increasing pressure for "mandatory collaboration" that robs women's services of their role as independent advocates.
- There is concern about the increasing importance of "service systems" that do not share a feminist, integrated ARAO understanding of violence against women or acknowledge women's advocates as leaders.
- There is a loss of ability and no resources to work with other women's advocates for broad prevention issues to end violence against women. ■



**Northern stars:** Staff from Red Lake, Thunder Bay and Kenora participate in one of the five roundtables to launch *Shifting Ground*. This meeting was held in Red Lake for shelter workers in Northwest Region.

we will be developing actions for the fall and focussing on the issues coming out of the *Shifting Ground* project that relate to government policy. We hope to plan some exciting public events that OAITH members and community groups will join to mark Woman Abuse Prevention Month and Dec. 6 next year.

# Building for a strong future grounds 2005 Board work

On behalf of the OAITH Board of Directors, I would like begin by thanking the membership and all those Board & Board committee volunteers who have worked exceptionally hard over the past year. Thank you all for volunteering your skills, experience and time to get the work done.

I also would also like to thank our sister agency The Assaulted Women's Helpline who once again in 2005 shared half of the proceeds of their Annual Fundraiser with OAITH and provided their space for our Board meetings.

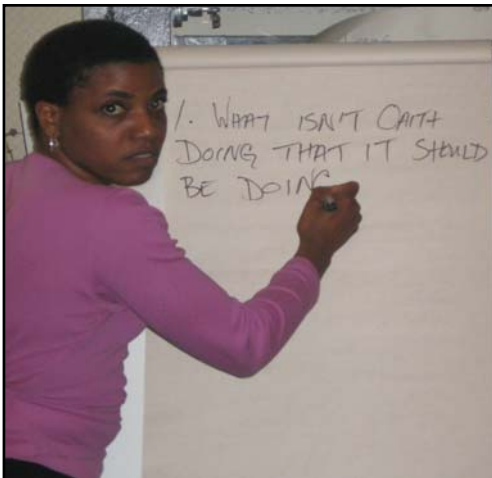
## Accomplishments

This past year was a really busy year and together we accomplished a lot. We ended the year 2005 looking forward to 2006, where with you, we will develop a new strategic vision and plan for the Association that will guide us over the next three years. Through the work of the permanent committees of the Board the work of the Association is accomplished.

In addition to the Anti-Racism/Anti-Oppression Committee and the Social Justice & Action committee there are other permanent Board committees including finance, personnel and membership. This year, we also struck two ad-hoc committees, one to begin the Strategic Planning process and the other to draft the AR/AO Implementation plan.

Some highlights of our work in 2005:

- Review and updates to Financial and Personnel policies



**Looking forward:** At the AGM, Jacqueline Lawrence, of WiseSolution Consulting led OAITH members through an opening discussion for Strategic Planning. WiseSolution has been guiding us through a planning process that will take us into the next three years.



**Looks like fun:** Board members (from left) Liz Forestell, Joanne Scott, Pat Yellina, Rebecca Rogers, Natalie Selzter, Carol Latchford and Cindy Cowan share a laugh with members at the October OAITH Annual General Meeting. Board member Winsome Miller was also present at the meeting.

- Completed Communications and Website Policy
- Completed Board Conflict of Interest Policy
- Re-Activated Standing Board Committees operating for Finance, Personnel and Membership and Revised terms of reference, developed annual Board and Committee work plans
- Completed draft Policy/position development on new emerging issues policy
- New AGM format and move to new location outside of Toronto
- Increase communications from Board to membership and held one regional meeting
- Strategic Planning Process Planning begun
- Financial statement changes and budget development
- Draft AR/AO Implementation Plan completed
- Developed new OAITH brochure to profile our work and outline how to get involved.
- On the website accompanying reports and materials available on line to profile the work.
- Integration of AR/AO work within the life of the Association
- Community partnerships for projects and funding
- Direction and focus of our political work

## Other priorities

The Board recognized the need early in 2005 to begin to plan for the future with the membership we identified a number of issues that were important considerations for our planning.

First the issue of addressing limited resources in terms of staff, funds and member/volunteer support. We continue to rely on project funding to support some of our on-going work particularly in the area of member education and training. We know we need to build our capacity to access other funding to be in a position to develop new sustainable initiatives.

The management of our financial resources was also identified as a priority. The finance committee recommended that the Restricted Fund be increased to ensure the financial stability of the Association.

## Acknowledgements

Many thanks to our core funder Status of Women for their continued support of OAITH projects and most importantly to you our members for supporting the work of the Association through your membership.

OAITH is an organization that does a lot with relatively little in the way of resources. We are a single staffed operation. We would like to acknowledge the hard work of Eileen Morrow as the Coordinator. Eileen's passion, commitment and expertise is invaluable to OAITH. Through her hard work and guidance the Association continues to be a strong and effective voice for woman and children facing violence across the Province of Ontario.

Special Thanks to members in Ottawa, for all

## Strengthening operations

The focus of the work this year was on getting OAITH in a position to plan for the future. There were many changes to Board and Committee operation including an annual Board & Committee planning process, financial planning and infrastructure development. Some of the key emerging issues that the Board discussed over the past year were as follows:

- Fostering new leadership within the Association including Board succession planning, orientation and training
- Association Financial planning
- Ongoing policy and procedure development

See **Board Highlights** page 8

## Board Highlights from page 7

their expertise in organizing this year's Annual General Meeting in Ottawa. It was well attended and we received a lot of feedback that will be used in this coming year's planning. The training on meeting the needs of Trans. Women was facilitated by the TransAccess Project. Other highlights included a discussion on Strategic Planning, OAITH Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression implementation Plan and our Status of Women project *Shifting Ground*.

This year we welcomed new members. They were Armagh, (West Central Region), Julliette's Place, (Toronto Region), Red Door Shelter, (Toronto Region), and Native Women's Centre, (West Central Region).

The Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression and the Social Justice and Action Committee were very active over the year providing on-going education and training to members

and working to move forward an agenda across the Province to end violence, poverty and oppression in the lives of all women and children. (See pages 2 to 6.)

The Board has continued to work to ensure that OAITH is a relevant, active political Association and that our membership is both involved in and benefits from the work.

### On a personal note

As a first time Board member I really want to take this opportunity to say to both Eileen and all the members that it has been a wonderful first year for me. I feel honoured and privileged to be in the company of such a committed group of women.

I continue to learn and grow and I am excited by the possibilities for Association growth and change. OAITH is a progressive responsive provincial Association that is making a difference. ■

Cindy Cowan, OAITH Board Chair



## Join your sister shelters

We are looking forward to a new year of exciting change for OAITH and action on the things that matter to women and children. Join us in our common work to end violence against all women and children. OAITH membership adds your critical voice to a strong advocacy coalition both for women, and for independent women's services. ■

## Working for change at the federal level

Most of our work at OAITH is done on the provincial policy level, but we also look for opportunities to make change at the federal level.

### Federal election

Soon after the federal government fell in November, we began to collect material for members and allies in other networks that would provide some background on federal issues affecting women and Canada's promises on women's equality rights.

*Election 2006: What's In It For Women?* was the result--a brief, but comprehensive outline of federal issues and links to many of the groups and materials women's advocates and voters could use to take to their candidates. The document was widely distributed and we received many compliments on its format and content.

The information is still available on our website at [www.oaith.ca](http://www.oaith.ca) and can still be useful in your contacts with federal policy makers.

### Governor General meets with women from VAW groups

In February, Governor General Michaëlle Jean visited Toronto as part of a country-wide tour.

During her visit, she invited a number of Toronto-based women's anti-violence advocates to meet and discuss woman abuse issues and ideas for preventing it. She also asked specifically to have representatives of the Association attend her meeting.

The Governor General was attentive and concerned about the information and indicated a particular interest in working on woman abuse issues.



**Meeting of minds:** Governor General Michaëlle Jean met with Toronto women's groups and with OAITH. Coordinator Eileen Morrow (left) with the Governor General after the meeting.

She has spoken recently of her early work in the shelter movement in Quebec and of her experience as a child exposed to woman abuse that led her to the work.

Speaking on International Women's Day in Victoria, she said of her visits in the East:

*"My first four official visits took me to Winnipeg, Charlottetown, Montreal and Toronto, where I met with women and men making a tremendous contribution to fight violence against women. I would like to salute the work of grass-root organizations who, with very little means and so very little recognition, manage to accomplish so very much. In fact, as they told me, they are only considered experts when they provide free services and statistics for research."*

She called on all of us to "defend steadfastly, vigilantly and yes, even stubbornly the rights of women and children, who are always the most affected by conflict, violence, oppression and injustice."

OAITH was asked to coordinate continuation of the work begun at our meeting. We look forward to doing that in the coming year in collaboration with our sister women's groups. We'll keep OAITH members informed as we move forward. ■

## Political action tips

In early 2005, OAITH finished work on our *Training for Change* project with release of our new CD giving women's advocates ideas on getting started in political action work.

The CD contains strategies on collecting information, evaluating objectives and tactics for making change, lobbying government, working with media and building coalitions.

It also has a list of internet resources that can support advocacy work in these areas, in addition to some keys sites for finding government information.

Information in the CD was put together by the Social Justice and Action Committee during the project and based on membership discussion sessions.

All OAITH members received the CD free when it was first released. Additional copies are available to members and others for \$10.00 each for production cost and mailing.

If you're interested in this information, please email us at [sjac@oaith.ca](mailto:sjac@oaith.ca). ■

