A WORD FROM THE CHAIR

“\textit{A Woman is the foundation on which Nations are built. She is the heart of her Nation. If her heart is weak, the people will be weak. If her heart and mind is clear then the Nation is strong and knows its purpose. Women are the centre of everything.}”

GREETINGS,

Writing a report this year has been bitter sweet and very difficult, I know I have given Marlene an anxiety attack wondering if she would even get it in time to go to print. So here we are, my final report as Chair of this fabulous Association. Looking back over the past 6 years, I have great feelings of pride. I have had the opportunity to work with so many kick ass women, and together we have created an Association we can be proud of.

I have always had a vision for OAITH, a vision of leadership, with a strong presence and purpose for our membership, with government and our broader community. Together, we have solidified this vision, we speak as a unified voice, we have purpose and together we lead. At the center of this has always been the women and children we serve, the vision to live free from violence and the purpose to end this violence in our communities. Miigwetch, for supporting us and working with us on this journey.

My initial draft of this report was to highlight the positives OAITH has had over the past 6 years, but I was worried I would forget something, so I sat and decided I wanted to simply say Miigwetch-Thank you, for this beautiful journey. In our herstory, we have not had a Chair sit for her max term of 6 years; I am honoured and humbled by this.

My heart is filled with pride.

We have come so far, and our journey is nowhere near its end. I will miss these women around this board table, I am honoured to call you my friends, humbled by your wisdom and proud at what we have achieved. Marlene, I will miss our morning calls in our vehicles, we have shared frustrations, disappointments and sometimes anger but also lots of laughter, I admire you and I am honoured to have worked with you, Miigwetch.

Today, OAITH’s heart and mind are clear, we are centered, we are strong, we know our purpose. As Art says above, women are the centre of everything! I wish you well, continue to work with love and kindness. Miigwetch.

CHARLENE CATCHPOLE
BOARD CHAIR
**OAITH HIGHLIGHTS**

**By Marlene Ham, Executive Director**

**OAITH’s 40th Anniversary:** Our first highlight must go to celebrating OAITH’s 40th Anniversary. It was truly amazing to bring our membership together to reflect on OAITH’s work over the last 40+ years. With the support of our members and the community, we were able to raise over 2,000.00 to assist with OAITH’s government relations. We couldn’t have pulled it off without the incredible support and leadership of Lena Almanzan of Women’s Habitat who organized the auction and to the 40th Anniversary Planning Committee; Silvia Samsa, Nancy Smith, Sue Weir and Sandy Watson-Moyles.

**Wrapped in Courage:** In November, OAITH organized our Annual Wrapped in Courage Reception at Queen’s Park that turned out to be the best attended reception by MPP’s. Joining us, was representation from the PC, NDP, Liberal and the Green Caucus. We’ve been waiting for this day to come when we would have them all in the same room together.

**Violence Against Women IS a Non-Partisan issue in Ontario!**

Congratulations to our membership and all participating Wrapped in Courage organizations for building this momentum in your communities.

**Member Engagement:** Over the last year, OAITH staff have visited every region of Ontario! We’ve been to Dryden, London, Belleville, Toronto, Ingersoll, Peel, Durham, Cornwall, Brantford and Collingwood. It’s been an honour to be able to go into the communities of our larger membership to learn more about what you’re doing and to share with you what is happening at OAITH! We hope to visit more communities over the next year.

**Communication:** Beginning in December of 2018, OAITH released: Working on the Front Lines of Gender Inequality. This communication reaches close to 3,000 individuals through our Training Hub, Aging Without Violence Project and Membership List. Our aim is to ensure that the broader OAITH community has regular communication about emerging social policy issues, training hub updates, library resources, upcoming events, and jobs in the VAW sector.

**Awards and Recognition:** This year, OAITH was joined by member organizations and Lakehead Researchers and Students in Orillia, ON to accept the Inaugural Community-Based Research Award. This award was achieved for the work OAITH and our member organizations have done in partnership with Lakehead University. We’re truly honored to be apart of the “Shelter Access for all women: Creating a harm reduction framework” Project. This work is ongoing and OAITH is looking forward to this evolving partnership with Lakehead University.

**Government Relations:** OAITH has been focused, determined and working hard to make sure that government and the opposition are informed and educated about the needs of our membership. Over the last year we’ve made sure that every MPP across the province of Ontario knows about VAW Shelters. Together we have a strong and unified voice. Through letter writing campaigns on your funding, submissions on the provincial budget, and endorsements on various issues, we’re active and organized as a provincial association.
POLICY COMMITTEE REPORT

BY KENDALL TREMBATH, POLICY COMMITTEE CHAIR, WOMEN’S SHELTER SAAKAATE HOUSE

Policy is looking to answer questions that are fairly simple when you boil it down: WHY (mission statements), HOW (Values, Policies), WHAT (strategies, standards), WHEN and WHERE (Business Plans, WHO (Process Maps). Good policy gives a clear description of what OAITH as an organization is all about. It illustrates our expectations to members and stakeholders about what we are doing and why. It provides a reference for the organizational culture that we are governing and for OAITH employees to live by in the everyday work. Policy has given OAITH the new foundations for daily activity in a way that is clearly understood by everyone in our organization. OAITH has gone from a hands-on working board to a policy governance board that is enlightening, transparent and democratic. Good policy development naturally lends itself to good governance.

Over this last year we have reviewed and approved Program and Services Policies – specifically the Privacy Policy, the Soliciting Membership Benefits Policy, the Social Media Policy, the Public Complaints Policy and the Accessibility Policy. The policies complement the Board Policies that were thoroughly developed in the 2016-17 years.

I look forward to working with a dedicated team on the Policy committee in the next year to come and that OAITH can continue to provide non-partisan and impartial advice to the government regarding the development, implementation and evaluation of Violence Against Women policy and services in Ontario.
Since January 2018, OAITH has been working with stakeholders across sectors to raise awareness and capacity related to older women experiencing violence through the Aging Without Violence Project. The AWV project is guided by an intersectoral provincial advisory and seeks to disrupt the invisibility older women who have experienced may feel within services while bridging gaps in frontline VAW, legal, health, housing, residential care, and social service sectors. Each month, the project releases a Word to the Wise new fact sheet focused themes related to violence against women in Ontario.

2018-2019 Highlights of the AWV Project Include:

- VAW sector training focused on promising practices within VAW services for women 55+ in September with Janice Abbott of Atira Women’s Resource Society
- Webinars co-hosted with Elder Abuse Ontario in October (Colonization, Oppression, and Racism, Understanding Violence Against Indigenous Women Who are Older) and January (Sexual Violence & Older Women in Long Term Care: intersectoral Approaches and Promising Practices)
- Visual training tool with 30+ original black and white interactive illustrations and animated video focused on the neurobiology of Trauma
- Risk management curriculum focused on older women
- Forum theatre Community Consultation workshops
- 5 focus groups held with Elder Abuse Networks across Ontario including written responses to a high risk scenario by each participant
- Survey of all Elder Abuse Networks in Ontario
- Live Twitter Chat in March 2019
- Provincial survey by Leger to gain an understanding of current attitudes and awareness of the general public of Ontario in relation to violence against older women.

The AWV section of the OAITH website, launched in September 2018, houses information for older women, service providers, and friends and family members concerned about an older woman who may be experiencing violence. The project’s social media presence, impact, and engagement continues to grow, with a total Facebook reach of 160,015,207,009 total impressions, 21,173 video views and 131,153 total engagements between April 2018 - March 2019.

The AWV project looks forward to another year of intersectoral collaboration as we work towards creating a brighter future for older women in Ontario who have experienced violence.
In 2018, the market share for the last 6 months have improved since last year.
WITH TREMENDOUS THANKS

2018/2019 PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATIONS

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University of Guelph, Dr. Mavis Morton

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Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres, Nicole Pietsch

Ontario Personal Support Workers Association, Miranda Ferrier

South Asian Women's Centre, Kripa Sekhar

The 519, Yasmeen Persad

Elder Abuse Ontario, Rochella Vassell, Raeann Rideout

Rekai Centre, Barbara Michalik

Fem'aide Ontario, Francine Groulx

leZlie lee kam

Marianne Park

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