

OAITH ANNOUNCES MISSION AND VISION DURING PRIDE MONTH



Re: OAITH Announces Mission and Vision During Pride Month

OAITH is pleased to announce that after a 1-year engagement process with our membership that we've developed a new mission and vision for the association that reflects and is inclusive of our membership and those accessing gender-based violence services and supports.

Developing a vision and mission for a vibrant organization like OAITH, brings both opportunities to look at our history and to transforming our future, and the role we play in that ongoing process of structural and systemic change.

**OAITH
Vision**

**An Ontario that is safe,
equitable and just for all
women,
girls and gender-diverse
communities**

**OAITH
Mission**

**OAITH works towards
ending all forms of gender-
based violence
and oppression through
advocacy, education,
research and training**

“In understanding our past, OAITH acknowledges that feminist movement(s) and the services offered by women’s shelters has had a negative impact and at times a very harmful approach when responding to communities outside of the dominant gender-binary, who’ve experienced gender-based violence.ⁱ”ⁱⁱ As an association, we’ve taken steps over the past number of years to support our members through training, policy and resource development to better support 2-Spirited, Trans, Gender-Queer, Gender Non-Conforming and Gender-Diverse Communities. We recognize that there is more that needs to be done and we remain committed to this process.” -Marlene Ham, Executive Director

In 2017, OAITH joined organizations in support of Bill C-16, An Act to Amend the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code, with a written submission to The Senate:

“As individuals and organizations committed to ending gender-based violence in Canada, we wish to see a concerted effort to support all survivors — including trans, two-spirit and gender diverse people. Contrary to the suggestion that this bill will threaten “female born” women only spaces, such as rape crisis centers or shelters, we assert that C-16 will enable a necessary shift in service provision, removing some of the barriers trans, two-spirit and gender diverse people face when accessing supports. In Ontario, there are sexual assault centres and shelters beginning this work by developing trans-inclusion policies and

providing training for staff to ensure trans and gender diverse survivors have necessary access to their services” (2017, *Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres, Ontario Association of Interval & Transition Houses, Ottawa Coalition To End Violence Against Women, Ontario Network of Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Treatment Centres, Office of Sexual Violence Support and Education Ryerson University, Women’s Health in Women’s Hands, Canadian Women’s Foundation, YWCA Canada*).ⁱⁱⁱ

We’re proud to have joined these organizations and wish more had done so at the time. Tensions and critiques by women’s organizations during the Senate Hearings, motivated OAITH to explore more of we what can do as an organization with over 40 years of experience in addressing gender-based violence.

As organizations across Ontario embrace Pride Month, we thought no better time then to acknowledge that Pride is much more than a rainbow. A movement that responded to horrific human rights abuses and was led by *Black and Latina Trans Women in the U.S., including Marsha P. Johnson, Sylvia Rivera and Miss Major Griffin-Gracy*.^{iv} We must ensure these truths are told and remain at the centre of our discussions during Pride Month and beyond.

Here in Canada, the record isn’t great.^v This year marks the 20th Anniversary of the *Pussy Palace Raids* when the now ‘defunct’ Toronto Police Service morality squad raided a women’s bathhouse in 2000, under the guise of liquor license violations.^{vi} In 2021 it will be 40 years since the infamous *Toronto Bathhouse Raid* in 1981 and many are still waiting for true government accountability and systemic change.^{vii} ^{viii} Queer communities in Canada have been questioned and surveilled for decades, as described pointedly in Gary Kinsman’s, *Canadian War on Queers* all under the guise of protecting national security^{ix}. This manifestation continues in organizations when gender-diverse communities are constantly questioned and their identities surveilled to ensure their identities legitimacy. We call for these practices to stop. This is further contextualized through experiences of racism, classism, country of origin, language, ability, age, religion, status, family and political affiliations.^x

Transforming and moving organizations towards structural and systemic change is a process, and this is one small change that we hope will contribute to and build a foundation for a safer and more just future for gender-diverse communities, foster relationship building and strengthen intersectional feminist movements.

ⁱ Baker, Linda et al. [“Gender Diversity in the VAW Sector: Identifying Barriers and Recommendations for Consideration.”](#) Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women & Children, November 2016.

ⁱⁱ Seelman, Kristie. [“Unequal Treatment of Transgender Individuals in Domestic Violence and Rape Crisis Programs”](#). SW Publications, 2015 (59).

ⁱⁱⁱ OAITH et al. [“Letter to the attention of the Senate C-16.”](#) May 20, 2017.

^{iv} Borge, Jonathan. [“Pride is a Riot: The Queer Black History of Rioting.”](#) Refinery 29, June 15, 2020.

^v [“A Timeline 1971-2013: 40 Years of Pink Triangle Press.”](#) Pink Triangle Press.

^{vi} Taylor, Jessica and Powell Ami. [“The Pussy Palace Raid: A Brief Herstory.”](#) Arquivos, September 26, 2019.

^{vii} Kohler, Will. [“Canada’s Stonewall- February 5, 1981: Toronto’s Brutal “Operation Soap” Bathhouse Raids, Over 300 Gay Men Arrested.”](#) Back2Stonewall.com, February 5, 2020.

^{viii} Kinsman, Gary. [“Remember This: A Brief Statement on Memorializing Resistance to the Canadian War on Queers.”](#) Radical Noise, October 15, 2019.

^{ix} Kinsman, Gary and Gentile, Patrizia. [“The Canadian War on Queers: National Security as Sexual Regulation.”](#) UBC Press, 2010.

^x Boisver, Nick. [“LGBTQ activist Sarah Hegazi, exiled in Canada after torture in Egypt, dead at 30.”](#) CBC News. June 16, 2020.