PROVINCIAL COORDINATOR’S ANNUAL REPORT

To Our Valued Membership:

It’s with great pride that I have this opportunity to share with each of you, how far OAITH has come in the last year. It has taken a tremendous amount of hard work, commitment, energy and at times, some serious tenacity to see it through. OAITH’s leadership has believed in doing our work strategically and collaboratively that carries integrity and transparency. As your Provincial Coordinator, I believe we are on our way to achieving this. Through engagement with our Members in 2013 and 2014, OAITH’s Strategic Plan has provided a strategic framework to guide our priorities and commitments.

OAITH will improve the capacity of governments and communities to respond to and end violence against women.

Over the last year OAITH’s Provincial Coordinator and Board of Director’s has worked to build, strengthen and formalize our relationships with government through government consultations, the OEDG, and the VAW Roundtable. More importantly, government requests that OAITH be there! Our Provincial Campaign, Wrapped in Courage generated approximately $23,000 in revenues and we are expanding our reach with a newly forged relationship with the Ontario Nurses Association! Finally, through our partnership with the University of Guelph we are bringing together the lived experience of women through the release of 25 Years of Femicide in Ontario. We hope to use a range of tools to remember, honor and act to inform awareness building and policy issues regarding Femicide.

OAITH will have strong engagement with and by OAITH Members.

Through the leadership of our Interim Chair of Membership and our Regional Representatives, Members across the province are hearing from us! We have created opportunities for people to participate on our internal committees and regional meetings for anyone who is interested. From May to September OAITH has travelled to Oshawa, Kingston, Sudbury and Haldimand & Norfolk to engage our Members in person! We have discussed our Strategic Plan, OAITH Membership and our By-Laws. We heard what people appreciated, their ideas and where they’ve struggled, so we’re working towards positive lasting change to ensure our Members are engaged and supported.

OAITH will have strong internal operations.

A strong foundation will make for a strong Provincial Association, but as you know change management requires conscious and considerate thought, decision making and patience. Our biggest task under this direction has been the implementation of a virtual office. This has required considerable thought and care to preserve OAITH’s history, intellectual property and reputation as a leading VAW Association. This has required many conversations and information sharing on what this means for OAITH with our stakeholders, members and funders about our modern day. The response has been overwhelmingly positive! Although this current fiscal year has experienced some of that adjustment financially, this will be monitored to determine how the reduced expenses will benefit OAITH in our next fiscal year when we begin budget planning sessions in January.
**OAITH will have a diversified funding base.**

In 2015 we are very happy to report increased revenues from Membership, grant monies from OWD, two year sponsorship from the Ontario Nurses Foundation and a donation from the Ontario Provincial Police Association. We are seeking out different grant opportunities that build upon what has currently been accomplished or what strikes us as an innovative opportunity with strategic partners who will work collaboratively with us.

**Some Final Thoughts...**

As we enter the next year together, I’m very pleased we’ve been able to sit at a variety of tables including; Building a Bigger Wave Advisory Committee, Canadian Network of Women Shelter’s and Transition Homes, VAW Learning Network Resource Group, End Violence Association of Canada, MCSS Stakeholder Group, OEDG, and the VAW Roundtable, to name a few. OAITH has participated in the Shelter Standards Consultations, Long Term Affordable Housing Strategy and the Elder Abuse Strategy Consultations in the past few months. Through engagement with our Board of Directors and call outs to members seeking your experience, issues are being framed. We’ve also been able to support a variety of initiatives and movements such as No One Is Illegal, Black Lives Matter, Right’s for Women in the Sex Trade, Migration Rights and Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women and Girls.

Through these relationships and opportunities, I’ve weighed in on complicated issues that are divisive in nature and have advocated that no woman is deserving of violence and all are deserving of safety, freedom and inclusion. Ending all violence against all women requires a range of advocates, survivors, researchers and policy makers who bring different approaches and strategies, through an integrated, intersectional framework of VAW issues. It requires innovation, strategic thinking, collaboration, shared power and complimentary ways of working. In my new role with OAITH as your Provincial Coordinator, I aim to bring together all of these dynamic ways of working to the table to strengthen what we do with women who experience all forms of violence in Ontario.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marlene Ham, Provincial Coordinator

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**ANNUAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

It is with great sadness that we inform the membership of OAITH of Lynda Roy passing in August. Lynda was a leader and instrumental in advocating for responsive and inclusive services for all women and their children who have experienced violence. More specifically, Lynda provided and participated in developing and delivering training for OAITH member shelters to increase their capacity to deliver services for women with disabilities and/or who are Deaf or hard of hearing. She worked closely with shelters in Toronto Region to provide support groups and one to one supports to women who had experienced violence.

Notably, she worked with a team to develop a position paper on Women and Accessibility for violence against women organizations and shelters to inform policy and practice for women with disabilities and/or who are deaf or hard of hearing and provided training to shelters on the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). It was this work that helped to inform policy development to not only meet but exceed government standards. Her work to ensure women who are marginalized due to ableism has and will continue to have a profound impact on shelters, violence against women organizations and women and children who have experienced violence.
MEMBER EDUCATION
& TRAINING COMMITTEE REPORT

To Our Valued Membership:

The Membership Education and Training (MET) Committee was successful in receiving another year of project funding from the Ontario Women’s Directorate in 2014. A number of community partners such as; Luke’s Place, Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants, Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres and Women’s College shared our vision and made a commitment to support this project’s outcomes. One of these outcomes included hosting an OAITH Provincial Training Day that includes a number of skill based workshops for counsellors and advocates working with women who have experienced violence. The MET Committee embraced the challenge and were excited to be planning this Provincial Training Day funded by OWD. To accomplish this required a group of committed individuals with a shared vision, dedication and a commitment to create a space where shelter staff and community partners can strengthen their knowledge, capacity and understanding of the complexities of working with women and their children who are experiencing violence across Ontario. We all know that women need to navigate through many systems and overcome many barriers to live a life free from violence and abuse. MET members acknowledged that in order to help women navigate and negotiate these systems requires advocates with advanced understanding of the complexities of the systems and skills that will assist women to circumvent multiple barriers.

The presenters, topics, and overall content were informed by the Provincial Needs Assessment that was conducted by MET in 2013 which highlighted the following areas of learning requested by our membership;

• Engaging Conflict in Residential Settings
• Impact on Children
• LGBTQ Inclusion Practice

In addition to the above the MET committee looked at the current emerging issues and trends that impact women along with what information, tools and resources shelters and Second Stage houses could use to increase their capacity to respond to and advocate for the needs of women that reach out to us each day.

Last year, at our OAITH Training Day, we heard from Dana Gillespie Tozer, PhD candidate within McMaster University’s School of Social Work. Dana’s previous research has involved a policy and practice review of offender treatment programs (such as PAR) for women who have been criminalized with what are considered ‘domestic violence’ offences. Her current work continues to engage in a critical analysis of PAR programming for women, but from the perspective of the women themselves. Dana engaged shelter and second stage housing advocates in critical dialogue last year and we are pleased to have her join the MET committee as MET continues its knowledge collaboration efforts both on-line and face to face with both OAITH and non-OAITH members.

MET continues to support the development of OAITH’s capacity to host and manage a Learning Management System on our website as a learning portal for education and training of shelter staff and second stage organization staff in Ontario. This year we were able to analyze the effectiveness of this training as we partnered with The Learning Network to assess whether OAITH’s 27 training modules matched identified VAW training core competencies. MET committee members continue to sit on the VAW Learning Network Advisory Group who have initiated discussions this year with Faculties to explore whether a systemic approach can be taken that would enable social work, nursing and other such programs to include sexual violence and intimate partner violence curricula. MET looks forward to sharing with you the development of our collaborative efforts with the network to have education on VAW as a graduation requirement for all college and undergraduate students in Ontario.

We plan to strengthen our analytical capacity by building Return on Investment spreadsheets to increase our knowledge about who is actually using our educational modules, how often, and what is drawing them to our learning portal. Our data set indicates that 799 modules were completed and 124 certificates issued to 127 registrants from April 1st-August 31 2015.
Though these numbers look promising they are not reflective of the number of staff doing this work in shelters across the Province. As such, MET members are tasked with creating a strategy to increase usage and a cross-fertilization of our training program across Ontario to increase the number of workers who complete our training and use our resources.

OAITH currently has integrated evaluations at the end of each of the modules, however we will be moving to include knowledge awareness tests at pre, mid and post course. This will assist OAITH in understanding who our learners are, if they are utilizing the information and had increased knowledge following their completion of the course. In addition, evaluations will be reviewed so that recommendations can be incorporated.

None of the above could be accomplished without the assistance, and expertise of OAITH’s Resource and Training Project Coordinator, Denise Glasbeek and the leadership of the OAITH provincial Coordinator, Marlene Ham. Both of these women have been working diligently with the MET Committee on the Provincial Training Day and the Learning Management System. On behalf of the OAITH Board and the MET Committee, Thank You!

Last but not least I would like to thank Lindsay McAllister from H.E.R Place, Friend of OAITH, Dana Gillespie Tozer and York University Student, Tasleem Rasool for your commitment and dedication to the MET committee. You have been valuable members of the MET Committee and have been generous with your time in assisting MET in reaching its goals this past year. I look forward to working with you all as we continue to enhance the knowledge of Shelters and Second Stage Housing staff across Ontario in the coming year.

Sharon Floyd, Chair, Member Education & Training Committee

SOCIAL JUSTICE ACTION COMMITTEE
& ANTI RACIST ANTI OPPRESSION COMMITTEE

Chair: Jehan Ahmed Chaudhry
Member: Corey Allison

In 2014/15 the Chair of the SJAC/ARAO Committee invested time and energy to support the OAITH Board in exploring membership needs and developing shared strategic vision. In the New Year, membership was invited to express interest in sitting on the SJAC/ARAO Committee. This recruitment drive led to one new member, Corey Allison, from the Southwest region.

1) Through July our committee reviewed the Long Term Affordable Housing Strategy and offered feedback to the OAITH Coordinator to present to the Ministry of Municipal affairs and Housing. Our concerns focused on ensuring people impacted by violence against women have voice in crafting the strategy, that existing resources designated for crisis are not decreased to fund new and long term housing. We also believe that a comprehensive strategy requires service delivery models.

For the coming year, our committee hopes to meet three times (in person or virtual). At our initial meeting we will outline the work plan for the coming year; we hope to develop shared vision for an effective anti-racism, anti-oppressive, social justice and action committee, identify areas of effort that reflect the emerging issues within our VAW sector, and select key activities to carry-out within the year. The remaining two meetings will create opportunities to monitor, reflect and evaluate our work plan in action.

Our committee is looking to expand in size and seeking representation from other regions in the province. Please consider joining our committee as we are in an exciting, creative place of renewal. We seek a collective of diverse women who are passionate about challenging power structures, engaging in a critical analysis and who are committed to forwarding our movement. If you have questions please reach out or connect with me at the AGM in September.

Jehan Chaudhry
Executive Director*, Sandgate Women’s Shelter of York Region Inc
MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE REPORT

This year the Membership Committee made 2 commitments:

1. To improve engagement with our membership
2. To improve communication within the OAITH organization and its membership

With these goals in mind we actively addressed the challenges by coming up with a structured template for regional reports. Not only would this make it easier for new Regional Representatives, it would ensure that we would eventually be speaking the same language from each region to identify issues and or opportunities for OAITH to advocate for or build on. We also set timelines for regional meetings so that they would coincide with the board meetings and increase the quality of information flow to and from the membership.

This year we made a coordinated effort to contact each shelter in all regions, through Regional Reps, to update them on current and future endeavors of the Association and to recruit/increase and solidify our membership base as identified as a need in our last AGM. We also contacted and travelled out to meet the shelters in the Central East and East region to rebuild the membership in that district. The Interim Membership Chair and the new Provincial Coordinator met with several of the shelters in person at 2 scheduled meetings to update the shelters of the work that the association has been accomplishing and invite them to join OAITH.

We are very excited to inform membership that we have engaged 4 Shelters & Associate organizations from the Central East and East regions to participate in OAITH and our total membership this year is 51 Shelters and 6 Associate Members giving us a membership revenue of $142,750 increasing last year’s revenue by $2,000. We heard the membership last year and we worked hard at reaching out and engaging everyone. Additionally, as part of this engagement, the Membership Committee surveyed each region for a democratic vote of a preferred location for the MET Committee to host a Provincial Training Day in addition to our AGM & Strategic Visioning Day. In alliance with the majority vote, we are proud to host the AGM & Strategic Visioning Day with the Provincial Training Day at the Airport Holiday Inn at 970 Dixon Road.

Left on the Membership Committee “To Do List”, moving forward, is:

- A Standardized fee reduction application
- A collation process for the information from regional reports for the board
- An accurate visual map of the OAITH regions

The Regional Representatives would like to thank the membership for being so actively engaged with us this year.

Respectfully,

The OAITH Membership Committee

SURVIVOR ACTION COMMITTEE REPORT

Highlights:

- January 12, 2015 OSAC members had a facilitated meeting with Board Chair and Interim Coordinator resulting in Report “OSAC Discussion – January 12, 2015”
- OSAC members were involved in a research project through researcher Pat Breton out of York University on Mother’s experiences fleeing violence who were also had Children’s Aid Society involvement. Researcher Pat Breton is mentoring survivors on becoming co-authors to an upcoming journal article submission.
- OSAC ran a recruitment drive for new members, as four group members resigned. Expressions of interest were received from 8 individuals, 6 who have actively continued to express interest and participate in the initial 2 phone calls that have since taken place in August and September
- Planning is underway for a Conference call in October that will cover Terms of Reference, Confidentiality, Orientation and ARAO training

Submitted by:
Eva Kratochvil, OSAC Co-Chair
Our region is geographically vast, covering from Parry Sound up to Timmins and Wawa. Our region met three times through digital technology. These meetings produced the following outcomes.

**Shared Resources & Knowledge:**
- OAITH updates
- Trans Policy
- Reducing Barriers Toolkit: A Toolkit for Supporting Women with Varying Levels of Mental Wellness and Substance Use
- Second Stage Housing Project: Timmins – collaboration with shelter and municipality
- Sudbury Homelessness Coalition presented research recommendations
- Pet shelter on site model – Elliot Lake
- Indigenous Child & Family Service – Protocol

**Tool Development:**
- Intra-Regional Shelter Transfer Protocol

**Pressures/Action & Advocacy:**
- Cuts to mental health beds in the region have put strain on shelter system to accommodate women

**Training:**
- Harm reduction training held at various shelters throughout the region
- B-Safer training shared in the East Algoma region
- Trauma Informed Care Certificate for Front Line & Transitional Staff – online – Elliot Lake

**New Initiatives:**
- Tweet chat on twitter every Friday at noon EST in May for Sexual Assault Awareness month
- Breakfast Club – reduce conflict house, reduce isolation and better connect with transitional worker

Shelter members in Northwest region: Saakate House (Kenora), New Starts Women’s Shelter (Red Lake), Hoshizaki House (Dryden), First Step Women’s Shelter (Sioux Lookout), Faye Peterson House (Thunder Bay), Marjorie House (Marathon), Beendigen (Thunder Bay). This membership reflects seven of the nine shelters.

Management updates from the NW: Kendall Trembath is now the Executive Director; Debra Vermette is the new permanent Executive Director for Beendigen and Jennifer Chamberlin is the new Executive Director in Red Lake. We also have a new Ministry person working with the NW: Nancy Tulloch.

This year we managed to have a face to face meeting in Dryden and a number of audio conferences. The region has undergone a data review with MCSS and information has been shared between shelters as to the process, outcomes, etc. There are shared concerns around the application of Gladue principals at the Bail stage of the Criminal Justice System which continues to be an on-going concern and a newly revised Police protocol was signed between shelters and police this year for Thunder Bay and district.

Recently Debbie was asked to represent the North at the Shelter Standards Advisory.

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Zweep, Northwest Regional Representative
CENTRAL REGION REPORT

Central Region continues to be very active...meeting regularly with good attendance at every meeting. We continue to be challenged by some of the trends that we see in the areas of homelessness, mental health and substance use. We have had good dialogue around VAW/CAS collaboration agreements and how they differ in each community.

We have reviewed the new MCSS Regional boundaries and have had updates and much discussion regarding the new Shelter Standards.

In June we had Heather Stewart, the Project Officer from the Canadian Network of Women’s Shelters and Transition Houses join us at our meeting. Heather conducted a Focus Group with us regarding The Model Practice Guide (MPG). This tool is intended to make it easier for shelters to share, develop and implement good practices. Heather is developing a flexible suite of tools to create practice training guide templates, along with a framework for sharing these templates to formalize our knowledge exchange practices within the national shelter network.

There was a rich discussion about how shelters communicate, both internally and externally as well as formally and informally. Our Region appreciated the opportunity to be involved and give input into this Canada-wide initiative and will look forward to the Guide when it is released.

Our region remains committed to the goals of OAITH.

Respectfully submitted,
Lyn Allen, Central Regional Representative

CENTRAL WEST REGION REPORT

The Central West Region continues to support the good work being done by OAITH. Our group met once during the year, and OAITH updates are shared with the group as they become available. Each organization has renewed their membership for the year and are committed to being active participatory members.

Our region had a lengthy discussion about the Lobby efforts and OAITH’s role. Our region asked that the OAITH Board consider having all the future lobby efforts come under the umbrella of OAITH. Our region felt this recommendation would keep shelters on the radar screen and keep the higher level of conversations going, keeping VAW in plain view and raising our profile.

Our region is pleased that OAITH was included in the expert consultation for the new Shelter Standards, our region believes having OAITH at the table will be a great resource for shelters as the standards roll out and implementation begins.

Our region is very supportive of the Wrapped in Courage Campaign and hope to have much success with the Purple Scarves and welcome the opportunity to form Partnerships with our local ONA.

We are excited that all of the membership from our region are participating in all or a portion of our three days together.

Respectfully submitted
Jane Scheel, Central West Regional Representative
SOUTHWEST REGION REPORT

The southwest region met twice this year. We invited all Second Stage and shelters in the southwest area to share concerns about our sector. We are fortunate to be one of the few regions that has a number of stand alone Second Stage housing units. It was very obvious to all in the room that there are disparities between Second Stage and shelters to the point where membership fees are prohibitive for many of these organizations and although they are expected to comply with the rules and regulations as set out by government they are often not included in consultations.

Issues identified through the course of our conversations included: CAS wanting case notes, Dads requesting information on children, dealing with subpoenas, resident and tenant hoarding and the usual cornucopia of stuff associated with working in the violence against women sector.

Respectfully submitted,
Kate Wiggins, Southwest Regional Representative

TORONTO REGION REPORT

1. The Toronto Region has been involved in the advisory committee of MCSS Shelter Standards. Arlene McCalla, Interval House, has been the attending meetings and ensuring all Toronto OAITH members are kept up to date on the progress of the standards.

2. There are five work groups of the Toronto Region:

   1. Housing Committee: A position paper was submitted to the provincial consultation process on Affordable Housing Strategies.

      All our members are identifying the lack of safe and affordable housing as key issues for the women and children we serve.

   2. Harm Reduction Committee: This committee addresses, advocates and supports Harm Reduction policies and practices. Our aim is to be to address issues with an AR/AO framework.

      Women’s Habitat, The Red Door and Redwood have all embraced a harm reduction philosophy and framework. For example, at Women’s Habitat, all rooms have a locked safe where women can store their medication.

   3. Immigration Committee: This committee works to address the gender based inequity in immigration laws. Training opportunities are presented to shelter staff. We also inform on best practices on issues with CBSA (Canadian Border Services).

   4. Humber College: Managing in the VAW Sector is a four course certificate program delivered in partnership with Humber College. Many of our members are instructors in the course.

   5. CAS/VAW Committee: This committee has evolved into an advisory group that advocates for best practises and program to enhance collocation between the two sectors.

   The Toronto OAITH Region will be meeting on September 30th prior to the AGM.

Submitted by Silvia Samsa

OUR ROAD TRIP TO THE EAST MAY 2015!
INTERIM CHAIR OF MEMBERSHIP, MELODY ROSE
Training made possible with the support of the Ontario Women’s Directorate.

Ontario
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Canadian Network of Women’s Shelters & Transition Houses
United to end violence against women

WRAPPED IN COURAGE