

ANNUAL REPORT

2019/2020

National Association of Women and the Law

Equality Now!



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MANDATE & ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY

The National Association of Women and the Law (NAWL), founded in 1974, is a not-for-profit feminist organization that promotes the equality rights of women through legal education, research, and law reform advocacy.

We recognize that each woman's experience of inequality is unique due to systemic discrimination related to race, class, sexual orientation, disability, age, language, and other factors. In our view, a just and equal society is one that values diversity, and is inclusive of it. We are committed to working collectively and in coalition with other groups to dismantle barriers to all women's equality. To this end, the general objectives of NAWL are to:

- Achieve equality before and within the legal system
- Eliminate violence against women
- Ensure a decent standard of living for all women through legislative reform
- Guarantee employment and pay equity
- Remove barriers that limit access to equality for all groups of women
- Establish a fairer deal for women and children on relationship breakdown
- Ensure reproductive choice and monitor new reproductive technologies

NAWL works on its own and in collaboration with other women's equality-seeking organizations to impact law and public policy on a wide range of issues, achieving a number of victories, including:

- Adoption of sections 15 and 28 in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms
- Amendments to the Criminal Code regarding sexual assault laws, rape shield legislation and criminal harassment legislation
- Positive changes to family law and to the Divorce Act
- Advancement of equality rights for lesbians

In 2006, NAWL was defunded when the federal government removed 'advocacy,' 'equity' and 'access to justice' from Status of Women Canada's (SWC's) mandate, thereby preventing it from funding feminist research and advocacy work.

In October 2007, NAWL announced that it was forced to lay off staff and shut down its national office. For the next ten years, NAWL continued its federal law reform efforts thanks to private charitable fund-raising efforts and the unwavering dedication of volunteers.

In August 2017, NAWL received three year funding from Status of Women Canada to implement the project: *Rebuilding Feminist Law Reform Capacity: Substantive Equality in the Law Making Process*, and became operational again.

In June 2019, NAWL received four year funding from Women and Gender Equality Canada (formerly SWC) to implement the project: *Sustaining Feminist Law Reform in Canada: Building NAWL's Capacities to Strengthen its Fundraising and Diversify its Funding Base*.



GOVERNANCE, DEMOCRACY & PARTICIPATION

NAWL is an incorporated non-profit organization that is governed by a National Steering Committee (NSC) made up of a maximum of 12 volunteers. Since its founding in 1974, NAWL has used its unique research and educational strategies to raise public awareness about legal issues affecting women.

NAWL has a nationwide membership of lawyers, law students, academics and other individuals who share a commitment to gender equality.

NAWL briefs and papers have traditionally been developed by working groups, with membership open to all.



NATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE

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MESSAGE FROM THE NATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE

In 2019-2020, NAWL continued to lead and support feminist law reform, strengthen feminist capacities and expand and diversify the network of feminist and equality seeking organizations, lawyers, academics, students and activists working together to advance the equality rights of all women in Canada

The new NAWL website was launched in December 2019 (<https://nawl.ca/>). In addition to providing NAWL's current work, the new website is also an archival tool that includes all volumes of *Jurisfemme*—a bilingual newsletter that NAWL published quarterly from 1977-2007, as well as many briefs, tools, and communications developed over the last forty years, and some great old photos.

Throughout 2019-2020, NAWL's Co-Chair, Professor Martha Jackman continued to teach a Feminist Law Reform course to upper year common law students at the University of Ottawa's Faculty of Law, utilizing NAWL's online Feminist Law Reform 101 course materials (<http://nawl.ca/en/feministlawreform>). An extensive update of the Feminist Law Reform 101 online course materials and website is underway and the new online materials are being piloted in the Fall of 2020. The new FLR website modules are expected to be finalized in 2021.

In June 2019, NAWL received a Capacity Building Fund grant from Women and Gender Equality Canada (formerly SWC) to implement the four year project: *Sustaining Feminist Law Reform in Canada: Building NAWL's Capacities to Strengthen its Fundraising and Diversify its Funding Base*. The Project is designed to build NAWL's fundraising capacities with the goal of diversifying the funding base. NAWL's online fundraising approach and software were updated in the Fall of 2019, and piloted with a membership appeal launched in Dec 2019, followed by an end of year fundraising appeal undertaken on behalf of the NAWL Trust. In 2020, work began to prepare for fundraising with foundations.

For the first time in decades, NAWL re-engaged with strategic litigation at the Supreme Court of Canada. In November 2019, represented by Co-Counsel Anne Levesque, NAWL Co-Chair, and Nathalie Chalifour, NAWL and Friends of the Earth Canada (FOE) joined forces and filed an application to jointly intervene in the *Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act (GGPPA)* appeal. Leave to intervene was granted to NAWL and FOE in December 2019. The hearing was postponed because of COVID 19, but on September 23, 2020, Nathalie Chalifour appeared before the SCC to present NAWL and FOE's joint oral submissions, which were dedicated to the memory of the late Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. The NAWL/FOE intervention focuses on the disproportionate impacts of climate change on women and girls, especially those who face intersecting and compounding forms of discrimination, proposes a feminist interpretation of federalism, and argues for upholding the *GGPPA* as an equality-affirming interpretation of the Constitution. The Court's decision is forthcoming.

Following discussions with stakeholders, a decision was made for NAWL to engage in Bill C-5, *An Act to Amend the Judges Act and the Criminal Code*. NAWL's brief on Bill C-5, which was prepared by Professor Rosemary Cairns Way, and endorsed by thirty-six (36) groups, was submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights on April 13, 2020.

NAWL's pre-budget submission, prepared by Fay Faraday and finalized to include feedback received from members of the feminist law reform network, was endorsed by; Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights, Barbra Schlifer Memorial Clinic, Canadian Council of Muslim Women, CRIAW, DAWN Canada, Ending Violence Association of Canada, Fédération des maisons d'hébergement pour femmes, South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario, Women's Legal Education and Action Fund, Women's Shelters Canada, was submitted on August 7, 2020.

Since the beginning of the COVID 19 pandemic, NAWL has been leading and supporting advocacy to highlight both the importance of ensuring there is a fully gender responsive approach to all aspects of the COVID-19 response and recovery. This has included advocacy on the importance of consultations with women's and equality seeking groups, and funding mechanisms to help stabilize our sector.

NAWL, together with the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, developed a proposal for support to equality seeking women's groups in Canada during the COVID 19 pandemic. The proposal was endorsed by twenty-four (24) organizations and submitted to Women and Gender Equality Canada on April 17, 2020. That same day, NAWL and other women's rights groups wrote a letter to Minister Monsef, which was endorsed by twenty-eight (28) groups, calling on the Government of Canada to ensure a rigorous and far-reaching gendered response to COVID-19.

On behalf of twenty-two (22) women's rights and equality seeking groups, on May 19, 2020, NAWL also sent a letter to the Prime Minister on the importance of feminist policy making in the context of COVID 19, and advocating for the government's recovery plan to include: an immediate commitment from the government to the financial stabilization of the women's rights and gender equality sector; and the establishment and funding of processes for and with organizations with a primary focus on advancing women's rights and gender equality.

In light of the current and expected future economic consequences of COVID-19 on women, work began to update *A Women's Guide to Money, Relationships and the Law*, which continues to be one of the most accessed resources on NAWL's website. In addition, a new module on COVID 19 has been developed for the online feminist law reform 101 course.

A series of strategic opportunities had been identified for NAWL to meet in 2020 with decision-makers to discuss key policy issues. However the COVID-19 crisis shifted policy priorities and made in-person meetings impossible. Nonetheless, in July 2020, NAWL successfully convened a virtual meeting of representatives of nine (9) women's rights groups from across the country with Minister Lametti and Department of Justice staff, to discuss the impacts of the delayed implementation of Bill C-78, and to present recommendations about key implementation issues.

NAWL was also invited to meet with the NDP's Building for Better Task Force. On July 29, 2020, NAWL's ED Suki Beavers and Co-Chair Martha Jackman had a call with the Task Force to provide inputs on priorities for their COVID 19 policy platform.

Throughout 2019-2020, NAWL continued to work in solidarity with many feminist and equality rights activists, organizations, networks and coalitions to advocate on a range of women's rights and feminist law reform issues, including as follows:

- ✓ NAWL Executive Director, Suki Beavers, continued to participate as a Steering Committee member of the Beijing +25 Network, and as a member of the Advisory Committee that developed and reviewed the Canadian parallel report, “Unfinished Business: Canada’s Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action”, which was endorsed by 50+ Canadian organizations, and launched on October 28, 2019. She also attended the meeting of the Beijing +25 Network hosted by the Canadian Labour Congress on January 22, 2020 and made a presentation on the history of Canadian women’s groups in the follow up to and implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and follow up processes (B+5, +10, +15, +20). On March 2, 2020, NAWL signed a letter demanding governments postpone CSW64 in light of COVID-19, and on March 11, 2020, signed a letter to Ministers Monsef and Gould calling on Canada to join all Action Coalitions of the Beijing +25 review process and ensure coherence between its foreign and domestic commitments to invest in women’s movements and leadership during the Beijing +25 process and beyond. As part of the Steering Committee, NAWL’s ED contributed to the development of concept note and then proposal submitted to WAGE in March 2020, for funding to support the facilitation of Beijing +25 network.
- ✓ NAWL’s Executive Director was a member of the Advisory Committee, the Steering Committee and the Government Relations Committee of Up for Debate 2019, a network of over 100 organizations in Canada calling on federal political parties to participate in a gender equality debate in the lead up to the 2019 federal election.
- ✓ NAWL’s Executive Director continued to participate in meetings of the Gender Equality Network Canada (GENC) Consultative Committee, and attended the 5th national GENC meeting held in Montreal, on November 12, 2019.
- ✓ Following the 2019 federal election and appointment of the new Cabinet, NAWL participated on the drafting committee that prepared a letter sent to Minister Monsef on December 9, 2019, with four key asks. In addition to NAWL, the letter was also signed by: Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights (AC), Amnesty International Canada (AI), Canadian Women’s Foundation (CWF), Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA), Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAOW), Feminist Alliance for International Action FAFIA), NAWL, Oxfam Canada, Unifor, Women’s Shelters Canada (WSC), and YWCA Canada.
- ✓ NAWL’s support for a National Action Plan on Violence Against Women (NAPVAW) included: co-signing a letter developed in December 2019 by Women’s Shelter’s Canada and supported by twenty other organizations, requesting a meeting with Minister Monsef on the development of a NAPVAW, on December 5, 2019, NAWL participated in a social media blitz on the National Action Plan on Violence Against Women (NAPVAW). On March 3, 2020, NAWL signed three letters to Prime Minister Trudeau, Minister Monsef and Minister Morneau calling for the establishment and funding of a NAPVAW, and in August 2020 NAWL participated in both providing feedback to the government’s draft NAP framework document, and the development of a reissued call for a NAPVAW led by Women’s Shelter’s Canada.
- ✓ NAWL Executive Director, Suki Beavers and NAWL Project Director, Rachel Kohut, attended DAWN Canada’s Conference “Do the Rights Thing: An Intersectional Approach to Human Rights” on December 3, 2019. Suki Beavers spoke on the afternoon plenary “intersectional Human Rights, challenges and opportunities”.

- ✓ NAWL remained a member of the pay equity coalition, and on January 15, 2020, NAWL's ED met with the new federal Pay Equity Commissioner.
- ✓ NAWL, along with the CLC, the CWF, Oxfam, WSC, YWCA was part of the core committee that convened the meeting; "Defining a Feminist Influencing Agenda" held on January 16th and 17th, 2020, that was attended by forty-one (41) participants from forty (40) organizations from across the country.
- ✓ On February 13, 2020, NAWL signed on to a letter developed by the Canadian Health Coalition sent to Minister Morneau asking for the necessary commitments for pharmacare to be included in the federal budget, and also signed the new joint statement on pharmacare issued by the Canadian Health Coalition on May 22, 2020.
- ✓ On July 7, NAWL signed a letter opposing the use of a restorative approach to an inquiry into the Nova Scotia mass shooting. On July 8, 2020, Martha Jackman was interviewed about the call for a public inquiry into the NS mass shooting, and on July 12, 2020, Suki Beavers was interviewed by the Todd Veinotte Radio Show in Halifax (95.7), also on the call for a public inquiry into the NS mass shooting.
- ✓ NAWL signed an open letter sent to the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister on August 12, 2020, calling for the prioritization of a robust system of child care a priority of Canada's recovery effort.
- ✓ On August 20, 2020, NAWL sent a letter to the Prime Minister and Minister of Justice, which was endorsed by thirty (30) feminist and equality seeking groups, urging the nomination of women and/or men who are Indigenous, Black, racialized, and/or from other equality seeking communities, to fill the two forthcoming Ontario vacancies on the Supreme Court of Canada.
- ✓ On September 18, 2020, NAWL signed a letter sent to the Deputy Prime Minister calling for her to host a roundtable with women's right organizations and feminist leaders as part of her federal budget consultations.



CHARITABLE TRUST FOR RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

The NAWL Charitable Trust for Research and Education was established in 1983 with the purpose of promoting and understanding the status and role of women in Canadian society among the general public. The Trust prepares and disseminates research and education regarding legal issues in all aspects of the social, economic and political life of Canadian women. It assists in the protection of women's civil rights and liberties by charitable means, as well as in the relief of poverty. Unlike NAWL, the Trust is a registered charity and all donations are tax creditable.

The Charitable Trust is composed of five (5) members appointed by NAWL's National Steering Committee. The Trustees are responsible for decisions regarding the allocation of funds.



THANK YOU!

Thanks to very hard work of both the long serving and new NSC members who provided invaluable guidance and support to NAWL in 2019-2020

NAWL gratefully acknowledges the generous support of the University of Ottawa's Programme de common law en français (PCLF), and the Loran Scholars Foundation, for their respective support of NAWL interns in 2019-2020.

THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS FOR THEIR INVALUABLE SUPPORT:

Shirley Greenberg

NAWL members and donors

and

Status of Women Canada  Status of Women Canada Condition féminine Canada 