

# Annual Report 2008-2009

## National Association of Women and the Law

*Real Equality Now!*



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## MANDATE

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 in the event of divorce
- Ensure reproductive choice and monitor new reproductive technologies

NAWL's activities include but are not limited to the following:

- Lobbying for changes to federal and provincial laws and regulations
- Producing publications on legal issues affecting all aspects of women's lives
- Consulting with government officials on legal issues of concern to women
- Providing legal expertise in the service of the Canadian women's movement
- Advocating for gender equality in the courts and the legal profession
- Sponsoring national biennial conferences that formulate policy positions on such critical issues as the feminization of poverty, international perspectives on women and the law, and family law matters
- Hosting workshops and consultations on gender bias in the criminal justice system, family law and in the legal profession
- Promoting feminist scholarship through our Charitable Trust for Research and Education
- Organizing public education activities through our regional caucuses on legal issues affecting women
- Promoting feminist perspectives on current legal issues through the media

For the last 35 years, NAWL has focused its efforts on women's equality rights in Canada. Since that time, in coalition with other women's and equality-seeking organizations, we have achieved many 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



## GOVERNANCE, DEMOCRACY & PARTICIPATION

NAWL is an incorporated non-profit corporation that is governed by a National Steering Committee made up of a maximum of 12 volunteers, which is representative of all regions of Canada and includes women from communities that are often marginalized in Canadian society.

NAWL has a nationwide membership of lawyers, law students, academics and other individuals who share a commitment to gender equality. The organization's policies are formulated in public forums convened during NAWL's biennial conferences.

NAWL briefs and papers are developed by working groups, with membership open to any equality-seeking individual who has demonstrated knowledge and skills on the topic that is being addressed. Every effort is made to include diverse community perspectives within all working groups and to include both French-speaking and English-speaking members.



## NAWL CONTRACT STAFF

Director of Strategic Planning  
**Pamela Cross**

Administrative Consultant  
**Pam Mayhew**



## MESSAGE FROM THE NATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE

NAWL's work in 2008/09 focused on revisioning and rebuilding the organization to function effectively in the current political climate. With the generous support of a number of unions, individual donors and volunteers, we were able to hire Pamela Cross, former Executive Director of NAWL, as a strategic planning consultant and Pam Mayhew, formerly NAWL's Administrative Officer, as an administrative consultant, to support the NSC in its ongoing efforts to keep NAWL alive.

Throughout 2008, the NSC engaged in a number of discussions, both internal and including allies of NAWL. The results of these discussions can be seen in our work in early 2009:

- an expanded and revitalized NSC, with a new focus on young women in leadership roles
- a revised Constitution that reflects the streamlining that NAWL has undertaken

- the beginning of an exciting research grants project, funded through NAWL's Charitable Trust
- a funding proposal to Status of Women Canada for an important national family law project

In addition to its strategic planning, NAWL participated in a number of activities in 2008 and early 2009:

**Ad-Hoc Coalition for Women's Equality and Human Rights:** NAWL and other women's equality-seeking groups continued to draw attention to the actions of the Conservative government and to plan for a federal election.

**Still Alive:** NAWL continued with its fundraising activities with a "Still Alive" direct mail campaign in the summer of 2008.

**Toujours Rebelles 2008:** NAWL sponsored Samantha Henrickson, one of our loyal volunteers, to attend and participate in this historic and important gathering of young feminists in Montreal in October 2008. Samantha has brought back ideas, energy and enthusiasm from this event to contribute to NAWL as one of our new NSC members.

**Jane Doe Conference:** NAWL provided sponsorship support to this national conference on sexual assault, held at the University of Ottawa in March 2009.

**Thank yous:**

The members of NAWL's National Steering Committee have once again dedicated themselves well beyond the call of duty to ensure NAWL's survival. A number of long-time NSCers left us at the end of their term in 2008 - Chantal Richard , Alana Patterson, , Rhakhi Ruparelia, , Maneesha Deckha, and Patricia Harewood.

To them, to those who remain and to those who have joined us for the first time, all of us at NAWL are extremely grateful. We know you all have lives that are more than full enough already, and we deeply appreciate your commitment to NAWL.



## CHARITABLE TRUST FOR RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

NAWL established the NAWL Charitable Trust for Research and Education 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 members appointed by NAWL's National Steering Committee. The Trustees are responsible for decisions regarding the allocation of funds.



# **THANK YOU!**

## **THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS WHO HELPED FUND PROJECTS**

Court Challenges Canada

## **THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING UNIONS FOR THEIR FINANCIAL SUPPORT**

Canadian Union of Postal Workers  
N.S. Federation of Labour Defence Fund  
Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation  
Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions  
Public Service Alliance of Canada

## **THANK YOU TO MEMBERS AND DONORS FOR THEIR SUSTAINING SUPPORT OF THE ORGANIZATION**

**WE WOULD ALSO LIKE TO THANK ALL VOLUNTEERS AND MEMBERS  
OF WORKING GROUPS FOR THEIR CONTINUED SUPPORT  
AND DEDICATION TO NAWL**