

ANNUAL REPORT 2016 / 2017

National Association of Women and the Law

Equality Now!

nawl | anfd

2339 Ogilvie Road, P.O. Box 46008, Gloucester, ON K1J 9M7



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

When it was fully operative, NAWL worked 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. NAWL has continued its federal law reform efforts over the past ten years thanks to private charitable fund-raising efforts and the unwavering dedication of volunteers. During this period, NAWL organized a national forum for young feminists, developed and published an alternative guide to law school as well as an easy-to-read information booklet for women regarding their socio-economic rights in the family law context. NAWL has also co-authored law reform briefs and appeared before Parliamentary Committees during this time.



GOVERNANCE, DEMOCRACY & PARTICIPATION

NAWL is an incorporated non-profit organization that is governed by a National Steering Committee 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 any



NATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE

Jane Bailey
Lisa Cirillo
Sasha Hart

Martha Jackman (Co-chair)
Cheryl Milne
Amy Salzyn (Co-chair)
Julie Shugarman (joined the NSC in October, 2016)



NAWL CONSULTANTS

Interim Executive Consultant (Ended August, 2016)
Julie Shugarman

Administrative Consultant
Pam Mayhew



MESSAGE FROM THE NATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE

In 2016-2017 NAWL continued operating with a skeletal structure. While committed to remaining administratively sound, the National Steering Committee decided that, in keeping with the direction set in 2013, we would spend as few resources as possible given an inability, without state funding, to do the research and advocacy work the organization was designed to do.

In July 2016, Status of Women Minister Patty Hadju announced that the federal government would be restoring the eligibility of advocacy activities for funding within projects supported by Status of Women Canada's (SWC's) Women's Program. As NAWL had been working in collaboration with others (FAFIA, CRIAW, LEAF, DAWN and NWAC) behind the scenes on this since November 2015, we were very pleased about the critical shift in policy.

Shortly following the announcement, NAWL submitted a draft proposal to SWC based on a project idea that focused on NAWL's traditional area of strength and expertise: to rebuild feminist capacity to engage in the law reform process. NAWL was then invited to submit a full proposal for this multi-year project, the preparation and submission of which took up a significant portion of our time and focus in 2016-2017.

The bilingual law reform project proposal aims to address the under-representation of women's voices broadly and feminist legal expertise, in particular, in law making processes. Its goal is to revitalize the capacity of feminist organizations and advocates to engage on legislative matters that have an impact on women's equality rights. Led by a dedicated Project Director, the project is designed to rebuild a network of feminist law reform experts in this country including feminist law students, legal academics, lawyers, advocates and leaders from women's organizations, and equip them to engage with government to effectively address and remedy systemic gender-based wrongs through the law making process. At the close of this fiscal year, NAWL was cautiously optimistic about the project's fundability and the future of the organization's critical law reform advocacy work.

Since our last Annual Report, the NAWL Charitable Trust for Research and Education, with generous support from Shirley Greenberg, launched its open access, bilingual online Feminist Law Reform Course. Over 100 feminist law professors, students, lawyers and activists attended the celebratory launch event, held at the University of Ottawa in November 2016. NAWL's co-Founder, Shirley Greenberg and Status of Women Minister Patty Hajdu both addressed the crowd with thoughtful and hopeful remarks and Shirley was presented with a certificate of recognition for her outstanding contribution to the Canadian Women's movement. It was a fabulous and beautifully intergenerational event – the NAWL NSC is extremely grateful to all of the attendees for the part they each played in making the gathering so successful.

The Feminist Law Reform Course, freely accessible on NAWL's website, includes over 80 edited video clips that have been developed, closed captioned and in some cases subtitled, for various modules covering a broad range of topics (including, as a sample: the federal law reform process, lobbying, writing opinion editorials, funding the law reform process, working in coalitions and filing

Access to Information requests). Among those featured in the course videos are award-winning author and Informed Opinions co-founder, Shari Graydon; University of Ottawa law professors Natasha Bakht and Carissima Mathen; PSAC Women's and Human Rights Officer, Andrée Coté; Canada Without Poverty Executive Director Leilani Farha; Ethics, governance and public policy expert Penny Collenette; and now Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, the Honourable Caroline Bennett. The video clips are accompanied by suggested readings, discussion questions and assignments. It is NAWL's hope that this free and highly practical course in law reform advocacy will strengthen the capacity of law students, civil society activists and women's organizations to advance women's equality in Canada.

In 2016/2017, NAWL also continued its commitment to the Alison Dewar Scholarship in Equality, Labour and Human Rights law at the University of Ottawa. The scholarship, founded in 2014, provides financial support for a female student enrolled in the Common Law faculty who is interested in pursuing a career in some combination of women's equality and union-side labour, workers' rights, or human rights law. This year's recipient – the third since the scholarship's founding - is Leah Marjorie Bowes. Leah is a first year law student with a Master's degree in Public Policy and a Graduate Certificate in Sexual Diversity Studies from the University of Toronto and was the Founding Director of the Gender and Public Policy initiative at the University of Toronto. She focused her graduate studies on women's labour and human rights issues, producing several research reports on topics related to atypical feminized labour. In her applicant statement, Leah wrote about what motivates her interest in women's equality work - as well as detailed some of her relevant work experience:

In the final year of my graduate study anonymous, online violent threats were made towards feminists at the University of Toronto. This threat highlighted not only the prevalence of gendered violence, but also the unacknowledged and differential experience of women in Canadian society. This inequality of experience is one of many forms of gender inequity that has motivated me to work towards equality for women in Canada. [...]

As a Policy Intern at the City of Toronto's Affordable Housing Office, I contributed to the completion of annual Equity, Diversity and Human Rights reporting metrics and policy files aimed at improving women's access to affordable housing opportunities in Toronto. In addition I worked to construct a gender consultation strategy for Toronto's 10 Year Housing Plan, aimed at evaluating the impact of Toronto's affordable housing programs on women's precarious housing. [...]

NAWL is extremely pleased with the calibre of applicants for the Alison Dewar Scholarship and remains committed to finding ways to support the ongoing development of the young feminists whose work has been recognized in Alison's name.

In 2016/2017, NAWL continued to receive and respond to a number of requests to sign letters, co-author briefs, and join various coalitions engaged in advancing women's equality.

The following provides a sample of some of these activities:

- NAWL participated in the Canadian Women's Foundation's first meeting of the Ad-Hoc Consultative Committee on the Pan Canadian Network of Women Leaders.

- NAWL wrote a letter to the Quebec government in December 2016, supporting several Quebec-based women's and First Nations organizations calling for the launch of an independent and systemic inquiry into police abuse of indigenous and aboriginal women in Val-d'Or.
- NAWL took an active leadership role in advocating for a restored and modernized Court Challenges Program of Canada. To this end, NAWL drafted a letter to Hon. Melanie Joly, Minister of Canadian Heritage regarding the importance of protecting CCPC's historic mandate to protect and advance substantive equality and access to justice for disadvantaged groups and official-language minority communities. Over 70 major equality rights focused organizations signed onto NAWL's letter, a copy of which is available on the NAWL website.

Thank-yous: NAWL's work in 2016/2017 was made possible by the ongoing generous support of law professors, lawyers, law students and volunteers. We would not have been able to continue our work without the commitment of these groups and individuals. We would also like to thank:

Derek Hogue from Amphibian Design for continuing to ensure the integrity and security of NAWL's main website, which he rebuilt for us four years ago. Karen Cooper, for her continued willingness to provide generous and highly skilled non-profit and charity law advice. Anne Levesque for being such a committed NAWL volunteer and, in particular, for her critical support around the organization and launch of the online Feminist Law Reform course.

Pam Mayhew, for her invaluable work to help ensure NAWL's administrative viability and the members of NAWL's National Steering Committee who continue to dedicate themselves to ensure that NAWL has every opportunity to survive as an organization. In particular, the NSC wants to recognize the work of two outgoing members of the NSC: to Jane Bailey, who is stepping down from the NSC after many years of committed service to NAWL – your brain-power and support in keeping this organization alive and well anchored, have been critical.

And, finally, to Amy Salyzyn, our fearless Co-Chair for the last two years: without you, we would not have been able to maintain the organization with such a high level of integrity, or develop the monumental funding application that defined our work over the last year. Amy's commitment and diligence have been outstanding and we are deeply grateful.

Without each of you, none of this would be possible.



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 six members appointed by NAWL’s National Steering Committee. The Trustees are responsible for decisions regarding the allocation of funds.



THANK YOU!

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

Shirley Greenberg
Shirley E. Greenberg Chair for Women and the Legal Profession
NAWL Members and Donors