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**from the OWN desk**  
by Erin Harris

Effective communication within a volunteer organization is a building block of success and always a challenge.

For 23 years, our OWN members have come to expect news “from the front” in the form of a hard copy newsletter called **Contact**. Now the e-letter has replaced **Contact**.

Over 85% of our OWN members have been moving with the times and are tech-ready. It is our hope that we can connect easily with you our members, and that you will be encouraged to visit our [website www.olderwomensnetwork.org](http://www.olderwomensnetwork.org) on a regular basis to view reports of our meetings and learn about other community activities. Presently, our OWN [facebook www.facebook.com/OlderWomensNetwork/](https://www.facebook.com/OlderWomensNetwork/) has over 1000 followers and likes, and more every day.

**So....what have we been doing on your behalf since our last e-letter?**

- **Our** new visual welcome on the OWN office door and on our website is a **revised engagement statement** that reads:

“We amplify women’s voices and cultivate their skills and resilience. Together with our donors and volunteers, we are active in changing the conditions that threaten women’s safety, dignity and equality”.

**On your behalf:**

- We attended the Seniors Advisory committee (SAC) for Service Canada .
- We participated at the provincial Ministry for Seniors Affairs Liaison Committee. Strategy called [Aging with Confidence: Ontario’s Action Plan for Seniors](#).
- We are responding to requests from women-centric agencies to network, collaborate and/or endorse petitions, charters and parliamentary Bills.
- We support CRIAW, the only women’s organization in Canada focused exclusively on nurturing feminist research and making it accessible for public advocacy and education.

- We are collaborating with METRAC Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children, on **the Justice for All** project.
- We are collaborating with Riverdale Immigrant Women's centre – Toronto on ***A Place to Call Our OWN Empowering Women to Take Action for Affordable Housing*** project.
- We will attend the Women's College Hospital Event on Nov 21: Working at the Intersections of Elder Abuse and Violence Against Women Sectors.
- We will attend YIMBY (Yes in My Back Yard) Festival on Dec 9th. 10 Years of grassroots celebrations.
- We will attend the Regional Geriatric Program of Toronto AGM, to support their **Senior Care Friendly Framework**.
- Queen's Park - meetings with MPPs
- Join OWN and the Raging Grannies at the National Housing Day Rally and March, on Wednesday, November 22, 12 Noon at Allan Gardens (Sherbourne/Carlton).
- We are attending a Town Hall meeting with Carolyn Bennett MP and Minister of Health Dr. Eric Hoskins and Josh Matlow, Seniors' Advocate for Toronto, on Nov. 26, 3 to 5pm at Holy Rosary Church hall on St.Clair Ave. W.

## **OWN's 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner**

By Susan Mansfield-Jones, Social Convener



The celebration of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of OWN was held on Sept. 30, 2017. Our theme was celebrating the spirit of our OWN women – yesterday, today and tomorrow. We assembled at 6:00 pm at the Hot House restaurant, and Erin Harris introduced the Honourable Indira Naidoo-Harris, the first provincial Minister for the Status of Women. The Minister commented that OWN as a women-centric organization is highly respected by community leaders and government officials. She described her new post and reflected on the continued need for women-focused approaches to planning strategies as the future of OWN. She then worked her way around to all the tables greeting our guests.

Moira Bacon gave a much appreciated detailed history of OWN's Plan of Action in the early years. Jill Jones spoke of the origin of the Peterborough chapter and its current advocacy issues. Kate Chung talked about the current housing projects, and emphasized the global need of accessible housing.

Judging by the noise level, all thoroughly enjoyed both their dinner and the camaraderie.

Many thanks to our official photographer Sharon Danley and our Planning Committee members, and to the generous donors who made this event possible.

**Thank you** to all our OWN members who directly and indirectly affect the new women's and seniors movement, building coalitions across differences, creating circles of peace, hope and civic engagement.





**Member Quotes:**

“The Hot House was an excellent choice. My meal was indescribably good (chicken, tender and tasty and I can only say, thank you again Erin AND btw I sat with some wonderful women.”

- June Gurvich

What a lovely event-congratulations! The food was wonderful, and the speakers informative.

- Karen Henderson

Thank you for the hospitality you showered on me on the occasion of OWN's 30<sup>th</sup>! I enjoyed delicious food and the speeches were endearing.

The staff tucked me into a taxi and I got home safely thanks to you. Real Class! I even had a rosebud in water from the garland on the table. Thank you so much.

- Elsie Dollekamp

My profound respect and gratitude to you and all the older women who today and in the past have organized and stood up for the younger generations of feminists.

- Prabha Khosla

Congratulations on achieving your 30th birthday and I wish you well in the future.

All the best wishes, Barbara Malcolm. coordinator, Illawarra OWN Wellness Centre, New South Wales, Australia.

## **Activism and systems advocacy:**

[Economic Security](#), [Ending Violence](#), [Women in Leadership](#), [NEWSROOM](#)

### [Ontario Begins Consultations on an Updated Domestic Violence Action Plan and a Gender-Based Violence Strategy](#)

Ontario is engaging with agencies and people with lived experience of domestic violence and gender-based violence across Ontario in September 2017 to learn from their experiences and provide an opportunity to give insights into our services and supports. [Read more here.](#)

### [Women's Economic Empowerment Consultation](#)

From June 9, 2017 to September 1, 2017, we invited Ontarians to share their feedback online and through written submissions, about how to help women and girls achieve their full social and economic potential. The survey is now closed. We will report back on the findings of this consultation in October 2017 before we release the final strategy in Fall 2017. You can read the [discussion paper here.](#)

### [Ontario Passes Legislation to Protect Human Trafficking Survivors](#)

Today, Ontario passed the Anti-Human Trafficking Act, 2017, which will increase protection for survivors of human trafficking and make it easier for survivors to pursue compensation.

The Act enables people affected by human trafficking (including people who have been trafficked, or are at risk of being trafficked) to apply for a restraining order to protect themselves or their children from traffickers. It also makes it possible for survivors to sue their traffickers for compensation through civil court in order to help survivors restore and rebuild their lives.

## Taking Action Against Sexual Violence and Harassment

### [It's Never Okay: An Action Plan to Stop Sexual Violence and Harassment Progress Update 2016-2017](#)

The three year, \$41M Action Plan is leading the way to an Ontario where everyone lives in safety, free from the threat, fear or experience of sexual violence and harassment.

#### Major Initiatives

- [Walking Together: Ontario's Long-Term Strategy to End Violence Against Indigenous Women](#)
- [Ontario's Strategy to End Human Trafficking](#)
- [Removing Barriers Preventing Women from Attaining Top Leadership Positions](#)

#### Do you know this famous 6?

Campaign of solidarity with indigenous women  
Article by OWN member **Prabha Khosla**



Since its inception, the *Indian Act* has accorded privileged forms of Indian status to male Indians and their descendants. By comparison, Indian women and their descendants have been treated as lesser in worth, and as second-class Indians.

On June 1, 2017, the Senate of Canada unanimously passed an amendment to Bill S-3. This amendment, which has been dubbed the “6(1)(a) all the way” amendment, would,

for the first time, entitle Indian women and their descendants to full 6(1)(a) Indian status on the same footing as Indian men and their descendants.

The Government of Canada has rejected this equal status amendment and wants the Senate to pass Bill S-3 without eliminating all the discrimination against First Nations women and their descendants. **Learn about the Famous Six and read their message [here](#).**



## OWN HOUSING COMMITTEE

**October 4<sup>th</sup> Day of Action at Queen's Park**  
by Ronny Yaron



From left to right, Kate Chung and panelists David Lepofsky, Roger Gervais and Thea Kurdi

Over the last two years, the OVN Housing Committee has been focused on our Living in Place Campaign which seeks to bring about changes in the Ontario (and later Canadian) Building Code to make it mandatory that every new multi-unit residential building be made universal design, i.e. that each room in every apartment be fully

accessible. In November 2016, we were successful in having Toronto City Council vote to endorse the campaign.

On October 4, 2017, we took our campaign to Queen's Park to reach out to Ontario MPPs and their staff. We held a press conference at 9:00 am at which panelists David Lepofsky, Thea Kurdi and Roger Gervais, all experts in accessibility issues, spoke.



Many thanks to Audrey King of CILT (on the left) for moderating the panel discussion. This was followed by a gathering in a resource room on the second floor, where invited accessibility resource people engaged with Ministers, MPPs and other invited guests, including a number of differently abled people in wheelchairs and other mobility aids. During the morning, Thea Kurdi and Roger Gervais gave detailed presentations. A very special thank you to Daniel's Corporation for generously providing the refreshments for all our guests.

The Honourable Minister for the Status of Women Indira Naidoo-Harris and MPPs or their staff attended. Nathalie Des Rosiers Liberal MPP for Ottawa-Vanier and Monique Taylor, NDP MPP for Hamilton Mountain, were enthusiastic supporters. OWN members and supporters who were sitting in the legislature visitors' gallery were introduced during question period.

All in all, it was a successful Action Day and first attempt to solicit support from many politicians and a *hands on/voices heard* learning experience for our Housing Committee.

--Ronny Yaron

## **OWN Members in the Community**

**Mary Hynes** was interviewed by the Star:

<https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2017/10/03/toronto-residents-do-not-make-enough-money-to-thrive-report-says.html>

## Velma Demerson's Book Launch

<https://www.thestar.com/yourtoronto/once-upon-a-city-archives/2017/07/20/the-incorrigible-women-of-the-female-refuges-act.html>



### **Thea Kurdi:**

OWN Housing Committee presentation of the Living in Place-Universal Design campaign by Thea Kurdi to the St.Lawrence Neighbourhood Association on September 27<sup>th</sup>. Also present were OWN members Kate Chung, Ronny Yaron and Sherri Russell to lend support.

**Open letter to Hon. Peter Milczyn and Hon.Tracy MacCharles**  
by OWN member **Doris Power**

**Re: Urgent need for universal design apartments and condominiums and change of building code.**

Many Canadians feel Housing should be a right, and a growing number of us despair that what is available is not affordable for most. Everybody needs a home.

Yet thousands are forced out of their homes at the most vulnerable time of their lives due to accidents, illnesses, or disabilities, and this results in homelessness, overflowing hospital and long-term care beds, crowded shelters, and waiting lists for housing that are astronomical and impossible to address.

City planners are not facing reality nor the approaching senior tsunami. Soon the population will be 1/4 seniors, and we already have close to 5 million Canadians with disabilities. Common sense should inform us all that the Ontario Building Code MUST

be changed and all units in all new multi-unit buildings must be required to be 100% accessible and barrier-free!

Universal design allows spaces to accommodate anyone of any age or any ability, going beyond mere accessibility. It demonstrates an underlying commitment to including as wide a range of users as possible for a lifetime of changing needs and abilities. The ability to 'age in place' ensures we do not ghettoize people according to their abilities or ages. To age in place means people can remain in their communities.

Some developers and builders seem to believe that Universal Design will cost more than conventional design, but there is evidence from places where universal design is more commonly used (such as Australia) that shows that the cost of universal design in housing is less than 1% more when planned from the initial design stage! It is when people are forced to renovate that the cost becomes prohibitive.

Please work to ensure the Ontario Building Code Section 3.8.1.1 is revised immediately in keeping with the legal requirements under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Ontario Human Rights Code to recognize all persons with disabilities as people first, by making universal design mandatory in all rental and ownership apartments.

I sincerely trust that you see the wisdom of changing the Ontario Building Code, thereby representing the needs of Ontarians and benefiting future generations.

Respectfully,

Doris Power, John Corso, Heather O'Neil, Jon Alexander, Rosie DaSilva, on behalf of Tenants for Social Housing (T4SH)

## **Anam Cara**

**Anam Cara** is a gaelic term for soul mate. Soul mates share a bond that transcends time and place. OWN has a commemorative record book which honours individuals or a group. A donation to OWN purchases a page in the book with a message concerning the honoree, a photo, or any other tribute desired. This book is on permanent display at the OWN office. It is a great way to celebrate a life. If you would like to take advantage of this, please contact the OWN office and we will send you an application form.

## **Kathleen Repka**

We are indebted to former OWN member Kathleen Repka for her financial bequest to OWN in appreciation for all the volunteer work done on behalf of all OWN women, provincially and nationally. Kathleen was a revered feminist, activist and founding member who sat on the OWN Council as Secretary until 1992.

On behalf of OWN members, on Feb 1991, Kathleen co-signed a letter to all federal MPs urging them to remain peace oriented and not be persuaded by international forces to engage in acts of war.

Her son Paul Repka, shared her sentiments in the following way:

“Her years of involvement with the Older Women’s Network were very special to her. Her family appreciated having several celebrations, including some of her birthdays and

the 2013 celebration of her life, at the OWN Co-op with her many long-standing friends in the Older Women's Network. Thank you for enriching her life." Sincerest thanks to her son Paul Repka for honouring her wishes.

**Check our website and facebook page for more info on OWN activities and news.**

<http://olderwomensnetwork.org/>

<https://www.facebook.com/OlderWomensNetwork/>

**Disclaimer:** The views and opinions expressed in the articles are those of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Older Women's Network.