

OCW Board Retreat Day on Mission and Membership March 2010.

Notes from discussion recorded by Beverlee McIntosh

STRENGTHS

- Strong social values and commitment to effect change
- Good knowledge of social issues (NCWC and PCWO policy)
- Impressive history of advocacy and our name has cache in the community
- Email is giving us easy and quick communication
- We can sit on community boards and advisories or be official observers under the name of OCW giving representative more strength in voice at table.
- We have a good reserve fund
- Strong network with women who are/ have been leaders in the community
- Progressive ideas
- We hold regular meetings and community events (persons' day, IWD)
- Education meetings for members (and the public) are well attended
- Self funding allows arms length advocacy not related to outside agenda
- Affiliate model of membership gives us powerful voice in advocacy

WEAKNESSES

- We do not have a good marketing plan for council
- Board lacks a yearly work plan (see president's check list for some ideas)
- Local councils cannot rely on much support from Provincial or National.
- We are spread over many issues in a social model that tends to use single issue advocacy groups
- Advocacy for Emerging issues is slow if we have no existing policy
- Structure for integrating new members is awkward, people drop out
- Lack mentoring program to support new members, f/u on applications
- New members don't see how they are making a difference
- We do not have enough affiliate members to strengthen our voice
- Lack of 'high tech' expertise in council
- Meeting discussions are not always optimally productive
- Poor affiliate participation in resolutions formulation
- Vision is not clear, it is difficult to explain to potential members what we do

OPPORTUNITIES

- **OCW brochure** can be updated to better reflect our vision and expertise
- Web site page can build on what we have for future growth (task group)
- Face book could provide information to broader group of younger users
- Affiliate organizations are glad to work with us, this increases networking opportunities and profile of OCW helping our affiliates with advocacy (e.g., Zonta work with immigrants, Council on Aging work with housing and LTC)
- Attempt to sit on more community boards representing OCW e.g. ask for a standing council position on Social Planning council (SW committee)
- We can speak at local level to politicians, counsellors and media
- We endeavour to improve membership and fund development
- Endeavour to improve communication with public (board work plan)
- Clarify our goals and membership criteria (Brochure, board work plan)
- Develop a financial survival plan
- Inspire members to participate (board work plan)
- Membership 'log-in' for members only on web site
- Post history of council and policies on web site for researcher's data
- Advocacy for women is no longer funded by government, there is a breach which OCW may fill
- There are 2 universities in Ottawa, we can connect with Women's studies programs, social work programs and other relevant fields of study to increase membership
- It is not so important to retain affiliates, some organizations may be temporary, using OCW for advocacy, and this can be an opportunity, not a negative aspect of our role in advocacy for women
- Speakers can be gleaned from affiliates to increase profile and highlight their expertise
- OCW networking is a source of ideas and inspiration
- Acquire a category for volunteers to do more work without becoming full members.

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THREATS

- Loss of membership
- Decrease of members' involvement due to other commitments, burn out and health related issues.
- Average age of membership is increasing, we are not clear what our target group is in terms of age (suggested that we not target age but rather women with similar interests, viz., advocacy, interest in process and committee work, respect for process of networking and building reputation of OCW...brochure and web design as well as board work plan)
- Due to decline in membership we are losing our voice in community as an effective advocacy group representing women
- Burn out due to work load on too few members (board work plan to delegate)
- Too many issues to cover and too few personnel (board work plan)
- Membership retention, people join and leave because they don't see how they are making a difference
- Women's organizations in the community are all on the decline
- People attend education meetings but don't pay membership
- Single issue groups join us then leave when their goal is accomplished
- Young women are in the work force and are less connected to politics and fundraising process. Media and email have 'dumbed-down' issues, presenting them as entertainment rather than providing in-depth information

PRIORITIES IDENTIFIED FROM RETREAT

• MEMBERSHIP

*Values and mission are "Education. Advocacy and Idealism" . we need to reflect this in the brochure

*Need a strategy to attract more affiliates.(Margaret and Edeltraud to review past affiliates and look at National and Provincial organizations which might have a local affiliate who could be a member of OCW, develop a list for discussion on board work plan).

*Strategy to attract individual members (brochure, web site, face book, Board work plan)

*Affiliates who are only looking for short term benefits are welcome. (Board work Plan)

* Plastic sleeve type name badges will be available at all general meetings for members

• MEMBERSHIP RETENTION

*Encourage affiliates or a delegate to talk to their organizations about OCW

*Use affiliates to find speakers for general meeting

*Clarify role of affiliate reps so they know how we can increase networking opportunities

* Meetings are held in business-like way (this is not a social club) but also in a welcoming atmosphere for all attendees.

Take opportunity at general meeting to network with attendees, encourage joining OCW.

• BOARD WORK PLAN

* be more specific on issues, amount of work they take on and target dates.

*Better plan to network with affiliates, Meet-and-greet meeting in September

*Look to affiliates for resolution suggestions

* offer to send OCW to an affiliate meeting to talk about issues/ work plan

* consider having each member pay for a hard plastic name badge with OCW crest to be worn at all meeting

• MARKET PLAN

*Brochure will be reviewed before re-printing. Clarify our vision " Advocacy, Education and Inspiration", annual events (IWD, person's day, general meetings) and address list of affiliates which does not have to be changed yearly.

* Be clear that we are not-partisan and have a long advocacy history which empowers our voice in advocacy

*Clarify values (where to find policy) so potential members will know if they want to share these goals

* develop a large poster-board with a stand which can be taken to events where people can pick up brochures.

*when brochure is developed, some of this wording can be worked into new web site page

* new board will be making a decision about financial feasibility of web page. Janet is looking at possibility of owning our own web page. Beverlee and Shirley are looking at possibility of 'piggy-backing" on an existing web page with PCWO or NCWC. Both have pros and cons. Cost and continued technical expertise can be a problem in owning our own web page, nevertheless we would have more control over what goes on the web page and how we market ourselves. Using National or Provincial web page could give us more "hits" and would be less expensive. It is also very simple to cut and paste updates so technical expertise to post would not be difficult when we want to update. There would not be so much space so we would have to limit what we put on a shared web page and provincial or national may wish to vet what we put on web page which could delay posting.

*President will set up a face book page for OCW and maintain it with updates of coming events. Job of maintaining face book page can be delegated when feasible.