



HURONIA HIGHLANDS NEWSLETTER BRANCH UPDATES: MARCH 2008

President's Message

On behalf of the Board of OASW, I wish to acknowledge this special time for social workers. This week has been designated to celebrate National Social Work Week. The theme is "Social Workers Advocating for Human Rights in a Diverse Community". While the level of diversity in the Huronia Highlands' catchment area may not be as significant as in some other areas, it is a trend that we must continue to acknowledge and ensure this increasing diverse population will always be dealt with in a manner that will improve the quality of life for all.

The Branch has various posters that promote this theme which can be placed in various workplaces. Should you like to obtain one for your office, please contact any of the members of the Board.

Congratulations and enjoy your week.

Morris Hudasek

Huronia Highlands A.G.M

On November 5, 2007 at Georgian College, Barrie was well attended with Joan MacKenzie Davies, executive director of OASW presenting on the Quality of Life Survey followed by discussion. Joan spoke of Bill 171, the Regulation of Health Professionals in Ontario' and the enormous cost of this struggle to get Social Work include in the Act. This cost needs to be recovered in fees, etc.

Your Board Members :

With the retirement of Doug Moore, secretary, Dawn Myers, Treasurer, Megan Rochford, Membership, Chrissy McLean (student rep) and Diane Campeau, we requested new board members with good response. Along with that, we have some changes in responsibilities. Your current board is as follows:

Morris Hudasek remains as President

Dan Downey is Treasurer,

Mario Spiler is our new Provincial Representative,

Diane O'Hara is responsible for Membership and continues with the Newsletter

Steve MacDonald has taken responsibility for conducting the Membership Survey

Jill Lamourie MacIsaac, a new board member, is now our Secretary

Sheri Upper

In addition we have 2 student reps coming on-board.

Membership Survey:

This was conducted as a result of our concern on how best to meet members' needs, to get you involved. When I first joined Huronia Highlands, I was impressed at the attendance at social work luncheons and other events. Not so today, as now it is difficult to plan successful events. Only 22 members about responded to the survey. Our membership now totals 150.

Of the 22 respondents, in the past year, 4 attended the OASW conference, 7 a professional development workshop, 2 our annual golf tournament, 5 social events, 4 the annual general meeting (questionnaire was before our 2007 AGM where we had good attendance), and half the respondents did not attend any of the above functions.

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Why, we ask? Answers included the “spread out geographical area and getting people to various locations”, “busy juggling our lives ... OASW just doesn’t make the ‘must do’ list”, members’ interest and participation in branch activities varies with climate changes”, etc.. Suggestions included a virtual network on line, “perhaps more a change of location for events”, “better overall communication”, “spreading events around in terms of location is helpful, but it may wash out attendance. Do we need to thinking about Barrie as a central location for events?”

2008 National Social Work Week: March 3-9

The 2008 theme is *Social Workers Advocating for Human Rights in a Diverse Community*. An article (enclosed) has gone out today to the Muskoka papers and should appear Wednesday, March 5th. In addition, I’ve enclosed the summary of Steve MacDonald’s doctoral dissertation on the topic of *Human Rights Awareness and the Professional Performance of Social Workers*.

Some branches actually have large banners made up for Social Work Week and displayed throughout the week in a prominent location. Unfortunately Huronia Highlands is so spread out, this is an impossibility.

Thus we leave it to our various Board members to organize events in their respective communities. This makes it difficult as well to organize events this week. However, the Midland-Penetang group met on Friday, February 29 though and had 18 for lunch. In addition to fellowship and good food, prizes were given out.

Social Work Job Fair

Our Job Fair, held last year during Social Work Week was mainly organized by the Social Work students at Georgian College/Laurentian Campus in Orillia. It was a great success. A decision was made to have this as a yearly event. But this year it will be near the end of this month. Further details will be coming.

Welcome New Members

Our membership now stands at 150. Some of our old members have moved to other Branch areas. One has retired. Some have just not renewed. Since this past October, we have acquired 7 new members to our Branch. They are:

- Judy Casteels from Minden
- Terry Cheng from Unionville
- Lori Davies from Novar
- Michael Kennedy from Moonstone
- Melissa Read from Barrie
- Lindsay Yarrow from Parry Sound

Welcome. We look forward to meeting you personally at some future function.

To All Our Members

We welcome your input. Any relevant notices will be forwarded to our membership. Have a good week and spread the word.

Diane O’Hara, Newsletter Editor

**Human Rights Awareness
and the Professional Performance of Social Workers**
Summary of a doctoral dissertation by Dr. Stephen D. McDonald

The profession of Social Work has evolved dramatically from its early roots based on charity and philanthropy. Its traditional needs-based approach has more recently come into conflict with a broader vision, one with an accent on advocating for human rights.

The Universal Declaration on Human Rights came about when, after the second world war, many concerned global citizens felt determined never again to allow such horrors as the Holocaust to happen. The international community longed for some mechanism to be put in place to eliminate or reduce the potential for gross violations of human rights.

Following the adoption of the UDHR, other important international human rights conventions arose over the succeeding years, such as The International Convention on Civil & Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The Convention to Eliminate Discrimination Against Women, The Convention to Eliminate Racial Discrimination, and The Convention on the Rights of the Child, all followed.

The values and ethics inherent in the profession of social work are very synchronized with the movement towards human rights education.

A research study was undertaken to determine the impact of human rights training on social workers. In the first part of this study, a survey was sent out to over 2500 professionally qualified social workers in the province of Ontario, Canada. The response to the survey indicated that social workers appreciated that the United Nations conventions were important, but that they felt ill informed about them.

The second part of the study was the implementation of a training program for social workers in human rights as they are defined by the United Nations conventions and declarations. This also involved an attempt to measure the impact of the training with before and after tests. Paired T-tests were conducted to determine the significance of the results.

A group of social work volunteers was taken through a training seminar (Sept, 2006), on human rights, designed and conducted by trainers from Equitas - The International Centre for Human Rights Education, of Montreal. The training included information about the United Nations conventions and declarations, as well as on their applicability to the practice of social work.

The results of this assessment showed that participants' familiarity with United Nations conventions, and their appreciation of their importance, increased. Their estimation of the relevance of human rights knowledge in the practice of social work also increased. Their ratings on whether or not human rights knowledge was likely to offer them renewed inspiration and vision about being social workers also rose after the training.

In an increasingly global world, where migration is increasing, where global communication is instantaneous, and where what happens on the other side of the planet has immediate impact on daily reality at home, social workers can no longer afford to define themselves without consideration of international standards of humanity and ethics.

Flowing from this research, it is recommended that consideration be given to formalized training in human rights for social workers, both as part of curriculum at university and as professional development once they are practicing. Training should take the form of directly applying human rights knowledge to social work cases. Social Work associations and organizations should regard the promotion of a human rights perspective as part of their mandate.

PRESS RELEASE FOR MARCH 5TH PUBLICATIONS

Social Workers Advocating for Human Rights in a Diverse Community

By Diane O'Hara, retired Social Worker

This National 2008 Social Work theme, will be celebrated throughout the country this week, March 3rd. to the 9th. What does it mean? To quote Dr. Steve MacDonald, University Professor, from his doctoral dissertation titled "Human Rights Awareness and the Professional Performance of Social Workers":

"The profession of Social Work has evolved dramatically from its early roots based on charity and philanthropy. Its traditional needs-based approach has more recently come into conflict with a broader vision, one with an accent on advocating for human rights."

As social workers, indeed, we still continue to advocate for individual clients, based on their needs. In a variety of settings we assist clients to access services within their environments. But we go beyond that. We encourage them to become empowered to take action to problem solve for themselves, their families. Then, through volunteering with community groups, social workers are engaged in efforts to provide low income housing, special needs for children, action against the abuse of the elderly, woman, children and so on.

We go from the micro, the individual approach, to the macro, social action in the broader sphere. Where human rights are in jeopardy, there you find OASW, our Ontario Association of Social Workers. The list of social advocacy efforts is endless. OASW's Children and Youth Advisory Group are looking at public policy issues impacting on children and families in regard to, for example, poverty. There are recommendations to promote safer schools. There is political action to ensure First Nations Children and Families are able to access services available to other children in Canada. They are involved in protecting the rights of mental health patients. They are concerned with increasing employment, training opportunities and job creation. These are just a few examples on how our social work leaders are involved in bettering the environmental conditions of the disadvantaged.

OASW also promotes and protects our social work profession. The most notable recent example is Bill 171, the *Regulated Health Professions Act*. It included a controlled act of psychotherapy and the use of the title 'Doctor' by Health Care Professionals who have earned this designation. Initially Social Work was excluded from both despite an Ontario group of health professionals recommending the opposite. Vigorous action by OASW with briefs and meetings with the provincial Minister of Health and others, as well as individual social workers writing to and meeting with MPPs across Ontario, resulted in Social Work being added to the controlled act for psychotherapy. Unfortunately, as it now stands, someone with a Phd in Social Work cannot use the title 'Doctor' in a Health Care setting. However in other settings this designation is valid. How fair is that? This is one battle that continues.

After over thirty years in the profession, I continue to be most proud of my chosen profession. We Social Workers well deserve one week of special recognition each year. Don't you agree?

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