

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

PUTTING OUR VALUES
INTO PRACTICE

OTTAWA COALITION TO END
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

2022-2025



contents

03 INTRODUCTION

04 GOVERNANCE

07 MEMBER & COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT

10 ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

13 PROGRAMMING &
COLLABORATION

16 ADVOCACY





Introduction

OCTEVAW revised its mission, vision, and values in 2017 and committed to values of intersectional feminism, anti-racism, and decolonization. This strategic plan is focused on bringing these values to life across the organization. OCTEVAW's vision as a coalition is that violence against women (VAW) and gender-based violence (GBV) ends. In order to get there we need to dismantle the root causes of GBV and VAW that are intrinsically connected to other forms of violence and oppression. Dismantling the root causes of GBV and VAW is only possible if it is informed and led by the needs of those most negatively impacted by mainstream structures, institutions, and society that support, sustain and inflict violence on survivors and communities.

This strategic plan has been developed collaboratively with the OCTEVAW Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) Caucus, OCTEVAW members, staff, community partners, and other experts. The priorities are intended to make space for and centre BIPOC individuals, groups, and survivors in the mainstream VAW/GBV sector that has traditionally centred the experiences of white people. As outlined in the strategic plan, there is still a lot of work to be done to ensure OCTEVAW raises the voices of and truly serves survivors and communities with intersecting identities. We know that our work is ongoing.

This represents the most comprehensive strategic planning process OCTEVAW has undertaken in over a decade, causing us to reflect on the role we can play in standing with all those who work with survivors, not only our members, and in giving life to our commitment to intersectionality.

This vision reflects the longtime efforts of members, grassroots activists and organizations, community members, OCTEVAW staff, and volunteers.

1

Governance

Non-profit governance is designed to shift accountability upwards (to the Board of Directors) rather than downwards to communities. We also know that BIPOC candidates face added barriers in accessing governance roles and, when they do, they face barriers to participating in decision-making.

COMMITMENT

Over the next three years, OCTEVAW will become increasingly **accountable to BIPOC communities** and survivors in addition to those it is already accountable to — members, the Board, and funders. OCTEVAW will **recruit BIPOC board members** who are impacted by and committed to this work. Members of the board will reflect the range of people affected by gender-based violence (GBV), including violence against women (VAW), and will feel safe and supported in fulfilling their mandate as Board Members and overseeing OCTEVAW's strategic direction.



1

Governance

HOW?

We will do this by exploring and adopting non-colonial & non-corporate governance practices, structures, and values of engagement in the following key functions:

- Revising the OCTEVAW Board structure, director roles, and supporting documentation.
- Developing a new Board recruitment and onboarding process.
- Undertaking Board succession planning.

Beyond exploring alternatives to mainstream governance practices, OCTEVAW commits to:

- Creating a community accountability framework.
- Integrating and maintaining the OCTEVAW BIPOC Caucus as a central advisory body and foundational relationship for the Board and staff.
- Connecting with local Indigenous leadership and grassroots groups to identify ways to build meaningful and respectful relationships.
- Reviewing the Truth and Reconciliation of Canada's Calls to Action and the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA to identify the relevant recommendations and develop action plans to incorporate them into OCTEVAW's work planning/ways of working.



1

Governance

OUTCOMES

- Decisions and actions are informed and influenced by BIPOC grassroots communities, activists, and survivors—instead of arising from a traditional framework in which the board makes decisions without necessarily consulting or including other affected communities in decision-making.
- We have established a board that is diverse, engaged, and tapped into community and grassroots needs.
- We have developed a robust board orientation process and cultivated a board culture that is inclusive and facilitates a brave and safer space.
- We have deepened trust and long-term relationships with local Indigenous leadership, including organizations, Elders, and community leaders. We are taking their lead on how OCTEVAW can support them.
- We have taken concrete action to support Indigenous sovereignty and well-being, informed by local leadership and key reports such as the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), the TRC, and the MMIWG2SLGBTQQIA final report.

2

Member & Community Engagement

Throughout this planning process, we heard over and over again that meaningful non-colonial and anti-racist work requires working with and supporting non-members, with a focus on non-mainstream and non-white-serving groups and grassroots networks that have their ears to ground when it comes to community needs.

COMMITMENT

In 2024, OCTEVAW will hold **equitable, trusted, and trusting relationships** with members and non-members, including BIPOC grassroots organizations, survivors, and networks. OCTEVAW will continue to build and rebuild relationships. Meetings and networks **include BIPOC, survivors, and non-mainstream organizations and actors by default.**

2

Member & Community Engagement

HOW?

We will centre building and rebuilding trusting relationships and shared values with non-white-serving groups and grassroots networks by:

- Ensuring non-members and members can play a role in shaping OCTEVAW's priorities.
- Providing tangible supports and resources (e.g. financially contributing to special projects, sharing OCTEVAW's office space, etc.).
- Rethinking how OCTEVAW currently convenes members and community partners (e.g. the standing committee structure) and consider alternatives.
- Engaging with Indigenous leadership and organizations in Ottawa to better understand how OCTEVAW can support their existing work and/or make space for activities that centre Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people in OCTEVAW's work.



2

Member & Community Engagement

OUTCOMES

- OCTEVAW has created safe spaces and support for BIPOC, 2SLGBTQQIA front line staff/volunteers and grassroots networks/organizers to thrive.
- We are integrating our funding requests more seamlessly with grassroots networks and organizations.
- We are supporting Indigenous leadership and organizations in Ottawa in the ways that matter to them.
- We are making meaningful connections and providing meaningful support to groups and organizations focusing on non-mainstream and non-white-serving groups and organizations.

3

Organizational Change

For OCTEVAW to live its values of intersectional feminism, anti-racism, and decolonization, it has to make sure it reflects them as a work place. This is a key building block for recruiting and retaining diverse staff and board members. OCTEVAW members noted this is a priority for their organizations and expressed the desire to learn alongside OCTEVAW.

COMMITMENT

In 2024, OCTEVAW is a **safer, more equitable, and inclusive workplace** for existing and new staff and volunteers. Our staff and volunteer complement is diverse and supported. **We value and celebrate the lived experience, expertise, and activism staff and volunteers bring to their roles.**

3

Organizational Change

HOW?

We will develop an inclusive culture, policies, and practices at OCTEVAW and—where appropriate—partner with experts to support members to do so. This will include:

- Auditing culture, policies, and practices at OCTEVAW related to staff and volunteers.
- Completing the ongoing process to develop internal accountability mechanisms/procedures, informed by transformative justice, for addressing when a member of the staff or a volunteer causes harm.
- Exploring and identifying promising practices around survivor engagement at OCTEVAW.
- Undertaking deep work to learn about different systems of knowledge, ways of knowing, and ways to create a healthy, supportive culture. This would contribute to challenging colonial, European, and white supremacist ways of working. Attention and care will be taken to avoid tokenism and appropriation.
- Providing leadership, tools, and resources to member organizations in partnership with experts so we can all learn together and OCTEVAW can support members in becoming more inclusive workplaces (e.g. models for organizational change, board recruitment, and inclusive cultural change and practices).

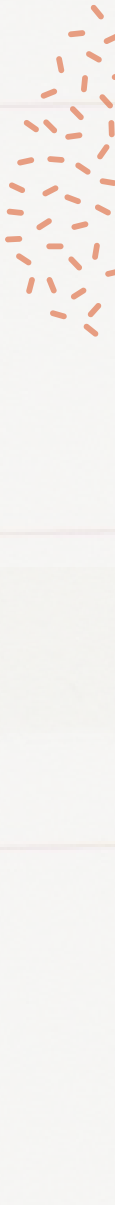


3

Organizational Change



OUTCOMES

- OCTEVAW provides existing and new staff with equitable salary and access to benefits that promote the wellbeing of each person's whole self.
 - Our staff is diverse and they are comfortable bringing their whole selves to work, and they are not tokenized when they do.
 - OCTEVAW's work and culture are informed by different knowledge systems and ways of knowing, rather than the default colonial and European approaches.
 - There are safer formal and informal ways for survivors to connect with and shape OCTEVAW's work.
 - Member organizations have learned alongside OCTEVAW and have taken steps towards meaningful inclusion in their own workplaces.
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4

Programming & Collaboration

OCTEVAW's work has evolved over time and has expanded in scope. Most of this work requires collaboration with other organizations. As OCTEVAW focuses on its values and begins working more with grassroots organizations and networks, it's important to adopt internal practices to guide these collaborations.

COMMITMENT

In three years, OCTEVAW programs and collaborations are **pushing the boundaries** of the traditional VAW/GBV sector. We lead in this area and members and other not-for-profit organizations are learning with us. Our **programming is focused and responsive** to community needs as they emerge.

4

Programming & Collaboration

HOW?

We will shape OCTEVAW's core areas of programming to reflect our values and commitment to decolonial/anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism lenses and intersections. This will include:

- Auditing and reviewing programming to ensure it is in line with these values: Prevention (e.g. Engaging Men; Project SoundCheck™); Public Education and Movement Building; Amplifying Front Line Voices.
- Undertaking a process with members and non-members to identify program priorities and needs.
- Developing frameworks for equitable partnerships (e.g. self-assessment criteria to hold ourselves accountable as an effective collaborator, collaboration agreements, shared values).
- Seeking out and securing funding to ensure that this work is central to OCTEVAW and sustainable, not an add-on.



4

Programming & Collaboration

OUTCOMES

- We are a collaborator with intersectional grassroots movement makers that amplify and prioritize BIPOC leadership, voices, and experiences.
- OCTEVAW sets a new standard for what it means to work in true collaboration. Member organizations and non-member organizations have learned with us and have shifted to reflect this standard.
- OCTEVAW's fundraising is focused on maintaining collaborative programming.



5

Advocacy

OCTEVAW has always engaged in vigorous advocacy. As a coalition, we have traditionally supported front line agencies and workers that support survivors to ensure their expertise informs public policy and contributes to criminal justice and legislative reform at all levels of government.



COMMITMENT

OCTEVAW has **maintained the political role and grassroots spirit** that many VAW/GBV organizations have moved away from, and is working with BIPOC organizations/networks, survivors, and front line agencies and workers to **advance a powerful policy agenda that truly reflects the intersections of VAW and GBV.**



5

Advocacy

HOW?

We will define an intersectional advocacy agenda informed by members, BIPOC, grassroots organizations and networks that reflects values and systems change goals. This will include:

- Centring advocacy on the root causes and intersecting oppressions that underpin GBV/VAW.
- Advocating for communities free of violence by thinking big. We will not be limited by approaches that push to fix broken systems through tweaks and will embrace transformative justice and other alternative justice frameworks in this process.
- Using OCTEVAW's advocacy platform to amplify and raise up the voices of BIPOC, grassroots organizations and networks.
- Pushing other mainstream organizations to question their practices and take positions aligned with intersectional feminism, anti-racism, and decolonization.



5

Advocacy



OUTCOMES

- Survivors, BIPOC, and grassroots networks shape OCTEVAW advocacy efforts.
 - OCTEVAW is a powerful platform and influential organization on issues of GBV/VAW.
 - OCTEVAW has undertaken significant work to build new systems while, in the interim, also changing existing systems.
 - OCTEVAW has pushed members and non-members to adopt intersectional advocacy agendas and advocate for intersectional change.
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