

# Lessons Learned and Wisdom Gathered

## Radical Reflexive practice

- Be self-reflective: examine your life for inconsistencies and then fix them.
- Learn to develop a reflective practice that includes compassionate curiosity.
- Make a reflective practice part of your daily movement work.
- Be a life-long learner.

## Collective work

- Never do the work alone. It is too isolating and too dangerous to slip into despair.
- If you cannot find your allies within your organization, find them on the outside.
- Work in coalitions wherever possible.
- Attach yourself "to the places where there is zeal for activism."
- Find your "place" in the movement work. Not everyone can be good at everything but we can all contribute our skills to a collective movement, whether it be frontline organization, policy, research, education, etc.
- Find your allies, keep them close, and praise them for their support.
- Develop your allies inside and outside of government.
- Foster patience. Bill 168 took 14 years of feminist activism before it became reality.
- You can do everything but not all at once.

## Leadership work

- Take risks, be clear about your goals, and don't compromise.
- Take every opportunity to speak out and educate the community.
- Know the facts of VAW work.
- Bring men into the movement as allies but do not allow them to take over. Their work is with other men and boys; support them and teach them how to do the work.

## Theoretical grounding

- Be intentional about using an intersectional lens.
- Hold a macro lens even while doing micro work with individuals.
- Find the balance between service work and political work; it is always changing.
- Reignite notions of movement building in VAW.
- Be very good at what you do.
- Bring your wisdom and ARAO lens to other social movements and build a wider tent.

## Relationships

- Do not gossip; it is contagious and creates a toxic environment.
- Learn to do constructive criticism.
- Be generous with praise and kindness.
- Encourage mentoring and shadowing to bring more young activists to the table.
- Be generous in sharing your resources.

## Cultivate strength

- Find variety in your everyday work to keep your spirits up.
- Keep a sense of humour; you will need it.
- Train yourself to be a marathon runner/activist.
- Do not spread yourself too thin.
- You have a right to pace yourself and take a break to renew your energies.
- Treat your body as your sacred temple.
- Consult with the Elders.
- Have ceremony in your life.

## Proactive outreach

- Look for the most vulnerable women in your community; develop a relationship with them and be proactive in supporting them.
- Develop new programs.
- Use media as a powerful tool for our purpose.

## Legacy work

- Maintain a succession-planning practice as a strategy to sustain the movement.
- Document the organizing history of the movement.
- Archive movement work; do not shred documents unless they have been digitized.

## Gratitude

- Be grateful to do this work. It is sacred work and it is an honour to serve.
- Celebrate life and share success stories.
- Never give up hope for a better world.

A Living History (1973-1993): How the Experiences of Early Activists Shaped the Violence Against Women (VAW) Movement in Ontario: A Case Study

by Deborah Ann Sinclair, 2019