



DAWN-RAFH Canada

DisAbled Women's
Network
Canada



Réseau
d'action des femmes
handicapées du Canada

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DAWNING: How to Start and Maintain a DAWN Group

Edited and written by
Joan Meister and Shirley Masuda
for

DAWN Canada: DisAbled Women's Network Canada

This document expresses the views and opinions of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official policy or opinion of Human Resources Development Canada or the Government of Canada.

DAWN Canada wishes the information in this book to be available to as many women as possible. Women are therefore encouraged to photocopy any or all of this book for personal use or sharing with other women.

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We urge you to donate a copy of *DAWNING* to the public access place of your choice - such as public libraries, hospitals, adult education centres, community centres, etc.

Flyers could be posted at laundromats, in hospitals, on bulletin boards, at malls, doctors' offices, union halls, women's resource centres, pharmacies, day care centres, therapy clinics, etc. And you could send them to free newspapers, newsletters and radio and television stations.

There are many women with disabilities out there who have no where to turn for support and information.

Please help us get the word out!

ATTENTION! WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES

DAWN Canada: DisAbled Women's Network Canada is a national organization formed to address the needs of women with disabilities in Canada. A new book, **DAWNing: How to Start and Maintain a Group** has been published to provide women with information on how to form their own local DAWN, groups for support, companionship and to bring about change.

DAWNing is full of encouragement and practical advice. Even if you don't think you want to start a group, it is a "must read" for any woman with a disability who has felt alone and powerless. Written in Plain Language by women who live and work with disabilities of all kinds, it could prove to be a valuable resource for anyone who wishes to improve her situation or get to know about other women with disabilities.

Check it out and help yourself!

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The DAWN Canada Woman



Our woman is from a figure owned by the British Museum in London, England and she is described as "3rd Century Egyptian". DAWN Canada received permission from the museum to use her. Unfortunately, they call her a "fertility" figure. Until recently, all goddess figures were considered by archaeologists and museums to be little more than idols used by women who wanted successful pregnancies - just as society generally has seen women to be mainly babymakers. Far from being savage (bloodthirsty) and barbaric (uncivilized), these ancient cultures encouraged reverence (respect) for the Earth and honoured women as images resembling the "Great Mother". They believed that women possess the gift of creative force. Therefore, all women were considered to be sacred and were respected for our insight and wisdom, our ability to invent and the power that

we represented.

For centuries, modern civilization has viewed women who cannot bear children, women past childbearing years and women with disabilities as having no value. A woman's duty has been to bear children and to work to care for her husband and family. A woman who is disabled or who needs care is thought of as unable to be married and a drain on her family and society. A woman who cannot do enough physical work to earn her keep is despised. Unless she can be used for sex, she often doesn't survive. The DAWN woman is our symbol of independence, defiance and power. She is from a much earlier time when a woman's place was respected. She is strong and capable, valuable in her own right, just as we are. If you feel low, weak and frightened, think of her. She is within us all, even though others may not see it. She represents the strength of a community of women with disabilities, a power that stands behind us and she casts a big shadow. - E.J. Miller-Towle

Acknowledgements

This manual would never have been finished without the patience and encouragement of Eileen O'Brien and the rest of the Advisory Committee for DAWNing. This project started as a funding proposal by DAWN Canada in August 1997, went through at least three major revisions (changes) and many smaller ones, waited for a four month sick leave (see below) and never stopped sounding like a good idea. Thanks are due to Claudette Perron, our funding officer with Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) at that time. She saw us through many funding opportunities and the beginning stages of this long process and has since moved on. Best wishes to Claudette at her new job and welcome to Linda Brown, her replacement.

Many individual, wonderful women have put their best energies together to help to make this manual possible and useful. First of all, thanks to each of the contributors who gave abundantly (a great amount) of her time, knowledge and spirit. These women were asked to contribute because they are experts in different areas and what a bunch of experts we have! Maria Barile in Montreal, a founding member of DAWN Canada, heard about the project and volunteered to share her particular perspective (point of view). How else would we all learn how to conduct (lead) a bi-lingual (two languages) meeting as a chair with low hearing? If we can do that, we can do anything!

And then there's our artist, E.J. Miller-Towle, who agreed to do the artwork and then volunteered to write an article on organizational image and the DAWN Woman. Sue Leon not only was the computer coach to the project but she also volunteered to do something on mentoring. We're truly blessed. Special thanks go out to a group of women who agreed to be close readers of various drafts of this document. Maxine Thomas, Margo Massie, E.J. Miller-Towle (and Tim), and Pam Horton, the proofreader, all added their generous input and helped to shape this book. They read lovingly and thoughtfully and the contributions (gifts) of each helped to make this manual better and better. In our on-going efforts to make DAWN Canada as accessible as possible, all of the articles have been edited for Plain Language.

This is just a bit trickier than you'd think: there are two main parts to it. One is using plain, clear language to make things easier to understand and read. Lots of "un-plain" words appear in parentheses () behind the complicated word. And sometimes it's the other way around! The second part is formatting - how important it is to use headings, wide margins, numbering, bullets, white space and graphics (drawings) to make a document easier to see, understand and read. Thanks to Barb Goode for her assistance with reading the draft of this manual and for the materials on Plain Language that she contributed throughout the project. Kathy Hawkins is the DAWN Canada computer wizard who has helped in many ways. And thanks again to Sue Leon. She put all the technological pieces (computer stuff) together to create the first draft for the Advisory Committee while I was laying around for four months and unable.

The laying around for four months resulted from a pressure sore that went wrong and some plastic surgery. Patience is not one of my strengths. I learned lots about different systems - hospital, medical, rehabilitation and home support. A crash course. One thing's for sure, we have a great deal of work to do, women. I hope this manual helps you to do some. Endnote: This manual took on a life of its own and grew like a mushroom. It needed, at the last minute, more money than we had in the budget. Special thanks to Linda Brown at HRDC for her extra efforts to get us more. Big thanks also to our printer, Jack Moller at Broadway Printers.

Forewards

from Joan Meister

The need for this manual probably occurred to me immediately after I became the Chair of DAWN Canada in 1987, way back on a cold winter afternoon in Winnipeg. It was the founding conference of DAWN Canada and I agreed to be Chair - I knew how to chair a meeting. I'd been active in my union, left wing politics and, of course, the women's movement. "Rules of Order" didn't scare me anymore. Why, I knew how to deal with "challenges to the chair" and a "preferential speaker's list", too. Hah! Fools rush in ...

What I didn't know was that chairing a meeting is only a small, small part of running, helping to shape and keeping alive a national organization like DAWN Canada or any other group. Chairing a meeting is important but there are so many other things that are also important:

- I spent an awful lot of time flying back and forth to Ottawa and many other cities
- I attended endless meetings with bureaucrats (government employees) and politicians (elected representatives)
- I supervised all projects
- I answered the phone that never stopped ringing

MS and low energy had already taught me how to set priorities (putting things in order of importance) and it was a good thing that I already knew about that one.

Set Priorities

At first, when I started chairing DAWN Canada, I couldn't believe how many things I was doing for the first time, things that I didn't actually know how to do. Thank goodness I had Shirley Masuda here in Vancouver to listen to me, support me and help me lots and lots. And Maria Barile in Montreal and Pat Israel in Toronto and ... I also began to understand how lucky I was to have had relevant (similar, fitting) experiences doing things like chairing lots of meetings, taking hours and hours of minutes, participating in panels or what I learned when I was on my union's negotiating (bargaining) team. All of these things helped me to be able to do many things for DAWN Canada. And thank goodness for that or it all would have seemed even more weird and lots scarier than it already was sometimes. Then I began to realize how few other women with disabilities had ever had those kinds of opportunities. I started using a wheelchair at 30 and I'd had a chance to do many (mostly inaccessible) things before that. I also began to learn that many women with disabilities have lived institutionalized, medicalized or just plain isolated lives since birth. Or that they have been unemployed or underemployed and never had the chance to go to a job interview never mind a union meeting.

I soon found that most of the political work that I had done before was suddenly not accessible to me. I didn't stop being a feminist and a trade unionist but I did start using a wheelchair and my former world had too many stairs and was suddenly closed to me and beyond my reach. The women's movement didn't really "get it" about access and was suddenly also pretty much inaccessible to me. I turned to the disability community to do my political work and soon after, I realized that the disability community just didn't "get it" about women's issues. I turned there because I figured that it would be accessible. It seemed that these organizations which were mostly dominated (controlled) by men weren't interested in doing - or didn't have enough time or money to do - anything about an issue like mothering as a woman with a disability or about the violence in our lives. Different priorities.

Not too long after that, I started to wish that somebody had written down some of the things that I needed to know - in one place - and answers to the thousands of questions that I had. Questions like:

- How do you hold an accessible meeting?
- How do you form a society?
- And why should you?
- Just how do you go about getting money out of the government?
- Why doesn't anyone have a simple checklist for access needs?

For the longest time I was zooming off to zillions of meetings with important people about important issues and never feeling as though I really knew what I was doing. My main objective during those first years was to get women with disabilities on the agenda – everybody's agenda - and keep us there. I spent a lot of time asking a lot of different people for lots of advice about a lot of different things.

This manual is an attempt to give answers to those kinds of questions, put down in one place, so that you can feel a bit more confident than I used to feel. In those days, I relied heavily on my general belief that people with disabilities scared most non-disabled people or at least made them uncomfortable. I felt that having a disability gave me a tiny advantage in a world where, as a feminist in a wheelchair, I did not have much power or much ability to influence decisions. I still rely on that one sometimes. But DAWN Canada has made it mostly unnecessary for us to use those kinds of stupid devices. As women with disabilities, we have believable (credible) issues and, therefore, we are taken a bit more seriously than we were at the beginning..I hope that after you have a look at this book or even parts of it, you will know how to hold your meeting or how to get some money from the government or that this "process" stuff isn't too mysterious. If you take it all apart into smaller pieces, it doesn't seem so hard or big. But more importantly, I hope that you figure out how to reach out to other women with disabilities, get together with them and make your lives better. I hope that you share some good advice, good ideas and good laughs. I hope that you start some cross-disability, truly accessible groups for women with disabilities - whether you decide to become a society or not and no matter what your reasons are for getting together! And I sure hope that this manual gives you some clear ideas about how to get there. And why we should try and keep trying.

This manual is meant to be written in Plain Language. I have never done it before but it seemed like high time to learn. Plain Language is another way of meeting women's access needs that helps us to connect better with each other. And with lots more women with disabilities and other women, too:

- women who have English as a second language.
- women who have low reading skills because of barriers like lack of large print, poverty or culturally appropriate, accessible, safe education.
- women labelled mentally handicapped.
- women with huge fatigue issues and tired brains

We just have to keep trying to get more and more accessible, to reach out to more and more women and make our voices heard.

from Shirley Masuda

Looking back over the last ten years I have many memories.

Life kept getting more interesting and a lot busier. As part of being a researcher and being the only employee

of DAWN Canada, I wore several hats:

- I had to keep track of all of the money and pay the bills
- I had to travel and talk about my research and about DAWN Canada
- I represented DAWN Canada on many national committees and national women's groups

I learned many, many things - things that we've put down in this book and things you might want to know.

My research took me to every major city in Canada and to many smaller ones. I met hundreds of wonderful women who participated in the projects. I learned something important from every woman I talked to - learned about her life, about her disability and about my own life as a woman with a disability.

The worst jobs that I had to do were keeping track of the money, going through government audits (when they check the accounts) once in a while and writing grant proposals. DAWN Canada lived from one project to the next and Joan and I spent a great deal of energy and time writing grant proposals (See 'Where Does It Come From? - Grant Writing', p. 183) and going to Ottawa or being on the phone with the Funding Officers (bureaucrats).

The Secretary of State Department (now part of a huge new department called Human Resources Development Canada - HRDC) and Health Canada were our biggest funders over the years. We also got some money from the Solicitor General and the Justice Department. Grant writing and negotiating for money takes a great deal of effort and time and I have sworn off writing grant proposals now, but no telling for how long!

The work that I enjoyed the most and which I felt was making the biggest contribution to women with disabilities' causes covered a wide range of things. As the DAWN Canada Researcher on violence against women with disabilities, I was very privileged to be able to work on the Women's Consultation Group set up by Kim Campbell when she was Minister of Justice. This was a group of feminist from equality seeking national women's organizations across Canada. It was set up to advise the Minister on how Canadian laws (especially those which addressed violence and human rights) affected and oppressed women.

The first legislation that we worked on was the "Rape Shield Law" and then the 'Anti-Stalking" legislation and others followed. It started out being eight women and quickly grew into a more representative body, at the insistence of Lee Lakeman of the Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres (CASAC). (See "[Feminist Group Process](#)", and "[Coalition Building](#)") She chaired the group and insisted that we must have representation from all national feminist organizations and that we must be as culturally diverse as the whole of Canada. This group of women still exists and over sixty women attended the last meeting.

There were many conferences and committees that I served on for DAWN Canada - far too numerous to mention or even to remember. Each one was a learning experience. Of course , the most memorable ones were the DAWN Canada conferences. It was, and continues to be, a profound (deep, very important) learning

experience every time we organize a conference or a meeting for women with disabilities and make sure that every woman's needs are met and voices are heard. We are getting very good at it but we will always have things to learn because the needs are as diverse (different) as the women who come. (See "[Access Needs Checklist](#)".)

There have been many speaking engagements, from dinner speeches to keynote (theme) speeches and workshops at conferences. The most thrilling one for me was to speak to hundreds of women at a Take Back The Night March in Vancouver, my home territory. (See "[Invitations to Meetings](#)") I have enjoyed a position of privilege and respect from the federal government, equality seeking women's groups and women with disabilities all over the world.

One touching bit of evidence of this is the fact that my first manual, Meeting Our Needs was translated into German to be used by the German disability movement. There are many other occasions when I have felt honoured as an individual and as a representative of a feminist, equality seeking organization – that's us - DAWN Canada: DisAbled Women's Network Canada

Was it worth all the work - keeping track of the money, writing grant proposals, negotiating with the bureaucrats for money, the research, writing papers and manuals, the committees, the advisory groups, the speeches, the workshops, the travelling and ...? You bet it was!

I owe DAWN Canada a big Thank You for giving me the opportunity to do this work and to represent women with disabilities in Canada and internationally. I also owe a big Thank You to Joan Meister, my friend, my boss and my mentor. She never lost faith in me and taught me so much about democratic process, accessibility and accountability.

There are many changes happening to DAWN Canada right now - we will be opening an office soon with new workers and new projects and I hope DAWN Canada continues to be a big part of my life and maybe a part of yours, too.

I started with DAWN Canada not knowing what was in store for me. I learned as I went along. Sometimes it was difficult but always exciting. I wish there had been a manual like DAWNING: How To Start And Maintain A Group to help me out. No one can know all the answers all of the time.

But a good thing to think about is from The Rule Of Mental Leverage:

It is easier to remember where to get information when you need it than to memorize the information itself.

DAWNING: How To Start And Maintain A Group provides you with some very specific information about how to organize and maintain your groups. This is a woman's book based on women's experience and I am sure you will find it helpful in your work.

One: Why DAWN Canada?

In this section we tell the story of DAWN Canada: DisAbled Women's Network Canada and share with you different perspectives on (ways of looking at) why DAWN Canada was started in the first place and why we are still a good idea.

I. A Short Herstory

Part One - Joan Meister

In the beginning ...

Back in June 1985, a critical meeting took place in Ottawa. It was the first time women with disabilities from all across Canada had ever got together **as** women with disabilities to talk about issues of concern **to** women with disabilities at an event that was organized **by** women with disabilities. A few good women had not only dreamed of getting just women with disabilities together, without any men, to talk to each other about really important things - they did it! The meeting took place. "**We** were in charge," says Maria, one of the organizers. It's her favourite memory of that time.

The meeting was organized by Pat Israel (Toronto), Pat Danforth (Regina) and Maria Barile (Montreal). Each of these visionaries (people who see far into the future) had been working in the disability community for a long time. It was not supportive of issues of concern to women with disabilities. Each woman believed that a meeting to talk to other women was very important. They wanted to identify and discuss big issues in our lives as women with disabilities.

A fine old DAWN tradition was begun. The organizers applied for and got money from the federal government to hold this meeting in Ottawa at the Westin Hotel. For many of the 17 women, it was the first time they had slept in that kind of a hotel. It was the only hotel in Ottawa that had enough modified (changed to be accessible) rooms to accommodate us (meet our needs). It was very expensive; access can be expensive when there are no choices. The hotel is connected to a mall but no one went shopping!

Instead, 17 women with disabilities from all across Canada got together and started talking. We talked for three days. Non-stop. We met in a room with no windows and covered all four walls with four levels of flip chart pages. We talked like we'd never been in a room with that many other women with disabilities before. We hadn't. It was exhausting (tiring) and very high energy at the same time. We **were** in charge.

It was a very well facilitated (run) meeting and we got a lot of work done. We defined six areas of major concern, issues that kept coming up when different women spoke:

1. mothering
2. self image
3. employment
4. health
5. sexuality
6. violence

Pat Danforth thought of our wonderful name, DAWN: DisAbled Women's Network. (See "[Language](#)") The name was a response to the idea that we should create an autonomous (independent), national organization to explore our issues of concern and be the voice of women with disabilities in Canada.

Not surprisingly, we realized that there was a lot of work to do. We decided that:

- we absolutely had to get to work on the issues that we had identified, we needed to do research on them
- we had to go home and start more groups, have more meetings like this one
- we had to stay in touch with each other on a national level

We thought about how if there were 17 of us in one room in Ottawa, just imagine how many of us there were out there in the whole country. We didn't think about how we didn't have one cent to do anything with, we just knew there was a need to do it.

We had big plans, though. We formed a Steering Committee to take us through the time before we could get the funding to hold the founding conference. We decided to return to our various parts of the country and organize DAWN groups locally. Most of us made a commitment to do lots of hard work.

It was an amazing three-day meeting; it was well organized and well run. It was our first taste of government funding. It was a first attempt to represent women with all kinds of disabilities. Or so we thought. We didn't have a very good grasp of cross-disability at that first meeting. We did not have any women who represented women with mental illness or any who were labelled mentally handicapped. We didn't even know about women with brain injuries or HIV/AIDS then. (See "[Cross-Disability](#)")

The Steering Committee was formed during the meeting to guide this brand new organization through it's infancy. These women already had computers and all were attached to e-mail (electronic mail) and that was how we kept in touch. (See "[Electronic Communications](#)",) We had absolutely no money so it was just as well that we were able to talk to each other electronically instead of by long distance phone calls. We still don't have enough money to have a phone number listed for DAWN Canada!

At this time, when I returned to Vancouver, I was given the opportunity at a BC Coalition of People with Disabilities conference to hold a workshop for women. That was the beginning of DAWN BC. Groups in Quebec, P.E.I., Saskatchewan and Ontario were also being started up.

During this time, Pat Israel and Pat Danforth applied for and received funding on behalf of the Steering Committee of DAWN Canada from the federal government to hold our founding conference. I was busy getting the Constitution and By-Laws written as a draft to take to the conference. (See "[Constitution](#)" and "[By-Laws](#)") We were all busy getting our provincial groups organized. An "Angel" appeared here in BC to help the Steering Committee and we were given free postage and photocopying. We kept in touch.

Disabled Peoples' International Conference

Not too long after the first meeting in Ottawa, DAWN Canada was offered funding from the federal government for five of us to attend the Second World Congress of Disabled Peoples' International (DPI) in the Bahamas. DPI is the group that represents national groups of organizations of people with all kinds of disabilities. These groups are from all countries around the world. The conference was attended by a group (delegation) from Canada (Council of Canadians with Disabilities) and DAWN Canada was part of that delegation.

For me it was a very powerful experience because there were more of us than them - the guests with disabilities outnumbered the non-disabled guests. We didn't feel weird when they got on an elevator with a bunch of us, they did. And it was so beautiful that it was a bit hard to pay attention to the agenda when I first got there. The conference was at the Paradise Island Resort and Casino! The vegetation (plant life) was spectacular (awesome) and the nights were soft, fragrant and black. It was hurricane season so the hotel rates were affordable. But luckily, there was no hurricane of a weather-related variety.

There was a big storm brewing, though. The DAWN Canada women called a women's meeting and 60 women attended it. It lasted all evening and was translated into five different languages (English, French, Japanese, American Sign Language and Spanish) more-or-less at the same time (simultaneously) and spontaneously (without any planning). The work of translating for the meeting was done by women who are bi-lingual and who volunteered to do it.

DAWN was able to play a useful role since we had spent three days in Ottawa figuring out what the biggest issues were for us. We shared our knowledge with the women from around the world and we all had similar concerns. Imagine that. Anyway, there was this other big concern about the DPI Congress - gender parity (equal numbers of women and men participating equally).

That women-only meeting resolved to (decided to do it and act on it) make sure that Disabled Peoples' International (DPI) made sure that women with disabilities had an equal voice and an equal place in DPI. This is a work in progress.

It was a very powerful feeling, though, to be working with all of these wonderful women with disabilities from all over the **world**. And feeling proud. And knowing that we all "got it". DAWN Canada had truly begun. We understood that we were really part of a pretty amazing network - women with disabilities from all over the world and all over Canada, too.

The Founding Conference

In March 1987, the founding conference of DAWN Canada: DisAbled Women's Network Canada took place in Winnipeg. This meeting was held in the downtown YWCA. A group of young dancers who were auditioning (trying out) for the Royal Winnipeg Ballet stayed there at the same time and we all shared the (accessible) bathroom. Mornings were pretty crowded! A number of important things took place during this meeting. Not only did we ratify (approve) the Constitution and By-Laws, we decided to join the national umbrella organization for provincial disability groups in Canada, the Council of Provincial Organizations of the Handicapped (COPOH) which has since changed its name to the Council of Canadians with Disabilities (CCD). We also decided to join other feminists at the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC). (See "[Lists](#)") We approved (ratified) the six areas decided in Ottawa as priority areas for future DAWN Canada work and decided to ask the federal government for funding to do the research. No one had ever done any research before about issues of concern to women with disabilities and we felt that it was time. (See "[Doing Research](#)", "[Why Do Research](#)" and "[Research Guidelines](#)") The final piece of important business that was achieved by the founding conference was the election of a Board of Directors. The Board was representative of each region of Canada and almost all disabilities. The Board elected an Executive and DAWN Canada was born!

Starting to Work

The Board immediately began to put into action the directions from both the meeting in Ottawa and instructions from the founding conference in Winnipeg. Research, research, research. We all knew about the issues in our own lives and those of the women we personally knew but we knew nothing more general and representative about women with all kinds of disabilities in Canada and neither did anyone else. We applied once again to the federal government for funding (See "[Where Does It Come From?](#)") and we were given enough to produce papers on employment, violence and parenting. We hired Jillian Ridington as our first researcher and she gathered the information and produced the papers. This involved sending out a very long questionnaire to many women all across the country and waiting for their responses. Lots of women were interviewed for their more in-depth comments. During her work, Jillian found that all of the topics involved the issue of self-image and so she did an additional paper for us on that topic, too, bless her heart.

The response was overwhelming both in volume (numbers of responses) and in depth. Women let us know in detail about every aspect of their lives. From this response, we knew that we were heading in the right direction. We knew that our preliminary work at the meeting in Ottawa in 1985 was an accurate assessment of the concerns of women with disabilities all across this land. These papers, produced in 1989 are:

- [Who Do We Think We Are?: Self Image and Women with Disabilities](#)
- [Different Therefore Unequal: Employment and Women with Disabilities](#)
- [Beating the "Odds": Violence and Women with Disabilities](#)

- [The Only Parent in the Neighbourhood: Mothering and Women with Disabilities](#)

The papers proved to be absolutely the first research done **by** women with disabilities **about** women with disabilities in Canada and pretty much around the world. We've been recognized since then as world leaders on issues of concern to women with disabilities. We only had enough funding to produce a small number of them and these important documents are now out-of-print (we ran out). We still get requests for them. In 1991 there was another Annual General Meeting which was attached to a conference called "Self-Image: Who **Do** We Think We Are?". Pat Israel was elected Chair at that AGM and soon after DAWN received enough funding to open a national office in Toronto. Joanne Doucette was hired as the Coordinator. Pat also had this life that she was interested in living and she resigned before she burned out. Everything came back to Vancouver and, as Past-Chair, I ended up doing the same stuff I was doing before.

Working harder and faster

The next few years were a blur of activity for DAWN Canada. We were swamped with requests to attend government meetings, consultations and conferences, invitations to attend other organizations' events, phone calls for information and requests for documents. We had no staff and no office. The business of this national organization was again being conducted out of my bedroom and all calls came to my home phone. I supervised all projects; Shirley and I had an excellent labour/management relationship! The fact that so many were interested in our existence let us know that we were providing a valuable and unique service to those who were well enough connected to know that DAWN Canada existed. Unfortunately these were mostly people like bureaucrats, politicians and other national organizations, not necessarily women with disabilities. DAWN Canada Board members were in touch with the women who were trying to organize on the provincial level. We hoped, anyway. The women at the provincial level didn't (don't) get much financial support either. I felt that my main job was to keep DAWN Canada alive. This meant keeping the Board of Directors in touch with each other and informed about the events that kept happening. Another important aspect to the work during the early years was to get DAWN and our issues on the agenda. Everybody's agenda - the women's movement, the disability community, the funders, the employers, the insurance companies, the politicians ...

"Funding-Driven" Agendas

It's important to talk about federal funding since that is how almost all non-profit, national organizations like DAWN survive. As we learned from the first research we did, women with disabilities are:

- very poor
- poorly educated
- unemployed and underemployed
- often isolated
- twice as likely to experience violence as non-disabled women
- interested in being mums but it's very hard

We also have little access to different resources and have a poor self-image. And, of course, as women we face the same kinds of discrimination that non-disabled women face everywhere. We are not in a good position to do fundraising much beyond what we need for our everyday, disabled lives. The federal government has resources set aside to help individuals, through their groups, to "achieve full citizenship" as Canadians. Applying for and receiving funds from the federal government is how a group like DAWN continues to exist. (See "[Money](#)") But it can be a fickle (changeable) and arbitrary (dependent on other's judgements) process. Sometimes there's a big difference between what your project proposal (request) asks for and whether you get any funding at all, how much you actually get, if you get any, and how you are allowed to spend it. Government priorities can change from government to government (Liberal to Conservative), from Minister to Minister (politician to politician) and even from bureaucrat to bureaucrat (government employee to government employee). These are the people who make funding decisions. It's called a "funding driven agenda" when a group must spend money according to someone else's (often a politician's or bureaucrat's) priorities (agenda). You never quite know what's going to happen next.

There are several reasons for this kind of funding uncertainty:

- politicians get elected every few years by people who vote in elections
- politicians and governments change
- politicians make decisions about how to spend tax dollars according to what kind of policy is described by the government that wins the election
- bureaucrats are directed by politicians to do the work of the government
- bureaucrats don't get elected, they stay on

At each step of this process, your ideas for a funded project can be influenced or changed by someone else's idea of how to spend money based on government policies, individual personalities or egos, elections or even world-wide events.

Remember to vote!

As an example of how dependent government funding can be on something like popular opinion, take the example of Rick Hansen's "Man in Motion World Tour". Once it was certain that Hansen was becoming a popular media figure on a world scale, a hero even, the Canadian government got on the bandwagon and supported him with millions of dollars (remember "Independence '92"?). For a decade, people with disabilities became the federal funding "flavour of the month". It was good timing for DAWN Canada. We got some funding as well.

Government Funding

There are two kinds of government funding that are important in the life of a non-profit organization: "core

funding" and "project funding". **"Core funding"** is very desirable because it tends to get renewed without too much hassle. You get it on a yearly basis and the relative certainty of it allows an organization to actually plan ahead. You can do some work which can move from one logical and sensible step to the next and the next. You can hire a staff person to deal with things like correspondence (opening mail and sending letters), filing and telephones. You can have an office instead of working out of your bedroom. You can have a phone listing in the phone book. DAWN was promised "core funding" a long time ago but it hasn't happened yet. They can still withhold core funding or delay it but it's more likely to be regular and reliable than project funding.

Try to get promises in writing

"Project funding" is also wonderful to get but is very limited in what you can do with it. It's only allowed to be used for specific projects and never "capital expenditures" or things like office rental, computers, photocopying machines, telephones, etc.. You can't have conferences or annual general meetings, put out a newsletter, hold Board of Directors meetings or open an office. You do get to do research (which DAWN has done lots of) but you can't develop the organization (which DAWN needs to do lots of). Project funding is the only kind that DAWN has ever received. It seems that the government is much more interested in the valuable information that we provide than in the development of a group that could become a constructive and maybe critical voice about the government's policies on disability issues. The government pays so-called "experts" and researchers lots of money to provide them with information about all aspects of Canadian life, including disability, but they never hire us as consultants or experts.

The Fruits of Our Labours

Over the years, DAWN Canada has done lots of work and become very expert about some of the important issues in our lives by doing many projects about them:DAWN Canada's Projects and Events

1985

First national meeting of women with disabilities planned by us

1987

Founding conference in Winnipeg

1988

The first issue of our newsletter came out:

Thriving, Vol. 1 No. 1

1989

Jillian Ridington researched and wrote:

- [Who Do We Think We Are?: Self Image and Women with Disabilities](#)
- [Different Therefore Unequal: Employment and Women with Disabilities](#)
- [Beating the "Odds": Violence and Women with Disabilities](#)
- [The Only Parent in the Neighbourhood: Mothering and Women with Disabilities](#)

1991

We held a conference and Annual General Meeting in Toronto:

Who **Do** We Think We Are: Self-Image and Women with Disabilities Conference

We put out another issue of our newsletter

Thriving, Vol. 1 No. 2.

Together with the Canadian Disability Rights Council (CRDC), we published

Four Discussion Papers On New Reproductive Technologies.

Two women in DAWN BC, Kelly Wheeler and Gem Wirszilas, published an anthology:

Visions Of Flight: A Journey Of Thought By and About Women with Disabilities.

1992

DAWN Canada worked together with the National Film Board to make a film about sexuality and relationships and women with disabilities. It's (international) premier took place at the conference and exposition on disability held in Vancouver called, "Independence '92": Towards Intimacy

Shirley Masuda, with help from Jillian Ridington, researched and wrote:

Meeting Our Needs: An Access Manual for Transition Houses.

1993

Ellen Frank researched and wrote:

DAWN Canada's Safety Net/Work Policing and Justice Project: Responding To Violence Against Women with Disabilities: An Assessment of Police Training Needs

1994

DAWN Canada and the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) put on a national conference for feminists on New Reproductive Technologies in Vancouver.

The Annual General Meeting attached to this conference elected a new Chair, Eileen O'Brien.

Ellen Frank did more work on the legal system:

Domestic Violence: Accessibility of Legal Information to Women with Disabilities.

Monika Chappell and Tanis Doe researched and wrote:

Breaking the Cycle of Violence - Healing Our Lives.

DAWN Canada put out another issue of *Thriving*.

1995

DAWN Canada and the National Action Committee on the Status of Women produced the conference summary report, prepared by Yvonne Peters:

NRTs...The Contradictions of Choice: The Common Ground Between Disability Rights and Feminist Analysis

We put out another issue of *Thriving*.

Monika Chappell wrote another report:

DAWN Canada's Safety Net/Work Policing And Justice Report: Responding to Violence Against Women with Disabilities. An Assessment of Judicial Training Needs.

Shirley Masuda researched and wrote a manual on suicide and women with disabilities:

Don't Tell Me to Take a Hot Bath: Resource Manual For Crisis Workers.

1996

DAWN Canada put on a Think Tank with women from the larger community on Employment and Women with Disabilities and later published the results:

Employment and Women with Disabilities: Transcript -Think Tank.

A German translation of *Meeting Our Needs* and the work on new reproductive technologies was produced in Germany.

A video by The Justice Institute in B.C. was made with DAWN Canada women participating in the video and participating in an advisory committee for it:

Charting New Waters: Responding to Violence Against Women with Disabilities

Monika Chappell moved out of the judiciary and into substance use and misuse and wrote:

[Relief... At What Cost?](#) *Women with Disabilities and Substance Use/Misuse: Tobacco, Alcohol and Other Drugs, Summary of Themes.*

Shirley Masuda produced a community kit:

SAFETY NET/WORK Community Kit: From Abuse to Suicide Prevention and Women with Disabilities.

1997

Monika Chappell wrote another important tool for women with disabilities for DAWN Canada:

A Way Out: Women with Disabilities and Smoking

1998

Shirley Masuda wrote a report for Status of Women Canada:

The Impact of Block Funding on Women with Disabilities: Canada Health and Social Transfer

Shirley Masuda researched the situation of women with disabilities in British Columbia and their health for DAWN Canada and the BC Centre of Excellence for Women's Health:

Women with Disabilities: The Social Construct of Access to Health

At this time, Maria Barile is being a resource for the organizers of a conference for women with disabilities in Italy. They are translating *Meeting Our Needs*, [Beating the "Odds"](#) and the new reproductive technologies papers into Italian.

Meanwhile, back in the regions ... At the beginning, DAWN groups were popping up all over the country. There was a huge excitement in the air and women with disabilities were happy to get involved and talk to each other for the first time. The groups that were starting up had lots of enthusiasm but no experience or resources. Although we got funding to put out a few copies of a national newsletter, *Thriving*, DAWN Canada did not have the resources to do much communication or support work for the members in the regions.

Remember that for most of the time, we didn't even have a phone listing, there was no staff and everything happened out of my bedroom. It was no better in most of the provinces. Ontario got some decent funding from their provincial government for awhile and they did some wonderful work, especially in the areas of health and sexuality. And then the provincial government changed from NDP to Conservative and that was the end of that funding. Quebec and Saskatchewan got some funding and so did a couple of other provinces but it didn't last for very long. Over time, the lack of resources began to take it's toll on the women who were trying to do DAWN work everywhere. We are not a bunch of whiners and complainers but we do have disabilities and our individual needs require some care and attention, too. We weren't able to

replace ourselves and get some new blood because we didn't get funded to hold annual, Annual General Meetings or even regular meetings. We started to drop like flies.

The lack of resources took it's toll on the organization as well as the individual women, of course. DAWN Canada began to falter and fade. We were no longer "thriving". We simply weren't able to do the very necessary things that would have kept us healthy. Things like:

- communicating with each other - keeping in touch
- organizational development - starting and **maintaining** groups
- board meetings - taking care of business
- annual general meetings - renewing the Board and taking care of more business
- newsletters - sharing the information and not re-inventing the wheel, getting new members

I stayed on as Chair (and Past-Chair) for far too long because the government doesn't fund annual general meetings (AGMs) and an AGM is the only time when an organization can elect a new Board of Directors (and Executive, including Chair). By the time we did manage to have an annual general meeting in 1994 and pass the torch on to the next Board, DAWN Canada was a mere shadow of it's former proud and vigorous (lively) self.

Don't sweat the small stuff.

2. A SHORT HERSTORY

PART TWO - Eileen O'Brien

Eileen O'Brien has been the Chairperson of DAWN Canada since 1994 and has spent her life as an activist for social change. In her early adult life she was awarded a fellowship with Frontier College of Toronto for her community development work in Northern communities. Later on, her training as a registered nurse helped her move easily into the women's health movement. There she worked with women in a transition house and rape crisis centre and after that with the Canadian Pelvic Inflammatory Disease Society.

Her commitment as a woman with a disability to the empowerment of women with disabilities within the women's and disability movements is lifelong and tireless and she takes great pride and joy in joining her sisters in this struggle. Eileen is proud to be the mother of a daughter who is an active member of DAWN Canada.

When I became Chairperson of DAWN Canada in 1994 I knew, as Joan Meister had known before me, that we had our work cut out for us if we were going to sustain it (keep it going) and strengthen our national organization. DAWN Canada was run solely (only) by volunteer labour, except for the researcher employed on any current project who was very busy doing the work of the project.

We had been existing on only project funding since the beginning (1985) and the organization was primarily (mainly) a research and policy (planning) advisory group. We did projects by and about women with disabilities and spoke about our findings to various government bodies, DAWN members and allies. We had affiliate groups as well across the country that we shared information with but very little direct communication was possible (affordable) among the DAWN groups, members or supporters.

Our research was brave and revolutionary: we hired only women with disabilities and we worked hard to keep our voice our own. Shirley Masuda, our senior researcher, fought consistently for this. The research principles that she helped DAWN Canada develop have served as a model for other grassroots groups in both Canada and the United States. (See "[DAWN Canada's Research Guidelines](#)")

We wanted to keep control of that process of speaking in our own voices and doing our own research. We wanted our struggle for freedom to be our own. We joined our voice with the sound of the international disability movement's battle cry:

Nothing about us without us!

Maintaining a national group with no money meant that we had to develop community development principals into most research projects. Action research (See "[Doing Research](#)") with focus groups across the country became our way of ensuring a strongly representative voice. We tried increasingly to provide something concrete in the project itself that would improve things for our members, such as a self help manual or kit which could be used by the groups or individual women.

Another progressive research model was to train a woman who had strong skills and experience in a specific topic but lacked the necessary academic qualifications to be a researcher on her own. A DAWN Canada researcher who was qualified was paid to co-ordinate the project and oversee the methodology (process) and the DAWN woman in training took on the project. This team approach was very successful and we think that it allowed for a very in-depth commitment to the subject matter. It also provided our community with another trained researcher.

With little to no money we communicated with our Board and affiliate (member) groups in most provinces and the Yukon through working together on projects, using our Board of Directors as the Advisory Committee on most projects (including this one!). Our ability to communicate, however, was limited to project bulletins, questionnaires and advisory committee meetings.

As the result of a very successful project on New Reproductive Technologies we were able, not only to educate women on the very complex health and social costs of this technology, but also to send out a good batch of other information in the form of our famous newsletter, *Thriving*.

Our newsletter brought us responses from all over the world. It helped us to increase our membership and

open doors to stronger alliances (partnerships) with the women's movement as well as to women with disabilities in other cross-disability organizations. We were only funded to produce a few issues of *Thriving* and then were told that the government doesn't fund newsletters.

DAWN Canada had begun to work on justice issues (legal cases) before 1994 and had participated in some pioneering coalitions in two very important cases which affected women with disabilities and other women. Both cases involved the rights of sexual assault victims. DAWN Canada's involvement in these legal cases opened the door for many more successful partnerships (alliances).

We were building coalitions to intervene in cases involving discrimination under Canada's *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. We soon discovered that not only could we inform the courts and the lawyers and organizations we worked with about our issues but we could again use this experience to develop our own community.

We were able to learn about significant (important) *Charter* rights and their application (use, function) and to hear directly from specific women with disabilities who were affected by the decision. For the first time in history we have had an important (significant) voice in the courts of Canada and we hope, in the future, to guarantee that a community development aspect for DAWN Canada exists in each of the cases we work on.

This work was made possible by the strong commitment of the Court Challenges Program, funded by Canada's Department of Justice. It gives resources to grassroots groups such as ours. We have worked with other equality seeking groups like ourselves and have learned that despite our broad differences, on the issue of discrimination we have much in common. We came to understand that a court case fighting for the rights to same sex benefits, for example, had broad implications (consequences, things that might result), for people with disabilities and very specifically women with disabilities.

DAWN Canada's Human Rights Work

We have worked with Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF), Equality for Gays and Lesbians (EGAL) and the Council of Canadians with Disabilities (CCD) along with many other equality-seeking groups to support cases that will have direct effects on the lives of women with disabilities. Most of the following cases involved discrimination under section 15 of the Canadian *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. These are some of the kinds of legal cases that DAWN Canada has been involved with, the issues and the outcomes:

1. Queen v. Rosenberg 1998

The Ontario Court of Appeal recognized that a same sex partner is a legal "spouse" (mate, husband or wife) regarding Canada's *Income Tax Act*.

We were successful.

2. Queen v. Latimer 1998

The Saskatchewan Court of Appeal upheld the mandatory (compulsory) sentence of second degree murder for Robert Latimer who killed his daughter, Tracy

We were successful.

3. Ferrel v. Attorney General (Ontario) 1998

This case was a constitutional challenge to Ontario's repeal of (withdrawing of) the *Employment Equity Act*. We intervened at the Court of Appeal of Ontario.

This fight was unsuccessful.

4. Queen v. O'Connor 1995

This criminal case concerned whether a counsellor for a victim of sexual assault must disclose (reveal, tell, show) all counselling records that the defence lawyers (acting for the abuser) wish to see. We intervened at the Supreme Court of Canada.

We were unsuccessful

5. Eldridge v. Attorney General (British Columbia) 1998

This *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* case addressed whether British Columbia can refuse to pay for medical interpreter services (sign language) for deaf persons needing medical help. We intervened at the Supreme Court of Canada.

We were successful.

6. BCGSEU v. PSERC

(British Columbia Government and Service Employees' Union v. The Government of the Province of British Columbia as represented by the Public Service Employee Relations Commission)

This case concerns whether a physical kind of fitness standard applies to a female firefighter who was already performing her job because when she didn't meet this standard she lost her job. It is proceeding to the Supreme Court of Canada and raises many critical (important) human rights issues.

No decision has been made yet by the court.

7. Queen v. Ewanchuk

This is a criminal case and is a Supreme Court of Canada appeal. It deals with several issues about sexual assault, including the definition of consent (agreement, permission) and whether there is such a thing as "implied (hinted at)" consent.

No decision has been made yet.

8. Godin v. Ministry of Health and Community Services

(New Brunswick)

This *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* challenge case concerns the availability of legal aid in state guardianship applications in New Brunswick. We intervened at the Supreme Court of Canada.

No decision has been made yet by the court.

9. Queen v. Darroch

This criminal case is about the significance (importance) of using a woman's past sexual history in sexual assault trials. It refers to Section 276 (Bill C-49) of the Criminal Code. We were successful at the Ontario Court of Appeals and it is currently being heard by the Supreme Court of Canada.

No decision has been made yet.

Building Coalitions - Strange Bedfellows

The understanding of the need to work together on these kinds of issues has meant a new kind of alliance (coalition) building - a new kind of inter-dependence (depending on each other) which we think is crucial (very important) in light of current government cutbacks and rising incidences of discrimination against the most vulnerable (unprotected, defenceless) in our society.

Working with the Council of Canadians with Disabilities (CCD) has been a challenge in many regards. We have, I think, worked hard together to strengthen our common voice as people with disabilities on the issue of funding to disability groups and other issues related to social policy in Canada such as transportation, etc. We continue to value this process of working together as important in our development as a culture and as a movement.

As DAWN Canada, however, we find ourselves at odds with this very patriarchal (male, top-down, hierarchical) model of a group which is not used to the feminist process of consensus and coalition building. As

a lobbying group, the CCD has been remarkable in it's tireless negotiations for a place for people with disabilities on the government's agenda.

However, as a grassroots movement, there is still much work to be done. The principle of hiring people with disabilities to do the research and to speak for ourselves is a basic premise (assumption) in the development of our community of women with disabilities. It is not understood or adhered to by the CCD. Discrimination against and ignorance of feminist principles is systemic (wide spread) and I think we must continue to fight where it is necessary.

Most women in the CCD are DAWN Canada members, though, and are very supportive of our issues if they get on the agenda of the meeting. The fight, of course, is to get them there. We have a written agreement with the CCD to have DAWN Canada work on all issues directly related to women with disabilities.

Without the necessary funding, we lack the resources to provide a gender analysis on CCD policies and position papers. The work continues on this level. I must say that I have learned to love and respect most of the people there and I think we have come a long way since the first meeting I attended.

The evolution of DAWN Canada continues. Most regions have had funding cut backs and we have seen many DAWN groups fold (die). Sometimes there are direct funding cuts such as the cutting of program funding to women's centres and local DAWN affiliate groups by Status of Women Canada. As well, our research suggests that women are loosing our will and ability to participate as citizens of Canada. Cutbacks to things like:

- home care
- accessible transportation
- disability aides
- basic food and shelter allowances
- hospital services
- declassification of many medications

have left many of us exhausted, frightened, angry and worse. This has hurt us and it erodes (grinds away) the gains we have painstakingly (with great hardships) made.

We have, by sheer necessity, broadened our network through contact with individual women with disabilities wherever they find themselves fighting to survive. Some have become part of the network through various disability groups, others through women's groups, transition houses and other feminist projects. Still others find us where ever someone has left a pamphlet, project report or newsletter.

Many women with disabilities in other countries through our contacts at conferences, Disabled People's International (DPI), the newsletter and our different projects have also become part of our ever expanding network. There is a DAWN Trinidad and Tobago! Also, with the formation of our Girls and Young Women Committee, we have begun to make connections to the wonderful young women coming behind

us. This year, for the first time, we have been given enough money to hire a co-ordinator, Kathy Hawkins from our Newfoundland DAWN group, and we have much hope for the future.

We are, I think, quite a rare breed. We have nothing to lose and we are fearless warrior women who are dedicated like no others. We are not going anywhere. There is no place to opt out. Freedom is like the air we breathe. We've acquired the habit and we are rather attached to the beautiful feeling that the fruits of our struggles bring us. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to have been a part of DAWN Canada in these last few years and I can't wait until the next history installment!

2. WE ARE WHO YOU ARE - Bonnie Sherr Klein

Bonnie Sherr Klein is a stroke survivor and is the Volunteer Artistic Director of KickstART! A Festival of Disability Arts and Culture.

She has been a filmmaker ("Not a Love Story: A Film about Pornography"); broadcaster ("Bonnie and Gladys", CBC Radio); and author (Slow Dance: A Story of Stroke, Love and Disability, Vintage Canada Paperback.) Slow Dance won the 1998 VanCity Book Prize for best BC book on issues pertaining to women.

I recall vividly (strongly) my own "DAWNing", the day I first saw the light at the end of the darkest tunnel. My experience reveals (indicates) the difference a DAWN group can make in a woman's life. It was exactly three years after I'd had a sudden and catastrophic (disastrous) brain-stem stroke at the age of forty-six.

After several years of intensive rehabilitation, I was "discharged" and dumped back to make it on my own in a world which seemed to have no place for me. I felt like I was the first person in the world in a wheelchair, or with severe energy limitations. I had avoided the other patients in rehab, thinking this was just a phase I would pass through on my way to becoming my old "normal" self. It was all too scary. What did "these people" have to do with me? Well, everything, as it turns out. These women were who I was now, though I was too frightened to accept it. Because I knew no other people living with disabilities (or so I thought) I had no role models of people like myself who not only lived but thrived in the world. Everywhere I went, even in my old feminist circles of friends and organizations, I felt alone and "Other." Often I wondered whether it had been worth the struggle to survive.

Three years after my stroke, when I was at my lowest point, beginning to suspect that I was going to remain disabled for the rest of my life, I recalled hearing something in my previous life as a feminist filmmaker about a network of feminists with disabilities, something like DAWN Canada. A true grass-roots (read: without funding) organization, DAWN had no office and was not listed in the Montreal phone directory. Somehow, through feminist networks, I tracked down the Montreal chairperson. I explained that I was "newly" disabled and wanted desperately to meet and learn from other disabled feminists. Maria Barile, bless her intuitive and flexible heart, responded immediately with a date and place for a meeting. Only afterwards did I realize she had called the group together especially for me! I almost didn't go. I felt tentative (unsure),

apologetic about my status as a formerly "able-bodied" woman. I felt illegitimate because I was not as disabled as some other people. I felt guilty about the privileges of class, career and family which made my experience so much easier than that of so many others. (Doesn't this sound just like a woman?)

I found myself in a YWCA room with an assorted bunch of women, many shapes and appearances and ways of getting around, many races and ages and classes, many kinds and degrees of disability, including some "hidden" disabilities like chronic illness and environmental sensitivities. We seemed to have little in common except our diverse disabilities-which turned out to be quite enough. We told each other our stories. We laughed, cried, complained, and raged together.

I was horrified by one young woman's story of being abused by her care-givers and I identified with another woman's sorrow at the gardening she could no longer do. It was like the early days of consciousness-raising in the Women's Movement: those "clicks" of recognition as we saw again that the personal is political. What I had believed were private, isolated experiences turned out to be systemic discrimination based in the way different systems operated against us. We moved naturally from sharing the brilliant coping strategies individuals had invented, to planning, lobbying and advocacy actions. DAWN had committees for research, employment, and disability benefits and we were part of a coalition to improve transportation facilities.

We couldn't remove our disabilities but we could try to remove those disabling barriers (handicaps) caused by society's ignorance and prejudice about disability. We could build a world which accommodates and values our differences. I was no longer alone. Here I was not Other because everyone was Other.

Now that I knew other feminists with disabilities, I was finally ready to accept that I would be disabled for the rest of my life. DAWN was the turning point in my re-entry to life. We who are separated, discriminated against and often isolated by society are in desperate need of peers, buddies, other women, for support and empathy (deep understanding and sympathy), women with whom we can talk openly, cry freely, laugh at ourselves and occasionally at the non-disabled Others. We need rolling-models for inspiration and challenge, and sisters for solidarity.

We do not get this kind of support from the health and rehabilitation service agencies (which are medicalized) or charities. We do not even get it from our disability rights organizations, which often have no time or space to deal with the personal when the political battles are so great. We have to create those spaces ourselves, and to reach out to women who need them and who don't know that we are there for them. When women with disabilities get together, personal sharing usually happens naturally and spontaneously (without planning). But I would like to see it built into the organizing of DAWN groups, not left to chance or, after we get our "real" work done, we can chat.

Getting together as a discussion, support or consciousness-raising (self-awareness and broad understanding of your place in the world) group is what many women need and want. We need to do outreach to catch those women who fall between the cracks. Let's be blunt: DAWN groups have historically evolved to fit government funding guidelines; they have creatively and resourcefully (work with imagination) responded to

what was available, and often languished (sickened, waiting without hope) in between grants. But we all know many women who are longing to connect with others, who have no idea where to find that connection. Peer-support (women like ourselves) is a fundamental (basic) need for every person with a disability, and a legitimate purpose for a DAWN group. The chapters that follow describe some directions which DAWN has taken so far, and offer some practical skills that have worked, but remember that there is no formula for a DAWN group, DAWN can be anything you want it to be. It is whatever works for you and the women you want to be with. Laugh and let your hair down!

Here are some "how-to's" for building personal connections:

1. Decide on a policy of confidentiality (See "[Confidentiality](#)"), so women can feel safe to be honest with each other
2. Agree on some basic rules of behaviour: - time is shared - no one is forced to talk - no one is interrupted - only one woman speaks at the same time - no one is put-down, attacked, or offended - offensive words or behaviour can be challenged without attacking the offending woman.
3. In any meeting, take time to connect, to check in on feelings, to get close. Among women with disabilities, "How are you?" is not just a polite custom but a meaningful and sometimes loaded question.
4. Take time to listen to the answer. Allow time for every woman to speak without interruption: try a "round" at the beginning and end of every gathering for each woman to say how she is, what's going well (or badly) in her life, what she liked most at the meeting, what she appreciated most about the woman on her left.

Sound hokey or scary? Don't let doubt or fear of being "touchy- feely" get in the way. We need each other; there's often no one else to talk to. Certainly no one else has been there like we have.

What do we have to lose? We are champion survivors.

3. THE DAWNING OF DISABILITY CULTURE - Catherine Frazee

Catherine Frazee has been involved in the equality rights movement for many years, most notably during her term as Chief Commissioner of the Ontario Human Rights Commission from 1989 to 1992. In addition to her private practice in mediation/arbitration, she currently holds a Research Fellowship at West Park Hospital, is an Associate in Research and Social Development at the Roeher Institute and serves as part-time Vice-Chair of the Ontario Worker's Compensation Appeals Tribunal. Ms. Frazee is an active participant in numerous volunteer committees, including the Council of Canadians with Disabilities Human Rights Committee and the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund Legal Committee.

Ms. Frazee is a committed activist who has lectured extensively in Canada and abroad on issues related to disability rights, disability culture and the disability experience.

What on earth is a section about "*Disability Culture*" doing in this manual?

Granted, the link between art and politics is not always obvious. But there is an important link. What is it that happens when two or more women with disabilities come together? We talk about the things that are important to us. We talk about the things that have happened in our lives. We talk about our struggles to achieve equality, respect and justice. *We share stories, ideas, experiences and dreams.* Those stories, ideas, experiences and dreams weave together. And in that process of weaving each of us becomes something more than one individual. We become part of a community, a community of women with disabilities.

Through the stories, ideas, experiences and dreams that we share, we build relationships, trust, confidence, understanding and *culture*. As we learn about ourselves and each other, as we stretch and grow in our sense of pride about who we are and what we have survived together, we are helping to build a lively and powerful Disability Culture.

Why is culture an important part of our political work? It has to do with how people's attitudes and ideas are shaped. In an article entitled "Art on the Frontline", Angela Davis recounts how in 1986, President Reagan signed a bill declaring the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King as a national holiday in America. Prior to this, Reagan had openly and publicly expressed his opposition to such a move. Davis attributes the change in Reagan's position to Stevie Wonder's popular recording of "Happy Birthday", which mobilized thousands of young Americans in a groundswell of support that even the stubborn Reagan could not ignore. And it has to do with how people's energies are charged. It is difficult to get a lot of people all fired up about ideas and it's almost impossible to keep people fired up and ready to give their time, their energy and their resources over a long period of time with no certainty of positive outcome, if all you have to offer is a concept.

When the work is hard and/or disheartening (and disabled women's advocacy is both) people have to feel passionate about it in order to sustain the effort. Culture brings us together on an emotional level. And when we are brought together on an emotional level through the medium of culture, aside from the stirring of our emotions, something else happens. Collectively, people begin to identify with each other.

Since feminism, saying "I am a woman", means much more than simply that I am biologically female. The statement "I am a woman" means that *I am a member of the community of women - globally, locally, socially, historically and politically.* Similarly, "I am a lesbian" tells you more about my personal, political and social identity than it does about what I do in bed. So too, as disability culture evolves, identity and a sense of community are nurtured.

So what is the place of art in disability culture? Whenever artists with disabilities pick up their paintbrushes or their guitars with their whole selves, disability will be there. Its very presence in the canvas and the music is essentially political. Even a love story is political if it shows sensitivity and respect for the disability experience. If it works with our real pains, joys and dreams. No artist can "control" the way an audience will receive her work. She can't prevent unwanted responses, such as pity or distaste. But if the artist herself has an attitude of self-respect and pride, the work will reflect that attitude. Everyone who sees the painting or hears the song will do the same. Artistic work that is not explicitly (only about) political can also be very effective in gently bringing people around to a different understanding of disability.

In Canada, the United States and around the world, artists and performers with disabilities are contributing to one of the most radical and effective aspects of disability culture- challenging conventional notions (commonplace ideas) of beauty, form and motion. What are some of the features of disability culture? Like classical music and abstract art, our appreciation of disability culture may be improved by an understanding of how it works and what it all means. In order to understand how disability culture works, think first about the effects of discrimination in the world around us and what we do about it.

For example, people with disabilities everywhere share the experience of being labeled and described in unflattering and humiliating terms. Within the culture of disability, therefore, don't be surprised to encounter our artists reclaiming, taking back words like "cripple" and "gimp", and using the power of these words in asserting a strong and fearless identity. Just as faggot and dyke are actually used *within* the gay and lesbian community as terms of endearment, within *our* community, gimp becomes a short form for "one of us" in a totally positive sense, and cripple is used increasingly to denote a kind of swashbuckling bravado.

I first ran across this attitude in an essay called "On Being a Cripple" by Nancy Mairs, who wrote: "People, crippled or not, wince at the word cripple as they do not at handicapped or disabled. Perhaps I want them to wince. I want them to see me as a tough customer, one to whom the fates/gods/viruses have not been kind, but who can face the brutal truth of her existence squarely. As a cripple, I swagger." What powerful words! People with disabilities everywhere share the experience of being segregated, institutionalized, marginalized (left out on the edges) and silenced.

We know that our very presence in mainstream (conventional) society makes some people uncomfortable. Disability culture responds to all of this with one very loud and clear message: "Get over it!" Artists with disabilities and performers make no apology. They are in your face. Not only are we visible and vocal, not only are we laughing and singing about our joy in life and love for ourselves and each other but we are allowing ourselves to express the depths of our rage and our pain. So, as we work within our communities for social and political change, let's remember the contribution of artists with disabilities in using their creative talents to transform oppression (injustice) into a vibrant (lively) disability culture.

As American Simi Linton writes in "Claiming Disability": "*We have come out not with those brown woolen lap robes over our withered legs, or dark glasses over our pale eyes but in shorts and sandals, in overalls and business suits, dressed for play and work Ñ straightforward, unmasked, and unapologetic. ... And we are not only the high-toned wheelchair athletes seen in recent television ads but the gangly, pudgy, lumpy, and bumpy of us, declaring that shame will no longer structure our wardrobe or our discourse.*"

We are everywhere these days, wheeling and loping down the street, tapping our canes, sucking on our breathing tubes, following our guide dogs, puffing and sipping on the mouth sticks that propel our motorized chairs. We may drool, hear voices, speak in staccato syllables, wear catheters to collect our urine or live with a compromised immune system. We are all bound together, not by this list of our collective symptoms, but by the social and political circumstances that have forged us as a group. We have found one another and found

a voice to express ourselves: not despair at our fate but outrage at our social position.

When women with disabilities burst forth in a flourishing (growing, thriving) culture of disability, we leave behind our passive and "closeted" selves and take our equal places in the social sunshine. The immediate reward is pleasure in ourselves and each other. The long-term reward, no longer simply a dry "concept", comes alive and present in our collective identity. We find ourselves living as if we have already won the rights, freedoms and respect for which we fight.

4. A HUMAN RIGHTS CONTEXT - Yvonne Peters

Yvonne Peters practices as an equality rights lawyer in Winnipeg, Manitoba. She provides legal consultation and advice to unions, community groups, human rights organizations, the corporate sector and government. From 1989 to 1993 she served as the Executive Director and Litigation Director of the Canadian Disability Rights Council. Before becoming a lawyer, Ms. Peters worked as a Social Worker and a Human Rights Officer. Ms Peter has worked for 20 years as a human rights activist. She has been a member of the board of directors of numerous community organizations at the national, provincial and local levels.

Currently she is a board member of the Canadian Centre for Disability Studies (CCDS), the Community Legal Education Association (CLEA) and the Canadian Journal of Women and the Law (CJWL). Ms. Peters is also a member of the Equality Rights Panel of the Court Challenges Program (CCP) and Chair of the Manitoba Legislation Committee of the Midwifery Implementation Council (MIC)

Uniting for Equality

1. Turning the Personal Into the Political

I have been asked by DAWN Canada to write a few words about why women with disabilities should unite our voices to fight for justice and equality. For many years I have been a member of both the women's and the disability rights movements and so, to me, the answer seems clear and obvious. But, after reflecting on (thinking about) my own history, I realize that there was a time when I believed that, as a woman with a disability, I could make my own way and solve my own problems.

This was my attitude when I left the University of Saskatchewan in 1974. Armed with a B.A. degree I set off with the firm conviction that I would find a "good" job and that I would take my place in the "real" world. After all, I had followed my high school teacher's advice and obtained a university education which, I was told, was the key to a good job. But, I was not ready for the negative attitudes and misguided stereotypes held by many employers about hiring an employee who is blind.

Although I managed to get a number of interviews they usually turned out the same. They focused primarily on my blindness and not on my qualifications (skills). I was given a wide array of excuses for why I was not suitable

for the job, including:

- concerns that I would have trouble finding my way to the washroom
- fears that I might trip over equipment and injure myself
- worries that co-workers would not be comfortable working with me

Due to my inexperience, I did not handle these situations very well and often left the interview feeling frustrated and discouraged. My confidence began to wane (fade) and I was no longer as certain about my future.

Fortunately, I met an acquaintance from university who persuaded me to attend a meeting of people with disabilities. The topic was discrimination and the lack of human rights protection for people with disabilities. My initial reaction was one of reluctance. I was still convinced that I could fight my own battles.

But gradually the light began to DAWN. I realized that although individual strength is a very valuable quality, there are also benefits to working collectively (together) with like-minded people. In particular, I found collective action empowering and self-affirming. I also learned that individual solutions will not eliminate (get rid of) the many discriminatory attitudes and barriers that confront (face) people with disabilities in Canadian society. Most importantly, I learned that there is strength in numbers and that through solidarity (togetherness), political and legal change can be achieved (won).

Since my original encounter with society's perception of disability, I have learned a great deal about the nature of discrimination and what it means to have equality. As I have already said, much of my learning has come about from working with groups and individuals who are also interested in a world in which equality is a priority (first choice). We have a long way to go before that priority is realized. However, through the collective efforts of groups such as DAWN Canada, small but important steps have been made.

Like many women with a disability, I still have to fight many individual battles, but for me, the most significant (important) victories have occurred by uniting and working together with others to make a difference. Highlighted below are some of the gains which have been made to date. I also offer some suggestions (ideas) as to how we can continue the struggle for equality.

2. What Progress Has Been Made in Achieving Equality?

To recognize (identify) that disability discrimination is often at the root (source) of the disadvantage and inequality experienced by people with disabilities is a relatively recent thought. The recognition of disability rights was pioneered (started) by a variety of disability rights organizations in the late 1970's. These organizations challenged the view of disability as a "defect" or "illness" The goal of such organizations was to push to identify (recognize) the right of persons with disabilities to self-determination (See "Self-Identification", p. 113), individual autonomy and the right to participate in society as full and equal citizens.

Their efforts were noticed. By 1990, human rights legislation in all jurisdictions included both mental and physical disability as prohibited (forbidden) grounds of discrimination.

In 1982, the scope and importance of disability rights was expanded by the introduction of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and its constitutional guarantee of equality of all Canadians, including people with disabilities. Section 15 of the Charter provides a comprehensive definition of equality and has inspired many equality-seekers to use the courts as another avenue for (path to) claiming their rights. Thanks to the Court Challenges Program (a program which provides funding for equality rights test case lawsuits) equality-seekers such as women's organizations and disability rights organizations have been able to ask the courts to provide legal recognition of their rights.

The case of *Andrews v. the Law Society of British Columbia* was the first case to consider the meaning of equality under Section 15 of the Charter. Both the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF) and the Council of Canadians with Disabilities (CCD) participated in this case and made a significant contribution to the Court's interpretation (version) of equality.

Traditionally, it was assumed that equality meant making sure that everyone was treated exactly the same. The concept of same treatment works if everyone is starting from the same place. However, for many groups, such as women with disabilities, social and economic barriers have prevented us from taking our place as full and equal citizens in society. For example, an employment training program which does not take into account the employment barriers encountered (faced) by women with disabilities because of our disability as well as our gender may not represent genuine (real) equality.

Andrews rejected the notion (idea) that equality means treating everyone exactly the same. It acknowledges that there are certain groups in our society who have experienced historical, social, political and legal disadvantage. With this new approach to equality, known as the "substantive" approach, laws and policies must not only be concerned with treating everyone the same but also with how they address (speak to) historical disadvantage.

In October 1997 the Supreme Court of Canada handed down another landmark (first important, monumental) decision in the case of *Eldridge v. British Columbia (Attorney General)*. The *Eldridge* case is one of the most significant legal victories for the rights of Canadians with disabilities to date.

In this case, deaf persons living in B.C., including a mother who gave premature birth to twins, were denied access to sign language interpreters when receiving medical care. The Court made these important decisions:

- that the failure to provide sign language interpreters discriminated against deaf persons.
- that governments have an obligation to ensure that programs, services or benefits offered to the public, do not discriminate against people with disabilities.
- that where discrimination is identified, the government is also obligated to take positive steps to overcome the effects of the discrimination.

The *Eldridge* case is bound to have far-reaching effects in the advancement of equality, not only for people with disabilities, but for all equality seekers.

A number of equality-seeking groups were permitted to appear before the Supreme Court to provide their views on how the Court should interpret equality in the *Eldridge* case. DAWN Canada, in collaboration (working together) with LEAF, provided both written and oral (spoken) arguments to the Court. In reading the Court decision, the impact of the arguments made by DAWN and LEAF is obvious. Thanks to the Chair of DAWN Canada, Eileen O'Brien, the views of women with disabilities, particularly those of deaf women were front and centre in the DAWN/LEAF submissions (presentations).

3. Furthering the Goal of Equality for Women with Disabilities

Many of the activities carried out by DAWN Canada have been aimed at promoting (advancing) the equality of women with disabilities. Sadly, ours is one of a very few voices in Canada to carry this message.

If we work together across our differences we will empower ourselves and develop equality skills to offer to the world.

The equality interests of women with disabilities continue to be under-represented, or in many cases non-existent in the development of government policy and program delivery. Likewise, there are very few equality test cases that deal with the multiple (many) levels of discrimination experienced by women with disabilities. It is vital, therefore, for DAWN Canada and its affiliates (member groups) to continue to fight for the equality rights of women with disabilities. Set out below are just a few ways in which this work can be advanced (taken forward):

- educate women with disabilities about our rights;
- encourage and support women with disabilities either as individuals or as a group to assert (declare) our rights;
- continue to conduct and publish research on equality issues of particular concern to women with disabilities;
- insist that all governments take into account (consider) the particular concerns of women with disabilities;
- continue to participate in test cases before the courts that have the potential (possibility) to develop a better understanding of the equality rights of women with disabilities.
- the Court Challenges Program provides funding for equality-seeking groups to:
 - hold meetings to explore what issues might be tested in the courts,
 - explore the potential of taking a particular issue to court, and
 - take the government to court on the grounds that a particular law policy or practice discriminates against women with disabilities.

5. A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE - barbara findlay

I am a 49 year old white, fat, lesbian lawyer. My ancestry is British. I was raised Christian and working class,

and am a survivor of abuse and psychiatric institutions. I have hidden disabilities.

Working Together Across Our Differences for Our Welcome in the World

Where were you in your life when you first realized that the world was unfair and unequal?

- was it when you could not get into a building in your wheelchair or there was no sign language interpretation? ¥ or when someone called you a Paki, or a squaw, or a bimbo?¥ or when a meeting was scheduled on a Jewish holiday *again*?¥ maybe it was when you couldn't afford to go to a meeting because it was held in a coffee shop and your welfare cheque didn't leave room for cappuccinos.
- or when you realized it was not safe to let your caregiver know you were a lesbian because she was homophobic (anti-homosexual).

Or maybe it was for several of those reasons. Usually we come to realize that the world is unequal by our own experiences in it, by the pain that we feel when we are cut out or denied or scorned or laughed at or otherwise discriminated against. But it takes more than pain to recognize inequality. That's because the pain is served up with humiliation (shame) and blame and we are taught to believe that it is *our fault* that people treat us badly or that we don't deserve any better. Sometimes the pain of being stepped on, humiliated, beaten or ignored can overwhelm (crush, overcome) us. We end up in despair and maybe on booze or drugs as the only way we can deal with the pain. Internalized Oppression

In Canada today, the lessons that the dominant culture teaches us when we are growing up are that

- people with disabilities are somehow less than human
- aboriginal people are lazy
- people of colour are not "real Canadians"
- lesbians are sick or perverted
- men deserve to be paid more than women even if the jobs are the same
- poor people have no motivation

We all know the lists, the stereotypes, the attitudes that the world has about who deserves what. We know those stereotypes because *we were taught them, too*. They are what we were taught about ourselves! We grew up learning that we and others like us are unworthy and are somehow less than other people - that we must have done something to deserve this mistreatment and maybe it's our own fault. Maybe the most painful part is that when we hear those stereotypes, we believe them. They become part of our self-image. That process is called "**internalized oppression**" and that means that we beat ourselves up. Healing from the Oppression It is not our fault that we take on their lies about us. It is like growing up with a mirror that gives back a distorted image of you and not realizing that it is the mirror that is warped, not you!

Then at some wonderful moment,

- when you are talking about your experiences with someone who has had something happen to them like that
- when you are reading a book about a similar thing
- when you go to a group of other people whose lives are like yours,

you come to see that you did nothing wrong. You did not deserve to be fired or harassed or excluded. The problem is *them*, not you! Having a chance to talk to someone else who has had the same kinds of things happen to them as you have is a necessary step to healing and a step that can lead to action. Having this chance can happen in a group, at a meeting. Things that can get in the way

Unfortunately, sharing experiences with people is often not enough all by itself:

- African American women who worked in the civil rights struggle found that the men in the movement expected to be the leaders, that the women would do the support work.
- Lesbians working in the North American women's movement found that straight (non-lesbian) women were often as not embarrassed by us, telling us that we should keep a low profile or else people would think all feminists were lesbians.
- Women with disabilities have found working with men with disabilities difficult because the men think their issues and opinions are more worthwhile than the opinions and the issues of the women.
- People of colour find that working with white people on any issue is very hard because white people do not take racism into account.

Being a target for mistreatment (abuse) in one way does not translate (interpret) into an understanding of how people are targeted for different kinds of mistreatment in another way. What is to be done?

First, it is important to find a group that you share enough with that you feel safe and comfortable even though, of course, no one has exactly the same experiences as anyone else. That is how the women's movement came to be - it developed after women realized how much we could learn and how far we could go if we

- talked with each other
- relied on each other
- supported each other

without having to deal with men who undermine us or who make us feel like they were the only ones with any answers. There are now women's caucuses (groups) in many places such as the workplace, schools and universities, political parties and governments. The next step? Decide to form a group where all aspects of who you are, are recognized and supported. Groups that do this are ones like DAWN Canada: DisAbled Women's Network Canada. Vancouver Lesbian Connection and immigrant and visible minority women's associations. But just as gay men don't automatically understand sexism and straight women do not automatically understand homophobia (anti-homosexuality). Non-disabled women do not automatically understand disability issues. White women don't get racism. That is because of the lessons that

the culture has taught us about being white, non-disabled, male or raised Christian. That lesson about those aspects of ourselves is that we are, *in those respects*, normal. And that is called **internalized dominance**. Internalized Dominance When we go to a group, we take not only our internalized oppression (beating up on ourselves) but also our internalized dominance (beating up on others). Sometimes we just don't see the problems - we literally don't see. We take account (notice) of who is in the room with us but we don't notice (take account of) the people who are *not* in the room with us. We forget to think about the people who are not there. We believe they are not there because they chose not to come. We don't ask ourselves if they are not there because we have not made them welcome. Including Everyone (Inclusiveness)

There are some positive steps that you can take to make your group more inclusive.

1. Take time at the beginning of each meeting to do a round of introductions, and include the question of whether there is anything anyone needs to make their participation better or easier. This could range from

- the kind of seating someone needs if they have a physical disability,
- a need for regular breaks if they are a smoker or have Attention Deficit Disorder
- a need to be reminded not to take on any extra tasks
- a need to be out of the meeting by a particular time (e.g., for transportation)
- a need to detoxify (clean yourself) from an oppressive event by telling what happened to you since the last meeting.

2. Have people take responsibility for learning how your issue particularly affects people marginalized (who are stuck out on the edges) for other reasons. This means seeing who is in your group and who is missing:

- are you all white?
- all physically disabled?
- all Christian-raised?
- working class or middle class or poor?

3. Be aware of a group which is not represented and get one of the women who is there to find out about them. Also find out about:

- their priorities
- their views on the issues you are dealing with
- their willingness to make alliances (See "[Coalition Building](#)")
- what changes you might have to make to your own activities to accommodate (meet the needs of) people from other communities

4. Spend some time at your meetings finding out about the differences among you as well as the similarities. This could involve setting aside a half hour at meetings to ask people to talk about an individual difference. For example:

- a Jew in a group of people with disabilities can explain what it is like to be Jewish and what observances of Jewish Holidays are important to her
- an Indo-Canadian woman might talk about herself and about how prejudice against Indo-Canadian women operates in Canada

Solving Problems

Be willing to develop imaginative (creative) solutions for problems. Some of the most painful and fearful times in groups is when it appears as if the equality rights of one woman are contradictory (opposed) to the equality rights of another woman. Each woman believes that the other is prepared to leave the group if that is what it comes down to. In the face of a lifetime of being left out and a group where both women believed that her differences would be welcomed and respected, this is a very threatening and painful time. (See "[Conflict Resolution](#)")

When such an issue arises here are some suggestions for getting through these hard times:

- a woman not directly involved can be a mediator (referee, negotiator), reminding each of the women that an acceptable (agreeable) solution is one that helps everyone
- others need to understand that the disagreement is something that is sure to come up from time to time
- we all need to understand that this kind of issue is important and not just a detour from the group's "real" agenda of the meeting

We must expect, prepare for and deal with these kinds of misunderstandings because we have not developed ways of dealing with these kinds of issues in our groups before. When you are dealing with these situations of conflict, think "both/and" (including both women in the solution) instead of "either/or" (choosing between them and leaving one out). If a question seems to be, "Who is right?", think about how to ask the question differently. Often people feel powerless in situations of this kind and that has been taught to us.

For example: My mother told me, "If you don't have anything good to say, don't say anything at all." She taught me to avoid scenes. If someone else was "rude", for example by saying something racist, I was taught to look down (so no one would think I agreed with the person who said the racist thing) but to say nothing, so that it would go away more quickly. In fact, in situations like this, there is *no neutral place*.

If I, as a lesbian, hear an anti-lesbian or gay (homophobic) slur in a room full of people and no one says anything, I have to assume (believe) that they agree with the speaker. There is no other sure assumption (belief) that you can make. Feeling powerless and not knowing what to say - these are the ways our society has taught us to keep quiet when we see behaviour that targets others right before our eyes. But if we keep quiet, nothing will ever change.

Another thing we often feel when we have to deal with a sticky situation is that we don't have the skills. We are afraid that we will do it wrong, make it worse. It is true that we have not been taught these skills. We have

to learn them from each other and teach them to each other. It is also true that there are "a thousand ways to be right" - in other words, there is no one, magic formula which is the only thing that can work in any given situation.

When you are dealing with conflict between members, especially across a difference between them (a woman keeps forgetting to take her hand away from her mouth when she speaks and the woman who is hard of hearing cannot hear without being able to read her lips, for example) remember that each of us comes with our own internalized oppression. (The woman who keeps her hand over her mouth when she speaks might think that nobody really wants to hear what she has to say.) Every time someone in the target group (those being oppressed) has to speak up to protect her accessible space, her right to hear or to challenge beliefs held (assumptions made) by the dominant group (those doing the oppressing, the oppressors), she pays a cost from her dignity. It *costs* to be the one to point out that the group is making no space for you to hear better.

It costs because when you are that woman, you have to bear (tolerate) the humiliation (embarrassment) of being laughed at, overlooked or mistreated in the first place. On top of all of that, you have to put up with (bear) the embarrassment (humiliation) of drawing attention to yourself and to your disability.

If you are in the dominant (oppressive) group, be grateful that the woman who is feeling hurt and oppressed has enough trust to talk about the problem, instead of just leaving the meeting.

Diversity Working Together

When diversity issues come up in a group, they often seem to be "off the topic", not "on the agenda". But if a diverse group is going to work together for very long, diversity issues can never be treated as "off the topic". The group has to have an understanding that diversity issues may come "out of left field", but that is their nature! (See "[Diversity](#)") The group must also have a commitment to spend group time and energy dealing with diversity issues. It will *never* work to "schedule the issue of racism for our April meeting" or "include diversity issues on our list of priorities".

Diversity is about *how* we work together, whatever we are doing. And because none of us has had much training or experience in how to make that happen, our meetings may be slower and bumpier than they would be if all the people in the group were "people like us". Speaking of people like us, remember that you are all some of us, and we are all some of you. (See "[We Are Who You Are](#)") All communities of people of colour have lesbian daughters and gay sons. All communities of gay and lesbian peoples include women with disabilities. People with disabilities include people of colour with disabilities. Or lesbians of colour with disabilities. Or Jewish working class people of colour. We are all some of you and you are all some of us.

So when we make divisions between "us and them", the divisions are artificial and not real. And those divisions cut *us* off from the world. One of the most pervasive (noticeable) features of internalized dominance is that we are taught to be completely ignorant of the situation of people in the target position. Heterosexuals know nothing about lesbians, gay men, bisexual or transgendered people. White people know nothing about the lives

of people of colour. Non-disabled people probably have never given a thought to the ways women with disabilities manage our lives. And so on and on and on... Ignorance is not our fault (mostly).

We were not taught what we need to know about the lives of people less powerful than we are in this society. Think of what you learned in a Canadian school about the lives of:

- people with disabilities?
- working class people?
- aboriginal people?
- immigrant people of colour?
- homosexuals (gays and lesbians)?
- Jews?

And we were *certainly* never taught about the lives of working class lesbians of colour or Sephadic Jews with disabilities or Chinese-Canadian immigrant families in small towns or second generation Muslim girls who find themselves to be lesbian. Those complexities (complications) were not included in the pages of the textbooks that we learned from. So it is very easy to make a mistake about the ways someone is different from you, by acting on a stereotype, not having information or misinterpreting something according to what is considered to be "normal" in the dominant culture. What we *did* learn in school and in our culture, is that making a mistake, any mistake, is *baaad*. It is something that we avoid at all costs. So we tend to be defensive if someone says we did something or said something "wrong". For one thing, we tend to think it means that we are bad people.

Mistakes happen.

If you can adopt the attitude that making a mistake is a chance for a joyful learning experience, you will cause yourself much less pain and defensiveness. You will learn much more, too, and you will have a much better time doing it! Of course, it takes a while to change the "wrong = bad" equation, but the relief you feel when it begins to change is enormous.

Similarly, it is important to be supportive of other people who make mistakes. Do not disown a white person who says something racist - it will only raise the stakes for them for making a mistake. Instead, you can

- talk to them
- acknowledge times when something similar has happened to you

Sharing Power

A group that works together across the differences within it for the welcome of everyone is a group that must share power willingly. The structure of the group must be one that makes it possible to share power

easily. Otherwise the patterns of putting people on the fringes (marginalization) and exclusion (leaving them out) will be repeated in the group.

If there are important positions that only a few people share, for example, Chair or President, make sure that the diversity of the group is represented there. One good way to do this is to have a two-person or three-person Co-Chair (sharing the chair) position, so that at the very top diverse groups are represented.

TWO: STARTING A GROUP

This section takes you through some important steps that you should consider when you think about starting a group. Why do you want one? What kind will it be? What kinds of things will it do? What kinds of things can it do? Who do I want to do it with? How do I start one? Don't forget that you can start whatever kind of group meets your needs. This manual hopes to tell you about some basic skills that you might find useful for starting your own group - what you do in your group is up to you.

1. How to start your own group - Joan Meister

I have MS but didn't start using a wheelchair until I was 30. I got my first power chair early this year and shortly after, I got the pressure sore from hell, went to the hospital, came home to a rented hospital bed, lay down flat for three months, had plastic surgery and was flat for another month. It was the hardest thing I've ever done. I also was the first Chair of DAWN Canada for too long. I'm very lucky in my life because I have a wonderful home and friends, financial security and Sherman, the elder statesdog.

I got a B.A. (Hons. Eng. '77) and worked at SFU where I became my union's Coordinator before I had to stop working and go on Long Term Disability. I believe in worker's rights and the right of all persons to have the opportunity to work at meaningful, well paying jobs. I was also active in the women's movement and left wing politics. These experiences only just began to prepare me for the job of DAWN Canada Chair, the second hardest thing I've ever done.

I've been on different national and provincial Boards and Executives (e.g., Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work, Women and Words, National Action Committee on the Status of Women, BC Coalition of People with Disabilities, DAWN BC). Currently, I am the Chair of the Board of Directors of the BC Centre of Excellence for Women's Health and President of ORW: Opportunities through Rehabilitation and Work Society.

- Let's say you are a woman who recently became a paraplegic and the only group of disabled people in your city is a little bunch of men who play wheelchair basketball. You really want to talk to someone about this creepy guy who hassles you all the time at work.
- Let's say you've been blind since birth and you want to talk to someone about having a baby and being a mum.
- Let's say you have a mental handicap and you want to talk to someone about menopause.
- Let's say you are a deaf woman who wants to talk to someone about everything.

Chances are, you'd rather talk about any or all of these things with another woman - one with a disability,

maybe the same disability as yours. Someone who's been there. Someone that you won't have to explain the obvious to. Someone who won't ask too many dumb questions. Someone you'll feel comfortable with.

How do you find her?

Talk to a friend about what you feel like you need in the way of support, political action, advocacy or plain old fun. It helps just to say things out loud to an understanding ear. It helps get things more clear in your mind and that's always a good thing.

And what you get clear about is whatever you want it to be. "It" could be anything:

- from sex education, to
- alternative healing methods, to
- raising children as a single mum with a disability, to
- responding to the provincial government's recent changes to
- mental health policies

But once you decide that you want to talk to other women about it, you're ready to call a meeting together about it! Once you know what the topic for discussion is, you should think about who you'd like to get together with to talk about it. In other words, who you'd like to invite to join you at the meeting.

You might know their names as friends or co-workers or other students at school. You might only know that you'd like to talk with a woman (or ten of them) who knows more about it than you do. These are the women you want to meet with about it.

You can reach out to them in a number of ways:

Make a few phone calls to find out if friends want to talk about it. Ask them if they know anybody else who wants to talk about it, too.

Put a notice in the local or provincial (or even national) disability or women's magazine or paper.

Put a notice in the newsletter that you might be familiar with in a disability-specific way (for example, the CNIB, the MS Society, the Heart Foundation, etc.).

Get on the Internet (See "[Electronic Communications](#)")

In each case, it's best if you announce to the women what the topic is ahead of time. You may as well get women who want to be there for the same general reasons.

If this sounds like what you'd like to do, it's probably time for you to read more in this section about meetings and how they can work

2. Meetings, Meetings, Meetings - Joan Meister

The first time I ever went to a "real" meeting it was for my union and it was just before a strike vote. Very tense. There was this guy on the other side of the room of about 300 people who kept jumping up and yelling "Question!". Nobody answered one that I could tell and nobody actually asked one, either. I was confused and intimidated for the whole time.

Meetings don't have to be like that if they are well organized and if everybody understands the rules. Like most things, practice makes perfect when it comes to understanding and participating in a meeting. Ask around and find a couple of meetings that are about things that interest you. If you can, check it out. Compare notes and decide how you would want to handle things differently. Go to a General Meeting of your provincial disability organization, or women's group, or city council, or political party or ...

Purpose

The purpose of having a meeting is simple: to get together with others who are concerned about the same issue (thing) and who want to talk about it and maybe do something about it together. You could get together with two other women with disabilities or twenty and talk about the fact that you aren't happy about your home care service, for instance.

It might feel good just to compare notes with other women who **really** know what you're talking about. And who have different information and ideas to share with you. And then you might decide to meet again to talk some more about this issue. Or you might want to talk about something else. You might even decide that you'd like to get together to write a letter to government that describes the problems you have all experienced with your home care service. These are meetings.

Participants

Meetings can be made up of

- a group of friends
- club, union or Society members
- colleagues
- or, even total strangers.

Meetings can have just a few women or lots. The only common thread is that you all have interests or concerns about the same things (issues).

Meetings can even happen over the telephone and then they're called conference calls or teleconferences.

Don't try to have a conference call meeting with deaf women or women who need other languages translated before asking them about their needs ahead of time - it can be time consuming and, therefore, can be frustrating or even expensive. Ask them first for all of their advice!

Process

Chairing

It is a good idea to have someone act as the Chair for the meeting. A Chair is sort of like a traffic cop:

- she makes sure that everyone follows the rules of the meeting and is headed in the same direction
- she makes sure that women stick to the topic
- she acts in an unbiased (fair) way
- she keeps a speaker's list and makes sure that everyone who wishes to speak, gets a chance to speak
- It's a good idea to get a Chair who is familiar with chairing the kind of meeting you wish to have. It's an important job.

Rules of Order

DAWN Canada uses *Bourinot's Rules of Order* (and so do many other groups - like the Canadian parliament!). There are different ways to organize the business of a meeting (See "[Labour Process](#)", "[The Pollatch Way](#)" and "[A Consideration of Feminist Process](#)"). Whatever system you decide on, there will likely be some kind of rules that are agreed on at the beginning of the meeting to help keep a meeting going in a way that allows each woman to have her say. (See "[We Are Who You Are](#)")

It is best if the Chair knows how a meeting runs and has been to a few before. If she doesn't, a meeting can be very long, not much fun and doesn't get much done. At the end of a meeting, each woman should feel as though she has had a chance to hear information about the topic of the meeting that will help her. She should also feel that she has been able to state her opinions about the topic(s) on the agenda. She should feel welcome. (See "[A Feminist Perspective](#)")

Agenda

An agenda is just a list of what is going to be discussed at the meeting and in what order (sort of like a menu). The agenda should be read at the beginning of the meeting or if you can, send the draft out ahead of time. The first thing the meeting does is approve the agenda. That way, everybody knows what to expect and there are no items left off the agenda that are important to someone. This is called "Approval of the Agenda" and should be first.

The next thing that usually happens at a meeting is the "Approval of the Minutes" (of the last meeting). Both of these things help the meeting to do what's most important and to know what's been done before

Depending on how complicated your agenda gets, it can also be divided into "New Business" and "Old Business", new things to talk about and things that didn't get sorted out last time. There can be a special section

for dealing with money called "Finances" - if you have any or if you want to get some.

The last thing on the agenda should be the item called "Next Meeting". This is where you decide on the date and time of the next meeting or if you're going to have a next meeting. If you do it at the end of the meeting, you can set a next meeting time which is convenient for most women. It's a lot easier to do it when most members are present in the same room than to do it later by phone.

Minutes

Minutes are the written record of a meeting. It is important to keep track of important decisions that are made at meetings. The Chair should make sure, right at the beginning, that someone does the minutes. It is very difficult to chair a meeting and take minutes at the same time.

If you decide to become a Society, then you are responsible for keeping minutes and having them available for all members to read. (See "[By-laws](#)") The Secretary, if you have one, usually does the minutes but most often they get done by whoever volunteers. Minutes don't have to be too complicated or long, they just have to keep track of the decisions that are made. (See below for a description of the meeting and minutes of the "[Robin Red-Breast Club](#)").

It helps to have an accurate record of what you are going to do and who is going to do it and that's what minutes do.

Motions

Motions are generally how decisions are made at meetings. Motions must have someone "move the motion" and must have someone else "second the motion". After "discussion on the motion", the chair asks the members to vote "in favour" or "against" (yes or no). The motion "carries" (passes) or gets "defeated" (fails) depending on how many women vote "in favour" or "against". It can get more complicated than that but those are the basics.

Robin Red-Breast Club Meeting

Here's an example of how motions go and the minutes for that part of the Robin Red-Breast Club meeting which was held in the branches of the old oak tree:

The Chair says:"Can I have a motion about what to have for lunch?"

Jill raises her wing and the Chair recognizes her. Jill says:"I move that we have worms for lunch."

The Chair asks for someone to "second the motion". (Motions can fail to get recognized by the meeting for lack of someone to second the motion.)

Sally puts up her wing and says: "I second the motion."

The person who moved the motion gets to "speak to the motion" or "motivate" it. Jill talks about how plump and juicy the worms are since the rain that morning. The Chair asks for other speakers "to the motion" (for and against).

There are a few raised wings that indicate speakers wishing to speak, the Chair starts a speaker's list ([see below](#)). The Chair calls on the speakers to speak in the order that they appear on the list. If there is lots of discussion, the list can be quite long. After a number of speakers, if all speak either "for" or "against" the motion, the Chair can ask the meeting if it's ready to vote on the motion.

But then there is a flutter of feathers and Alleson (who was on the speaker's list) says she wants to "amend" the motion. That means that she wants to change it.

She says: "I move that the motion now reads that we have *fried* worms for lunch!"

A motion to amend the "main" motion must also have someone second it (a "seconder"). The Chair calls for a seconder but no one raises her wing. After waiting a few moments and there is no one who raises her wing to second the "amendment to the main motion".

The Chair announces that: "This motion (the amendment) fails for lack of a seconder."

"Whew," someone twitters softly.

Then Susan says: "I move to add ant's eggs to the main motion."

The Chair asks for a seconder. Dorothy raises her wing and seconds the amendment. Seeing many nods and no raised wings, the Chair asks the meeting to vote on the amendment. "All those in favour. All those opposed." The Chair announces that the amendment "carries".

The Chair asks the minute taker to read the amended motion to the meeting. She reads: "MOVED that we have worms *and ant's eggs* for lunch."

There are hardly any more speakers and they all speak in favour of worms and ant's eggs for lunch.

Once again, the Chair says that she thinks the meeting is ready to vote. "All in favour?" There is a fluttering of feathers and a snicking of beaks. The Chair looks around the meeting and announces that the motion "carries unanimously" (all of the votes are "in favour", with none "opposed"). A cheer is heard. Everyone is happy about having worms and ant's eggs for lunch. The Chair preens one of her long tail feathers.

The minutes of this portion of the meeting of the Robin Red-Breast Club will look something like this:

MINUTES OF THE SPRING MEETING of the ROBIN RED-BREAST CLUB

Lunch Discussion

Jill moved a motion which was seconded by Sally:

MOVED that we have worms for lunch (Jill/Sally)

Ellen moved an amendment to the main motion:

MOVED to add *fried* to the motion.

(Alleson...)

The amendment failed for lack of a seconder.

Susan moved a motion which was seconded by Dorothy:

MOVED AN AMENDMENT to add *ant's eggs*. (Susan/Dorothy).....**CARRIED**

Discussion followed on the amended main motion.

MOVED that we have worms and ant's eggs for lunch (Jill/Sally).....**CARRIED**

The meeting broke for lunch and the members flew off to the green, grassy field below the old oak tree.

Speaker's List

The Chair should keep a list of the women who wish to speak at a meeting in the order that they indicate their wish to speak. This is usually done by raising your hand (wing!). The Chair writes down the names as women raise their hands. This is a speaker's list. If she needs help, the Chair can ask someone else to take down the names for her.

Some women can't raise their hands or if they are deaf, maybe don't speak with their voices. The chair and the rest of the meeting must accommodate these differences. Each woman must have the opportunity to express her opinion. It is the Chair's job to make sure that she can. (See "[Enabling the Environment](#)")

It is every member's responsibility not to interrupt another speaker. Not only is it very rude and causes confusion for everyone but women who are hard of hearing have a difficult time hearing or understanding what's going on. Get on the speaker's list and observe it.

Another way to get through the agenda or to ensure that all women get a chance to speak is to time the speakers, to keep track of how long each speaker speaks. This is another job for the Chair - to keep speakers on track and on time. Usually three minutes is enough time for someone to say what they need to say. But it all depends on:

- the needs around the table
- the number and type of items on the agenda
- the length of time you have for holding the meeting (and when the transportation is arranged for)

The Chair is responsible for making sure that each woman who wishes to speak can do so and in a "first come,

first served" way, according to the speaker's list. She can also keep track of the woman who never speaks. The Chair can ask her if there's anything that can be done to make it more possible for her to participate. Do this privately, during a break, and you might be surprised at the response.

Phone List

Before the end of the meeting, make sure you send around a piece of paper to get women's addresses and phone numbers. That way, you can get in touch again. Make sure you tell them:

- why you want it
- that they don't have to fill it out if they don't want to
- that you will keep the information private (See "[Confidentiality](#)")

Where

Meetings can happen where you want them to happen, where it's cheap (or free) and accessible. Depending on the size of the meeting and the number of people you expect to attend, meetings can happen in your livingroom, a community centre activity room, a hospital room or a board room. As long as it's accessible, it can be in any of these places (See "[Access Needs Checklist](#)")

It's best to get a space that has good public transit routes nearby. It's also important to:

- check access very carefully;
- find a free space;
- make sure there's enough room for the estimated number of wheelchairs, guide dogs, attendants, etc.

You can always use someone's living room but, of course, only if it's accessible.

When

This is one of the trickiest parts of organizing a meeting. When can everybody make it? Unless it's a small meeting and you can get in touch with everyone well ahead of time, all you can do is make a "best guess" for a time that is far enough ahead that most women are likely to be free. Consider some of the following:

- safety, if women are coming to an evening meeting
- rest times, bedtimes or nap times
- different religious holidays
- school schedules for children (and, therefore, parents) and other students
- work weeks, etc.

Transportation

If you can afford to look after transportation, start doing it well ahead of time. If not, make sure that you give everyone lots of notice of the meeting so that she can arrange for whatever kind of transportation she needs.

Access Checklist

This is a very important area and there is an "[Access Needs Checklist](#)" for you to use to make sure that you think of everything. Photocopy it. If you can, phone everyone first and check the information against the list. Keep track on a sheet of paper. Also look at "Enabling the Environment" on page 66 for some ideas on how to solve some access problems.

If you do a good job here, you will truly have a meeting that will be accessible to women with all kinds of disabilities and you can conduct a cross-disability meeting that will let every woman feel comfortable, able to participate and welcome (See "[Cross Disability](#)").

Invitations to Other Meetings

You will eventually be invited to speak to another group about your experiences as a woman with a disability. Don't panic. And remember that the reason that they have asked you to come and speak to them is because they want to hear from you.

For instance, the "Women's Faculty Club" wants to hear about your experiences as a blind woman who is going to their school. Here are some things you can do to get ready:

- find out as much as you can about exactly what they want someone to speak about - if you feel that you're not the expert since you're not blind or a student but Sally is, tell them you'll get Sally to call them - and then make sure that you or Sally does get back to them.
- make **sure** that their location is accessible. If it isn't, make helpful suggestions about where they could hold their meeting or how to get in touch with sign language interpreters, etc. Send them a copy of the "Access Needs Checklist" on page 211 that you can copy for them.
- if they aren't willing to make their meeting accessible, let them know (very politely, of course) that DAWN does not attend inaccessible meetings on principle and send them an "Access Needs Checklist" anyway
- prepare ahead of time. This might mean that you will
 - find out about their group
 - read information about the topic
 - phone someone else who has lots of familiarity with the topic
- phone someone with lots of experience with public speaking for some tips

Here are a few good reasons why you should accept these kinds of invitations even though the thought of speaking to a bunch of strangers might make you feel like throwing up:

- one of the members of the Women's Faculty Club might be a woman with a disability and would like to join

your DAWN group

- these women might be in a position to make important policy suggestions about putting money toward taping their classes and materials or better access in general
- they might like to donate money to your group
- there might be some good food, it might be lots of fun and you might meet some really interesting people!

3. Enabling the Environment - Maria Barile

Maria Barile was born in Italy and immigrated to Canada in 1963. She has been active in the disability rights movement since 1970, and is a founding member of DAWN Canada. Maria writes, lectures and conducts action research in the areas of disability rights, feminism, New Reproductive and Genetic Technologies, health and violence against women.

Maria's other areas of interest include exploring the role of modern eugenic practices in the lives of persons with disabilities. She is also interested in the promotion of disability culture in Canada.

Maria has a BSW with a minor in Women's Studies ('87) and a MSW ('93) from McGill University.

Chairing a Meeting - What Does It Mean?

For me, chairing a meeting means directing its process. In other words, setting up the practical ways that group members communicate within the given time allowed for a meeting. Action Femmes Handicapées des Montreal (AFHM) has had many types of meetings such as: self-help, action oriented and problem solving, among others. Each has required a different style of chairing. One of the most important lessons for me was to recognize my own limitations in chairing meetings.

Chairing A Meeting With Communication Barriers and Diversities

Some of these limitations were due to my hearing and communication disabilities. That is, as someone who is hearing impaired, leading a group has meant learning by trial and error. FM systems are great when they work. However, mine was a used one given to me by the Ministry of Education and it broke down often. The reality is that, even with the FM system, you can't really hear everything.

My second barrier was that my own voice fluctuates in volume and I can't hear it well enough to know what level it's at. Unless someone points out that I cannot be heard because I am speaking too quietly, I have no idea. Add to that is my lack of articulation since English is my second language and French is my third. (Italian is my first.)

AFHM is a bilingual group with women who come from different ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. One of the group's greatest strengths, it's diversity (it's differences), appeared to be an obstacle for me as chair, with my disabilities. I needed to know the language being spoken at any given time and what was being said.

I have always believed in the feminist notion of independence. The rehabilitation institutions taught me that

the meaning of independence is that I need to do everything on my own. For the longest time and against my own best interests, I refused to look at the problems and could not see any solutions.

Then, when I was a social work student, someone challenged my ability to chair a meeting in class. And that created a real barrier for me since I felt (mistakenly) that I needed to prove that I could chair a meeting on my own, independently and with no help

Enabling Group Environments

"Independence means having the personal and economic means to make choices". In 1989, I heard and understood this statement and it changed my way of looking at independence. I stopped trying to follow the non-disabled leadership style and started doing it my way. I asked to have a co-chair that spoke French better than I did. We sometimes had an outside animator for specific group activities.

Mostly I began to pay attention to where I sat. Under the best of circumstances, I need to have people in front of me to lip-read. Ideally, I need a "group table" which is like a half moon. If I sit opposite the group members, they and I can see each other the best. Round tables also work for better viewing.

However, we did not have an ideal situation. The YWCA, who kindly allowed us the use of some free space for meetings, had only rectangular tables. I began to experiment with locations. Finally, it hit me. As long as I am in the center of either side, I can see best!

AFHM is not very wealthy as an organization; oral interpreters and sign language interpreters are rarely hired. However, I did manage to have the group note-taker (secretary) sit next to me. In that way, between the co-chair who helped with keeping track of people who spoke (speakers list), the note-taker and a clear explanation of rules for the meeting, a hearing-impaired Chairperson can lead a good meeting. With time and persistence, other group members and I learned that changing the environment can help in chairing a group better.

Some Trials And Errors:

Running a bilingual meeting can be both entertaining and frustrating. For example, one person says one word in one language and it is misheard in another language. It can be amusing once the error is seen but quite confusing when one person is hurt by what she thinks has happened and really it's something that just got lost in the translation, or something.

At first, we tried translating everything that was said. That took lots of time. Then we tried two co-chairs with one who looked at one side of the table for speakers, the other one the other side. Each co-chair would summarize in her own language. Finally, we settled on each person speaking in the language of her choice and a third person summarizing it if necessary. All information is provided in French with an English summary. Our Newsletter follows the same format.

Recommendations

1. Choose a co-chair and note-taker that you can communicate with easily and be comfortable with: a co-chair that you can lip-read easily and a note-taker whose handwriting you can read.
2. Understand your own limitations and share them with the group.
3. Ask them to share their own concern about it.
4. Ask group members for feedback on how clearly they can hear you.
5. Set specific rules for who is talking so that you can follow (use a speakers list).
6. If your group can afford it, use technologies.
7. Explore your sitting position. (Initially I would try to walk closer to the person who spoke. That was a bad idea as it disrupts the flow and I missed what the next person would say.)
8. Ask someone close to you to repeat things for you. (Make sure that in your introduction you explain that to people)
9. Before the meeting get to know new people so that you know the preferred spoken language as well as any specific articulation, speech pattern so that you can easily lip read

Conclusion

Setting up a process means identifying what works best for a specific person or group of people. Indeed, with many modifications the group chaired by someone with communication related disabilities would look different than one led by a non-disabled Chairperson. However, if we, as a community, are going to ensure that inaccessible environments allow our participation then we must find innovative ways to create access to anything and everything that we want to do; from the meeting room to the boardrooms to (eventually) the parliament buildings.

Keep a speaker's list.

4. Society Status: Pros and Cons

The practical point to going to the trouble and expense of becoming a Society is to be in a better position to get money from different sources. Before they give you any money, almost all funders require that you are a Society or that you are in the process of becoming one. This includes all levels of government and foundations.

Another good reason to go to the trouble of passing a mandatory (required by the *Society Act*) constitution and by-laws is that it forces you to be very clear about who you are, what you hope to do and how you propose to do it.

The place to apply for provincial society status is at the provincial government level. Be aware that the kind of things they approve tends to shift a bit in the political winds (often from election to election, political party to political party).

Check with your provincial disability group or the local group affiliated with the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (See "[Lists](#)") to get some advice. They'll be able to tell you whether you should identify yourself as an advocacy organization (something the federal government frowned on for years) or whether to be safe and just talk about education and communication.

A. Constitution

A constitution describes your organizational goals in the best of all possible worlds - like if you had enough money and energy to do all of the stuff there is to do for women with disabilities. Look at the DAWN Canada Constitution, which follows, and you'll see that we're going to do it all! Seriously, though, this is the place where you state your intentions. This is also the place where you can declare yourself to be as diverse, feminist and cross disability as you are going to be.

You can pretty much copy the DAWN Canada Constitution if you like it and just change the name and geographical indicators. You might like to do a bit more research and ask the provincial disability group or women's group to send you a copy of theirs. The main thing is that you like how this document describes who you see yourselves as and generally what you hope to do. Ask for a copy of their Constitution from a completely different kind of group. All of this kind of information is only a phone call away.

A constitution is required by the *Society Act* people.

CONSTITUTION of DAWN CANADA

(as amended and approved Sunday, November 13, 1994 at the Annual General Meeting of DAWN Canada, Vancouver, BC)

1. Name

The name of the Society is "DAWN Canada: DisAbled Women's Network Canada".

2. Purposes

The purposes of the Society are:

1. to be a national, feminist, pro-choice voice of women with disabilities in Canada and Quebec
2. to provide support, information, and resources to women with disabilities in Canada;
3. to enhance communication among women with disabilities, and between the disabled consumer movement and the women's movement of the needs and concerns of women with disabilities in Canada;
4. to educate and raise awareness of the general public regarding the needs and concerns of women with

disabilities in Canada;

5. to educate and raise the awareness of women with disabilities, all organizations dealing with issues affecting persons with disabilities and all organizations dealing with issues affecting women to ensure that equal access to all goods and services is provided;
6. to reach out and remain sensitive to the unique needs of all women with disabilities including aboriginal women, black women, south Asian women, Asian women and other members of linguistic and ethnic minorities, including French-Canadian women and immigrant women, women in institutions, lesbians, single parents, and others in Canada;
7. to provide role models for disabled girls and to encourage and support them as they develop into mature and independent Canadian women;
8. to promote research on all issues affecting women with disabilities in Canada;
9. to work in cooperation, whenever possible, with others who share our concerns for equality and social justice in Canada; and
10. to liaise with women with disabilities internationally.

3. Winding Up

In the event of winding up or dissolution of the Society, funds and assets of the Society remaining after the satisfaction of its debts and liabilities, shall be given or transferred to such organization or organizations concerned with social problems or organizations promoting the same purposes of this Society as may be determined by the members of the Society at the time of winding up or dissolution. If effect cannot be given to the aforesaid provisions, then such funds shall be given or transferred to some other organizations, providing however that any such organization referred to in this paragraph shall be a registered charity recognized by the Department of National Revenue, Taxation, as qualified as such under the provisions of the Income Tax Act of Canada from time to time in effect.

4. Non-Profit

The purpose of the Society shall be carried out without purposes of gain for its members and any profits or other accretions to the Society shall be used for promoting its purposes.

5. Alterability

Paragraphs 3,4 and 5 of the constitution are unalterable.

B. By-Laws

Read the following set of DAWN Canada By-laws and you'll get an idea about what by-laws are intended to do. You will notice that there are a lot of details about **how** DAWN Canada is supposed to behave. By-laws are a bunch of rules that let everyone know what to expect of all members and, therefore, of the organization.

By-laws are required by the *Society Act* people, too. Most people find that by-laws are pretty boring. And they sure aren't written in Plain Language. But if you're going to become a society you have to have some. If you want to find out what they really mean and how they can actually be a good thing to have, ask someone to help.

(Some people find them kind of interesting and even fun!)

Once again, if you like what you see here (below), copy them. You'll have to change the name and geographical locations since DAWN Canada is a national organization and you probably aren't going to start one of those. The *Society Act* people are very strict about specific things like quorum (the minimum number of people who must be present at a meeting for decisions to be made). These regulations may be different from province to province so check it out.

Change what you want to change. Lots of thought has gone into these by-laws but that doesn't mean that they can't get better or suit you better. Maybe you want to have co-chairs, or representatives on the Board of Directors from major cities only or reps from only small towns. Maybe it makes more sense to you to have a different minimum size for your Board of Directors.

All of these decisions have probably been thought over by someone you know who has done it with another group. Ask around. If you can't locate anyone who has dealt with by-laws before, call up your local or provincial labour council for advice. (That's where I learned about by-laws - in my union.) Ask someone in a women's group. Phone your local MP's office. Politicians know about by-laws and constitutions.

When you have a draft of the Constitution and By-Laws that make you happy, it's time to take them to the membership for approval at your founding conference!

BYLAWS of DAWN Canada: DisAbled Women's Network Canada

(as amended and approved on Sunday November 13, 1994 at the Annual General Meeting of DAWN Canada, Vancouver, Canada)

ARTICLE I - MEMBERSHIP

There shall be four categories of membership in the Society:

1. Active
2. Supporting
3. Sustaining
4. Provincial and Territorial Affiliate Group

1. Active Membership

A) Active membership in the Society shall be open to all women with disabilities and organizations controlled

by women with disabilities resident in Canada who subscribe to the objectives of the Society as outlined in the Constitution.

B) Active members may have voice and vote at all meetings of the Society

C) The subscribers to the Constitution and these Bylaws shall have the same duties, rights, and responsibilities as any other active member.

D) It is the duty of each active member, in order to remain in good standing in this Society to comply with the Bylaws of the Society and pay, when due, the annual dues for the current year.

2. Supporting Membership

A) Supporting membership in the Society shall be open to all women and organizations controlled by women resident in Canada who subscribe to the objectives of the Society as outlined in the Constitution.

B) Supporting members may have voice but no vote at all meetings of the Society

C) It is the duty of each supporting member, in order to remain in good standing in this Society, to comply with the Bylaws of the Society and pay, when due, the annual dues for the current year.

3. Sustaining Membership

A) Sustaining membership in the Society shall be open to any individual or organization that supports the objectives of the Society as set forth in the Constitution.

B) Sustaining members shall not be entitled to attend the meetings of the Society except upon prior invitation by the Chairperson of the meeting.

C) Sustaining members who attend meetings of the Society shall have voice, at the discretion of the Chairperson, but shall not be entitled to vote.

D) It is the duty of each sustaining member, in order to remain in good standing in this Society, to comply with the By-laws of the Society and pay, when due, the annual dues for the current year.

4. Provincial And Territorial Affiliate Group Membership

A) Provincial and Territorial Affiliate Group membership in the Society shall be open to one provincial or territorial group of women with disabilities per province or territory. This Province or Territorial Affiliate Group member must be controlled by a Board Of Directors made up of women with disabilities. It must subscribe

to the objectives of the Society as outlined in the Constitution.

B) Provincial and Territorial Affiliate Group members shall elect delegate(s) to various events as and when indicated to them by the Board Of Directors of the Society.

C) Provincial and Territorial Affiliate Group delegates may have voice and vote at all general meetings of the Society.

D) It is the duty of each Provincial or Territorial Affiliate Group Member, in order to remain in good standing in this Society to:

i) comply with the Constitution and Bylaws of the Society

ii) pay, when due, the annual dues for the current year, and

iii) provide the national Board Of Directors with a current provincial or territorial mailing list of provincial or territorial affiliate group members annually.

ARTICLE II - TERMINATION OR WITHDRAWAL OF MEMBERSHIP

1. Any active, supporting or sustaining member who desires to withdraw from the Society shall notify the Board Of Directors in writing to that effect and on receipt by the Board Of Directors of such notice, the member shall cease to be a member.

2. Any active, supporting or sustaining member shall cease to be a member upon failure to pay the annual membership dues.

A) the fees will be determined at the last meeting of the board before the Annual General Meeting

B) the fees shall be based on a sliding scale for individuals and organizations.

C) the fees shall be waived at the discretion of the Board of Directors

3. Any active, supporting or sustaining member may be expelled from the Society by a special resolution of members passed in a general meeting called for that purpose. (See article III.4.B)

4. At a meeting described in article II.3, a member has the right to speak on her/his own behalf and shall have recourse to the rules of natural justice.

ARTICLE III - MEETINGS OF THE MEMBERSHIP

1. Annual General Meetings

- A) The Annual General Meeting of the Society shall be held during the month of May of every year, at a place in Canada and on a date to be fixed by the Board of Directors.
- B) If for any reason the Annual General Meeting of members is not held during the month of May in any year, such meeting may be held at such other time as may be determined by the Board of Directors.
- C) A quorum for the Annual General Meeting shall be ten (10) active members present.
- D) At each Annual General Meeting shall be presented:
 - i. a report of the activities of the Society for the previous year and the financial statements of the Society
 - ii. any new bylaws or changes to existing Bylaws approved by DAWN Canada in the previous year for approval
 - iii. such other materials or information relating to the affairs of the Society as is, in the opinion of the Board, or interest or importance to the members
 - iv. items for which the Secretary has received prior notice from members
 - v. other business relating to the affairs of the Society which a majority of the members present at the meeting consent to discuss and
 - vi. election of new DAWN Canada Board Of Directors

2. Special General Meetings

- A) A special general meeting may be called at any time by the Board Of Directors or upon written request to the Board of Directors by not less than ten percent (10%) of the members.
- B) The purpose of the Special General Meeting shall be described in the request described in article III.2.A and the purpose shall also be described in the notification to the membership.
- C) Any persons calling a meeting of the membership of the Society pursuant to article III.2.A, shall be responsible for the administration and preparation of the meeting.
- D) All costs incurred through the preparation and administration of the Special General Meeting shall be covered by the Society.
- E) A quorum for a Special General Meeting shall be fifteen (15) active members.

3. General Meetings

- A) General meetings shall be held not less frequently than once every six months.
- B) At least fourteen (14) days written notice of all general meetings of the Society shall be given to members, specifying the time, place, and purpose of the meeting.

4. General Regulations Governing Meetings

- A) A simple majority (51%) is required for adoption of regular resolutions.
- B) Special resolutions of the Society require a three-quarters (3/4) majority and written notification stating the intent of the resolution must be given to all members at least fourteen (14) days in advance of the meeting.
- C) Only active members of the Society can vote at any meeting of the members of the Society.
- D) Meetings of the Society are open to sustaining members at the discretion of the Chairperson
- E) The rules of procedure at any Annual, General or Special meeting shall be *Bourinot's Rules Of Order*.

ARTICLE IV - PROXIES

1. Every member entitled to vote at a meeting of the members may, by means of a proxy, appoint a person who need not be a member, but must be a woman, as her nominee to attend and act at the meeting in the manner, to the extent and with the power conferred by the proxy.
2. A proxy shall be executed by a member or her attorney, authorized in writing, and ceases to be valid three month from it's date.
3. A proxy shall contain the date thereof and the appointment and name of the nominee and may contain restrictions, limitations or instructions as to the manner in which the proxy is to be used as well as a revocation of a former proxy.
4. In addition to revocation in any other manner permitted by law, a proxy may be revoked by instrument in writing executed by the member or by her attorney authorized in writing, and deposited either at the office of the Society at any time up to and including the last business day preceding the day of the meeting, or any adjournment thereof; or, with the Chairperson of such meeting on the day of the meeting; or, adjournment thereof, and upon either of such deposits, the proxy is revoked.
5. The Directors may by resolution fix a time not exceeding forty-eight (48) hours, excluding Saturdays and holidays, preceding any meeting or adjourned meeting of the members before which time proxies to be used

at that meeting must be deposited with the Society or an agent thereof, and any period of time so fixed shall be specified in the notice calling the meeting or in the information circular relating thereto.

ARTICLE V - DIRECTORS AND OFFICERS

1. The Board Of Directors shall be made up of women with disabilities and consist of the following officers:

- Chairperson
- Past Chairperson
- Vice Chairperson
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Members At Large

A) There shall be no more than twelve (12) and no fewer than seven(7) members elected to the Board of Directors.

B) The Chairperson and Vice Chairperson and no less than five (5) other members of the Board of Directors shall be women with disabilities.

C) The Board of Directors shall be elected by membership at each Annual General Meeting.

D) A quorum for a meeting of the officers of the Board of Directors shall be three (3) members who must be either the Chairperson, Past Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Secretary, or Treasurer.

E) All members of the Board of Directors shall be members of the Society

F)The Directors shall hold terms of one (1) or two (2) years, to be determined at the first Board Of Directors meeting held after the Annual General Meeting. The Past Chairperson shall cease to hold the position and title of Past Chairperson one year from the date of the Annual General Meeting at which the current Board Of Directors is elected.

2. Consent of a nominee for election as a director of the Society must be obtained before her nomination.

3. The Directors shall take office immediately upon their election.

ARTICLE VI - DUTIES OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

1. The Board shall be responsible for carrying on the business and activities of the Society in such a way as to fulfill the Society's purposes and objectives.

2. The Directors shall serve without compensation and no Director shall, directly or indirectly, receive any profit from her position as such. Reasonable expenses incurred by any Director in the performance of her duty may be paid.

3. Any resolution passed by the Board may be vetoed by a special resolution at a general meeting of DAWN Canada (see article III.4.B).

4. Minutes of all board meetings shall be available for inspection by board members.

5. Paid employees shall be hired by the board and shall hold positions on such terms as the board shall determine.

6. Board meetings shall be held from time to time at the call of the Chairperson with a minimum of seven (7) days notice given.

7. Any meeting of the board is open to all active members and supporting members of DAWN Canada. Sustaining members may attend by prior invitation of the Chairperson (Article I.3.B)

ARTICLE VII - DUTIES OF THE OFFICERS

1. The Officers shall consist of a Chairperson, Past Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Secretary, and Treasurer and shall be elected by the Board Of Directors from its membership at its first meeting after the Annual General Meeting of the Society.

2. The duties of the Officers of the Society shall be as follows:

A) The **Chairperson** shall preside at all meetings of members, directors and the executive officers. She shall be a member *ex officio* of all committees.

B) The **Vice Chairperson** shall perform the duties of the Chairperson in the absence of the Chairperson and shall be responsible for the internal communications between and among DAWN Canada Members and liaison with organizations with whom DAWN Canada is linked.

C) The **Past Chairperson** shall bring added continuity and smoother changes from board to board.

D) The **Treasurer** shall have custody of all monies, obligations and contracts belonging to the Society and be responsible for the preparation of the annual budget and monthly and annual financial statements.

E) The **Secretary** shall be the clerk of the Society and be responsible for organizing the recording of the proceedings of all general and special meetings of members and meetings of the directors and the executive. She shall be the custodian of any seal of the Society and other papers and documents belonging to

the Society. She shall perform such duties as are usually performed by a Secretary. She shall maintain at the offices of DAWN Canada, a corporate book in which shall be kept:

- i) a copy of the letters patent and of any supplementary letters patent of DAWN Canada to be kept for seven (7) years;
- ii) a copy of all bylaws and special resolutions of the Society;
- iii) a register of members, alphabetically arranged, in which is set out the names and addresses of all members of DAWN Canada and which shall be kept for seven (7) years; and
- iv) a register of members of the Board Of Directors in which is set out the names and addresses of all women who are or who have been board members and the date on which she became a member and if she has ceased to be a member, the date on which she ceased to be a member of the Board Of Directors of DAWN Canada.
- v) the corporate book shall be open for inspection and for the taking of extracts there from by all members of the Society during normal business hours at the office of the Society.

ARTICLE VIII - REPLACEMENT AND REMOVAL OF DIRECTORS

1. Vacancies in office and on the Board may be filled by the Board on an interim basis, subject to membership at the next general meeting.
2. The Society may, by special resolution (see article IV.4.B), remove a Director before the expiration of office and may, by ordinary resolution, appoint another member of the Society in her place.
3. An office of the board shall be considered to be vacant if:
 - A) The Director ceases to be a member of the Society, or
 - B) The Director is absent from three (3) consecutive meetings of the Board without giving prior notice to the Board.

ARTICLE IX - OFFICE OF THE SOCIETY

1. The head office of DAWN Canada shall be in Canada

ARTICLE X - COMMITTEES

1. There shall be such committees as the Board and membership may, from time to time, deem advisable.
2. Committees may be struck and persons elected thereto either by the Board or the membership.

ARTICLE XI - FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF THE SOCIETY

1. The Directors shall present before the members of the Society at the Annual General Meeting, a financial statement showing the income and expenditures, assets and liabilities of the Society during the preceding fiscal year.

2. The Board of Directors shall appoint the auditor of the Society and due notice of the appointment shall be given at the Annual General Meeting.

ARTICLE XII - FISCAL YEAR AND FUNDS

1. The fiscal year of the Society shall be from April 1st of each year to March 31st of the following year.

2. All funds of the Society shall be deposited in the name of the Society at a credit union to be determined by the Board of Directors.

3. The Board Of Directors shall have the power to borrow or raise or secure the payment of money in such manner as the Society shall deem fit without limiting the foregoing, may cause to be signed bills, notes, contracts, and other evidence of security for money borrowed from any person, firm, corporation, or bank, on such terms as the lender may be willing to advance the same, provided that debenture shall not be issued with the sanction of a special resolution of the Society.

4. The authorized **signatories** of the Society shall be the Treasurer and any of the following:

- Chairperson
- Past Chairperson
- Vice Chairperson
- Secretary
- Staff Member(s) (as authorized by the Board Of Directors)

5. Every document, cheque, bill of exchange or other order for the payment of money, notes or other orders for the payment of money, notes or other evidence of indebtedness in the name of DAWN Canada shall be signed by the Treasurer and any other of the authorized signatories described in article XII.4

ARTICLE XIII - MAINTENANCE OF MINUTES AND OTHER BOOKS AND RECORDS

The Directors shall see that the minutes of members' meetings and the minutes of the Directors' meetings, and all other necessary books and records of the Society required by the Bylaws of the Society or by any applicable statute or law are regularly and properly kept by the Society's Secretary as per article VII.2.E

ARTICLE XIV - INSPECTION OF RECORDS OF THE SOCIETY

The books and records of the Society shall be open to the inspection of the members at all reasonable times at the office of the Society.

ARTICLE XV - ALTERATIONS OF THE BYLAWS

The Bylaws of the Society may only be altered by special resolution (see article III.4.B).

THREE: GROUP PROCESS

There are different ways to approach conducting a meeting and building a group. Here are three possibilities that all use democracy as their guiding principle. All are different but all share a respectful and cooperative spirit. These approaches have worked well for different groups in a wide range of settings - everything from labour unions to First Nations ceremonies to rape crisis centre meetings.. There may even be other ways that you are familiar with that work well. Ask around. See who does what and why.

1. A CONSIDERATION OF FEMINIST PROCESS- Lee Lakeman

This June I will be travelling back to Ontario with two old friends to speak at the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Woodstock Women's Emergency Centre. We opened one of the first five transition houses in the country. Now that I am over fifty years old, I think I can say that ending violence against women has been my life's work. Currently, I work as part of the collective at Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter. We operate a shelter and a twenty-four hour crisis line along with extensive public education and advocacy programs.

I am also the voice from my region on the Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres (CASAC). In that capacity I have helped to win the fight for the new rape shield law (with Shirley Masuda) and for the protection of women from the abuse of their personal records in courts (with Joan Meister). I have also fought for a limit on the use of drunkenness as a defense in cases of sexual violence. As a CASAC representative, I have been invited to travel to India, Russia, and Egypt in order to work with women there. I have had a long alliance with members of DAWN groups.

I have been a member of the same collective for twenty years now. Without that group, I would never have seen and learned and contributed to women's liberation in the many ways that I have been able. Without a doubt, I know that I have been part of saving women's lives, increasing women's safety from abusive men, hiding children from danger and creating new opportunities for women.

As a single mother, a woman who faced long periods of illness, a woman with a working class background and little formal education, I have been sustained by my collective and encouraged to develop myself. Within my group, I grew the best friendships of my life. My collective has offered me tools I could not have had alone, comfort and discipline and the splendid joy of shared struggle and meaningful work. If your group offers you even one-tenth of what I have had it will be worth every ounce of effort.

Introduction

Most women, I believe, are aware that men don't treat us fairly and that the world's power holders keep men in a position of greater status than women. Most women know that from birth, we have faced limits on our lives which have nothing to do with our talent, skill, or determination. I think most women in most places in the world are in constant reaction (always responding) to that knowledge.

Women live in resistance (opposition) to men's oppression, but resistance doesn't always work. Sometimes we don't even know we're resisting. Feminist organising, it seems to me, is partly the work of being aware of oneself fighting against (in resistance to) and being increasingly aware of other women doing the same thing. It concerns facing the nature and extent of the oppression of women. Part of women's resistance to the oppression we face is becoming more and more committed and effective.

By "feminist process" we mean adding to good democratic practice in a way that best helps to organize women to achieve justice and equality for all of us. These practices enrich (improve) and explain rather than replace democratic organizations. We have learned quite a lot in the last twenty years which might be useful to new DAWN groups. I have decided that I can best contribute to this project by naming a few points:

1. Ongoing Development of a Group

Women's groups are always in some stage of growth. They mature, they shrink, they expand, they divide, they multiply and they can behave like teenagers. New membership and new ideas can constantly regenerate (renew) them. I find it helpful to think of the group as changing, delicate and in need of constant cultivation (care). If it doesn't get that care and attention, it will not automatically thrive (grow healthy).

Consciousness raising (self or group awareness) may be the most important tool of modern feminism. Since the 60's and 70's, women have gathered in small groups (5-30) to tell each other about each of their lives. By doing so we see that many events and experiences are not happening to us just because we use a wheelchair or because we are tall or because we ate too much or because we are behaving in a particular way. If we are curious and diligent (hardworking) and serious, we will see similarity (sameness) in the way the world treats us because we are women.

Giving voice to those similarities can take away inappropriate feelings of guilt or a sense of failure. Hearing how many other women have married men who abuse their wives and children comes as both a horror and a relief. We know that the abuse of battering husbands often begins with the first pregnancy or when her last child starts school. We can stop spending so much time wondering what we did to provoke his violence. Instead, we can probably see that it is any change in our relationship to him that could set off his violent struggle for more power.

Most women's groups are still well served by CR (consciousness raising) techniques. This telling of personal incidents (stories) to find common and, therefore, political realities is part of our regular activity as women. It is part of how we listen to each other. We are always listening for the common threads. Once we find them, we can name and analyse them. Then we can discuss and consider strategies (methods of dealing with situations).

There are, of course, pitfalls to avoid. For some while, rape crisis centres got embroiled (tangled up) in a discussion of whether workers at the shelters should always be women who had been raped or whether they should be women who, if raped, had properly healed or "dealt with" the attack. Both positions had something to say but in the end neither is quite "on". In feminist theory, rape and the fear of rape control all women. Every one of us has been subjected to the possibility of attack since childhood and none of us can effectively deal with our vulnerability to rape as though it is not part of our past and future. Obviously, being a woman, having lived and grown up as a woman is enough.

Separatism (in this case, women keeping separate from men) can be closely linked with belonging to a CR group. Equality seeking women, like many other groups, have often chosen to organise apart from those who gather privilege (advantages) at our expense and those who gain from women's oppression (men). Just as women are always in resistance to (fighting against) our exploitation, we are always aware of it.

When men enter a room of women, we behave differently. Sometimes that behaviour is motivated by fear of men or by ambition to have what men have. Sometimes it's because we like them or sometimes it's motivated by anger. Men have separated us from the human group to which we belong by treating us differently and unfairly.

Since men have set us apart, sometimes we insist on the right to gather and organise our resistance against their power. We call this demand to work only with those who share the same oppression, separatism. It is legal, ethical and often, politically wise. In new DAWN groups, it might mean you would refuse active membership to men with disabilities or even non-disabled women. In other women's groups it means we do not invite men to be members. (See "[Constitution](#)" and "[Bylaws](#)")

2. Personal/Political

Besides actual CR (consciousness raising) groups, we can bring personal information into meetings through "opening rounds" or sharing time or special topic evenings. And I would advise that:

- every meeting begins with a report to each other of our state of mind and state of well being
- each member is encouraged to share the important changes in her life as part of the meeting.
- each member makes it her business to see to the personal well-being of each other member using collective resources
- you see to the group's well-being by noticing and dealing with situations where the group is getting over-loaded or depleted (used up) or otherwise threatened

Since we are so prepared to use the personal lives and stories of our members as a source of political information-gathering, we also would do well to honour the political information and activity of our members as deeply personal. (See "[Confidentiality](#)")

I think we are wise to believe that women in our groups do the best they can most of the time. When we are in a struggle with each other, we are wise to exercise our understanding of each other and of each other's personal strengths and weaknesses. (See "[Conflict Resolution](#)")

We strengthen the group by taking responsibility to teach each other techniques, attitudes, facts and procedures that might be helpful. We need to correct each other. However, most of all we need to encourage and sustain (support) each other. Development of respectful and egalitarian (democratic) relations within the group must be a priority. Discourage personality-based cliques (group within a group) and dependencies.

In my mind these are all political activities to which the group should commit time and energy. They should be part of regular meetings and regular processes. This nurturing (taking good care) of each other and the group gives longer life to feminist organisations than to most others. It is not a wimpy lifestyle option of women. It is part of our political strength and perseverance (ability to last) for the long struggle ahead.

Encourage warmth and mutual aid between members without confusing the group with a community that exists for the well-being of only its own members. Any women's group worth its salt exists for the advancement of all women. While it should not sacrifice its own membership, it should not always put its membership first. Sometimes we must insist that the movement come to our aid and there are times to come to the aid of others. (See "[Coalition Building](#)")

Our clarity (clearness) and honesty about our personal and political commitment to each other and demands of each other will help the group decide on:

- membership criteria
- planning work load
- planning fun
- deciding on private, personal responsibilities and collective, collaborative (joint, mutual) responsibilities
- what the group must discuss and what would be better left quiet

3. Basis of Unity

The group needs to pick a direction.

- Will it be primarily (first of all) a service group of helpful women which identifies and tries to help women with disabilities in need of assistance?
- Will it be a small group of "successful" women with disabilities who publicly advise other women with disabilities how to "make it"?

- Will it decide who will speak for women with disabilities publicly?
- Will it be a group which identifies and studies the issues for women with disabilities and publishes the results?
- What do you hope the group members will have in common besides having disabilities?
- Who will not be allowed in the group?
- Who will you especially try to woo and encourage to join?
- What must women be willing to do to be a member of the group?
- How much time does she need to commit to each week?

Service group vs vanguard group vs study group vs consciousness raising (CR) group vs affinity group? Each of these has a logical structure and process that matches the group purpose. In my opinion, although a feminist activist group has to be all of the above at various times, it's best to know and agree about what your main purpose is.

At our best, I think of my group as a little (on purpose less than 30) group of individuals who have decided to come together to multiply (increase) our effectiveness and to sustain each other in the struggle. My group's first priority is

- to operate an anti-rape centre with a shelter and phone line for abused women.

When taking care of each other interferes with that goal we have gone too far. We either have members who need to get their needs met somewhere else or they need to leave the group. Although it rarely comes to that, it is important that we all know from the outset what we are trying to do.

In our group, we rotate and divide up various jobs but we have decided that we will all do some of the same basic work of our organisation. We take turns answering the phone and running the shelter. That way we have a common kind of work to think about and talk about together. And we all have a piece of the work that is vital (necessary, critical). When we don't like each other much or when we are tired of the group we always do our crisis shifts. It is fundamental. It is the basis of membership. In twenty years no one has been silly or angry or self absorbed enough to abandon the phone line or the shelter.

We treat collective meetings with almost the same level of seriousness. And since everyone knows how hard it is to keep doing that, we have a constantly growing respect and trust for each other. And that is before any of us do anything exceptional (unusual). I think any activist group would be wise to design a little regular commitment. You could think and talk about it and you could agree to never let it drop. It should be a very clear "bottom line" kind of work which everyone shares.

A final distinguishing mark of most feminist groups is that all members are responsible for the development of theory (explanations and plans) as well as a fair share of the work. Each member is expected to be developing her thoughts about how to organise for social change by constantly reflecting on what can be observed and learned and what has been done. We expect each other to read, listen and learn. To teach, evaluate and adjust. There is no intellectual vanguard (leader). We all are expected to follow whoever has the

best idea and to lead when it is ourselves who has the best idea.

4. Achieving as a Women's Group

We form groups for a reason. We want to increase our effectiveness to resist the oppression of women for ourselves and for other women. Because it will take all of us to establish freedom, none of us ought to consider herself free until we are all free.

Gathering with other women increases our strength in obvious ways but in subtle ways, too. Generally, the more women we gather the more labour, intelligence and contacts are at the disposal of (available to) the group.

One limit to gathering with many women is that as soon as the group is too large, it is difficult for personal contact to be regular and meaningful. Distrust will weaken the bonds (ties) within the group and everyone will shift to a bit more of a "cool" connection instead of a warm one. They will stop offering everything they have to the group project. The only solution we have found to this is to break down most of the time into smaller working committees of the main group. The small group then becomes the place where others really know you and where you and your contribution are more fully understood.

5. Diversity of Membership

We have to plan and work to get the membership we want in our groups:

- Is it important to your aims that you have a range of women as members?
- Do you want young women for their energy and long term work possibilities or do you want older women for what they have learned?
- Are you trying to attract one of everything or just trying to be open to all women with all disabilities? (See [Cross-Disability](#))

Often women's groups have resolved these questions by aiming to reflect the diversity (differences) in the general population. Sometimes it is necessary to have a critical mass (the numbers you need to get something done) larger than the population, of one group of women in order to make themselves heard and understood in the larger group.

For instance, women of colour find it easier and more comfortable to be part of a larger percentage of the group than they are in the Canadian population. It reduces the likelihood of racism and increases their ability to fight racism when it occurs. In such cases you might aim at the percentage of the world population.

But sometimes the numbers you need to get something done (critical mass) is that number that makes the diversity work for everyone. These are decisions to make based on what will make you effective fighters for social change, not on guilt or sympathy or idealism. (See "[Diversity \(Differences\)](#)")

Good Process = Good Product

6. Allies

It is also important to live well with the imperfections of your group. Regularly ask yourself who is missing from your group and ask yourself how that might be pushing you toward making mistakes. Try and find allies outside your group who will help push you in the other direction. For instance if you are trying to discuss "accommodation" and what employers should be asked to do and you do not have any women in the group who hold full-time jobs, maybe you could ask a local union representative to discuss the issue with you.

Certainly no one of our groups expects to achieve very much alone. It is in our work joined to the work of other groups that the real transformative power (to change) lies. Our groups must set aside time and energy and sometimes money for that alliance work. Reading newsletters and flyers, having guest speakers, participating in campaigns and coalitions teaches us and strengthens us. It puts us in a position to call for support on our actions and initiatives and helps us understand what kind of call to action might work in our community. (See "[Coalition Building](#)")

For my group, we give priority to demands or calls for organising from women's groups and second from anti-poverty groups.

- To whom will you be a willing ally?
- From whom will you try to win an alliance?
- What will the terms and conditions of those alliances be?

7. Reflection and Action - Moving Forward as a Group

Evaluation and planning are important if not vital (necessary, essential) steps to achieve effective action. Women especially find it difficult to keep measuring ourselves and each other in our effectiveness. But without knowing how we're doing, we can waste a lot of time and energy. We can settle for feeling better instead of achieving better conditions for ourselves and others.

We try very hard to quantify (measure) our plans for the day, month or year. We say or write down what we are expecting ourselves to achieve and then we measure as coolly (unemotionally) as we can whether or not we have achieved that goal and we account for the difference. Out of that process comes:

- encouragement for what we did well
- correction of what didn't work
- new plans for the next day, month or year

There are two difficult parts for us:

1. daring to believe we can change things like the number of callers we will get or the number of speaking engagements we will be asked to do

2. daring to take credit for what we've done.

But even more, evaluation must happen on a daily basis. Each of us, as group members, takes responsibility for thinking about:

- what we think will generate social change
- what will keep the group together
- what we should be doing as joint work

Then each of us works and observes the impact of that work and then each of us has to think again. Were our original ideas correct or helpful or does something have to change? There is no end to this process of moving back and forth between action and reflection (thinking back). It makes each of us stronger, more able to think and lead the group. It also makes us more able to participate in all collective processes because we have opinions, ideas, worries and pride of our own.

In the end, it is the opinion of the group members that matters but we also solicit (ask for) criticism and praise from our allies in order to supplement (add to) our internal notions (ideas).

And when we are criticised or praised by other than allies we think hard about what it might mean. Sometimes this is the opposite of what is actually said. We think about our basis of unity and to whom we planned to be accountable. We examine once again whether we are doing what we think best. None of this is a waste of time. We just get stronger and more sure of ourselves. Or we change.

8. Governance of (Running) a Feminist Organisation

Collectivity: it is very common for women to organise ourselves into affinity (alliance) groups with collective structures. By that we mean groups of like-minded women who come together voluntarily and who maintain a structure in which each is equal to the others. Usually there is no election of officers although women will take turns being chair of a meeting, facilitator of a learning process or coordinator of an action.

Our attachment to (fondness for) collectivity is not only because women are trained as children to cooperate and so find it fairly easy. But since equality is what we are after, collectivity becomes a practice for the future.

Others say that collectivity keeps the group strong by making sure every member could lead it and that every leader can be replaced. While leadership is not quite that easy to order up, it is possible to keep the group more "leaderful" than it might otherwise be as a hierarchy (with a pecking order).

In a collective, women often choose turns for being the official chairperson of the meeting. They will take some responsibility to:

- set dates
- propose (suggest) an agenda
- gather up the membership
- suggest (propose) problem-solving methods or innovative processes to try

This is all done in order to have a successful, decision-making meeting. (See "[Meetings, Meetings, Meetings](#)") Women might choose a "facilitator" for an evaluation session, for instance. She would propose to the group how they might evaluate this time or where and with whom they might have meaningful dialogue (conversation) as part of that process. Similarly an "action coordinator" might gather up a draft for a poster, a suggested strategy for getting media attention or for gathering up allies for a demonstration. These ideas would be put to the group for discussion and modification (change, adjustment) and then she might have a mandate (group-given permission and backing) to proceed.

9. Consensus (Mutual, Informed Decision-Making)

Consensus is a process of making decisions that is common in collectives. In the method of counting votes and determining who has the majority, there is often a winner and a loser when there could have been more victory for all. In a consensus model, women try to convince each other and compromise until everyone is satisfied that a reasonable decision has been made. (See "[Labour Process](#)")

Consensus decision-making requires maturity and generosity on the part of all of the women. Women who are in the minority must understand that they should not hold up the rest of the group needlessly (without good reason). Women who are in the majority must value the intelligent contribution of the minority so much that time and compromise (give and take) are well spent in accommodating that minority.

In my group, we sometimes agree to vote on unimportant decisions but if someone thinks an issue important and she says so then we will work to consensus.

10. Authority is Not Leadership

- We need leaders with ideas and the ability to convince people of the value of their ideas.
- We need women to exercise authority in certain situations when they know that they have the agreement of the group to do so.

We find that often these two things get too mixed up. The chairperson, for instance, is meant to keep order in the meeting but hopefully she can cooperate with whoever has some good ideas to discuss. Often we find whoever has ideas to offer can get a little "out of order", talking a lot and she needs a good chairperson to limit and focus her to arguing hard for what she wants. A good chairperson helps get the others talking and thinking and feeling without shutting down the excitement of the leader. This is because leaders, of course, are not always right and we all need to consider whether and when to follow.

Authority comes from the group. The group should decide what the rules are and how authority is to be exercised (used). For instance:

Is the chairperson meant to talk in the meeting to express her own opinion or is she to stay quiet for that meeting or to "pass the chair" to someone else during an item that involves her?

- When someone is facilitator or coordinator how much power do they have to make decisions?
- How do they report back to the collective about the moves they have made or want to make?
- Who evaluates that work, when and by what standard?

These things should all be decided ahead of time. Women find it particularly difficult to take authority appropriately and feel confident about it. We're not used to power.

Leadership is both proceeding on an idea and gathering followers. While it is a bit more difficult to do it just by making up our mind to do it, it's not magic. We can each decide to practice putting ideas forward and convincing others and we can practice struggling with a problem till we come up with an idea for a solution.

Leaders are not geniuses. Often their ideas are reapplied from another situation or learned in books or borrowed from less determined activists. We can all improve ourselves as leaders. And in a feminist process we agree to do so.

2. THE POTLATCH WAY: WOMEN'S WORK - Maxine Thomas

I am a mother and grandmother from the Saanich and Snuneymuxw Nations. I thank those women who have shared their knowledge and skills with me and wish that these teachings and ways will spawn (start) new growth in this new circle of women with disabilities that I now find myself with.

I am a First Nations woman. My ancestors, relatives and nation of people live on the South coast of Vancouver Island and on the coastal mainland including Washington State. I am lucky in many respects because I have a caring family to look out for me, I have good medical coverage and I have a stable income.

I was completely frustrated about my limited physical ability. I began having joints replaced (e.g., like my elbows and finger joints), so I could function better. While struggling with all this I met Joan Meister and that is when I began to make sense to myself again. My sense of value returned. I had been feeling myself as a burden to my wonderful children, I wasn't aware of or connecting to my value.

Culturally, I am a very lucky woman. I was born into a system where value is clear and what to do with that is known. Everyone has a place in this system and important events must be undertaken by every generation. These events are called "Potlatches" and they are organized by women.

To be a First Nations woman is an identity with blessings and gifts. This is important to me because I am now

a woman with a disability and when I let my thinking dwell (stay, live) there I have trouble understanding my life. I have had Rheumatoid Arthritis for 18 years and three years ago I was defined as "disabled", a definition that I struggle with.

Years ago, when I was working, I was trained to co-ordinate and facilitate community, provincial, national and international conferences for Aboriginal people. In order to remain true to my beliefs and values, I used traditional principles in a contemporary (present day) setting. Our driving force was to better the situation of our people and to use our traditional discipline to do it. We never backed off, no matter how large the task.

Now, in these quiet years since I have been busy becoming a grandmother, I look backwards to see what I have done with my life. I begin viewing the complex ways that we live in this world. Many First Nations women resist feminism yet they come from matrilineal societies (inheritance from the mother of social roles, responsibilities and recognition) and matriarchal systems (cultural positions of influence held by women). These cultures honour us because we are women. This is one important part of our identities not always carried into our other roles as women in Canada.

This security will return a functioning collective identity to a colonized people. To be colonized means somebody else defines you and the way you are allowed to live. In that context,

- how do you sustain your power?
- where do you live in your value?
- what makes you love life again?

he pathway to this personal value is in discovery - discovery and the creation of ease in the mind, body, emotions and spirit.

I couldn't find anyone to resonate with (find understanding with) until I met Joan. Joan is an independent, empowered, kind and gentle soul - with an attitude! She is a role model. She makes life look easy and that's what I needed in that moment when I met her. This is a gift. This is the gift that Joan wants to share with other women like us so that we will do together what's needed to live in understanding, harmony, ease, balance and health. This is the wish of this book. And with that in mind I will move on to write my piece.

THE POTLATCH WAY

The Potlatch has always been an integral part of our West Coast cultures. There is nothing in any other culture that parallels it so we can only learn about it through our own people, First Nations women. It is a ceremony that encompasses many different milestone events from birth to death.

A Potlatch is a feast that honours each person who participates as a witness. We have always been oral peoples rather than literate (speaking and listening rather than reading and writing) and through the Potlatch we pass on our history. This is why it is so important for people to come and witness this event.

Training

From early childhood we are taught the values of our culture. Hereditary rights (rights passed to the next generation) gives people special positions. Strict training will guarantee correct and accurate procedure. Leadership is clear and relationships between organizers must be based on the following:

- Love is the defining force.
- Humility and joy are the companions that propel women to organize a Potlatch.
- Serious detail will guarantee proper scale.
- Trust and respect directed to co-workers is necessary.
- Simple facts clearly stated form the basis of the model.
- One leader with proven ability opens, directs and moves the organization to completion.
- There is nothing random about the organizing or the event.

How do we organize a Potlatch?

We start with an understanding. We share common values and needs and from that basis we define our goals. We know the guiding principles will be based on mutual respect and benefit. We trust that those who undertake the work of getting our jobs done will represent our best interests and be dignified in their manner as they represent us all. The leaders will express our togetherness not our differences. Because our representatives live in our midst, their accountability is guaranteed.

Respect

We acknowledge and appreciate their contributions, we offer our help whenever we see them to make it easier for them to walk their path. Because our bond is so strong, as strong as our need for each other and our appreciation of each other, we always act and speak from our love for each other. When we are asked to represent everyone else we respect the request enough to consider our ability to do the job well.

We consider the possibility to contribute to our community and we are thankful for the opportunity and recognition. If we take it on, we will know the task, the timeline, the cost and the expectation and agree to meet them happily. It is always acknowledged as wise for a new person to request the guidance of an experienced woman - it is to everyone's benefit that this approach is used. Usually, mothers, aunts or grandaunts or grandmothers would fulfil this role.

Harmony

From the moment that a Potlatch is started by the setting of the date, it has begun in the heart of the organizers. The full success of the event will depend on the organizing and also on the heart of the women working together on it.

Each woman must only work on the planning with her mind and heart at peace and a feeling of harmony. She must approach other women in this manner as well. This means, simply, that we connect in our hearts to each other. The undertaking we share is so dear to us that we acknowledge this by always doing it right. This does not mean that we lose our personality or character. It means that we act out of goodwill and harmony.

We can trust that when we are in the process of planning and working together we will be approached with goodwill and that every aspect of the work of the Potlatch will be done well and the prospect of being involved will enhance (improve) our individual and collective life.

Leadership Model

The announcement of the event and location are the beginning of the Potlatch process. In each community there are experienced people whose life is committed to conducting Potlatches properly. These women hold these positions because they have trained over many years and are reliable.

There is usually more than one expert organizer. Which woman will be in charge depends on her availability and compatibility (her ability to get along with you). Once we approach the person to be in charge, we are putting it all in her hands. Where there are multiple choices, the organizer in charge will make that clear and offer these choices to you. She will ask her own network to take charge of things like preparing physical arrangements. She is in charge of them, you should not approach them directly. Your choices will be made in the process of things like defining the budget, the length of time, the type of communication system, menu or will your event be small or large?

Some families will do all of their own organizing and consult periodically, others will ask for an experienced organizer to take this responsibility and carry it for them for any reason.

Summary

Our culture and our individual identity require us to Potlatch. We come together as a people, honour someone (who is formalizing their place in our society), tell the history behind the event, eat good food, practice gift-giving to all the guests, publicly acknowledge and gift the organizers and all their helpers who took on the responsibility to bring the event into life.

We Potlatch for our people. This gives us the opportunity to recall the history that came before us and connect ourselves to it. How well we take care of all details and guests and organizers defines what kind of people we are. The right way to conduct ourselves while planning and at the Potlatch is defined according to our traditions and values. No one from the outside tells us their right way to do things, this is our culture. The very event itself speaks for our place in history. To not Potlatch is to have no place and no voice.

This article was prepared to offer you a bird's eye view of a process. My way of speaking here is an attempt to contain and reflect my identities as a woman: First Nations and disabled. I hope that this DAWN movement

will prove to restore, if needed, and maintain our dignity as women with disabilities. This means to me to share our voice, personally and as a group. It also means that there is a possibility to respectfully share this tender disability culture in which we live separately.

3. LABOUR PROCESS - Nancy Riche

Nancy Riche, Executive Vice-President of the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), is from Newfoundland where she taught at a community college before becoming a full time worker for the labour movement in Canada.

She is also Chair of the CLC's Women's Committee and is Vice-President of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions with its headquarters in Brussels. Other CLC responsibilities include the Department of Women and Human Rights, the Department of Anti-Racism and Human Rights and the Labour College of Canada

For any organization, small or large, democratic process is fundamental to its success. And not only must there be democratic process in practice but the members must see (and feel) the democratic process in action. Simply put, democratic process means that space is provided for all opinions to be heard and valued. All members should feel included because they *are* included.

It is true that we women feel we have a different style than men, and we do. We tend to operate on consensus. We avoid "the vote." At the end of a meeting, particularly where you've had to deal with a sensitive or controversial issue, a decision reached by consensus is preferable by far to one reached by a vote.

A vote results in winners and losers. My experience is that the losers often do not accept the result and winners either gloat or feel uncomfortable. Either way, it's not a prescription (formula) for moving the agenda ahead.

It all sounds easy, eh? Everybody speaks (some more than once), we all listen to everyone else's point of view, we ask questions for clarification, and at the end of the discussion (not debate) we all agree.

Not so fast!

There are often at least two sides to every issue (issues like where to hold the annual dinner or what will be on the menu can sometimes be the most controversial - if that's the case, it probably means there's a bigger problem somewhere else!). Each side feels passionate and each side believes they are right. To debate to the point that ends in a vote is to have a "win-lose" situation. That is not productive and probably only works well at very large gatherings like a Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) Convention where there are about 3,000 delegates.

So, what's the alternative? We could chat, some individual members could speak up to three times. Others (usually there's at least one) could speak for long periods of time (you know, the ones who go on and on and on). The discussion goes on for much longer than was anticipated and the meeting gets behind schedule. You don't get through all of the items on the agenda. The meeting adjourns (finishes) much later than planned.

Not productive!

Somewhere between strictly adhering (following) the "rules" and consensus building discussion, lies the answer. And it works. But there are some basics that must be learned and practiced to make it work.

The basis for participatory democracy (in a meeting) are *Rules of Order* – "Roberts" or "Bourinots". Get a copy out of the library and study them, use them, take ownership of them. You can only "play" with the rules when you really understand them.

Caution: do not **use** the rules in an oppressive and overbearing way. Do not become that pain-in-the-__ __ __!! expert. Remember, your goal is consensus (general agreement and understanding) not a win-lose vote.

At the Canadian Labour Congress, we use *Bourinots Rules of Order* and while they appear to be complicated, there are only a few that we need to know well to chair a democratic meeting:

- Have an agenda - get it approved as is or as amended - and stick to it.
- Be firm - no discussion until there is a motion on the floor. For example, "I move that we hold the AGM in Regina".

Each person who wishes to speak "to the motion" does so before anyone speaks the second time.. Is there overwhelming support for Regina? Yes? Then, you can do one of two things:

1. Call the vote if you know it's going to make everyone feel good, "Yeah! We're going to Regina!", or
2. Make a statement like "Well it looks like we are going to Regina." and see how the meeting responds.

Experience in chairing, knowledge of the rules, and knowing the membership will help you make this judgement call. It will accurately get the right feeling of the meeting.

But what if there is not overwhelming support for Regina? What if some members are strongly opposed? What if the chair has a strong opinion on the issue? And, what if there are solid arguments on both sides?

Good questions. The chair could suggest that the AGM committee be asked to "go back to the drawing board" and return to the next meeting with a new plan.

Remember: Always turn the chair over to someone else if, as chair, you want to speak on one side or the other of an issue. If you want to give factual information to help facilitate the discussion, you can do it "from the chair".

Remember: It is often better to put off a discussion for another time than to end up in a win-lose situation!

This very small example is the basis for democratic process. Of course, there is much more to the "rules" than this, but I believe that this is the fundamental piece.

Of course, it doesn't work unless everybody in the group understands the process, so take some time at

the beginning of the meeting to explain the rules, particularly if there are new members. It really is worth fifteen minutes to ensure that the meeting runs smoothly.

Better still, why not invite a "rules of order expert" to do a short seminar with the group. There are great trade union women all over the country who could do this for you - call the District Labour Council in your city, if there is one, or the provincial Federation of Labour.

How can you ensure a democratic process for your members and your meetings?

1. Believe in it.
2. Be prepared - do your homework.
3. Study the rules.
4. Adhere to the rules.
5. Make sure everybody has a good knowledge of the rules.
6. Democratic process guarantees including everyone's point of view.
7. Try to get consensus.
8. Be fair.
9. Let everyone who wishes to speak, speak (and listen).
10. Have fun.

You don't have to reinvent the wheel. Ask for help and advice!

FOUR: BASIC GUIDELINES - Joan Meister

This section deals with some fundamental (basic) guidelines that you ought to consider if you have decided to become a DAWN group. Even if you don't want to become a DAWN group, these are some good things to think about. These are things that any group of women with disabilities will probably want to or even have to deal with at some point or another.

What is described below is how your group would look and act in the best of all possible worlds. You may not be able to achieve total diversity or cross-disability because you group only has five women and there aren't any older, Asian deaf women who live in your town. The important thing is that you are aware of the possibility that there might be one and that if she moves to town, you are open to including her (if she wants to be included).

1. DIVERSITY (DIFFERENCES) - Joan Meister

Bringing together a group of women with all kinds of disabilities means that you automatically have diversity of the kinds of disabilities, but you can increase the possibility and the extent of the diversity by being aware of what the concept means. Achieving diversity in your group means including differences (inclusiveness) of all kinds: ability, race, class, age, sexual preference, language, religion, etc., etc. On purpose. (See "[A Feminist Perspective](#)" and "[Constitution](#)")

One of the first political decisions that DAWN Canada made at our first Annual General Meeting (1987 in Winnipeg) was to join with other people who live with discrimination on a daily basis. We decided to join our sisters and brothers in the national organization representing people with disabilities in Canada, the Council of Canadians with Disabilities (CCD). We also decided to join our sisters in NAC (National Action Committee on the Status of Women).

By doing this, DAWN Canada demonstrated (showed) our intention to unite with others who experience discrimination in their daily lives: all other people with all other disabilities and feminists in Canada. There are times when we join together with other people who are regularly discriminated against as well. For example, we work together sometimes with First Nations people and people from cultural and ethnic minorities. (See "[Coalition Building](#)" and "[Networking](#)")

The decision to join with other people who are different from ourselves and who face discrimination was made for another reason, too. By joining together (uniting), DAWN Canada became stronger because of the strength you find in larger numbers. Our voices can be heard better and carry more weight when we speak the same message as others who share our concerns about discrimination and oppression (persecution, injustice). We also get more support from others who better understand our issues and who have learned to trust us as allies (buddies, political comrades). (See "[Coalition Building](#)")

Respecting and including differences (diversity) increases our numbers and our strengths.

Another important aspect of diversity, cross-disability, and access involves being inclusive (including everyone) about other important aspects of women's lives.

Inclusiveness (being inclusive) means that you consider things like:

- whether a woman is older or younger
- whether she is of a different level of income than you
- whether she is a lesbian
- whether she is from a different race or culture
- whether she has a different religion
- whether she is a vegetarian
- whether she is a mum

After you think of these kinds of different and important aspects of a woman's life, you need to think about what kinds of additional needs she might have. Each of these things could involve doing some things differently.

- Maybe we need to have a different schedule for meetings because of religious holidays or kid's school holidays.
- Maybe we need to honour the experiences and knowledge that come from older women or the new insights of

the younger women.

- Maybe we should value the lessons learned from the lesbian struggles.

Maybe we just need to be as aware and respectful as possible about lots of kinds of differences and needs. Think about it.

2. CROSS-DISABILITY -Joan Meister

Uniting (joining together) with other women with disabilities means uniting with **all** other women with **all** other types of disabilities. To respect diversity means to respect and include differences. That is how DAWN Canada calls ourself a cross-disability organization. To be cross-disability means that we include women with all kinds of disabilities and that we accommodate (meet) those needs.

There are seven large categories of disabilities that are recognized by most organizations, funding bodies and DAWN Canada. There are women who have:

1. blindness or low vision
2. deafness or who are hard of hearing
3. mental handicaps
4. mental illness
5. mobility disabilities
6. learning disabilities
7. hidden disabilities

Over the years, there have been others categories added to the list - women with:

- brain injuries
- HIV/AIDS
- substance use/misuse issues

There may be more additions to this list over time.

3. SELF-IDENTIFICATION - Joan Meister

An important guideline to remember when defining disability is self-identification. Self-identification is how DAWN Canada acknowledges (recognizes) a woman's right to become an active member. (See "[By-laws](#)")

It means that if you decide that your environmental allergy, for instance, is a disability in your life, that's for **you** to say, for **you** to define, for **you** to identify to others. But only if **you** choose to do so. This is called self-identification.

DAWN Canada recognizes a woman's right to self-identify as a woman with a disability, no questions asked. We recognize that each woman is an expert about her own life and disability.

4. ACCESS - Joan Meister

No matter which disability a woman identifies herself as having, DAWN tries to meet (accommodate) her needs. DAWN Canada has a firm policy on meeting the identified access needs of our members.

That means that all DAWN material and events are accessible. It also means that DAWN must always remember to have an item in our budgets called "Access" or "Accommodation" (See "[Where Does it Come From?](#)").

You should have this item in your budgets, too. You will need money to provide things like infra-red loops, tapes of reports, meeting spaces with ramps and accessible washrooms, sign language interpreters, large print and any other alternative formats and aides that are required. Fortunately, it's not too hard to convince the funders that "Access" is the "bottom line". So far, so good anyway.

This doesn't mean that you must provide all kinds of accommodations at all times. We all operate on tight budgets. It does mean that you must find out as much as you can ahead of time about whether there will be any access needs. If there are, you provide for them. To find out about them ahead of time:

- have a copy of your access checklist (See "[Access Needs Checklist](#)") in front of you when you are making or receiving the phone calls or e-mails about your meetings
- ask the women what they need
- if you are putting up a poster, give women a number to call by a certain date to give you notice about their access needs
- keep a list

Please have a look at the "[Access Needs Checklist](#)" for a detailed list.

Get in touch with the relevant or appropriate organization of people who have the disability to find out more about how you can meet their needs. For example, contact the local chapter of the Canadian Council of the Blind for information about large print or making tapes. Or get in touch with the local representative of People First for answers to questions about Plain Language. It might be faster and easier (not better) to contact another DAWN group or the provincial affiliate (member group) of the Council of Canadians with Disabilities (CCD) for this information for starters. (See: "[List of CCD Affiliates](#)" and "[List of DAWN Affiliates](#)")

Discuss access needs at a group meeting and find out what your members have to say - put it on an agenda!

5. CONFIDENTIALITY (KEEPING THINGS PRIVATE) - Joan Meister

A woman with a disability is likely to be isolated, alone in her disability. A DAWN group is one of the few places she may feel safe enough to share very private, personal information and experiences. Members of DAWN groups, therefore, may end up hearing some confidential (very private) information about some members of

the group.

Have a discussion with your group about confidentiality. Try and decide on some method of dealing with it (policy) for the long term. DAWN Canada members are required to keep things that women share with them private (confidential).

Mailing Lists

DAWN Canada also has a policy about (method of dealing with) not giving out the group's mailing list - ever. It's part of how we keep something quite simple but important (and private) like your address and phone number confidential. Strangers could learn about other personal information from something like your phone number.

Here's an example: some other group might want a copy of your mailing list to send out a questionnaire about "Computer Use by Women with Disabilities". Before you send out your list, you should decide whether you agree with the objectives of the group or if the results of the questionnaire will benefit women with disabilities. (See "[DAWN Canada's Research Guidelines](#)") In this case we probably would agree to take part, but you'd have to see a copy of the questionnaire first and then make your decision. Maybe it's sexist or patronizing. You just never know!

If we like what we see, we offer to stick mailing labels to already printed, postage-paid material (using this example of the "Computer Use" questionnaire). You can even ask for an honorarium (payment, money) for this work. By always being careful with your mailing list, you are maintaining control over whether strangers have access to private information like womens' addresses and phone numbers. If someone tries to get hold of it, you've got to wonder why they want it. Talk about what confidentiality means with your group.

6. DAWN CANADA'S RESEARCH GUIDELINES

DAWN Canada has been observing and distributing the following "Research Guidelines" since 1995. Shirley Masuda first drafted them during her work on *Don't Tell Me To Take a Hot Bath*.

1. The need for research is determined by the disabled women's community.
2. Research must always benefit women with disabilities.
3. Research must be done by members of the disabled women's community because members:
 - a) know the issues and priorities of the community
 - b) understand the day-to-day reality of women who are disabled
 - c) understand the political and social interactions (dynamics) of the community
 - d) can examine (analyze) data within the framework of these dynamics
4. Research actions resulting from the research must be directed toward making positive change for women

with disabilities.

5. Research participants will be given the results of the research.

K.I.S.S. - Keep It Simple, Sister

7. ORGANIZATIONAL IMAGE - EJ Miller Towle

What people know about you and your group they get mostly from written materials. That might be letters, media releases which lead to newspaper or radio articles or television interviews, grant applications for money, thank you letters, petitions, membership drives, donations, etc. The first and often lasting impression that they get is very important.

Remember, after something appears on a piece of paper, it can then show up anywhere - it can be picked up, faxed, copied or read out loud. It can get into the hands of people that you wouldn't want to see it.

- Be careful what you put on paper in the name of your group.
- Be very sure that what you are saying is accurate.

THE IMAGE OF YOUR ORGANIZATION - E.J. Miller-Towle

Since the age of three I have endured being an artist and chronic pain. After many strange and awful diagnoses, treatments and "cures", I was diagnosed in my thirties with severe (that's putting it mildly!) Fibromyalgia, which in my case is progressive (getting worse) and debilitating (making me feeble).

I live a contented life in a beautiful place under the care of my husband, pets and a good friend where I draw, paint, write and refuse to suffer in silence.

Imagine that you are at home and the doorbell rings. Outside are two children raising (soliciting) funds for their ball team by selling candy bars. One is neatly dressed and the candy is nicely packaged and wrapped and carried in a little basket. The other child is somewhat grubby and tattered and offers you your favorite candy with the wrapping torn and loose, produced from a stained paper bag. Which would you choose? O.K., I know you are a kind and generous person and would probably take both but which would you eat?

Every day we form opinions and make choices based on image. No matter how desirable something may be, it does not sell unless it is attractively packaged. Whether you are presenting goods or services for sale or hire, soliciting (asking for) support, petitioning (asking, lobbying) for an outcome or providing information, your offering is irrelevant (makes no difference) if no one pays attention to it.

Today so much competes for notice that the first impression you present may be your only chance at a meaningful contact. The general appearance of your documents must represent the value of their contents; if

the envelope is smudged and the letterhead is messy and unprofessional, the recipient (person who receives the document) may decide that the message is equally unimpressive and file it under 'G' for Garbage.

Some people believe that good presentation, proper grammar, form and spelling are unimportant details -of interest only to snobs or academics. But, in fact, they are tools to ensure the sharing of information in a way that can be most easily understood, accessible and accurate.

While it would be wonderful if everyone would patiently work at figuring out, absorbing and appreciating what we have to say, no matter how it was presented (in such a world we would have no need for DAWN!), the reality is that most people are not like that.

You must make every effort to use whatever skills you have to encourage the reader's attention. If you do this, you will be demonstrating (showing) that you are polite, considerate of your reader's time, appreciative of their efforts on your behalf and, therefore, that you deserve at least a reply. Below are some tips to help you develop these skills.

Content:

- Get yourself a good dictionary, and use it! Even if you have Spell Check on your computer!
- Get a small book on basic grammar, such as "Write Right" (by Jan Venolia) - especially if you have Spell Check!
- Also useful is a book on letterforms to help you layout documents with the correct headings and in the proper manner for who or what you are addressing.
- Make rough drafts so that you can fine-tune your writing.
- Speak simply and clearly, and avoid overly cumbersome (awkward) and formal (stuffy) phrases.
- Come to the point quickly and state your objectives (goals) as factually (accurately) as possible.
- Try for a friendly manner without being too chummy or intimate and businesslike without sounding stuffy or arrogant.
- Avoid flowery phrases, unnecessary details and being too emotional.
- Don't use a lot of CAPITAL LETTERS AND !!!!!!! EXCLAMATION POINTS !!!!!!! (no need to shout).
- Remember to be:
 - Plain
 - Informative
 - Pleasant
 - Considerate
 - Polite
 - Businesslike.

How It Looks:

- Keep it simple.
- Use good white paper (don't be tempted to go for weird colors to get attention).
- Don't use strange typefaces, fancy script or amateur artwork in the letterhead or the body of the letter.
- Keep it businesslike and easy to read, even if that strikes you as boring.

- Use an electric typewriter, word processor, or computer and printer that has dark, legible (easy to read) type. Make sure your old manual typewriter or dot matrix printer has a fresh ink ribbon. Do not use hand printing and weird colored inks
- If you do not have access to proper equipment, use a small print shop or résumé and photocopy service that can design your letterhead (See "[Stationery](#)") and do layout and typing for you. Or ask a friend for help. Or find a school that will lend you a typing student.
- If all else fails and you have errors or messy pages, you can cut it out, then center and tape the letter onto your letterhead which can then be photocopied onto good paper. Keep the original for your files and send the copy.
- Make sure your return address is easy to read.
- If you have developed a relationship with your correspondent (the person you're sending the letter to), by all means include a hand-written note on a separate piece of paper with your letter.
- Keep it neat. Always store your paper and envelopes covered, in a clean dry place and keep your work place clean. There should be no white-out, eraser and/or finger smudges, cross outs, stickers or lunch on the letters or envelopes.

Anything that goes out on your letterhead should be how you want your group to be known and remembered!

FIVE: LANGUAGE

I. IN GENERAL - Joan Meister

The language that we use to describe ourselves and each other indicates (shows) how we feel about ourselves. We can describe ourselves and each other with respect and dignity by using language carefully. Or we can be disrespectful, undignified and sloppy. How would you rather be described?

You may have noticed that this manual almost always refers to "women with disabilities" rather than to "disabled women". Our name is a big exception but we love the acronym (the initials of the whole word: **DAWN** Canada: **Dis**A**ble**d **W**omen's **N**etwork Canada.) The decision to describe ourselves as women first and call ourselves, women with disabilities, is a very deliberate (carefully considered) decision. It is based on the fundamental (basic) knowledge that we are women first. We also happen to have disabilities.

You may have noticed that this book refers to people who don't have disabilities as "non-disabled". If you call them "able bodied" you leave out a reference to all the women who have mental disabilities. We don't want to leave anybody out. (See "[Diversity](#)")

Other kinds of language use are important, too. For each woman with each different kind of disability there will be words that make her feel better about herself and words that make her feel worse. This list goes on and on and you've probably got one or two of your own to add. Try to avoid using words and phrases like:

- the blind leading the blind

- retarded
- crippled
- deaf mute
- wheelchair bound
- crazy

Instead, the following general guidelines will help you use better words and phrases. This list is borrowed from a pamphlet called "Words Matter" which was published by the North Shore Advisory Committee on Disability Issues (ACDI). See below in "**Access in Action**" for more information about and from this group

- put the person before the disability
- a "disability" is a functional limitation
- a "handicap" is an environmental or attitudinal barrier
- the word "disabled" is an adjective (word that describes), not a noun (word that names). People are not conditions. Use "people with disabilities"; do not use "the disabled"
- use words that are non-judgmental, non-emotional and are accurate descriptions
- do not use trendy euphemisms - expressions such as "physically challenged", "differently able", "special", are generally seen by people with disabilities as patronizing, avoiding reality and inaccurate. Keep to simple language, such as " people with disabilities"
- do not use " victim of", " suffers from", " confined to a wheelchair", "afflicted". These terms diminish (lessen) the person's dignity and magnify (enlarge) the disability.
- avoid labelling people with disabilities as courageous, superhuman, poor or unfortunate.

And how did "challenged" creep into our language and become popular as a joke anyway? It's funny to talk about someone being "vertically challenged" when they mean "short" - unless you are a woman of short stature. To describe someone's biological reality (like her height) as a "challenge" or something that you can overcome if you only try hard enough, is insensitive and rude at best. At worst, remarks like that one deny the reality of our lives with disabilities and diminish (lessen) our daily struggles in an inaccessible world.

While we're at it, let's consider "differently abled". Each and every person on the face of the earth has different abilities. To refer to a woman with a disability as "differently abled" ignores the fact that she can't walk or hear or see. It ignores how her life is very much different from the life of someone who can. Maybe the person who thinks that we are "differently abled" and ignores our disabilities can also more easily ignore the fact that we need access.

It's important to be aware of how language use applies to organizations as well as to individuals with disabilities. If an organization calls itself "National Society for *Crippled* Children", you might want to wonder why they use a name like that and what it might indicate about their attitude about disability (or children) in general.

Something else to watch out for is whether an organization refers to itself as an organization "of" or an organization "for" people with disabilities. If it's "for" you can be pretty sure that it doesn't have a majority of

people with disabilities on its Board of Directors. And that might mean that the organization is made up of very well-intentioned people who don't "get it" about living with a disability and who might not ask us about important decisions that they make about our lives, either.

Using language carefully is not always easy to remember to do but it sure makes a woman feel better about herself if you make the effort and try to get it right.

- Be sensitive to differences and needs
- Pay attention
- If you're unsure, ask questions
- Ask permission, too
- Be respectful

2. ACCESS IN ACTION

The following is part of a pamphlet published by the North Shore Advisory Committee on Disability Issues (ACDI) and was brought to our attention by one of its authors, Pam Horton. Pam is the current President of the B.C. Coalition of People with Disabilities (and the proofreader of this manual).

The North Shore Advisory Committee on Disability Issues (ACDI) is a tri-municipal (three-city) cross-disability committee sponsored by the City of North Vancouver, District of North Vancouver and District of West Vancouver. The ACDI advises the Councils and staff on issues affecting people with disabilities.

This pamphlet was distributed to all employees of the City of North Vancouver and the Districts of North Vancouver and West Vancouver. For more information, contact:

North Shore ACDI,
c/o The District of North Vancouver,
PO Box 86218,
North Vancouver, B.C. V7L 4K1

Would you like your City Council to become more accessible? Ask a Councillor about it at a campaign meeting before your next municipal election.

Accessible Literature

Not everyone has perfect vision. In fact many people in our society have difficulty reading some printed material. To ensure that everyone has the opportunity to participate in their community, the ACDI encourages organizations to make printed material which is usually available to the public, available in alternate formats. Brochures, newsletters, annual reports and notices should be available in user friendly formats.

Requests for materials in alternate formats should be treated as routine.

If a printed document is available to the public at no cost, there should be no cost for providing it in an alternate format.

Ideal Format for Enlargement

- Use a 12 pt. sans serif font (Arial, Helvetica, Universe)
- Use bold for titles only
- Do not use italics
- Underline sparingly
- Use a columnar format with a maximum column width of 6 1/2 inches
- Do not use glossy paper
- Use high colour contrast (dark ink on light paper)

Alternate Formats

1. Enlarged Copies - Enlarged photocopies of material can be easily read by someone needing large print when the original document has been prepared with wide margins and sans serif font.

2. Audio Tape - Unless legal accuracy is required, staff or volunteers should be able to transcribe documents onto cassette tapes in-house.

3. Computer Disk - Organizations should consider having a policy in place regarding provision of documents on computer disk. This format allows clients to format documents to meet their individual needs on computers with text reading capability.

3. PLAIN LANGUAGE

We have tried to respect the rules for Plain Language in this manual. It's hard to take someone else's words and change them without worrying about changing the meaning as well as making the words more plain and clear. It's actually a lot better if everyone starts out with Plain Language in the first place!

Changing things into Plain Language sure does make you aware of the problems involved in doing that work and the problems that are created when people **don't** use Plain Language in the first place. Try it soon. But read this first ...

A. USE PLAIN LANGUAGE- Barb Goode

I live in Burnaby, B.C. and I will have lived on my own for 22 years at the end of September 1999. I have a cat named Sante Claws. My disability is that I'm labeled mentally handicapped. I have been a self advocate for half my life.

I have helped several groups put books and papers into Plain Language. I enjoy doing it. Plain Language is for everyone.

What is Plain Language writing? It is a way of organizing information that makes sense to the reader. This works not only for people who have trouble reading and writing Ð it works for everyone! Plain Language is easy-to-read materials which assist all readers to get the information they need quickly and easily. It keeps the reader in mind.

Plain Language is important to me as a woman who also has a learning disability. It assists me to be more involved with meetings and take part in the way I feel comfortable, without feeling left out and needing someone to tell me what words mean. Sometimes that's what happens if people are speaking or writing in language that I don't understand.

Plain Language can help everyone out. A friend of mine says ramps are not just for people in wheelchairs. Plain Language is ramp accessible!

In the 1980's and early 1990's, more people labeled mentally handicapped were getting more involved with boards and committees. They wanted to take part fully, but the language that the associations used was too difficult to understand. Language is an important tool to help people to participate in their communities and meetings. It's also important to have an organization that people feel comfortable with and can take part in fully - something like DAWN.

If you want more information on "Plain Language", the Canadian Association For Community Living (CACL) has produced three workbooks called *The Power of Language*:

- Handbook on Plain Language Writing
- Workbook on Plain Language Writing
- Facilitator's Manual on Plain Language Writing

You can contact the Canadian Association for Community Living at the following address:

4700 Keele Street
The Roeher Institute
Kinsmen Building
York University
North York, Ontario M3J 1P3
Canada Ph. (416) 661-9611

Use your thesaurus for different, plain word choices.

Your computer probably has one.

B. HOW TO WRITE IN PLAIN LANGUAGE

The following is from *The Power of Language: Facilitator's Manual on Plain Language Writing*, p. 27. This is part of a series of books put together by The Canadian Association for Community Living (CACL) CACL is Canada's national association dedicated to promoting the participation of people with intellectual disabilities (labeled mentally handicapped) in all aspects of community life. Order these books from the address or phone number above.

Before you write:

- Decide who will read what you write and include them in the process.
- Make your reasons for writing clear.
- Use the right words and do not insult the people you are writing for.
- Write the way you speak.

While you write:

- Use clear sentences, but vary the sentence length.
- Use words that are familiar.
- Write one idea at a time.
- Use as few words as possible but, remember, sometimes more words are needed to make a point.
- Repeat the main points using different words, if possible, so that people can understand them.

After you write:

- Illustrate. Use examples and/or pictures.
- Use easy-to-read type.
- Use no more than five items in a list.
- Place key points first and repeat them at the end as a reminder.

C. PLAIN LANGUAGE POLICY

The following is from *The Power of Language: Handbook on Plain Language Writing*, pp. 16-17. Your group might be interested in following the example of the Canadian Association for Community Living (CACL) and adopt something like it.

CACL Plain Language Policy

This policy is intended to ensure that plain language use is adopted throughout the association.

What Is Plain Language?

Plain language is direct and easy to understand. By "plain" we do not mean simplistic. Nor do we mean using only short words. If many readers understand a word with many syllables that term would be acceptable. For example, most people in the community living movement understand the word "deinstitutionalization."

Here are some suggestions for achieving plain language:

- Plain language is clear and concrete.
- Plain language uses familiar words.
- Plain language is a way of writing and organizing ideas that makes sense to the reader.
- Plain language uses informal, everyday words.
- Plain language reaches people who have difficulty reading.
- Plain language provides access to information for all readers.
- Plain language reduces confusion and mistakes.
- Plain language saves time, because it gets the job done well the first time.

Who Should Use this Policy?

The words we use have the power to include or exclude people. If people do not understand, they cannot take action. Our power to exercise rights or gain justice is limited by what we know. Plain language should be used by everyone in the organization.

When To Use This Plain Language

Plain language should be used in any written documents including resolutions, memos, minutes, reports, and publications of the CACL and The Roeher Institute. Spoken presentations should follow the same policy. This policy recognizes the need for technical documents. When technical documents are produced, plain language versions should also be available.

Why Is This Policy Necessary?

Over the years the work of our association has involved a growing amount of printed material. A survey in 1990 by Statistics Canada revealed that more than one in three Canadian adults have some difficulty reading in their everyday life. Our own research by The Roeher Institute, *Literacy and Labels* and *The Right to Read and Write* has identified the importance of this problem for individuals labelled with an intellectual disability.

Our organization can be proud that it supports the participation of self-advocates in the work of the

organization. Access to information is necessary for people to make responsible decisions at Board and Committee meetings and in their own lives.

Where Has Plain Language Been Used?

Several documents have been printed by the Canadian Association for Community Living and The Roeher Institute using plain language. Here are a few examples:

- Resolutions and committee reports require the use of plain language.
- Recent Board packages use large print, bold headings and numbered pages in a bound volume.
- The Roeher Institute's "Rights, Justice, Power" series (*The Right to Have Enough Money, The Right to Fair and Equal Treatment, The Right to Control What Happens to Your Body*) provides straight forward guides to several major policy studies.

These examples provide greater access to information in ways unique to the knowledge to be shared. They show respect for the reader's background and experience.

How to Simplify Your Documents

Plain language challenges the writer to explain jargon and technical words or to avoid them entirely. The way information is presented is just as important as the words used.

Here is a list of a number of plain language techniques researched by the Self- Advocate Advisory Committee:

- Use clear, accurate language.
- Organize information in a logical order.
- Limit each paragraph to one idea.
- Put key points under sub-headings or in boxes.
- Plan the layout and design with the reader in mind.

Using plain language can be difficult at first. Any new skill requires practice. Plain language techniques sometimes require using more words. Documents will not necessarily be shorter. It is important that the meaning will remain the same.

Orientation of Staff and Volunteers

All staff and volunteers of the Canadian Association for Community Living need to know how best to implement the policy. Everyone will have opportunities to learn the strategies and techniques of plain language.

SIX: REACHING OUT, REACHING IN

Now that you've been meeting for a while and have decided on some areas of particular interest to you and the group, you might want to start thinking about doing something about the issues. And you might not. If the members of your group decide to keep meeting in a social or individually supportive way, you might feel as though your group is just fine. You don't want to change anything. That's great and that's your choice.

On the other hand, you and the other members of your group might feel as though it's time to start reaching out to other women. You might want to get some help, support or information from another group or individual or do some research so that you can try to influence government decision making. If you do feel that it's time to move and grow in a different direction, this section will help you to get started.

1. MENTORING - Sue Leon

Self-employed for most of my life, I am a musician and computer geek. I have worked as an activity coordinator for a Stroke Recovery Group, I lead music and percussion workshops for senior's and stoker's retreats, I am a music coach for adults and children, I perform music in restaurants, clubs and facilities for seniors and most recently am employed as a web site editor. I love cats, I enjoy helping others learn how to use computers for the great tools they are and my passion is playing piano and singing.

I have many mentors in my life and they are all invaluable resources and inspiration to me. In fact, without my mentors I would not have the capabilities I have. I try to share the gifts they have given me, and I truly believe that what you give moves on into the world and more people receive. And I am grateful to know I am another's mentor.

Mentoring is take and give. Don't forget to do either.

The word "Mentor" has its origin thousands of years ago in Greek mythology, when Odysseus asked his friend Mentor to look after his son while he went off to win the Trojan Wars. The Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary, (1913 Edition, p. 913) defines "mentor" as *A wise and faithful counsellor or monitor.*

In modern-day terms, mentors are influential people who help you to reach your major life goals. Mentors share knowledge, experience and insights with a less experienced person to promote personal welfare, training or career. Most adults can identify a person who, at some time in their life, had a significant and positive impact on them.

Mentors can be friends, relatives, co-workers, teachers, as well as historic or contemporary personalities. Most often, a mentor is a more experienced or older person who acts as a role model, challenger, guide or cheerleader.

A new word has appeared in the English language – "mentoring". Although not in any dictionary, mentoring is widely understood throughout the world in communities of friends and families, businesses, schools and

social and health services.

So, what is mentoring?

Mentoring is all about building a partnership between people which improves the self-worth of each person. It involves sharing ideas, support and successes.

Mentoring builds greater self-confidence in a person's judgement and a willingness to embrace (take hold of) responsibility and take informed, calculated risks.

Who benefits from mentoring? Everyone.

How? Here are some benefits to the person who receives mentoring or the "mentee" (also known as "protégé"):

- they receive sound advice about dealing with difficult situations or people, office politics, personal image, risk taking, or career planning
- they receive support, guidance and encouragement;
- they are exposed to decision making and problem solving within a given area or field
- they gain access to community knowledge and networking opportunities
- they develop new skills

Benefits to the Mentor:

- they gain exposure to new and different ways of thinking, knowledge and perspectives
- they obtain satisfaction through helping their mentee prepare for future opportunities and personal development
- they sharpen their own leadership skills
- they heighten their awareness of community, political climates, organizational operations and issues

Benefits to the Community and the Workforce:

- improved representation and participation in the community
- more knowledgeable members with broader experiences
- improved communication and willingness to help others
- positive attitudes towards the future

Examples of Mentors and Mentoring:

- women executives assist other women to break the "glass ceiling"
- senior citizens demonstrate hobbies to elementary students

- co-workers take new employees "under their wings"
- volunteers partner with students who are at risk of dropping out of school
- people managing life challenges provide support and wisdom to others
- older students help younger students cope with peer pressure
- university alumni (graduates) provide guidance to students seeking careers
- experienced faculty members (teachers) assist their newer work mates
- successful entrepreneurs help new entrepreneurs starting out

Key Roles of the Mentoring Process:

Coaching is the process of helping another person to improve their capabilities, and to understand related issues. The mentor, as coach, creates new learning opportunities for the mentee, providing sound guidance, support, and encouragement in the development of relevant skills and attitudes for the future.

Facilitating, or the process of helping things happen, can involve one individual providing guidance or advice to another, recognizing and alerting another to potential (possible) barriers, or preparing a path for learning to occur. As a facilitator, the mentor helps the person to learn, and to pursue his or her goals.

Networking is the process of developing more contacts through existing informal channels. We all have our own networks of contacts which we use to get things done, and which can be very valuable in sharing with another person. Networking arises from an understanding and appreciation of the benefits of the informal organization - who to call for advice and resources or who to call to find out who to call. (See "[Networking](#)")

Counselling is a process of helping another person work through their own motivations and intentions with a view to resolving a problem or making important choices. As a counsellor, the mentor serves as a sounding board when the person is faced with a decision or a problem. They can help a person see the issues involved more clearly.

Have you decided that you would like a mentor or mentors? Have you a couple of people in mind that you'd like to ask? Be specific about what you want from a mentor. The more certain you are about your needs, the more likely you will be able to find a mentor to meet those needs. Target the area of expertise you need. This will guide you toward the specific area or function so that others can help you identify a potential mentor.

Or, would you like to be a mentor? Has someone asked you to consider being his or her mentor? A mentor is seen as someone who:

- is a loyal friend and advisor
- is a teacher, guide, coach and role model
- is trusted with the care and education of another
- has knowledge and advanced or expert status, and who is attracted to and nurtures a person of talent and ability

- is willing to give away what he or she knows in a non-competitive way
- represents skill, knowledge, virtue and accomplishment

The most effective mentors do the following:

- welcome newcomers into the fold and take a personal interest in their development and well-being
- want to share their knowledge, materials, skill and experience with those they mentor
- offer support, challenge, patience and enthusiasm while they guide others to new levels of competence
- point the way and represent tangible evidence of what one can become
- expose the recipients of their mentoring to new ideas, perspectives and standards, and to the values and norms of the community
- are more expert in terms of knowledge but view themselves as equal to those they mentor.

It's a good thing. Include it in your community. Pass the torch!!

2. DOING RESEARCH - Shirley Masuda

What is Research?

Research is simply collecting information or data about something. If you need a new jacket you check the ads in the paper, you go to the stores and check the styles, the colours, the prices and you buy the jacket that you can afford and that will be the most flattering and/or useful to you. That is research.

It is the same when DAWN Canada does research. We decide what problem we need to work on, collect the data and then decide how we can best use it to help women with disabilities. See "[DAWN Canada's Research Guidelines](#)")

Kinds of Research

1. Quantitative Research is counting the numbers of how many times the problem you are researching happens, how it happens and to whom it happens. Statistics Canada has quantitative research on people with disabilities in Canada. They can tell us how many people in Canada have disabilities, how many are women, what provinces we live in and how many of us live on low incomes.

This kind of research is considered to be a scientific method of research and it is used by drug companies to determine how many people respond in a certain way to new drugs compared to those who were given sugar pills and thought they were taking the real drug.

2. Qualitative Research is not so concerned with numbers. It is more concerned with social issues. Qualitative research looks at what it is like to have a disability. It may focus on one particular issue or on more than one such as, "What it is like for women with disabilities to live in poverty and how does that affect our

health?" The women's stories give a bigger, fuller picture than just the numbers of how many women have disabilities and how many are poor.

You can combine qualitative and quantitative research in the same project.

3. Academic Research is research that is done in universities by professors or by the professors who supervise their students who do the research. A great deal of this research is done to teach students how to do research and has little meaning for the people involved as participants.

The academics choose their projects, they develop a set of questions and a set of expectations that may have nothing to do with reality. They talk about doing research on people rather than on issues. Academic research will always have statistical tests of some sort to determine if a particular finding is something that could be expected as just a normal expectation or if the results mean that there is a problem that is causing the results and how important the problem is.

4. Action Research is research done for the purpose of using the information that is going to be collected to make a change that will benefit the participants. This means that the information is collected with that specific purpose in mind. Often this is research that we already know the answers to but we have to have numbers and stories to convince the people who make the changes, about what we want to have changed.

5. Community Research is research that is done in a particular community, such as the disabled women's community, immigrant community or other vulnerable communities. This type of research can be done by anyone who thinks there is a problem and has the means to do the research such as universities, independent researchers or members of the community. There can be big problems with this kind of research - one of the problems happens when outsiders (often academics) label vulnerable communities as being faulty in some way that is causing a social problem for everyone.

Why Do We Do Our Own Community Research?

The biggest reason for doing our own research is that we know what it means to live with a disability, we know our community, we know our issues and we know what needs to change. Researchers coming in from the outside of the community have little understanding of what it is like being a woman and living with one or more disabilities twenty four hours a day, being poor, isolated and/or abused. Often researchers will gain credibility by having a woman with a disability collect the information for them. Having a disability does not mean that a person is aware of the issues and the dynamics in the community any more than being a woman guarantees that she is a feminist.

Researchers who are not part of the disabled women's community are usually coming from a place of privilege and power and often have an agenda which is not our agenda. This puts us in a position of having researchers from outside the community define who we are, what our problems are and how they should be fixed. Even the experts now recognize that academic research in the community is missing the mark and rarely results

in defining the real issues and in getting to progressive solutions.

This information belongs to the women interviewed and they have only loaned it to you.

Nine Steps To Doing Research:

Step 1: Define The Problem

It is important to discuss with your group which problems are the most important. It is also important to know what the political agenda is at the moment because that will give you the opportunity to be part of the government's vision for what they will be doing over the next term of office. Keep in mind that political agendas change as the politicians change so it is important to take advantage of the opportunities as they come up.

Step 2: Find Out What Has Been Done Already

This is what we call the "Literature Review". Perhaps the research has been on women or on disabled people but not on women with disabilities and you can build on that research. You can find information from many sources:

- at the local libraries
- universities
- local Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) offices
- Status of Women offices,
- DAWN Canada and local DAWN groups
- the Internet

Be sure to include your own knowledge of the problem and why it is important to do this research work at this time.

Step 3: What Do You Want To Know?

All research is for the purpose of answering one or more questions. After you have done the literature review you will have a better idea of what has been done, how it was done, what parts of the information were important, what was relevant to women with disabilities and what was left out. This will give you a good idea of which questions your research should pose and then answer.

Step 4: How To Do The Research

This is called the "methodology". You may choose a focus group to discuss the issue, mail out a questionnaire, do telephone interviews or all three. However you choose to do the research you must design a "research tool" or set of questions to ask the women who will be participating in the research.

It is important to refine the questions to make it easy for the women who will be interviewed and for yourself when you have to sort through a mass of information after you get the returned questionnaires. This is where an Advisory Committee made up of women with disabilities and feminist women who are experienced in this kind of research can be an invaluable resource.

Step 5: Finding Women To Participate

How you decide to reach women to participate in the research project depends upon the scope of the project and the methodology. You can use your own local resources, DAWN groups, women's organizations, disability organizations or advertise in the newsletters of all of these groups. Use your imagination - that always works.

Step 6: Getting Consent

You will need to get consent from the women who participate in the research. If you are using questionnaires, a woman gives her consent just by completing (and returning) the questionnaire. If you are doing interviews you will need consent forms with signatures of the participants and a witness, which can be you. If a woman cannot sign the form, she can ask someone to sign on her behalf.

For telephone interviews you could simply tape record the consent. When you are taping anything you must inform the participants that you are doing so. All participants must be given the freedom to withdraw from the research at any time and they should be given the name of a person to contact if they have any complaints about the research or how it was done. Participants can also refuse to allow you to use their information.

Step 7: Analyzing The Results

You cannot separate being a woman or being disabled from the information that you have collected. All of the information must be viewed from the perspective of the women who participated in the research. You must look at the total picture in deciding what the information that you have collected means. This is what we call analyzing the information through the "Disabled Feminist Lens".

Step 8: Writing The Report

There is a format for writing research papers. It begins with a brief summary called the "Executive Summary", followed by the "Literature Review", "Methodology", "Research Results" and "Discussion" or the "Implications" of the research results. You can include anything else that is relevant such as "Recommendations" (for the government, for instance).

Your report does not have to be so formal as this but you do need to say why the research was done, how it was done, who participated, what you found out and what it all means. And make sure that everyone who contributed to the research in any way receives credit for it and a copy of it if they want one.

Step 9: Making The Most Of The Results

Getting the information out to the people it was meant for is crucial if they are going to see the need for change. You must get the information out before the political agenda changes if it is intended for the politicians. You can use the news media to put pressure on the people who can make the kind of changes that your research shows are needed.

It is also important to make the information available to all of the women who participated in the project and in an accessible form.

3. WHY DO RESEARCH? - Joan Meister

We need to do research for some very good reasons. One reason is because sometimes you have to be able to make an argument for something like influencing policy change or getting funding by using data (facts and numbers). These days, as funding gets harder and harder to get, we need all the help we can get. When you do research, you collect data. Sometimes it's very powerful when you make a point about women with disabilities and violence by using numbers. This statistic, **51% of women with disabilities have been sexually abused** packed quite a wallop with the people who used to fund work on violence against women, for instance. The above statistic is from DAWN Canada research on violence and women with disabilities which resulted in a report called *Meeting Our Needs: An Access Manual for Transition Houses*, published in 1990.

Another good reason to do our own research is because if we don't do it, nobody else will. Statistics Canada gathers data, lots of numbers, on a national level but not very often about women with disabilities. The way they collect information is sometimes very inadequate. When they collected information about people with disabilities for the 1991 Health and Activity Limitation Survey (HALS) for that year's Census, they did not ask anyone in any kind of institution to participate. So much for many people with mental health issues or labeled mentally handicapped.

The other side of that coin is that even when they do research about us they don't always know which questions are the important ones to ask (like about the violence in our lives). We do. Academics have done some research, too, but they don't always know which questions to ask either. Or they don't always ask us for advice.

DAWN Canada has done a lot of research up until now. We've done research on women with disabilities and substance misuse, (un)employment, violence, the impact of government cuts to social programs, self image, health, parenting, suicide and access to support services for women with disabilities. (See "[References](#)") As a result, we have become the experts on our own issues.

Another benefit of doing research is getting to know lots of women (and their groups) who are also doing work in similar areas. (See "[Networking](#)" and "[Coalition Building](#)") Sometimes you can share the work by combining your efforts and that makes the job easier. It may even make the work more fun and it certainly results in more input.

We worked together with NAC (National Action Committee on the Status of Women) to produce a report on new genetic and reproductive technologies. We also worked with LEAF (Legal Education and Action Fund) on an important legal struggle which resulted in getting sign language interpreters for deaf people needing medical help and for all government services.

The following reason for doing our own research is going to become more and more important as time goes by. And it's a little hard to describe:

- We know that disability increases with aging and that the Baby Boomers are getting older.
- Because of the aging Baby Boomers, there is going to be a bulge of older Canadians.
- We also know that the incidence (frequency) and severity (harshness) of disability increases with aging - there

will be more and more Canadians with more and more severe disabilities.

This is already beginning to happen and will get more obvious as time goes by. It will be an important national, if not world-wide happening, and it will have a huge impact on government spending priorities, for instance. There is already and will be increased attention to issues of disability from such areas as:

- governments (who pay Canada Pension Plan - Disability benefits)
- insurance companies (who pay LTD - Long Term Disability benefits)
- academics (who want to write about and publish the results of these interesting social events and consequences)
- rehabilitation, home care and medical systems (that are going to have to deal with us in larger numbers) and many others.

Although DAWN Canada is the only group in Canada that has done any specific research on issues of concern to women with disabilities from a cross-disability perspective, we have to work hard to be recognized as experts about our own experiences. The people who do the research almost never ask us.

Disabled women have to be three times as credible to be believed at all.

We have to fight hard to get funding for our work. People with titles or letters after their names get the research funding - from other people with titles or letters after their names such as funders, policy makers and politicians. And most of them are non-disabled men. This happens whether they know anything about us or not. When we do the research ourselves or in partnership with others, the results are usually more accurate and relevant to our lives.

The good researchers ask us for help, the other ones don't bother. When you get asked to participate in someone else's research, ask lots of questions:

- How many women with disabilities are working (getting paid) on the project?
- Where did they get their funding? (If it's a project looking into the effects of smoking and it's funded by a tobacco company, the results might be a little slanted!)
- How much input will there be done by women with disabilities?
- Will we benefit in any way from the research?
- Do we get a copy of the results? (See DAWN Canada's "[Research Guidelines](#)")

If you don't like the answers you get to any of these kinds of questions, there are a couple of things you can do:

- write to the funder(s) of the research describing your concerns if you have some and any suggestions you might have (be polite now!)
- suggest that they ask a woman with a disability to sit on their advisory committee if they have one (be prepared to do it or find someone who will)

If you like who they are and what they're doing, offer to help to distribute the results (if they pay the postage) by applying mailing labels from your membership list to pre-paid, prepared mail-out envelopes. (See "[Confidentiality - Mailing Lists](#)")

A Word of Caution

Doing our own research is a good idea and it involves the same kind of responsibilities that apply to anyone else who does research. We must be meticulous (exact) in how we do our research (methodology). The consequences (impact) of our findings are usually shocking to people who know nothing about our lives or who have never thought about us before. Things like the harshness (severity) of the poverty, violence, isolation, unemployment or suicide in our lives makes people cringe (wince, flinch) and not believe us.

Their disbelief is why we have to do our research very carefully. We will make our case better (prove our point) if we collect or analyze our data strictly according to the rules. We can still decide on which questions to ask that are important to us. We just have to be very careful that our method is flawless (perfect) and they will have a harder time challenging the results that may shock them.

4. NETWORKING - Eileen O'Brien

DAWN Canada: DisAbled Women's Network Canada, is a national "network" of women with disabilities from all across Canada. It is our hope that every woman with a disability, no matter whether or not she is part of a regional DAWN group, another disability group or an individual, will see herself as part of a large, supportive, interconnected group sharing similar experiences and working together for change.

"Network" is a name we use to describe a large loosely woven but strong connection between people with some shared purpose. I like to think of this "network" as a net or a spider's web, with each strand representing one of us. As we join together in some action on our own behalf or that of our sisters and as we exercise our rights as human beings, our strength increases.

When we speak of "networking", we not only mean joining forces with the women with disabilities in our cross-disability community who would strengthen our voice. We also mean actively thinking about what is the cause or reason behind our problems and who might help us solve our problems and achieve our goals along the way. Why is our ability to be seen or heard or included impaired? Is it because I have some "deficit" or "disability", or is it some deficit or disability in the society in which I live?

You may say, "I shouldn't have to fight for my rights. I'm a human being and I have human rights. But why am I not able to ride the bus or get enough to eat or find a home to live in or get a job (where the workplace doesn't exclude me) or get inside a public building or toilet. Why am I denied a million and one things that most people take for granted?"

Why? Good question. What is the source of the problem? What is wrong with our society that allows respect for humanity to be optional and places our ability to participate as something that depends on the fickle (changeable) good will and charity (kindness, hand-outs) of others?

To "network" is constantly to be thinking

- Who is likely to share my principals of human rights for women living with disabilities?
- Who is likely to be my ally along the way?
- Who is also struggling for her human rights?
- Who will understand that to help me will eventually bring about a world where all humanity will be respected?

Every meeting you go to, every meeting you plan, you should be thinking: " How can we best make use of these contacts, now and in the future, to bring about long term equality rights in Canada?"

We have to know, understand, and trust that when one group of individuals fights for minority rights it is inevitably (eventually) fighting for my rights as well. We have to trust that there is enough to go around for all of us and that a world united in it's respect for all humanity is the world we are all working toward.

We already know it's a good idea to "network" with other groups and individuals to make us stronger, but how can we begin and how do we know whether or not they are true allies or just short term buddies with their own personal agendas?

The best way to find out is to **do** something with them. Talk is cheap!

We have found that we make mistakes and have some fights and struggles. But, the ones who stay in there and listen and share and work in respectful partnership with us are the ones who join us in our network. Perhaps never as formal members of DAWN Canada but certainly as friends and allies at times when our common voices and work are needed. We can do many things together:

- share projects
- sit on subcommittees
- go to conferences
- write briefs to the government on policy that effects us all
- work on court cases
- walk picket lines
- share money and resources
- meet regularly to solve problems and ask questions.

There are many, many ways that this can be done and it means that we are never in a fight alone and neither is any other individual or group that is struggling against a part of this discriminatory society

This not only means that when we have a meeting, we invite all the politically correct people to sit at the table. It means that we work and struggle with the difficult feelings, ideas and actions of racism, homophobia, ableism, misogyny, etc. It means that we make the mistakes and share in the rewards of working in areas we have never worked before. (See "[A Feminist Perspective](#)")

Try to fix it. If you've tried and can't fix it, stop worrying about it. Move on.

When we worked with other feminists on New Reproductive and Genetic Technologies we had to confront the fact that feminists have historically led the way to fight for abortion on the basis of disability. These were difficult struggles. We continue to demand that self-determination as a feminist with a disability means that selecting fetuses for abortion on the basis of disability is wrong. For us it is the same as selection on the basis of sex. We need to be allies as feminists on this issue and help non-disabled women understand.

When DAWN Canada worked with LEAF, Women's Legal Education and Action Fund, on the *Eldridge* case before the Supreme Court of Canada (See "A Human Rights Context", p. 35), we met with deaf women in three regions of Canada to discuss how the denial of interpreter services has historically affected their access to adequate health care services. There were mistakes and there were rewards.

There wasn't enough time or money [There's **never** enough time or money! - Editors.], nor a national group of deaf women so that the discussions were organized by the deaf women themselves. However, we made connections that will serve us all in the future, I think, and we are beginning to clearly understand what strength we have when we begin to work together for a common purpose.

Winning this case in the Supreme Court means that not only do deaf persons have the right to interpreter services to access health care but that under section 15 of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (which guarantees our human rights as people with disabilities), others requiring accommodations will stand a much better chance of getting them.

That is networking as we see it and as we weave our wonderful, ever strengthening web, we learn and unlearn, grow and are truly surprised by the beauty and diversity of our humanity.

5. ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS - Kathy Hawkins

Kathy is Vice Chairperson of the DAWN Canada Board of Directors (since 1994). She supervised a DAWN Canada publication, "Finding Directions - A Career Planning Guide for Women with Disabilities" (May 1996). In 1997, Kathy developed the DAWN Canada web site through funding received through the Employability and Social Partnerships Department of HRDC.

Kathy has been closely involved in the Internet and technology for close to six years. In April of 1998, she facilitated a workshop for the Board of Directors entitled "Internet 101 - A Basic Understanding". This workshop gave the Board an opportunity to learn the basics of the Internet and how it works.

Kathy is currently the Coordinator for DAWN Canada (since July 1998).

When starting a DAWN group, one of the most economical ways that you can communicate with other group members is through electronics (computers). Of course, in order to do this you need a computer that is powerful enough to get on the Internet. Some public libraries and community colleges have computers set up for the public to use and might be one way to connect with others.

If you have a personal computer system already connected to the Internet the cost of communicating with others is very cheap. However, to purchase a computer and get yourself hooked up to the Internet could be very costly.

One way this form of communicating might work within your group is through your networking. (See "[Networking](#)") You might be able to talk to another group that would be willing to let you use their computer on a regular basis to send and receive information. (See "[Money](#)") This will give you a chance to develop a network and become connected to another group within your community and also to develop your own group at the same time!

And now for the "technical" information about "Electronic Communications"...

In today's world, more and more individuals are communicating electronically than ever before. Access to fax machines, computers and e-mail accounts are becoming an everyday mode (method) of communication.

Computers are still very expensive so they may not play an important role in your life. If you need to use one or even learn how, you can ask a friend, go to a public library, a colleague or even a government office. Maybe learning about computers would be something you could form a group to do.

The Internet

The Internet originated in 1969 and has since become a vital (important) part of our lives in the "Information Age". The Internet is also known as the "World Wide Web" or the "Net". It is the world's largest computer network.

A computer network is basically a bunch of computers hooked together. In a computer network, each message is hooked together through telephone lines through a "modem". A modem is a device that is used to transfer information through telephone lines. When you connect your computer to another you are using your modem to send this information to the other system. They are usually found built in to your computer but you can use them as an external attachment to your computer as well. And you'll want to because the Net is the world's largest computer network and it has an amazing variety of information to offer.

Computers are part of the "new communications technology" that is affecting our lives on a scale as big as the telephone and television. Some people believe that when it comes to spreading information, the Internet is the most significant invention since the printing press.

There are many parts that make up the Internet, including:

1. Electronic Mail (e-mail)

This is the most widely used service on the Internet. You can exchange e-mail messages with millions of people all over the world. People use e-mail for anything they might use regular, paper mail or the telephone for. Electronic mailing lists enable you to join in group discussions with people who have similar interests and you can meet people from all over the world on the Net.

An e-mail address has two parts separated by the "@" (at) symbol. It looks like this: yourname@host.com

An email address should be written with no spaces between the characters and can be either in upper case letters (capital letters) or lower case letters (small letters). There shouldn't be any spaces when you type the address. The name of the sender and her address are separated with the "@" symbol.

2. The World Wide Web

When people talk about "surfing the net", they often mean checking out sites on this database that spans the globe. A database is a wide collection of documents kept on numerous computers about the world, or the World Wide Web. The "Web" can combine text, pictures, sound, and even animation (moving drawings) and it lets you move around with a click of your computer "mouse".

When purchasing a computer, there are many programs that are already on your system. These programs are called "software". The software(program) that is used to find your way through the Web is known as a "browser". The most popular browsers today are called "Netscape Navigator" and "Microsoft Internet Explorer". You can use either of these browsers to visit DAWN Canada's site on the World Wide Web, at: <http://indie.ca/dawn/index.htm>

Getting Information from The Internet

When your computer is connected to the Internet, it provides files of information that are free for those who are interested. The files range from library card catalogues, to texts of old books, digitalized pictures and a huge variety of software, from games to various programs.

Special tools known as "search engines" help you find information on the Net. Lots of people are trying to make the fastest, smartest search engine and the most complete Net index To use a search engine, you might try starting with one of the more popular ones like: <http://www.yahoo.com>

3. Electronic Commerce

This term is just a fancy word for buying and selling stuff over the Net. It seems that everybody's doing it, and now the software is available to make sending your credit card number over the Net safe and secure. You can buy anything you like online if you have a computer, a credit card and can afford it.

4. Newsgroups

A system called Usenet (User Network) is an enormous, distributed, online "bulletin board" where people post messages for others to read and respond to. It's much like a bulletin board that you could see in your local library, laundromat or community centre.

The only difference with the newsgroups or discussion groups on the Net compared to those you see in your community is that usually the bulletin boards in the World Wide Web are divided or grouped together according to topics. They are also updated daily. Internet bulletin boards date from the 1970's.

Newsgroups are systems set up for people of similar interests for discussions via e-mail, message areas and Internet chat.

5. Internet Chat

This is a feature of the Internet that lets you instantly communicate with people around the world. There are many different programs to use. IRC (Internet Relay Chat) is one of the most popular. "Powwow", and "ICQ" are just a couple of the more very popular programs designed specifically for communicating with others.

6. FTP

File Transfer Protocol lets you look through files stored on computers around the world. You can copy any of the files that interest you. An FTP site is a university, government agency, company or individual that stores files that you can copy to your computer. Looking through the contents of an FTP site is similar to flipping through files in a filing cabinet or pages in a catalogue.

Electronic communications let us communicate with consistency and immediacy and do it easily and quickly. It lets us build and develop our networks with more detail over a greater distance.

If you wish any additional information, please feel free to contact me at this e-mail address: dawnca@canada.com or by phone at (204) 726-1406.

6. CONFLICT RESOLUTION - Shirley Masuda

There will be times in an organization or in your daily life when you will find it necessary to resolve some conflict. Every time we meet someone in the hall it is a time for conflict resolution in a very simple form - which of you will smile first or say hello first. That is conflict resolution. As the conflict gets bigger and more tense it becomes more difficult but the principle is the same - get to a place of reasonable ease.

As an example of a conflict within an organization I have made up the following story about Cynthia and Molly which is not true, but which illustrates the process for conflict resolution.

- Cynthia and Molly disagree on the cover for a book they're producing.

- Molly hates the colour that Cynthia chose even though Molly told Cynthia that she was free to choose whichever colour she wanted.
- Molly feels very strongly that the colour Cynthia wants is wrong but that Cynthia is determined to go with that colour.

Although Cynthia has been Molly's supervisor for years they have always worked as equals. Now Molly really wants Cynthia to hear and consider her wishes.

How can they resolve this conflict and solve this problem?

Conflict resolution has two parts - where you want to be and how to get there. Conflict resolution almost always involves a compromise (give and take) on both sides. Here are three steps to help you reach the concessions (compromises) that help you not to give away what is important to you and the other person.

Step One

The first step is to know what you want. Many people who are in a conflict situation do not have a clear picture of what they want. When you do not have a clear picture of what you want you cannot effectively negotiate (bargain) with the other party. Also, knowing clearly what you want puts you in a better position to know what the most important part of that is and which part or parts you are willing to give up. This is very important because at the end of the conflict resolution you want to feel that you have not given up too much or what was really important.

You must know what you want before entering into a conflict resolution and you must prepare for it. This will give you confidence and prepare you for step two.

Molly had to sit down and figure out exactly what she did want so she could tell that to Cynthia. It turns out that she wanted:

- a nice cover that has their organization's logo
- a catchy and interesting title
- a pleasing layout
- their names mentioned as authors
- a pleasing colour for the cover

Molly was ready to go to step two.

Step Two

The second step in conflict resolution is to find out what the other person wants. Studies show that only 3% of

the time people in conflict consider the other person's needs. Knowing what the other person wants is critical to working out a solution.

The other person may have some really serious concerns and may also have some very good suggestions that would enhance (improve) the goals that you are working toward.

It's not enough just to let the other person talk - you must listen carefully and make the other person feel like she has been listened to and that her concerns have been considered. You must separate the problem from the person in order to assess what that person is saying. This will be hard to do as emotions rise but preparing yourself sufficiently in step one will help you see past the individual.

The first job for Step Two was for Molly to listen to what Cynthia wanted. Molly had to be respectful and she had to find where Cynthia's wishes and her wishes were the same and also find where they were different. The different wishes were the things that they had to resolve.

Molly listened carefully to what Cynthia said, made notes and let her know that she was hearing her reasons for the way she wanted the cover to be. Then Molly told Cynthia what she wanted and they were able to see how close they were to agreement on the way the cover should look. Then they moved on to step three.

Step Three

The third step is working out a solution. Just because you like someone, don't give in too much and just because you dislike someone, don't be too hard. Remember, you are trying to come to some action that you can both accept. Try to keep a balance between the hard and the soft line. Check in with how you are feeling every now and then and ask yourself how it is going for you.

Be as aware as you can of the other person's "hot buttons" (things that get her angry or upset) and be aware of your own and when it gets too hot take a powder room break to cool it down. You may even have to call for a longer break while you both cool down. Keep your goals in mind and know how important they are to you and whether or not they are worth the struggle and/or the compromise for you and for the other person.

Now they had to work out a solution. Molly found out that Cynthia wants everything that she wants except that horrible colour. Again Molly has to listen to Cynthia's arguments and why she has chosen this colour. Then Molly will tell her as nicely as she can why she don't like it - it just about makes me sick every time I see it. (Sometimes Molly argues a little too passionately for what she wants.) Cynthia said that Molly didn't know much about colours and she was tired of arguing.

Molly felt like exploding. Molly said she had to pee and went to the washroom and then took a walk outside for a few minutes to cool down.

While she was walking outside, she had to go back to her goals - to have a cover that would have the logo, a catchy and interesting title, a pleasing layout, their names mentioned as authors and a pleasing colour. Molly went over in her head what she was willing to negotiate on. The only outstanding issue really was the colour and Molly thought that she could be more flexible on that.

When Molly came back from cooling down, Cynthia had cooled down too. Cynthia apologized for taking a personal swipe at Molly and Molly apologized for being unreasonable and stating her case a bit too strongly.

They got down to business. Cynthia tried out some colour variations (shades of the colour she wanted) and Molly agreed to a softer shade of the same colour even though she wasn't in love with it. They both gave in a bit but neither sacrificed what each wanted. They reached an agreeable solution.

If neither had been willing to give up a little, they could have become very angry and taken on a personal mission rather than ending up with a cover that does the best job for everyone. When it becomes a personal struggle the friendship is put in danger and perhaps one or both would have left the disagreement carrying anger and resentment for a long time to come.

Cynthia and Molly are still good friends and treat each other with respect and caring, thanks to the conflict resolution steps that they followed to get an agreement that they could both live with.

Pitfalls Of Conflict Resolution

There are several pit falls that you should avoid by going through the above three steps toward conflict resolution. These will slow the process and add pressure to an already uncomfortable situation

- 1. Me First** Sometimes you will have to speak first if the other person refuses to speak first. The person who speaks first often is trying to clarify to herself what it is she wants. If you have done your preparations you already know what you want and you can take your time. What is important now is to find out what the other person wants
- 2. You First** Since you have done your homework you, can be courteous and invite the other person to speak first. This will give you the advantage. Once you know what she wants you can speak to her needs and you may want to modify your approach to laying out what you want and point out any common ground (points you agree on). Don't be so nice that you loose yourself in the other person's stuff or start finding blame.
- 3. Emotional Overload** The process of conflict resolution is much more difficult if the people involved have strong emotions for each other - love, hate, anger, etc. They have their scripts already written and have probably gone over them many times before. It is very important at this point to get out of the emotions and into the facts. For example, ask yourself: How do I feel and what do I want? When things start to overwhelm you take a break to cool down and collect yourself.
- 4. Surprise** Prepare and over-prepare for this session. Know what you want and what you are willing to give up and ask yourself all the possible questions you can imagine the other person asking you. If you are caught off

guard you may freeze up and forget your points and then you will have no plan to work with.

5. But It Worked Last Time What worked with one person will probably not work with another person. Remember we are all individuals and we want to be treated as individuals. Giving flowers will work with one person but the next will wonder what the heck you are up to and be doubly cautious. Meet each conflict resolution as a new challenge and prepare for following the steps to working through the conflict (above).

6. Bullying After you have reached a resolution don't throw in little "add-ons" at the end and watch that the other person does not do it either. When the negotiating has finished you cannot add things and you must go back to the beginning. This is like the car-repair man who fixed the woman's bent fender and when she got the bill it was \$100.00 more than she was told it would be. The car-repair man said he had forgotten to include the paint job. (He didn't get his \$100.00 because it was not included in the negotiations for repairs. It was assumed to be part of the deal.

7. You Can't Get There From Here If you don't know what you want you can't possibly know what action you want to come out of the conflict resolution. Knowing what you want gives you the advantage. If you don't know what you want use this discussion to help you define what you want and how to get it and how to direct the other person toward it.

8. Killing The Process When you know what the other person wants don't resist it to the death of the process. This can only be a no-win situation. Look for common ground. Try to get behind the other person's eyes. There may be some good points that will even enhance (improve) your ideas.

10. Speeding Go slow. Find out what the other person has to say and make her feel heard. Let her say it as many times as she needs to say it. Give her the extra time and she will be more open to working with you.

11. But I Thought When you have heard what the other person has said, speak to those concerns and check to see if you have it right. It will be too late after the negotiations have ended to say "But I thought...".

Here are some questions to ask yourself:

About A Situation That Was Not Resolved

- What pit did I fall into?
- What could I have done differently?
- What pit do I find myself in most frequently?

For All Conflicts

- What do I want?

- What are the most important parts of what I want?
- What am I willing to give up?
- If I were in complete control, what would I want to happen?
- What are the alternatives?
- What assumptions am I making about the other person?
- What assumptions do I make most often?
- How can my assumptions put me at a disadvantage?
- What do I like about the other person?
- What do I dislike about the other person?
- What are my prejudices toward the other person?
- What motivates the other person?
- What are the other person's "Hot Buttons"?
- What are my "Hot Buttons"?

Be A Leader

Finally, remember that your tone of voice and your body language do not lie. If you are serious about reaching a resolution then:

- speak calmly and with respect and caring
- talk to the other person using her level of language and using her terminology. (She will be able to relate to you and your points better hearing it in her own kind of words.)
- make sure that your body language is open and inviting for discussion and for reaching a resolution. Mirror the body posture of the other person and then begin to make your posture more friendly and open. You will find that she will follow your lead.

remember to be discrete.

7. COALITION BUILDING - Judy Rebick

One of Canada's best known political commentators, Judy Rebick is the host of a new weekly discussion show on CBC Newsworld called "Straight from the Hip". She was previously co-host of the national debate show, "Face Off". She is the author of numerous articles on political issues and is a popular speaker across the country.

In addition, Judy writes a weekly for the London Free Press; and a monthly column for Elm Street, a national women's magazine. She is co- author of the book "Politically Speaking" a dialogue with Kike Roach, a young black feminist. Judy also teaches a current politics course in Women's Studies at the University of Toronto.

From 1990-1993, Judy was president of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, Canada's

largest women's group with more than 500 member groups. She has also been a spokesperson for the pro-choice movement and later for the national women's movement.

Over the past twenty years, Judy has been an active supporter of people with disabilities. She worked as Director of Special Projects for The Canadian Hearing Society from 1980-1991 and was co-chair of Disabled People for Employment Equity.

Judy received her BSc from McGill University in Montreal. She was born in Reno Nevada, but grew up in New York City, Toronto and Montreal.

Once you have a functioning group, you need friends and allies. One small group can offer information and support to its members but if you want to change public policy, push for accessibility or in any way affect the world outside of your own group, you will usually need friends and allies. Coalition building is about making friends and allies.

A formal coalition is an organization of organizations. For example, when the federal government first introduced it's *Employment Equity Act* in the 1980's, organizations representing the different target groups:

- women
- visible minorities
- people with disabilities
- aboriginal people

realized that we would have more impact in our lobbying if we worked together. Working together in a coalition meant figuring out and negotiating our common positions. Sometimes this was not so easy. But the coalition of equality-seeking groups which was first begun in the 1980's, helped to educate other groups about disability issues. The unity and solidarity continued in the fight to save the federal Court Challenges Program and in other areas.

Another kind of coalition is when one group wants to win something and needs support to do it. Strike support is a good example of this kind of coalition. For example, when the teachers in Ontario went out on a two week political work stoppage, they needed to form a coalition with parents and students to make sure that their protest was a success. When people with disabilities were fighting against cutbacks at the federal level, they asked their coalition partners among women's groups and unions to write to the Minister and support the protest.

Coalition building is not one-sided. The groups you ask to support you, will probably ask you to support them in the future. That is why most coalitions are built with groups that share similar values, such as equality and social justice.

But some coalitions are just formed around a single issue. For example, let's say that a shopping centre in your town has doors that are difficult to open and they are not responding to your requests for change. A senior's group in your town might be a very good ally. If your group and the seniors group go to the shopping

centre manager together, she will see that a lot of customers are affected by those hard to open doors. A lot of paying customers.

In the example of the hard to open doors, a day care centre might be another place to look for allies. Mothers with babies in strollers or carriages would like automatic doors too.

Coalition building is also important because the direct contact with different groups helps to educate the community about the needs and issues of women with disabilities. A group that you worked with on an issue may later invite you to address their members about disability issues. Coalition building is an excellent way to network.

Working in coalition can also help you with resources. For example, a coalition partner may be able to do your photocopying, another one might have a media expert to help you publicize your issue. Some partners like unions might even be able to provide money for your issue. But remember groups like unions are involved in many coalitions and their resources are stretched. If you are asking for money, talk to them first about what you might be able to ask for.

Working in coalition doesn't mean you have to agree about everything. It is only necessary to agree about the issue you are working in coalition on. Coalitions are usually temporary structures that last as long as the struggle on the particular issue. Sometimes coalitions take on a more permanent nature. But most of the time the coalition remains as an informal network that can be activated whenever needed.

First Questions to Answer for Coalition Building

1. Who is directly interested in the same issue?
2. Are there any other groups or important individuals who would support us?
3. Are there any other groups or individuals who have waged a fight like this before?
4. Is there already a coalition of groups we could go to for support?

Here are answers to these questions for our example of the shopping centre doors:

1. Seniors and mothers of babies.
2. Daycare centres, supermarket worker's union, women's centre, disability group(s).
3. There was an accessibility fight in City Hall. The group that did it has disbanded but some of the individuals are still around.
4. There is a coalition of social services agencies that might agree to help.

Once you have determined who might support you, then you have to decide what kind of organization to build.

After you determine your possible allies, you have to decide how to approach them. If it is a simple issue, you can probably just make a phone call. Before you call, make sure you know what you are asking for. For

example, with the seniors and the mother's group or day care centre, maybe you would like them to come with you to a meeting with the shopping centre manager. You might want the other groups to send a letter of support or to circulate a petition.

But let's say your issue is a little more complicated. You have decided to campaign for accessible public transportation in your town. This will take a longer campaign. In this case, you would ask the same questions about who will be your coalition partners but you might decide to suggest a formal coalition. Let's say you decide that your allies are seniors groups, other disability groups, agencies serving people with disabilities, women's groups and the transit union. You might invite these groups to a meeting and suggest forming a coalition to fight for accessible public transit.

Whether you are asking for one time support from your coalition partners or forming a long term relationship over the course of a campaign, here are a few helpful hints for coalition building.

Helpful Hints

- Have a clear goal
- Know what you want your coalition partners to do
- Make sure your coalition partners understand the issues
- Be willing to negotiate with coalition partners
- Ask for ideas from your coalition partners
- Be ready to support your partners when they have an issue

8. ADVOCACY - Mary Williams

Mary Williams lives in Vancouver, B.C., with a large tabbycat to keep her in order. She says she doesn't mind the webbed feet that she's had to grow or the wet tire tracks that betray her presence, she still loves the West Coast.

Mary is and has been active for over 20 years advocating for the rights of women with disabilities to be equal members of society. Her belief that there is strength in numbers has led her to work with several disability organizations - DAWN Canada, Pacific DAWN, BC Coalition of People with Disabilities and Pacific Transit Co-operative (disability transportation system).

Mary believes that women with disabilities and women from all other walks of life must learn to work together to seek equality so that all women can become part of mainstream society. To that end,, she has worked with the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC), West Coast Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF) and Women's Access to Legal Services (WALS).

Her latest interest has been about the growing trend in BC and across Canada to cut back on legal aid. As an example, this issue has a devastating impact on single mothers with disabilities.

The single most fulfilling part of her life as a woman with disabilities has been the opportunities she has had to be an advocate for her sisters in the disability community.

There are probably as many definitions of advocacy as there are people who do advocacy (advocates) but a short one that I like is:

- the support of a cause or issue which has had a barrier placed in its way

I work with the British Columbia Coalition of People with Disabilities. It is an example of a group that does two basic types of advocacy: Small "a" Advocacy and Large "A" Advocacy.

Before I go into detail about advocacy, I would like to say a word about the difference between "advocacy" and "service" organizations. An organization is said to be an "advocacy" organization as opposed to a "service" organization, if its main purpose is to support, lobby or empower and encourage its members and others to self-advocate. DAWN Canada is such an organization.

A "service" organization is one whose purpose is to provide its clients with direct aid. This service can come in the form of equipment, such as wheelchairs and adaptive aids or other services such as treatment facilities and diagnostic or employment services. The Variety Club, MS Society and the Lions Society for Children with Disabilities are some examples of "service" organizations.

What is the difference between Small "a" Advocacy and Large "A" Advocacy and how can they be further defined?

Small "a" Advocacy

In Small "a" Advocacy, also known as individual advocacy, one individual might advocate for herself or a family member such as a child, for example, to get schooling, hospital care, respite care or counseling that she needs. In another example, an individual might advocate for a person outside of her family. This might mean that the advocate works by herself or with a group on behalf of the person needing advocacy. It might mean empowering or supporting that person to advocate for herself for such things as disability benefits, schooling or adaptive equipment.

Large "A" Advocacy

Large "A" Advocacy, also known as political advocacy, means that one group advocates for itself or another group. This might mean placing your issues before government: federal, provincial, regional or municipal, supporting your issues or defending them. It can and does often mean placing your issues and defending them before:

- your national or provincial organization
- other national or provincial disability organizations

- organizations or individuals in the community at large.

These are short definitions of types of advocacy, but you will be able, over time, to work out your own methods of advocating for yourselves. Here are some examples of what I mean:

1. One way of advocating for an issue is by joining a coalition (See *Coalition Building*, p. 163) of other groups who are interested in the same cause or causes - there is "strength in numbers". A very useful spin-off of this is that your group can then become better known by other groups when you need support.

2. Another way of gaining support for your cause can often be achieved by supporting other groups when they ask for it, again becoming better known to them and others.

3. Always have your ducks in a row before you start your fight:

- know your issue thoroughly
- have all the documentation to support your issue ready to show your opponents
- be ready to speak to your issue at meetings, whether at public hearings or in private with government or community figures

Make sure you gather as much support as you can, from your organization and other organizations and individuals. The numbers of letters of support you can get are a good way of measuring the amount of support you can rely on. If you feel you have enough support letters to present to your opponents, they can be a good way of showing that you are not alone in defending an issue.

The beginning of acknowledgment of the basic human rights of women with disabilities could not have been achieved without the advocacy of hundreds of groups and individuals. That the concerns of women with disabilities are beginning to be more and more understood internationally, nationally, provincially and regionally is due to the fact we are willing, and have always been willing, to put ourselves on the line for ourselves and for our sisters.

Don't let the word "advocacy" throw you. You may already possess the skills of an advocate, but you have been calling it something else. Even if you don't think you know how to go about it, it's not hard to learn to be a good advocate and if you have the support of other women with disabilities, women in the same or similar circumstances as your own, it's even easier.

You probably already have one of the most essential ingredients for good and successful advocacy. You have seen or experienced or heard about situations that have to be changed and you want to be involved in that change. When you or your group, or both, come to that point where, in the words of the Janis Joplin song, "Freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose", remember: you have many, many women with disabilities supporting you, who have used advocacy successfully for issues large and small, in our own lives and to help better the lives of our sisters.

Good luck. And again, please don't be afraid of the word "advocacy", its just another word for "support". There is nothing so rewarding as an issue well organized, well fought and well won!!

9. LOBBYING - Joan Westland

Joan Westland is currently the Executive Director of the Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work. She has extensive experience in the areas of community based program development; individual as well as organizational needs assessment and also employment equity and management training.

She is on the Board of Directors of the Foundation for Independent Living and in that capacity is working on a television documentary about the survivors of land mines in Cambodia. Joan is also a director of the Canadian Deafness Research and Training Institute and is an advisor to the reference group for the Canadian Labour Force Development Board.

Professionally, Joan has served as the Executive Director of the Canadian Coordinating Council on Deafness; as the Senior Advisor on Employment Equity to Employment and Immigration Canada; and as consultant to the Mackay Rehabilitation Center and Dawson College in Montreal.

Internationally, Joan has participated as an expert in forums convened by the United Nations in Austria, Finland and Estonia. She has also been a member of the Canadian delegation to the United Nations Social Commission in Vienna and the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

She has worked on community based projects and leadership training in Venezuela, Brazil and Namibia. She has also developed curriculum and delivered training programs to the All Russia Society of the Disabled in Volgograd, Russia.

Joan is in her fourth term as Mayor of the Municipality of East Bolton in Quebec.

The *Websters New World Dictionary* defines the verb to lobby as:

- to attempt to influence a public official
- to attempt to influence the passage of a measure

A lobbyist is defined as a person acting for a special interest group who tries to influence the introduction of or voting on a piece of legislation or the decisions of government administrators.

Based on these definitions, the success of a lobbyist would be determined by the legislation or government policies adopted that reflect the interests of the group s/he represents and by the number of bureaucrats and politicians that have been won over to the particular cause.

In the private (non-government) sector, corporations will have senior, paid staff whose position is lobbyist. These people are responsible for monitoring any and all activity within governments that may have an impact on

the particular area that they work for. This could include drafting and/or amending (changing) legislation or awarding contracts. Corporate lobbying can be relentless (ruthless) and most certainly strategic (very carefully thought out).

In the non-profit sector, lobbying is usually one of several responsibilities a staff person and/or a volunteer may have. The lobbying function is often one of educating as well as negotiating. This is particularly true on issues concerning people with disabilities. Education and negotiations are ongoing jobs. The gains and losses involved in resolving (solving) issues and changing government policies often seem to cancel each other out so you have to keep at it.

There are at least three aspects to non-profit, non-government organizations (NGO) lobbying that make it distinct from the ongoing lobbying efforts of the private, corporate (for profit) sector. These are resources, passion and power. Resources in terms not only of funds but also in terms of personnel; passion because the issues are part of a cause that you believe in; and, power as determined by the influence of the constituency or group that the lobbyist represents.

Regardless of whether a person is lobbying on behalf of a corporation or an organization of people with disabilities, there are certain key elements which will lead you to success. These are (but may not be limited to) the following:

It not only matters who you know but what you know - as important as it is to develop professional relationships with decision makers, it is equally important to be knowledgeable on all aspects of the issues. A good understanding of the other points of view demonstrates an openness and flexibility, which encourages cooperation;

Speak up and speak often - the challenge to keeping an issue on the agenda and as an important concern throughout discussions, is to articulate (state) the point effectively without nagging or whining. The purpose is to be convincing not annoying!

Prepare, Plan, Execute and Follow up - whether the concerns need to be identified or are long standing issues that need to be reinforced, lobby efforts should begin with comprehensive preparation.

- research the issues
- identify the problems
- develop sound options to resolve the situations.

Included in the preparation should be not only what needs to happen but also who can make it happen, Once the what and who questions are answered, then a plan is put into place to determine how the necessary changes can be initiated.

The lobbying plan is executed over a short, medium and/or long period of time. Ideally the plan should include a mechanism to monitor the actions taken; who was involved as well as what worked, what did not and why.

The information collected is valuable to determine necessary adjustments to the lobbying process as well as appropriate follow-up procedures.

The follow-up to any lobby effort can be anything from thank you letters; to the provision of documentation and a report detailing the result of a particular action. Keeping people informed of lobby initiatives maintains awareness, builds understanding and support.

Be Proactive Not Reactive - it is not always possible to influence peoples decisions and/or participate in the legislative process from the onset. Sometimes things happen in crises and an urgent response is the only thing to do. However, involvement in the beginning, during and following the development of policies and programs is certainly the ideal;

Give Recognition and Acknowledgment - whenever possible, time should be taken to acknowledge the contribution of partners and to recognize the effort of supporters. Seeking out allies and getting support for an issue is easier to do when effort is taken to make sure that everyone benefits from the experience and is congratulated for their contribution.

When addressing the issues that concern people with disabilities, it is rare that goals are achieved by a single individual or that any one person is the expert on all topics!

Even those people who are not supportive of proposed changes to a system or policy need to be in your circle of communication. Lobbying is not simply a game of enemies and allies, it is the skill of working with a variety of individuals who may have influence in different areas. Again, know the players, what they stand for and why!

A few last words in this overview of tips and techniques is intended as a guide to effective lobbying. Each person or group of individuals will bring their own particular style and approach to the lobby efforts. It is understood that this may involve compromise, tact and diplomacy and it almost always requires patience! Good Luck!!

10. CORPORATE PARTNERSHIPS Lynda White

Lynda Whyte is the Manager of Employment Equity and Diversity at the Royal Bank of Canada. She has served on the Women's Advisory Committee to the President of the Treasury Board of Canada and on the Advisory Committee on Employment Equity to External Affairs. She also participated in the International Conference on Women in Beijing, China. Her volunteer work on boards includes the Centre for Research Action on Race Relations, the Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work, the Canadian Centre for Disability Studies. Lynda is the Chair of the Canadian Bankers Association Standing Committee on Employment Equity.

In what is becoming an increasingly difficult environment to keep healthy, non-government organizations (NGOs) going, partnerships are becoming more and more important as a way to advance the goals of the different partners involved.

Partnerships create a way to bring a variety of skills and resources together to create results which benefit the partners. The *Oxford* dictionary defines a partner as:

a person associated with others in business of which he/she shares risks and profits, one who engages jointly.

I would suggest that this is the way that many of the partnerships operate that exist as we know them today. The possible partners for NGO's that I'm discussing here include the government, corporations (businesses), labour unions and educational institutions.

To dwell on corporate partnership opportunities is to create a list of exciting opportunities that are successful for all the partners. The list of possibilities includes such things as:

1. Skill Training or Transfer Programs
2. Internships
3. Mentoring
4. Shared Sponsorships of Events or Research
5. Community involvement
6. Consulting Services

1. Skills Training or Transfer Programs

Many of us are aware and have had experience with skills training or transfer programs. These programs are at their best when a corporate group and a non-government organization (NGO) come together to define a common goal and develop a program together. In the community of people with disabilities this might be a partnership between a corporation that wants to attract and retain people with disabilities in its workforce and an NGO that is involved in a goal to better the employment opportunities of people with disabilities.

By coming together, the corporation and the NGO partner can develop potential programs to improve the skills of people looking for work. This can be done by developing training programs which focus on building the skills that the employer wants from a worker. At the same time, this training can provide the skills that the individual and the NGO partner want.

This type of program may be a combination of classroom study and on-the-job training in the employers workplace. It is important that the candidates for such types of programs are reviewed by both the employer (corporate partner) and NGO partner to match the skills and identify the possibility for success.

Another factor which makes these programs work is that the potential worker, the NGO and the corporate partner come together to determine any accommodation that is necessary in the workplace to make it accessible and improve the candidates success. Funding of such programs is usually arranged between the NGO and the corporate partner. These types of programs have been successful in the financial services industry (banks), the retail industry (department stores) and the technology sector (computers), to name a few.

Recruitment referrals are a means of community organizations referring potential job candidates to corporate employers. It helps greatly here if the NGO has some knowledge of the types of jobs and skills being sought by the corporation through discussions with recruitment officers or through actual site visits to get a feel for the work environment and the types of jobs that exist.

2. Internships

Internships (being an advanced student, an apprentice) are another way for an individual to acquire skills that will help them to better understand and compete in today's job market. These types of programs are often formed with educational institutions (schools) or NGO's running training programs and the corporate sector. Employers agree to take candidates into their workplace for work experience, generally in specifically agreed upon areas of the organization that will improve the skills being developed by the individual. This provides better skills for the intern (advanced student, apprentice) to take to the job market. It also provides an opportunity for the intern to consider her own desire to work in the job that she is being an intern in. At the same time, it gives an employer a chance to learn from the intern, as well as consider the intern as a potential candidate for any jobs that may become available during the period of the internship relationship. These programs are often funded through grants received by the NGO and in some cases an honorarium (small sum of money) is provided by the corporate partner to the intern.

3. Mentoring

Mentoring provides another win-win for individuals with disabilities and corporations. This is an opportunity for people in businesses to help people with disabilities develop skills and to coach and counsel them to help them get ready for the workplace. At the same time, people in organizations are learning about an individual who is a potential candidate for their workforce and about an area of disability they may have been unfamiliar with before.

Mentoring also provides a networking opportunity. Individuals looking for employment are able to get in touch with the network of people that the mentor might know both inside and outside of a particular workplace. She can also follow up on employment opportunities with the support of the mentor. Many people looking for employment make extensive use of the various networks they may access for potential leads and references. (See [Mentoring](#))

4. Sponsorship of Events and Research

Support (sponsorship)of events and research is another opportunity for partnering. Very often events seen by either non-government organizations (NGOs) or the corporation are events which meet the goals of both potential partners:

- Conferences with speakers of mutual interest for learning or a common potential audience are possibilities.
- Career Fairs about jobs available in the marketplace for potential candidates for employment are another possibility.
- At times specific projects such as making videos or booklets, which might benefit more than one audience, might be a potential for co-operation.
- Additionally, a number of NGOs do research in an area which may be of interest to corporate partners and this might lend itself to joint funding for and shaping of the research.

I'm sure we could add creatively to this list!

5. Community Involvement

Community involvement is something that more and more people think is valuable. They think that its important and they like the idea of becoming involved as a volunteer with community organizations. They like the idea of giving something back to their community.

Many organizations encourage their staff to do this. Many employees in organizations do it without their organizations even knowing about the volunteerism. To be able to share knowledge and learning in both directions is a great opportunity. These types of partnerships also let both of the partners take advantage of opportunities for greater future results for both parties.

6. Consulting Services

Consulting services are developing when NGOs offer advice to corporations in a variety of ways. An example might be advice on the accessibility of a businesss services and products. A wide range of knowledge in the community is of interest to people in organizations which develop and sell products and services. In this case, corporations should be paying a consulting fee as they would to any other consultant.

I'm sure that if we put our minds to thoughts of corporate partnerships, we could come up with many additional ideas about how we might find many common goals that could be supported by working together. While I have outlined some of the opportunities that readily (easily) present themselves, I invite you to consider (think about) your own environment and the tremendous potential that exists for us to achieve our goals through working with others outside our own organizations, whatever they might be!

SEVEN: MONEY

You don't need lots of money to start a group but you probably will need some to keep it going after you've been at it for a while. It all depends on what kind of a group you want to have. Or whether you are interested in becoming a society. Or holding a conference. Or paying for transportation. But even if you just want to pay for the tea and cookies, you'll probably want some money!

This section tells you where to find a source for some government money (grants), how to apply for it and how to keep track of it. This section is also written from an urban (big city) point of view, not small town. Fundraising on a more small town scale can involve lots of other strategies including rummage and bake sales, garage sales, tag days, and car washes, for instance. Organizing events and volunteers on a smaller, local scale is something you may know lots about. And if you don't, you probably know someone who does. Ask around.

When DAWN Canada started up and for about one and a half years before we had our founding conference, we existed on zero money and the generosity of our "Angel". He gave us free postage and photocopying for one and a half years. This and our ability to communicate electronically kept the DAWN Canada Steering Committee going for a pretty important period of time. Get an Angel!

Get an angel. Be good to your angel.

Having a generous "Angel" can also be referred to as contributions or donations "in kind". This means that, like DAWN Canada's Angel, someone agrees to provide you with something you need for free. Usually, it involves the Angel giving you something that doesn't cost them any money personally. Some "in kind" contributions could be things like:

- postage
- photocopying
- faxing
- long distance telephone calls
- meeting space
- computer use

If someone works in an office and has access to the photocopier or postage machine, they can often do a bit for you for free - with or without the knowledge of their bosses. Some organizations like labour unions, other non-profit organizations with offices or service agencies can do this kind of thing officially. Government offices (like Status of Women or Human Resources Development Canada) can let you make long distance phone calls for free and so can your local Member of Parliament. Start asking around.

*If you do find an Angel who is willing to give your group an "in kind" donation (something for free), make darn sure you don't abuse the privilege!

1. WHERE DOES IT COME FROM?

WRITING GRANT PROPOSALS - Shirley Masuda

I began my working career as a registered nurse and went back to university to get an honours BA in Psychology after my three daughters were in school. I was working hard on my thesis, the first research to be

done in Canada on childhood sexual abuse, when my marriage broke up.

I had three daughters to support so I got some training and finally landed a job with the federal government calibrating the electrical meters for all electrical inspectors in Canada. I was the first woman to ever be hired into this position and although I was fully qualified for the job I was taken in at two levels below what men had been hired at. I remained at that level as a temporary employee for almost four years when I had had enough and moved to Vancouver.

I am deaf in one ear and have limited hearing in the other ear. I had been an activist in the Ottawa disability community and in Vancouver I was hired by the BC Coalition of People With Disabilities. It was here that I became involved with DAWN Canada and helped to organize a Board meeting of DAWN BC/DAWN Canada. The following year I was hired as a research assistant on the first research project and for the last eight years I have been the Senior Researcher for DAWN Canada.

In addition to being a mother and a grandmother, I also have another life. I have continued my interest and my volunteer work in helping women who were survivors of childhood sexual abuse, rape and domestic violence. I received an MA in Psychology through distance learning with a university in the US. Until recently, I had a private counseling, hypnotherapy and craniosacral practice. I hope to open another private practice in the coming year as well as continuing to work for DAWN Canada.

How to get money is a problem for every group. As a national organization, DAWN Canada gets funding mostly from the federal government but we have had small private and corporate donations, too. As smaller groups you can apply for regional, provincial, municipal and private (foundations, individuals) funding.

You will have to do some research in your area to see what is being handed out and for what kinds of projects. Because the federal government also organizes itself into regional offices, check with your regional Human Resources Development Canada Office and the Status of Women Canada Office (they're in the phone book) to see what money they have for women's projects and/or disability projects.

Provincial governments will have ministries for women's equality or a women's secretariat (office) as well as a disabled person's office (secretariat). Also check with your city hall to see if they have put money aside for women's projects or for disability issues. Look into possibilities from private organizations like professional women's associations, unions ("in kind" donations especially but maybe labour, too) foundations or even churches. Use your imagination here.

Getting the Proposal

When you have found a pot of money that is being given away to organizations like yours for the kind of work you want to do, ask to speak to the person in charge of distributing the funds - in governments, that person is usually called the "funding officer".

Ask her a lot of questions:

- what is being funded?
- how much can you apply for?
- what kind of "product" (end result) is expected at the end of the project?
- what's the deadline?

Don't forget that it should only cost you a short phone call since if you ask them to call you back, they will. Then they pay for the (maybe long distance) phone call. That's our tax dollars at work.

Provide some information about your organization. Ask to have a grant application form sent to you with all relevant information as well as information about their organization.

Be very careful about who the funding organization represents and whether or not they have a feminist perspective, what restrictions they place on you and whether or not they respect you as independent, feminist women with disabilities who are capable of doing the job.

* DAWN Canada has had an informal policy not to ask for or accept money from the drug or tobacco companies since their products can do such harm to us.

When you get the information, read the application form and accompanying material very carefully. The first thing to check is the closing date for applications. There is no point in working on an application if the deadline is the next day or has already come and gone. (If you think you really deserve funding from this source, phone anyway.) Most funders will be giving a one-time amount of money for specific kinds of things (for example, to enhance awareness of women's health issues).

The next step is to fit your needs into what they are funding. It may take some creative thinking to shape the meaning of what they say to fit your goals. Let's say what you really want to do is strengthen your organization by increasing your membership. They say that what they will fund is a project on health and women with disabilities. Maybe you can do both. You may be able to develop a project to ask women what kind of information they would need in order to improve the nutritional quality of their food without spending more money.

Outreach

At the same time as you fulfill the stated goals of your funding application, you can do some outreach work. You could publicize your group and build up your membership. You could even ask for money (donations). After all, you can send out more than one sheet of paper for one stamp and one of those sheets of paper could be a membership form or a blurb about your group. Or both. Or an appeal for financial support. Of course, you do the work on nutritional information on another sheet(s).

The Proposal

When you have decided what you could do with this money it is time to write the proposal. It isn't so difficult if you follow their outline. If there is no space to give a history of your organization then attach it to the form and give some examples of what you have done and hope to do.

If you are a non-profit society you can include your Constitution and By-laws which will give them information about the purpose of the organization and how you function as an organization. If you don't have an application form make the history a part of the written application.

Writing your proposal

To write your own proposal from scratch follow the steps below:

Step 1 – "History"

Write a little "History" of the organization and why it exists. Make sure you attach the Constitution and By-laws if it is a non-profit society. These will tell them why and how you operate.

Step 2 – "Purpose"

Describe the project and what it hopes to do - in this example, it will be called (the title), "Nutrition (Eating Habits) and Women with Disabilities". Explain why you want this money. Be very clear - **you** have to know how much you need and why before you'll be able to convince anyone else to give you a large amount of money! Using the above example of "Nutrition and Women with Disabilities", you can say things like:

- how many women with disabilities live in your area or province
- how many are on low income, what you know about their daily lives
- what kind of nutrition are the women currently getting?
- how important good eating is to staying healthy or becoming healthier when you have a disability.

You can call this part the "Purpose" section or make up some other name for it.

Step 3 – "Project Plan"

How you have to tell them exactly what you are going to do. This part will show them how you plan on spending their money and also let them know that you do know what you're doing (with **their** money). Let's say you are going to:

- send out a questionnaire to women with disabilities through the provincial disability organization to ask women with disabilities about their nutritional (eating) habits.
- ask them if they would like information on how to make their meals more nutritious and tasty with the same amount of money. (And don't forget that you might, at the same time and for the same amount of postage ask

them about poverty or access to services or forming a support group or ...? You don't necessarily share this on the application form, though.)

- consult with a dietitian and collect the appropriate materials and send it out to them.
- evaluate project results

You may even want to set up a network to exchange recipes and get together in small groups and test them out. This will encourage the project to continue or to grow into something bigger.

This "something" might be able to take on other issues or provide ongoing support to women with disabilities in their lives after the money is gone. Be creative but be realistic.

You can call this section your "Project Plan" or "Methodology" section.

Step 4 – "Timeline"

Next, it is important to set up a "Timeline" which describes when each step of the project will happen. A timeline shows the funder that you know what you are going to be doing and that you've thought it through carefully ahead of time. After all, it's their money and they are more likely to part with it if they think that you know exactly what you're doing with it.

A timeline will help to keep you on track as the project gets done over the period of time that you specify (also called "term" of the project). Your funder will know by looking at your timeline if you can complete the project when you say you are going to.

Do not take on more work than you can possibly do in any one period of time.

In the following example, the period of time is eight months, but it could be four, six or eighteen, depending on how much work you realistically can get done with the amount of money available. Your timeline might look like this:

"Nutrition and Women with Disabilities"

Timeline

Month 1-2

- Form an advisory committee (invite a dietitian!)
- Develop (with advisory committee) and mail out questionnaire

Month 3

- Send reminder letters to women who did not return questionnaire
- Consult with dietitian for information on cheap, nutritious foods

- Begin to gather information and recipes on good nutrition

Month 4

- Assess the returned questionnaires for dietary needs

Month 5-6

- Consult with dietitian on best information for the needs expressed in the questionnaires
- Prepare materials to send out to women with disabilities

Month 7-8

- Send out materials to women with disabilities
- Set up network for sharing good eating ideas and recipes
- Complete financial report for funders with the bookkeeper
- Evaluate project

Step 5 – "Budget"

The Budget comes next. Find out how much money you can apply for and then figure out how much it will take to do this project. After you have made up the budget you may want to make some "budget notes" to explain the expenses in case they think you are asking for too much money. Remember that you are dealing with women with disabilities and you will need some extra money for making all materials and events accessible. Don't forget to budget for a bookkeeper - below she would be paid out of "Consulting Fees". Be generous in your budget because there is a good chance that it will be cut back.

Here is a sample budget:

Budget

Salary (2 part-time workers) 15,000.00

Consulting Fees 3,000.00

Phone 600.00

Printing 500.00

Postage 800.00

Office Supplies 500.00

Materials (Printing/Purchasing) 2,000.00

Alternate Formats 500.00

Total 22,900.00

Step 6 – "Evaluation"

Government money often requires that you have an "Evaluation" (assessment) section at the end of your project. This means that you and the funders have a way of deciding whether your project did what you said it was going to do. In this example:

- Did the women find out about how they could eat better food with little money?
- Are they going to carry on doing it?
- Did they learn some good lessons that will help them to be healthier?
- Questionnaires, interview or telephone calls can all be used to complete an evaluation of your project.

Those are the main components of writing a grant application! It isn't too hard or mysterious. You just have to make sure that you provide enough information to satisfy the curiosity of the people who are going to give you some money.

Asking for Help

If you need help getting started, there are lots of other groups and organizations that have done it. Ask them for help.

- Ask your local contacts in the disability community or women's movement to give you a copy of an old application form to look at (See "[Lists](#)")
- Ask them to help you write it!
- Ask them to go over your application form when it's ready
- Check the arithmetic
- Re-read the section "[Organizational Image](#)" and then send it in.

But do check to see that you have given all the information that is required. Remember to budget for a bookkeeper There is a lot of competition for not very much money and your chances will increase if you give the funders everything they ask for on the application form. Your chances will decrease if they are left with a bunch of unanswered questions.

If you have a good relationship with the funding officer, (and you should try to develop one) you could ask her or him to review your proposal and tell you how to improve it. After sending the proposal in you may phone to see if it arrived, whether they need any more information and how long it will take to hear back from them about your application.

Remember to send a thank-you letter.

Getting the Money

When you get the money write a thank you letter. Then deposit it right away. This involves a few things:

- Decide ahead of time who will be the signing officers for the account that you will open. Whose signatures will be on the cheques? Usually it makes sense to have the Chairperson and the Project Worker. Or the Bookkeeper if you have one. Talk about it at a meeting with everyone.
- Set up a process for the handling of the money with the bookkeeper. (Don't worry, she'll know what to do.)
- Get cheques that require two signatures. That way, two women share the responsibilities for the money. It feels better that way. And looks better to the people who worry about these kinds of things.
- The credit union or bank will ask you for documents to prove that you are who you say you are and likewise for your organization:
 - take along the Constitution and By-laws, anything on your letterhead if you have some, minutes from the meeting where you decided on the signing officers, the project proposal, the letter from the funders and anything else you have that might prove that you are on the up-and-up. (Financial institutions are funny about these things.)
 - take some personal identification
 - it helps sometimes if you phone the people at the credit union or bank to set up an appointment - tell them that you want to open an account for a non-profit group and they'll tell you what they need from you. Talk to the bookkeeper about the process that you already talked about and start following it with the first cheque you write.

Make sure you spend the money the way you said you were going to spend it and good luck on your project!

2. WHERE DOES IT GO?

KEEPING TRACK OF THE MONEY - Shirley Masuda

Most DAWN groups are too poor to have a paid bookkeeper. If you have a volunteer bookkeeper you are very lucky. If you are not so lucky you will have to keep your own records of every penny that you spend. This is important because you will have to give an account of the money to the funders and they'll want to know that you've spent their money wisely and in the same way that you said you'd spend it. By keeping good track of the money you gain credibility and it is easier to get money the next time you ask for some.

Keeping track of the money is critical when it comes to keeping the project on track. You must spend the money in the way that you said you were going to spend it. You must keep a close watch on each budget item to make sure the money will last to the end of the project. If you are underspending in one area you can ask your funders if money can be moved around, but don't do it without checking.

Keeping track of money is a major headache for all of us. Here are some pointers on how to manage the money:

- If you don't have a computer get a record book and a calculator (unless you are a math genius, of course!) and set it up something like your bank cheque book records.
- Set up a separate section for each budget item with the total amount you have to spend, how much you spend

on what and the balance.

- Do this each month.

Remember salaries and contract fees must never be used to pay for other budget items.

Example of Records:

DAWN Canada: Account No. 000 000 01							
Office Expenses							
Date	Salary	Supplies	Postage	Phone	Bookkeeper	Total Spent	Balance
June 1							10,000.00
June 1	1,000.00					1,000.00	9,000.00
June 4		50.85				1,050.85	8949.15
June 10		145.63	145.63			1,196.48	8803.52
June 15				125.33		1,321.81	8678.19
June 22					100.00	1,421.81	8578.19
June 30						1,421.81	8578.19

Now you can see where the money went and how quickly it is disappearing (see "Balance Column"). Check your work by making sure the total for all the expenses, Salary - 1,000.00, Office Supplies - 50.85, Postage - 145.63 and Phone - 125.33, Bookkeeper - 100.00, add up to the same total as Money Spent - 1,421.81. If it doesn't, you have made a mistake somewhere. The bottom line or the "Balance" is transferred to the next month and you carry on just as you did here.

In this way you are able to keep track of the total amount of money you spent on, for instance, "Office Expenses". You can also add a line on your statement that gives you totals for the month. At the end of the project you have the totals of all the budget items and how much was spent on each item. With a computer program you can set up the budget categories, enter the amounts and the computer will give you printouts of any set of information you want. If you have a computer, it is worth investing \$50.00 and spending half a day learning the program.

Just keeping records like this is not enough. You must keep **every** receipt and **every** invoice. If you have to mail the invoice in with a cheque for payment, make a copy and staple it to the cheque stub. Separate all of this into files by the month. This will make it easy for a bookkeeper to use the information or for a person to audit your account if that is required.

Never reimburse anyone for money they have spent without a receipt and never pay any bill without

saving the invoice or the receipt. (You don't want to be stuck paying for it out of your own pocket.)
Keep your records up-to-date on a weekly basis.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: REFERENCES (BIBLIOGRAPHY)

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APPENDIX B: LISTS

1. DAWN GROUPS

Yukon Territories - Women on Wings

c/o Judi Johnny
PO Box 1073, RR #2
Whitehorse, YT
Y1A 5A5

British Columbia - Pacific DAWN

c/o Carol Bast
15 - 2132 Dundas Street

Vancouver, BC
V5L 1J6

Saskatchewan - DAWN Saskatchewan

c/o Etln Lennox
2025 McTavish Street
Regina, SK
S4T 3W8

Ontario - DAWN Ontario

PO Box 781, Stn B
Sudbury, ON
email: dawn@tyenet.com
Phone (Voice/TTY) 705 671-0825
Fax 705-671-0829
Phone - Ontario only 1-800-561-4727

Quebec - Action des Femmes Handicapes Montreal

c/o Nathalie Léveillé
112-5795 Sir Walter Scott
Cote St. Luc
Montreal, PQ
H4W 2T7

Prince Edward Island - DAWN PEI (Prince Edward Island Dance with DAWN)

c/o Estelle Reddin
RR #2
Cornwall, PE
C0A 1H0

Nova Scotia - Nova Scotia Metro Area Women with Disabilities (MAUD)

212 - 2786 Agricola Street
Halifax, NS
B3K 4E1
Phone 902-453-0004

Newfoundland & Labrador - DAWN St. John/s

c/o Corrine Gough
PO Box 23144
St John's, NF
A1B 4J9

2. PROVINCIAL DISABILITY ORGANIZATIONS

Yukon:

Yukon Territory Second Opinion Society

708 Black Street

Whitehorse, YT

Y1A 2N8

email: sos@yukon.net

Phone/Fax : 867-667-2037

British Columbia:

BC Aboriginal Network on Disability Society

1179 Kosapsen Crescent

Victoria, BC

V9A 7A6

email: mavis_henry@pinc.com

Phone: 250-381-7303

British Columbia Coalition of People with Disabilities

204 - 456 West Broadway

Vancouver, BC

V5Y 1R3

email: feedback@bccpd.bc.ca

Phone: 604-875-0188

Fax: 604-875-9227

Alberta:

Alberta Committee of Citizens with Disabilities

707 - 10339 -124th Street

Edmonton, Alberta

T5N 3W1

email: accd@canet.com

Phone: 403-488-9088

Fax: 403-488-3757

Saskatchewan:

Saskatchewan Voice of People with Disabilities

1024 Winnipeg Street

Regina, SK

S4R 8P8

email: voice@sk.sympatico.ca

Phone: 306-569-3111

Fax: 306-569-1818

Manitoba:

The Manitoba League of Persons with Disabilities

200 - 294 Portage Avenue

Winnipeg, Manitoba

R3C 0B9

Email: mlpd@mb.sympatico.ca

Phone: 204-943-6099

Fax: 204-942-3146

Quebec:

Confederation des Organismes Provinciaux de Handicapés du Quebec

4545 Pierre-du-Coubertin

Montreal, Quebec

H1V 3N7

Phone: 514-251-1383

Fax: 514-251-7933

Prince Edward Island:

PEI Council of the Disabled

P0 Box 2128

Charlottetown, PEI

C1A 7N7

Email: peicod@pei.sympatico.ca

Phone: 902-892-9149

Fax: 902-566-1919

Nova Scotia:

Nova Scotia League for Equal Opportunities

208 - 2786 Agricola Street
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3K 4E1

email: nsleo@ns.sympatico.ca

Phone: 902-455-6942

Fax: 902-454-4781

Newfoundland/Labrador:

Coalition of Persons with Disabilities of Newfoundland and Labrador

4 Escasoni Place
St John's, Newfoundland
A1A 3R6

Phone: 709-722-7011

Fax: 709-722-4424

3. NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL DISABILITY ORGANIZATIONS

Advocacy Resource Centre for the Handicapped (ARCH)

Kinsmen Building, York University
4700 Keele Street
Downsview, ON
M3J 1P3

email: cacl@yorku.ca

Phone: 416-661-9611

TTY: 416-661-2023

Fax: 416-661-5701

Canadian AIDS Society

400 - 100 Sparks St,
Ottawa, ON
K1P SB7

email: cdnaids@cyberus.ca

Phone: 613-230-3580

Fax: 613-563-4998

Canadian Association for Community Living

4700 Keele Street
Downsview, ON

M3J 1P3

email: cadl@yorku.ca

Phone: 416-661-9611

TTY: 416-661-2023

Fax: 416-661-5701

Canadian Association of Independent Living Centres (CAILC)

1004 - 360 Sparks Street

Ottawa, ON

K1R 7S8

email: cailc@magma.ca

Phone/TTY: 613-563-2581

Fax: 613-235-4497

Canadian Association of the Deaf (CAD)

203 - 251 Bank Street

Ottawa, ON

K2P 1X3

email: jroots@cyberus.ca

Phone/TTY: 613-565-2882

Fax: 613-565-1207

Canadian Centre for Disability Studies

2404 - 7 Evergreen Place

Winnipeg, MB

R3L 2T3

email: ccds@escape.ca

Phone: 204-287-8411

Fax: 204-284-5343

Canadian Clearinghouse on Disability Issues

Office for Disability Issues

Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC)

100 - 25 Eddy Street

Hull, Quebec

K1A 0M5

email: tom@gabriel.resudox.net

Phone: 819-953-1194

Voice: 1-800-665-0917

TTY: 1-800-561-9706

Canadian Council of the Blind (CCB)

405 - 396 Cooper Street
Ottawa, ON
K2P 2H7

Phone: 613-567-0311

Fax: 613-567-2728

Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work (CCRW)

6th Floor, 20 King St. West
Toronto, ON
M5H 1C4

email: ccrwwaen@can.net

Phone: 416-974-55

Canadian Hard of Hearing Association (CHHA)

205-2435 Holly Lane
Ottawa, ON
K1V 7P2

email: jmcnamara@cybemus.ca

Phone: 613-526-1584

TTY: 613-526-2692

Fax: 613-526-4718

Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA)

2160 Yonge Street, 3rd Floor
Toronto, ON
M4S 2Z3

email: cmhanat@interlog.com

Phone: 1-800-267-3017

Phone: 416-484-7750

Fax: 416-484-4617

Canadian Paraplegic Association (CPA)

320 - 1101 Prince of Wales Drive
Ottawa, ON
K2C 3W7

email: rprice@canparaplegic.org

Phone: 613-723-1033

Fax: 613-723-1060

Confederation des Organismes de Personnes Handicapees du Quebec (COPHAN)

21 77 rue Masson, Local 412, 4e etage
Montreal, PQ
H2H 1Z1
Phone: 514-526-8686
Fax: 514-526-4494

Council of Canadians with Disabilities (CCD)

#926 - 294 Portage Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3C 0B9
email: ccd@pcs.mb.ca
Phone: 204-947-0303
Fax: 204-942-4625

DAWN Canada: DisAbled Women's Network Canada

PO Box 93558
Nelson Park RPO
Vancouver, BC
V6 4L7
email: dawncan.yahoo.com
Phone/Fax: 604-873-1564

Disabled Peoples' International (DPI)

101 - 7 Evergreen Place
Winnipeg, MB
R3L 2T3
email: dpi@dpi.org
Phone: 204-287-8010
Fax: 204-287-8175

Learning Disabilities Association of Canada

323 Chapel Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1N 7Z2
email: ldactac@fox.nstn.ca
Phone: 613-238-5721
Fax: 613-235-5391

L'Institut Roeher Institute

Kinsmen Building, York University Campus

4700 Keele Street
Toronto, ON
M5J 1P5
email: cad@yorku.ca

Phone: 416-661-9611
TTY: 416-661-2023
Fax: 416-661-5701

National Educational Association of Disabled Students (NEADS)

Room 513 Unicentre
Carleton University
Ottawa, ON
K1S 5B6
email: ca322@freenet.carleton.ca

Phone/TTY: 613-526-8008
Fax: 613-520-3704

National Network for Mental Health

203 - 55 King Street
St. Catharines, ON
L2R 3H5

Phone: 905-682-2423
Fax: 905-682-7469

Neil Squire Foundation

220 - 2250 Boundary Rd
Burnaby, BC
V5M 4L9
email: info@neilsquire.ca

Phone: 604-473-9363
Fax: 604-473-9364

People First of Canada

308 - 489 College Street
Toronto, ON
M6G 1A5
email: pfc@interlog.com

Phone: 416-920-9530
Fax: 416-920.9503

4. NATIONAL WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS

Canadian Abortion Rights Action League (CARAL)

Jo Dufay
726 - 1 Nicholas Street
Ottawa ON
K1N 7B7
email: caral@interlog.com

Phone: 613 789-9958
Fax: 613 789-9960

Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies (CAEFS)

Kim Pate
701 - 151 Slater Street
Ottawa, ON
K1P 5H3
email: kpate@web.net

Phone: 613 238-2422
Fax: 613-232-7130

Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW)

Kim Young
600 - 251 Bank Street
Ottawa, ON
K2P 1X3
email: bw7250@freenet.carleton.ca

Phone: 613-234-8252

Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAOW)

Linda Clippingdale
CRIAOW/ICREF
Lise Martin (hm: 613-241-3392)
408 - 151 Slater Street
Ottawa, ON
K1P 5H3
email: criaw@sympatico.ca

Phone: 613-563-0681
Fax: 613 563-0682

Canadian Women's Foundation

Bev Wybrow

504 - 133 Richmond St. West
Toronto, ON
M5H 2L3

email: info@cdnwomen.org

Phone: 416 365-1444

Fax: 416 365-1745

DisAbled Women's Network Canada

110 Ste Thérèse Road, Office #005
Montreal, Quebec, H2Y 1E6

Phone: 514-396-009 (Quebec); **Fax:** 514-396-6585 (Quebec)

Toll free (Canada): 1-866-396-0074

Phone the toll free number first to arrange a facsimile transmission

Email: hutch@cfirehose.net

Federation nationale des femmes canadiennes-françaises (FNFCF)

Susanne Janson
302B - 450 rue Rideau
Ottawa, ON
K1N 5Z4

email: fnfcf@franco.ca

Phone: 613-241-3500

Fax: 613-241-6679

Federation des femmes du Quebec (FFQ)

Françoise David
100 - 5225 rue Berri
Montreal, Quebec
H2J 2S4

email: femmes@ifq.qc.ca

Phone: 514-948-3262

Fax: 514-948-3264

MediaWatch

Linda Hawke
204 - 517 Wellington Street West
Toronto, ON
M5V 1G1

email: mediawatch@myna.com

Phone: 416-408-2065

Fax: 416-408-2069

National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC)

Julie Johnstone
23 - 270 MacLaren Street
Ottawa1 ON
K2P 0M3
email: ncwc@intranet.ca

Phone: 613-232-5025

Fax: 613-232-8419

National Association of Women and the Law (NAWL)

Louise Shaughnessy
604 - 1 Nicholas Street,
Ottawa, ON
K1N 7B7
email: nawl@fto.net

Phone: 613-241-7570

Fax: 613-241-4657

National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women of Canada (NOIVMWC)

Shelley Das and/or Lucya Spencer
225 - 219 Argyle Avenue
Ottawa, ON
K2P 2H4
email: noivmwc@web.net

Phone: 613-232-0689

Fax: 613-232-0988

National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC)

Joan Grant-Cummings naccc1@web.net
203 - 234 Eglinton Avenue East
Toronto, ON
M4P 1K5
email: nacio@web.net

Phone: 416-932-1718

Fax: 416-932-0646

Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC)

Patricia Baxter and/or T. Woods

9 Melrose Avenue
Ottawa, ON
K1Y 1T8
email: nwac@istar.ca
Phone: 613-722-3033
Fax: 613-722-7687

Nouveau Depart

Lise Jacquot
1355 boul. Rene-Levesque oust
Montreal PQ
H3G 1T3
Phone: 514-866-0416
Fax: 514-866-4866

Relais-Femmes de Montreal Inc.

Lucie Belange
810 - 1265 rue Berri
Montreal, PQ
H2L 4X4
email: relaisf@cam.org
Phone: 514-844-4509
Fax: 514-844-1598

Reseau national d'action education femmes (RNAEF)

Marie-France Gosselin
305 - 1173 Cyrville Road
Ottawa, ON
K1J 7S6
email: rnaef@sympatico.ca
Phone: 613-741-9978
Fax: 613-741-3805

Women's Research Centre (WRC)

Deborah Prieur and/or Jan Barnsley
101- 2245 West Broadway
Vancouver, BC
V6K 2E4
email: wrc@web.net
Phone: 604-734-0485
Fax: 604-734-0484

Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF)

Jane Rounthwaite

1800 - 415 Yonge Street

Toronto, ON

M5B 2E7

email: leafexdr@interlog.com

Phone: 416-595-7170 (ext. 231)

Fax: 416-595-7191

APPENDIX C: STATIONERY

Business cards: (the size of type is measured in "points"):

Name: Avant Garde 11 point **bold**

Title: Avant Garde 11 point normal (or "book")

Address: Helvetica 9 point (normal) with 9.5 point leading (line spacing).

Many printers like to get the original artwork for business cards as shown here; 2-up so they can print them two per sheet and cut them apart later. This is also a good way to get cards for two people in one print job. Talk to your printer carefully about what you want (type of paper or card, ink colour) so that there are no surprises!

Letterhead: The next page has a sample of Dawn Canada's letterhead, which could be used as a model, or even copied. You or your printer can replace the contact info with your group's; we used Helvetica 12 pt. type.

APPENDIX D: ACCESS NEEDS FORM

Included in this document is an Access Needs Form, you can download and print this form in [PDF format](#), or in [MS Word format](#)

APPENDIX E: DAWN MEMBERSHIP FORM

Included in this document is the DAWN Membership form, you can download and print this form in [PDF format](#) or in [MS Word format](#)

APPENDIX F: DAWNing ORDER FORM

DAWN Canada is happy to announce a new book, *DAWNing: How to Start and Maintain a Group* in print, tape or diskette format.

In order to receive one or more *DAWNings*, fill in the form below and enclose your cheque or money order. If you are a woman with a disability and/or cannot afford to pay the suggested cost, please send whatever you can to help cover postage.

We do not have the resources to do any billing so if you are a organization or can afford to pay, please make sure you enclose a cheque or money order with your order.

Return this order form to: DAWN Canada

P.O. Box 22003

Brandon, MB

R7A 6Y9

204-726-1406 Phone

204-726-1409 Fax

dawnca@canada.com

I would like to order:

Print x \$30.00 =

Diskette:

Word x \$10.00 =

Word Perfect x \$10.00 =

Total \$

Please send my copy(ies) of DAWNING to:

Name:

Organization:

Suite No:

City:

Province:

Postal Code:

Phone (H):

Phone (Wk):

Fax:

email:

DisAbled Women's Network Canada Réseau d'action des femmes handicapées du Canada

110 Ste Therese Road, Office # 005 / 110, rue Ste Thérèse, bureau 005
Montreal, Quebec, H2Y 1E6 / Montréal, Québec, H2Y 1E6

Phone / Téléphone: 514-396-0009 (QC); **Fax / Télécopieur:** 514-396-6585 (QC)

Toll free / Numéro sans frais (Canada): 1-866-396-0074

Phone the toll free number first to arrange a facsimile transmission (Canada) / Téléphonez d'abord au numéro sans frais pour organiser une transmission par télécopieur (Canada)

Email / Courriel: hutch@efirehose.net