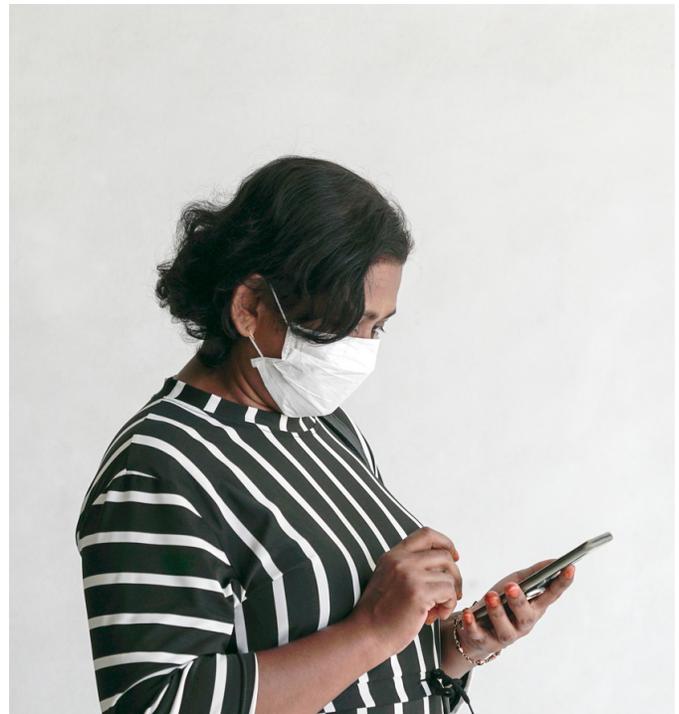


ANNUAL REPORT

— 2020/2021



MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Members,

I ended last year's greeting, speaking to the 'epic curveball' that 2020 threw us and how you (and OPDI) responded. That theme has clearly continued, and reinforced the importance of our peer support work at local levels and the strength of our peer staff and leaders.

It was an exciting and rewarding year, as we brought in changes to our membership framework based on your direct feedback, and kicked off OPDI's 2020-2023 Strategic Direction.

But the reality is, this year was marked by many challenges for OPDI, our member organizations and for the healthcare sector, in general. We've had to tackle and reflect upon such difficult issues that we were all faced with this past year, including:

- The ongoing global pandemic; and the need to support our staff and leaders as they valiantly worked through these challenges, continued to deliver vital services and faced burnout;
- The drug poisoning/ opioid crisis,
- Police brutality of many BIPOC individuals; and
- Our Province's health sector transformation into the Ontario Health team model.

These weighty issues have continued to shine a light on the significant health inequities that exist within our system, and they have served to inform OPDI's work to:

- Advocate on behalf of the vital, accessible peer support services that are part of the solution to our health care system inequities;
- Amplify your voice to government and key stakeholders; and most importantly,
- Keep you informed through our communications and educational resources.

I want to thank **YOU**, our members, for staying engaged and working so closely with OPDI throughout this year. Coming into this year, I had committed to you that we would find new ways to bring our membership together to share knowledge and to strengthen the CSI/Peer Support movement; I am confident that we collectively continue to achieve that!

I would also like to thank our Board of Directors, especially, Alise de Bie and Tyrone Gamble, who as Chairs for each half of this year, led us quietly and ably through many challenges.

Sincerely,

Laura Pearson
Executive Director
Ontario Peer Development Initiative

2020 AGM AND AWARDS PRESENTATION: A SPECIAL 2 HOUR VIRTUAL EVENT IN A PANDEMIC ENVIRONMENT

As our sector continued to face the realities of our pandemic world, OPDI's team organized a special 2-hour online event on October 5, 2020. Over 68 guests attended, to recognize and honour our inspiring 11th Annual Lighthouse winners.

We approved by-law revisions that were a result of direct feedback from you, our membership, to allow for two new membership levels (affiliate and individual) and enabled proxy voting for our members.

OPDI's 2020-2021 Board was Welcomed In: Tina Behdinin, Percy D'Souza, Marina Mikhail, Andrea Schaefer, as well as returning board members: Alise De Bie, Brooke Chambers, Tyrone Gamble, Calvin Prowse and Kari Sterling.

11TH ANNUAL LIGHTHOUSE AWARDS

We would like to congratulate all of our Lighthouse Award winners!

Peer of the Year Awards:

- **Aubrey Andrus**
- **Meghan Schuebrook**
- **Carol Boehringer**

Unsung Hero Award: **Monica Aguilar**

Pay It Forward Award: **Julia Read**

Innovator's Award:
"The Breathing Space" – a physical wellness and student peer support space at Conestoga College made possible by **Kayleigh Hilborn, Patty McColl and Bonnie Lipton-Bos.**

Resilience was the Theme for 2020, and our Special AGM 2020 Video:
WORD on RESILIENCE



MISSION:

The Ontario Peer Development Initiative's mission is to strengthen and promote diverse peer voices in Ontario through community building, information-sharing, collaboration, advocacy and education

VISION:

A world in which lived experience is valued, peer autonomy and peer culture are protected, diversity is respected, and peer support is available to all.

2020-2023

STRATEGIC VALUES & STRATEGIC DIRECTION FOR



OUR VALUES

LIVED EXPERIENCE/EXPERIENTIAL KNOWLEDGE

OPDI values lived experience and the skills and knowledge gained through experiencing mental health and/or substance use concerns, and navigating systems and related systemic barriers, stigma, and discrimination.



INTEGRITY, TRANSPARENCY & HONESTY

OPDI acts with integrity, transparency, and honesty in all its relationships and partnerships.



DIVERSITY AS STRENGTH

OPDI advocates for social justice, equity, anti-oppression, anti-racism, and inclusion. We respect and value all people's race, religion, spirituality, ethnicity, gender identity, age, class, income, sexual identity, disability, geographic location, and unique life experiences.



HOPE, WELLNESS & RECOVERY

OPDI believes in the right of each individual to self determine their own approach to wellness/recovery and to learn from their peers.



INDEPENDENT PEER VOICE

OPDI is member-driven and rooted in and accountable to the history of the Consumer/Survivor movement and sustaining an independent, peer voice.



INNOVATION THROUGH PARTNERSHIP & COLLABORATION

OPDI is committed to building and fostering an innovative peer community through partnership and collaboration. We are stronger together than alone.



OUR DIRECTION

HOPE, WELLNESS & RECOVERY

OPDI believes in the right of each individual to self determine their own approach to wellness/recovery and to learn from their peers.



FINANCIAL PERSPECTIVE

- Develop consistent reliable income source
- Develop additional funding sources
- Develop a fundraising program



OPERATING PERSPECTIVE

- OPDI has a strong community profile
- OPDI is recognized as a leader in quality improvement
- Ensure OPDI is a preferred workplace



INNOVATION & LEARNING

- Expand partnership
- Strengthen the autonomy of independent Consumer Survivor Initiatives and peer support organizations
- Operationalize anti-racism and anti-oppression principles



WWW.OPDI.ORG

PROVIDING VITAL SUPPORTS IN A VIRTUAL, PANDEMIC WORLD: QUICKLY ADJUSTING

COVID 19 altered the course of 2020-2021.

We recognize our sector was already experiencing stress from insufficient resources with increasing demand for our vital peer support services.

In order to support our membership through this challenging time, OPDI expanded its webinar & guest partnership offerings, hosted bi-weekly leadership forums to share challenges, solutions and resources and launched two communities of practice; i) focused on Hospital peers and ii) Peer Leaders working in the Criminal Justice space.

EMPOWERING COMMUNITY MINDS



In order to better support the increasing mental health needs of Ontarians during COVID-19 and beyond, OPDI joined five other community mental health organizations to empower and support communities impacted by mental health challenges across the province.

The organizations within ECM saw COVID-19 adding new challenges to the vulnerability of already marginalized populations, who already face negative mental health impacts of social isolation, housing insecurity, digital exclusion and economic instability.

LOCAL MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS SHIFTING THEIR SERVICES

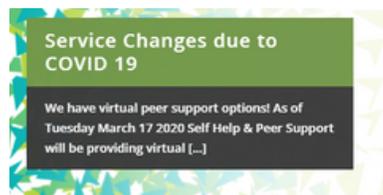
We are proud that our member organizations not only shifted their service delivery models, but some were able to provide increased supports and/or roll out new programs in a virtual reality.

But OPDI also recognizes that there are gaps that cannot be replaced in an online format, like the community meals & outings, face-to-face drop-in programs and in-person peer wellness checks that many of you offer and have had to suspend indefinitely.



The Krasman Centre Warm Line experienced a doubling in demand through the pandemic.

CMHA WW's Self Help & Peer Support Centre quickly changed their service delivery model at the onset of the pandemic.



SELF HELP &
PEER SUPPORT

SUPPORTING YOU: MEMBERSHIP SERVICES



Completing our 29th year of serving our members has only strengthened the OPDI team's commitment to supporting you, and ensuring that we provide you with the appropriate educational opportunities to further peer support professional standards, incorporating best practices and emerging sector issues.

Once again, the ongoing pandemic was a challenge for everyone, but it also provided us with new opportunities to share with each other and provide support in the new 'virtual' norm.

OPDI's team collaborated with members and other sector professionals, to increase our educational webinar offerings to you. Those webinars and corresponding educational materials can always be found on OPDI's website here. With your ongoing input, support and collaboration, OPDI was able to:

- Support Solicitor General/MAPS Working Groups;
- Provide timely ARAO resources and training, based on survey feedback; and
- Conduct regular focus groups through regular Leadership Forums.

Peer Support Strong Conference:

During this period of uncertainty, OPDI recognized that peer support was more important than ever to maintain mental wellness.

We partnered with Lived Experience and Recovery Network (LERN) and Nipissing Mental Health Housing and Support Services: Peer Support Services (NMHHSS) to bring you "Peer Support Strong" - a full day celebration of the power of peer support.



128 attendees from across Ontario joined us, as we hosted keynote addresses and workshops from peer leaders across the province and included networking opportunities with experts throughout the field.

Committed to CORE Peer Support Education:

As part of our 2020-2023 Strategic Direction, OPDI committed more resources towards developing a more enhanced training strategy for peer support professionals.

We have been listening to your feedback, are committed to continuous improvement and ensuring that our training strategy is as effective as possible, so we are evolving the delivery from eight modules over five days, to a more manageable framework; 17 two-hour virtual modules.

We look forward to sharing our 'Enhanced Training Strategy' pilot findings in the coming months!



ADVOCATING FOR YOUR WORK: PEER SUPPORT PLAYS A VITAL ROLE IN ONTARIO'S HEALTHCARE FRAMEWORK

As OPDI continues to be the provincial voice, advocating for the great CSI/Peer Support work that you do locally, we have worked hard to amplify that voice.

Our 2020-2023 Strategic Direction reinforces our vision to sustain the independent peer voice by achieving stronger partnerships and collaborations.



In the past year, OPDI has listened to you, shared your perspectives with sector partners and ensured that the peer support voice has been included at more strategic planning tables and government working groups. On behalf of peer support professionals across Ontario, we provided subject matter expertise on guidance documents from the Ontario Government and The Canadian Research Initiative in Substance Misuse (CRISM).

As we continue to grow the peer support movement, and showcase the value of peer support within Ontario's healthcare framework, OPDI has also undertaken new initiatives that support and reflect that growth, the importance of peer support and our 2020-2023 Strategic Vision & Direction.

Re-Branding:

As the peer support movement and OPDI's service to its members soon enters the 30th year, we believe it is the optimal time for OPDI to rebrand. We look forward to unveiling our new brand in the coming months, that will better reflect the strength of our work and movement, and position us for an even stronger future and amplified voice of lived experience across Ontario!

Independent CSIs:

We have been listening to many independent CSI leaders about the future of independent CSIs in the evolution of our Province's healthcare framework. OPDI has engaged with external consultants to assist us in developing a deeper understanding and a potential business case for collaboration opportunities and shared services, that could enable united, independent CSIs to flourish.



Government Relations:

OPDI has embarked on an aggressive government relations plan that will bring the voice of our members' lived and living experience, and a deeper understanding of the role of peers in our Province's healthcare system to Government Officials, Key Sector Stakeholders and Funders. This work will continue on through the year 2021-2022 and will ensure that the impact of your work throughout this pandemic, is understood and honoured during future decision-making discussions.

RESEARCH & PARTNERSHIPS

Social Science Humanities Research Council Grant:

A new partnership enabling our CSI sector to develop a consistent approach towards data collection, address any crucial evidence-based gaps that could create and inform sector-related funding opportunities, and reinforce our sector's advocacy and education efforts. As Ontario's mental health system undergoes significant reforms, with shifting delivery priorities and pressures to consolidate services under Ontario Health Teams, the need for current evidence of service effectiveness is essential to maintain financial sustainability.

Virtual Care Committee and Equity Working Group:

A valuable Provincial reference group for virtual mental health and addictions healthcare in Ontario, comprised of committed and diverse professionals working together to identify best evidence and practical solutions for virtual care needs across the province. OPDI has brought the unique perspectives of our members' and peers' experiences to this Virtual Care Planning Table.

As we collectively continue to advocate for equity in the area of digital health, the group, through OPDI's input, has been able to successfully identify challenges encountered by our member organizations and of the individuals we serve, reinforcing those who are excluded as our health care has been offered virtually.

POWeR:

A two-year longitudinal study examining the impacts of peer support on occupational outcomes. This study has been designed by researchers from Wilfrid Laurier University and the Université du Québec à Montréal, in collaboration with peer support organizations across Ontario.

OPDI signed on as a research partner; serving on the advisory committee and actively facilitating the identification of research participants.

Smart Homes Research:

OPDI continued to serve on the Advisory Committee of the Smart Homes Research initiative; exploring how to help people with lived experience of mental illness manage their health and everyday lives using smart technology.

The final report, launched through a media release and press conference, resulted in OPDI advocating for changes to the Assistive Devices Legislation to include smart technology for individuals with chronic and persistent mental illness to support their independent living. MPP Terence Kernaghan presented these proposed legislative amendments, through a Private Member's Bill in February 2021.

CA-IAR Clinical Standards:

A group managed at arms length by Ontario's Ministry of Health, monitoring the use of Clinical Assessment tools such as Ontario Common Assessment of Need (OCAN). OPDI continues to reflect the needs of our members at this committee. We work on understanding OCAN usage across CSI and Peer support organizations. We developed a survey in the 2019/2020 fiscal year that continues to assess this usage on an ongoing basis.

Evidence Exchange Network {EENET} Steering Committee

OPDI participates on the EENET Steering Committee that conducts coordination and strategic dissemination of mental health research and service knowledge to stakeholders.



COMMUNICATING WITH YOU!

As more and more of our work and sectorwide information-sharing went virtual over the last year, the OPDI team continued to increase its communications efforts to you and the wider sector, through its various channels.



6
POSTS



9
SESSIONS

***Membership
Communiques***

13
EDITIONS



48
EDITIONS



135
POSTS ON EACH PLATFORM

LET'S STAY CONNECTED

NewsToGo

NewsToGo is an electronic newsletter which is focused on research, resources and policy information of relevance to consumer/survivor organizations and to broader stakeholders in the healthcare sector. You'll also find updates about OPDI, as well as relevant peer support job postings and community events & initiatives.

Contributions and comments are welcome. Please email us at opdi@opdi.org, and include "News to Go" in the Subject line.

To sign-up for the newsletter, click [here](#).

SOCIAL MEDIA

Follow us on social media for peer support community events, opportunities and updates!



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