

Self-Help Ontario

The Newsletter of the Ontario Self-Help Network

Spring 2007

"What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet." -Shakespeare

"What's in a Name?" The Other Kind of Self-Help

By Roya Rabbani, Executive Director
Self-Help Resource Centre

In Shakespeare's famous play Juliet has a solution for Romeo when his last name became a threat to their relationship: "Doff thy name". Anytime I have to write or speak about self-help to an audience not familiar with it, I am tempted to doff the name and stick to its qualities and benefits. Recent uses of "self-help" in the popular culture of Dr. Phil and pop-psychology self-help books has obscured the historic and cultural meaning of self-help: people to working together to help each other on their common issues.

So rather than "doffing" the name, we will take Juliet's words of advice and let the qualities of self-help approach speak for its self. This brief article will share a few of the self-help strategies which have helped community people to come together to build their own solution to their issues. The self-help strategies include:

- Building supportive communities
- Promoting shared leadership by building members' capacity and distributing responsibilities
- Connecting experiential and conventional knowledge

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Report on the Barrie Regional Conference

The Barrie Regional Self-Help Conference was a success for the people who managed to make it through the messy weather of the storm that hit southern Ontario the evening before. More than half of the registrants from as far away as Cornwall and Toronto made it in time.

The keynote speaker, Native elder John Rice, opened the conference with several songs and told us the Objibway version of the creation story. Based on their evaluations, participants found the conference a good place to network, meet and share experiences with others, to gather good materials in an atmosphere of respect, humour, and mutual understanding, and to enjoy the mix of professionals in the various groups.

Thanks go to the CMHA Barrie-Simcoe team for all their hard work and to Aleta Armstrong, Kate Storey and Len Wood for their wonderful workshops on helping skills and peer support education.

Kingston Regional Conference

The next regional conference will take place Tuesday, June 19th in Kingston, Ontario. Further details will appear on our website www.selfhelp.on.ca

Future Conferences

The fall 2007 regional conference will be in Windsor, Ontario. The date and details are yet to be determined. If you are interested in having a self-help conference your region of Ontario, please email us at oshnet@selfhelp.on.ca

Free E-Newsletter

You can get advance notice of all OSHNET conferences, workshops and events by subscribing to our monthly e-newsletter. Subscribe at www.selfhelp.on.ca

"It's Not Gonna Kill You"

The Ministry of Health Promotion is launching its new public education initiative that aims to encourage youth to make healthier nutrition choices.

The campaign includes television ads, posters, internet banner ads and an interactive resource for youth.

For more information visit www.notgonnakillyou.ca

French Language Services for Self-Helpers

By Gillian Kranias, Co-Coordinator of the Ontario Self-Help Network

Like many minority communities, franco-Ontarians face extra barriers when seeking support within their communities, including non-professional supports such as self-help groups and initiatives. When OSHNET staff look around at the current situation, we know there could be more self-help/peer support groups serving francophones - and a shortage of groups often accompanies a shortage of information and infrastructure to support those groups. To better support Ontario's francophone communities, OSHNET has been developing its networks with and services for francophone community members and professionals working with francophones across the province. Working from an English-based organization, our progress has been gradual, but not insignificant. With increasing supports from the Ontario Health Promotion Resource System (of which OSHNET is a member organization) French language services are on the upswing at OSHNET.

Today we have all OSHNET factsheets and several resource materials available in French. This spring, we will launch French pages on our website. Meanwhile, on the ground, we have been collaborating with both voluntary and social service organizations (OPC/COIP, L'ACFO and francophone community health centres) to raise awareness about our services and provide more opportunities for information exchange and skills development in French related to self-help groups and strategies.

Last fall, OSHNET co-hosted - with the Association des communautés francophones de l'Ontario (l'ACFO-TO) - a francophone community forum during self-help awareness week. The forum included a panel of four professionals serving diverse francophone community members in Toronto, all of whom have extensive experience with self-help strategies in health promotion. The 13 participants who attended this event appreciated the diverse presentations by panellists and case study discussions after the break. Networking was one of the key goals of the event and everyone left satisfied to have gained new contacts and/or nurtured existing linkages.

Over the winter, OSHNET hired a consultant to help us develop a directory of French language self-help groups and initiatives in Ontario, and expand our networks with people active or interested in self-help/peer support strategies and OSHNET services. We plan to launch the directory in April, along with our French language web pages. In the meantime, OSHNET Co-Coordinator Gillian Kranias (with support from our French-speaking volunteer Monika Goodluck) has been providing French consultations and workshops on request to community agencies who want to develop their capacity to support self-help initiatives.

If you are interested in learning more about OSHNET's French language services or would like to contribute to our growing network or francophone community members and professionals active/interested in self-help, please contact Gillian Kranias

Tel: 416) 487-4355

Toll Free: 1-888-283-8806.

Email: oshnet@selfhelp.on.ca

www.selfhelp.on.ca

French Language Resources Available On-Line

The Ontario Self-Help Network is a program of the Self-help Resource Centre of Toronto.

Our website has 86 resources about many aspects of self-help/support groups, geared for individuals and professionals working in related fields.

These resources include the following French language items:

Définition de l'entraide

Entraide 101

L'entraide et les familles

Promouvoir la santé et l'autonomie par l'entraide

La confidentialité et les groupes d'entraide

L'entraide et la promotion de la santé

L'intégration de stratégies d'entraide

Outil comparatif - gestion de groupe d'entraide et gestion par un professionnel

Groupes de soutien: Passage d'un leadership professionnel au système d'entraide

À côté, pas au-dessus - savoir se positionner en tant que professionnel

To access these resources, visit our website. From the pull down menu, select Resources, then On-line Resources. You can search for French language resources in each topic area.

If you have questions or suggestions, please contact the OSHNET Co-coordinators.

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“What’s in a Name?” – The Other Kind of Self-Help

These are the backbone of the examples shared here. While the rhetoric and theories of social capital, community empowerment, adult education, participatory development and health promotion guided us to conceptualize the approach, it was the community members who made these theories real by taking action.

For example, in a small community-based agency, mentorship groups developed which enabled a group of newcomers to Canada to support each other and learn from more experienced newcomers about volunteering in Canada. At the same time a partnership was developed between this small agency and a large health service provider which wanted to diversify its volunteer source benefited both agencies. The newcomers were trained and supported by the community agency and were placed at, and supervised by the health agency.

In another example, a group of women in a marginalized community were trained in shared leadership and capacity building skills. The skills enabled them to work together, and for all of them to assume leadership roles. They were able to organize recreational activities for a group of young girls who, due to the cultural barriers were not able to use some recreational amenities such as swimming pools.

And finally, another group, after the initial activities of organizing and identifying needs in their small neighborhood, secured skates for a group of young children who never could otherwise experience this activity. The children were engaged in various recreational activities during the course of winter.

In the last five years the Self-Help Resource Centre through its various projects and programs has supported the value of self-help/mutual aid strategies in contributing to the health and well being of communities and individuals. Some were developed based on conventional methods of gap analysis, literature review and replication. Some of these projects started as demonstration projects and proved their success based on their evaluation.

In all of them the cornerstone was building the capacity of people to work together in addressing their common issues. Our approach to health promotion is slightly different, as it relates to our assumed definition of health and its determinants. As a result, we gathered people in groups to participate, build their capacities, share leadership, develop partnership, broaden their network of connection and in the process be empowered to develop trust and increase their communities social capital for health. We used the buzz words seen in policy but demonstrated their use in practical projects.

Our workshops and trainings for implementation of the self-help strategies are available free of charge to the not-for-profit agencies. Visit our website www.selfhelp.on.ca to learn more about them and see how it relates to your work.
mentee.

Spring 2007 Workshops

Here are three workshops offered by the Self-Help Resource Centre in May and June 2007.

Building Support Networks for Your Clients. Thursday, May 10, 1 to 4 pm

In this practical workshop we will:

- Discuss social support networks and their importance to your work
- Discuss how you can incorporate mutual aid strategies into your current work to build support networks
- Discuss ways to examine and evaluate various social support systems

Dealing with Conflict. Tuesday, June 5, 1 to 4 pm

This workshop will be fun and interactive, drawing on your own experiences. Participants can expect to:

- learn several models for approaching conflict
- practice your skills with case studies
- explore challenging situations through role-play

Beyond Icebreakers – Using Games to Facilitate Groups Tuesday, June 12, 1:30 to 4:30 pm

This workshop will demonstrate a variety of exercises used to achieve different goals. By doing and discussing a variety of exercises you will learn what works for your group and how to adapt them to your needs.

To learn more about these workshops or to register

**www.selfhelp.on.ca
Tel: 416-487-4355
Toll Free: 1-888-283-8806**

The Ontario Self-Help Network (OSHNET) was established in 1992 to support the development of new and existing self-help/mutual aid initiatives across Ontario. There are 19 affiliates across the province working together to promote and support self-help.

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