

Annual General Meeting  
October 2021



Dear S.O.A.R. Members and Guests:

I am honored for the opportunity to be part of “Survivors of Abuse Recovering (S.O.A.R.)” and to serve as your Chair of the Board of Directors. This year has been a year of change, growth, and continuing the support of adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse throughout Nova Scotia during a world-wide pandemic.

I recognize the meaningful contributions of the Board of Directors, who put great effort into achieving our goals and moving S.O.A.R. forward, by sharing their talents and adding lasting value to the future growth of S.O.A.R. Thank you to our Board of Directors; Karen Martin (Past Treasurer) , Peter Kiefl (Treasurer), Margo Stevens (Secretary), Mary-Lynn Chittick, Earle Illsley, Karen Cox, and Tara Kalkman. The Board of Directors accepted the resignation of Sheri Dawson (Past Chair) and welcomed Tara Kalkman in April.

Although Karen Martin had attempted to resign from the Board last year, she agreed to stay on for one more year to assist in the transition to a new Treasurer. Many thanks to Karen for her steady hand in S.O.A.R. I speak from the heart when I say that I could not be Chair without her wisdom and guidance.

The Board decided earlier this year that the office that had been generously provided by, and in, Open Arms on Cornwallis Street in Kentville no longer met our needs. We vacated that space and are searching for a new location. Our current operations are being conducted entirely online and over the telephone, with no physical office. More about this later.

Some other changes have been dictated by the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting state of emergency in Nova Scotia. We continued to hold our meetings online using videoconferencing software. We created a new Document Management policy and used it to help us set up a folder system in the Google cloud to allow for online collaboration on Board documents. We are currently conducting our first online Peer Supporter training, using tools and equipment funded by the Mental Health Foundation’s *Be The Link* program.

We rolled the Coordinator position and the Peer Mentor position into one because there was so much overlap in the duties and responsibilities that it just made sense. The Peer Mentor Training program has produced its first Peer Mentor from within our pool of Peer Supporters. We view the Peer Mentor Program, funded by a grant from the Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia and the Department of Health and Wellness, as a resounding success and we would like it to continue if possible.

All of the above changes have positioned us well to step into a part of the S.O.A.R. mandate that previously had not been fulfilled: to serve all of Nova Scotia. Which brings us back to the issue of not having a physical office at the moment. The S.O.A.R. Board is working diligently to procure stable

funding for an office and an Executive Director so that we may expand throughout the province. An Executive Director would take over the day-to-day operations that the Board currently oversees, therefore freeing up the Board to concentrate on the expansion to a province-wide service.

This year we also restarted all the working committees and updated their Terms of Reference to reflect current operations. I want to thank everyone who has joined the committees and has worked very hard to help S.O.A.R. deliver our services to the community.

The Mutual Aid Project, a.k.a. The Sexual Violence Peer Support Network, is due to be concluded in March 2022. Begun in 2019, we have struggled through some challenges to create the support network but now have 9 agencies on board, a website, and a completed Peer Support Training manual that a few agencies have already adapted to their own needs.

In other committee work we have taken our bookkeeping online and simplified the Treasurer's reports to the Board, and refined a method of tracking relevant information of our membership such as active/inactive status, who has what training, criminal record check expiry dates, etc.

As we look to the future, some of our key priorities for the coming year include:

- Continuing to provide Peer Support services to peers who call upon us.
- Completing the current Peer Supporter training and incorporating the lessons learned into our program.
- Securing stable funding for an Executive Director and a physical office.
- Expanding the reach of S.O.A.R.'s services to peers and Peer Supporter trainees from all across the province.
- Completing the transition to the Google cloud for S.O.A.R.'s operations.
- Providing a Peer Supporter Refresher Training.
- Continuing to support the Sexual Violence Peer Support Network.

The Board of Directors will continue working on these 2021/2022 goals and encourage you to attend our November 10, 2021 regular meeting. Meetings are always open to S.O.A.R. members and take place the second Wednesday of each month at 6:00 pm online using Zoom. We look forward to also meeting in person again sometime in the future.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I thank all Peer Supporters and members for your dedication to S.O.A.R. and I look forward to serving you in the coming year.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Vey,  
Chair