GASP Year One - May 2019 to 2020

As we look back over the past year, what has GASP accomplished?

Learning the Climate Science

Our first priority was to educate ourselves thoroughly on climate issues. As women who have been lifelong activists, we needed to know and share quality resources and that we were addressing climate change based on science as much as passion about the world we leave our descendants.

Personal Commitments to Mitigate Climate Change

We also made personal commitments to act to mitigate Climate Change. We are using our purchasing power to demand change and patronizing companies that have renewable, sustainable plans.

Finding a Name

It was important that we come up with a name that aligned with who we are; what our values are; we wanted ‘grandmothers/grand others’ in our name; did we want healing or softer words or a more action oriented name? By consensus, GASP - GRAND(M)OTHERS ACT TO SAVE THE PLANET was chosen. We use the acronym GASP.

GASP Branding

We looked at several items … T-shirts, scarves, sashes, armbands, and masks. We decided on green masks as we felt they would get attention and get people asking questions; the masks are light and cheap to make (and have been extremely useful during COVID-19); and masks also get across the message of global pollution.

We then wanted a logo that would identify GASP and Louise Fortin, of Thrive Design, also a GASP member, came up with the logo we use.

Building Our Green Network

We started to align ourselves with like-minded and other ECO groups. Our first guest speaker was Lisa Kohler of HEN (Halton Environmental Network), who highlighted HEN’s various activities and how GASP members can support them. We have now collaborated with many local Halton environmental groups – HEN, HACEN, Halton Hills Climate Action, Oakville Green, Burlington Green, Sustainable Milton; women’s groups – Oomama, GRAN, AWH, WHAM, CFUW, as well as national and international groups – 350.org, Lead Now, Fridays for the Future and many others.
Our membership grew quickly. Members had different areas of climate change they wanted to work on. GASP formed various sub-committees and we now have an Education/Outreach Team; a Communications Team; and a Political Action Team.

**Political Action**

We were ready and decided our first ACTION would be to meet with Halton area Provincial MPPs and share our concerns and suggestions with them, specifically concerns about Premier Ford’s Climate Change Plan. However, a Federal election was called, and it was decided that throughout the summer we grandmothers, grandchildren, and students from HEN would meet with all candidates in Halton running in the Federal election.

We interviewed every available candidate in Oakville, Oakville-North Burlington, Burlington, and Milton. We shared their responses so others would be more informed. In addition, we also helped students throughout the region hold all-candidates meetings on Climate Change and in September GASP participated in a Town Hall meeting in Milton which was hosted by CBC’s Matt Galloway.

These interviews made GASP recognizable to candidates and raised awareness of the Climate Crisis.

In fact, on election night, the CBC played a 30 second clip of GASP members watching the election results.

We started to attend student climate strikes and Fridays for the Future rallies in Oakville, Georgetown, Halton Hills, Burlington, Milton, and Hamilton wearing our green facemasks and bringing our grandchildren. In September, we joined with thousands in Toronto at an International Strike for Climate. We were enthusiastically welcomed by youth at all these events.
Year One: May 2019 - 2020 (Cont’d)

Survival Cabinet
Once the Federal election was over in October, we focused our actions on ensuring a “Survival Cabinet” across all party lines was formed to deal with the Climate Emergency. We issued a press release and worked with other local environmental groups.

We also met once again with all elected MPs before the resumption of Parliament to determine how they could promote the Climate Emergency to their colleagues.

We started working at the Municipal level, especially on Climate Change Action plans in each Halton municipality. In fact, GASP member Linda Middaugh delegated on July 8, 2019 in favour of Milton declaring a Climate Emergency. Linda made a second delegator December 7, 2019 requesting funds for a dedicated staff resource person.

Note: Milton declared a Climate Emergency on July 22, 2019

Our Communications Team set up:
- Our Facebook page- GASP Grandmothers Act to Save the Planet
- Our Instagram page- GASP4Change
- Our Twitter page- GASP4Change
- Our Email -info@gasp4change.org
- Our Website – www.GASP4change.org is almost complete.

A great GASP brochure.

YMCA Peace Award
In November 2019, we heard we had been nominated for the YMCA Peace Award. On November 20th, we were incredibly surprised when GASP was selected. What an honour!
Year One: May 2019 - 2020

Participation in Municipal Budget Meetings

Throughout the month of December, 2019, GASPs attended municipal budget and council meetings to ensure money was being allocated to the Climate Crisis; that each municipality appointed a designated Climate Change staff person; and they developed an Action Plan that strives to be carbon-neutral by 2030.

We also encouraged the declaration of a “Climate Emergency” in every municipality and were there to support presentations by other ECO groups. GASP gifted some Mayors a copy of the book “Drawdown” by Paul Hawken. Photo (right) of GASP members attending Milton Budget Meeting.

Our Education/Outreach Team was busy organizing a Re-usable Bag Share at Food Basics in Oakville; looking into the Car-Idling by-laws; the use of plastic in grocery stores; and food waste in Halton.

A tour of the Halton Waste Management and Recycling premises was also organized as well as a presentation, in Hamilton, with Dr. Dianne Saxe.

Ontario’s Environmental Plan

We continued to have concerns about Ontario’s Environmental Plan, and a letter was sent to Premier Ford requesting a meeting to discuss these concerns and to come up with creative solutions to address the pollution that is plaguing our province. Together with the climate justice youth movement we were suggesting the Provincial Government should apply a “climate lens” to all its decision making. Unfortunately, our request was refused.

In January, we formed an ad-hoc committee on water. We connected with Wellington Water Watchers and Save Our Water.

On February 27th, 2020, 11 GASPs were invited to the Ontario Legislature to support Save Our Water and Wellington Water Watchers. We met Mike Schreiner, Leader of the Ontario Green Party; we attended a press conference; we were recognized in the House during Question Period and heard Mike ask a question on behalf of Save Our Water. In the afternoon session of the Legislative Assembly, Mike presented a petition on behalf of Save Our Water with over 3500 names on it. This was a great opportunity for GASPs to be seen and heard by the Ontario Government, especially since our request for a meeting with Doug Ford was declined.
Year One: May 2019 - 2020 Cont’d

GASP members support Save Our Water and Wellington Water Watchers at the Ontario Legislature

In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic brought new protocols – social-distancing, self-isolation, quarantine, and no large gatherings. We figured out ways to meet virtually and we stayed in touch via Zoom, video chats and email.

Just Recovery for All

In April we started thinking about what comes after COVID-19 and ways we can respond, recover, and rebuild. Going back to “normal” is not an option.

We are looking into a Just Recovery for All and have signed on to open letters by 350.org, Lead Now, Halton Climate Action and HACEN.

Thank You cards were sent to all Federal and Provincial politicians thanking them for their strong leadership during the pandemic and asking them to continue to work together to address and mitigate the climate crisis.

Basic Income

An ad-hoc committee has been formed to investigate a Minimum Basic Income. This came about because of an open letter from over 50 Senators to the Prime Minister, Deputy PM and the Finance Minister calling on them to investigate this.

Senators Gwen Boniface and Kim Pate joined us at our GASP meeting on June 25th, 2020 and provided us with an overview of this issue and answered many questions.
Year One: May 2019 - 2020 (Cont’d)

Put an end to fossil fuel financing
Another ad-hoc committee has been formed to investigate banks and insurance companies and their negative impact on the climate by financing fossil fuel projects.

Protect Ontario’s Environmental Bill of Rights
We also recently conducted a massive mailing campaign to Premier Ford, Jeff Yurek, Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks, Halton MPPs, Leaders of Provincial Opposition Parties, national and local newspapers expressing our dismay that on April 1st, the Ontario government suspended Ontario’s Environmental Bill of Rights. We strongly urged the Provincial Government to repeal or revise this regulation, so that it would only target those government proposals that are COVID-19 related or defer timelines due to the present pandemic.

Note: On June 15, 2020, the Ford Government restored environment protections.

May 28th, 2020 was GASP’s one-year anniversary and looking back, we felt we had accomplished a lot.

Black Lives Matter
However, on May 25th, 2020, George Floyd, an African American man was killed by police during an arrest in Minneapolis. Over the past few months, we have been focusing on COVID-19 and looking at how we move forward with a just recovery. While our vision has always been to achieve Climate Justice, we now have a renewed commitment to social and racial justice.

The killing of George Floyd has reignited Black Lives Matter and has clearly shown that to tackle the climate crisis, we must address systemic discrimination. The work of addressing white supremacy is critical to building a climate movement rooted in justice. There is no just recovery for climate without addressing discrimination in all its forms.
A Just Recovery for Canada
Grand(m)others Act to Save the Planet (GASP)

GASP is a grassroots, nonpartisan, group of grandmothers and grand ‘others’ who care deeply about the world our descendants will inherit. The Climate Crisis makes us fearful for the future of our grandchildren. If we do not radically change the way we live, we will put their lives at risk.

We heard the voices of our grandchildren and we pledged to work with them to advocate for climate justice and social justice.

Then came the pandemic. Covid-19 is a warning from Science that the time is up for business as usual. How Canada has dealt with the pandemic is a positive indicator that our governments can co-operate and work together in a non-partisan way and that citizens will care for each other in a crisis.

Then Black Lives Matter was reignited with the police killing of George Floyd. It forced communities across Canada to address the long shameful history of racial injustice with black, brown, and indigenous people. We know that poor and marginalized people are being disproportionately impacted in a negative way. We must act to root out systemic discrimination in healthcare, housing, education, employment, the criminal justice system, and anywhere else we come across it.

How appropriate is this quote today!

“We can’t have a green and peaceful future without racial justice, equity, civil rights, and empowered communities. We believe the systems of power and privilege that destroy the environment also strip vulnerable communities of their humanity — and too often, their lives.”

Source: 2016 Blog written by Annie Leonard, Executive Director at Greenpeace USA

We grandmothers leave it to others to submit the details of ‘how to’ for a Just Recovery. However, we want to be clear. We expect you to be bold and courageous in your leadership. Canada needs a grand vision and a concrete, comprehensive plan of action for systemic change that ensures both Climate Justice and Social Justice. Canada must build an equitable future for all. Canada can do it! So, there is ‘No business as usual’ for a Just Recovery.

"The pandemic is a reminder of the intimate and delicate relationship between people and planet. Any efforts to make our world safer are doomed to fail unless they address the critical interface between people and pathogens, and the existential threat of climate change, that is making our Earth less habitable.” (General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus in an address to the 73rd World Health Assembly, May 18, 2020)
We, in Canada, just recently recognized our own complicity in the harm done to Indigenous communities. We are just recognizing the white, unacknowledged privilege within the climate movement, not from young people like Greta, but from some of the established environmental organizations.

Social justice and climate justice are the same.

"Building a movement rooted in the needs of those most oppressed is the only way we can achieve liberation for all" (350.org)

If GASP wants to see a just transition to a decarbonized economy, we know this will not succeed until there are structural changes in society to address and redress centuries of systemic discrimination and inequality.


One people, One planet, One future