



The John Howard Society of Nova Scotia  
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*Effective, just and humane*

# RESPONSES

*to the causes and consequences of crime.*

## INTRODUCING JHSNS' FIRST PROVINCIAL NEWSLETTER

The John Howard Society of Nova Scotia is proud to circulate its first provincial newsletter: *Responses*. The newsletter will reflect the work of each regional office and the provincial Society itself, while acknowledging the challenges faced by our clientele. We look forward to keeping our members, community partners, and supporters throughout the province even more informed on the Society's activities and priorities.

Readers can expect regular fixtures in the content of the newsletter. Each issue will provide updates on activities at the Board level, as well as regional and provincial programs and services offered by our offices. In each issue we will also take a critical look at a topic relevant to our clients and our work. This issue's *Special Story* considers the complicated, lengthy and expensive process of applying for a record suspension while overviewing the difficulties experienced by those trying to find work with a criminal record.

We have also chosen to reserve a section of the newsletter for our clients. *From Our Clients* will publish written work or visual art submitted by clients. The piece in this issue is from a participant of our Creative Writing Workshop at Central Nova Scotia Correctional Facility. We have also identified the newsletter as an opportunity to highlight the work and contributions of our volunteers. This issue's *Volunteer Spotlight* we catch up with C. Robert (Bob) MacDonald, former Executive Director of JHSNS and long-time Board member and supporter. Finally, we will try to include important announcements and details of upcoming events from our community partners and other stakeholders in the corrections field.

We expect to circulate three issues of *Responses* each year. Combining the newsletter schedule with the Annual General Report released every June at our AGM, our networks will now have access to quarterly updates from JHSNS. Look for the next *Responses* issue in December.

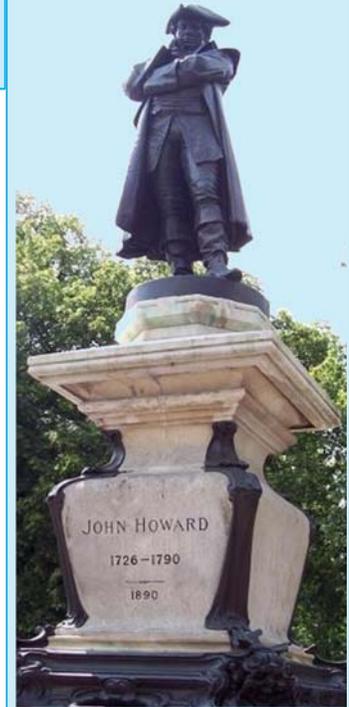
We hope you enjoy the read.

JHSNS Provincial Newsletter

*Responses*

Volume 1, Issue 1

September 2014



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*At the 2013-14 Annual General Meeting, the following Directors on our Board received a Recognition Award for five years of service to the Society:*

- *Dana Bowden*
- *Oscar Miller*
- *Terry Hatcher*
- *Flora MacLeod*

*Thank you for your dedication to the work of JHSNS!*

## **A NOTE FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

In honour of our inaugural newsletter launch, I was asked to contribute a few words from the Board. For those who know me, limiting me to 'a few words', is difficult. Let me start by welcoming two new Board members, Fred Honsberger and Ron Joiner. Both of them bring a wealth of corrections knowledge and experience which will definitely be a benefit to the work of the Society. We will miss two Board members, Dana Bowden and Angela Power, who left due to other commitments. However, the composition of the Board is such that we expect to continue our move forward toward providing services and programs in keeping with the mission and goals of the Society.

Although the JHSNS is one of the smaller Societies in the John Howard of Canada federation, we are very proud of our staff and the work they do. As the JHSNS representative on the JHSC Board, I can attest to the fact that we provide programs and services that are well regarded by the other affiliate representatives of the JHSC. The primary reason for our success thus far and positive progress is due in large measure to the efforts of our creative, diligent, competent, and dedicated staff. As we head into our 65th year the JHSNS is thriving and, despite fiscal challenges, the business acumen and technological strengths of our Executive Director, John Peach, combined with the strengths of our staff complement are assets which the Board readily acknowledges as deserving of our full support.

**Janis Aitken, Past President**

## **OFFICE UPDATE: NORTH EASTERN REGION (WESTVILLE, NS)**

The Northern Regional Office has been busy with the Restorative Justice Program and the Community Service Order Program.

Since January of this year the completion rate for the Restorative Justice program is 91%. I believe that it's success is due in a large part to the focus on honesty, accountability, victim and community involvement, and an environment that is inclusive and focuses on repairing harms and building relationships.

The Community Service Order Program is also a very effective program, with a completion rate of 84% for the current year. This program is beneficial in many ways; it affords people the opportunity to give back to their community, gain valuable skills, provides mentorship opportunities and make connections to the community. I believe that the success of the Community Service

Order Program comes from matching the interests and skills of the client and taking into consideration the needs of the community placement.

We are ever so grateful to our community placements who open the doors for many of our clients and make a difference in their lives.

*"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."*

*- Margaret Mead*

## OFFICE UPDATE: CENTRAL REGION (TRURO, NS)

### **The Giving Back Project— Responding to Needs in Our Communities**

With the changing needs of our community and clientele, we realized we had to find more creative ways to facilitate volunteer and community service work. The Giving Back Project was developed to address identified needs in our community, while still holding wrong doers accountable for their behavior.

The project enables clients to have a hands on approach while giving back to their local community. For example, as a potential condition of a restorative justice contract, a client may choose to purchase or make items to be donated to a family in need, youth group or homeless shelter. Clients may also par-

ticipate in a victim empathy session that promotes taking responsibility, making amends and provides opportunities for good citizenship behavior.

The Giving Back Project collected \$2,184.00 in donations for fiscal year 2013-14, which was given back to the community of harm.

We would also like to take this opportunity to recognize staff member Cindy Reid for her five years of service with JHSNS!



*Photo (above) Cindy Reid receiving her certificate from Executive Director John Peach, taken at JHSNS 64th AGM on June 18, 2014.*

*Photo (left) A donation to the Giving Back Project for Mommy 2B. Other community partners who received donations include: SPCA, Boys & Girls Club, Big Brothers & Big Sisters, Family Resource Centre, Third Place Transition House, and JHSNS—Central Region.*

## OFFICE UPDATE: HALIFAX REGION (LOWER SACKVILLE, NS)

The Halifax Regional office is celebrating the one-year anniversary of our Anger Management and Emotional Intelligence (AM&EI) Program. There is a recognized need in the community to provide this type of programming, especially to those under court order. Some anger management service providers are reluctant to work with clients who are compelled to attend. Our program is open to referrals from probation, mental health services, medical professionals, other community organizations and, of course, self-referral.

AM&EI uses group-based discussion and activities to create a supportive environment in which clients can discuss their personal situations and learn from each other. The program focuses not only on understanding anger, but also on enhancing communication skills so that individuals are better able to recognize and express their emotions in a productive manner.

AM&EI was based on the Anderson & Anderson Anger Management program and has been certified by the National Anger Management Association of North America. While it was initially designed and implemented as a program for adults, we have recently completed development of a program tailored to youth.

We would also like to highlight the success of our Creative Writing Workshops in Central Nova Scotia Correctional Facility. Our volunteer facilitator is currently running the third series, with the largest participant group yet. Over six sessions, participants are able to work on writing skills under the tutelage of a published poet and short story writer. Those who attend all sessions receive a certificate of completion acknowledging their commitment to personal development through self-expression.

*JHSNS hopes to expand the Anger Management & Emotional Intelligence program in the near future to our North Eastern and Central Regional Offices, where it could dovetail very well with the existing youth and adult Restorative Justice programs, as well as the other programs and services we offer across the province.*

## RECORD SUSPENSIONS & FINDING WORK WITH A CRIMINAL RECORD

Over the past few years there seems to have been a significant jump the number of job postings and employment opportunities that require a criminal record check. Night cleaners, hotel maintenance workers, warehouse employees - all potential starting points for candidates who are looking to enter or re-enter the workforce, and all require a criminal records check. In the past, backgrounds checks were not often needed for these positions.

This trend has made obtaining a Record Suspension (formerly called a “pardon”) vitally important to the job search of anyone with a criminal record. What some don’t realize, however, is that there have been significant changes in the last few years that make obtaining a Record Suspension very difficult. Let alone increased wait times and perplexing paperwork, the fee for a Record Suspension has risen from \$150 to \$631 just to apply; required costs like getting a local police record check, your full criminal record from Ottawa, plus other incidentals like courier fees puts the total cost of an application between \$800 and \$1000! These amounts are not in any way affordable for someone unemployed or working at a minimum/low wage job.

JHSNS’s Halifax Regional Office has recently partnered with the Department of Community Services in the Halifax area to provide a Record Suspension Application Service, in which our staff and volunteers work with the DCS clients through each step of the process. Most importantly, DCS is willing to

cover the full costs of the Record Suspension, including the \$631 and all incidentals. Clients who may struggle with literacy and/or find the complex 22-page application package overwhelming can benefit from experienced support walking them through each step of this increasingly complicated process.

This will hopefully be the start of a province-wide partnership, allowing clients in our Central and North-Eastern regions to access this service (although public transit, an unavailable necessity outside the Halifax area, may pose yet another barrier). So far, since January 2014, we have received over thirty referrals, demonstrating that there is a strong need. Unfortunately, at this time there is no financial support available for citizens interested in obtaining a Record Suspension who are not on Income Assistance. This limits a minimum wage worker’s ability to take steps to move into a better paying job and really moving forward with their lives.

The increased “need” for criminal records checks, plus the increased complexity and cost of obtaining a Record Suspension, presents several challenges in how JHSNS delivers effective, just and humane responses to crime in our community. We believe that the opportunity to demonstrate a commitment to positive change should be an *equal* opportunity, not just an opportunity for those who can afford it.

**Rob MacDonald**

### FROM OUR CLIENTS: [NO TITLE] by Randolph Riley

Grade 4, what a year, the year I won gold in my Taekwondo championship, the year I had to drop out of boxing and the year I beat up the grade 5 bully. It was also the year I got struck by a truck on my way home for lunch! I remember that day as clear as the sound of the school bell; me and my two buddies, who were brothers, used to race home every day at lunch, beginning at the sound of the school bell. We would always split up at the same building that would take us our separate ways home because they lived two streets over from me. On this particular day I happened to be falling dead last. There was these three buildings with underground parking garage doors we split up at. We would run the bushes in front of the building and then dart past the garage doors. My friends were just ahead. I watched them make it across. I was no more than four or five seconds behind them when POW! The next thing I knew I was soaring through the air, hitting the ground like a ton of bricks. As I screamed out in pain, a man came running out of the truck rushing to my side. He said, “Oh my gosh, don’t move, I’m going to call an ambulance.” He left my side running back into the building.

I, being left there alone, now began to panic. My friends were gone. They didn’t even see me get hit. I got up and limped around the corner between the buildings and continued my way home. Once I got home

lunch was ready as usual. As I was eating my mom asked me what was wrong. I don't know if she knew something happened. I responded saying, "nothing." There was some family over at the time so she didn't pay too much attention to it. Once I finished I began my journey back to school. Before the bell rang I told my two buddies what happened. They couldn't believe it. I had to tell them I was serious. Once I got to class, about ten, fifteen minutes into the lesson I heard my name over the PA: "Randolph Riley, come to the main office please. Randolph Riley." After talking about the accident to my friends outside I calmed down a bit but when I heard my name of the PA, the adrenaline that raced to my heart was overwhelming. It was like I got hit all over again. I left class and as I approached the office, I saw my principal, the secretary and the man who hit me standing there. My mom came in the door seconds later.

We went in the office and spoke about it. The man asked me, "Why did you leave?" I told them I just happened to be so scared I didn't know what else to do. Then my mom said, "And when you came home why didn't you tell me what happened?" My response to that was for some reason I felt in the wrong I knew better than to be running by those garage doors. I felt so guilty getting hit doing something I shouldn't have been doing. I've been told plenty of times not to run by those doors and here I was centre of attention. I felt I owed the man an apology more than he did me. I showed them my leg on which I'd been hit. I had this bruise there that was quite big. The principal called an ambulance and my mom and I went to the hospital. I was happy to find out nothing was broken. I saw my doctor quite frequently for the next little while and on account of my accident the extracurricular activities I participated in I had to give up. Still, to this day I get pains in my legs every so often, to me a reminder that being a risk taker has its consequences.

## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT on Bob MacDonald

Bob became involved with JHSNS after leaving his teaching career. Interested in the criminal justice field, he jumped at the opportunity to work in the Cape Breton Regional Office in 1964. Fifty years later, Bob has had a 32 year working career with the Society (first as Regional Director in Cape Breton and then as Executive Director of the Provincial Society) followed by 18 years of volunteer involvement. After retiring in 1996 he remained with the Society as a volunteer and life member and then nine years ago became a Board Member and has been one since.

During his time with JHSNS Bob has been involved in many initiatives. To highlight a few: JHSNS signed the first fee-for-service parole contract in Canada (1970), opened and ran the first John Howard halfway house east of Edmonton and organized the first inmate versus police ball game in the community. JHSNS won two back-to-back awards from the Atlantic Provinces Criminology & Corrections Association for Outstanding New Development in the Field of Criminal Justice in the Atlantic Region (early 1970s). "The first was for our television show *Crime, Corrections and You* and the second was *Con Employed*, a program where JHSNS hired ex-offenders to find work for other ex-offenders in Halifax, Kentville and Sydney." For years, JHSNS had the largest group of volunteers of any John Howard Society in Canada, with membership numbers in the hundreds. The Criminal Justice Education Program for Schools was also very popular, lasting for 23 years.

"And, as a volunteer Board Member, working to revitalize the Society's membership was a very important project. At one point, membership numbers had dropped very low but we made it a priority issue ... and were successful at rebuilding membership numbers."

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

### Randolph Riley

As a young man I enjoy taking walks lakeside, spending time in the woods in the countryside, wildlife, world history, musical instruments, and web research. I enjoy discussing global matters and world issues as well as science and familiarizing myself with religion and cultures. I consider myself a very easy going man for my age with patience, leadership, and always willing to educate. I am a family man and enjoy spending time with kids and having play dates. I am also a graduate of the class of 2013 at NSCC in which I received an award for valedictorian of my course. I am currently incarcerated at the Central Nova Scotia Correctional Facility awaiting future court dates.

*"Be Kind for everyone you know is fighting a great battle."*

*- Philo of Alexandria*

The awards Bob was most proud of receiving for his work with JHSNS:

- 1) The Queen's 25th Anniversary Medal in 1977
- 2) John Dunlop Memorial Award in 1983-84 (details below)
- 3) The Corrections Exemplary Service Medal in 1990



*(Above) Bob receiving the Nova Scotia Criminology & Corrections Association's John Dunlop Memorial Award for outstanding contributions in the field of corrections.*

THE JOHN HOWARD SOCIETY OF  
NOVA SCOTIA

SINCE 1950

The John Howard Society of Nova Scotia (JHSNS) is a provincial organization comprised of and governed by people whose goal is to understand and respond to problems of crime and the criminal justice system. JHSNS is a member of the John Howard Society of Canada.

JHSNS has three offices, each serving a different catchment area: **North Eastern Regional Office** serves Pictou, Antigonish and Guysborough Counties; **Central Regional Office** serves Colchester and East Hants Counties; and **Halifax Regional Office** primarily serves the urban area of Halifax Regional Municipality.

Learn more on our website:  
<http://www.ns.johnhoward.ca>

**Become a Member!**

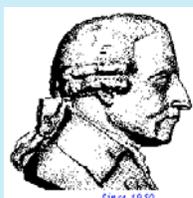
As a member, you are one of the owners of JHSNS. Membership includes:

- The opportunity to represent your community within the Society and/or as a Board member;
- The opportunity to elect individuals to the Society's Board of Directors;
- An invitation to the Annual General Meeting, a copy of the Annual General Report, and a copy of the Audited Financial Statement; and
- Invitations to learning events held throughout the year

For more information, or to apply, go to:  
<http://ns.johnhoward.ca/about>

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[Continued from previous page, *Volunteer Spotlight on Bob MacDonald*]

**Proudest/favourite initiative?** For many years Bob was involved with JHSNS's volunteer program, including training and managing volunteer projects. "I would have to say that something I'm very proud of is our volunteer program. Many that have been JHS volunteers, and even staff, have gone on to work in prominent positions in government or with federal or provincial corrections. Terry Hatcher (a current Board Member) is an example: after leaving JHSNS he rose through the ranks of the Correctional Service of Canada to become the acting Deputy Commissioner for the Atlantic Region."

**Why are you so passionate about JHSNS?** "JHSNS does really good work. The majority of those who have broken the law can change if they have access to opportunities, counselling, and the proper programs and treatments to help them. The work that JHSNS does helps provide people with the skills and support they require to make necessary changes in their lives so that they do not continue to be in conflict with the law."

## ANNOUNCEMENTS & UPCOMING EVENTS

### JHSNS

**Freeing The Human Spirit**—FTHS is a yoga and meditation program for prisons. We are actively seeking volunteers throughout to facilitate the program in provincial correctional facilities. See our website for more details.

**National Restorative Justice Week 2014**

Communities across the province and country will be celebrating Restorative Justice Week from Nov. 16-23. This year's theme is "Inspiring Innovation." For more information on the activities scheduled for your community, contact your local Restorative Justice Agency. Our North Eastern and Central Region offices will have event details confirmed soon.

**JHSNS History Project**—The Provincial Society has launched a research project that will map the activities and developments of JHSNS since 1990. It is a follow-up project to *The First 40 Years: John Howard Society of Nova Scotia 1950-1990*, available on our website.

### Community Partners

**4th Wall: Justice, Youth & Arts Project**

The Michaëlle Jean Foundation and Art Gallery of Nova Scotia (AGNS) have teamed up to give visibility to young people working to address issues of justice in their communities. Artwork by youth aged 15-30 from across the province will be exhibited at AGNS from mid-Sept. 2014 to Jan. 4, 2015.

On Sept. 27th there will be a youth solidarity forum on justice as well as workshops, art making and dialogue with the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean and Jean-Daniel Lafond (co-founders of Michaëlle Jean Foundation). For details: [http://www.artgalleryofnovascotia.ca/en/AGNS\\_Halifax/learn/4thwall/default.aspx](http://www.artgalleryofnovascotia.ca/en/AGNS_Halifax/learn/4thwall/default.aspx)

**Forgiven/Forgotten a Halifax Production**—theatre performance on Wednesday Oct. 29, 2014 hosted at First Baptist Church, 1300 Oxford St, Halifax NS. For details: <http://www.theatreofthebeat.ca/plays/forgivenforgotten>

If you would like to be added to or removed from the newsletter's emailing list, please contact [jhsns@ns.johnhoward.ca](mailto:jhsns@ns.johnhoward.ca).