



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

RESPONSES

to the causes and consequences of crime.

OVERVIEW OF NEWSLETTER CONTENTS

Studies from around the world have consistently found that rehabilitative interventions are more effective in reducing risk of recidivism than punitive measures alone. The John Howard Society of Canada (JHSC) firmly believes that during incarceration, individuals should have their basic needs met, their human rights respected, and be granted opportunities to learn and build skills that will promote their success once back in the community. Recent issues that have gained attention in the media have caused many to question whether those coming into contact with the criminal justice system are leaving it worse off than they were before. Further, what will the long term impact be on Canada's offender population.

One example is the lawsuit filed against Correctional Services of Canada by two federal prisoners in BC who claim that they were denied access to programs while serving their sentences because of their classification as low risk offenders. Although their participation in programming is linked to their chances at parole, it has not been available due to a lack of funding.

An issue that has received a great deal of attention is the challenge filed by The B.C. Civil Liberties Association and JHSC against the widespread use of segregation in Canada's correctional facilities. Although this practice has been denounced by some as torture when used in excess, its use has continued to rise across the country.

The recently proposed Bill C-53 (also called the 'Life Means Life' Bill) will attempt to keep certain offenders who have committed the most 'heinous' of crimes behind bars permanently. Many have opposed this move, calling it dangerous and unnecessarily cruel to remove any hope of parole for those serving life sentences. The aim of Bill C-56 is to place new restrictions on statutory release in federal prisons, the practice that allows offenders to be released after serving two-thirds of their sentence. The Bill is touted as a measure to improve public safety, although the conviction rate for violent offences by individuals while out on parole or statutory release has been on the decline for a decade.

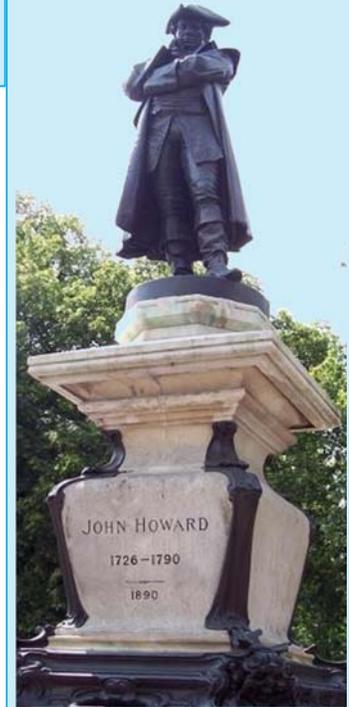
These examples highlight some of the concerns that lead us to focus this edition on reintegration. We examine current efforts by JHSNS but also critically investigate reintegration through our Feature Story (page 4). On page 5 we share a story from a participant of our Creative Writing Workshops, which sends a heartfelt message about the importance of community. Finally, we meet a volunteer from our Central Regional Office who is dedicated to restorative reintegration approaches (page 6).

JHSNS Provincial Newsletter

Responses

Volume 2, Issue 1

April 2015



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JHSNS Board of Directors

JHSNS' Board of Directors have been working on developing a Strategic Plan for the Society, lead by Vice President Cheryl Fraser. Board and Staff members met in December to conduct a SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats), and that feedback has been informing the Strategic Plan. This will help guide the future activities of the Society by giving vision to our work.



Aerial view of NNSCF prior to its opening in February 2015.

Research has shown that gardening programs in prison can help with offender reintegration and decrease recidivism rates.

JHSNS PROGRAMMING DEVELOPMENTS

There has been a lot of recent activity between the three offices to expand programming. Here's a quick overview of the highlights:

- ◆ **Freeing the Human Spirit** (yoga program for inmates) is close to implementation at both Central Nova Scotia Correctional Facility (HRM) and North-eastern Nova Scotia Correctional Facility (Pictou County)!
- ◆ **Record Suspension Application Support** (RSAS) —All three JHSNS offices are now ready to support clients through the record suspension application process, by helping to determine eligibility, support with the paperwork, and ensuring that the necessary information is collected for the application.
- ◆ **Anger Management & Emotional Intelligence** (AM&EI) Program —By the end of May, all three regional offices will be trained to deliver JHSNS' AM&EI Program. This program was developed by Anderson and Anderson Anger Management, adapted by our certified AM&EI Program Facilitator, and then certified by the North American Anger Management Association.

OFFICE UPDATE: NORTH EASTERN REGION (WESTVILLE, NS)

The past few months have been busy for our office. As always, restorative justice and restorative approaches work with clients, victims and the community has been our primary focus. However, we have also been working to build a good relationship between JHSNS and the new correctional facility in Pictou County, The Northeastern Nova Scotia Correctional Facility (NNSCF).

Staff and volunteers of JHSNS—North Eastern Office had an opportunity to tour the new facility prior to its opening. We observed many positive aspects such as good lighting (including natural light in inmate areas), opportunities for physical fitness, reasonable meal options and an excellent heating and cooling system for the building (a geothermal heating system). We are pleased to have a positive relationship with the management and staff of NNSCF and look forward to opportunities to work together to expand program opportunities for inmates. Of particular interest right now is a gardening program.

Our office has been working closely staff at NNSCF towards the implementation of a gardening program at the institution. Conversations between our office and NNSCF have been ongoing. We have also toured the gardening program at Nova Institution for Women (Federal Corrections). At this point the gardening program is still in preliminary stages, but it is our hope to have it fully running in the near future (including a green house!).

A gardening program would provide many benefits for NNSCF inmates by fostering employability skills, expanding nutritional options at the facility as well as potentially helping to improve mental and physical health. With a gardening program, there is also potential for giving back to the community by donating some of the produce to those in need through a soup kitchen or food bank.

Susan Hughes
Director—North Eastern Region

OFFICE UPDATE: CENTRAL REGION (TRURO, NS)

JHS Central Region would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our dedicated community placements who are involved with our Community Work Program (CWP). It is through their dedication and time that we are able to place individuals in the community that require supervision for their community service hours. The Community Work Program ensures that supervised work settings are available for youth and adults who have to complete community service hours assigned by the Courts. We connect individuals to community placements within their residential communities.

We are in need of more community placements throughout the Colchester and East Hants areas. You must be a

non-profit or publically funded organization to be a community service placement.

Any community placement supervising hours for a youth must have a criminal record check done along with the vulnerable sector and child abuse registry check. If you or somebody you know in your community may be interested in volunteering for this position, please contact our office at (902) 843-4969 ext. 153 and ask to speak to Wanda Dickie.

Christina King
Director – Central Region

“Restorative Justice is an old idea with a new approach. Looking at crime and punishment through a different lens.”

OFFICE UPDATE: HALIFAX REGION (LOWER SACKVILLE, NS)

The Halifax Regional Office has been busy with a number of projects since the new year. As of the end of March, we have completed two terms of our Employment Readiness Program (ERP) and have been granted a project extension by Employment Nova Scotia. This enables us to run a third program term over April and May. Over 90 referrals were received for the three terms, coming from Dept. of Community Services, Provincial and Federal Community Corrections (Probation, Parole), community organizations and individuals who self referred!

Since the last newsletter, we've delivered community education presentations at NSCC, Saint Mary's University, and Eastern College. The office also hosted a public learning event on April 15th: *A Discussion on Record Suspension Policies and Procedures in Canada*. Our panel included local attorney Mark T. Knox, QC, PhD student Samantha McAleese (Carleton University, Ottawa), as well as individuals who have lived experience with the record suspension application process. With many new faces in the audience from local universities, agencies and the community, the event facilitated a great discussion during the question and answer period. We consider it to have been a great success!

Thanks to the funding support from Dartmouth Community Health Board and Cobequid Community Health Board, we've been able to offer free Anger Management & Emotional Intelligence Programming to a number of clients in the Dartmouth and Cobequid areas. Although the funds available to Dartmouth clients have been exhausted, we are still offering free support for those in the Cobequid Region.

We'd also like to recognize that we've now been offering our Record Suspension Application Service for over one year now, and have worked with over 65 clients and helped more than 10 clients submit their final application.

Recommended Canadian Resources for Restorative Practices & Restorative Justice

Rethinking the Impact of Traditional Justice: Natalie DeFreitas at TEDxVancouver
www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jx4ExrPT8Wg

Restorative Practices to Resolve Conflict/Build Relationships: Katy Hutchison at TEDxWestVancouverED <https://youtu.be/wcLuVeHlrSs>

Victim Story Restorative Justice: Ann Marie Hagen finds peace after her father's murder
<https://youtu.be/TSCx1XS0f8Y>

The Story of Reena Virk
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oXOpjKkZaOQ>

Through The Glass by Shannon Moroney <http://www.shannonmoroney.com/index.html>

Walking After Midnight by Katy Hutchison <http://www.katyhutchisonpresents.com/index.html>

Excerpts from ERP Participant Feedback Surveys:

What parts of the program did you find most useful?

“Everything”

Why was it so useful?

“Because it makes you stop and think about things you may have forgotten or just didn't think was important.” (Term 1 Participant)

Comments/recommendations for the program:

“I recommend it to anyone who wants to change their life.” (Term 2 Participant)

FROM CONFINEMENT TO CONTRIBUTION – EFFECTIVE CORRECTIONS

When offenders are incarcerated they are often dealing with a number of issues that, if not resolved, will continue to serve as obstacles when they are released. Barriers to successful community re-entry include a lack of positive social connections in the community, low level of education, a lack of employability skills, the inability to secure appropriate housing, and mental health and substance abuse issues. Despite the mandates of both Federal and Provincial Corrections clearly expressing commitments to "address dynamic criminogenic factors to assist with the successful, reintegration of offenders into the community," recent actions seem to contradict this sentiment. One is the loss of more than 500 acute care beds for inmates with mental health issues after recommendations were made to increase care for prisoners with mental illness. Another surprising announcement came as COSA (Circles of Support and Accountability), a sex crime prevention program in correctional facilities and the community, had its funding cut. This program was meant to decrease rates of recidivism among dangerous sex offenders once they return to the community. This funding cut followed a five year study conducted by the government which found the program to be extremely successful at improving public safety and saving money.

While federal and provincial facilities do offer programs for offenders, it can be difficult to obtain information about what is being offered as well as details surrounding program engagement. Traditionally it has also been challenging for community organizations such as The John Howard Society to gain access to facilities to implement new programs that could benefit reintegration efforts, help with offender release planning, and provide transitional support.

Offenders face many obstacles once back in the community, including finding employment with a

criminal record. A current trend in the labour market seems to require a clean criminal record check. With a criminal record, no matter how old or minor the offence, opportunities for year-round, full time employment can be very limited. Without work and a regular income, it can be very difficult to overcome other barriers to successful reintegration – stable housing and employment and/or educational upgrades cost money. Recent changes to the application process for getting a pardon (now called a record suspension) have made it more complicated and expensive than ever before. And, thousands of individuals who rushed to get their applications in before the changes were implemented in 2012 are still waiting for a decision, with the Parole Board of Canada saying there is no money in the budget to clear the backlog.

To address other major barriers to successful reintegration (lack of positive social connections in the community and mental health and substance abuse issues), there are community organizations such as (but not limited to) the Elizabeth Fry Society, COSA, and 7th Step who are committed to working with the offender population. However, a collaborative approach is needed between corrections and community organizations to ensure that resources are made available and that there are no gaps in the support provided throughout the transition process. The John Howard Society of Nova Scotia strongly believes that involvement in the criminal justice system can be an opportunity for positive change, provided that offenders are offered the tools they need to make positive changes and achieve success while moving through the system.

*By Michelle Hierlihy
Student Placement
Dalhousie School of Social Work*

FROM OUR CLIENTS:
SANTA
by Lisa Morris

I was about eight years old. Christmas was coming and I was getting pretty excited. I still believed in Santa. That year stands out more than any others because that was the year my dad broke his back and couldn't work. I remember times were tough. I overheard mom say it would be a bleak Christmas but I knew Santa would pull through.

Mom came home from Woolco with a bag full of toys and clothes and asked if I wanted to help her wrap them. "Sure," I said. I'm looking at the clothes thinking they are not going to fit my brother. And I'm way too old for the girly toys. So I asked mom who the presents were for and she said, "You'll see." A mystery.

Two nights later the toys get loaded into the truck and I look outside and see a bed a table and chairs and a TV in the back of the truck.

"Mom, are you moving? What's going on?"

She replies, "You'll see."

Dad comes along with some groceries and a turkey. We grab the presents and all climb into the truck.

"Mom, where are we going?"

She replies, "You'll see."

Off we go to the town down the road, where I go to school. Oh, we're going to Grannie and Papa's. But nope, we drive past their house. We go to a little lane by the church to this little house. We get out and mom passes me stuff to carry. For a moment I think, "Uh, oh. I've done it. They are going to give me away." I'd rather they gave away my little brother. He's a brat.

We go to the door and this very feeble lady answers. There are kids in the background. I hear my mom say,

Hi. I know we've never met but I know your dad just died and you are all alone and that you have been going through a hard time with your mom in the hospital and you are trying to look after your brothers and sisters so I brought some things and I hope you are not offended and that it's okay.

And the lady started crying and hugged my mom. And I started crying. What did she mean their dad died and their mom is sick? I thought everyone had moms and dads at home. Who's going to look after them? What's going to happen?

Mom said the community would look after them. Us. Many others like us. Because that's what you do. You spare what you can and you count your blessings.

From that day on I counted mine. And always remembered the lesson I learned on the doorstep that night.

ABOUT LISA MORRIS

Lisa Morris is a 38 year old woman raised in Cape Breton. She is the eldest of two children and mother of three, which include twins.

Morris has battled depression and found herself serving time for fraud.

She enjoys writing, as she finds her emotions flow from her body through the pen and out onto the paper. She looks forward to a positive future as a mother, sister and daughter.

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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VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: ERIC MACINTRYE

Eric became involved with JHSNS - Central Region in 2012. He was researching different branches of the justice system for a school project when he came across our website. After reviewing the site and learning more about the work we do, he explored volunteer opportunities with the Society. Shortly after applying as a volunteer, Eric ended up doing his student work practicum with us.

While volunteering with JHSNS, Eric has enjoyed working with clients as a community representative, program facilitator, and as a restorative justice advocate for the Society. He has assisted with the development of several educational programs such as motor vehicle and off-highway safety education. Eric's background and experience in corporate retail and loss prevention has been valuable to our Stoplifting program.



Eric has been a volunteer at
our Central Regional Office
since 2012.

Eric's proudest moments were being able to participate in Restorative Justice Week and going to local schools to speak with students about restorative practices. Eric feels that public education is key and believes that in many cases Restorative processes can be a more effective way to address the harm done to the victim and community. Eric noted, "Witnessing a youth experience a "light bulb" moment and watching the transformation is quite rewarding. When I can share my life experiences with youth and young adults and provide some tools for change it makes it all worthwhile."

Eric's compassion for the people we serve is an inspiration for all of us. The staff at JHS wanted to take this opportunity to let Eric know that he is making a difference in our communities through his dedication to public education on restorative principals and giving his time to our youth.

We are grateful to have Eric as part of our team of community volunteers. Thank you Eric, from the ladies at John Howard Society – Central Region!

*By Christina King
Director—Central Region*

65TH ANNIVERSARY & AGM

This year marks the 65th Anniversary of The John Howard Society of Nova Scotia! On June 17th starting at 6:00 pm at the Austenville Owl's Club, at 34 Oakdale Crescent, Dartmouth NS, on beautiful Lake Banook. We'll be celebrating by looking back through the years. We hope to see members, staff and volunteers (current and former), as well as community partners—please RSVP at 902-429-6429 xt 115 or jhsns@ns.johnhoward.ca

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