



Effective, just and humane

RESPONSES

to the causes and consequences of crime.

John Howard was a humanitarian and prison reform was his legacy. We find it interesting to compare his work in the 1700s with current matters.

With this issue we consider developments (or in some cases, lack thereof) in working with people in conflict with the law during incarceration and in the community. Specifically, we offer examples of restorative practices being used in the province as well as areas of concern within correctional facilities. We've included two feature pieces to reflect some positives and areas for improvement: *Nova Scotia's Domestic Violence Court* (below) and *Over 200 Years Later* (pg. 4-5). On pg. 3 readers will find a wonderful letter from an inmate of Nova Institution who's involved with restorative programming. Among the general public, offenders are often viewed as less deserving of community inclusion. Hopefully this issue challenges that harmful outlook. *Enjoy the read!*

FEATURE STORY—NOVA SCOTIA'S DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COURT

Cape Breton introduced the Domestic Violence Court (DVC) in 2012 as a pilot project to assess the effectiveness of a restorative justice approach to intimate partner violence. Rates of intimate partner/domestic violence (IPV) cases in NS have been increasing steadily over the years and an intergenerational pattern has been observed, where IPV has become a family norm. Though the DVC is voluntary, so far 53% of all IPV cases have opted in—over 300 cases.

Increasing rates of IPV means more primary victims, family members and friends who experience the violence and trauma of abuse as it happens, and who then must endure the proceedings of the case as it moves through court. For many, this latter phase is comparable to revictimization and interrupts or delays the healing process. DVC aims to curb the prevalence of IPV and disrupt its perpetuation from generation to generation.

The voluntary component of DVC is a defining factor, so different from Canada's traditional court system. And, the sense of restitution that the restorative approach offers victim(s) allows for closure; the accused is required to openly admit to their actions of violence. Defence and Crown alike have praised the DVC for the counselling and programming accessible through the process, which foster skills for healthy relationships. Many community groups support the DVC, but there have been suggestions for more services for victims as part of the program. At the same time, community members indicate they are already noticing positive changes within their communities that can be attributed to the DVC.

While the DVC is still young, JHSNS is eager to see an evaluation of the pilot. We hope for preliminary evidence that a restorative approach to intimate-partner violence is creating positive change in our communities through the families who have been willing to take part in the pilot.

- Jennifer Haigh, Summer Student



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PROVINCE WIDE UPDATES

Thanks to PricewaterhouseCoopers Team Leadership Grant, staff throughout the province have obtained the following training:

- * *Non-Violent Crisis Intervention and Trauma Awareness;*
- * *Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST);*
- * *Mental Health First Aid*

We've held two Provincial Staff Meetings this summer focused on implementing learned best practises from recent training, our Operational Plan and developing a Communications Strategy.

Given our work in the community, it's important that our knowledge and skills remain current. Additional professional development opportunities for NERO staff and volunteers have included Human Rights 101 and Restorative Approaches refresher training.



Kate Bray (staff) preparing transplants for the garden at NNSCF.

We hope the garden program will continue to be successful and expand over time.

A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

I am pleased to be saying “hello” to all the Board, members, volunteers and partners as the new President of the Board of Directors. The John Howard Society is a vitally important organization in our communities and to the offenders who will transition to the community. I look forward to meeting everyone involved and to getting a better understanding of the day-to-day services you provide. I am anxious to support the Executive Director and the team in furthering the work of the Society and building its presence and partnerships in the communities across Nova Scotia. I also want to thank all of you for the important work you do, whether as an employee, volunteer, community partner or member.

**-Cheryl Fraser,
JHSNS President**

(Photo to right)

In June, JHSNS Management attended the International Restorative Conference 2016, hosted in Halifax, NS.



OFFICE UPDATE: NORTH EASTERN REGION (WESTVILLE, NS)

The North Eastern Regional Office has been very busy working on new projects and building partnerships. We've seen growth in existing programs and, thanks to our community partners, staff have participated in a variety of professional development opportunities.

Last winter we partnered with the John Howard Society of New Brunswick to deliver the Strengthening Families Program (SFP). SFP is a 14-session, evidence-based parenting skills, children's social skills, and family life skills training program specifically designed to help reduce risk. The families that participated in the program gained knowledge and skills to help strengthen their relationships through building stronger bonds and a better understanding of each other. The families also enjoyed learning from each other. It's our hope to deliver another SFP term in the next few months.

This past spring we were pleased to partner with the Dept. of Justice and the Dept. of

Education to promote the expansion of Restorative Approaches in Schools in Nova Scotia. More specifically, our office assisted with schools in Straight Regional School Board. Restorative Approaches in Schools is an approach that focuses on the importance of building healthy relationships, which is foundational to a healthy individual and community. We look forward to continuing to support this initiative as it rolls out in the province.

Another great partnership that we've developed is with the Northeast Nova Scotia Correctional Facility (NNSCF). A few months before the facility opened we met with management and began discussion about a potential gardening program at the facility. We are pleased to announce that after much planning, the garden program at NNSCF became a reality in the spring of 2016. JHSNS has two dedicated volunteers who visit the facility weekly to deliver a lesson plan to the inmates on various garden topics that the men have identified wanting to know more about. Produce from the gar-

NORTH EASTERN REGION—CONT'D

den is given to those in need in our community. The men are enjoying the garden program and are happy to be helping the community.

Our core program continues to be the Nova Scotia Restorative Justice Program (NSRJP). RJ understands crime as a harm done between people. The RJ process provides an opportunity for those people to come together in a safe space to talk about

the harm, discuss how it has impacted people and work on a plan to repair the harm and restore the victim, community and offender.

News from our office talks a lot about our partnerships. I will leave you with a quote from Helen Keller: "Alone we do so little; together we do so much"

-Susan Hughes, Director of North Eastern Regional Office

OFFICE UPDATE: CENTRAL REGION (TRURO, NS)

Central Regional Office delivers the Nova Scotia Restorative Justice Program (NSRJP) for youth and the Adult Restorative Justice Program in the Colchester-East Hants area. Our resources in recent months have focused almost entirely on these programs and we've continued to see positive results and successes.

Our office promotes and facilitates various restorative initiatives. For example, How to Write an Effective Apology Letter, Victim Empathy Sessions and Giving Back to the Community of Harm. To address issues that put youth at risk of being involved with the justice system, we deliver education and crime prevention programs to our clients and community partners.

The Central Region also facilitates restorative discussions at the Nova Institute for Women. We provide the women with information on restorative opportunities within the institution and how they can get involved, increase the awareness of victim empathy and personal accountability, and provide reintegration support to women returning to the community.

We'd like to share some of the feedback we've received from our community.

Testimonials:

Dear Staff of the Truro John Howard Society:

The board of directors and Staff of our organizations would like to thank you for including our agency in your Giving Back to the Community of Harm project. Your thoughtfulness and support is greatly appreciated. Thank you for the valuable work you do.

John Howard Society:

I can't even express how thankful I am to everybody for not only helping me out, but giving me a second chance. I don't even know what I would have done without your help and support. I promise you won't have to see me for the wrong reason ever again.

Victim: "After participating in the restorative process, I know longer feel like a victim"

-Christina King , Director of Central Regional Office

"RJ is not a program or model; instead it is a set of principles that can be applied to a variety of situations of conflict, crime, and relationships" -Community Justice Initiatives

To learn more about volunteer opportunities at NERO, please call 902-843-4969 ext.151.

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

At the International Restorative Conference 2016 in June, Minister of Justice Diana Whalen announced that November 1, 2016 is the target date for making the Adult Restorative Justice Program available throughout the province.

NERO Director:
"We are thrilled to hear about the expansion and look forward to providing restorative justice service to adults in our communities."

CRO Director: *"We have been one of two pilot sites [in NS] administering the Adult Restorative Justice Program ... We are looking forward to working with our justice partners across the province as we see an expansion of the NSRJP."*

RJ Week 2016:
Nov. 20-27th.
Look for events going on in your community!

National RJ Symposium:
Nov. 21 & 22, Halifax NS.



Work apparel for a client. With some ERP funds remaining after the term wrap-up, we were able to help a few extra clients with employment-related needs (ENS approved!).



Pleasant Street, Dartmouth – one of our roadsides under the Adopt-A-Highway Program. These roadways are part of our Community Work Teams, which organize clients into groups to do their community service hours through projects for non-profit community organizations.



These care packages are headed to Adsum House, donated through the Community Workplace Program.

OFFICE UPDATE: HALIFAX REGION (LOWER SACKVILLE, NS)

After an eventful spring of wrapping up our third Employment Readiness Program project (funded by Employment Nova Scotia), winding down a second Community Maintenance Program group (normally we facilitate one group) and seeing a full time employee move on to new pursuits, HRO has enjoyed a stable summer. We've benefited from hard-working personnel: Mike Dove went from temporary employee to a part time staple (Community Caseworker), we received government funding to hire a summer student May-August (Jennifer Haigh), we hosted a student placement from NSCC May-June and were fortunate to keep her as a volunteer afterwards (Jessica Bezanson), Jenna Tucker went from part time to permanent full time (Community Caseworker), and Natalie Cox has returned as Community Facilitator.

I was fortunate to attend the JHSC National Staff Conference this year, hosted in Vancouver, BC. The wide range of topics covered identified a number of areas for potential development within our local communities, which we've been researching since. We've also engaged with local community initiatives. In June staff visited Solutions Learning Centre to present on HRO programs/services and the record suspension system. In July we attended the African Nova Scotian Community Resource Event and an event on Nova Scotia's Action Plan for an Aging Population. Such opportunities help us identify developing needs in our communities, but also remind the community of what we can offer through programs and services.

Over May and June we held Community Work Team cleanups for each of our adopted roadways (Dartmouth, Halifax, Lower Sackville) and completed CWT projects for Orendo Canoe Club and Calvin Presbyterian Church. Word is spreading about our CWT initiative – we have three more projects scheduled for late August/early September!

For existing programming, our Anger Management & Emotional Intelligence Program continues to be in high-demand and we've had two facilitators running groups steadily throughout the summer. We've exhausted the funds granted by Cobequid Community Health Board to sponsor seats for participants and are currently using funds granted by Nova Scotia Mental Health Foundation to continue offering AM&EI free of charge. Caseloads for Employment Search Support and Record Suspension Application Support have been stable. In recent months we've helped six ESS clients-in-need obtain workplace certifications or apparel and submitted 5 record suspension applications. Our caseworkers have been hard at work!

As we prepare for the fall, HRO staff would like to thank Jenn, who's worked so hard and been very helpful in her summer student position! We're also looking forward to having student placements during the upcoming school year.

-Adrienne MacDonald, Director of Halifax Regional Office

FEATURE STORY – OVER 200 YEARS LATER...

Over 200 years ago John Howard revolutionized the way prisons were operated and maintained in many parts of Europe, in a period when inhumane conditions were simply part of the punishment for breaking the law. While much progress was inspired by John Howard's efforts for prison reform, if we compare with present day critiques of correctional facilities we are left disappointed and wanting.

In recent years there have been several evaluations of federal prisons by the Correctional Investigator (nicknamed the Corrections Watchdog, or federal ombudsmen). The reports have identified a series of recommendations for an improved correctional environment and treatment strategy. Though we have certainly seen significant changes since John Howard's

time, one cannot help but notice that countless problems are still prevalent. Howard Sapers (Correctional Investigator) recently produced an evaluation on institutional conditions for the aging offender population (50+), noting the lack of appropriate provisions and making recommendations for improvements. The situation for this offender group is particularly problematic because over the past 10 years incarceration rates for the elderly have been increasing. Sapers estimates that the rate will double in the following five years as well.

The aging population has specific needs that generally differ substantially from the younger offender population. For example, mobility limitations, health issues and victimization (bullying) from more able bodied inmates. So, what has been the response to Sapers' recommendations? Presently, no changes have been implemented. Note that institutional improvements to enhance the physical and mental health of prisoners was a priority of John Howard's work in the 1770s.

Incarceration is trying for the prisoner themselves, but also their family members, the community and the legal system. Some of this could be alleviated by operationalizing a network of information and support, accessible to prisoners and their families to ease the inevitable challenges that arise. A potential reality is the death of an inmate. Should this occur, next of kin are instinctually among the first to be notified, right? Wrong. It has been a recent pattern that limited information, if any at all, is communicated to an inmate's next of kin. Once kin receive information regarding the death of their loved-one, an unsettling amount of information has been redacted from reports, leaving family members without closure and asking many questions that go unanswered. The grieving process is difficult enough without the added mystery of the conditions surrounding death.

How do we rectify this? How can institutions safeguard the confidential information contained in their reports while offering kin of the deceased some understanding and closure? We think a movement towards collaboration and communication within the network of institutions/corrections and community actors (including families) can help to respect the security and privacy measures in place without disrespecting the justice deserved by families. After all, communication and collaboration were how John Howard put his stamp on prison reform.

- Jennifer Haigh, Summer Student

RESTORATIVE PRACTICES FROM AN "INSIDE" PERSPECTIVE

"Written by a Woman Who Regrets What She Has Done"

As a female resident of Nova Institution for Women in Truro, Nova Scotia, I cannot fully explain with mere words what restorative justice means to me. The respect and appreciation I have for the local office of the Restorative Justice Team with the John Howard Society who come in here faithfully to meet with, educate, help, and listen to us women is also beyond the scope of mere words.

I am serving a life sentence for the death of my own daughter and when I was first introduced to the concept of "restorative justice" I became defensive as I mistakenly took it to mean that it was being implied that I could,

in some way, "restore". At first this idea was so insulting to my family, community and victims. When I was informed what it was really about, I was very intrigued. This has been a process of several years now that I have been learning about and participating in the restorative justice group offered by JHS.

Through the education, information, and sharing that takes place in our regular Restorative Justice meetings, I also was inspired to look into what I could do in here to facilitate a restorative process of sorts with any of my victims who were willing. Staff at the John Howard Society encouraged me and supported me along the way.

It was a long thought out decision with much

How much has changed since John Howard's work in the 1700s?

The movement led by John Howard was profound and his legacy lives on, but how can we do our part to further his vision of prison reform?



Nova Institution for Women, Truro NS. Multi-level security, federal institution.

JHSNS would like to thank the author of this piece for sharing her thoughts and permitting us to include it in our newsletter.

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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input and sensitive, emotional discussions along the way. It turns out Corrections Service of Canada has its own Restorative Opportunities Program that nobody here at Nova has ever attempted to use before. I am currently in the process of applying to use this program with my Dad. I hold no expectations for myself, but simply want to offer him and the others I have hurt an opportunity to voice how they have been impacted by my crime. An opportunity to ask questions which the court process did not allow for.

I don't think in the slightest that applying for this process to meet with my victims ... can compensate for me taking a life. This comes from the most sincere place of remorse, regret, shame and guilt. Perhaps a process like restorative justice can be the first step in a long bridge towards healing.

This inmate also commented on the Central Regional Office's Giving Back Project:

Being able to help out the community I am currently living in by the various "giving back" projects the local RJ group has facilitated in here [Nova Institution] has been very rewarding. It is so important to me, and a lot of the other women in here to be able to give back to society, for we have taken so much ...

We have made things such as scarves, hats, bags, socks, Christmas cards, "hugs", and donated children's books that were donated to us by the Elizabeth Fry Society. These gifts were donated to various community groups.

The feedback and gratitude we received from the recipients and participants was so unexpected and heartwarming that I was overwhelmed with emotion.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Lorna MacCallum has been a volunteer with the Central Regional Office for 5 years. Lorna is the property manager at Hallidays Flooring, where she has worked for over 25 years.

During her time with us, Lorna has been a strong Restorative Justice advocate representing the community at restorative justice conferences. Lorna became interested in our program after she participated in a restorative justice conference support and saw the positive benefits.

Lorna's compassion and kind heart for the people we serve is an inspiration for all of us and we're grateful to have Lorna as part of our team of community volunteers.

Lorna—thank you for your dedication to Restorative Justice and the work of JHSNS!

We would also like to say thank you to the proprietor of Hallidays, Mr. Vick Yeadon, for supporting our program and allowing Lorna to attend meetings during office hours.



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