TABLE OF CONTENTS

WHO ARE WE? OUR MISSION .................................................P.2
BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND STAFF .................................P.2
BOARD CHAIR REPORT .........................................................P.2
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT .....................................P.3
TRAINING AND EDUCATION PROGRAM ..........................P.4
LITTLE BLACK BOOK ............................................................P.5
RESTORATIVE ACTION PROGRAM ....................................P.6
2018 SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS ........................................P.8
VICTIM OFFENDER MEDIATION PROGRAM ..................P.9
COMMUNITY SUPPORT .........................................................P.11
Community Justice Initiatives Association (CJI) is a community-based non-profit society located in Langley, British Columbia, Canada. Considered the ‘go-to’ place for anyone wishing to learn or understand restorative justice practices from a real-world perspective.

Our mission:
To promote peacemaking, reconciliation and the resolution of conflict through the development and application of restorative justice values, principles and processes.

With over 30 years of experience providing conflict resolution programs in such settings as the criminal justice system, organizations, schools, businesses, and for private individuals, we are driven by a unique understanding of conflict in society and have become leaders and pioneers in what we call “restorative justice.”

WHO ARE WE? OUR MISSION...

Community Justice Initiatives Association (CJI) is a community-based non-profit society located in Langley, British Columbia, Canada. Considered the ‘go-to’ place for anyone wishing to learn or understand restorative justice practices from a real-world perspective.

Our mission:
To promote peacemaking, reconciliation and the resolution of conflict through the development and application of restorative justice values, principles and processes.

With over 30 years of experience providing conflict resolution programs in such settings as the criminal justice system, organizations, schools, businesses, and for private individuals, we are driven by a unique understanding of conflict in society and have become leaders and pioneers in what we call “restorative justice.”

STAFF 2018/2019
David L. Gustafson - Executive Director, VOMP Facilitator and Trainer
Heidi Knull – VOMP Facilitator (started March 2019)
Susan Underwood – VOMP Facilitator
Aaron Lyons – VOMP Facilitator (to October 2018)
Daniela Cohen – School Program Coordinator (to March 2019)
Zofia Switkowski - School Program Coordinator (started March 2019)
Karla Woelbern – School Program Facilitator (to January 2019)
Christianne Paras - Training and Education Coordinator
Jennifer Siemens – Operations Director
Saskia Epp - Administrative Assistant

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2018/2019
Jeff Christian, Chair
Dan Bennett, Vice Chair
Alison McVeigh, Secretary
Scott Nichols, Treasurer
Fae Chato-Manchuk, Director
Vic Derksen Siemens, Director
Coral Forslund, Director
Russell Nelson, Director
Kaylie Maughan, Director

I appreciate the opportunity to make a few comments on behalf of the board of directors of CJI. I am honoured to be a part of our group, and to be associated with CJI.

We all want to recognize and celebrate the achievement of a Doctor of Criminological Sciences degree from the University of Leuven (Belgium) by our Executive Director, Dave Gustafson. This recognition is a true achievement on the part of Dave. It is also an international recognition of the work of the Victim Offender Mediation Program, on which the doctoral presentation was based.

As a board of directors, we are interested in good governance of CJI. As such, this year we have focused on achieving increased clarity in our explanation of purpose. Much of that involves improving the way in which we present that purpose to the world, including our clients, our funders, and all others. To that end, we have worked toward the development of materials that will enable us to better tell our story. One of the outcomes of that effort has been the creation of a new website, that is not only more modern in technology and appearance, but also reflects our core values in every respect. We expect further developments in the coming year, and we are hopeful that by doing so, we will attract greater interest in the quality of our programs. I encourage you to visit the new website and to give us feedback on your impressions.

In the coming year, we will be looking for opportunities to increase support to the program that we operate in partnership with the Langley School District. We want to see this program operating in as many Langley schools as possible. Our motivation is simply to provide the tools to teachers and students to resolve the inevitable conflicts that arise in life, without the need to resort to abuse, “bullying”, threats and even violence. Check out our short video about the program on the website. We believe that the more these skills are used, the more peaceful our community will be, now and in the future. Please feel free to join our effort by contacting our office to see what you can do.
As I grow older and ‘season’ alongside CJI, I frequently find myself reading and considering books and articles like the best-seller by Jim Collins Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap and Others Don’t; (the secret to be revealed, below) and his sequel Good to Great for the Social Sector. Having helped to provide ‘helmsmanship’ for CJI since our beginnings, I’m always aware that it is tempting to rest on our laurels, contenting ourselves with past successes, rather than diligently seeking ways to improve our practice, take reasonable risks to explore new avenues for program development and new ‘markets’ for what we do best. Similar musing had me thinking about a quote which seems to pop up frequently in the literature of organizational inspiration and management. The quote, attributed to the French aviator and writer, Antoine de Saint-Exupery (the author of the much-loved “The Little Prince”) says: “If you want to build a ship, don’t drum up the men and women to gather wood, divide the work, and give orders. Instead, teach them to yearn for the vast and endless sea.”

Having done some rigorous academic work over the last few years has me cautious about quotes ‘attributed’ to specific authors. I couldn’t find this one in any of Saint-Exupery’s works, but did find a similar theme in his 1948 book “Citadelle” (“The Wisdom of the Sands”). There he wrote about a man who wanted to build a boat, and imparted to a group of people around him his love for the sea and sailing, whereupon the group spontaneously set about to perform the tasks that would be needed to build the craft that would take them all to sea:

One will weave the canvas; another will fell a tree by the light of his ax. Yet another will forge nails, and there will be others who observe the stars to learn how to navigate. And yet all will be as one. Building a boat isn’t about weaving canvas, forging nails, or reading the sky. It’s about giving a shared taste for the sea, by the light of which you will see nothing contradictory but rather a community of love.

Perhaps, over the years, the thing CJI’s Board and staff leaders have done best is to impart and to share with one another a love, a yearning, for peace and peacebuilding, for a peaceable community, one characterized by love and respect for one another, and for the ways and means that those things can be realized in the real worlds in which we labour: schools, communities, organizations, prisons and beyond, from the Langley to international spheres where models developed here are producing the same outcomes in their adoptive homelands.

As a result, like the individuals in Saint-Exupery’s lovely story, board members, staff and volunteers through the years and those who have chosen to be our collaborators in each of our program areas, have each been inspired to do their part, passionate about their roles and pursuing excellence as they go about their disparate, yet common, tasks: repairing the breach, restoring justice, bearing the healing chalice to those who thirst for its contents. And, while they labour in each of our fields, seeking to make CJI as an organization not merely good, but great; aspiring to hone and to improve all that we stand for, all of the time.

I’ll leave it to each of our division ‘heads’ to provide a synopsis of this year’s activities in their own spheres, and conclude by simply offering here 1) sincere gratitude to each of you our metaphorical shipbuilders: CJI staff, CJI Board Members, Society Members and collaborating colleagues, and 2) a welcome to our newest three: Zofia Switkowski, who now heads our schools program; Heidi Knell, who works with myself and Susan Underwood in the serious crime prison-based Victim Offender Mediation Program (aka Restorative Opportunities); and former Crown Counsel, author and animator extraordinaire, consultant Wendy Van Tongeren. It is truly a joy to work together with each of you as we live and work toward a common vision.

Oh, and, as promised, here is the gist of Jim Collins’ research into what enabled the Fortune 500 companies he studied to make the leap from good to great:

The companies from among the Fortune 500 list who transcended good to become great had about them these common characteristics: leadership (CEO’s) who combined vision, willingness to take risks, personal strength with humility, and commitment to the three-fold ‘hedgehog principle’: 1) know what you do better than anyone else in the world, 2) be utterly passionate about it, 3) know, understand and enhance your economic ‘drivers’.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT
BY DAVID L. GUSTAFSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
It has been another remarkable year for the Training and Education Program, in developing and fostering relationships with various organizations, providing training opportunities to participants all over BC and Canada, and being involved in notable initiatives that support the development of restorative justice across the province.

I had the privilege of visiting various communities, across BC and Canada, to offer training in restorative justice and victim offender conferencing, as well as restorative action in schools. Training participants range from educators and school support workers to restorative justice facilitators, judges, police officers, youth workers, victim service workers, and justice committee members. Feedback from those who attended the trainings indicate high levels of enthusiasm for restorative justice and support for its practice as a response to crime and trauma in these diverse and vibrant communities.

“I really valued the knowledge, skills, and compassion of the trainer as a facilitator as well as the excellent training manual as a resource.”

“Cases (for role-playing) were relevant, progression of complexity was good...practice was challenging but required. Feedback and coaching at each stage was very helpful.”

“It was very much a fun learning process. I really enjoyed the exercises especially the one with the timeline grid, and role-playing. I learned so much more because the process was demonstrated, and I was also able to ask for guidance as we practiced the process. Nya-weh.”

Ranjit Kingra, Restorative Justice Coordinator from Maple Ridge Pitt Meadows Community Services shared her thoughts about the partnership with CJI in providing training and support for establishing restorative action in School District 42:

“For years Restorative Justice has been talking to School District 42 about what it would be like to bring restorative justice into the school district. A grant made possible a partnership between Restorative Justice, CJI, and School District 42 to bring Christianne to our communities of Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows to facilitate ‘Talking Peace’ curriculum training to two elementary schools and

‘Conversation Peace’ training to a high school. The Talking Peace workshop was piloted to district administrators and child care workers; it was clear there was interest and eagerness to bring restorative justice training to the school district. I believe it is Christianne's knowledge, communication and facilitation skills that truly create a space for learning.”

Support workers and administrators from School District 42 shared their experience in taking the Talking Peace training:

“I have found the one-day workshop was immensely helpful and if not for that, I would not be able to be working on teaching the Talking Peace lessons, which I am currently doing with our school counsellor, as well as working on circles. Our plan is to finish our unit with a circle where the class will build class set of values.”

“All schools should have the restorative action curriculum as common language and practice! It's my go to now!”

The Training and Education department also had the amazing opportunity of hosting the first symposium on diversity and inclusion in restorative justice for practitioners across the province. The ‘Widening the Lens Symposium’ was held on International Women’s Day, offering a vibrant panel discussion, dynamic keynote speaker - Harley Eagle, and engaging anti-oppression cultural diversity workshops and breakout dialogue sessions.
It was a highly attended event, and feedback from participants indicated the desire for more events and training opportunities around topics of diversity and inclusion in the future.

CJI’s continued involvement with the formation of a provincial restorative justice association has led to the incredible opportunity to be part of the official formation of the Restorative Justice Association of British Columbia (RJABC), and RJABC’s inaugural annual general meeting and first networking event. Such a significant juncture for restorative justice in the province!

Lastly, CJI’s partnership with the Crisis and Trauma Resource Centre (CTRI), a national training organization based in Winnipeg, has continued to expand with training workshops being offered in several cities throughout Canada and the US, to a range of organizational and community professionals. In the last year, our team of talented trainers have delivered training in Alberta, Newfoundland, Ontario, Vancouver, Chicago, Indiana, and Maryland.

It is truly a privilege to be part of CJI and I am looking forward to the continued growth of the Training and Education Program, in supporting the communities we serve, fostering the partnerships we have, and helping advance the practice of restorative justice.

THE LITTLE BLACK BOOK

Each year we make the Little Black Book available and accessible to more community agencies, service providers, community policing, institutions that serve youth, and secondary as well as elementary schools via the web. The objective is to make youth aware, in the easily accessible format of the internet, of useful information about services available to them in their communities and to provide a pro-active tool in helping them independently make healthy and responsible choices.

We distribute wallet sized information cards, free of charge, to all schools and community service organizations in in Langley, Surrey, White Rock, Delta, and Maple Ridge. Youth are encouraged to access the website for any help, questions or useful information they may need. The website and important numbers are listed on the card and can easily be carried in a wallet or purse. We have designed the card to be a convenient reminder that the Little Black Book is available online at www.youthblackbook.com

Each year we distribute over 15,000 wallet sized information cards. Our goal is to replenish the supplies of these cards annually. This project is not only a beneficial resource guide, but is also essential for the youth in our communities. We are dedicated to ensuring that it continues to provide the assistance that they need.

CJI would like to thank the generous financial supporters of this project in 2018:
City of Langley Community Grant
City of Surrey Community Grant
Township of Langley
PROGRAM OVERVIEW
As it approaches its 20th year, CJI’s Restorative Action Program continues to thrive within the Langley School District and greater community, gracefully adapting to new challenges and inviting meaningful opportunities along the way.

This past year has seen several transitions for the Restorative Action Program. Through the tides of change, this passionate initiative has demonstrated a deep and lasting commitment to embedding restorative practices into the fabric of school communities across the district and supporting all stakeholders in building capacity to carry the work forward in collaborative partnership.

CJI continues to provide meaningful experiential learning opportunities for youth in classrooms across the Langley School District, utilizing circle processes and the core principles of restorative justice. In these Peace Circles, trained facilitators engage youth in developmentally appropriate activities and games to unpack the complexities of conflict-based topics such as anger, coping strategies, power, communication skills, assumptions, accountability, and taking ownership. These Circles offer a preventative approach to conflict by providing young people with the space to connect with one another, build and deepen relationships, and develop the skills to regulate their emotions and move peacefully through conflict.

In addition to Peace Circle programming, Restorative Peer Facilitator Training is made available to students at the secondary school level who wish to contribute to their school community by becoming facilitators and supporting their peers in navigating conflict. Appropriate conflicts and incidents of harm are referred to these peer facilitator teams through school counsellors or other support staff.

When more complex conflicts arise, CJI staff members support schools and the greater community by facilitating restorative processes with those involved and affected. Due to the relational nature of school environments, and the lengthy history that affected parties may share, the restorative process – and its patient, flexible, and inclusive approach – is well-suited to meet the needs of participants in these more complex experiences of conflict and harm.

YEARS IN REVIEW
With a skill set in peacemaking and mediation, Daniela Cohen led the way for the Restorative Action Program over the past year as School Program Coordinator. Building on the work that came before her, Daniela collaborated with colleagues Karla Woelbern and Cristy Watson to continue to meet the high demand for services in the 2018/19 school year. Early this spring, Daniela transitioned out of her role with CJI to return to her passion for diversity-focused youth work with the North Shore Multicultural Society. Concurrently, Restorative Action facilitator Karla Woelbern shifted from her facilitator role with the organization to pursue a position with Abbotsford Community Services. It is with deep appreciation that CJI thanks Daniela and Karla for their dedication and contributions and wishes them both all the best in their new roles.

Alongside these transitions, CJI has welcomed new School Program Coordinator Zofia Switkowski on board. Zofia comes to the organization as a trained restorative justice facilitator and passionate advocate for restorative practices. With a background in restorative community-building and conflict transformation with youth, Zofia is thrilled to be joining the CJI team, and looks forward to working alongside school district partner Cristy Watson and the broader community, as well as expanding and deepening the important work of the Restorative Action Program.

Over the past year, the Restorative Action Program staff and Cristy Watson have worked tirelessly to meet the demand for Peace Circles in the Langley School District, using the new OWN IT curriculum to support youth in developing skills to navigate conflict. In the last year alone, over 1,200 youth across the Langley school district participated in Peace Circles. Each week of the program focuses on a different restorative principle, which provide an acronym model (“OWN IT”) for youth to use to respond restoratively when conflicts inevitably arise.

The whole-school approach to restorative practices has remained an integral part of CJI’s work in school communities over the past year. Rather than providing a surface-level approach to conflict, the organization understands the importance of a multi-faceted approach, carried out in collaboration with all school stakeholders. This can include simultaneously mean engaging students of varying ages in Peace Circles, providing professional development opportunities to school staff, or developing and supporting a peer facilitator team within the school. This past year saw great enthusiasm from teachers...
and administrators in learning to facilitate circles in their own classrooms and building capacity for the use of restorative practices in their schools. In response to this enthusiasm, Cristy Watson and Daniela Cohen developed an eight week professional development curriculum aligning with the OWN IT manual, which was piloted at Yorkson Creek Elementary with a dedicated group of teachers during after school sessions over the course of a two month period.

In October of 2018, a new cohort of restorative peer facilitators from Brookswood and Langley Secondary schools were trained by Christianne Paras and Daniela Cohen. These youth and their staff supporters attended four full days of training over a one-month period and returned to their respective buildings equipped to begin taking referrals from their own school communities.

Grade 9 Social Studies classes at Aldergrove Community Secondary School have continued to participate in a tailored six week Circles curriculum developed last year in collaboration with ACSS teaching staff. These six sessions focus on restorative values, community-building, power, conflict, justice and rights, and have been designed to flexibly respond to the needs of each group, while still aligning with provincial core competencies. These Circles have seen increasingly positive outcomes as time goes on and have become a foundational aspect of the Grade 9 Social Studies student experience.

**FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

As we turn our attention to the 2019/2020 school year, it is evident that the Restorative Action Program and its staff have much to look forward to. Requests for Peace Circles have already begun pouring in, and schools are eager to open registration to youth for peer facilitation training in the fall. An important task for the coming year will be to conduct a thorough follow-up with active peer facilitation teams and revive those that have experienced staff and student turnover. CJI will be looking for opportunities to more meaningfully and regularly support these youth facilitator teams in maintaining and continuing to develop their skill sets and relationships with one another.

In recent months, secondary school stakeholders have expressed interest in CJI facilitating targeted Restorative Action Peer Facilitation Training for specific student groups, such as AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) program participants, LGBTQ2+ school leaders, and various at-risk groups. This demand speaks to the broad applicability of the skills youth develop in CJI’s Restorative Action peer training, and the benefit educators recognize in engaging their students in this initiative. Working with support staff, teachers, and administrators, we will be looking into opportunities and means of engaging these specific groups in the coming year.

Creating opportunities for Professional Development and education around restorative practices will also be a priority for this coming year. With the OWN IT curriculum finalized and printed in a facilitator-friendly manual format, educators participating in professional development sessions can now utilize this hard-copy tool as they bring Peace Circles into their own classrooms. For school communities not yet positioned to facilitate in-house Circles, simplified professional development presentations and trainings can be held to introduce the restorative approach. The Restorative Action program – like many other established restorative justice initiatives – faces the continuous challenge of educating the community on what restorative justice is, how the process can play out, as well as the types of incidents that can be referred, and how. Our hope is to increase the district-wide understanding of and capacity to engage in restorative processes alongside our organization. Pursuing this goal also supports CJI’s desire to increase restorative facilitation case referrals.

Restorative Action staff have also identified the need for streamlining in the referral process for restorative facilitations from schools, law enforcement, and other community agencies. CJI will be looking to best practices, as well as community and school stakeholders for input on most feasible options for this streamlining process.

With shifting staffing capacities over the last year, the Restorative Action team has acknowledged potential to bring back volunteer positions within the organization for students who complete the 4-day Restorative Action Peer Facilitation Training. By inviting secondary school students to volunteer and co-facilitate in elementary school Circle settings, these older students can gain valuable leadership and modelling experience, while younger students can benefit from a by-youth-for-youth approach to facilitation.

Lastly, with the understanding that youth are spending more and more time engaging in online communities, and experiencing conflicts through these platforms, CJI staff have recognized the need to increase accessibility to our programs and activities through social media. By curating and maintaining a more robust social media presence (specifically on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter), CJI’s Restorative Action Program will be available for a wider pool of youth and community agencies for engagement and education. Increasing CJI’s social media presence will also provides a platform to highlight the important work of the organization and recognize supporters, funding agencies and sponsors.

**REFLECTIONS AND EXPERIENCES**

“The Restorative Action program has proven itself invaluable in my classroom. My students have increased their ability to problem-
solve, self-discipline, to cooperate and show empathy. The Restorative Action principles align perfectly with the Core Competencies and BC’s New Curriculum. It is my wish that Restorative Action principles and values were mandatory in all classes. I believe, every year, that because of Peace Circle values and Restorative Action principles, conflicts are resolved in a way that restores harmony. Restorative Action participants learn important skills that are not only applicable in school, but to all areas of their life, for the rest of their life.” – Educator, participant in elementary school Peace Circles

“I started working with CJI after seeing a presentation about the potential impacts of the principles of restorative justice and peace circles can have in the classroom. In a rough male-dominated class, students were able to learn how to regulate their own behavior, be vulnerable and respectful, discuss sensitive topics, and learn how to make space for less dominant voices. They changed from a class with behavioral issues, and demonstrated cases of bullying and defiance, to a group that was able to work, learn and grow as individuals and a group. Students loved the process so much, that it is often requested as a "reward" – please…can we have a peace circle? This translates directly to: can we learn to communicate effectively, honestly, and meaningfully with our peers in a respectful and safe environment? CJI’s Restorative Action Program is a critical resource that has specific application to the new curriculum and core competencies. Our school, and specifically the Socials Department have committed to making the Peace Circle process a foundation of our Socials 9 program and we will continue to rely on CJI for as long as they are able to provide their wondrous facilitators.” – Educator, participant and collaborator in Socials Studies Circles.

**2018 SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS**

In June 2018, Community Justice Initiatives announced the Restorative Youth Peer Mentor scholarship recipients: Conor Blackaby and Olivia Bernemann, both from Brookswood Secondary School.

These two students have been active Restorative Peer Mentors in their schools since 2016. Each has exemplified the values of the Restorative Action Program in their dedication to younger peers and compassionate leadership within their schools. Both volunteer their time regularly in peer to peer mentorship, while maintaining part time jobs and coursework. We are proud to have such role models in our community!

Conor plans to pursue a career in nursing at Trinity Western University, while Olivia plans to attend University of the Fraser Valley to study psychology with the goal of becoming a child counsellor. We wish them the best of luck!

“No matter what, every mediation painted a new colour in the seemingly shaded school atmosphere. Many people live in the shadows, fearing their problems and issues are of no importance, embarrassed. Restorative Action gives my school colour and a sense of community as students begin to understand the underlying deeper foundations of conflicts, whether personal or relational. Rather than being driven by anger and revenge or feeling ashamed and disregarded, I have had the opportunity to show people different ways to not only find an outlet and resolution for their negative emotions but also a way to point their focus towards the future.”

- Conor Blackaby

“Restorative Action has also benefited my life through the way I interact with others and am able to solve conflicts in my life. The Restorative Action program at Brookswood has created a peaceful atmosphere that makes school easier to attend. I am very thankful that I was given the opportunity to take the training and for what it has done in my life.”

- Olivia Bernemann

We are thrilled to honor these two bright young students with CJI Restorative Youth Peer Mentor scholarships. We are grateful for their contributions to positive school environment, and know they will continue to impact the community, whatever direction they choose to take.
Those familiar with CJI’s annual reports will be aware that it is my strong preference – rather than presenting a table of statistics in our VOMP (aka Restorative Opportunities) Report – to tell a story, a case study and preferably one written by a program participant: someone who has participated in a dialogue with the federal prisoner who caused them and their family members harm. The story which follows was written by Jillian Murphy, a young woman who, together with her mother and father, participated in a dialogue facilitated by myself and Susan Underwood, another of our long-term and highly valued CJI staff facilitators, in a nearby prison last December.

One quiet evening at home, over 18 years ago, my mother, Sandra Murphy, sat awestruck watching as a tragic story unfolded on the TV evening news. Katy Hutchison, a young widow from Squamish BC, working with CJI staff, had met with and had forgiven the young man who took her husband’s life. Katy, committed to ensuring that the rest of her life was invested – not in the manner of Bob’s death and the pain of his murder, but in his life and the healing and wellbeing of everyone impacted by his loss - was now sharing her story with the world. That newscast was my mother’s first encounter with what our family came to know as restorative justice (RJ). Little did my mother know that in the year 2016 she would, herself, be living out a story very similar to Katy’s.

In August of 2016, my brother Johnny’s life was taken in a pre-trial correctional facility as a result of an altercation with his cellmate in segregation. Knowing from day one that our family would want to meet with the young man who took John’s life, we asked our Victim Services support worker to help us get connected with a restorative justice organization that would assist us with our wishes. This organization was CJI. We admit that, at the time, we knew nothing of CJI or even what it might mean for our family to engage in an RJ process. All we knew was that we wanted to meet the young man who turned our lives upside down.

I can recall at least four face-to-face meetings with our CJI Facilitators before we met with the offender. They made themselves available for what seemed like 24/7 via email, texts and phone calls. They encouraged us to meet with them on our schedule and at meeting places we were comfortable with. They were kind and gentle. They provided a listening ear as we related stories of the good memories we shared of Johnny. Whenever I had concerns or questions about the process- and boy did I have questions! - they were understanding and answered them in a timely manner. My mother, father and I all felt very comfortable sharing our doubts and fears with them.

When it came time to meet ‘Gordon’, the offender, on Dec. 7th of 2018, we felt as prepared as we could ever be. We were able to ask him questions about what occurred that day and to receive honest answers. Together with the facilitators who had brought us together and arranged our entry to a federal prison, we sat in a circle and shared our thoughts and feelings in meaningful dialogue with Gordon. Not only did we get answers to some of the heavy questions that had been weighing on our minds for nearly two years, but we also received perspective. We learned a good deal about Gordon: how he grew up, his struggles, his strengths, his hopes and future goals. Forgiveness is neither a requirement nor an expectation of CJI’s RJ processes. However, offering Gordon forgiveness allowed us to see him as a fellow human being, and not as the ‘monster’ our minds may have been trying to convince us he might be. Choosing to forgive him had been our objective from day one. We knew that carrying the guilt and shame of what he had done was already enough for him to bear. We wanted him to know that we would be okay. But, it was not until we offered our forgiveness to him face-to-face that we realized it was really for our own healing. In fact, my father says “Forgiving him for what he had done to my son changed my whole outlook on life.”

Without the opportunity to meet with the offender face-to-face, I honestly do not know where my family would be at in our healing journey today. We likely would not have had the peace within our hearts that we now carry with us. I am forever grateful to have received the free and life-transforming services that CJI offered my family. Further, I want to offer my sincerest THANK YOU to all who dedicate their time and efforts to helping others find reconciliation and receive healing through CJI!

-Jillian Murphy

Thomas Moore, the famous Psychotherapist and author, in his best-seller, Care of the Soul, comes as close as anyone I know to describing how we, as facilitators, go about accompanying the survivors of often horrendous trauma and the prisoners who caused those harms as we bear witness and help them to find what they were seeking when they first made their tentative approach to us. Perhaps what we are really offering is a form of care of the soul. Moore describes how that might differ from most therapeutic approaches:

Care of the soul is quite different in scope from most modern notions of psychology and psychotherapy. It isn’t about curing, fixing, changing, adjusting or making healthy, and it isn’t about some idea of perfection or even improvement. It doesn’t look to the future for an ideal, trouble-free existence. Rather, it remains patiently in the
present, close to life as it presents itself day by day, and yet at the
same time mindful of religion and spirituality....
Care of the soul is a sacred art (Moore, 1992).

In Jillian’s account of their participation, she makes clear that
‘Although forgiveness is neither a requirement nor an expectation
of CJI’s RJ processes...choosing to forgive him had been our objective
from day one.”

Many VOMP participants ultimately get to forgiveness, but it would
be a small percentage who, like the Murphys, start there. In our
first meetings with them, they were clear that they had come to
their convictions along what had become two converging paths. They
were of Métis heritage, and intimately acquainted with the
 teachings of their elders, including the list of ‘grandfather teachings’,
the cardinal values which have come down to them and to many
indigenous peoples through the ages: Respect, Love, Caring, Honesty,
Kindness, Trust, Honour, Sharing. It is easy to comprehend how, given
commitment to that set of traditional teachings, values and virtues, it
would be difficult to seek vengeance, nurture hatred, or wish for evil
to befall anyone, even the ‘offender’.

Added to the values embraced as a part of Métis culture, Jillian, Ken
and Sandra were committed Christians, members of community
within a community that embraced the teachings of Jesus about
giveness. Having been recipients of great Grace, they explained,
they were motivated to offer that Grace, in turn, to another who had
gravely offended against them and their loved one, Johnny, son and
brother.

I’ll never forget the hours spent with these lovely people, culminating
in a powerful facilitated dialogue with Gordon, table set aside,
wheeled chairs pulled into a tight circle as they shared with him the
journey they had been on for the previous two years, and how they had
come to consensus about offering forgiveness to him, the young man
who had taken Johnny’s life, motivated by teachings such as these:

So, chosen by God for this new life of love, dress in the wardrobe God
picked out for you: compassion, kindness, humility, quiet strength,
discipline. Be ... quick to forgive an offense. Forgive as quickly and
completely as the Master forgave you. And regardless of what else
you put on, wear love. It’s your basic, all-purpose garment. Never be
without it. (Colossians 3:13-14 The Message).

The Murphy family are clear that their VOMP participation has
impacted them profoundly. It seems clear that their grace and
mercy have also profoundly affected Gordon. The hope is that their
forgiveness will enable him to forgive himself and to put his energies
into his own growth and healing goals, including the commitment
made to the family, “never again to do violent harm to another”.
Not everyone who participates in VOMP has the same experience of
transcendence or transformation of their personal tragedy, but many,
over the 30 year history of the program have done so. The notions we
had at the beginning, of melding learnings from the worlds of victim–
offender mediation, peacebuilding, the psychology of trauma and
recovery and of offender treatment programming with the values and
principles of RJ, have been vindicated and have borne fruit in many
lives. And still, after 30 years and more of immersion education in
these very things, with having witnessed hundreds of exchanges of
apology and forgiveness as well as the life trajectories of the victims
and offenders which followed those encounters, there are still
mysteries that seem bottomless, too deep to be completely plumbed
and paradoxes which remind us that truth is often found between
what appear to be opposing poles, as one of the great scholars and
teachers of forgiveness, John Monbourquette, reminds us in his book
How to Forgive:

The Great Paradoxes of Forgiveness:

- Easy but often inaccessible
- Available but often forgotten
- Liberating for the other and even more so for ourselves
- On everyone’s lips and yet misunderstood
- Innate to the human heart and yet illusory
- Vital for humans but so often feared
- Bestowed upon the soul and yet menacing
- Mysterious and yet an everyday occurrence
- Utterly divine and utterly human (Monbourquette 2000: 193).

The Murphy family – and Gordon, too – know these paradoxes well. To
a great degree they have plumbed the mysteries and discovered that,
yes, while forgiveness is “utterly divine”, it is also “utterly human”. One
thing they know for sure, the truth of what John Monbourquette had
written: forgiving has proven “liberating for the other, and even more
so for [them]selves”.

The Great Paradoxes of Forgiveness:
COMMUNITY SUPPORT

The faithful, ongoing support of individuals, organizations, foundations and community groups helped to sustain CJI’s programs over the last year. The Board of Directors and staff would like to acknowledge, and extend appreciation to these contributors:

Coast Capital Savings
Correctional Service of Canada
Edith Lando Foundation
First West Foundation
Hamber Foundation
Langley Mennonite Fellowship
Langley School District #35
Province of British Columbia

LITTLE BLACK BOOK SUPPORT

City of Langley Community Grant
City of Surrey Community Grant
Township of Langley