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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.

With over 35 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".

**OUR MISSION:**

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

**OUR STAFF:**

- Dr. David L. Gustafson
  *Executive Director*
- VOMP Coordinator & Trainer
- Jennifer Siemens
  *Operations Director*
- Jessica Zandbergen
  *Administrative Assistant*
- Dawn Beebe
  *VOMP Facilitator*
- Nathan Larsen
  *VOMP Facilitator*
- Zofia Switkowski
  *Restorative Action Program Coordinator*
- Marcela Villaça
  *Restorative Action Program Facilitator*
- Galen Taylor Jones
  *Restorative Action Program Facilitator*

**OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS:**

- Russell Nelson
  *Co-Chair*
- Kaylie Maughan
  *Co-Chair*
- Alison McVeigh
  *Secretary*
- Scott Nichols
  *Treasurer*
- Vic Derksen Siemens
  *Director*
- Fae Chato-Manchuk
  *Director*
- Coral Forslund
  *Director*
- Fr. Makoto Watanabe
  *Director*
- Peter Fraser
  *Director*
This past year has been a time of transition. The global COVID-19 pandemic officially came to a close, according to the World Health Organization, borrowing interest rates that have stayed low and steady for nearly fifteen years have quickly climbed to a level that we haven’t seen since the financial mortgage crisis of 2008, and supply chain and other factors have contributed to high inflation, to name a few. So, we have some improvements on some things and challenges on others, but a transition none the less.

As stated in past Annual Reports, we are very thankful for the ongoing commitment and passion of our fellow board members, who contribute tirelessly to support the effectiveness and longevity of our small non-profit that quietly provides invaluable pathways forward in the face of profound harm and conflict experienced by persons in our local community and areas abroad. Together, we eagerly embrace and look toward to the coming year, imagining what new possibilities may emerge through our collective effort.

Over this past year, the board members have continued to contemplate how we and the organization are adhering to the values and mission statement. We continue to examine the fabric of the board to ensure we have the necessary cross-section of voices to represent all those we do serve, as well as those we could. As an example of one outcome of this discussion, we are in the process of adding a new board member that can bring their different perspectives and skills, preferably the legal profession, compared to the other members of the Community Justice Initiatives board.

The board also continued to look thoughtfully into how we serve our clients and our community, with the focus on ever widening the circle of those we serve, and unearthing biases that we may unknowingly have that result in the exclusion of others that we could be serving. As we advance the preparation of our new strategic plan this coming year, we will also need to look carefully at how plan policies are structured and what actions we will need to continue on our trajectory toward a more equitable and equally accessible non-profit for clients, staff and board members.
“Hope is a state of mind, not of the world... It is an orientation of the spirit, an orientation of the heart; it transcends the world that is immediately experienced, and is anchored somewhere beyond its horizons... Hope, in this deep and powerful sense... (is) an ability to work for something because it is good.... The more propitious the situation in which we demonstrate hope, the deeper hope is.... It is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense”.

Vaclav Havel, Writer,
Former President of the Czech Republic (1986).

The moment I saw this quote, I realized I had found the ‘kick starter’ I always seek for this report; something cogent and illustrative of what our past year held and a vision for what the years to come might yet hold. There have been so many instances over this past year where the certainty that something we were exploring or proposing simply made sense proved to be well-founded, fostering hope and healing for others and even a transcending of the immediate and often very troublesome circumstances our ‘clients’ were facing. Those outcomes also continue to work to underscore a “conviction that something will turn out well...” as we learn to more and more skillfully utilize the values, the principles and yes, to some degree, the techniques involved in restorative approaches to the resolution of conflict and the healing of often very significant harms.
In all three of CJI’s ‘divisions’: Criminal Justice & Corrections, Schools and Training, this past year saw growth and gains that are tremendously encouraging, coming out of what is for the agency nothing less than “an orientation of the spirit, an orientation of the heart”. The annual reports of staff in these areas speak eloquently for themselves. The work being done is impressive, and the staff additions, Dawn Beebe, Nathan Larsen and Galen Taylor Jones bring competencies, skills and personal traits that have quite wonderfully enhanced the CJI staff cohort. Grateful thanks to each of you: Jennifer, Jessica, Kaylie, Zofia, Marcella, Galen, Dawn and Nathan, not only for your diligence and commitment to the work, but for the ethos you have helped to build here. You make it a joy to come to work each day.

In addition to the ‘work as usual’, we have also seen challenges this year to explore and to engage in significant new work as change agents, here in BC and halfway around the globe. I hope the paragraphs which follow can adequately convey some of that activity, that spirit:

1. Restorative Justice in Cases of Health Care Harm:

Once again, CJI’s reputation for working with referred program participants to help resolve significant harms in a wide swath of Criminal Justice and Corrections cases - where the harms we have dealt with historically have been the greatest imaginable - and as trainers, equippers and mentors - has resulted in us being invited to train 25 leaders in Provincial Health Authorities beginning to look at the use of restorative approaches in incidents of health care harm. Kaylie Maughan and I delivered virtual training to these folks in 25 – 30 hours over a number of weeks last Spring and Summer. Those trainings were followed by a conference at the UBC Campus in Kelowna, October 5th & 6th hosted by First Nations Health Authority, Interior Health, and UBC Okanagan’s School of Nursing. I attended to assist with sessions and to meet with some of the Provincial Health Authority leadership to discuss what CJI’s role in this might involve from this point on:

_Such a reimagining of our healthcare systems has implications for how we address and heal from harms, whether caused at the interpersonal level or at systemic and institutional levels. What’s more, a restorative approach may help prevent healthcare harms by building trusting relationships at all levels to ensure inclusive systems and services. It encourages being proactive to prevent harms and promote our well-being rather than being reactive after harms occur._
While overcoming inertia in this sector will be a challenge in itself, statements such as this one, are beginning to prove persuasive to healthcare authorities and to the political leaders who will need to be involved if this expression of RJ is ever to gain a foothold in BC. CJI is being asked to be (and is now positioned to be) at the forefront. My mantra has been: if we (CJI staff) can bring about the outcomes seen for over 30 years in our Victim Offender Mediation / Restorative Opportunities Program, where the harms are tremendous and were intended, surely we can assist in bringing about at least similar degrees of trauma recovery and healing of the hurts where the harms may have been grievous, indeed, but where there was no intent to cause harm. Perhaps as importantly, creating opportunity for the principals (the health care practitioners and the patients who’ve suffered harm) to speak openly with one another, may in fact lead to the thing the harmed patients most emphatically want: i.e., “meaningful apology” and “that something is learned from each of these incidents that will prove instructive and efficacious in ensuring that no one else is similarly harmed in future”.

2. **South Africa:**

As often happens, contacts made years ago have a way of coming ‘round again. Years ago, I had the honour or meeting with and ultimately providing training and consultation for two ‘leading lights’ in South Africa: George Kowlock Lai Thom and Mike Batley.

George’s interest was in the VOMP program and learning to facilitate cases involving violent crime in the prisons of South Africa and beyond. George has since led powerfully and effectively in RJ approaches to dealing with violence against people with albinism who are often targeted for unimaginable violence and even death.

Mike was interested in the training and consultation we and some of our colleagues had done with BC Fish and Game and Conservation Officers dealing with individuals charged with poaching. Mike borrowed from those materials / training segments and instituted those RJ processes in a number of African nations dealing with ‘poachers’ (and that is to put it kindly) ‘harvesting’ rhino horns and elephant tusks. Mike has since been in RJ leadership as one of the lead staff at The Centre for Restorative Justice in South Africa.
George was responsible for introducing me and the spectrum of CJI’s programs to Lesley Anne Van Selm, ED of Khulisa, [see www.Khulisa.com[1]]. Khulisa is one of the strongest non-profit organizations in Africa, with 55 offices, many staff and connections to scores of Non-Governmental Organizations. Lesley Anne is particularly interested in implementing programs like CJI’s in schools, in “capacitation” of emerging leaders in neighbouring communities, and also in trying to reinvigorate interest in RJ in the Criminal Justice and Corrections Systems.

Those interests led to an invitation for me to travel to Johannesburg last Fall to do the keynote address for Khulisa’s 25th anniversary, to do half-day presentations at the University of Pretoria for Psych. and Social Work Students, and to do some training and consultation with Khulisa staff and leaders of NGO’s working closely with them. I have joked that Lesley Anne “worked me like a rented mule” while I was there. I had committed to do four events: the two just mentioned and two half-day workshops on RJ, Trauma Recovery and Resilience, at the offices of the prestigious corporate law firm, Allen and Overy for NGO’s, Social Workers and RJ practitioners, and streamed on-line to other communities. However, ‘new opportunities’ surfaced, and by the end of my sojourn there, I had done twelve ‘gig’s: 8 workshops in addition to the above, two of them full days, six of them half-days (and two of those involving a number of hours of high-speed travel to distant communities). Whew. Given the jet-lag, I was frequently preparing the next day’s presentations at 3:00 in the morning. No point lying in bed stressing about prep when one can just get up and do it…. I had ALMOST settled in to my new time zone (9 hours ahead) by the time I had to start out on my return trip.

A couple of the involvements took place in Alexandra Township, population ca. 1.1 million (pictured below), a ‘stone’s throw’ from the business district of Johannesburg and “The Richest Mile in Africa”. The disparities are stunningly clear and heart-breaking. Still, Khulisa staff and volunteers from the township are hard at work at a number of inspiring and encouraging projects: An Ex-Offenders Academy (teaching basic life and survival skills to recently released offenders); an Entrepreneurs Program, working with women and men from the township to help them realize dreams of starting their own businesses (many great stories here), providing consultation for business start-ups; a youth diversion program, helping to keep youth out of prisons where – it would seem – it is almost impossible to contain someone without violation of their human rights.

[1] (see HOME - Khulisa Social Solutions). A thorough survey, i.e., clicking on the tabs of even this website will take a good 15 minutes, but would be worth the investment in better understanding the context and the challenges involved.
A Zulu Chief took me around the ‘housing project’: not an unbroken window in the place, no heat, no electricity, no sewage, water from a couple of garden hoses; gas supplied only to the dozen single cooking burners in a common kitchen where she and her sisters were cooking a soup made from vegetables grown in a small garden on the grounds of the Children’s Library / School next-door; this to be served only to the children in that one section of the ‘residence’. Once over eighteen you are expected to fend for yourself. No Soup Kitchen for you; at least, not here.

The needs were great, but the energy, enthusiasm and hope for a better future were palpable.

And what is to come of all of this?

What came to mind for me on my 41.5 hour travel duration back home was this text from one of the Hebrew Prophets: “Make wide the place of your tent, and let the curtains of your house be stretched out without limit: make your cords long, and your tent-pins strong.” Isaiah 54:2 (BBE) While Khulisa has interest in the whole spectrum of CJI’s RJ programs, they are particularly interested in our schools program and curricula. There are many thousands of children here, but many are not actually in school; they are too terrified to attend, given the bullying and violence and vulnerability of even the walk to the building through the township. A good deal of what Khulisa is hoping to work on together with us is training for some ‘Master Trainers’ who would then take on roles like those of our CJI schools program staff, but continue to train facilitators who would work in the schools on a regular basis, using the approach and strategies we have developed and implemented here. Our curricula has ‘good bones’; Khulisa’s leaders believe it could be adapted and contextualized for their purposes without a lot of cost or difficulty.
My personal hope is that the time spent in South Africa and the relationships we have built there will ultimately lead to a new alliance and future collaboration between Khulisa and CJI. Just how that might look is still something of a mystery, but I have the conviction both that it makes sense and that it will turn out well.

Respectfully submitted,

Dave Gustafson
Dawn Beebe and Nathan Larsen joined CJI as Restorative Opportunity / Victim Offender Mediation Program facilitators in August of 2021, during the Covid 19 pandemic. Dawn came to us with many years of experience working as an Institutional Parole Officer (IPO) with diverse types of offenders. Nathan had expertise in working with individuals who had significant social and cognitive needs. Together their competencies were a good ‘fit’ as a co-facilitator team committed to meeting the needs of both victim and offender participants referred to the program, all the while manifesting restorative justice values and principles. Their work over the past years has primarily consisted of meeting the terms of our contract with the Correctional Service of Canada: fulfilling referrals quota, meeting and preparing participants for the communications beginning to take place between them. A further task involves educating (or re-educating) Pacific Region CSC employees about the terms of our contract, particularly regarding the Commissioner’s Directives (e.g., 785- Restorative Opportunities) making clear that staff are to prioritize and enable victim offender mediation at every point. As 2022 drew to a close, the institutions became fully operational once again, personnel began to return to work, and CJI staff had to work diligently to ensure that referrals were once again beginning to be made and to flow as usual prior to the pandemic’s having curtailed communications necessary to those referrals.

Our program ‘stats’ indicate that we received 30 referrals in FY 2022-2023, just two fewer than the previous year 2021-2022. As usual, more male offenders were referred than female offenders. The most common offence referred was murder, followed by sexual assault. Cases were most often referred by parole officers or site chaplains, although some came by virtue of our close working relationships with Victim Services Unit staff.
As with previous annual reports, the occasional ‘story’ stands out. In this case, co-facilitated with our Alberta Restorative Opportunities counterpart, the offender’s initiative coincided at an opportune time with the needs of their victim, a family survivor of homicide who had reached a point in her life where she wanted to be rid of the guilt, shame and anger she had been carrying for years. As is sometimes also the case, she had interest in knowing how much the offender had changed, and what had warranted his release by the Parole Board to the community. The logistics for this case were more complicated than usual, with the victim, her supporter and our Prairie colleague / counterpart having to travel from another region to attend. Dawn and Nathan accommodated the victim’s needs for an orientation to the prison and the room in which the meeting would take place, much to her relief. Both participants, the victim and the offender reported finding the process powerful, meaningful and healing. In fact, the victim, after a few days to process what she had experienced, including the recognition that the offender had, indeed, changed, praised the facilitators (all three), expressing gratitude, saying that she had never in her life felt that she was given so much decision-making power and respect for her decisions. She made special mention of the care and consideration she had received from Dawn and Nathan while here in BC.

All of this is in keeping with research done a few years ago which indicates that while well over 90% of respondents surveyed had experienced profound “disempowerment, disrespect and even secondary victimization through their experience of the contemporary Criminal Justice System processes, that negative experience was entirely eclipsed by their experience of the VOM process facilitated by CJI staff.

The legacy continues and the reputation grows.
As I think back on this past year with the Restorative Action Program, I’m struck by the themes of growth, adaptation, and reflection. We’ve had the pleasure of growing as a program, not only in our numbers and offerings, but also in our skills and abilities. As the landscapes of our school communities continue to change, we’ve needed to adapt more than ever to meet the needs of the individuals and groups we work alongside. I feel immense gratitude for the threads of deep reflection that continue to weave themselves throughout the tapestry of our work; I can see that as a collective, we are becoming more comfortable asking challenging questions about the values, assumptions, and processes at the core of restorative practice. While there are rarely any easy answers to be found, these questions in themselves allow us to work alongside youth and adults with a flexibility and integrity that is fundamental to building strong and trusting relationships.

Youth and adults alike are coming into schools carrying the weight and uncertainty of an incredibly complex world. Lasting effects of the pandemic on wellbeing, complex social pressures, intersecting oppressions, and the seemingly omnipresent influence of social media all take a toll on our capacity to be in good relationship with one another. While we cannot eradicate these factors or shield participants from their effects, we can invite dialogue, honour the inherent value in each individual we work with, and hopefully undo some of thealoneness that these forces feed off of.

I’m immensely proud of the deep compassion and resilience our team has demonstrated this year in working to co-create spaces and experiences that help us to build strong relationships with ourselves, and one another.
With increased funding this past year, we were able to create a part-time facilitator position, and welcome Galen Taylor Jones to the Restorative Action team. Galen has brought with them years of experience working with youth in the context of land and food systems. Throughout the school year, Galen has applied this experience - and their skills in restorative justice facilitation - to training, peace circles, and restorative mediations with the program.

In the spring of this year, we were able to invite Cori Nickel on to the team as a practicum student. Cori’s energy, enthusiasm and charisma were appreciated not only by our youth participants, but by schools and CJI staff as well. Thank you, Cori, for the time and care you dedicated to the Restorative Action Program! We hope you will continue to stay in touch.

Marcela has continued to go above and beyond in her facilitator role this year, working confidently and independently in a variety of grades and school settings across the district. As my time as program coordinator comes to an end, I am thrilled and reassured to know that Marcela will be taking on this position and bringing her own vision and approach to the role.
This year, our team facilitated approximately 220 individual Peace Circles, with over 750 student participants aged 7-18. This is in addition to the many classrooms across the district in which trained educators and support staff facilitate Peace Circles independent of CJI. Each Peace Circle session is approximately an hour long, and begins with a round of sharing using a talking piece. Students co-create guidelines for the sessions, and often take turns bringing talking pieces to share with the group.

This year, facilitators adapted the OWN IT curriculum for various classrooms based on needs of the group, with main themes including community-building, conflict styles, listening skills, perspective-taking, understanding anger, responsibility-taking, I-statements, apology and forgiveness. Peace circles with middle and secondary students also included dialogue and exercises on healthy relationships, boundaries, and consent. Demand for Peace Circles continues to be high, with a growing waitlist for the fall.

When we asked students what they took away from or enjoyed about Peace Circles, they shared:

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"The feeling of safety and ease to share your thoughts and opinions."  
Grade 6 student

"I enjoyed participating in Peace Circles because we talked about our feelings which is good because it's good to let it out."  
Grade 5 student

"I enjoyed learning how to deal with conflict and it helped me resolve some of my own problems."  
Grade 10 student

"That I learned how to calm down."  
Grade 5 student

"I enjoyed the volcano of emotions [activity] because I started to realize what I was doing to my friends and how they would feel when I erupt."  
Grade 10 student

"I liked talking about our feelings and opinions and also getting closer with the class."  
Grade 10 student
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Beyond the themes we covered, youth shared an interest in discussing a wide range of topics, including anxiety, social media, arguments at home, stress management, LGBTQ+ identities and experience, toxicity in friendships, eating disorders, burnout, self-love, and depression.
Where have we facilitated Peace Circles this year?

**SECONDARY** Grades 8-12
- Aldergrove Secondary
- Langley Secondary
- D.W. Poppy Secondary
- Langley Fundamental

**ELEMENTARY** Grades 2-7
- Wix Brown
- Noel Booth
- Simonds
- Parkside
- Glenwood
- Alex Hope
- Uplands
- Blacklock
- Lynn Fripps
- James Kennedy
- Fort Langley
- Topham
- Douglas Park
- Yorkson Creek

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**Restorative Mediations**

This year, we received 64 total referrals for restorative mediation support, and anticipate we will have received a total of 70 referrals by the end of the school year. The majority of the files we responded to this year involved general peer conflict (e.g., exclusion, gossip, arguments). 13 files involved assault or some degree of physical harm. In addition, 7 files included harms related to racist, sexist, or body-shaming comments.

Outcomes from restorative mediation referrals included: face-to-face conferencing (formal or informal), indirect resolution (e.g., letter-writing, shuttle mediation), or alternate means (e.g., Peace Circles, additional support for impacted parties, connection to community-based resources). Restorative Action staff have noted an increase in participants with significant mental health challenges, and an increase in participants in care.

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**64 REFERRALS**

SEPT 2022 - MAY 2023

- **16 referrals** resolved through face-to-face conferencing
- **19 referrals** resolved through indirect means (e.g., letter-writing, shuttle mediation)
- **9 referrals** resolved through alternate means (e.g., Peace Circles, supports for harmed and responsible parties, connection to community-based resources, ongoing follow-up, etc.)
- **12 referrals** turned down (8 not appropriate for RA, 4 for lack of capacity)
- **6 referrals** currently in progress

**165 INITIAL MEETINGS CONDUCTED with 138 PARTICIPANTS**

Lessons of how to take accountability, understanding roles in conflict, conflict processes, complications, and ways of listening more fully, have had an impact on the Langley School District as a culture has started to evolve – one of approaching conflict rather than viewing conflict as something to be feared or a tool for power and control.

(School Counsellor)
This year, the Restorative Action Program hosted three trainings. Two site-specific trainings were facilitated at Aldergrove Secondary students, with peer leadership students (Totem Ambassadors and Peer Mentors). In February, the Restorative Action Team facilitated three full days of training for 22 participants (students and staff) at the School Board Office. Over the course of training, participants learned about Restorative Justice principles, theory and practice, and facilitation skills for working restoratively with conflict and harm (initial meetings, conferencing). 90% of participants felt that the training would help them in resolving conflicts that they themselves face. 100% of participants felt that the training would help them in supporting students to resolve conflict. Through roleplays, interactive exercises, and group dialogue, participants were engaged throughout the sessions and shared positive feedback about the experience:

“I loved it!!”
“The trainers were kind and supportive and made sure everyone was comfortable and understood things”
“I would love to see this as a specialized session for administrators”
“I wish this was available for everyone! Such great practice and tools”
“I loved the combination of students and adults”
“The trainers were excellent communicators, displayed openness to trainees making mistakes, and had warm, kind personalities”
“This was amazing! I would do it again!”
Since completing training, many of the student participants have facilitated restorative processes and conferences back in their school communities, with the support of administrators and counselling staff.

The Restorative Action Team also offered presentations on restorative justice and the program to RCMP partners as well as social justice and law classes. CJI was also able to invite Yves Cote in to speak about his experience of incarceration and transformation at Aldergrove Secondary on three occasions. Restorative Action Pro-D opportunities were also provided to Walnut Grove Secondary SEAs, and the Social Studies department at Aldergrove Secondary. In total, the team’s training efforts reached over 130 individuals across the district this year. We’re eager to offer further training, presentations and professional learning opportunities to staff and students next school year!

Teacher Feedback

The facilitators were excellent - they developed relationships with the kids so quickly, and were so patient with their behaviour. They persevered through a lot of behaviour challenges, and were so gracious to the kids. They were open about their own examples and life experiences which was helpful for students.

(Grade 6 teacher)

Having Peace-Circles be a regular part of the weekly schedule has become an important part of my planning because of its usefulness in introducing and teaching the topics related to effective communication. My classes are composed of students with many challenges—of which social emotional learning is a key component. Access to the RA program with its facilitators is quickly becoming a “must have” in my professional practice.

(Grade 8 Resource Teacher)

Zofia, Galen and Cori are skilled facilitators who have a strong ability to connect with youth. Week after week I was super impressed with their ability to lead a challenging group, their vulnerability, approachability, patience and respectful interactions. Thank you for leading us, I am grateful for your time and expertise.

(Grade 5 teacher)
“We cannot change the world by a new plan, project, or idea. We cannot even change other people by our convictions, advice and proposals, but we can offer a space where people can begin to disarm themselves, lay aside their occupations and pre-occupations and listen with attention and care to the voices speaking into their own center” – Henri Nouwen

This year of training has proven to be quite a journey of co-learning and shared wisdom, that has created deep connections that are only beginning to be fully appreciated. We focused on aligning trainings and consulting work with our restorative values, to further support and uplift both grassroot organizations and established institutions who want to critically examine their current structures and practices, and to advance their skills to help their communities start healing and “growing tall again”[1]. Similarly, CJI has undergone many growing pains over the last almost 40 years, and while we have years of experience and wisdom gained regarding best practices in Restorative Justice, we are also in an ongoing process of unlearning and re-establishing ourselves distinctly from the colonial justice system and the harms it continues to perpetuate towards marginalized and racialized groups, as well as victims.

In fact, despite long being considered a “just” alternative to the colonial legal system, scores of research and feedback from the community members we serve has shown that westernized Restorative Justice and its practitioners often recapitulate the harmful features of the colonial legal system. Examples of this include reinforcing punishment and shame narratives, working from a stance of interrogative investigation of the “facts”, rather than centering healthy supportive relationship and the needs for healing, and finally, by prioritizing those who cause harm over those who have been directly harmed. The critiques are scathing, but the need for the field of restorative justice to consistently examine itself is pressing, even more so given it has been predominantly a privileged white male institution since the start of its use alongside the Canadian justice system in the 1970’s.

As we moved out of our isolated silos post-pandemic, and came back into connection and conversation, we quickly realized that the training and consultation work that we have provided in the past, also needed some examination under our restorative values. Colonial concepts of expertise, professionalism, hierarchy, paternalism, adherence to strict policies and blanket systems had been some our ways in the past, and were not what organizations and groups were currently seeking from us. Instead, conversations with potential clients centered on sharing lived experience, supporting and consulting on complex situations, advancing skills, connecting understandings of trauma, shame, and accountability to restorative facilitator practices, conceptualizing new ways to incorporate Indigenous and locally understood knowledge into colonial frameworks (that for the moment endure), and using restorative practices beyond the quasi legal arena, such as within organizations and teams, in healthcare, counselling and schools, and in ways to gather and sustain communities doing grassroot work, like climate change, antiracism and radical liberal arts.

These new requests and hopeful conversations prompted us into many new ways of undertaking trainings and workshops, seeing them as new ways to share wisdom, stories, co-create (at times) uncomfortable but brave spaces for important dialogue, to share challenges, pain and hope, and to start to dream and materialize how we might move more creatively and restoratively within system boundaries. In some cases this included shedding oppressive ways that were not working, but creating more harm. We are not the sole experts in restorative values or practice, and we have tried to walk humbly, speak the truth of our long history of experience, our pitfalls and learnings, and welcome and invite all voices to share their wisdom together. The results have been far better than we could have imagined. We have built a number of growing relationships with our clients that have been described as “hopeful”, “like a trusted confidant”, or “not alone anymore in our small community—but connected to others with the same heart”[2].

Of the amazing groups and folks that chose us to work with this year, a few were rather unprecedented. One client relationship I still find myself returning to in thought, began with a curious phone call from the United States Military mid-year; and while the conversation began as a guarded one on both sides, it quickly grew into one of hopeful and vulnerable sharing as well as some very dry humour all around. This small branch of the military oversaw newly minted supervisors all over the world and were tasked with efficiently training them on all aspects of military policy and personnel directions. This work included disciplinary processes; however, these seasoned group of trainers, some retired, some active duty, had all faced deep trauma within their work (outside of combative action), and truly wanted to see some kind of shift towards supporting their military family more proactively and when harm occurs, with a focus on relationship, supportive care and resilience.

Punitive discipline in the military is both shaming and humiliating and very public, which had led to some very tragic losses, and had permeated their culture to create an unhealthy environment. These thoughtful and wise folks wanted better for the younger generation of recruits just starting out their military careers, “even if it meant just moving the dial half an inch to the better”. Together, we curated a number of workshop sessions tailored to their environment, broached the connection between restorative and military family values and philosophy and wove together restorative practitioner skills that entwine with shame, trauma and the creation of brave spaces to hold uncomfortable but healing conversations. As these folks have said, the conversations went “blood deep”, and the training space created a deeper sense of felt safety, and a strengthened team cohesiveness, that made them feel they could get creative even within the intense bureaucratic constraints they worked within. I’m still left reflecting (with teary smiles) on their immense resilience, deep lived experiences of pain, perseverance and resilience, and a sense of love and family for each other that I have not seen rivaled. We still connect with a number of them personally, who have excitedly taken restorative practice into their personal family lives and are seeking more resources.

Another profound and ongoing connection that began building this year, is with the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation (COTTFN) just outside of London, Ontario. We were first contacted to provide a week-long training on Restorative Justice practice by their Justice department head. We traded thoughts on what was wanted and needed by the community, whom they hoped would attend in greater numbers, and would begin some larger needed community conversations and reconnections. Once I arrived, we quickly connected over all manner of things going wrong, from airline strikes to lost baggage and community weather conditions. We decided to throw out previous plans, and instead connect over dialogue in the beginning heat of Summer, over a sacred fire attended to by their firekeeper. We sketched, beaded, ate, told stories, challenged one another, spoke of restorative values, the colonial ways of doing and Indigenous ways of knowing, we laughed as all our materials blew away in large gusts of wind, in our failed attempts to tape them to a large jeep, and we cried for many needed reasons. I came away deeply moved and well-rattled Settler with much more than an intense
The Nation called on us again in late summer to focus on a workshop connecting the body, brain, biology and somatics to restorative practices, as well as indigenous teachings and ceremony. During this training I had my second grateful opportunity to work and learn from one of the wisest, funniest and skilled COTTFN justice leaders, Andrea Young, who worked alongside me in all three of these workshops co-facilitating and connecting my colonial narratives to their community, Indigenous teachings and ceremony. This two-day retreat at a farmhouse in the community, brought a number of Elders and youth leaders into conversations about complex trauma and its impact on the brain, body and spirit that were profound. There was a sense of creation as well, as the community folks present that day dialogued on what workshops should be undertaken next and how they should be presented, and how to garner more interest with other community members. Right there on our last day, we collaborated on coming together in the fall for a family retreat of sorts that would bring whole families together for a number of days of good food, relaxation and connection to discuss restorative practices and how families and communities could work within the colonial justice system and take a more active role in their families healing journey. Just before the snow started to fall in late November we did just that, coming together over dialogue, food and exploratory activities with deep sharing and needed conversations over ongoing community challenges, and the challenges with the colonial systems that still infiltrate their lives. We are planning our next learnings together for next year.
What we are learning from these and other trainings this year is that people need support and space to dialogue about the possibilities and challenges of growing restorative work that fits for their community, however large or small, and to deal with the ever-present colonial system that greatly impacts and impedes how restorative work can be done successfully in these communities. The looming challenges that communities face in delivering restorative practices in ways that work for them, even though their policies are governed by a colonial system that is often rigid or full of constraints and centers the norms and privileges of white supremacy, cannot be understated. In our invitation to train at the North West Territories Community Justice Training Symposium, which brought together justice workers to Yellowknife from all over the North, to build capacity and connection, we overheard and witnessed these passionate care workers struggle with these challenges directly. Opening dialogue between these colleagues and welcoming sharing of stories of hardship and resilience, allowed the breakdown of feelings of isolation, and started to build support between siloed groups from across the Territories. We spent three days up North, broaching topics such as working with trauma and shame, and centering the needs of healing and wellness for all parties. Many of the nights, my co-trainer and I reworked everything we had in mind to ensure we mirrored the conversations that were coming forward and the input of the participants in where they would like to grow towards each session. We came away tired but energized and feeling like we had learned so much from the work. In the end, the Justice Department had heard so much from the session’s participants, that they asked us to write a report on all the themes, feedback and activities we had gleaned from the training to help guide further follow up conversations they were planning. We have already heard that we will be welcomed back for further conversation together in the near future.

Finally, after many more memorable trainings and workshops that kept us busy and on our toes this year, we were grateful to have the opportunity to bring most of our training team of internal staff and contractors together for a large training with a long-term school client. After a number of insightful days full of youth connection, we were able to gather together as a large team in the sun at the nearby beach close to our training location. We took precious time to share our development, connections and appreciations for the year, and with the powerful work we get to do with one another and in so many different communities. We look forward to many more years of working together with others to envision and create more meaningful, equitable and inclusive restorative practices.
The objective is to offer an accessible, comprehensive and organized list of resources and services that can support youth, and those working with them, in meeting their needs. The Youth Black Book is available through our website, www.youthblackbook.com. We also print and distribute wallet-sized information cards to schools and community service organizations in the Fraser Valley, which link to the Youth Black Book and offer a list of numbers for immediate crisis situations. We distribute over 15,000 of these cards annually, and aim to replenish them yearly as well so they are kept up to date.

In 2023, we’ve worked to update the YBB so the language and resources are current, and best reflect the evolving needs and identities of youth today, with a lens of youth empowerment and choice. The YBB is an essential resource for youth and adults working with youth in the Fraser Valley, and we are dedicated to ensuring that it continues to be one.

CJI would like to thank the generous financial supporters of this project in the 2022/2023: Township of Langley Community Grant, City of Langley Community Grant and City of Surrey Community Grant.

Thank you so much. I am finding that having a small discreet card is like having a safety net/ life line for some of the kids I work with in the district. I work in SD42 (Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows), I also work in private practice in Coquitlam with children and youth only, and you can put me on your list if you wish. It is increasingly difficult to find services for kids under 12. The wait list for Child & Youth Mental Health is 9 months and up and the Foundry no longer sees kids under 12. Social media is also a huge problem with bullying, sexual luring...

(Teacher/Counsellor)
The ongoing and faithful 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:

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