

Corner Brook Status of Women Council

NEWSLETTER - July 2021

Restorative Justice

The justice system is often seen as an intense bureaucracy to the naked eye. It has structure upon structures, and with so many people with various titles, it's easy to be intimidated. A crown prosecutor, a magistrate (judge), defense lawyers, not to mention all the trials, jury trials, preliminary enquiry, voir dire... and the list could carry on for pages. But nobody focuses on the court procedures, the fancy words, all they see is the offender. So, allow me to introduce you to another famous word in the justice system... victim.

Victims are barely heard of, sometimes for good reasons, possibly for their protection, or simply because they may not want to be known. And that's okay. However, victims tend to be revictimized by the system. With all the procedures and trials, it may seem like they are reliving everything. This may be especially true when the primary victim is deceased and the secondary victims, the family, remain. So how does one move on? Is there even such a thing?

Restorative justice may not be the answer to all your questions, but it may be a guide. With a restorative justice program, sometimes referred to as a diversion program, the offender acknowledges the harm done to the victim and the community. It then gives an opportunity for the victim to be involved in restoration. This could be through community service or meeting with the victim through victim-offender reconciliation.

Of course, going before someone who has caused harm to you or someone you love may seem a little intimidating, but there have

been positive effects. The gift of forgiveness may be the best gift someone may receive, especially if they do feel remorse for their actions. It may also help to hear the person's story, understanding the event not just through your experience, but the offender's as well.

"I expected to be repulsed by a pathetic attempt to say "I'm Sorry" I received more that I could have wished for when I came to realize he truly wanted to take back his actions (of course impossible). I never dreamed I would be able to forgive, never mind support the release of my offender." -Victim

Understandably this may be hard, it involves coming face to face with someone who hurt you perhaps emotionally, mentally, and/or physically. In the end however, it may benefit you in ways you may never have imagined. Of course, you may be willing to take a step like this, or maybe you weren't even considering it. Someday you may change your mind, and if you don't, that's also okay.

The program has some benefits for both the victim and the offender. Some of these benefits include:

- Reduces some offenders chance of recidivism (re-offending)
- Reduces symptoms of post-traumatic stress that victims may have, and also lower the desire for violent revenge
- Both victim and offender feel satisfied with the way their cases have been handled
- Offenders get to express their emotions in positive action, and an understanding of the harm they have caused can led to a greater feeling of remorse

As I mentioned before, this may not give you the answers you are looking for or the answers to the questions you are asking yourself. but it may make you feel more comfortable if you could ask them to your offender, and perhaps give you a peace of mind. With that being said, any questions? Not necessarily for me, but what about for yourself?



Upcoming:

We are book clubbing right through the summer. We are having too much fun to stop and would be happy to have you join us. Meetings take place on the second Tuesday of every month starting at 7pm. This month we are reading *The Birth House* by Ami McKay. The novel follows the life of a rural Nova Scotian midwife in the 1920's.

If you haven't joined us yet, you won't want to miss August's book: *I Am an Addict* by Ben Cox.

We have also started a Trail Walking group. Planned walks in July include a walk around Tipping's Pond, Massey Drive at 10:30am on Monday July 5th and the Pipeline trail here in Corner Brook at 10:30am Tuesday July 20th. Light refreshments will be provided after the walk. Please call 639-8522 for more details.

Thursday July 1st - In light of the ever increasing number of bodies at residential school sites, our staff have chosen to not engage in traditional Canada Day celebrations and will instead spend the day in reflection, acknowledgement and education.

Monday July 12th - Orangemen's Day - commemorating the Battle of the Boyne, which took place in 1690 outside Drogheda, now in the Republic of Ireland. The office will be closed on this day.

Friday July 30th - International Friendship Day. A day internationally recognized to help end violence and spread kindness.

Friday July 30th - World Day Against Trafficking in Persons. On this day the UN aims to create awareness about human trafficking and worldwide efforts to defeat this scourge.

Building a Better Canada

The recent findings at the former Residential Schools in both Kamloops, B.C. and Cowessess First Nation in Saskatchewan and racial attacks on Asians and Muslims have caused deep pain and hurt across the nation.

In light of these events, this Canada Day presents a time to reflect, recognize and educate ourselves on the injustice and heinous acts that have taken place within this country.

Reflection provides us with a deeper understanding of our history and the impact it continues to have on our society. It enables us to recognize privilege, systemic racism and injustice that still exists today.

When we reflect, take time to appreciate all people who make up Canada. Understand and learn about the historical colonial atrocities that were targeted towards many vulnerable populations. Reflect on the individuality of our citizens and embrace the uniqueness regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or gender. Through this reflection, we must accept that our history contains adverse events; but with a deeper understanding of these events, this allows us to effectively identify the problems, design solutions and communicate our ideas.

Let us use these events to learn from the wrongdoings and grow as a nation to build an inclusive future that empowers marginalized groups. As a country, we must acknowledge that we are not where we should be and use this knowledge to become better Canadians and show the world that we can do better. We must not only learn from these past events but ensure they become the catalyst for reconciliation, genuine change, and inclusiveness from coast to coast.

We must use recent tragedies as motivators to build an all-inclusive multicultural country. Ensure that your Canada Day presents a special time to learn and appreciate all that makes this country great. Show solidarity, understanding and resilience as we speak up against intolerance and embrace people of all communities as equal partners in building a better future for our country. Use this Canada Day as a unique opportunity to allow all people to heal, listen, share stories and show the world that our actions matter. We must honour Canada, not for its history, but for what we want it to be in the future.