

Sector Reports

Correctional Operations and Programs

Youth Group Wins Ron Wiebe Award 2004

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Left to right: Marena McLaughlin, Regional Deputy Commissioner, Atlantic Region, CSC; Holly Hondred, YRAP member, Edmonton, Alberta; Janine McKall, YRAP member, Edmonton, Alberta; Clara Rendell, District Director, Newfoundland and Labrador Parole District, CSC

Communities across Canada and internationally celebrated Restorative Justice Week, November 14-21, 2004, and reflected on this year's theme: *Engaging Us All in the Dialogue*. There were a diversity of events that took place including community forums, youth activities, an evening of performing arts, multi-faith discussions, institutional symposiums, official city launches and much more! Such vibrant celebrations are a clear indication that people are engaging in dialogue about restorative justice in creative ways and are promoting the use of restorative approaches to address the harm caused by conflict and crime.

This year, the Correctional Service of Canada formally invited municipal leaders across Canada to support Restorative Justice Week through an official proclamation of the week in their cities. In terms of promoting awareness, it is gratifying that at least 46 municipal leaders from Vancouver Island to Newfoundland accepted the Acting Commissioner's invitation and officially proclaimed Restorative Justice Week 2004.

A highlight of the celebrations, the sixth annual Ron Wiebe Award ceremony, took place this year in St. John's, Newfoundland on November 20. At that time, Marena McLaughlin, Deputy Commissioner, Atlantic Region, announced the Youth Restorative Action Project (YRAP) of Edmonton, Alberta, as the 2004 Ron Wiebe Award winner and made the presentation to Janine McKall and Holly Hondred, who accepted on behalf of YRAP.

YRAP is a youth justice committee, established in 2003, that has already made an impressive impact on the youth justice system in Edmonton. Members of YRAP – a growing organization, currently with 50 members ranging from 16 to 24 years of age – have worked on more than 60 cases of youth crime involving significant social issues such as racism, child prostitution, homelessness, mental illness and severe addiction.

YRAP's role is all encompassing. Youth members vote on whether to accept a referral based on their mandate and then organize and prepare all participants for a conference. YRAP members sit on the panels, decide what consequences will be included in the written contract, write all documentation including court reports, attend court with the offending youth, and mentor/supervise the completion of contracts/court orders by the young person who caused harm.

YRAP honours the values and principles of restorative justice with the goal of bringing together the young offender, the victim and the community of youth to determine how to repair the harm done through education and rehabilitation. YRAP is currently in the process of expanding the project to Toronto and Ottawa.

In presenting the 2004 Ron Wiebe Award, Ms. McLaughlin commented that YRAP has "demonstrated how youth can make a difference...they are role models for not just youth but for all of us, in that they have transformed human relationships by enabling and promoting communication and healing between people in conflict."

The 2004 national report on Restorative Justice Week activities is currently being prepared and will be available by March 2005 at www.csc-scc.gc.ca

For more information on YRAP, visit www.yrap.org or phone (780) 415-5831.

For more information on the Ron Wiebe Award, visit www.csc-scc.gc.ca or contact the Restorative Justice and Dispute Resolution Branch at restorativejustice@csc-scc.gc.ca or at (613) 947-6435.■