

ENGAGING COMMUNITIES IN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

An Information Session hosted by the
Ottawa Police Services Board

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OTTAWA POLICE SERVICES BOARD

Working together for a safer community

PROGRAM

Welcome and Opening Remarks	Henry Jensen, Chair, Ottawa Police Services Board
Introduction & the Role of the Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health in Community Justice Health	Carlie Chase (Moderator), HR/Programs Director, Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health
Community Justice: Is Ottawa Ready?	Chief of Police Vern White
The Role of the Crown Attorney's Office	Walter Devenz, Assistant Crown Attorney
Live Re-Actment of a Community Justice Circle	Chaplain Carl Wake & <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Ron Hunt▪ Jim MacPherson▪ Karen Murphy▪ Mike Alexander▪ Karen Hartzke▪ Marysia Riverin▪ Lee Payne
The Role of Faith and Law Dialogue on Crime Prevention	Chaplain Carl Wake
Closing Remarks	Carlie Chase / Henry Jensen

GUEST SPEAKERS

MS. CARLIE CHASE, HR/PROGRAMS DIRECTOR, WABANO CENTRE FOR ABORIGINAL HEALTH

Carlie Chase is Shuswap from the Skeetchestn First Nation in British Columbia. She is currently the Director of Human Resources & Programs at the Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health and has been part of the Wabano staff team for over 6 years. At the Centre, Carlie ensures the urban Aboriginal community in Ottawa receives integrated, holistic health care that encompasses physical, emotional, mental and spiritual aspects of well-being. Carlie is also part of a women's trio drum group – the Women of Wabano – the group has produced a fundraising CD called “Voices” which won the Native American Music Award for Best Debut Group of the Year in 2007.

MR. WALTER DEVENZ, ASSISTANT CROWN ATTORNEY

Walter Devenz is currently an Assistant Crown Attorney in the Ottawa Crown Attorney's office. He has conducted numerous criminal trials as an Assistant Crown Attorney both in Ottawa and in Alberta. As well, he has been involved in police officer training, and regularly consults with the police on various cases. He has developed a keen interest in restorative justice as another means of fulfilling his role as a prosecutor. He is currently the Assistant Crown Attorney assigned to head up the new Ottawa Youth Mental Health Court initiative undertaken under the direction of the Ottawa Crown Attorney. This court is the first fully committed court of its kind in Canada, and serves as a novel and unique form of restorative justice in a youth context. Since being admitted to the Bar in Alberta in 1990, the majority of his practice has been in the criminal justice system in both Alberta and Ontario, as both a Provincial and Federal Prosecutor.

CHAPLAIN CARL WAKE

Chaplain Carl Wake has been an ordained minister with the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada since 1982. He is currently the Coordinating Chaplain at the Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre (OCDC), where he has been ministering for over 18 years. Since 2000, he has facilitated over 130 restorative justice conferences and debriefings for peer-on-peer violence in the Youth Services Unit at OCDC. An official trainer in Restorative Justice Conferencing with the Ontario Multifaith Council for Spiritual and Religious Care, Reverend Wake is the Chairperson of the Prison Networking Group, a network of organizations and individuals who work with inmates while incarcerated and when released. He is also the founder of the Ottawa-based Faith and Law Dialogue on Crime Prevention.

CHIEF OF POLICE VERN WHITE

Vern White was sworn in as Chief of Police of the Ottawa Police Service in May 2007. Before joining the Ottawa Police Service, he led the Police Service in the Regional Municipality of Durham. Before becoming Chief in Durham he spent over 20 years with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, leaving with the rank of Assistant Commissioner. Earlier in his career he worked in various policy and investigational areas in a number of locations including Halifax, the Yukon Territories, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. His extensive experience includes major case management, community policing, proceeds of crime, detachment/unit commander, support services management, commercial crime and program policy. Chief White also has a wealth of demonstrated successes in working with diverse communities, particularly Canada's First Nations and Inuit communities. In addition to a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Sociology and Psychology from Acadia University and a Diploma in Business Administration, Chief White holds a Masters Degree from Royal Roads University in British Columbia in Conflict Analysis and Management. He completed his thesis on Restorative Justice.

Restorative Justice:

A Primer for Citizens of the City of Ottawa

Many Canadians believe that addressing criminal acts through traditional justice system approaches – sometimes called “retributive justice”, where a court weighs the facts of a case and metes out punishment of some form – is entirely appropriate for many crimes. However, many of us also believe that for some crimes, traditional approaches may not be an optimal approach to dealing with the harm caused by these criminal acts.

So-called “community justice” approaches have emerged to provide our communities with additional options to deal with criminal acts. Community Justice approaches are based in a philosophical basis, commonly referred to as Restorative Justice, or “RJ”. This philosophy views harm and crime as violations of people and relationships. Community Justice approaches based in the RJ philosophy reflects a premise that crime and conflict cause harm and that individuals must accept responsibility for repairing that harm, as well as be held directly accountable to the people they violated.

Conflict is viewed as an opportunity for a community to learn and grow, and for those involved including the victim, offender and other stakeholders, to have their voices heard, their needs addressed and their solutions considered. RJ therefore elevates the role of victims and community members in the justice process and holistically looks forward, focussing on what needs to be healed and what can be learned in order to prevent such crimes from happening again.

Forms of RJ Practices:

Implemented properly, Community Justice can lead to a greater sense of community safety, social harmony, peace and satisfaction for all involved. RJ practices can take many forms. A few include:

- *Community Justice Forums* (CJFs) is a controlled environment where an offender, victim(s) and others are brought together under the guidance of a trained facilitator to discuss the offence, its impacts and possible solutions which may include apologies, return of items, counselling, community service and other forms of redress to address the harms caused.
- *Victim-Offender Mediation* (VOM) is usually a face-to-face meeting, in the presence of a trained mediator, between the victim of a crime and the person who committed that crime.
- *Sentencing or Peacemaking Circles*, popular within Canada’s Aboriginal communities, use traditional circle ritual and structure to involve the victim, victim supporters, the offender, offender supporters, judge and court personnel, at times a police officer and a selection of community members, together, who search for an understanding of the criminal act and identify means for healing to occur.
- *Family Group Conferencing* is often used in juvenile crime cases and involves a wider circle of participants than VOM, especially family members, due to the important role they play in a young person’s life.

Advantages of RJ Practices:

The advantages of employing RJ approaches to certain crimes and incidents can be many and include:

- Victims, and the community at large, have a much greater voice during the justice process. Everyone has a chance to hear and be heard.
- A deeper understanding of the incident, including its possible root causes, can be achieved.
- Offenders are held accountable, as the acceptance of full responsibility is a condition for any application of RJ practices.
- Offender anonymity is reduced
- Offender ability to develop empathy with their victim is increased
- RJ practice is often less confrontational than cases heard before the traditional court system.
- Inherent in RJ practice is broader systems of support, for both victims and the offender.
- RJ practices achieve a balanced approach to the needs of the victim, offender and the community, all the while preserving the safety and dignity of all.
- RJ practices tend to cost less than traditional approaches, and can be implemented in a more timely manner.
- Bonds between people can be established / restored, and through the process, legitimate healing can occur.

Traditional justice approaches are compared to RJ practices in the following chart:

Dimension	Traditional	RJ
Offense	A violation of the legal system	A harm to a person and/or community
Focus	Establishing blame or guilt	Repairing harm and solving problems
Victim	Perspectives of victim largely ignored	Significant voice that helps decide outcomes
Offender	Largely passive participant	Active participant that helps decide outcomes
Responsibility	Offender often seeks to deny	Offender must accept
Stigma of Crime	Often cannot be removed	Can be lifted with appropriate actions
Repentance	Of secondary concern	Encouraged, as forgiveness is deemed possible
Key Players	Professionals	Those directly affected

How You Can Get Involved with RJ in Your Community

You can get involved in RJ practices in your community in several ways:

- With proper training (available through various sources – contact OPS for details), you can facilitate community justice forums or other RJ conferences
- Mentor youth/adult offenders on an individual basis
- Participate in a community RJ committee or advisory group
- Help provide individuals and families access to other community supports

For More Information

To learn more about Community Justice and how you can become involved, please contact:

Ottawa Police Service
Chief Vern White or Coordinator Louise Logue
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Tel: (613) 236-1222, ext. 5346