

## CJI History

For more than 40 years, CJI has successfully applied proven restorative justice principles to tough community problems. Many of these age-old principles have been practiced by indigenous cultures for generations.

A significant modern restorative justice movement was born in 1974 when young probation officers Mark Yantzi and Dave Worth suggested that two teens apologize and make restitution for vandalizing the property of 22 people in Elmira, Ontario instead of going to jail. Judge Gordon McConnell agreed, setting a new legal precedent in Canada.

What began in 1974 under the umbrella of Mennonite Central Committee and was incorporated as a small charity in 1982 and has developed into an agency with 20+ staff and more than 200 volunteers, all applying restorative justice in 17+ different program areas.

The Elmira Story has also sparked restorative justice movements across Canada and around the world.

Below are more of CJI's innovative approaches to conflict and crime.

### **Extending the Reach of Restorative Justice**

Expanding on the first successful meeting between youth who committed crimes and their victims, CJI's founder and first Executive Director, Mark Yantzi developed the Victim Offender Reconciliation Program (VORP). VORP grew and gained credibility in the community—today we receive hundreds of referrals from the adult court system in the Waterloo Region. Youth VORP was also developed.

In the 1990s, we began offering conflict resolution services for individuals, neighbours, families, and groups in the community. Due to the program's success, we receive referrals from community agencies and city bylaw departments.

Recognizing that elder abuse was an issue in the Waterloo Region, in 2005 CJI developed specialized conflict resolution services for adults who are 55+.

### **Applying Restorative Justice to Sexual Trauma**

Revive began in 1982, when CJI gave people who had been sexually abused a place to meet so they could talk about their experiences. Soon CJI started a program to provide group support for these survivors of sexual trauma.

*It is essential to provide therapeutic support for those who have been harmed physically, emotionally, and spiritually by the devastation of child sexual abuse. However, if we consider only the victim's needs, our work is incomplete. That is like mopping the mess from a dripping tap without fixing the leak...Dealing only with the effects does not move us toward an abuse-free society.—Mark Yantzi in his book *Sexual Offending and Restoration**

In 1986, believing that people who had offended sexually could change, CJI staff pioneered healing support for offenders. In keeping with restorative justice principles, personal

accountability and repairing harm were emphasized along with understanding the offense cycle and personal growth.

In 2012, CJI started a Cybersex Offenses group. In 2013, we added support groups for intimate partners of people who have offended sexually, intimate partners of survivors, and a group for male survivors who have also offended sexually. CJI is a leader in helping all people affected by sexual trauma and continues to expand to meet community needs.

### **Applying Restorative Justice to Women in Prison**

Founded by a former inmate of the infamous Prison for Women in Kingston, Stride began in 1995 as a telephone support service for federally sentenced women in prison and on parole. In 1998, with the opening of the new federal prison for women in Kitchener, Ontario (Grand Valley Institution for Women) Stride became a program of CJI.

Under the leadership of Julie Thompson, Stride evolved to offer reintegration support for women leaving prison focused on empowerment, meaningful and responsible choices, respect, dignity, community engagement, capacity building, social justice, and accountability. CJI developed and implemented a nationally recognized Circles Program which matches trained volunteers with women wanting support as they re-enter the community. To facilitate positive relationships between community members and women in prison, CJI started a social recreation program called Stride Night. Crafts, sports, games etc. provide the backdrop for interaction as community volunteers and agencies visit the women in prison to help them prepare for successful reintegration.

In 2009, CJI began Fresh Start Creations—an innovative program through which women in prison create artisan pieces that are sold in the community. 100% of the proceeds raised are donated to charities in the Waterloo Region that are chosen by the women.

In 2014, CJI received funding from the National Crime Prevention Centre to replicate the Stride program across Canada in partnership with women's prisons, half-way houses, and other organizations that serve women involved with the justice system.

### **Restorative Justice Helps Youth Returning from Custody**

Modelled after CJI's successful Stride program, Backhome was started in 2012 in partnership with Ray of Hope. Later, CJI also collaborated with Lutherwood. Volunteers participate in recreational activities each week with youth at custody facilities in the Waterloo Region. Upon their release, teens can choose to be supported by a Circle of volunteers as they reintegrate.

### **Using Restorative Justice Principles to Reduce Conflict Among Family Members**

Family Centred Programs began in 2007 as a collaborative effort between Community Justice Initiatives, Ministry of Children and Youth Services, and Family and Children's Services of Waterloo Region. Using restorative justice principles, CJI's Family-Centred Program empower families to make decisions about their children in child protection through culturally sensitive, respectful

meetings. Recognizing that parents identified by child protection services needed better skills to handle conflict, in 2012 we began offering one-on-one parent conflict coaching.

**CJI will continue to provide creative, responsive services in the Waterloo Region and beyond as needs arise and funds are available.**