



At a time when stories of injustice seem to fill the headlines, CJI remains grounded in clarity about our purpose. We're grateful for the incredible people who bring this purpose to life every day.

Despite financial pressures facing our sector, CJI staff, volunteers, and community partners haven't missed a beat.

Across our programs, people continue to show up with compassion, creativity, and courage. They support those navigating harm, conflict, and systems that often fall short of what people deserve.

I am grateful to our board members who have shown up with support and leadership during this difficult time. Below **read a volunteer profile** about Andre Rajna, retired Crown Attorney and our former Board President.

In this edition of the newsletter, we want to share some of the great work happening locally, nationally, and within our organization. We invite you to also peruse our 2024-25 Annual Report to see the highlights of the past year: [CJI 2024/2025 Annual Report](#)

Recent Highlights:

- **Victim Initiated Restorative Responses Program.** CJI received a grant from the Department of Justice to pilot Victim-Initiated Restorative Justice processes to make restorative justice more accessible to victims of harm. **READ MORE BELOW**

- **Radicalization Project.** We are thrilled to be 1 of 7 partners on a national initiative funded through Public Safety Canada's Community Resilience Fund. Our mandate is to support 10 pilot communities to build stronger local responses to social polarization, hate, and advancing community-based prevention efforts through multi-sectoral collaboration. Watch for more details as the project unfolds.

Thank you for all the ways you support CJI, from engaging on social media, to volunteering to giving financially.

CJI wouldn't exist without you our donors and supporters!



Warmly,
Kate Crozier, CJI Interim Executive Director

P.S. Join the movement to create a safer, more inclusive community. [DONATE](#) or [VOLUNTEER](#).

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The Justice System Is Overloaded—But There Are Other Ways to Handle Conflict

Volunteer Profile: Andre Rajna, Past CJI Board Chair

If you want to reduce crime, then work upstream—put money into improving mental health and addiction services and give people stable housing.

Andre Rajna, former Crown Attorney and CJI Board President

“Our courts are overburdened,” says Andre Rajna, a former Crown Attorney, and the outgoing president of the CJI Board. “We can't litigate our way out of the [conflict in our community.] There have to be other ways of dealing with it.” Andre says Crown Attorneys have adapted by offering special courts to deal with social issues including mental health, addictions, and domestic violence. But he also sees a place for restorative justice.



“There are certain situations where blame and punishment won’t work,” Andre says that people who must have an ongoing relationship after a crime, like neighbours or family members, are better served by restorative justice. When he was a Crown Attorney, he referred many cases to CJI’s Victim Offender Reconciliation Program (VORP).

He remembers a case where neighbourhood friends were playing and the actions of one boy resulted in the other losing his sight in one eye. **“The victim’s family didn’t want this kid to be prosecuted,” says Andre. But it didn’t feel right for nothing to happen.** Andre referred them to VORP and they were very willing to participate. This restorative justice process gave them a way to acknowledge that harm had been done and to discuss a way forward.

Many others were not willing to participate in VORP. “By the time it got to the point of charges being laid the conflict was entrenched,” says Andre. Something minor, like throwing snow on a neighbour’s driveway, could escalate with back and forth acts of revenge and calling the police on each other. “I tried to encourage police to refer these cases between neighbours early before they got out of hand.”

Andre also sees the value of using restorative justice in cases of domestic violence. “In the realm of domestic violence, for quite some time police have had to lay mandatory charges.” He says that this isn’t always a helpful response. Crowns can use early intervention peace bonds and order the person charged to take some programming. He says there can be value in programming for people who use violence, but it only helps one partner and not the the other. Restorative justice for domestic violence has the potential to meet the needs of both people in the relationship. “I think we could do more to decrease recidivism and allow these couples to be healthy.”

Andre says that **whether the courts or parents like it many of these couples are going to stay together.** “If they’ve had 20 years together and they have kids, at some point they gotta work this through.” Restorative Justice processes like CJI’s Facilitated Dialogue prioritize safety as they support victims of sexual abuse to determine what their unique healing and justice needs are. Facilitated Dialogue also works with the person who caused harm to be ready to meet those needs.

During his time on the CJI board, Andre recognized the benefits of restorative practices. “Restorative justice is useful for dealing with conflict. Restorative practices are upstream interventions that prevent conflict.” From his decades of experience as a crown attorney **Andre observed that most of the charges coming through the courts were “petty thefts, petty trespassing, and mischief with property.”** He says, “The common denominators [of these crimes] were usually homelessness, addiction, and mental health.” Unfortunately, Ontario courts are so backlogged with these types of offenses that many of the charges are dismissed to make room for more serious crimes. “There’s no accountability.” Andre says, “If you want to reduce crime, then work upstream—put money into improving mental health and addiction services and give people stable housing.”*

CJI is grateful for Andre’s leadership as a member of the board from 2018 to 2025 and president from 2022 to 2024. Knowing first-hand the importance of

restorative justice and the work of CJI, Andre and the rest of the board fought hard when CJI went through challenging times in 2023. “We were so glad Kate stepped up as Executive Director after Chris resigned. She has done a fantastic job.” He adds, “I enjoyed my time on the board and I learned a lot. I wish CJI well.”

“As a champion for CJI, Andre has invested meaningfully and consistently in the wellbeing of this organization over the last seven years,” says Interim Executive Director Kate Crozier. “We are grateful for his steady leadership and support. You will be missed, Andre!”

**Andre is retired and does not speak on behalf of the Attorney General. His opinions are his own.*

CJI Staff Want Every Member of Our Community to Have Access to a Meaningful Justice Experience



On June 5th, CJI staff gathered at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo to explore our justice frameworks. Of course, we talked about Restorative Justice! But we also discussed how our work intersects with Transformative Justice, Restorative Practices and Alternative Dispute Resolution. Staff worked in teams to consider the values they hoped CJI would promote in the future. What emerged loud and clear was our collective desire for every member of our community to have access to a meaningful justice experience.

Justice Framework Definitions

Restorative Justice

Restorative justice is a philosophy and set of practices centered on healing the harm caused by wrongdoing. Unlike punitive justice, which asks, “What rule was broken and how should the person-who-caused-harm be punished?” restorative justice asks, “Who was harmed, what do they need, and whose responsibility is it to meet those needs?”

Transformative Justice

Transformative Justice is rooted in abolitionist, feminist, and anti-oppression traditions. It arose from the need for community-led responses to harm that reject carceral systems and work toward both healing and systemic change.

Restorative Practices

Indigenous, African and Celtic traditions offer us examples of worldviews that were designed around ideas of connection and relatedness, which then informed ways of being. Academically, Restorative Practices (RP) is a social science field concerned with how to strengthen relationships between individuals and within communities.

Alternative Dispute Resolution

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) refers to a broad range of methods used to resolve conflicts without going to court. These methods range from informal, cooperative approaches like negotiation to more structured, rights-based processes such as arbitration. While litigation is typically excluded from ADR, some ADR methods incorporate formal procedures and legal principles.

NEW PROJECT: Victim Initiated Restorative Responses Program

CJI received a grant from the Department of Justice to pilot Victim-Initiated Restorative Justice processes. This project aims to make restorative justice more accessible to victims of harm by centring on their needs and choices. This includes healing through CJI's mediation services, as well as exploring options like letter-writing and survivor-centred circles that offer supportive ways to gather, process and heal in community. We're working closely with several community partners in Waterloo Region, including [Spectrum](#), and across Canada to inform an understanding of best-practices to co-generate this model.

Share Your Ideas and Experience!

Do you work with victims/survivors? Join a Task Force of community members and volunteers to engage on topics CJI is grappling with related to making restorative justice more accessible to victims of harm.

Contact Aurra at aurras@cjiwr.com if you are interested.

Upcoming CJI Events and Training

CJI Agency Orientation

Monday, October 7, 2025 @ 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm, online

Considering becoming a CJI volunteer? Our Agency Orientation is the first step toward becoming a volunteer. Learn about the history of CJI, as well as how we continue to evolve. We will share the pre-requisite training required for each program and current volunteer openings. We look forward to answering your questions. [RSVP](#)

Transformative Mediation Training September 23-26, 2025 (In Person)

Conrad Grebel University College 40 Westmount Rd N, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada

In this workshop, develop practical skills to resolve interpersonal conflict and to facilitate mediation. Also, explore and develop effective communication strategies and skills that are essential for facilitating conflict resolution. Integrate theory and practice through role-plays and interactive exercises guided by coaches. Conrad Grebel University College and Community Justice Initiatives will award certificates to each participant who completes the workshop.

COST: \$695 [Learn more and REGISTER](#)

Upcoming Transformative Mediation Training: Virtual November 19-21 and 25-29 8:30 a.m. - 12:30 pm

COST: \$675 [Learn more and REGISTER](#)

