



Corrections **FAST FACTS**

Successful reintegration of an offender into society requires community acceptance, support and involvement.

Restorative Justice

Restorative justice is emerging as an important complement to the traditional criminal justice system in Canada and around the world.

A companion to traditional criminal justice, the restorative justice process involves the offender, the victim and the community. Victims are often provided with the opportunity to meet their offenders in person. The process allows victims to describe the impact of the crime to their offenders and for a reparation plan to be developed collaboratively. Offenders are held personally accountable for their acts and given the opportunity to attempt to repair the harm caused by the crime.

Evaluations of restorative justice programs and processes indicate a high level of satisfaction among victims and offenders. Most restorative justice programs have targeted low-risk offenders who have committed minor crimes. Some programs target offenders who have committed more serious crimes. In these more serious cases, offenders have a wider range of problems (e.g., substance abuse, employment difficulties) that may require treatment services.

Restorative models have drawn on Aboriginal approaches to addressing conflict and crime which emphasize the need for collective healing – for the victim, offender, family and community. Models of restorative justice include:

- victim-offender mediation
- family group conferencing
- community justice forums
- healing circles

Restorative Justice

Milestones for Canada

- The Supreme Court of Canada decision in *Gladue v. the Queen* (1999) highlighted the importance of restorative justice processes in sentencing Aboriginal offenders.
- In 2000, Canada had a leadership role in the advancement of a resolution at the United Nations to develop international guidelines on the use of restorative justice.
- The resolution was passed and led to the establishment of the *United Nations Basic Principles on the Use of Restorative Justice Programmes in Criminal Matters* by the United Nations Economic and Social Council in 2002.
- Restorative justice programs and approaches have been implemented in all jurisdictions throughout Canada.

Programs and Initiatives in Canada

National Restorative Justice Week, held annually in November, is dedicated to promoting awareness about restorative justice through public forums and information sharing.

Various federal departments and agencies have partnerships in place with community-based organizations involved in restorative justice, including Justice Canada, Public Safety Canada, Correctional Service of Canada and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

As restorative justice has become more applied across Canada, governments have increased their collaboration to share best practices and learn from others' experiences. Maintaining discussion and interest about restorative justice helps to ensure that it continues to evolve in a way where we all benefit from the successes of other jurisdictions.

Research and Evaluation

The research and evaluation findings to date have demonstrated promising results and include the following conclusions:

- Restorative justice processes have a strong effect both on victims and offenders in humanizing the system (Umbreit, 1994).
- Victims who participate in restorative justice programs experience increased empowerment, and decreased levels of anger and fear (Rugge, Bonta, & Wallace-Capretta, 2005; Strang, 2002; Wemmers & Cyr, 2005).
- Restorative justice has been found to lower the likelihood of offenders re-offending, by up to 12% (Bonta, Jesseman, Rugge, & Cormier, 2006; Latimer, Dowden, & Muise, 2001; Rugge et al., 2005).

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