

2018-2019 Citizen Advisory Committees Annual Report

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Introduction

In 2018-2019, the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) spent the year focusing on recruitment, aging offenders, employment and mental health initiatives across the Nation. We saw the wrap up of the Kickstarter projects throughout 2018 and finalized in 2019.

The NEC hosted monthly teleconference calls, along with a face-to-face meeting in September 2019. I had the honour of attending the International Corrections and Prisons Association conference in October 2018, meeting delegates from around the world and presenting about the CAC in partnership with the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC). CSC did an outstanding job highlighting to the world the incredible work that is done in Canada around successful offender reintegration as well as providing superior offender care in federal institutions of all levels.

The NEC said good-bye to a few familiar faces around the table and, at this time, we would like to acknowledge the people who bring the voice of the CAC to the national level, including the outstanding correctional staff that provide amazing support to the movement:

- **Atlantic Region** Peggy Joiner (CAC) and Sherry Jackson-Smith (CSC)
- **Quebec Region** Nicole Gareau (CAC) proceeded by Anthony Gagnon (CAC) and Julie Charest (CSC)
- **Ontario Region** Mark Jowett (CAC) and Jaqueline Edwards (CSC)
- **Prairie Region** Michael Swait (CAC) and Nell Hales (CSC)
- **Pacific Region** Raj Saran (CAC) proceeded by Tatiyanna Kolesnichenko (CAC) and Reeta Shandil (CSC)

Thank you to Commissioner Anne Kelly for her continued support of the CAC along with Assistant Commissioner, Communications and Citizen Engagement Amy Jarrette, as well as Suzanne Leclerc and Donat Bilomba. We said farewell to our CSC Co-chairperson, David Molzahn, and wished Patrice Miron a happy retirement. We welcomed new faces and reinvented energy to Katherine Cole, Director, Citizen Engagement and Lise Jolicoeur, Manager, Community and Stakeholder Relations.

Overview

One of the principles articulated in the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act* is for the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) to involve the public in its operations. Citizen Advisory Committees (CACs), amongst other advisory committees, contribute to CSC meet its legislated mandate. CACs, a citizen-led movement that was initiated in the early 1960s, help CSC build stronger links between offenders and communities.

In 2018-2019, there were 350 CAC members serving CACs in about 80 CSC sites and district parole offices under the jurisdiction of the Correctional Service of Canada. CSC's responsibilities towards the CAC are outlined in the *Corrections and Conditional Release Regulations* and in the [CSC Commissioner's Directive 023](#). This policy ensures CSC maintains positive relationships with the community and enhances its effectiveness by engaging citizens in matters related to the operation of the Service.

CAC members are citizens appointed to serve on committees who believe in public safety, the right of all citizens to be involved in the correctional process, and the ability of offenders to become law-abiding citizens. CACs have three main roles:

- **Observe** – CACs are impartial observers of CSC's day-to-day operations. They help assess if offenders are getting adequate care, supervision, and services. They also ensure that CSC is operating under the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act*.
- **Liaise** – CACs listen to public concerns and offer CSC a community point of view on the impact of its policies, programs and services. They also help raise awareness on federal corrections and promote the important work that CSC undertakes to encourage citizens to get involved.
- **Advise** – CACs give advice to CSC on its policies, programs and services, and on how it runs correctional facilities. Members visit facilities regularly to meet with offenders, and CSC officials and staff.

National Achievements and Challenges: 2018-2019

The National Executive Committee of the Citizen Advisory Committees members participated in 13 national conference calls and one in-person meeting during the course of the year. Discussions included revisions to Commissioner's Directive (CD) 023, training for CACs, the NEC constitution, the Kickstarter Initiative, recognition for CAC members, and participation in CSC policy consultations.

From a national perspective, NEC was successful in implementing a one-year pilot Kickstarter Initiative across the regions in 2018. Led by the NEC, its goal was to support activities that would advance CAC's 2016-2018 strategic priorities, namely employment, mental health, and aging offenders. It received 15 creative proposals of which two (2) were national in scope and 13 were local-level proposals. Maximum funding for national and local initiatives was \$10,000, half of which was dedicated to national level proposals with \$1,000 per region for local level proposals. The two national projects, PAWSitive

Space and a CAC collaboration with Trent University and the Peterborough Reintegration Services (PRS) known as the Community Reintegration of Aging Offenders (CRAO): Gaps in Knowledge Report, received funding from CSC's Health Sector and the Communications and Engagement Sector. Approved regional projects that supported CAC's three priorities included: Learning Event, Mental Health Organizations Tour, Aging Offenders Project, Birdhouses for the Community of Prince Albert and Woodcraft for the community. In addition to these projects, other activities were supported outside the Kickstarter Initiative Framework including *Train the trainer: Certification and skills training for offenders in the Ottawa community*, and *Welcome Forums*.

The James A. Murphy CAC Award of Excellence, which recognizes and acknowledges individuals or teams who exemplify commitment, drive and leadership in advancing the CAC movement, continued despite a lower-than-usual number of nominees this year. Former NEC-CAC National Chair, Lori Ebbesen was the year's award recipient.

Deliberations on the promulgation of an updated CD 023 continued.

CAC Achievements and Challenges By Region: 2018-2019

Atlantic Region

Aside from the formal meetings, Citizen Advisory Committee members spent time either on site or on telecommunicating with CSC and the community regarding CSC and CAC strategic priorities: employment, mental health, housing, and aging offenders. In this time period, meetings with the Inmate Committee at the Community Correctional Centre (CCC) in St. John's NL became regular and meetings were held with CSC regional management team to discuss key issues, receiving budget updates, and trouble-shooting some issues.

CACs received invitations to participate in CSC professional development opportunities and briefings on the needle exchange process whenever extra seats were available. The region was successful at recruiting new members. Newfoundland and Labrador's committee members are trailblazers in ways to implement the CAC mandate over a large geographical area. Their approach includes engaging Indigenous communities and other ethnocultural communities. The region equally focused on making connections with faith communities to see what mutual objectives could be addressed in support of vulnerable populations.

Committee members selected areas of interest (Health and Safety committee, Case Conferences at Shepody, and the implementation of new initiatives in facilities) to become involved in besides their regular meetings. The local horticultural program continued to thrive and two Kickstarter projects focused on professional development and an Animal Memories Session were successful. The region maintained a record of

another successful, now annual, Awareness Day to liaise with institutions and the community.

The region's challenges include several changes in CSC staff, recruitment of new CAC members, lack of funding to hold a CAC face-to-face meeting in Newfoundland, and the need for training opportunities for CAC members and CSC staff on CD 023 and the CAC mandate. The region had 51 members this fiscal year 2018-2019.

Quebec Region

The region's local committees continued to target activities related to their mandate and added a focus on Indigenous offenders to the national Citizen Advisory Committee priorities of employment, mental health, and the aging offender population.

Regional achievements for the year included the successful member recruitment and retention campaign with Granby's CAC, the East/West Quebec District (EWQD) piloted "Kickstarter" project, and the "Visiting Mental Health Organizations" project that facilitated networking with community stakeholders.

Several CACs, including Archambault and La Macaza, placed great importance on cultural understanding and participation in Indigenous activities such as the Change of Seasons Ceremony and external symposiums. Mental health activities included the restart of a local health committee composed of CAC members and CSC's Regional Director of the Health Sector.

As part of the region's efforts to liaise with the community, the CACs participated in career fairs, a trade show hosted by community organizations, and open doors at Port-Cartier Institution. CAC initiatives in the community included "kitchen meetings" that enable external stakeholders to take part in information and networking opportunities. La Macaza's CAC invested in specific efforts to maintain connections with the community, including politicians, municipal authorities and a business association.

Networking through visits to institutions and community CACs was instrumental in sharing knowledge of the prison system and allowed participants to understand the scope of CAC's mission and the impact it has on their volunteering. The sharing of best practices helped new CSC employees to better assume their role. Together, these activities contributed to the training of CAC members.

The region's challenges were in the area of recruitment and retention CAC members and the need for more training opportunities for CAC members. The region had 81 members this fiscal year 2018-2019.

Ontario Region

Ontario Region reported a series of activities that contributed to building a stronger and more informed CAC, increasing CSC staff and offender awareness and knowledge of the CAC, and community outreach.

The region continued to strive to keep members engaged by providing educational opportunities, such as attending workshops, viewing documentaries, and sharing any other information that is relevant and broadens CAC's understanding of corrections. An improvement in the flow of communication between CACs and CSC was in part due to several meetings with CSC staff, including the Regional Deputy Commissioner. Opportunities for learning enabled attending CACs to report to other members. CAC members are made aware of all CAC activities, and have been actively participating in these activities.

CACs were actively involved in building relations with CSC staff and management to the point of increasing the level of mutual respect and an understanding of each group's respective roles. Members attended searches and were invited to staff, district, management, and security meetings. These interactions enabled CACs to gain a deeper insight into the obstacles facing residents as they attempt to reintegrate. This knowledge was used to gather information on outside resources available for residents to access.

The region's activities resulted in an increased number of CAC members, a successful Kickstarter project, an increased understanding and support of CAC activities and CSC's processes, increased interest in assisting aging offenders, and increased collaboration with CSC senior management.

CACs in the region deal with a large Canadian population that is constantly changing in size and diversity. They continued to play a vital role in community outreach to promote CAC and the work of CSC. Presentations at local meetings, contact with local politicians, and recruitment activities served to promote CACs in the community. Visits to several local businesses and local church groups and community centers served to promote the employability of offenders to learn about resources available to assist offenders with their community reintegration.

The region's challenges were in the area of recruitment and retention CAC members and the lack of resources to act on some ideas aimed at assisting offenders with their community reintegration. The region had 45 members this fiscal year 2018-2019.

Prairie Region

The Animal Memories project undertaken through the National Kickstarter Initiative focused on raising awareness about the many benefits of the human-animal bond within federal corrections and invited inmates to share animal-related memories through stories, artwork, photos, and poetry. It was organized in partnership with Animal Assisted Therapy researchers from the University of Saskatchewan and University of Regina. The researchers were joined by volunteer handler and dog teams in the Prairie, Pacific and Atlantic regions.

Forums highlighting animal-assisted interventions and showcasing animal-inspired submissions were held at the Regional Psychiatric Centre, Drumheller Institution and Stony Mountain Institution (Prairie Region), Matsqui Institution (Pacific Region) and

Nova Institution for Women (Atlantic Region). Management, staff, offenders and community partners were invited to foster dialogue on research evidence and raise awareness about possible opportunities in animal-assisted interventions.

The Prince Albert CAC initiated a Kickstarter Initiative Partnership between Saskatchewan Penitentiary, Prince Albert Wildlife Federation and Kin Enterprises to engage offenders at Saskatchewan Penitentiary on the mental health range with a meaningful activity that would give back to the local community. Raw materials for birdhouses were purchased and Kin Enterprises, a local non-profit agency that employs individuals with diverse physical, mental and emotional abilities, assisted with cutting birdhouse templates in their wood workshop. The birdhouses were then assembled and stained by offenders residing on the mental health range, which were then presented to the Prince Albert Wildlife Foundation.

In 2018-2019, the James A. Murphy CAC Award of Excellence recipient, Lori Ebbesen, was from the Prairie Region. Throughout her longstanding involvement with CACs, she demonstrated an exceptional capacity to work collaboratively in the best interest of the CAC movement. Lori's ability to foster a proactive, flexible, transparent and respectful leadership style allowed the region's membership to flourish and successfully meet their mandate.

The region's challenges were in the area of recruitment and retention CAC members and the need for more training opportunities for CAC members. The region had 84 members this fiscal year 2018-2019.

Pacific Region

Three staff members, the local CAC Chair, and twelve offenders on day parole and statutory release participated in a four-week mindfulness series, "Mindfulness: Living Life in the Slow Lane", to help improve their mental wellbeing. They learned how to be present and become more aware of their sense of self, to cope better with overwhelming or emotional situations. The activity was led by the Fraser Valley Community Corrections CAC.

The Metro-Vancouver East Community Corrections (MVECC) CAC members hosted a networking event at the Rising Sun Community Residential Facility. The event provided an opportunity for CAC members from across the region to meet and learn about offender reintegration. Attendees included 16 CAC members from institutions and community, the Chair of the Regional Ethnocultural Advisory Committee, CSC staff, and community partners. Five Community Residential Facilities held information booths and participants were provided tours of the Community Residential Facility. Artwork from the MVECC Art Therapy Program was displayed for all to enjoy.

Mission Institution's CAC was successful in establishing the Buddy Bench program, which builds and provides benches to local elementary schools. CAC members utilized their community contacts to receive donations of wood that inmates at the institution treated, cut, stained and turned into benches. Inmates were able to learn and practice

new skills while giving back to the local community. Buddy Benches symbolize hope, build empathy, promote inclusiveness and remind children to be kind to one another.

Abbotsford News featured Matsqui Institution's CAC Chair, John Glena, in the news. The [article](#) highlights John's long-lasting, successful career as a police officer and his current role as a CAC member. The Animal Therapy and Buddy Bench Kickstarter initiatives, as well as the importance of education and training for offenders were discussed in the article.

John emphasized the significance of community involvement with corrections and proudly shared his commitment and dedication as a member of the CAC.

The region's challenges were in the area of recruitment and retention CAC members and the need for more training opportunities for CAC members. The region had 89 members this fiscal year 2018-2019.

CACs in the news and CSC publications

CAC received positive coverage in the news and through the CSC's *Let's Talk Express* publication. Articles were as follows:

- Solitary Confinement gets Overhaul at Abbotsford Prison (*available in English only*)
<https://www.abbynews.com/news/solitary-confinement-gets-overhaul-at-abbotsford-prison>
- Ex-cop now Preaches Importance of Rehabilitation at Abbotsford prison (*available in English only*)
<https://www.abbynews.com/news/ex-cop-now-preaches-importance-of-prison-programs-at-abbotsford-prison>
- Volunteers needed to work inside walls of area institutions
<https://www.thewhig.com/news/local-news/volunteers-needed-to-work-inside-walls-of-area-institutions>
- A Great Year for Citizen Advisory Committees (CAC)
<https://www.lte-ene.ca/en/great-year-citizen-advisory-committees-cac>
- The James A. Murphy Award of Excellence for 2018
<https://www.lte-ene.ca/en/james-murphy-award-excellence-2018>
- CAC National Chairperson Chelsea Morrey at the International Corrections and Prison Associations (ICPA) Conference
<https://www.lte-ene.ca/en/cac-national-chairperson-chelsea-morrey-international-corrections-and-prison-associations-icpa/>
- The 2018 National Kickstarter Project (Collaboration between CACs and CSC)
<https://www.lte-ene.ca/en/2018-national-kickstarter-project-collaboration-between-cacs-and-csc>

Conclusion

CACs across the regions collectively volunteered an estimated minimum of 396 hours of their time in meetings this year. This estimate does not include travel time, participation in CAC operations, reviewing CSC internal policies, projects, or the preparation of documents related to local or regional meetings.