



2009 ANNUAL REPORT



Annual Reflections

This past year will stand out as one of the most significant to date in the development CERA. The year is highlighted with the Board's, volunteer's and staff's steadfast reaffirmation of restorative justice philosophies and practices to inform, inspire and anchor every discussion and decision. The outcome has been resounding sincere connections and commitments to our passionate drive for restorative justice with integrity in the communities we serve.

It has been exciting, challenging and rewarding as Board Chair and Executive Director, to lead CERA through this time of transition. Dedicated to the road map set out in our 2006 Strategic Plan, our primary goals were to enhance our image, expand our recognition and refresh sound internal structures. With full agreement, everyone worked tirelessly on these elemental goals as the essential bedrock of our vision to grow our society aligned with our mission to enhance the quality of justice in the communities we serve through restorative measures.

We are deeply appreciative of our relationships with community partners and other organizations that have been strengthened and rejuvenated through consistent effort, patience and the accomplishment of our goals. Growing pains at times seemed daunting yet through supportive teamwork they transformed our society into a stronger more responsive and accountable, transparent organization. More than ever, we are now better equipped to provide the enhanced restorative justice services we aspire to.

The work of CERA has changed lives and brought healing, restoration and fresh starts to people who have been affected by crime. It has been a sincerely appreciated honour for us to journey forward with CERA through this year. Our vision is brighter and reenergized as we plan and prepare for the expansion of our services for our communities. We look forward to the invaluable support of our partners, members and community alliances working with us as kindred spirits committed to the principles and practices of restorative justice.

Dianne Archer,
Chair, Board of Directors

Jennifer Ingraham
Executive Director



Society Overview

Over the year we said goodbye to devoted members Starla Kingston, Linda Reimer, Tossia McNabb - Secretary, Robbyn Heesaker and Richard Browning. These departures were replenished with welcomes to Larry Hayes, Jeff Sawyer, Maxine Wilson and Eric Wong. Holding steadfast positions were Steve Bailey - Vice Chair, Joel Chan - Treasurer and Nasima Nastoh.

Throughout the year we maintained focused efforts on the tasks required to meet our goals. I appreciatively acknowledge the broad ranging expertise and supportive teamwork that led to our accomplishments:

- The recruitment and hiring of our first Executive Director, Jennifer Ingraham.
- The restructure of our human resources management system that included quality performance standards to enhance all operations.
- The revitalization of our society image with a new name, new logo and updated website.
- Joined the Tri-City and New Westminster Chambers of Commerce.
- Completed the revision of our policy manual and included clear, accountable procedures.
- Turned a potentially critical incident into a positive opportunity for assessment and revision.
- Confirmed strategic plan changes were positive, essential steps to reach our goals.
- Maintained strong financial health through responsible decisions that facilitated the numerous changes in organization and service growth.

Looking ahead, I see our Board of Directors is bursting with expertise, energy, passion and new perspectives that will insure continued active pursuit of organization goals. I gratefully appreciate the role entrusted to me by the Board and their enduring support. I am also grateful for dependable, passionate staff and volunteers who make our work possible.

Programs

CERA has experienced significant change and challenge that has translated into stronger programs, increased referrals, strengthened volunteer engagement, and rededicated staff. Consequently, in our tenth year of service, CERA is significantly strengthened and ready to serve our communities with restorative principles and practices. It is most encouraging that as I interact with community members and leaders, the concept of 'restorative justice' is becoming better understood and a desired practice in addressing issues of crime in the communities we serve. I extend deep appreciation to all those who are making possible the work of restorative action.

Community Youth Justice Program (CYJP)

The CYJP accepts referrals from both police and Crown Counsel on matters relating to youth offences. Based on restorative justice principles, our program provides a viable and effective alternative to the court system for offences committed by youth. We use trained volunteer facilitators and a resolution conference model to involve all parties in processes to 'right the wrong'.

Highlights of 2008-2009 CYJP Activity

- The CYJP completed 2008 having received 41 referrals; the second highest annual number since the program's inception in 2000.
- Thirty referrals came from police agencies, 6 came from Crown Council and the remaining were self-referrals, other agency referrals, or school based referrals.



Highlights of 2008-2009 CYJP Activity Continued

- The most common referrals were: theft and fraud 44%, mischief 22%, and assault (minor) 21%.
- Twenty-four restorative processes were conducted in 2008, with a 96% successful completion rate. This means that 96% of all accused youth who participated in a restorative process were successful in completing all the components of a mutually satisfying agreement he/she made collaboratively with the harmed party and their supporters.
- The CYJP currently has 13 active and committed volunteer facilitators who lead all restorative conferences supervised by the Program Manager.
- In November 2008, Alan Patola Moosman resigned from his position as Program Manager. Alan worked with CERA for nine years and made a significant contribution to the advancement of restorative justice during his tenure.
- In early January 2009, CERA welcomed Gerry Baragar to the role of Program Manager.
- In early January 2009, it came to CERA's attention that there existed a serious weakness in service delivery and the processing of files. As a result, an RCMP consultant performed a thorough evaluation and assessment of CERA's CYJP processes which concluded with several recommendations. From January to April 2009, CERA staff worked with diligence, transparency and integrity (keeping referring partners and funding partners informed) to rectify the identified problems and followed through on all RCMP recommendations. As a result, the CYJP is now operating with internally sound checks and balances to ensure all clients receive the highest level of care concerning their respective case. All referring partners and funding partners have declared their ongoing support for CERA, and have expressed their satisfaction with how this situation was managed. With an improved service delivery system and accountability measures in place, CERA anticipates a significant increase in CYJP referrals.

2008 Client Evaluations

- 100% of persons harmed, accused youth and all supporters felt that the youth accused had taken responsibility and apologized for his/her actions
- 71% of youth accused felt that the conference helped them regain the trust and respect of their friends and family
- 100% of person harmed thought the agreement would significantly repair the harm that was caused.
- 100% of accused youth who believed the conference/restorative justice experience would stop them from committing future crimes

Please note these statistics are based on a 58% response rate.

Empowering Youth

Piloted in 2006 – 2007, Empowering Youth is a joint initiative between CERA and School District 43 to train and support students in the use of restorative justice principles. As an effective alternative to traditional discipline practices, restorative justice builds internal capacity within schools by equipping students with foundational life skills in conflict/dispute resolution and effective problem solving.

Through two locally designed curriculums (Talking Peace – designed for elementary students and Conversation Peace – designed for middle and secondary students), Empowering Youth equips students with skills in conflict resolution and empowers them to be actively involved as peer mediators in assisting fellow students in handling school conflicts in peaceful ways.



Highlights of 2008-2009 Empowering Youth (EY) Activity

- In 2007 – 2008, Empowering Youth trained 87 students to be peer mediators.
- In 2008, Empowering Youth was featured on CBC radio and in the Tri-City News
- CERA joined a 'restorative action in schools' focus group in conjunction with School District #43 and Dr. Brenda Morrison, professor of criminology at Simon Fraser University.
- In 2008, we focused on strengthening the program's implementation process. We are now seeing wider implementation of the Empowering Youth program and are preparing to include additional schools in 2009-2010. We are currently focusing on working with the schools that 'feed' into Centennial High School, in order that students will have continuity of skill development and practice of restorative skills from elementary to high school.
- We have received partial funding to hire a part time coordinator for the Empowering Youth Program for the 2009-2010 academic year. This is a significant step forward for the development of this program.

General/Organizational Highlights from 2008

- Strengthened relationships with key stakeholders and community partners
- Accepted the role of leading/hosting Restorative Justice Provincial Conference in 2010
- Implemented office upgrades that increased the efficiency and professionalism of operations
- Hired a new program manager, Gerry Baragar
- Conducted a complete evaluation and overhaul of program service delivery
- Secured a new data base system for the CYJP
- Participated in a Rotary Club international study on practices in restorative justice
- Evaluated, assessed and rejuvenated CERA's volunteer facilitator training and engagement
- Made numerous public speaking presentations to educate the public on the principles and practices of Restorative Justice.

"I have had many volunteer positions and volunteering with CERA has by far been the most rewarding. I came to CERA because I wanted to develop mediation skills. The position has definitely offered me opportunities for skill development and it has offered me so much more. I appreciate that I have been encouraged to volunteer in any way that works for me. I have assisted with the Empowering Youth Program which is a program that trains elementary and high school students to do peer mediations to resolve conflicts in peaceful ways. I have helped out with creating a computer database system, and facilitated restorative justice conferences. I have never had a volunteer position where I have felt so appreciated and encouraged to see my own strengths. It feels amazing. It feels great to be contributing to something that impacts people in such a positive way. There have been many moments when I have felt a deep sense of honour for the exchanges that I have witnessed in conferences. It is hard to put this experience into words. What I do know is that it has left me with a deep respect and commitment for restorative justice work and an appreciation for the way the work has touched my life."

Tammy Van Hinte

Administration and
RJ Conference Facilitator Volunteer