

# Restorative Justice Program of the Sunshine Coast



## 2022-2023 Annual Report

Presented by:  
Donna Schmirler, Board President and AGM Chair

Restorative Justice Program of the Sunshine Coast (RJPSC)  
ANNUAL REPORT FOR Year 2022-2023  
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A. Introduction

To begin the President's Report this evening, I would like to speak a bit about our growing partnership with VIRRJA (Vancouver Island Regional Restorative Justice Association), an umbrella organization of the many small RJ programs on Vancouver Island, the Gulf Islands, the Sunshine Coast and quathet. It is a coming together of like-minded and like-hearted people, in order to strengthen and support our RJ work. I have found attending and participating in VIRRJA meetings to be most interesting and informative.

I attended VIRRJA's Annual General meeting via Zoom this past October where I listened to the report given by VIRRJA President, Richard Tarnoff, and was so inspired by his words that I have chosen to quote his report in its entirety, in my Annual Report, because I just can't come up with words to say it better. He says:

"We come together at a time that is ominous and catastrophic in many parts of the world. While Canada has had to cope with the effects of climate change, the Overdose crisis, homelessness and the continued Violence of colonization, we have thankfully been spared the devastation of war that exists in many places. Although restorative justice by itself cannot solve all the world's problems, we believe it can be part of creating a safer, more just society.

And this is not just the opinion of the restorative justice community. Many other social institutions, such as schools, health care, human rights, and the military are coming to the conclusion that restorative processes are more likely to resolve harms in ways that benefit all parties than adversarial, legalistic models.

For example, the BC Office of the Human Rights Commissioner recently completed a three-year long study of the significant rise of hate-based incidents during the Covid-19 pandemic. This was true for all categories of hate-based incidents. Their recommendations were organized around three themes.

1. Understanding hate and acknowledging its harm
2. Building safety and belonging
3. Fostering accountability and repairing harm.

As far as how to achieve accountability and repair harm, they concluded “that legal responses to hate have been largely ineffective.” They recommended that “The Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General, with support from the Attorney General, should support and fund community development of restorative and healing programs to deal with hate.”

Similar sentiments are being heard from those working in education and healthcare. Even many victims and women’s groups, who had previously opposed the use of restorative justice for cases of sexual assault, are recognizing that the legal system often re-traumatizes victims and are looking to restorative justice as a choice that should be available to victims.

Nevertheless, while there is growing recognition of the potential benefits of restorative justice, the legislation and resources that are required to make it happen are lacking. What barriers are halting enthusiastic participation in restorative justice? What do our members need to do their best work? How can VIRRJA show up in a way that aligns with our values and continues to prioritize relationships and community?”

Richard Tarnoff, VIRRJA President

Mr. Tarnoff's words ring in my ears. And bring me round to our efforts over the last two years to regroup and move forward, in a restorative way, endeavoring to live our values in our personal and professional lives. And working to renew our partnerships in the community, especially with syiyaya Truth and Reconciliation and Resiliency BC (which works on building anti-racism efforts)

We continue to work tirelessly to assess the RJ needs in our community and to respond to community needs in timely, innovative and healing ways, by following best practices.:

One of our ongoing challenges has been to seek and find core funding. We spend much time and energy applying for many grants to keep our organization going, thus reducing the time and energy available to deliver our services.

We hope with advocacy from all the RJ programs and associations in B.C. and across Canada, that helpful legislation and resources will soon be coming our way.

## B. Highlights of RJPSC Activities in 2022-2023

2022 was a challenging year for RJPSC. The world and our Sunshine Coast community were coming out of the pandemic and we needed to renew and reconnect with the many working relationships that had gone dormant during the pandemic years. It was enough of a highlight that we kept going, kept applying for funding, and kept the doors open.

### 1. Volunteer Trainings and Community Awareness efforts

In 2022 and 2023, RJPSC continued to provide training for our volunteers, both on Zoom and in person. We facilitated a dialogue circle on Truth and Reconciliation during syiyaya days, in June, in both 2022 and 2023. In both years we hosted an information table at the Rotary Volunteer Faire (April) and held information tables at both Sunnycrest and Clayton's Malls during National Restorative Justice Week in November.

### 0. Charitable Status Achieved for RJPSC in July, 2023

After nearly a year of working through a lengthy and detailed application process, including holding a Special General Meeting of our membership to update our Constitution, we were granted charitable status in July of 2023. We are now a registered charity! Our hope is that this will go a long way to stabilizing our funding. We can increase our donations because people will now receive a tax receipt for their contributions AND being a registered charity opens up new sources of funding which were not available to us when we were simply a non-profit society.

### 0. Provincial Symposium for Restorative Justice, Richmond, B.C., June 2023

Attending the Provincial RJ Symposium, offered by the B.C. Association for RJ, was a personal highlight for me. Jan Smalley, our coordinator and myself attended in-person in Richmond, and were able to meet and greet,

network, build and renew connections with other dedicated RJ people from around the province. It reinforced for me that we are part of a much bigger network of people dedicated to promoting the values, world view and processes of Restorative Justice. We attended many dynamic and inspiring presentations showing how people were using RJ processes to provide healing and positive outcomes in many complex and harm-saturated scenarios. AND I was there in real time to hear and see our Provincial Solicitor General, Mike Farnsworth announce that the B.C. Gov. was committing to a one-time funding of 3 million \$\$\$, to be distributed among RJ programs in B.C. (We are still awaiting further information on how to access these funds)

0. Hiring of Assistant Coordinator and Volunteer Program Assistant, July, 2023

The biggest highlight for me in 2023 and the one that I think will have the biggest impact for RJPSC in the medium and long term, was the hiring of two wonderful people for part-time work with us. We were most privileged to hire Lindsey Button, in the role of Assistant Coordinator and Tatiana Velasquez in the role of Volunteer Program Assistant. Their supportive work and positive energy have been the boost that we needed to really move forward.

C. Restorative Process Outcomes for 2022-2023 (Jan Smalley)

funding from 4 sources provided a variety of restorative processes for referrals from community and service organizations, RCMP, Crown Council, individuals, Department of Fisheries and Oceans, schools, recreation and park facilities. Over 300 people from across the coast directly benefited from restorative processes and their positive outcomes. Specific referral types included vandalism, theft under 5K, uttering threats, graffiti, assault with a weapon; business, group and organizational conflict. Of the fourteen individuals referred to the program for criminal acts, seven received additional support to address challenges related to brain differences and injuries, mental health and addictions and grief and trauma as part of the written resolution agreements. With partnership and grant funds, the program provided “wrap around” support for those referred to the program, along with family and survivor conferencing and supper evening circles. Resolution agreements included repairing of damaged property, regular mentoring and volunteerism with community activities and non-profit groups, Elder mentorship and learning indigenous ways of being

and protecting of nature, creating artwork to give to volunteers as appreciation gifts and honoraria.

#### D. Gratitude and Appreciation to All Who Support the RJPSC

a) First and foremost, a very big thank-you to all our amazing and dedicated staff for their ongoing work through the challenging time that was 2022 and 2023.

This includes our Coordinator, trainers, consultants, contractors and Canada Summer Jobs employees. You wrote and acquired the grant money, kept the doors open, found a way out of the oppressive and deflating effects of the pandemic and continued tirelessly to bring restorative practices and processes to the Sunshine Coast community. You are at the heart of our work within the RJPSC.

b) Next and equally important, we want to acknowledge the work of our Volunteers, who gave freely of their time and expertise to:

- serve on our Board of Directors, or work on a Board subcommittee
- support our staff with administrative work or organizing trainings, meeting minute-taking, membership drives, website development
- take a role in the work of Community Justice Forums or Peace-Making Dialogue Circles

And all the many and varied tasks that get asked of you. We simply couldn't do this work without you.

We also gratefully acknowledge the support of our Funders in 2022-2023:

Canadian Red Cross  
Province of B.C. (3 funds)  
District of Sechelt  
Town of Gibsons  
SCRD  
School District #46  
Government of Canada  
Sunshine Coast Credit Union  
Rotary Club of Sechelt  
Individual Donors

A huge thank-you to the following program partners, businesses and stakeholders for their generous gifts of time, teachings, blessings, expertise, purchase discounts, letters of support, office/meeting/training space and resources given in-kind. The RJPSC could not exist without your support.

RCMP - our local detachment and "E" division  
Halfmoon Bay and Chatelech Community School Association

Clayton's Heritage Market  
Coastal Crust Pizza  
Marg Penney  
Sara Singerman  
Shorncliffe Care Facility  
Staff of the District of Sechelt  
shishalh Nation  
Metis Nation  
Department of Fisheries and Oceans  
Vancouver Coastal Health, Mental Health and Addictions  
Sunshine Coast Community Services: Circle of Support;  
And Victims Services  
School District #46  
Vancouver Island Region Restorative Justice Assoc. (VIRRJA)  
Saltspring Island Restorative Justice Program  
Resiliency B.C. Network - Organizing Against Racism

And finally, a big thank-you to all our referral sources, including: Indigenous Elders and families, RCMP, self-referring individuals and families, SD #46, Sunshine Coast agencies, businesses and community groups.

Submitted by : Donna Schmirler, President, RJPSC