



The Church Council on Justice and Corrections
Le Conseil des Églises pour la justice et la criminologie

The Well

A gathering place for the CCJC community...

Fall/Winter 2008

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Editorial

Maristela Carrara

This edition of The Well brings you articles and news on the many issues that were part of CCJC’s agenda in the last few months. We have a [contribution from Craig Jones](#), executive director of the John Howard Society, with whom we partnered to produce a public interview in May about the consequences of importing failed American criminal justice policies in Canada. He follows up on the subject in a very interesting article that analyzes the impact of the current economic situation in the US on our government’s plans to adopt a tough-on-crime approach.

CCJC was also represented at the 11th World Conference of the International Institute for Restorative Practices that took place in Toronto this October. [Margot Van Sluytman](#), who presented the workshop “Dialogue of Hope: Sharing Transformation Even After Murder” at the Conference, wrote an article on restorative justice for this edition that I am sure will inspire. Another article on this conference was also written by [Caitlin Bancroft](#), CCJC’s liaison for the Salvation Army.

Finally, as part of the annual meetings of the National Associations Active in Criminal Justice (NAACJ) this year, CCJC participated in a consultation with the National Parole Board (NPB) on user fees for Pardon applications. Our next edition will include an analysis and report on this consultation, but we are pleased to include an article submitted by the NPB on [Pardons](#).

We have two [books reviews](#), submitted by John deVries and Bob Russel, on interesting new releases. Please be sure to also check out the [news](#) and [upcoming events](#) sections. Many thanks to each contributor, you helped to make this issue both enjoyable and thought-provoking. We welcome all [feedback](#) and hope you enjoy this edition!

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Soul Food

The only dream worth having ... is to dream that you will live while you're alive and die only when you're dead ...

To love. To be loved.

To never forget your own insignificance.

To never get used to the unspeakable violence and vulgar disparity of life around you.

To seek joy in the saddest places.

To pursue beauty to its lair.

To never simplify what is complicated or to complicate what is simple.

To respect strength, never power.

Above all, to watch.

To try and understand.

To never look away.

And never, never to forget.

- Arundhati Roy

From her book, *The Algebra of Infinite Justice*

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Tough on crime – a cost-ineffective luxury to be indulged in happier economic times

First Thoughts on the Prospects for the 40th Parliament

By Craig Jones – Executive Director of the [John Howard Society of Canada](#)

What a difference an election makes! – particularly when that election just happens to coincide with a financial sector meltdown of global proportions. I won't dwell on this except to note that we are far – maybe three years – from seeing a restoration of normalcy (whatever “normalcy” looks like when it arrives). The full extent of the damage to the confidence and psychology of financial market operators is far from understood. To the surprise of no one, then, the economic crisis dominated the Speech from the Throne; one of the most important documents by which a government announces its legislative path. Perversely, this might be good for those who oppose – on grounds of evidence, effectiveness and humanity – the 39th Parliament's “tough on crime” agenda. This was to have been one of the social cornerstones of the “new government” when it debuted, but it has been relegated to the dustbin of history under this “new new government” for one reason. Though no one on the government benches will say so in public, “tough on crime” is cost-ineffective in the long and short terms -- a luxury to be indulged in happier economic times.

And these are not happy economic times.

Here's the relevant passage from the Throne Speech, a single paragraph that was more than three quarters of the way into the speech itself, after even climate change:

“Canadians look to governments to ensure that the justice system is working effectively and that Canadians are safe. Our Government will take tough action against crime and work with partners to improve the administration of justice. Serious offences will be met with serious penalties. Legal provisions will be strengthened in key areas, such as youth crime, organized crime and gang violence. Gun laws will be focused on ending smuggling and stronger penalties for gun crimes, not at criminalizing law-abiding firearms owners. More broadly, Canada's criminal justice system will be made more efficient. Citizens need to know that justice is served, and that it is served swiftly.”

This is about as innocuous as one can get: almost unadulterated boilerplate. I would not go so far as to say that one can assess the importance of a legislative agenda purely on the basis of how much one particular speech says about any given topic, but read the entire speech and one cannot escape the conclusion that this government's focus is about managing the crisis and little else. So the PM has to be thinking that, if he wants another bite at the apple of a majority government, he's got to do two difficult things:

- (1) successfully stickhandle his path through the worst of the financial meltdown – which is still in front of us – while staying on the right side of his business-conservative brethren by not running a huge deficit; and,
- (2) find a way to build political support in Quebec which is, on balance, hostile to his crime and social agenda.

A second term – even a second minority term – has a tendency to moderate leaders, as they cannot help but grow in the job. Of course, living in the PM's residence and accommodating himself to the benefits that attach thereto has its own appeal. The PM disparaged compromise in the 39th parliament, but there is no escaping that this minority was born of compromise. Keeping it will require still more compromise. He may even understand the country better as a consequence of the bruising he received from Quebec (without which no government in Canada can form a majority). Most interesting in this regard was his warning to his party conference in Winnipeg to be less ideological and more pragmatic. Just as there are no atheists in a foxhole, there are no ideologues in a financial crisis. Ideology too is a luxury: it will come to be seen as the single biggest casualty of the meltdown in financial markets. Of course it will rear its head again – and sooner than we expect – but for the time being the hyper-ideological zeitgeist that assumed such grotesque proportions over the course of the Bush/Cheney regime will come under severe scrutiny as Bush's successors unpack the destruction thereby produced for lessons to apply to the immediate future. Politics being the most imitative of human activities, the PM's team cannot have missed the significance of the utter collapse of the Bush administration's governance style upon which the PM modeled his first minority government.

The demise of one ideological era, of course, only signals the dawn of a new one: but in the interregnum – the duration of which is impossible to predict – a new sobriety could take hold. This prospect is much to be welcomed: the time is right to press harder for evidence-based policy making as the forces aligned against it have been battered.

I would also be surprised if there were not a few conservative party power-brokers asking themselves, “Can we do better in Quebec under a different leader?” -- so the PM has got to be very adroit at managing the ambitions in his own party as well as the impending transformation in the Liberal Party. Of course there is little he can do about what happens in the Liberal Party – though he surely has his preference for Leader of the Opposition.

In light of the economic turbulence and the cost of implementing the 39th parliament's crime agenda (which cost has to have become known to Treasury Board by now) it could be a relatively quiet time on the criminal justice brief. The government will seek support on an issue-by-issue basis, where it can, and there will be issues where a large consensus may emerge. It's too soon to know whether the crime and justice agenda will be included. We should, in my opinion, draw attention at every opportunity to the cost of the "tough on crime" agenda vs. what that money can buy in prevention, diversion and community-based services. We should be reaching out to justice critics in the NDP, the Bloc and Liberal parties – cultivating their sensibilities toward effective, just and humane evidence-driven policy choices. But we ought not put too much confidence in them to do the right thing: ultimately they will do what is best for their respective parties, irrespective of what is best for Canadians. That is in the nature of brokerage politics – and even more so in the context of a minority parliament. Pay close attention: this promises to be interesting.

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Re-storying our Lives – the Gift of Contemplation

By Margot Van Sluytman - MargotVanSluytman.com

If writing is, as I believe, a form of contemplation, then a reader, in spending time with a writer's words, participates, as well in contemplation. And yes, a writer needs a reader. Yearns to know that other eyes, hearts, minds, and souls, will spend time with the content that has been birthed via her pen. So, I write this short piece in an effort to share how the words: Restorative Justice, found my heart and soul, and in so doing, inspires me to share with those who might find this content of any help, to use it.

My Father's murder in 1978 sealed me into a tomb of unrelenting search for meaning.

On one May day in 2007, an email came from the wife of the man who murdered my Dad. An email that spoke to and from a place of deep yearning to reshape savagery, terror, and too much ache; to reshape them into a new story of possibility and hope. An email that would permit paradigm shifts in understanding that even from the most horrific crime can come a flicker of light, a flicker of meaning. My tomb began to become unsealed.

In meeting the man who murdered my Father, a meeting that was the result of that email, my voice became part of a joint contemplation that compelled me to breathe my new story onto blank and awaiting pages. And what is that new story? It is a newly birthed understanding of how hope came to find a place to underscore that we do not restore what was lost; we cannot. The new story is that we come to a place of transformation, a place where we stop for a moment and recognize that we are more than one definition, more than one act.. We are more than victim, more than offender, if we want to be.

I came to see that voices entwined with the desire to be worthy, can and do honour life. I came to acknowledge that a place of authentic dialogue permitted the melting of so much pain, guilt, fear, and unworthiness, that in telling of our Encounter, we would share tiny shards of hope with others; and that continues to happen.

As we read and/or write essays, letters, poems, and stories we come to know how vital the sharing of story is to the rich act of contemplation, to the vital act of re-storying our lives. As we read about how new paradigm shifts have taken place we are invited into a space where human beings become more human: kind, honest, in facing their challenging realities, and choosing to shape new lives.

We each crave community: connecting with the kindred. We each crave continuity: with hope and possibility, which prove the existence of goodness, of a Source of abundant compassion, joy, and authentic fervor, spiced with humour and, like so many of us, longing. We must decide how we can make these things happen. And we can.

We deserve to find our own self connecting to a continuity of humanity that asks for trust, surrender, and hearts willing to listen. Willing to journey with the possibility of new stories, when the old ones separate, negate, and attempt to narrow our capacities to be honourable. We need to remember that hope is alive and well. Soul to soul, eye to eye, with self and with other, we can permit the seeds we plant in the rich soil of contemplation to reap harvests of actions that swell into nourishing, new ways of being in the world worth the time it takes to shape new stories.

*Let Us Listen**

Listen. It's a mad, mad world,
And I am filled with words.
Words I want to spill upon a page.
Upon pages. And pages.

I can't make any promises,
Well, maybe one: I will tell my
Truth. I will write my story.

Just listen. Please. I will listen

To your story too.

*An excerpt from *The Other Inmate: Mediating Justice-Mediating Hope. Poetry and Workbook for Restorative Practices*. Palabras Press. 2008.

Margot Van Sluytman teaches individuals how to write their voice to find healing and transformation. She is the author of twelve books of poetry, including: [The Other Inmate: Mediating Justice-Mediating Hope. Poetry and Workbook for Restorative Practices](#) which is used in the Restorative Justice Department of Queen's University, Kingston, at the Calgary Remand Centre, by M2W2, and many venues around the globe. Her book [Sawbonna: Dialogue of Hope.. A Real Life Restorative Justice Story](#), for which Professor Howard Zehr wrote the *Foreword*, will be published in 2009. Margot has been invited to share her work with victims and offenders across North America. Visit her website at MargotVanSluytman.com

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***International Institute for Restorative Practices Conference –
Speaking to the human being in each of us***

By Caitlin Bancroft – [Salvation Army Canada](#)

The International Institute for Restorative Practices conference in Toronto in October 2008 was a huge collection of practitioners and administrators from around the globe. There was a vast variety of workshops to choose from every hour, addressing each of us in a variety of ways: some spoke practically to the social workers in us, others spoke emotionally to the partner/parent/community member in us, and others spoke bureaucratically to the administrators in us.

My first workshop was presented by Katy Hutchison who spoke of her journey to restoration after her husband was brutally murdered by youth under the influence of alcohol. This event devastated Katy's family and the community, but along the way she decided not to let it define their lives. She consciously decided to make something good emerge from this tragedy, and began presenting to youth on the dangers of substance abuse and peer pressure. She connected with one of the young people who committed the crime and approached him with an attitude of forgiveness. She wanted him to be accountable for his actions in the past and to make changes so

he could be a decent member of society in the future. The passion and dedication to community with which she presents and her forgiving yet demanding approach to offenders are inspiring.

I attended 3 sessions presented by federal government personnel. Rebecca Berinbaum, a parole officer for women, contrasted the Canadian and British correctional systems, and concluded with several recommendations for reintegration success, including securing employment prior to release, programming, multi agency approach, and, of course, Restorative Justice counselling. She stressed that reintegration starts the day the offender arrives in prison, and incarceration time should be used with that in mind. One fact that I found fascinating is that Belgium (population 10 million) has 30 full time RJ counsellors in its prisons.

Tanya Ruggie, a researcher from Public Safety, spoke about her meta-analysis of international research studies on RJ. Bottom line findings are that RJ works better in face-to-face interactions and with low-risk offenders (not necessarily less serious offences). She offered advice for program deliverers in term of securing funding: all programs should be evaluated for effectiveness in addressing recidivism and all programs should use a risk assessment tool.

I heard next from Tania Petrellis and Renée Laframboise from the Correctional Service of Canada's Restorative Opportunities program, which offers victim-offender mediation for serious offenders. They have ~14 contracted mediators who will travel to the institution/community where the mediation will take place. This small number of facilitators obviously limits capacity, so the program is not widely advertised so as not to create demand which can't be met at this point. Although this is a small program with little impact as yet, it is reassuring that CSC is getting on board. (Belgium, here we come!)

Gordon White of BC gave a very hands-on demonstration of working with and motivating resistant offenders before the conference. He worked with a member of the audience who portrayed a reluctant teenager, and brought him from being completely unwilling to participate in conferencing and thinking the everyone was out to get him, to understanding that this process is not about furthering blame and making things worse but rather rebuilding harm and improving relationships. Gordon emphasized that at this stage, process is more important than content. Bringing the cautious/resistant client on board involves a genuine display of interest in the client and a demonstration of fair process. He did a nice job of providing practical help for the pre-conference stage and for participants who make lack understanding of the RJ process.

This conference was a wonderful refresher on the value of restorative practices and a motivator on how to facilitate them. It was good for those of us in the field of corrections, but it was also encouraging to see so much action in the field of education. Perhaps if restorative practices and the values that arise from participating in the processes ingrain themselves in school-aged kids, there will be fewer adults presenting in the justice and correction systems in the future.

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What is a pardon and how do I apply for one?

Nadine Archambault-Chapleau - [National Parole Board](#)

A pardon allows persons convicted of a criminal offence who have finished their sentence and shown that they are law-abiding citizens to have their criminal record kept separate and apart from other criminal records and any information pertaining to convictions taken out of the Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC).

The National Parole Board (NPB) makes decisions to issue, grant, deny and, in some cases, revoke pardons.

Except for persons who are serving a life or an indeterminate sentence, anyone with a criminal record becomes eligible for a pardon at some point.

To become eligible for a pardon, a person must finish all their sentences and then wait a certain amount of time: three years for summary convictions (e.g. trespassing, indecent act) and five years for indictable offences (e.g. robbery, fraud under \$5,000). Many offences can be prosecuted either by summary conviction or indictment (e.g. impaired driving, assault). Such offences are referred to as "hybrid" offences.

To apply for a pardon once you become eligible, you need to get a NPB Pardon Application Guide. The Guide includes step-by-step instructions on how to apply for a pardon and all the forms you will need to fill out.

The Guide is available through NPB offices across Canada, RCMP offices, provincial and municipal police offices, Courts of Justice; on the NPB's Web site at www.npb-cnrc.gc.ca, or by calling the NPB's toll-free Pardons INFO-line at 1-800-874-2652. The Pardons INFO-line can also help answer any questions you may have.

You do not need a lawyer or representative to apply for a pardon. The NPB treats all applications in the same way.

Once your application has been completed, mail it to the following address.

National Parole Board
Pardons and Clemency Division
410 Laurier Avenue West, 5th Floor
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0R1

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Book review I

Peacemaking Circles and Urban Youth – Bringing Justice Home

by Carolyn Boyes-Watson, Ph.D., Living Justice Press, St. Paul, Minnesota

288 pages, Website www.livingjusticepress.org

Peacemaking Circles & Urban Youth is about transformation of lives and systems as illustrated by the ongoing 1999 “Roca” experiment. Peacemaking circles shape a strategy’ that builds positive relations among marginalized inner city and immigrant youth living in dangerous Boston neighborhoods. In the 1970’s and 80’s , ‘restorative justice’ conferencing and circles were introduced as alternatives to imprisonment. Author and Harvard professor, Carolyn Boyes-Watson builds on these foundations. Now the reader can envisage restorative justice less as a technique and more as a ‘way of life’. The ideas shaping the peacemaking circles are from first nations circles adapted to western ways. Carolyn has captured ‘how lives and organizations change’ when values, principles and peacekeeping practices are immersed into personal lives and communities.

The author skillfully lets forty five young participants - black, hispanic, and asian youth as well as mid-east war survivors - tell their peacemaking circle stories. For urban youth faced with ‘modern monsters’, circles open them to positive life goals. As the book’s chapters sequentially illustrate, circles have become a strategy for youth development, a space for individual empowerment, a space for personal accountability and responsibility, and a space for healing while ‘opening the heart within systems’.

The experiences of youth and the author’s reflections provide insights and inspiration that become a ‘must read’ for anyone working with youth or adults in neighborhood, workplace, school or church. With its consistent emphasis on values and principles, effective peacemaking circles turn the hierarchical world of systems upside down. Peacemaking circles offers hope and dignity for youth. This book moves ‘restorative justice’ to levels beyond pioneer restorative justice victim-offender conferencing. Molly Baldwin, executive director of Roca,

builds on the restorative justice thinking and practices of Howard Zehr, Judge Barry Stuart, Kate Pranis, Mark Wedge, Aan Goosh Oo of the Tagish/T'lingit Nation and others. In the transformation of youth through peacemaking circles lies the potential to heal ourselves – peacemaking circles transform persons and communities as they nurture a new way of living that facilitates glimpses of shalom in the here and now.

Rev. John de Vries, Jr.,
London, Ontario
Church Council on Justice and Corrections, Ottawa
Restorative Justice Chatham-Kent
Interfaith Committee, Correctional Services of Canada
Canadian CRC Restorative Justice liaison

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Book review II

From the Streets··· the Battlefield··· the Sanctuary”

by Jerome Redd, Bathwater Press Inc.
76 pages, Website www.jeromeredd.com

Recently, I had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Jerome Redd while flying to Buffalo following a personal weekend with friends. During our pleasant conversation, we found three areas of mutual interest: we were both Christians, we both had worked in the Criminal Justice System and we shared an ongoing interest in adult education. This rather engaging conversation led to some personal story telling, and I learned that Mr. Redd has written a book of personal poetry to express himself in numerous ways relating to his own life and Christian faith. Mr. Redd forwarded a copy to me, and I was pleased to write this review for “The Well”.

Personally, I am not an engrossed consumer of such reading material. But after reading his book, I found myself reliving our conversation on that flight. In reflection, his book took me back to my poetry reading days in secondary school in the 1970’s. After reading this seventy-six page paperback, my interest in poetry from my secondary school days was renewed. The author’s passions in his personal writings communicated to his reading audience. He writes with true conviction and honest human emotions that we may experience from time to time in our own lives. For example, Mr. Redd writes about war, spiritual empowerment, relationships, determination and personal change. He doesn’t hide his personal pain and challenges but highlights his Christian faith in times of need. I am pleased to recommend this book to our readers, noting that a second book written by this author is under consideration by Bathwater Press Inc. for publication.

Mr. Bob Russell
CCJC member and retired, Ontario Ministry of Community Safety & Correctional Services (1977-2006)
Oakville, Ontario
E-Mail: bob55russell@sympatico.ca

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In the news

In an article of September 30th, 2008, Randy Boswell discussed **the lack of clarity around Canada’s new clemency policy for Canadians facing death penalty abroad**. The announced policy stated that Canada would no longer seek clemency for Canadians on death row in a democratic country. Later, government representatives softened the policy in their public statements, claiming that it would be applied on a “case-by-case basis”. But when challenged in Court, government lawyers explained that statements by ministers and other government

representatives were characterized as “**political messaging**” and not intended to be interpreted as the actual policy. [Read the full article through this link.](#)

Raffy Boudjkanian (The Cronicle) also discussed Canada’s **Clemency policy**, specifically in the case of Mohamed and Sultan Kohail, Canadian citizens who face the death penalty in Saudi Arabia. Concerns were raised last week when it appeared Mohamed Kohail's final legal course of appeal was rejected by the Saudi courts and **nothing short of direct interference by the Canadian government for clemency could save his life.** [Read the full article.](#)

In October, the **Coalition for Children and Youth, of which CCJC is a member**, issued a statement on children and youth justice needs in Canada. [Follow this link to read the press release.](#)

CCJC’s Community Chair of Justice, **Lorraine Berzins**, was interviewed for an article on youth crime published by the Catholic Register. [Follow this link to read the full article.](#)

[Follow this link to read Doug Cuthand’s comments](#) on the proposed changes to the Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA). Dave explains that “the YCJA was originally designed to rehabilitate youths and allow them to have a second chance at life. This **new legislation is based on revenge rather than rehabilitation.** Revenge may make some people feel better but in the long run we are heading down the slippery slope of the American experience.”

This September Prime Minister Stephen Harper outlined his party's proposal to deal with **violent youth crime** - and left it up to provinces whether they would apply the new sterner measures between the ages of 14 and 16. The proposal raises many questions, including the issue of fairness. In Canada, **youngsters are already treated more harshly than adults.** [Follow this link to read full article published by The Gazette.](#)

Also on the same topic, Randall Denley provided a strong **critique of the new youth-crime policy** in an article published by the Ottawa Citizen in September. Denley comments that “*To some degree, there is a problem with youth violent crime, but the question is, will the Conservative measures do anything to help? The problem with increasing punishments is that the crime has already taken place. It's a lot more effective, for society and for victims, to focus attention instead on crime prevention.*” [Read the full article through this link.](#)

CCJC was one of 30 invited national participants in a **symposium on Youth Justice Renewal** held in Ottawa, March 27-28th 2008. The **Coalition on Community Safety, Health and Well-being** hosted the event along with the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police. Among participants were justice related NGO’s, school boards, Family and Children’s services, Canadian Nursing Association, YOUCAN, Child welfare, Mental Health services, a Crown attorney from Montreal and approximately 5 from police services and RCMP including Deputy Chief Chris McNeil. [A report on the symposium is available through this link.](#) Our thanks to Sandra Wright for inviting CCJC, represented by Maureen Murphy, into the circle of experience.

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Upcoming events

Put Our Minds to Work: Rethink Mental Health & Illness in the Workplace

Conference - Wednesday, December 3rd, 2008

Hampton Inn Conference Centre – Ottawa, ON

www.reach.ca / debra.simms@reach.ca / 613-236-6636

Building a Compassionate Justice System

Two Day Introduction to NVC & Restorative Circles with Dominic Barter

Friday March 20th free talk about this topic from 7 to 8:30 pm.

March 21st and 22nd, 2009 - Montreal, QC

For further information on Dominic's work: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WFF09Wwcj-w>

Contact: gincen@sympatico.ca

Public Safety Canada, in collaboration with a number of centres of criminology across Canada, will host a series of lectures in February and March 2009 as part of its ongoing "**Corrections & Criminal Justice Speakers' Series**". For more info, go to <http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/prg/cor/index-eng.aspx> in the coming weeks. Light refreshments will be served at each lecture. Join us for the debate!

The 2009 Series will include:

Ryerson University – Week of February 9th (exact date TBC) – Toronto's Gladue Court: Alternative Approaches for Aboriginal Offenders.

Université de Montréal – February 27, 2009 – Restorative Justice and Female Offenders: Is it different for women?

Simon Fraser University – March 13, 2009 – Intersections between Parole and Victims.

20th International Conference on the Reduction of Drug-Related Harm

Harm Reduction 2009: Harm Reduction and Human Rights

Conference: April 19th -23rd, 2009 – Bangkok, Thailand

For more information about this conference please visit <http://www.ihra.net/Thailand/Home>

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Get in touch with CCJC

Your comments and suggestions are most welcome! Please send us news and articles you would like to see shared in this newsletter. To get in touch with the CCJC, please contact Maristela Carrara at mcarrara@ccjc.ca or 613-563-1688 x4.

We are located at 507 Bank Street, Ottawa, ON K2P 1Z5.

CCJC welcomes donations and new memberships, and we can issue you a charitable tax receipt. To make a donation online, please use CanadaHelps.org. If you prefer to send your donation by mail or to become a member, please the form on page 9 of our latest [annual report](#).

P.S.: We are looking for volunteer translators!

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