



The Well

A gathering place for the CCJC community...

Spring 2009

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Editorial

Richard Haughian

The CCJC plans and organizes many of its activities according to the principal themes or objectives of Prophetic Community Education, and Witnessing on Public Policy. This spring edition of The Well, as the voice of CCJC, reflects these same themes in its choice of issues, activities and news that CCJC is currently engaged in or monitoring.

Under the theme of Prophetic Community Education, for example, is the article “*Art – Making for Public Change, with Thanks to Mr. Plato*” by Lorraine Berzins, which gives an update on this innovative public art experiment with street-involved people. Nayula Beaudry’s “*Humanizing Justice at Ottawa University,*” also describes the education sessions held with students during RJ Week 2008.

Under Witnessing on Public Policy, be sure to read about the role of punishment in the criminal justice system, a controversial topic discussed at the John Howard Society’s (JHS) National Staff Conference, summarized by David Lam; and CCJC’s response to JHS’s position on punishment, written by

Lorraine Berzins. "Reducing Gang Violence, the Forgotten Factor – Taking Care of the Victims," again by Lorraine Berzins, tackles the timely topic of gang violence and proposes CCJC's approach to this much-debated issue. Laurent Champagne's article "La Commission Nationale des Libérations Conditionnelles et le PARDON," about a consultation with the National Commission of Conditional Release, marks the first time The Well has included an article in French. We plan to make this a regular feature in future editions.

This month's review of Transforming Conflict through Insight, brings to our attention an interesting and valuable resource for all of us seeking ways to deal more effectively with conflict and to transform current criminal justice processes.

We encourage you also to check In the News, Upcoming Events, and Letters to the Editor (a brand new session), for informative and challenging items that invite both your personal reflection and action.

We want to thank all of you who contributed to this edition of The Well. Your thoughtful words are greatly appreciated.

We hope that you enjoy this edition and we welcome your feedback.

Letters to the Editor

Lower blood alcohol levels for the Criminal Code not needed ([click to read](#))

By Emile Therien, Past-president of the Canada Safety Council

Reaching Out Victims of Crime ([click to read](#))

By Hazel J. Magnussen

You may also want to read CCJC's Church Series article on Victims -

<http://www.ccjc.ca/initiatives/Victims.pdf>

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A special call for Prayers and Action

Zimbabwe under Fire a Call for Prayers and Action ([click to read](#))

By Collen Makumbirofa - Foundation of Reason & Justice

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Soul Food

"Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and right doing is a field. I'll meet you there."

- Rumi

Forgiveness is the restoration of a good relationship, but it doesn't abolish the consequence of the offence, nor is it going back to where we were before the offence was committed, it's got to be a new

relationship ... If I borrow money from you and squander it, your forgiving the debt doesn't put back the money - that's lost, and you bear the loss and so "carry the guilt". If I get in a rage with you and throw your best teapot out of the window, no amount of forgiveness will unbreak the teapot - all we can aim for is a relationship in which both you and I can bear to sit down and breakfast together out of a shaving mug without feeling uncomfortable and without an ostentatious avoidance of the subject of teapots ..."

- Dorothy L. Sayers

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'Humanizing Justice' at Ottawa University

By Nayla Beaudry

The Restorative Justice Network of Ottawa hosted an educational event at Ottawa University as part of last year's Restorative Justice Week. The event took place on November 18, 2008 and provided an introduction to Restorative Justice to students and community members.

Ernie Tannis, a well-known Ottawa lawyer, mediator and alternative dispute resolution advocate, acted as the moderator for the event.

The first speaker, Peggy Land, had lived through the murders of two family members and did not have the opportunity to participate in a restorative justice process. She spoke expressively about how this type of process would have helped her to heal and move forward as the victim of these crimes. Peggy also spoke about how such a process would have allowed the offenders to take responsibility for their actions in a way that was not available through criminal prosecution.

The second speaker was Ottawa Police Chief Vern White, whose commitment to restorative justice vibrated throughout his presentation. Vern described how his participation in sentencing circles had converted him into an avid supporter of this type of conflict resolution.

At the end of the event, the 120 participants were divided into groups and led through mock restorative justice circles by various volunteer facilitators. The presenters had evidently piqued their curiosity, as was demonstrated through the lively small group discussions that ensued. The event clearly had an impact and it was wonderful to have been a part of it.

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Perspectives on Corrections at a JHS Conference

David Lam

3rd Year Criminology Student - Carleton University

As a placement student at CCJC, I had the opportunity to attend the John Howard Society of Canada (JHSC) National Staff Conference in February. I was particularly interested in the keynote speakers, Professor Wesley Cragg of York University and Mary Campbell, Director General of Corrections and Criminal Justice. Their speech made it clear to me that our political leaders' "tough on crime"

approach can be problematic. In fact, both speakers emphasized that excessively negative sanctions were generally ineffective in curtailing crime.

Professor Cragg used the 1985 JHSC paper, [“Perspectives on Corrections: Towards a Philosophy of Corrections”](#), as a framework for his presentation. One theme that remained prevalent throughout Professor Cragg’s presentation was that punishment is needed so that the law is respected: **this need to punish those who break the law remains as a JHS principle.** (This brings to the fore an area of long disagreement between JHSC and CCJC: when all this was under government review, CCJC challenged that need for punishment as the legal response to those who break the law. Today, 25 years and many more brutalizing prisons later, perhaps it’s time to re-open this question. [READ MORE by Lorraine Berzins below](#))

Coercion, however, Professor Cragg made clear, is not an effective means to motivate people to change. For this reason, punishments, such as incarceration, that are inherently coercive, tend to not yield any positive results. Therefore, also central to the paper and his presentation, was the belief that being sentenced to imprisonment, with loss of freedom, is already punishment enough, nothing more of a punitive nature should be added. Punitive conditions such as inhibiting offenders’ access to programs while imprisoned will only further impair their ability to function in society upon release. Thus, it is crucial that society continues to provide the best possible social services, health and educational programs to offenders even when they are serving custodial sentences, as it will help reduce the degree of alienation they experience from the rest of society. In other words, **offenders should be sent to prison as punishment, but not for punishment.**

On the other hand, Mary Campbell commented on a growing trend in crime policies to emphasize harsher penalties, such as additional mandatory minimums, rather than addressing the underlying, root causes of these problems. Similar to Cragg, Campbell held the notion that penitentiaries often encroached more than necessary on human rights, citing the fact that caging a human being naturally undermined their integrity. However, Campbell remained optimistic and encouraged the audience to be audacious and not simply adhere to pre-established rules as it is the key to invoking changes in not just one client but an entire system.

Despite the consensus between both the government and non-government sectors that harsher penalties are ineffective in tackling crime, policies continue to make strides in that direction. As more and more offenders are placed into the already overcrowded prison system, where they endure punitive conditions, the chance of successful re-integrations back into the community diminishes by straining their ties to the public, fostering further social issues. Unfortunately, these policies will likely remain a key component of government platforms due to their popularity among the masses, which help parties garner votes. Despite this prospect, we should heed Campbell’s words, remain optimistic and carry ourselves with a sense of audacity in order to redirect policymaking towards more evidence-based practices.

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Punishment needed? CCJC begs to differ...

Lorraine Berzins, Community Chair of Justice

CCJC begs to differ ... Prison ‘AS-but-not-FOR’ punishment: it may sound uplifting, but is it refiddling the words while Rome burns? CCJC and the John Howard Society (JHS) have long been

warm allies, solid partners; this continues. But the recent JHS reaffirmation of its 1985 'just deserts' aka 'justice model' of corrections brings to the fore an area of long disagreement.

The John Howard Society's 1985 paper 'Towards a Philosophy of Corrections' presents some very inspirational ideals about the obligations of our society towards offenders and prisoners. But it accepts without questioning the foundational premise that, first, they must be punished. CCJC and JHS have long been warm allies, solid partners; this continues. But already back in 1985 we knew we differed in this regard.

Yes, crime requires a societal response. But CCJC has long questioned the assumption that, for that societal response to be adequate, it has to take the form of punishment. Just because there is a deep consensus on this point? There was a deep consensus about slavery too...until leadership arose to challenge this. The law would lose our respect? Where is the evidence that it is punishment that is the necessary cornerstone of our respect? And how would it really stack up against all the evidence the JHS paper does point out: imprisonment does not reduce crime, it does not secure obedience to the law, it worsens offender attitudes toward society, it does not midwife responsibility.

The JHS paper's clarification of what society's obligations are to offenders, especially while they undergo incarceration, are inspirational. But how can this be expected to flow from the fundamental acceptance that first we must punish...no matter the care taken to identify clearly what that punishment may or may not consist of? It seems an exercise in elegant semantics in the midst of an elemental surge of punitive emotions unleashed by the permission legally given to the purpose. Imbedded from the start is the tiny seed that has inevitably always fed the surge, kept us building new prisons and kept them full, with an inherent 'drift' away from all those good things that JHS has built into the rest of its philosophy. Yes, places of confinement are sometimes required for serious safety reasons. But if a place of confinement has from the onset a more positive purpose, unwincingly devoid of punitive intent, that has a better chance of permeating the whole atmosphere, culture and ethic with dignity and respect. That is not easy still, but surely a little more likely. We certainly have not experienced the lesser harshness expected to result from 'honest' punishment language.

*In 1991 at the national congress 'In Search of What is Right', CCJC and NAACJ brought a challenge to that basic assumption of our law: the 'rightness' of punishment, itself, for wrongdoing: The paper "**Is Legal Punishment Right?**" laid out the analysis: any approach that maintains the punishment principle is bound to give us more of the same system that has been so destructive. That and other related papers stirred up many reactions at the time, from judges to criminal justice theorists and practitioners, to victims of crime, prisoners and politicians.*

*Today our prisons 'AS' punishment remain as punitive as ever. As US States trim services like education and health care while prison budgets keep growing, fundamental questions are beginning to be heard again. **"The fact that so many Americans, including hundreds of thousands who are a threat to no one, are incarcerated means that something is wrong with our criminal justice system and the way we deal with both dangerous criminals and those whose behaviour we simply don't like."** David Keene, President, American Conservative Union, 2009... **"We have to fundamentally rethink prisons"**. Newt Gingrich, American Enterprise Institute forum, 2008. (Both cited in the Pew Report "One in 31: The Long Reach of American Corrections, 2009).*

Perhaps it is time to rekindle some public conversation about such fundamental questions in Canada. You are invited to read ["Is Legal Punishment Right"](#) as well as [Restorative Justice on the Eve of a](#)

[New Century: The Need for Social Context and a New Imagination](http://www.ciaj-icaj.ca/francais/publications/DP1997/berzins.pdf) published in 1998 by Canadian Institute for the Administration of Justice, <http://www.ciaj-icaj.ca/francais/publications/DP1997/berzins.pdf>. Please send comments to info@ccjc.ca to join in this new public conversation.

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Reducing Gang Violence, the Forgotten Factor:

Taking Care of the Victims

Lorraine Berzins

There has been a lot in the media lately about gang-related violence. Recent legislative proposals focus on so-called 'new' legal provisions as the solution: a new category of first-degree murder for any killing by a gang member, a new mandatory minimum for drive-by shootings, and some new minimum penalties for illegal drug distribution.

Sounds 'tougher' on crime? Not even! *These penalties in fact, as will be shown below, are actually no different from what already happens in practice today.*

Then why be concerned? *The smoke-and-mirrors approach is keeping before the public eye false information and expectations: the wrong debate. Need we repeat again what is now well known from other countries? Penalties have an insignificant effect when it comes to what should matter most: making a difference to the number of people killed. Lost in the clamour is the rest of the story: the strategies that have been proven effective and some basic human ingredients that have made them so. One of these has been personal care and attention to what the victims and their families have needed. All too often forgotten in the crime talk that goes on, some of CCJC's recent work is right on point about that: release of the second article in its special Church Series, Criminal Justice at a Crossroads. Sounding the alert that we are called to new hearts and minds about crime, it emphasizes the importance of **the particular role faith communities can play in being 'neighbours' to the victims suffering from its harm**. It also offers practical suggestions and resources for this-see <http://www.ccjc.ca/initiatives/Victims.pdf> But what about the gang problem?*

How has victim care been involved in successfully reducing gang-related violence? *One example is from Boston where 18 years ago a rash of gang-style killings was stopped in a few months. The strategy used was well documented and evaluated (see Irvin Waller, Less Law, More Order, The Truth about Reducing Crime, 2008). It has since been successfully replicated in 10 US cities, with large reductions of up to 50% in targeted violent crimes within a few years (see <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/pubs-sum/216298.htm>). The successful strategy relied, among other things, on efforts to mobilize the mothers of kids, those who had been killed and those who might join gangs... Quickly getting in touch with friends and family of those killed, even in the emergency room, to help them and try to avoid revenge killings that just escalate problems... Outreaching to youth in the gangs through street social workers to mediate disputes and help the youth and their families access much needed social services... Enlisting former gang members to help broker solutions among police, rival gangs, others affected...*

Another example is from Brazil, where murder is the principal cause of death for people under 25 - in Rio de Janeiro, drug gangs are the city's largest youth employer. When non-violent outreach was

offered, gang members began asking for help with their conflicts, saying they wanted a different life... impromptu restorative responses began to be organized in the shantytowns for the situations youth and adults were raising... A 'restorative circles' process developed that made room for the complex web of mutuality much gang-related violence involves. "Often, all those in the circles see themselves as victims and each other as offenders. Restorative practices are valuable in part because they can contain and recognize such experiential truths... The process speaks to people because it balances responsibility with empowered decision-making and belongs to the community using it." Dominic Barter in <http://iirp.org/eforum/032009/index.html>

And what about Canada's existing laws to cover gang violence?

Most gang-related killings already result in charges of first degree murder; drive-by shootings already result in sentences of at least 4 years. New laws proposed to be tied up with specific notions like 'gang-related' and 'drive-by shooting' are likely to bring about more legal wrangling, over what qualifies, than social safety. Mandatory minimum sentences are already well documented as creating many more problems than they solve, increasing litigation, plea bargaining, court and prison costs; removing all discretion to take into consideration each unique situation vis-à-vis victim, offender, community realities and restoration-rehabilitation issues. Meaningless changes in penalties will not help with prevention, nor even with apprehension and conviction where the real challenges lie – much to the contrary. But they will consume energies and resources that prevent investments in evidence-based and community-building alternatives.

Listening to the evidence

It is clear from all that evidence that reducing gang violence depends much more on giving people an option, providing care and support, strengthening healthy community relationships, healing wounds, mobilizing responsible social bonds: block by block, neighbourhood by neighbourhood.

Sounds tougher on the politicians? Talk to your MP.

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Art-making for Policy Change, With Thanks to Mr. Plato

Lorraine Berzins

CCJC has completed the first phase of a daring new project to experiment with how public art may help stimulate the kind of community awareness that gets governments to make good policy change. In collaboration with cj fleury and her Ontario Arts Council grant, street-involved people began to explore the possibilities of Transforming Public Fear into Knowledge and Understanding Through Art. They were guided in the creation of 'self-identity sculptures' for use in experimental projections casting shadows. These we hope will be projected onto public buildings in our city! The purpose, in a nutshell, is to deepen public insight into key policy choices through enabling street-involved people to create and present art to make themselves known to their fellow citizens in ways other than through the frightening stereotypes to which they are often reduced. The inspiration came from Plato's Cave allegory and was put forward by cj fleury, public artist, to harness imaginations: 'It is as if the general public only sees a shadow of who the street involved people really are'... 'If making art can 'make special' their full humanness (to themselves as well as others), the observer's initial perception could be forever changed.'

CCJC came to this initiative as a result of a project about safety issues in a downtown urban community (Taking it To The Streets, Ottawa, 2007); and new insights about crime prevention through social development (Ross Hastings, CCJC AGM 2007). We learned that those at highest risk of being victimized by crime are disenfranchised people and marginalized neighbourhoods. But they are not the ones whose voice is influencing development of policy and resources to increase safety in our society. Their true realities are not getting through in a way that has been able to create sufficient public support for the policies and services that could make the biggest difference. Words of rhetoric alone have failed. And so we turned to art, and the adventure has begun.

You can read a report on how participants took to this project and view a powerpoint presentation of their identity sculptures in-the-making, at <http://www.ccjc.ca/art.html>

Plato's Shadows is an Art-centered project, but it was generated from community activism. The art-making ignited a spark that enabled several of the street-involved people to express the 'voice' of their own full humanness, to recognize it themselves and find dignity and joy in claiming it. Several are now eager to take it to the streets to generate more activism! One participant's experience particularly encapsulates the vision that has been guiding this process. He is a black man who had the opportunity to speak on television about the project. "He was able to speak about something that means a great deal to him. He is even writing a play on issues relating to mental illness and homelessness and people who are stereotyped. He wants to find out how people are impacted by these realities and highlight how there is not an organized front on the part of legal services, social services, the church and other involved agencies to really look at social barriers from a systemic perspective, which could possibly lead to social change. These are really his ideas. He has thought quite a lot about it all. This opportunity was a great celebration of him."

This is just the beginning of our venture into art as public catalyst: so much to learn, and there are plenty of policies to change! The project is in a hiatus while the artist completes a high profile initiative to produce street sculptures echoing stories from another Ottawa community. In the meantime, Plato participants will be canvassed for input into the planning of the next phase...and another bid to win the support of the Ontario Arts Council!

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La Commission Nationale des Libérations Conditionnelles et le PARDON

By Laurent Champagne trésorier CEJC

En novembre dernier 2008 le Conseil des Églises pour la Justice et la Criminologie CEJC comme membre des Associations nationales intéressées à la justice Criminelle ANIJC fût invité à une consultation par la commission nationale des libérations conditionnelles section PARDON sur les frais de service. Les coûts pour se service n'ont pas changés depuis 1995 et de plus le nombre croissant des demandes de 20,000 à 37,000 sont deux arguments qui motivent cette réflexion et se désir d'augmentation. Cependant il s'agit d'un saut de \$50 à \$135 qui n'inclut pas les \$104 de coûts indirect évalués par la commission. Nous avons insisté sur l'impact possible d'une telle augmentation : découragement des bénéficiaires pour leur situation économique. Nous avons donc suggéré une possibilité d'aide financière par un programme spécial.

Plus 10% de Canadiens ont un casier judiciaire ce qui signifie un grand bassin de client potentiel. Une donnée très encourageante est que 97% des personnes qui ont reçu le pardon N'ONT PAS RÉCIDIVÉ alors la Commission pense qu'elle a un programme qui facilite la réhabilitation. Nous les avons encouragés à poursuivre leur mission puisque les informations criminelles sont entreposées dans une banque accessible uniquement par la justice en cas de récidive. Il est à noter que chaque pardonné doit faire les démarches pour retirer l'information relative à son dossier. Nous avons insistés sur l'importance de croire qu'un changement est possible dans toute personne et qu'il en est de même pour les judiciarisés. Nous devons travailler tous ensemble à la réinsertion sociale pour redonner confiance au public en général et assurer une place aux ex-judiciarisés dans la société : le Service Correctionnel Canadien, la Commission Nationale des Libérations Conditionnelles et les Associations Nationales intéressées à la Justice Criminelle. Nous étions d'accord pour développer des outils et du matériel pour informer et éduquer la population sur les bienfaits du pardon. Il faut avertir que la démarche est relativement simple et qu'aucune aide d'avocat n'est nécessaire. Cela signifie un coût fixe et unique car avec des agences c'est à leur discrétion.

Lors de notre dernière rencontre des ANIJC en mars 2009 des représentants de la Commission nous ont informés que leur site Web était transformé et avait eu une cure de rajeunissement. Vous êtes invités à le visiter www.npb-cncl.gc.ca/pardons ou à vous informer au téléphone sans frais 1-800-874-2652

Le CÉJC doit continuer à éduquer la population sur l'importance de la réinsertion sociale des ex-détenus(es) dans nos communautés respectives. C'est en accueillant ces hommes et ces femmes que nous réaliserons qu'au bout de la ligne, ils ne sont pas si différents que nous et qu'ils ont droit à une autre chance.

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Book Reviews

Transforming Conflict through Insight

Kenneth R. Melchin and Cheryl A. Picard. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008. 156 pages

Review by Richard Haughian

Conflict is a fact of daily life. We experience it in our personal relationships and witness it constantly both nationally and internationally. Fortunately, we also experience moments of conflict resolution. Yet, do we know what happens when a conflict is resolved? What learning takes place? Can examining this learning help us to work through conflicts more effectively?

According to the authors, the resolution of conflicts leaves us transformed. This transformation involves learning that alters our feelings and relationships. The focus of this work is to use the Insight Theory of Canadian philosopher, Bernard Lonergan, to understand the learning that occurs when conflicts are resolved well. Insight Theory offers a framework for understanding how feelings, cares and threats function in conflict. It explores how feelings carry deeper values, which also carry narratives rooted in past experiences and expectations about what is important and what should happen. It emphasizes the centrality of curiosity and insight in the learning process.

This work combines the insights of conflict theorists and practitioners at Carleton University, Ottawa, with those of philosophers studying the work of Lonergan at Saint Paul University, The result is Insight Mediation, a learning-centred model that builds on the twin pillars of practice and theory.

*This work would appeal to those engaged in the field of mediation and conflict studies. It also offers many insights for anyone interested in dealing more effectively with conflicts in their personal and civic lives. **Of special interest to readers of the Well: Chapter 5 focuses specifically on applications of Insight Theory to what happens in criminal justice processes, with a case study of a victim-offender mediation and one of a sentencing circle.***

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In the news

Restorative Justice

- *According to Maclean's magazine, **Caledon is the safest community in Canada**, boasting a crime score that is 87% below the national average. Mayor Marolyn Morrison attributes the low crime score to the strong partnership between the town's OPP, council and local community groups. The mayor also highlighted the Police Advisory Council of Caledon, which oversees the restorative justice program, the town's heavy promotion of volunteerism and the detachments' primary focus on youth issues, traffic enforcement, and reducing victimization. [Click here for the full article](#) from March 12, 2009.*
- *Justice Stuart discusses the **waning popularity of sentencing circles in Canada**, citing the discrepancy between its fundamental principles and the basic principles of the Canadian Criminal Justice System. [Click here for the full article](#) from February 27, 2009.*

Mental Health

- *A report revealed that Ashley Smith, a 19 year old, died due to the inability of the federal and provincial health care and correctional system's **inadequate mental health services**. Howard Sapers, Correctional Services Investigator, stated that Smith's death continues a **disturbing pattern of deaths in custody** due to under-resourced and ill-functioning correctional and mental health systems. [Click here to read more details](#). from March 3, 2009.*
- *According to police, the Lethbridge Justice Project has helped hundreds of families keep their teenage children afflicted with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) out of jail. The project was first created 10 years ago by an officer who realized that there was a severe lack of resources available to a problematic teenager. Currently, there are plans to expand the project to include **adults afflicted with FASD, who make up 20 to 30% of adult inmates in Canada's Justice System**. [Click here to read the full article](#). from March 5, 2009.*

Tough on Crime

- *CCJC's Vice-president, Richard Haughian, was interviewed by the Catholic Register for the article "**Crime prevention needed, not tougher sentences**". [Follow this link](#) to read the full text by Michael Swan.*
- *Opposition parties supported government's **anti-gang measures**, but criticized it for **underemphasizing crime prevention measures**. Dosangh, an M.P. from British Columbia, stated that government simply repackaged current offences and ignored crime prevention programs. [Click here to read the full article](#). from March 13, 2009.*
- *Darryl Davies, criminologist and professor at Carleton University, criticizes Canada's justice system, stating that it disproportionately targets street crimes and the most marginalized groups in society, largely ignoring those involved in credit card fraud, computer crime and insurance fraud, which have far larger adverse effects. **Rather than basing policies on empirical findings, Davies believes that politicians base them on ideologies, which helps them garner more votes**. Furthermore, Davies says that few strides are taken to*

eliminate crime completely because it creates employment. [Click here to read the full article.](#) from March 17, 2009.

- Burnaby NOW reports that the new anti-gang measures, which include automatic first-degree charges for gang-related murders and new charges for drive-by and public shootings, **will have a negligible impact on the dissuasive power of the law** as these crimes already entail hefty sanctions. Since criminals do not regularly conduct risk assessments, introducing more severe sanctions will be ineffective. [Click here to read the full article.](#) from March 7, 2009.
- Crown attorneys in British Columbia state that **the new mandatory minimums prison sentences, which are part of the new anti-gang legislation, will clog the court system.** Since the accused lose any incentive to plead guilty, there will be an increase in the amount of trials and by extension, the amount of stress on Crown prosecutors. [Click here to read the full article.](#) from March 7, 2009.

Drugs

- Charlie Smith criticizes the introduction of more mandatory minimum sentences for drug traffickers. **These new punishments will essentially disregard the 1987 Supreme Court's cautionary words that the court can assess whether or not sentences are "grossly disproportionate" or not by circumventing the judge's discretion.** [Click here to read the full article.](#) from February 28, 2009.
- **The future of drug treatment courts is up in the air.** While its supporters call them one of the most successful and innovative program inside the justice system, its detractors claim that they are an unsuccessful and expensive experiment. The Justice Department is currently reviewing these courts and will make a funding decision in the summer. [Click here to read the full article.](#) from March 10, 2009.
- According to Evan Wood, the new drug strategy, which **re-aligns Canada with the American's "War on Drugs" approach, will only worsen the situation.** Wood points out that this approach has created a massive illicit market of \$320 billion USD and fostered a number of public health concerns, such as the transmission of HIV among drug users. Furthermore, it has also contributed to the American's incarceration rate, which is higher than the rate of any other country. [Click here to read the full article.](#) from March 23, 2009.

Prisons

- Although crime rates have plummeted by 25% in the past two decades, the United States correctional spending has quadrupled in the same time period. According to researchers, **states are trimming money from education and health care in order to support the massive increase in correctional spending.** One in every 31 adults, 7.3 million Americans, is in prison, on parole or probation, at a cost to the states of \$47 billion in 2008. [Click here for the full article](#) from March 3, 2009.
- Hutton opposes the belief in incarcerating more offenders and draws from Canadian and American statistics to support his argument. Most notably, Hutton presented facts suggesting **that a "tough on crime" approach actually places the public at a greater risk** because there are fewer resources to catch the more dangerous offenders. [Click here for the full article](#) from March 1, 2009.
- Western justice officials have opted **against the idea of building a "super-jail" to hold gang members** who are awaiting trial. Instead, they agreed to exchange strategies on gathering intelligence and managing gang members more effectively in existing facilities. [Click here for the full article](#) from March 22, 2009.
- The federal government is introducing **new legislation that will end the practice of giving convicted offenders double-time credit for time spent in pre-trial custody.** According to Justice Minister Rob Nicholson, this practice will facilitate more "truth in sentencing", offenders will serve a sentence that is equal to the one that they receive and also unclog the court system. [Click here for the full article](#) from March 25, 2009. Frank Addario, president of the Criminal Lawyers Association, criticizes this legislation, stating that it is "toughness unguided by thinking" and **challenges Justice Minister Nicholson to show how it will make Canadians safer in the long run.** [Click here for the full article](#) from March 25, 2009.

Youth Justice

- A new academic study concluded that **the Youth Criminal Justice Act has been successful** in keeping youths out of courts and custody without increasing the amount of crime. [Click here for the full article.](#)

Correctional Services Canada – Release of the 35th annual report of the Correctional Investigator

- *The 35th annual report of the Office of the Correctional Investigator put forth a number of different recommendations for the Correctional Service of Canada, such as training all frontline staff to deal with the mentally ill, improving its ability to provide psychological or psychiatric assessments and programs before an offender's scheduled parole hearings and convening timely investigations and follow-up action into incidents of serious injuries or deaths of inmates. Furthermore, the office made recommendations to the Minister of Public Safety such as; re-establishing the National Aboriginal Advisory Committee and securing adequate funding for the implementation of the Correctional Service's Mental Health Strategy. [Click here for the full report.](#)*

Correctional Services Canada –2009-2010 Report on Plans and Priorities tabled in the House of Commons on March 26, 2009, on behalf of 95 federal departments and agencies.

- Available online through [this link](#)

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Upcoming Events

Collaborative Community Initiatives Speaker Series

This series was created to promote dialogue and knowledge exchange on current issues related to communities and place-based policies.

Thursday, April 23, 2009 9:00 am - 11:30 am

Holiday Inn Plaza la Chaudière - **Gatineau (QC)**

Free of Charge - PLEASE REGISTER by clicking on the following link www.eplievents.com/cciss

National Victims of Crime Awareness Week 2009

Crowne Plaza Hotel - **Ottawa**

April 27, 2009

www.victimswweek.gc.ca

Calgary John Howard Society in association with the **Department of Justice Studies, Mount Royal College** are pleased to invite you to a **Presentation, Q & A, and Book Signing with author Margot Van Sluytman. [Click here for more details on the book: Sawbonna: Dialogue of Hope: A Real Life Restorative Justice Story](#)**

Tuesday, May 5th, 2009 - 4:30 pm to 6:30 pm

Mount Royal College - **Calgary**

For more information & RSVP contact Lindsay Shultz 403-543-7825 lindsay.shultz@calgaryjohnhoward.org

National Conference on Positive Youth Development

May 7th & 8th, 2009

Wilfrid Laurier University

Waterloo, Ontario

www.thrivecanada.ca

2nd International Conference on Restorative Practices

May 31 – June 3rd, 2009

Coast Plaza Hotel, **Vancouver**

<http://restorativepracticesinternational.org/9.html>

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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 use [this form](#).

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

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