



RURAL RED DEER RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PROGRAM

Annual Report

April 1, 2023 – March 31, 2024

Table of Contents

Vision, Mission, and Values

Letter from Our Executive Director

Accomplishments

Goals

- Service Delivery
 - Restorative Conferencing
 - Quality Standards
 - Restore School Culture Project
- Community Engagement
- Sustainability

Financial Report

What's Next

Gratitude and Thanks

Our Team

Our Vision:

Communities value, support, and utilize Restorative Justice processes as a first response to harm.

Our Mission:

The RRDRJ program offers a facilitated approach for individuals harmed to express the impact of the harm to those responsible, thereby fostering accountability, healing, repairing harm, restoring relationships, and building community. We involve individuals, families, schools, businesses, and social support programs in restorative practices, processes, and learning opportunities to promote the creation of safe and supportive communities.

Our Values:

Repair Harm; Restore Relationships; Build Community

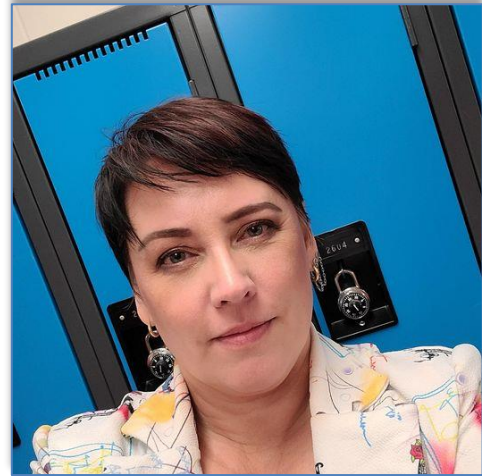
What is Restorative Justice?

Restorative justice is a more integrated approach to justice that focuses on repairing the harm caused by criminal behavior and addressing the needs of all parties involved – victims, offenders, and communities. It seeks to promote healing, reconciliation, and accountability by bringing together those affected by a crime to discuss the impact of the offense, identify needs, and develop solutions that aim to restore relationships and prevent future harm. Restorative justice processes can include mediation, victim-offender dialogues, community conferencing, and restitution. The emphasis is on repairing the harm rather than solely punishing the offender, with the goal of promoting greater understanding, empathy, and community involvement in the justice process.

Letter from Our Executive Director Jo Phillips

In 2021, Rural Red Deer Restorative Justice was formed as a grassroots not-for-profit organization to bring the principles of restorative justice as an alternative justice resource to rural communities in Central Alberta. In the three years since, there has been significant work toward policy development, data gathering, education, governance, and relationship building.

We have the right people in place to do this. 2023-24 was a tough year when it came to case referrals. Much discussion was had around what to do. I have full faith that many of the choices made will result in an upward trajectory of community impact in the coming years.



Coming into RRDRJ, I found a team of people excited about the possibilities of this program. A Board committed to figuring out how we grow the program. Facilitators who want to help people. Community partners who provided insight, sponsorship, and opportunity. The groundwork has been laid, and as we move into the next phase of growth, I am looking forward to what we can do with the puzzle pieces.

Reinforcing relationships, building new relationships, and earning trust is core to the forward movement, and that comes with listening to all stakeholders, a willingness to adapt, providing increased education, and taking repeated, demonstrable action. We have big goals for the upcoming year, and I believe we'll exceed them, because of the depth of the path laid.

What I am most proud of in our 2023/24 fiscal year is the commitment and effort of our entire team, from the Board to our Community Advisory Council and Facilitators. We brainstormed. We faced problems head on. We figured things out, adapted, and celebrated our wins. The seeds planted this year will have no choice but to produce a beautiful crop in 2024/25.

Thank you for all you do,

Jo Phillips

RRDRJ Executive Director

Accomplishments

We sent letters, dropped off brochures, spoke to students and teachers, held ZOOM meetings with stakeholders across provincial ministries, and met with RCMP detachments across our region. Connecting was the name of the game, and the point of the connection was to educate our community and excite them about referring to RRDRJ.

Our team was asked to provide presentations at Medicine River Crime Watch, the ATA Middle Years Teachers Conference, Red Deer Victims Services, Central Alberta Victim Services, Red Deer Polytechnic, and at the Alberta Restorative Justice Association Annual Conference. It is exciting to be invited in to help build Restorative Justice across the province, share what we know, and learn from others.

We are set on a mission to recruit new board members, seeking to bring in members from the business community. We welcomed 4 new board members this year, for a board membership of 10 invested and excited volunteers.

The ACRJ grant extension was approved and secured \$50K in funding for the 24/25 year. We also received the Lacombe County special grant to implement restorative practices in a school - a project we look forward to at Iron Ridge Junior Campus in Blackfalds. We were also tremendously grateful for the continued support of Vesta Energy, with a donation of \$10K. The Red Deer Polytechnic Justice Studies class of 2023 donated an additional \$1500. We are appreciative of the community and governmental support!

As an organization in its young years, we have put intense work into policy development. This year our Board workshopped a Strategic Plan for 2024-2027, that was approved in February 2023. We explored Domestic Violence as a referral option, and after extensive research and discussion, decided not to move forward. Work was done on Confidentiality, Workplace Hazard Assessment, and Restorative Conferencing Practices.

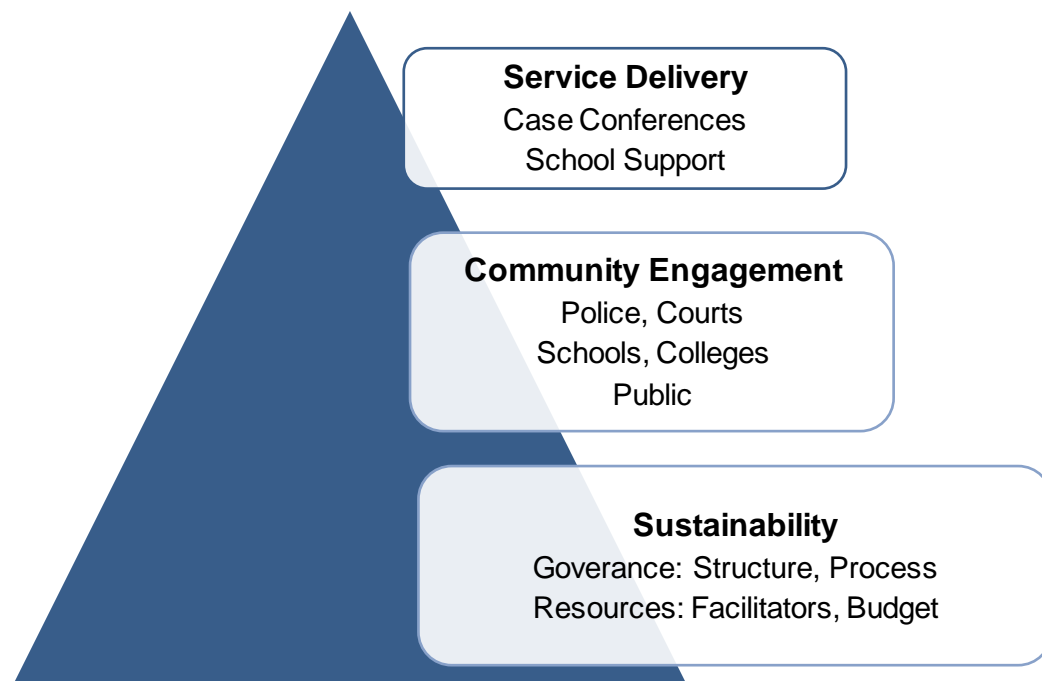
The biggest change in RRDRJ in the year 2023/24 was the announcement of Debbie Leitch's retirement. Debbie has been instrumental in the creation of our program, moving us from a place of "how are we going to do this" to a place of "we have all the tools necessary to knock this out of the park."

With Debbie's announcement came a decision by the Board to hire a part-time Executive Director. We brought in Jo Phillips at the end of January 2024, and Debbie and Jo worked together to transition.

The final quarter was marked by connection with all stakeholders in RRDRJ, from those on the Board and Advisory Council, to Facilitators, partners, related agencies, and the community. The results of these connections will be significant in our upcoming year. Immediate adaptations included revision of forms and consents to digital, to enable faster referrals and more efficient data gathering, inclusion of the Facilitators voices at the table, and understanding barriers to using RJ and mitigating those barriers through education.

Our 2021-2024 Strategic Plan focused on three goals:

- Service Delivery
- Community Engagement
- Sustainability



Goal # 1: Service Delivery

Restorative Conferencing:

Program activity related to service delivery from April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2024. All cases were referred from three officers at the Blackfalds RCMP detachment.

We received 6 referrals involving 9 offenders. We refused one referral because it was out of our scope of service. Of the 8 cases that were accepted, 4 cases were referred back to the RCMP due to non-participation, and 4 proceeded to a successful conference.

Types of offenses included:

- 50 % involved Arson.
- 50% involved Assault.

Types of reparative action included:

- Written/Verbal Apology
- Financial Restitution
- Counselling
- Fire Starter Program
- Community Service
- Educational presentation

Outcomes:

- 50% of referrals progressed to Case Conference
- 100% of case conferences were successful.

Underlying Issues:

- Retaliation
- Bad decisions
- Because it seemed fun
- Long term conflict

Quality Indicators

The RRDRJ program is proud to provide a service that addresses the five standards of quality including: accessibility, effectiveness, efficiency, acceptability, and safety.

Accessible



- **Roster of 8 trained facilitators readily available.**
- **Removal of age restriction** (accept youth and adults).
- **Service referral expansion: criminal and non-criminal**
 - **3 Police Detachments** (Blackfalds, Bashaw and Rimbey RCMP)
 - **The Crown Prosecutors' office**
 - **Direct referrals from schools**
- **Enhanced Web/social media access for all**

Effective



- **Progression of referrals to Case Conference: 50%**
- **Underlying causes of behaviour identified:** Retaliation, Bad decisions- not thinking of consequences of actions or impact.
- **Actions taken to Repair Harms:** Apology, Reimbursement to repair damage, Counselling-, Community Support Programs.
- **100% of conferenced cases completed contract**
- **0% recidivism in 6 months.**

Efficient



- **100% of intake assessments occurred within 1 week** of receiving the referral.
- **50%** of referrals accepted into program.
- Two facilitators assigned to each case.
- Average hours/ case= 10.

Acceptable



100% of participants indicated satisfaction with process. There were learnings regarding the necessity of more in-depth pre-conference interviews and general knowledge sharing about restorative and reparative processes with participants in advance of case conference.

Safe



Policies to ensure the safety of facilitators, volunteers and all RJ participants have been developed and implemented:

- Confidentiality
- Working and travelling alone- (hazard assessment)
- Participants in Case Conferences-(trauma-informed considerations).

Restore School Culture Project

We ran a pilot project at St. Gregory the Great in Blackfalds with the intention of building a program that could support schools in restorative process as alternative intervention and potential diversion from criminal activity. The project was supported by a Lacombe County Crime Prevention grant. Agnes Struik, our program educator, developed and implemented a trial program that included the education of 60 staff members on restorative processes. While the initial plan was to create a proactive resource, the conditions existent in the school resulted in a focus on “putting out fires”.



Success of this pilot project was evidenced by:

- Stakeholders indicate an increased awareness of Restorative Practices and how it can function in their school.
- The development of new processes to implement in future school projects.

Goal # 2: Community Awareness and Engagement

This year, we intensified our efforts to raise community awareness about the Rural Red Deer Restorative Justice Program and the overall benefits of restorative justice. Our initiatives included educational sessions for community organizations, teachers, students, and various programs. We worked on a school-based pilot project to explore how we can support restorative processes in educational settings. Additionally, the expansion of program resources and their wider distribution have significantly enhanced community awareness and engagement.

Highlights included:

- **Marketing**



- Development and distribution of resources such as infographics, brochures, rack cards, and post cards
- Attendance at the Lacombe Spring Tune Up Event
- Submission of an article to Alberta Rural Crime Watch
- Consistent social media content on Facebook and Instagram
- Up-to-date website with easy access to tools and resources
- Table at the Banff ATA Middle Schools Conference
- Presentation to Central Alberta Victim Services
- Presentation to the Banff ATA Middle Schools Conference
- Presentation at the annual Alberta Restorative Justice Association conference on “how to develop and implement a community-based RJ program”

- **Relationship Building**

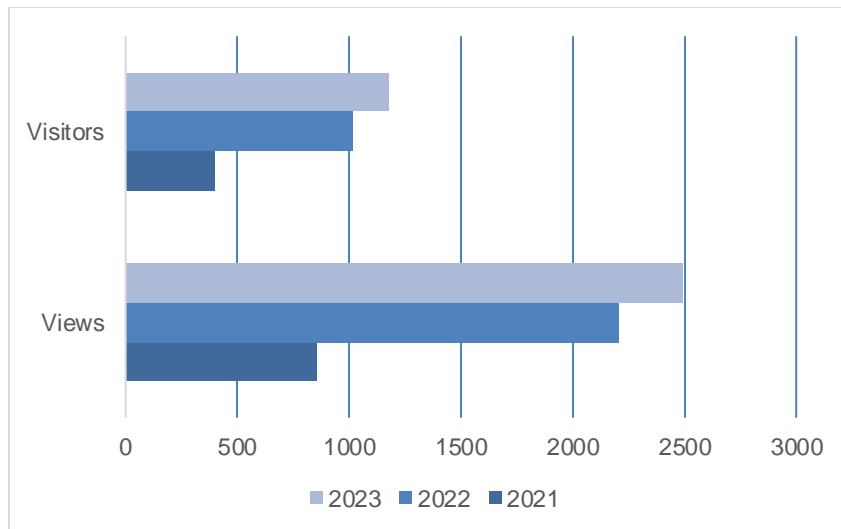
- Partnership discussion with Bashaw RCMP detachment
- Partnership discussion with Rimbey RCMP detachment
- Partnership discussion with Lacombe County Municipal Police and Wolf Creek School Division SROs.
- Conversations with Sylvan Lake RCMP detachment
- Conversations with Red Deer RCMP
- Joined the Blackfalds High Risk Youth Coalition (now defunct)
- Participation in Red Deer Indigenous Diversion Program



- Attended an invitation-only provincial forum for Alberta Justice to explore standards and guidelines for restorative justice services across the province.
- Established partnership with Red Deer Polytechnic Justice Studies program:
 - “Hired” a work practicum student through the RIPEN program to help develop resources for the enhancing school culture project
 - Initiated senior justice student learning practicum to support Capstone Learning projects.

Online Marketing Data

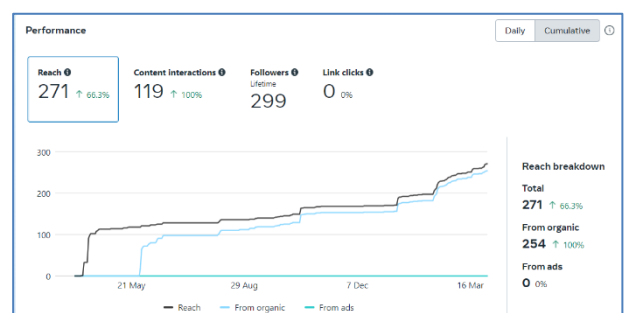
<http://rrdrestorativejustice.ca> Web Traffic



Facebook Insights April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2024



Instagram Insights April 1/23 to March 31/24



Goal # 3: Sustainability

Governance



- Board Development – training, strategic planning workshop.
- Expanded board membership to address skill gaps in education, law and business.
- Development of 2024-27 strategic plan
- Advocacy and partnership building activities.

Structure and Processes

- Hired an Executive Director- January 2024.
- Expanded direct referral sources for both criminal and non-criminal cases to additional police detachments, court, schools, community members.
- Changed service policy to include adults.
- Refined and streamlined referral processes, intake, and consent.
- Reviewed Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault as referable offences and voted against providing this service at this time.



Facilitators



- Continue to face issues with facilitator turnover.
- Provided 2 Facilitator orientation sessions and trained 6 new facilitators. Current roster =8.
- New recruitment initiatives underway.
- Revised Restorative Conference training sessions
- Provided monthly Facilitator training meetings.

Funding

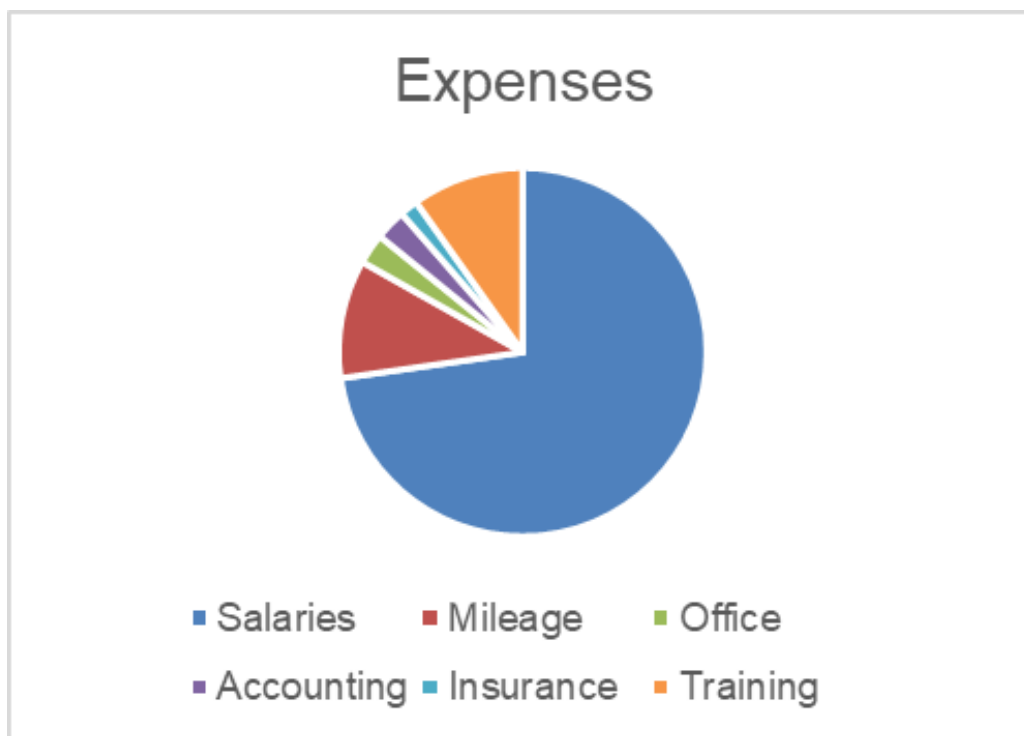
- Vesta Energy- Renewed sponsorship.
- ACRJ grant- Renewed.
- Blackfalds Bulldogs Foundation support.
- Lacombe County Crime Prevention Grant.



Expenses (April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2024)

EXPENSES

5600 Accounting	1,096.62
5610 Marketing Expenses	236.25
5620 Dues and Subscriptions	100.00
5690 Bank Charges	150.00
5700 Office Expenses	1,135.58
5710 Insurance	733.36
5725 Promotions	952.29
5730 Meals Expense	827.65
5800 Travel (Mileage Reimbursements)	4,409.17
5805 Executive Director Mileage	365.16
5820 Facilitator Per Diem Expense	1,400.00
5830 Payroll Expenses - Wages	30,400.00
5835 Payroll Expenses - Employer Taxes (CPP/EI)	1,538.48
5840 Training Materials	573.02
5850 Training Expense	3,108.95
Total Expenses	\$47,026.53



What's Next

1. Intensified effort to connect with in person, educate and create action with RCMP detachments, schools, the Crown, and other referring bodies.
2. Support schools in using restorative processes as a proactive approach to preventing youth from criminal activity.
3. Reinforcement and solidification of soft partnerships.
4. Increase in community involvement to create more educational opportunities.
5. Stabilization of facilitators and processes to ensure we are providing an effective tool for our referring partners and communities.
6. Utilization of the Red Deer Polytech partnership to build and contribute to public knowledge related to restorative justice processes and outcomes.
7. Fund raising to ensure there is sufficient budget to support expanded direct referral sources and enhanced program service delivery to schools and communities.



Thank You

40+

Volunteers

More than 40 volunteers have contributed to our program in the last fiscal year. We appreciate the time, conversations, commitment, and effort you put toward the building of Restorative Justice in Central Alberta. Thank you!

We would not exist without the support of the Blackfalds RCMP. This detachment has been our key referral source, and Constable Hewitt has been invaluable in building our program.

Blackfalds

RCMP

Financial Sponsors

Our sincere thanks and gratitude go to the following 2023 financial sponsors: Alberta Solicitor General's Community Restorative Justice Grant, Lacombe County Crime Prevention Grant, Vesta Energy as well as our many community partners who provide in-kind resources to support service delivery.



thank
you!

Our Team

Executive Director – Jo Phillips

Relevant Education: Bachelor of Arts in Psychology (2000) University of Calgary, Certified Youth Resilience Coach, Youth Coaching Institute (2022)

Relevant Experience: Extensive, award winning experience in business building and leadership, coaching, working with youth and supporting schools. Highlights of employment history include: Co-Founder and CEO of Jo(e) Social Media (11 years), Executive Director Jo(e) Youth Creative (3 years), Program Delivery of Starting a Social Media Conversation in schools (9 years)

Program Educator – Agnes Struik

Relevant Education: Master of Arts in education and psychology, Vermont College, Montpelier, Vermont, USA, 1992 Master's Thesis: The Student-Teacher Relationship, Introduction to Peacemaking Circles Ontario Society of Psychotherapists (2006), Advanced Peacemaking Circles, Conrad Grebel University (2017) IIRP Certificate of Restorative Justice Facilitator training. **Relevant Experience:** Agnes has worked as a teacher, principal, and a psychotherapist for the last 25 years. She has extensive training and experience in restorative practices, circles and RJ training including conducting peacemaking circles with former child soldiers in Liberia.

RJ Case Facilitators

John McLevin

Lisa Sharpe

Barry Brouwer

Jody Pitcher

Bernice French

Janene Anderson

Jenifer Ambrose

Laurel Bach

Board of Directors

Jean Bota - Chair

Dean Hart- Treasurer

Debbie Leitch- Secretary

Constable Jeffery Hewitt- RCMP- Blackfalds Detachment

Agnes Struik- Program Educator

Carrie Dennett – Professor- Justice Studies at Red Deer Polytech

Dana Kreil- Appointed Lacombe County Councilor

Jackie Fry- Public Defence Lawyer

Greg Gordon – Crown Prosecutors Office

Dana Depalme- Appointed Red Deer County Councilor

William Young- MD- Community Rep

Lisa Vornbrock – Financial-Servus Credit Union

Community Advisory Council

The Community Advisory Council comprises over 35 individuals, including RJ Board Members, Facilitators, School Principals and social workers, Community and Social Support program members, and Law Enforcement.