



# Annual Report

## 2015-2016

Youth Justice

Restorative Justice

Social Justice

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## Our Vision

Youth realizing their full potential and building safe and peaceful communities.

## Our Mission

To increase the capacity of youth, schools, communities, and the justice system to communicate and manage conflict through Peacebuilding dialogues.

# A Message from our Founder

In the late 90's, I was invited by Justice Barry Stuart to observe a Carcross/ Tagish First Nation Peacemaking Circle in the Yukon. The Circle was convened to consider how to respond to a youth who was convicted of arson for burning down a home. During the Circle, the young person offered to rebuild the home he had burned down and the members of the Circle agreed to help him. Justice Barry Stuart, a pioneer of justice reform, agreed with the Circle's recommendation and ordered that the youth would not be sentenced to jail, if he helped rebuild the home. And so it happened: a man's home was rebuilt, and a young person, who had otherwise been an upstanding member of his community, worked hard to take responsibility for his actions and make amends.

Everything about this encounter with a different way to do justice was illuminating. By the time I visited the Yukon, I had spent more than two decades litigating, arbitrating and mediating disputes in Toronto. I was troubled by the widening gap between societal expectations of fairness and the realities of the justice system. I understood this gap to be a major contributing factor to social conflict and inequality, especially for those who were unable to afford adequate legal representation.

Restorative approaches to conflict and harm, such as the Indigenous Peacemaking Circle I witnessed in Carcross/ Tagish First Nation, promised to show the way to a more equitable, just and peaceful society where people would be empowered to mitigate harm and create more positive futures.


The introduction of the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* in 2002 presented an opportunity to develop and implement more appropriate responses to address adolescent conflict. Since then, Peacebuilders has diverted over 700 young people out of the



criminal justice system, trained hundreds of community members to facilitate Peacebuilding Circles, worked in dozens of schools, and led crisis response circles in our city.

Restorative approaches to conflict present an opportunity to fundamentally change our understanding of justice. Today, as a result of the work our dedicated staff and many engaged community volunteers, our programs have been embraced by the very institutions we sought to engage: courts, schools and police.

We hope this report will give you a glimpse into what we do to support young people in Toronto and how we are transforming our city's capacity to support young people in conflict. There is so much more that we can do. We hope you will work with us to get there.

Sincerely,  
  
**Eva E. Marszewski, O.Ont., L.S.M.**  
**Founder and CEO, Peacebuilders**

# WHO WE ARE

## HONOURARY PATRONS

The Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean  
C.C., C.M.M., C.O.M., C.D.  
27th Governor General and Commander in Chief of Canada  
(2005-2010)

The Honourable Louise Arbour  
C.C., G.O.Q.  
Counsel, Borden Ladner Gervais LLP

The Honourable Warren K. Winkler  
O.C., O.Ont., Q.C., L.L.D. (Hon.)  
Former Chief Justice of Ontario

The Honourable Roy McMurtry  
O.C., O.Ont.  
Former Chief Justice Ontario

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## STAFF

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Joseph Makari  
Public Interest Articling Fellow

Kim Sebag  
Articling Student

Carl Chu  
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Debby Poljanowski  
Office Administrator

Dhiana Alfonzo  
Bookkeeper

# HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2015 – 2016

## Leading the change

Over the last decade, Peacebuilders has received increasing recognition for our leading role to affect change in the youth justice system in Canada and abroad.

In 2015, our founder was awarded the Order of Ontario, the province's highest honour for her achievement in restorative justice. That same year, Peacebuilders was awarded the prestigious Emil Gumpert Award from the American College of Trial Lawyers for our extra-judicial measures initiative. This award enabled us to research and advocate for pre-charge diversion measures in Toronto. In 2016, we were awarded a three-year grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation to partner with the Toronto District School Board, the Toronto Police Service, and Justice for Children and Youth. With this grant we will be able to bring restorative practices to Toronto high schools to change the way school administrators and police respond to student conflict. These awards, in addition to the Toronto Community Safety Award (2008), the Toronto Community Vital Ideas Award (2009), and the McMurtry Community Service Award (2013), have helped to shift public consciousness about the role of restorative practices in the justice and education systems.



**Order of Ontario  
2015**



**American College of Trial  
Lawyers, Emil Gumpert Award  
2015**



**Ontario Trillium Foundation  
Youth Opportunities Fund  
2016**

## Expanding our networks

We are building our capacity through local, national, and global networks. Peacebuilders is part of various networks that support young people and work towards social change. We work with partners at local, national, and international levels to advocate for the use of restorative practices to manage conflict and repair harm.

### LOCAL

**Community Crisis Response  
Network and FOCUS Toronto**

These initiatives bring together neighbourhood stakeholders to prevent and respond to crises in Toronto. Their impact is at the individual and community levels.

### NATIONAL

**Smart Justice Network  
of Canada**

Smart Justice is a network of leaders from different sectors who work together to promote responsible, fair, humane, and efficient ways of responding to criminal and social challenges.

### GLOBAL

**Ashoka**

Ashoka connects us to a global community of social innovators. This community inspires us to devise strategies that have impact at the individual, public, and systemic levels.

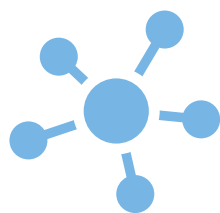
# RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

## Helping keep young people out of the criminal justice system

Research has overwhelmingly shown the harmful effects of charging and punishing children and youth. Young people who are charged are less likely to succeed in school or find stable employment and they are more likely to reoffend. Our responses to minor misbehaviours must meet the needs of young people to support their development.

In the last decade, the policies and legislation of youth criminal justice have changed dramatically, but far too many young people still face criminal charges. Many offending behaviours stem from external factors: mental health needs, abuse and neglect, under-housing, addiction issues, and systemic discrimination and disenfranchisement. We know that conflict is a part of most young people's every day lives. We need to reevaluate the systems and programs intended to respond to adolescent misbehaviour and adopt responses that promote the well-being of young people, rather than cause further harm.

### How we're helping



We're connecting young people with supportive peers and mentors.



We're teaching community members how to facilitate productive conversations with youth to help young people manage conflict meaningfully and effectively.



We're working within the justice system to offer restorative alternatives to charges and punishment.



We're changing the way judges, lawyers, police and probation officers think about justice.

## Restorative Youth Circles (RYC)

Since 2006, Peacebuilders has run Restorative Youth Circles (RYC), a restorative justice court-diversion program at the Ontario Court of Justice at 311 Jarvis Street. RYC uses Peacebuilding Circles to support young people facing criminal charges. The program provides youth with an opportunity to tell their story, work through the conflict and the circumstances that led to the incident. Many of the youth who participate in this program see their charges dropped. Additionally, with funding from The Law Society of Upper Canada's Lawyers Feed the Hungry Program, RYC has provided almost 3,000 young people with meals.

In 2014, Peacebuilders received funding for three years from Youth Justice Canada to launch the Restorative Youth Circles Enhanced Pilot Project (RYCE). The RYCE program works with youth from the Jane and Finch area of Toronto. In addition to a dedicated group of Peacebuilders' Circle Keepers, a full-time youth worker is able to provide support and resources to young people facing criminal charges.

### How does it work?

#### 1. Intake

Young people are referred by a vice-principal or police officer before charges are laid, by a Crown attorney before trial, or by a judge, probation or correctional officer prior to sentencing. The young person meets with our staff to talk about the incident and ensure that our program is the right fit.

#### 2. Peer Circles

Once the intake process is complete, the young person attends weekly peer circles, led by our staff. Our peer circles introduce young people to Peacebuilding Circle values and provide an opportunity for youth to express their worries, develop conflict-resolution tools, and acquire valuable life skills.

#### 3. Individual Circles

The young person meets with two to three trained Circle Keepers on a weekly basis to discuss the conflict. The individual circles are an opportunity for the young person to reach out to family and community members, as well as other individuals impacted by the conflict in a safe and supportive environment. Our Circle Keepers also use this time to help the young person start planning for the future by connecting them with various community resources, including employment and education.

#### 4. Report to the Courts and Program Completion

The Circle Keepers prepare a report to the court outlining the young person's progress. The report is shared with the defence counsel, the Crown attorney, and the referral source, and then shared with the courts. At the end of the program, the young person must return to court. Our staff and Circle Keepers support the young person through this process and help them prepare. They are present in the court to support the young person and ensure a smoother connection to any additional supports the young person may need. Since 2002, all of Peacebuilders' reports have been accepted by the courts, and in most cases, charges have been dropped.





# Providing young people with access to justice and empowering them to overcome personal challenges

Kris\* would likely have ended up with a criminal record before he even finished high school. Because of Peacebuilders, he may not.

Kris got in a fight with a friend at school and things got a bit out of hand. Then Kris threw a punch. He decided he needed to walk it off. He circled the block, walked back into school and was immediately called into the principal’s office and suspended for four days. A month later, the police showed up at his door and Kris was charged with assault.

Kris’s application to legal aid was denied and his parents couldn’t afford to hire a lawyer. But Kris had an advantage: he had participated in Peacebuilders’ Restorative Schools program. His principal contacted our staff to let us know Kris was struggling to find legal representation and needed some support. We reached out to our network and connected Kris with a criminal defence lawyer who was able to take on his case pro-bono.

Because the charge was minor, Kris’s lawyer advocated for him to go through extrajudicial sanctions, and, because of his positive experience with Peacebuilders at school, Kris was referred to our Restorative Youth Circles program.

Kris attended peer circles for six weeks. He was always the first one there and the last to leave. He really connected with the staff who continued to support him after the court accepted Peacebuilders’ report. When Kris told us about his experience with Peacebuilders, he said: “If I didn’t have [Peacebuilders], I would still be in court. I would have to represent myself. I watch Judge Judy, but I can’t do that.”

As with any young person, Kris’s story isn’t over. But because of Peacebuilders, Kris has the chance to create a new story. If he doesn’t get into any trouble in the next four months, he will return to court with his lawyer and see his charges dropped.

“If I didn’t have [Peacebuilders], I would still be in court.”

*\*In order to protect the privacy of our clients, we have changed names.*



# RESTORATIVE SCHOOLS

## Fostering resilient young leaders

When young people get in trouble at school, traditional forms of discipline do not aim to repair harm or address the circumstances that led to the incident. Numerous studies show that suspensions and expulsions do not alter bad behavior; in fact, they can feed it by alienating students from the school community.

Educators and administrators are increasingly interested in using restorative practices that build on values such as community, empathy, and responsibility. Schools that utilize restorative practices have experienced significant results, including lowered suspension rates, higher graduation rates and an overall improved school atmosphere.

Justice for young people means more than helping those in crisis when they are charged with a criminal offence or suspended from school. It means empowering young people to overcome personal challenges and realize their full potential.

### How we’re helping



We’re creating space for students to have their voices heard.



We’re enabling students and teachers to work together to manage conflict.



We’re building the capacity of schools to understand young people’s needs and how to best address and serve them.



We’re bringing effective programs to schools to build safer learning environments.

## Eastdale Collegiate Institute Community Change-Makers Pilot Project

From September 2014 to June 2017, Peacebuilders ran a pilot project that brought restorative practices to Eastdale Collegiate Institute. Funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation, the project used Peacebuilding Circles to help students and teachers manage conflict to create a safer, more supportive learning environment.

### The Eastdale pilot included:

#### Classroom Circles

Classroom Circles are used as a tool to engage students in the academic curriculum. Eastdale teachers work with Circle Keepers to facilitate Peacebuilding Circles focused on course content. The Circle process enables both students and teachers to teach and learn in new ways in an inspiring and collaborative dialogue.

#### Community Building Circles

Outside of the classroom, Community Building Circles support the students’ sense of belonging. Circle Keepers work with the high school’s guidance counsellor to facilitate circles with new students. Many of Eastdale’s students have had negative school experiences and have transferred to Eastdale for a fresh start. These Circles enable the students to develop new relationships, find their voice, and work through the circumstances that led to the transfer.

#### Intervention Circles

Intervention Circles are used to create a safe space for students to address conflict in response to a specific incident. Peacebuilders’ staff and volunteer Circle Keepers work with the individuals involved to develop resolutions, repair harm, and rebuild relationships. Intervention Circles are used to address minor conflicts, to work with students facing suspension, and as a means of reintroducing the young person back into the school as part of their reentry support plan.

## Restorative Schools: Early Diversion and EJM Pilot Project

A new grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation’s Youth Opportunities Fund is allowing Peacebuilders to deepen our school engagement. We’re partnering with the Toronto District School Board, the Toronto Police Service, and Justice for Children and Youth to develop, implement, and evaluate a pre-charge diversion program for Toronto high schools. The pilot program will complement the City of Toronto’s extra-judicial measures initiative by providing teachers, administrators, and police with training and resources to manage and defuse conflict that takes place on school grounds thus preventing police involvement in student conflict.

The project will be piloted at two Toronto high schools from September 2017 to April 2019. Our goal is to build a model for a lasting program of restorative practices in high schools to address student conflict and reduce harsh discipline and charges. This project will build stronger communities, repair damage caused by conflict, and empower young people.





## Building the capacity of schools, communities, and the justice system to support young people in conflict

“When I applied for the Public Interest Articling Fellow position at Peacebuilders, I was looking forward to working on important projects related to youth justice in Canada. Having researched and studied criminology, restorative justice, and law, I was excited about the opportunity to work in Peacebuilders’ office at the Ontario Court of Justice at 311 Jarvis St., support the organization’s public and legal advocacy projects, and learn about a different way to do justice.

But I did not expect how much more I would learn from my work at Peacebuilders. As a Circle Keeper in our Restorative Schools program at Eastdale, I led weekly Classroom Circles and learned how to prevent and respond to school-based conflict. I formed deep connections with the students and saw the opportunity to engage them in other ways.

Given my extensive experience playing competitive basketball and leading a number of youth basketball programs, I offered to develop and coach a basketball program for Eastdale with assistant coach, Melissa Hanoun. I developed the program with an underlying belief in the ‘Rosenthal effect’ — that is, if my expectations of the students were high, then they would respond to my high expectations by performing at an increased level. I held try-outs (everyone who showed up made the cut), ran practices, and worked with the team to establish a code of conduct. By the end of the season, the students had not only advanced their skills and won games (we placed second in the final TDSB Regional Varsity Basketball tournament), but the school also saw significant improvements in attendance and classroom behaviour.

I did not anticipate that coaching a high school basketball team would become part of an already rich articling student experience. And I am grateful for it. Engaging with young people outside of the courthouse and the classroom helped me better understand the importance of restorative, community-based, and confidence-building approaches to supporting young people in conflict.”

### *About the author*

Joseph Makari is a Public Interest Articling Fellow at Peacebuilders. His position is generously supported by the Law Foundation of Ontario.

**“Engaging with young people outside of the courthouse and the classroom helped me better understand the importance of restorative, community-based, and confidence-building approaches to supporting young people in conflict.”**



# CIRCLE KEEPERS



## Volunteer-driven programming

Peacebuilders works with a committed group of trained volunteer Circle Keepers whose professional and life experience provide an extraordinary level of service.

Growing research shows that initiatives that cultivate positive relationships with strong role models have transformative effects on young people and help foster resilience. For young people in conflict with the law, the support of our dedicated staff and Circle Keepers makes an incredible difference.

Over the last decade, Peacebuilders has trained hundreds of volunteers to use Peacebuilding Circles to resolve conflict and repair harm. Our volunteers advocate for the use of restorative practices and principles in their communities and help us further our mission to increase the capacity of youth, schools, communities, and the justice system to communicate and manage conflict through Peacebuilding dialogues.

## Volunteers are vital to our success

In 2004, David participated in his first Peacebuilding Circle while he was a vice-principal at Jarvis Collegiate Institute. One of his students was facing criminal charges and had been referred to our first restorative justice court-diversion program. As part of the program, our Circle Keepers encouraged the student to meet with members of the school community to discuss the conflict, which had taken place on school grounds.

David was impressed that Peacebuilders was able to get the student's charges dropped, but was even more excited about the impact the Peacebuilding Circles had on the student's attitude and behavior. As a result, David began Peacebuilders' volunteer Circle Keeper training. He also began using circles on a regular basis to work with students from Jarvis Collegiate Institute.

David continues to volunteer as a Circle Keeper, making him one of our longest standing volunteers.

# THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

We are proud to acknowledge the following foundations and organizations whose generous contributions between January 1, 2015 and December 31, 2016 helped us work towards a more just and equitable society for our young people.

## Institutional Funders



## Peace Partners



## Special Events

Thank you to our Spring for Peace and Dinner for their Future supporters.

## In-Kind



## Emil Gumpert Award



**Annual Report Design**  
Scott Newlands Creative | [scottnewlands.com](http://scottnewlands.com)

## 2015 – 2016 Financial Highlights

<b>Revenue</b>		
Donations	220,493	136,102
Foundations	256,539	79,317
Fundraising & Events	377,011	475,724
Government grants	120,710	200,521
	<b>974,753</b>	<b>891,664</b>
<b>Expenditures</b>		
Programs	602,301	404,043
Fundraising & Events	185,331	145,600
General & Administrative	75,624	65,141
Public Awareness	6,933	10,726
	<b>870,189</b>	<b>625,510</b>
<b>Excess of revenue over expenditures</b>	<b>104,564</b>	<b>266,154</b>





Each spring, Peacebuilders holds its annual fundraising gala, Spring for Peace.  
To learn more about investing in the future of our young people, contact:  
416-960-0105 | [info@peacebuilders.ca](mailto:info@peacebuilders.ca)

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