



Provincial Court  
of Alberta



Court of Queen's  
Bench of Alberta

**NEWS RELEASE**  
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## Alberta Courts Embrace Restorative Justice

Calgary - Judges, prosecutors, defence counsel, community and justice stakeholders, and members of Indigenous communities have collaborated to make the justice system more accessible, compassionate and responsive to the needs of those caught up in the justice system through a new restorative justice pilot project.

Restorative justice recognizes and honours Indigenous justice traditional practices and seeks to respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Calls to Action to eliminate the overrepresentation of Indigenous people in custody. Restorative justice provides culturally relevant services and commits to the recognition and implementation of Indigenous justice systems.

While honouring the roots of Indigenous practices, restorative justice is used by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous agencies to provide offenders an opportunity to take responsibility for their offences while working to change the root causes of their behaviours. It serves to facilitate reconciliation with the victim and assists in repairing harm to the victim and the community that has been impacted by the offender's behaviour.

"This project allows us to recognize that there are many meaningful pathways to justice" Chief Justice of the Court of Queen's Bench Mary Moreau said. "Restorative justice recognizes the complexities of the people participating in the justice system, as well as the complexity of their relationships. It's a nuanced approach that – in appropriate circumstances – leads to more meaningful and effective long-term outcomes for all participants."

"In appropriate cases, prosecutors will be encouraged to use restorative justice processes as a diversionary alternative to the traditional criminal justice system" Assistant Deputy Minister for the Alberta Crown Prosecution Service Kim Goddard said. "In cases where diversion is not appropriate, restorative justice processes can be used to inform and assist a Judge imposing a sentence. A framework has been developed to provide prosecutors with principled yet flexible guidance to ensure consistency and transparency in decision making."

A matter can be considered for restorative justice referral when:

- The offender acknowledges responsibility;
- The facts of the offence are agreed upon by all;
- There is voluntary, informed consent by all participating parties.

"Over the years, there have been many excellent restorative justice initiatives in Alberta. The Committee has attempted to identify all of the organizations that provide these essential services, determine their capacity to take on referrals, and implement an approach that will permit referrals to be made in all regions of the province" Chief Judge of the Provincial Court Derek Redman said.

Since its inception in 2019, the Committee organizing this project has grown to more than 100 members, including Judges from the Court of Queen's Bench and Provincial Court, prosecutors, defence counsel, Indigenous groups, victims' rights groups, restorative justice practitioners, policing agencies, and many other stakeholders in the community.

"We owe it to our children and those yet to see, to be happy healthy and to heal", Bigstone Restorative Justice Special Projects Coordinator Helen Flamand said. "To show our resilience and to lead by example; never give up and always try hard and love others and most importantly, to love ourselves. Tapwe (TRUTH); Sakihitowin (LOVE); Kistenitamowin (RESPECT)."

The Restorative Justice Pilot Project is named after the first Nunavut Chief Justice Beverley Browne who passed away last year. Over the course of her 30 years on the bench, Justice Browne worked tirelessly to improve access to justice for Indigenous people. In November 2020, at a pipe-naming and blanket ceremony held in her honour, Justice Browne received the Cree spirit name Wîyasôw Iskweêw which has no direct translation but conveys the meaning of 'Woman Who Stands With The Law'.

The Committee is hosting the first Restorative Justice Symposium on March 31, 2022 at 4 p.m. It will commence with a traditional ceremony in the Indigenous Court in Calgary and be broadcast to the public via Webex. Tickets are free and available at: [rjalbertacourts.ca/symposium-mar31](https://rjalbertacourts.ca/symposium-mar31)

Please visit [rjalbertacourts.ca](https://rjalbertacourts.ca) for complete information on the symposium and on the Honourable Beverley Browne – Wîyasôw Iskweêw – Restorative Justice Pilot Project.

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