



OTTAWA

Circles of Support & Accountability



2020 – 2021 Annual Report

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No One is Disposable *leads* to No More Victims

By Jill Skinner

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Susan Love and all the folks behind Circles of Support & Accountability (CoSA) in Ottawa. I had the good fortune to connect with Susan back in 2002 and a few other committed volunteers who saw a need to provide support to people who had been convicted of sexual offences who were being released from prison into the community. At the time, I was a Staff Sergeant for the Ottawa Police Service, in the Sexual Assault and Child Abuse unit, and recognized my goals were the same as those committed CoSA volunteers - No More Victims!

I have continued to be a supporter and watched that small group become more formalized and even more committed to supporting the people they work with. For anyone not involved in the criminal justice system, you might not be aware that most offenders *do* return to our community - and rightfully so. If we want them to integrate successfully, they need supports whether in the form of affordable housing, employment, or something as simple as identification. CoSA volunteers help to facilitate anything their core members need; and they're available after hours, when professionals are not. They also need accountability – to help them learn the skills to live pro-socially and prevent further offending behaviour.

Like many community-based organizations I have seen, CoSA Ottawa struggle to achieve financial sustainability year-after-year, despite their proven effectiveness, reducing recidivism by 80%! I encourage those who are not familiar with CoSA to be informed and get involved. No One is Disposable leads to No More Victims!

Jill Skinner

Business Development & Senior Investigator, Investigative Solutions Network Inc.

Retired Deputy Chief, Ottawa Police Service

President's Message

Last January, I was asked to assume the role of President of the CoSA Ottawa Board of Directors on an acting basis when the previous President, Lisa Roots, stepped down. I want to take this opportunity to thank Lisa for taking on the position and for her dedication to the work of CoSA. I began my tenure with CoSA as Vice President of the Board more than 5 years ago and have enjoyed the time immensely. I am very proud to serve with a group of very talented individuals. Each person has brought their own unique set of skills and experience to the table, but everyone shares one common belief of the unique and critical role that CoSA plays in the Ottawa community.

CoSA Ottawa's Board of Directors has been very active despite the pandemic with monthly meetings held virtually. The Board added four new talented members including Lyse Morin who is representing St John's Church, Victoria Stillie from the Department of Justice Victims Directorate, Suzanne Johnson who also works at the Department of Justice as an analyst, and Jake Legault, a defense lawyer with Bayne Sellar Ertel Carter. Both Victoria and Suzanne are former CoSA volunteers.

With the knowledge that the federal funding from Public Safety Canada is ending in Spring 2022, the Board held a special 'enhanced' strategic planning meeting in March 2021 to address the funding challenges ahead. This session was led by consultants to assist in identifying the best approach to focus on sustainability. In this regard, CoSA Ottawa hired a fund development firm, V Formation, to facilitate the development and implementation of a funding strategy throughout 2021-2022 and beyond.

The CoSA Ottawa Board and Advisory Group continued to work closely with staff on circle issues and, in particular, how to best support core members and volunteers especially during the pandemic. Navigating restrictions and maintaining meaningful dialogue are always a priority for core members but, like other front-line work, much more challenging to achieve during the pandemic.

President's Message, continued...

I have always been impressed with the level of commitment each volunteer makes to CoSA Ottawa in helping some of our most marginalized population develop a healthy and law-abiding lifestyle. It is this commitment and belief in the power of change that sets CoSA Ottawa apart as a unique and valuable player in the Ottawa community.

The CoSA Board saw the need to achieve diversity on our Board as well as the Advisory committee in order to respect cultural and traditional needs of, and the impact of generational trauma of residential schools on our Indigenous Core members; and to be part of our country's conversation on reconciliation. We accomplished this by recruiting an Indigenous member on the board and the Advisory group and also held trainings and attended events to learn about Indigenous history and culture.

Finally, I want to thank one person in particular and that is Susan Love who heads up CoSA Ottawa. I have known Susan for many years not just through my involvement in CoSA Ottawa but also during my time working at Public Safety Canada. Back then and indeed during my time working at CoSA, I have always been impressed with Susan as someone who has an incredible passion and caring for the work we do for our community and our core members. Ottawa is truly blessed to have such a talented and dedicated leader!

As I step away from my involvement with CoSA Ottawa and take on my new responsibilities as acting Executive Director of CoSA Canada, I am comforted to know that we will continue to work closely together.

Cliff Yumansky

Board of Directors



Cliff Yumansky, A/President & Chair

Lyse Morin, A/Vice President



John Daley, Treasurer

Tara McWhinney, Secretary



Nicole St. John, Director

Suzanne Johnson, Director



Victoria Stillie, Director

Jake Legault, Director



Advisory Group

The Advisory Group is a non-decision-making committee that advises the staff, and ultimately the Board, on an as-needed basis, on challenges that arise with Core Members and other personnel matters.



Bob Cormier - Psychologist

Former Member of the Board of Directors for CoSA-Ottawa and CoSA Canada



**Dasa Farthing - Mental Health Manager,
Children's Hospital Eastern Ontario**

Former Circle Volunteer and former Member of the CoSA-Ottawa Board of Directors

Coordinator's Update

With the pandemic ravaging on, we continued to amend programming to meet provincial Covid-19 restrictions, and so appreciated the great support from CoSA Canada and sister sites in Canada. Circles were more comfortable with virtual meetings, but some core members were, understandably, still hesitant to share openly.

Later in the year, the Anglican Diocese of Ottawa deemed CoSA an essential service, allowing us to meet in person at St John's during lockdowns, of course, following strict health protocol, so we were able to resume in-person meetings at a reduced capacity (bi-weekly instead of weekly).

We continued our Discussion Series, often facilitated by volunteer Amber Robinson who did a great job, however due to the virtual format, participation was low. So, in March, we decided to try a new format with professional facilitators, which resulted in increased attendance.

Unfortunately, we were not able to hold either our Thanksgiving Dinner or the Christmas Party so, in an effort to bring people together as best we could, we held a virtual Holiday/Christmas event, by Zoom.

To accommodate our core members without access to the Internet, our volunteers and staff met with them at our office and other locations, to allow everyone to participate.

Eighteen people attended and, although a small turnout compared to our in-person festive gatherings that brought together upwards of 60 to 80 people, it was fun none the less! Steve won the prize for best holiday get-up!



Coordinator's Update, continued...

Our volunteers and core members never ceased to awe-inspire me – never flinching at a challenge, like navigating the obstacles that prohibited in-person meetings, always finding a way to continue on! Thank you so much for your tenacity and dedication to do this work, particularly in the face of adversity.

Among many other skills and talents, Rae excelled in all things technical, from managing the election of board members at our first virtual annual general meeting, to setting up many, many circle meetings and events, to creating the Holiday video, which was no easy feat considering photos were scarce due to the lack of in-person meetings...but she pulled it off! I can't thank you enough, Rae, for all this...and so much more! It's been amazing working with you!



Many thanks also to our board of directors, in particular, to Cliff Yumansky and Lyse Morin, for their leadership and commitment at this difficult time.

I know I speak on behalf of all of us in expressing huge gratitude to Gary van der Veen and the staff and many parishioners at St John's Church for their continued support and hospitality. Without space to hold circle meetings, we simply could not operate.

We are so grateful to our funders and supporters – Public Safety Canada, whose funding concludes in March of 2022; Ottawa Community Foundation; and many individuals who donated throughout the year and to our Race Event. Thanks, as well, to a host of individuals who lend their name in support of CoSA-Ottawa as official Supporters. We are eternally thankful for your endorsement. We are in this effort together!

Susan Love

Year in Numbers

- **Volunteer hours (group & 1on1 meetings, special events, Discussion Series):** 1,254 (1,728)
- **Volunteers (active, in circles):** 29 (55)
- **New volunteers (trained & approved):** 16 (11)
- **Core Members (annual total, not simultaneously):** 18; 4 new (18, 5 new)

Type of legal condition:

- **810:** 1 (0)
- **LTSO:** 3 (4)
- **Day Parole:** 1 (2)
- **Full Parole:** 2 (3)
- **Statutory Release:** 2 (1)
- **One Chance Stat Release:** 2 (2)
- **Probation:** 4 (3)
- **No conditions:** 3 (4)
- **Bail:** 0 (1)

Note: most CMs are subject to Sex Offender Registry (SOR), 161 Order (no parks, public areas where children are expected, no access to internet)

- **Core Member breaches/charged (returned to custody):** 1 (3)
- **Core Members who reoffended:** 1 (0)
- **Core Members who graduated from CoSA:** 2 (1)
- **Circles closed:** 3 (1)
- **Indigenous Core Members:** 6 (4)

Discussion Series & Events

- April 27 – Check in during Covid restrictions
- May 11 - Positive Self Talk, Facilitated by Amber
- July 6 – Coping with Covid restrictions, Movie/book reviews
- Sept 14 - Positive Self Talk P2, Assertiveness (Intro) w Amber
- Nov 2 - Assertiveness w/ Amber
- Dec 12 - Christmas/Holiday virtual Event
- Feb - Trivia
- Mar 1 - Averting Boredom with Kathleen Weedmark

Training and Professional Development

- Somatic Yoga (4 participants, including 2 CMs)
- Mental Health First Aid (certificate), with Yvette Murray (15 vols/staff)
- Non-violent Communication with Rachelle Lamb (attended by 19 vols & staff)

Quotes and Kudos

In the absence of fun photos, due to the lack of in-person gatherings during the year, we'd like to share some heart-felt comments we received.

"I joined CoSA 11 years ago as a gift to my future son. I was pregnant with Jake at the time - he turns 10 this fall. My gift to Jake in supporting CoSA is two-fold: I am showing him that people do have the power to change the course of their lives if they are willing to work hard at it, AND I am helping to make his world a safer place. CoSA works, I see it first-hand. Thank you for helping to build our brighter future with your support." JM

"X mentioned to me that someone close to him was an offender and that this called him to volunteer. This is proof of his genuine motivation towards your noble cause. You are bringing humanity to our society!"

"I am a student in a class called "Community Mobilization and Engagement" in which I have been assigned the task of presenting a recent example of a "Community circle". Upon doing some research I discovered this [story](#) (about CoSA). I am so impressed with the work of CoSA. On behalf of myself, my children, every community, victims and offenders, I commend your efforts."

"It is no secret that St. John's Church is a special place in the Ottawa community for so many reasons. These are my thoughts:

Meeting in such a spiritual place emphasizes the wholeness, the oneness, of society; be it strength, compassion or forgiveness. We are all one in the sight of God. The very structure of the walls, built to withstand the trials of life, create a Holy space that bestows the sincerity of grace on all who enter. As the circles of CoSA meet within these walls we are embraced by its grace, by which each member receives the strength and courage to move forward; to heal. CoSA meetings become a form of ceremony; a safe place to open one's soul, embraced by the safety and grace of God.

So, while CoSA's presence may not be convenient, like so many things in life, inconvenience tests the fiber of one's soul." EB

Official Supporters

We are honoured to recognize the following distinguished individuals in the community who lend their name in support of CoSA-Ottawa.

Andrejs Berzins: Former Chief Crown Attorney of Ottawa

Lorraine Berzins: Former Community Chair of Justice, *Church Council on Justice & Corrections*

Robert Cormier: Psychologist, *Ontario Review Board* Member, Former *CoSA-Ottawa* Board and *CoSA Canada* Board, current *CoSA-Ottawa Advisory Group* member

John Edwards: Former Commissioner, CSC; Past President, *John Howard Society of Ottawa*

Phil Firestone: Psychologist

James Foord: Criminal Lawyer

Rick Goodwin: Clinical Director, *Men & Healing*

Susan Haines: Executive Director, *National Associations Active in Criminal Justice*

Diane Holmes: Former *City of Ottawa* Councillor

Patricia Love: Former Probation/Parole Officer; Co-Founder of *CoSA-Ottawa*

Kimberley Mann: Executive Director, *Collaborative Justice Program*; Co-Chair, *Ottawa Restorative Justice Network*

Liam Marshall: Psychologist, *Waypoint Centre for Mental Health*

Lisa Murphy: Forensic Psychometrist, *Royal Ottawa Mental Health Centre*

James Scott: United Church Minister; Community Mediator

Geris Serran: Psychologist, *Correctional Services Canada*

Jill Skinner: Business Development & Senior Investigator, *Investigative Solutions Network Inc.*; Former Deputy Chief, *Ottawa Police Service*

We are forever grateful for your continued support and belief in us!

Financial Report: Audited Statements

Statement of Financial Position

	Assets	2021	2020
<i>Current Assets</i>			
Cash		\$ 59,673	\$ 93,015
Short-term investments		50,000	-
Accounts receivable		7,118	9,171
Prepaid expenses		<u>2,895</u>	<u>2,897</u>
		<u>\$ 119,686</u>	<u>\$ 105,083</u>

Liabilities and Net Assets

<i>Current Liabilities</i>			
Account payable and accrued liabilities		\$ 5,344	\$ 6,220
<i>Net Assets</i>			
Unrestricted		<u>114,342</u>	<u>98,863</u>
		<u>\$ 119,686</u>	<u>\$ 105,083</u>

Statement of Operations and Changes in Net Assets

	2021	2020
<i>Revenue</i>		
Grant, other	\$ 146,283	\$ 126,879
Donation and fundraising	14,888	25,060
Other revenue	<u>2,737</u>	<u>253</u>
	<u>\$ 163,908</u>	<u>\$ 152,192</u>
<i>Expenses</i>		
Personnel	\$ 106,694	\$ 101,996
Administration	3,235	2,211
Professional fees	15,565	9,507
Office rent	12,696	13,181
Program costs	<u>10,239</u>	<u>7,874</u>
	<u>148,429</u>	<u>134,769</u>
Excess of revenue over expenses	15,479	17,423
Net assets, beginning of year	<u>98,863</u>	<u>81,440</u>
Net assets, end of year	<u>\$ 114,342</u>	<u>\$ 98,863</u>

Statement of Cash Flows (YE Mar 31/21)

	2021	2020
Cash Flows for (used in) Operating Activities		
Excess of revenue over expenses	\$ 15,479	\$ 17,423
Changes in non-cash working capital components:		
Accounts receivable	2,053	(4,594)
Prepaid expenses	2	(1,209)
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	(876)	(2,742)
Deferred revenue	<u>-</u>	<u>(10,000)</u>
	<u>\$ 16,658</u>	<u>\$ (1,122)</u>
Investing activities		
Purchases of investments	<u>(50,000)</u>	<u>-</u>
Decrease in cash	(33,342)	(1,122)
Cash, beginning of year	<u>93,015</u>	<u>94,137</u>
Cash, end of year	<u>\$ 59,673</u>	<u>\$ 93,015</u>

A Core Member's Story

I am writing this so that everybody understands how important a program like CoSA is to me and others. I was in the federal penitentiary system for 30-plus years. My sentence was a D.O., indeterminate, and I was paroled January 29, 2020. I came out to a world which I did not understand, in a society that had changed so much that it was like going to another country. I was lost and confused and angry most days. With the help of a lot of really good people, I started to get my feet planted on the ground. But my anxiety was getting really high, and I was so scared that I was going to act out again.

I met Susan Love, the director of CoSA, about 12 years prior, in a Federal Penitentiary, who told me that, if I came to Ottawa, she would be there to help me. So, with the help of my parole officer, I contacted her. Being that it was right in the middle of covid-19 lockdown, getting involved in the group had to be put off for a while. But when we got past the lockdown, I finally got some volunteers to help me.

The help and the time that my volunteers spend with me, have made it so I can get my feet on the ground - Standing Tall - making sure that when I have some issues, I have someone to talk to. When you get released from the federal penitentiary system and you do not have people to talk to, it is most likely that you are going to return to the pen system. I believe this is one program that needs to be running for people like me. Because of the help from CoSA, I have not had any major issues on my day parole.

I got certified as a heavy equipment operator, and had an apartment to spend weekends in. I have done so well because of all the help I have been given from parole officers, social workers, and some new friends, but the place I feel the safest is CoSA. I have some great volunteers who understand me; they have helped me through some of the difficult times that I have had.

There are a lot of people coming over from the federal penitentiary system that could use the help I have received. With this help, most of us will never return to the federal penitentiary system which, in turn, means no more victims. No more victims - it's the greatest thing I have in my life.

These are just the words from an old con, but helping CoSA, helps to prevent more victims. Please help CoSA, help people like me make this world safer for everyone. Thank you in advance for any help you can provide to this great organization.

“Dale”

A Volunteer's Story

I became a CoSA volunteer in 2020 in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. The training was held virtually, and even though I have since only had a few opportunities to meet people from CoSA in person (apart from my circle), I still feel very much connected to the organization.

I was drawn to CoSA because of the slogan “no more victims”. I’ve volunteered in victim services for many years on crisis lines and I even have a post-graduate certificate in Victimology. However, I have become acutely aware that there is one aspect that is constantly underestimated within the field: supporting people convicted of criminal offences. The media tends to paint victims and offenders as two binaries, or diametrically opposed: the former worthy of support, and the latter written off as irredeemable. This superficial dichotomy between victims and offenders is false and ultimately counteracts efforts to reduce victimization. I feel strongly that supporting people convicted of criminal offences, especially those at risk of reoffending, is the key to a safer and more just society and that is exactly what CoSA is about.

I was nervous about meeting my core member the first time. Restrictions finally eased up. I hadn’t seen any friends for a long time, let alone a person convicted of sexual offences. I didn’t know what to expect and whether I would be able to make a connection with the guy. I showed up without expectations, and quickly got the impression that this was going to be a good experience. My core member opened up about his crimes and I was impressed with his honesty and how far he’d come. The weeks went on and as I got to know my core member and circle volunteers better, I knew this work was important.

We have had ups and downs over the past year, and one significant issue that affected the group dynamics. It was difficult to get through, but I was impressed with how the core member, who was guided sensitively by CoSA staff, approached the issue with the group. Although the core member still faces obstacles and challenges every day as he reintegrates into society, I am inspired by his personal motto that helps him remain calm when he feels his anger surfacing: “Nothing is worth one more day of my time back inside”.

I have had many long chats with my core member about the person he was when he committed his offences. He was the absolute worst, most violent and angry version of himself, and not someone I’d want to pass in the street, let alone be associated with. Today, he is working toward the best version of himself and is committed to living a meaningful and crime-free life in society. He is calmer, more self-reflective, and even kind. Prior to CoSA, he didn’t think he’d last this long on the outside. Through volunteering with CoSA, even people who have committed serious harm, can make meaningful changes in their life when they are open to accountability and receiving support...I’ve seen it with my own two eyes.

Anonymous

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