

***Helping build inclusive, caring and safe communities***

**LCCJ Community Animator Report - September 14, 2017**

**Submitted by** Andrew Lynch, Community Animator

**LCCJ Website­ –** There is now a *Be Strong* tab on the website which will be used to post program and resource information. Even better news is that a new LCCJ website is under development and should be on line in late Fall.

**Schools & Youth Centres News**

YAK – I have met with Jeff Kohl, the new executive director and likely will continue with something along the lines of Circle Wednesdays which we began during the 2016-17 school year. We also discussed their pending role in managing the Smiths Falls Centre for Youth which has experienced financial challenges and lost its staff.

Lanark Highlands Youth Centre – Laurie Clarke has been in communication with Warren McMeekin, the E.D., and is conducting a circle with youth on September 29th.

Smiths Falls – YAK Youth Services in Perth, Big Brothers Big Sisters, and The Town of Smiths Falls have come together to form a vision for a Youth Campus at the recreation centre (arenas) in Smiths Falls. In the short term, monthly activity calendars are being compiled, and there is funding to provide space and staff at the Smiths Falls Recreation Centre. In November, we will be offering a series of one hour workshops for youth in using restorative dialogue for conflict resolution.

Almonte District High School (Almonte) – Helen and I met with Principal Nancy Holman and several staff members to discuss needs and establish a focus for the first semester. On Wednesday, September 13th, Helen Rochon and I conducted the OTF surveys and began circles with three classes, grade 7/8, 9 and 11. On the October 27th PD day, we will facilitate a fishbowl circle. The inner circle will be composed of students and staff who have participated in circles and can speak to their experience. The inner circle will also serve as a demonstration of the proactive circle process. The outer circle will be composed of the rest of the school staff who will observe, and also have opportunities to pose questions.

Arklan Community Public School (Carleton Place) – We have received a request from Principal Shelley Riddell to resume circles. Helen Rochon has been in contact with teachers to establish a schedule.

Maple Grove Public School (Lanark) – Laurie Clark and I met with Principal Andrew Pratt (formerly VP at Arklan) to discuss needs and establish focus. The circle process will be introduced to all staff at an upcoming staff meeting – likely near the end of September. Circles with students commence on September 25th

North Elmsley PS – I have met with Principal Kevin Fisher (former principal of Maple Grove) about introducing restorative and proactive circles at his school. Our first step will be to conduct a circle with all staff members on September 25th to introduce the framework and restorative principles. I also will conduct an introductory circle with the school council on Tuesday, October 3rd.

Perth & District Collegiate Institute – I have met with the Christine Campbell, Student Support Partner who is very interested in incorporating circles into her practice. I will visit a couple of her classes on Friday, September 22nd to get an idea of the makeup of the classes and the nature of the content.

St. John Catholic High School – I have met with the Vice Principal Catherine English. We are looking at a two-pronged approach.

1. Introducing proactive circles in two intermediate classes with the objective of building the capacity of the teachers and students to incorporate restorative practices into their teaching and learning.
2. Developing training modules and resources for the use of restorative dialogue in conflict resolution.

The Stewart Public School (Perth) – We have been approached by teachers to resume circles this school year. Tracey Parker is in communication with them to establish a schedule.

The principals of other schools have been contacted, but have yet to reply.

*Be Strong Challenge ­*– Challenge packages were distributed to all UCDSB and CDSBEO elementary schools in June. During the last couple of weeks of the school year, elementary students and teachers were invited to participate in the ***"Pick 3" Be Strong Challenge***. The idea of this was to encourage people to think about and practice ways of being that are not only embedded in circle practice, but are conducive to the development of healthy relationships and caring, safe and inclusive communities. Classes were invited to formally register with us and share through pictures, videos and email their experience with the challenge. Classes from St. John Catholic School and Calwell Street Public School participated.

Several teachers and principals commented on the merits of the *Be Strong Challenge*, but felt that it came too late in the school year. They indicated that they might incorporate elements of it into their start-up activities this September.

We will be planning events and challenges for elementary and secondary students.

**Presentations & Training**

UCDSB Summer Institute for Teachers, August 22 & 23, 2017. Al Howard (UCDSB teacher,LCCJ facilitator), Laurie Clark (Be Strong Volunteer) and Andrew conducted two one-day workshops – one for elementary teachers and one for secondary teachers. The workshop description in part read: *This dynamic workshop provides the basics for understanding and using Restorative Practice in school settings. Hands-on, fast paced and highly interactive, these one-day sessions are founded on the belief that an effective learning environment is one where students feel safe in taking risks, where they experience and grow from their failures and where everyone in the space learns with and from each other.* Attendance at all of the Summer Institute workshops was voluntary and free, resulting in a drop off from numbers registered. Nevertheless, participants at our sessions, and we as well, found them to be very worthwhile. Feedback was universally positive, with the most negative comment from a teacher being that she would have liked more practice.

**Volunteers**

Now that interest in *Be Strong* is ramping up, we are in need of more volunteers. We will be recruiting young adult and adult volunteers over the next couple of months. If you know of someone who might be interested in working with youth in a school or youth centre setting, please inform them that they can contact Andrew Lynch by email andrew@commjustice.org or by telephone, 613-264-1558 for details.

**Numbers of Student Engagements**– when all levels of student engagement are factored in to date, numbers total more than 8000 with more to count this month. Of those, approximately 2500 represent high level, mostly weekly engagements.