



Southern Community Restorative Justice

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the agreement with the Connective Support Society for the term of January 1, 2025, to December 31, 2027, for Southern Community restorative justice services, be approved.
2. That the Chair and the Corporate Officer be authorized to execute the Connective Support Society agreement on behalf of the Regional District of Nanaimo.

BACKGROUND

Under Bylaw No. 1490, the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) provides the service known as the *Southern Community Restorative Justice and Victim Services Support Service*, providing financial assistance in relation to restorative justice and victim services programs operating in School District 68 and carrying out program services in Electoral Areas A, B and C. This RDN provides funding by agreements to each Ladysmith Victim Services, Nanaimo Victim Services and previously to the John Howard Society. In 2022, the John Howard Society became Connective Support Society (Connective), to better reflect the programs and services offered by the organization.

One of the programs offered by Connective, which is supported financially by the RDN through agreement, is Connective's Restorative Justice Nanaimo Program. The Restorative Justice Program offers an alternative to the criminal justice system that focuses on why crime occurs, how it affects others and how harm can be repaired. The program works with youth and adult offenders to identify the root cause of their crime(s) with a lens of putting in place preventative interventions and supports, while including the community, victims of crime, and other relevant parties, to resolve conflict, promote accountability, and foster healing.

Connective's Restorative Justice Nanaimo Program has been operating since 1998 and has one of the highest rates of referrals in BC with cases being referred from the RCMP, Federal and Provincial Crown Counsels, Youth Probation, local schools, community organizations and individuals. The Restorative Justice Nanaimo program's referred offenses include gender-based violence, serious assault, drug trafficking and cybercrimes. Primarily, referrals are through the RCMP detachments within the RDN. The program's benefits including increases to public safety, lowering the rates of criminal recidivism, providing access to culturally informed Indigenous justice processes as well as meeting the needs of victims of crime. The program matches youth with volunteer mentors, who act as positive role models, connect youth to community resources, and provide emotional support. The program also trains community volunteers to participate in restorative circles, articulate the impacts of crime on the community, and contribute to meaningful resolutions.

As the agreement was previously with John Howard Society, amendments are needed to reflect the organizational change. The new agreement (Attachment 1) has been updated to reflect this change, along with the updated term.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The RDN annually provides \$5,000 to the Southern community restorative justice program, based on the previous agreement with the John Howard Society. It is recommended to maintain the funding level through a three-year agreement with Connective Support Society.

REVIEWED BY:

- L. Grant, A/Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENTS

1. Agreement - Connective Support Society 2025-2027
2. Bylaw 1490 Southern Community Restorative Justice and Victim Services Support Service