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Message from the Director, Dr. Mansfield Mela

In this edition of the newsletter, you will appreciate the extraordinary program of the first ever virtual Violence & Aggression Symposium. It was well-attended, enhanced participants' collective learning and sought to benefit individuals in the criminal justice system (CJS) and those that work to support their rehabilitation. Some of the forensic research topics presented apply to those with a unique disability such as Autism Spectrum disorder, women in the CJS, offenders overdosing on opiates, criminal justice workers exposed to trauma and consequences of the harm inflicted by psychopaths. In the new world dispensation of prioritizing equity, diversity and inclusion, these topics covered in the symposium should inform many areas of forensic practice such as culturally developed risk assessment tools. Efforts such as researching culturally humble, respectful and informed approaches have thankfully come to stay.

Turning to the second half of the symposium, the speakers focused on the role of and intervention with trauma in diverse settings. There does not seem to be an end to the collective trauma we are experiencing in society today. The ravaging effect of the pandemic on our emotions and attitudes, leading to increased family disruption, increased offending and a sense of a disturbed and altered public safety are a few of the emerging issues. The discovery of many buried bodies of Indigenous children and the recurring deaths of law enforcement agents in the hands of those they seek to serve and protect leaves one with many questions. What is the ultimate outcome we hope for? How can these reduce and/or restore hope in humanity? What can I do as an individual or even as an organization? Existential as these questions appear, there is a practical window to embed research in these existing gaps. Questions that we need are those that will generate solutions or interim steps to ameliorate the real and perceived dangers of our day. We find ourselves in the middle of significant legislative changes and reactive trends related to oppression and racism.

All these are challenging topics we can direct our research questions to. Important and relevant research should seek to address the knowledge gap of recognition of and intervention.

At the Forensic Centre, we are engaged in these difficult discussions through research to uncover enhanced and psychologically safe spaces for interviewing those affected by traumatic events, such as sexual assault. We have provided grants for researchers to study ways the pandemic has affected legal and criminal activities. We invite learners to consider these areas of study and join hands with us to propose research endeavors to reduce victimization. In this newsletter, you will see an event like the Biennial Violence & Aggression Symposium is just one opportunity to do so.

It is my pleasure to welcome Professor [Philip Woods](#) as the new Executive member representing the College of Nursing for a three-year term. On behalf of the staff and faculty of the Forensic Centre, I want to thank Professor Peternelj-Taylor who has served out her Executive Committee membership and remains a founding member of the Centre. Recently, the Forensic Centre staff engaged some faculty members from the Department of Sociology to determine potential areas of collaboration. This positive development should enhance our closeness in shared research endeavors. We anticipate this type of engagement to serve as a continued 'membership drive'. We invite [applications](#) from faculty and community members that see our work as complementary to theirs.

Lastly, I want to take this opportunity to wish you all a good rest of the summer with minimal or no restrictions. Take advantage of the weather and enjoy refreshing holidays.

Mansfield Mela, Director, CFBSJS



Forensic Centre's Research Highlight

Virtual Violence & Aggression Symposium
June 14 – 15, 2021

The experienced Planning Committee for the Biennial Violence & Aggression Symposium were thrown a curveball for the 18th offering originally scheduled for June 2020. With USask and almost all other non-essential businesses switching to remote workplaces in mid-March 2020, the group of planners voted to postpone the event to June 14 & 15, 2021 when *surely* things would be back to normal. Fast forward to the next planning cycle when it was apparent, that would not be the case. Holding the event entirely online seemed the best option which brought us to this year's virtual event hosted on a platform called [PheedLoop](#), a Canadian-owned business.

Much of the 2020 program carried forward to the rescheduled symposium and focused on trauma-informed care and risk assessment. Day One plenary sessions were delivered by [Dr. Mark Olver](#), a Professor in the Department of Psychology at the University of Saskatchewan and [Dr. Leslie Anne Keown](#), a Senior Research Manager in the Research Branch of Corrections Service Canada. Day Two keynote talks were presented by [Mr. Howard Sapers](#), former Independent Advisor on Corrections Reform, and [Dr. Judith Andersen](#), a health psychologist and Associate Professor at the University of Toronto.

Over 220 people (the event's best turnout to date) viewed 11 concurrent sessions which were offered by experts on topics related to the themes, such as, effective treatment for sexually offending behaviour, trauma-informed approaches to assisting police officers struggling with mental health challenges, risk factors and resilience across special populations, and Autism Spectrum Disorder focusing on Asperger's Syndrome and violence.

To ease any technological mishaps or reoccurring "you are muted...you are STILL muted" the presentations were prerecorded but were followed by live Q&A sessions with the Speaker(s). A virtual exhibit hall took the place of a face-to-face poster session with 10 submissions that related to the overarching purpose of V&A: to assist in translating research and theory into practice, provide an opportunity to highlight excellence and innovation within a variety of correctional and criminal justice environments, and promote the use of evidence-based practice across the criminal justice spectrum -- crime prevention agencies, courts, police, corrections, parole -- in Saskatchewan, Canada and beyond. The 'Best Student Poster' prize went to Emma Marsden from McMaster University for her work titled, "The Role of Impulsivity in Criminality among Canadian Federal Offenders".

The Symposium was not only an opportunity to highlight research and issues of importance in academia, criminal justice, and corrections but also to honour the work and memory of a man who dedicated his career to the same, Dr. Stephen J. Wormith. Steve was founder and Director of the Centre for Forensic Behavioural Science and Justice Studies and devoted many years to planning V&A. A memorial slideshow played in the virtual event lobby and Dr. Lisa Jewell, a longtime colleague and his predecessor Chair of the Planning Committee (along with Dr. Mansfield Mela), wrote a dedication to him for the event (please read it [HERE](#)).

While most would have preferred to be in-person to network, collaborate, and enjoy each other's company; feedback received so far indicates that, *knock on a very large piece of wood*, should we be unable to host the Violence & Aggression Symposium face-to-face in the future - the trail has been blazed for online offerings.

Thank you to all who attended, our [sponsors](#), the Speakers, volunteers, and [Planning Committee](#).

We welcome all feedback!

Please provide [HERE](#) at any time.

Topics from the Field

Prepared by Dr. Davut Akca, Research Officer

CFBSJS



We are very happy to launch our campaign web page on the Principles on [#EffectiveInterviewing](#) for Investigations and Information Gathering!

Check out all the information and available resources here 📌

[apt.ch/en/what-we-do/...](https://apt.ch/en/what-we-do/)

[#MendezPrinciples](#) [#PreventionWorks](#)

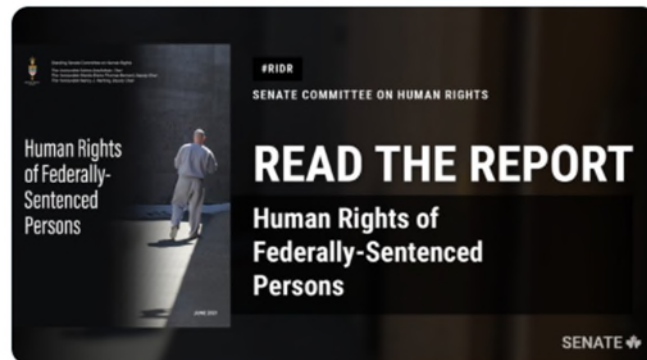
The 'Mendez Principles' on effective interviewing for investigations have been announced in May 2021 and formally recognized by the United Nations. Grounded in science, law and ethics, the principles aim to shift police practices from interrogation to rapport-based interviews. What are the implications of these principles for Canadian police departments and investigators? A comprehensive analysis of the current practices is needed to understand where the Canadian police departments are at in relation to these principles and what needs to be done to comply with these principles.



Human rights central to a fair and effective correctional system, Senate committee finds.

Read the report: ow.ly/WsNa50FujhD

[#SenCA](#) [#RIDR](#) [#cdnpoli](#)



Senate of Canada has published a report on the [Human Rights of Federally-Sentenced Persons](#). Key recommendations in the report address various topics including but not limited to the overrepresentation of Indigenous Peoples and Black persons in custody, mandatory minimum sentences and restrictions, the needs of federally-sentenced persons with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), rehabilitation and reintegration of federally-sentenced persons, implementing a holistic approach to mental health. Implementing these recommendations requires an evidence-based approach and the adoption of best practices in corrections, to which our Centre is dedicated to contribute.



James Downs @jamesldowns · Jun 20

If you recruit me to your research project because of my lived experience of #mentalhealth problems, don't be all surprised when I show advanced knowledge of research methods & study design
Patient involvement isn't about confining people to one identity. We have so much to offer

James Downs, a patient who previously suffered from mental illnesses and attempted to take his own life, stressed the importance of patient involvement in research and emphasized that patients have so much to offer in said research. Our Centre has been leading Patient-Oriented Research (POR) studies for the last few years, and our experience so far validates his statement. We invite researchers and practitioners who are interested in POR to contact us and collaborate on future studies.



David Pyrooz
@dpyrooz

Yes, gang crackdowns can reduce community-level violence. But an overreliance on suppression-based strategies is tantamount to kicking the can.

Why? See below ↓



Greg Newburn @GNewburn · Jun 19

"We estimate that gang takedowns explain nearly one quarter of the decline in gun violence in and around New York City's public housing communities during the post-2011 period."
achalfin.weebly.com/uploads/8/5/4/...

Researchers found that gun violence in and around public housing communities in New York City fell by approximately one third in the first year after a gang takedown. They estimated that gang takedowns explain nearly one quarter of the decline in gun violence over the last 8 years. A prominent gang-researcher, Dr. Pyrooz, posted a thread and commented that "unless the underlying causes of gang emergence and association are addressed, these suppression-based tactics won't stop the bleeding. Incapacitation is rarely permanent, and gang members often describe prisons as "higher education," so if you're concerned with gang violence in communities, the "chickens will eventually come home to roost." Research should focus on the underlying causes of gang involvement and policies need to be developed to eliminate those.

Events

Currently working remotely but normally we can be found at:
110A, 9 Campus Drive
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon SK S7N 5A5
Canada
306-966-2687
forensic.centre@usask.ca



17th
Biennial International Conference on the
Nurse's Role in the Criminal Justice System

Save the Date! November 4 & 5, 2021

Call for Abstracts EXTENDED

[Abstract Submission Portal](#) now open until July 31, 2021



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