



OJEN • ROEJ

ONTARIO JUSTICE EDUCATION NETWORK
RÉSEAU ONTARIEN D'ÉDUCATION JURIDIQUE



ANNUAL REPORT

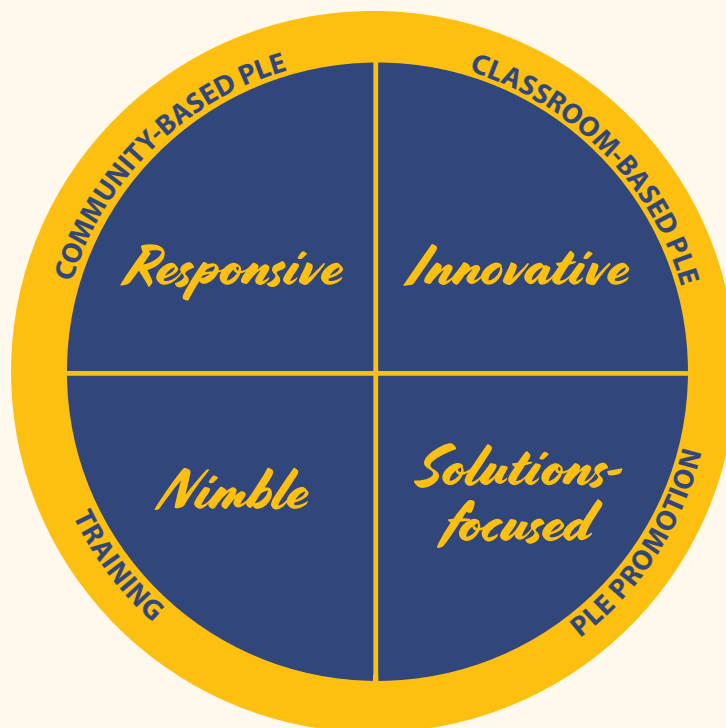
Ontario Justice Education Network

Executive Director's Message

With the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic, OJEN saw its program plans for 2020 change abruptly and significantly. As our education and community partners scrambled to adapt, we shifted as best we could to meet them and the needs of the young people they serve. OJEN's approach to public legal education (PLE) continues to go beyond sharing legal information; we seek to form connections between youth and justice sector professionals and we rely heavily on experiential learning and skill-building to develop legal capability in young people. In 2020, it was a challenge to offer our programs in an accessible format, while maintaining the interactive qualities that make these programs so impactful.

While we were forced to temporarily suspend some of our **classroom-based** and **community-based PLE programs**, we found innovative ways to transition other OJEN programs online, always keeping the remote learning fresh, relevant and engaging. OJEN's **training** for teachers, youth workers and volunteers moved online, as we offered regular live webinars and archived video recordings on the OJEN website. Our efforts to **promote effective PLE** continued to grow as we supported our local OJEN committees, hosted PLE conferences and engaged in research projects.

We are deeply grateful to the funders who have been flexible and accommodating during these difficult times. We are also delighted that so many of our dedicated volunteers have continued to support our public legal education activities.



Thriving in these unprecedented times, OJEN relies on qualities that have been our organisational trademark since inception. We remain **responsive, nimble, solutions-focused** and **innovative**. Please check out our program activity pages to see how these qualities have helped us achieve our access to justice goals in 2020.

Jessica Reekie
Executive Director

Summer Law Institute

OJEN's annual two-day Summer Law Institute (SLI) offers teachers the opportunity to connect with justice sector professionals and academics to gain insight into a variety of topical legal issues. With in-person meetings on hold, we faced the prospect of cancelling this popular professional development conference. Instead, we re-imagined it as a webinar series, making it accessible to more teachers than ever.

The series of six webinars ran between July 22nd and August 25th. Teachers from throughout Ontario attended the sessions from the comfort of their homes or viewed the recorded webinars posted on our website at their convenience.

Moving to a webinar series gave us more flexibility to book speakers who had been unable to attend in past years, due to distance or scheduling conflicts. As a result, we booked some of the most exciting speakers from our wishlist, including long-time educator and Indigenous education advocate, Charlene Bearhead. Her presentation centered on the curriculum resource, *Their Voices will Guide Us*, inspired by the National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls. From Vancouver, Alan Andrews, Climate Program Director from Ecojustice, spoke about *Mathur et al. v. Her Majesty the Queen*, a civil suit which was brought by 7 young people against the government of Ontario, for weakening climate targets.

Response to the webinar format was so enthusiastic, we continue to offer new webinars as a regular feature of our professional development program.



...the webinars addressed topics in law that are both current and relevant, and the speakers shed light on the critical issues. I particularly enjoyed receiving the link to the recording right after. I used the recordings at my first History Department meeting in September and shared the Environmental Law webinar with the Geography Department.

— Lora Gillies,
York Region District School Board



Twitter Moot

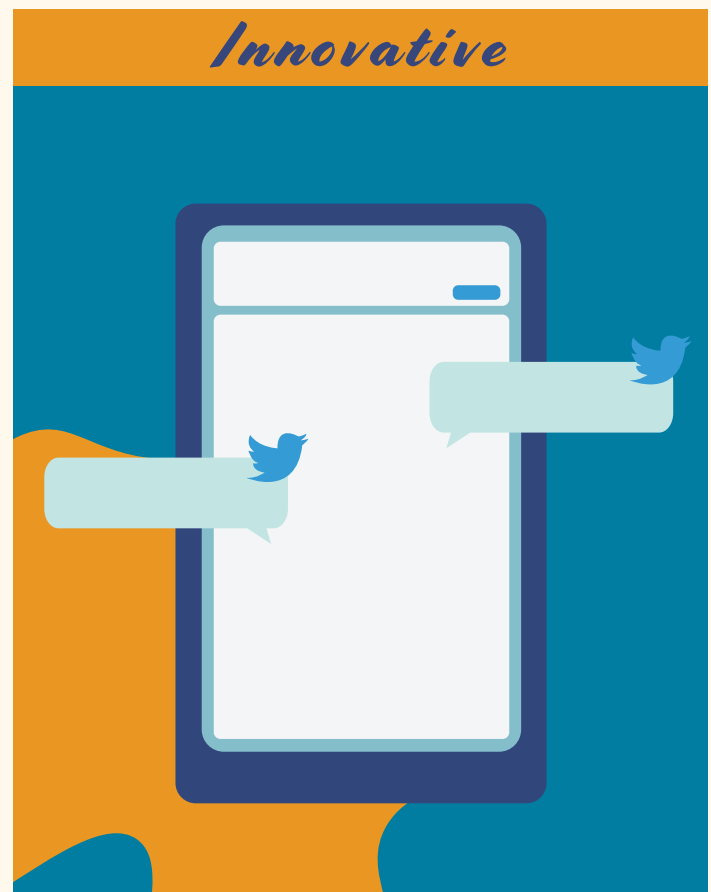
In 2020, technology took on greater significance in the classroom. OJEN focused on supporting teachers and students by providing programs and resources adapted for virtual classrooms. The Twitter Moot is an innovative and practical way to use social media and technology to augment classroom learning.

Taking inspiration from the Hamilton OJEN Committee's Law Day Twitter Moot, we introduced a province-wide version of the program in October during Access to Justice Week. It was an immediate hit with teachers and students alike.

The online debate focused on the question – should we allow peremptory challenges in criminal jury trials? Students prepared for the debate using OJEN's resources. On the day of the Moot, they used a common hashtag to engage on Twitter. From 9 am until 5 pm they shared their opinions and debated with other students from across the province. Winners were chosen for "Most Persuasive Tweet" and "Most Engaged Participant."

"Peremptory challenges are a tool that can be used by lawyers to ensure a fair and diverse jury - therefore they should not be banned... While [they] can serve as a tool and an obstruction to aid in diverse juries - perhaps the real issue lays on HOW a lawyer can use peremptory challenges. Maybe there should be regulations that outline to what extent [they] can be used."

— **Danielle Brooks, Cathedral High School, Hamilton - Most Persuasive Tweet**



The Twitter Moots were amazing opportunities to discuss thought-provoking and timely legal issues. Students in the classroom, as well as those learning remotely, participated in a robust debate on Twitter and it provided a unique, safe, and engaging experiential learning opportunity for everyone!

— **Patricia Valeri Tortis, Law Teacher, Cathedral High School, Hamilton**



Navigating Police Encounters

OJEN tailors its programs for vulnerable and marginalised youth to meet the needs identified by each community. Our Navigating Police Encounters program responds to requests we received for public legal education that focuses on interactions with the police in the wake of the police killing of George Floyd in May of 2020.

Delivered online, the Navigating Police Encounters program is both a forum for discussion and a source of reliable legal information for youth between the ages of 14 and 26. Participants engage in a guided discussion about their perceptions of police, receive information about their legal rights during police encounters, and learn how to access legal information and support. They also have the opportunity to meet with a lawyer and/or a police officer.

OJEN is partnering with Crime Prevention Ottawa to deliver the Navigating Police Encounters program for youth in Ottawa throughout 2020 and 2021. Expanding on the original program, a version of Navigating Police Encounters is now offered to Ottawa parents, youth workers and other adults who support young people. OJEN staff are also working with justice sector professionals in Ottawa to provide training in program delivery, so that local volunteers can continue to offer the program in the future.



A wonderful collaboration of partners and a successful delivery of pertinent information to our youth. The youth were left feeling informed after engaging in meaningful dialogue with the hosts. Looking forward to partnering again in the future!

— **Mindy Arsenault, Provincial Youth Outreach Worker**
Boys and Girls Club of Ottawa



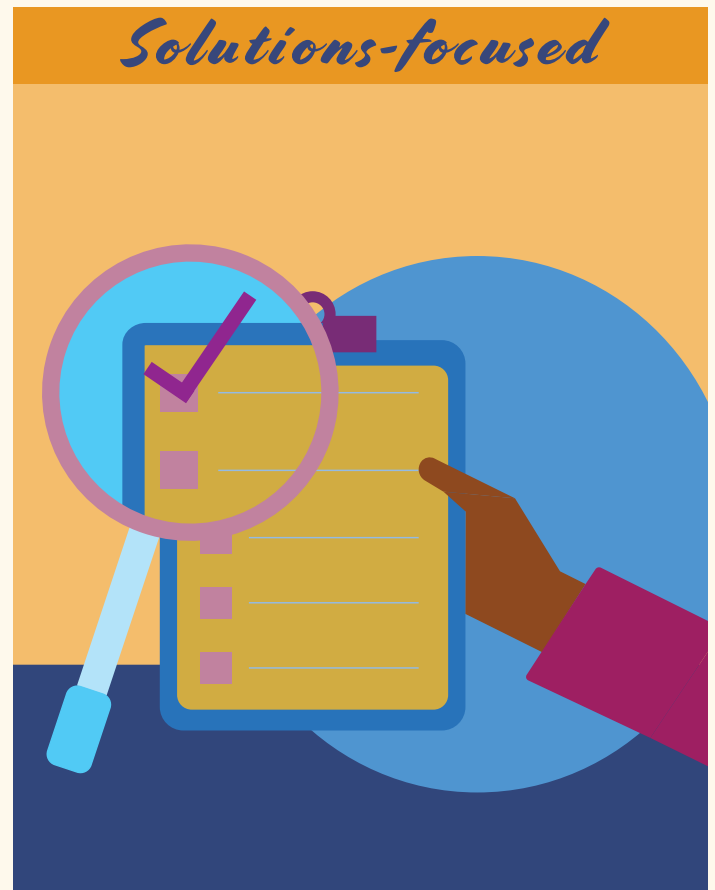
Serious Legal Problems

Over the summer of 2020, OJEN conducted a small qualitative study for Justice Canada which examined the impact of serious legal problems on 16 to 30 year olds in the Black community in Toronto and Ottawa. This was one of 14 studies conducted across the country to learn more about the legal needs of minority populations throughout Canada.

Partnering with a research team from Calibrate Solutions, OJEN reached out to various community organizations, distributed a survey, and conducted four small focus groups. Study participants shared stories of their experiences encountering legal problems, the ways they dealt with them and the outcomes of their efforts. The results provide a window into the complex ways in which legal problems impact the lives of racialized urban youth.

The most common type of legal problems were experiences of discrimination in public settings (48%), issues with housing (44%), police contact (40%), and employment (36%). While the experiences that the study participants shared varied in substantive area, severity, and complexity, all of the participants saw race, social privilege and economic opportunity as fundamental to how they navigated legal issues and why they faced legal problems.

Contributing to the study allowed youth in communities we work with regularly to give voice to their experiences with the justice system and potentially make an impact on government policy.

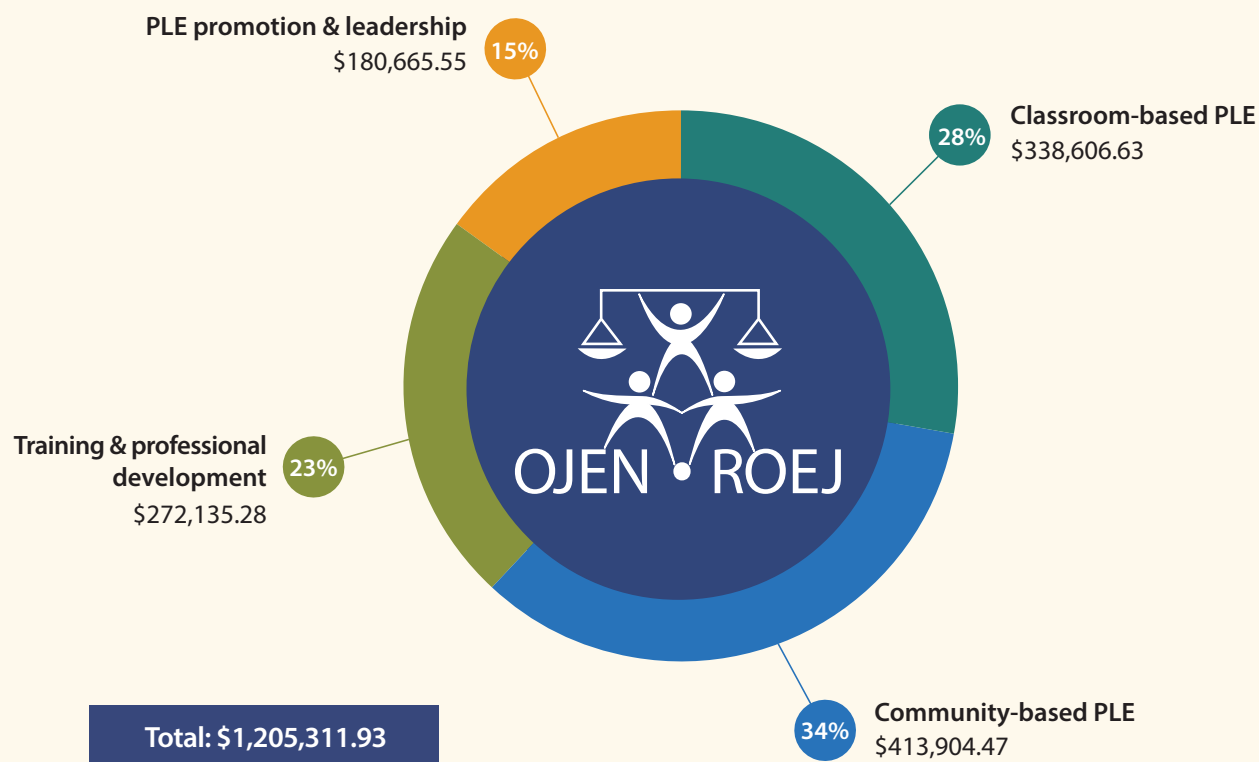


This study was a great opportunity to learn more about the legal needs of a specific group of youth, so that we can design better, more responsive public legal education initiatives. OJEN staff have developed new pilot programs which focus on the most common legal problems surfaced by the youth. We plan to offer these workshops not only to the youth who participated in the study, but to any community partners interested in hosting the programs.

— Jessica Reekie, Executive Director, OJEN



How we spent our funding in 2020



We are grateful for the generous support of the many individuals who have donated to OJEN throughout the past year. Special thanks to the Herbert family and friends who continue to support our activities with Tate’s Tableaux.

Funders

OJEN is funded by grants from: The Law Foundation of Ontario, the Ontario Trillium Foundation, Department of Justice Canada, Department of Canadian Heritage, the Ontario Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, the Ontario Bar Association, the Ontario Bar Association Foundation, the City of Toronto, and Crime Prevention Ottawa.



OJEN Award Recipients

OJEN's annual awards honour outstanding leadership in justice education.

Chief Justices' Award

Jamie Glass

Teacher - Middlefield Collegiate Institute

Hux-Kiteley Exemplary Justice Educator Award

Rita Gravina

Teacher - Bishop Strachan School

Tate Herbert Post-Secondary Volunteer Award

Miscia Sullivan

Student - Osgoode Hall Law School

OJEN Staff

Jessica Reekie

Executive Director

Raras Azzahra

Digital Communications Associate

Renaë Bruce

Finance & Administration Manager

Mara Clarke

Program Developer

Nadine Demoe

Communications Manager

Thomas Gallezot

Project Leader

Emisoné Kadiri

Senior Program Manager

Kristy Pagnutti

Program Manager

Nat Paul

Director of Educator Support

Marc Rainford

Project Leader

Bryn Rieger

Project Leader

Simone Samuels

Director of Outreach Programs

Michelle Thompson

Manager of Legal and Digital Development

Directors & Officers

Justice Lois Roberts

appointee of the Chief Justice of Ontario

Justice Katrina Mulligan

appointee of the Chief Justice of the Ontario Court of Justice

Leigh Macdonald

appointee of the Ontario History and Social Science Teachers' Association

Paul Saguil

appointee of The Law Foundation of Ontario

Gina Papageorgiou

appointee of the Law Society of Ontario

Simone Bern

appointee of Legal Aid Ontario

Beverly Leonard

appointee of the Ministry of the Attorney General of Ontario

John Adair

appointee of OJEN

Halime Celik

appointee of OJEN

Jan Haskings-Winner

appointee of OJEN



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