

2021

Annual Report



Executive Director's Message

Despite the challenges brought on by a second year of COVID-19, OJEN's justice education programs continued to reach thousands of youth throughout Ontario in 2021.

Thanks to the support of our amazing partners and volunteers, we were able to meet the public legal education needs of diverse youth audiences. After adapting many of our core programs for virtual delivery in 2020, we took full advantage of technology to reach youth across the province. We developed innovative engagement strategies that kept workshops interactive, informative and fun, even though they all took place remotely.

OJEN's justice education initiatives are designed to introduce young people to the legal system and foster connections with justice sector professionals. They provide young people with the legal life skills necessary to navigate the various legal issues they may encounter in their lives. OJEN meets young people where they are most comfortable. Our school-based initiatives support the high school curriculum while our community outreach addresses the interests and concerns of youth living in vulnerable environments. While most of our programs are youth-focused, we also support the teachers and adults who work with youth by providing them with professional development opportunities.

In this annual report we highlight a few successful programs in each of our 4 areas of operation:

- School-based justice education initiatives
- Community-based justice education initiatives
- Training & professional development for adults who work with youth
- PLE leadership and justice education promotion

Although we're shining the spotlight on only one program from each area, OJEN ran hundreds of workshop sessions for young people, teachers, youth workers, and legal professionals throughout 2021.

As we prepare for our 20th anniversary in 2022, we are proud of everything we have accomplished so far with the extraordinary support of so many friends. We are also excited for our future. Our staff and Board of Directors are currently in the process of creating a strategic plan that will guide us to our 25th anniversary in 2027. I look forward to sharing it with everyone soon and invite all of you to join us for OJEN's next chapter.

Jessica Reekie
Executive Director



OJEN turns 20 in 2022! Please donate to our 20th Anniversary fund.
Empower youth to build their legal capability.

Together 180



“ As a participant in the Together 180 program it made me more aware of my mental health and how to advocate for my rights. [Now], as a Youth Leadership Team Project Officer it is nice to know how I can use my experience to help others.

*Former Together 180 Participant,
now a Youth Leadership
Team Member*

OJEN's community-based programs respond to the needs and interests of marginalized, racialized youth and youth living in vulnerable environments. OJEN's popular Youth-Police Dialogues (YPD) and Navigating Police Encounters (NPE) were developed as a result of frequent requests for programming that addresses youth concerns about police relations. These multi-session experiential programs give youth practical information about policing practices and one's rights when interacting with police. At the same time, they develop key legal life skills such as communication and advocacy. Adapting the in-person format for online delivery allowed us to continue to meet the demands for these programs throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Together 180 builds on the success of the YPD and NPE programs and expands to a new youth audience. It addresses the unique needs and circumstances of youth involved in the justice system. While maintaining the emphasis on skill building, youth also receive information they can use post-custody to navigate the law-related challenges they may encounter. This includes information about securing housing and employment. They also learn where to access reliable public legal information and assistance, and community-based support.

2021 Activity Highlights



Partnered with **15** community organizations to deliver **34** Navigating Police Encounters workshop sessions to **376** vulnerable youth



Piloted **16** sessions of Together 180 for youth in custody or on parole

Virtual Courthouse Visits



“ ... attending court in person always makes for one of the more memorable days of the semester. However, for the time being, I was glad to be able to offer the students a window into the actual courtroom and what criminal proceedings are like during the pandemic.

Teacher – Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board

The cornerstone program of OJEN's Courtrooms & Classrooms initiatives is the Courthouse Visit program. For many of the thousands of students who visit local courthouses annually, this is their first glimpse of a courtroom and the first time they see lawyers, judges and court staff in action. Many courthouses make class visits even more meaningful by offering tours or arranging question and answer sessions with judges and lawyers. Although the COVID-19 pandemic made in-person courthouse visits impossible, several local OJEN committees found inventive ways to offer them virtually.

Committees throughout the province established protocols for teachers to book virtual courtroom sessions by Zoom. Whenever possible, courts found ways to accommodate school groups, and judges and lawyers often made themselves available after the proceeding to speak to the classes. In Sault Ste. Marie, the Algoma committee offered students real-time virtual tours of their historic courthouse. Hosted by members of the Court Services Division, tours included visits to the cells, judicial chambers and one of the largest courtrooms. Judges, justices of the peace, lawyers, mediators and special constables, made special appearances to describe their roles and answer questions from the online audience.

2021 Activity Highlights



2,617 students had a classroom visit by a justice sector volunteer



2000 grade 5 students participated virtually in the Durham Courthouse Law Day activity

Webinar/Podcast Archives



“ ... a great new tool. I could watch the one seminar that I missed from last year. I am looking forward to using it for this year’s institute... to go back to resources.

Attendee from 2021 Summer Law Institute

Providing quality professional development for high school law and civics teachers has always been a priority for OJEN. The Summer Law Institute (SLI) for teachers is OJEN’s longest running program.

This two-day annual event gives high school teachers information on some of the most important legal issues of the day by the law professionals involved in them. The SLI was reinvented as a webinar series when the COVID-19 pandemic made the in-person event impossible.

Although we miss the opportunities for in-person networking, the webinar format makes our SLI presentations more accessible to teachers throughout the province. Taking accessibility one step further, OJEN has now created an archive on our website where past SLI webinars are posted. Teachers can access these presentations at their convenience as either webinars or podcasts. The archive currently contains 20 webinars on topics including: a step-by-step demonstration of how to deliver a Steps to Justice workshop, areas of law that impact a students’ education outcomes, our popular annual presentation of the Top Five cases of the previous year and many others.

2021 Activity Highlights



Published **39** electronic newsletters that were distributed to **4760** subscribers



Produced **20** professional development webinars for teachers and teacher candidates

Guidelines for better legal workshops



“ This was an excellent webinar with first rate speakers: helpful and engaging content; clear slides; and highly relevant, useful and practical information. If you had requested a rating, I would have said 5 stars (out of 5, of course). Many thanks!

Workshop participant

20 years of experience delivering Public Legal Education (PLE) to young people and the adults who work with them, has given OJEN a tested and nuanced approach to successful workshop design. In October of 2021, OJEN partnered with the Public Legal Education Association of Canada (PLEAC) to co-host a 90 minute webinar entitled Guidelines for Better Legal Workshops: best practices for effective public legal education presentations.

As part of Access to Justice Week programming, the workshop was directed at members of the legal community, including lawyers, paralegals and others, who were new to PLE or interested in improving their presentation skills. OJEN's experienced public legal education professionals shared practical tips and strategies they use to make PLE workshops relevant, useful and engaging.

The live webinar qualified for 1 hour of EDI Professionalism Content from the Law Society of Ontario, and the recording is available on the OJEN website along with a presentation summary.

Access to Justice Week is an annual initiative of The Action Group on Access to Justice (TAG) and supported by the Law Society of Ontario and The Law Foundation of Ontario.

2021 Activity Highlights

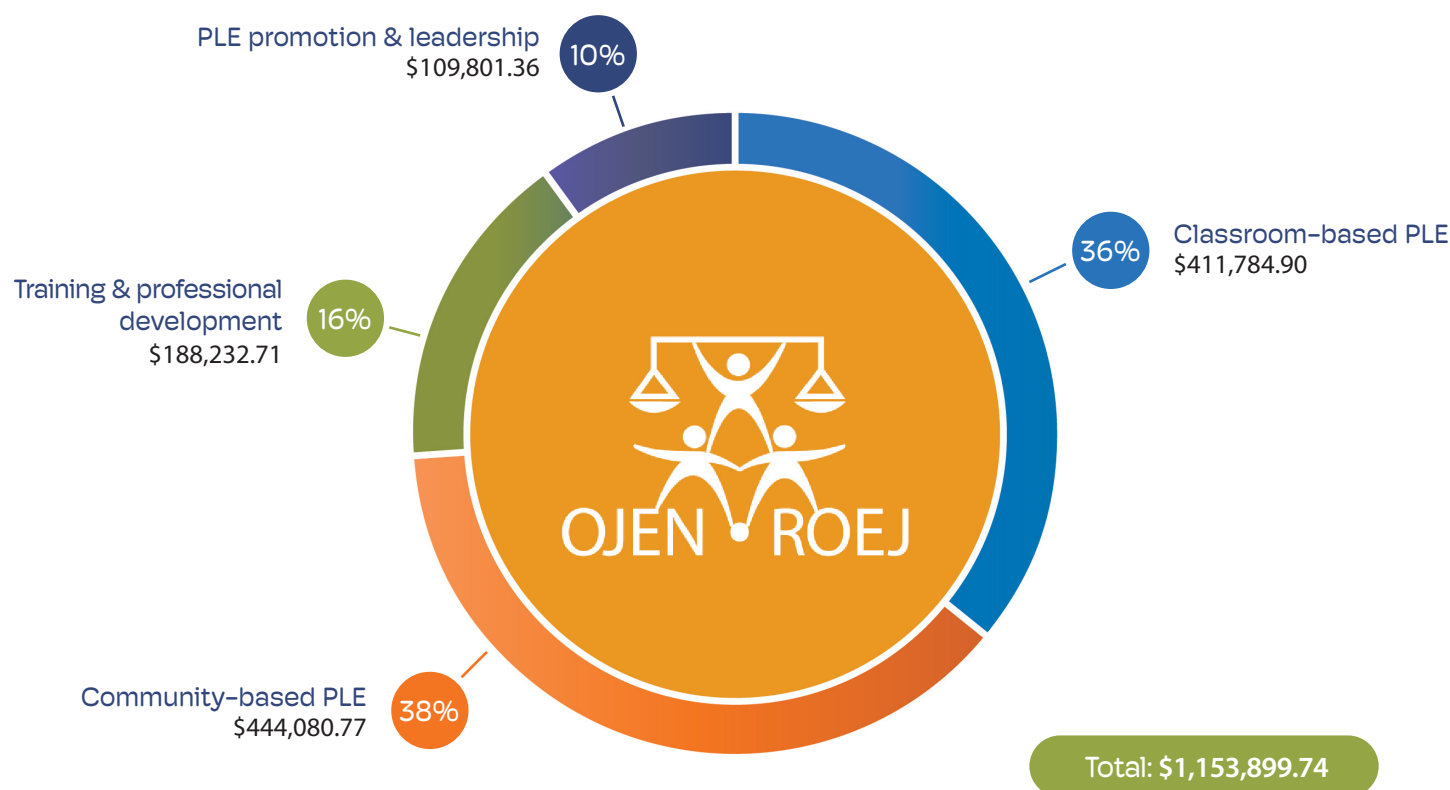


170 legal professionals attended Guidelines for Better Legal Workshops webinar



Delivered 85 workshop sessions to racialized and marginalized youth

How we spent our funding in 2021



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 Bar Association, the Ontario Bar Association Foundation and Crime Prevention Ottawa.



OJEN Award Recipients

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

Chief Justices' Award

Justice Nancy Kastner (OCJ)
Ontario Court of Justice

Hux-Kiteley Exemplary Justice Educator Award

Kim Wilson
Teacher (retired) - Halton District School Board

Tate Herbert Post-Secondary Volunteer Award

Nemee Bedar
Student - University of Ottawa Faculty of Law

OJEN Staff

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Executive Director

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Marc Rainford
Project Leader

Bryn Rieger
Project Leader

Michelle Thompson
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Directors & Officers

John Adair
appointee of OJEN

Simone Bern
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Marc Boissonneault
appointee of the Ministry of the Attorney General

Halime Celik
appointee of OJEN

The Hon. Breese Davies
appointee of the Superior Court of Justice (Co-Chair)

Luis Filipe
appointee of OJEN

The Hon. Ferhan Javed
appointee of the Ontario Court of Justice

Leigh MacDonald
appointee of the Ontario History & Social Science Teachers' Association (Co-Chair)

Geoff Pollock
appointee of the Law Society of Ontario

The Hon. Julie Thorburn
appointee of the Court of Appeal for Ontario

Paul Saguil
appointee of the Law Foundation of Ontario (Treasurer)

Diane Vautour
appointee of OJEN



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