

A
PROPOSAL
FOR AN
HONOR GROUP IN EDMONTON

Submitted by:

The Canadian Native Friendship Centre
Division of Alcoholism, Department of Public Health
Edmonton Welfare Council

NOVEMBER, 1965

A PROPOSAL FOR AN HONOR GROUP IN EDMONTON

PURPOSE

An honor group is an effort to bring existing social agency services to bear on a particular problem situation relating to the minor recidivist alcoholic offender.

A pilot project is proposed since it is a recognized fact that newcomers to the urban scene, particularly people of native ancestry, provide a serious court problem. It is hoped that this demonstration project will bring existing agencies within the community into contact with the newcomer at a point in time when the most constructive efforts at settlement can be made. It is felt that the earlier this can be accomplished, the better is the prognosis for a successful adjustment to the urban scene. Since the first contacts for many newcomers with the larger society in the urban area is through the courts, the establishment of an Honor System to which these persons can be remanded will provide a contact point for agencies to meet the people who need the services which are already available within the city.

HISTORY

With the establishment of the position of court worker by the Canadian Native Friendship Centre various efforts and methods were tried to develop a meaningful service for the native person in the court situation. With experience it proved impossible for a single court worker to constructively handle any significant number of cases. Mr. Shank, then

the court worker and presently the Acting Executive Director of the Canadian Native Friendship Centre, became aware of a project which had been tried with recidivist alcoholics in the United States known as the Honor Court System. This system has provided the only significant breakthrough in the treatment of the recidivist alcoholic within the past few years. It was instituted by a judge of the Municipal Court in Des Moines, Iowa who has reported significant results. Since that time the system has been tried in almost fifty courts throughout the United States with considerable success. For example, in Denver, Colorado the arrest rate had dropped considerably since a variation of this system has been in operation, from a total of 18,000 arrests in one year to a total of 12,000 arrests in a recent year. A significant amount of this reduction can be assigned to the operation of the Honor Court system in that city.

Since alcohol problems made up a great number of arrests with newly arrived natives in the city, the Canadian Native Friendship Centre approached the Division of Alcoholism of the Department of Public Health, Government of Alberta, to ask their help in investigating the possibilities of using this kind of a system within the Edmonton court system. The Division of Alcoholism, upon investigation, determined that this is a project which should receive their full support and thus agreed to co-sponsor such a project with the Canadian Native Friendship Centre. Further involvement of other agencies within the community was felt to be necessary to make this a successful bridge between the individual who required services, and the agencies available. For this reason Mr. Clark of the Edmonton Welfare Council was asked to assist in the investigation into the possibilities of this project.

Under Mr. Clark's chairmanship a meeting was called of certain member agencies of the Edmonton Welfare Council -- this project was discussed and it was agreed by this group that the project was not only a worthwhile one but should be vigorously pursued by those involved. A meeting was arranged with a group of magistrates from various courts within the Edmonton area who accepted the idea in principle and offered use of one of the courts as a pilot project, pending approval of the Attorney General's Department. The judge of one court has agreed to use his court room and co-operate in any way possible with the Honor Group system.

HYPOTHETICAL CASE HISTORY

In order to demonstrate the application of this Honor Group to the Edmonton area, a hypothetical case has been prepared. The agencies which will be involved have been listed in the right-hand column at the point they offer their services. All of these agencies have agreed to take part.

John Newcomer, arrives in the city with but limited)
funds and little, if any experience in an urban area, looking)
for work. Since many newcomers headquarter in low income)
areas and the least expensive rentals are to be found there,)
John Newcomer settles in this area. For any one of a number)
of reasons, cultural, social or other, John Newcomer is)
arrested for disturbing the peace, drunk and disorderly or)
other alcohol-related charges, and jailed.)

At this point the usual process of arrest, jail,)

court and sentence, is interrupted. He is)
interviewed by a screening board composed of)
a representative of the Canadian Native Friend-) Canadian Native
ship Centre as well as other appropriate agen-) Friendship Centre
cies. His record indicates he is an appropri-)
ate person to take part in the Honor Group. The)
purposes are explained to him and he is given) Probation
the option of going up for regular sentencing)
or taking part in the Honor Group. Upon)
acceptance of the Honor Group offer, the pre-)
siding magistrate is so informed and remands)
John for sentence on his own recognizance for)
a period of thirty days. John is then taken)
along with those others who have been accepted)
into the Honor Group that morning to a nearby)
room where he is informed as to the purposes)
and suggested recommendations and/or regulations)
of the Honor Group. At this point John is given) Y.M.C.A.
the opportunity to shave, shower and discuss the) Y.W.C.A.
problems he faces with an Honor Group represent-) Canadian Native
ative. Transportation is then provided to a) Friendship Centre
place where he can receive clothing if necessary)
and then to where he will be staying. In other) Indian Affairs Branch
words, the problems which have nagged at John) Dept. Public Welfare
since he arrived in town and perhaps had some)
causitive factors in causing him to turn to) City Welfare

drinking to forget these problems, are cared)
for immediately -- problems such as lodging,)
meals, clothing and pocket money.)

John Newcomer attends the first meet-)
ing of the Honor Group occurring after his in-)
duction into this organization and at that meet-)
ing is exposed to the urban society and the)
resources available within that society to help)
him settle comfortably into a producing role.)
The meeting is chaired by a former graduate of)
the Honor Group who has maintained his interest)
and representatives of various agencies are)
introduced, giving short talks on their special-)
ities, members of AA tell their stories and)
former graduates of the Honor Group provide)
support to the new member. A host organization)
provides refreshments for John and the rest of)
the group.

United Church Women

Catholic Women's
League

I.O.D.E.

Junior League

etc.

Alcoholics Anonymous

A lack of a job is one of John's major)
problems so a representative of the National)
Employment Service talks to him, informally, and)
then suggests that John come to see him the next)
day in his office. The informal give and take)
of the social situation, somewhat structured)
to provide opportunity for intermingling of the)

National Employment
Service

various groups, gives John a feeling of know-)
ing the people that he is going to see in their) Family Service
offices the following day. The native person) Association
from long experience with Government agencies,) Catholic Charities
usually sees the person on the other side of the)
desk as an authoritative figure, one to be fear-)
ed and placated if possible, not one to com-)
municate with. It is believed that this in-)
formal interchange will go a long way toward)
changing this attitude of the native person.)

At the end of the thirty day remand period John appears in front of the court with a representative of the Honor Group to speak for him and then sentence is passed. Assuming that John has made a satisfactory adjustment, he has the funds available to pay any fine which may be levied. There is no attempt in this system to relieve the offender of his obligation to society for his breaking of the law, but there is the opportunity for him to understand and accept what is happening to him in the city and to adjust to the point where this sort of thing need not occur again.

John will maintain his association with the Honor Group and with the agencies until such time as he is absorbed into the mainstream of the community and disappears from the roles of the welfare organizations.

What we are attempting to do in this program is to allow the city to successfully absorb these newcomers into the on-going constructive, productive life of the city. We will consider our operation a

success when John disappears from the Honor Group and does not appear again in court or on the roles of the relief agencies.

If John should drop out of the Honor Group before the remand period is over and not appear in court, the usual court procedures are carried through. No individual will be considered again for the Honor Group until three months have elapsed since his last opportunity to use the program.

REQUEST

We, the undersigned, specifically request from the Attorney General's Department approval in principle of this plan. The agencies which are suggesting this plan be instituted will provide the necessary manpower, necessary funding and the necessary facilities. The only exception to this is that there may be some additional work required on these cases by the Probation Department. However, this additional work should be, in the near future, offset by the reduction in the number of repeat offenders.

Canadian Native Friendship Centre
Division of Alcoholism, Department
of Public Health

Edmonton Welfare Council

November 25, 1965
/eg