

Foreword by Professor Howard Zehr

New Zealand Judge Fred McElrea, now retired, has been a prominent advocate of New Zealand's youth justice system but also of restorative justice more broadly, in New Zealand and internationally. This wide-ranging collection of his papers offers important insight into New Zealand's approach but beyond that, contributes significantly to the larger field of restorative justice.

I first encountered New Zealand's innovative and essentially restorative system for youth during a speaking tour there in 1994. I immediately realized the inspiration it could offer to us in North America and through the organization for which I then worked – Mennonite Central Committee – arranged to itinerate Judge McElrea and Matt Hakiha, a youth justice practitioner, throughout the US and Canada. This trip helped introduce the possibility of a restorative, community-focused justice system to the wider world. Since then Judge McElrea has spoken and consulted in many communities internationally and contributed to numerous publications.

While Judge McElrea readily admits its limitations and challenges, New Zealand's youth justice system offers a practical, community-oriented model for combining the best of the current legal system with a restorative justice approach. He has consistently advocated the use of these and other restorative justice approaches in both youth and adult systems as well as a variety of community settings.

As this suggests, Judge McElrea has been more than a mere proponent of restorative justice; he has been a leading pioneer and critic, seeking to help the field live up to its promises and potential. He was an early advocate for involving the community more broadly than initial restorative justice practices in North America had done. As a lawyer and judge, he has imagined important ways that restorative justice can be applied within the legal system while encouraging a healthier balance of system and community roles.

Fred, as he is known in the restorative justice community, is an innovative thinker whose talks and papers are articulate and thoughtfully prepared. What a gift it is to have them collected in one place, accessible to researchers and practitioners, and easily searched through the excellent "reader/researcher aids" on the website.

I am sure that book publication would have been rewarding, but having these papers available on a website like this is so much more useful. Congratulations to Napier Libraries, David Thompson, and others who made this possible!

– Howard Zehr 23 August 2017, Eastern Mennonite University and Zehr Institute for Restorative Justice