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Considering new approaches to criminal justice reform

Edmonton – Attitudes and practices of criminal justice implementation has improved over the last few decades, but there remains many aspects of the criminal justice system that still require new ways of thinking and implementation.

The [Biennial Alberta Criminal Justice Symposium](#) presented by MacEwan University in partnership with the John Howard Society, will feature a variety of speakers and workshops that will explore current best practices in Canada and the international community.

These include effective rehabilitation, creative correctional practices and evidence-based approaches and practices that significantly prevent criminal behavior or reduce recidivism (re-offending).

The symposium will examine six key themes: mental health, addictions and diversion; prison and correctional reform; multiculturalism and diversity; harm reduction; youth and gangs; and restorative justice/truth and reconciliation.

During the three-day symposium, four graduating sociology students will present their research on topics related to the criminal justice system. They are Kelsey Friesen, Delphine Brown, Danielle Schmidt and Jamie Perrott.

Friesen's research focuses on sexual violence at post-secondary institutions. Although post-secondary institutions foster growth, they are also environments where students experience sexual violence. While sexual violence has always been present in these institutions, it is only recently that sexual violence, along with its impacts, have received closer attention.

Brown's paper examines the context in which legislation and vigilante responses to sex offenders emerge. Her paper explores the relationship between disgust and anger, and responses to sex offenders. The findings in this paper indicate that disgust reactions to sex offenders tend to drive legislation such as memorial and registration laws, whereas anger reactions to sex offenders tend to drive vigilante responses.

Schmidt's research examines recidivism as one of the primary difficulties faced by offenders exiting the correctional system. High rates of recidivism contribute to offenders becoming entrenched in the correctional system.

Perrott's presentation looks at the cases of individuals who are found not criminally responsible on account of mental disorder. While many of these individuals will eventually be granted a conditional discharge, little is known about how they are monitored in a community setting.

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