

Sunshine Coast Elder College

Restorative Justice – September 9 Class

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Restorative Justice Program of the Sunshine Coast



*Healing Harms and
Restoring Relationships
in our Community*

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*We are honoured to be operating within the shíshálh
syiwa and unceded territory of the Squamish Nation*

What is Restorative Justice (RJ)?

In the face of conflict and crime, RJ offers a non-adversarial, non-retributive approach to justice that emphasizes healing for 'victims', meaningful accountability for those who have caused harm, and the involvement of citizens in creating healthier, safer communities.

"I think the (RJPSC) is a great tool. The people involved were very supportive and non-judgmental. I very much appreciate the second chance that was given to me."

• Program Participant

What does Restorative Justice offer?

- An alternative to court
- An opportunity for the 'victim' to be heard by the 'offender', have a say in how harm should be repaired, and gain healing and closure
- An opportunity for the 'offender' to face the consequences of their actions, recognize how they have affected others and repair the harm that has been done
- A way for all parties to receive support from family, friends and colleagues
- A coordinated approach between the community, justice system, police, schools, and agencies
- Information, resources and support to address root causes of conflict and crime
- Flexibility and sensitivity to provide services in ways that promote cultural safety for Indigenous participants

Our Core Services

Four types of restorative processes are available to all residents, agencies and businesses of the Sunshine Coast. These include:

Community Justice Forums/Circles

A Community Justice Forum is a process in which all parties affected by a criminal offence/incident voluntarily participate in a circle with the guidance of two RCMP-trained facilitators. They discuss the incident, uncover impacts and develop an agreement to repair the harm.

Victim Offender Conferences

The VOC process is in-depth, often taking a longer period of time, and requiring additional training and resources. Facilitators meet with victims and offenders separately when there is not comfort to meet face to face, sharing messages and insights as both parties work towards an agreement to repair the harm.

Community Accountability Panels

A Community Accountability Panel is used in cases where a crime impacts the community at large and the victim is not willing or able to participate directly but supports a restorative approach. Panel members support offenders in repairing the harm caused by their actions.

Peacemaking Dialogue Circles

A Peacemaking Dialogue Circle is a carefully constructed process of communication, designed to create a safe space for all voices. Through structured elements, participant interaction is organized for maximum understanding, empowerment and connection, while maintaining a sense of positive possibilities to resolve differences.

How can I access RJPSC Services?

It's easy to make a referral! We accept cases by phone, email, or through our online contact form. Referrals come from:

- RCMP, and other justice agencies
- Partner restorative justice programs
- Schools in SD 46
- Communities and businesses
- Self-referrals
- People who have experienced harm, seeking a restorative approach

How We Work

First, a trained team meets with each party to explain the options, answer questions, and determine which RJ Process fits. All our work is confidential and we only convene once all parties voluntarily agree to participate. The team follows up on all cases to ensure resolution agreements are fulfilled.

Who is eligible for Referral?

- Cases where the 'offender' understands and regrets the harm done, and is willing to take responsibility for their actions
- First-time 'offenders' (youth or adult)
- People with multiple offenses on a case by case basis
- Category 3 and 4 offences - and some Category 2 offences
- 'Victims' with specific issues, questions and commitment to a restorative approach
- Neighbourhood and community disputes: not necessarily criminal, but could escalate without intervention

About RJPSC

The Restorative Justice Program of the Sunshine Coast is dedicated to offering an alternative method of justice to the traditional court system by promoting the use of restorative practices in dealing with minor offences. Our goal is to maximize social justice for victims, offenders and the community and to minimize further harm caused by the offending behaviour. Results show that offenders participating in restorative practices are less likely to re-offend, building stronger, safer communities.

RJPSC - formerly known as the Community Justice Program of the Sunshine Coast - began in 1998 when RCMP Corporal M. Frizzell recruited volunteers from the community and provided training in Community Justice Forum (CJF) facilitation. By 2004 the Restorative Justice Program incorporated as a non-profit society. Today the program is run by a volunteer Board of Directors that includes representatives from the RCMP, School District No. 46 and the wider community. The program serves the entire Sunshine Coast from Port Mellon to Egmont.

How you can get Involved

- Become a Member
- Use RJ in your own life
- Attend our AGM and public events
- Volunteer with us
- Participate in a training course
- Join our Board of Directors
- Become a Facilitator or Mentor
- Donate
- Share our work with family & friends

Thank you to our Partners:

- District of Sechelt
- Open Door Group – Sechelt and Gibsons
- Royal Canadian Mounted Police
- School District #46
- shíshálh Nation and SIGD
- Sunshine Coast Credit Union
- Sunshine Coast Regional District
- The Province of British Columbia
- Town of Gibsons



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Indigenous Origins of Circles & How Non-Natives Learned About Them

The Circle Processes that many non-Natives are using today is rooted in the tradition of Talking Circles that Indigenous Peoples in North America use and have used for millennia. Different Native Peoples practice different forms of the Circle Process. The form of the Circles described in Living Justice Press books most closely reflects the Talking Circle process practiced by the Plains People of North America. In these traditions, Circles are far more than a technique; they are a way of life. Circles embody a philosophy, principles, and values that apply whether people are sitting in a Circle or not.

During the 1990's, members of First Nations in Canada began teaching the Circle Process to non-Native people. They chose to do this because First Nations Communities were seeking alternatives to mass incarceration of their people, which was – and remains – another form of genocide. Returning to Native ways to resolve conflicts and harms required collaboration with non-Native people: lawyers, prosecutors, judges, as well as non-Native neighbours. In the process, non-Native people experienced the circle process and its power to bring transformation for everyone involved. From these origins, the use of Circles among non-Natives has grown.

Indigenous Origins of Circles & How Non-Natives Learned About Them

Several First Nations contributed to the use of Circles among the non-Natives of Canada and the U.S. The Hollow Water First Nation on Lake Winnipeg has played a critical role in demonstrating the philosophy and power of Circles to address harms in communities. Many non-Natives learned about Circles through their work, especially by reading Rupert Ross's book "Returning to the Teachings: Exploring Aboriginal Justice" (Canada).

In Yukon, Harold and Phil Gatensby, members of the Carcross-Tagish and Danka T'lingit First Nations, and Mark Wedge, a member of the Carcross-Tagish First Nations, have also trained many non-Native people in Circles, especially professionals in the Criminal Justice Systems and in schools. Euro-Canadian Chief Judge Barry Stuart of the Yukon Territorial Court responded positively and became a leading advocate for using Circles among non-Natives. For example, these First Nation Circle Practitioners, along with non-Native Circle trainers, trained the entire staff and many in the community of Roca, Inc., a youth centre outside Boston that works with gang, street, and immigrant youth.

Indigenous Origins of Circles & How Non-Natives Learned About Them

This cross cultural transference that First Nations initiated was spurred by the need to find alternatives to incarceration and to reduce the disproportionate incarceration of Native People. When non-Native People, including People of Colour, experienced the power of the Circle process to address harms and conflicts, they began to use the process with other non-Native People and in other areas of life as well. The Frog-Town Summit University Circle in Saint Paul, Minnesota, for example, operated for many years to keep young African-American men, ages 18-35, out of prison and on a good path.

Using Circles in schools quickly became another major area of use. In Minnesota, Dakota-Ojibwa playwright and scholar, Chuck Robertson was a strong advocate of using Circles with Native and non-Native communities, especially around schools. With his Circle Associate Jamie Williams and Oscar Reed, Dr. Robertson trained and worked with hundreds of educators to bring the Circle Process into school settings.

Indigenous Origins of Circles & How Non-Natives Learned About Them

Because Circles have the capacity to bring people in conflict together in a good way, different Native Communities have, at different times, sought to use the process to resolve differences and conflicts with their non-Native neighbours. The form of process reflects the traditions of each Native People. A form of the Circle Process has been used by Native Elders for several decades in Wyoming, for example, to protect the Bighorn Medicine Wheel from non-Native tourist abuse and violations.

Indigenous Peoples around the world have clearly used processes similar to Circles to attend to the community's work. Circles of stone or wood can be found all over Europe. Some European circular sites date back 5,000 years or more. Though Indigenous forms of Circles have been largely lost, many Indigenous Peoples continue to use Circle-like processes today. We are deeply indebted to those who have carried these traditions into modern times.

Thank you

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