

Preamble

The purpose of this document is to articulate that which guides us in our work, practice, and commitment to restorative justice. The following is a Charter for Practitioners of Restorative Justice that is a living, breathing document – a continuous work in progress. This draft is based on the discussions and contributions of various practitioners in the field of restorative justice in the Province of British Columbia and beyond. We wish to recognize the many tributary streams that fed our dialogues and honour all who have taught us. We respectfully acknowledge that restorative practices strive to embody values and principles that are akin to and informed by holistic peace and justice making processes in many First Nations communities. We gathered as a group with history and experience, not to attempt to set the standard for the field, but to carefully consider the ethics surrounding our personal practice.

A Charter for Practitioners of Restorative Justice

1. Restorative justice is a philosophy, a way of life based upon living in right relationship with one another within community. We pledge to walk with and work with one another upholding restorative principles and values.

2. Restorative justice approaches begin with a redefinition of crime: *crime is harm done to persons*. In these approaches crime and conflict are seen, fundamentally, as violations of people and interpersonal relationships which create obligations and liabilities. It follows, therefore, that justice will seek to heal, to the greatest degree possible, people and relationships, and to fulfil the obligations which exist.

3. We seek to provide service that equally values the intrinsic human worth of those who have been harmed, those that have caused harm and the communities to which they belong. As restorative justice practitioners, therefore, we pledge to practice in such a way as to create meaningful opportunities for:

- those who have suffered harm to be involved, have voice and seek healing,
- those individuals that have caused harm to fulfil their obligations and,
- communities to find ways of mending and reweaving what has been torn in the fabric of the community through crime and conflict.

4. We will strive always to engage in processes that are principled in restorative ways, while endeavouring to live our lives as examples of these values and principles.

Statement of Principles and Values

5. Restorative practices and actions are guided by restorative principles and values. Our actions are guided by: caring and compassion, equality, healing, responsibility, truth and honesty, justice, inclusion, trust, safety, respect, non-judgement, self-awareness and integrity, flexibility, empathy, the interconnectedness of community, courage, humility, wellness, confidentiality, listening and sharing, peace, empowerment and self-determination.

6. We will challenge one another to be personally accountable to these values and this way of life, by welcoming feedback and ideas and by continuously examining our practices and actions. Our actions as practitioners will model the processes, values and behaviours we wish to elicit from those who participate in these processes.

7. We believe that the values and principles are an affirmation of what we aspire to in all of our relationships and interactions; they are important components of living and practicing restoratively.

8. Borrowing from the Hippocratic Oath, we too assert;
'First, do no further harm.'

9. We will endeavour to be aware of the potential harm in our practices for participants, including the community, and to always work towards healing harm.

10. We will invite full, informed and voluntary participation of all. This empowers all participants to be involved in the process, and allows for all voices and concerns to be heard. We acknowledge peoples' different capacities to engage in restorative processes, and seek, wherever possible, to support them to build their own capacities.

11. We will facilitate processes which seek to heal what has been broken, which honour the wisdom of the participants, which create opportunities for learning and which increase the hope for prevention of further harm.

12. We acknowledge that the impact of our actions can have unintended effects on participants. We will work respecting the limits of our competencies. We commit:

- to attempt to anticipate situations that may take us beyond our current training and expertise;
- to consult with our peers and mentors;
- to invite and carefully consider feedback of participants and;
- to engage in personal programs of continuous learning and development.

13. We value diversity. We encourage communities and all involved in restorative approaches to speak of their needs, and endeavour to create the safety needed for them to do so.

14. We will facilitate decision-making processes that are based on consensus, both in our practice and in the operation of our organizations. Consensus will be built in consultation with those affected by the decisions.

15. We recognize the importance of social justice issues in matters of crime and conflict. We acknowledge that no one agency or practitioner can meet all needs. We, therefore, will work collaboratively with other agencies and individuals in an effort to encourage and facilitate holistic responses.

16. We will encourage and support both symbolic and practical resolutions and reparations which are significant and meaningful to the participants and which are linked directly to the harm done.

17. We recognize the need for a caring, supportive community because of the inherent struggles along this path. We pledge to support one another, and to seek the support of our colleagues when faced with our limitations.

18. We recognize our obligation to ourselves, our communities and our co-workers to maintain our own mental, physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing. We will work with others in the field, respecting confidentiality, to debrief and nurture ourselves. We will endeavour to achieve balance in our lives, and model wellness to the community.

19. Finally, we recognize that restorative ends cannot be achieved by retributive means. In restorative justice, the process is as important as the outcome.

Signatories:

Alana Abramson*
Catharine Bargaen*
Sandi Bergen*
Dyan Burnell*
Meredith Egan*
Liz Elliott*
David Gustafson*
Deborah Hale*
Brenda LeClair*
Katrina Montano
Anna McCormick*
Jane Osborne*
Melissa Ouelette*
Alan Patola Moosmann*
Amy Powter*
Tony Ranada
Lydia Steer*
Jacquie Stevulak*

Eric Stutzman*
Barry Warhaft*

** Indicates participation in original drafting of this Charter*

There are a number of sources that informed our work on the charter. They include:

- Gustafson, David & Sandra Bergen. *Victim Offender Mediation Program: vision and values*. (Community Justice Initiatives, Langley, BC 2002).
- Sharpe, Susan. *Restorative Justice: A vision for healing and change* (Mediation & Restorative Justice Centre, 1998).
- Zehr, Howard & Harry Mika. *Fundamental Principles of Restorative Justice* The Contemporary Justice Review, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1998), 47-55.
- Zehr, Howard. *Changing Lenses* (Herald Press, Scottsdale, PA 1990).
- Zehr, Howard. *The Little Book of Restorative Justice* (Good Books, Intercourse, PA 2002).