

Form: Request to Speak to Committee of Council

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==Committee Requested==

Committee: Emergency & Community Services Committee

==Requestor Information==

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Reason(s) for delegation request:

John Howard Society of Hamilton, Burlington & Area has a 7 year history of providing support, education and advocacy to individuals who identify as Indigenous, Racialized, Newcomer, LGBTQ2S, in conflict with the law, living in low income situations and living with mental health. Agency staffing reflects the diversity of our community and the Centre for Conflict Resolution and Prevention Team includes staff who identify as Black, Indigenous, Jewish, Gay, and Caucasian.

The Hamilton Restorative Justice Collaboration Initiative was designed 12 years ago to make the City of Hamilton a

restorative community aware and responsive to the needs of those harmed and the harmer. This Collaborative was a partnership with Hamilton Police, and the City of Hamilton Recreation and the Board of Education, funded by Trillium Foundation. The goal of the Initiative was to create a city that would allow people to repair harm and restore their connections to community. This 5-year initiative addressed the needs of at risk youth/students with multiple barriers that affected their ability to achieve success in school and the community. All staff were trained in the School Boards (Catholic and Public) and the City of Hamilton Recreation, as well as all the Staff at the John Howard Society of Hamilton. The staff in all the organizations used circles to start their days, to increase communication, to deal with issues with students in a non-punitive way. Formal circles were also used to address systemic and individual conflict in those same areas, including racism and bullying.

After the funding ended, a social enterprise plan was developed through the support of Innoweave. The plan launched the Centre of Conflict Resolution & Prevention (CCR&P) to sustain restorative practices, both training and formal circles, within the Hamilton Community.

Since January 2017 when the Executive Director joined the agency, the John Howard Society was also called upon to further assist with internal conflicts in the Hamilton Community planning teams, that the Executive Director had previously supported when she was a consultant including (Keith neighbourhood) (Gala neighbourhood) (Stinson neighbourhood) (Sherman neighbourhood) (Riverdale neighbourhood) the City of Hamilton Housing (step by step), as well as the Social Planning and Research Council, St. Matthews House, and Kiwanis Housing.

In each of these situations pre-meetings with each individual involved took place to better understand what the problem was, what the impact was, what the people were thinking, and what they needed to make things better. Each pre-meeting was completed by a member of the CCR&P team, and took one hour per individual to complete. After the information was gathered the team who was to facilitate would meet to strategize the best way to address the situation. A formal circle would be planned in a safe neutral space, at a time that worked for all involved. Support people were invited if appropriate including elders, counselors and family members, Food would be available for breaks during the time the circle would be completed. Each conflict was then facilitated in a circle and took roughly 5-6 hours, once the pre-interviews were completed. At the end of the process the next steps were shared with all involved, and follow up was planned as required.

Common to each situation regardless of the location or compliment of the group included issues of; racism, sexism, heterosexism, bullying, abuse including; power and control issues within the groups and organizations. Many of the individuals benefitted from an understanding of privilege and power, and receiving the tools to problem solve and deal with the arising issues and conflict. All sessions provided were delivered through an anti-oppressive lens. Systemic oppression was discussed as well as white/heterosexual privilege, racism, and colonization.

Restorative practices were utilized, which included education, formal and informal circles, mediations and teaching the planning teams how to utilize the tools of restorative practice and positive communication.

The process also allowed all involved to speak their truths, be heard, and learn new skills to avoid future conflicts, and to change some of their thinking errors.

Since January 2017 anti-oppressive training and restorative practice skill development has been taught by John Howard Society of Hamilton to a variety of groups, with many different individuals including multiple trainings on Six Nations and New Credit Reserve, City of Hamilton, McMaster University, Wilfred Laurier University, Mohawk College, CORE Collaborative, Grand Valley Women's Prison, Syl Apps Youth Centre, John Howard Society of Ottawa, Legal clinics and John Howard Society of Hamilton.

Restorative Practice is a philosophy, a set of principles and values, a way to view the world. Restorative Practice is about a different way to respond to conflict in an inclusive way in which all people are equal and all are heard and valued. The process takes place in a circle and teaches that people are equal and all have a voice and should be heard. When we combine this philosophy with anti-oppressive practice and look through an anti-oppressive lens we are able to also address the core of the harm which can include racism, sexism, heterosexism, colonization and other isms. Currently the agency is working with Indigenous Partners, the Crown Attorneys, Victim Services and the Police to create An Indigenous Court Process in Hamilton.

Will you be requesting funds from the City? Yes

Will you be submitting a formal presentation? Yes