

Emergency and Community Services Committee

Restorative Practice Presentation

June 6th, 2019

Dear committee members:

Since January 2017, the John Howard Society was called upon to assist with internal conflicts across the city of Hamilton. Issues were identified that included racism, sexism, heterosexism, and power and control issues. The residents did not appear to have the necessary tools to problem solve and deal with the arising issues and conflict. Restorative practices were utilized, which included formal circles and teaching the planning teams how to utilize the tools of restorative practice and positive communication in each meeting in order to build welcoming communities. The process also allowed the harmed and the harmer to learn new skills to avoid future conflicts. The hope was that the individuals would continue to work in the planning teams but in a much healthier fashion. The planning teams did not always appear welcoming to others and many from diverse and disenfranchised communities did not join the planning teams. Restorative Practice skill development has been utilized in a variety of groups, with many different individuals including multiple trainings on Six Nations and New Credit Reserve. The skills can be used at a personal, group, or community level.

The John Howard Society is connected in all areas of the city and are involved with many disenfranchised individuals, including those living in social housing; who are experiencing homelessness; those in risk or conflict with the law; as well as those we work with in the schools, community centres, service clubs, community planning groups, libraries, at festivals, and at court. Through these relationships, we are able to connect with the most disenfranchised groups and help them reach their individual and group goals. Our clients have lived through many challenges and overcome numerous barriers. Their resiliency has been proven to help them reinvent themselves and to alter and improve their communities. Many have the desire to help others and improve their communities but lack the knowledge, skills and means to achieve their community improvement goals.

An idea that came out of numerous conversations with residents from the Beasley neighbourhood after the recent rise in Islamaphobia was that people did not want to live in fear because of their religious and cultural differences. We spoke about their desire to find likeminded residents and try to break down the barriers of fear and tension with all religions and backgrounds in their neighbourhoods. One of the John Howard volunteers had talked about a program he was involved in called the Welcome Table. This program was originated by the

Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation in Mississippi. The goal was to end division and discrimination based on difference and to talk candidly and constructively about race. By emphasizing storytelling the program creates a safe space for interracial multicultural dialogue that is solution oriented. It promotes equity and inclusion, helping communities forge meaningful and collaborative relationships built on trust. The parents and youth we worked with in Beasley Neighbourhood who were newcomers spoke about the difficulties of being new immigrants and not knowing how to connect to others and feared retaliation. They also spoke about how amazing it was to live in Canada compared to some of the war torn countries they had come from. We successfully ran the Welcome Table Program and brought 30 people together weekly to discuss their issues concerns and solutions to being disenfranchised and fearful in their community.

This last year we provided training to the Neighbourhood Leadership Institute's resident stream and professional development stream in Restorative Practice. We offered the attendees the opportunity to develop capacity within themselves and their projects to train in Restorative Practice. The John Howard Society's focus on community-based restorative practice educational opportunities aligns with our goal to make Hamilton a restorative city by offering community members the opportunity to:

- 1) learn new skills and strategies to effectively mediate and respond to individuals or groups engaging in conflict. These strategies provide effective responses that prevent unsafe and inappropriate behaviours that may lead to alienation, conflict and lack of community
- 2) assist participants to develop the skills and abilities to become part of the solution of building a more restorative community
- 3) directly link the sharing of expertise in the area of Restorative Practice that maximizes the existing resources available through the community.

Project Rationale

Our agency has a 70-year history of providing support and advocacy to multi-barrier individuals who are indigenous, racialized, newcomer, LGBTQIP2SAA, in conflict with the law, in low income situations and living with mental health. Agency staffing reflects the diversity of our community and we have extensive experience in the start-up of child, youth, family and adult programs and projects including:

The Hamilton Restorative Justice Collaboration Initiative was designed 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 to success in school and the community. After the funding ended, a social enterprise plan was developed through the support of Innoweave. The plan launched the Centre of Conflict Resolution & Prevention to sustain restorative practices within the Hamilton community and expand into other sectors providing training and formal circles within the city including: school conflict with students and staff and administration, universities and colleges, legal clinics, housing and neighbourhoods etc.

John Howard Society has the skills, expertise and desire to continue to make Hamilton a restorative city. We are asking the city of Hamilton to offer financial support to allow us to provide Restorative Practice Training and circles to those in the community that cannot pay for the services, but want to solve conflict in a restorative and meaningful way.

Project Plan

The Restorative Practice Program has the goal of establishing Restorative Practice as an overall philosophy and strategy for the entire City of Hamilton when approaching conflict or responding to behaviour that causes harm. Restorative Practice is not about a specific program. Instead it 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, a way in which all people 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. The principles and values of Restorative Practice need to be at the heart of any program that a community sets up to deal with harm done to others. 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.

The Restorative Practice workers will offer training to any of the groups requesting it. The training would be offered as one day or four day based on the skills, abilities and desires of the group. Once trained, the workers would continue to mentor the residents and offer solution-based problem solving as required. The model is a train-the-trainer model and community members would join the training team when they were ready, if they desired and had the skills and abilities. The facilitators would be available for support and to bring the trained into new training so they could practice their skills. The members would be shown how to open meetings in a way that is inclusive to all and builds on the principles of Restorative Practice and community building.

The residents of the South Mountain, and those in the McQuesten community have currently requested a Welcome Table, to deal with the diversity and tension in their neighbourhoods. With

this grant we would have the means to provide this valuable resource to their communities.. The Welcome Table would provide a safe space where people from different backgrounds can share their stories, their experiences in an effort to build trust and understanding amongst those who participate and reside in the neighborhood

Specifics

The Restorative Justice workers would work within the John Howard Society and be part of the restorative team. . John Howard staff are well connected to communities throughout the city and could use these connections and networks to ensure all interested people would become involved..

John Howard Society would also continue to regularly offer fee for service workshops to staff at legal clinics, shelters, university and colleges, social service agencies, in order to ensure Hamilton was on target for becoming a Restorative City.

Evaluation:

We would ensure that a thorough evaluation would be conducted to ensure community residents were receiving quality training and in order for us to improve the service as required . Collection, submission and analysis of statistics would also be included.

1. XX participants to attend a full day or 4 day training session in Restorative Practice strategies and skill development
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2. 95% of the participants will identify an increase in knowledge in Restorative practice, skills and strategies.

3. 80% of the participants will identify an increase in mediation and strategies to respond conflict
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The John Howard Society of Hamilton, Burlington & Area will share the results of the outcomes through a Final Report, our agency's annual report, JHS Newsletter, Twitter, and Website.

Restorative Practice strategies and skills are inclusive of all cultures, religion, ethnicity, age and gender based on the focus of equity, inclusion and community building. Equally all John Howard Society of Hamilton, Burlington & Area programs and services are designed to be inclusive. Interpretation would be available as required.

Ruth Greenspan