

Restorative Practice and Anti Oppression; John Howard Society of Hamilton, Burlington & Area

1)Background

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 all 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.

2)Team Composition

This team assigned to this project consists of:

Garth Bell, Restorative Practice Lead in Brantford, Six Nations and New Credit Reserves. IIRP Trained, trainer and Facilitator as well as Peace Building trainer and facilitator. He has Trained approximately 12, 000 people in Restorative Practice, in North America, and has been keynote speaker at numerous restorative conferences around North America. Garth has facilitated over 1000 formal circles. Lead in Restorative Justice for the Agency, setting up the Restorative Practice Program in Hamilton 12 years ago.

Garth identifies as: Black and Indigenous. He identifies as male and heterosexual. He is a parent, in his mid-50s; his experiences are influenced by growing up in Hamilton North End, playing professional, semiprofessional sports, and having Lincoln Alexander as his uncle and role Model.

Ruth Greenspan, Executive Director of the John Howard Society of Hamilton, Burlington and Area. Social Worker holding an MSW since 1988, Teacher and Facilitator at Mohawk College in the Social Service Worker Program for 19 years.

Identifies as; female, Jewish, and heterosexual. She is a parent of 3 bi-racial children, in her mid-50's; her experiences are influenced by growing up in a working class family in Niagara Falls, with a father who escaped the Holocaust and fled from Poland. She has worked a great deal in the community to counter violence against women and children and racism. She has been very active in the last few years to combat the up rise of fascisms in the world and the country and Hamilton.

3)Anti-Racism, Anti-Oppression

The issues of racism and anti-oppression are woven into the work of the John Howard Society of Hamilton. Upon Ruth's arrival at the John Howard Society the Diversity, Equity and Inclusivity Committee was created with staff and Management. This committee meets monthly to look at internal issues including changing the culture of the agency so it is more diverse and inclusive. The recruitment of new Board members has included a diversity and skills matrix which was not utilized before. Changing the Composition of the Board to reflect the community we serve is an ongoing goal. Currently the Board and staff are working on a Strategic Plan that addresses working on Diversity, Equity and Inclusivity. Staff training in the last 2 years has included; Indigenous Training, Safe Space Training, Mental Health First Aid, Naloxone Training, Human Trafficking Training, LGBTQ2S Training, and Trans Training. The Agency is involved as one of the organizers in the "No Hate in the Hammer Campaign", and will be facilitating workshops at the October 4th Gandhi Peace March Educational Session.

Restorative Practice puts its energy into the future not into what is past. It focuses on what needs to be healed, what needs to be repaid, what needs to be learned in the wake of a crime. It looks at what needs to be strengthened if such things are not to happen again."

With restorative Practice we help people get to a good mind , and we meet people where they are at.

4) Process and Format

Training identifies formal restorative mediation process, strategies, skills and underlying philosophy of Restorative Practice through an anti-oppressive lens. Skills are learned in the area of community building, active listening, understanding assumptions and presumptions, restorative language and questions. Provides the participants with skills, knowledge and strategies to prevent or assist in resolving conflict and to build a stronger community. This four day training provides applied learning, role playing

and facilitation of informal and formal circle conferences to increase skills in facilitation and practice. All aspects of the training are transferable to all employments and life.