

**Restorative Conversations: Talking about Restorative Approaches and Gender Based Violence
in Nova Scotia**

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PART 1: Project Summary

Introduction

Nova Scotia has a unique history taking a restorative approach to justice, having established a comprehensive restorative justice program for youth in 2000 that allows for multiple referral entry points; and that recently expanded access to this program to adults in 2016.

Additionally, Nova Scotia has supported the development of a robust community of practice in schools, with over 120 schools using a restorative approach in school settings to both build community and support disciplinary responses that allow effective reintegration of students. Supporting this is an active Academy examining this through the lens of relational theory. Led by Professor Jennifer Llewellyn, the Schulich School of Law has been the nexus for an international learning community engaging scholars from New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Australia, and the United States to consider the role of a restorative approach grounded in relational theory to build sound public policy to address complex problems.

However, there remain gap areas in this work with respect to access to these processes for victims of gendered violence, an area where active and engaged victim support and advocacy work is the strongest. With a moratorium in place restricting the use of these processes, the only resolution pathways available to support these victims is the formal criminal justice system which struggles to meet their needs. It is important to recognize that this long-standing restriction was based on a commitment to work to ensure best outcomes for victims and concerns that informal community-led models such as the Nova Scotia Restorative Justice Program might not be robust enough to ensure the safety of victims of these crimes.

Organizations working in the field of gendered violence have begun to explore how less offender focused processes might be able to safely play a role in building more meaningful justice for victims of gendered violence, and have begun to seek those places of common ground which focus on the shared awareness that the current criminal justice system does not serve victims well and most especially is not able to meet the justice needs of victims of gendered violence

The opportunity, then to apply for and work with the resources offered through the Department of Justice Canada's Policy Centre for Victim Issues was timely and important

This project embraced the value of these important early conversations and supported them through research and knowledge mobilization, facilitated exploration and asset mapping, and collaborative illumination of principles that need to underlie any action steps of future work in this area.

The Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women (NSACSW) in collaboration with these organizations, supported a broad grouping of community organizations advocating for victims and those offering restorative approaches in a structured exploration of how a restorative approach could support better justice outcomes for victims of gendered violence.

It was also important as well to lift up and more deeply understand the work unfolding in Nova Scotia Aboriginal communities, which have embraced, through a customary law lens, a community accountability process for these gendered violence crimes which has been identified as an asset by the courts.

In developing the approach for this project, focus was placed on three key spheres of action: Research and knowledge mobilization; facilitated dialogue and asset mapping; and collaborative illumination of principles to guide future action and ongoing evaluation.

This was envisioned as a community-led and community-moderated project that would build knowledge and mobilize community organizations; both those that serve victims and those that deliver restorative justice programs.

Partners

Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women (NSACSW)

The NSACSW took on a hosting, convening, and project management role. All capacity investments were made at the community level.

Bridges Institute/ Metro Interagency Restorative Conversations Committee on Family Violence

Bridges Institute is a men's treatment program and key community leader exploring a restorative approach to community-based support for victims of intimate partner violence.

Key project partners were Executive Director Tod Augusta- Scott and researcher Dr. Verona Singer, Co-chair of the Metro Interagency Restorative Conversations Committee on Family Violence.

Be the Peace Institute

Be the Peace Institute is a community-based organization promoting positive social and systemic change toward gender equity through addressing the roots and consequences of gendered violence; and exploring a restorative approach to justice for survivors. Key project partners were Executive Director Sue Bookchin, and research collaborator Dr. Diane Crocker, Saint Mary's University.

Mi'kmaw Legal Support Network

Mi'kmaw Legal Support Network is a nationally recognized Indigenous community justice organization delivering a range of legal support services to indigenous offenders and victims in Nova Scotia. Key project partner was Executive Director Paula Marshall

Professor Jennifer Lewellyn, Project mentor

Professor Llewellyn is the Viscount Bennett Professor of Law, Schulich School of Law, Dalhousie University, and Coordinator of the International Learning Community; a network of scholars examining the theory and practice of a restorative approach in both transitional contexts and established democracies.

Summary of Project Activities

PROJECT WORK PLAN AND SUMMARY REPORT OF OUTCOMES		
Goals		Objectives and Outcomes
1	Facilitated Dialogue	<p>Objective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The engagement of community leaders and organizations serving victims and working in restorative justice is the central focus of the project from which the various knowledge products and outcomes will flow. <p>Outcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This work was led by Bridges Institute. The Metro interagency on family violence co-hosted the dialogue sessions at their monthly meetings throughout the life of the project and Interagency members participated in all wider gatherings hosted by the project.
2	Literature Review and secondary research	<p>Objective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bring forward best practices and important cautions in current research and evaluation findings pertaining to the application of restorative approaches in support of victims of gendered violence. Build knowledge and connect Nova Scotian initiatives with international research, practices and outcomes. <p>Outcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This work was led by Bridges Institute. Dr Verona Singer, Adjunct Professor, Saint Mary’s University was contracted by Bridges institute to conduct the in-depth literature review. This literature review is available in Appendix “A” of this report.
3	Action Research	<p>Objective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating an action-research framework to link these multiple efforts and avenues for exploring best and promising practices and explore what this looks like for Nova Scotia. Maintain fidelity to the centrality of the identified needs of victims and families; a victim-centered approach that restores victims' dignity, agency and voice. Ensure inclusion of diverse stakeholders, including Indigenous, African Nova Scotian, Acadian, LGBTQI, immigrant, and other vulnerable communities.

		<p>Outcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This work was led by Be the Peace Institute. Director Sue Bookchin, working closely with Dr. Diane Crocker, Saint Mary's University. • Extensive in-person interviews were conducted with a wide range of stakeholders and a results examination gathering was hosted to invite feedback on the preliminary results.
4	Indigenous Knowledge Transfer	<p>Objective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capture and share the Customary Law based approaches being developed in Nova Scotia's Mi'kmaq communities that place focus on community led accountability processes. <p>Outcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This work was led by the Mi'kmaw Legal Support Network. • A comprehensive resource guide was developed which captures the Mi'kmaw Justice Circle Processes used by the network. • A summary of this guide can be found in Part One of this report.
5	Asset Mapping	<p>Objective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broaden the scope of this dialogue by capturing through asset mapping the ways in which all of the community entities engaged in the dialogue are engaged in work that encompasses a restorative approach or supports relational principles. • The asset mapping will also illuminate more fully where victim's needs are and what new potential pathways might be developed to serve them more fully through a restorative approach. <p>Outcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This work was led by Be the Peace Institute. • A comprehensive timeline was captured to map the assets present in the work in Nova Scotia to support victims.
6	Collaborative Illumination of Principles	<p>Objective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrive at commonly agreed principles drawing from relational theory and consider how to build upon these principles as a starting point for practice; and how to link these to the fundamentals of a feminist perspective on the needs of victims of gendered violence. • These principles will establish the basis for any forward path or actions to advance new ways to support victims. <p>Outcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This work was led by all partners.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In addition to the monthly explorations hosted through the Metro Interagency Committee, an end of project facilitated session brought shared focus to the elaboration of principles.
7	Knowledge Mobilization	<p>Objective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share what we learn and how to replicate it. • Consider developing a tool or a resource. • Link and amplify successes for knowledge transfer and replication in a variety of criminal justice and community-based settings. <p>Outcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This work was led by all partners and will form part of any next steps ahead. • The key impact of the project on knowledge mobilization was a strengthening of shared knowledge about the principles guiding restorative approaches, and new partnerships and community - system engagements that were forged as an outcome of the monthly explorations; the high quality work products developed; and the very well attended gatherings hosted under the auspices of the project. • Another component of knowledge mobilization was to examine the impact and evaluate the project from the perspective of the project partners. • This collaborative deep dialogue evaluation process was led by Dr. Gabrielle Donnelly, Acadia University.



Mi'kmaw Customary Law Resource Guide
Summary for the Restorative Conversations Project Final Report



“Knowledge of the past will empower our future”

Mi'kmaw Elder Jane Abram

The **Mi'kmaw Legal Support Network (MLSN)** is a community-led Aboriginal Justice agency mandated to provide a wide range of justice support services to Mi'kmaq/ Aboriginal persons and communities. In fulfilling this broad mandate, MLSN's reach encompasses direct service delivery to individuals, community healing supports, and engagement with wider systems to advocate for the equality rights of indigenous persons.

MLSN strives to support and empower all indigenous peoples in Nova Scotia, and to build, rebuild, and strengthen relationships between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples, and engage with the current criminal justice system at every level.

The disproportionate presence and retention of Indigenous people in the justice system has been well established and documented. The effectiveness of a punitive system that disengages the offender from their community and enables disassociation from responsibility does little to discourage recidivism.

To truly address overrepresentation, it is imperative that Indigenous voice and autonomy be given space and authority to flourish. This issue must be resolved with Indigenous people at the table and forefront. Services like MLSN are integral in supporting Indigenous peoples and reducing overrepresentation.

As outlined in the Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Calls to Action¹:

30) We call upon federal, provincial, and territorial governments to commit to eliminating the overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in custody over the next decade, and to issue detailed annual reports that monitor and evaluate progress in doing so.

31) We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments to provide sufficient and stable funding to implement and evaluate community sanctions that will provide realistic alternatives to imprisonment for Aboriginal offenders and respond to the underlying causes of offending.

38) We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to commit to eliminating the overrepresentation of Aboriginal youth in custody over the next decade.

In addition to the complex work of advocacy and working across systems to building protective policies, much of MLSN's day to day work and where its work is most visible to system partners, is through its programs which support individuals in conflict with the law and those who have experienced victimization. In these functions, MLSN is highly engaged with the both the community and the criminal justice system.

Key goals of MLSN's interface with the criminal justice system include:

- Building a partnership and a new relationship between the Criminal Justice System and the Mi'kmaq / First Nations people of Nova Scotia in a staged and progressive manner.
- Promoting improvements in the administration of justice as it affects

Mi'kmaq / Aboriginal people in Nova Scotia through a centralized administrative entity offering direct services.

- Creating and establishing new justice arrangements recognizing the diverse needs, traditions, and cultures of Mi'kmaq / Aboriginal people as they relate to Aboriginal Justice issues; and
- Expanding the awareness of Mi'kmaq / Aboriginal people and educating mainstream justice workers about Mi'kmaw cultures and traditions to build and strengthen the relationship between the judicial system and Mi'kmaq / Aboriginal people in Nova Scotia.

As it works across systems to animate a deeper understanding of what a Mi'kmaw Customary Law approach entails, MLSN has examined and found strong alignment to the principles underpinning restorative approaches. The ancient roots grounding a Customary Law approach have also shaped current understandings of restorative approaches.

Restorative Approaches and Customary Law Approaches are:

- Relationship centered: focused on understanding and promoting interconnections between individuals, groups and communities;
- Comprehensive and holistic: takes into account contexts and causes of harm and its impacts;
- Inclusive and participatory: culturally grounded and trauma informed, attentive to the safety and well-being of participants;
- Responsive: contextual, flexible practice, along with accessible, efficient, and effective processes, informed by data and knowledge;
- Focused on promoting individual and collective responsibility;
- Collaborative and non-adversarial: involves parties to the process and system and community partners; and
- Forward focused: educative (not punitive), problem-solving, preventative, and proactive.

The Customary Law Program, a key program offered by MLSN, provides a range of conflict resolution and community healing processes grounded in the use of circle processes.

Prior to European contact, Mi'kmaw and other Indigenous communities traditionally utilized varying forms of the circle process to address community needs and justice concerns. This can be traced back historically to when the Mi'kmaq Grand Council governed the seven districts of Mi'kmaki. "Indigenous societies have practiced legal pluralism in various forms well before the arrival of European settlers and colonists. These systems of law governed the conduct and behavior of individuals in relation to the land, as well as towards other members of the society."ⁱⁱ

The circle concept is inherent to the cultural fabric of the Mi'kmaw and is reflective of their traditional communal practices. Other traditional practices accommodated by the sentencing circle process include spirituality, smudging ceremonies, prayers, grassroots consultation, and participation in decision-making leading to community consensus and shared responsibility.

Indigenous legal traditions are unwritten sacred beliefs and traditions that are passed on orally through the generations. The values, beliefs, and understandings of law are embedded within these devices and stories, and are emanated through the continuing practices, customs, and traditions of the society. This reality illustrates a fundamental principle about law and its institutions: that the existence of law is distinct from its institutional form.ⁱⁱⁱ

The purpose of a justice response using a circle process in Aboriginal societies is not to punish, but rather to restore the peace and equilibrium within the community, and to reconcile the accused with his or her own conscience as well as the individual or family who has been wronged.

Indigenous elders play a central role in cultural, traditional, and spiritual practices. Elders carry wisdom and teachings that support the community and all members. The presence of elders throughout the circle process is sacred: they are a vital part of the circle process.

The return to traditional communal practice, the responsibility of the community in committing to the process, the empowering experiences afforded various community members, and the community-led rehabilitation of offenders all serve to heal and empower Indigenous people.

For those who have never experienced or been exposed to the process of circles, questions of why and what is the value of it may be asked. The use and meaning of a circle in Mi'kmaw and Indigenous culture is not new. It existed long before colonization, and it continues to be an important part of life and community. Circles allow for people to express themselves in a safe space with support, and for underlying issues to be addressed so forgiveness, healing, compassion, understanding, peace, growth and transformation can occur. It is through this process that wounds are mended, that communities become stronger/more united, and that all those affected can be part of the process in a meaningful way.

The Customary Law Program regularly works in collaboration with the criminal justice system, but the principles of circle processes, and the techniques used to prepare and keep circles, is not well understood. On a parallel track, mainstream victim supporting advocates share this knowledge gap, and do not have a strong understanding of, or support for, MLSN's very successful work in collaboration with the Courts to provide sentencing circle processes in cases of domestic violence.

MLSN's engagement in the ***Restorative Conversations Project*** was focused on this knowledge gap, and worked to build a resource guide which could be used to share knowledge and orient officers of the court, and other representatives of the mainstream criminal justice system, more fully to the structures and principled processes involved in keeping a circle.

The ***Mi'kmaw Customary Law Resource Guide***, which is in development, invites the reader into a comprehensive journey through the context and social history of MLSN, the principles underpinning circle processes, and how circles are administered by MLSN. The Guide further grounds this orientation with evidence from legislation and case law.

With this important contextual background, the ***Mi'kmaw Customary Law Resource Guide*** anchors this overview with clear descriptions of the varied ways in which circle keeping work is used in the range of work carried out by MLSN. This both animates the purpose and principles of circle processes for the reader and provides practical explanations as to how the circle might work as a response to matters that might benefit from a referral.

The ***Mi'kmaw Customary Law Resource Guide*** provides a comprehensive understanding of the range of circle processes available through a collaboration with or referral to MLSN, including:

- Circle processes step by step;
- Mi'kmaw Justice circles;
- Mi'kmaw Sentencing Circles;
- Mi'kmaw Healing Circles;
- Mi'kmaw Post Conviction Circles;
- Mi'kmaw Reintegration Circles;
- Mi'kmaw Circles of Support; and
- Mi'kmaw Sentencing Circle processes in domestic violence cases.

It is anticipated that the ***Mi'kmaw Customary Law Resource Guide*** will complete the community and elders review step, and move to a more formal publication, in 2020. For more information, please contact Paula Marshall, Executive Director, MLSN at 1-877-379-2042 or at pmarshall@mlsn.ca.

“Entering the circle journey ...it’s a safe process. We are ALL ONE regardless of race, colour, religion, etc. This process is healing for ALL and is inclusive.”

Mi'kmaw Elder Carol Francis

¹ “Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future” (2015) 324, online:
http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Exec_Summary_2015_05_31_web_o.pdf.

¹ L. D. Chartrand, “Accommodating Indigenous Legal Traditions” (2005) 7.

¹ L. D. Chartrand, “Accommodating Indigenous Legal Traditions” (2005) 10.

Restorative approaches and gendered violence: Moving beyond is it possible?

A Discussion Paper

By: Verona Singer, PhD
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Executive Summary

Restorative approaches *can* be used in gendered violence cases. This is the finding from my literature review on some restorative justice models used in intimate partner and sexual violence cases. The seed for this literature review was planted in 2014 after a two-day workshop with transition house and men's intervention program workers where we contemplated using restorative approaches in intimate partner violence cases. Going forward the participants wanted to learn more about some successful models. It is hoped that those participants, women-serving agencies and restorative justice providers considering restorative approaches for intimate partner or sexual violence will find this discussion paper useful.

This paper documents restorative models developed and evaluated in the literature between 2012-2018. There is one anomaly, which is the family group decision-making model from the early 2000's developed by Joan Pennell and Gale Burford. This model is included because it is an earlier example of a successful approach used in family violence cases in Newfoundland.

The first part of the paper introduces readers to some of the background conversations taking place in Halifax since the 2014 workshop.

There are three sections that follow.

Section One (p. 4-12) documents different types of restorative models with examples of programs from around the world. Victim offender mediation, circles, conferences, and victim impact panels are models used in intimate partner or sexual violence cases. A description of each program, how it works and who it serves are presented in narrative form and in a table format for ease of reference. Transformative justice, an alternative process used in some Afro-centric, communities of colour, and LGBTQ communities, is also discussed.

Section Two (p. 13-14) documents the concerns and cautions as well as the positive aspects of using restorative approaches with gendered violence as presented in the literature. Concerns include compromising the safety of the victim, making the victim have face-to-face contact with the offender, and compelling the victim to forgive the offender. Positive aspects include victim empowerment resulting from being listened to and heard, offenders taking responsibility, and addressing violence when victim and offender want to reconcile.

Section Three (p. 14-15) lists the issues agencies must address when establishing a restorative approach to gendered violence. These include developing principles to guide the work, hiring skilled facilitators in gendered violence and restorative justice, ensuring the protection and safety of victims, monitoring outcomes and follow-up. Agencies must also affiliate with Afro-centric, Indigenous, LGBTQ and immigrant communities. Two practice guides are mentioned which offer step by step points to set up a restorative approach for intimate partner or sexual violence. References to the documents are found in the table in Section One.

The paper has a brief conclusion and ends with two appendices and a reference list. Appendix A (p. 17-18) is a draft of the principles document the Metro Interagency Restorative Conversations Committee on Family Violence developed for a restorative approach to gendered violence. Appendix B (p. 19-20) is a further reading list of journal articles on restorative approaches and gendered violence.

Introduction

This discussion paper outlines some of the promising programs and practices gleaned from the literature that use a restorative approach to respond to intimate partner violence and sexual violence. It is hoped this document will be a useful resource guide for women-serving and restorative justice agencies who are exploring the possibility of developing a restorative approach for gendered violence.

This discussion paper evolved from conversations that have been ongoing in Halifax, Nova Scotia for the past several years. The conversations began when a small group of feminist activists started talking about whether restorative approaches could be used to respond to intimate partner violence. Eventually the group broadened to include sexual violence and restorative justice agencies. The conversations delved more deeply and reflectively into the principles of restorative approaches. Missing from the conversations, however, were examples of restorative programs that have been used in gendered violence. Funding was secured from the federal Department of Justice Policy Centre on Victims Issues to conduct a literature review to find out what programs there are around the world where restorative approaches are documented and used for gendered violence.

It has been suggested that the discussion of whether criminal justice or restorative justice is a more appropriate response for dealing with gendered violence presents a false and unnecessary dichotomy (Zosky, 2018). In most of the programs reviewed here the restorative approach is not better than but parallel to the criminal justice system. The criminal justice system can be useful to sanction an offender who does not fulfill their obligation(s) under the restorative process. Another argument suggests restorative processes shouldn't be used at all in gendered violence cases, as it jeopardizes the safety of the woman. As Mary Koss, a well-known researcher on restorative justice puts it, "No woman should be forced to meet the perpetrator, but neither should she be denied the opportunity if she desires it" (as cited in Madsen, 2006, p. 112). Finally, a restricted framing of restorative justice as solely program models can neglect approaches that use a relational lens to support well-being and positive relationships (Llewellyn, 2012). These points have been part of the ongoing dialogue in our exploration of restorative approaches and gendered violence.

A review of the literature revealed there is limited published research on restorative approaches currently being used and evaluated with gendered violence. There are many published articles on the theoretical application of restorative approaches to gendered violence, however the purpose of this review was to find rich descriptions of restorative models being used throughout the world for intimate partner and sexual violence. Research articles from peer reviewed journals were perused from 2012-2018 and seven program models were found; five programs for intimate partner violence and two programs for sexual violence. These program models were chosen because they had either been evaluated or had detailed descriptions of their processes and are found in the United States, New Zealand and Europe.

Employing the above time frame and criteria for the literature search eliminated some restorative processes that have previously been written about. One of these is the family group decision making conferencing model developed by Joan Pennell and Gale Burford in Newfoundland (2000) for child welfare and family violence cases. Another is the customary law work being done in Nova Scotia with the Mi'kmaq community. The final example is the circles of support and accountability. These will be briefly described in Section One.

Section One describes some of the restorative approaches used in gendered violence cases and provides examples of programs that have been developed and evaluated. It also includes a chart for

ease of reference. The chart includes references to two documents: one is a framework document to help groups set up restorative programs for intimate partner violence; the other is a practice guide for establishing a restorative process for sexual violence. Section Two is a discussion of the concerns expressed by feminists and women-serving agencies about using restorative approaches in gendered violence as well as some of the optimism about using restorative approaches. Section Three outlines points to consider in setting up a restorative approach for intimate partner or sexual violence. There is an appendix section listing articles and documents about restorative processes and gendered violence for additional reading, along with a set of principles for restorative approaches in gendered violence developed by the Metro Interagency Restorative Conversations Committee on Family Violence.

Section I: Models of restorative approaches with examples

There are several models of restorative approaches. The four most common are: victim offender mediation; conferences also known as family group conferencing; circles; and victim impact panels. Each model is described below along with examples of programs found in the literature that use the model for intimate partner or sexual violence.

1. Victim offender mediation.

These are face to face meeting(s) between victim and offender in the presence of a mediator. They can take place pre or post sentence, as an alternative to incarceration, after incarceration or upon release from incarceration. There are two examples from the literature that use victim offender mediation. Both are used with intimate partner violence.

a. The first example is a program in Austria (Pelikan, 2010) operated by the agency Neustart. The prosecutor refers the case to the restorative justice agency post charge and upon agreement from the victim and offender to participate in the process. The cases referred are situational couple violence where the level of violence does not result in serious injury nor is there coercive control.

This victim offender mediation process is a mirror model process whereby a male and female social work mediator contacts the victim and offender. The social workers have separate conversations with the victim and offender where they ask about what happened in the violent incident, about the relationship in general, what the victim wants in terms of reparation or compensation, whether the offender is to get treatment, and whether the couple separate or remain in the relationship. After these individual conversations, the two mediators come into a room together with the victim and offender. This can happen immediately after the individual conversations or after a period of time to give the victim and offender an opportunity to reflect on their stories. This reflection period can involve the victim or offender receiving counselling or legal support.

In the mirror model session, when the two mediators, the victim and offender are in the same room, the mediators face each other, and the victim and offender sit beside them. Then the mediators tell the victim's and offender's story to each other. Once the mediators have finished, the victim and offender can clarify, explain and correct the story versions. Then the victim and offender can begin an exchange with each other. The mediators might offer suggestions, alternatives and clarifications during the conversation between victim and offender. This rendering and questioning allow the victim and offender to reflect on their own situation and story (Pelikan, 2010).

The session with victim and offender along with the two mediators is the core element of the whole process. The session follows a design that brings into effect two main working principles of mediation: recognition and empowerment (Pelikan, 2010, p.51).

The research conducted by Pelikan (2010) found that this process led women to feel more empowered about their decision to leave the relationship. Those that stayed in the relationship stated they felt more empowered to state their demands for a life without violence and more able to handle conflicts without violence. These women also felt their abusers had changed. At least half the women had separated from the abuser. Moreover, among women who stayed in their relationship, more contacted the police when there was a re-occurrence of violence.

b. The second example of victim offender mediation is a post-sentence model used in the United States (Miller & Iovanni, 2013) and Canada by the Correctional Services of Canada Restorative Opportunities program. In this model conversations between the victim and offender usually take place years after the offence occurred. This is more of a therapeutic process as the offenders do not gain a reduction in sentence or favor for parole when agreeing to participate in the program. Since the offender doesn't gain any reduction in their sentence, their motivations to participate differ from diversionary models. In a post-sentence model, the victim gets the opportunity to question the offender about the abuse

Miller & Iovanni (2013) examine a case study of intimate partner violence. The offender received 15 years for sexually assaulting the victim. The violence was long-standing and became progressively more severe. The victim decided to participate in the post-conviction restorative dialogue with the offender eight years after his conviction. During the eight years the victim engaged in counselling, went back to school and developed support networks for herself and children.

The preparation time for the victim and offender includes many months of meeting with the mediator to prepare each for the interaction. Letter exchanges can be the first step, eventually leading to a face-to-face dialogue if so desired by the victim. In the face-to-face meeting a support person can accompany the victim and offender.

One of the key benefits of a post-sentence restorative justice model is that the victim has had time to heal, become stronger, and feel safe. In addition, the offender has had time to reflect and take responsibility for their actions. The elapsed time and lengthy preparation by the skilled facilitator are essential. Post-sentence victim offender meetings appear to have the highest level of victim satisfaction (Miller & Iovanni, 2013).

2. Conferences.

This restorative approach brings the victim, offender, service providers, supporters and family members together to discuss the impact of the harm committed and the reparation by the offender. Conferences are facilitated by skilled restorative justice practitioners. There are two examples of conferences used for sexual violence and one for intimate partner violence.

a. The first is a program called RESTORE developed in Arizona. It is no longer operational due to lack of government funding (Koss, 2014). This program was for a one-time offence of acquaintance sexual assault. Prosecutors referred offenders to RESTORE, however, the offenders could only participate once the victim had consented to process. Both the victim and offender were provided with free legal counsel to help them decide whether to participate. Finally, a risk assessment determined whether the offender was suitable for the program. In the article by Koss (2014) on the evaluation of RESTORE, there is a chart on the operational overview of the restorative process from the referral, to preparation, to conference, to final stage of accountability and reparation (p. 1628-1630).

Most of the offenders chose to participate in the program in order to apologize for their behaviour. Most victims participated to ensure that the offender wouldn't assault again and would get the help they need. The victims stated that the opportunity to express to the offender how the incident impacted them was very important. Half of the victims did not believe the sincerity of the offender's apology. Victims identified that empowerment was a positive outcome of participating in the RESTORE program and overall most of the victims reported satisfaction with the process.

In her discussion Koss (2014) suggests that the more intimate the victim and offender were, the more likely they were to be interested in the RESTORE program. There was a high consent rate from the offenders to participate in the program. This rate fell when the offender declined to take responsibility. One question Koss raises is whether the offenders' rate of taking responsibility would increase if more preparation work was done with them.

Koss (2014) points out the racial bias of the RESTORE program; African Americans and Hispanic offenders and victims were less likely to be referred than Caucasian.

b. The second example is called Project RESTORE, used in New Zealand (Julich, Buttle, Cummins & Freeborn, 2010). This model was inspired by the RESTORE pilot program in Arizona. The referrals are received from the court after a guilty plea, community, or are self-referrals from the victim or an offender who has admitted responsibility. All cases are assessed by a team comprised of a restorative justice facilitator, a victim specialist and an offender specialist, and supervised by a clinical psychologist. All three staff are highly trained: the facilitator in restorative justice processes and sexual violence; the victim and offender specialists in sexual violence counselling. The team meets weekly to discuss referrals and decide which cases will go forward to the restorative process. For cases to go forward the offender must take responsibility and agree to treatment if recommended, and the victim must be willing to participate without feeling coerced.

When these criteria have been met, the facilitator arranges separate pre-conference meeting(s) with the victim and offender and the specialists. Detailed preparation work and coaching are provided to the victim, offender and their support people to ensure they are independently prepared to go forward into the restorative conference. The restorative conference agreements are monitored by the specialists and follow-up meetings are held with the victim and offender.

Project RESTORE is a victim centered program where the victim participant's rights are emphasized. The victim specialist acts as a support and advocate for the victim throughout the process. The flexibility of the process is another important aspect to meet the changing needs and concerns of the participants. For example, if the victim changes their mind on about attending a face-to-face meeting with the offender, the victim specialist can act in their place.

c. The Family Group Decision Making model was a demonstration project in Newfoundland in the early 2000's for child welfare and family violence cases (Pennell & Burford, 2000). The program is no longer available due to lack of funding. The cases were referred by child welfare to the coordinator. Initial work such as implementing safety measures was done with family members to prepare them for the conference. The conference participants included family members and service providers, such as child welfare workers, police, teachers, or shelter workers. At the conference, information about the case was presented, and there was discussion among all those present. Then the service providers left the room leaving the family to deliberate in private and develop a plan. The service providers were invited back into the room to review the plan to ensure it was comprehensive and included monitoring and evaluation of the actions going forward. On average, the conference lasted for about five hours. In an evaluation of the project, the findings revealed increased safety for the families, increased family

dialogue and that family violence was stopped (Pennell & Burford, 2000). This conference model is seen as part of an ongoing collaboration with the family to address abuse and violence.

3. *Circles.*

Circles are a restorative approach used with Indigenous people here in Canada to address gendered violence in a sentencing context. In Canada, circles are also used post-sentence with sex offenders who have completed their prison sentence and are returning to the community. In the following examples from the United States, circles are used with offenders and victims of intimate partner violence.

a. Restorative Circles was developed as a pilot program in Duluth, Minnesota in the early 2000's (Gaarder, 2012). It took four years of conversations among groups such as shelters, men's intervention programs, criminal justice personnel, indigenous groups, and restorative justice providers to build enough trust to consider attempting a pilot restorative justice program for intimate partner violence. The pilot program was designed for repeat offenders and offenders in same sex relationships. There are two separate circles; a support circle for the victim and a sentencing circle for the offender. Each circle has circle keepers and community volunteers. To be included in the program offenders must be referred by the courts and have taken responsibility for their violence.

The circle for the victim is intended to provide support and to offer a safe place for the victim to tell her story and determine her options. The circle for the offender is a sentencing circle to discuss the harm done to the victim and determine an appropriate restorative sentence. The sentencing circle lasts about six months and there can be some follow-up circles after that. The circle-keepers for the sentencing circle are a man and woman, and for the support circle two women. The circle-keepers introduce open ended questions and remind participants about circle guidelines. The circles meet weekly for 2 hours.

One offender who took part in the program had stopped using violence for 5 years after the sentencing circle, and two others decreased their use of violence. For the most part the victims felt supported and cared for and did not feel their safety was compromised.

The research on this circle suggests that increasing the victim's material resources and social supports should be an important focus for the restorative process. Another finding is having two separate circle processes for the victim and the offender is unique. The victim gets to have input into the offender's sentencing circle. A third finding is that the victim may use her circle to report subsequent abuse which she may not report otherwise, thus improving her safety. The circle keeper asks the victim what they want from the offender and then establishes safe ways for the offender to accomplish that or for the circle to help the victim accomplish it. The research also shows that there must be paid staff to run the program. Using volunteers wasn't always successful. The pilot program benefitted from being connected to the legal system. If the offender failed in some of his conditions or agreements, the legal system could step in to remedy the issue. The circle program seemed to strengthen the community coordinated responses to intimate partner violence (Gaarder, 2012). This pilot program is now a permanent program operated by the organization Men as Peacemakers.

b. Another example is the Circles of Peace program in Arizona (Mills, Barocas, Ariel, 2013). This restorative process is a court referred domestic violence treatment program for offenders. The program was developed as an alternative to the batterer intervention program and follows all the required state legislation to respond to intimate partner violence. The program is used for single incidents or repeat cases of intimate partner violence and includes a circle-keeper, restorative justice provider, and the offender. Other participants include trained volunteer community members, and the offender's support person and family members. The victim could attend some of the circle sessions individually or with a

support person, have a support person attend on their behalf or not attend at all. This was designed to eliminate coercion of the victim to participate. The circle is 26 weeks in duration. The intent of the circle is to develop a plan for the offender to make amends to the victim, her family and the community. Since the goal of the circle is to restore, this moves beyond the aims of batterer intervention program which are to change the attitudes, beliefs and consequently the behavior of the offender.

Evaluation results of the Circles of Peace program compared to a batterer intervention program found there was no significant difference in the offender's recidivism rates. Circles of Peace are no less or more effective than batterer's intervention program's and while victims participated in about half of the Circles of Peace their safety was not compromised. This finding could be helpful to alleviate a concern that restorative approaches are a less safe option for victims (Mills et al, 2013).

c. There are specialized restorative programs for Indigenous people, particularly sentencing circles. In Manitoba, there is a restorative program for sexual violence that has been operational in Hollow Water for many years. It is called a community holistic healing circle for victims and offenders of sexual abuse. There are two separate circles, one for the victim and one for the offender. Both these circles include family members. Eventually the two circles are brought together into a larger healing circle and then move to a sentencing circle with community members and court staff present (Woolford, 2009). Several evaluations have been conducted on the program. Unique to the Hollow Water program is the requirement that the victim be willing to consider forgiving the offender. Forgiveness is a value of the Anishinabe people who believe that a person who harms is out of balance and to achieve rightness and repair the harm balance must be restored to the family, community and nation (Native Counselling Services of Alberta, 2001).

The Mi'kmaq people of Nova Scotia have developed a customary law approach to work with their people in gendered violence cases. According to the Mi'kmaq approach, everyone must be taken care of – the wrongdoer, the survivor of wrongdoings, and everyone affected (McMillan, 2011, p.163). These restorative processes are provided by the Mi'kmaq Legal Support Network (MLSN).

There are two circles for intimate partner violence: a sentencing circle, which is post-conviction, and a healing circle, which is post-sentence. Both circles are part of the domestic violence court program. The offender must acknowledge responsibility. The community must be willing to support the re-integration plan for the offender, and the victim must be interested in participating. If the victim chooses not to participate a representative can attend on their behalf. Pre-circle preparation with the victim and offender is crucial and carried out by MLSN workers (Mi'kmaq Legal Resource Tool Guide for Customary Law Program, 2019).

d. Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) is a re-integration circle of support for sex-offenders who have been released back to the community at the end of their sentence. The circle of support is comprised of volunteer community members who meet with the core sex offender member via weekly circles to provide pro-social friendship support. The inner circle of volunteers has access to an advisory circle of service providers who provide expertise and advice (Wilson, Corini, McWhinnie, 2009). The circles are offender focused and have very little, if any, victim involvement. CoSA is found throughout Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom.

4. Victim impact panels.

Victim impact panels is a restorative process used for intimate partner violence. Their purpose is to increase the offender's empathy for harms caused to their victims through their use of violence and abuse. A victim impact panel is comprised of victims of intimate partner violence whom the offender

does not know. These victims share their stories of how the violence and abuse from their partners impacted them.

a. In Zosky's (2018) study of the victim impact panel, there are one-time, two-hour sessions between victims and offenders convicted of intimate partner violence attending a batterer intervention program. The victims receive extensive preparation to be able to tell their story. The offenders listen to the victims and are not allowed to engage with them or ask them questions after their presentation. Afterwards the offenders break into small group discussions with trained facilitators to discuss the content of the panel.

Zosky's (2018) suggestions to improve the victim impact panel include a facilitated discussion on how the impact of violence learned from the panel could be translated to the offender's own family. Also, that a victim impact panel should never be a stand-alone event but part of a batterer intervention program so when an offender's trauma is triggered by the panel, there is counselling support to process the trauma and not place their own family at greater risk.

The evaluation of this study found that after listening to the panel, most offenders did express some remorse for the violence they perpetrated against their partner and children. Limitations to this study include lack of insight into the feelings of victims participating in the impact panel and no mention of whether the victim partners saw differences in the offenders behaviour following the panel. There is also no follow-up over time to determine any future offending (Zosky, 2018).

b. There is a program in the San Francisco area for men who are incarcerated called Resolve to Stop the Violence Program (RSVP). The RSVP program is a three-pronged approach. The first part is Manalive, a teaching program in jail where the men unlearn violent attitudes. Next there is a victim impact panel where survivors of intimate partner violence come into the jail to present to the prisoners. Lastly, there is a circle model where men process the harm they have done to their families and how they will repair that harm.

5. Transformative Justice

For some Afro-centric, Indigenous, communities of colour and LGBTQ2+, the approach of transformative justice seems to be more dominant in the response to sexual and intimate partner violence. Transformative justice promotes community accountability models and support networks based on principles of care and harm reduction for the person who was harmed and the person who harmed (Ansfield & Coleman, 2012). The person who was harmed is provided with support and safety, and then helped to explore how they want the harm to be repaired. This could be from the individual who harmed, and the community where it occurred. Transformative justice moves beyond individual responsibility to examine how systems of oppression such as racism, patriarchy, capitalism and the prison industrial complex contribute to the harm (Kelly, 2012). Grassroots organizations such as Philly Stands Up and INCITE! Women of Colour Against Violence in the United States are two organizations that address sexual violence and intimate partner violence through transformative justice processes.

On the following two pages are charts for ease of reference that outline the programs described above, their location, referral entry points, who they work with and links to websites where available.

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

Restorative Model	Name	Location	Target Population	Referral	Website
Victim offender mediation (VOM)	Neustart	Austria	Victim, offender	Post-charge (pre-conviction) Crown	https://www.neustart.at/
	Restorative Opportunities Program	Canada USA	Victim, offender	Post-sentence (pre-reintegration) Corrections	http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/restorative-justice/003005-1000-eng.shtml
Conference	Family Group Decision making	Newfoundland Canada	Victim, offender, family members	Post-sentence (pre-reintegration) Corrections	n/a
Circle	Restorative Circles	Minnesota, USA	Victim, offender	Post-conviction (pre-sentence) Courts	http://www.menaspeacemakers.org/dvrc/
	Circles of Peace	Arizona, USA	Offender, victim	Post-conviction (pre-sentence) Courts	https://www.circlesofpeace.us/
	Mi'kmaq Legal Support Network	Nova Scotia, Canada	Victim, offender, family, community	Post-conviction, Post-sentence	n/a
Victim impact panel	Resolve to Stop the Violence (RSVP)	San Francisco, USA	Victim, offender	Post-sentence (pre-reintegration) Corrections	http://communityworkswest.org/program/rsvp/
	Zoksky's 2018	Oregon, USA	Victim, offender	Post sentence (pre-reintegration) Corrections	https://dvsdprogram.com/
Restorative justice for victim survivors of family violence	Victim Services, Victoria State Government 2017	Australia			PDF available on internet

SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Restorative Model	Name	Location	Target Population	Referral	Website
Conference	Project RESTORE	New Zealand	Victim, offender family & friends	Post-conviction (pre-sentence) Courts, community, victim or offender	https://projectrestore.nz/
	RESTORE pilot program	Arizona, USA	Victim, offender family & friends	Post-charge (pre-conviction) Crown	n/a
Circle	Hollow Water	Manitoba, Canada	Victim, offender, family & friends	Post-conviction (pre-sentence) Courts	https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/cst-bnft-hllw-wtr/index-en.aspx#openinq6
	Circle of Support & Accountability	Canada, UK, USA	Offender	Post-sentence (pre-reintegration) Corrections	http://cosacanda.com
Transformative justice	INCITE! Philly Stands Up	USA	Victim, offender community	Self referral, community	https://incite-national.org/ https://phillystandsup.wordpress.com/
Doing restorative justice in cases of sexual violence	Mercer & Madsen 2015	Belgium			PDF available on internet

Section II: Concerns about restorative approaches in gendered violence

Much of the literature on restorative justice and gendered violence discusses the concerns of feminist advocates and practitioners about using restorative approaches in intimate partner and sexual violence. These concerns have been expressed in our own conversations at the Metro Interagency Restorative Conversations Committee on Family Violence meetings. It is useful to document some of them in this discussion paper.

- a. Safety of the victim is paramount due to the power differences between the victim and offender, particularly coercive control in intimate partner violence. (Daly, 2011).
- b. Restorative justice returns intimate partner violence to a private family matter and takes it out of the public arena which feminists argued for with pro-arrest, charge and prosecution (Dickson-Gilmore, 2014; Galverides, 2015).
- c. There is pressure on the victim to participate in victim-offender mediation sessions when the victim may not want to. Voluntary participation by victims is a key principle of restorative processes (Drost, 2015).
- d. The victim and the offender may be intimidated by the restorative process (Drost, 2015).
- d. There may be pressure on the victim to accept an apology. Many victims in restorative justice find apologies from the offender insincere (Drost, 2015; Koss, 2014).
- e. The impact of violence may be minimized by the restorative justice mediator due to their lack of understanding of gendered violence or by community members who have mixed loyalties and whose norms and values may support certain levels of violence (Daly, 2011; Drost, 2015).
- f. Victim-offender mediation is only a short-term intervention; there is no long-term monitoring of the offender or follow-up with the victim after the initial session (Drost, 2015).
- g. A denunciation of violence in intimate relationships is not always articulated in victim-offender mediation sessions, which can further support the offender's justification for the abuse (Drost, 2015).

Positive aspects of restorative approaches in gendered violence

Much has been written on the positive aspects of using restorative approaches for intimate partner or sexual violence. The points listed give an overview of some of the arguments that feminists and academics consider when advocating for restorative approaches to gendered violence.

- a. The criminal justice system does not meet the needs of victims (Drost, 2015; Pali & Madsen, 2011).
- b. A restorative process provides a venue for hearing and listening to the voices of women, and participation in the process can be empowering for women. (Daly, 2011; Drost, 2015; Koss, 2014).

- c. Offenders take responsibility which can be rewarding for a victim (Drost, 2015; Koss, 2014; Pali & Madsen, 2011).
- d. Victims can use the restorative process to report subsequent abuse which she may not report otherwise, thus improving her safety (Gaarder, 2015).
- e. Often the restorative process is connected to the legal system so if the offender fails in some of his conditions or agreements the legal system can step in to remedy the issue (Gaarder, 2015).
- f. Restorative approaches can strengthen a community coordinated response to intimate partner violence (Gaarder, 2015).
- g. There is the potential to address violence when the victim and offender want to repair and continue the relationship (Daly, 2011).
- h. Therapeutic interventions in addition to restorative justice processes can have additional benefits particularly for young first-time sexual offence offenders (Daly, 2011).

Section III: Considerations when setting up a restorative approach for gendered violence

There are many issues to consider when developing a restorative approach for intimate partner or sexual violence. The issues highlight the complexity of the development process as well as the complexity of gendered violence. Although there are models that provide frameworks for a restorative approach, the following points illustrate the thoughtful work that is necessary as the model is developed and operationalized.

1. Develop a set of principles that can guide the work of the restorative approach. These principles are the foundation for the restorative approach and can be referred to when problems or concerns arise in the restorative process. See Appendix A for an example of the principles developed by the Metro Interagency Restorative Conversations Committee on Family Violence.
2. There is no one-size-fits all restorative approach for gendered violence. The examples in this document provide a range of approaches that can be considered by a community for gendered violence cases. Each model must be based on principles that are developed by the community, reflect the community, and uphold cultural values (Kelly, 2012).
3. Restorative approaches are labour-intensive and not a quick fix. We cannot impose a model on a victim, offender, and community and expect it will work in every situation. It takes time to prepare an appropriate restorative approach, to manage all the safety considerations for the victim, and to build relationships and trust among the facilitator, victim, offender, gendered violence service providers and community supports.
4. Restorative approaches are not cheap justice. Only working with the offender in gendered violence cases, ignoring or minimizing the safety needs of the victim, particularly in communities committed to decarceration, and not monitoring the offender to ensure they follow through on their commitments to restore the harm contribute to meaningless justice (Dickson-Gilmore, 2014).

5. There must be a skilled facilitator in gendered violence, well-versed in abuser and abused dynamics, to ensure that victims are safe, and that the victim and offender voluntarily agree to participate in the restorative process (Julich & Bowden, 2015; Miller & Iovanni, 2013).
6. There must be a follow-up period to ensure the agreed upon outcomes from the restorative process are completed by offender and that victim is still safe (Daly, 2011; Pelikan & Hofinger, 2016).
7. Restorative practices need to be documented and evaluated (Daly 2011; Julich et al, 2010; Drost, 2015).
8. Evaluations with victims and offenders of restorative programs revealed harms were most often caused by the people delivering programs. Staff must be well trained in gendered violence, restorative processes, and complex cases so as not to cause further harm (Drost et al, 2015).
9. Restorative processes for gendered violence must be affiliated with women's advocate services, services for indigenous, LGBTQ2+, women of colour and immigrant women (Gaarder, 2015).
10. Legislation allowing restorative approaches for gendered violence may improve the likelihood that victims have another avenue to access justice. Some practitioners dissuade victims from accessing restorative justice services believing they will cause greater harm to the victim. Legislation on restorative approaches also enables practitioners to develop the skill and experience necessary to deal with complex cases (Keenan, Zintaag, Nolan, 2016).
11. Restorative approaches can be very effective in empowering young offenders and victims of gendered violence, especially when used in conjunction with other resources and services such as men's treatment programs, counselling for women and child welfare (Pelikan, 2010).

There are two practice guides that will assist you in developing a restorative program. The first is Restorative Justice for Victim Survivors of Family Violence (Victim Services Victoria State Government, 2017). This framework document includes principles, processes and programs for practitioners to consider when setting up a restorative approach for intimate partner or sexual violence. The second, Doing Restorative Justice in Sexual Violence Cases (Mercer & Madsen, 2015) is a practice guide for sexual violence. It sets out risks and benefits of restorative approaches, screening, referral process, case preparation and complexities. Both documents are available as PDF files on the internet.

Other articles providing useful research on the topic of gendered violence and can be found in the bibliography. This additional reading discusses in more depth and detail the points raised in this backgrounder document. See Appendix B for a list and synopsis of some of the articles.

Conclusion

As this discussion paper has attempted to illustrate, using restorative approaches with gendered violence is a complex process. A careful and nuanced approach is required to ensure the success of each program and the safety and security of victims.

As demonstrated by the examples in this document, several restorative programs have been developed successfully with positive results. These models have shown the cooperation and trust that has been built among gendered violence experts, restorative practitioners and criminal justice system providers.

The results have revealed that the victim's safety has not been compromised and offenders have taken accountability and responsibility for their violence. This is good news and has promising implications- particularly for young offenders and young victims-in the prevention of future gendered violence.

Appendix A

Restorative Principles in Gendered Violence - Draft
Metro Interagency Restorative Conversations Committee on Family Violence – 14 February 2019

Purpose:

These nine principles articulate the values we seek to uphold in our individual and collective responses to gendered violence. Clarity about these principles allow our communities to have greater success working together with our clients and colleagues to stop harm and repair harm.

1. Repair harm without creating harm (e.g., increasing risk)
 - a. Just outcomes involve repairing harm without creating more harm
 - b. Repair plan that restores/ recreates safety, respect, and empowerment
 - c. Relational – valuing connections between and among people; not creating more harms to relationships
 - d. Continuously exploring how systemic interventions may inadvertently create harm
2. Feminist analysis
 - a. Feminism means creating repair plans that are fair and just
 - b. Creating safety by challenging abuses of power; un-negotiated power
 - c. Recognizing that gender influences peoples' choices to perpetrate abuse and their experiences of victimization
 - d. Not defining people according to gender stereotypes (i.e., women as simply weak, powerless, victims, vs. men as simply strong, powerful, perpetrators)
3. Responsive to/ Collaborative with clients
 - a. Consulting those who have been harmed about what just processes and just outcomes mean to them; advocating in a manner that is collaborative vs. paternalistic
 - b. Creating responses that are specific to individuals; Resisting a one-size-fits all approach (e.g., mandating apology/ forgiveness; pro-arrest, pro-charge, pro-prosecution)
 - c. Consulting with people about what they want in terms of just processes and outcomes
 - d. Acknowledging that while workers share restorative principles, their practices and interventions will be different depending on what their individual clients want
4. Trauma responsive
 - a. Recognizing that both parties involved are often dealing with histories of trauma
 - b. Recognizing that both parties may be traumatized by community/ state interventions
 - c. Earning people's trust to collaboratively create just processes and just outcomes
 - d. Recognizing that the effects of trauma leads to binary/ dichotomous conclusions about peoples' identities (e.g., people are either all good or all bad, all right or all wrong, all victim or all perpetrator)

5. Culturally responsive

- a. Repair plans need to be responsive to individuals, taking into account their relationship to their cultural context (e.g., gender, culture, class, sexual orientation, etc.)
- b. Curiosity about the influence various cultural contexts have on people choices
- c. Avoid assuming what is helpful for one person from a community is helpful for another person from the same community
- d. Intersectional where violence and oppression intersect with gender, race, class, age, ability, sexual orientation and colonialism

6. Community

- a. Community is collaboratively defined by those involved in the process of creating and implementing a repair plan
- b. Community is responsible for containing harm, mandating counselling, creating safety
- c. Community creates contexts to foster respectful relationships; repair harm
- d. Community addresses environmental issues that foster harm

7. Responsibility and accountability

- a. Repair plans focus on people taking responsibility for their choices; victimization does not excuse individual responsibility; people need to take responsibility for their choices even if others do not
- b. The process must be in the 'public interest', where justice needs to be done and seen to be done
- c. Repair plans must have formal and informal mechanism to monitor accountability
- d. Evaluation must be built into the restorative process

8. Skilled practitioners

- a. The more complex the cases, such as those involving trauma and high levels of irresponsibility, the more qualifications are required by the workers
- b. Workers need training in work with trauma, restorative justice, intimate partner and sexual violence; training with those who have done the harm and those who have been harmed
- c. Workers need to be involved in a community of practice; have supervision
- d. Those working with men need to earn the trust of those working with women; instilling confidence that men are effectively supported to stop harm and repair harm

9. Collaboration with Colleagues

- a. Trusting each other's commitment to our shared values, giving people the benefit of the doubt, being charitable when people or organizations make mistakes; acknowledging the difficult, complex task at hand
- b. Celebrating the diversity of practice, appreciating the multiple ways to operationalize restorative principles; not trying to find consensus about or homogenize restorative practice
- c. Respecting each other's expertise; Having humility about our own expertise
- d. Resisting the temptation to polarize the collegial conversations into good or bad people, right or wrong, us vs. them, community vs. government

Appendix B

<i>Article</i>	<i>Synopsis</i>
Pelikan, C., & Hofinger, V. (2016). An interactional approach to desistance: Expanding desistance theory based on the Austrian mediation practice in cases of partnership violence. <i>Restorative Justice, 4</i>(3), 323-344.	Starting on page 338 this article discusses & describes the VOM process in Austria and what works and what doesn't. The article includes some methods on how the RJ process works and gives a couple of case studies.
Hayden, A. (2012). Safety issues associated with using restorative justice for intimate partner violence. <i>Women's Studies Journal, 26</i>(2), 4-16.	This article does not discuss a program but gives some context on how RJ can provide safety for women, with cautions. Pages 10-15 may be most pertinent.
Dickson-Gilmore, J. (2014). Whither restorativeness? Restorative justice and the challenge of intimate violence in Aboriginal communities. <i>Canadian Journal of Criminology & Criminal Justice, 56</i>(4), 417-446.	The article outlines the issues Indigenous communities face with IPV and the problems and concerns with RJ.
Westmarland, N., Johnson, K., & McGlynn, C. (2018). Under the radar: The widespread use of 'out of court resolutions' in policing domestic violence and abuse in the United Kingdom. <i>British Journal of Criminology, 58</i>(1), 1-16.	The article discusses how the police state they are using RJ or out of court resolutions on the doorstep with IPV despite a moratorium in the UK on RJ in IPV cases. Discusses the cautions with this approach.
Wasileski, G. (2017). Prosecutors and use of restorative justice in courts: Greek case. <i>Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 32</i>(13), 1943-1966.	This article identifies the cautions for prosecutors using RJ. Training such as understanding the needs of victims, the responsibility & accountability of the offender, and the dynamics of IPV are key.
Pali, B. and Madsen, K. (2011), 'Dangerous liaisons? A feminist and restorative approach to sexual assault'. <i>Temida, 49-65.</i>	Discusses restorative dialogues being practiced in Copenhagen between victims and offenders of sexual violence.

Article

Synopsis

McGlynn, C., Westmarland, N., & Godden, N. (2012). 'I just wanted him to hear me': Sexual violence and the possibilities of restorative justice. *Journal of Law & Society*, 39(2), 213-240.

This article explores SV and RJ and how it can be used in the UK. It uses a case study to illustrate possibilities.

Pennell, J., Sanders, T., Rikard, R. V., Shepherd, J., & Staroneck, L. (2013). Family violence, fathers, and restoring personhood. *Restorative Justice*, 1(2), 268-289.

Examines how a program operated by child welfare called Strong Fathers can be integrated into RJ processes that are safe for women and children experiencing IPV. It documents that a treatment program for abusive men can be restorative and how it meets that criteria.

Keenan, M., Zinsstag, E., & O'Nolan, C. (2016). Sexual violence and restorative practices in Belgium, Ireland and Norway: A thematic analysis of country variations. *Restorative Justice*, 4(1), 86-114.

Article may be useful as it discusses SV and RJ in 3 countries - Norway, Ireland and Belgium.

Gavrielides, T. (2015). Is restorative justice appropriate for domestic violence cases? *Revista De Asistentia Sociala*, (4), 105-121.

Summarizes a study done in the UK of programs that deliver some type of RJ and IPV. Documents the concerns but also list some programs in the UK that could lead to further exploration.

Daly, K. (2011). *Conferences and gendered violence: practices, politics, and evidence*. Prepared for I. Vanfraechem & E. Zinsstag (forthcoming), *Conferencing and Restorative Justice: Challenges, Developments and Debates*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Helpful article in that it outlines some of the different types of RJ processes used for GV and what the overall issues are.

Drost, L., Haller, B., Hofinger, V., Van Der Kooij, T., Lünemann, K., & Wolhuis, A. (2015). Restorative justice in cases of domestic violence: Best practice examples between increasing mutual understanding and awareness of specific protection needs. *Criminal Justice Programme 2013 with the European Commission Directorate-General Justice, Directorate B: Criminal Justice*.

Discusses the interviews with victims and offenders in 6 countries who participated in VOM sessions. Some interesting commentary for practitioners to consider. Highlights some of the cautions and promises as expressed by victims and offenders.

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**Restorative Conversations:
Expanding the Dialogue Project**

Report: Action Research Data Synthesis

May 2019

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I. Executive Summary

Project Description

The *Restorative Conversations- Expanding the Dialogue* Project (RC-ED) has explored how conversations about using restorative approaches (RA) for gender-based violence (GBV) have been evolving in Nova Scotia. It is a collaborative effort by Bridges Institute, Be the Peace Institute, Mi'kmaw Legal Support Network, the Halifax Metro Interagency Committee on Family Violence, and is supported by the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women and funded by Justice Canada Policy Centre for Victim Issues. As part of the project, *Be the Peace Institute* interviewed 25 people who have been involved in the dialogue, oversaw a workshop on October 25, 2018 in which participants helped make sense of interview data, and contributed to a knowledge mobilization retreat on April 4, 2019.

Context

Agencies delivering the Nova Scotia Restorative Justice Program are prohibited from taking GBV cases by a moratorium established in 2001. Discussions about using RA for GBV, and debates leading to the moratorium, have caused much consternation. Over the ensuing years conversations have been happening in various sectors and venues about the issue, especially with the realization that the criminal justice system often does not manage these cases well for victims.

The conversations explored in this report started with a small group in 2012. In 2014 they brought together a larger group of service providers to expand their conversations. Since then this group has merged with the Metro Interagency Committee on Family Violence in Halifax. In the meantime, the Mi'kmaw Legal Support Network developed restorative responses to family violence, including GBV, based on customary law principles that are embedded within the criminal justice system response for Mi'kmaw people.

Report Purpose

This report describes the results from the interviews and the October 2018 workshop. Research participants identified factors that led to the productive conversations currently happening; barriers that might stand in the way of building on this success; and how the findings may guide next steps moving forward. They also identified lingering concerns about using RA in GBV, and how the community might contribute to improvements in current responses to GBV.

Findings

The interviews revealed that much has been learned about both GBV and RA over the years since the moratorium. Indeed, the wider social context has changed with the MeToo movement and the burgeoning attention to GBV.

Those interviewed identified curiosity, respect and generosity as having facilitated productive dialogue. Working together in face-to-face meetings, with strong and supportive leadership, helped build trust and heal some relationships that had suffered from debates around the moratorium. The work together needed to overcome lingering tensions related to the historically challenging relationship between community entities and government systems.

Going forward, those participating in the conversations will need to consider emerging challenges related to meeting fatigue; barriers to trust and confidence across professional silos; and the inclusion of diverse

voices. In addition, any moves toward developing RA for GBA will need to address the moratorium, its scope and purpose, how resources will be allocated and to whom. Along with concerns about centring victims' voices, appropriate models and requisite skills for practitioners, these issues cause nervousness and lingering concerns about using RA with GBV among many involved in these conversations.

The conversations that began in 2012 and now continue at the Metro Interagency table have produced a community coalition that has influenced system change, particularly around the Halifax Domestic Violence Court. Through this work, a great deal of common ground has emerged, especially related to principles (how to work in a restorative way) and concerns about existing criminal justice responses to GBV.

Conversations about principles and a principle-based approach have proven to be a key compelling feature of the evolving conversations. Those interviewed discussed principles associated with doing restorative work, and highlighted similar principles associated with having productive and safe conversations about RA and GBV.

The interviews suggest that next steps should continue to focus on principles with an eye to developing implementation possibilities. Work should continue to build on existing trust and strengthening relationships. This work should involve modeling relational principles and practices together.

Recommendations- Expanding the Dialogue

Based on interview data and workshop discussion, this report concludes with several recommendations:

- Develop and build broad consensus on guiding principles
- Build on the trust that has been developed
- Enhance knowledge sharing within and across fields
- Move principles into practice
- Make decisions about scope and mandate
- Create structures for collaboration

II. Introduction

Project Purpose

The *Restorative Conversations- Expanding the Dialogue Project* (RC-ED) is a collaborative effort by Bridges Institute, Be the Peace Institute, Mi'kmaw Legal Support Network and the Halifax Metro Interagency Committee on Family Violence. It is supported by the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women and funded by Justice Canada Policy Centre for Victim Issues. The project aimed to mine the value of community conversations that have been exploring how a restorative approach (RA) can play a role in building more meaningful justice outcomes for victims of gender-based violence (GBV). The conversations, which began in 2012 and now reside at the Metro Interagency Committee on Family Violence (MICFV) have involved organizations working primarily in the field of gendered violence, but also justice and restorative justice.

The project has grown out of conversations initiated in 2012 among three service-providers: Tod Augusta Scott (Bridges Institute), Verona Singer (Victim Services, Halifax Regional Police) and Pamela Harrison (Transition House Association of Nova Scotia). In 2014 they brought service-providers from the transition houses and men's intervention programs to share, together with scholars and experts, a feminist, trauma-informed approach to restorative justice. Since then, agency representatives in Halifax have continued

the conversations, developed draft principles for a restorative approach to gender-based violence and continued to collaboratively seek possibilities for system change. On September 27, 2017, this group hosted a facilitated gathering to share their ideas with a broader community of service providers. It was then decided to merge the group with the MICFV, as many of the same participants are at both tables, and also now involved in the development of the Halifax Domestic Violence Court Program. The table is now referred to as the Metro Interagency/Restorative Conversations Committee on Family Violence (MIRCCFV).

The RC-ED project aimed to support the work in progress at the MIRCCFV on addressing the use of RA for GBV. Those involved with the MIRCCFV, and leading the conversation about RA, have felt the work has succeeded in opening positive dialogue about a difficult subject.

The project involved three components:

1. A scoping literature review of identified models using a RA in GBV by Verona Singer, PhD for Bridges Institute.
2. An opportunity for Paula Marshall, ED of the Mi'kmaw Legal Support Network (MLSN) to share and document the restorative work they do in Nova Scotia Indigenous communities based on traditional customary law, in collaboration with the Mi'kmaw Family Healing Centres and the criminal justice system.
3. An action-research component by Sue Bookchin, MPH and Diane Crocker, PhD for Be the Peace Institute (BTPI) seeking real-time information about the current reality of the conversations, what has happened leading up to this point, what has been learned and how can that inform future work.

Action Research

The action-research is structured in 3 phases:

- **“What?”** - Capturing the current reality of the conversations about RA in GBV and its history, through deep-dialogue interviews with participants in the MIRCCFV and others with relevant knowledge.
- **“So What?”** - Collective sense-making, both with the project team, and at a workshop hosted on October 25th 2018 for interviewees and stakeholders to review and help make sense of the interview data.
- **“Now What?”** - What is their readiness for going forward? While we draw conclusions and make recommendations from the data, the project culminates in a final retreat on April 4, 2019, during which participants collectively envision a principle-based path forward.



This report describes the results from the interviews and the October workshop. We identify factors that led to the productive conversations currently happening, barriers that might stand in the way of building on this success, and how the findings may guide next steps moving forward. We also report lingering concerns from participants about using RA in GBV, and how the community of MIRCCFV members might move forward to ultimately improve justice processes and outcomes for victims of GBV.

Background and Context

The graphic timeline below was crafted at the October 25th sense-making event. The illustration shows the significant work that has happened regarding restorative justice and restorative approaches in GBV in community, government, judicial and academic sectors over the past two decades.¹ The reports, meetings and programs illustrated have all worked toward improving access to justice and stronger accountability outcomes for those involved in experiences of GBV, (survivors and perpetrators).

Discussions about using RA for GBV have caused much consternation and debate. Cautions raised in 2000 by the women’s advocacy community that resulted in a moratorium restricting the use of RA in GBV remain real – these crimes are fundamentally about power and control and, while on a continuum of harms, often place victims and children at the highest risk.



Over the ensuing years, it has been a challenge to develop collaborative processes to discuss the use of RA in GBV with a foundation of trust needed to foster consensus and innovative thinking. In addition, it has been difficult to collaboratively define an approach that both protects those victimized, offers them a contextualized response, preserves their autonomy of choice, and also ensures perpetrator accountability. These challenges exist in other jurisdictions as well. This report documents how

¹ Illustrations by James Neish and Corrie Melanson, See Meaning Graphic Facilitation

participants at the MIRCCFV table have met these challenges and how others outside the table understand its work and the implications.

Over 20 organizations at the MIRCCFV table have flagged their openness to ongoing engagement in this active exploration based on the shared awareness that the current criminal justice system does not serve victims of gendered violence well, and less offender-focused processes might be able to safely meet victims' needs.

III. Methodology

Interviews

We conducted 25 deep dialogue interviews. We included members of the MIRCCFV who had been involved since at least 2014, and two who had been involved from the beginning. This was a relatively small subset as organizational affiliations shift over time, participation fluctuates, and there has been an influx of new participants at the table with little knowledge of the effort's history.

Some at the table represent organizations with provincial mandates beyond Halifax, with members who have a long history in the conversations dating back to the 2000 moratorium. We included some of these individuals as important stakeholders, as well as some key government-based MIRCCFV members with a similar history. We sought input from those more recent to (or only sporadically at) the table, representing African-Nova Scotian and Indigenous perspectives, and we included some individuals who never sat at the table, but who were identified as relevant stakeholders, including academics and individuals working in the restorative justice field more generally.

The final roster of interviewees was comprised of stakeholders in the fields of both GBV and RA, including: women's advocates; providers of GBV-related services for women and for men; government actors; restorative justice agency staff; Indigenous and African Nova Scotian service providers; academics and researchers.

We developed the interview guide around the following core questions:

Process Questions

- What brought people to the table in the first place?
- What circumstances/factors facilitated the conversations?
- What circumstances/factors created barriers?
- What has shifted or evolved in the conversations over time?
- What has been learned or accomplished?
- How is the system around a restorative approach changing or being impacted by the conversations?

Issues Questions:

- What are some of the specific issues being addressed around the table?
- How are they being addressed?
- What is the current thinking or level of activity regarding use of a restorative approach in situations of gender-based violence?
- What principles have been developed to guide those activities?
- Are there areas of common ground or consensus?
- What principles have emerged that can guide further work?

Collective Sense-making

On October 25th, 2018, we invited interviewees and stakeholders together. Guided through interactive discussions by a professional facilitator, participants reviewed and shared their sense-making of the interview data and how it informs a path forward. A graphic recorder captured the proceedings, (see image below).



Situating the Researchers in the Research

Feminist research principles suggest that researchers should situate themselves in the research to acknowledge their role and perspective. This offers a level of transparency to readers and elucidates their existing perspective about the issues being explored. This reflexivity proves particularly important in the type of action research pursued in this project.



Diane Crocker, a professor at Saint Mary's University, and Sue Bookchin, Executive Director of BTPI, developed the interview guides, conducted the interviews (usually together), and wrote this report.

Over the years, both Diane and Sue have been involved in different ways – directly and indirectly – in initiatives and conversations about the topic we are studying and addressed in this report. This involvement, including sitting at the MIRCCFV table, inevitably means that we are ourselves part of the story we tell in this report. We see advantages and disadvantages in this position. On the one hand, we hoped our involvement in RJ and/or GBV-related issues would encourage those interviewed to speak broadly and with depth about the complexities in their thinking and experience. On the other hand, our own engagement in the debates explored in the interviews means we are not completely neutral, nor might we be perceived as such by those we interviewed. We hoped we'd be trusted in authentically seeking a full range of perspectives with genuine curiosity and open-mindedness. Further, while we took care to be cognizant of our social location as white, professional women, we note that racial and class status assumptions and biases can be difficult to see.

IV. Findings

The following synthesizes data collected by BTPI from 25 deep dialogue interviews and the sense-making event on October 25th, 2018.

In the interviews people talked about two main areas:

- What has happened at the MIRCCFV table and leading up to its development
- Opinions about whether RA offers an appropriate response to GBV situations, and under what circumstances.

Those who have been at the table from early on were able to share more deeply about progress or current reality at the table itself. The content for those arriving more recently to the table, or whose constituents have mandates beyond Halifax, or who are involved in other related discourse in Halifax and beyond, was more so about the latter. While we have tried to prioritize the former, both showed up in the interviews.

In what follows we describe: findings relating to how the conversations about using RA in GBV have evolved over time; what factors facilitated the dialogue; what barriers were faced; what has been learned and accomplished; and what challenges may influence a go-forward path.

The level of engagement with interview participants in this issue, and indeed in this project was high. We had no trouble recruiting people to participate in interviews, and several individuals identified themselves to us and asked to be included. This interest speaks to the importance of the work that has been done to date, and the need to keep moving forward and build on the good will and interest that already exists. We found people to be forthcoming, open, and thoughtful in their responses. Any assumptions we may have made about who would say what were quickly dispelled, as people revealed the complexities in their thinking. Many expressed appreciation for the opportunity to share their perspectives, and were eager to hear about the collective findings.

What factors facilitated the Restorative Conversations table?

Curiosity and respect

The conversations about RA and GBV in Halifax were facilitated by relationship building that started with a small, select group and has expanded to include a wider range of stakeholders over the years. It began with regular meetings between Tod Augusta Scott, Verona Singer and Pamela Harrison. They brought curiosity and respect for one another's work and vantage points to generate productive dialogue. Their work together also bridged a gap between those working with male perpetrators and those working with women survivors. Our interviews revealed that the trust built in these early conversations opened the

door for others to have courage for honest and open conversations about a subject that historically had been very polarizing. Participants in the early conversations noted that their own academic work helped to shift their thinking from the dominant discourse of bad men and victimized women, to a new narrative that included the possibility that violent men could change, and women could have agency and voice. This helped others to resist the temptation toward “either/or”, “us versus them” thinking.

Generosity in relationships

Interviewees emphasized the primacy of relationships – how working together across traditional silos or differences has been essential and that “*we need to have confidence in our relationships around the table.*” We heard about how much dedicated effort it takes to build the level of trust needed for productive work and effective partnerships. Some suggested it was comfortable because no one was “*starting a campaign*” or trying to persuade anyone else; there was an openness to hearing about ideas and also concerns about restorative approaches. We heard that those participating in this conversation in Halifax were invested in learning from each other and were “*charitable*” toward each other’s ideas.

Participants in the October sense-making workshop said they felt reassured that relationships had been identified as a key facilitating factor in the conversations that have evolved over the past few years. Some of those who had not been at the table expressed surprise that our findings in this regard had been so positive, and this was reassuring for any efforts moving forward.

Face-to-face opportunities

The 2014 event (held at the Atlantic School of Theology) was described as particularly pivotal. It reminded people that the women’s and men’s organizations had a history of co-operation that could be recovered and built on. Some participants described the event as having been stressful, but they felt it created an opening for the relationship-building that has happened since. Likewise, in the sense-making event on October 25th, participants said they valued face-to-face opportunities to learn about one another’s work and perspectives.

Developing common principles

We heard that conversations at the MIRCCFV have been “*abstract*” enough to keep the dialogue positive. The discussions about principles have been “*respectful, collegial, constructive, insightful, and robust,*” as well as productive and non-threatening. This approach has eased some anxieties and helped highlight the ways in which restorative principles align with how the agencies that serve women and men actually work. The exercise of clarifying shared values has helped build positive relationships based on common ground.

Building a community coalition

Another concrete factor that facilitated early success at the table, according to some we interviewed, lay in the fact that the conversations included primarily those working in the community. This allowed the group to gel as a “*community coalition*” before moving outward. Historically there has been a narrative that the conflict about restorative approaches in GBV lies between government and women’s organizations. But according to these interviews, the dynamic is much more nuanced and complex, influenced by patterns and constraints that are sometimes individual, but more often systemic. Many of those we interviewed appreciated the opportunity to participate in learning conversations without the pressure of having government at the table.

Support and leadership

Other factors that facilitated the conversations included support from the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women, ongoing leadership by the originators of the discussions, as well as many others in government and community over the years. The growing interest in and use of restorative approaches in the province also contributed.² People also mentioned that *“the system itself seems more open”* and ready for change and cited innovations like the Halifax Domestic Violence Court Program development, specialised Sexual Assault Crown Prosecutors and the Independent Legal Advice initiative for sexual violence survivors, as Nova Scotia examples.

Social context

Our interviews indicated that many felt the larger cultural context has been a facilitating factor as well. High profile cases (and the public reaction to them) and the #MeToo movement reflect some cultural shifts that may be indicative of readiness for substantive change in how GBV situations are handled.

New knowledge and dissatisfaction with criminal system

People interviewed noted the array of research and new knowledge relating to both GBV and RA that has emerged in the past two decades. Among many feminist activists and scholars there was growing dissatisfaction with the current criminal justice system approach to GBV, a re-thinking of some earlier work to improve the system (e.g., pro arrest/prosecution policies), and the possibility that justice perspectives could be *both* feminist *and also* restorative. Many of those we interviewed shared these hopes and concerns. They shared a desire to be better educated about what else could be done to keep victims safe, honour women’s agency, and ensure meaningful accountability by perpetrators.

Common ground

Most respondents described a sense that the current criminal justice system is not meeting victims’ or perpetrators’ needs, particularly within population groups affected by historical systemic bias and racism. The widespread agreement among interviewees that system change needs to happen has been an important factor in propelling the conversations forward- *“If the consensus is that the current criminal justice system cannot deliver justice in these situations, let’s imagine what can.”* The fact that the MIRCCFV table has prioritized women’s safety and choice as essential principles is a common ground that has provided a sense of safety even when not everyone agreed. There is an appetite for new ideas both at the table and among others working in this field in the province, and new people are being attracted to the energy of collaboration at the table.

Creating space and overcoming fear

The ability for the MIRCCFV to have these conversations is a product of both slow and incremental relationship building between and among community agency representatives, and also the wider culture shift related to gender-based violence. The conversations have helped overcome some fear, created space for different perspectives, and diminished resistance to talking publicly about using restorative approaches in cases of gender-based violence.

² Examples included the Nova Scotia Restorative Justice-Community University Research alliance, work done by Jennifer Llewellyn, projects using restorative approaches in schools, the restorative inquiry into the Home for Coloured Children and the Dalhousie Dentistry process.

What has been learned around the table?

In our interviews we heard that a lot has been learned, both about the complex continuum of GBV, and about restorative practices and principles. People described how these learnings have helped change people's minds and created greater openness and receptivity to considering possibilities. We were told that the sophistication and nuance in the current conversations could not have happened years ago – that the conversations have become *“intellectually rigorous”* and more informed than in the past. The prevailing sense is that the past decade has seen a *“huge shift”* and substantial increase in knowledge about restorative approaches, principles and practice. As one person stated, *“If a divide remains, it is now a more informed divide.”*

Those we interviewed identified several specific learnings that have emerged from their participation at the MIRCCFV table. People referenced distinctions, for example, between restorative “justice” as a model practiced by the Nova Scotia Restorative Justice agencies, and a broader application of restorative “approaches” that could allow flexibility in practice and need not require a face-to-face encounter between someone harmed and the person who caused it. Shifting language was another example. There is now talk about “repairing harm” as a component of ensuring accountability.

People we interviewed also talked about developing a sense of *“cultural humility,”* a better understanding of the dominant culture's *“othering,”* and the unique challenges of communities with intersecting oppressions (e.g., Indigenous, African-Nova Scotian, LGBTQ2S). Interviewees acknowledged these voices are often missing from discussions about how GBV and related issues like child welfare, are experienced in racialized and vulnerable communities. *“We need to be conscious and cautious of the folks at the margins. They can tell us what we've done wrong,”* and help us identify the gaps and failures in the systems that need to be addressed. These comments mirror others who suggested that *“context matters,”* and *“one size does not fit all.”*

What have the conversations accomplished?

The enlivening quality of conversations and partnerships at the current table were mentioned frequently as an example of people getting to know one another and respectfully sharing varying perspectives about new possibilities: *“There's a richness to the conversations here that's not happening elsewhere,”* *“a greater understanding of the complex social realities;”* a common belief that trauma-informed perspectives are essential; and a *“more sophisticated gender lens.”*

Many people we interviewed highlighted the process being used to develop the Halifax Domestic Violence Court Program (DVCP) as a major accomplishment that arose, at least in part, from the success of the Restorative Conversations Table. This *“community coalition”* has had a *“huge impact on how the Halifax Domestic Violence Court Program (DVCP) is developing.”* The inclusion of community-based service providers on the working group, steering committee and evaluation team of the DVCP is increasing mutual trust, respect and collegiality at the DVCP tables. We heard several points about this work:

“This [approach] was very new for government... and quite unique [for government] to invite communities to shape the DVCP framework.”

“Government [was] realizing they need community, and community is feeling like government is listening.”

“We took our principles to the DVC conversations... about what a principled approach would look like.”

There has been some sense that the Restorative Conversations have facilitated access to decision-makers in government in a way that had not been possible in the past. Many people we interviewed felt that their voices were being heard. Some mentioned the meeting with the former Minister of Justice in which community agencies were invited to discuss potential restorative approaches in the domestic violence court.

In the October workshop, participants commented mostly positively on the accomplishments identified in the interview data. One participant described the follow-through associated with the conversations as “*refreshing*.” Below are some of the comments from the closing circle that day:

- *Learning new perspectives to engage about.*
- *Being here when we are generally left out.*
- *This experience – not in secret anymore – not alone on this journey.*
- *Momentum is building – it’s rejuvenating.*
- *Enriching conversations and connectedness.*
- *More context. Honesty about worries and tensions.*
- *How many have been invested in this and how much has been accomplished.*
- *Appreciate the face to face opportunity.*
- *More tools to deal with complex issues.*
- *Really optimistic – a powerful time to shake some trees!*

What principles have guided the work?

In our interviews we enquired about principles that guided the conversations and we heard a variety of answers. People emphasized that trusting our relationships around the table matters. Other principles guiding the conversations include respect for one another’s work, collegiality, collaboration, “*constructive insight*,” and an appreciation of diverse practices.

Some interviewees were unsure of what principles guided the conversations themselves, if there were principles at all, or if they were mostly implicit.

People were surer about the restorative principles guiding their own work with clients. One service provider described their therapeutic work as restorative. Another discussed their approach as restorative in that they help restore a woman’s safety, and honour women’s choices about how they want to heal, decide on their own standards for themselves and their children, “*so when she leaves, she is more whole, more capable, more fully realized... and choosing life-enhancing relationships.*” A restorative practice for another involved “*helping women see system harms as structural, not personal.*” Some identified inclusive, intersectional feminism at the root of their restorative work, or ensuring that abusers take responsibility for their actions and repair harms. A very long list of principles people said they subscribe to also included: prioritizing relationships; focusing on context; woman-centred, which also means accommodating children; genuine process and meaningful opportunity for voice; actively valuing diversity as a central component; “two-eyed seeing;” advocacy; healing; importance of the collective; the need to engage the whole community.

What barriers or challenges have been faced?

Participants were asked about barriers to the conversations. For many these are also reflective of the barriers to effectively using RA in GBV, and will require continued negotiation going forward.

Relationships and Overcoming History

Challenges needed to be overcome before productive dialogue could take place. The early co-founders took slow and painstaking steps to build trust together and then to expand the conversation among a larger group. They seeded the field with an expanded narrative from the dominant binary discourse about GBV, withstanding the growing pains this entailed in the field. Some noted there are still competing interests about the narrative. *“We’re still telling an old story, but that’s not the story our clients are telling us.”*

Some interviewees described a history of *“fractured relationships”* among different groups of service providers. Some of these tensions, we heard, were born of a competitive environment for resources; assumptions, mistrust and a lack of professional standards across fields and jurisdictions.

System-based dynamics

The historically challenging relationship between community entities and government systems was a common refrain in the interviews and has had a large impact on trust. Interviewees talked about repeated experiences of government entities downloading services to community agencies without requisite resources, and repeated attempts over the years to downsize resources to women’s services and those most vulnerable. This has made the subject of adequately resourcing new or innovative initiatives a significant concern among many interviewed.

There have been *“a ton of assumptions, fears, misrepresentations and mistrust of government, without much genuine collaborative problem solving;”* along with the *“immense burden on women’s advocates... under-resourced, overwhelmed by needs and having limited capacity to envision possibilities while ensuring real women don’t fall through the cracks.”* *“We like easy wins ...and quick fixes, and simple solutions to complex issues.”* *“We don’t consider the context... how can we have a system response that forces us to look at the gray areas, the complexities?”*

What are the challenges going forward?

People interviewed have expressed clear desire to continue the conversations, especially at the MIRCCFV Table. People seem excited about possibilities even as they actively grapple with the challenges. Below are some challenges discussed by interviewees.

Time for relationship building

People described challenges associated with building and sustaining relationships and devoting the time needed for face-to-face engagement. They described a sense of exhaustion over the amount of work involved outside their mandated provision of essential services, and *“meeting fatigue,”* especially once the Restorative Conversations table merged with the MIFV and became deeply involved with the development of the Halifax DVCP. This pressure continues to impede participation from some key actors in the field.

Trust and confidence across professional silos

While trust continues to be built, some participants described it as *“tenuous”* and not necessarily encompassing *all* the relationships. For example, many identified the need for women’s organizations, men’s organizations and restorative justice agencies to get to *know* and *understand* each other’s work before trust in one another and confidence in one another’s skills and abilities could be assumed.

We also heard some concerns about whether everyone's contributions and expertise were/are equally valued, questions about who "owns" the conversation, who should be leading it, who has access to decision-makers, and who is the final arbiter of what constitutes restorative principles and good practices. Some of these questions reflect past experiences that had negative impacts and relationships that remain wary.

Missing voices

A recurring theme among those we interviewed was around the diversity of voices and those missing at the table, and the expressed need to actively engage them and in culturally adept and bias-aware ways. The interviews generated a long list of missing voices, described as "*striking*" by one discussion group at the October workshop. The list included: legal actors; police; child welfare workers and other key service providers; voices from African Nova Scotian communities and the significant additional barriers and biases faced around GBV for victims, offenders and families; newcomer and LGBTQ2S+ communities, who likewise face more dangers, risks and access to justice issues; and Indigenous voices [MLSN and Mi'kmaw Family Healing Centres] who have long-standing experience in using RA in GBV in the context of Customary Law that has been identified as an asset by the courts, "*yet there seems to be little awareness about their principles and processes, nor appreciation of this work.*"

Some noted that the MIRCCFV encompasses more expertise about GBV than RA. In addition, a specific debate emerged about whether the table should include decision-makers in the system (or representatives of), or those who work directly with clients. There was also a question about whether merging the Metro-Interagency and the Restorative Conversations into a larger table is actually the best forum for these conversations moving forward. Questions about who should be included or actively recruited to the table, based on what criteria, and how to balance increasing numbers at the table with efficiency for action on a given initiative, will need to be navigated.

The moratorium

We heard a wide variety of opinions about the ongoing moratorium on the use of RA in GBV in Nova Scotia, its value, scope and who it actually applies to. Some saw the moratorium as an important "*safety valve*," allowing people to participate freely in imagining new possibilities without worrying that implementation may happen prematurely. For these people, the moratorium ensures that RA in GBV won't be implemented before concerns have been adequately addressed. For others, the moratorium presents a barrier to fully realizing the potential of restorative approaches in meeting the needs of victims better than the current criminal justice system does. These differences in assumptions and opinions will need to be clarified and negotiated going forward.

System resourcing

Interviewees offered a number of examples where authentic collaboration between government and community is growing, and reflects deepening relationships fostered over time. However, many expressed worry about the tendency for government to under-resource new initiatives and oversimplify complex problems: "*Trying to create simple [one-size-fits-all] solutions when there's so much complexity makes it very challenging to experiment in this field...the risks of harm to victims is so significant.*"

People noted that implementation of new initiatives requires sufficient resourcing and evaluation to prevent further harm, particularly where development of new expertise and ongoing training is an essential component.

Scope

In the interviews we heard differences of opinion on the scope of the conversations, e.g., whether to focus narrowly on intimate partner violence or more widely on all forms of GBV.

There also seems to be no common definition of the terms “restorative justice,” “restorative approaches,” “restorative practices” and whether and how they are either interchangeable or distinct. Even the term “restorative” itself yielded many different interpretations. And “*what accountability looks like in a restorative engagement*” was also a question raised.

Many interviewees (both men’s and women’s workers) described their work with clients as “restorative.” But the criteria for what deems it such varied widely and included the terms “*therapeutic,*” “*feminist,*” “*intersectional,*” “*responsive,*” “*trauma-informed,*” “*cultural competence/humility*” and “*healing.*” A respondent reflected that “. . . *we need real care in the language of this movement.*” Principles underlying the restorative work ranged from safety of women and children, victim-centred and victims defining “*just outcomes,*” to abusers taking responsibility and repairing harm.

What lingering concerns are influencing readiness for RA in GBV?

We heard from most participants that they accepted restorative principles as valid, and were ready to expand the dialogue and explore ways to operationalize principles in practices, but with lingering concerns about how they would be implemented and by whom. “*There’s little argument about the principles- it’s the implementation . . . that is the challenge.*”

We heard a number of lingering concerns related to essential components of the dialogue and for implementation of RA in GBV:

- Defining what a restorative engagement can look like in GBV situations, “*Healing is good but it’s not a substitute for the fact that GBV is a criminal activity.*”
- Whether RA can deal with the complexity and depth of harm experienced by women in violent relationships, and avoid “*pressuring women to participate, either subtly or overtly,*” as well as whether offenders will participate authentically and safety can be assured;
- Whether “*decisions will consider the real experiences of real people,*”
- Whether appropriate models exist;
- Devoting the time needed, “*We’re always in a hurry to process caseloads. It takes time for [offenders] to change.*” “*We need to understand how much time it takes for a traumatized person to figure out what they need, to be able to cooperate with the system, to understand how it has affected them and determine what is in their own best interests.*”
- Devoting adequate resources, in general, but also resources specifically for training, “*We need ongoing and more sophisticated training, sequential and across silos.*”
- Identifying who in the province is adequately trained to do RA in this context. “*We need preparedness- highly specialized practitioners with advanced and nuanced understanding of power dynamics, and verifiable skills/credentials,*” or whether and how collaboration among GBV workers and RA workers will inform implementation.
- Negotiating the value and purpose of a continued moratorium between those who deem it essential until the challenges of doing RA in GBV well are resolved, and those who view its demise as a prerequisite for progress in this work.

Centring victims' voices

Many respondents talked about the need to sustain the strides made over the past 20 years in the GBV: *"Losing ground is always a concern for activists."* Prioritizing women and children's safety, not re-traumatizing them, ensuring women have authentic choice without pressure to participate, are areas of common ground among those interviewed. *"So much of the system processes fall on her shoulders, including what should happen to him."* *"Women in violent situations have very few choices; they're expected to make the choice of least harm to others, depending on their social location."*

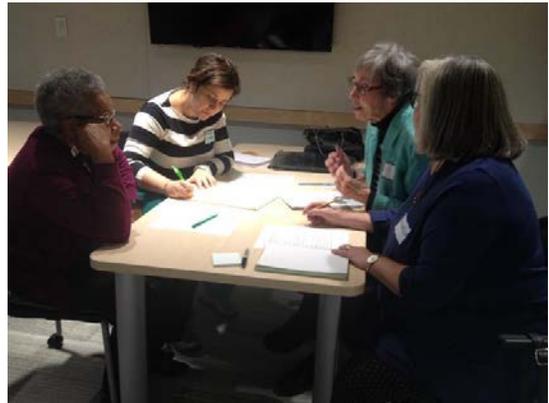
Some respondents spoke about a *"...continued lack of substantial investment in/commitment to victim issues and needs," "... even as we bolster services/possibilities for perpetrators,"* and the ongoing challenge of engaging victims meaningfully in the process and the discourse.

Others described the victim blaming, stigma, and gender/racial bias that persists in the justice system, and questioned whether RA in GBV can be any more successful in *"an already deeply flawed system; RJ won't solve those problems."*

A number of people interviewed talked about the lack of 'first voice' informants in this field-- *"victims speaking from their own voices," "hearing what they would like to see from the systems and service providers."* *"It's radical to include first voice as a legitimate voice... and it needs to be managed, otherwise it becomes too easy to dismiss them."*

Accountability for system harms

The need for public discourse about the accountability of the systems and the harms they cause to victims and families, especially in more vulnerable communities, was raised by several participants in terms of how the systems themselves can behave more restoratively. While inadvertent and unintended, *"we need to be supremely aware of such harms to the most vulnerable."* These would include children, youth, African Nova Scotian and Indigenous peoples, and those appearing in multiple system engagements concurrently (e.g., in justice, mental health and child welfare systems). In African Nova Scotian communities, *"Sometimes help means more harm,"* with *"limited access to services and few practitioners [and system actors] being of African descent."* Some suggest a dedicated discussion is needed about how we acknowledge and address accountability for these unintended system harms, and that communities need to be part of that.



What are some possible next steps?

At the October workshop we invited participants to suggest next steps for this conversation, given what they learned from the interview data. Suggestions included the following:

- Continue to work on relationships and restoring relational trust
- Develop a model for implementation. Some recommended a pilot program to be designed by community-based actors and implemented *only* with sufficient funding, training and evaluation.
- This work should involve modeling relational principles and practices together

Some participants also identified the need to work on issues identified as barriers to ongoing conversations and a willingness to continue to participate in relationship building. There was a suggestion that *“we need to start sharing some success stories.”*

V. Conclusions and Commentary

Scope of the Project

It has been challenging to consider the path of the conversations at the MIRCCFV table separate from the larger context of conversations considering the use of RA in GBV beyond the table.

Some of those at the current MIRCCFV table could speak directly to the history and path of how people came together. Others had only more recent participation in the Halifax conversations. However, most of those interviewed have had long-standing experience in the explorations of RA in GBV and they contributed their perspectives based on that experience. Almost everyone shared elements of both. While we attempted to prioritize the path at the table, the breadth of content shared is relevant in informing a forward path that expands the dialogue.

We have been similarly challenged in strictly categorizing the data into those two distinct areas or in trying to bound the system strictly by the parameters of the table. What happens next at the MIRCCFV will necessarily impact the broader system conversations, and also be impacted by them. As one respondent said, *“There are so many voices who care about this,”* and want to see new ways of addressing GBV cases.

Contribution of the MIRCCFV

The successive and current iterations of the MIRCCFV have been a unique opportunity in the time since the roll-out of the Nova Scotia Restorative Justice Program and advent of the moratorium. It remains a significant contribution as one of few venues where a broad range of people across sectors are invited to step outside their silos and into open exploration of RA as a possibility for achieving better justice processes and outcomes in GBV situations. Our interviews demonstrated a great deal about the positive evolution of the conversations, and acknowledgement of the growing collegiality at the MIRCCFV. There is passion and purpose around the table, curiosity, desire to learn, and good faith intentions for thoughtful, collaborative work. The convergence of this table with members' participation in other innovative initiatives supports cross-pollination of ideas, accomplishments, perspectives and practical possibilities that raise the collective capacity to accomplish common aims.

Mining History

Reflecting on the past and capturing the ‘institutional memory’ can be instructive in unearthing both challenges and milestones. It can reveal building blocks for success like the immense body of work undertaken in Nova Scotia on restorative justice, gender-based violence and their intersections, as illustrated on the graphic timeline. It can help us discern the residue of subtle and overt tensions in the landscape that need tending in order to rebuild trust and foster confidence in one another. And it can unearth what has been learned from challenging times. The shared work and enlivening discourse at the table is likely making a valuable contribution to further healing and trust.

The moratorium was such a significant moment in time, *“... both practically and symbolically.”* Described both as an *“important hold moment,”* and alternately as an elephant in the room, it afforded an opportunity over many years to learn more and create space for reflective practice for practitioners, government and academia. It also created separations that persist, e.g., RJ practitioners and GBV practitioners have

different mandates and skill sets, and only rare opportunities for knowledge sharing or collaborative learning. It is clear from participants that getting to know one another, sharing knowledge and practices in these two domains and collaborative work will be necessary to narrow that gap. Separation also magnifies the importance of avoiding making assumptions – about people, policies, intentions, choices, knowledge, practice, etc.—that were mirrored in the interview process where any of our assumptions were rarely proven accurate, and our curiosity was rewarded with new perspectives.

Our findings show a willingness to engage with the challenging topic of RA in GBV, and to move past some of the personal and structural divisions from the past to pursue common aspirations for improving justice, even as negotiation about the purposefulness of a continued moratorium continue.

Amplifying the Facilitating Factors

Many of the facilitating factors in the MIRCCFV's development centre around the primacy of relationships – making time to engage and inquire together and get to know one another as humans, in an environment free of judgement and *“privileging curiosity.”* When the quality of relationships is sufficiently strong, they may better tolerate the *“messiness”* of collaborative and inclusive work across silos, and be resilient enough to withstand a productive level of risk inherent in innovative thinking and action.

Trust, once broken, is painstaking to restore, but restoration seems to be happening in ways that are encouraging and enlivening, judging by the enthusiasm and high attendance at the MIRCCFV meetings.

The collaborative approach of leaders in government inviting *and sustaining* community-based providers' participation at the Halifax DVCP tables is a noteworthy and mutually appreciated investment. People on all sides seem encouraged by the shared recognition that *“we need each other.”*

Victim Centredness

People we interviewed generally agree we need to be more victim-centred, trauma informed, and *“shift responsibility from the woman to the person committing violence.”* Many spoke about the *“lack of substantial and sustained investment in addressing victims' needs,”* and the fact that the direct voices of women are missing in much of the discourse and planning. If we are to centre victims' needs, how do we meaningfully involve them without tokenising their contribution or re-traumatizing? Those most directly affected can tell us not only about system failures, but also what their needs and our responses to them *should* look like, and according to their cultural and social location. The question of who speaks for or controls access to women's voices is a provocative one. There is *“immense pressure on women's advocates”* to fulfill that role. But how do we integrate an accurate and diverse range of perspectives without directly engaging with the people most affected, especially those with highly complex needs and histories of marginalization? Persistent gender-biases around GBV were well-articulated in our interviews, and these complicate the already substantial challenges in engaging victims in ways that are responsive not only to their needs for support, but also to their potential willingness, even eagerness, to contribute; to use their experiences for positive change in the systems. This is unresolved territory.

Aspirations from Common Ground

Achieving just processes and outcomes in situations of GBV that are less traumatizing, more productive, attentive to complex contexts and the particular needs of all those involved-- victims, offenders, children, families and communities-- in culturally adept and responsive ways, based on feminist intersectional principles, may be the common ground of our collective aspirations.

The context for conversations about RA and GBV has shifted considerably over the years. Many respondents acknowledged, with appreciation, individuals within the system who have and are

contributing to making these changes happen. *“People are changing and so are the systems they are working in.”*

There is widespread agreement among those we interviewed that: *“There’s no one way”* to do this work; and *“we can’t have one model [for everyone] – when we do that, then we expect and pressure people to fit that model.”* But it is a risky experiment, as many mentioned, when significant harm and women’s lives are at stake. *“So it must be mindful and principle-based,”* and include structures for evaluation, learning and course correction.

At this time, with alignment of energy, enthusiasm, knowledge, commitment to principles and social and political will, there is a rich opportunity to contribute to this ground-breaking work in Nova Scotia in a thoughtful, methodical and principled way.

VI. Recommendations- Expanding the Dialogue

People expressed clear desire to continue the conversations, especially at the MIRCCFV table, as evidenced by high levels of attendance at meetings. There is passion and purpose in the group, curiosity, and learning that is attracting more people to join in the conversations. There are exciting possibilities even amidst some lingering tensions that will need tending over time.

1. Develop and build broad consensus on guiding principles

Development of guiding principles is being more widely acknowledged as essential for collaborative engagement in complex work. This is especially true when accommodating a wide array of views, and attempting to be inclusive of an expanding spectrum of stakeholders. The MIRCCFV table should continue its work building consensus on principles to guide actual practice of RA in GBV, but also develop explicit principles to guide the conversations going forward. The guiding principles of the Nova Scotia RJ Program based on relational theory may be helpful in aligning complementary principles grounded in a feminist, intersectional, anti-oppressive and trauma-informed framework.

Having principles to guide the collaboration will enhance trust and provide a touchstone when tensions and inevitable disagreements arise. Converting guiding principles into practical implementation can be a challenging juncture – one that requires vigilance in continually asking whether actions and decisions are aligned with the principles articulated.

2. Build on the trust that has been developed

Much could be gained by men’s groups, RJ agencies and women’s groups learning more about one another as people, as well as how they each approach their work, how they understand it as “restorative,” and how it aligns with common, agreed upon principles. The MIRCCFV can thereby build on the trust that has been developed to help increase each constituent’s understanding and appreciation of one another’s work.

3. Knowledge sharing within and across fields

The separation between the fields of GBV and RA has divided programs and people who are learning in parallel but not in collaborative tandem. Our sense is that bridging that gap will be fruitful and contribute to the development of practice standards that will be useful to all. Establishing shared language and common use of terms would be a worthwhile activity (i.e., defining restorative justice/practice/approaches, and what accountability looks like in a GBV restorative engagement). It is an opportune time to reach out to local experts in Nova Scotia, including MLSN, as well as the Restorative International Learning Community, and to continue to seek connections in other jurisdictions about this

work. The literature review and MLSN toolkit provide a starting point for these explorations. Developing more structures for collaborative discourse, engagement and shared work would also be helpful.

Whatever happens going forward can only be enhanced by connections and joint learning with others who also seek better justice outcomes.

4. Moving principles into practice

Discussions about how service providers see themselves as operationalizing restorative principles in their current practices will assist in illustrating pathways from principles to implementation. Articulating how existing services align with restorative principles may ease some worries about implementation and promote innovative ideas about RA in GBV that address lingering tensions.

We are perceiving some readiness around the MIRCCFV table and beyond to try out new models or prototypes involving both the persons harmed, and the ones committing the harm (not necessarily in a face-to-face encounter). These would need to be aligned with agreed upon principles and also, importantly, require collaborative planning and learning among women's services, men's services and RJ practitioners. If piloting such models will include RJ agency practitioners, an exception to the moratorium would need to be sought.

Whatever is developed, it should not create more issues, burden, or harm for victims.

5. Decisions about Scope and Mandate

The MIRCCFC could benefit from some strategic conversations going forward. We heard questions about whether the table was too big, or whether it included an adequate representation of expertise and/or marginalized voices. Given what we heard, it seems worthwhile for the MIRCCFV to continue to grow, diversify, and discern who else should be actively recruited to the table. But given the next steps on the horizon, and the need to balance increasing numbers at the table with efficiency for action on any particular initiative, smaller working groups might be needed. In the course of activating an idea, they might consider: which service providers/practitioners should be involved; what role will each play; what criteria will be used to assess suitability for a restorative approach; how community involvement will be defined; how it will be resourced; and how it will be monitored and evaluated for effectiveness and fidelity to principles.

6. Structures for collaboration

Given how enthusiastically the government/community collaboration has been received in development of the Halifax DVCP, it would be worthwhile to actively strengthen the capacities and expand opportunities for shared work across silos of all kinds. This would include interdepartmentally within government, and also between government, knowledge holders, communities, academics/researchers, and community-based service providers. This requires a certain architecture – structures and frameworks that not only allow, but encourage and foster collaborative strategic thinking and collective action with a resource base to sustain it.

VII. Epilogue: Final Retreat - April 4, 2019



On April 4, 2019, at the conclusion of the project, the partners hosted a facilitated event with a cross section of 45+ community-based, academic and government actors to share findings from each of the project's three domains (action research interview data, scoping literature review, Mi'kmaw Legal Support Network Tool Guide), and explore how they inform a forward path. Participants included those working across government in justice, policy, victim services, legal aid, restorative justice, community services and healthcare; community-based agencies across family resources, women's advocacy and transition houses, men's intervention services, YWCA and YMCA's; restorative justice practitioners; researchers and students.

In the "open space" segment, where participants chose topics for further discussion, the conversations included:

- Would it be safe to lift the moratorium for young offenders immediately?
- Can we describe feminist principles in this context?
- What/how should social workers/students learn to become skilled practitioners?
- How do we build and support structures for collaboration across silos/sectors?
- How can we measure/evaluate? What happens when RJ "fails?"
- Injecting newcomer, racialized voices and concerns...
- Why do we not use real language when discussing men's violence against women?

Comments from participants about the event included:

"The wheels were still turning at the end of the day."

"The presentations were so informative, especially feminist principles that are accessible."

"The day will help us with next steps- the level of collective wisdom in the room and enlarged mentality was so impressive."

"Appreciated talking about a principled approach."

"The conversations were so rich... and such generous sharing."



Graphic capture by Bria Miller of Brave Space.