

Subcommittee Suggestions for the Canadian Restorative Justice Consortium

**Prepared by the
Steering Committee for the Canadian Restorative Justice Consortium**

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On November 16, 2010, the Steering Committee for the Canadian Restorative Justice Consortium (CRJC) facilitated a one hour workshop at the 2010 National RJ Symposium in Regina, SK. The workshop outlined suggestions about aspects of the CRJC from the following four subcommittees:

- Values & Vision;
- Goals, Activities & Products;
- Structure & Membership;
- Fundraising & Resource Generation.

The suggestions were provided through a PowerPoint presentation and a “mind map” document that outlined the Subcommittees’ ideas in a visual form. The workshop also provided an opportunity for people to ask questions and give feedback. The Steering Committee committed to take the feedback from the workshop into consideration, work on a proposal for the CRJC, and circulate it.

This document includes some background information about the consultation on the CRJC, the suggestions from the subcommittees, feedback given by workshop participants during the 2010 National Restorative Justice (RJ) Symposium, and next steps.

The Steering Committee wishes to express its thanks to those who assisted with developing these suggestions. The subcommittees met by conference call between spring and fall 2010. Their time and work is greatly appreciated.

I. BACKGROUND

The concept of developing a Canadian RJ organization was first discussed at a plenary during the National RJ Symposium in Ottawa in 2005. In 2007, the Steering Committee for the CRJC formed and began holding a consultation to determine whether there is a need for this organization. The consultation has involved several steps and processes, including the establishment of the subcommittees and the workshop during the 2010 National RJ Symposium.

The consultation indicated that there is strong support for the development of the CRJC. For example, 90% of respondents to an online survey agreed with the need to establish it. Respondents suggested that the CRJC could:

- Enable RJ practitioners to network and develop partnerships.
- Enhance information sharing between RJ practitioners, academics, and others about program development, new research and best practices.
- Support the skills development of RJ practitioners.
- Conduct public education, develop communication strategies, and develop and implement advocacy strategies.
- Support research on RJ.

The consultation has resulted in a great deal of information on topics such as the vision and values for the CRJC, its goals and activities, how it would be structured, and its membership. The subcommittees were asked to undertake a number of tasks and provide the Steering Committee with feedback and ideas. This document outlines the results of the subcommittees' work.

II. SUGGESTIONS FROM THE SUBCOMMITTEES

A. Subcommittee on Values & Vision

The Values & Vision Subcommittee focused on developing ideas for the CRJC's vision, mission, values, and principles. The Subcommittee aimed to make these aspects of the CRJC inclusive so that they would reflect the many ways in which RJ is practiced and understood. Realizing that it would be difficult to come up with a definition of RJ that would accomplish this and that all practitioners could agree to, they decided to provide a broad statement about RJ that would form the basis for the proposed vision, mission, values and principles. This statement is the preamble below.

The preamble leads to a recommendation for a broad vision about RJ in Canada and a mission that outlines the role of the CRJC in achieving that vision. As requested by the Steering Committee, the Subcommittee also presented some alternate visions and an alternate mission. It then provided suggestions for the CRJC's values and the principles to guide the CRJC's daily operations.

Preamble

The CRJC acknowledges that justice honours the inherent worth of all and is integral to all social structures. In this context, restorative justice (RJ) is fundamentally about healing, accountability, and how people relate to each other. When a person or group has experienced harm or has caused harm, RJ provides a space for dialogue so that the integrity of all can be restored and each person can become a fully contributing member of the community. Within this broad understanding, RJ can be interpreted and practiced in a variety of ways and settings.

The CRJC seeks to embody restorative values and processes within all of its practices.

Vision for RJ in Canada

The Subcommittee recommended a broad vision for RJ in Canada.

Recommended Vision:

Every Canadian has the opportunity to access RJ programs and services.

Rationale: Throughout the consultation on the development of the CRJC, there has been agreement about the need for RJ to be more widely available. The recommended vision reflects this. It also reflects the idea that all Canadians should have the ability to access RJ if they wish to do so.

Alternate Visions:

Canada embraces RJ.

Rationale: Hull is a city in the United Kingdom that is trying to use RJ in every possible way. The Subcommittee was inspired by this, and feels that Canada could become a country that completely embraces RJ. This would be the most ambitious vision of the three proposed by the Subcommittee.

Canadians live in communities that use and embrace RJ.

Rationale: RJ is strongly linked to the concept of community. This vision reflects the community-based nature of RJ and the need for it to be used more broadly in all kinds of ways within communities.

The CRJC's Mission

Recommended Mission:

The CRJC promotes RJ at the national level and supports the work of local, regional and provincial/territorial RJ programs, agencies, and networks/associations.

Rationale: One of the strongest themes throughout the consultation process has been that the CRJC should promote the use of RJ and support the work of other groups in the RJ field. The recommended mission reflects this.

Alternate Mission:

The CRJC nurtures RJ principles and practices in Canadian society by supporting RJ practitioners, programs, agencies, and networks/associations.

Values for the CRJC

The following recommended values are based on suggestions during the March 2010 meeting in Winnipeg.

- Leadership – the CRJC advocates for the use of RJ and supports its use in programs and sectors across the country and around the world.
- Transformation – the CRJC believes in the potential for people, organizations, communities, institutions, and society to grow and change in positive ways.
- Inclusiveness – the CRJC believes in the equality of all people and engages victims, offenders, families, communities, government, and other institutions in its structure, processes and activities. It includes all sectors where RJ is or could be used.
- Respect – The CRJC honours the sacredness, dignity, and inherent value of every person, and its actions demonstrate respect for its members and others.
- Courage – the CRJC speaks out boldly and passionately about the role of RJ.
- Accountability – the CRJC is transparent and responsive to its members, the Canadian public, and funding organizations.
- Creativity – the CRJC searches for innovative ways to address challenges, and it embraces new technologies and creative ideas.

Principles for the CRJC

The Subcommittee suggested that the following principles would guide the operations of the CRJC. It would:

- Embrace RJ values in its processes, structures and actions.
- Respect the autonomy of local, regional and provincial/territorial RJ programs.
- Work collaboratively across geographic areas, with victims organizations, the criminal justice, education and health systems, and others whenever possible.
- Demonstrate active listening, be open to suggestions and challenges, and be willing to work through difficult issues.
- Honor the stories and experiences of our members and others, and take the time to reflect on its actions and experiences.

B. Subcommittee on Goals, Activities & Products

There has been a high level of agreement during the consultation process about potential goals, activities and products for the CRJC. This Subcommittee attempted to integrate some of the specific goals, activities, and products with ideas for how the CRJC should be established and function. Additionally, the Subcommittee agreed with the proposals of other Subcommittees about elements of the CRJC, such as:

- The importance of modeling the values and principles of RJ in all of the CRJC's activities, processes, and relationships.
- The value of RJ in supporting healing and transformation within communities.
- A focus on dialogue and the exchange of ideas between the leadership of the CRJC, its members, and other groups and organizations.
- Using new ways of doing things when possible and appropriate, including being open to new technology and creative ideas.

The Subcommittee developed the following ideas for goals, activities and products.

Goals of the CRJC

At the national, provincial/territorial and local community levels and across sectors:

- 1) To embrace the ideals, ideas, practices and language¹ of RJ in all communications undertaken by the CRJC.
- 2) To promote reciprocal opportunities and the exchange of ideas, research, skills transfer and knowledge integration with respect to RJ.
- 3) To widen the circle of RJ understandings and practices by
 - a) strengthening the existing RJ networks and relationships,
 - b) connecting to groups and individuals open to exploring new possibilities and options for a more satisfying justice,
 - c) listening and learning about differing views from organizations with a less restorative focus, sharing information and seeking common ground with them where possible,
 - d) reaching out in new ways to groups and individuals traditionally marginalized and/or disconnected from restorative opportunities.
- 4) To foster and enable dialogue, in communities with a view to growth in their capacity to move towards RJ practices that promote healing and transformation.

¹ For example that language might include concepts and words such as: forgiveness, healing, reconciliation, apology, making amends, transformation, talking circle, the names of traditional First Nation ceremonies and other spiritual practices, consensus building, etc.

- 5) To utilize and create technologies for expanding RJ and the CRJC.

Activities and Products

- 1) Widen the circle of support for CRJC initiatives by collaborating and inviting both the members and the general public to share their interests, capacities and talents in the creation and support of the CRJC activities and products.
- 2) Seek ethical and diverse financial support and value driven partnerships for CRJC initiatives through a variety of sectors.
- 3) Advocate and nurture the development of RJ values and skills among children and youth to help lay the foundation for more healthy communities.
- 4) Collect, create and communicate a body of evidence - research, statistics, stories and other materials that can support and promote RJ across Canada.
- 5) Create an interactive website that will support the CRJC's vision, mission, goals and activities.

C. Subcommittee on Structure & Membership

The Structure & Membership Subcommittee considered the feedback from the Winnipeg meeting and other information regarding the strengths and weaknesses of non-profit corporations, coalitions, informal networks, and other organizational models. The Subcommittee also considered the amount of staffing, funding, administrative support, and other supports that would be needed under each model. Taking this information into consideration, the Subcommittee makes the following recommendations.

The CRJC's Structure

The CRJC will be an incorporated, charitable, non-profit organization. It will have a 10 person board, with a minimum of 6 organizational members and a maximum of 4 individual members. It will have an executive, be voluntary and made up by the membership. Will make decisions by consensus and will make decisions by simple majority when consensus is not achievable.

Rationale: It will be necessary to ensure that members of the Board of Directors have a range of skills and experiences, that the Board represents different regions of Canada, and that it represents various sectors within the RJ field without being dominated by particular organizations or interests. On the other hand, the Board can not be too large, or it will be difficult to reach consensus and bring the Board together. For these reasons, the Subcommittee feels that 10 is the maximum number of Board members and that there should be both organizational and individual members.

It is envisioned that the Board of Directors would strive to model the values and principles of RJ by making decisions by consensus whenever possible. It will be necessary to balance this with the understanding that it may not always be possible to achieve consensus. In these kinds of situations, it could be necessary and acceptable for the Board to vote.

Membership Categories and Fees

- Organizational memberships: fees will follow a sliding scale from 25\$ to 300\$, depending on capacity.
- Individual: Fees will be sliding based on capacity.
- Regional RJ Groups: This may be its own membership category. This will likely be a developmental aspect to the CRJC as regional organizations develop and identify ways to speak into the national CRJC. Perhaps as they develop there may be a process by which they nominate a member to the Board or some other method of representation. Perhaps we can up the number of board members in the future from 10 to accommodate regional representation.

Rationale: The recommended membership categories attempt to be inclusive and are consistent with the recommended composition of the Board of Directors. It is anticipated that potential members would determine which of the membership categories best fits them, and would apply for that category of membership.

Feedback throughout the consultation process indicates that regional representation is important, and that there needs to be a way for regional, provincial, and territorial RJ networks and associations to be involved in the CRJC. Offering this membership category would ensure that these groups could join the CRJC if they wish to do so. While this form of membership is developmental, it is likely that regional groups and networks will be eligible to be elected to the organizational seats on the Board of Directors. Fees for this form of membership will need to be determined in the future, as it is likely that these groups may also have organizational memberships in the CRJC.

Other Considerations:

The Subcommittee on Structure & Membership also recommended that:

- The Board of Directors would be a “working board” that would undertake various tasks and activities.
- There would be working groups to perform tasks and activities. The working groups would be made out of the membership and other willing volunteers.
- There be a part time, paid Coordinator who works at keeping the board and working groups operational and productive.

Rationale: The Subcommittee recognized that the roles, responsibilities, and tasks of the Board of Directors can not be finalized until the goals, activities and products of the CRJC are determined and the CRJC has some funding and other resources. It is unlikely that the CRJC will have a significant amount of funding when it is first established. During the consultation process, it was suggested that the CRJC could “start small” and be “scaleable” over time, meaning that it could grow and take on more activities in the future as it develops its funding and capacity. The Subcommittee agrees that the CRJC will have to “start small”, with an active, working Board, volunteer working groups, and few staff resources.

D. Subcommittee on Fundraising & Resource Generation

The Subcommittee on Fundraising & Resource Generation determined that it will not be able to make concrete suggestions regarding the kinds and amounts of resources needed until the other elements of the CRJC have been determined. Therefore, most of this Subcommittee’s work will occur after the elements of the CRJC are closer to being finalized. However, the Subcommittee on Fundraising & Resource Generation agreed with the Subcommittee on Structure & Membership that it will probably be necessary to have some kind of paid Coordinator position.

The Subcommittee developed the following questions, which will be considered during the next phase of developing the proposal for the CRJC:

- How much funding should come from public and private sources?
- What kinds of connections to existing organizations would be acceptable, particularly in regards to in-kind donations and partnerships?
- Should the national organization be entirely funded by memberships?
- To what extent are individuals and groups prepared to pay for memberships?

III. FEEDBACK FROM THE WORKSHOP AT THE SYMPOSIUM

About 70 people from a range of groups and sectors attended the workshop about the CRJC during the 2010 National RJ Symposium. The attendees included RJ practitioners, victims and those who work with victim-serving agencies, offenders and those who work with offender-serving agencies, Aboriginal people, educators, government officials, and others.

The feedback received during and after the workshop suggested that there was a continuing level of support for the establishment of the CRJC. Most of the feedback related to the following:

- Which vision was preferred by those who attended the workshop.
- The desire for more concrete and specific information about the goals, activities, and products of the CRJC.
- Suggestions that the CRJC could begin developing a website or some other concrete product that would be immediately useful.

- Questions about the CRJC's membership.
- Questions about how aspects of the CRJC will be determined, and how the organization will be formally established.

IV. NEXT STEPS

After considering the feedback from the Symposium workshop and other aspects of the consultation, the Steering Committee has developed a proposal for the CRJC. This proposal is being circulated in spring 2011. The Steering Committee will review the feedback and determine next steps for the establishment of the CRJC.

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