More Than Just a Program:
Developing a Restorative Approach to Schools in Nova Scotia

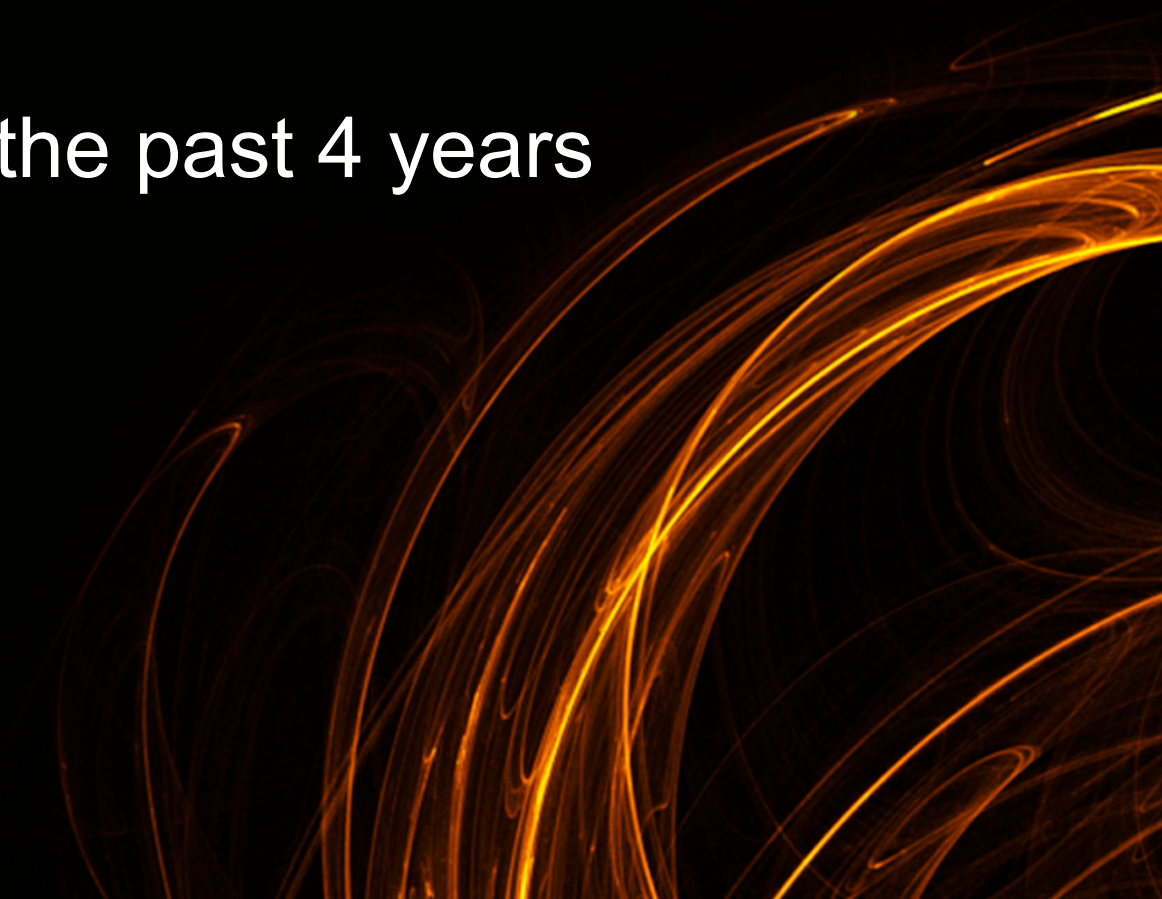Halifax, NS

Friday, June 15, 2011

Outline of The Session

- Introduction

- Background

- A restorative approach in Schools

- Guiding Principles

- Stage 1: Introduction and Building Capacity

- Stage 2: Training and Implementation

- Stage 3: Evaluation and Sustainability

- Building a Community Hub for Restorative Approaches

- Questions

Introduction

- Tri County Restorative Justice:
- Who we are
- What we do
- Our journey over the past 4 years
- Youth leadership

A restorative approach in Schools

A restorative approach in schools is founded on the belief that in order to build safe and healthy school communities, we must strengthen and support our social relationships through community participation, respectful dialogue, sustainable processes that build and strengthen relationships and opportunities for all school community members to feel empowered, engaged and participate meaningfully.
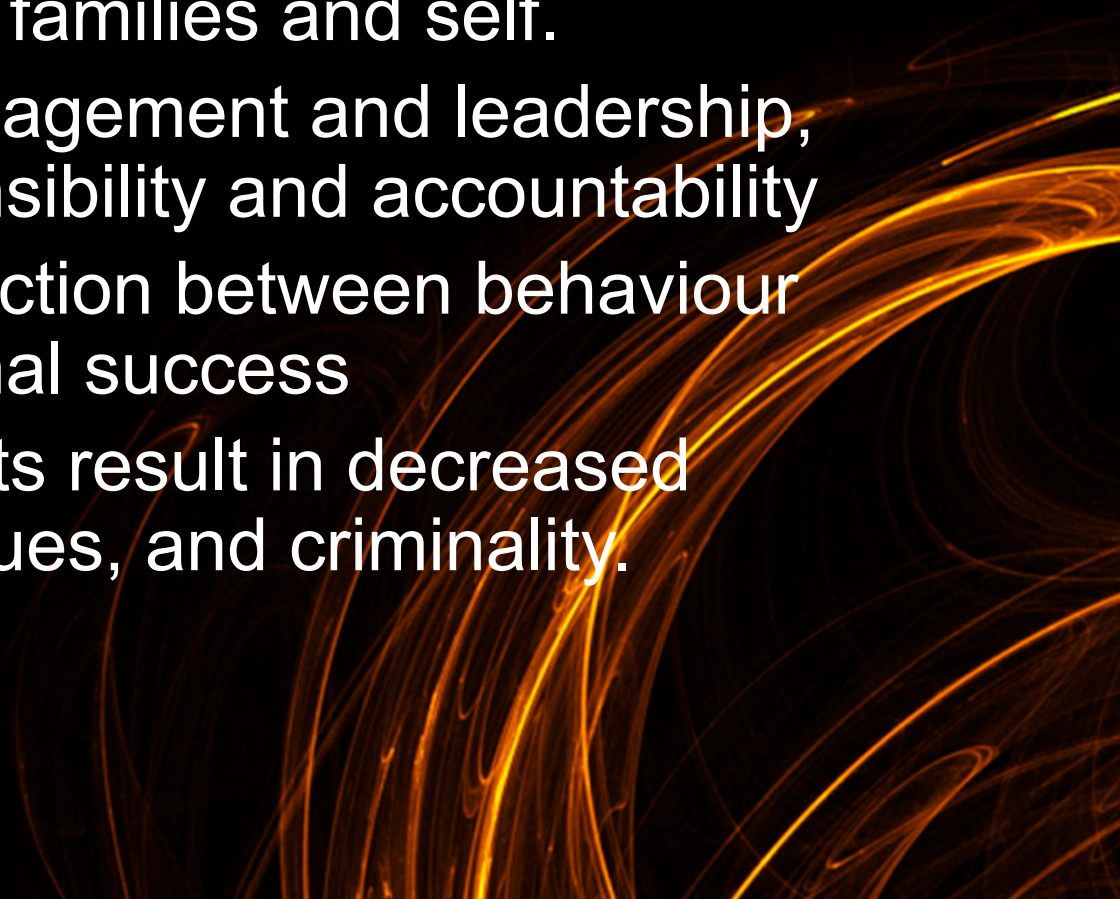
Relational Theory

- Human beings are fundamentally relational in our nature

- Relationships are the basis of who we are, who we become and how we live and this is noted across many faiths

- Relational theory suggests that we not only live in relationship with others but that we should understand human beings in and through relationships

- Thus, our relational nature should inform the ideas, principles, laws and institutions that shape human interactions and human life

- This does not take away individual existence or agency but rather helps us understand individual choices and decisions through a lens of social relationships

Guiding Principles

- Students learn best when they have positive relationships with adults within the school.

- Positive relationships require respect, dignity, cultural competence, accountability, inclusion, and mutual concern.

- In order for students to understand and learn how to relate as human beings they must be held accountable for their actions.

- Accountability can best be fostered through an understanding of the impact of our actions on our relationships with others; it is rarely fostered through separation.

- Developing strong relationships requires student engagement, leadership and a restorative, community-based approach.

- Conflict provides an opportunity to restore and to build positive relationships.

- All practices and processes within the school should be centred on a relational, restorative approach.

Why take a restorative approach?

- Relationship-based, community-centred, whole child approach designed to increase attachments and improve relationships with school, communities, families and self.
- Supports student engagement and leadership, and increases responsibility and accountability
- Acknowledges connection between behaviour and academic/personal success
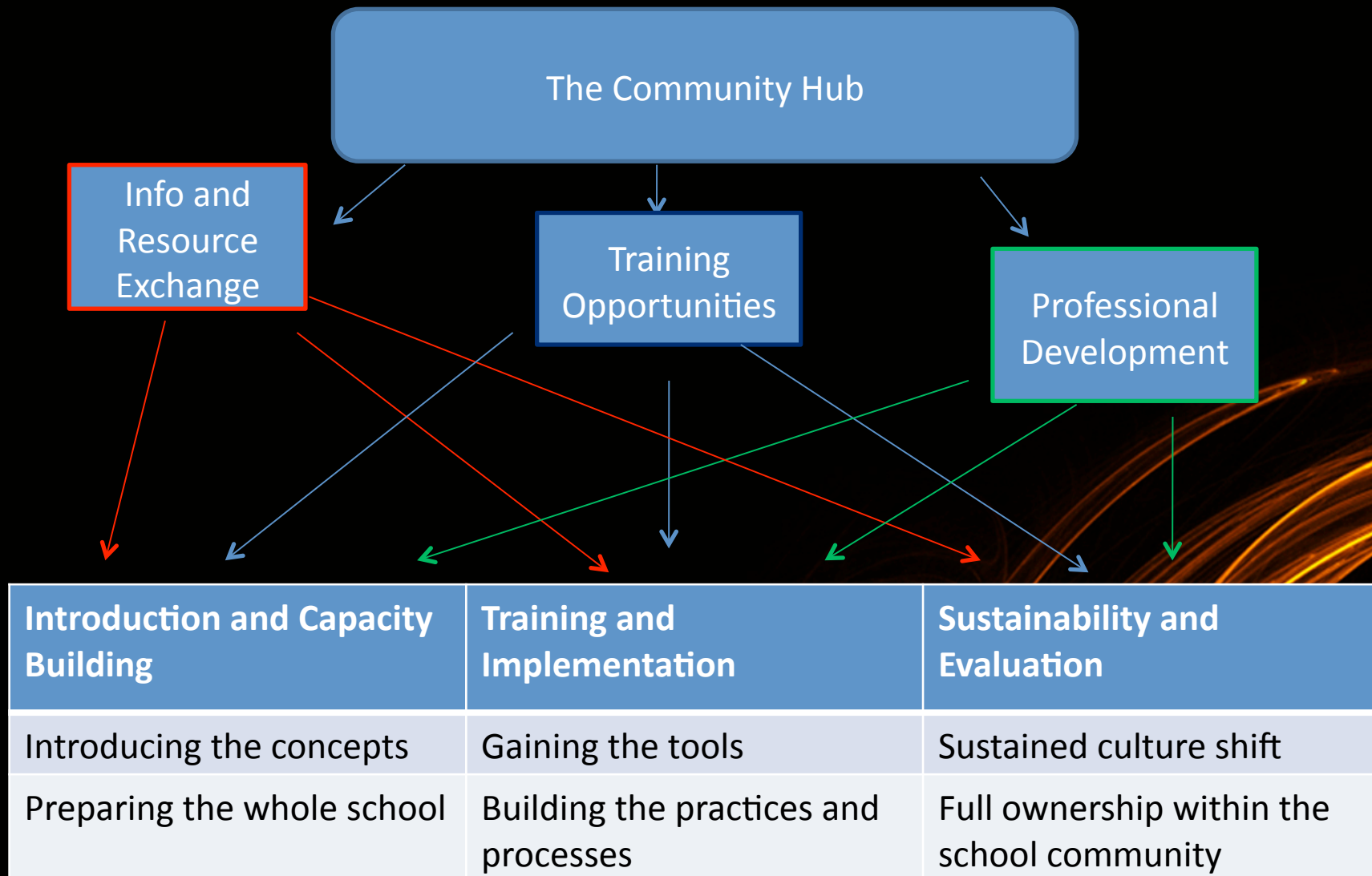- Increased attachments result in decreased conflict, discipline issues, and criminality.

Restorative Practices

- The practices and processes used to introduce a restorative approach into a school are called restorative practices.

- These practices help schools to operate restoratively and encourage community members to behave restoratively.
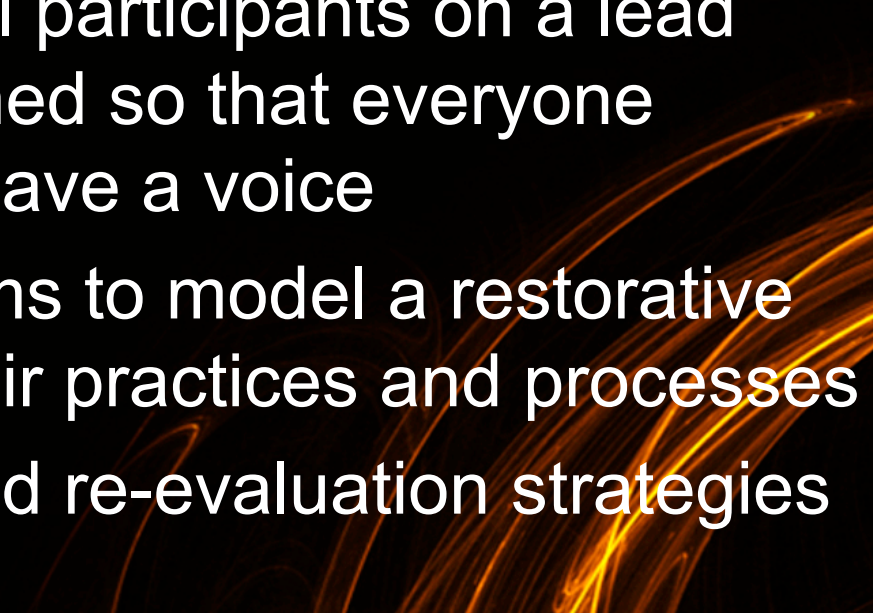
Stage 1: Introduction and Capacity Building

- Whole-school approach: Why is the school taking a restorative approach

- Preparing the school and community through: information sharing, movies, web resources, exchanges, reading material for staff, and other learning opportunities

- Create mentorship opportunities for schools, administrators, and teachers

- Asset-based capacity building: connect to the things that are working in the school and provides a common language

- Engage community elders and guest speakers

The Lead Teams

- Identify lead teams (admin, student, and parent membership) and clearly define their role

- Lead teams identified for specific issues

- Ensure the roles of all participants on a lead team are clearly defined so that everyone (including students) have a voice

- Support the lead teams to model a restorative approach through their practices and processes

- Build in evaluation and re-evaluation strategies early on

Stage 2: Training and Implementation

- Establish a few model/pilot schools
- Whole community approach: Schools, Boards, Parents, Community members
- Staged approach for culture shift
- Reflective of the culture and equity background of schools and communities
- Responsive to different learning styles
- Collaboration with school board and administration- based on the environment of a particular school
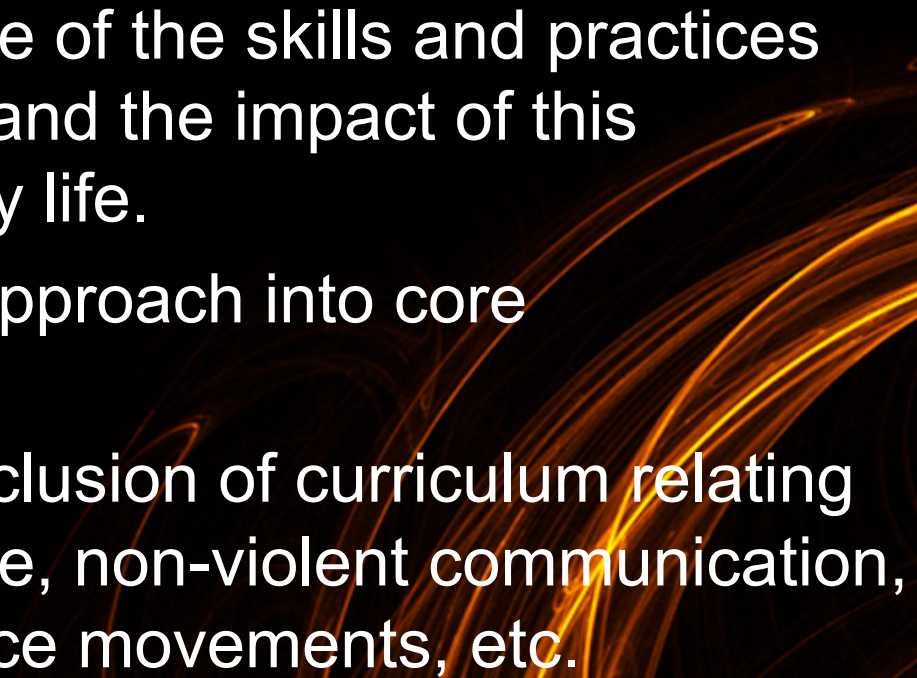
Training Components

1) Foundation day for all staff and administration- What are the knowledge, skills and attitudes required?
2) Appreciative Inquiry
3) Asset based community development- link to what is working
4) Cultural competence and Africentric education
5) Introductory sessions for parents and community members
6) Circles training
7) Formal and Informal Conferencing
8) Implementation and Evaluation (Integrated throughout)
9) Student Facilitators
10) Build in-school capacity

Implementation

- Structured, Staged Approach
- Develop 3-5 year flexible implementation plan with lead teams (begins in stage 1)
- Integrate a restorative approach into the everyday policies and practices
- Work with Administration, Student Facilitators and lead teams on developing a sustainable restorative process for discipline
- Create a monitoring and evaluation framework and re-evaluate the process yearly (involve parents, students and community)

Curriculum

- The values of respect, dignity and mutual concern that orient and drive this approach and their connection to aboriginal culture and human rights contextualize teaching in a number of areas.

- Recognition of the value of the skills and practices that are being learned and the impact of this approach on day-to-day life.

- Building a restorative approach into core competencies

- Recommendation of inclusion of curriculum relating to emotional intelligence, non-violent communication, civic engagement, peace movements, etc.

Stage 3: Evaluation and Sustainability

- Process for school to self evaluate- through lead teams and supported networks of practitioners
- Continuing Education for staff (availability of ongoing training and refresher courses)
- Built in refresher training for staff and students done yearly
- Student-led information sessions and workshops for peers and parents
- Conferences, workshops, summer institute, ongoing learning opportunities

Restorative Approaches Hub

- *Role:* To support and sustain schools in this province interested in taking a restorative approach.
- *Mandate:* To encourage and promote a community of educators, administrators and practitioners who come together to share ideas, supports, and resources. The Council will also develop and facilitate training, sustain a web-based community, support mentorships and exchanges, and create a long-term plan for continued professional development.
- *Best Practices*: The use of processes and practices consistent with the values, goals, ethics, theories, and beliefs of restorative approaches will ground the work of the Hub.

Questions?

Thank you!!