

# Winnipeg Youth Justice Committees

Restorative Justice  
Values and Practices

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# Overview

- Canadian Youth Justice Overview
  - Formation of youth justice committees
  - Impact of YCJA
- Basic principles & values
- Context
- Research findings & conclusions
- Limitations & Challenges
- Discussion & questions – implications?

## Research Question...

“What practices, conducted by the Winnipeg Youth Justice Committees in the course of fulfilling the mandate of the Youth Criminal Justice Act, reflect a restorative justice approach?”

# JDA to YCJA

## Youth Justice Committees

JDA



YOA



Established



YCJA



Roles expanded

- \*repair harm (victim & community)
- \*rehabilitate, reintegrate
- \*solicit victim concerns
- \*facilitate reconciliation
- \*conduct conferences

# Basis of research

- WYJCs
  - Definition
- Values and Principles
  - Context



# Key Principles

(Van Ness & Strong: 2006)

1. Work to heal victims, offenders & communities injured by crime;
2. All parties should have opportunity for active involvement;
3. Government responsible for order, Community responsible for peace.

# Fundamental Values

(Van Ness & Strong: 2006)

1. Encounter

2. Amends

3. Inclusion

4. Reintegration

# Basis of research

- WYJCs
  - Definition
- Values and Principles
  - Context



# RESEARCH FINDINGS

## - Themes -

1. Training

2. Meaning of RJ

- who, what, why

3. Meeting procedures

- objectives, discussion, decision-making, disposition

4. Victim participation

# Dominant Patterns

## I. Offender focus

- in definition
- prevention of recidivism
- rehabilitation
- reintegration
- reparation
- accountability

# Offender Focus

**We focus on:**

**“looking for the gifts of the offender, and try to work with them to develop those gifts.”**

# Dominant Patterns

## I. Offender focus

- in definition
- prevention of recidivism
- rehabilitation
- reintegration
- reparation
- accountability

# Offender Focus

**“Their actions are what brought us here, so their decisions help fix it.”**

**“The youth never leaves the room, we all arrive at a disposition together.”**



# Dominant Patterns

## I. Offender focus

- in definition
- prevention of recidivism
- rehabilitation
- reintegration
- reparation
- accountability

# Dominant Patterns

## II. Language and Communication

- With other members
- With youth

# Language & Communication

- "...have to be someone that's willing to see the youth as a person, and not only as an offender."

# Dominant Patterns

## ■ III. Victim Involvement

### Categories:

1. Active victim participation
2. Some victim participation
3. No victim participation

# Dominant Patterns

- Victim Involvement
  - Revictimization of victims?
  - Hostility towards youth?
    - Nothing to offer?
    - It's our role



# Dominant Patterns

## III. Victim Involvement

Consistent, meaningful inclusion =

- reparation
- restitution
- reduction of aggression
- reintegration of:

youth, victim, youth &  
victim

# Victim Involvement

"We've had, um, victims request that a youth clean up, like that's an ideal situation that's happened a couple of times, where a youth has been able to remove paint or fix a fence. There's one that...was actually helping an older man with his back yard, and they actually kind of developed a relationship. I mean that's what you always want to do, right?"

# Dominant Patterns

- Training

“All committee members receive restorative justice training.”

“They probably received some training but I can’t specifically say.”

# Challenges & Limitations

- Hawthorne Effect
- Variation in practice between committees
- Uneven distribution of trained members
- Members from YOA – grounded in retributive system
- Victim reluctance



# WYJC Practices that reflect restorative justice principles & values

- Rehabilitation of offender
- Prevention of recidivism
- Reparation of harm
- Promoting accountability & responsibility
- RJ language & communication
- Victim involvement & participation
- Facilitation of reintegration



# Conclusion

- Restorative Justice = Paradigm shift
- Incremental changes have occurred
- Youth and victims have benefited
- More work to be done

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