

ARROWSMITH COMMUNITY JUSTICE SOCIETY

Mission, Vision & Core Values



Adopted: 14 Oct 2014

MISSION:

Arrowsmith Community Justice provides restorative justice and dispute resolution processes to the community which brings all parties of a conflict or crime together to facilitate a timely and mutually agreeable resolution.

VISION:

Our vision is a community in harmony.

CORE VALUES:

We are guided by:

- Accountability
- Respect
- Reconciliation
- Truth
- Connection
- Consensus
- Forgiveness
- Compassion

DEFINITIONS:

Accountability requires that one explain his/her actions and take responsibility for them. This draws upon one's integrity, commitment, and resolve. Accountability means to be committed to; to be incumbent upon; ethical; conscientious; and responsible. It means we are acutely aware of what is going on; our effect on others; and accept our part in it.

Respect is treating everyone equitably, regardless of age, gender, sexuality, race, nationality, or economic situation. It is having courteous regard for and appreciation or worth; honour and esteem; value and consideration. It is to honour myself and others; and to believe that all human beings have equal worth.

Truth is an accurate and complete recounting of our thoughts, feelings, and experiences. It is uncompromising honesty, sincerity and frankness. When we are going genuinely truthful, intentional description or dishonesty is not an option.

Consensus is a process of group reflection and decision making whereby an entire group of people can come to an agreement. The input and ideas of all participants are gathered and synthesized to arrive at a final decision acceptable to all. Through consensus, we not only work to achieve better solutions, but also promote the growth of community and trust. It is referred to as finding an equal footing between participants.

Compassion occurs when we feel the suffering or trouble of others. To be compassionate we must open our hearts, care about what has happened or will happen to them, and attempt to understand their feelings and emotions. Deep concern for others accompanied by a strong urge to help. Compassion is a feeling of deep empathy for another, giving freely with no hidden motive; or respecting the inner wisdom of the other.

Reconciliation is the balance between disruption and harmony for the parties involved. The re-establishment of cordial relations, the restoration of harmony, and the renewal of friendship. When the lives of those involved in an incident are disrupted, they are out of balance. The RJ process brings their life back to a balanced state and ultimately acceptance will happen.

Forgiveness is the act of excusing a mistake or offense. Forgiveness is also mercy; giving pardon to; compassion. Compassionate feelings support a willingness to forgive.

CORE VALUES – DISCUSSION PAPER

Accountability *"Knowing that we are response-able is fundamental to effectiveness"* (Source: Stephen Covey). Some other words submitted, considered and discussed in this definition were responsibility, dependable, answerable, liable, obligation, take responsibility for, ownership, and admit wrong. Accountability can also be defined as *"obliged to account for one's acts; responsible; capable for being accountable for; explainable."* (Source: Webster's Dictionary)

The second component of accountability is one of answerability – the obligation to provide information to others in our communities of interest with respect to our decisions, actions, and results in light of clear, previously agreed upon understandings and expectations. For example, we inform our communities about our actions, but we must render account of our actions to our direct supervisors. *"In this organization authorities can be delegated, accountability cannot."* (Source: RCMP)

Respect We must accept that other beliefs exist but do not necessarily have to agree with them.

Basic courtesy recognizes the dignity and diversity of all persons. Tolerance, sensitivity and objectivity are also important facets of respect. By competent and ethical behaviour, we can treat people fairly and without bias. Respect comes down to treating others the way you would like to be treated – without prejudice and bias.

Respect must apply to all stakeholders – community members, conference participants and co-workers alike. The rights of everyone, no matter what they have done, must be respected even if we don't agree with their actions.

Respect involves open mindedness, trust, and a commitment to values, including mutual problem solving, while recognizing differences and accepting uniqueness. Respect also includes the objective consideration we display towards the rights, values, beliefs and property of people. The dictionary describes respect as *"considerate, treat with regard; a feeling of high regard; honour; and esteem.:"* (Source: Webster's)

Truth *"My relationships depend on being honest with other people. My life depends on being honest with myself."* (Source: unknown) The Webster's definition of truth includes such words and ideas as sincerity; genuineness; conformity with fact; reality; accuracy; present the facts; and honesty. Other words that were included during the discussions of this value were honesty; factual; get at the truth; tell everything; genuine; unvarnished; tangible; validity; exact; accurate; frankness; and trustworthy.

Within restorative justice truth exposes the broader issues leading up to the offence, the details of the offence and the thoughts or feelings following after the offence. Culpability is admitted. Two people may have two different truths.

Connection is a product or an outcome of a "Community in Harmony" not a value. It is the act of joining or being joined; it is the act of experiencing the associations and relationships that exist among us.

In restorative justice terms it is the process that helps bring the potential for inclusion, balance and "healing the harm". We recognize the connecting power of this work on three levels: strengthening the individual with "self"; building the individual's capacity to be with "others", and opening the individual to the larger purposes of "life" or spirit. In facilitating connection, we are aware and comfortable with tensions and conflicts that are often the precursors for connecting.

Other words or thoughts included – bring together; share; bond between mentors and offenders; and relate to. Connection can also be described as *"joining or being joined; a relationship; association; the relationship between things that come together; a group of people associated together in a common business or group; similar beliefs"*. (Source: Webster's)

Compassion To quote the Dali Lama *"If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion."* We demonstrate our compassion when we give our time and or our finances to assist in the alleviation of that suffering or trouble. i.e. we show generosity. When we are compassionate we show empathy, consideration and sincerity in our dealings with others. We are willing to listen carefully, to validate feelings, to be patient with ourselves and others, and to assist others in reducing their suffering or troubles. *"Being compassionate is demonstrating your sincere empathy for other people."* (source: RCMP)

Some other words submitted and included under this definition were understanding; sensitivity; sympathy for; and fair conclusion for. In the definition of their values, the RCMP define compassion as *"demonstrating care and sensitivity to work and action."* The dictionary describes it as *"sympathy; to feel pity for; sorrow for the sufferings or trouble of another accompanied by the urge to help; and deep sympathy."* (Source: Webster's)

Consensus The fundamental right of consensus is for all people to be able to express themselves in their own words and of their own will. The fundamental responsibility of consensus is to assure others of their right to speak and to be heard. Coercion and trade-offs are replaced with creative alternatives and compromise with synthesis. Some other words used in this discussion were agreement, unanimous understanding of and common belief of.

Consensus was a founding principle of the Arrowsmith Community Justice Society program from the point when the community at large was consulted for input into its design, to the work that followed by the steering committee to develop the program they desired. If a decision wasn't reached by consensus, it went back for further discussion and revision until consensus was reached. It continues to be an important value to the board.