



Introduction to Classroom Circles

A seven week program facilitated in-classroom by
Youth Restorative Action

What can you expect?

Our Introduction to Classroom Circles program consists of two weeks, six weeks or seven weeks of hour-long workshops during which students will explore restorative justice and conflict resolution. For the full seven week program, students will co-create community values and uphold collective responsibility for circle protocol. Students will engage in games and small group activities that will encourage them to consider others' perspectives and reflect on their own assumptions and identity. By the end of the program, students will be able to use the discussion circle format to share their thoughts and reactions in a safe and supported environment.

Workshops are prepared and led by our Youth Program Coordinator and youth volunteers from Brooks. Teachers are encouraged to participate in the circles and engage with students during small-group activities. Series is suitable for grades 5 through 12.

Who are Youth Restorative Action?

Youth Restorative Action is the youth program of qathet Community Justice, the local Restorative Justice program. YRA is a team of 10+ youth, ranging from 14-27, who are passionate about contributing to a more just, supportive and inclusive community, both in and outside of school. We are trained to facilitate Circles using Restorative Approaches for conflict, relationship building & collaborative learning.

qCJ is a local non-profit community organization. We facilitate conversations at no charge to help restore relationships where conflict or crime has caused harm. We aim to support participants in developing meaningful responses to harmful actions. Some cases are criminal and referred by the RCMP while non-criminal cases can be referred by individuals or organizations.

Why use Classroom Circles?

“Circles are a traditional First Nations format for discussion and decision making... Talking Circles in classrooms are usually used to demonstrate that everyone is connected and that every person in the circle has an equal voice. They also ensure that everyone can see and hear the speaker.”

Page 19-20, The BC First Nations Land, Title, and Governance Teacher Resource Guide. First Nations Education Steering Committee (2019)

“Peace circles (or classroom circles) are considered a Tier 1 proactive/preventative effort, intended to be used to build foundational communication skills and positive relationships in the classroom.”

Page 7, Conversation Peace: Restorative Action in Secondary Schools. Fraser Region Community Justice Initiatives Association (2023)

At the end of our pilot project in June 2024 with a grade 10 class, the class average was 3.82 out of 5 in response to the statement “I feel like I understand restorative practices” and a 3.27 out of 5 in response to the statement “I feel more confident speaking up in class.” 77% of students would recommend our program to others.

Weekly Topics

Week 1: Introductions & Values	The intention of Week 1 is to ground into Circle practice, explore the values we hold and begin coming up with a collaborative classroom agreement.
Week 2: Restorative Justice & Class Agreements	<p>The intention of Week 2 is to work on our classroom agreement and build our understanding of Restorative Justice and Practices.</p> <p>There is an option to end here with a collaborative classroom agreement draft and an understanding of Restorative Justice.</p>
Week 3: Assumptions	The intention of Week 3 is to explore how assumptions affect our relationships in communication and conflict.
Week 4: Harm & Accountability	The intention of Week 4 is to explore how harm is all around us - how we are harmed and we harm others, and what it means to take accountability.
Week 5: Conflict	The intention of Week 5 is to discuss how we view conflict and how we often show up in conflict.
Week 6: Practical Application	<p>The intention of week 6 is for students discuss real-world issues while putting into practice all they have learned so far. Teachers and students have the choice to request topics specific to their class, like a present conflict or a hot-button topic, or engage in an activity and Circle around topics with a diversity of opinions.</p> <p>This week is optional.</p>
Week 7: Closing & Feedback	The intention of the final week is to check for comprehension of the topics covered and to give students the opportunity to provide feedback.