



# Impact Report 2020-2024



*We operate on the lands of the Tla'amin People, and for that we are grateful.*

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## Acknowledgements

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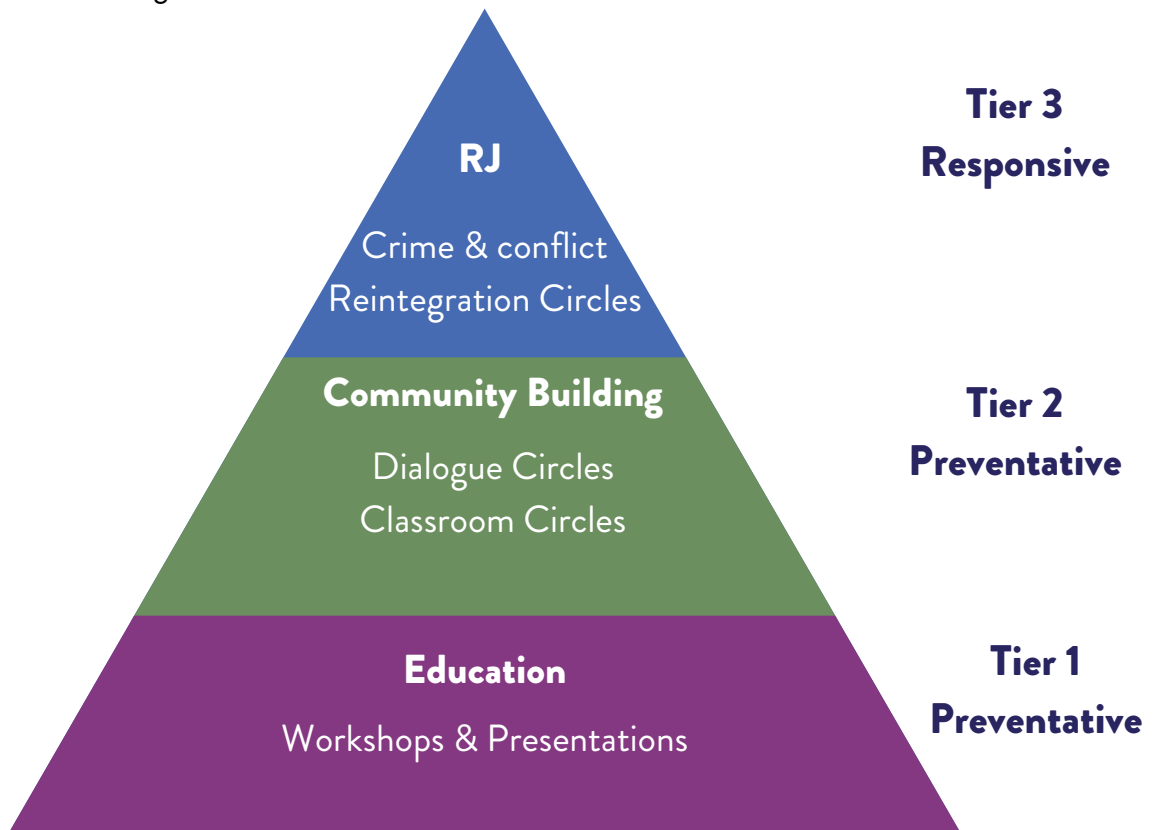


# Who Are We?

## Mission & Activities

Youth Restorative Action (YRA) is a youth-led Restorative Justice program supported by qathet Community Justice. Our mission is to foster a supportive, inclusive, and accountable community through restorative practices, empowering individuals to resolve conflicts, prioritize relationships, and support mental and emotional growth.

YRA has three tiers of focus: education, community-building & harm prevention, and Restorative Justice intervention (casework). Primary activities include: workshops & presentations, facilitating community-building Circles in the community & classroom, and co-facilitating Restorative Justice Circles for cases involving crime & conflict.



## Learning Outcomes

### Preventative (Tier 1 & 2)

Increased communication & conflict resolution skills, confidence in speaking in front of peers & voicing thoughts, feelings and opinions, greater capacity for accountability, opportunities for leadership & collaboration, building connections with peers.

### Responsive (Tier 3)

Encourages meaningful accountability and amends-making through hearing impacts and harms of their actions from those directly affected, those affected get to communicate, youth have a say in what happens, opportunity to be welcomed back in a community after an absence (ex. suspension).

## What is Restorative Justice (RJ)?

Restorative Justice is an approach to justice that seeks to repair harm caused by crime or conflict. It provides an opportunity for those harmed and those who have caused harm to communicate about impacts, address needs and determine how reparations can be made.

Restorative practices have been used by a variety of Indigenous peoples around the globe long before they were enshrined into the Canadian criminal legal system, a process which began in the 1970s. YRA most often uses the Peacemaking Circle process at its core and integrates learnings from ᑭᐃᑦᐱᑦᐱᑦ Old Ones/Elders where consensual and appropriate. Since then, Restorative practices have been build into the Criminal Code of Canada Criminal Code of Canada including Youth Criminal Justice Act (S.C. 2002, c. 1, s. 4-5; s. 10, s. 19, s. 42; Canadian Victims Bill of Rights (S.C. 2015, c. 13, s. 2; Corrections and Conditional Release Act (S.C. 1992, c. 20, s. 3, and more.

## Restorative Justice in Schools

Principles and values of Restorative Justice can be applied outside of the criminal legal system in what is usually referred to as Restorative Practices or a Whole School Approach. The Little Book of Restorative Justice in Education defines Restorative Justice in education as “facilitating learning communities that nurture the capacity of people to engage with one another and their environment in a manner that supports and respects the inherent dignity of all.”

Restorative Justice in Education includes Restorative responses to discipline and conflict, but it can also be used to foster connection and deeper relationships among peers and teachers, build empathy and communication skills, provide a container for the exploration of values and beliefs and encourage honesty and accountability.

Benefits of the use of Restorative Approaches in school includes:

### 1. Community-building & Improved School Culture (Shafer & Mirsky, 2011)

- Cultivates relationships between peers, students and teaches, and schools and families
- Fosters a strong sense of school community where students feel like active members, encouraging the school community to work together in a proactive and respectful way to expose issues and find strategies & solutions together
- Contributes to the reduction of racial, cultural, gender and socioeconomic status inequality and exclusion by facilitating positive relationships and communication
- Improvements in attendance, academic achievement and graduation rates, and reduced number of classroom disruptions (McMorris et al., 2013)

References: 1. Evans, K., & Vaandering, D. (2016). *The Little Book of Restorative Justice in Education: Fostering Responsibility, Healing and Hope in Schools*. Good Books; New York, NY.; 2. Shafer, M., & Mirsky, L. (2011). *The restorative approach in Nova Scotia: A partnership of government, communities and schools.*; 3. McMorris, B.J., Beckman, K.J., Shea, G., & Eggert, R.C. (2013). *A pilot program evaluation of the family and restorative conference program.*

## **2. Social & Emotional Skill Building**

- Promotes the cultivation of empathy as students express their emotions, listen to and understand the emotions of others, reflect on their feelings, thoughts and actions, and take responsibility for their behaviour
- Helps in the development of: assertive skills, problem solving, emotional awareness, social and interpersonal skills, shame management skills, perspective taking

## **3. Preventative & Alternative Responses to Conflict & Behavioural Problems**

- Promotes prosocial behaviours through the development of social and emotional skills (empathy, self-awareness, etc.)
- Communication skills development and social bonds are protective factors to criminal involvement and interpersonal violence (Ministry of Children & Youth Services, 2013)
- Reduction in disciplinary problems, suspensions and expulsions (Porter, 2005; Shafer & Mirsky, 2011)
- Promotes alternative and nonviolent methods of communication that allows for the possibility of discussing different opinions, beliefs and values respectfully, while encouraging awareness of interconnection and how to work together to find solutions/middle ground
- Reduction in experiences of aggression, violence & bullying (Wachtel, 2016)
- Ensures that perpetrators are given increased supports, a deeper understanding of the impact of their actions on others, and the opportunity to repair the harm where possible.
- Provides an alternative to the traditional zero-tolerance policy. As traditional punishment (suspension, expulsion, charges, incarceration) often results in isolation and exclusion from peers and the wider community, it can interfere with successful rehabilitation and reintegration, and can contribute to reoffending, violence, alcohol and drug use (Wong, 2016; Ministry of Children & Youth Services, 2013). It can also lend to the intensification of inequality of treatment for youth who are of racial/ethnic minority, low socioeconomic status, have mental health issues and/or cognitive disabilities.

\*All listed benefits taken from: Lodi, E., Perrella, L., Lepri, G. L., Scarpa, M. L., & Patrizi, P. (2021). Use of Restorative Justice and Restorative Practices at School: A Systemic Literature Review. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*; 19 (1): 96, doi: 10.3390/ijerph19010096

Additional references: 1. Ministry of Children and Youth Services (2013). *Stepping Up: A Strategic Framework to Help Ontario's Youth Succeed.*; 2. Porter, A. (2007). *Restorative practices in schools: Research reveals power of restorative approach, part II.*; 3. Wachtel, T. (2016). *Defining restorative.*; 4. Wong, J., Bouchard, J., Gravel, J., Bouchard, M. & Morselli, C. (2016). *Can at-risk youth be diverted from crime? A meta-analysis of restorative justice diversion programs.* *Criminal Justice and Behavior.* 43. 1310-1329. 10.1177/0093854816640835.

## Leadership Team



27 Youth Leaders  
15 RJ facilitators  
5 Youth Training offerings  
800 students impacted  
7 Dialogue Circles  
22 Grade 8 Presentations  
3 Pro-D Workshops

### Activities

- Leadership meetings
- RJ Training
- Presentations & workshops
- Classroom Circles
- Dialogue Circles
- Strategic Planning



## Leader Impact Statements

“YRA has altered how I engage with the world and people around me. YRA has shown me how to approach conflicts with more open-mindedness and how to respect others' lived experiences during difficult conversations. These conversations have opened my perspective on how to engage in more understanding and respectful conversations with people, while also acknowledging the systems and barriers that are in place. Restorative action evolved all aspects of my life and has made me become more empathetic and easy to connect with other people and my community as a whole.”

**Emmy-Lou Corbett, 18**

“The ways Restorative Action can be used is so very eye opening. It allowed me, someone who normally talks a lot, to step back and listen to the other things that were being said. This has changed the way that I deal with conflicts and everyday things that happen in my life. The way restorative practices have helped me look at people and situations differently is amazing and important to the way I have since acted in high school.”

**Abigail Welp-Ellis, 18**

“I've been involved in YRA for over two years and it has been really rewarding to get to engage with staff and students all over the district through my work with restorative justice. I was part of developing our six- week RJ curriculum and facilitating it in a grade 10 class, and have been part of grade 8 presentations. I really appreciate how supported we are in YRA to grow as leaders and take initiative on projects and presentations. I've had such a wonderful experience learning from other youth, our coordinator, members of the community, and other qCJ volunteers.”

**Indy Morwood, 17**

“I have been volunteering with YRA for the past three years and have had the opportunity to do so much with this group. qCJ offers incredibly in depth training for a diverse skill set. With the help of Chelsea, Siobhan, and the other YRA volunteers, YRA has achieved some amazing things in the past few years. I am proud of our yearly presentations to the new grade eight students, we present on what we do in YRA and then give an example of a circle discussion. These presentations always yield lots of great feedback, and this we received interest in joining the club from multiple grade eights.”

**Reed Worthen, 17**

“I became involved in Youth Restorative Action and qathet Community Justice after a previous member gave a presentation to my Grade 8 class. I was really intrigued about using Restorative practices as an alternative for conflict resolution because the system really aligned with my values. I'm now a grade 12 student and I have been involved ever since. Learning about RJ has taught me so much about how I respond to conflict and engage with others. Throughout my time as a volunteer I have gotten experience in circle facilitation, presentations, running workshops, and designing Restorative classroom curriculum, which I then got to co-facilitate a pilot project on. I am so grateful for the leadership and learning opportunity YRA has provided me with. The RJ community is so incredible in this town and I have learned so much.”

**Safiyah Dyck, 17**



# YRA Training

Curriculum (16 hours total)	
RJ & Peacemaking Circles	Theory, processes & applications.
Conflict & Conflict Resolution	Personal conflict styles, conflict dynamics, conflict resolution tools.
Power & Privilege	Identifying sources of power & privilege and how it can be harnessed and distributed to serve others.
Harm & Trauma-informed Practice	What is harm & trauma and how it impacts how we show up in the world & in conflict.
Assumptions & Perspectives	What are assumptions? How do they impact how we see the world & conflict?
Communication Tools	Tools for more effective & respectful communication.
Circle Facilitation	Process, tools & roleplay for facilitating Circles.

## Feedback

“Through the circle keeper training, I gained a more in-depth understanding of how to better communicate with people, and built my empathy and understanding about what people may be feeling and going through.”

“I felt so comfortable saying things I wouldn’t say to people I have known for years.”

“It was informative while not being boring and I’ll be recommending it to others.”

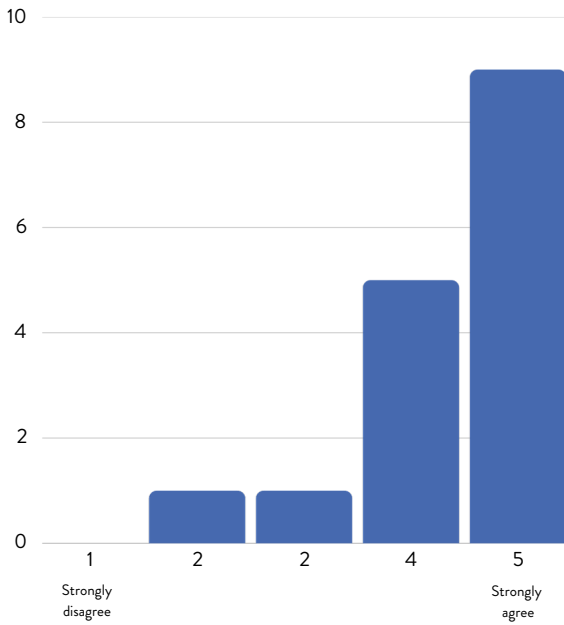
“I really enjoyed the training and appreciate how open, comfortable, and safe the experience was!”

“I loved doing this training, and honestly I wish it lasted for longer.”

“Very open and honest, created a safe vulnerable space.”

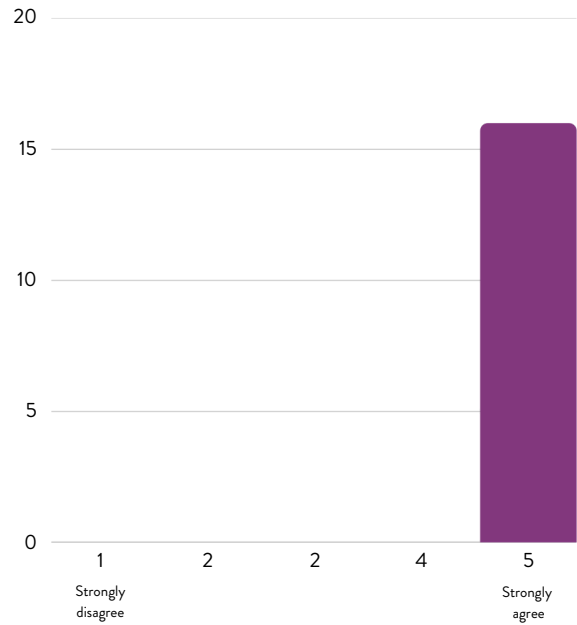
“Very engaging. Non-judgmental, creating safe and comfortable environment, hearing all voices.”





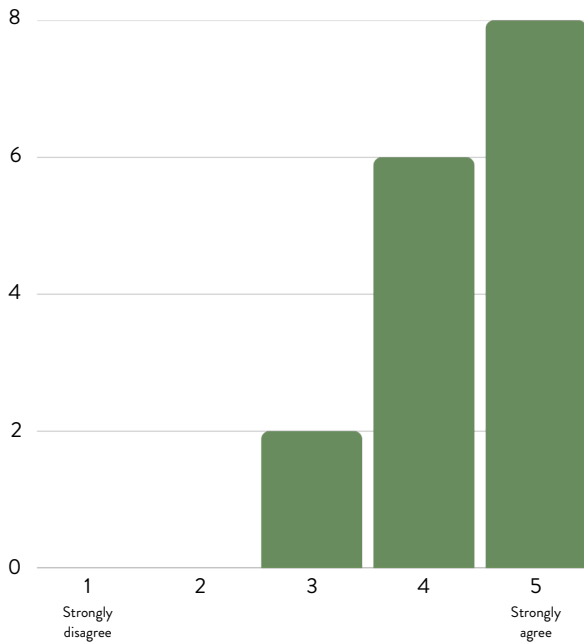
**I feel like I understand Restorative Justice/Practices**

**4.38 Average**



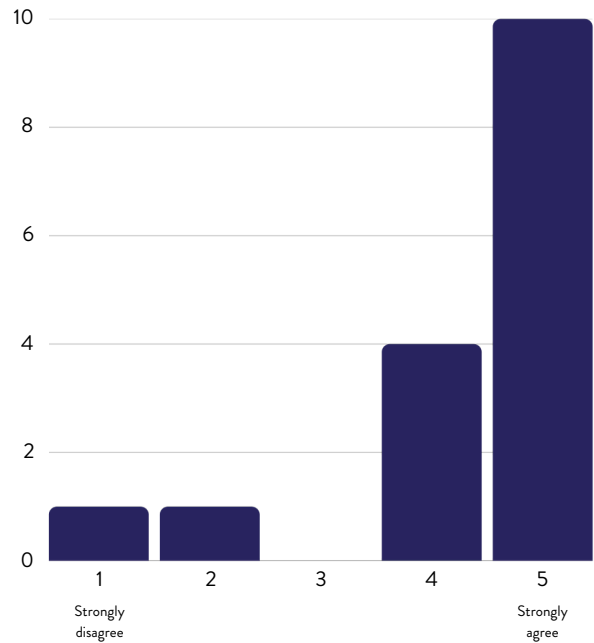
**The instructors were engaging & knowledgeable**

**5.0 Average**



**I feel that my contribution to the class and learning style were valued**

**4.38 Average**



**I have gained practical skills in conflict resolution**

**4.31 Average**

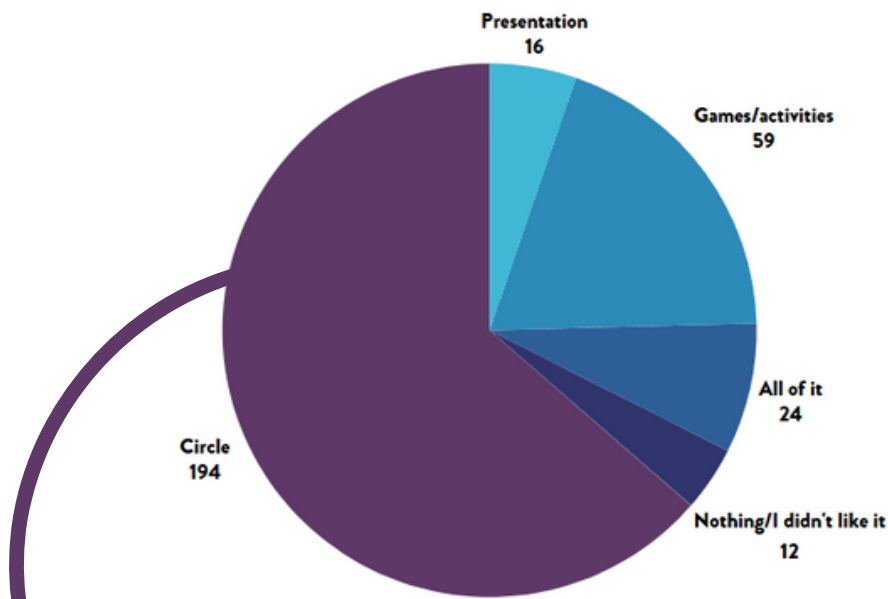
Total responses: 16 people  
 Feedback from YRA Volunteer Training November 2024 &  
 Brooks Social Justice Class Training May 2024

# Activities

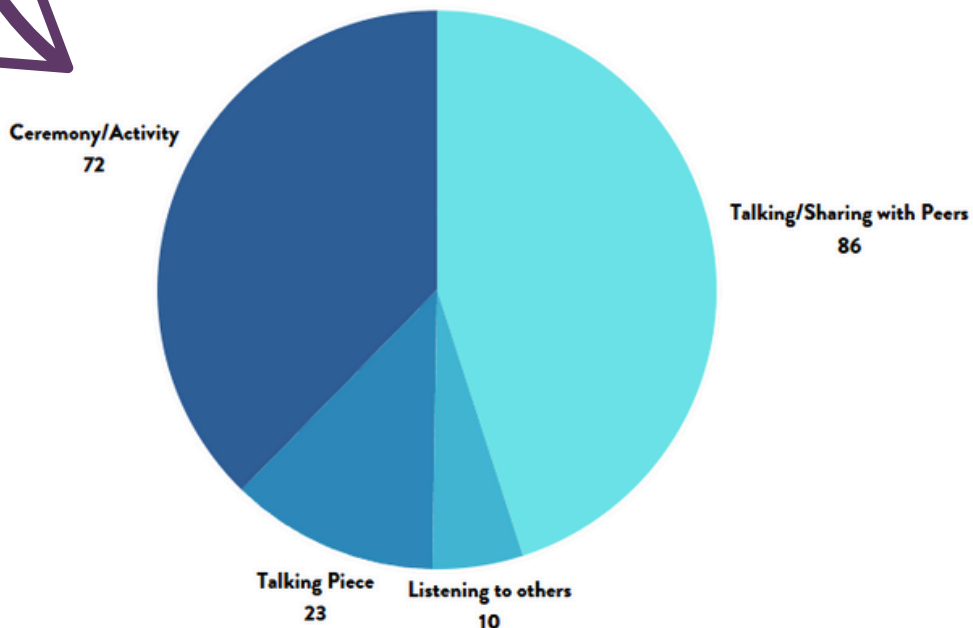
## Grade 8 Presentations

Every year, each of the grade 8 classes attend in workshop where they learn about Restorative Practices & participate in a Circle with their class. As with all YRA activities, these presentations are designed & facilitated by YRA members with the mentorship of the YRA coordinator. These presentations have expanded and developed over the years, but generally consist of a 10 minute presentation with slides and a video, followed by a Circle where students develop values & guidelines and practice Circle process by answering questions in “rounds.” Past questions have focused on conflict or the transition to Brooks from elementary.

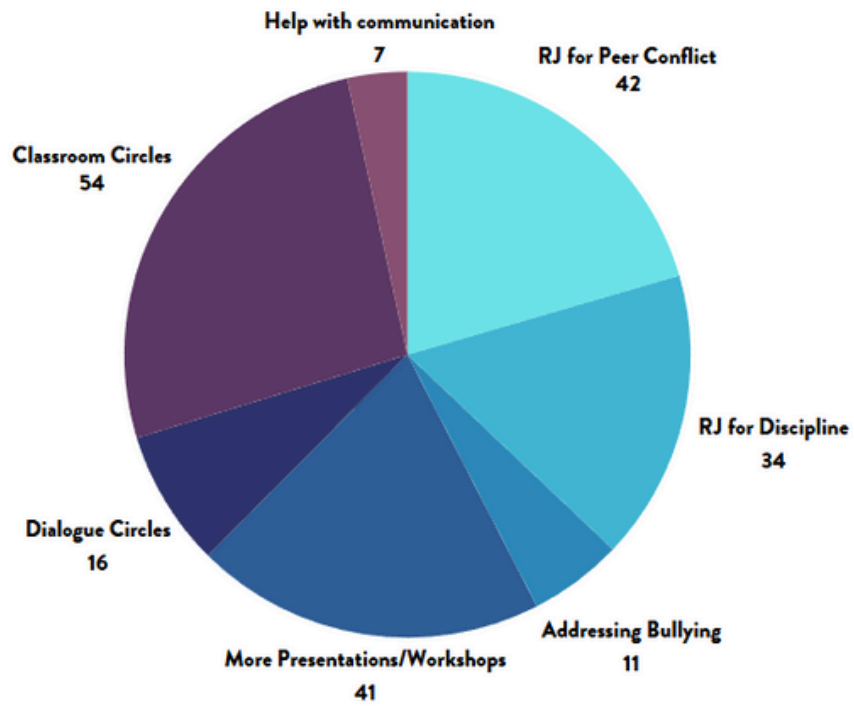
### What was your favourite part of the presentation?



### What did you like about Circle?



**What would you like to see YRA do at Brooks /  
How could have Restorative Practices helped you in the past?**



## Dialogue Circles

YRA members have led a number of Circles out in the community and within Brooks. The intention of these Circles is to build relationships, bridge understanding and find collaborative ways to move forward. Some Circle topics have included:

Climate Justice

Student & Teacher Relationships

Mental Health

School Engagement

Rural Living

Waste Management



Climate Justice Community Circle  
September 2021



SD47 Pro-D Workshop  
October 2022

## SD47 Pro-D

YRA members along with qCJ staff have designed & facilitated three Pro-D workshops on “Restorative Practices in the Classroom”, delivered October 2023, February 2023 and August 2024. These workshops taught educators the basics of Restorative Practices & how they can implement Circles in their classroom as both a learning tool & a process to help build relationships amongst peers.

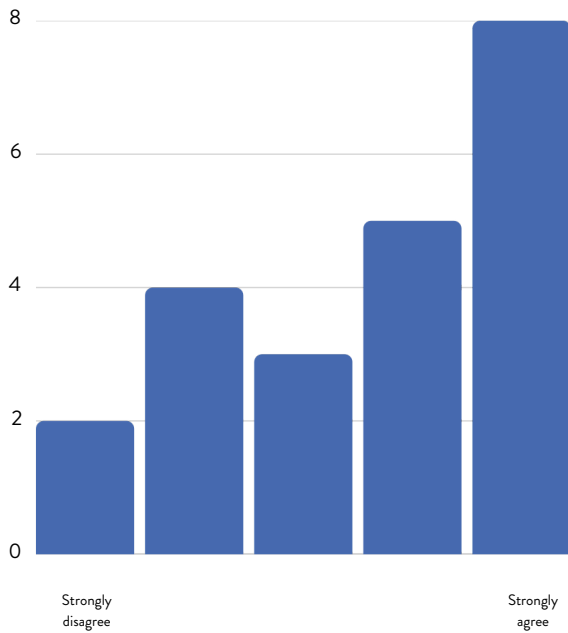
## Classroom Circles

Our Classroom Circles curriculum was developed in the 2023-24 school year by a committee of 10+ including youth, teachers, lawyers and qCJ Staff. Content is informed by qCJ’s internal RJ facilitator training, other classroom-based RJ resources, including direct mentorship from Community Justice Initiative Langley. In May/June 2024, two YRA members & the coordinator facilitated a pilot in a grade 10 Brooks Classroom.

**77.3% of the students said they would recommend Classroom Circles to other classes.**

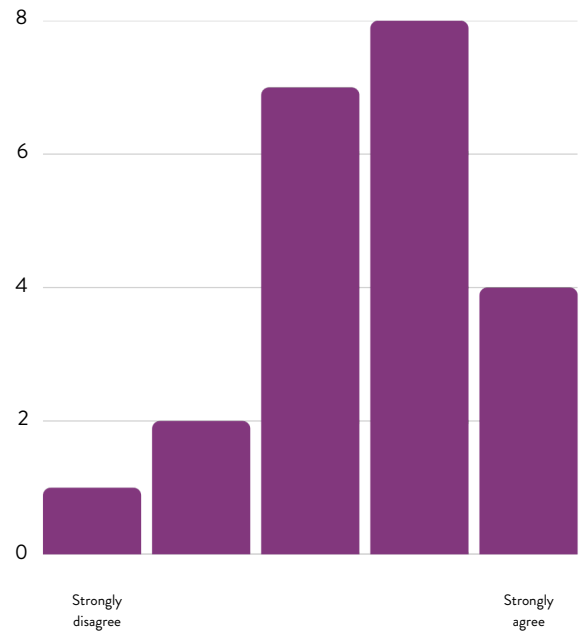
<b>Week 1: Introductions &amp; Values</b>	The intention of Week 1 is to ground into Circle practice, explore the values we hold and begin coming up with a collaborative classroom agreement.
<b>Week 2: Restorative Justice &amp; Class Agreements</b>	The intention of Week 2 is to work on our classroom agreement and build our understanding of Restorative Justice and Practices. There is an option to end here with a collaborative classroom agreement draft and an understanding of Restorative Justice.
<b>Week 3: Assumptions</b>	The intention of Week 3 is to explore how assumptions affect our relationships in communication and conflict.
<b>Week 4: Harm &amp; Accountability</b>	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.
<b>Week 5: Conflict</b>	The intention of Week 5 is to discuss how we view conflict and how we often show up in conflict.
<b>Week 6: Practical Application</b>	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. This week is optional.
<b>Week 7: Closing &amp; Feedback</b>	The intention of the final week is to check for comprehension of the topics covered and to give students the opportunity to provide feedback.

# Classroom Circles Pilot Feedback (May 2024)



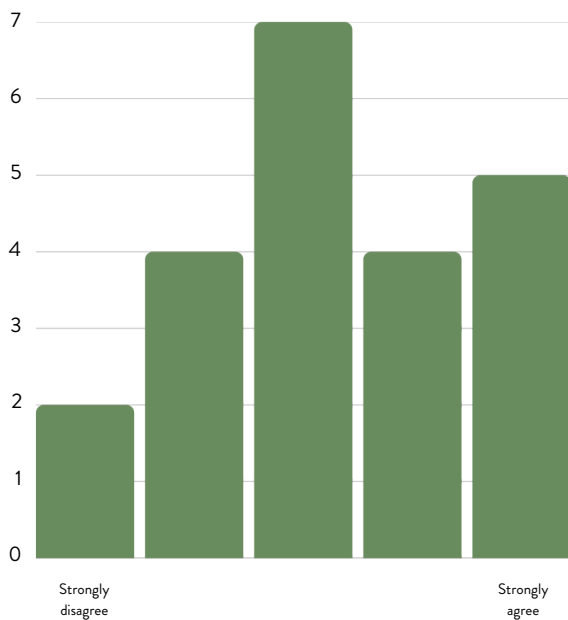
**I enjoyed participating in the Classroom Circles**

**3.59 Average**



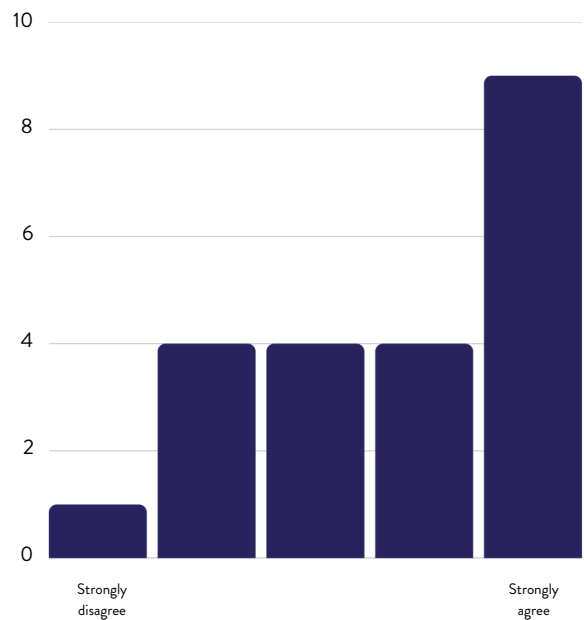
**I feel like I understand myself better when it comes to conflict.**

**3.55 Average**



**I feel more confident speaking up in class.**

**3.27 Average**



**The facilitators were engaging and knowledgeable.**

**3.73 Average**

Total responses: 22

The sharing of ideas without interruption and practicing listening resonated with me.

I wish it was there when I was younger because I used to get bullied and no one would listen.

I liked hearing everyone sharing their thoughts and feelings.

You learn so much about others!

I think it would have helped in elementary because I was bullied and this would have helped.

I really enjoyed it. The Circle was really fun.

I think it would be amazing if this was available. It would have helped with friend dynamics.

I want to use it. I liked one at a time with no interruptions.

I think the part that got my attention the most is when instead of punishment it should be consequences.

I think conflicts would have ended quicker if restorative justice was implemented into elementary school.

I think it would have made me better at voicing thoughts & public speaking.

I think it was great cause we get to share our ideas.

Being able to share all of our opinions with little to no judgment.

I liked being able to share all of our opinions with little to no judgment.

Restorative Action could have changed when I got in trouble because I would have made my side heard.

It was very enjoyable to share my opinion to the class and it's pretty fun. I know more about my classmates.

I could tell more people were trying to be more confident speaking up.

It gets people talking and working together.

I like being able to speak openly.

I liked being able to talk while everyone else was quiet.

It would have been nice to have Restorative Action before now because even though there was smaller problems it would have made it easier.

I appreciated being able to have a voice.

I really appreciate Circles, and just this entire idea of community support. We exist on the same planet, so we have stuff in common and talking about it is very cool.

Maybe I'd be more comfortable in groups if this was available sooner.

I think there is so much power in vulnerability. Just hearing everyone's inner thoughts, and hearing all the things they've gone through, and overcome, it's really powerful. It's how you build community is having faults, or bad happenstances that you all share, not masking all the time, like "how are you?" and an automatic "good." That doesn't help anyone. This is real power. This is how real community is built. I really love Circles, and I wish we could have one about every topic, ever.

I think it would be amazing if this was available in elementary. It would have helped with friend dynamics.

Restorative Action could have changed when I got in trouble because I would have made my side heard.

## Youth Participant Feedback March 2022 - Present



# Youth Restorative Justice Casework

qathet Community Justice receives criminal referrals from the RCMP and Crown Council, and non-criminal referrals from anyone in the community. For youth referrals, at least one member for YRA is on the case team, providing peer-to-peer support, with the consent of the participant(s). The use of Restorative Justice in schools can be used for things such as vandalism, violence, peer conflict & bullying, drug and alcohol violations, reintegration into school community after an extended absence, reintegration after skipping, and much more. Indeed, many school districts within BC alone have partnerships with RJ programs or have it embedded within the schools. Some of these school districts include Abbotsford (#33), Surrey (#36), North Vancouver (#44), Langley (#45), Sunshine Coast (#46), Sea to Sky (#48), Arrowsmith (#69), Port Alberni (#70), Cowichan (#79), and many more.

## Youth Referral Statistics

