

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SASKATOON

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RIGHTING THE WRONG (RESTORATIVE JUSTICE)

This like all other issues of Social Justice moves from awareness to education. The media today provides us with many examples of crime, not just the act itself, but also the human dimension.

We are made aware of the background of the criminal and the victim. Being aware does not necessarily mean being educated.

A beginning step in the transition is the use of a talking circle.

The Talking Circle

This, together with the healing circle and the sentencing circle, is one that is used by native people. The principles are much the same.

A. Physical

- People sit in a circle, sometimes on the floor.
- No barriers such as tables separate them.
- Passing a hand held item such as a stone or a feather around the circle establishes who is to speak.
- Silence is acceptable, indicated by passing the item on.
- No interruptions are allowed.

B. Content of what is said

- Non critical.
- No right or wrong.
- No judgement statements even "Good".
- Free choice of expression, may be a story.
- Speak from the heart with feeling.

C. Need for a skilled Facilitator?

- This may not be necessary for a talking circle, but is for other types.
- Pre-planning a) avoid one person speaking too long b) to deal with emotional or tense situations
- Facilitator takes part in the circle
- Merely to ensure that rules are followed

Office for Justice and Peace, Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon, 2000

Source: Saskatoon Correctional Centre (Fr. André Poilievre)
Beyond Therapy, Beyond Science (1992) Anne Wilson Shaef