

Restorative Justice Learning Debrief

Tony Case
2017



Table of Contents

Working Group Members	2
Introduction.....	2
Background	2
Purpose and Scope	2
Guiding Principles for the Learning Debrief	3
Approach and Journey to Date.....	4
Meetings and Consultations	4
Case Studies.....	5
Guiding Questions	9
Learning Debrief Themes	10
Learning Theme 1: Understanding & Education	12
Learning Theme 2: Recognizing Dalhousie’s RJ/RA Expertise & Building Future Capacity	14
Learning Theme 3: Ensuring RJ/RA Sustainability.....	16
Learning Theme 4: Continuing to Build a Dalhousie RJ/RA Culture	19
Concluding Remarks.....	21



Restorative Justice Learning Debrief

Introduction

Background

The *Report of the Task Force on Misogyny, Sexism and Homophobia* in Dalhousie University Faculty of Dentistry outlines 39 recommendations to Dalhousie University. Specifically, Recommendation 13 reads:

The Faculty of Dentistry should conduct an independent external review to determine whether Restorative Justice (RJ) Sessions, properly constituted to ensure voluntary and inclusive participation, could assist in attitudinal and behavioural change in the student body, staff and faculty.

In response to this recommendation, Dalhousie University along with the Faculty of Dentistry engaged an independent consultant to lead a Restorative Justice/Restorative Approach (RJ/RA) Working Group to conduct the review using a learning debrief framework.

For the Learning Debrief, the terms *restorative justice* and *restorative approach*, although technically different, as expressed in the first learning theme, are used interchangeably for this debrief unless specified otherwise.

Purpose and Scope

The purpose of the review was to learn, through the examination of three recent Dalhousie cases, whether and how a restorative approach on campus worked well, leading to valuable and positive change, as well as what could be improved upon in future applications. This review and reflective learning process was used in the creation of this Learning Debrief.

Working Group Members



Aisha Abawajy—

a student representative
of the Dalhousie
student union

Arig al Shaibah—

Vice Provost, Student
Affairs

Tom Boran—

Former Dean, Faculty of
Dentistry

Tony Case—

independent consultant,
Knightsbridge
Robertson Surette

Debora Matthews—

Associate Dean,
Academic, Faculty of
Dentistry

Jasmine Walsh—

Assistant Vice
President, Human
Resources



Guiding Principles for the Learning Debrief

- ♦ A belief that RJ/RA is one approach/practice, not the only approach/practice, for any number of university challenges for which RJ/RA may be considered.
- ♦ A critical analytical lens and a strength-based approach that supports positive learning and change.
- ♦ A comparative perspective across Dalhousie contexts to both broaden and manage the scope of the review.
- ♦ A commitment to do no harm by maintaining confidentiality, managing historical information with care and respect, and focusing on future possibilities.
- ♦ An intersectional approach by considering the relevance of existing power relations.



Approach and Journey to Date

The Working Group was formed as a diverse group who had an understanding and varying perspectives of restorative justice and how it was used within the institution. The Working Group used three case studies as the basis for the Learning Debrief and framed their understanding of the cases and the identification of emerging themes using a set of guiding questions. The Learning Debrief was conducted through a series of meetings, interviews, and focus group discussions. With diversity of opinion at the forefront, those who took part in these discussions did so based on their involvement in or understanding of the case study, availability, and willingness to participate. The approach, case studies, and guiding questions are outlined below.

Meetings and Consultations

- ◆ Creation of a working committee and bi-monthly working group meetings – Fall 2016 – June 2017
 - ◆ Purpose, scope, and principles created to guide the working group
- ◆ Group check-in with internal Dalhousie RJ/RA experts – February 22, 2017
 - ◆ Sharing of the Learning Debrief approach and actively seeking feedback
 - ◆ Review of potential Dalhousie case studies that would be appropriate for the Learning Debrief
- ◆ Bi-monthly meetings with internal RJ/RA experts and practitioners – March 2017 – June 2017
- ◆ Selection of three Dalhousie case studies to be part of Learning Debrief
- ◆ Interviews and focus groups conducted in April, May and June 2017
 - ◆ The breakdown of stakeholders interviewed and/or part of a focus group across the three case studies are:
 - Dalhousie Faculty/Dalhousie Employees – 25
 - Dalhousie Students – 22
 - External Stakeholders – 10
- ◆ Summary of Learning Debrief Themes – June 2017
 - ◆ Shared emerging themes from case study focus groups and interviews with working committee and internal RJ experts June 21, 2017
 - ◆ Shared emerging themes one on one with external RJ experts June/July 2017
- ◆ Writing of Learning Debrief – August 2017



- ◆ Shared draft of Learning Debrief for feedback from working committee and key stakeholders – September and October 2017

Case Studies

Multiple case studies were put forward by the RJ/RA experts and practitioners. After review, three case studies were selected as they best fit the scope of the work in shaping the Learning Debrief. The case studies are described as follows:

1. **Dalhousie Dentistry School Society (DDSS) and Dalhousie Hygiene School Society (DHSS) – Restorative Student Government in Faculty of Dentistry**

Background

This case study was informed and inspired by the work started by the Dalhousie Dentistry School (DDS) Class of 2015 participants in the restorative justice response to the Facebook incident, and fully supported by the Faculty, a group of current student leaders from Dentistry and Dental Hygiene have been working together in the same restorative way since their upper-year classmates graduated. They are striving to make and sustain change to achieve a welcoming, inclusive, and safe student community at the Faculty of Dentistry.

Some of these student leaders participated in support of the restorative process with the 2015 class, as members of the wider impacted community. In doing so, they recognized their responsibilities as student leaders, and as future members of the profession, to continue to examine values and ensure they promote and support equity and inclusion within the Faculty in places where they have influence. This most naturally fit within the work of the student societies.

Using a restorative approach to facilitate ongoing reflection, the student leaders reimaged their constitution, priorities, and values. This had an immediate effect on the types of social events they planned and the way they structured relationships between class years to support learning and well-being. It even required them to think differently about the configuration of their student lounge—ensuring that the space was being used in a way consistent with their values.

Building a Restorative Model for Student Governance

- ◆ Student leaders engaged the help of on-campus restorative facilitators to ensure the work from DDS 2015 was honoured in process design and carried forward in their leadership redesign.
- ◆ An intentional decision was made to work using restorative tools with a values approach.
- ◆ Busy students began to prioritize having regular in-person meetings so all voices could be heard and important decisions made together. Healthy working relationships between the two student groups (hygiene/dentistry), and groups with the student body (local and international students), were essential for the work to move forward.
- ◆ Student leaders completed an overhaul of their student governance model within the faculty and presented the plan to an approving student body.



- ◆ Senate, Faculty Administrators, and senior university officials praised the work of the students who ensured regular status updates with these stakeholders as a means of being transparent and accountable.

Learning/Outcomes

- ◆ Student leaders recognized that what happened in the Facebook incident was not unique to the DDS Class of 2015—it is symptomatic of what happens throughout the institution—but they had an opportunity to make a difference to the culture and climate of the Faculty of Dentistry.
- ◆ The DDS Class of 2015 committed to learn and act to improve the climate and culture and to address issues of exclusion and discrimination. Several Class of 2015 alumni stayed connected with the new group of student representatives to support them in their learning and leadership.
- ◆ A cornerstone piece of their work, a Social Hosting Policy, has been viewed by other faculties as a more holistic strategy to keeping students safe while attending events where alcohol is served. The current licensing standard requires only a “Smart Serve” course for bar staff, which does not provide student leaders with any training on how to respond to any real related crisis beyond overserving/overconsumption of alcohol.
- ◆ The student lounge known as the Cavity was revealed during the restorative response to the Facebook scandal to have a small contained bar service room that was rife with behaviour similar to that exhibited in the Facebook post. During the restorative justice process in 2015, the liquor license was suspended for that space until the space could be reimaged and made safe. The students worked on a plan to redesign the space ensuring it reflected their values through its increased use as a social space.
- ◆ The liquor license was returned for the room upon presentation of the redesign plan to the Faculty and senior university administrators. Funding was approved and the project was completed, revealing an open inclusive space, welcoming of all students.

2. Continuous Off-Campus Community-Generated Noise Complaints

Background

Long-term residents on the street close to the Studley campus lament the beginning of each academic year as it brings new groups of students to the street who seem unaware the area is not part of a student housing district. Quality-of-life issues for the residents abound mostly attributed to their student neighbours.

Years of police action of ticketing for the offences had little effect on the behaviour. The street was known as a party area for students seeking accommodation in the area and was often rented to full capacity. Landlords for student houses were rarely engaged or were nonresponsive to community complaints. The university code of student conduct did not give standing for community members to file a complaint and was nonapplicable to these sorts of off-campus behaviours. Residents repeatedly reached out over the years asking the University to take some action.



Community Restorative Response Model

- ♦ A series of meetings were held within the university to determine who was involved, what relationships were being impacted (known/unknown), and what other external stakeholders had interest in this matter being resolved. A plan to have a conversation with the most frequently offending students was created.
- ♦ A meeting with students identified to be leaders, the dean, police, student affairs, and security was held during which, the impacts to the community and to themselves of their ongoing disruptive behaviour was discussed.
- ♦ The university and community stakeholders continued to develop working relationships after their discussions, and they sought new ways to partner both proactively and reactively on shared concerns (Joint Community Action Team [JCAT]).

Learning/Outcomes

- ♦ Students brought the letter they wrote and distributed to their neighbours. This was a good first step in validating their neighbours' concerns.
- ♦ Students recognized they made their street a hot spot for complaints and enforcement.
- ♦ The students identified the need for other students on the street to be educated about being respectful and the need for a change in current behaviour.
- ♦ With the conversation about impacts came an acknowledgment of wrongdoing and acceptance of responsibility for several occasions during which police issued fines.
- ♦ JCAT expanded to include the Fire Department to address safety issues raised by both the community members and students about unsafe conditions (e.g., apartment sizes).
- ♦ The Dean of the Faculty was involved and committed to the learning opportunity.
- ♦ The landlords became involved and indicated students could be evicted if their impact on long-term residents did not improve.
- ♦ JCAT members collaborated with new students and long-term residents at the beginning of the new academic year and held an afternoon street party/BBQ meet-and-greet intended to bring the community together.
- ♦ Landlords have paid greater attention to the student renters to ensure complaints are less likely.

3. RJ: A Residence Case Study

Background

Although RJ may be used from time to time as a response to residence code violations (formal restorative conferences – circle processes), the focus has been on utilizing n RA and restorative principles to guide residence community interactions and accountability.

Restorative Methods Being Used

- ♦ Restorative conversations, including use of affective statements and questions:



- ◆ Residence Code of Conduct follow-up, community dialogue, team dialogue, staff performance issues.
- ◆ Restorative meetings (staff meetings and community/floor meetings):
 - ◆ These meetings are organized to encourage authentic engagement of community and/or team members and may include using circle processes or aspects of circle processes.
 - ◆ The meetings engage community members/team members in value discussions and create floor/team charters. These are discussed at future meetings and used to guide community/team dialogue when issues arise moving forward. Supports are also discussed to aid in success. Where safe to do so, communities/teams are given an opportunity to problem-solve when issues arise. All individuals are given an opportunity to share their stories/experiences.
- ◆ Circles of support:
 - ◆ Teams or communities may come together to discuss how they can offer support to one another to ensure all individuals can uphold community standards/values/charters.
 - ◆ Group discussions on the challenges and barriers being faced by individuals and how these barriers can be overcome.
 - ◆ Teams also came together to discuss how they could support one another's personal development and their communities.

Learning/Outcomes

- ◆ Training for Residence Life staff is now underway:
 - ◆ Training session for all new Resident Associates include:
 - Intro to a restorative approach
 - How Resident Associates can use a restorative approach
 - Principles of a restorative approach
 - Proactive and reactive processes
 - How restorative approaches fit within the student resident conduct system
 - ◆ Online training session for new Resident Associates provides reading materials on restorative approaches
 - ◆ Online training discussions for returning Resident Associates on how they intend to use restorative approaches in their communities in the coming year
 - ◆ Training session for Senior Resident Associates
 - ◆ Discussions consider how Senior Resident Associates can support restorative approaches work
 - ◆ Principles and understanding and use of restorative approaches are reviewed
 - ◆ Training session for all Resident Associates are offered



- ◆ Learning conversations (based on principles of a restorative approach) are taught and practiced extensively.
- ◆ All Resident Associates are provided with a training manual that outlines proactive and restorative processes they can utilize in their communities.

Guiding Questions

The following questions were used to guide the Learning Debrief meetings with case study stakeholders, both individually and in focus groups.

1. Selection of RA

- a) What led you or the stakeholders to decide that RA was the appropriate approach in this situation?
- b) Thinking about this RA situation, what learning would you like to be applied when others elect to use RA in the future?

2. Goals or Expectations of RA

- a) What did you hope the RA process would achieve?
- b) Any advice for others as they set goals and expectations for the RA process?

3. Preparation and Support

- a) What support did you receive before and during the RA process that you appreciated?
- b) Is there anything that would have made it easier for you or others to participate throughout the process?

4. Implementation of RA

- a) How was your well-being and the well-being of others maintained throughout the RA process?
- b) What perceptions may have shifted in you or in others because of this process?
- c) Thinking about the RA situation we are discussing, what learning would you like to be applied in future RA processes?

5. Sustaining the Success of RA

- a) How will you sustain the learning from this process?
- b) How was the learning from this process shared or communicated with those connected to this situation?



Learning Debrief Themes

The Learning Debrief themes emerged from semi structured interviews and focus groups that helped to elicit experiences and perspectives people have encountered during events and/or in certain situations. Where appropriate, reports, debriefs, and presentations related to the three case studies were also reviewed as part of the learning. The capturing or debriefing of these lived experiences into themes is intended to help people and organizations step back, reflect, and apply a critical lens on how they may apply the learning as they look to the future.

For the Learning Debrief, the terms *restorative justice* and *restorative approach*, although technically different are used interchangeably unless specified otherwise. In doing so, it is not meant to limit the application of a restorative approach to situations where there has been a wrong or a conflict.

The following Learning Debrief themes emerged as to whether and how a restorative approach on campus worked well, leading to valuable and positive change, as well as what could be improved upon in future applications.

- ◆ Theme 1: Understanding & Education
 - ◆ Having a clear understanding of what RJ/RA is and educating multiple stakeholders (practitioners, students, staff, and faculty) on how and when it should be used is foundational to its implementation and impact.
- ◆ Theme 2: Recognizing Dalhousie's RJ/RA Expertise & Building Future Capacity
 - ◆ Dalhousie is recognized and sought out for its leadership and world-renowned expertise on the theory and practice of RJ/RA. Dalhousie is fortunate to have a highly skilled core group of practitioners who can apply the theory and principles in the field and have been at the leading edge of innovative practices in this area. Having these skilled practitioners has been critical to the successful implementation of RJ/RA on the campus.
- ◆ Theme 3: Ensuring RJ/RA Sustainability
 - ◆ Ensuring RJ/RA sustainability involves three components: skill and behavioural development, follow-through, and measures of success. All are important in enhancing the value of RJ/RA and its impact on changing behaviours of participants and the culture of their communities.
- ◆ Theme 4: Continuing to Build a Dalhousie RJ/RA Culture
 - ◆ Dalhousie already has a strong RJ/RA culture, which has enabled it to become a recognized leader and sought-out expert on RJ/RA. That culture has helped to create an

Restorative Justice Learning Debrief



environment where the practice and value of RJ/RA work has grown and evolved. The opportunity ahead is where and how the institution can fully support the growth and evolution of the RJ/RA culture so that it adds greater value to the future Dalhousie community.



Learning Theme 1: Understanding & Education

How This Learning Theme Assists in Positive Change

Having a clear understanding of what restorative justice (RJ) or what a restorative approach (RA) is and educating multiple stakeholders (students, staff, and faculty) on how and when it should be used are foundational to its implementation and impact.

Today at Dalhousie there is clearly a strong nucleus of RJ/RA experts and practitioners who understand its purpose and benefits, when it is to be used, and how to use it. They understand the nuances of the framework and conceptualize it as a principled approach that focuses on relationships. They are interested and accessible in sharing their knowledge and experiences with those building their own expertise and with those encountering RJ/RA for the first time.

When Dalhousie takes the time to educate participants and stakeholders of the RJ/RA process, it helps to enhance the value it brings to a community. We would call this education “pre-work,” which is a key part of RJ/RA work, specifically:

- ◆ Defining the purpose of the work and the value it will bring to the relationships and community.
- ◆ Outlining how the work will be done and guiding principles of RJ/RA to be used as part of the process.
- ◆ Helping to set expectations of what may and may not be achieved as part of the work.
- ◆ Clarifying that participants need to show up and be engaged to gain the most out of the work.
- ◆ Providing support to the participants as they learn about the process and as they experience the work.

Some key learnings and observations from participants (including some staff and faculty) who experienced the positive impact of RJ/RA under this theme are as follows:

- ◆ It takes a lot of people’s time to do the work well. Participants may be surprised by the commitment needed as they work through the issues, yet they recognize this commitment helps to elicit the value of the process.
- ◆ Participants felt supported, included, heard, and valued in the process. They had ownership in the opportunity to participate in an RJ/RA process and entered it of their own accord.
- ◆ It is not a one-time event but an ongoing, iterative process. It takes time to unpack situations and issues. Taking this time is important to the understanding of what RJ/RA is and is key to the success of the RJ/RA work.
- ◆ RJ/RA is a reflective and experiential learning process. Therefore, understanding what it is and how it benefits the participants and their community evolves throughout the process. What is understood as an expectation or the value one would receive at the beginning of the process usually changes and deepens over the course of the work.
- ◆ As the participants experience and learn about the situation impacting their community, they begin to realize they are building skills they can apply to other experiences, situations, and communities.



Opportunities to Enhance the Positive Change of This Theme

There is an opportunity to create a better understanding of what RJ/RA is and educate the Dalhousie community on how and when it can be used. Continuing to invite new voices and perspectives and leverage the core of local experts and practitioners will only help to build this understanding. Today the understanding is different across the Dalhousie campus depending in part on how much expertise, experience, and skill one has in RJ/RA. If Dalhousie decides to enhance its understanding and education of RJ/RA, how the institution goes about this work will be as important as the work itself.

Potential RJ/RA Components to Educate Around

- ◆ Clarify the different definitions and/or overlapping definitions that may cause confusion:
 - ◆ *Restorative justice, restorative approach, restorative practices*
- ◆ Clarify and educate those who have never experienced RJ/RA so they understand:
 - ◆ What it means to work restoratively.
 - ◆ What the benefits are of taking a restorative approach in a situation.
 - ◆ What the key principles of RJ/RA are.
 - ◆ What makes the RJ/RA principles restorative?
 - ◆ How the restorative principles act as a framework and a guide to the work.
 - ◆ When and where a restorative approach could be best used.
 - ◆ That there is value in having restorative conversations in a facilitated and safe process.
 - ◆ That the act of reflection is a valid and valuable learning construct that can lead to positive action and behavioural change.
 - ◆ How an emergent and evolving approach like RJ/RA adds positive value.



Learning Theme 2: Recognizing Dalhousie's RJ/RA Expertise & Building Future Capacity

How This Learning Theme Assists in Positive Change

Dalhousie is recognized and sought out for its leadership and world-renowned expertise on the theory and practice of RJ/RA. Dalhousie is fortunate to have a highly skilled core group of practitioners who can apply the theory and principles in the field and have been at the leading edge of innovative practices in this area. Having these skilled practitioners has been critical to the successful implementation of RJ/RA on the campus. Looking ahead, it will be important for Dalhousie to leverage these internal capabilities to help maintain and build future RJ/RA capacity.

In the focus groups and one-on-one interviews, the importance of the role of the RJ/RA practitioners was consistently cited as a key factor of the success of the process. Many interviewed recognized the practitioners':

- ◆ Skill, competency, and experience in RJ/RA.
- ◆ Leadership in the RJ/RA process and their role as champions of the process.
- ◆ Ability to create a caring and supportive working environment that honoured the different perspectives of the participants and community members, specifically their ability to:
 - ◆ Create a safe environment to hold the collective tensions and anxieties of the participants as they worked through challenging issues and situations.
 - ◆ Promote participation and inclusion of thoughts, ideas, and different perspectives. The promotion of these facets can help to shift, broaden, and evolve points of view.
 - ◆ Facilitate challenging conversations among the participants that were constructive and ultimately restorative.
 - ◆ Discuss, name, and/or address issues and the impact of events or situations.
 - ◆ Help guide the participants and the community to create and own the way forward.

Opportunities to Enhance the Positive Change of This Theme

There are two important opportunities for Dalhousie to leverage the expertise of the RJ/RA practitioners and build future capacity to do this work on campus. First, it is important to recognize and value the RJ/RA skill and expertise Dalhousie has today. These are committed practitioners who work restoratively in dealing with issues or situations as they arise not only in the Dalhousie community but also in their daily lives, personally and professionally. Although some of these practitioners are known, others at Dalhousie are less recognized and have a greater RJ/RA skill and expertise than many realize.

Second, it is important to recognize that the current approach to building RJ/RA capability and capacity is not likely sustainable. Presently, most of the RJ/RA capacity building is done informally. All the RJ/RA experts and practitioners have full-time jobs at Dalhousie focused on other types of core work. Much of the RJ/RA work they take on is a personal choice because working restoratively is core to who they are. The good news is that the Dalhousie RJ/RA practitioners enjoy teaching, mentoring, and developing the skills of others. When and where possible, they take the time to share their expertise. Much of this



capacity building begins by being involved in an RJ/RA process. When an employee or faculty member is exposed to an RJ/RA process and its principles, these experiences seem to enhance his or her interpersonal skills and enable him or her to better help and support students, staff, or colleagues after the RJ/RA process is completed. We have also seen that practitioners build ways of working restoratively into their functional roles, and when they take on new roles they build capacity by exposing other employees and teams to the restorative principles and practices so that they become a new way of working together.

Although this organic way of building RJ/RA capabilities and capacity has immense value, it may not be enough to maintain and build on for the future. RJ/RA work can be intense and demanding on practitioners, especially when this work is added to their role as a “project.” Sometimes practitioners receive multiple RJ/RA requests that cannot be accepted because of the time commitment required to have a positive impact on the work. As one practitioner stated, “A bad restorative process is just not worth doing” and ultimately goes against the principles of RJ/RA.

Potential Opportunities to Build RJ/RA Capacity and Capability

- ◆ Self-Exploration – The creation of individual learning or development plans so practitioners continue to grow their RJ/RA skills and expertise over time, with specific objectives, actions, and measures of success.
- ◆ Study/Practice Groups – A safe learning place to bring together seasoned and emerging RJ/RA practitioners to share experiences and leverage the guidance of mentors.
 - ◆ RJ/RA is a lot about learning by doing, being immersed in an experience, and helping oneself and others to step back and reflect; therefore, it is important to create protected spaces for new practitioners to do this.
- ◆ Steering Committee – The creation of a steering committee or working group to focus on practical ways to build RJ/RA capacity. A committee called ROAD (Restorative Options at Dalhousie) was set up a few years ago that may have had this as part of their mandate and may be worth revisiting.
- ◆ Formal Learning Framework – Identification of key areas of formal learning that would help to build RJ/RA skills.
 - ◆ An interested group of up-and-coming RJ/RA learners/practitioners have some expertise and may benefit from formal learning goals and opportunities to help them build their capabilities.
 - ◆ Could formal learning and development be offered to faculty members and staff who want to leverage RJ/RA skills to help them be better in their roles and as educators?
- ◆ Designation of an RJ/RA Functional Role Within Dalhousie – Could a full- or part-time role within a functional department be created dedicated to leading a practice area (center of excellence) and building RJ/RA capacity and capabilities?
- ◆ Dedicated Resources – Specifically, does the institution dedicate time, budgets, and people to build capacity?



Learning Theme 3: Ensuring RJ/RA Sustainability

How This Learning Theme Assists in Positive Change

Ensuring RJ/RA sustainability requires three components: skill and behavioural development, follow-through, and measures of success. All are important in enhancing the value of RJ/RA and its impact on changing behaviours of participants and the culture of their communities.

Skill & Behavioural Development

Many of those who have been through a restorative process are thankful for the learning it provided them in their development personally as members of the Dalhousie community. They recognize that they have learned new skills and behaviours they will carry forward to other parts of their lives and in other roles and communities at the university.

Below are just some of the learning, skills, and behaviours RJ/RA participants took away:

- ◆ Enhanced understanding of how positive relationships can be developed and moved forward.
- ◆ Greater understanding of what individual responsibility means and how to be accountable for one's actions.
- ◆ Enhanced ability to build diverse relationships:
 - ◆ Hearing and being open to new and/or differing perspectives.
 - ◆ Awareness of others' thoughts and ideas.
 - ◆ Skills to build inclusion.
- ◆ Enhanced skills to hold and engage in conversations that are meaningful and valuable:
 - ◆ Meetings (student, faculty, one-on-one).
 - ◆ Community events.
- ◆ Enhanced understanding, comfort, and skill in working through conflict and interpersonal dynamics.
- ◆ The ability to engage in reflective learning; to step back and review one's own assumptions and behaviours and apply that reflection to approaching situations or relationships differently.
- ◆ Understanding the culture of a community and how to engage others to help a community grow and evolve.

Follow-Through

In each of the three case studies reviewed, follow-through was a key component to making a positive impact on the work of RJ/RA. Follow-through can also be thought of as legacy, as in "What is the legacy of the work that has been undertaken and how will it sustain itself in a community in the future?"

Follow-through occurred regularly in the implementation of the RJ/RA process during which next steps were identified to help interpersonal relationships move forward. Follow-through also occurred regularly with participants where practitioners would check in (one-on-one or in small groups) to ensure participants were being supported and to provide opportunities for the participants to reflect on their



own learning, perceptions, and actions during the process. These check-ins created feedback loops that were of value at an individual level and for the broader community.

The second area of follow-through occurred when an RJ/RA intervention would help build and develop actions/processes that could then become part of the ongoing culture of the community. In all three case studies, follow-through evolved to try and meet the needs of the community moving forward. That follow-through was owned by members of the community working on improving student governance, community liaison work to build student and community relationships. The ultimate follow-through was ongoing RJ/RA skill building for student residents to help students take accountability for their conduct and interactions with others. Another factor was the ongoing changes or evolution in the follow-through. Many of the processes put in place in the community continued to evolve and adapt to meet the changing community needs and as new members joined the community. These included changing skill-building approaches, sharing learning with other students and faculties, and identifying new community projects or relationships to be developed.

Measures of Success

Measuring the success of any people-designed and -planned intervention or process is challenging. By “measuring the success” we mean, “What has changed in a person, persons, or the circumstances, and are we able to identify objectively what is different and/or enhanced? If a skill has been developed, where and how is it showing up in one’s day-to-day? or If there has been a behavioural shift, what does that look like and are others able to see and describe that new behaviour? And if there has been development of a skill or shift in behaviour, what is the impact on others within the community?” For this Learning Debrief, it is important to recognize that measuring behavioural change is challenging and not something easily done, whether it is in team development, employee engagement, or RJ/RA.

Many of the participants who were part of this review shared powerful stories that showed they had broadened their perceptions and gained new skills to engage with others in relationships. These stories represent qualitative measures of success. When people tell a story about what they have learned, it gives insight into not only their learning but also their commitment to practicing and carrying their learning into future situations and communities. A success story helps to build a new narrative, which helps the learner think and act differently when encountering a similar experience in the future.

Each of the skills and behaviours listed above were accompanied by stories of success. The success stories were shared and identified not only in one-on-one conversations, interviews, and focus groups but also in reports, presentations, and events hosted to celebrate a milestone and/or the development of a new process (e.g., the creation of a new governance structure).

Opportunities to Enhance the Positive Change of This Theme

It is important to share, hear, and recognize the stories of success emerging from much of the RJ/RA work. Individual stories on their own are powerful, but when one continues to hear comparable success stories in different situations, it highlights the consistent value of the work being done by the practitioners and participants in the RJ/RA work at Dalhousie.



RJ/RA stories need to be heard and recognized as they can tell us that something is different or improved. But defining exactly what that is and to be able to put a tangible value or measure on it is difficult. In general, most people stated interventions are a challenge to measure:

- ♦ “Behavioural change is hard to measure, especially over time.”
- ♦ “A changed perception is hard to measure.”
- ♦ “Improved interpersonal dynamics are hard to measure.”
- ♦ “There is not always enough time and resources dedicated to do the follow-up needed to see what impact and value an intervention has had over time.”
- ♦ “There may be no success criteria or measures of success developed on the front end of the people intervention that can then be used as a guide for success throughout the process.”

One opportunity to help measure the success of RJ/RA is to ensure there is understanding and agreement on why it is being used, when it should be used, and how it will be implemented (going back to Learning Theme 1). If this foundation exists, then it helps to set a base line and it becomes easier to define measures of success at the beginning of the RJ/RA process, which can be revisited as part of follow-through work at the end. Check-ins or revisiting the process at the midpoint or at the end can also help to reveal how participants’ perceptions or behaviours have evolved throughout the process.

Because it is hard to measure individual behavioural change, it may be more appropriate to focus on the follow-through work because, in all three case studies, there has been some demonstrated change or evolution in the culture of those communities, or at least within a subset of the community. To measure future success and help ensure sustainability of an RJ/RA intervention, it is perhaps best to focus on what community norms are evolving and how. Continuing to check in on the follow-through can be a key measure of success when looked at over time. Finally, the more RJ/RA interventions can show they are meeting or exceeding the measures of success, the more the credibility of the RJ/RA work will increase.



Learning Theme 4: Continuing to Build a Dalhousie RJ/RA Culture

How This Learning Theme Assists in Positive Change

Dalhousie already has a strong RJ/RA culture, which has enabled it to practice and become a recognized leader and sought-out expert on RJ/RA. That culture has helped to create an environment in which the practice and value of RJ/RA work has grown and evolved. The opportunity looking ahead is where and how the institution can continue to support the growth and evolution of the RJ/RA culture so that it adds greater value to the future Dalhousie community.

Many interviewed recognized that RJ/RA is a valuable learning construct that aligns with the aspirations and values of the university. This recognition has helped to enable strong pockets or places within the institution where RJ/RA has grown. Dalhousie's culture has supported the growth and value of RJ/RA by:

- ◆ Providing support, time, and recognition of the RJ/RA knowledge experts, practitioners, and participants.
- ◆ Showing a willingness to use the RJ/RA framework and process with Dalhousie students.
- ◆ Providing some space and time to do RJ/RA work.
- ◆ Helping to enable its growth and evolution in an informal and organic way.
- ◆ Enabling informal sharing and cross-pollination of ideas and best practices of RJ/RA between student bodies (e.g., Dentistry & Law).
- ◆ Bringing a restorative lens to other kinds of human interventions, conversations, and situations (e.g., community engagement and conflict management).

The opportunity moving ahead is how the university builds on the RJ/RA culture so that it continues to create the right conditions that lead to positive and valuable change throughout the institution.

Opportunities to Enhance the Positive Change of This Theme

One opportunity to grow and evolve the RJ/RA culture is to expand its recognition as an institution-wide process that could be used across multiple levels at Dalhousie. Presently RJ/RA work is student-centric whereby other community members, usually staff and faculty, become involved only when it is related to a student issue or situation. From this Learning Debrief, it is clear RJ/RA does assist in positive change not only for student participants but also for faculty and staff. Many of the faculty and staff who experienced a restorative approach through a student RJ/RA process stated the experience gave them a new way of thinking and behaving when interacting with students and colleagues. It helped to address not only an issue of injustice but also how they think and understand justice in their campus relationships. It provided new perspectives and a broader way of thinking. Perhaps it is worthwhile looking at how this restorative approach might be expanded or broadened to include more students and other community members. What might a restorative approach look like if:

- ◆ It was expanded and introduced to 3,000 new incoming students annually? There is value in introducing it to new student residents, so why not expand it to all incoming students?
- ◆ Restorative approaches were aligned with the Dalhousie values and the idea of being a learning institute where it could be used in the classroom or when teaching students?

Restorative Justice Learning Debrief



- ◆ It was introduced to faculty members as a way to interact with students and their colleagues?
- ◆ It was introduced to the faculties to share ideas among the schools and around the institution?
- ◆ It was introduced as part of the new employee/staff and faculty member orientation process?

A second opportunity to grow and evolve the RJ/RA culture is around integration with existing frameworks, processes, and policies at Dalhousie. Are there integration opportunities with?

- ◆ Dalhousie conduct policies, perhaps starting with (but not limited to) the student code of conduct?
- ◆ Dalhousie values embodied as living commitments and behaviours expected throughout the university community?
- ◆ Dalhousie mediation, discipline issues, and conflict management processes?
- ◆ Performance management and career development processes for all Dalhousie staff/employees?
- ◆ Frameworks and policy development focused on enhancing the Dalhousie culture around inclusion, diversity, and equity?
- ◆ The Dalhousie employee/staff engagement working on enhancing the workplace environment and culture?

RJ/RA adds value in supporting and developing community cultures within the institute of Dalhousie. Therefore, it may warrant leveraging the restorative capabilities of RJ/RA in other venues and with other stakeholders, especially with staff and faculty. The question will be how Dalhousie creates the right conditions so RJ/RA culture continues to grow and add value throughout the institution.



Concluding Remarks

After reviewing the three recent RJ/RA case studies at Dalhousie, it appears that RJ/RA does offer value and positive change for individuals and their communities and can assist in behavioural change in students, staff, and faculty. Dalhousie has the knowledge, understanding, and expertise on how, when, and where RJ/RA is best used to offer the greatest value and impact on individuals and their communities. There is a need to expand this knowledge and engage in an education process to create a greater common understanding and acceptance among internal stakeholders (staff and faculty). Even something as simple as what is meant by *restorative* and how restorative justice and a restorative approach are different and yet part of an integrated construct is not well understood by many in the Dalhousie community. A greater understanding of the value RJ/RA brings to the institution may enhance the willingness to use RJ/RA and leverage its value to the community.

Dalhousie's greatest strength as it relates to the value and positive change of all internal RJ/RA processes is the expertise and skill of its RJ/RA practitioners. It cannot be understated that without the skill and leadership of the internal practitioners, there is no safe and supportive engagement of participants and no behavioural change possible or community evolution and development. In fact, the skill and capability of the practitioners is likely greater than the Dalhousie community recognizes. The challenge looking ahead is that much of the RJ/RA work done by the practitioners is voluntary and not necessarily part of their core functional roles. The way practitioners engage in RJ/RA work may not be sustainable in its present form, especially if leading experts and practitioners decide to move on or retire. So how does Dalhousie recognize and support the RJ/RA practitioners today so they can help build future RJ/RA practice capabilities and capacity among others in the community (staff, faculty, and students)?

RJ/RA sustainability is occurring in all three case studies reviewed, especially through the follow-through work being done by different committees, working groups, and participants. Examples of the positive changes created from the follow-through are around things such as ongoing governance issues, community liaison work or ongoing skill development, and the practice of RJ/RA principles. Another key area of sustainability is the caring participants showed in helping to move their communities forward and their personal commitment and motivation to develop personally during and after an RJ/RA process. Many believed the RJ/RA experiences assisted in their skill development and the development of new behaviours in dealing with interpersonal relationships and challenging people situations. Because measuring behavioural change can be challenging, it may be worth focusing on tracking the community changes being implemented in the follow-through work of future RJ/RA interventions. These tracked community changes could be evidence of impact or measures of success. The opportunity looking ahead is reflecting on Learning Theme 1, Understanding & Education, to help set the success criteria or measures of success for valuable and impactful RJ/RA work in the future.

There exists a strong and recognized RJ/RA culture at Dalhousie, where the practice of restorative work continues to grow. For future enhancement and evolution of the RJ/RA culture, it may be worthwhile to look beyond its student-centric focus and look for opportunities with staff and faculty where warranted. RJ/RA successfully functions as an independent process and intervention, but it can also be valuable



when integrated with other Dalhousie frameworks, processes, and policies. Having a restorative lens or approach on Dalhousie's conduct policies, for example, can further leverage the value RJ/RA brings to the institution.

There is a solid foundation of knowledge and a high level of expertise of RJ/RA at Dalhousie that assists in leading to valuable and positive change in individual and community development. Looking ahead, it is important for Dalhousie to discuss what *restorative* means to it as an institution and where and how RJ/RA should be used. Ensuring greater understanding and alignment within the Dalhousie community will help to enable, leverage, and build on the internal expertise the institution has so future restorative opportunities continue to be impacted in a positive way.