

**EVALUATION REPORT
PEER RESOLUTION CONFERENCES FOR YOUTH
IN NORTHERN COMMUNITIES**

**Dr. Kenneth J. Whyte
RR. #3, Site 3A, Compartment 23
4527 Johnson Road
Terrace, BC, V8G 4R6
Telephone: 250-638-8960
E-mail kwhyte@Monarch.net
February 23, 2006**

1. PROJECT FRAMEWORK

1.1 Law Courts Education Society

The Law Courts Education Society (LCES) is a provincial organization that is mandated to help people understand how the justice system works, and help justice personnel understand the issues and needs of the communities they serve. Since its founding in 1989, LCES has received awards and recognition for its effective and innovative programming, serving youth, First Nations people, ethnic and immigrant communities, people with disabilities, and people with special learning needs. The society consults and collaborates with school districts, community groups, justice system personnel, and the provincial and federal government to design, implement and evaluate its programs. LCES receives core funding from the Ministries of Education and Attorney General and the Law Foundation of British Columbia, and develops new programs through special project funding. The Society has offices around the province and delivers programs to most of the province through regional programming initiatives (www.lawcourtsed.ca).

1.2 Peer Resolution Conferences

What is a Peer Resolution Conference?

A Peer Resolution Conference (PRC) is a unique youth justice peer process. Using aboriginal justice practices and principles, the Peer Resolution Conference offers an alternative to school suspensions.

The goals of the Peer Resolution Conference program are to:

- Keep students in school
- Practice restorative justice
- Hold youth accountable for their behavior and give them a way to make amends
- Empower youth to accept responsibility
- Allow victims to be involved in the process
- Foster knowledge, skills and values that youth need in contemporary society
- Provide an opportunity for peer volunteers to learn the skills need to weigh conflicting points of view and reach a just and appropriate consequence.

Who is involved in the Peer Resolution Conference?

The Peer Resolution Conference (PRC) is made up a number of adults and students. The Conference will involve the following roles. Note that the youth who has behaved inappropriately is called the respondent.

The **youth facilitator**, who ensures that all participants have a chance to fully and fairly participate and that the conference reaches an outcome based on restorative justice principles.

The **youth co-facilitator**. This youth supports the work of the main facilitator. The **recorder** is a youth who keeps the records of the case.

The **mentor** is a youth volunteer who supports the respondent after the conference in completing the outcome.

The **respondent** is the youth who behaved inappropriately

The **respondent's parent or family member or elder** makes suggestions about what the respondent needs, describes the impact of the crime or violation on the family, and makes suggestions about ways the respondent could repair the harm.

The **victim's parent or family member or elder** includes the person who supports the victim during the conference and ensures that the victim's views are presented to the Peer Resolution Conference.

The **adult facilitator** is an adult who supervises the case and sometimes gives information to help the conference members have a greater understanding of some issues. Generally, the advisor critiques the conference afterwards.

The following is a list of potential additional participants in a conference:

A **witness**: anyone who testifies during the conference about what they saw or heard about the violation.

The **victim or school/community advocate** presents the impact of the respondent's behaviour on all victims and who was affected from his/her point of view.

Other participants. These may include social workers, probation officers, the school counsellor and/or home school coordinator, members of the local bands, translators, youth advocates, or outreach workers.

1.3 Northern BC Communities Project Background and Context

Peer Resolution Conferences (PRCs) for Youth were a pilot project in School District #27, funded by the Community Mobilization Program through the Canada's National Strategy for Safer Communities Initiative Program, Department of Justice.

In April 2002, the LCES participated in detailed discussions with the Williams Lake community about alternatives to school disciplinary measures in order to better ensure safe, respectful, and supportive school environments. Discussions confirmed the limitations of suspensions in dealing with unacceptable student behaviors such as theft, vandalism, fighting, alcohol use, and bullying. There was consensus that while school suspensions may be necessary in some situations, they fail to address the root causes of problem behaviors. It was also agreed that suspensions can isolate youth from the direction and guidance that may help to

create positive changes in their lives. Finally, the use of suspension as discipline can make reintegration into a school environment difficult for youth, thus contributing to repeat offences, truancy, and drop-out. Discussions included representatives from School District 27, including the Assistant Superintendent, the Education Committee, local justice personnel, and the Director of Instruction responsible for school suspensions. An important source of guidance for the project has come from consultations with the Aboriginal community. Initial project discussions included the Cariboo-Chilcoton Band Counsel, the First Nation Educational Council, and members of the Williams Lake, Alkali Lake, Soda Creek, Stone, and Canim Lake bands. The involvement of the surrounding communities allowed for collaboration and input regarding Aboriginal approaches to justice, and allowed for Aboriginal communities to be involved in the design and delivery of programs and services for their youth.

As a result of these consultations, the LCES and the Project Advisory Committee initiated a unique pilot project to implement Peer Resolution Conferences for youth to provide students and administrators with a more effective alternative to traditional school discipline procedures, especially suspension. Project evaluation was an integral part of this project, and an external evaluator was hired to develop tools to monitor the success of the project. The evaluation component began in January 2003 and was completed in October 2003. The overall report indicated that the project met its objectives and stated:

“Based on these encouraging findings, School District #27 should not hesitate to continue the conferences and mediations as an integral part of their program in as many school s as possible.”

1.4 Northern BC Communities Project

Based in the needs and successes of the project in School District #27, LCES, in partnership with 5 Northern Native School/Communities proposed to design, develop, implement, and evaluate a Peer Resolution Conferences for Youth Train the Trainer Pilot Program. Using the LCES Peer Resolution Conferences for Youth Training Materials, each community will have one or more facilitators trained in the program and then these facilitators will be responsible for training participants and co-ordinating the program in their selected school communities. Through the program, students facing suspension or other disciplinary measures (“respondents”) who have the approval of their families or legal guardians and the school administrator will have the option of participating instead in a Peer Resolution for Youth Conference (PYRC). Once the project is finished, each program co-ordinator/s will remain in the community to sustain the program as part of their regular duties. This will insure that the Peer Resolution Conferences for Youth program will remain sustainable.

The five participating schools and community organizations included:

- Vanderhoof Nechako Valley Secondary School in Vanderhoof

- Wet'suwetén Unlocking Aboriginal Justice Program, Moricetown, BC and Smithers schools.
- Gitksan Unlocking Aboriginal Justice Program and Hazelton schools in Hazelton, BC.
- Coast Mountain SD #82 and Clarence Michael School in Terrace.
- Prince Rupert Restorative Justice Program and Conrad School in Prince Rupert, BC.

Each of the respective “trained facilitators” will return to their community and train between 30-50 students and or school personnel in the PRYC model.

At the School District and Community levels, the pilot aims to demonstrate:

- decreased use of suspensions as school disciplinary measure;
- decreased recidivism rates for students participating in conferences;
- improved school attendance for students participating in conferences; and
- increased community awareness of restorative justice alternatives for school suspensions

Benefits for Youth will Include:

- empower youth to be accountable for their decisions and actions, to provide them with a way to make amends and to restore broken relationships with their peers and/or the community;
- encourage youth to gain positive experiences and values;
- increase youth self esteem;
- ensure intervention that prevents youth at risk from behaviours that lead to suspensions, more serious infractions of school rules, or criminal offences;
- attain a perception of resolution and closure for victims of student wrong doing; and
- foster peer facilitators in gaining new awareness, knowledge, and skills, such as the ability to weigh different points of view and to reach a just and appropriate consequence, which are valuable tools for a restorative justice approach to conflict.

1.5 Training and Resources

LCES scheduled and delivered a two-day training session in Terrace on November 30 and December 1, 2004. The following 9 people from five northern Aboriginal communities attended a two-day training session on the philosophy of peer conferences, the restorative justice model and how to use the peer conference as an alternative to traditional methods of school discipline.

Mark Gauthier	Vanderhoof
Lucy Glaim	Smithers
Elgin Cutler	Smithers
Pamela Torres	Hazelton

Terry Danes	Hazelton
Cheryl Sabastian	Terrace
Carolyn Sousa	Terrace
Theresa Wesley	Prince Rupert
Leah Robinson	Prince Rupert

The evaluations from the training were very positive. The completed evaluations can be reviewed in Appendix A. Eight of those who attended indicated that they intended to use these resources with youth in their community. Five indicated a “yes” and 3 indicated “partially” in response to the question asking whether that they felt the two-day training session prepared them to begin to implement the peer resolution program.

1.6 Program Evaluation

The program implementation design included the hiring of an independent third-party evaluator to conduct an evaluation of the program implementation based on the criteria established in the program guidelines. This evaluator was hired before the training took place on November 30 and December 1, 2004. He attended the training and gathered data on the training that was noted in the last section. He was party to project updates and conference calls held in the winter and spring of 2005. A mid-term progress report was filed on April 30, 2005. It indicated that more time would be needed in the implementation stage than envisioned. A conference call was held on June 7, 2005 and reports were collected from 3 of the five sites. By June 7, there wasn't any response from Terrace or Prince Rupert. At that time it was clear that the PRYC was not being implemented at all the sites and most were not on a time-line that was envisioned.

When the teachers returned in September they were concerned about their bargaining with the Province and possible strike. From October 7 -21, 2005 the teachers were out on strike and away from their classrooms. This event prevented the implementation of any new programming this past fall. When teachers returned to their classrooms they were devoting their time to catching up activities with the core curriculum and their moral was such that most were not receptive to increased work loads due to new initiatives. In effect no work was done on during the fall on the peer resolution project.

In January 2006 the evaluator began to collect data. All the anecdotal reports and information received prior to January, 2006 indicated that the implementation had not gone as smoothly in all sites as hoped or in the time frame planned. In consultation with the LCES it was agreed that the evaluator would collect data from each community on the successes and struggles experienced as they began to implement the project. The intent would gather information on the progress to date, identify the constraints that may have prevented implementation as envisioned, and find out how the project may have been more

successful. The new focus would clearly identify what is necessary and critical to ensure increased success in the continuation of PRYC initiative in the region and elsewhere. During the period of January 18-27 the evaluator traveled to all the sites and conducted personnel interviews with 17 individuals who were either implementing the program or key personnel working within the respective school districts. All nine of those trained during the November 30 and December 1, 2004 session were interviewed. Appendix B lists those who were interviewed.

2. PROGRESS REPORT OF THE PRYC

2.1 *Prince Rupert/ SD. #54 Prince Rupert*

Leah Robinson was acting principal of Conrad Elementary School during the period of the training held on November 30, December 1, 2004. She continued in this position until June, 2005. She was then transferred to the position of principal of Port Edward Elementary School for the 2005-2006 term.

Leah stated that she implemented the training component of the program with the grade 7 class and they were very receptive to the program. In June the class did a "mock circle". At the same time "peer helpers" were trained in the same school. No actual use of the Peer Resolution Conference Process was undertaken and parents were not involved.

Salient Points from the Pilot Project:

- When Leah was recruited for the training, she attended because she was interested; however she did not know at that time of recruitment, that she was expected to implement the program after the training.
- Leah and Theresa made a presentation to the board early in the new year of 2005 and the board was receptive to the concept and the program.
- The Prince Rupert Restorative Justice Program has numerous commitments and has little time to support the implementation of such a program in a public school setting. Compounding this problem is the difficulty of coordinating times for such support. Much if the training has to be done in the classroom in small periods of time which does not often match with staff availability of the Restorative Justice Program.
- The students from the grade 7 class from Conrad have gone on to one of the two high schools in Prince Rupert leaving the program without a continuation point for these students to sustain the PYRC.
- The impending strike in September and subsequent teachers strike in October 2005 eliminated all possibility of implementing new programming in the fall of 2005, as students were catching up on lost time and the moral of teachers was such that teachers were not receptive to new work loads.
- SD. #54 is piloting other programs including a ZUNI life skills program and FRIENDS. Both these programs focus on empowering students, building self-esteem and problem solving.

Future Possibilities in SD. #54 Prince Rupert

- The pilot indicated that the grade 7 students were very receptive to the program and it was appropriate for this level.
- All parties interviewed commented on the merit and value of the program and are still interested in the program.
- LCES needs to allow an appropriate lead time for the implementation of the program along with appropriate support and training. The School District has very few resources for such endeavors. Most programs are launched in September, thus all lead and preparatory work should be done before June.
- LCES should ensure that there are teachers, counselors and support for these individuals as they launch the program. The support should be on-site to model the restorative process, and to assist in the implementers in the initial processes.
- The RCMP is involved in mediation processes for severe behavior cases in the high school and they should be considered as a resource in future efforts.

2.2 Terrace/ SD. #82 Coast Mountains

- Carolyn, an itinerant teacher attached to the First Nations Education Centre and Cheryl the principal of Clarence Michael School, attended the training held on November 30 and December 1, 2004. Cheryl was interested in the concept; however at the time of training, she was interested in the peer resolution concept and process but wasn't committed to implementation of the project. Cheryl did not attempt to implement the program because she was unable to commit time to do it.
- Carolyn, the itinerant teacher attached to the First Nations Centre, was interested in implementing it in Clarence Michael School with some of the students during the noon- hour. It is important to note Carolyn's home was within the First Nations Education Centre which was located in Clarence Michael School; however she did not teach in the school nor was supervised by Cheryl, the principal of Clarence Michael School.
- After the teachers strike in October, 2006 neither Cheryl nor Carolyn were prepared to implement the program and at present do not see themselves involved in any future PRYC initiative.

Salient points from the pilot project:

- The Assistant Superintendent has expressed great interest in the program, however he was unaware the program was indeed being piloted or considered for piloting by school personnel.

- The Assistant Superintendent is also acting as the Head of the First Nations Education Centre and has interest from that perspective.
- SD. #82 also includes Kitwanga and Hazelton and the program was also piloted in Hazelton. (See the next section)
- SD. #82 is now formalizing a formal policy for the review, consideration and implementation of projects and programs originating from outside sources. It is due to be formally approved by the board later in February.
- The RCMP has been involved in alternative mediation processes with the school district in the past.

2.3 Hazelton / SD. #82 Coast Mountains

Pamela and Terry, both staff members of the Gitxsan Unlocking Justice Program attended the training session held in Terrace on November 30, and December 1, 2004. The Gitxsan Unlocking Justice director negotiated entrance into the schools in the area, and starting early in 2005 Terry began working in schools in the area. Pamela was away on sick leave most of the period from January 2005 to June 2005. Terry was a youth Justice worker on a time-specific contract that ended in June, 2005. The Gitxsan Unlocking Justice Program has the mandate to serve 6 Gitxsan communities and 9 schools within the Hazelton region... Terry began trying to service the 9 schools in their region. Soon he discovered as unable to serve all these schools fully and worked in select schools. He introduced the concepts of the resolution of conflict and that students themselves have the power to resolve conflict. He introduced these concepts in the context of the Gitxsan culture and felt there was success in all students developing an awareness of the peer resolution process. He spent considerable time in two public elementary schools with groups of students at the grade 6 and 7 level, and small groups of students in these two schools role played an incident where a "contract" was completed. Late in the spring of 2005 his time in the schools dropped off and he has gone on to another role with the Gitxsan Unlocking Justice Program.

Salient Points from the Pilot Project

- SD. #82 and schools in the Hazelton area are open to the concept of the peer resolution process.
- No one in the school district in the Hazelton region really had any specific knowledge of the Program LCEC was attempting to implement. In many cases Terry was working with students who the schools had identified as students who were "at risk".
- The high school in Hazelton was not receptive to the program last year.
- The Gitxsan Unlocking Justice Program has limited resources and at present is unable to implement programming within a school setting.

2.4 Smithers/ SD #54 Bulkley Valley

- Lucy and Elgin attended the training sessions on November 30 and December 1, 2004. Lucy is a Wet'suwet'en Youth Justice Worker working out of Smithers and Elgin an Aboriginal Support Worker in Smithers Secondary School.
- Early in 2005, Lucy made a number of presentations on the Peer Resolution Project for Youth to groups in SD. #54. Included were presentations to the Aboriginal Education Council in the SD, District principal and SD. Board, teachers groups in Smithers Secondary School and Houston Secondary School. In all cases the groups expressed interest but the project was not championed. In the spring of 2005, Elgin introduced some of the concepts with small groups in informal settings in the Smithers Secondary School.
- Early in 2006 the seeds sown by Lucy and Elgin took root. At the present time, Lucy and Elgin are beginning the process of training students in the leadership club of the Smithers Secondary School.

Salient Points from the Pilot Project

- A teacher and the principal of Smithers Secondary have given their support to the program pilot. Training of students will begin in February, 2006.
- LCES needs to support this recent initiative in any manner it can to ensure its success
- There is support in SD#54 for the concept and process of the peer resolution project.
- SD. #54 now has a formal process for reviewing new program initiatives. They have developed Focus Groups made up of teachers and principals to screen and review of all new curricula for consideration and use. There is a focus group for Social Issues. It meets three times a year. The PYRC should be brought to this group at their next meeting.

2.5 Vanderhoof SD. #91 Nechako Lakes

Mark, a counselor at Nechako Valley Secondary School attended the training held in Smithers on November 30 and December 1, 2006. He has implemented other programs that have some similarities to the Peer Resolution Project for Youth. One is called "Real Justice" and the other was a Peer Mediation Program, thus he and students in the secondary school had experience in this process. It was his intention to train students from three feeder elementary school in Vanderhoof. The only impediment to this process is to find the time. He hoped to do it this last term, but the teachers strike in October prevented this. All the time available was used for students to catch up in their studies from the time lost

during the school closures due to the teachers strike. Mark plans to do training with students from at least two of these schools in late winter or spring 2006.

Salient Points from the Pilot Project

- There is strong support for this project in Vanderhoof. The principal, vice-principal strongly support this project.
- There has been related work done in peer mediation and peer resolution processes that is good foundation for this project.
- The Law Courts Education Society needs to follow up and support this training scheduled in the next project in any that is necessary and any way it is able.

2.6 Lessons Learned During this Pilot Process

- The students are receptive to this program and the concepts of conflict resolution.
- All the school districts are receptive to the program concepts in general but in each jurisdiction LCES needs to follow the respective formal and informal school district protocol and get both a champion/s of the program at the school level and support from the Board office.
- The peer resolution conferencing process is a time consuming process and one that demands that a teacher or counselor in the school have training and skills in the restorative justice conferencing processes.
- School districts generally follow a school year cycle with new programming with a start date in September. This means all preparatory work including training the trainers should be completed in by early June for September implementation. This proposed time frame also suits the weather conditions in the North as many do not want to travel during the mid-winter months.
- The First Nations restorative justice programs are an excellent resource but have limited time and resources. They should not be the agency that is negotiating and doing the front- end work with the respective school districts. Their resource should be used in training those implementing the program within the schools and supporting the initial peer resolution conferences.
- On site coordination of the project, especially at the early stages of the implementation would have been most desirable

The Key Lessons Learned for Future Include:

- The program needs to have a champion or champions at the school level and support from the board office confirmed in order to deliver the program.

- Once this has been established the training can be scheduled and proceed. During the training considerable time should be utilized so the implementers feel confident that they can supervise the peer resolution conference. processes.
- Where necessary there should be support for the implementers in the initial implementation processes and especially during the peer resolution conferences. To do this LCES would need to contract a professional in the region on a part-time basis.

2.7 Complications and Efforts

It is important to state that there were a number of factors that complicated the implementation of the Peer Resolution Pilot Project in the Northern Communities and the staff noted spent considerable efforts and made progress despite the factors I am noting below.

The timing was not ideal with the training scheduled in November- December with an immediate implementation time in January. In Prince Rupert, the person trained was working as an acting-principal in a new situation, but still took on the project with little notice. In Terrace, the first contact in the head office went on medical leave for the rest of the year and her duties were later picked up by others. Secondly, the support and commitment from the principal was not there from the start. In Hazelton, one of the staff trained went on medical leave and a junior staff member with a time-specific contract carried the project forward. No one within the school district was involved in the lead-up and training. In Smithers the people trained put in considerable effort to sell the project to the school district with no immediate success. The people trained should not have been in the position of selling the program after the November-December training.

Not fully realizing the situations of School districts in the north was perhaps the biggest factor affecting the success of this project. Most of the school districts in the North are experiencing a decline of enrolments and shortage of financial and personnel resources. Terrace and Hazelton in SD. #82 have four-day weeks as a cost saving measure. Some of the districts are downsizing their head office, reorganizing board office duties and focusing on priority items in the delivery of core programs with little time for new projects. The protocol for the review of outside projects has been informal and still is however SD #54 Bulkley Valley now has a clear formal process and SD #82 is presently formalizing their process. The final factor is the workload of teachers. Many teachers are finding they are asked to do more without adequate resources. They are dealing with more special needs students without professional support that was once there. Finally the teachers strike in October 2005 put a hold on almost all new projects. In conclusion the moral of many teachers is at low point.

2.8 Other Relevant Information

Other information that is most relevant to the future is the report on the pilot process in Williams Lake in a previous project. On October 26, 2003 an evaluation of the implementation of the Peer Resolution Project for Youth in Williams Lake was tabled. It included the following recommendations about participants, and for introducing the process of restorative justice as a tool for discipline in other locations:

- Ensure that the school board and administrators are supportive of Peer Resolution Conferences for Youth. It is also important to have the assistance and encouragement of top administrators in the school in order to establish innovative ways to ensure conferences or mediations are successful and restorative justice becomes part of the schools values.
- Ensure that a very well organized project coordinator is in place to handle problems as they arise, to summarize data as it is produced, and to supervise the overall project. This is essential to success. For the project to continue to expand to other schools, accurate records need to be maintained in order to inform the school board of project outcomes. The project coordinator must therefore be an effective administrator in order to see that evaluation forms and other records are diligently completed. The coordinator must also be proficient at publicizing the results amongst interested parties. A regular system of communication with funders, key stakeholders, and community interest groups should be maintained to inform media and community groups about the use of restorative justice in schools. The results of the pilot should be disseminated in order to maintain enthusiasm following the project completion in October 2003.
- Spend more time at the high school level to determine the needs of administrators and students for PRCs. Only one conference took place at the high school level. Prior to the training, the high school indicated the need for conferencing; however, months after the training no conferences had taken place. The discrepancy should be clarified in order to understand the needs of the high school level and how the program might effectively respond. This process could be facilitated by the project coordinator, who would encourage and oversee this process.
- Designate a parent volunteer, teacher, counsellor, or administrator, to assist in the management of pre and post conference duties. These people could participate by organizing meeting times with participants, ensuring the proper set up for the meeting, and ensuring all paperwork is completed following the conference or mediation. The imposition of additional jobs to already over-burdened teachers and school administration may lead to reluctance to applying the conference process instead of or in addition to traditional forms of discipline. It may be of use to do some outreach and training for individuals who are

interested in participating in community volunteer service. If possible, a committee of volunteer parents and other interested parties might be formed to provide ongoing support for schools.

Based on all the anecdotal information gathered during this project, all of these recommendations are relevant and applicable to future initiatives to implement the Peer Resolution Conferencing for Youth

One final piece of relevant information that supports the evidence found during the interview process and further builds the foundation for the recommendations is found in the feedback provided by the participants during the training that took place in November 30 and December 1. Two questions with the responses from the participants are noted here:

What might be some of the barriers towards reaching these goals?

- School, teachers and AO's and others buying into the process. We must do a good sell job.
- Getting others to buy in
- No stable coordinator to deliver the project
- Labour/time intensive
- School district not supportive
- Turn over key. ppl is the principal
- Getting people to see the value of the program
- Society doesn't like changes
- No trust of youth
- Legalities
- Can't address all issues
- The main barrier that I see is that schools may be over-subscribed with other important initiatives... too start a new project requires additional energy at the outset and I hope this barrier does not stop, or interfere with the project.

What are your biggest concerns as your prepare to begin to implement the peer resolution conferences in your community?

- Stressing all steps required to make this possible
- The time involved in getting this off the ground
- Time a factor
- Teachers/staff already stretched to the limit
- Attitude changes from hard line to a different approach
- Facing critics or possible obstacles to implementation IE. Unions, district policy
- Effort and time restraint given the # of other roles and responsibilities

- Getting support from all parties. Have students within the school support the program and view it as a positive interactive. Have the community view the project as worthwhile
- My concern as to the amount of work involved in the conference has been allayed
- Time, time, time

In retrospect most of the participants foresaw the challenges but did not have the position, time or resources to meet all these challenges.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Even with the complications and difficulties experienced in implementing this project, progress was made during this pilot. Training of student facilitators was completed in one site. Two of the areas are set to deliver the training for student facilitators. All indicated the peer resolution conferencing process has great merit. Most important, all of the sites indicated interest in considering the program for future implementation should there be the proper consultation, lead work, training and support for those directly implementing the program.

Recommendation #1 (Developmental Work)

The program must have a champion or champions at the school level and support from the board office confirmed in order to deliver a successful program. These champions need to be teachers or counselors within a school. It will be necessary for LCES to have appropriate resources to ensure there is a skilled and knowledgeable person to do the necessary ground work at the school district level and continue to support the program implementation during the duration of the implementation. Without this support many of the school districts may not buy into the project.

Although some of the districts have formal protocol to review any new program, the informal process is still important. To pilot a program is not the same as implementing something across the school district. Most head offices will support a pilot process if the school principal embraces it and most principals will embrace initiatives by teachers if the teachers are willing and have some enthusiasm about the initiative. The strategy and approach needed is to get support from the bottom up and top down in the respective school districts.

One suggestion noted by a superintendent is that there is a Northern Superintendents group that meets twice a year. LCES should consider a presentation to that group as one way to publicize the program.

Recommendation #2 (Staffing)

Following from the 1st recommendation, a professional needs to be hired to fulfill a range of duties and provide support to the implementation process in the region. The position does not have to be a full-time position but it needs to be filled with an individual who has “school district savvy” and who can be a strong advocate for the Peer Resolution Conferencing process for Youth. This person needs to be available to do the developmental work, organize the training and able to support the individuals implementing the program as well as establishing and maintaining a regular system of communication with the funders, school boards, other key stakeholders, and community interest groups. As noted above, school districts will most likely buy into a new initiative if they know adequate resources and continued support will be provided by the agency leading the initiative.

Recommendation #3 (Roles)

As noted earlier, a classroom teacher or counselor needs to be the champion and implementer at the school level.

Considering all factors, the ideal implementation would be at the grade 8 or 9 area. Most of the districts have k-7 schools with grade 8-12 high schools. An implementation at the grade 8 or 9 level in the high school would allow for continuation, whereas at a grade 6-7 the students move on to high school and become only a small fraction of the total enrolment of the grade 8 or 9 classes. Most high schools have a counselor which should be present during peer resolution conferences. Also this may allow for more than one professional present to carry the load of pre-conferencing and post conferencing duties and recording.

There are a number of First Nations schools in the region. They should be approached as possible future sites for the implementation of the PRYC.

All the districts have a First Nations Education Centre and some staffing. They may well-situated to bring additional support during the peer resolution conferences. They need to be brought into any future piloting process. Also parent volunteers may well assist in this process.

The respective Restorative Aboriginal Education Justice Programs have a critical role. They should not be the agencies selling the program to the school districts but they have in-depth knowledge of the resolution process and should be involved in the training of the implementers, advocacy in the communities and school districts and support the actual peer conferencing if called upon.

During the review of the present pilot many school districts noted that the RCMP is involved in mediation processes with students in some more severe cases. Many are trained in the peer mediation process. The RCMP should be

approached in the respective communities to see if they are interested and able to contribute to “prevention work” with the peer resolution conferencing process.

Recommendation #4 (Training)

Appropriate training for the teachers, counselors and support workers who are involved in the peer resolution conferencing process is critical .During the training considerable time should be utilized so the implementers feel confident that they can administer and handle the peer resolution conference processes. This may mean initial training at a central location for two days as done during this pilot. In addition strong consideration should be give to training on-site in every location so there are others trained to assist in the peer conferencing process. This might be scheduled in after-school sessions, evenings, etc. . . . The respective Restorative Aboriginal Justice programs can assist in this and also the RCMP can be involved. This on-sire training would allow school administrators, other teaching staff and parent volunteers to also attend when appropriate.

Appendix A

Summary of the Peer Resolutions Conferences For Youth Train the Trainer Training Evaluations

Workshop Location: Terrace, BC

Workshop Date: Nov 30-Dec.1/2004

(Eight Evaluations were completed)

Please rate the following activities of the Training:

1) Each one Teach One – Intro to the training (**4.25**)

Excellent – 5 Very good – 4 Good – 3 Fair – 2 Poor – 1

2) Presentation on the Philosophy of Restorative Justice (**4.6**)

Excellent – 5 Very good – 4 Good – 3 Fair – 2 Poor – 1

3) Conference Responsibilities (**4.5**)

Excellent – 5 Very good – 4 Good – 3 Fair – 2 Poor – 1

4) Conference Decision Making (**4.5**)

Excellent – 5 Very good – 4 Good – 3 Fair – 2 Poor – 1

5) Mock Conferences (Scripted) (**4.4**)

Excellent – 5 Very good – 4 Good – 3 Fair – 2 Poor – 1

6) Did you find the information in the training useful and practical?

If no please indicate why not? Yes (6) No (0)

And 2 no responses

7) What could have made the workshop more useful for you?

Having more time and providing more information as to the “meat of what it’s all about

More practice

A resource person who facilitates in the school

Nothing I can think of

8) Comments on the training materials

Useful and easy to follow. / More colour or some handouts
Good

Very interesting

Interesting

Materials might be difficult for grade 6/7 to use.

Need short sentences and more graphics

9) What else would have been useful to include?

A separate book for volunteers

Good to get all involved (participation)

Maybe a video showing an actual conference

10) Other comments:

Great workshop

Good job Evelyn

Thanks for bringing it to our neck of the woods

Well organized... Enjoyable... Great group

Appendix B Peer Resolution Interviewees

Prince Rupert

*Theresa Wesley: Coordinator Prince Rupert Restorative Justice
*Leah Robinson: Principal Port Edward Elementary School
Brian Kangas: Superintendent of Education SD. #54
Debbie Leighton Stevens: District Principal SD. #54, Prince Rupert

Terrace

*Carolyn Sousa Language and Culture Teacher, First Nations
Education Centre
*Cheryl Sebastian: Principal, Clarence Michael Elementary School
Rob Greenwood: Assistant Superintendent of Education and Director of
First Nations Education, SD. #82 Coast Mountains

Hazelton

*Pamela Torres: Facilitator, Gitxsan Unlocking Aboriginal Justice
Program
*Terry Danes: Bail Supervisor
Velma Sutherland: Principal John Field Elementary School
David Swab: Principal, New Hazelton Elementary School

Smithers

*Lucy Glaim: Wet'suwet'en Youth Justice Worker
*Elgin Cutler: Aboriginal Support Worker, Smithers Secondary
School
Birdy Markert: District Principal, Aboriginal Education
Cheryl Hofweber: Director of Student Services SD. #54 Bulkley Valley

Vanderhoof

*Mark Gauthier: Counselor, Nechako Valley Secondary School
Libby Hart: Vice-principal, Nechako Valley Secondary School

- Personnel who attended the training Session on November 30, December 1, 2004