

Restorative Inquiry Sharing Circles

For Former Residents

March-April 2017



Why are we inviting you to sharing circles?

Former residents of the Nova Scotia Home for Colored Children asked for, and helped design, a Restorative Inquiry. The Inquiry's purpose is:

- to make clear what happened in the Home and why it matters for all of us.
- to make sure the harm you experienced is not repeated.
- to help Nova Scotia do better for children in care, and children and families in African Nova Scotian communities.

These sharing circles are one step to help us learn about your experiences in four areas: **Family and Community, Caregivers, Education, and Justice**. The purpose of these circles is to gather information on these key areas. Your input can help us focus on which issues are most important. We can begin to address these issues with our partners to try to make positive changes.

How will the sharing circles work?

The Restorative Inquiry is not like a traditional public inquiry. It is also not like the settlement process. You will not be asked to testify or share everything that happened to you. You don't have to prepare anything before you come.

In sharing circles, you will be seated with other former residents and Restorative Inquiry facilitators. The facilitators will ask about the topics and give former residents in the circle a chance to share what they think is most important. The facilitators will go around the circle several times to make sure everyone can say what they would like to say. If you want to pass and simply listen during a round, that is OK too.

How will information be gathered and shared?

Note-takers will gather the general themes and points from the circles. They will not collect your names or identify who said what. This information will help as we meet with community groups, government departments, and public agencies to begin to address issues. Former residents will have the chance to take part in the next part of this process too, if they wish.

A note on privacy: The Restorative Inquiry will not ask for, or share publicly, any names, details or other information that might identify you or anyone else against their wishes or

without their consent. The Public Inquiries Act protects you from facing reprisal (for example, being sued) for anything you share about the past at a Restorative Inquiry session.

Circle Values

We hope sharing circles will be a positive experience for everyone who takes part. To help this happen, we embrace three key values that we want to practice in every circle:

Safety – We want all participants to feel safe to share to the level they are comfortable. Circles will be structured so people can take breaks if they need. We trust and will support participants to uphold each other's privacy and not share personal details outside the safety of the circle. The Restorative Inquiry will keep personal details private.

Respect – We want all participants to feel heard and respected. Facilitators will use a talking piece to help ensure everyone has a chance to speak. We trust and will support participants to be caring and supportive of each other as they share and listen to others share.

No Further Harm – One of the Restorative Inquiry's guiding principles is to do no further harm. We understand some experiences may not be easy to share. Each circle will have support people onsite. We trust and will support participants to consider each other's well-being.

Upcoming Circles:

Wed. March 15 – 5:30-8:30 p.m.

Dartmouth North Community Centre (105 Highfield Park Dr.)

Wed. March 22 – 5:30-8:30 p.m.

Needham Recreation Centre (3372 Devonshire Ave., Halifax)

Fri. March 31 – 1-4 p.m.

North End Community Health Centre (2165 Gottingen St., Halifax)

Contact Us:

Please let us know if you plan to attend one or more circles. This will help us with planning. You can reach us at 902.722.1300 or info@restorativeinquiry.ca. You can find us online and see a calendar of upcoming events at restorativeinquiry.ca.

Please contact us as well if you have any questions about the circles. Even if you are not sure if you want to take part, but you want to stay updated on the Inquiry, you can reach out. We will not share your contact information with any outside agency.

You can also reach out to VOICES, an organization of former residents that is supporting the Restorative Inquiry and making sure former residents are central in the process. VOICES' toll-free number is 1.844.780.5123.

