

Exploring the Intention of Restorative Practice from an Indigenous Lens



Gayle Desmeules, M.A. Leadership & Training

IIRP Licensed Trainer

www.truedialogue.ca

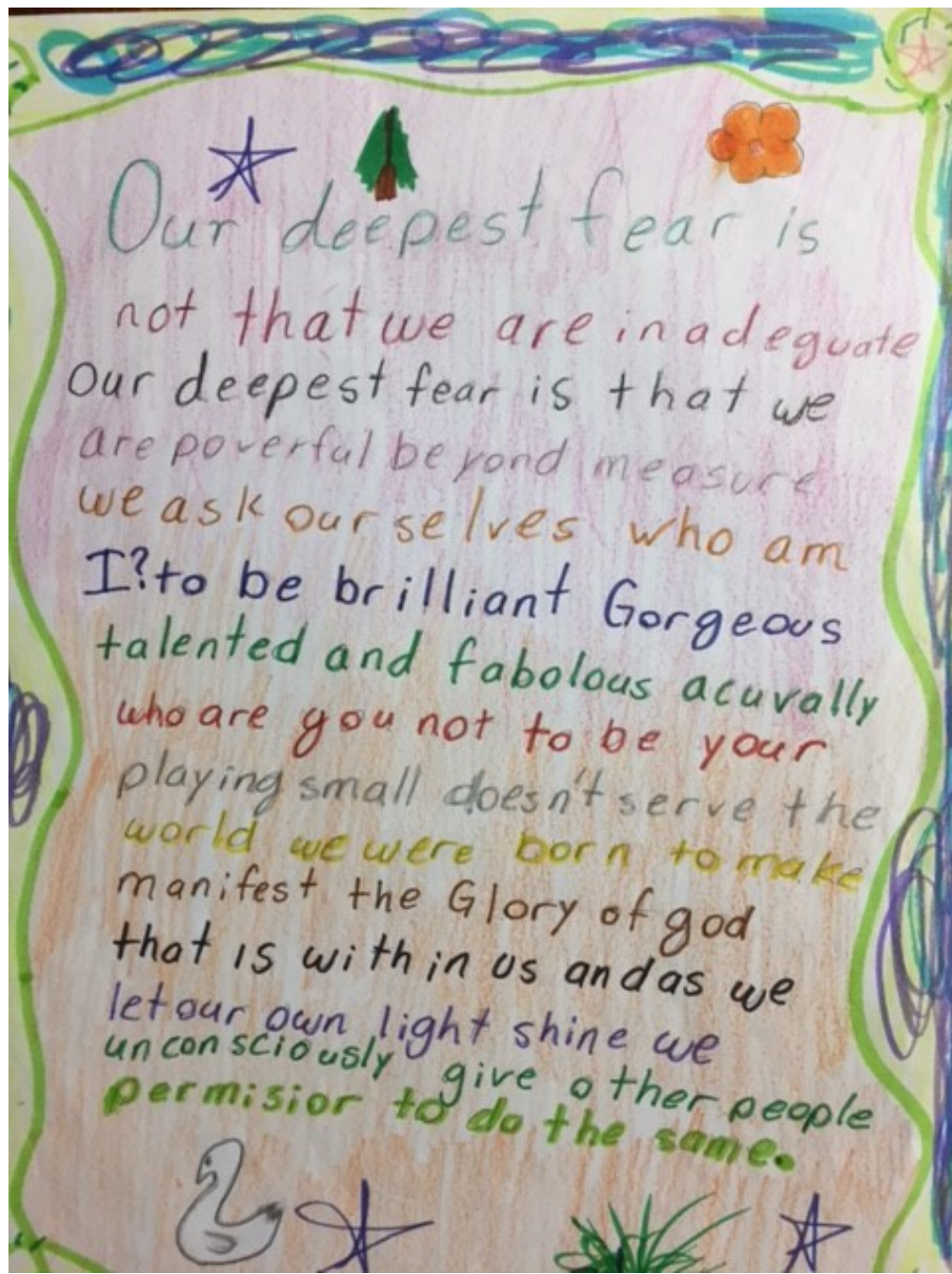


iirp

International Institute
for Restorative Practices
Canada



True Dialogue



Letting
our Light
Shine



True Dialogue

Gayle Desmeules



IIRP
Canada

My Restorative Journey

Inquiry Questions

1. What is the **intention** of Restorative Practice from an Indigenous perspective?
2. How can honouring traditional community values, **ways of knowing** benefit Indigenous people and offer a common future for humanity?
 - United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (2007)
 - Truth & Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls To Action (2015)



True Dialogue

Gayle Desmeules



iirp Canada

Wahkohtowin - Video

Understanding Cree Natural Law from Spiritual Elders, and their interpretation of Restorative Justice

Video funded by the Alberta Law Foundation
and produced by Native Counselling Services of Alberta

Video can be viewed/purchased at following website:

www.bearpawmedia.ca

Pay Attention to

- Messages the Elders convey regarding their understanding of restorative justice?
- How does this equate/differ from your understanding, beliefs and values?



True Dialogue

Gayle Desmeules



iirp

Canada

Wahkohtowin

Doctrine of Relationships based on interpretation of natural laws viewed from a *relational lens* by Cree Elders.

Restorative Justice seeks to repair harm by restoring the relationship.

When people come to live together in peace and harmony it is called **Wetaskiwin**.

Living in Harmony means mutual respect, obligation and responsibility to foster and maintain healthy relationships.



True Dialogue

Gayle Desmeules



iirp Canada

Restorative Practice (circles & conferencing) derive its POWER from WORLDVIEWS that shape them. If we don't understand CULTURAL relevance, their power will be quickly eroded. (Rupert Ross)



QUALITIES OF A PERSON WITH UBUNTU

A person with Ubuntu having the following qualities:

Welcoming *Hospitable* *Warm & Generous* *Willing to Share*
Compassionate *Open & Available to Others*

- Doesn't feel threatened that others are able and good, for they have proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that they belong in a greater whole.
- Feels diminished when others are humiliated, diminished when others are oppressed, diminished when others are treated as if they were less than who they are.



True Dialogue

Desmond Tutu

Gayle Desmeules



iirp

Canada

Disruption of Wahkohtowin / Ubuntu

By all measurements of the human condition, Indigenous people lead in the statistics of suicide, family violence, substance abuse, crime rate, poverty, and school drop out

Why are Indigenous people (any historically oppressed population) in such a vulnerable position in (Canadian) Society?

The emergence of a Leader.



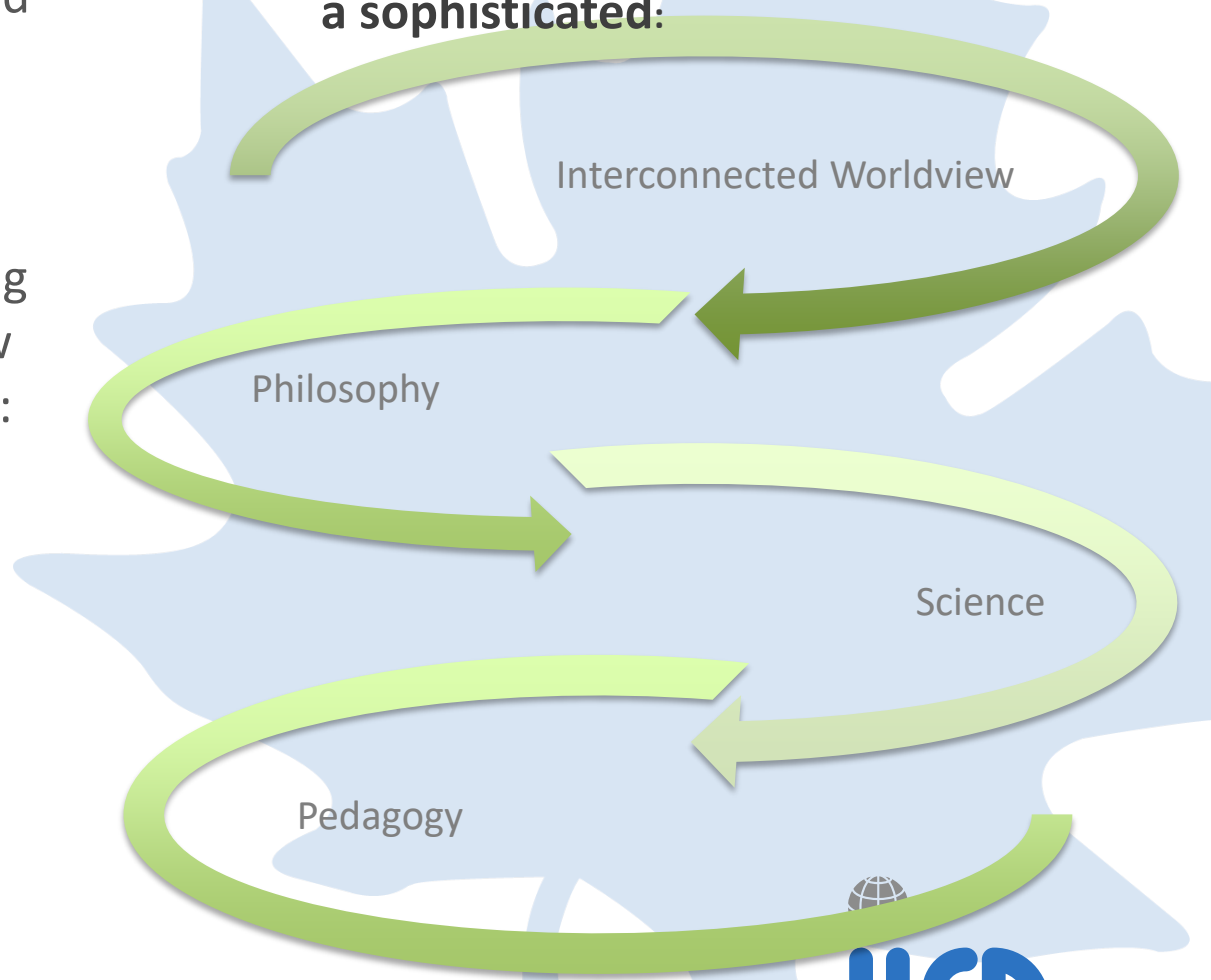
SETTLER PERSPECTIVE OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

Upon contact, settlers and Indigenous people co-existed – a relationship based upon survival.

When settlers began forming government the settler view of the First Peoples became:

- **primitive**
- **god-less & heathen**
- **child-like & unable to make decision for themselves**
- **savage**

Settlers were unable to see vibrant Indigenous societies with a sophisticated:



True Dialogue

Gayle Desmeules



Ethno-Stress

“When the Cultural Beliefs or Joyful Identity of a People is Disrupted”

Policies and practices that evolved between Aboriginal peoples and White society over the past four hundred years have been **based on the assumption that Aboriginal people were inherently inferior and incapable of governing themselves**. Therefore, actions deemed to be for their benefit could be carried out without their consent or involvement in design or implementation.

The Color of Democracy: Racism in Canadian Society (1995)



True Dialogue

Gayle Desmeules



iirp Canada

Systemic attack on the collective Aboriginal psyche

- Aboriginal people began **internalizing the negative stereotypes** of Aboriginal identity
- Colonized Identity: belief that indigenous philosophy, science, culture and spirituality is INFERIOR.
- The people were left to feel neither a part of Canadian society nor comfortable with their Aboriginal identity.

Political domination

- No way for families, nations to self-determine (make choices for themselves). Absence of FAIR PROCESS
- Loss of meaningful role of Aboriginal women in Aboriginal and Canadian society.

Gayle Desmeules



Impact of HISTORIC
TRAUMA

Loss of an internal locus of control

- Generations of Aboriginal children have grown up in environments where their parents and other adults appear to have **no power or control over their lives**.
- Root cause for **lateral violence**, over-representation in social-justice system, negative health determinants

Loss of ability to build & maintain healthy relationships

- Introduction of **pervasive intergenerational cycles** of family violence in entire generations of children in communities.
- Devastating effect on a community's sense of connectedness.

Loss of transmission of healthy social norms

- For some children, the **violence** has become **normal**.

Gayle Desmeules

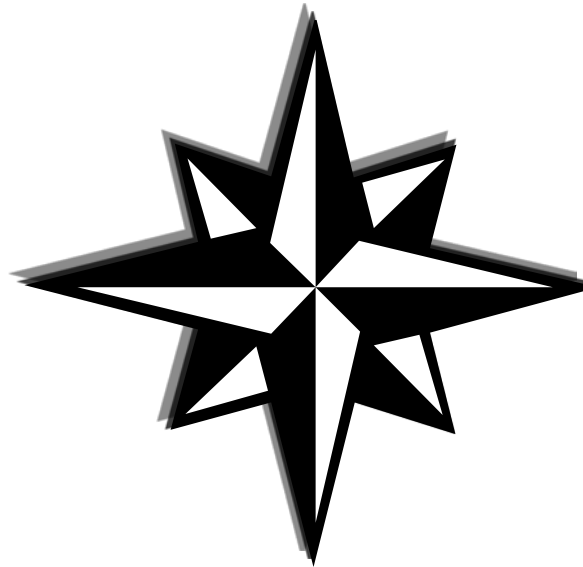


Impact of HISTORIC
TRAUMA

NATHANSON'S COMPASS OF SHAME

WITHDRAWAL

isolating oneself; running and hiding



ATTACK OTHERS

lashing out verbally or physically, blaming others.

ATTACK SELF

self put-down, masochism

AVOIDANCE

Denial, drugs and alcohol, workaholic

Intention of Restorative Practices

When dealing with historically oppressed populations is to facilitate recovery from Historic Trauma

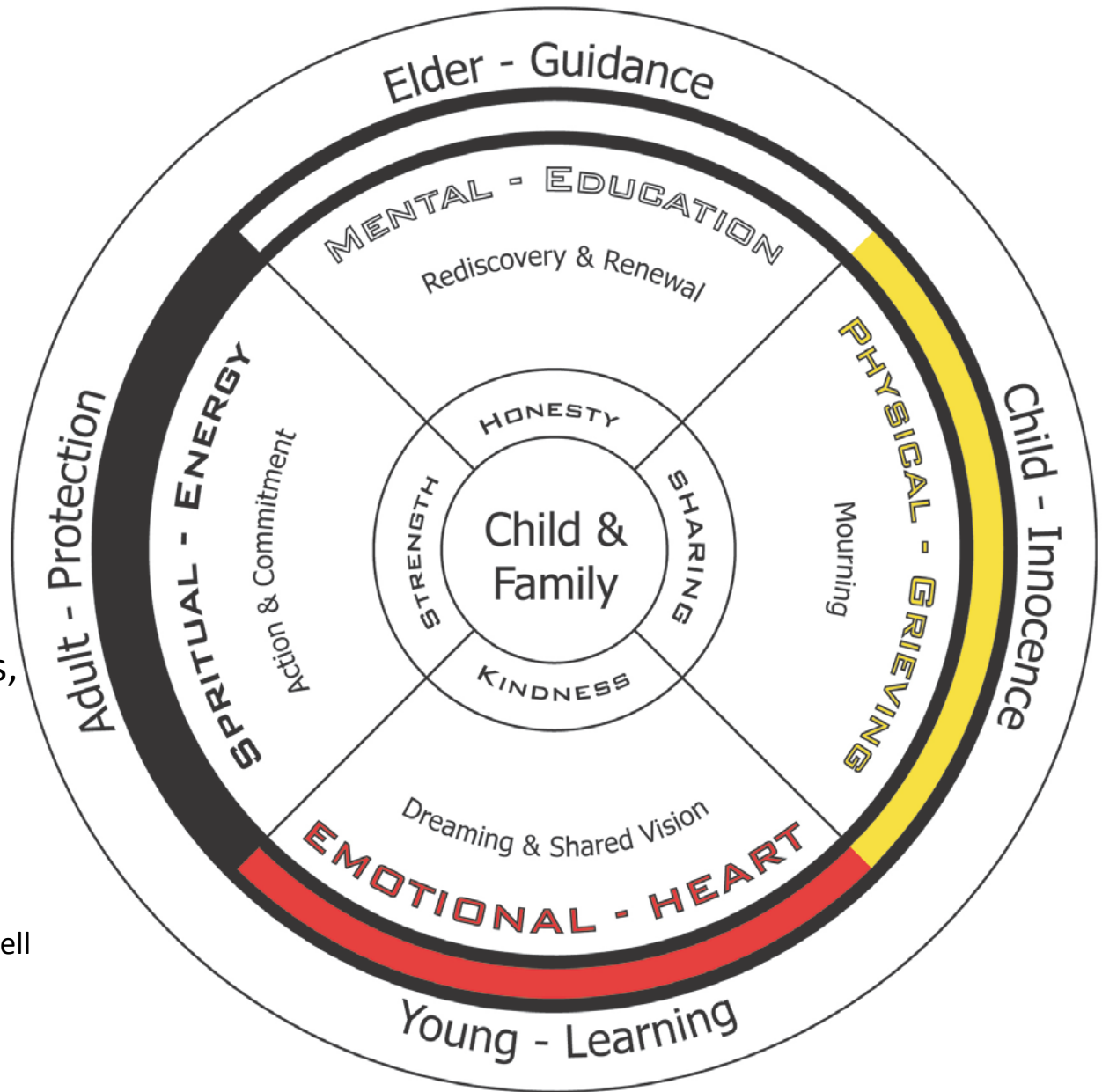
- Begin to **unpack internalized oppression**: *feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, or sense of despair*, which is manifested in harming behaviour—levels of suicide, crime rates, family breakdown, substance abuse, poverty, violence, school drop-out rates, etc.
- **To restore a positive identity, allowing individuals to**
Strengthen relationships and address conflict and tensions by repairing harm as a way of building and sustaining community



Restorative Engagement is likely when it involves facilitated dialogue that:

- Assists others to make meaning of their lives
- To identify what is most important in all that is happening
- What needs to change and what their part will be in the change process, and
- What is needed that will help build and sustain healthy relationships

Terry O'Connell



A Sacred Circle

Incorporating the use of the circle in a restorative process: honours worldview, ceremonial ways, customs and laws in Aboriginal culture.

ABORIGINAL WORLDVIEW: All things are cyclical, holistic, and equal, there is a constant flow of energy, all things are considered animate, imbued with spirit and interrelated. Everything is connected and inter-dependent for survival. (Battiste 2000)



True Dialogue

Gayle Desmeules



iirp Canada

Restorative Engagement Focus

- Share their story
- Feel heard & understood
- Make sense and meaning of what is happening in their relationships & identify what must change
- Assist everyone involved to build capacity through the use of explicit language and (culturally) relevant practice

Terry O'Connell

A SACRED CIRCLE

Spiritual/Religious practices are honored

Equality everyone is respected, has a voice

Confidentiality stories shared are sacred

Voluntary attend on your own free will, personal choice, not mandatory

Inclusive everyone is invited who is connected or impacted

Safety emotionally, mentally, physically, spiritually for everyone

Relationship focus - build, maintain, renew, address relational disharmonies

Focus is on the children
& *future generations*

Elder George Brertton & Gayle Desmeules



EXPLORING FAIR PROCESS

The Central Idea

Individuals are more likely to trust and co-operate freely with systems – whether they themselves win or lose by those systems – when fair process is observed

(2007 Harvard Business Review)

How does this notion of fair process fit within the context of colonization & historic trauma? History of an uneven *playing field*, power imbalance, no voice or choice, distrust?

A BETTER QUESTION

How can restorative practices even the playing field, engage Indigenous (historically oppressed) people, re-build trust?



True Dialogue

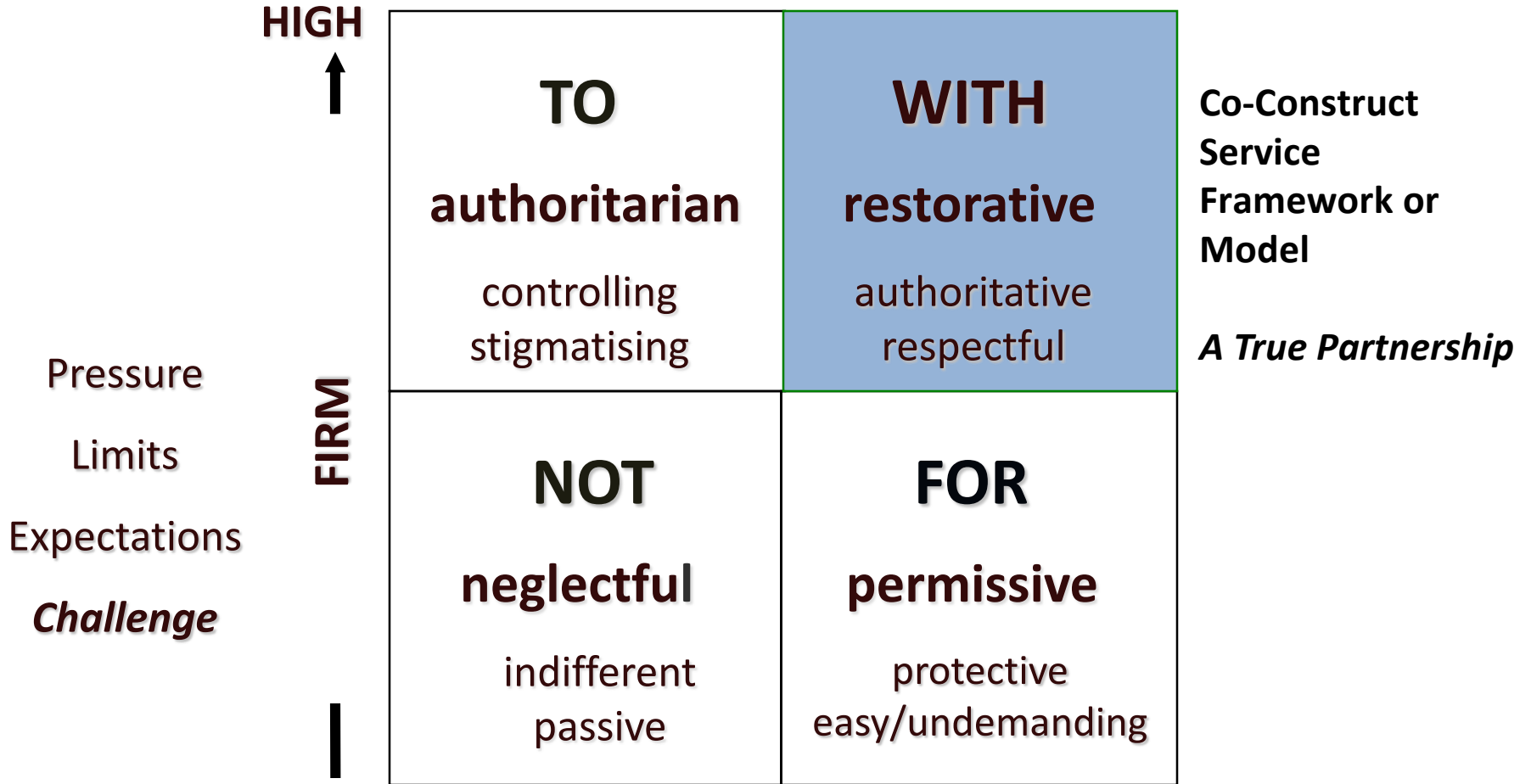
Gayle Desmeules



iirp

Canada

Practice Domains



LOW ————— FAIR ————— HIGH

Support - Encouragement - Nurturing

Adapted from Social Discipline Window - Paul McCold and Ted Wachtel - 2000



(WITH) DOMAIN

Climate of Reciprocity – Practice of exchanging things with others for mutual benefit.

Fair Process (supportive of one another) **Firm** (challenge one another) **builds:**

- Trust (which enhances)
- commitment (which leads to)
- Voluntary co-operation

This enhances learning, innovation, moral development, behavioural change through relational accountability, people are more productive – resulting in healthier workplaces, families, communities.



PARADIGM SHIFT

ADVERSIAL BASED SYSTEM

- Problem Focus
- People as problems
- Reactive
- Fault Finding, Blaming
- Professionals
- Crisis Management
- Creates Despair
- Controls, Involuntary
- Prescriptive
- Doing To, For or Not
- Policy Driven

RESTORATIVE PRACTICE APPROACH

- Solution focus
- People as resources
- Proactive
- Claiming Responsibility
- Everyone
- Preventative
- Creates Hope
- Consent, Voluntary
- Creative
- Working With
- Relationship Driven

CIRCLES & CULTURAL COMPETENCY

- **By virtue of its construct** circles provide a culturally competent model, a safe environment for people to share their views and experiences with one another
- **Circles help** restore “Wahkohtowin or Ubuntu” a relational framework to **re-establish a climate of respect** through initiation of the healing process, promotion of understanding, joining with others and growth.
- **Create a NEW story**



INTENTION OF FAMILY GROUP CONFERENCING

To empower our family to take responsibility to make decisions for our own children.

To heal people, to live in peace, to form a functional family.

To build a relationship that is in harmony with others, to grow, learn and change through relationships.

To bring us from harm to harmlessness as best can be accomplished within that relationship.

To recognize options and have choices.



(Desmeules, 2003)



iirp Canada

INTENTION OF RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

Reconciliation

Repair broken relationships

Reclaim
Wahkohtowin:
living an
interconnected
worldview

Ability to **Self
Determine**,
charting own
course

UBUNTU

Gives people resilience, enabling them to survive and emerge still human despite all efforts to dehumanize them.

Desmond Tutu

**If you are doing
Restorative Practices
You are doing Human
Rights**

**Healing and
Reconciliation =
Building
Resilience =
Moving Beyond
Historic Trauma**

© LaBoucane-Benson, 2009



True Dialogue

Gayle Desmeules



iirp Canada



*From
Within*

*We don't need someone
to show us the ropes.*

*We are the ones we've
been waiting for.*

*Deep inside us we know
the feelings we need to
guide us.*

*Our task is to learn to
trust our inner knowing.*

Sonia Johnson

Let your Light Shine