

Conflict Resolution Studies

Jurisdiction: Prince Edward Island

Contact: Verner Smitheram

Level: Adult Learning

Theme: Community-based practices, and Organizational/Structural

Description of Practice: Training of 20 Mi'kmaq adults in applied conflict resolution for community mediation, facilitation and negotiation. The courses, in the form of three-day workshops are conducted using active learning, adult education methods. Skills development is fostered by means of role plays, cases, simulations and exercises. The exit requirement for the 210 hour *Certificate in Conflict Resolution Studies from the University of Prince Edward Island* is a formal assessment requiring demonstration of all the skills and processes taught. **(Program attached)** This is one of the most comprehensive professional development programs in conflict resolution in Canada. www.upei.ca/conflictstudies

Background/Context: The overall purpose was to prepare Circle Keepers within the ambit of the Aboriginal Justice Program of the **Mi'kmaq Confederacy of Prince Edward Island**. The program was a response to community needs for internal conflict resolvers for non-violent situations.

Timing: The program was conducted from September 2004 to October 2005. It involved teaching the existing *Certificate in Conflict Resolution Studies*. Distinctive features involved

- teaching to a class, all of whose members were adults from either the Lennox Island or the Abegweit Bands of PEI,
- presentation of a special course blending the Centre's Interest-Based Process with the traditional Aboriginal Circle Process
- inclusion of a range of participant preferences for traditional ceremonies, prayers, spirituality, community related examples....

Setting: Classes were conducted in a conference room in the town of Summerside PEI which was a geographic mid-point for participants.

Language of instruction - English.

Development: The Mi'kmaq **Confederacy of Prince Edward Island** approached the Centre Director for advice about how to produce conflict resolvers whose credentials would of high standard sufficient for graduates to engage in conflict resolution practice and be credible both in their communities and to the Justice system.

Evidence: Nineteen of the 20 participants graduated on October 15, 2005. One individual has one course and the final assessment to complete. This is a remarkable retention rate. As a result of this training, the Aboriginal Justice Program has a strong group of trained facilitators *within the community* ready to conduct future circle and other intervention processes with the guidance of a Consultative Group established by the Aboriginal Justice Coordinator. The training is considered to be a success among the participants as well as all stakeholders involved. The participants have gained tremendous knowledge in a timely manner and now have the skills to be utilized by the Justice Program as well as by the Centre for Conflict Resolution.

Adaptability:

The training offered by the Center for Conflict Resolution Studies is grounded on the *interest based model* which is widely known to be a successful collaborative process for *all kinds* of dispute resolution. The program is of benefit in several ways.

- In collaboration with the Aboriginal Justice Coordinator, the Center designed a training package adapted to meet the needs of an Aboriginal interest group in PEI and their special concern to train all aboriginal participants together as a cohesive group of members from two Bands.
- The Aboriginal Justice Program now has the trained personnel needed to deal with cases of intervention, prevention and sentencing.
- This education has broadened the capacity of service in the Aboriginal Communities on Prince Edward Island in workplaces and community organizations of all kinds.
- The knowledge and skills are fully compatible with tradition Circle processes.
- The graduates are prepared to adapt their skills to their personal lives.

The training could be offered to other groups but with the added advantage of utilizing some of the graduates as instructor assistants and in a few cases as co-instructors. (Program attached.)

Further Information:

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