

“They Were my Anchor”:  
Understanding and Strengthening the Mentor Role at Restorative Justice Victoria

By

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We acknowledge and respect the lək̓ʷəŋən peoples on whose traditional territory the university stands and the Songhees, Esquimalt and W̱SÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

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# Executive Summary

## Introduction

Restorative Justice Victoria (RJV) is a small non-profit in Victoria, B.C., Canada that relies on community volunteers, and a few trained staff caseworkers to provide Restorative Justice (RJ) services to the community. Of critical importance is the mentor role, which provides support and guidance for offenders (known as Responsible Parties, or RPs) and victims (Affected Parties, or APs) as they navigate the RJ process. This role as it exists in this context is distinct from traditional uses of the word “mentor”, and is differs from other common RJ practitioner roles, such as facilitator or mediator. Facilitators and mediators primary role is to lead the dialogue between the RP and AP, while the mentor’s focus is primarily on supporting and preparing RPs and APs for the dialogue, and on ensuring that agreement terms are completed. Mentors are uncommon in RJ organisations yet are essential to RJV’s work and ensuring successful outcomes for clients, especially for complex cases and those involving violent harms. This research aims to examine and deepen understanding of the unique mentor role at RJV, to strengthen its effectiveness, sustainability, and provide actionable recommendations for enhancing mentor recruitment, training, and support, with potential applications for broader RJ practice.

## Methodology and Methods

Semi-structured key informant interviews were conducted with RJV staff and volunteers who do mentoring and one AP to gather qualitative data. Unfortunately, no RPs participated in interviews. Using an intrinsic case study approach, data was coded and themed using NVivo and analysed with a focus on the skills, strengths, approaches and knowledge of mentors, the purpose and value of the role, rewarding and challenging aspects, organisational-level reflections, and cultural safety, anti-oppressive, intersectional approaches.

A jurisdictional scan was conducted by reaching out to RJ organisations from BC, other Canadian provinces and internationally to inquire about the existence of ‘mentor-like’ roles at their organisations. Responses collected via email and telephone were collated into a table (Appendix C).

## Key Findings

The findings from the interviews with mentors begins by summarising their past experiences (vocational, volunteer, personal and educational) (see figure 5.2.1). The strengths and approaches used by mentors were mapped into three general categories: 1) Personal wellness, self-care, boundaries & self-reflection, 2) Relational skills/approaches and personal strengths, and 3) Technical, administrative, and learned approaches (see figure 5.3.1). For the first category of mentor strengths and approaches, boundary-setting included being clear on the boundaries of the role and mentor-mentee relationship, having boundaries with not applying prior vocational skills to the role when not appropriate (such as counselling or mediation), and being aware of one’s own capacity, limitations, and personal triggers. For the second category, relational approaches included non-

judgemental listening with empathy and humility, being vulnerable and authentic in order to build trust and connection, using strengths-based, healing-centred, and solution-focused approaches, and approaching mentorship with a spirit of collaboration and co-creation. The third category, technical, administrative, and learned approaches included having knowledge of resources, being adaptable, creative, advocating for the client, being trauma-informed, victim-centred, using educational approaches and inspiring change and re-alignment of values.

The rewarding aspects for mentors were witnessing the growth and transformation of RPs, seeing the APs needs getting met, connecting with people, feeling appreciated, and gratitude for the training opportunities, skill-building, and coaching. Challenges included personal challenges (boundary-setting, triggers), challenges with clients (difficulty connecting, clients with comorbidities (i.e., mental illness, addiction, poverty), complex cases, APs causing harm, and RPs not completing agreement terms), and technical, logistical, and organisational challenges (scheduling, new technology, long dialogues, and working alone).

The impacts and value of mentoring were explored for each involved (RPs, AP, Community and Mentors) (see figure 5.5.1).

The AP described the approaches that the mentor used, and how the experience with RJV impacted her. The AP described their mentor as authentic, approachable, present, and trustworthy. She felt supported by an entire RJV team, not just the mentor, and felt that the process was human-centred, healing-focused, and flexible. The AP felt safe, supported, heard, validated, and went through a process of self-discovery resulting in increased confidence. They felt that the support they received from RJV was superior to the other community and personal support available to them.

Mentors were asked several questions on intersectionality, cultural diversity, and potential 'blind spots'. Themes that emerged from these questions include 1) building trust and safety through listening, adapting, avoiding assumptions & having self-awareness, 2) Having accountability for mistakes, humility, and being able to receive feedback and engage in self-directed learning, and 3) organisational reflections and feedback. Finally, organisational-level reflections and feedback were compiled into six themes: 1) Shift to complex cases over time, 2) Training and workshops, 3) Client intake and screening mentor applicants, 4) Culture of support, teamwork and upholding RJV values, 5) The word "mentor", and role description. These themes contributed to informing the recommendations.

## Recommendations

The project identified five recommendations for RJV:

- 1) **Training and Workshops:** RJV has already undertaken courageous efforts towards critically assessing and improving their organisational culture to safely hold diversity, as well as offering dedicated training for cases involving intimate partner violence. Additional training recommendations include trans/ gender-inclusive training, self-compassion, boundary-setting, supporting neurodiverse, disabled and/or brain-injured clients, and supporting clients with substance use disorder or addiction. Training should be announced with plenty of notice, and in-person training opportunities should be offered in addition to virtual ones.

Volunteers and staff should be given opportunities to connect formally and informally through social activities, circles, buddy-pairing, and peer mentoring.

- 2) **Clarity in Role Boundaries and Ethical Practice Standards:** Offer additional guidance and training on navigating professional and personal boundaries in the mentor role, especially for complex cases.
- 3) **Scheduling:** The organisation should consider investing in a scheduling application or software to assist with the task of scheduling meetings with all parties.
- 4) **Collaborative Team Approach to Casework:** RJV should consider adopting a more integrated team/ co-working approach when supporting RPs, especially for cases involving violence or sexual harm. With this approach the RP would be supported by an integrated team of mentors and community supporters, each leveraging their specialised knowledge to strengthen the support and guidance the RP receives.
- 5) **The Word “Mentor” and Role Description:** Most feel that the word “mentor” does not accurately encapsulate the breadth of the role. The AP offered suggestions such as ‘guide’, ‘anchor’, ‘guardian’ or a non-English word (being careful not co-opt a word for use in a settler organisation). It is recommended that RJV also update the description of the mentor role on the website to better capture the complex cases, which are increasing in frequency.

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# Introduction

## 1.1 Project Client & Background

As a small non-profit organisation, Restorative Justice Victoria (RJV) is a community-based non profit organisation that provides restorative justice (RJ) services in the Greater Victoria region of British Columbia, the unceded territories of the ləkʷəŋən (Lewkungen) peoples as well as the WSÁNEĆ (Saanich) Nations. RJV receives 75 - 100 referrals annually from police, BC Crown Counsel, judges, probation officers, schools, community organisations, community members and self-referrals. RJV is one of the few programs in BC that accepts referrals at almost all stages of the criminal justice system. The organisation receives referrals for a wide range of offences, the most common being mischief, various forms of assault and theft. The RJV program cannot accept serious offenses, such as those involving murder, manslaughter, kidnapping, hostage taking, aggravated sexual assault, etc. (see pages 2-4 of *Crown Counsel Policy Manual: Alternatives to Prosecutions – Adult (ALT 1)* (British Columbia Prosecution Service, 2023).

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**A note on language:** At Restorative Justice Victoria, the preferred terms are ‘Responsible Party’ (RP) and ‘Affected Party’ (AP), rather than ‘offender’ and ‘victim’. However, the terms ‘RP’ and ‘AP’ may be used interchangeably with ‘offender’ and ‘victim’ throughout this report.

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In restorative justice processes, the voice of the victim is central, and the process can be adapted to ensure the physical, emotional, and psychological safety of the victim is maintained. At RJV, participation from RPs and victims is voluntary, and is therefore only appropriate for RPs who accept responsibility for the offense and are willing to make amends to the community. RPs can decide not to participate at any time, and their file will be returned to the referring agency. The goal of RJ work is to address the harms resulting from crime and violence, and their methodologies can be used in conjunction with, or as a diversion from, the criminal justice system, or outside of the system entirely. RJV’s processes are guided by the concepts of safety, dignity, belonging, and respect. Approaches are tailored to each individual case and the participants (in particular, the victim) are invited to help design the process.

There are several approaches to RJ programs, the main ones being victim-offender mediation, community conferencing, and dialogue circles. Each of these differ in their approaches and which parties are invited to participate. In each of these models, the role of the facilitator or neutral third party is essential for bringing the relevant parties together, facilitating the process, and monitoring the outcome (Souza & Dhami, 2008, p. 34). Any of these RJ approaches could benefit from a mentor role supporting RPs and APs.

RJV relies on volunteers in addition to its small staff to carry out the important work that it provides in the community. Casework volunteer roles include: facilitator, community member, and mentor. These are described in more detail below:

- **Facilitators** take a lead role in the case by meeting individually with each AP and RP and their supporters to design a process and dialogue that will be safe, respectful, and effective while meeting the justice needs of all participants, with special consideration given to the needs of the victim(s).
- **Community member** roles can be filled by (trained and vetted) members of the community or caseworker volunteers (i.e., facilitators or mentors), and their presence in a dialogue is to encourage the RP to understand the impact of their actions on the broader community, reinforce the harms and needs shared by the AP, and provide insight by sharing their own personal experiences as an AP or RP.
- **Mentors**, the focus of this project, are the ones who provide support to the RP(s) and/or the AP(s) in a case. The mentor role will be explored in more detail in Section 1.2.

At RJV, a typical process follows the nine steps listed below. Mentors are involved most significantly in steps 5 (preparation), 6 (RJ Dialogue), and 7 (Completing agreement terms).

1. **File referral:** with permission from the AP and RP, file is referred to RJV with some general information about the offense.
2. **Initial contact:** Case manager contacts AP and RP to confirm consent, answer questions and ensure RP accepts responsibility.
3. **Intake meeting:** case manager meetings individually with RP and AP to learn more about them to design a meaningful process. They also discuss confidentiality, program guidelines, the offense, and expectations.
4. **Assigning a team:** Once everyone agrees to process, the case manager sends a call-out email to case workers who self-select cases they would like to participate in. This typically includes two facilitators and a mentor.
5. **Preparation:** Mentor contacts the RP and/or AP, and sets up meetings. When all parties feel ready, a meeting is held with facilitators to plan and prepare for the dialogue.
6. **RJ dialogue:** This is a group meeting lasting 2.5 - 4 (+) hours involving all parties (AP participation is optional). The intention is to explore how the AP and others have been harmed by the offense, and the factors that contributed to it. Everyone collaborates towards creating agreement on how to move forward. Optional evaluation surveys are provided to all participants, including the case team.
7. **Completing the agreement:** After the RJ dialogue the RP completes the terms of the agreement by the deadlines decided.
8. **Notifications and paperwork:** Once all agreement terms are completed, AP is notified and the final report sent to referring agency. File is concluded.

## 1.2 The Mentor Role at RJV

Mentors at RJV are assigned to support APs and/or RPs through the RJ process. Mentors can support either the RP or the AP, or both simultaneously (but separately) during an RJ process, depending on their capacity and level of experience. RP (offender) mentors provide guidance and support for RPs as they go through the restorative justice process by communicating with them regularly, connecting

them to relevant community resources, and ensuring they are taking accountability for the offence. RP mentors work with RPs to uncover factors in their life and society that may have contributed to the offence and what accountability means and looks like for them. Mentors also plan and prepare RPs for the RJ dialogue meeting and continue to support the RP post-dialogue to ensure they are on track for fulfilling agreement terms.

AP (victim) mentors provide both emotional and practical support to APs throughout the restorative justice process. While RPs are required to have the support of a mentor, this is optional for APs, who can choose to participate in the process with or without the support of a mentor. RJV offers a 'spectrum of victim involvement' process for all APs, from options for no involvement, partial or indirect involvement, to full involvement. The process is flexible and the mentor adapts their approaches to suit the needs of AP. Mentors can facilitate partial or indirect communication for APs, such as through letter writing, or video recording. Mentors can also connect APs with professional services, such as counselling, victim services, or financial support, etc. In cases where the AP wants to participate in RJ but the RP does not, RJ can offer Victim Healing Circles, which could include a surrogate RP.

### 1.3 Defining the Problem

Staff at RJV noted that a dedicated "mentor" role is not commonplace amongst RJ organisations despite feedback surveys from RJV participants continuing to reflect the value and importance of the mentor role to ensuring successful outcomes in RJ (personal communication, Feb 14, 2020). Over the years, the role has transformed and expanded towards providing RPs and APs with a deeper level of support, especially as cases have become more severe and complex. Subsequent conversations with RJV staff have revealed that the organisation is now taking on significantly more cases involving serious and violent harms and fewer property-related or non-person harms (personal communication, March 24, 2023). This shift results in increased demands on mentors' capacity, including a need for more expertise, specialized training, and robust organisational support. RJV acknowledges that the term "mentor" may not accurately represent this role.

RJV has received feedback from other RJ organisations that their mentor role is uncommon and innovative (personal communication, Feb 14, 2020). As noted in the subsequent literature review and jurisdictional scan of this report (sections 2 and 3, respectively), the RJV mentor role is indeed unique in that few RJ organisations have a role that is solely dedicated to supporting and guiding APs and/or RPs through an RJ process, without also taking on administration, facilitation, or mediation duties. RJV has also made it a priority in recent years to create an inclusive and culturally safe organisation, and they are interested to learn if and how the concepts of cultural safety, intersectionality and anti-oppressive practice are understood and being implemented by mentors and RJV organisationally. The organisation has shifted their training focus from client-focused skills, to building internal (personal) skills. RJV has expressed concern that the role in its current state requires a deeper examination to better understand and define its scope, purpose, impact, and value, especially considering the significant changes to case severity in recent years. RJV is dedicated to fostering innovation in RJ practice, by learning more about the strengths and knowledge of mentors, as well as the approaches and skills that mentors employ when working with clients. In the

spirit of continuous improvement, RJV stands to benefit from learning about what is working well, what are the challenges, and recommendations for improvement.

Strengthening understanding of the role will help RJV to better tailor their recruitment, training, development, and support of mentors. In addition, RJV hopes to share findings from this report more widely with the broader RJ community, who have expressed interest in learning more about this role and implementing it in their RJ programming as an effective and innovative approach for enhancing RJ practice.

## 1.4 Project Objectives & Research Questions

The project objective is to examine and deepen understanding of the unique mentor role at Restorative Justice Victoria (RJV), to strengthen its effectiveness, sustainability, and provide actionable recommendations for enhancing mentor recruitment, training, and support, with potential applications for broader RJ practice.

### 1.4.1 Main Research Question:

What is the purpose and value of the RJV mentor role and how can RJV optimize and define this unique role to enhance support for clients, mentor wellness, improve RJ outcomes, and foster wider implementation with the RJ community?

#### **Secondary Research Questions:**

- a. What are the key skills, approaches, and knowledge areas that RJV mentors employ when working with clients, and how can these skills and approaches be enhanced or adapted to better suit the changing nature of cases handled by RJV?
- b. What are the primary challenges impacting mentors in their role, and what recommendations for improvement have been identified to further enhance mentors' effectiveness in the role? How can RJV address these challenges to better support mentors and enhance the overall effectiveness of the mentor role?
- c. Given that RJ is premised on a social justice ethic based on the principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion (Chouinard & Boyce, 2018), to what extent are mentors aware of, and apply concepts of cultural safety, intersectionality, and anti-oppressive approaches into their practice, and what additional training and support might they need in these areas?

By addressing these research questions, this project will provide a comprehensive understanding of the RJV mentor role, enabling RJV to better support mentors and potentially influencing RJ practice more broadly.

## 1.5 Project Scope

The primary focus of this research is on the mentor role at Restorative Justice Victoria, not other RJ practitioner or volunteer roles such as facilitators, case managers, community members (victim proxies), although many staff and volunteers in the organisation participate in multiple roles and some duties may overlap. Recruitment for interviews was restricted to RJV staff and volunteers who have done mentoring for at least two years, and APs and RPs were recruited to join at the discretion of the RJV staff (see Section 4.2 for more detailed information on recruitment methods). This project is not longitudinal and represents a snapshot of this moment in time for the organisation, from years 2020 – 2024, acknowledging that the organisational, political, legal, and legislative context influencing RJ programs and policies in BC and Canada is continually evolving.

The literature review and jurisdictional scan was expanded to include an examination of the experiences of victims and offenders in RJ programs, both community-based and prison-based, as well as other RJ practitioner roles that were involved with supporting clients through the RJ process, including facilitators and mediators. Both the literature review and jurisdictional scan included sources from around the world, however the scan had more of a focus on RJ organisation within BC.

This project includes only a 'surface level' evaluation for mentors' level of awareness and application of cultural safety, intersectionality, and anti-oppressive approaches. These topics are complex and further research should be dedicated to exploring these topics at a deeper level. Finally, this project did not include a deep dive into RJ training modalities.

## 1.6 Organization of Report

This report is organised into eight chapters plus References and Appendices. The following provides an outline of each chapter:

- Chapter one introduces the project topic, the client organisation, and the research questions.
- Chapter two presents the literature review. The review is divided into the following thematic areas: Comparing and contrasting role titles; Skills and qualities of RJ practitioners; The importance of preparation; RJ as a therapeutic process; How RJ works; Cultural skills & Indigenous RJ. Within each section, the relevant literature is outlined and discussed in the context of the research questions with a view to informing the questions for the interviews and the conceptual framework for the project.
- Chapter three summarizes the results of the jurisdictional scan of other RJ organisations in BC, Canada and globally.
- Chapter four outlines the methodological approach to the research, including the participant groups and characteristics, recruitment process, and approach to data collection and analysis and strengths and limitations.
- Chapter five covers the findings and themes that emerged from the interviews with participants.

- Chapter six includes a discussion and analysis of findings in relation to the research questions and the literature review and scan, as well as unexpected findings and suggestions for future research.
- Chapter seven outlines recommendations for RJV to consider based on the findings of the interviews and the literature.
- Chapter eight provides an overall summary of the research project, including a revised conceptual framework, and outlines the conclusions reached regarding the research questions.

## 1.7 Positionality Statement:

Positionality situates a researcher's worldview, values, assumptions, and biases, all of which may be shaped by their ethnicity, race, sexuality, gender, abilities, social class, status, as well as personal life experience, religious faith, political views, and geographic location. These aspects, both fixed and fluid, may influence the research design, execution, and interpretation of the data (Holmes, 2020). Self-reflection and a reflexive approach are required in order for the researcher to identify, critique and disclose their positionality.

I identify as a white, able-bodied, neurotypical, cis-gendered female, with Irish, French Canadian, Scottish, and New Zealander ancestry. My values are more left/liberal-leaning, I try to promote principles of equity, inclusivity, and decolonization, and strive to be an ally to advocate for BIPOC, LGBTQ2S+, and equity-deserving individuals. I am critical of the traditional criminal justice system and believe government systems should increase support for vulnerable populations. Personally, I am drawn to RJ because I see it as a means for societal transformation, based on principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion. The lens with which I interpret results and analyse data could be influenced by an unconscious bias against punitive measures, intolerance, or conservative political ideologies.

While I do not have direct experience as a client of restorative justice nor the criminal justice systems, my personal interest in restorative justice mentorship began when I applied to be a volunteer in the program in 2015. Over the course of three years, I mentored 6 RPs in non-person/property-related cases involving shoplifting, drug possession, and graffiti vandalism. In every case that I was involved with, the RPs were able to complete their agreement terms successfully and their files were closed. None of the RJ dialogues I was involved in had a victim present, and instead, an RJ volunteer stepped in as a 'community member' (victim proxy). In most of the cases, I witnessed the RPs embracing their involvement in RJ as an opportunity to make positive changes in their lives and reflect on the root causes that lead to the crime. I found initially that I struggled with setting boundaries with my time, as well as feeling unclear about the blurred lines with not providing counselling support to the RPs. While several cases felt hopeful and transformative for RPs, a couple cases felt less impactful, with the sense that everyone involved just wanted to get it over with. In these cases, the RPs were in their teens and had committed low-impact, non-person crimes.

## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

The literature review is a scoping review to explore and analyse the prevalence and nature of ‘mentor-like’ roles in other restorative justice organisations within BC and in other provinces/territories and countries that may share similar characteristics to the mentor role in RJV. More specifically, the review sought to explore to what extent the role exists, its scope, strengths, perceived value, and evaluations of effectiveness. The literature was reviewed for demographics, skills, approaches, background, and knowledge of those who are effective in these roles. The literature was also reviewed to gather knowledge on ways that RJ practitioners, volunteers and organisations have incorporated concepts of cultural safety, intersectionality and anti-oppressive approaches into their practice or training.

A challenge immediately emerged with the word “mentor”, since it appears to be used in diverse contexts. Cambridge dictionary defines mentor as, “to help or give advice to a younger or less experienced person, especially at work or school” (n.d., Definition 2), while Merriam-Webster defines it as, “a trusted counsellor, guide, tutor, or coach” (n.d., Definition 2). Elements of this are consistent with the RJV mentor role in that they are often, but not always ‘experienced’, and do provide some advice and help, however that is not their primary function. This definition also captures a ‘power-over’ element, which is something mentors try to be cognizant of.

### 2.2 Main Themes of the Literature Review

Searches were conducted via University of Victoria’s library database and Google. Search terminology was expanded to include other terms such as: facilitator, mediator, practitioner, professional, caseworker, supporter, support worker, and volunteer. While the mentor role does contain elements of these roles, most of the examples found in literature and by other organisations in the jurisdictional scan did not quite align with the duties, scope and type of support provided by the RJV mentor role. The scope was also generously broadened to include ‘helping professions’.

The main themes are:

- **2.3 Introduction to Restorative Justice**
  - 2.3.1 Criticism of RJ
- **2.4 Comparing and Contrasting Role Titles: Mentor, Facilitator, Mediator**
  - 2.4.1 Mentor title
  - 2.4.2 Facilitator & Mediator
- **2.5 Skills and Qualities of RJ Practitioners**
  - 2.5.1 Profile of RJ volunteers
  - 2.5.2 Motivations for volunteering
- **2.6 The Importance of Preparation in RJ**
  - 2.6.1 Humanistic Approach
  - 2.6.2 Shame management

- **2.7 RJ as a Therapeutic Process**
  - 2.7.1 Trauma-Informed Care
  - 2.7.2 Practitioner Self-Care to Avoid Burnout
- **2.8 The Mechanisms Behind How RJ Works**
  - 2.8.1 Interaction Perspective & Social/Human Capital
  - 2.8.2 Storytelling
  - 2.8.3 Practitioner Collaboration, Multi-agency and the Role of Community
- **2.9 Anti-oppressive RJ Approaches & Cultural Skills**
  - 2.9.1 Cultural Skills
  - 2.9.2 Colonialism in Canada & Indigenous RJ approaches
- **2.11 Conceptual Framework**

## 2.3 Introduction to Restorative Justice

Justice is a multidimensional and complex social construct that is generally understood to refer to a perceived fairness or appropriateness of outcomes, interactions, and procedures (Paul, 2015). While people can attempt to ‘achieve justice’ informally, it is generally a normative expectation in the West to seek out a traditional or legalistic approach to justice. In the traditional criminal justice system, the state takes the role of victim, and the two sides engage in a formal argumentation, favouring rational consideration of evidence, and abiding by formal courtroom rules and procedures, in the pursuit of a generalizable, objective, ‘justice’ in the form of a verdict of guilt or innocence. In this system, offenders who are found guilty are given punishment that ranges in severity and length, as determined by law, custom, and desires of the state (Paul, 2015).

An alternative path to justice is restorative justice (RJ), which aims to restore the harm caused by crime, and rebuild relationship between parties by encouraging the individuals who committed the harms to take responsibility for their offending and empowers the victim to voice their experience about the impact the offence has had on them and the broader community (Suzuki & Yuan, 2021). RJ is arguably a more holistic and integrated approach that views crime as both the cause and effect of, a breakdown in the web of social bonds that connects an individual to their community (Bazemore, 1998, p. 778). In the RJ worldview, the harm of one is the harm of all, and the ripple effects of this harm are felt on many levels (Zehr, 2002, p.18). Therefore, the RJ response to crime focuses on repairing damaged relationships and building new ones, rather than punishing or removing offenders from society. Unlike the retributive model, the restorative justice approach offers the victim hopes of restitution, an opportunity to be heard, information about the case, and expanded and empowered opportunities for involvement, influence, and input. Communities are also viewed as mutually responsible in this process and play a crucial role in setting the terms of accountability (Bazemore, 1998, p. 779). Offenders are no longer merely objects of punishment, but instead are actively responsible for repairing the harm caused by their crime. They are required to demonstrate accountability through meeting obligations to repair harm to the victim(s) and/or victimised communities. They are also encouraged to heal, and develop new social skills, competencies, and community connections (Bazemore, 1998, p. 772). Justice is perceived to be achieved when there is

a balanced response to the needs of the victims, community, and offenders, all of whom are co-participants in the justice process (Bazemore, 1998, p. 778).

RJ can include *diversion* from the court system, or actions taken *in conjunction with* the court. RJ processes are usually only applied to offenders who have admitted to the offence, that is, the penalty phase (versus the fact-finding phase) of criminal processes (Daly, 2002, p. 57).

RJ is multi-faceted and exists in diverse contexts of practice and culture; it has emerged in more than 100 countries worldwide, in both contemporary and ancient cultures and has been linked to the traditions of the ancient Arab, Greek and Roman civilizations, as well as the Celts, Māori, Samoans, and many other Indigenous Peoples (Consedine, 1995; Braithwaite, 1999; as cited by Moore, 2012; Moore, 2018). Restorative justice is used in diverse contexts, including adult and youth criminal matters, family welfare, child protection, civil matters, disputes in schools, and in workplace settings (Daly, 2002). It has also been influential for academics and researchers in policy making and legislative developments (Aertsen et al., 2013).

Ideally it should be built from the bottom up by communities in dialogue and experimentation, so that it is responsive to the needs of the community in which it is situated (Zehr, 2002, p. 9-10). As Bazemore (1998, p. 772) states, “restorative justice is a work in progress; no community or justice system is fully restorative”. However regardless of program context, the core values remain the same: interconnectedness, reciprocity, respect, empathy, collaboration, responsibility, empowerment, transformation, relationship and community, and cultural sensitivity (Chouinard & Boyce, 2018, p.7). RJ is rooted in a social justice ethic aimed at societal transformation, based on principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion. RJ is therefore inherently political, as it confronts the traditional retributive models of justice, and recognizes that a system that excludes marginalised voices and perspectives is not politically neutral (Chouinard & Boyce, 2018). The goal of RJ is ultimately societal improvement, however even within RJ there is a lack of consensus surrounding what this looks like or how to achieve it (Chouinard & Boyce, 2018, p.7).

### 2.3.1 Criticisms of Restorative Justice

Critics of restorative justice question its framing as dichotomous and superior to other justice approaches (Daly, 2002). RJ tends to be painted in a mythical way, with over-emphasized stories of dramatic personal and social transformations deriving from anecdotes, and unsupported by comprehensive empirical evidence (Daly, 2002). These exaggerated narratives were likely an attempt at spreading ideas about RJ with hopes of reforming the criminal justice system (Suzuki, 2023). However, rather than this oppositional dualism, which is too simplistic and inadequate in depicting the true complexity of justice systems, a more nuanced lens is required; restoration and retribution are not necessarily contradictory notions (Daly, 2002).

However, in the last 20 years, RJ has rapidly increased in popularity and RJ programs are now integrated into criminal justice processes in almost every continent in the world (Suzuki, 2023). Empirical research examining RJ in criminal justice settings has also expanded significantly and has shown that RJ has the potential to benefit victims and offenders in many ways, such as reducing rate of recidivism, and decrease victim’s fear of revictimization and post-traumatic stress (Suzuki & Yuan, 2021). Despite this, there is always potential risk of harm for victims and/or offenders who enter the

process, especially for crimes involving sexual assault and domestic violence. This underscores the importance of ensuring proper screening, preparation, and facilitation by RJ practitioners who are well-trained and emotionally intelligent and can safely guide the process (King, 2008).

## 2.4 Comparing and Contrasting Role Titles: Mentor, Facilitator, Mediator

### 2.4.1 Mentor

The literature contained one brief mention of a ‘helper or mentor’ that seemed similar to the RJV mentor role. White Shield & Robinson (2023) discussed that a therapeutic alliance with a helper or mentor is preferred to a therapist since they can engage in the ‘global Indigenous practice’ of teaching a person to create and maintain a skill set of solutions they can carry forward with them for life. Mention of RJ mentoring programs in the literature were primarily for justice-involved youth. Youth with these formal mentoring relationships benefited from positive outcomes in academic performance, employment, improved decision-making, and a reduction in rearrests (Lopez-Humphreys, & Teater, 2018). Other peer mentoring programs partnered incarcerated adults with high-risk or justice-involved youth, and showed positive outcomes for both the youth, and the mentors. Incarcerated or formerly incarcerated adults who participated as mentors in these programs experienced enhanced psychological well-being, healing, positive self-image, and capacity for hope and generativity (Lopez-Humphreys, & Teater, 2018).

### 2.4.2 Facilitator and Mediator

The literature search did not uncover any mention of a distinct ‘preparatory’ or ‘supporter’ role similar to that of the mentor that did not also participate in facilitation, mediation, or case coordination. The roles of facilitator and mediator in the justice literature have perhaps the closest overlap in skills to the mentor, however key differences remain. The preparation of offenders and victims for the dialogue circle is a central part of RJV’s mentor role. While most of the literature on the facilitator and mediator roles focuses on procedural tasks of bringing affected parties together and facilitating conferences/circles, there is some mention in the literature of how these roles are involved with preparing, supporting, and monitoring outcomes. These aspects will be outlined in more detail in section 2.6 on “The importance of preparation in RJ.”

## 2.5 Skills and Qualities of RJ Practitioners

The Canadian Principles and Guidelines for Restorative Justice Practice in Criminal matters [FPT Meeting] (2018) provides guidelines for the knowledge, skills, and attributes that facilitators should possess. These include Interpersonal and communication skills, trauma-informed understanding, recognising, and dealing with power imbalances, adapting processes, and exploring needs of participants, including spiritual and cultural needs, an understanding of the root causes of crime, and a knowledge of resources and supports for clients. These guidelines also recommend that programs

are flexible and tailored to the unique needs of participants, and include careful preparation of all involved parties to assess their readiness.

The United Kingdom Restorative Justice Council's Best Practice Guidance for Restorative Justice [Restorative Justice Council] (2011) provides an overview of the range of skills and knowledge practitioners should have to run restorative processes. Core skills include effective communication and personal skills (ability to motivate and encourage; active listening and reflecting back; giving and receiving feedback; explaining so that others understand), creating a safe environment for participants (building trust; being non-judgmental; assessing and addressing imbalances of power; being sensitive to diversity; managing conflict and aggression), ensuring equitable access without discrimination (maintaining self-awareness of one's own prejudices and boundaries of one's knowledge and experience; knowing when to seek help), planning and problem-solving, and ability to work effectively with other team members.

The Government of New Brunswick's Framework for Restorative Justice Practices in Conflict and Crime [Justice and Public Safety] (2022) outlines essential characteristics and personal qualities of RJ facilitators to include: Compassion and good judgement, cultural sensitivity, honesty and openness, self-awareness, impartiality and respect and dignity for all people.

Miller (2011) found that facilitators who had personal experience with victimisation, while not necessary, gave facilitators some initial 'credibility' with clients and helped them deepen connection and understanding with clients. Skilled facilitators also possessed qualities such as: empathy, understanding, ability to listen, ability to nudge and challenge, providing a safe space to vent, confront, dissect, and express feelings related to the offence.

Choi & Gilbert (2010) characterised a mediator's skills and role as: nondirective and unobtrusive, neutral, demonstrating respect, creating a victim-sensitive environment, keeping things under control, facilitating conversation, and collaborating with other mediators (p.223). It was possible for mediators to maintain both compassion and accountability in the process of resolving conflicts.

In Bolitho & Bruce's (2017) study, facilitators highlighted skills of self-awareness, and how imperative it is to remain composed and manage personal reactions during victim offender mediation sessions. It is a specialised characteristic of people in helping professions to be able to endure hours of intense emotion and compartmentalise personal emotional reactions (p.359). As King (2008) concludes, in helping professions, and in legal problem-solving contexts, having the skills to perceive, understand and manage emotions (both one's own and the other parties' emotions), is important for achieving resolution (King, 2008).

### 2.5.1 Profile of RJ Volunteers

Despite the reported success of RJ, these programs continually have difficulty securing stable financial support, partnerships, and sustainable community involvement (Dhami and Joy 2007). Community participation, particularly from volunteers, is a crucial foundation for community restorative justice programs. Souza & Dhami (2008) surveyed volunteers across twelve RJ programs in the British Columbia and found that the majority of volunteers were white women in their early 50's, with university education. Nearly half were retired, unemployed or students. In terms of role,

over two-thirds were facilitators, and the remaining volunteers had roles such as coordinators, administrators, or trainers. Of note, the role of “mentor” was captured in the ‘other’ category. This is one of the only mentions of the RJ mentor role in the literature. Communication skills, interpersonal skills and leadership skills were rated as most useful for RJ volunteers. Those that were employed tended to work in disciplines concerned with improving the health and well-being of others, such as counselling, social work, and teaching. Other volunteers came from backgrounds in corrections, police, mediation, psychology, and child and youth care work. Specific qualifications or accreditations that they found helpful to their roles were counselling, social work, dispute resolution, criminology, and other specialised knowledge & training. Souza & Dhimi note that while RJ volunteers with professional qualifications can certainly benefit the program, it is important that professionals remain impartial and objective, and avoid imposing their views on participants. RJ programs should consider encouraging participation from diverse individuals, including those who are unemployed.

### 2.5.2 Motivations for Volunteering

For volunteer motivations, Souza & Dhimi’s research showed that they were motivated by altruistic and humanitarian drives, desiring to help others and give back to their communities. They also benefited from learning new skills and abilities and forging new connections and friendships. Finally, volunteers may be motivated by guilt (being more fortunate than others), and desire to experience personal growth (Souza & Dhimi, 2008, p. 36). Younger volunteers (age 20-54) were more likely to be motivated by career-related reasons than older volunteers. Volunteers’ personal values were in line with the values promoted by RJ and many expressed dissatisfactions with the traditional criminal justice system.

## 2.6 The Importance of Preparation in RJ

A primary function of the mentor role at RJV is preparing clients for the dialogue. A meta-synthesis of RJ studies by Suzuki & Yuan (2021) found that the preparatory work done by facilitators/mediators contributed to victim and offenders’ understanding of RJ and set reasonable expectations for their roles and outcomes. Victims and offenders especially benefited from social support networks and human connections, in particular this support and connection came from facilitators and mediators and justice agencies. This is often overlooked in the literature, despite general consensus among RJ scholars on the importance of support for offender reintegration (Hansen & Umbreit, 2018, as cited in Suzuki & Yuan, 2021).

A study of restorative facilitators in Australia describes the preparation phase prior to the face-to-face meeting as “by far the most important component of the RJ process” (Bolitho & Bruce, 2017, p.347). In this study, Facilitators depicted preparation as lengthy, intense, diligent, victim-focused, careful, aggressive, and precise (p.347), and helpful for establishing a good working rapport with both victims and offenders (p.353).

Miller (2011) found that victims derived the greatest satisfaction, peace and understanding from the preparation process with their facilitator, who participants described as non-judgemental, and treating them with respect, dignity, and fairness. During the extensive preparation process, clients

were encouraged to be introspective, process feelings and conflict and develop a more comprehensive understanding of the harm and its ongoing impacts.

Victims who are not adequately prepared to attend a face-to-face RJ conference with an offender may hinder the process by attacking them and entering into a shame-rage spiral. A skilled practitioner can support both the victim and the offender to understand their respective experiences of shame or guilt, which is more likely to result in a successful and healing RJ process for both parties (Rodogno, 2014).

Some RJ organisations have been criticised for delivering ‘fast food’ RJ processes that do not build in enough time for adequate preparation with participants and conversations with mediators (Choi, & Gilbert, 2010, p.223). This disempowers participants by limiting the flow of information, and not allowing enough discussion, or opportunities to build relationships, express emotions, and solve problems (Choi, & Gilbert, 2010).

A facilitator or mediator in the literature seems to be characterised as a professional and trained person whose role it is to facilitate, in a fair and impartial manner (Yuan, 2017). For the mediator role in particular, a central characteristic is ‘neutrality’, meaning not supporting either side in a disagreement, and not displaying strong feelings or opinions (Yuan, 2017). Offenders and victims who perceived neutrality by facilitators felt they were not being judged as a result of their offending or victimisation (Suzuki & Yuan, 2021).

However, in the restorative justice context, victims and offenders are not coming together on a ‘level moral playing field’, since offenders in the program have already admitted guilt and wrongdoing as a condition of participating (Zehr, 2002, as cited in Lewis, & Umbreit, 2015, p.5).

### 2.6.1 Humanistic Approach

A ‘humanising approach’ was described in Lauwaert & Aertsen’s (2016) research on adult men who had gone through victim-offender mediation in Belgium. They found that the preparatory meetings were profoundly important to the process, and could occur over several months for serious cases. The participants expressed gratitude for their mediator and their attitude towards them, specifically how much the mediator was open, humanising, non-judgemental, and was willing to listen. This respectful presence by the mediator created a safe container for open communication where participants felt they could speak freely and explain their story. They felt that the mediator was there when no one else was there for them. This process contributed to desistance by helping participants process moral feelings of shame, embarrassment, regret, and closure, and influenced them towards change by developing a prosocial self-perception and plans for a more positive life. Lauwaert & Aertsen note that this experience was different from the attitudes of many other professionals the participants encountered and may be criticised as it goes against mainstream ideas of professionalism.

Lewis & Umbreit (2015) found that practitioners who were effective used a humanistic approach, which contrasted the settlement-focused, efficiency-based approaches dominant in Western cultures. The humanistic approach instead strives to achieve human connection, peace and long-lasting social harmony using the healing power of dialogue. This approach promotes inner and

relational healing and transformation at both the individual and community levels and emphasises the strength and resilience of the human spirit (p.6). RJ practitioners therefore pursue building authentic connection, rapport and trust with both offenders and victims. Of note, the model's 'pre-mediation preparation sessions' are suggested to occur 'a week or more before the dialogue' (Lewis, & Umbreit, 2015).

## 2.6.2 Shame Management

RJ processes are exercises in shame management (Rodogno, 2014). Shame and guilt have different correlates and outcomes in the interpersonal realm. The experience of shame results in one seeing the self as globally bad, whereas experiencing guilt for a particular action, one sees the self as negatively evaluated in connection with a particular action (Rodogno, 2014). The behavioural outcomes of shame can interfere with future interpersonally constructive action. Shame is connected to self-focused reactions of personal distress rather than empathetic concern for others. Whereas when shame shifts to remorse-guilt, empathy can be elicited, and offenders are more likely to be motivated towards reparative behaviours (Rodogno, 2014).

Victims may feel shame caused by feelings of helplessness, betrayal, violation, and powerlessness. However, they often do not acknowledge this shame as it is often masked as anger and moral indignation which is a defence against feeling shame. If a victim is not adequately prepared and attends an RJ conference with the offender in this state, the offender may perceive this as an attack from the victim, which can generate shame and defensiveness, and results in less empathetic concern. Skilled RJ practitioners can support victims by encouraging them to acknowledge and communicate their anger and shame (Rodogno, 2014). If shame is visible in the offender, the victim is more likely to see the offender as a human being (Rodogno, 2014).

## 2.7 RJ as a Therapeutic Process

As described throughout this paper, the primary function of RJ mentors is to support and guide (i.e., 'help') clients, both practically and emotionally, through RJ processes, often also using skills in education, counselling, advocacy, and social work. It is therefore reasonable to postulate that the RJ practitioner (mentor) role falls into the category of a 'helping profession'. Helping professions are those occupations that provide health and education services to individuals or groups of people ("APA Dictionary of Psychology", 2018). Examples of other common helping professions include counsellors, therapists, psychologists, educators, social workers, pastoral support workers, life coaches, and health professionals, among others. An essential skill in this field is the ability to create positive human connections and attach successfully to highly distressed individuals. The quality of this relationship has been found to have a significant impact on successful client outcomes (Skovholt, & Trotter-Mathison, 2016). Essential to this skill is forming an empathetic attachment to the client:

*"Practitioners spend hours trying to learn the attachment skills of attending, intense listening, emotional sensitivity, and nonverbal understanding. Accurately absorbing the reality of the Other, caring about the Other, and feeling the feelings of the Other are essential in this skill of empathetic attachment."* (Skovholt & Trotter-Mathison, 2016, p. 27)

Empathy is an imperative element of the RJ process, allowing for the ability to “imaginatively step inside the beliefs, feelings, motives, and thoughts of others in order to reach shared understandings” (Wilson, Huculak & McWhinnie, 2002, p.369). Empathy bridges differences, opens up space for reconciliation, and serves as the foundation for transformation and social change, inspiring action, and a willingness to help others (Wilson, Huculak & McWhinnie, 2002).

Complex RJ cases require skilled facilitators who have a strong understanding of emotions (Moore & Vernon, 2023). An established approach in counselling practice is a therapist’s unconditional positive regard for the client, by using active listening to demonstrate empathy and understanding for the client’s perspective (Rogers, 1957, as cited in Moore, 2018). However, those experienced with counselling and restorative justice understand that this unconditional positive regard is not always possible, especially in cases involving extreme violence against women and children (Moore, 2018). A more realistic approach is unconditional listening without ascribing binary assessments (i.e., positive/negative, or good/evil), while practising humility and the assumption that learning will be inevitable for all parties involved (Moore, 2018).

While the role of the RJ practitioner is not that of a therapist, the restorative process is likely to be therapeutic for clients. Clients can begin to gain insight into the interrelationships between the offence and their feelings, thoughts, and behaviours, and reassess their significance and their relationships with others (Moore & Vernon, 2023). A study by Miller (2011) found that both victims and offenders benefited significantly from the space to “talk, talk, and talk”, while facilitators listened, validated feelings, offered alternative ways of perceiving things, challenged stories, and aided them to make sense out of tragedy. While formal therapy was also an integral part of the victims’ healing, those who participated in counselling after the offence believed they never got as much out of it as they did from their meetings with the RJ facilitators. They encountered limits to the compassion and understanding received from others, while their RJ facilitator helped them to reconcile their experiences of victimisation with their futures.

### 2.7.1 Trauma-Informed Care

Trauma-informed care in the literature mostly emerges in the mental health or social work fields, yet is an essential skill for RJ practitioners to possess due to the high prevalence of histories of trauma and abuse in RJ clients (van Wormer & Link, 2016; FPT Meeting, 2018). Trauma-informed care requires a shift from, “what is wrong with this person?” to “what has happened to this person?” (Harris and Fallot, 2001, as cited in Justice and Public Safety, 2022, p.5). RJ processes should address both the social and the individual dimensions of trauma (Randall & Haskell, 2013). Trauma-informed care can also be understood with an ecosystems lens, meaning organisations can direct their interventions to focus on the environment and organisational processes. Correctional institutions, which use practices of control, restraint, and seclusion, are the worst places to treat trauma and often exacerbate vulnerabilities that could lead to re-traumatization (van Wormer & Link, 2016). Trauma-informed correctional practices should include stable environments that are safe, highly structured, contain predictable and consistent limits, incentives, and boundaries, with fair and equitable treatment (Randall & Haskell, 2013). A trauma-informed approach means being psychologically literate and cognizant of the sophisticated complexities of human development and the ways in which violence, neglect, abuse, and other traumatising experiences disrupt and diminish

human's neurobiology and relational capacities (Randall & Haskell, 2013). Trauma-informed approaches should therefore include interventions that can rebuild these damaged capacities and disrupted abilities to form positive relational attachments. Healing from trauma occurs through human connection and developing and experiencing healthy relationships and attachments, to oneself, others, and the community (Randall & Haskell, 2013). Tailoring trauma-informed interventions to each client is associated with increased rehabilitation and reduced recidivism (Randall & Haskell, 2013). Practitioners should be able to cultivate calm environments that create a sense of safety, warmth, and peace (van Wormer & Link, 2016).

## 2.7.2 Practitioner Self-Care to Avoid Burnout

In helping fields, practitioners must also focus on self-care to maintain their own emotional selves in order to avoid burn-out. Practising self-compassion, maintaining a sense of humour, and fostering rich personal lives with positive attachments has all been linked to psychological well-being and helping practitioners become more resilient to the highs and lows of the work (Skovholt & Trotter-Mathison, 2016). Self-compassion involves being kind and forgiving to oneself after mistakes or failure rather than being harshly critical and understanding that imperfection is part of the experience of being human. Finally, a crucial career-sustaining practice for facilitators is setting boundaries and having healthy separation between their role in the program and their personal lives (Miller, 2011).

## 2.8 The Mechanisms Behind How RJ Works

### 2.8.1 Interaction Perspective and Social/Human Capital

Interaction perspective in the RJ literature primarily focuses on the interactions between offenders and victims, and very little is known about other dynamics and interactions impacting offenders/victims, such as with RJ practitioners, support networks and the broader communities of care (Suzuki & Yuan, 2021). Interactive processes can result in both reformation and empowerment. In cases of partnership violence, the interactions that occur in the RJ process can precipitate a transformation in an offender's relationship with themselves and their relationship with the victim. They become able to recognise the victim's suffering and take responsibility for their wrong-doings as an immediate cognitive-emotional experience (Pelikan & Hofinger, 2016). A study of youth in Northern Ireland who were formerly involved in restorative conferencing found that desistance was strongly associated with the development of informal human connections and strong prosocial relationships with agency staff. These socially reassuring interactive processes cause individuals to undergo a cognitive transformation; by having others who believe in them, they begin to believe in their own potential to change and rise above the offending behaviours (Marsh & Maruna, 2016).

Embedded in the power of interactions is the potential to foster social and human capital in restorative justice processes, especially when 'supporters' are present (Claes & Shapland, 2016). Social capital refers to the relationships and reciprocal opportunities and resources that are available to a person in their community, and it is measured by the degree to which they are able to meaningfully engage and develop valued relationships with significant others, families, groups,

networks and communities. Building social capital is foundational for human development and well-being (Graham & White, 2014). These new connections that are developed through supporters add their own human and social capital, facilitating reintegration into their communities, and connecting them with essential opportunities, resources and programs and ensuring successful completion of their agreement (Claes & Shapland, 2016). Victim involvement that is positive also builds new human capital. The direct two-way communication that occurs through the RJ process encourages the offender to reflect about themselves and the root cause of the offence, focus on the future and pro-social problem solving to make positive changes to their lives, and obtain practical support to achieve these goals and avoid re-offending (Claes & Shapland, 2016).

### 2.8.2 Storytelling

Listening to victim's stories about the impact of the offence has been found to have an empowering and healing effect which can validate their intrinsic worth as human beings (Yuan, 2017). Unlike victim impact statements used in the criminal justice system, storytelling in RJ encounters is 'dual directional' and inclusive, allowing opportunities to answer and respond to questions face-to-face, and have their feelings addressed, which can be transformational for the relationships between participants (Yuan, 2017). Story editing (i.e., the process of changing the stories we tell about ourselves), and story prompting (i.e., accepting that others see us in different ways) can empower changes to our behaviours, habits and routines (Moore & Vernon, 2023). RJ processes have the potential to change the offender's self-identity by shifting the narrative, fostering agency, and changing cognitive mindsets (Claes & Shapland, 2016).

### 2.8.3 Practitioner Collaboration, Multi-Agency Partnerships & the Role of Community

The community surrounding the victim and offender is not always considered a key stakeholder in RJ processes, yet it is important to include. For offenders, communities of social support serve to develop and uphold shared norms and values, which builds social and human capital and can therefore contribute to desistance (Claes & Shapland, 2016). While the micro-community can include anyone who feels emotionally, physically, or otherwise connected to the victim or offender, it can also include professionals and RJ practitioners (Claes & Shapland, 2016).

Offenders are much more likely to succeed in RJ programs when they are supported by a community-based network and an accountability framework (Wilson, Huculak & McWhinnie, 2002). For some severe or complex cases, the needs of the clients are beyond the RJ practitioner's abilities to address, and should involve the additional support from partnerships with outside professionals, agencies, and organisations, rather than just one sole RJ practitioner (Masson, & Österman, 2017). Similarly, a co-working approach is recommended for complex cases, as it can provide additional knowledge from specialists, potentially distributes the balance of power, and gives caseworkers someone to debrief and reflect on cases with (Restorative Justice Council, 2011; FPT Meeting, 2018). Bolitho & Bruce (2017) highlighted that an appropriately resourced and functional RJ team facilitates better learning, coping and may reduce feelings of isolation for practitioners.

## 2.9 Anti-Oppressive RJ Approaches and Cultural Skills

An anti-oppressive system of RJ requires a separation from the criminal justice system (Leland & Stockwell, 2022). Building anti-oppressive RJ systems demands constant and vigilant anti-racism, and a commitment to accountability and restoration at all levels.

During its first forty years, the RJ community failed to adequately address racialization (Davis, 2019), and thus has received criticism from anti-racist and social justice advocates for its lack of racial equity, in both theory and practice (Muhammad & Gray, 2021). There continues to be a lack of research on multicultural and multiethnic representation in RJ, despite racial minorities disproportionately enduring the injustices and inequalities of the justice system (Fattah, 2021). Systems and movements that do not include leadership and membership from those who are racialized, marginalized or equity-deserving will inherently fail to achieve just outcomes for non-white people, due to embedded systemic racism (Fattah, 2021). Integrating racial consciousness into RJ programs has the potential to facilitate healing of some aspects of inter-generational racial trauma (Muhammad & Gray, 2021). Davis (2019) urges racial justice advocates to invite more healing into their lives, and RJ advocates to bring more warrior energy into theirs.

RJ organisations should consider taking on a more proactive approach with educating both victims and community representatives about systemic racism and implicit racial bias, especially with RPs experiencing the intersections of severe mental illness and race, since systemic shortcomings likely contributed to the offence (Muhammad & Gray, 2021). Understanding the systemic factors that contributed to the harms can foster empathy and give insight into the context of one another's perspectives and experiences (Muhammad & Gray, 2021).

Willis & Hoyle (2022) found that offenders with socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds were more likely to be judged by practitioners as being insincere and seen as more likely to reoffend. If facilitators perceive these offenders as being less receptive to the RJ process, it may result in offenders being assigned more onerous agreement or having less successful outcomes. RJ organisations should ensure that practitioners are trained to reflexively engage with their own social and class positions, privileges, and biases, and become educated on how socioeconomic inequality may impact the way individuals communicate and present.

### 2.9.1 Cultural Skills

Bias is a part of human life, the problem is not with having biases, but rather when these biases intentionally or unintentionally lead to discriminatory practices (Umbreit & Coates, 1999). When participants of RJ programs come from different cultures, the typical or familiar patterns of communicating and expressing values can cause confusion and disruption to the process. To achieve healing and repair and restoration of relationships, the views of all parties need to be considered (Umbreit & Coates, 1999). When discussing cross-cultural differences, we must be mindful of the tendency to overgeneralize cultures and overlook differences within-cultures (Umbreit & Coates, 1999).

Further, intersectionality perspectives should be incorporated. This perspective recognises that multiple identities create unique experiences that are distinct and not necessarily able to be divided into their component identities or experiences. These interlocking identities are impacted by relative socio-cultural power, and privilege that impacts individual and collective experiences and identities (Parent, DeBlaere, & Moradi, 2013). Practitioners need to take the time to reflect, listen to their clients and understand how they see the world, being sensitive to cultural differences and how they may impact communication styles (Umbreit & Coates, 2000). Cultural skills can be built through reflecting and studying one's own behaviour and communication style, and asking oneself the following questions: "Am I comfortable with silence?", "Do I interrupt too often?", "Do I overinterpret straying eye contact?", "Do I carry embedded, learned prejudices towards people with different skin colour, or who are less/better educated than myself?". (Umbreit & Coates, 2000, p.13-14). In order to uncover biases that they may be unaware of, practitioners can keep a journal and record incidents and communication patterns that made them or their clients uncomfortable. Achieving healing, repair, and restoration in relationships is more likely when the worldviews and communication styles of each participant are examined and understood (Umbreit & Coates, 2000).

## 2.9.2 Colonialism in Canada & Indigenous RJ approaches

RJ practitioners also should be intimately aware of, and work towards counteracting, colonialism in Canada, and the historical and ongoing ways in which the government systems sought to fundamentally change, culturally assimilate, and physically eliminate Indigenous (First Nations, Inuit, and Métis) peoples (Hewitt, 2016). European settlers to Turtle Island (what is now known as "Canada") violently subjugated Indigenous Peoples to a colonial legal system, from which they profited, while dismissing existing Indigenous legal systems and ways of being. Indigenous people continue to be over-represented in the court and carceral systems and there is a continued refusal to acknowledge and make space for Indigenous laws (Hewitt, 2016). Since its inception in 1876, the *Indian Act* homogenised the diverse and distinct cultures, languages, laws, traditions and practices into a singular 'Indian' identity, and forcibly removed children to attend residential schools. The intergenerational trauma, violence, pain, abuse and suffering inflicted upon Indigenous families continues to ripple through families and communities today, and is connected to the increased involvement of Indigenous Peoples in the criminal justice system (Hewitt, 2016). In the last decade, the incarceration of Indigenous Peoples has increased by seventy-five percent. Indigenous restorative justice models stray from the criminal justice system by employing a culturally relevant process that is based in Indigenous legal traditions, and focuses on healing individual and community harm, while acknowledging the harms of ongoing colonisation (Hewitt, 2016).

I acknowledge that there are hundreds of distinct Indigenous cultures and Nations on Turtle Island (Canada), each with their own restorative justice approaches, yet it is beyond the scope of this paper to delve into the specificities, therefore I will speak to the general global Indigenous paradigms that emerged from the literature. Indigenous RJ approaches tend to centre the role of the community as essential. An individual's healing is infused back into the entire community, the relatives and creation itself (White Shield & Robinson, 2023). A foundational value embedded in Indigenous restorative justice is the worldview that all of creation is interconnected, and individual actions have ripple effects that impact the whole of life:

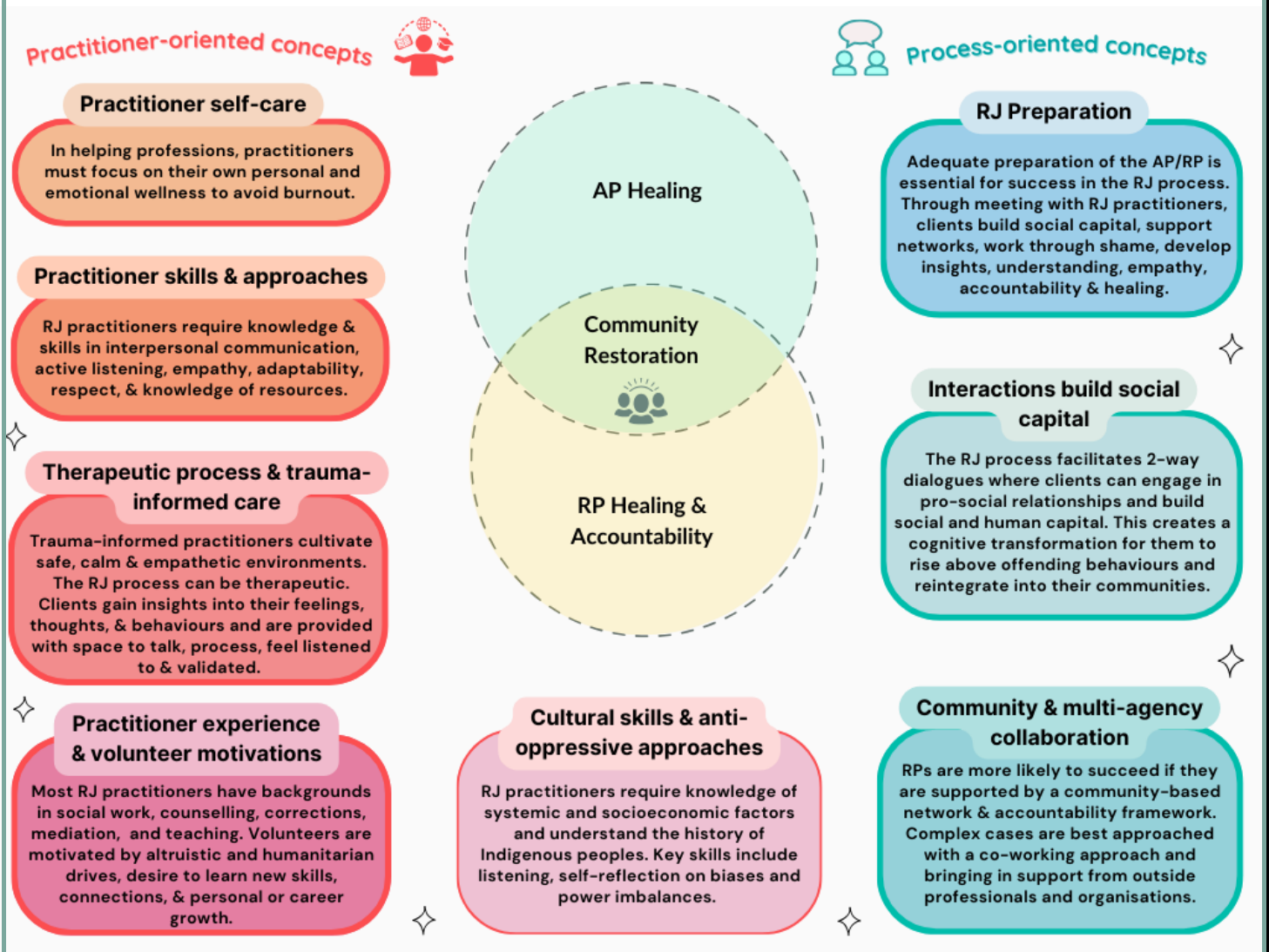
*“A child is taught that an ant, a butterfly, a plant, a tree, the fish, the sky is just as important as they are...when a person or being dies, the universe shifts to accommodate that loss” - Edna Little Elk (White Hat 2003 as cited by White Shield & Robinson, 2023)*

Indigenous RJ gathers a circle of expanded family-relatives around the individual to provide non-judgemental care, understanding, support and accountability, and guide them towards what motivates them for change (White Shield & Robinson, 2023). Yet, one must also be cautious when advocating for ‘social harmony’ in the community if it means favouring one individual (the offender) over another (the victim) in the name of ‘collective rights’, and reducing the victim to ‘individual rights’. Individual rights and well-being should not be sacrificed for the intended good of the community (Emma LaRocque, as cited in Asch, 1997, p.80-81). RJ practitioners must remain victim-centred and hold offenders accountable, even if this disrupts the perceived social harmony.

## 2.10 Conceptual Framework

Figure 2.10.1 shows the initial conceptual framework that emerged from the literature. The conceptual framework will be revisited and revised to reflect the findings from the interviews and jurisdictional scan. The framework is organised with the AP, RP, and community at the centre. Around the perimeter are the primary elements that emerged from the literature that contribute to positive outcomes. On the left-hand side are concepts that focus on the practitioner, starting with the importance of practising self-care to avoid burnout. This is a practice that often must be learned and continually cultivated. The skills, approaches, qualities, motivations, and past experience of practitioners are also important contributing factors in supporting APs and RPs through successful RJ processes. Some of these approaches include knowledge of trauma, and cultural safety, anti-oppressive practices, and the importance of adequate preparation for APs and RPs. On the right-hand side are more process-oriented concepts. Through the preparation process, APs and RPs build social capital and can undergo significant growth and transformation. RJ processes are more likely to succeed when there is collaboration and support from multiple practitioners, professionals, and other organisations in the community, especially for complex cases.

**Figure 2.10.1** Conceptual Framework showing the concepts, skills, and processes that emerged from the literature on ‘mentor-like’ practitioner roles in RJ



## 3 Jurisdictional Scan of RJ Organisations

For the jurisdictional scan of RJ organisations, I emailed 39 RJ organisations within BC, Canada, and Internationally (see Appendix B for email template). In addition to providing an introduction to the study and some information about RJV's mentor role, organisations were asked the following three questions:

1. Does the organisation have a 'mentor-like' role similar to the one described? If so, what is it called?
  - 1a. What are the expectations and duties, and,
  - 1b. What kind of training/onboarding is involved, including training on cultural safety, intersectionality, and/or anti-oppressive approaches,
2. Are there any specific skills, background knowledge or previous experience that helps them to be effective in the role?
3. Have you conducted any evaluations or gathered feedback on how effective this role is and the impact it has?

Twelve organisations responded via email or phone. Of the twelve, three stated simply that they do not offer mentoring, and nine provided more detailed information either by email (N=7) or phone (N= 2) which are captured in Appendix C. Of the 9 included in the table, seven organisations were from B.C. Canada, one was from New Zealand and one from the United Kingdom.

### 3.1.1.1 Mentors and Other Roles

Only one organisation (Abbotsford RJ and Advocacy Association - ARJAA) had a mentor role, yet this role was only available for youth. Other organisations had staff, facilitators, case coordinators, specialists and/or volunteers that fulfilled some of the support and preparatory work similar to that of the RJV mentor role, in addition to other duties. Many organisations expressed desire to have a mentor role and agreed that it would be a valuable addition to their programming.

### 3.1.1.2 Training

As for training, the youth mentors at ARJAA received 10 hours of training which included sessions on RJ principles and best practices, law, communication strategies, and cultural sensitivity training. Mentors were expected to attend additional training sessions offered throughout the year.

The remaining organisations varied in their training, from volunteers and supporters with limited roles who received very little training, to more comprehensive training for facilitators, such as training at a Justice School (i.e., Justice Institute of BC) for 35 hours. Several organisations are in the process of strengthening their training programs. Most mentioned that they regularly provide workshops on a variety of topics including trauma & vicarious trauma and resiliency,

communications, mental health and addictions, de-escalation strategies, narrative-based RJ, first aid and naloxone.

As for training on cultural safety, anti-oppressive approaches and intersectionality, organisations offered workshops on local Indigenous cultures & protocols, equity, inclusivity, unconscious bias, anti-racism, anti-oppression, gender, and sexuality. As part of this training, RJ practitioners were expected to gain an understanding of the broader (systemic) context and interconnection (root causes) behind offences.

### 3.1.1.3 Skills, Knowledge, and Experience

The skills required for effective RJ practitioners include being supportive, strong listening skills, compassion, confidence with dealing with complex/emotional issues, empathy, self-care and willingness to process own triggers, being open, taking time and not rushing the process, having cultural awareness and an understanding of the limitations of the role and professional ethics and boundaries. A staff program manager at a BC RJ organisation shared the limitations of their role in RJ:

*“Ideally we are short-term people in their life [...] I remind them we are not therapists, probation officers, social workers, or counsellors, our role is to help people get through this process, and if they need connections, we can establish those connections in the community. Once the file is closed we don’t have ongoing relationships with people.”* (personal communication, Nov 14, 2022).

Most organisations mentioned volunteers and staff having past work experience or education in social services, counselling, and experience “working with people from all areas of society”. A staff program manager at a BC organisation shared their experience with their unexpected successes and challenges with the background experiences of RJ volunteers and staff:

*“Hairdresser is one of the best we have. No background in [RJ], but has finely tuned listening skills. Listens intently, and is able to connect those pieces quickly. The most challenging are those people that have similar backgrounds to what I have (corrections/probation/addictions work). They can hold onto that black and white, concrete thinking. Have to teach people not to think in ‘right/wrong, good/bad’. They don’t want to let go of ‘this is the bad guy, and this is the victim’.”* (personal communication, Nov 14, 2022)

### 3.1.1.4 Additional Comments

During the two phone conversations other themes emerged that are worth mentioning. Both organisations mentioned the major challenge they face is funding, which isn’t stable and creates a competitive situation for all RJ organisations who are forced to compete for the same funding grants, which was “frustrating”.

One organisation located in a small B.C. community mentioned how they only have one paid practitioner, calling themselves the “only lonelys”. The organisation described the mentor program that they had in the past that they had to stop as cases became more complex:

*“We had a mentor program, it worked very well for a long time. Then all of a sudden it started to not work as well. A shift happened to more complex cases. People had great info, great support, when there was compliance, it was easy, then complex files, with complex issues, there was some ‘resistance’. In one year, half a dozen situations happened where volunteer mentors were saying things that were [...] of significant concern [...] they ended up saying things that were inaccurate”. (Personal communication, Nov 1, 2022).*

Another challenge they reflected on was that only older and retired people are coming forward to volunteer, since they don’t have as many competing obligations as younger volunteers, who often have full time jobs and families. A new approach this organisation was embarking on was matching practitioner’s specific skill sets with clients, the example being horseback riding.

Another organisation mentioned the ongoing challenge they face with balancing the right number of volunteers with the number of referrals they receive. If they train too many volunteers without enough referrals, the volunteers get bored and leave, but if they train too few, then the organisation becomes overwhelmed and under-resourced. At the time of the conversation, they reflected that their referrals were quite low and the programs receiving the most referrals were embedded in the RCMP.

## 4 Methodology and Methods

### 4.1 Methodology

This study gathered qualitative data using an intrinsic single case study design with embedded units. The case, or the unit of analysis, is the mentor role at RJV. Intrinsic case study design types are used when the case (i.e., the mentor role) is intrinsically interesting because it is unusual or 'special', and researchers wish to investigate this special nature to gain a better understanding (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Taber, 2014). This approach is also ideal for enabling researchers to answer "how" and "why" type questions, while considering the relevant contextual conditions (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Data can be gathered and converged from a variety of sources to elucidate the details of the case.

Data was gathered through semi-structured key informant interviews with mentors, staff, and APs to gather qualitative data. Unfortunately, none of the qualifying RPs who were invited to participate volunteered to be interviewed for this study.

### 4.2 Methods

Once approval was obtained from the University of Victoria Human Research Ethics Board (Protocol Number: 20-0644-02), RJV program manager sent out the recruitment materials to eligible participants, using purposive sampling. Participants were invited to participate in the study based on the following eligibility criteria:

Group 1 (caseworker volunteers who do mentoring) & Group 2 (RJV staff who do mentoring): Must have mentored a minimum of 2 cases with RJV, within the last 2 years.

Groups 2 (RPs) & 3 (APs): Must have had a mentor and involvement with RJV must be concluded; Must be over 15 years old; Are considered not too vulnerable and are likely open to being contacted by RJV based on previous interactions (the last 2 criteria up to the discretion of RJV program managers).

RJV program managers sent emails to recruitment groups via bcc to protect anonymity, using email scripts provided (see Appendix D). Recruitment emails included recruitment poster (same for all groups) (see Appendix E), and consent forms (two versions, one for mentors/staff and one for RPs/APs) (see Appendix F). Participants were directed to email me (the researcher) directly to protect anonymity and bypass potential perceived pressure to participate.

I coordinated with participants to obtain signed consent forms and schedule the 1.5-hour interviews using zoom (videoconferencing technology).

I screen shared research questions using PowerPoint and interviews were recorded and manually transcribed.

For the jurisdictional scan RJ organisations, I used Google search engine to find RJ organisations within BC, Canada and Internationally, and emailed 39 organisations. The email template (Appendix

B) that was sent to organisations provided an introduction to the study and some information about RJV's mentor role and asked three questions about the mentor role. Responses received via phone and email were collected and summarized into a table (Appendix C). See Section 3 of this report for more detail.

### 4.3 Participants

Seven participants were interviewed. Participants ages ranged from mid-20's to early 80s, (participants were not always explicitly asked about their age, this is an estimate). All self-described as being white and having mixed European descent. Two identified as neurotypical, two identified as neurodiverse (autistic and ADHD), and two did not disclose this information. One was an AP, who identified as female. The remaining six were facilitators who also did mentoring (n=3), and staff who did mentoring (n=3). Of the mentors/staff, six identified as female, one as non-binary. One had been with the organisation for 1-2 years; two had been there for 2-5 years; two were there for 5-10 years; and one had been there for more than 10 years. All had mentored RPs primarily or exclusively, and some mentored APs occasionally.

### 4.4 Data Analysis

Qualitative data from interview transcriptions were coded line by line using NVivo (qualitative data analysis software), beginning with open coding, then axial coding to draw connections between codes and group them into categories, followed by selective coding to connect the categories around primary themes. Keeping the research questions in mind, data coding focused on the skills, strengths, approaches and knowledge of mentors, the purpose and value of the role, rewarding and challenging aspects, organisational-level reflections, and cultural safety, anti-oppressive, intersectional approaches, while being open to allowing other themes to emerge from the data.

### 4.5 Limitations

The original intention was to conduct interviews in person, however as a result of the safety measures in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as logistical challenges with securing space at RJV, the interviews were done virtually. A lack of face-to-face contact may have impacted the level of comfort and disclosure by interviewees, and reduced my ability to read visual cues that may have elicited additional questions. In some cases, technological difficulties, such as internet connectivity issues, interrupted the flow of the interview. However virtual meetings may have been more convenient for some people and allowed them to meet in the comfort of their own home.

The most prominent limitation in this study was low sample size. In particular, no RPs were interviewed, and only one AP was included in the study. In addition, no participants identified as male or racialized, and no youth participated in the study. The perspective of the RP was then supplemented by the experience of the mentors, the AP, and the literature.

There were also challenges with the literature, in that the role of "mentor" as it relates in the context of RJV is almost non-existent in RJ literature. This is discussed further in section 2.1.

I received limited responses from organisations that I reached out to as part of the jurisdictional scan, therefore the results are not representative of all RJ organisations, and mentor-like roles may exist in organisations that I did not connect with.

During the time it took to complete this project RJV has undergone significant staffing changes to case managers, the program coordinator and executive director, therefore the reflections of RJV staff may not represent the perspectives of the current organisational staff, and additional initiatives may have occurred since that would not be captured in this report.

# 5 Interview Findings

## 5.1 Introduction

This chapter will provide an overview of the findings from the interviews with the mentors/staff and the AP. Semi-structured interviews allowed some freedom with the flow of conversation which gave me more background information and context and allowed additional topics to emerge, resulting in richer data.

This chapter is organised into the following sections:

- **5.2: Mentor profiles: Experience and Training**
- **5.3: Mentor profile: Skills, Strengths, and Approaches**
- **5.4: Rewards and Challenges for Mentors**
- **5.5: Impacts and Value of Mentoring**
- **5.6: Intersectionality, Cultural Safety, Anti-Oppressive Approaches**
- **5.7: Organisational Feedback**
- **5.8: Summary**

## 5.2 Mentor Profiles: Experience and Training

The experience and training described by mentors and staff can be grouped into three broad categories:

- Vocational and volunteer experience,
- Personal lived experience,
- Education and specialised training.

The interview questions that produced these themes were: “What education, training, skills and/or personal or professional background experiences have helped you be effective in your role as a mentor?”.

Vocational and volunteer experience (see Figure 5.2.1 below) revealed many helping professions such as educator, counsellor, social worker, nurse, chaplain, advocate, mediator, board member, as well as experience in leadership roles and community development. Many had experience in ‘front line’ work supporting vulnerable people, such as those experiencing homelessness, dementia and survivors of violence and sexual assault. Several had experience as educators in school settings and professional development training for adults, such as non-violent communication. Beyond

specialized education required for specific vocations (e.g. nursing, counselling) participants had training non-violent communication, non-violent crisis intervention, suicide intervention training, project management, business, psychology, gender studies, justice studies, among others.

Participants described the value of personal lived experience, and learning from mistakes. Their own personal experience of trauma, personal identity factors (e.g., being a parent, a woman, a survivor, and/or an aged person), as well as knowing friends, family and clients who experienced trauma, mental and physical illness, addiction, and/or disability gave them a deeper understanding and first-hand experience.

**Figure 5.2.1** Description of Mentor's Experience, Education, and Training.



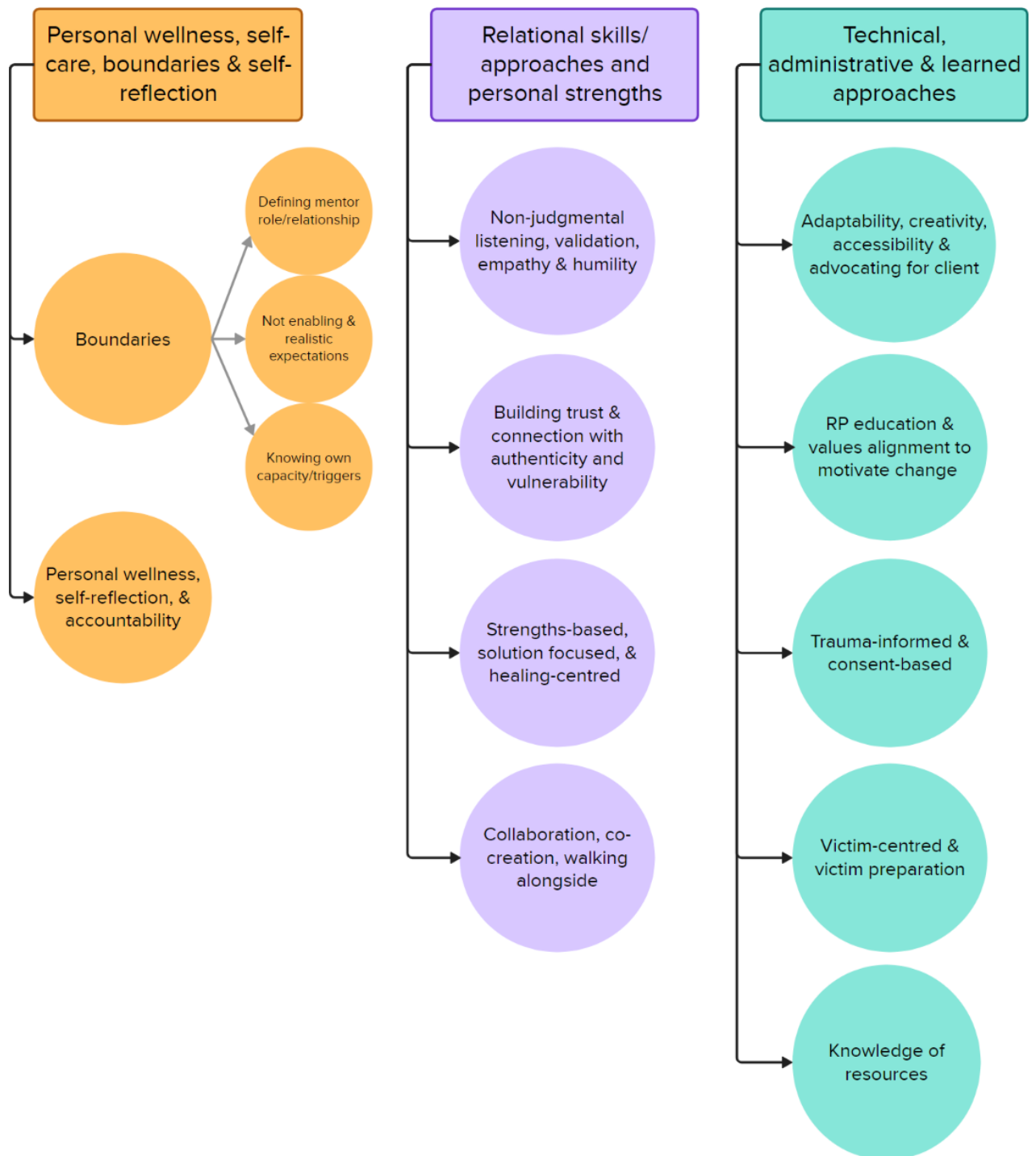
## 5.3 Mentor Profiles: Skills, Strengths, and Approaches

In addition to asking mentors about their skills and training, mentors were also asked how their mentoring approaches changed over time, and to share lessons learned or wisdom that they have gained from their work as a mentor. Finally, mentors were asked if there is anything they would do differently now, versus when they first started. From these interviews, three broad categories of skills, strengths and approaches emerged from the data (see Figure 5.3.1):

- **Personal wellness, self-care, boundaries & self-reflection (2 themes; 3 sub-themes)**
- **Relational skills/approaches and personal strengths (4 themes)**
- **Technical, administrative, and learned approaches (5 themes)**

The three categories overlap and interact with one another (see Appendix A).

**Figure 5.3.1** Description of Mentors' Skills, Strengths and Approaches that Emerged from the Interviews.



For the category **personal wellness, self-care, boundaries & self-reflection**, the major themes that emerged were:

**1) Boundaries**

This is a broad theme that is further parsed out into three sub-themes.

**a) Boundaries with defining the mentor role and the mentor-mentee relationship** (i.e., not their friend, not their counsellor), and gently ending the relationship once they have concluded their participation in the program.

*“You have to be really careful [...] There are restrictions, there are boundaries, and you cannot become their buddy, because if you do, you can't be their mentor. There always needs to be a little bit of space. And so there's sort of a pattern when I come into a relationship with RJ. I come in and we start building the relationship building, building, building....And then there's a point at which, it's usually just after the dialogue, while we're waiting for agreement terms, then it starts going down in the other direction, okay, we're able to let go of this relationship now, because you have your strengths, and I have mine, and we're gonna be okay in the world.” – RJV staff & mentor*

Participants described challenges with not integrating their professional/vocational skills and approaches with their mentoring work. For instance, one staff member described observing mentors-in-training who had backgrounds in law going into “autopilot” with an “adversarial lens” and begin interrogating clients, thus requiring a conscious “retraining” towards different methods and approaches.

*“I've heard from a number of lawyers over the years that they're like, ‘I'm in rehabilitation’, cause it challenges them to have to do and think and act very differently than they're used to, and I think that's something that sometimes people don't expect is how difficult that's going to be when they come from that type of a background.” – RJV staff & mentor*

Those with counselling or mediation backgrounds have acquired skills that can be very useful for mentoring, however they need to be mindful not to step into a counselling or mediating role with clients. They struggled with defining the boundaries with the mentor-mentee relationship compared to their experience with more clarified vocational roles that are bound by ethical practice standards. In addition, often clients have experienced trauma, which would be revealed in the meetings with clients, and the mentors who were counsellors had to be careful not to go too deep, but instead to refer them to see a counsellor who was not them.

*“There are some firmer boundaries in a paid counselling relationship than there are in a mentor relationship. I think I assumed that they would fall under similar lines, I guess, and what I found is that in a mentor role it's like you don't have the same ethical practice standards. And you're kinda creating them as you go”. – RJV mentor*

Similarly, there are risks with applying mediation approaches in an RJ context:

*“Sometimes those backgrounds can actually be a hindrance, because people can struggle to delineate the difference or they fall into patterns of how they do things in another context, like with mediators, sometimes they really struggle to differentiate like conflict and violence right? Like they start using mediation skills to mediate violence. You can't mediate violence, and so as an RJ practitioner, you have to be really clear about that, and if you mediate violence, you mutualize violence [...] It's not a situation where everybody's contributed to the problem and you're there to resolve it in that way. You're talking about a unilateral violation of somebody's life and experience, and so it's a different skill set.” – RJV staff & mentor*

**b) Boundaries with not doing too much for the RP and setting realistic expectations.** When mentors were new to the role they could inadvertently create dynamics where they enable the RP to take on a more passive role, or set-up expectations that are not realistic for the RP to complete and experience frustration and a sense of failure when the expectations are not met.

*“One of the things we often see is mentors, especially in their first cases, working harder than their clients. They so want their client to be successful that they're doing half the work for them, and then they're pissed off when their client isn't doing their part [...]” – RJV staff & mentor*

**c) Boundaries with knowing one's own capacity, limitations, and triggers; staying safe.**

Mentors emphasised the importance of doing the personal work for when they get triggered, so that they can take responsibility for their reaction and manage it without having to place it on the client.

*“For me that is a lot about doing personal work, too, because I do get triggered by things or have reactions to things, but that's that piece about having that really meaty internal practice. There's a part of me that reacts, okay, I see that now. I'm responsible, actually, for dealing with that reaction. I need to manage that reaction. I need to navigate that reaction. That's not my client's job.” – RJV staff & mentor*

It is also important for mentors to prioritise their own personal and emotional safety to ensure they are not at risk of violence. Having training in nonviolent communication and non-violent crisis intervention provided mentors with de-escalation skills for situations where clients could potentially display violence.

*“And there's often a lot of emotion. There's a lot of anger and potential threats, and all sorts of things. And you want to be compassionate, but you need to have clear boundaries.” – RJV mentor*

## **2) Personal wellness, self-reflection, & accountability**

A common theme that repeatedly emerged is the importance of the mentor prioritising their own personal growth, healing, self-reflection, and self-care in order to be able to be effective in the role. Several mentors also emphasised the importance of having compassion for both themselves and their clients:

*“What I've really noticed over the years [...] is that the most critical thing for being well suited to the mentor role is really the internal health of the mentor, the wellness of the mentor, to the extent that they are doing their own healing work, their own accountability work, their own personal work, their own relational work.” – RJV staff & mentor*

All mentors will inevitably be challenged, or triggered/activated at some point, therefore it is essential that they are able to be aware of, and accountable for processing, and managing their own emotions, reactions, and biases, and remain open to receiving feedback, otherwise they risk causing more harm:

*“You have to do a lot of work that's about you, so that when you're working with clients it's not about you. That's really what it comes down to, otherwise your ego, your triggers, your*

*bullshit, your fragility, your whatever it might be, becomes the client's problem unfortunately or the team's problem, or the organisation's problem." – RJV staff & mentor*

One described their method for (temporarily) putting their personal challenges and distractions aside while meeting with a client:

*"And what I need to do each time when I'm going [to meet] a client is I have a teapot, and I take that stuff out of my head and symbolically put it in the teapot, put the lid on for the time that I'm with my client, so that I am fully with them, and not being concerned about myself and what's going on with me." – RJV staff & mentor*

Another shared how they model practising self-care and boundary setting during sessions when they get triggered or overwhelmed:

*"I have been activated in sessions, and I have had to ask for some space and to come back [...] but ultimately it ends up being really nourishing for me to be able to be in a space with somebody where I might be triggered and activated by content that is really personally resident, and to be able to set my own boundaries, do what I need to do, be a full human, and then come back to the work and have that be a part of it. A lot of this work for me is modelling behaviour for people." – RJV staff & mentor*

For **Relational skills/approaches and personal strengths**, the major themes that emerged were:

### **1) Non-judgemental listening, validation, empathy, and humility.**

All of the subjects interviewed, including the AP, emphasised the importance of listening skills and providing clients with space to be heard, acknowledged and validated. Mentors created space for RPs and APs to tell their stories, process emotions, and the opportunity to cultivate a human connection without judgement. Mentors understand that there is always so much more going on in the client's lives beyond the offence and their involvement in the RJ process; they have often faced marginalisation, discrimination and/or stigma and often have not been adequately supported by others in their family or community.

*"So in my experience, what happens is the offence is just one small piece of what people are navigating. They're also navigating all of the social responses to that. So friends, family members, doctors, counsellors, clergy, hospital workers, like everybody who they're interacting with oftentimes are showing up in pretty shitty ways that are quite unhelpful for them. And so being able to speak to that is really key, and hold space for that." – RJV staff & mentor*

Mentors expressed their empathy and compassion for RPs and APs and the importance of trying to withhold their judgements and assumptions. Most mentors demonstrated some understanding of the intersections of lived experience and systems of oppression that have caused clients harm. RPs can often experience oppression and secondary victimisation, especially if they are racialized, disabled or part of another equity-seeking group. Mentors are able to balance a compassionate understanding of the RP's experience, while also continuing to hold them accountable for the decisions they made that led to the offence.

*"[...] all these things that have happened in this person's life, all these different oppressions that they are currently living with, that's gotten them where they are now right, not their*

*fault [...] There's all these other systems to blame in terms of poverty and capitalism, and all of that, but ultimately they still need to be taking responsibility and appropriately making amends in this process.” – RJV mentor*

One mentor described their method of allowing themselves to notice the judgements and assumptions that they perceived, and then implementing a practice of putting these superficial details aside, and choosing to perceive them on a deeper, more human level, as equals.

*“You have to be able to see them and recognize them as being completely equal to you, because they are, and being able to look at the trappings like clothing and dirt under the fingernails, or whatever and just know that that's all superficial [...] Let's find the spirit, the soul of whatever is inside of that person that we wanna connect with.” – RJV staff & mentor*

## **2) Building trust and connection with authenticity and vulnerability**

Mentors described how they “love people” and were “relational” and “curious” people who enjoyed getting to know new people with diverse experiences and backgrounds. Mentors found the work continually engaging because it involves human beings going through a critical moment of change in their lives.

*“...This is typical of helping professions, and different forms of care work. You have an interest in how people operate. This is a job or a role that you will never really get bored of, because it is endlessly engaging, because you're working with human beings, at typically a really critical moment in their lives.” – RJV mentor*

Mentors said it was important to be authentic, empathetic, and vulnerable, and genuinely care about the people they were working with, which helped them build a trusting relationship with their clients.

*“You need to be authentic and empathic, and you need to be able to find your vulnerability. I think it's really important that we find our vulnerability as we're working with people. It also helps people to know that they are dealing with someone who really cares about them, and cares about themselves, as well.” – RJV staff & mentor*

One mentor described how building trust and connection was achieved by seeing the good in people, and that they also trusted the RP, and communicated that to them.

*“I'm just very fortunate that I always see the good in people, and I can see it right away, it's kind of an interesting thing. [...] but I can always see their heart, and as soon as you do that, you build that connection, they trust you. And I trust them.” – RJV staff & mentor*

Two mentors mentioned that they found it useful to “not take themselves too seriously” and insert some (appropriate) humour and lightness to the process to build rapport. One used it as an opportunity to model to the client appropriate use of humour.

One mentor described how they would occasionally self-disclose personal details about their life if they related to what a client was saying, in order to build connection and put themselves on the client's level.

*“And so sometimes I will disclose something about myself, something that I can disclose safely, so that they can see that I'm not this lofty person who's sitting there judging them. [...] If somebody says something about, “oh, I can't concentrate on anything. I just have such a hard time!”. I will say, “Yeah, oh, my gosh! I know exactly what you mean, because I can't*

*either”, and then I give them an example of what I experienced with ADD, and I think it helps.” – RJV staff & mentor*

The same mentor described how when they were new to the role they tried to remain scripted and separated/disconnected from the clients, yet they quickly shifted their approach towards acting more natural, authentic, and conversational.

*“Many years ago, I took myself out of the conversations with the client, and then, later on, I began to realise no, I am a person, too, and in order to have a conversation with someone you need to be in, you need to be in this conversation, as the person you are not as a robot asking a series of questions”. – RJV staff & mentor*

### **3) Strengths-based, solution-focused, and healing-centred**

Several mentors described they use a strengths-based approach that focuses on healing, overcoming shame and supporting the clients to rebuild their own sense of self-esteem.

*“I often use a lot of strengths-based questions to allow them to be able to look into themselves and see that they are whole, they just need a little glue and Scotch tape to put it back together.” -RJV staff & mentor*

One mentor described their process of asking RPs about their positive traits, and taking note of small positive things that the RP might have said or done, and reflecting these favourable actions/traits back to the RP in subsequent sessions. This was especially useful when they were approaching the dialogue and the RP often felt very critical and shameful about themselves and what they did. Reminding the RP of their positive traits helps them overcome unproductive shame and critical sense of self, and instead motivated them towards acting in ways that matched a renewed positive self-image.

*“... I have a question that I usually ask people in the second session, I say, “tell me, what's good about you? [...] I wanna hear, what's the best thing about you?” And they have a very difficult time coming up with things [...] and I will reflect it back to them, like, “you know, when you were talking about your mother the other day, and you were telling me what you did, it seems to me that you're a very kind person. Is it true? Are you a kind person?” and then they sort of go, “Well, I guess I kind of am!”, and that sort of builds them...” – RJV staff & mentor*

Other mentors remained positive and optimistic that the process would be successful for the clients, believing in their client's capacity to transform.

*“You know I fully believe in people's capacity to transform and grow, and I think, as a mentor you're able to see that possibility rather than just hold that as a distant concept or ideal, it becomes a reality.” -RJV mentor*

Several mentors mentioned that, in their attempt to be strengths-based and build up the RP's sense of self-worth, noticed a tendency in themselves and their colleagues, to provide too much praise, when instead it would be more effective to help the clients cultivate a sense of internal self-worth and pride:

*“I think very well-timed praise is sometimes useful, but often, if you don't believe it about yourself, it just kind of bounces off anyways, so I try and find other ways of growing that sense of internal self-worth and pride.” – RJV mentor*

#### 4) Collaboration, co-creation, walking alongside

Mentors described RJ as a collaborative process that requires input, connection, and support from multiple parties, including the AP, RP, RJV team, and the community. Mentors described themselves as “co-creators”, using the term “we” to indicate the level to which they are supporting them through the process. While the process is victim-centred, agreement terms are co-created in the dialogue with input from all circle members and are agreed upon by the RP.

This theme also came through strongly for the AP, who described the mentor as a guide who “walked along beside” her to support her through the process. The AP also felt like she was supported by an entire team at RJV, rather than just the mentor.

The mentors and the AP also appreciated the support that was offered by the broader RJ team, to work through challenges, brainstorm solutions, and receive coaching.

*“Being able to get together as a staff team was really helpful to talk through cases [...] I think that's a great resource to learn from each other, and create space to kind of debrief cases and brainstorm together and problem solve. I think that that's really important and valuable [...] so that we're not isolated and alone in this work.” – RJV staff & mentor*

One mentor felt that it was very important to bring in additional mentors, RJ staff, allies, family members or friends of the APs and RPs who could provide support, and hold RPs accountable. Not only does this share the load for the mentor, but it helps the clients build capacity and strengthen support systems in their lives outside of RJ, and it can be powerful to hear these messages from people they already know and trust.

*“And so I've been able to work with people in a way where it's like, ‘Hey, is there anybody supportive in your life that recognizes that you're a good person, but also understands that you fucked up? Is there anybody that can hold those same truths other than me? If so, who is that person? Maybe I'll do an educational session with them. We're forming a really deep connection here and I'm a little troubled that I may be the only person in your life that's providing the support. And then I can get them to be more of an active ally, or supporter in your life without you having to get them to that place.” – RJV staff & mentor*

The category **technical, administrative & learned approaches** describes skills and approaches that a mentor learned or developed through experience, education and/or training. Major themes that emerged were:

##### 1) Adaptability, creativity, accessibility, and advocating for client

Often a challenge mentors face is balancing the needs and requests from the AP and/or Crown with what the RP is reasonably able to achieve. Mentors need to get to know the RP well enough to anticipate their ability to be successful in achieving the agreement terms without over-committing themselves:

*“Really making sure that people were not over-committing, like, hopefully by the time you get to the dialogue, you know situation well enough, and a bit about their mental capacity [...] how much they can reasonably do, because I do recall I had some really lovely, well-intentioned often pretty passive RPs who, wanting to be people pleasing, would sign up for anything, they would do it all, and there just was no way they were gonna be able to get the hours done, get the apology letter written, do a little bit of counselling... it was just not*

*gonna happen. So to try and help people not overcommit was also important, and advocate for them with that.” – RJV mentor*

Mentors also have to advocate for their client’s needs during dialogues, and attune to their mental capacity, level of anxiety, support needs. One mentor recounted a time they worked with the facilitators to ensure the dialogue was fast and efficient to “avoid it dragging on and losing the attention” of a young, neurodivergent RP. Two mentors emphasised the importance of having regular preparatory meetings scheduled weekly or biweekly in order to keep up the momentum and avoid prolonging the process. Another mentor described how they had a case where an AP from a higher Socioeconomic Status was seeking unreasonable financial restitution from an RP who was living on or below the poverty line and at risk of homelessness. Mentors often needed to “push back” and find different, more trauma-informed, or realistic approaches to address the harm:

*“Sometimes I've found it really necessary to push back and be more creative in an approach. [...] this person has literally no capacity to do a dialogue, and if they do, they are gonna be at risk of harming themselves. So we're not gonna do that. We're literally gonna do something different, and they're still gonna take accountability. They're still gonna acknowledge and understand community impact. There's different ways to get things done, and I think that's something that I've learned throughout this.” – RJV staff & mentor*

All mentors described how they had to be adaptable and use creative methods to ensure the RJ process remained accessible, engaging, and meaningful for clients. Examples included writing apology letters for RPs who have difficulty reading/writing, providing options for participating either in person or remotely (using Zoom video conferencing software), offering cultural support, or language translation. Mentors also described how they frequently customised their approaches to meet the needs of each client, even from meeting-to-meeting:

*“I think my approaches are pretty diverse, depending on the client. I try to read the client and their needs and their abilities, and work within that. So it's not just one approach. It depends on what's going on [...]. Maybe I see a client this week, and the approach will be one way, and next week the approach is going to be something else, depending on what's going on with them.” – RJV mentor*

As mentors gained experience in the role, they became more open-minded and creative when coming up with ideas for agreement terms, and would focus on building upon the natural skills, interests, and strengths of the RP:

*“I'm far more creative now than I used to be. And I think, ‘let's look at what your particular skills are’. For instance, if they're an artist and they've been doing graffiti, then can they do a comic strip and imagine how it would be for the AP to receive this comic strip, [...] so that they have a sense of, ‘oh, it doesn't just have to be narrow agreement terms’.” – RJV mentor*

## **2) RP education and values alignment to motivate change**

Mentors mentioned that educating RPs is essential for shifting behaviours and taking accountability, especially for sexualized violence cases. For these cases, a mentor can meet with an RP more than 25 times, bringing in subjects of consent, respect, sexism, toxic masculinity, cultural norms, patriarchy, privilege, racism, entitlement and making connections to their behaviour. They brought awareness to the survivor experiences, and encouraged them to access books, websites, and other educational materials to explore it deeper. Mentors will encourage agreement terms that are educational in nature, such as taking a course on anger management or nonviolent communication.

*"[...] Education is a primary part of that, and so I often find the mentor role is providing specific forms of education that are needed to address the harms and shift behaviour [...] And so I'm having a lot of conversations with folks about consent, respect, sexism, misogyny, racism, those sorts of things." – RJV staff & mentor*

Another way RJ aims to repair harm done to victims and the community is by addressing the 'root causes' of the harm. In many cases this involves focusing on the healing and rehabilitation of the RP. Mentors described how when they were working with RPs that were experiencing significant shame and negative self-regard, they focused on shifting from crippling shame to productive guilt, by first "building back up" the RP's self-esteem so that they could see themselves in a positive light, with the goal of motivating them towards positive change. The mentors asked the RPs who they want to be, how they want to show up in their community, what they would like to change about who they are, and how they could take steps towards achieving these goals. These ideas are then translated to tangible agreement terms that leverage their strengths and work towards achieving these desired changes:

*"In order for us to keep our communities safe, in order for us to keep individuals' safe, we would like every person to be able to really look inside themselves and see who they are, and see what their abilities are, see what their treasures are inside of them, so that they can grow and be the kind of community member that that we would want, and that, of course, does not include hurting other people." – RJV staff & mentor*

Similarly, another mentor described how they do a values exercise with RPs to bring awareness to what they value and create a self-accountability measure,

*"If somebody says, 'I value community and respect', then that's something that I can gently nudge them on later, like, 'how are you acting in alignment of building towards your values in this process? What can we do to support you to do that?'" – RJV staff & mentor*

### **3) Trauma-informed and consent-based**

Mentors focused on integrating a trauma-informed lens to the work, understanding that many, if not most, of the RJ clients have endured trauma and are experiencing shame. One mentor described how they prioritise consent and model it for clients, by giving them choice and encouraging them to speak up if they feel uncomfortable.

*"... to really prioritise consent and model that for people like, when I ask questions I'm very upfront that, if this question doesn't feel comfortable, let's not answer it. Just giving people choice and options and just coming at things in a very trauma-informed way. That has really changed my approach to mentoring over the years." – RJV staff & mentor*

Another mentor discussed how forcing the retelling of the same story repeatedly (e.g., to police, at RJ intake, and to mentor and facilitators, and again during the dialogue) was "overkill", and caused the RPs to "become numb to it", so this mentor would read the case file notes in advance, and encourage the facilitators to do the same.

### **4) Victim-centred and victim preparation**

Most mentors emphasised always putting the victim (AP) front and centre for everything they do. For 'victimless' crimes, the focus is on the harm done to the broader community. This was a prime motivator for all the work they do, and mentors found it incredibly rewarding and personally healing to witness the needs of victims and survivors being met, as well as the growth and transformation of RPs as they shifted towards taking deep responsibility for the harm they caused.

*“What is important that people understand, is that everything we do is to try to right the wrong. And so the wrong is always up there. It's like there's a tack in it, and it's stuck to the wall, and we always notice that it's there. There's never a time when I have a client that we ignore someone's part in this, [...] I certainly don't support what they've done, and there's never a time when I say, “well, you know, we all make mistakes”. No, I never say that, in fact. I don't even use the word ‘mistake’ ever. I always use the word ‘decision’. And so the victim is always front and centre.” – RJV staff & mentor*

One mentor who worked on complex cases learned that APs can also cause harm in the RJ process, and need to be prepared to participate in a dialogue for it to be successful. RJ is victim-centred, not victim-led, which was an important distinction to learn:

*“Another really tough learning for me has been that APs can absolutely cause harm in the process in a huge way [...] And that's why it's also about preparing them for dialogue. It is not just ‘We'll do what you want’, [...] it is very much an assessment process, and having clear boundaries with affected parties, just as it is with responsible parties. They haven't done wrong, but they can cause harm in a process.” – RJV staff & mentor*

## **5) Knowledge of resources**

Knowledge of community resources available was highlighted as integral for supporting both RPs and APs. Resources include support organisations (counselling, addiction treatment, financial support), school or professional development offerings (e.g., nonviolent communication training), and places where an RP can volunteer to fulfil agreement terms, such as a local nonprofit.

## **5.4 Rewards and Challenges for Mentors**

Mentors were asked what aspects they found rewarding, and what aspects they found challenging. They were also asked how they think the mentor role provides value. The rewarding aspects of the role are inextricably linked to the value and impact, including the transformation and healing that occurs throughout the process.

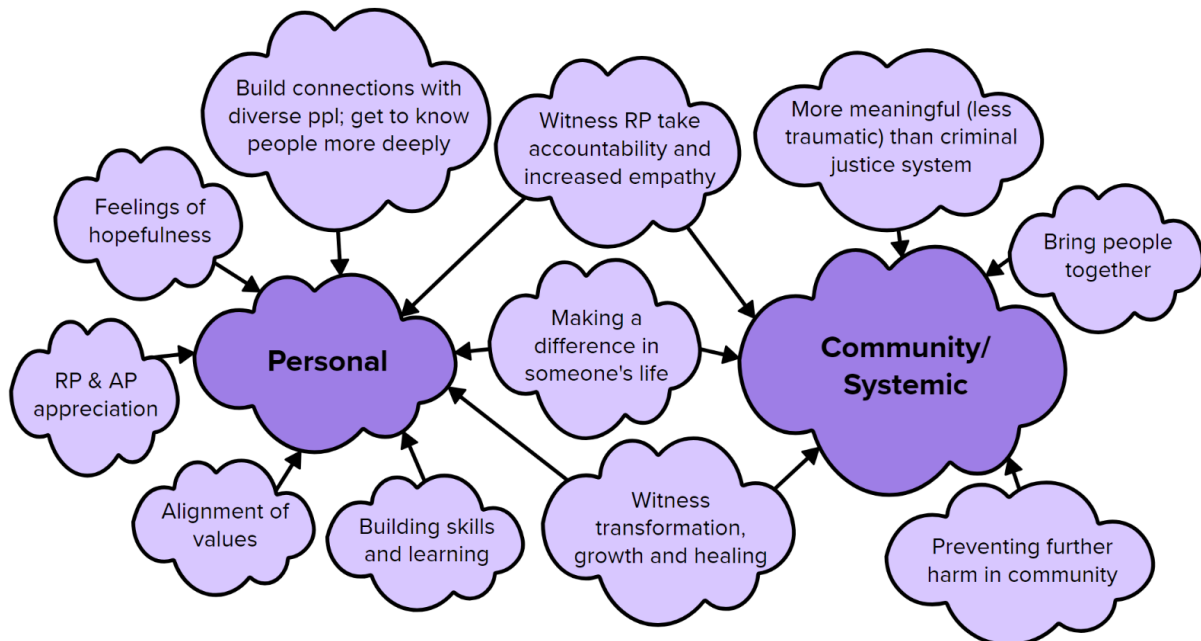
### **5.4.1 Rewarding Aspects of Mentoring**

The themes that emerged for the aspects that mentors found rewarding were categorised into a micro level (personal/ individual) and macro level (community/ systemic). Figure 4.4.1 shows the interconnections and overlap, in that there were many aspects that were both personally rewarding to the mentor, with ripple effects that also positively impacted the larger community and systems.

- 1) Witnessing RP's growth and transformation towards greater accountability, understanding and empathy**
- 2) AP getting needs met, RJ preferred over criminal justice system**
- 3) Connection; getting to know people more deeply**
- 4) Feeling appreciated by clients**

## 5) Training, skill-building, coaching, clinical supervision

Figure 5.4.1 Rewarding Aspects of Mentoring.



### 1) Witnessing RP's growth and transformation towards greater accountability and empathy

Most mentors expressed how rewarding it felt for them to “make a difference in somebody’s life” by witnessing the RPs grow and transform, knowing that they played an essential part in facilitating that transformation.

*“And I think that in itself can be transformative to be a mentor to not just watch it happen, but actually be the one to help encourage that or make that happen for somebody else.” – RJV mentor*

They described how some RP’s began the RJ process with a dismissive and avoidant attitude, minimising the harms, expressing that this process was a “waste of time”, that they “didn’t deserve to be there”, and wanting to “get this over with”. Other mentors worked with RP’s who felt useless, undervalued, disconnected, fearful and experienced “stifling shame”.

After some time, mentors observed the shift in RP’s having greater empathy, awareness and understanding of the impacts of their behaviour, and taking deeper responsibility for the harms they caused. As part of that transformation, mentors observed RPs becoming more aligned with their own values, goals, and vision for who they want to be.

*“I find lots of it rewarding, I think that being able to watch people grow and become [...] more in alignment with who they wanna be and the values that they have, and watching that shift with the time and that increased awareness is incredible, and watching somebody, for instance, who did not empathise at all with someone who they deeply hurt to deeply empathising [...]” – RJV staff & mentor*

One mentor found it rewarding to help RPs understand the “big picture” and integrate recognition of the root causes and “all the things that conspired that led them to the situation they found themselves in”. Another mentor felt that their work mentoring RPs with violent tendencies prevented further harm in the community, which was personally rewarding and healing for them as a survivor of violence,

*“I think it's incredibly rewarding for me, especially as someone who's experienced quite a bit of violence, and to watch people shift those violent tendencies over time, it's incredibly rewarding to think that I potentially supported somebody in essentially preventing harm within the community”. – RJV staff & mentor*

*“They're never the same people that leave RJ. They always are renewed, and feel like they have a chance to start over if they wish.” – RJV staff & mentor*

## **2) Training, skill-building, support, and coaching**

Three mentors mentioned they enjoyed and felt grateful for the training, workshops, and skills learned through their involvement in RJV. All of those interviewed specifically mentioned Dr. Lisa Gunderson's anti-racist workshops as something they were grateful to have the opportunity to participate in. One mentor/staff mentioned how much they appreciated being able to access clinical supervision with a Psychologist. Mentors also appreciated the ongoing support and coaching available to mentors, and how much they learn from one another.

*“The one thing that I've appreciated that I didn't expect so much is the support that's always available. It's so reassuring that if I'm stuck at all I can just phone whoever is in charge of the case.” – mentor*

The topic of training and workshops at RJV will be explored more deeply in section 5.7 Organisational feedback.

## **3) AP getting needs met, RJ preferred over criminal justice system**

Witnessing APs getting their needs met in dialogues provided a lot of satisfaction, hope and motivation for mentors interviewed, who primarily worked with RPs. Several mentioned that victims would be likely face a lot more trauma they had to go through the criminal justice process.

*“So, being a mentor, and watching (the AP) get their needs met in that way and have their hopes met, is really helpful for me [...] to know that I've contributed in some way.” – RJV mentor*

*“I may work with RPs most, but it is all so I can meet the needs of survivors and help them to heal and basically be able to walk in the world in a way, knowing that it's possible for people who've caused harm to shift and transform and it's not their labour to have to make that change happen [...] Yeah, it's very hopeful. So that nourishes me.” – RJV staff & mentor*

## **4) Connection; getting to know people more deeply**

Mentors found it rewarding to connect and build relationships with other people, both with their fellow RJ colleagues as well as with the APs and RPs. One mentor described their RJ colleagues as

“an amazing group of people” who were aligned in their values and dedication, despite coming from diverse backgrounds and ages.

*“And you get to build relationship with people. I've really, really liked a lot of my clients. It's tough work, but it's also incredibly important.” – RJV mentor*

Mentors emphasised how crucial human connection is to the process of growing, healing, and learning, something that is absent from the criminal justice system.

*“I believe that most people learn way better in the context of a relationship than they do in the context of a system. And so I love that about RJ. I love that it brings people together with other people in a very supportive way to take accountability. I think it is more meaningful than most of what happens in the criminal justice system”. – RJV mentor*

*“I think that having a mentor role is necessary to build the type of trusting relationship that is needed to support really, deep changes in somebody’s behaviour and perspective.” – RJV mentor*

*“So it's an emotional journey for (RPs), [...] to have someone listening and providing some feedback as they go through that emotional journey.” – RJV staff & mentor*

#### **5) Feeling appreciated by clients**

Two mentors mentioned how it felt rewarding to hear their client’s express appreciation for them, and recognised that (most of) the mentors and facilitators were volunteering their time.

*“Well, I don't remember a case that has not been really appreciative of the mentors and my work with them. And that's rewarding.” – RJV mentor*

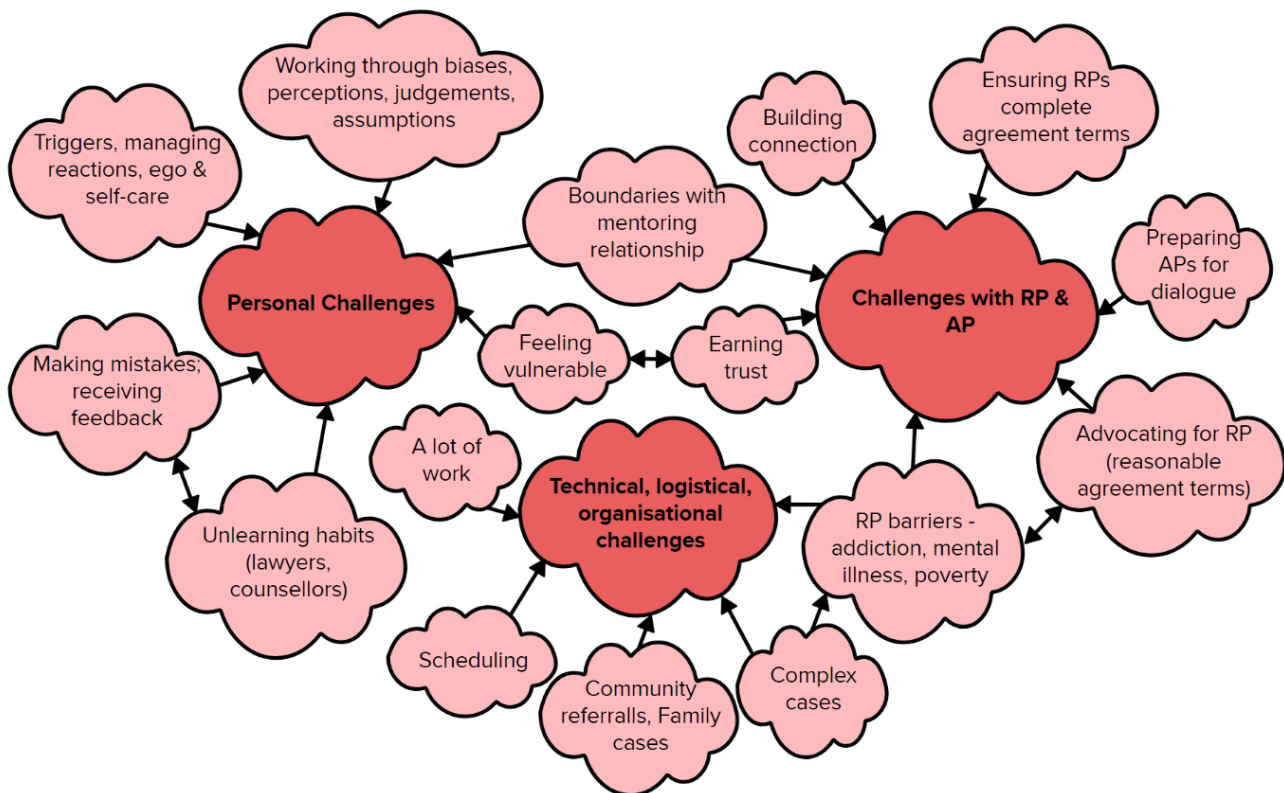
### **5.4.2 Challenging Aspects of Mentoring**

The challenging aspects described by mentors are divided into three broad categories:

- 1) **Mentor’s personal challenges:** setting boundaries, working through personal triggers, having backgrounds in law, counselling, or mediation.
- 2) **Challenges with RPs and APs:** working with RPs with comorbid struggles (i.e., mental illness, addiction, poverty), difficulty connecting with some clients, difficulties with RPs completing agreement terms, complex cases & community referrals and APs causing harm.
- 3) **Technical, logistical, organisational challenges:** Scheduling, difficulties learning new technology, challenges with stamina with long dialogues, desiring an ‘expanded team’ approach to complex cases.

These challenges are explored in more detail throughout other sections, therefore to avoid being repetitive, the general categories and themes will only be listed here.

**Figure 5.4.2 Challenging Aspects of Mentoring**



## 5.5 Impacts and Value of Mentoring:

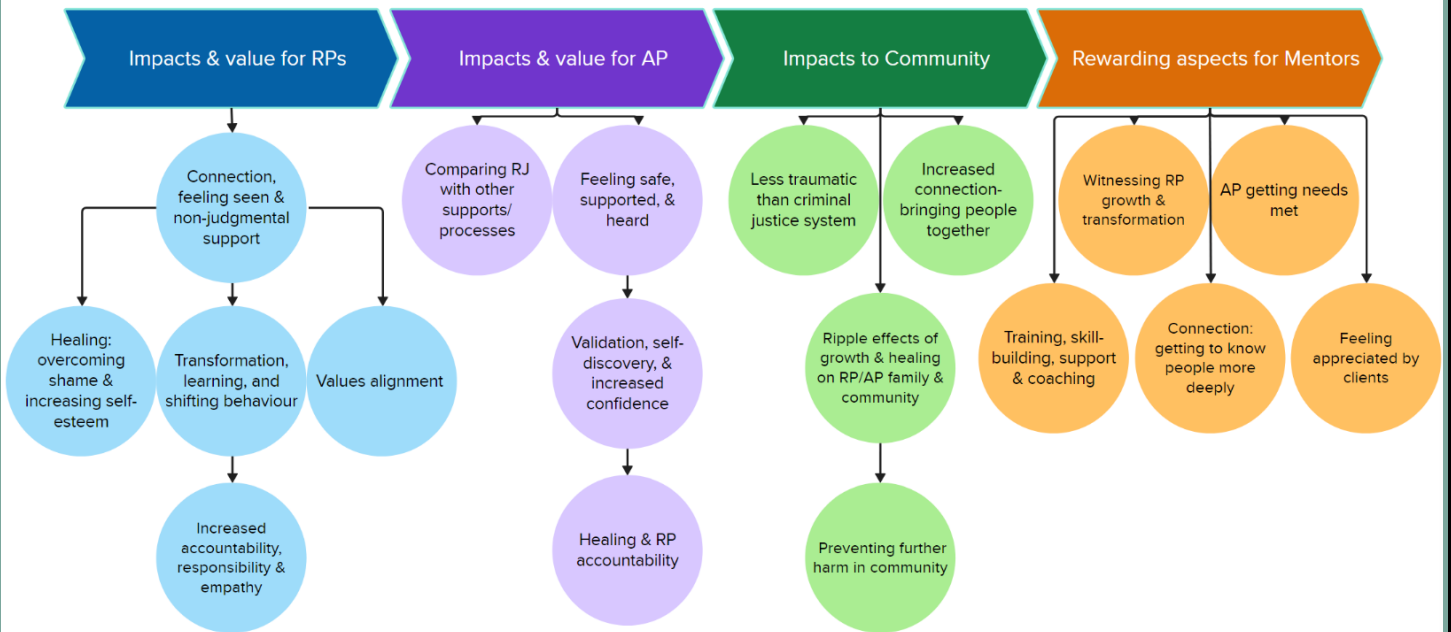
Figure 5.5.1 shows the impact and value of the mentor role across the spectrum of perspectives: impact on RPs, the AP, the community, and impact on mentors. The impacts that are described here also overlap with the rewarding aspects of mentoring described in section 5.4 since the connection, learning and growth of RPs is rewarding for mentors.

A limitation of this study to note is that the impacts of the RJ process on RPs can only be described from the perspective of the mentors, since no RPs were interviewed.

These impacts were described as:

- Connection, feeling seen, and receiving non-judgemental support
- Healing, overcoming shame & increasing self-esteem
- Transformation, learning and shifting behaviour; values alignment
- Increase in accountability, empathy & re-alignment with values

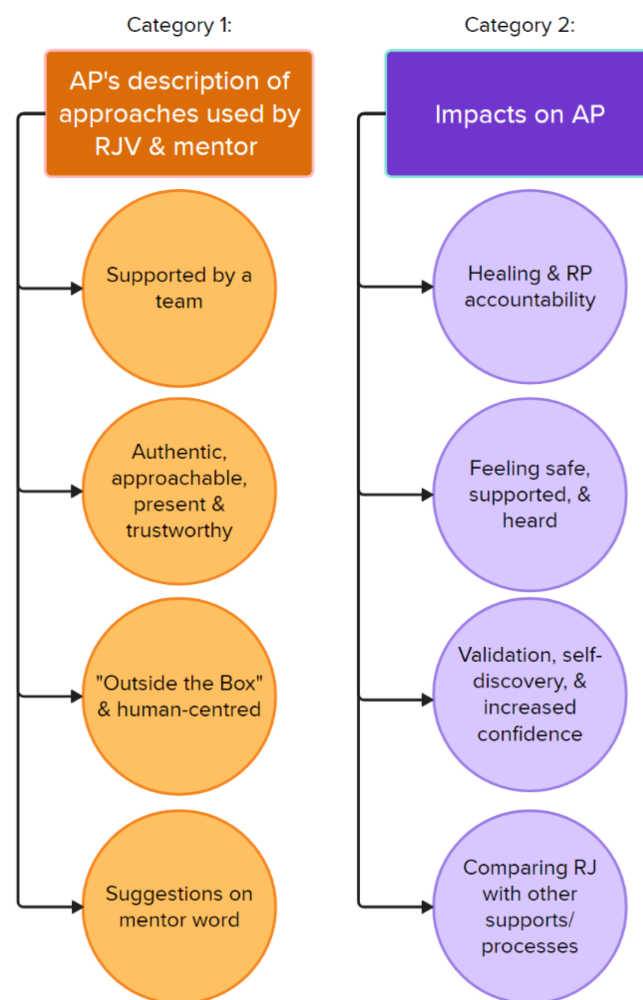
**Figure 5.5.1** *Impacts and Value of Mentoring for RPs, AP, Mentors, and the Community.*



### 5.5.1 AP Impacts

The AP was asked in what ways the mentor supported or guided her through the RJ process, and if there was anything that the mentor said or did that was particularly impactful. For clarity, this AP’s mentor supported her, her family, and the RP, which is somewhat unusual at RJV. Typically, there would be a separate mentor assigned to each the RP and the AP. The AP shared reflections on 1) Her experience with the RJ process and her mentor, and 2) Changes and personal impacts of the RJ process for her and her family.

**Figure 5.5.2** AP’s reflections on Her Experience as well as the Impacts.



**Category 1: AP’s description of mentor and RJV organisation approaches**

**b) Supported by a team**

The AP describes that she felt supported by an “entire team” at RJV, including her mentor, and those involved in intake, and other administrative tasks. She felt “held” by them, and that she could reach out at any time for questions or support.

### **c) Authentic, approachable, present and trustworthy**

The AP reflected that her mentor was present, approachable, thoughtful, and created feelings of emotional safety, trust, unconditional support, and validation. She felt that the mentor made themselves fully available to her to engage in deep conversations. The AP also felt that the mentor used common layperson language (as opposed to overly complicated, or academic), and treated her like an equal who “walked along beside” her throughout the RJ process.

*“Talking to a mentor I wasn't talking to an authoritative figure, I wasn't talking to someone who was intimidating me. It was just equals. It was, ‘I'm here for you’. And it wasn't friendship, but it was just a really safe discussion. It was everyday language. It was talking through, ‘here's what I felt, here's what I'm feeling today.’ And they were like, ‘yeah, I get it, I feel like that some days, too’”. - AP*

The process of coming up with ideas for agreement terms felt prosecutorial to the AP and her family, and they struggled with this task. The AP appreciated that the mentor, who had also been mentoring the RP, was able to provide insightful guidance on appropriate agreement terms. Once the RJ dialogue concluded, the AP knew that their involvement in the program was coming to an end, and she had full trust that the mentor would monitor the RP's progress with completing the agreement terms.

#### **➤ “Outside the box” and human-centred**

The AP had heard of restorative justice and chose it as a preferred process instead of going through the criminal justice system. Going into the process she expected it to be a lot more structured and scripted, and instead was relieved to find that it was much more human-centred, ‘outside of the box’, and focused on the healing needs of the AP(s) and RP,

*“I thought it was going to be quite structured [...] it was nice that it wasn't so structured because it allowed it to morph into what our family needed as victims. And then it allowed what the RP needed too. It was tailored to the needs, and the healing, and what's it gonna take for all of us to get what we needed in that support. And so that was very nice. [...] and it wasn't inside the box. I don't do well inside boxes! (laughs)” - AP*

#### **➤ Suggestions for the word “mentor” as role title**

The AP struggled with the word “mentor”, feeling that it belied the nature of the role, denoting a person of authority or superior knowledge. She felt that the mentor was more of a ‘guide’, ‘guardian’ or ‘anchor’ who guided her through feelings, walked alongside her through the process, and gathered everyone together.

## **Category 2: Impacts on AP**

### **a) Healing and RP accountability**

From the start, the AP didn't feel that it was appropriate to press charges against the RP or have the Crown involved,

*"I'm so thankful for RJ, that option was there for us, because I don't know where we'd be today if we had to go just through Crown. And I say 'we' including the RP." - AP*

Yet at the same time the AP didn't feel that the RP fully understood the impacts of the offense and how it harmed the AP and her family. The AP found it healing to bring everyone together face-to-face and have an opportunity to share this directly with the RP:

*"[...] with RJ I knew that it was gonna be healing. It was going to be coming together with the RP in saying that their understanding of how their action impacted somebody else [...] I think our world needs that healing and just coming together and talking, saying, 'that's how it impacted me'. You have a choice to not do it, so don't do it, and I feel like we're so cut off from each other as humans, like with social media, and then covid, and the isolation, and it was just we're here. I'm speaking with you. You're speaking with me. We're all getting through it. [...] But the RJ process was where it needed to be, for the RP and our family" - AP*

#### **b) Feeling safe, supported, and heard**

The AP described the feeling of relief that she felt when she first connected with her mentor, and realised that this support was available for as long and as often as she needed it, without restriction.

*"And it was just like an anchor, and I could pick up the phone and call. It wasn't prescriptive. It wasn't, 'you just have 4 meetings with the person'. And from the moment that we met through the phone it was just this instant, sigh, they've got me." - AP*

In addition to scheduling check-in meetings, the mentor also made themselves available for additional calls when the AP needed to talk. The mentor supported the AP in processing her thoughts, emotions, and reactions:

*"It was knowing that the mentor was there, whether it was a 5 min conversation. Oh, my gosh! Sometimes we'd talk for an hour and a half, like it was just wonderful to know that the mentor was there to support and to work through some of these thoughts. Because as a victim, I don't know what to do with those feelings that have been brought against me, cause I haven't dealt with that before" - AP*

#### **c) Validation, self-discovery, and increased confidence**

The mentor in the AP's case also mentored several of her family members individually as well as the RP. The AP found it incredibly valuable that the mentor knew each individual's story and could help the family understand and reconcile their different perspectives and reactions to the same offence. This helped the AP feel validated and less 'crazy' in their reactions to the event.

*"...and what was interesting in our case was [...] the way each person in our family reacted to (the offence) was crazy. So different, and that was a hard one to deal with, because without a mentor, and without restorative justice, probably today, we'd still within the family, be*

*arguing about how it impacted us [...] But with the mentor, speaking with each family person individually, and understanding the background and the reaction to the action taken upon us, the mentor was able to bring us together, understanding how we all reacted to that action. So I knew when I spoke to the mentor that I wasn't crazy because I had this different reaction than other members of my family.” – AP*

The AP used the word “discovery” to describe her process of learning about her own thoughts and reactions to events. In conversation with her mentor, she gained tools to pause and reflect on the broader context around the behaviours of others, becoming more compassionate, understanding, and reflective, and less reactive and personally offended. She gained a stronger ability to become aware of, name and understand her feelings.

The AP felt more confident with speaking about her feelings and lived experiences, and with this confidence she joined a support group, something she said she likely would not have done if it weren't for the RJ experience.

#### **d) Comparing RJ with other supports/ processes**

The AP had accessed other supports such as victim services, a counsellor and a social worker, yet described the support she received from RJ and the process as a whole as feeling much more natural, healing, forgiving, and human-centred.

*“In comparison to dealing with the Crown before we got to restorative justice, we had victim services, and I had support. We had a counsellor and the social worker, but when I got to restorative justice it just felt just so much more natural, and just that much more human and that much more, ‘Let's just talk about the people’” - AP*

## **5.6 Intersectionality, Cultural Safety, Anti-Oppressive Approaches**

One of the secondary research questions asks:

To what extent are mentors aware of, and apply concepts of cultural safety, intersectionality, and anti-oppressive approaches into their practice, and what additional training and support might they need in these areas?

To address this research question, mentors and staff were asked the following questions:

- 1) How do you approach interacting with an RP or AP who is different from you or mainstream society, or may be considered marginalised in terms of one or more of the following aspects: culture, language, gender, ethnicity, religion, class, age, physical or intellectual ability, and/or lived experience?
- 2) How aware are you of how your own culture, language beliefs, biases, assumptions, experiences, power, and privilege might influence your interactions with APs and RPs?
- 3) Do you think you have any ‘blind spots’ (areas for improvement or learning)?
- 4) What have you learned, and how have these reflections changed your approach to mentoring?

- 5) What can you do individually, and can RJV do as an organisation, to create safe spaces for RPs and APs that are free from judgement, discrimination, racial reductionism, and improve client's experiences of feeling safe, heard, respected, and acknowledged?

Themes that emerged from these questions were:

**4.6.1 Building Trust and Safety Through Listening, Adapting, Avoiding Assumptions & Self-Awareness (of Privilege, Power, Bias)**

**4.6.2 Accountable for Mistakes, Humility, Able to Receive Feedback, Self-Directed Learning**

**4.6.3 Organisational Reflections and Feedback (on Anti-Racism, Inclusion and Increasing Diversity)**

**5.6.1 Building Trust and Safety Through Listening, Adapting, Avoiding Assumptions and Self-Awareness (of Privilege, Power, Bias)**

Most mentors expressed an awareness of their own privilege, social positioning, power, and potential 'blind spots' (unconscious bias), and how their biases might impact the interactions with clients:

*"And you know all of these things, my culture, beliefs, biases, experiences, power, privilege are always influencing my interactions with clients all the time. I have many blind spots." – RJV mentor*

Some mentors would intentionally bring awareness to the differences between them and their clients and openly acknowledge the power dynamics at play. Naming this discomfort, drawing attention to the power dynamics, asking clients about their experience, and creating space to listen were methods used by mentors to increase client's sense of safety, and build rapport and trust in an authentic way:

*"I've definitely been in sessions with people where I'm like, yeah, there's some discomfort here. And I think because we are so different, like visibly different. And so let's talk about that. Actually, if you give space to that, people typically are like, 'Oh, my God, I'm so relieved! Thank you. You're not trying to convince me that you're a safe person'. I see that there are some differences in my experience here, and that's probably gonna show up when we work together. So let's create an open space to talk about it, and acknowledge what those limitations might be, and where there might be possibilities to garner more trust in ways that feel accessible for you.'" – RJV staff & mentor*

*"If someone is [...] different in terms of their culture or their skin colour, or anything like that, I would often ask [...] and just see what that experience is like for them. Because I just don't know. [...] And it's not being spoken about. So I tend to try and just name it and see if they are open to having a conversation, [...] So they are impacted by it, probably on a regular basis, if not daily. But no one has ever just said, 'what is that like? Or how has that affected how you see the world?', and see where it goes." – RJV mentor*

Mentors understand that trust must be earned. Part of the process of building trust involves listening to people's experiences, and using a trauma-informed approach by asking them permission and consent before discussing certain topics.

*"My approach is that we don't go anywhere without permission. [...] and also understanding that trust is earned, trust is not assumed, especially people who have experienced high levels of marginalisation [...] It's not personal. Trust is earned, and we need to ask permission to go places." – RJV staff & mentor*

One mentor described their self-awareness of their own limitations due to their age; they chose not to work with clients who were English language learners since they found it too difficult to understand them. In addition, they avoided cases involving teenagers or young adults as they found it challenging to relate and build rapport.

mentors learned to make a conscious effort to avoid imposing assumptions or expectations onto their clients. They tried to approach them with curiosity, respecting that clients are the experts in their own lives:

*"...Just a huge amount of humility, and by that I mean [...] Our clients are the experts in their own lives, and we have no right to impose our own lived experiences and beliefs on theirs [...] it's really this way of just being there and learning and being humble and being present and being curious and really wanting to understand this person for who they are. They provide this opportunity to cross over the bridge and be in their world in a way, and that just requires a lot of letting go of stuff that we all carry..." – RJV staff & mentor*

Even if the mentors may have similar identities or lived experience as the clients, they are cautious about assuming that they understand the client's perspective.

*"I am transgender, and I have had transgender clients, just because they're transgender does not mean I know what being trans or gender diverse means to them [...] I don't know anything about this person, I don't know what gender means to them, so I have no ownership over that, even if I claim a similar identity or experience..." – RJV staff & mentor*

Mentors would also adapt their approaches in response to their client's needs. For instance, one mentor would speak slower and use more 'plain language' with certain clients to increase comprehension in communication. Others were cautious about the language they used to ensure it was inclusive and didn't further diminish or stigmatise people, for example, using client's correct pronouns. A few found that their personal experiences increased their understanding and empathy of certain experiences. For instance, one mentor's personal connection with a friend with a disability increased their empathy and awareness of accessibility needs, while another mentor's own experience with neurodiversity helped them to build rapport with neurodiverse clients.

## 5.6.2 Accountable for Mistakes, Humility, Able to Receive Feedback, Self-Directed Learning

To be effective in this work, it is essential that mentors have a "deep internal practice", and prioritise personal wellness, growth, reflection, humility, and accountability. This theme also emerged in the description of the mentor's skills, strengths, and approaches. There is a recognition that all mentors in the role will inevitably be triggered or challenged at some point, and they must therefore have the

courage to receive critical feedback and take accountability for their reactions and learning, otherwise they risk causing more harm:

*“I really believe in the idea of co-accountability [...] I don't wanna minimise serious and violent harm, but the reality is that we all cause harm. We all have things in our lives that we need to work on and take accountability for, and to the extent that we think we're different than our clients that we think we're not capable of or we are digging deep, and finding those places in ourselves where we still have to grow and have to learn” – RJV staff & mentor*

*“And it takes courage, if someone says to you, “I think you're biased in this way, and that concerns me” it takes a lot of courage to be able to actually talk about that...” – RJV mentor*

Mentors acknowledged that the process of learning and growing is endless, and that the more they learn, the less they know. One mentor discussed how much they learned from a podcast about Indigenous experiences, and another benefited from the San'yas Anti-Racism Indigenous Cultural Safety Training Program.

*“Yeah, so for me personally, this is a massive area of personal growth and exploration that honestly will never end” – RJV staff & mentor*

*“Yeah, it's like, the more you learn, the more you realise how much you don't know...” – RJV mentor*

### 5.6.3 Organisational Reflections and Feedback on Anti-Racism, Inclusion and Increasing Diversity

RJV had dedicated a lot of time in recent years to making organisational changes towards integrating trauma-informed practice, anti-oppression, anti-racism, decolonisation, and cultural safety into the organisation. They aim to create accessible opportunities to bring in more diverse staff, volunteers, and board members, with the understanding that first they need to cultivate an organisational culture where racialized people and those with diverse experiences feel welcome and safe, as currently “there is a lot of whiteness” and “fragility”. As a result, RJV is shifting their focus towards building internal (personal) skills for mentors and staff versus just client-focused skills. They acknowledge that RJV has not always worked well for all marginalised communities and they are interested in listening to the needs expressed by the community.

*“So we were jumping the gun and being like, “yeah, we're gonna try and diversify!” and people we are working with are like, “oh, no, no, you are not ready for that!”. We need to first be an organisation that can hold a diverse population, in terms of being welcoming, being safe [...] we have to be just at a better place organizationally, to be able to hold more diversity before we invite that diversity through our doors.” – RJV staff & mentor*

*“I think as an organisation, we are going through a change process which is actually less about developing skills focused on the clients and more about working on ourselves [...] I really think that at the heart of all this stuff is both individual and organisational capacity to sit with discomfort, to receive feedback, to deal with fragility, which is actually a really significant issue that we've observed here” – RJV staff & mentor*

RJV brought in an Indigenous consultant Chaw-win-is Ogilvie, and an anti-racism consultant Dr. Lisa Gunderson and implemented a mandatory book club for all staff and volunteers, which includes the titles by Author Robin DiAngelo *White Fragility* (2018) and *Nice Racism* (2021). Accompanying the book club are facilitated affinity groups separated out into three different levels: a group for BIPOC members (Black, Indigenous and People of Colour) , and two non-BIPOC groups: a beginner group, which is a gentle introduction to these concepts, and an advanced group for folks who are already quite familiar and are ready to dig in deeper and sit in more discomfort. Part-way through, they will undertake a 21 day challenge involving the consumption of daily content, information, or education about indigeneity or racialized identities, such as watching a Netflix show, listening to a podcast, or reading an article.

*“As an organisation, the hard work for us is all of the white people getting really comfortable, talking about and exploring their whiteness. That for us is just the starting point right and doing that in a way that isn't about blaming, shaming, stigmatising, you know, creating more white fragility, or angst, or rejection of these concepts...” – RJV staff & mentor*

One mentor reflected that while she has done a lot of training, reflection and reading, she does not get the opportunity to interact with or forge relationships with many racialized people.

*“My world is very white, and so I find it harder to do some of that work just because there are not very many areas in my life where I get opportunities to [...] interact. I don't have very many clients of colour, and so that is a harder one to learn more.. like I do a lot of trainings, and do a lot of readings, but there's less opportunity to live that experience in my life. And with RJ too, it's a very white organisation that reflects probably a lot of the demographics of Victoria. So that's an ongoing one that I struggle with.” – RJV mentor*

## 5.7 Organisational Feedback

These themes emerged from organisational-level reflections and feedback from mentors & staff, including an interview with a staff member in a leadership role. Themes include reflections, feedback, and/or recommendations on the following:

### 5.7.1 Shift to Complex Cases Over Time

### 5.7.2 Training and Workshops

### 5.7.3 Client Intake and Screening Mentor Applicants

### 5.7.4 Culture of Support, Teamwork & Upholding RJV Values

### 5.7.5 “Mentor” as Role Title

#### 5.7.1 Shift to Complex Cases Over Time

Most mentors, whether volunteer or staff, who were interviewed described a noticeable shift in the organisation taking on more serious harms and complex cases. In the past, the organisation primarily

dealt with property-related or non-violent, non-person offences (vandalism, shoplifting, drug possession), with some violent crime. However, that has now reversed, with the most common offences being violent crimes, and the least common being non-person or property-related offences.

This shift in case severity has resulted in a significant change to what is expected of the mentor role, requiring more demands on their time, capacity, and more specialised training, skills, and expertise:

*“It significantly changes the (mentor) role because all of a sudden the vast majority of cases that mentors are working on are going to require a lot more time, a lot more expertise, a lot more capacity [...] And so that definitely changes things... we now have a bunch of staff resources that go into the mentor role because it's so important, and it's a big ask for volunteers, ‘Do you want to work on a case for a year, that's gonna be really hard, trigger the shit out of you?’” – RJV staff & mentor*

The leadership staff member offered several theories as to why this shift occurred in recent years:

- RJV now serves an additional municipality (Saanich), which has more Crown referrals.
- Social justice movements such as Black Lives Matter cast a critical lens on criminal justice systems, so more people avoid reporting harms to the police, and are instead arriving at RJ as a community referral (self-referral).
- Recent legal changes to the Alternative Measures section of the *Criminal Code* (Criminal Code of Canada, 2024). Alternative measures are programs authorised under section 717 of the *Criminal Code* and include restorative justice programs (among others). Under this new policy, “concerning specific offences, before approving a criminal charge, Crown Counsel should consider every reasonable alternative to prosecution for every potential accused person” (British Columbia Prosecution Service, 2023, p.1). Crown Counsel are directed to pay particular attention to the circumstances of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit persons. Prosecution must work under the principle of restraint, choosing the least intensive intervention, and find alternatives to prosecution in every instance, including instances of serious and violent crime. This policy has resulted in increased referrals to RJ programs.
- The local loss prevention services changed their protocols to what they call “capture and release”, meaning they no longer involve police for shoplifting incidents, they now take their product back and ban the customer from the store. This resulted in a significant decrease in shoplifting referrals to RJV.
- The Covid-19 Pandemic caused a backlog in the court system, likely resulting in more referrals to RJV.

These reasons listed for the shift towards more complex and serious offence referrals to RJV are theories provided by RJV staff members and have not been verified or deeply researched as this is beyond the scope for this paper.

This shift in case severity further highlights the importance of the mentor role as essential to the practice of working with violent harms.

*“I would never feel comfortable or confident doing the type of work that we're doing in the community without mentorship, like it has become in many ways a cornerstone of our practice, and it has become really one of the things that we're known for, [...] it really*

*differentiates our approach from other restorative justice programs. And what we've learned is in contrast to those programs, we have the capacity to safely, meaningfully, ethically, do serious crime and violent crime work.” – RJV staff & mentor*

## 5.7.2 Training and Workshops

Mentors were asked questions about RJV training and resources and what kinds of additional training or resources they would like to see offered by RJV:

“How have the training(s) and resources provided by RJV adequately prepared you for your work as a mentor? How could they be improved?”, and “Are there any gaps in your own knowledge, skills or experience that you would like to see RJV offer additional training or resources on to help you or your fellow mentors be more effective in the role?”

RJV already has a practice of periodically asking staff and volunteers about the kinds of training and educational opportunities they would like to see offered, and have compiled a long list for consideration. RJV staff and leadership are aware there are gaps in training. The skills required to be effective in the role are broad and multi-disciplinary, and it is challenging to provide training to adequately prepare mentors, especially for those working on complex cases.

*“I think we provide lots of ongoing training and advanced training and opportunities to learn. But the reality is for those serious offences, even our most experienced and skilled folks it’s often still over their head. Those cases, they’re just high risk, high reward. Like, they just kind of suck, they’re really hard.” – RJV staff & mentor*

Several staff members reflected that there are limits to what can reasonably be expected of volunteers, which is why the organisation is attempting to secure funding to hire more staff to take on complex cases involving serious/violent harm. Approximately 50% of the cases RJV takes on are relatively straightforward and simple, and for those cases mentors are mostly adequately prepared.

The organisation has received funding to invest in a specialised sexualized violence training for mentors, involving 25 hours of training and a year long community of practice. RJV also offered two four-hour training sessions to all volunteers on sexualized violence, consent, and responding to disclosures, due to how frequently the topic of sexualized violence emerges in casework.

*“...Even if volunteers don't want to work on sexualized violence cases, we have a lot of clients in the process of working with them on another offence, or disclosing or speaking to sexualized violence that they've committed or they've experienced...” – RJV staff & mentor*

### **a. Positive Feedback on Training and Workshops**

All mentors were very satisfied and grateful for the training and workshops offered by RJV. Specifically mentioned and praised was the anti-racism training offered by ‘Dr. G’ (Dr. Lisa Gunderson, Racial Equity Consultant, Anti-Racist Facilitator & Clinical Psychologist). Mentors also appreciated the opportunity for practising scenarios through role play, and enjoyed workshops on the topics of cultural competency, shame, and hopelessness.

*“I thought they did an excellent job in terms of finding good presenters, good organisations, [...] with providing high quality trainings.” – RJV mentor*

*“I have worked with other organisations that are miles behind. Whereas RJV is asking the questions and being brave enough to do the (anti-racist) consulting [...] I think that's brave to be able to bring someone in like that. Who's gonna basically say, ‘this is what you can do better’, or ‘these are the questions you need to be asking’...” – RJV mentor*

*“I really appreciated doing scenarios. You know people love or hate them, but for me to be able to watch and engage in scenario practice to clarify what my role would be as a caseworker, as a mentor. I found that to be helpful.” – RJV staff & mentor*

#### **b. Critical Feedback and Suggestions for Improvement**

One mentor who joined RJV during the pandemic felt that the experience would have been “richer and deeper” if they were able to do the training in person instead of online over Zoom.

The staff interviewed were aware that there was a big expectation for volunteers to attend mandatory training, and were mindful of not asking too much of volunteers, who often have other life, volunteer or work commitments, and might not have capacity to do lots of training.

*“The problem is that with volunteers, most volunteers may have other lives, you know, like work, or they may be volunteering elsewhere, what have you. So they don't have the time. When you're a staff member, you can put an expectation on learning with your colleagues, because this is your job, this is what you're supposed to be doing, and it's important that we do this well.” – RJV staff & mentor*

One mentor felt that the mandatory trainings could be announced with more notice. Another wanted to see trainings that were more structured and had clearer learning outcomes that were directly connected to the work:

*“I would love to see more structured trainings that have very clear learning outcomes and curriculum attached that is consistently updated and reviewed, I would just love to see more of that at RJV. I think our trainings are good, but they could be improved on just by updating them and having some clear outcomes for folks, and being transparent about that. How we're hoping certain trainings improve the work that they do as mentors with clients.” – RJV staff & mentor*

Other suggestions for training: Supporting those with substance use and addiction, self-compassion, working with individuals with neurodiversity, autism, ADHD, traumatic brain injuries and/or cognitive disabilities, and trans-inclusive/gender inclusive training. One mentor/staff wanted to see more clear guidance on boundary setting (both physical and emotional), as they witnessed too much variability in approaches and felt it should be more clearly integrated in their procedures.

### **5.7.3 Client Intake and Screening Mentor Applicants**

For client intake, one staff member learned the importance of being very transparent on the limitations and expectations of the RJ program, and the added complexity and risk with accepting community referrals. Another mentor appreciated the intake process and saw it as a useful opportunity to gather information about clients that can be passed onto the mentor and facilitator to better prepare before meeting them.

For applicants to RJ, only about half of those who apply to volunteer at RJV are accepted into the program. One challenge staff encounter is that some apply to the role with unrealistic, “romantic” intentions, driven by ego and a desire to act as a “saviour”:

*“One of the things I've noticed is if anybody comes in with romanticised views, there's gonna be a fall from grace inevitably, it's gonna suck for them. It's gonna suck for us. So that's a red flag, this sense of the saviour mentality [...] And what we want is people having really reasonable expectations, and where they're not putting their need to feel good about themselves or their own ego as being the important thing about being in this role.” – RJV staff & mentor*

The staff appreciated applications from people from diverse backgrounds, who brought unique strengths, educational knowledge, and approaches to the work:

*“We really appreciate the different strengths that people bring to this work, and they're different approaches. Some people, again, are really soft and gentle in approach, and some people are a little bit more direct, and firm, and maybe do come from a law background or whatever, but that is a wonderful strength.” – RJV staff & mentor*

#### 5.7.4 Culture of Support, Teamwork & Upholding RJV Values

##### **a) Positive Feedback:**

Everyone who was interviewed mentioned their appreciation of the support and care that they felt was always available from RJV. They appreciated the opportunities for debriefing, brainstorming, and coaching which helped them work through challenges and feel less isolated in the work. Feeling challenged and triggered is expected in the role, so RJV staff made a point to support staff and work through conflict and difficulties in a healthy way.

*“There's a culture around that. And you know, ego can be a part of it, and our own stuff can get triggered, and so it's just important for us that we're just supporting the mentors as they navigate all the stuff, and we expect that there's gonna be challenges and expectation differences, and mismatches and tension, and all that sort of stuff. It's more about how we respond to it than about it being a reality in the first place.” – RJV staff & mentor*

Several staff members reflected on the shift over time away from being connected to the criminal justice system (i.e., using punitive and coercive approaches) towards consciously striving to embody RJ values.

*“Something that is unique about RJV is that I think people, volunteers included, are really familiar with the values of restorative justice, and they really hold them up and try to practise them as much as possible [...] Not perfectly like, I fucked up, and I'm not an RJ robot, but I think there's room and spaciousness to re-address harm and conflict, even engage in conflict in a healthier way, and with a lot of understanding and care at the heart of that. But I've not found it at other workplaces or volunteer places, so I think that's pretty cool.” – RJV staff & mentor*

##### **b) Critical Feedback & Recommendations**

One staff member who worked on complex cases strongly recommended using a more integrated team approach when supporting RPs, especially for cases involving violence or sexual harm. In this model, the RP would be supported and guided by several different mentors, professionals or community supporters with specialised knowledge and expertise in different areas. They felt that this would lessen the workload and burden for one person, provide specialised support, and would strengthen the RP's rehabilitation by hearing these messages from different people.

A few wanted more opportunities to connect with their colleagues/volunteers. One mentioned being there for 3 years and knowing only half of the volunteers, which made it challenging to pair clients with volunteers.

### 5.7.5 “Mentor” Word as Role Title

An RJV leadership staff member who was interviewed agreed that the role title “mentor” was inadequate, yet struggled to come up with a suitable alternative. In intake or intro sessions they would often describe the nature of the role first before using the term, to avoid confusion.

*“One of the things that I've always really struggled with in defining the mentor role is that mentor is like a shitty name, just straight up crap. It's horrible, people hate it. They think of 'big brothers and big sisters', or something. We've really struggled to have a better word. So what I usually end up doing when I'm defining it to people over the phone or at intake meetings [...] is I often just try and explain it as... this is a support person for you, just to help you, that sort of thing, and then I'll usually say, and we call that role “mentor”, because I want them to know. And then I usually acknowledge that it's not a great term, and it's the best we've found...what I would really love is just to have a new word for it [...]. It's so tricky!” – RJV staff & mentor*

This sentiment is also reflected in the AP interview, who felt their mentor was more of a ‘guide’ or ‘anchor’.

*“Yeah, well, I found that I struggled with (the word) “mentor”, too. That's why I needed a definition....Not a guide, not a leader. I used the word ‘anchor’. I think mentor denotes a person of more knowing, like it still has a bit of an authority to it. Cause somebody who mentors somebody takes them through, but has a bit more knowledge than they do. But this was more of a guide. It was more of a ‘I'll walk along beside you, and we'll get through this...I'll look after the process and bring everyone together.’ Because the mentor also brought us all together. There might be an Indigenous word or more organic word. Mentor is kind of more academic” - AP*

#### **Mentor Role Description (on Website)**

Interview participants were shown the current description of the mentor roles as they appear on the RJV website (see Appendix G) and asked if they felt accurate or required changes.

The AP was in full agreement that the description felt accurate as it was in its current state. Most mentors agreed that the description of the mentor role as it is currently on the RJV website is mostly an accurate description of the role, however, they acknowledged the difficulty of finding a role

description that accurately captures the broad variety of cases that RJV takes on. To most, the current description felt more accurate for non-person harms such as shoplifting, but fell short for cases involving violent crime or sexual assault, which could last a year or longer and involve significantly more preparation.

RJV staff suggested that the definition could be improved upon to include the complex cases, seeing as RJV has seen an increase in these cases.

*“I don't think I've ever had a case where I only attended one meeting with one person because I was working more complex cases, so I guess technically, that's right, But I think if that's on the website, people might think that, 'Oh, hey, This will be a quick process', but I mean, if you're here for multiple accounts of sexualized violence or sexual assault, it ain't gonna be one meeting.” – RJV staff & mentor*

## 5.8 Summary

These findings outlined the themes that emerged from the interviews with the mentors, staff and AP. Mentors/staff personal, vocational/volunteer, and educational experiences were summarised. Mentors/staff skills, strengths and approaches were mapped into three broad categories: 1) Personal wellness, self-care, boundaries & self-reflection, 2) Relational skills/approaches and personal strengths, and 3) Technical, administrative, and learned approaches. Next, rewarding and challenging aspects of mentoring were discussed. Rewarding aspects included positive impacts to individuals (micro) and the community (macro) level, and mentors struggled with personal challenges, difficulties with RPs and APs as well as logistical, technical, and organisational challenges. The impact and value of the mentor role was shown for the AP, RPs, the community, and the mentor. The AP's experience of RJ and the impact it had on her was summarised into two categories: The personal impact the process had on her, and her description of the approaches used by RJV and her mentor. Themes were discussed regarding questions on intersectionality, cultural safety and anti-oppressive approaches used by mentors and the organisation. Finally, organisational feedback was gathered from mentors and the AP, both positive and constructive, in order to develop recommendations for improving RJV's culture, training/workshops, intake and screening, description of the mentor role, and alternatives to the mentor role title.

## 6 Discussion & Analysis

### 6.1 Introduction

This section will build on the key findings from the interviews, literature review and jurisdictional scan of RJ organisations in consideration of the project's research questions, with the intention of deepening understanding of the mentor role at RJV to strengthen its effectiveness. Unexpected findings are discussed as well as suggestions for future research. The distinctiveness of the mentor role at RJV was validated by the literature and scan, which uncovered almost no examples of a role that closely resembled the mentor role. Therefore, the analysis was expanded to include RJ practitioner roles that were involved in supporting or guiding APs and/or RPs, with a primary focus on the 'preparation phase' (i.e., the process of preparing victims/offenders for the RJ dialogue circle). These practitioner roles were analysed for their approaches, training, skills, and AP/RP outcomes and how they deviated and aligned with the themes that emerged from the interviews. These 'supportive practitioner roles'/mentor-like roles were highlighted for being multifaceted, and adaptive, with robust educational backgrounds, and strong interpersonal and practical skills, while balancing self-care and maintaining self-awareness. The mentor interviews align with the literature in emphasizing the transformative potential of these supportive mentor-like RJ roles and their significant impact on participants and the community. This research offers a unique glimpse into a severely under-researched area of RJ practice, and provides additional evidence to bolster its value and impact, as well as uncovering specific approaches, skills, and strengths that mentors and RJ practitioners bring to this work, both individually and collectively. The analysis included in this section, as well as in Section 7 Recommendations, provides RJV with practical guidance and considerations for how to continue to improve the experience of mentors and outcomes for clients, as well as areas where more research is needed. This section can serve as foundation for RJ organisations who are considering including a mentor-like role in their RJ programming.

### 6.2 Purpose, Value, and Impact of the Mentor Role:

From the interviews, the impact of the mentor role touched all individuals involved in the process (mentors, RPs, APs), including the broader community (see Figure 2.5.1). As is reflected in Souza & Dhimi's (2008) research on RJ volunteers, RJV mentors were motivated by a combination of personal, and humanitarian/altruistic drives. Mentors benefited from the social connections, learning/training opportunities, and derived hope, meaning, and satisfaction from witnessing the client growth and transformation. When mentors in an RJ process are able to facilitate transformative shifts in RP's attitude, understanding and empathy, not only does this promote AP healing, but it can also serve as an enduring mechanism for protecting the community from future harm.

Mentors provided explanations for how this transformation occurs, and this is consistent with the literature findings. Mentors understood that the healing, growth, and transformation occurred in the context of human relationships and connection. In the literature, this concept is known as 'social capital', (also 'human capital' or 'community capital'), or the 'interaction perspective'. The human

connections and social support offered by RJ practitioners is integral for supporting both victims and offenders, yet has often been overlooked in the literature (Suzuki & Yuan, 2021; Hansen & Umbreit, 2018).

The AP, who described her mentor as her “anchor”, underwent a personal “discovery” process, and experienced significant positive impacts to her life as a result of her involvement in the RJ process. She described feelings of relief, trust, safety, validation, and support, and developed tools to better understand her reactions and emotions, resulting in her being less reactive, more confident, and more reflective in the face of challenges. This is consistent with the literature, where the act of listening to victim’s stories about how the offence has impacted them has an empowering and healing effect (Yuan, 2017). Skilled RJ practitioners can help victims feel more validated, develop new ways of perceiving things, and gain insight into their thoughts, feelings, and behaviours (Moore & Vernon, 2023). Some victims felt they got more out of the support offered by RJ practitioners than they did from participating in counselling (Miller, 2011). This was also reflected by the interview with the AP, who preferred the support she received from RJ, describing it as feeling more “natural”, and “human”, despite her having access to many supports, including counselling, victim services and a social worker.

A potential discrepancy emerged from the interviews with the mentors compared to the interview findings with the AP. Mentors described the importance of boundary setting and personal wellness, yet in the interview with the AP, she described that her mentor made themselves available to chat during scheduled meeting times, as well as impromptu unscheduled check-ins, as needed, and “without restriction”. According to the literature, in order to avoid emotional burnout, practitioners in helping fields such as counselling should practise a healthy separation between their personal lives and the program (Miller, 2011). While this “healthy separation” wasn’t specifically mentioned in the mentor interviews, each pairing of mentor and client must negotiate and communicate their own unique requirements for maintaining their well-being and healthy boundaries. RJV may consider incorporating this tricky balance into their training and intake processes by communicating realistic expectations to APs on the level of support and access they can expect to have from their mentor, and while ensuring that mentors themselves are aware of what is healthy for them. Both parties should be provided with the tools to navigate and communicate effectively to balance these needs, as well as access to additional resources. Otherwise, there is a risk creating potential pairings of mentors who are burnt out, and APs who do not feel adequately supported. This is an area that warrants additional research in the context of RJ.

### 6.3 Background (Education and Experience)

From the interviews, mentors had vocational and volunteer experience primarily in helping professions, and experience working with vulnerable people. The literature search did not uncover much with regards to the background experience of RJ practitioners, with the exception of Souza & Dhami (2008)’s research which found that RJ volunteers come from backgrounds in corrections, police, mediation, social work, dispute resolution, teaching, psychology, and child and youth care work. Similarly, the findings from the jurisdictional scan revealed that volunteers and staff at RJ organisations have former work experience or education in social services, counselling, and experience working with diverse individuals.

Those with backgrounds in law, mediation, or counselling sometimes encountered challenges with remembering not to apply their vocational skills in the role. For instance, they struggled to not act with an adversarial lens, or not counsel clients. From the jurisdictional scan, one program mentioned how a volunteer who had a career as a hairdresser was one of the most effective at the role. In contrast, the organisation faced challenges with onboarding volunteers with experience in corrections and probation work, as they had a tendency to think in “black and white” binaries (i.e., right/wrong, good/bad). There was no mention of this issue in the literature.

Almost all mentors had taken training in, or lead training in, non-violent communication. In addition to the education necessary for certain vocations (counselling, nursing, educating), mentors also had education and training in project management, business, gender studies, justice studies, and suicide intervention. Mentors also described their personal lived experience that they felt helped them be effective in the role and empathise with clients with similar experiences. Examples include having personal experience with trauma, being a woman, being an older person, being a parent, and experience supporting those close to them who have addiction, mental illness, or disabilities. This aligns with Miller (2011)’s research, which found that personal experience can give practitioners credibility and facilitate deeper connections with clients.

It is worth noting that none of the interview participants identified with the gender of ‘man’, resulting in a gender disparity with the findings. It is well known that ‘helping fields’ of counselling, social work, education, and health care/nursing tend to be overrepresented by women. University-educated, Caucasian women make up the foundational majority of RJ volunteers in Souza & Dhami’s (2008) study of BC RJ programs. The skills, strengths, approaches, and knowledge discussed in the following section (6.4) are what could traditionally be considered ‘soft’ skills, or skills more associated with female-dominated work. More research needs to be done on this gender disparity found in RJ organisations, including if there are any differences in approaches, impact, value, and considerations for recruiting more male and gender-diverse caseworkers.

## 6.4 Skills, Strengths, and Approaches

A diverse array of technical, practical, relational, and wellness-focused skills, approaches, attributes, and strengths emerged from the interviews with mentors. These findings were grouped into three categories. Each will be discussed below, along with implications.

### 6.4.1 Personal Wellness, Self-care, Boundaries and Self-reflection

Mentors at RJV emphasized the critical importance of self-care, boundary-setting, self-reflection, and personal growth. In the literature, clarity with their role boundaries and responsibilities is linked to volunteer satisfaction in RJ programs (Souza & Dhami, 2008). RJ practitioners are expected to be able to maintain a self-awareness of the limitations of their own knowledge and experience, know when to ask for help, and have an awareness of their own mental wellbeing, vicarious trauma or personal histories of trauma that may become triggering (Restorative Justice Council, 2011; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2020). It should be assumed that all mentors/RJ practitioners will inevitably feel challenged or activated at some point. It is therefore essential that they have the skills to self-regulate and manage their own emotions and reactions so that they do not put that burden

on the client(s) and risk causing more harm. Skovholt & Trotter-Mathison (2016) call it a 'sacred responsibility' for those in helping professions to take care of themselves, "When nurturers have no nurturing, it is like the shoemakers who have no shoes" (p.167).

From the jurisdictional scan, some RJ organisations expected practitioners to have skills in self-care, willingness to process their own triggers, understand the limitations of the role, and professional ethics and boundaries. Of note, when asked about training, no RJ organisation mentioned any training on the topics of self-care, boundary setting or personal wellness, with the exception of one organisation which offered workshops on vicarious trauma and resiliency. This finding may indicate a significant deficit in the training approaches for RJ practitioners. Perhaps RJ volunteers and practitioners are evaluated for these skills prior to being accepted into the role. Regardless, practicing self-care, self-reflection and boundary setting are skills that require ongoing maintenance as challenges arise, bolstered by a supportive organisational culture.

#### 6.4.2 Relational Skills/Approaches and Personal Strengths

Mentors described the importance of creating safer spaces, having empathy, withholding judgements, and validating experiences while holding clients accountable. This is consistent with the literature, in which empathy is listed as a core value of RJ (Chouinard & Boyce, 2018), and interpersonal and communication skills are important and useful skills for practitioners to possess (Umbreit & Coates, 2000; Dhami and Joy 2007; Souza & Dhami, 2008; Restorative Justice Council, 2011; Lauwaert, & Aertsen, 2016; FPT Meeting, 2018). Some mentors, especially those with counselling backgrounds, mentioned emanating a 'therapeutic presence'. In the literature, the quality of the 'presence' of the RJ practitioner has the power to facilitate change healing, connection, and create a safe container for open communication (Lewis & Umbreit, 2015; Lauwaert & Aertsen, 2016). More research is needed to uncover the mechanisms behind the presence and attitudes of practitioners in restorative justice settings (Lauwaert & Aertsen, 2016).

RJ Practitioners are expected to maintain both compassion and accountability when resolving conflicts (Choi, & Gilbert, 2010). However, unlike counselling practice, in RJ practice it may not always be possible to demonstrate empathy, understanding, and 'unconditional positive regard' for RPs, especially for severe/violent cases (Moore, 2018). Despite RJ being victim-centred, most of the mentors interviewed primarily mentored RPs. Mentors understood that focusing on RP healing and growth was necessarily for facilitating AP healing and community restoration. Healing, growth, and transformation occur in the context of trusting, and empathetic relationships. As one mentor said, "you have to love them". RJ practitioners must strive to establish warm rapport, trust, and authentic connection with their clients in order to help "build up a bank account of trust to offset the debt of trust they began with" (Lewis, & Umbreit, 2015, p.14). Facilitating RP healing and growth, especially for violent and complex cases, involves a tremendous amount of emotional labour by the mentor.

RJ organisations should consider supporting opportunities to integrate humour, positivity, and levity into their organisational cultures if they want to retain practitioners long-term. Humour emerged as a theme from both the interviews with mentors and the literature on helping professions, but did not appear in the RJ literature or the jurisdictional scan. For professional psychologists, maintaining a sense of humour, being playful, and telling jokes has been shown to be strong career-sustaining

coping strategies for serious work environments (Stevanovic & Rupert, 2004 as cited in Skovholt & Trotter-Mathison, 2016). At the same time, it should be acknowledged that it takes skill to use humour appropriately and tastefully, without causing further harm and disrespect to clients.

Shame management was mentioned in the mentor interviews, but not the jurisdictional scan. Mentors described their use of strengths-based, solution-focused and healing-centred methods to help clients overcome feelings of “unproductive shame” and build up their self-esteem. This is consistent with the literature, which cites shame as being negatively correlated with empathy. Feeling shame upon harming another person creates self-focused personal distress reactions rather than empathic concern for others (Rodogno, 2014). However when shame translates to remorse-guilt the focus is more on the harmful behaviour and its impact to others, which promotes empathy and motivates reparative behaviour (Rodogno, 2014). Mentors found it helpful to maintain a positive and optimistic outlook and believed in the client’s capacity to transform and grow, which often motivated the client to rise to meet these expectations. In the literature, this approach closely resembles the ‘humanistic’ model, which are more commonly seen in Indigenous cultures, to generalise. This model, “emphasises the strength and resilience of the human spirit, within a setting of dialogue, and thereby promotes inner and relational transformation” both at the individual level and the community level (Lewis & Umbreit, 2015, p.6).

One mentor who worked on complex cases expressed a strong desire for RJV to implement more of a collaborative team approach for educating RPs and holding them accountable, which would also share the workload burden for mentors. This collaborative approach to casework is supported by the literature. RPs who were supported by a community-based network and accountability framework were much more likely to succeed in RJ programs (Wilson, Huculak & McWhinnie, 2002). For complex cases especially, it is recommended that multiple practitioners, professionals, and outside agencies should be involved (Restorative Justice Council, 2011; Masson, & Österman, 2017; FPT Meeting, 2018). This practice provides additional support, reduces isolation, and provides opportunities for reflection and learning from specialists (Bolitho & Bruce, 2017).

#### 6.4.3 Technical, Administrative, and Learned Approaches.

The final category of skills, strengths and approaches encompasses the technical, administrative, and learned approaches described by mentors in the interviews. What arose most prominently here was how the mentors applied creative and adaptable approaches to ensure the process was accessible and trauma-informed for clients. In the interview with the AP, she described the RJ process as being human-centred, healing-focused, flexible, and “outside the box”. In the jurisdictional scan, four organisations implemented trauma-informed practice training for practitioners. In the literature, trauma-informed care is emphasized as an essential skill for RJ practitioners to possess due to the high likelihood of RJ clients having experienced trauma and abuse (van Wormer & Link, 2016; FPT Meeting, 2018). Using a ‘one-size-fits-all’ trauma-informed approach for RPs is not effective for reducing recidivism or promoting rehabilitation. Rather, interventions should be uniquely tailored for each RP to effectively respond to what they need to take responsibility and facilitate change (Randall & Haskell, 2013). Healing from trauma occurs through developing healthy relationships and connections to others, and mentors were adept at facilitating this healing process for clients. Trauma-informed practice should be a foundational part of any RJ organisation’s training program.

Several of the specific approaches that mentors described did not appear in the literature review, or jurisdictional scan. An example of this includes educating RPs in sexualized violence cases on the topics of consent, entitlement, patriarchy, and using a 'values exercise' with RPs to help them discover their values and motivate them for change. An unexpected finding that emerged from the interviews only, was the importance of adequately preparing APs for the dialogue to ensure they do not cause harm. One mentor discerned the difference between a process that is victim-centred versus victim-led. While victims' needs are paramount, the process should not be directed or dictated solely by the victim, rather it is a collaborative process which is guided by the values of RJ.

Mentors also applied their educational and vocational expertise to the role, specifically, skills in non-violent communication, and counselling approaches, such as motivational interviewing, solution-focused strategies, and narrative therapy. In the jurisdictional scan, several organisations spoke of practitioners having professional backgrounds in social service fields such as counselling. As mentioned, there is a noticeable gap in the RJ literature on the skills, approaches, attitudes, and professional backgrounds of RJ practitioners.

Finally, it is important for mentors to have strong knowledge of community resources and build relationships with community organisations to refer clients for support and also to serve as places where an RP could volunteer as part of their agreement terms. RJV could consider developing a more robust resource guide to assist mentors in this area.

## 6.5 Cultural Safety, Intersectionality, and Anti-oppressive Approaches

A secondary research question aimed to explore the mentors' awareness and application of cultural safety, intersectionality, and anti-oppressive approaches..

Three broad, interconnected themes emerged from this secondary research question: **Building trust and Safety, Accountability and Humility, and Culturally Safe and Inclusive RJ Programs.**

### 6.5.1 Building Trust and Safety

Mentors built trust and safety through active listening, adapting their approaches, avoiding assumptions, and maintaining self-awareness of their privilege, power, and biases. They used trauma-informed approaches, asked clients about their experiences, listened without imposing assumptions, and acknowledged the discomfort and power dynamics between them and their clients. All of these approaches are consistent with the literature (see Section 6.4, Skills, Strengths and Approaches for more detail).

### 6.5.2 Accountability and Humility

Mentors exhibited accountability for their mistakes, humility, and a willingness to receive feedback. They engaged in self-directed learning to continuously improve their practice. This is in line with the

literature, in that practicing humility and being able to graciously receive feedback and shift behaviour are essential traits for RJ practitioners (Leland & Stockwell, 2022).

### 6.5.3 Culturally Safe and Inclusive RJ Programs

Overall, most mentors from the interviews demonstrated some understanding of the systems of oppression and how the intersections of lived experience can cause clients harm, including RPs, who also often experience secondary victimisation. RJV has invested time and effort into creating a safe, trauma-informed, and welcoming environment for racialized, gender-diverse, and other equity-deserving individuals. This includes hiring consultants for specialized training in anti-racism and cultural safety, which was made mandatory for all caseworkers. These trainings have involved affinity groups and a book club. RJV has shifted their focus from building client-focused skills towards prioritising building internal skills for mentors.

The findings from the interviews are consistent with the literature on restorative justice and anti-oppressive practices, in that integrating racial consciousness into RJ programs can heal aspects of inter-generational and racial trauma (Muhammad & Gray, 2021). RJ programs require practitioners who are able to reflexively engage with their own privilege and social class and become aware of how socioeconomic inequality may impact the way individuals present and communicate, which in turn can impact how they are perceived and treated in the RJ process (Willis & Hoyle, 2022).

From the jurisdictional scan, RJ organisations offered workshops on local Indigenous cultures & protocols, equity, inclusivity, unconscious bias, anti-racism, anti-oppression, gender, and sexuality. In addition, some RJ programs mentioned requiring that their practitioners have an understanding of the broader (systemic) context and interconnection (root causes) behind the harm.

## 6.6 RJ Programming Considerations

This section includes a discussion on organisational considerations for RJV, which may be applicable to other RJ organisations considering implementing a mentoring program.

### 6.6.1 Increase in Complex Cases/Violent Harms

RJV has seen a significant increase in complex cases and violent harms in recent years, which has resulted in increased demands on mentors' time, capacity, knowledge, and skills. RJV must ensure a robust support system is established in the organisation to ensure health and resiliency of mentors is being maintained, including ongoing specialized training, and increased availability of coaching, peer support, and clinical supervision. This shift to complex cases also necessitates recruitment of mentors with more advanced skills, experience, and training, which is a significant demand for most community volunteers, and may require the organisation to onboard additional paid staff with specialised skills. However, more staff requires more funding, and RJ organisations across BC suffer from chronic lack of funding, often competing for the same scarce grants. Rather than competing, RJ organisations in BC need to rally together to lobby for more funding to support this increased need for qualified staff.

Implementing specialized support teams to collaboratively manage complex or high-risk cases is another recommended approach. RJ organisations in BC should consider more collaboration and partnerships with one another, including sectors, for instance, with police, victims services, mental health and addictions services, schools, and other community social services. This shift to complex cases elevates the mentor role to be an essential component to ensuring that RJ organisations can safely take on these high-risk, challenging cases. Any RJ organisation that takes on violent harms and complex cases should consider implementing a robust mentoring program as a matter of priority. More research is needed to explore the impact of complex cases on mentors' well-being and the long-term outcomes for clients.

### 6.6.2 Training and Workshops

While the interviewed mentors generally appreciated the training offered by RJV, especially from the racial equity consultant, there was a stated preference for more in-person training sessions which indicates a need for continuing to provide learning experiences which are interactive and engaging. Further, RJ training programs should incorporate clear learning outcomes with practical and direct applications to the work. The feedback from mentors on desired additional workshop suggests gaps in current training at RJV that need addressing, particularly in areas such as gender diversity, neurodiversity, substance use disorder, and boundary-setting. RJV is tasked with balancing the need for providing comprehensive training with the limitations of volunteer capacity and availability. The implication here is a potential restructuring of training schedules and formats to maximize engagement without overwhelming the mentors. Future research could examine the effectiveness of different training modalities and their impact on mentor performance and client outcomes.

### 6.6.3 Client Intake and Screening Mentor Applicants

The client intake process is crucial for setting the stage for successful mentor-client interactions by setting realistic expectations and gathering key information. This approach has also been identified by mentors as being trauma-informed since it ensures that clients avoid having to repeatedly retell traumatizing stories and allows for the mentor to come prepared. This is consistent with the literature on trauma-informed approaches.

Despite the thorough screening of applicants to the mentor program at RJV, with only about half being accepted in, some continue to have unrealistic expectations and exhibit a "saviour mentality". This points to a need for refining the selection process and providing initial training that aligns expectations with the realities of RJ work. RJV may need to develop more rigorous screening criteria and orientation programs to mitigate unrealistic expectations, especially from community volunteers that may not have significant prior experience with RJ programs.

### 6.6.4 Organisational Culture of Support & Teamwork

The unanimous appreciation from mentors for RJV's supportive culture as well as the desire for more connections among colleagues emphasizes the importance of a cohesive, trauma-informed, and compassionate organizational environment. This is consistent with the literature which suggests that workplaces are considered restorative when they create organisational cultures that are caring,

considerate and empathetic and staff who have skills in non-judgmental active listening (Hopkins, 2015). RJV might consider implementing additional structured opportunities for interaction, connection and relationship-building between volunteers and staff, such as social events, or team-building activities. Organisations that provide access to professional debriefing promote healthy functioning of RJ practitioners, and reduce likelihood of burnout (Bolitho & Bruce, 2017). While RJV already offers counselling, debriefing opportunities and coaching, they could consider expanding this support to include peer support groups and buddying systems and greater collaboration and involvement in decision-making. Future research could explore the specific elements of organizational culture that most significantly impact well-being and effectiveness for mentors and RJ practitioners.

### 6.6.5 Reflections on the Term “Mentor”

The critique of the term "mentor" by RJV mentors and staff and the suggestion for alternatives reflects a deeper need to change and clarify the role title to better align with its essence and responsibilities. As suggested by the AP, adopting terms like "guide", "anchor", or culturally resonant titles, such as those from local Indigenous languages could foster a more inclusive and accurate representation of the role. This change could improve perceptions of the role both within the organization and in the community to more accurately reflect the role's supportive and collaborative nature. If RJV were to consider adopting a word from another language, especially a local indigenous language, they would first need to develop strong, reciprocal and respectful relationships with Indigenous nations, language speakers and knowledge keepers.

From the scan of RJ organisations, only one had a mentoring program, however it was for youth (matching an adult with a youth offender). The RJ organisation in New Zealand employed RJ “facilitation specialists”, and would also engage the support of Kaumātua (a respected tribal Elder in the community) when appropriate and chosen by the participants. Future research could examine the impact of role terminology on mentor-client dynamics and community engagement, and further parse out the differences between the mentor role and other RJ practitioner roles.

### 6.6.6 Feedback on Mentor Role Description

The current role description as it appears on the RJV website (see Appendix G) was seen by mentors as accurate for simpler non-person or property-related harms (such as shoplifting) but inadequate for complex cases involving violent crime or sexual assault, which require more intensive preparation and can take months or over a year to complete. This highlights the need for improved clarity and description of the role, which could include differentiated definitions and role titles based on types of cases and levels of complexity, or severity of the harm. Recognizing of course, that case complexity may not always be evident in the initial intake. In its current state the description of the AP mentor role has been highlighted as “underwhelming”. An enhanced description of the AP mentor role could potentially encourage more APs to accept this offer of support, potentially also resulting in increased participation on dialogues.

### 6.6.7 Conclusion

The feedback from mentors and the AP, contrasted with the scan of RJ organisations, offers valuable insights into the strengths and challenges of RJV's current practices. The increasing complexity of cases, resulting in the need for more skilled mentors and enhanced training, also highlights the importance of a supportive organizational culture. Areas for improvement include updating role descriptions, changing the role title from "mentor" to another word, increasing options for relationship-building and debriefing/coaching/peer support within RJV, and building partnerships and collaborative working relationships with other organisations and sectors, to strengthen support offered to clients, and increase access to funding. By addressing these areas, RJV can strengthen its mentor role, enhance program effectiveness, and better serve its clients. Future research should continue to explore these themes, providing evidence-based recommendations to further refine and improve RJ practices.

## 6.7 Unexpected Findings & Future Research:

Several findings emerged that were unexpected. These include 1) increased complexity of cases, 2) emphasis on mentor personal wellness, 3) preparation meetings, and 4) lack of research on RJ practitioners. Each of these will be described in more detail below.

- 1) The increasing complexity of cases at RJV, especially those involving violent harm was unexpected as this was a change that emerged during the duration the project. When I was a mentor at RJV (until 2018), and when I initially met with my client to discuss this project in early 2020 (prior to the COVID-19 pandemic), majority of cases involved non-person, property harms, such as shoplifting, vandalism or possession, among others. The shift to RJV taking on more complex and violent harms occurred in a relatively short period of time due to a number of unexpected significant shifts in policies, law, public health, and social movements (see section 5.7.1). This continues to significantly impact the mentor role and RJV. This also calls into question whether these complex cases are better suited for highly trained and experienced professionals or staff who are compensated for their time and have greater availability than community volunteers. Yet, RJ organisations are chronically underfunded and rely on volunteers to meet the demand in caseload. Future research should be dedicated to exploring how RJ organisations can adequately support their caseworkers and clients through this evolution toward taking on more complex cases, including what kind of training and organisation support is required.
- 2) Another unexpected theme that emerged strongly from the interviews but wasn't reflected in the RJ literature was the crucial importance of the personal wellness of the mentor (this includes self-care, self-reflection, self-compassion, and boundary setting). Personal wellness in this sense also means 'doing the work' of healing, understanding triggers, and participating in critical self-reflection and accountability for one's own growth and learning. The topics of self-care, and protective factors in maintaining practitioner emotional health only emerged when the literature was expanded to include 'helping professions' (such as counsellors). Over the years RJV has shifted their focus from building client-focused skills towards prioritising building internal skills for mentors, which should be a practice

implemented by other RJ organisations as well. More research is needed on the self-care and self-reflexivity skills of RJ practitioners.

- 3) At RJV, the preparation meetings between mentor and client typically occur over several months prior to a dialogue, sometimes even over a year for complex cases. In contrast, the literature did not indicate the length of preparation time required, with the exception of one reference which suggested the preparation meetings could occur merely 'a week or more before the dialogue' (Lewis & Umbreit, 2015). Further, AP preparation was highlighted as an important part of RJV mentorship work, but not only for the sake of the APs' mental wellbeing. Rather, inadequately prepared APs can also cause harm to the RPs, trigger unproductive shame, and derail the restorative process.
- 4) Overall, there is limited literature on the skills, traits, attitudes and interactional dynamics of RJ practitioners and community volunteers, and RJ researchers concur that more research is needed on the topic (Tidwell, 2001; Latimer, Dowden, & Muise, 2001; Souza & Dhami, 2008; Lauwaert & Aertsen, 2016; Hansen & Umbreit, 2018; Suzuki & Yuan, 2021). As mentioned, in both the jurisdictional scan and the literature, there was a distinct lack of mentor-like roles in RJ which are dedicated to supporting and guiding adult APs and RPs through the RJ process. This presents an opportunity for RJV to pioneer and expand this aspect of the program and share this approach more broadly with other RJ organisations. The program could even be expanded to include a diverse pool of specialized mentors for different types of harms, ensuring that each case receives tailored support. Finally, a gender-disparity emerged within this research, with more females and gender diverse people than males participating in supportive RJ roles. Addressing this disparity suggests a need for targeted recruitment strategies to attract more male and gender-diverse volunteers, enhancing volunteer and staff engagement and retention. More research is needed to uncover the effectiveness of different approaches as well as considerations for recruiting more male and gender-diverse volunteers and caseworkers. Collaborating with academic institutions to conduct research on mentoring approaches and evaluating mentoring outcomes can provide empirical evidence for developing training programs and recruitment strategies.

## 6.8 Conclusion and Answering the Research Questions

The purpose of this project was to examine and deepen understanding of the unique mentor role at RJV, to strengthen its effectiveness, sustainability, and provide actionable recommendations for enhancing mentor recruitment, training, and support, with potential applications for broader RJ practice.

This project used two research approaches to deepen understanding of this unique role: a jurisdictional scan of RJ organisations across BC, Canada and internationally, and key informant interviews with RJV mentors, staff, and an AP. These methods provided insight into the uniqueness of the role, important knowledge, strengths, skills and approaches that mentors possess, and the importance of providing adequate training and support, especially as cases become more complex.

The following provides a summary of the project in consideration of the primary and secondary research questions.

**What is the purpose and value of the RJV mentor role and how can RJV optimize and define this unique role to enhance support for clients, mentor wellness, improve RJ outcomes, and foster wider implementation with the RJ community?**

The RJV mentor role is multifaceted and essential for supporting clients through the RJ process, especially for complex cases and violent harms. The literature and jurisdictional scan confirm that the role is indeed unique and innovative. Many RJ organisations expressed a desire to have a mentor role and agreed that it would be a valuable addition to their programming. The role's purpose and value are demonstrated through how it offers comprehensive and personalised support and guidance to clients through the RJ process, which is essential for achieving healing, accountability, connection, and access to resources. The impact of the mentor role is significant and enduring, often resulting in transformative healing for APs, RPs, and their families/communities, thereby interrupting the cycle of harm. This is done through building trust, connection, and addressing clients' underlying needs. The value of mentors lies in their focus on preparing, supporting, and guiding APs and RPs, without also taking on other roles, such as facilitation, or administrative duties. However, the role's scope has expanded in recent years, demanding more specialized training, skills and support. Challenges that mentors face include maintaining boundaries and self-care, managing complex cases, supporting clients with comorbidities (e.g., addiction and mental illness), and logistical/technical challenges (e.g., scheduling, technology, and access to community resources). Enhancing mentor wellness through tailored support and training programs is key to sustaining the effectiveness of the role. Sharing these insights with the broader RJ community could encourage the adoption of similar roles, thereby elevating RJ practices more widely. See section 7 for detailed recommendations.

**What are the key skills, approaches, and knowledge areas that RJV mentors employ when working with clients, and how can these skills and approaches be enhanced or adapted to better suit the changing nature of cases handled by RJV?**

The mentors and 'mentor-like' RJ practitioner roles possess diverse skillsets and strengths, including empathy, communication, resiliency, and nonjudgmental listening. Mentors demonstrated relationality, healthy boundary setting, self-awareness, openness to learning, and application of trauma-informed and strengths-based approaches. Mentors were adaptable to clients' unique needs, and created safe spaces for dialogue, all of which facilitated significant growth and transformation for clients.

Many RJ practitioners have prior experience in 'helping professions', including social work, counselling, education, child and youth care, health care, as well as mediation, or law. Personal background experiences, such as encounters with adversity or supporting marginalized individuals, enhanced mentors' empathy and understanding. Training in non-violent communication, counselling approaches (such as motivational interviewing, narrative-based), and knowledge of community resources further contribute to their effectiveness. Mentors' ability to manage their own emotional well-being and seek support from peers and supervisors is also crucial.

Organisationally, RJV contributes to mentors' effectiveness by providing sufficient support (such as debriefing, coaching, clinical supervision), relevant training, and fostering a restorative, empathetic, inclusive, and culturally safe culture that upholds RJ values. However, as the nature of cases becomes more complex, there is a need to enhance these skills through specialized training in areas such as intimate partner violence, gender inclusivity, substance use disorders, mental health, and neurodiversity. Additionally, mentors should be encouraged to continuously adapt their approaches by integrating new insights from ongoing professional development and peer support mechanisms.

**What are the primary challenges impacting mentors in their role, and what recommendations for improvement have been identified to further enhance mentors' effectiveness in the role? How can RJV address these challenges to better support mentors and enhance the overall effectiveness of the mentor role?**

The shift towards RJV taking on more complex/violent cases places increased demands on the skills, time, emotional capacity, knowledge, and training of mentors. RJV should continue to offer additional specialized training for mentors taking on these types of cases. Other aspects that hinder mentor effectiveness include a lack of self-awareness and accountability, judging and making assumptions, having unrealistic expectations, poor boundary-setting (such as doing too much for clients), and inadequate self-care practice. RJ practitioners with backgrounds in law, mediation, and/or corrections may require additional training or support. RJV should continue to prioritize creating an environment where mentors feel supported, valued, and connected. This includes continuing with regular opportunities for debriefing, and considering offering more peer support/mentoring, professional development, and recognizing and celebrating the contributions of mentors. Additional training recommendations include trans/gender-inclusive training, self-compassion, boundary-setting, supporting neurodiverse, disabled and/or brain-injured clients, and supporting clients with substance use disorder or addiction. By fostering a supportive organisational culture that prioritizes mentor wellness, RJV can enhance the overall effectiveness of the mentor role, ensuring that mentors are well-equipped to handle the demands of their work, which in turn results in more positive outcomes for clients.

Due to the distinct lack of research on RJ practitioner roles in general, especially the mentor role, RJV should consider collaborating with researchers to study the effectiveness of different mentoring approaches. This research can help identify best practices and provide empirical evidence to support the development of training programs and volunteer recruitment strategies. Evaluating the outcomes of mentoring interventions can also offer insights into the impact of the mentor role on client healing and community restoration.

**Given that RJ is premised on a social justice ethic based on the principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion (Chouinard & Boyce, 2018), to what extent are mentors aware of, and apply concepts of cultural safety, intersectionality, and anti-oppressive approaches into their practice, and what additional training and support might they need in these areas?**

Most mentors demonstrated a growing awareness of cultural safety, intersectionality, and systems of oppression, recognizing their own privileges, biases, and potential blind spots. Mentors strived to create inclusive, respectful environments by using plain language, correct gender pronouns, and being mindful of power dynamics. However, there is a need for ongoing training and support in

these areas. RJV has already shifted focus towards prioritising building internal skills for mentors (reflexivity, self-awareness, and humility) rather than just client-focused skills, as is reflected in their training approaches. RJV should continue recruitment efforts to achieve more diversity in their caseworkers and volunteers. Additional in-depth training on anti-racism, cultural competency, and gender diversity will not only further strengthen their practice, but align with the organisation's commitment to becoming culturally safe, diverse, and inclusive.

# 7 Recommendations

## 7.1 Introduction

This chapter will provide recommendations for RJV and other organisations seeking to improve their mentorship practice or implement a mentor-like role in their organisation. These recommendations are based on the literature review, including the scan of other RJ organisations, and the interviews with the mentors, staff, and the AP.

Based on the research, the summary of recommendations are categorised into the following:

- **7.2 Training and Workshop Recommendations**
  - Logistical: in-person, providing ample notice
  - Continue with anti-racism and cultural safety
  - Additional workshops and training
- **7.3 Clarity in Role Boundaries and Ethical Practice Standards**
- **7.4 Scheduling**
- **7.5 Collaborative Team Approach to Casework**
- **7.6 “Mentor” Word as Role Title and Description**
  - Mentor description on RJV website
  - The word “mentor” as a role title

## 7.2 Training and Workshop Recommendations

RJV has already taken significant steps towards assessing and improving the organisation’s ability to safely hold diversity. Bringing in the two consultants to assess the organisation and conduct training with the staff and volunteers, creating the affinity groups, and implementing the book club are all steps in the right direction towards achieving an organisational culture that is responsive, culturally safe, anti-racist and anti-oppressive. The work cannot be a ‘one-and-done’ but rather must be continual and ongoing and ideally built into the onboarding process. Additional training that the organisation should consider offering in the near future: trans/ gender-inclusive training, self-compassion, boundary-setting, supporting clients with substance use disorder or addiction, and working with neurodiverse, disabled and/or brain-injured clients.

The organisation should consider offering more in-person training opportunities as well as more opportunities to connect formally and informally with other mentors and volunteers. Suggestions include: social activities, circles, buddy-pairing, peer mentoring, and co-mentoring. The organisation

should continue to offer debriefing, counselling, and the opportunity for clinical supervision, all of which are appreciated by the mentors and staff.

Finally, the organisation should try to give volunteers plenty of notice in advance for mandatory trainings.

### 7.3 Clarity in Role Boundaries & Ethical Practice Standards

RJV should consider drafting additional guidance and training on defining the boundaries and practice guidelines of the mentor role. RJV should also consider providing additional guidance and support to new mentors with setting boundaries so that they avoid inappropriately applying their prior background training and vocational skills to the mentor role (i.e., counselling, mediation, corrections.). While RJV does already adhere to guiding principles and practice standards, they only contain broad recommended minimum standards and are not intended to provide detailed direction to RJ practitioners (Lyons et al., 2016). RJV might consider providing practitioners with more detailed practice guidelines for navigating professional and personal boundaries in the role, especially with complex cases, while continuing to allow enough space for creative and experimental approaches, and maintaining the freedom to tailor the process to each client's individual needs.

### 7.4 Scheduling

RJV should encourage mentors and staff to schedule regular biweekly or weekly meetings with RPs, and consider investing in a scheduling application to assist with this task, which was identified as a primary challenge by several mentors and staff.

### 7.5 Collaborative Team Approach to Casework

RJV should consider adopting a more integrated team approach when supporting RPs, especially for cases involving violence or sexual harm. In this model, the RP would be supported and guided by a team of several different mentors, as well as professionals or community supporters, each with specialised knowledge and expertise in different areas. This would lessen the workload for each mentor, and provide the RP with specialised support, which would strengthen their rehabilitation and building of community capital.

This could be done through developing stronger collaborative partnerships with community organisations, and ensuring that staff who are assigning cases to mentors are aware of the specialised skill sets of each mentor.

### 7.6 The Word “Mentor” and Role Description

It is clear that the word “mentor” is unique to RJV and is also a word that most do not feel accurately encapsulates the breadth of the role. The AP offered some suggestions, such as “guide”, “anchor”, “guardian”, or a non-English word. RJV could canvas caseworkers and clients to gather ideas on alternative suggestions.

Additional recommended changes to the description of the mentor role as it appears on the RJV website (Appendix G):

- Update the description of the role to also reflect complex or violent cases, which involve significantly more preparation.
- Include a component about education for the RP mentor, since education is a primary part of the process in addressing harms and shifting behaviour, especially for sexualized violence cases.
- Description of AP mentor is technically accurate but could be made more appealing and include mention of emotionally preparing them for the dialogue.
- Zoom is now a common way to meet; in-person meetings are no longer required.

## 8 Conclusion

Figure 7.6.1 Revised Conceptual Framework



The conceptual framework initially explored in chapter two outlined the themes from the literature review as they related to the mentor role and the variables that contributed towards AP healing, RP accountability & healing, and ultimately community restoration.

Figure 8.1 summarises the framework more broadly and incorporates the findings that emerged from the interviews and jurisdictional scan.

The foundation of the pyramid underscores the importance of mentors, specifically their wellness and the organisational structures in place to support their wellbeing. Above all else, mentors must be emotionally, mentally, and physically healthy, self-aware, humble, and be willing to learn and grow. The organisational structure must be set up to support this wellness and growth throughout, including screening, onboarding, training, and continual support and coaching for mentors. RJ values must be upheld, so that the organisation can cultivate a culture that is open to change and feels safe, inclusive, and supportive. It is clear that RJV has already taken significant steps towards addressing some of the gaps and challenges they face, and are aware that still more needs to be done, as this work is continuous.

The next pillar up shows the important skills, knowledge, approaches, strengths, and qualities that make up an effective mentor, supported by their past experience and education. Three major themes emerged from the data in this regard: personal wellness, boundaries, and self-reflection;

relational skills; and learned, administrative, procedural skills. The mentor facilitates support from the community to initiate the transformational process of healing and growth for RPs and APs.

Which brings us to the top several layers of this framework. While keeping the victim at the centre, the mentors focus their efforts on the RP, using empathy, love, non-judgemental listening, encouragement, trauma-informed approaches, and 'holding up the mirror' of accountability. Through this dialogic process, the RPs began to understand, learn, reflect, grow, heal, take accountability, express genuine empathy, remorse, and transform their lives. 'Transform' is a word that came up on more than one occasion and witnessing clients undergo a transformation was a major source of motivation and satisfaction for the mentors. In the literature, this resembled the humanistic approach, which emphasised the strength and resilience of the human spirit, and leveraged the healing power of dialogue to achieve human connection and promote transformation. Through these pro-social human connections, clients build social/human capital and start to shift the narrative of their identity, therefore changing their behaviours, habits, routines, and cognitive mindsets. Through this process, they begin to focus on future pro-social problem solving to make positive changes to their lives and resist re-offending.

The top pillar takes a systems-level perspective. Community restoration is the ultimate desired outcome for all RJ processes. The logo of RJV is a water droplet falling into the water, with ripples emanating outward, which represents the 'ripples of impact' that occur through RJ processes. When a harm occurs in the community, the impacts of this harm ripple infinitely outward in both obvious and subtle ways. Similarly, when healing occurs, the ripples of impact are equally as powerful, impacting individuals, communities, and entire systems. These 'positive ripples' may be hard to measure concretely, however they are the guiding motivation behind restorative justice work. The evidence suggests that the powerful work of RJ has the potential to heal, interrupt, and prevent cycles of violence, harm, and trauma from reoccurring, in large part due to the influential contributions of mentors and mentor-like roles in RJ.

Reflecting on the value of the mentor role, this project highlights the crucial impact it has in creating meaningful and lasting change. The findings demonstrate that mentors not only support individuals but also contribute to broader societal restoration. By identifying the skills, approaches, and knowledge that supports effective mentorship, this research provides a blueprint for strengthening the mentor role within RJV and can potentially be expanded to other restorative justice contexts. The conceptual framework highlights the necessity for mentors to be emotionally, mentally, and physically healthy, supported by an organizational structure that prioritizes wellness, growth, and continuous learning, especially as cases become more complex. By maintaining a victim-centered approach and employing empathy, non-judgmental listening, and trauma-informed practices, mentors help RPs develop genuine remorse, accountability, and a pro-social identity. The insights gained from this project can be applied to enhance mentor training and organizational practices, at RJV and beyond, thereby improving the overall effectiveness of restorative justice programs. As other jurisdictions seek to implement or refine their restorative justice initiatives, the concepts outlined in this research can serve as a foundational starting point, ensuring that mentors are well-equipped to foster positive transformation and community restoration.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A

Description of Mentor's skills, strengths and approaches



## Appendix B

Hello [REDACTED]

I'm a graduate student with the University of Victoria, BC, conducting research on 'mentor' (supporter) roles in Restorative Justice (RJ) Organisations. My client for this research is Restorative Justice Victoria (RJV), and they recruit and train volunteer mentors to support and guide offenders (Responsible Parties) and victims (Affected Parties) through the restorative justice process. Part of this research process involves a scan of other RJ organisations to discover if they have similar roles to the RJV volunteer mentor role.

First, I'll provide more details about what this role entails at RJV:

Mentors are trained volunteers who provide support and guidance for Responsible Parties (offenders) as they go through the restorative justice process by communicating with them regularly, connecting them to relevant community resources, and ensuring they are taking accountability for the offence and fulfilling agreement terms. Mentors to Affected Parties (victims) provide both emotional and practical support throughout the restorative justice process. Responsible Parties are required to have the support of a mentor, whereas Affected Parties have the choice to participate in the RJ process without the support of a mentor if they choose. RJV also has other distinct roles, such as Facilitators, Case Workers, Scribes, and Community members (who act as Affected Parties when none is present).

**I would be very grateful if you would be willing to support this research by answering the following questions:**

1. Does the [REDACTED] program have a 'mentor-like' role similar to the one described above? If so, what is it called?
  - a. What are the expectations and duties of this role? How might it differ from the description of the RJV mentor role I provided above?
  - b. What kind of training/onboarding does this role undergo? Is there any training regarding cultural safety, intersectionality and/or anti-oppressive approaches? If so, can you provide me with more information on what this looks like?
2. To your knowledge, are there any specific skills, background knowledge or previous experience that helps them to be effective in this role?
3. Have you conducted any evaluations or gathered feedback on how effective this role is, or what impact it might have? (if so, are you able to share any high-level details?)

You can email your responses, or you are welcome to call me at: [REDACTED]

Thank you for your time,

Tiffany Hannan  
Graduate Student,  
Masters of Community Development,  
University of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada

*This research has been approved by the University of Victoria Human Research Ethics Board. You may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or [ethics@uvic.ca](mailto:ethics@uvic.ca)). Project title: Understanding and Strengthening the Mentor Role at Restorative Justice Victoria*

## Appendix C

Location & Name of Org	Mentor Role	Training	Skills, knowledge, experience	cultural safety, intersectional, anti-oppressive approaches	Other themes/information
<p>B.C. Canada - Abbotsford RJ and Advocacy Association (ARJAA).</p> <p><b>Email response</b></p>	<p><b>Mentorship with youth only.</b></p> <p>-Mentoring program is specifically designed for children and youth going through a restorative process. Referred from RJ school program</p> <p>-Most are long-term matches (1 year) between an adult &amp; youth RP.</p> <p>-They provide emotional support and friendship which can increase self-worth and help the young person in times of stress and crisis.</p> <p>-The mentors help the young person learn how to deal with stress and conflict in a non-destructive manner, and will support and encourage the young person to complete their</p>	<p>-They provide approximately ten hours of training prior to setting up a match.</p> <p>-This includes an orientation to the principles and best practices of restorative justice, a session on volunteers and the <b>law, communication strategies, and cultural sensitivity training.</b></p> <p>-Mentors expected to attend various training sessions throughout the year (e.g., <b>trauma-informed practice</b>).</p>	<p>To be effective in the role of a mentor it is necessary that they are capable of <b>listening</b> to the youth and <b>being supportive</b> of them. That being said, good mentors can come from a lot of <b>different backgrounds</b> and with <b>different degrees of background knowledge and experience.</b></p> <p>The quality of training and the extent to which a <b>staff member can be engaged in supervising and supporting</b> the match is a good indicator of whether it will be successful.</p>	<p><b>Cultural sensitivity training.</b></p>	<p>N/A</p>

	restorative justice agreement, thereby helping the young person to be accountable for their actions.				
B.C. Canada - Courtenay/Comox - Comox Valley Community Justice Centre  <b>Email response</b>	<b>No mentor role.</b>  - <b>Case Coordinators</b> are trained volunteers; work 3 hour shift once/week. Part of resolution conference team.  -Intake meeting with Complainant and Respondent.  -Case coordinator meets with Respondent after conference to <b>support meeting agreement terms</b> (usually community service hours)	-New coordinators shadow senior volunteer.  -Encourage volunteer training at Justice school (30-35 hours) + have access to our library  -With funding, they can offer specialised training on topics: <b>communication skills</b> , first time foster family conflict resolution, <b>trauma focused RJ</b> , neural development of adolescent mind, Elder abuse, <b>Mental Health &amp; Addictions, RJ for transgender files; short-term transformative dialogue facilitation for files involving racism</b> , hatred and <b>homophobia</b> ; peacemaking circles, <b>narrative-based RJ, Indigenous cultures</b> in the Comox valley, etc.  VIRJJA (Vancouver Island Region RJ Association) annual conference for volunteers.	<b>Compassionate, good listener, capacity to see underlying issues.</b>	See 'Training' section - training for <b>transgender files, homophobia, racism, Indigenous cultures</b> , etc.	N/A
B.C. Canada - Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows Community Services  <b>Email response.</b>	<b>No mentor role.</b>  <b>No volunteers.</b> Full time staff facilitate circles and <b>provide support</b> to parties.	-We have considered training volunteers again, however we would need to bring on more staff to train and support volunteers.  -Advanced training should be offered in RJ practices at onboarding in addition ongoing training on needs of victims, <b>equity, diversity, inclusivity</b> as well as training on client support and rights, <b>de-escalation strategies, mental health crisis intervention, first aid, naloxone training,</b>	Volunteers should have a background (education and work) in <b>social service</b> work and have interest in RJ	See 'Training' section - training on <b>equity, diversity, inclusivity, unconscious bias, anti-racism, anti-oppression, gender and sexuality</b>	N/A

		<b>trauma and resiliency informed practice, duty to report, unconscious bias, anti-racism, anti-oppression, and gender and sexuality</b> to name a few.			
B.C. Canada - South Okanagan RJ Program  <b>Email response.</b>	<b>No mentor role</b>  No mentors or volunteers. Everything is completed by one Justice Manager and a Corrections Liaison who co-facilitates our RJ processes	-Indigenous Justice Program, most volunteers are of Indigenous ancestry. If they are not of Syilx/Okanagan ancestry, they would be provided with relevant information in regard to syilx cultural protocols and worldview based on our captikwl (Creation/Natural laws) stories.	If we were to train mentors/volunteers, they would be required to complete the <b>Community Justice Forum Facilitator training.</b>	See 'Training' section - training on <b>Syilx cultural protocols and worldviews</b>	N/A
B.C. Canada - Williams Lake Community council for RJ  <b>Email response.</b>	<b>No mentor role.</b>  -Some facilitators act as mentors throughout the initial process and follow up in an ad hoc manner.  -One of our members is <b>working towards developing a program for mentoring</b> repeat offenders.	No comment.	No comment.	No comment.	N/A

<p>B.C. Canada - Vernon - Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Vernon &amp; District (took over RJ program)</p> <p><b>Phone response.</b></p>	<p><b>No mentor role currently.</b></p> <p><b>Used to have a mentor program that worked well</b>, however when cases became more complex issues arose.</p> <p><b>Volunteer mentors were not adequately trained/prepared to handle complex cases.</b></p>	<p><b>Community justice forum</b> as main training model.</p> <p><b>-Trauma &amp; vicarious trauma workshop.</b></p> <p>-Held a community meeting with practitioners, victim services, and multiple agencies with aim of understanding resources available &amp; connections between the work</p> <p>-Some practitioners were able to apply learnings from training faster than others.</p>	<p>-Looking for <b>confidence, competence, comfort</b>. Being comfortable dealing with these issues that come up is more important than other training.</p> <p>-Hairdresser was one of the best - <b>finely tuned listening skills</b>, able to connect pieces.</p> <p>-Most challenging = people that have backgrounds in corrections, probation or addictions work. Can hold onto that black &amp; white (right/wrong, good/bad) concrete thinking.</p> <p>-Used <b>transactional analysis model</b> as a communication model.</p> <p><b>-Ongoing empathy, understanding, willingness to process our own stuff that gets triggered.</b></p> <p><b>-Self-care</b>, supportive and help people reach a destination.</p> <p><b>-Reminder that we are not therapists, probation officers, social workers, or counsellors, but we can establish those connections in the community.</b></p>	<p>Important to understand the broader (systemic) context and interconnections (root causes) behind the offense.</p>	<p>-Challenges with COVID, resulted in shift in process to over the phone.</p> <p>-Started process of <b>matching practitioner's specific skill sets with clients</b> (for e.g., riding horses).</p> <p><b>-Only one paid practitioner in a small community</b></p> <p><b>-Challenge with funding</b></p> <p><b>-Volunteer challenges: Mainly older people</b> who are retired &amp; have the time. Hard for those who are young, have a family, working, don't have time/flexibility, appointments, etc.</p>
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<p>B.C. Canada - Ladysmith - Community Circles RJ program</p> <p><b>Phone response.</b></p>	<p><b>No mentor role.</b></p> <p>-Talked about having a mentoring program &amp; training but not something they had the resources or volunteers to do.</p> <p>-Trained facilitators and mediators - program is all run by volunteers.</p> <p>-Facilitators -do all parts of the process, prep work, circle, and afterwards</p> <p><b>-Prep work is the most important part of the whole process.</b> At least 1 in depth interview, could be 2 or 3 more interviews</p> <p>-Good idea to have mentors as a separate role, facilitators need to be impartial</p>	<p>Do their own training and VOM training, community justice initiatives, and will be putting on a mediation and peacemaking circle training in the spring.</p>	<p><b>Being open, listening</b>, picking up on stuff, <b>taking the time</b>, not hurrying, doing it a lot, <b>more experience the better.</b></p>	<p>Did a few cases with the local First Nations, put in extra effort to find a support person in the community, which was very important</p>	<p>-Support for idea of dedicated support person (mentor) for Offender</p> <p>-In the region, <b>programs that are getting a lot of referrals are embedded in the RCMP</b></p> <p><b>-Funding is a big issue. Everyone is fighting for the same grants.</b> Frustrating.</p>
<p>New Zealand - Christchurch</p> <p>Restorative Justice Services Ōtautahi Christchurch</p>	<p><b>No mentor role.</b></p> <p>-Do have volunteer support people occasionally.</p> <p>-In NZ, support people for parties is encouraged &amp; mandatory for family harm cases.</p>	<p>-Volunteers are trained and supported, but their role is quite limited.</p> <p>-Currently planning to update and strengthen training/onboarding for volunteers.</p>	<p><b>Cultural awareness</b> and understanding, <b>awareness of privilege and intersection. Understanding of limitations of role</b> and <b>professional ethics &amp; boundaries. Experience working in social services</b> and <b>working with people from all areas of society. Compassion</b> and <b>empathy.</b></p>	<p>Usually, volunteers are often already <b>experienced in the social service sector</b> and come with a <b>baseline understanding of cultural safety</b> and <b>professional ethics</b>. We do supplement this and all volunteers are police vetted &amp; reference- checked.</p>	<p>N/A</p>

<p><b>Email response.</b></p>	<p>-The ideal situation is that these support people are people already involved in the lives of the participants, friends, family or professionals like counselors, social workers, etc.</p> <p>-Volunteers used when they don't have other people available as support people.</p> <p>-Their role is to simply support the participants at preliminary meetings and the conference, it is not long-term support. We also engage the support of Kaumātua (a respected tribal Elder in the community) when appropriate and chosen by the participants.</p> <p>-Much of what is included in the description of the mentor that was provided is the role of our <b>facilitators</b>. -The <b>facilitators work in pairs</b> and are responsible for assessing &amp; <b>preparing parties</b> for a potential conference, they also <b>connect participants to additional support &amp; resources</b>.</p>				
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<p>United Kingdom - Thames Valley RJ Service</p> <p><b>Email response.</b></p>	<p><b>No mentor role.</b></p> <p>-Harmers and Victims encouraged to bring a supporter who can participate meaningfully in a conference. This person could be an existing adviser to them (e.g. a clinician, or a probation officer), in which case their professional background might be relevant. But they would not otherwise expect a supporter to be trained in RJ - or indeed anything else.</p>	<p>No comment.</p>	<p>No comment.</p>	<p>No comment.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
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## Appendix D

### **Recruitment email scripts to accompany RJV research participant Invitation:**

*RJV program manager will send out an email to each participant group along with the mentor consent form and recruitment poster.*

#### **Groups 1 (RJV Mentors) & 4 (staff caseworkers who do mentoring):**

*[sent via bcc to ensure anonymity]*

Hello RJV Mentors,

You are invited to participate in a research study aimed at understanding and strengthening the mentor role at RJV.

This research is being led by Tiffany Hannan, a former RJV mentor, and graduate student at the University of Victoria (UVic), pursuing a Masters of Arts in Community Development, and supervised by Robert Lapper, QC, UVic Faculty of Law.

#### **Purpose and Objectives**

The purpose of this research is to explore and deepen understanding of the purpose, value, and strengths of the mentor role in RJV and to harvest innovative practices, approaches, and skills used by mentors in order to develop recommendations for how the role might continue to be strengthened and improved.

#### **What is involved:**

If you consent to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include one virtual focus group circle using Zoom. Circles will last no longer than 2 hours.

Audio will be recorded for data analysis purposes only. Raw data and names/identifying features of participants will remain anonymous and will not be shared beyond the research team, which includes Tiffany and her supervisor Robert.

Participation in this research is completely voluntary and no compensation will be provided. Mentors who choose to participate can withdraw at any time without consequence or explanation.

RJV program managers and staff will not be aware of who chooses to participate in this study, and your decision to participate (or not) will have no impact on your role, standing, casework, relationship, or future potential opportunities with RJV, or the researchers.

**Benefits of participating may include:**

- Opportunity for self-reflection, inspired learning, and personal growth
- Make connections with other RJV mentors and wisdom sharing
- Opportunity to share your experiences and be heard in a safe and non-judgemental environment
- Contribute to the organizational improvement of RJV and strengthen understanding of the mentor role so that RJV can better support the community it serves

If you are interested in participating in this study, or have any questions please connect with Tiffany directly at [tiffanyhannan@gmail.com](mailto:tiffanyhannan@gmail.com).

Supervisor Robert Lapper can be contacted at: [rlapper@uvic.ca](mailto:rlapper@uvic.ca).

**For more detailed information about this study please see attached consent form.**

Thank you,

RJV Program & Volunteer Manager

Attachments:

-Consent form for mentors/staff

-Recruitment poster

**Group 2: Offenders (also known as Responsible Parties or RPs):**

*[sent bcc to ensure anonymity]*

Hello,

You are invited to participate in a research study aimed at understanding and strengthening the mentor role at Restorative Justice Victoria (RJV).

This research is being led by Tiffany Hannan, former RJV mentor, and graduate student at the University of Victoria (UVic), pursuing a Masters of Arts in Community Development, and supervised by Robert Lapper, QC, UVic Faculty of Law.

You are invited to participate because you have valuable first hand knowledge and experience as someone who has had the experience of being mentored at RJV, as a former Responsible Party (RP).

### **Purpose and Objectives**

The purpose of this research is to better understand the purpose and value of mentors at RJV, and to find out what strengths and skills mentors have so that the role can continue to be improved.

### **What is involved:**

If you choose to participate in this study, your participation will include one virtual interview using Zoom video conferencing, lasting 1.5 hours or less.

Audio will be recorded to help the researcher analyze the data. Participant's names and identifying features will be removed in the final report to make sure they remain anonymous. Only the researchers (Tiffany and Robert) will have access to the collected raw data from the interviews.

Participation in this research is completely voluntary and anonymous, and no compensation will be provided. Participants who choose to participate can withdraw at any time without consequences or explanation.

RJV program managers, staff and volunteers will **not** be aware of who chooses to participate in this study, and your decision to participate or not will have no impact on your case, role, standing, or relationship with RJV.

### **Benefits of participating may include:**

- Opportunity for self-reflection, learning and personal growth
- Share your experiences and wisdom in a safe and non-judgemental environment
- Opportunity to improve RJV and the mentoring experience for clients, volunteers, and the community.

If you are interested in participating in this study, or have further questions please connect with Tiffany directly at tiffanyhannan@gmail.com.

Supervisor Robert Lapper can be contacted at: rlapper@uvic.ca.

### **Youth participants age 18 or younger**

If you are a youth age 18 or younger and wish to participate in this study, you are not required to ask for consent from your parents/guardians, however we will send them a letter of information about the research to let them know that you will be participating in the study.

**For more detailed information about this study see the attached consent form.**

Thank you,

RJV Program & Volunteer Manager

Attachments:

-Consent form for RPs/APs

-Recruitment poster

### **Group 3: Victims (also known as Affected Parties or APs)**

[sent bcc to ensure anonymity]

Hello,

You are invited to participate in a research study aimed at understanding and improving the mentor role at Restorative Justice Victoria (RJV).

This research is led by Tiffany Hannan, previous RJV mentor, and graduate student at the University of Victoria (UVic). Tiffany is doing this research as part of her Master of Arts degree in Community Development. Her supervisor is Robert Lapper, QC, UVic Faculty of Law.

You are invited to participate because you have valuable first hand knowledge and experience as someone who has experienced being mentored at RJV, as a former Affected Party.

### **Purpose and Objectives**

The purpose of this research is to better understand the purpose and value of mentors at RJV, and to find out what strengths and skills mentors have so that the role can continue to be improved.

**What is involved:**

If you would like to participate in this study, your participation will include one virtual interview using Zoom video conferencing, lasting 1.5 hours or less.

Audio will be recorded to help the researcher analyze the data. Participant's names and identifying features will be removed in the final report to make sure they remain anonymous. Only the researchers (Tiffany and Robert) will have access to the collected raw data from the interviews.

Your choice to participate in this research is completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or explanation. You may choose to have your data removed from the research study without penalty or explanation.

RJV program managers, staff and volunteers will not be aware of who chooses to participate in this study, and your decision to participate (or not) will have no impact on your role, standing, case, relationship, or future potential opportunities with RJV, or the researchers.

**Benefits of participating may include:**

- Opportunity for self-reflection, learning, and personal growth
- Share your experiences and wisdom in a safe and non-judgmental environment
- Opportunity to improve RJV and the mentoring experience for clients, volunteers, and the community.

If you are interested in participating in this study, or have further questions, please connect with Tiffany directly at [tiffanyhannan@gmail.com](mailto:tiffanyhannan@gmail.com).

Supervisor Robert Lapper can be contacted at: [rlapper@uvic.ca](mailto:rlapper@uvic.ca).

**Youth participants under 18:**

If you are a youth age 18 or younger and wish to participate in this study, you are not required to ask for consent from your parents/guardians, however we will send them a letter of information about the research to let them know that you will be participating in the study.

**For more detailed information about this study see the attached consent form.**

Thank you,

RJV Program & Volunteer Manager

Attachments:

-Consent form for APs/RPs

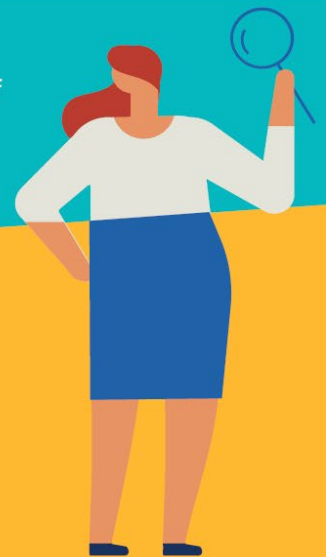
-Recruitment poster

# You are invited to participate in a research study!

## Understanding and Strengthening the Mentor Role at Restorative Justice Victoria

### Purpose of the Research

- Explore and deepen understanding of the purpose, value and strengths of the mentor role at RJV
- Harvest innovative practices, techniques and skills used by mentors
- Develop recommendations for how the role might continue to be strengthened



### What's involved?

- For **Mentors**: 1 virtual focus group circle using Zoom (2 hours)
- For **former Responsible Parties and Affected Parties who have experienced mentoring**: 1 one-on-one virtual Zoom interview (1.5 hours)

### Why should I participate?

Potential benefits of participating:

- Opportunity for self-reflection, inspired learning and personal growth
- Share your experiences and opinions in a safe & non-judgemental environment
- For focus group participants: an opportunity to make connections with other RJV mentors and share your wisdom and experiences
- Contribute to strengthening the mentor role at RJV and the broader RJ community as a whole



### How can I participate?

To participate please email:  
[Tiffanyhannan@gmail.com](mailto:Tiffanyhannan@gmail.com)

For more detailed information about this research see the attached participant consent form!



This research study is being led by Tiffany Hannan, graduate student at the University of Victoria (UVic) as part of the requirements for a Master of Arts degree in Community Development through the UVic School of Public Administration. Supervising this project is Robert Lapper, QC, UVic Faculty of Law: [rlapper@uvic.ca](mailto:rlapper@uvic.ca)

## Appendix F



### ***Participant Consent Form: RJV Mentors***

2023

#### **Understanding and Strengthening the Mentor Role at Restorative Justice Victoria**

You are invited to participate in research aimed at Understanding and Strengthening the Mentor Role at Restorative Justice Victoria (RJV).

This research is being led by Tiffany Hannan, former RJV mentor, and graduate student in the department of Public Administration at the University of Victoria (UVic) and you may contact her if you are interested in participating or have further questions: [tiffany.hannan@gmail.com](mailto:tiffany.hannan@gmail.com).

As a graduate student, this research is being conducted as part of the requirements for Master of Arts degree in Community Development through the UVic School of Public Administration. It is being conducted under the supervision of Robert Lapper, QC, UVic Faculty of Law. You may contact my supervisor at [rlapper@uvic.ca](mailto:rlapper@uvic.ca).

This study is being conducted for the following clients at RJV: Program and Volunteer Manager and RJV Executive Director

#### **Purpose and Objectives**

The purpose of this research project is to explore and deepen understanding of the purpose, value, and strengths of the mentor role in RJV, and to harvest innovative practices, approaches, and skills used by mentors in order to develop recommendations for how the role might continue to be strengthened and improved.

#### **Importance of this Research**

Research of this type is important because a dedicated “mentor” role is not commonplace amongst restorative justice (RJ) organisations, and has been praised as vital to offenders’ success and growth in the RJ process, and valuable in supporting victims through the process. However over the years the role has expanded and transformed towards providing a deeper level of support. Gaining a deeper understanding of the role will help RJV strengthen their training, development and recruitment of mentors, and findings from this research can be shared with the broader RJ community to enhance practice.

#### **Participants Selection**

You are being asked to participate in this study because you have valuable first-hand knowledge and experience as someone who has mentored Responsible Parties (RPs) and/or Affected Parties (APs) at RJV.

### **What is involved**

If you consent to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include taking part in one virtual focus group circle using Zoom video conferencing (2 hours).

Turning on your video will be optional, and only audio will be recorded for the purposes of transcription and qualitative data analysis. All participants will be anonymous in the data analysis and reporting, and any identifying features will be removed.

### **Inconvenience**

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, including the 2 hours required for attending the Zoom focus group.

### **Risks**

There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research.

### **Benefits**

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include:

- Opportunity for self-reflection, inspired learning, and personal growth
- Opportunity to share your experiences, and to be heard in a safe and non-judgmental environment
- For focus group participants: an opportunity to make connections with other RJV mentors and share your wisdom and experiences
- Opportunity to contribute to organizational improvement of RJV and strengthen understanding of the mentor role, which may positively influence RJV caseworkers, clients and the broader RJ community and possibly increase funding opportunities for RJV so that it can better support the community that it serves.

### **Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. For mentors who choose to withdraw from the study after they have participated in a focus group circle, your data will be summarized with no identifiers, as it will not be possible to remove individual's contributions from the group conversation data. Former APs and RPs who choose to withdraw during or after their interview may choose to have their data excluded from the research without penalty or explanation.

### **Researcher's Relationship with Participants**

The researcher may have a relationship to potential participants as acquaintances. To help prevent this relationship from influencing your decision to participate, the following steps to prevent coercion have been taken. Defining the research boundaries, and clear discussion and decision

making around roles and communication. The researcher will not a) disclose which participants agreed and did not agree to consent and b) the researcher will not share raw data with RJV or any other members. Any former RPs or APs that have been previously mentored by the researcher are excluded from participating in this research.

### **Anonymity**

In terms of protecting your anonymity, all participants will email the researcher directly to express their interest in participating, so RJV will have no knowledge of who is participating.

Anonymity within and during the group discussions cannot be maintained, however transcripts and raw data will be coded, will not be shared, and any identifying information, including names, locations, and/or specific details of cases, will be removed from final results. Focus group participants must respect the privacy and confidentiality of others in the group, and must agree to not discuss what was said outside of the group.

### **Confidentiality**

Only the researcher (Tiffany) and her supervisor (Robert) will have access to the collected data from the Zoom meetings. Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by encrypted USB data storage.

### **Dissemination of Results**

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways: A Master's Project Report, Defense, and uploaded to UVicSpace online. A copy will be provided to RJV, and all research participants. RJV may choose to share the results with other RJ organizations for the advancement of RJ knowledge and practice.

### **Disposal of Data**

Data from this study will be disposed of after the legal 5 years. All electronic data will be fully deleted.\*

\*Zoom servers are located outside of Canada, and Zoom stores users' names and usage data outside of Canada. No other information is stored outside of Canada, and recordings of Zoom meetings are not stored on Zoom servers.

### **Contacts**

Individuals that may be contacted regarding this study include:

Researcher - Tiffany Hannan, email: tiffanyhannan@gmail.com, phone: 250-507-9455

Supervisor - Robert Lapper, QC, email: rlapper@uvic.ca, phone: 250-721-7647

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or [ethics@uvic.ca](mailto:ethics@uvic.ca)).

The link to the Zoom meeting will be sent once consent form is signed and received by the researcher.

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study, that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers, and that you consent to participate in this research project.

<hr/>		
<i>Name of Participant</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>

***A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.***



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### **Understanding and Strengthening the Mentor Role at Restorative Justice Victoria**

You are invited to participate in a research study aimed at understanding and improving the mentor role at Restorative Justice Victoria (RJV).

This research is led by Tiffany Hannan, previous mentor, and graduate student at the University of Victoria (UVic). Tiffany is doing this research as part of her Master of Arts degree in Community Development. Her supervisor is Robert Lapper, QC, UVic Faculty of Law.

If you want to participate in this research, or have any questions, contact Tiffany at: [tiffany.hannan@gmail.com](mailto:tiffany.hannan@gmail.com).

This study is being done for the following clients at Restorative Justice Victoria (RJV): Executive Director, and Program and Volunteer Manager.

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this research is to better understand the purpose and value of mentors at RJV, and to find out what strengths and skills mentors have so that the role can continue to be improved.

#### **Importance of this Research**

This research is important because a dedicated “mentor” role is not common in restorative justice (RJ) organisations. Mentors are thought to be important for supporting Affected Parties (also known as: APs), and for helping Responsible Parties (also known as: RPs) be successful through the RJ process. Over time the role has changed, and now mentors provide a deeper level of support than they used to. Understanding the skills and approaches used by mentors will help the organisation improve their training and recruitment. This research can also be shared with other restorative justice organisations to improve the work that they do in their communities.

#### **Participants Selection**

You are being asked to participate in this study because you have valuable first-hand knowledge and experience as someone who has been mentored at RJV, either as a former Affected Party (AP) or Responsible Party (RP).

#### **What is involved**

If you participate in this research, you will be asked to take part in a one-on-one virtual interview (using Zoom video conferencing), lasting 1.5 hours or less.

Turning on your video will be optional, Audio will be recorded to help the researcher review the data. Participant's names, location, features, and details about the offense that may reveal their identity will be removed in the final report to make sure they remain anonymous.

### **Inconvenience**

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, including the 1.5 hours required for attending the Zoom meeting.

### **Risks**

There are minimal known risks to you by participating in this research.

It is very important to the researchers that participants feel supported in case this experience is uncomfortable, therefore participants will be provided with resources and options for debriefing after the interview, if that is needed.

### **Benefits**

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include:

- Opportunity for self-reflection, learning, and personal growth
- Share your experiences and wisdom in a safe and non-judgmental environment
- Opportunity to improve the organisation and the mentoring experience for clients, volunteers, and the community.

### **Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or explanation. You may choose to have your data removed from the research study without penalty or explanation.

### **Researcher's Relationship with Participants**

The researcher, Tiffany, may have met or worked with some participants as acquaintances. Any former RPs or APs that have been mentored by Tiffany will not be able to participate.

RJV staff and volunteers will **not** be aware who decides to participate or not.

### **Anonymity**

If you are interested in participating, please email Tiffany directly, so that RJV will have no knowledge of who is participating.

The raw data you provide, including your name, location, nature of offense or involvement with RJ (other than simply as AP or RP), name of your mentor(s), or any other information that may identify you, will **not** be shared or included in the results.

## Confidentiality

Only the researchers (Tiffany and Robert) will have access to the collected raw data from the interviews. Your confidentiality and the data will be kept safe by password-protected (encrypted) USB data storage.

## Dissemination of Results

The final results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways: A Master's Project Report, and Defense. A copy will be provided to RJV, and all research participants. RJV may choose to share the results with other restorative justice organizations to share wisdom and learnings in order to improve the work they do. An online copy of the final report will be uploaded to UVicSpace (UVic's research sharing website).

## Disposal of Data

Data from this study will be disposed of after the legal 5 years. All electronic data will be fully deleted.\*

\*Zoom servers are located outside of Canada, and Zoom stores users' names and usage data outside of Canada. No other information is stored outside of Canada, and recordings of Zoom meetings are not stored on Zoom servers.

## Contacts

You may contact the following people if you want more information about this study, or wish to participate:

Researcher - Tiffany Hannan, email: [tiffanyhannan@gmail.com](mailto:tiffanyhannan@gmail.com), phone: 250-507-9455

Supervisor - Robert Lapper, KC, email: [rlapper@uvic.ca](mailto:rlapper@uvic.ca), phone: 250-721-7647

If you want to verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, contact the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or [ethics@uvic.ca](mailto:ethics@uvic.ca)).

Your signature below indicates that you have reviewed this consent form, understand what is involved with participating in this study, and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers, and that you consent to participate in this research project.

_____	_____	_____
<i>Name of Participant</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>

**Are you age 18 or younger?**

If you are age 18 or younger, please provide the name and contact info of your legal parent/guardian. Consent from your parents/guardians is not required, however the researchers will send them a letter of information about the study and let them know that you will be participating.

**If you are age 19 or older please ignore this section.**

<i>Name of your Parent/Guardian</i>
<i>Email Address of your Parent/Guardian</i>

<i>Phone number of your Parent/Guardian</i>
<i>Your Initials</i>

***A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.***

## Appendix G

Description of the Mentor role as it appears on the RJV Website  
(<https://www.rjvictoria.com/volunteers/>) (2024):

### **Mentors:**

- The offender's mentor supports the offender in taking accountability before, during, and after the dialogue, and can connect them with relevant resources in the community. This role requires at least one in-person meeting with the offender before the dialogue, as well as keeping in touch with the offender on a regular basis after the dialogue and supporting them in accomplishing each of their agreement terms.
- The victim's mentor provides emotional and practical support throughout the restorative justice process. The role is not required for the successful completion of the dialogue, but is an option we offer all victims.