

Amber Johnson

Proposal for a Restorative Justice Graduate certificate at Fleming College

Over the last decade, Canada has received international recognition for innovation in the restorative justice field. Because restorative justice is an “approach” to justice, it has a potentially broad application to the field of social justice. In this way, restorative justice increases access to the justice system for those who traditionally are excluded—namely victims and communities, but also young offenders or those from marginalized groups. This can also be applied to other vocations such as health services, paralegal training, drug and alcohol counselling and personal support work.

Fleming College can create significant bonds and bridges not only between different programs and schools at the college but also with the surrounding community by implementing a Restorative Justice certificate. Participants in the program can be drawn from the college community including faculty, support staff and students as well as members of the larger community including professionals, non-profit organizations as well as government employees.

Restorative justice takes a community well-being approach to conflict resolution. Rather than focusing on blame and punishment, restorative justice promotes righting wrongs through understanding, healing and social engagement. On the foundation that conflict causes injury, it holds offenders directly accountable for the damage they cause. It also empowers victims, giving them a voice in the justice process. This theory can be applied by those in the law and justice field but also has promise to a wider range in issues such as the student appeal process, as a mediation tool in college residences as well as a broad range of health service professions.