

Alberta Indigenous Restorative Justice in Action (AIRJA) Overview

AIRJA is a project made possible through funding received by the Honourable Mickey Amery, Minister of Alberta Justice, and the support of the Integrated Justice Initiatives Unit.

In April 2024, the Otipemisiwak Métis Government of the Métis Nation in Alberta led a provincewide effort to engage communities in developing culturally relevant, sustainable restorative justice services. This project was based on the principle of “Nothing About Us, Without Us.” It represents an Indigenous-led inquiry approach and provides a culturally safe platform for Indigenous, racialized practitioners and allies to voice their concerns, feel heard, and participate in a restorative (non-adversarial, culturally safe) process to address systemic issues that hinder development and sustainability.

In the fall, the project team facilitated online sharing circles, gathered input at the Alberta Restorative Justice Association (ARJA) conference, and convened multiple stakeholder meetings. These engagements confirmed the importance of ensuring that Indigenous peoples' unique cultural values and governance practices guide efforts to support Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action to reduce the over-representation of Indigenous and racialized youth and adults in the social-justice system, for the benefit of all Albertans.

The insights from the [What We Heard Report](#) substantiate the relevance of Indigenous cultural values, customary law (note below), and societal structures in shaping restorative justice practices. What we heard emphasizes the need for models that go beyond mere reference to the origins of restorative justice. Instead, they must be fundamentally shaped by them, including standards of practice and training.

Self-determination is, within itself, a restorative justice strategy for healing and reconciliation. It represents a first step in breaking the cycle of violence, offering a powerful decolonization process to address issues related to unresolved intergenerational trauma and over-incarceration.

Indigenous peoples view restorative justice not merely as a program but as a way of life for reclaiming healthy relationships within a framework of cultural safety and mutual respect.

In April 2025, True Dialogue Restorative Justice Centre received funding from Alberta Justice and formed an AIRJA Volunteer [Advisory Committee](#) to guide the 2nd year of the project.

The Provincial Gathering, January 30-31, 2026, Edmonton, will feature sharing circles to highlight success stories, insights, and lessons learned from a trauma-informed, culturally relevant approach working with Indigenous youth and adult referrals to inform standards of practice and training.

Customary law - refers to the set of unwritten rules, practices, and beliefs that a community accepts as legally binding and that have been established through long-standing tradition and usage. It is based on what is observed and believed to be a legal requirement within a community, and it is often passed down through oral tradition or lived practice.