

Name: _____ Block: _____ Date: _____

HANDOUT 10: A Healing Circle Simulation

Instruction: You will be participating in a restorative justice simulation known as a healing circle. Your teacher will read the story of Frank to you and roles will be allocated for the healing circle. After the simulation, answer the critical thinking questions.

The Story of Frank: A Troubled Life

The Story of Frank is based on a true story but the names have been changed to protect the people involved. His story can be seen in the video *Voyage of Rediscovery* which is part of the First Nations Series, *The Circle Unbroken* (NFB 1983 ISBN 0-7122-0490-X).

Frank Brown was a very angry 17-year-old First Nations man who grew up in Bella Bella. Frank and some of his friends decided to steal some alcohol from a local bootlegger but didn't anticipate running into the man. They assaulted him very seriously and the community felt that Frank was a dangerous young man. To make matters worse, Frank had been carrying a loaded gun.

This wasn't the first time Frank had been in trouble. He had a previous conviction for breaking and entering and had been sentenced to a corrections camp for 16 months, which didn't seem to have any kind of positive impact. In fact, he had been negatively influenced by other troubled teens. The community felt Frank and the crowd he was running with were dangerous. This latest incident confirmed their fears.

A group of people who cared about Frank felt that if he was sent to jail he would be exposed to a lot of bad influences and come back to Bella Bella worse than when he left. They were willing to try to come up with a plan to help Frank understand his background, appreciate his culture and turn his life around. Frank's early home life had been unstable and likely contributed to his troubled teen years. However, this latest wrongdoing was too serious to be overlooked. Frank did not go to jail, even though the judge originally considered this when he heard the circumstances. Frank was put on an isolated island near Bella Bella where he came to terms with himself and changed his life.

The Healing Circle Simulation

Sit around a circle and the circle leader begins the simulation.

Circle Leader This person gathers the group together in a circle and explains why the justice healing circle has been called and how it will operate.

Frank Brown I am a 17-year-old Native youth. I have had a very difficult childhood because my father was an alcoholic and died when I was 8 years old. I went to live with my uncle but was unhappy because I missed my family, especially my dad. I felt abandoned. The town I was living in had high unemployment and the young people had nothing to do. They drank and did drugs and hung around getting in trouble. My friends were all doing bad things. I was angry and felt like I didn't matter. I didn't care what happened to me. I was a dangerous person because I didn't care who I hurt. I was convicted of breaking and entering when I was 16 and spent 16 months in a corrections camp. I hated it there, but I met a lot more guys who were just like me. Two weeks after returning home, I committed an assault in which a man was badly injured. Now what's going to happen to me?



Robert Hall I am Frank Brown's uncle. I offered to look after Frank when he was 8 years old, after his father had died. Frank's mother had several children to care for and Frank was beginning to get into trouble. I did my best to help Frank. I tried to be a father to him. In the town where we lived, there wasn't much for young people to do. Many people were unemployed. Kids hanging around the town soon started to drink and get into trouble. I had a hard time trying to keep Frank away from the troublemakers. In fact, since Frank didn't care about anything, he soon became a ringleader. I was very unhappy when I heard that Frank had been arrested for breaking and entering but I was not surprised. I would do whatever I could to help Frank but I do not know what to do.



Jim Brown I am Frank's brother. I am older than Frank and I know how badly he felt when our father died. I stayed home with our mother and my other brothers and sisters. Frank wouldn't listen to me and I couldn't stop him from getting into trouble. I tried to talk to him but I could see that Frank didn't care about himself or anyone else. I was sorry when Frank was arrested and I went to visit him in the corrections camp. In the camp, he saw that most of the inmates were young Natives. They hated the white guards, being confined to one place and working hard building trails and bridges. Frank didn't seem to be getting any better while in prison and he sure hadn't changed his attitude. I was worried that Frank would get in trouble when he got out. I do not want Frank to go back to prison.



Mrs. Brown I am Frank's mother. I did the best I could but things were really hard. I had five kids to worry about. Frank was the middle boy and for some reason he took his dad's death the hardest. I guess it was because when Charlie was sober, he used to take Frank fishing with him. He liked Frank because Frank was a tough little kid. But after Charlie was gone, Frank wouldn't talk about it. He just withdrew into himself. Then he started wandering off and wouldn't come home until late at night. I didn't know what to do with him. I thought that if he went to live with his Uncle Robert, things would be better and Robert could control him. I guess it worked for a while but soon he was spending most of his time with his friends. Frank's a good boy but he needs some direction, some purpose for his life. He doesn't feel like he belongs anywhere. He doesn't know who he is. I care what happens to him and I want to help make him better but I don't know what to do.



Constable Jones I am the RCMP Officer working in Frank's community. I know that the kids in Bella Bella are getting in trouble. There wasn't much to do in town except get drunk. Many of the adults spent their time in the beer halls and so it wasn't surprising that the kids thought this was the only thing to do. I have known Frank from the time he was 8. He had a lot of troubles and didn't fit in with the regular kids. He liked to hang out with the bad kids in town. I wasn't surprised when I caught Frank leading the gang in some break and enters. I arrested Frank and testified against him at his court case. I wish that I could do something to help Frank and the other boys, but there doesn't seem to be a way to make things better for them.

Chief Henry I am the leader of Frank's Native Band. There has been a lot of trouble on the reserve. There is not very much work especially during the winter. Many of the men go into town to try to find work but of course there is no work there either and so they end up hanging around the bars. Then they come home at night and take their anger and frustration out on their families. I know Frank. His dad died because of liquor. He didn't treat his family very good. His mother is a strong woman but she had so many kids and no way to support them after Frank's dad died. She thought she was doing the right thing sending him to live with Robert. At least Robert could help fill the place of his dad. This is a hard place to grow up. Kids here don't have much hope. They drop out of school because they can't get a job even if they do graduate from high school. We need to give kids like Frank some hope.



Judge Barnett I am the circuit court judge who sentenced Frank. When I first met Frank he was a very angry young man. He was uncooperative in court. He showed no regret for what he had done. I felt that I had no choice but to sentence him to a time in prison because he was a danger to himself and to others. I felt badly because I knew that he had a hard life and I also knew that he probably wouldn't get any better in prison. The justice system doesn't have very many options for people like Frank but it is hard on the offender and his family because they know that they are losing a son when he is sent away. When Frank came back home he was even more hostile than before. The assault that he has been charged with now is a very brutal one. The man very nearly died. We must protect society from people like Frank who have no respect for themselves or for others.



Mrs. Moore I am the victim of Frank's break and enter. Nobody ever asked me how I felt about Frank. He broke into my house, stole our stereo and some money. He and his friends left a mess behind. My kids are scared to go to sleep at night. I don't feel safe in my own house. Those kids are big trouble and somebody ought to teach them a hard lesson. They are a bad example for the young ones. It's hard enough to keep them interested in school but when they see the big guys hanging around drinking and bragging about the bad things they've done, it's impossible to teach them that they should be good and work hard at school. I don't know how to fix this problem but it would be a start if I could get my stuff back and somebody said they were sorry.



Mr. Hill I am the victim of Frank's assault. I still have a sore back where that guy kicked me and I can't see out of my left eye. My life is even worse now than it was before that guy, Frank, tried to rob me and kill me. He was a crazy man. I never saw anybody so mean and mad. Guys like that should be put away forever. You can't walk down the street anymore. It's not safe anywhere. Somebody's gotta do something to fix this cause soon we'll be killing each other.



Miss Black I am the social worker who worked with Frank's family. I knew Frank when he was little. He had problems then because his father was an alcoholic and would beat Frank and the other kids when he got home after a day of drinking. But Frank loved his father so much. He could never understand why his father did these things. When his father died, Frank felt abandoned. Sending him away to live with his uncle might have been a



Name: _____ Block: _____ Date: _____

good idea, but then he felt as though his mother and brothers and sisters had rejected him too. His uncle tried real hard to do the right things for Frank but nobody could fill the empty spaces in his life. He needed something to hang on to and so he turned to the kids who felt the same way he did. He didn't learn to respect adults or authority figures or his community. He felt as though he didn't belong anywhere. This made him angry and he wanted to take that anger out on someone. We need to give Frank someone and something to respect or he will never get well. Frank is not a bad person; he is a sick person and he needs to heal. If we send him to jail again, he will never get well.

Grandma Brown I am Frank's grandmother. Frank is a good boy. He has made some bad mistakes but we need to help him. The police don't help. The court doesn't help. Jail makes everything worse. We are family. We are a community. We need to do something to help Frank and all the kids who are like him. If we don't help now, we will soon cease to exist. There are old Native ways that can help a person heal and when a person gets better, the whole family can start to heal. Then a community begins to get strong and become a better place to live. We need to break the cycle of poverty, unemployment, violence and injustice and I think we should start with Frank.



Questions to Think About

1. Do you think that the healing circle is the best way to help deal with youth who have committed a criminal offence and have major problems in their lives?

2. After reading about Frank's life and the use of the healing circle, why do you think these new alternatives have been created in Canada as opposed to punishments and jail time?
