

**Integrating Restorative Justice with Indigenous Practices in Canada: A Framework for
Healing, Community Restoration and Public Safety**

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Abstract

Restorative justice (RJ) is becoming increasingly acknowledged as an alternative to conventional criminal justice methods with an emphasis on mending harm, encouraging accountability, and promoting reconciliation via candid communication. This study looks at how RJ is incorporated into Indigenous traditions in Canada and shows how it may be used to create culturally sensitive frameworks that put public safety and community healing first. Indigenous legal systems offer insightful perspectives that emphasize holistic healing, group accountability and spiritual rehabilitation. By fostering long-term community resilience, these perspectives can enhance the influence of RJ on public safety. Addressing past and present colonial effects is one of the many difficulties in bringing these practices into line with Canada's current legal framework. This study examines these challenges, examines successful integration models, and makes suggestions for further research. To better suit the needs of Indigenous peoples in Canada, RJ can be modified to address colonial legacies and increase community involvement, creating communities that are safer and more resilient.

Keywords: restorative justice, Indigenous peoples, Canada, public safety, community healing, reconciliation, cultural sensitivity, colonial legacies

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Integrating Restorative Justice with Indigenous Practices in Canada: A Framework for Healing, Community Restoration and Public Safety

Background Information

As a revolutionary approach to criminal justice, restorative justice (RJ) has garnered international prominence for prioritising communication, healing, and accountability between victims and offenders over more conventional punitive methods (Barmaki, 2022; Yeager & Chappelle, 2022). RJ is deeply rooted in Indigenous concepts, which place a higher priority on public safety, accountability to society, and collective healing. These perspectives support the idea that crime damages interpersonal relationships rather than just breaking the law. Indigenous justice techniques, which emphasise re-establishing social peace to advance the well-being of individuals and communities, are firmly rooted in cultural and spiritual traditions (Baskin, 2010; Przybylinski & Ohlsson, 2021; Wilson et al., 2002).

By promoting unity among communities and addressing systemic injustices that fuel crime, the incorporation of RJ into Indigenous criminal justice systems in Canada offers a chance to improve public safety. Due to colonial policies, Indigenous populations have historically been over-represented in the system of criminal justice (Dubord & Ram, 2023; Tomporowski et al., 2014). Although RJ and Indigenous practices share some concepts, there are still gaps, as RJ models frequently fall short of the cultural demands for justice and healing that Indigenous people have (Asadullaha & Morrison, 2021).

Restorative practices, such as mediation between victims and offenders and sentencing circles, have been included in the Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA) and related laws, especially for young people. However, these programs frequently place a strong emphasis on personal responsibility, which may run counter to Indigenous beliefs that

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communal healing is crucial to safeguarding the public in Indigenous settings (Crocker, 2016). A culturally inclusive paradigm that upholds Indigenous customs and accomplishes RJ's objectives for personal responsibility and public safety is necessary to address these issues.

Problem Statement

Indigenous practices are frequently not integrated into the current RJ frameworks of Canada, leading to culturally inappropriate implementations that do not appropriately assist Indigenous people (Baskin, 2010). By ignoring the underlying obstacles that lead to violence in Indigenous communities, such as systematic prejudice, intergenerational trauma, and the lingering consequences of colonial policies, this disparity endangers public safety (Przybylinski & Ohlsson, 2021; Tomporowski, 2014). Public safety outcomes are impacted by federal and provincial initiatives to modernise the justice system, particularly community justice initiatives, which usually ignore the special needs of communities of Indigenous people (Dubord & Ram, 2023). To develop a culturally sensitive approach that improves justice and community safety, this study aims to investigate methods of integrating RJ with Indigenous justice frameworks.

Purpose of Study

With an emphasis on highlighting instances where the two systems diverge and converge, this study attempts to investigate how RJ and Indigenous practices are integrated in Canada. Through an analysis of both past and present Indigenous involvement in RJ, this study will evaluate results that may promote public safety by utilising culturally relevant justice options (Baskin, 2010; Tauri, 2014; Van Camp & Wemmers, 2016). Through a culturally relevant framework that addresses the underlying causes of crime, the study will

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also assess the ability of the RJ to decrease court backlogs, improve community satisfaction, and foster safer communities (Yeager & Chappelle, 2022) among the public. Setting best practices for an encompassing RJ model that upholds Indigenous cultural identities, encourages community rehabilitation, and supports public safety is its ultimate goal.

Research Question

The research question for this highlighted research paper is: How, if it can, restorative justice be effectively integrated with Indigenous practices in Canada to enhance community healing, public safety, and social restoration?

Worldview

An Indigenous perspective that emphasises the interdependence of people, communities, and the natural environment is used in this study. Indigenous justice viewpoints place a strong emphasis on accountability, collective healing, and cultural heritage preservation, values that are similar to RJ concepts but are applied very differently (Baskin, 2010; Przybylinski & Ohlsson, 2021). By combining these ideas, this research seeks to create a framework that promotes public safety and healing in Indigenous communities while honouring Indigenous traditional customs (Crocker, 2016; Stroup, 2019).

Scope of the Study and Main Argument

The research comprises a thorough examination of Indigenous justice and RJ practices, including the historical and cultural influences on each. The Community Justice Programme in *Tsawwassen First Nation*, which integrates RJ with Indigenous justice concepts for safer and culturally responsive communities, is one example of the case research and body of literature on incorporating RJ in Indigenous settings that will be included

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(Dubord & Ram, 2023). It will also discuss real-world integration issues, like possible mainstream justice objectives' appropriation of RJ, and offer ways to preserve the cultural integrity of Indigenous RJ traditions (Crocker, 2016; Van Camp & Wemmers, 2016). To improve justice outcomes, promote public safety, and respect Indigenous cultural practices, this research is essential for closing gaps in RJ implementation (Weinrath & Broschuk, 2022).

Effective, sustainable justice and public safety in Indigenous communities require a culturally inclusive framework that combines RJ techniques with Indigenous justice. RJ and Indigenous justice both place a strong emphasis on community restoration, healing, and accountability; yet, mainstream RJ models frequently ignore the cultural and spiritual aspects that are crucial to Indigenous justice (Wilson et al., 2002). According to this research, RJ methods need to address the long-term effects of imperialism on Indigenous communities as well as the suffering produced by crime (Baskin, 2010; Barmaki, 2022). To fill important gaps in the current justice system, this study intends to create a culturally sensitive RJ framework that fosters healing, reconciliation, and public safety by analysing the similarities and differences among these justice paradigms (Crocker, 2016; Van Camp & Wemmers, 2016).

Literature Search and Review

To collect pertinent research on Indigenous restorative justice (RJ) and how it interacts with traditional judicial practices in Canada, a thorough literature search was carried out. This strategy involved determining keywords and phrases that captured the main idea of the investigation. To further narrow the scope, secondary terms such as *Healing Circles*, *Community Restoration*, and *Indigenous Communities* were employed in addition to the primary keywords *Restorative Justice*, *Indigenous People*, and *Canada*. The JIBC Library,

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Google Scholar, and JSTOR were the databases used for this study because of their extensive collections of content related to social work, the criminal justice system, and Indigenous studies. A comprehensive evaluation of the literature examining the connections between Indigenous legal systems and RJ, particularly under decolonisation and community-centred justice frameworks, was made possible by this search approach (Stroup, 2019).

There were about 142 articles found in the first keyword search across several databases. Numerous preliminary findings had only passing significance regarding Indigenous restorative justice in the Canadian setting, as *Table 1* illustrates. The search results were filtered to concentrate on research that was highly relevant to Indigenous restorative justice frameworks in Canada to reduce the scope. To ensure that the chosen studies explicitly addressed Indigenous viewpoints and practices, this adjustment was required to prevent the generalised focus on RJ (Yeager & Chappelle, 2022).

Established inclusion and exclusion criteria were used to guarantee the relevance of the literature. Peer-reviewed publications that addressed Indigenous RJ, the consequences of colonialism, and community involvement in judicial procedures were given precedence when evaluating studies published between 1999 and 2024. Studies without empirical support or qualitative information relevant to Indigenous justice, as well as those that only addressed non-Indigenous communities or generalised RJ techniques, were disqualified (Chrismas, 2016). Twenty papers that examined fundamental topics like Indigenous ways of existence, the value of community involvement, and the enduring impact of imperialism on RJ practices were ultimately chosen as a result of this process.

To determine which of the at least 20 papers that made the shortlist were most pertinent for a thorough analysis, an abstract review was done. Numerous of the chosen articles tackled urgent topics, such as the significance of cultural sensitivity, the necessity of

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community engagement led by Indigenous peoples, and the influence of colonialism on contemporary justice procedures. These issues were examined in several sources, such as Christmas's (2016) research on Indigenous community policing, which emphasises the value of culturally sensitive procedures in the Canadian legal system. With an emphasis on Indigenous-led methods of community healing and justice, this study offered insightful information about how RJ frameworks need to be modified to incorporate Indigenous customs (Dubord & Ram, 2023).

Themes and Analysis

A literature review reveals several important characteristics that are essential to comprehending how Indigenous practices might be successfully incorporated into restorative justice (RJ) frameworks in Canada. Among the topics covered are the significance of cultural flexibility, the vital function of community engagement, the long-lasting effects of colonial legacies, and discussions regarding the effectiveness and constraints of RJ in Indigenous settings.

Cultural Adaptability and Sensitivity

The significance of developing RJ frameworks that are sensitive to Aboriginal cultural contexts is emphasised by the subject of cultural adaptability. The relational and community-based qualities that are essential to Indigenous justice are frequently overlooked by RJ models created inside Western legal systems, which emphasize personal responsibility and punitive measures (Tauri, 2014). Tauri (2014) contends that the widespread adoption of Western RJ models around the world usually results in the imposition of external ideals that may conflict with Indigenous traditions that place a higher priority on spiritual healing and

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collective responsibility. Because the prescribed values do not align with the cultural and spiritual demands of Indigenous people, this conflict may make RJ less effective there.

Maxwell (2008) concurs, arguing that RJ methods, such as family group conferencing, should be modified to better conform to Indigenous cultural values. He warns that if RJ models ignore these cultural distinctions, they run the risk of backfiring since they can unintentionally perpetuate colonial power systems that devalue Indigenous values. According to Baskin (2010), for RJ to be truly successful in Indigenous contexts, it needs to take into account Indigenous ideas about spirituality, healing, and group responsibility. These principles form the basis of Indigenous justice systems, which see crime as a disturbance of societal equilibrium that calls for community-driven healing rather than personal punishment.

By analysing culturally responsive policing in Indigenous communities, Christmas (2016) expands on this criticism and makes the case for justice models that honour Indigenous cultural values rather than enforcing external systems. According to Andersen (1999) and Christmas (2016), RJ frameworks in Canada frequently use Western ideas of personal accountability without fully including Indigenous spirituality and healing practices. Together, these efforts highlight the necessity of community-centred, Indigenous-led RJ frameworks that respect Indigenous healing and restoration principles rather than emulating Western justice ideals.

Community Involvement and Engagement

The importance of community engagement and involvement in creating successful RJ frameworks in Indigenous contexts is another noteworthy subject. RJ works best when it is driven by communities, enabling Indigenous communities to actively participate in developing and carrying out *justice procedures*, as the literature repeatedly highlights.

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Through their empirical research conducted in British Columbia, Asadullah and Morrison (2021) show that RJ programs have greater success rates when communities of Indigenous people are actively involved in their planning and implementation. By fostering a sense of ownership, such involvement guarantees that RJ techniques are not only relevant to culture but also in line with the community's unique beliefs and requirements. According to their research, cooperation between governmental entities, Indigenous organisations, and educational institutions improves the efficacy and flexibility of RJ by establishing the foundation of the process in the particular cultural and social context of the community.

This viewpoint is further supported by Dickson-Gilmore (2014), who claims that community involvement is essential for tackling delicate topics like intimate partner violence. The social and cultural aspects that are fundamental to sustained conflict resolution may not be addressed by RJ initiatives if Indigenous populations do not participate authentically. Furthermore, the Community Justice Program (CJP) of the Tsawwassen First Nation serves as an example of how RJ efforts can be successful when they incorporate community involvement and Indigenous viewpoints. To promote a culturally sensitive strategy that focus on community healing, the CJP blends traditional criminal justice procedures with Indigenous justice components, such as the participation of Elders and community members (Dubord & Ram, 2023). The transformative power of community-driven RJ is demonstrated by this program, which also emphasises the importance of Indigenous communities in developing justice models that honour their cultural traditions and cater to their particular needs.

Colonial Legacies and the Impact

The systematic injustices and marginalisation that Indigenous communities still experience within the Canadian criminal justice system are addressed by the colonial legacy theme. Hewitt (2016) and Adjin-Tettey (2007) contend that the colonial past of Canada has

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solidified systemic hurdles in the legal system, leading to an over-representation of Indigenous people in jails and sustaining cycles of inequity and exclusion. These colonial legacies have led to a court system that routinely ignores Indigenous customs and beliefs, establishing Western legal norms that are at odds with Indigenous worldviews (Adjin-Tettey, 2007).

Building on this criticism, Hewitt (2016) argues that the Canadian present criminal justice system still functions according to a colonial paradigm that marginalises Indigenous people by disregarding their spiritual and cultural traditions. The necessity for RJ frameworks that give Indigenous views top priority and aggressively challenge colonial legacies by moving away from punitive measures and towards healing and repair is highlighted by these structural hurdles that have their roots in historical injustices. RJ presents a special chance to correct historical wrongs and advance justice based on Indigenous values, as claimed by Weinrath and Broschuk (2022). Colonial frameworks that have historically marginalised Indigenous voices and perspectives in judicial systems can be counterbalanced by RJ's embrace of Indigenous principles of restoration and community-based healing.

Discussions about Pros-Cons of Restorative Justice in Indigenous Settings

Even while RJ is frequently seen as a hopeful substitute for punitive justice, discussions about its benefits and drawbacks, particularly in Indigenous communities, continue. Researchers like Baskin (2002) and Maxwell (2008) point out that RJ has the potential to lower recidivism, promote community healing, and offer a culturally relevant substitute for the traditional legal system. Given that justice in Indigenous communities frequently focuses on healing and fostering communal harmony, these advantages make RJ a desirable choice for meeting their particular needs.

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Dickson-Gilmore (2014), however, presents significant questions regarding the application of RJ in domestic violence cases, contending that it might not offer sufficient protection for those who are most in need. If the focus of RJ on healing and reconciliation ignores power dynamics and the possibility of additional harm, victims may unintentionally be put in danger. Similarly, Barmaki (2022) warns that Western RJ models, which frequently place more emphasis on personal responsibility and reconciliation than on social and spiritual healing, may be fundamentally inconsistent with Indigenous justice values. To prevent colonial narratives from undermining Indigenous sovereignty, he cautions that RJ frameworks must be carefully modified to respect Indigenous customs and refrain from enforcing Western legal standards.

These criticisms draw attention to a gap in the literature, suggesting that additional empirical investigations and case studies demonstrating effective RJ integrations within Indigenous contexts are required. Hewitt (2016) and Adjin-Tettey (2007) urge research that outlines useful frameworks that take into account Indigenous legal traditions, offering direction to practitioners and policymakers. In order to ensure that RJ respects and is in line with Indigenous ways of life, future research should seek to identify best practices for enhancing its application in Indigenous communities.

Methodology

Using a thorough analysis of secondary data sources, this study employs a qualitative research technique to investigate how restorative justice (RJ) has been incorporated into Indigenous practices in Canada. The selection of qualitative methodologies was based on their ability to capture intricate social phenomena, including the historical circumstances, cultural dynamics, and community involvement that influence Indigenous perspectives on justice. A thorough investigation of how RJ models might be modified to uphold Indigenous

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values and address the persistent influence of colonial legacies on justice systems is made possible by this methodology.

Data Collection and Source Identification

A thorough assessment of scholarly publications, policy papers, case studies, and official and non-official reporting on Indigenous justice activities and RJ frameworks comprised the data-gathering procedure. Every step of the procedure was planned to guarantee that the study was based on trustworthy, pertinent, and culturally aware materials, offering a comprehensive grasp of the relevance of RJ in Indigenous situations.

Using a variety of scholarly databases and archives, a thorough search technique was used to find and compile pertinent literature. Because of their vast holdings in the social sciences, Indigenous studies, and legal research, JSTOR, Google Scholar, and LexisNexis were chosen as important resources. To get resources directly related to the Indigenous experience in Canada, institutional repositories that specialise in Indigenous justice and cultural studies were also examined. Terms like *Restorative Justice*, *Indigenous Justice*, *Community Healing*, *Decolonisation*, and *Cultural Sensitivity in Justice* were among the carefully chosen search terms and keywords that were used to capture both the particular context of RJ as it is applied in Indigenous settings as well as the larger theoretical frameworks surrounding RJ.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To choose materials that offered excellent, pertinent insights into Indigenous justice traditions and their conformity with RJ frameworks, the inclusion criteria were meticulously created. In particular, the sources included both theoretical and empirical literature, including books and peer-reviewed journal articles that theoretically investigated the compatibility of

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RJ with Indigenous legal systems and cultural practices or investigated RJ programs within Indigenous communities. Furthermore, case studies were chosen because they provided real-world instances of RJ implementations in Indigenous contexts, showcasing obstacles, achievements, and community reactions to these models of justice. Since they provide policy-oriented insights on modifying RJ frameworks to better suit the requirements of Indigenous communities in Canada, policy reports both governmental and non-governmental that address RJ best practices and describe lessons learnt in Indigenous settings were also included. To explore philosophical underpinnings for RJ, particularly as they pertain to Indigenous perspectives on justice, community, and healing, theoretical works that looked at philosophical and cultural viewpoints were included. A thorough investigation of RJ integration with Indigenous traditions was supported by the emphasis of the study on these source categories, which guaranteed a solid basis of empirical data and theoretical analysis.

The Exclusion Criteria were used to eliminate sources that deviated from the goals of the study and guarantee that the focus remained on Indigenous perspectives and activities. Studies or publications that did not specifically address Indigenous perspectives on justice or that did not take into account the cultural, spiritual nature, and communal aspects that are intrinsic to Indigenous RJ traditions were not included since they might generalise Western RJ models. Furthermore, non-Indigenous-only sources were disregarded because they failed to offer an adequate understanding of the cultural subtleties of RJ in Indigenous settings. Anecdotal or non-peer-reviewed sources were also excluded to preserve academic integrity and dependability. To keep the study focused on genuine Indigenous stories and practices and steer clear of non-Indigenous viewpoints that can weaken or distort Indigenous justice values, the exclusion process was crucial.

Inclusion of Diverse Indigenous Perspectives

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This study placed a high priority on the variety of voices from different Indigenous communities, including First Nations and Métis viewpoints, in order to thoroughly examine Indigenous perspectives on restorative justice (RJ) in Canada. Indigenous academics, professionals, and community leaders contributed insights, and their knowledge added a variety of perspectives to the research. The significance of recognising the regional customs and cultural variances that influence Indigenous justice practices is highlighted by this inclusive approach. Through the deliberate integration of these varied viewpoints, the research sought to generate trustworthy and pertinent results that appropriately represented the diversity of Indigenous communities throughout Canada. The findings of the study are strengthened by this inclusion, which guarantees that they are in line with the needs for justice and lived experiences of Indigenous communities.

Furthermore, highlighting Indigenous voices and knowledge honours the diversity of Indigenous cultures and emphasises the significance of regional customs and beliefs that shape perspectives on justice. With an emphasis on collective accountability and healing, this method recognises the close linkages between Indigenous justice practices and cultural and theological principles, which can differ greatly among groups. The study lays the groundwork for RJ models that are culturally responsive and flexible enough to meet the particular requirements of many Indigenous populations in Canada by considering these variations and capturing a wider range of Indigenous experiences.

Analysis of Thematic Data and Important Findings

To carefully find and analyse important themes in the literature and arrange the data into logical categories pertinent to the synthesis of RJ with Indigenous practices, this study used thematic analysis. To get contextual details and insights regarding RJ from Indigenous viewpoints, each source was carefully reviewed throughout the familiarisation phase of the

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analysis process. In order to record preliminary thoughts and observations regarding possible themes, this step required taking thorough notes. Understanding the many backgrounds and underlying causes driving RJ within communities of Indigenous people required familiarisation, which served as a basis for the coding procedure that followed.

To facilitate an inductive approach where topics organically emerged from the literature rather than being imposed, a coding scheme was created to classify the data into emergent themes. Important codes addressed issues including community leadership, cultural sensitivity, and how colonial history affects the administration of justice. For instance, *cultural sensitivity* codes recorded conversations about how RJ frameworks might honour traditional Indigenous ceremonies, healing practices, and the spiritual aspects of justice. Similar to this, guidelines on *community leadership* emphasise the contributions Elders and other members of the Indigenous community make to the development and application of RJ practices, guaranteeing community-driven strategies that are consistent with Indigenous values. Three main themes surfaced from the analysis and classification of these codes: the legacy of colonialism, community involvement and leadership, and cultural sensitivity and adaptability.

The last step was to integrate these concepts into the larger framework of RJ practices and Indigenous justice. This analysis shed light on the opportunities and difficulties in modifying RJ for Indigenous communities while tying the results of the study to the research objective. RJ must be culturally sensitive, community-led, and continually address the past atrocities that Indigenous peoples have experienced under Canada's mainstream legal systems, according to the synthesis process, if it is to properly resonate within Indigenous communities. This methodological approach focuses on models that relate to Indigenous principles of healing, community, and restoration, offering a comprehensive understanding of

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how RJ might be meaningfully included in Indigenous justice systems. Therefore, to effectively serve Indigenous people in Canada, the findings provide insightful information for future development of policies and RJ framework adaption.

Results and Findings

Several important conclusions about the incorporation of RJ with Indigenous practices in Canada may be drawn from the literature and case studies that were reviewed. These results provide strategic insights for promoting successful healing and reconciliation processes by highlighting the special advantages of culturally tailored RJ programs as well as the difficulties of putting such initiatives into practice within Indigenous contexts.

Cultural Sensitivity

The results highlight the significance of cultural sensitivity in RJ initiatives, especially the requirement that RJ frameworks be in line with Indigenous values of communal duty, spirituality, and collective healing. Indigenous perspectives on justice are fundamentally restorative, prioritising spiritual health and community harmony over punitive results (Barmaki, 2022; Weinrath & Broschuk, 2022). Indigenous RJ methods, for instance, frequently incorporate storytelling, land-based healing, and ceremonial events, all of which promote collective healing and assist in re-establishing a person's connection to their cultural identity (McDonald, 2022). Based on Indigenous worldview and values, these traditions demonstrate a comprehensive approach to justice that sees injury as a disruption to the interconnectedness of the community rather than a crime that needs to be prosecuted (Christmas, 2016).

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Furthermore, Maxwell (2008) highlights that the imposition of Western values, which frequently conflict with Indigenous customs, can be avoided by tailoring RJ techniques, such as family group conferencing, to Indigenous cultural contexts. RJ can assist Indigenous practices that see healing and reconciliation as crucial elements of justice by cultivating a justice system that recognises cultural quirks (Przybylinski & Ohlsson, 2021). Christmas (2016) draws attention to how policing has changed in Indigenous communities and makes the case that RJ frameworks that are adapted to Indigenous values like respecting spirituality and communal ties, are better at building trust and accelerating long-term healing.

Community-Led Initiatives

Research continuously shows that community-led RJ initiatives, where Indigenous groups actively participate in the planning, execution, and leadership of the programs are the most successful. With their empirical research in British Columbia, Asadullah and Morrison (2021) show that when Indigenous voices are at the forefront of the process, RJ programs have higher success rates and garner more community support. Since community members are more inclined to participate in programs they believe match their needs and values, community-led RJ initiatives not only more closely align with local customs and traditions, but also foster trust and promote active engagement.

One example of the possibilities of community-driven RJ frameworks is the Community Justice Program (CJP) of the Tsawwassen First Nation. To develop a culturally sensitive approach to justice, the CJP incorporates Indigenous viewpoints and traditional RJ components, such as community involvement and Elder supervision (Dubord & Ram, 2023). The effectiveness of RJ in promoting genuine healing and reconciliation is increased by this program, which shows how Indigenous-led initiatives offer culturally relevant solutions that complement local values and fortify community bonds. Dickson-Gilmore (2014) goes on to

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say that community involvement is essential for tackling complicated social issues like intimate partner abuse because it guarantees that RJ procedures take into account social dynamics and culturally rooted conflict resolution elements.

Addressing Colonial Legacies

The results also show that RJ frameworks must face and address colonialism's lingering effects on Indigenous populations. The over-representation of Indigenous people in Canadian jails and the continuation of cycles of marginalisation are results of systemic injustices within the judicial system that have been ingrained by the colonial past in Canada (Adjin-Tettey, 2007; Hewitt, 2016). According to Adjin-Tettey (2007), the criminal justice system in Canada is ingrained with colonial legacies, which frequently lead to justice procedures that disregard or disregard Indigenous worldviews. RJ must proactively address these past wrongs, putting healing above punitive actions and recognising the pervasive injustices experienced by Indigenous people if it is to be restorative.

According to Weinrath and Broschuk (2022), RJ provides a strategy to redress colonial harms by emphasising healing and reconciliation as opposed to retaliation. This change promotes a justice model that strengthens Indigenous voices and upholds systemic equality by enabling Indigenous communities to recover a sense of justice that is consistent with their historical experiences and cultural beliefs. RJ models that take into account the effects of colonialism, like forced assimilation and land dispossession, are better suited to be instruments for reconciliation, promoting healing that recognises the past traumas that Indigenous people have endured (Baskin, 2010).

Challenges in Implementation

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Although RJ has a lot of promise to improve rehabilitation in Indigenous communities, there are a number of obstacles that can prevent it from being used effectively, according to the literature. Lack of resources is a major issue for community-led RJ projects, which frequently have trouble getting enough money and assistance from the government (Asadullah & Morrison, 2021). Indigenous communities may find it difficult to create and maintain RJ programs that suit their particular cultural values and requirements because to a lack of resources.

There may also be conflicts between Indigenous spiritual traditions and secular RJ paradigms. According to Dickson-Gilmore (2014), when RJ models do not take into account Indigenous spirituality and collective activities, conflicts in justice philosophy may arise. The efficacy of the program may ultimately be impacted by this dissonance, which may cause the RJ process and Indigenous community norms to go out of harmony. A further obstacle to the acceptability of RJ is the widespread influence of colonial legal systems, which may not entirely accord with Indigenous beliefs on justice and frequently favour disciplinary procedures over restorative processes (Tauri, 2014). To ensure that RJ programs are lasting within Indigenous communities and culturally meaningful, several issues must be addressed.

Findings to the Research Question

To promote community healing and restoration, this study aimed to ascertain how RJ can be successfully incorporated with Indigenous practices in Canada. According to the investigation, in order for RJ to successfully integrate with Indigenous practices, cultural awareness is essential. In contrast to Western punitive models, indigenous justice systems place a higher priority on spirituality, group accountability, and community healing as essential components of justice (Baskin, 2010; Barmaki, 2022). Reconciliation and community-centred healing procedures are supported when RJ is modified to uphold these

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ideals (Asadullah & Morrison, 2021). A key component of Indigenous conceptions of justice is emotional and spiritual repair, which is fostered by Indigenous RJ practices including healing circles, storytelling, and land-based ceremonies (McDonald, 2022).

Additionally, RJ projects driven by the community consistently produce favourable results. Long-term success is more likely when programs created and run by Indigenous communities themselves guarantee cultural relevance, foster trust, and increase engagement (Dickson-Gilmore, 2014). The significance of Indigenous control over RJ processes is highlighted by the fact that externally imposed RJ programs frequently overlook historical injustices faced by Indigenous people and may lack cultural resonance.

According to Hewitt (2016), the research also shows that RJ needs to address Canada's colonial past, which was marked by forced assimilation, land dispossession, and the deterioration of Indigenous identity. Understanding these structural injustices is necessary for RJ to be truly restorative. It must move away from punitive measures and towards healing and reconciliation procedures, enabling Indigenous people to reclaim fairness on their terms (Adjin-Tettey, 2007). The injustices caused by colonial legal systems run the risk of being perpetuated by programs that ignore these colonial implications (Baskin, 2010; Dubord & Ram, 2023).

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Research

Examining both conventional RJ frameworks and Indigenous justice paradigms, this research's holistic approach is one of its core strengths. In line with Indigenous customs, this enables a nuanced understanding of how the two can interact, emphasising the importance of cultural sensitivity and community involvement while highlighting RJ's capacity to promote healing and lower recidivism in Indigenous communities (Przybylinski & Ohlsson, 2021). The scarcity of actual case studies demonstrating effective RJ implementations in Indigenous communities, however, is a significant shortcoming. Although the literature and theoretical

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frameworks provide insightful information, the study's capacity to evaluate RJ's effectiveness in a variety of Indigenous contexts is limited by the lack of real-world examples (Dickson-Gilmore, 2014). Additionally, the application of a single RJ approach is complicated by the diversity of Indigenous peoples across Canada, as each community may have distinct justice practices and beliefs that call for customised responses (Tauri, 2014).

Effectiveness and Challenges in Data Selection

Using resources sourced from Google Scholar, JSTOR, and the JIBC Library, the data selection method effectively found pertinent material on RJ and Indigenous practices. The study's depth and scope were increased by peer-reviewed studies from these sources, which offered thorough insights into RJ's interaction with Indigenous traditions (Asadullah & Morrison, 2021). However, it took a lot of filtering because the first search turned up a lot of sources that weren't unique to Indigenous cultures. Refining search keywords at the beginning could have helped reduce the exclusion of articles that concentrated on non-Indigenous populations or general RJ models (Baskin, 2010). Furthermore, the study's capacity to reach firm findings was hampered by the paucity of empirical data regarding RJ's effectiveness in particular Indigenous contexts.

Primary data collecting could be used in future studies to better understand how applicable RJ is in Indigenous contexts. Interviews with community people, RJ practitioners, and Indigenous leaders may offer personal accounts of the difficulties and achievements of implementing RJ. Comparative case studies from various Indigenous communities throughout the world, including Indigenous RJ models in Australia or Māori practices in New Zealand, may also provide insightful information about practical methods for modifying RJ for Indigenous settings.

Discussion

In combining RJ with Indigenous practices, the results of this study highlight the significance of culturally specific, community-led, and de-colonial approaches. This talk focusses on the important lessons learnt from studying RJ and its function in Indigenous contexts, showing how RJ may be a transformative model for justice, healing, and reconciliation in Indigenous communities when it is adapted well.

Co-Creation with Indigenous Communities

One of the most important conclusions drawn from this study is that to guarantee cultural relevance and efficacy, RJ frameworks must be jointly developed with Indigenous communities. In addition to failing to address the particular justice demands of Indigenous communities, traditional RJ models created without Indigenous engagement may unintentionally reinforce colonial power dynamics (Barmaki, 2022). RJ frameworks may perpetuate structural injustices that have historically silenced Indigenous voices in the Canadian legal system when Indigenous people are not given agency in their creation and application. On the other hand, it has been demonstrated that community-driven RJ programs, headed by Indigenous Elders, cultural leaders, and esteemed community members, promote greater feelings of accountability, belonging, and group healing (Asadullaha & Morrison, 2021).

Indigenous justice concepts, which place a higher value on connection, healing, and harmony than on punitive measures, are reflected in community-driven RJ models. Indigenous RJ practices have historically included holistic methods that allow participants to share personal stories, participate in community-centred healing, and re-establish a connection with their cultural identity, such as narrative storytelling, healing circles, and

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ceremonies. These community-led programs provide culturally relevant frameworks that respect Indigenous worldviews and give a nurturing atmosphere where accountability and healing are intricately entwined by establishing RJ in Indigenous practices and values (McDonald, 2022). In addition to attaining more significant justice outcomes, this co-creation process is crucial for building trust among Indigenous communities, who might be dubious of justice systems that have historically been imposed on them without consultation or regard for their distinct cultural contexts (Przybylinski & Ohlsson, 2021).

Prioritizing Healing over Punishment

Given the historical traumas that Indigenous people have experienced as a result of colonisation, the research findings further highlight the need for healing above punishment in RJ frameworks in Indigenous contexts. Western justice approaches, which emphasise punitive methods, frequently overlook the communal, spiritual, and emotional aspects of the dispute. This restriction is especially problematic in Indigenous contexts, since justice methods are based on healing, reconciliation, and communal well-being (Hewitt, 2016). On the other hand, Indigenous RJ methods place a strong emphasis on using spiritual and group healing techniques to mend hurt, rebuild connections, and reintegrate people into the community. Indigenous views on justice, which emphasise re-establishing harmony and balance amongst the community rather than punishing, are consistent with this viewpoint.

RJ models can provide spaces for participants to process trauma and conflict comprehensively by integrating Indigenous practices including storytelling, healing circles, and ceremonial gatherings. By addressing the psychological as well as spiritual effects of abuse, these practices create a space where victims, offenders, and community members can participate in group recovery. Additionally, by addressing the intergenerational trauma brought about by colonialism, this strategy helps Indigenous communities to move towards

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reconciliation, something that Western justice models frequently ignore (Baskin, 2010).

According to Weinrath and Broschuk (2022), Indigenous communities are empowered to recover their justice traditions and incorporate RJ in ways that are consistent with their cultural values when the emphasis is shifted from punishment to healing.

Decolonization and Restorative Justice

The results also indicate that RJ needs to actively participate in the decolonisation of justice systems rather than just absorbing Indigenous practices. Rethinking justice procedures to give community-led and restorative alternatives precedence over punitive, state-imposed paradigms that have historically disadvantaged Indigenous peoples is necessary to decolonise RJ frameworks (Baskin, 2010; Przybylinski & Ohlsson, 2021). Indigenous communities are still marginalised by colonial power systems in Canada's legal system, which perpetuates cycles of harm by enforcing punitive measures that ignore Indigenous viewpoints on accountability and reconciliation. Decolonised RJ models, on the other hand, prioritise healing, reconciliation, and restoration over retaliation, ensuring that justice outcomes are in line with the social and cultural requirements of Indigenous communities (Tauri, 2014).

Recognising and tackling the root causes of crime and damage in Indigenous communities, such as historical trauma, economic inequalities, and structural injustices brought about by colonial policies, is a crucial part of decolonising RJ (Adjin-Tettey, 2007). Decolonised RJ frameworks might, for instance, place more emphasis on community-led projects that address these underlying issues rather than just punishment, providing answers based on the social and cultural realities that Indigenous communities experience (Hewitt, 2016). In addition to challenging the conventional punitive model, this kind of approach supports justice procedures that actively advance Indigenous self-determination, sovereignty, and community resilience.

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Holistic and Inclusive Approaches to RJ

The fact that RJ programs work best when they are comprehensive and take Indigenous spirituality into account is another important finding. Spiritual practices are frequently incorporated into Indigenous judicial systems because they are seen as crucial to accountability and healing (McDonald, 2022). RJ programs run the danger of missing out on important chances for profound healing and significant community reconciliation if they disregard these spiritual practices or do not involve Elder supervision. RJ programs can offer a more thorough approach that takes into account the spiritual, psychological, and emotional aspects of justice by enlisting the help of Elders and spiritual leaders (Barmaki, 2022).

The results emphasise how important it is for RJ to acknowledge and honour Indigenous spiritual practices because they are strongly linked to community strength, identity, and culture. Programs can move beyond Western legal paradigms, which frequently concentrate only on individual accountability, and promote a relational and restorative justice process by incorporating Indigenous spirituality into RJ models (Weinrath & Broschuk, 2022). Given that Indigenous peoples are over-represented in Canada's criminal justice system, RJ models must address the systemic injustices that Indigenous communities face (Hewitt, 2016).

Connections Based on Results and Findings

The results highlight how crucial cultural sensitivity is as a fundamental component of successful RJ models. Programs created without taking into account Indigenous people's spiritual and cultural traditions frequently lack legitimacy and fall short of achieving genuine reconciliation (Tauri, 2014). On the other hand, RJ frameworks that integrate Indigenous practices like storytelling, land-based ceremonies, and healing circles have a higher chance of being accepted by Indigenous people and producing positive healing results (Baskin, 2010).

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These methods promote cultural continuity, fortify community links, and provide justice outcomes that are profoundly aligned with Indigenous identities and values by incorporating Indigenous customs into RJ frameworks (McDonald, 2022).

The efficacy of Indigenous-led projects and RJ's emphasis on community involvement are also significantly correlated. Indigenous communities are more willing to participate in RJ procedures when they are heavily involved in the planning and execution of these initiatives, according to research. In addition to guaranteeing cultural relevance, community involvement strengthens Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination throughout the legal system (Asadullaha & Morrison, 2021). The claim that decolonisation and Indigenous leadership are necessary to develop justice systems that represent Indigenous perspectives and address the specific requirements of Indigenous communities is supported by this connection (Przybylinski & Ohlsson, 2021).

Lastly, the study emphasises that for RJ to be truly rehabilitative, the colonial past of Canada must be addressed. RJ initiatives run the risk of perpetuating the same problems they aim to address if they fail to recognise the past injustices that Indigenous people have experienced. Programs can go beyond punishment to address communal traumas and facilitate a shift towards restoration and reconciliation by integrating Indigenous viewpoints and historical context within RJ frameworks (Adjin-Tettey, 2007; Hewitt, 2016). In the end, this method empowers communities to heal individually as well as collectively as they confront the injustices caused by colonialism and create resilient, justice-oriented communities by providing a deeper understanding of justice that is consistent with Indigenous values.

Recommendations

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Several suggestions are made in light of the findings of research to help RJ and Indigenous practices in Canada be successfully integrated. To guarantee that RJ frameworks are firmly ingrained in Indigenous contexts and foster lasting healing and reconciliation, these guidelines emphasise the necessity of cultural adaptability, Indigenous administration, decolonisation of justice practices, and the distribution of resources.

Culturally Adaptable RJ Frameworks

One of the main suggestions is that RJ frameworks be culturally modified to represent the restorative, spiritual, and communal elements that are essential to Indigenous justice systems and their safety. Without being adapted to the distinct cultural settings of Indigenous communities, generic RJ models may not be legitimate and may not effectively engage participants. Rather, culturally unique activities such as land-based rites, storytelling, and healing circles should be incorporated into RJ programs. Such actions are consistent with Indigenous conceptions of justice, which view injury as a break in the social and spiritual equilibrium of the community as well as a disturbance of the law (Barmaki, 2022). RJ frameworks can promote collective healing and restoration that is more in line with the beliefs and experiences of Indigenous communities by including these culturally based practices (McDonald, 2022).

Furthermore, as spirituality and justice are frequently closely associated in Indigenous cultures, RJ practices must incorporate Indigenous spirituality. A deeper healing process is facilitated by practices that honour and integrate spirituality, enabling members to rediscover their cultural history and reaffirming RJ's collective responsibility. Indigenous communities can participate in meaningful and culturally appropriate reconciliation processes thanks to these frameworks, which offer an alternative to Western punitive paradigms that frequently ignore these facets of justice (Weinrath & Broschuk, 2022).

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Indigenous Leadership and Community-Driven Initiatives

Putting Indigenous communities in charge of the planning, execution, and continuing administration of RJ programs is a key suggestion. According to research, RJ programs run by community people, cultural leaders, and Indigenous Elders are more successful at building trust and sustaining engagement over the long run (Asadullaha & Morrison, 2021). RJ models can be more effectively tailored to the unique requirements and principles of the community when Indigenous people occupy leadership positions, guaranteeing cultural relevance and commitment.

Local cultural practices, customs, and justice philosophies might differ greatly throughout Canada and the Indigenous groups can be integrated into RJ programs run by Indigenous people. By increasing credibility and confidence, this inclusivity motivates community members to take part in the legal system. In addition to encouraging self-determination, Indigenous leadership in RJ strengthens Indigenous communities' sovereignty to administer justice in ways consistent with their objectives and beliefs (Przybylinski & Ohlsson, 2021). By instilling a sense of accountability and ownership in the community, community-driven RJ systems that place a high priority on Indigenous leadership can create more resilient and sustainable justice models.

Addressing Structural Inequities and Colonial Legacies

RJ must aggressively face and address the lingering effects of colonialism if it is to be genuinely rehabilitative in Indigenous communities. Because they are based on colonial power structures, the traditional justice systems in Canada frequently uphold structural injustices and silence Indigenous voices. De-colonial ideas that prioritise justice, healing, and reconciliation over punishment should thus be incorporated into RJ models (Hewitt, 2016).

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To guarantee that justice procedures are based on historical and cultural awareness, such frameworks should specifically address historical injustices such as forced assimilation, land dispossession, and cultural erasure (Adjin-Tettey, 2007).

Indigenous communities can address the underlying causes of damage, such as socioeconomic disparities and intergenerational trauma brought on by colonial policies, in spaces created by RJ frameworks that place a high priority on decolonisation. By supporting the re-emergence of indigenous authority over the legal system, this de-colonial strategy for RJ empowers communities to mould justice through processes that are consistent with their lived experiences and cultural identity. In addition to enhancing community resilience, addressing these legacy issues in RJ frameworks gives Indigenous communities a forum to affirm and reclaim their traditional traditions in a context of justice (Baskin, 2010).

Resource Allocation and Support

The allocation of sufficient funds to promote the growth and sustainability of RJ initiatives led by Indigenous peoples is a crucial suggestion. Indigenous RJ programs frequently struggle to obtain financial and technical assistance from the government, which restricts their ability to create and maintain culturally appropriate RJ models (Asadullaha & Morrison, 2021). For Indigenous communities to be empowered to create RJ frameworks that are suited to their particular needs and justice philosophies, committed financing from both the federal and provincial governments is essential. To provide Indigenous community members with the information and abilities necessary to manage RJ efforts sustainably, this money should also support educational and training initiatives.

To help Indigenous communities navigate the legal system and create RJ models that are consistent with their goals and values, the distribution of resources should also include the

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availability of legal and technical support. Additionally, financing must be adaptable enough to take into account the variety of Indigenous cultures found throughout Canada, recognising that every community has its customs and methods for pursuing justice. The efficacy, cultural awareness, and long-term sustainability of Indigenous RJ initiatives can all be improved with consistent institutional and financial support (Dickson-Gilmore, 2014).

Ongoing Training and Cross-Cultural Education

Lastly, to guarantee that RJ models continue to be applicable, culturally aware, and successful, continuous training and cross-cultural instruction are advised. To promote a common understanding and respect for the social and communal aspects of Indigenous justice, training programs should teach RJ principles and Indigenous justice ideals to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous practitioners. The importance of spirituality, cultural flexibility, and the necessity of addressing colonial legacies in the administration of justice should all be emphasised in this training. These training programs can guarantee that RJ models are applied courteously and responsively by fostering cultural competency and understanding (Barmaki, 2022).

In order to enable practitioners to modify their methods in response to new community demands, education initiatives should also promote continuous reflection and adaptation within RJ frameworks. These initiatives provide non-Indigenous stakeholders with the tools they need to effectively support Indigenous-led RJ while empowering Indigenous communities to uphold RJ models that reflect their values and customs. The resilience, long-term viability and cultural authenticity of RJ models in Indigenous contexts are thereby enhanced by training and education programs (McDonald, 2022).

Conclusion

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To support community healing, reconciliation as a whole and justice in communities of Indigenous people across Canada, this study emphasises the encouraging possibilities of combining restorative justice with Indigenous practices. RJ frameworks can be successfully modified to satisfy the particular requirements of Indigenous peoples by placing a high priority on cultural sensitivity, involvement in the community, and encouraging an awareness of the colonial past. Even though RJ has many advantages, there are still issues, especially concerning resource distribution, concordance with Indigenous spiritual practices, and the structural injustices that colonial legal systems have maintained.

It is essential to prioritise Indigenous sovereignty, healing, and reconciliation as the legal system of Canada develops. In addition to promoting justice for Indigenous communities, implementing RJ in a way that respects Indigenous values enhances the justice system and public safety in Canada and opens the door for a more equitable, inclusive, and restorative framework that recognises the traditions and contributions of all groups.

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Table 1*Initial Database Keyword Search and Hits*

Database	Keyword	Number of Hits
JIBC Library (EBSCO)	Restorative Justice	17, 326
Google Scholar	Restorative Justice	449, 000
JSTOR	Restorative Justice	5, 193
JIBC Library (EBSCO)	Restorative Justice and Indigenous Peoples	471
Google Scholar	Restorative Justice and Indigenous Peoples	47, 200
JSTOR	Restorative Justice and Indigenous Peoples	755
JIBC Library (EBSCO)	Restorative Justice and Indigenous Peoples and Canada	142
Google Scholar	Restorative Justice and Indigenous Peoples and Canada	33, 400
JSTOR	Restorative Justice and Indigenous Peoples and Canada	368

Note. A summary of the number of hits obtained from each database based on the initial primary keywords that were searched. Three Databases have been chosen for the search of literature.