



University  
of Victoria

Graduate Studies

Notice of the Final Oral Examination  
for the Degree of Master of Arts

of

**TARYN BURGAR**

BA (University of Victoria, 2015)

**“Restorative justice and sexual assault:  
Canadian practitioner experiences”**

School of Public Administration

Monday, November 26, 2018

2:00 P.M.

Human and Social Development Building  
Room A373

Supervisory Committee:

Prof. Jerry McHale, School of Public Administration, University of Victoria (Supervisor)  
Prof. Rebecca Johnson, Faculty of Law, UVic (Outside Member)

External Examiner:

Dr. Tara Ney, School of Public Administration, UVic

Chair of Oral Examination:

Dr. Simon Devereaux, Department of History, UVic

## **Abstract**

This thesis examines the use of restorative justice with cases of sexual assault in Canada through the perspective of practitioner experience. It concludes that restorative justice for sexual assault is an innovative and viable justice practice that should be offered to survivor-victims as an option for their justice-seeking process. A literature review was undertaken to create a summary of past and current academic perspectives on the topic and to provide context for the interviews. Interviews were conducted with 12 restorative justice practitioners in Canada who have experience facilitating or participating in restorative justice processes that dealt with sexual assault. The data from the interviews was analyzed using thematic coding to produce a set of themes based on practitioner experience. The data was also used to examine the ethical issues that are relevant in the current landscape. This thesis determines that practitioners are knowledgeable about the practices that can make the restorative justice process safer. It finds that practitioners report being able to meet the varying needs of survivor-victims through procedural flexibility. It observes that they struggle with the practical and ethical tensions that arise in their work, but these tensions are manageable, and they are committed to working with them. Restorative justice has the potential to address a sexual assault case successfully when survivor-victim needs are met, safer practices are used, and practitioners are informed about the complexities and varying experiences of sexual assault.