

# **Community Behaviour Guidelines**

*or, how to implement Part 20 – Conflict Resolution  
of the Glen Valley Organic Farm Cooperative Rules of Association*

## Purpose

To guide members who either experience or witness behaviour they consider harmful.

## How this reflects our culture

At Glen Valley Organic Farm Cooperative (GVOFC), we hold the belief that conflict holds the possibility for creative solutions and learning. It is the intention of this document to explore an appropriate balance between individual and collective rights, freedoms, and responsibilities in making the farm a safe, caring, and orderly environment for living, working and visiting.

## Link back to the GVOFC Rules of Association

This document is based on, and complementary to our Rules of Association, specifically Part 20 – Conflict Resolution, Rules 94 through 97. (Note that Rule 15 deals with Grounds for Termination of Membership). Wording of Part 20 is found in Appendix A.

## Overview

(see flow chart, page 2)

## Explanatory Text

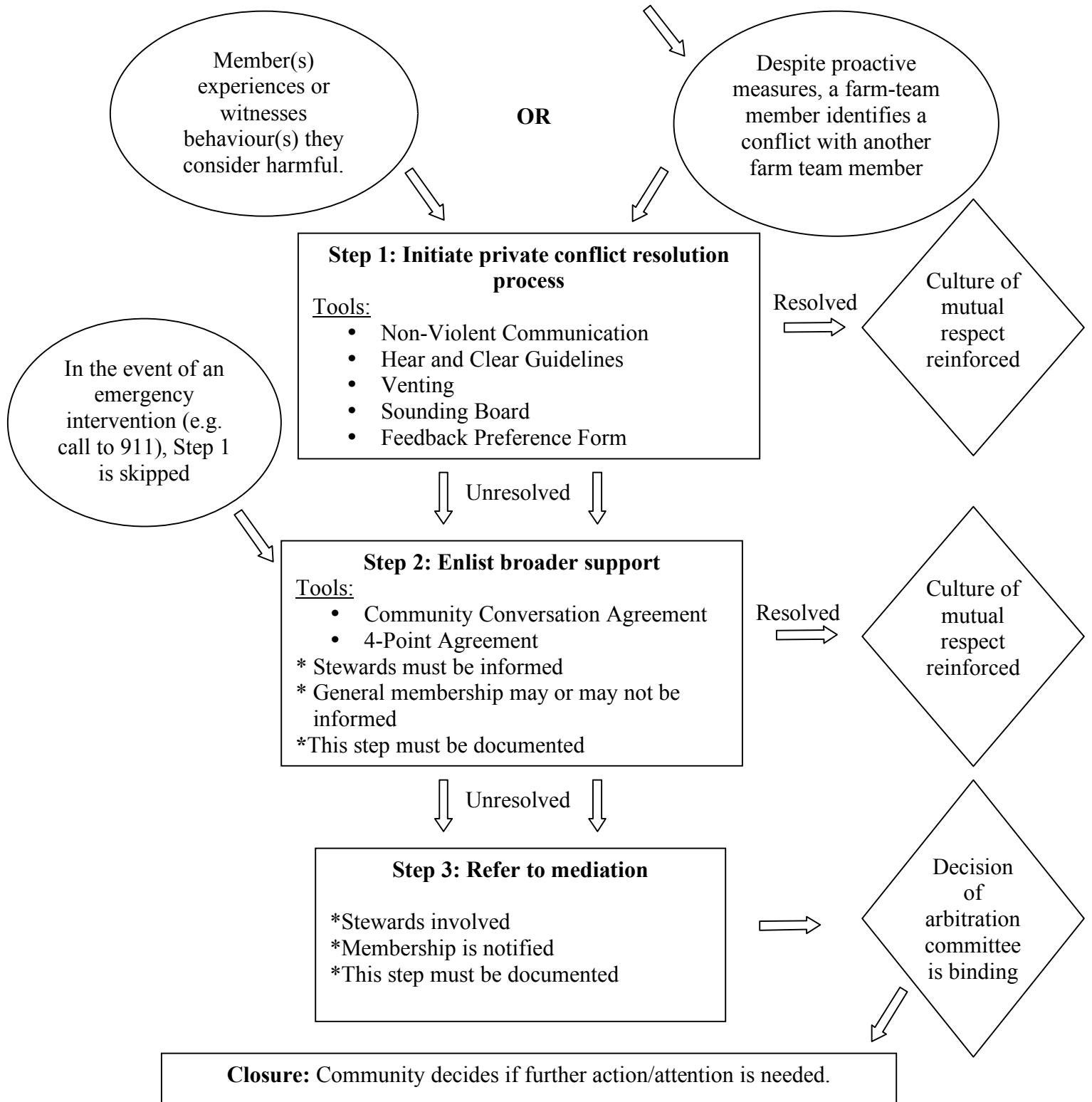
(Pages 3, 4, 5)

## Tools

- Wording of Part 20 – Conflict Resolution, GVOFC Rules of Association (Appendix A)
- Hear and Clear Guidelines (see Appendix B)
- Feedback Preference Form (see Appendix C)
- Community Conversation Agreement (see Appendix D)
- 4-Point Agreement (Appendix E)
- Suggestions for Documentation of Conflicts (Appendix F)
- Examples of harmful behaviour (Appendix G)
- Glossary of terms (Appendix H)
- Non-Violent Communication (ref. Marshal Rosenberg's, Non-Violent Communication: A Language of Life. Copies available)

**Chart 1: Community Behaviour Guidelines**  
*as applies to all members of the GVOFC*

**Farm Team Pro-active Step:** The Farm Team commits to holding regular, scheduled Community Conversations, using the Community Conversation Agreement. The Farm Team also commits to always utilizing the information given in the Feedback Preference Form when communicating with another Farm Team member.



### **Farm Team Pro-Active Step**

The Farm Team commits to holding regular, scheduled Community Conversations, using the Community Conversation Agreement. The Farm Team also commits to always utilizing the information given in the Feedback Preference Form when communicating with another farm team member.

In response to the request by the GVOFC membership that the Farm Team submit a plan for interpersonal communication and conflict resolution, the Farm Team has committed to holding regular, scheduled Community Conversations and to using the information in the Feedback Preference Form for communicating with other Farm Team members.

In the case where, despite these pro-active measures, a farm team member identifies a conflict with another farm team member, then they formally move to Step 1: Initiate Private Conflict Resolution Process.

### **Step 1: Initiate Private Conflict Resolution Process**

*Rule 94 (a) encourage the resolution of the dispute by the individuals themselves*

It is expected that all GVOFC community members, will treat themselves and each other with respect. While we each have unique skills, capacities, interest and experience in resolving conflict, it is assumed that we all value the importance of resolving conflict and do our best to engage in it with integrity and respect.

When a member experiences or witnesses behaviour(s) they consider harmful, they are encouraged to directly address the party involved in the issue. They may discover that their disagreement is based on differences in values or principles and, if it is not harming anyone in the community, they may mutually agree to disagree.

Community members may also choose, as part of Step 1, to ‘vent’ their concerns to someone within or outside of the community (see Glossary for further explanation of ‘venting’), or enlist the support of a ‘Sounding Board’ from within the Cooperative.

In both cases, the member will ask permission for the support and clarify what that support would look like - for example, a Sounding Board, may give feedback (not collusion) on the concern, agreeing to sit in on the conversation between the two parties.

When conflict occurs between Farm Team members, then in the interests of transparency and acknowledging that on more contentious issues, all Farm Team members can become affected, both parties agree to announce at the next Farm Team meeting what steps are being taken to resolve the issue. This will be continued until the conflict is resolved.

However, if the disagreement is not resolved, and begins to erode the fabric of the community, there is often a need for broader support/intervention, and the parties will move to Step 2, possibly engaging in a facilitated Community Conversation, thereby utilizing the benefit of the group intelligence.

Individuals are encouraged (but not required, at this step) to document and keep track of all efforts made to address the issue. If the issue is resolved, the individual may choose to hold onto their own private documentation for reference if needed and life moves on. The individual may also choose to submit a copy of their documentation to the Stewards. In this regard, the Stewards are to keep any communications confidential.

Tools:

- Hear and Clear Guidelines (Appendix B)
- Venting (Appendix H)
- Sounding Board (Appendix H)
- Non-Violent Communication (Appendix H)
- Feedback Preference Form (Appendix C)

**Step 2: Enlist Broader Support**

*Rule 94 (b) cause a meeting to be organized where the disputants themselves, in the presence of, and with the help of, one or more mutually agreed upon third party member(s) of the Cooperative shall attempt to resolve the dispute in a manner acceptable to them all;*

If the parties have not been able to resolve the conflict through Step 1, they can approach any other member(s) that they feel would be helpful in getting support to deal with the situation. That member will work with the individual to whatever extent they feel willing and able. One option may be to schedule a Community Conversation.

At Step 2, the Stewards may not be directly involved, but they do need to be informed of the nature of the conflict and any recommendations for action.

If the Board of Stewards is approached for support by an individual with a concern, it may appoint an individual on the Stewards team to review all actions taken thus far and review other possible next steps. Such options may include a facilitated Community Conversation (with the number of people in attendance to be negotiated with the parties involved), or where an agreement has been broken, it may include recommendations to the co-operative to clarify or modify the particular agreement.

The Stewards may also now decide to inform all parties concerned that the issue is now being taken to a Community Conversation at a community meeting of the general membership, and recommend that the person/s whose behaviour has caused concern attend that meeting to address the issue with the whole community in attendance.

The representative of the Stewards continues to follow up with the individuals concerned, recording all outcomes, further decisions and agreements formed (see, for example, the 4-Point Agreement in Appendix E), which will then be presented at the next community meeting. At that community meeting, after hearing reports back from the Stewards, the community decides what, if any, further action needs to be implemented in restoring the integrity and harmony of “the community fabric.”

When the issue has been resolved, it is also the responsibility of the Stewards' representative to inform the community that all communications are now complete and the community fabric has been restored.

At this step documentation of the process is required, and must be submitted to the Stewards. This can include any information the individuals deem important, and should include records of all suggested recommendations and any actions taken to try to resolve the issue at this level.

In the event that the conflict is not resolved at this stage, it will be referred to mediation.

Tools:

- Community Conversation Agreement (Appendix D)
- 4-Point Agreement (Appendix E)

**Step 3: Refer to Mediation**

*Rule 94 (c) refer the dispute to an arbitration committee of three (3). The directors and the member or other person aggrieved must each select one member of the Cooperative to the committee, and the third committee person shall be chosen by the two selected. The third person may be from within or outside the Cooperative, and may be a professional mediator. The decision of this committee is final and binding on all parties and may be enforced on application to the Supreme Court of British Columbia.*

If the conflict has not been resolved in Step 2, enlisting broader support, then the conflict will be referred to mediation. In cases where the conflict is between a member of the GVOFC community and the Stewards (when it relates to the operations of the GVOFC, not interpersonal conflict), then the committee will be made up of one member from the GVOFC chosen by the Stewards, one member of the GVOFC chosen by the aggrieved party, and a third person who is selected by these first two.

In cases where the Stewards are facilitating the conflict resolution between members of the Cooperative, then they may provide assistance to the parties in choosing the first two members of the committee, but defer the decision to the parties themselves.

One representative from the mediation team will be appointed to record all outcomes, further decisions and agreements formed, which will then be presented at the next community meeting for information to the community. At that community meeting, after hearing reports from the mediation team, the community decides what, if any, further action is needed to restore the integrity, trust and harmony of the 'community fabric'.

At this stage, the general membership will be informed of the conflict and actions being taken to resolve it. Documentation continues and is submitted to the Stewards.

**Part 20 — Dispute Resolution**

**Disputes**

- 94** In the event of a dispute arising out of the affairs of the Cooperative, between a member and/or any person aggrieved who has not for more than six (6) months ceased to be a member, the Directors shall:
- (a) encourage the resolution of the dispute by the individuals themselves; and if this does not result in a resolution,
  - (b) cause a meeting to be organized where the disputants themselves, in the presence of, and with the help of, one or more mutually agreed upon third party member(s) of the Cooperative shall attempt to resolve the dispute in a manner acceptable to them all; and in the event that the dispute is still not satisfactorily resolved,
  - (c) refer the dispute to an arbitration committee of three (3). The directors and the member or other person aggrieved must each select one member of the Cooperative to the committee, and the third committee person shall be chosen by the two selected. The third person may be from within or outside the Cooperative, and may be a professional mediator. The decision of this committee is final and binding on all parties and may be enforced on application to the Supreme Court of British Columbia.

**Procedure**

- 95** (1) Subject to these Rules, any meeting set up to resolve a dispute will be conducted in a manner the Cooperative considers appropriate, so long as each party is treated fairly and given full opportunity to present their case.
- (2) Each party to the dispute must submit to a meeting under Rule 94 (c) a written statement describing the nature of the dispute and a summary of the evidence the party intends to present at the hearing.
- (3) The arbitration committee must hold a hearing as soon as possible at a location that is convenient to all parties.
- (4) Each party to the dispute must attend the oral hearing, if any.
- (5) If all parties agree, the hearing may consist of an exchange of written statements or any other procedure.

**Decision must be in writing and signed by committee members**

- 96** (1) The arbitration committee may make whatever decision it considers just having regard to the Act, the regulation, the memorandum of the Cooperative, these Rules and the evidence presented by the parties.
- (2) The decision must be in writing and signed by each member of the arbitration committee.
- (3) Within four (4) weeks of the date of the decision, the arbitration committee may vary a decision to correct a clerical or typographical error or omission, or a similar type of error or omission.

**Costs of arbitration**

- 97** Both parties to an arbitration must each bear their own share of the costs, unless another provision has been made by the membership of the Cooperative.

## Appendix B – Hear and Clear Guidelines

### Pre-amble

- The purpose of a ‘Hear and Clear’ session is to reach a level of mutual understanding.
- Understanding does not assume agreement.
- Dialogue that threatens to deteriorate the relationship should not be allowed to continue. When emotions escalate, cognitive abilities ebb.
- All participants need to be mindful and assertive in managing this process.
- If either or both people are not willing or able to engage in this process, a later date is scheduled that is agreeable to both.
- It may be useful to invite a third person, agreeable to both, to help out.

### Hear and Clear steps

1. Person A speaks their point of view, using "I" language.
2. Person B listens without interrupting.
3. Person B acknowledges what Person A has said by summarizing both the emotion and content
  - Acknowledging another's point of view is very difficult, especially when I know I am right!
  - Without showing that I understand their needs and feelings, it is very unlikely that the other person will be able to hear me.
4. Person B speaks their point of view, using "I" language
5. Person A listens without interrupting
6. Person A acknowledges what Person B has said by summarizing both the emotion and content
7. Repeat as necessary .

## Appendix C – Feedback Preference Form

The purpose of this document is for individuals to put on record their preference for receiving feedback. This tool is optional for non-resident members of the GVOFC community, and is used as part of the Farm Team’s commitment to pro-active communications.

### Feedback Preferences

If you have concerns about something I’ve done (or that you think I might have done), giving me critical feedback works best if you do it this way:

I prefer to be engaged (check any that apply):

- |   |   |                                    |
|---|---|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> In the moment        | <input type="checkbox"/> Later, in private      | <input type="checkbox"/> And, .... |
| <input type="checkbox"/> By hand-written note | <input type="checkbox"/> By e-mail              | _____                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> By telephone         | <input type="checkbox"/> In person              | _____                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> At any time of day   | <input type="checkbox"/> Specify time of day    | _____                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Any day of the week  | <input type="checkbox"/> Specify day(s) of week | _____                              |

### Scheduling the engagement

- |   |                                |
|---|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Provide me with a brief description of the issue, and then work with me to schedule a mutually agreeable time. | <input type="checkbox"/> Or... |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Don’t hold back. Just clear the air with me as soon as possible.   | _____                          |

### Lead-in

- |   |                                 |
|---|---------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Offer me an appreciation first                     | <input type="checkbox"/> And... |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Do <u>not</u> offer me an appreciation first       | _____                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Be sure to check that this is an appropriate time. | _____                           |

### And?

I’d also like you to know about me in regard to this that (such as, ‘this is how I tend to handle my anger’, or ‘I don’t respond well to yelling’).

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## **Appendix D – Community Conversation Agreement**

### Regarding the spirit of our speaking and listening:

1. We speak for ourselves (statements starting with “I”) and allow others to speak for themselves
2. We create a safe space for all to speak and do not criticize the views of others or attempt to persuade them.
3. We listen with resilience, “hanging in” when something is hard to hear.

### Regarding the form of our speaking and listening:

4. We share airtime and participate within the suggested timeframes of 2 to 5 minutes.
5. We only interrupt to indicate that we cannot or did not hear a speaker.
6. We “pass” or “pass for now” if we are not ready or willing to speak.

### Regarding confidentiality:

7. When we discuss our experience of the Community Conversation afterwards with people who are not present, we will not attach names or other identifying information to particular comments unless we have permission to do so.
8. We will not blame, criticize, or shame anyone present nor people who are not present.

### Regarding between-meeting communications:

9. We will not continue the discussion through email afterward.
10. We will not collude with or gossip with a community member but instead agree to listen, thereby allowing them to get clear on the issue for themselves and agree to support them in communicating direct using the preferred feedback or by requesting a Community Conversation.

### Accountability for self & community care:

11. We give permission to the facilitators to gently remind us of our commitment to this agreement, and our responsibility to live up to this agreement during this process.
12. The facilitator of each conversation is to remain neutral and not engage in the conversation without permission from the group. If the facilitator has a charge on the topic, they agree to step aside and let someone else take their place.

## Appendix E – Four Point Agreement

The following 4-point agreement form may be used at the discretion of the parties involved in Step 2 of the Community Behaviour Guideline to document and help clarify expectations. A designated Steward will follow-up and monitor progress made with upholding any agreements drafted, and to report back to the community at the next community meeting or at such time as seems appropriate.

### **4-Point Agreement**

1. Agreement willing to be honoured: (provide details)
2. Plans for upholding the agreement: (specific supports requested of individual community members if any)
3. Plans for reparation to property/people and by when: (provide details)
4. Voluntary consequences that I agree to, if I fail to uphold the agreement: (provide details)

If any of the members involved do not attend the community meeting the case will still go before the meeting for discussion and the community may draft its own agreement outlining its expectations for how the issue will be handled, including timelines. The community may choose to use the above 4-part plan for attempting resolution:

The Stewards continue to track outcomes for future reporting at subsequent community meetings until the issue has been resolved.

## Appendix F – Suggestions for documentation of conflicts

An example of this documentation could look like:

- Nature of the conflict
- Who is involved
- Date and time
- Any witnesses
- Any co-operation
- Any partial resolution
- Any agreement made
- Next steps

## Appendix G – Examples of Harmful Behaviour

The following is a description of some, but not all, examples of harmful behaviour.

- **INTIMIDATION:** Intimidation is an act of instilling fear in someone as a means of controlling that person. For example, any of the following behaviours could be considered intimidation:
  - verbal threats
  - physical threats
  - defacing or stealing property
  - daring or coercing someone to do something dangerous or illegal
  - extortion
  - inciting hatred
  - setting up a victim to take the blame
- **BULLYING:** Bullying is a pattern of repeated aggressive behaviour, with negative intent, directed from one person to another, where there is a power imbalance. Bullying behaviour is a type of harassment and intimidation. This behaviour includes physical or verbal behaviour, and is an intentional and purposeful act meant to inflict injury or discomfort on the other person.

There are three critical conditions that distinguish bullying from other forms of aggressive behaviour, including:

- Power - involves a power imbalance
  - Frequency - is repeated over time
  - Intent to harm - is intended to hurt either physically or emotionally
- **HARASSMENT:** Any unwelcome or unwanted act or comment that is hurtful, degrading, humiliating, or offensive to another person is an act of harassment. Of particular concern is such behaviour that persists after the aggressor has been asked to stop.
  - **OTHER:** For the purposes of the GVOFC, we affirm that it is up to each individual to define for themselves what other behaviours may be 'harmful'. This could include, for example, strained interpersonal interactions or a refusal to make eye contact. It might also include a view that another member is obstructive in a meeting.

## Appendix H – Glossary of terms

### **Venting**

For the purposes of the Community Behaviour Guidelines for the GVOFC, venting refers to an interaction between a member who has experienced or witnessed harmful behaviours, and a second person of their choosing, who has agreed to be the recipient of the vent. The purpose of a venting session is to release an intense emotional charge in the moment. It is generally a one-sided conversation, without collusion. Both parties should be aware that the venting session is held in confidence, and it is up to the person venting to remind both parties of this expectation.

#### *Benefits:*

- Releases an intense emotional charge in the moment.

#### *Expectations:*

- Person receiving the vent has agreed to do so ahead of time.
- The venting session is held in confidence.
- No collusion is taking place.

### **Sounding Board**

For the purposes of the Community Behaviour Guidelines for the GVOFC, a Sounding Board is a designated person within the GVOFC community who has agreed to act in this capacity. A person who has experienced or witnessed a harmful behaviour(s) may approach one of the Sounding Boards to enlist their support in resolving the conflict. The Sounding Board may give feedback (not collusion) on the concern, and may agree to sit in on a conversation between the two parties. The purpose of the Sounding Board is to uphold the community culture around conflict, and not become involved in the conflict itself. They are ‘community weavers’ who mind the fabric of good-will in the community.

#### *Benefits:*

- Provides support in dealing with conflict.
- The Sounding Board is a member of the GVOFC community, who will ensure that the community culture around conflict is upheld.

#### *Expectations:*

- The Sounding Board does not hold a ‘charge’ on the issue, and if so, will decline providing support in that instance.
- The role of the Sounding Board is to mind the fabric of good-will, not to become involved in the conflict.

### **Community Conversation**

- Refer to Appendix D

### **Non-Violent Communication**

NVC is a set of communication skills (both listening and speaking) that move the conversation towards, feelings, needs, requests and observations, and away from blame and right/wrong dichotomies. The Centre for Non-Violent Communication (visit [www.cnvc.org](http://www.cnvc.org)) was founded by Marshall Rosenberg. Copies of Marshall Rosenberg’s Non-Violent Communication: A Language of Live, and the Non-Violent Communication Companion Workbook are available on loan. Contact Chris Bodnar ([chris@closetohomeorganics.com](mailto:chris@closetohomeorganics.com)).