

Peace Tree-ty

MRJC's Conflict Management & Support Hotline coaches an angry Edmonton man to deal with his "impossible" neighbour regarding the removal of a nuisance tree. The neighbours agree to a mutually beneficial Peace Tree-ty.

Scenario: A beloved tree that provides some privacy on one neighbour's property, significantly affects the other neighbour's (Jack Lumberjack's) quality-of-life.

The Conflict Escalates: Jack Lumberjack becomes enraged when his "impossible" neighbour who "just doesn't see sense," refuses to chop down a tree which significantly encroaches on his property. Jack calls Edmonton By-law Enforcement which refers the dispute to MRJC's ***Conflict Management & Support Hotline***. Jack wants to force his neighbour to "do what is right" or he will cut down the tree himself and "let the chips fall where they may."

MRJC's Case Coordinator Gets Involved: Jack calls MRJC's Conflict Management & Support Hotline. MRJC's Case Coordinator shares potential ramifications for Jack's threatened actions including potential legal actions, trespassing violations and most importantly, how these actions would impact his use of his own backyard over the long term. MRJC gives the Jack tips on how to approach his neighbour and he commits to approaching his neighbour once again about the removal of the tree, this time with an "with an open mind." MRJC sends Jack information about our support services, resources on how to prepare for a challenging conversation and provides over-the-phone coaching and role plays on how a conversation with his neighbour might play out.

MRJC Telephone Follow-Up: Upon following up with the Jack a few weeks later, MRJC is pleased to hear that the conflict between the two neighbours regarding the tree, has been resolved. Jack has met with his neighbour, and they agree that the tree should come down. They share costs to do this properly. In addition, they agree to replace the fallen tree with a new cedar and to share costs on this and other mutually agreed upon landscaping expenses.

MRJC invests countless hours helping people like Jack to overcome issues with their neighbours.

Hot Tub Noise Puts Neighbour Relations In Hot Water

An MRJC Resolution Meeting helps to restore good neighbour relations and a good night's sleep for all.

Scenario: Two nice couples (Susan and Bob/Mandy and Danny) live next door to each other for several years. Both couples pride themselves as being good neighbours -- this is vitally important to each of them. They cherish living next door to one-another and how this neighbour relationship has progressed over the years. Heck, there haven't been noise concerns, no property issues, no personality conflicts or anything else that could cause friction between these good neighbours.

What could possibly go wrong with this good neighbour relationship?

Well..., Mandy and Danny buy a new hot tub to help Mandy with her arthritis. This should be no big deal as they are putting the hot tub in the exact place where one had been previously, before they bought their house – situated between the two houses. Neighbours Susan and Bob never had issues with their previous neighbours, or with the hot tub, so how could this brand-new hot tub cause problems between two very considerate neighbours?

FAST-FORWARD – 1.5 YEARS

Problems Escalate: Mandy and Danny respond immediately to Susan and Bob's noise concerns regarding the new hot tub. In partnership with Susan and Bob, they call for service, replace several parts on the hot tub and motor which, unfortunately, does not improve the noise situation. Then, to be respectful to Susan and Bob, Mandy turns off their hot tub in winter, but she gets ticked-off and feels taken-advantage-of when Susan and Bob leave for a month of vacation without telling her. She could have used the hot tub during this month, which could have really provided much-needed therapy for her arthritis. Because of Susan and Bob's lack of consideration, Mandy is going to keep the hot tub operational next winter.

Meanwhile, Susan is at her wits-end. One night, she phones Mandy and Danny seven times during the night -- each time she wakes up from the drone of the hot tub motor. She and Bob have resorted to sleeping in their basement as the constant noise that they need to endure is not quite as loud there.

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Mandy and Danny feel that they have done everything possible to reduce the noise that the hot tub makes and to demonstrate respect for Susan and Bob's concerns. Mandy needs the hot tub for her arthritis. It is clear, that the lack of resolve between the neighbours regarding this issue

has had a serious affect on their relationship and communication, which has caused a **STALEMATE FOCUSED ON HOT TUB "TO BE OR NOT TO BE,"** between them.

MRJC's Conflict Resolution Team Gets Involved: Susan then hears about MRJC from a friend and calls our Conflict Management & Support Hotline. Above all, she wants to have the good relationship restored with her neighbours. In an almost three-and-a-half hour MRJC facilitated Resolution Meeting, both couples meet and agree to have the hot tub inspected by an independent consultant and to share costs on this. Within a week, an inspection is carried out, the problem diagnosed and fixed, and these neighbours have taken a critical and monumental first step into repairing the rift between them, and to restoring peace and goodwill.

MRJC invested almost 13 direct hours in these neighbours to find a creative, peaceful and impactful solution to their conflict, and more importantly, to help them to restore their friendship and belief in one-another as good neighbours.

All Is Not Quiet On The Western Front

MRJC's Conflict Management & Support Hotline coaches an older rural man to deal with his neighbours who have noisy dogs and have taken away his carefully planned, quiet retirement. An MRJC Resolution Meeting brings two generations in conflict together to take down barriers, set reasonable expectations of one-another and to create significantly enhanced communication and safety for all.

Scenario: Older rural Alberta man owns acreage just outside of Edmonton and lives there, peacefully, with his quiet companion dog. He wants peace and quiet for his retirement. To enable this, he purchases three properties (north, south and east) immediately surrounding his acreage.

The older man has the opportunity, but chooses not to buy the fourth piece of land to the west of his property. This property to the west has no buildings on it. Its long-time owner clearly informs the older man, that he has no intention of ever building on this land, or of selling it in the foreseeable future.

Unfortunately for the older man, and his aspirations of a quiet retirement, the owner of the property to the

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west of his acreage sells the property. The older man is not provided with the first option to purchase this land.

The property is purchased by a thirty-something couple. They build a home fairly close to the older man's home. They also have two noisy dogs.

Problems Escalate: The older man doesn't like being barked at by his new neighbour's dogs every time he leaves his front door. Upon receiving several verbal threats from the older man regarding the barking dogs, the couple-next-door install surveillance cameras, as they are scared that the older rural man will abuse their dogs while they are at work.

The older man is somehow convinced that the couple-next-door is involved in criminal activities. To block his view of their home (and hopefully the dogs view of him), the older man parks an old trailer right on the property line between the two houses. He also builds a four-foot snow wall between the neighbouring properties to create a sound and site barrier.

Because of some of the older man's comments and barrier building actions, the couple-next-door is convinced that he has installed a surveillance camera in the trailer on the property line to "keep an eye on them."

MRJC's Conflict Resolution Team Gets Involved: MRJC helps the older man to work through some of his regret about not buying the property next door when he had the opportunity to do so.

MRJC also works with the older man to set reasonable expectations and to come up with some ideas that would help him to foster a better relationship and possibly some goodwill with his new neighbours. MRJC helps him to explore how he might take down some barriers before meeting with the couple-next-door.

The County's By-law Enforcement agency then joins the MRJC facilitated Resolution Meeting between the two neighbours in conflict. Some agreements are developed between the two parties (**WHAT AGREEMENTS?**), the air is cleared and some of the feelings of danger and threats between the two parties are resolved. One major insight for the older man, is that the dogs owned by the couple-next-door, were actually "their kids, and not just farm dogs."

MRJC Six-Month Follow-Up: MRJC follows up with participants of the facilitated Resolution Meeting six months later to learn that the older man still isn't happy with his neighbours, but that he had "come to peace with the situation." The couple-next-door shares with MRJC, that the older man still complains about their dogs. He still often verbalizes his unhappiness about their co-existence as neighbours, however, they now feel much more comfortable to communicate with him directly. These are just some of the positive results of the MRJC facilitated face-to-face Resolution Meeting between the older man and the couple-next-door.

MRJC invests countless hours helping people in conflict like the older man and the couple-next-door. A Resolution Meeting can help you to resolve difficult conflicts or disputes that

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may arise between you and your family members, neighbours, members of your community, people at work, or fellow participants in groups or activities.

To find out more about MRJC's Resolution Meeting process, please call us at 780.423.0896.