As justice practitioners, facilitators, and circle keepers, we are often the holder of sacred spaces in which stories are shared. The stories of lived experiences shared in these spaces often come from a place of vulnerability, courage, and strength. So the importance of holding spaces in which we invite sharing and reflection, and foster understanding, connection, and compassion is an integral part of our practice.

But how do we, as practitioners, hold our own stories? How do we explore these stories and cultivate self-awareness and self-reflection? How do we honor and reflect upon our lived experiences that inform our practice – our values, principles, and ethics for our work?

This retreat workshop offers an opportunity to engage in and learn through a guided autobiographical writing process. Through this process, we will reflect on, capture, and share about various life stories that have led us to this work. The writing process enables us to deepen our capacity for understanding the significance of the narratives we hold, and how they connect to the values and principles that act as a compass that guide us in our work.

Guided Autobiography (GAB) was developed in the ’70s by Dr. James Birren, and has been used widely over the past 45 years to help people document their stories. It has been the subject of numerous comprehensive research studies, highlighting the profound effects of working with autobiographical stories, some of which include heightened self-awareness, sense of identity, meaning, life satisfaction, belonging and wellbeing.

This two-day retreat workshop will consist of individual reflective writing time, small group sharing and discussions, and large circle dialogue. Over the two days, participants will explore various themes that form the backbone of the GAB process. Some of the writing themes we will explore and activities we will engage in are:

- Lifeline (Timeline Activity)
- My Family, My Self
- Spirituality & Values (Spiritual Map Exercise)
- Life & Identity Metaphors
- Goals & Aspirations (Legacy Letter Exercise)

By taking part in this retreat, you will gain understanding and practice of the GAB process, increase knowledge of various writing techniques, and deepen creative capacity in capturing and narrating stories. Most importantly, it will be beneficial time and space for you to take account and reflect on your own stories, and how these experiences are linked to your values and principles that inform and guide your practice!

The Facilitator Retreat Workshop will be facilitated by Lindy Pfeil (see bio next page).

For more information, please contact Fraser Region Community Justice Initiatives at 604-534-5515 or email at training@cjibc.org.
Before Lindy and her family immigrated to Canada, she taught English literature at the University of South Africa. After volunteering with her local Victim Services program, Lindy went on to initiate and manage the North Shore Restorative Justice Society’s circles in schools’ program for five years.

Lindy is an author, certified coach, and guided autobiography facilitator (certified through the Birren Centre of Autobiographical Studies). She spends her days writing, editing, and facilitating workshops. And her biggest thrill is seeing people discover the magic in their stories.