



**2023**

**HUMAN RIGHTS  
LEARNING FORUM**

*'A Journey of Healing and Restoration'*



## OUR VISION

A trusted partner in building an inclusive, equitable and safe Ottawa.

## OUR MISSION

The Ottawa Police Service is committed to protect the safety and security of our communities.

## OUR VALUES

Honour, Courage, Service.

**OTTAWA POLICE SERVICE**

Respect, Values, and Inclusion Directorate  
Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Unit

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# INTRODUCTION

## ANNUAL HUMAN RIGHTS LEARNING FORUM

The Ottawa Police Service (OPS) Annual Human Rights Learning Forum (HRLF) is a collaborative event between the OPS and community partners/members that encourages meaningful and respectful discussion on human-rights related issues impacting local communities.

The forum brings OPS and community members together to collaboratively advance human rights issues. It is an opportunity to share learning in an effort to drive positive change for all communities as well as within OPS.

The HRLF supports the Service's central strategic priority to advance Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) in order to strengthen its commitment to human rights. Guided by in-house EDI and human rights subject matter experts, and in collaboration with experienced facilitators and key community partners, the forum provides an opportunity for guided yet open discussion to advance equity and inclusion.

The Ottawa Police Service hosted its first HRLF in 2015, collaborating with individuals and community groups to explore human rights and EDI-related issues from multiple perspectives. Since then, the forum has become an annual event that pushes the dialogue forward to better understand and address these issues on an ongoing and dedicated basis. Topics have included the theory and science

of bias, how to recognize and mitigate the impacts of hate, recognizing and addressing systemic racism, and understanding the trauma of hate and bias.

Discussions help to inform EDI-related initiatives at OPS and are thoughtfully guided to support an inclusive and respectful space for all who attend.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Ottawa Police Service (OPS) hosted the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Human Rights Learning Forum: “A Journey of Healing and Restoration” on December 7, 2023. The theme was carefully chosen to support and advance human rights fundamentals (i.e., the entitlement to realization of economic, social, and cultural rights indispensable to one’s dignity)<sup>1</sup> within local communities as well as among OPS membership. Recent local, national, and international incidents eroding public trust in policing were also considered during selection of the 2023 HRLF theme.

The event was held at the Ottawa Hellenic Event Centre and drew over 200 participants, including both community members and OPS employees.

Presenters included leading experts in the fields of conflict resolution and peace building. With guided facilitation, participants engaged in open discussion on experiences and potential healing/restorative approaches.

## Post-event survey results were positive;

**92%**

*of respondents<sup>2</sup> agreed the forum offered a safe space for sharing and learning,*

**90%**

*indicated they gained information relevant to their workplace, and*

**88%**

*indicated they would recommend attending the forums.*

OTTAWA POLICE SERVICE  
8<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL HUMAN RIGHTS LEARNING FORUM

## A Journey of Healing & Restoration

A workshop presented by the Canadian Institute for Conflict Resolution in partnership with ForGiving ForRestoring Canada

Thursday December 7th 2023  
8:00am - 4:00pm

Hellenic Meeting & Reception Centre  
1315 Prince of Wales Dr.

Register Today!  
ottawapolice.ca/HRLF

Community Equity Council, cicc icrc, ForGiving ForRestoring, Ottawa Police Service



- 1 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 22, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>
- 2 Post-event survey participation rate was 42%.



## OVERVIEW

The Ottawa Police Service (OPS), in partnership with the Canadian Institute for Conflict Resolution (CICR) and ForGiving ForRestoring Canada, and also in collaboration with the Community Equity Council, hosted the 8th Annual Human Rights Learning Forum: “A Journey of Healing and Restoration” on December 7, 2023.

The full-day in-person event was held at the Ottawa Hellenic Event Centre and drew over 200 participants, including both community members and OPS employees, who heard from leading experts in the fields of conflict resolution and peace building.

## PRESENTERS INCLUDED



**Liz Wigfull**

Secretariat Director, Ottawa Guiding Council for Mental Health and Addiction and member of the Board of Directors for Options Bytown.

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**Lorna Lemay**

CICR Trainer and Facilitator — a bilingual conflict resolution practitioner with extensive experience in training design and delivery, partnership building, and group facilitation.

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**Dr. Donna Hicks**

An Associate at the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, Harvard University. Dr. Hicks is the author of *Dignity: Its Essential Role in Resolving Conflict*, published in 2011 by Yale University Press.

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**Daniel Markus**

Executive Director, CICR — Peace practitioner and social reconciliatory.

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The event expanded on learnings from the 2022 HRLF, encouraging discussion on proactive measures to cultivate community strength, resilience, and harmony through mutual respect and understanding. Additionally, the forum was structured as a learning and participation session, with table-sharing exercises and additional opportunity for participants to engage with each other and share personal experiences, concerns, and ideas.

*“...encouraging discussion on proactive measures to cultivate community strength, resilience, and harmony through mutual respect and understanding.”*

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**Key objectives of the 2023 HRLF included:**

- Engaging the public, community partners, and OPS members in deepening their understanding and awareness around the trauma of hate and bias to promote unity, dignity, and collaborative healing.
- Supporting a healing journey to equip attendees with valuable insights, tools, and strategies they can carry forward, as well as fostering stronger ties with local communities and community organizations in order that the OPS may be better positioned to serve all communities.





## OPENING REMARKS

The 2023 Human Rights Learning Forum began with a Land Acknowledgement recognizing that the event was occurring on un-ceded Algonquin Anishinabe territory and honouring the peoples and land of the Algonquin Anishinabe Nation as well as all First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples and their valuable past and present contributions.

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*“...the importance of focusing on equity, diversity, and inclusion through dedicated commitment to human rights.”*

Ottawa Police Service Board Chairperson Dr. Beck welcomed HRLF participants and began the day's discussion by speaking about seeing through a new lens, and the Chairperson's expectations to learn and to gain new perspectives from the experience of the Forum.

Chief Stubbs also welcomed all participants and spoke to the positive tone of the event, the context of the current climate, both globally and on a more local level, and the need to focus on fostering a community that supports one another and improves outcomes for all. The Chief spoke about Ottawa Police Service and Ottawa Police Service Board priorities, and the importance of focusing on equity, diversity, and inclusion through dedicated commitment to human rights.

## **TRANSFORMING MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE USE CRISIS RESPONSE IN OTTAWA**

(Reference [YouTube video](#), @7:10)

Liz Wigfull, Co-Secretariat Director of the Ottawa Guiding Council for Mental Health and Addiction, and member of the Board of Directors for Options Bytown, presented the 'Transforming Mental Health and Substance Use Crisis Response in Ottawa's pilot project and thanked both the OPS and City of Ottawa for funding support. Acknowledgement was also given to the more than 1200 people who took part in consultations, including community members, frontline workers, and people working in various institutions who shared their experiences and recommendations for change.

As part of the pilot project, and to inform project outcomes, the following three main questions were asked of participants during consultations:

1. Where do people go to access mental health and substance use crisis service and supports?
2. What are people's experiences when accessing these services and supports?
3. What do people recommend for an improved and enhanced alternate response to mental health and/or substance use crises?

Recommendations stemming from the pilot project consultations included the following:

(Reference [YouTube video](#), @25:41)

1. Create racial equity in mental health and substance use crisis response.
  - a. Increase access to Black and other racialized mental health professionals.
  - b. Expand safer spaces for African, Black, and Caribbean communities.
  - c. Establish a mental health and substance use crisis center specific for African, Black, and Caribbean communities including Somali and Black Francophone communities.
  - d. Design culturally appropriate and trauma informed services.
  - e. Make changes to organizational policies, processes, and procedures to address racism.
  - f. Improve social determinants of health for racialized populations.

2. **Center equity for specific communities in mental health and substance use crisis response.**
  - a. Have safer spaces for street involved people.
  - b. Establish new and expand existing services to people in rural communities.
3. **Increase collaboration, communication, and coordination between organizations doing this work.**
  - a. Make sure there is a community-based model for crisis response.
  - b. Coordinate effective and timely follow-up to resources and referrals after crisis response service.
  - c. Improve marketing and communications about crisis response services.
4. **Increase funding.**
  - a. More funding is necessary.
  - b. Invest in peer support and training so that peers become a bigger part of this work.
5. **Address structural stigma.**
  - a. Adopt a client centered approach and model of care.
  - a. Provide resources for mental health and substance use on par with physical health.
  - b. Establish mechanisms to monitor structural stigma.
  - c. Involve people with lived experience in creating policies.

**A prototype was then conceptualized which will include:**

- A non-911 number intake call center
- A mobile crisis response team
- Referral to wrap around services that are able to help
- Peer support

The prototype will be led by a local social services organization and is expected to start in one neighbourhood, before expanding, in order to provide an opportunity for evaluation and improvements in advance of a larger-scale roll-out. The prototype has received funding for three years.

HRLF participants were encouraged to get involved by joining working groups, signing up for the Guiding Council's newsletter, checking social media for updates, and spreading the word. Related newsletters, reports, and the Council's strategy are available online at [www.ottawagcmha.ca](http://www.ottawagcmha.ca).



## KEYNOTE SPEAKER DR. DONNA HICKS ON DIGNITY

(Reference [YouTube video, @40:56](#))

Dr. Donna Hicks, associate at the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, and author of *Dignity: Its Essential Role in Resolving Conflict*, treated human rights learning forum participants to an in-depth discussion on how she arrived at the issue of dignity as an essential element of meaningful and successful conflict resolution.

Through her extensive experience in facilitating conflict resolution discussions, including at the international level, Dr. Hicks came to recognize that along with the political issues at the center of the conflicts there were also profound emotional undercurrents not being addressed. Additionally, as Dr. Hicks would attempt to bring those undercurrents into the discussions, the attempts were mostly met with denial by the parties in conflict.

Dr. Hicks then discussed the challenge of bringing the human element into conflict resolution conversations. In her extensive experience facilitating conflict discussions, she had observed that words such as 'trauma' and 'emotions' were not resonating with those in conflict, despite the obvious emotional element of conflict and the trauma that all human beings experience during times of conflict.

When Dr. Hicks positioned the experiences as assaults to an individual's dignity, the reactions of the parties in conflict, and the related discussions, changed. Dr. Hicks has been conducting "dignity dialogues" ever since. Instead of focusing on the political issues that divide people, and before entering the problem-solving stage, Dr. Hicks facilitated conflict discussions now provide the individuals with an opportunity to talk about their dignity violations. As Dr. Hicks expressed, "the healing process begins when people start telling their stories."

Dr. Hicks then shared what she views as 'the three simple truths' about dignity as a core human yearning:

1. We all want to be treated with dignity.
2. When we're not treated with dignity we suffer.
3. When we are treated with dignity we flourish.

Dr. Hicks also spoke about the difference between ‘dignity’ and ‘respect,’ sharing with forum participants that respect must be earned, but dignity is something all human beings are born with — that it is part of the human experience and that we all deserve to be treated with dignity.

Dr. Hicks then presented scientific evidence (Reference [YouTube video, @1:02:59](#)) of what it means to be human when our dignity is violated. Referencing social neuro-science studies, Dr. Hicks shared what happens to the human brain when we experience a physical assault as compared to an assault on our dignity. Studies showed that when dignity was being violated, it showed up in the brain in the exact same area and in the same way as when experiencing a physical injury. The study demonstrated that our mind does not know the difference between a physical assault and an assault on our dignity.

**HRLF participants were then introduced to the ten elements of dignity. Dr. Hicks spoke to their importance in terms of positive relationships, trust, and human connection (referring to the ten elements as rules to avoiding dignity violations):**

- |                           |                         |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Acceptance of identity | 6. Fairness             |
| 2. Recognition            | 7. Independence         |
| 3. Acknowledgement        | 8. Understanding        |
| 4. Inclusion              | 9. Benefit of the doubt |
| 5. Safety                 | 10. Accountability      |

Discussion then centered on how to move on after dignity has been injured, with acknowledgement being the first step towards healing. Dignity, Dr. Hicks stressed, is about connection.

- Connection to your own dignity
- Connection to others dignity
- Connection to the dignity of something beyond the self

**Before closing, Dr. Hicks shared the following ten temptations to violating one’s own dignity:**

- |                            |                             |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Taking the bait         | 6. Avoiding confrontation   |
| 2. Saving face             | 7. Assuming Innocent victim |
| 3. Shirking responsibility | 8. Resisting feedback       |
| 4. False dignity           | 9. Blaming others           |
| 5. False security          | 10. Gossiping               |

**Dr. Hicks left human rights learning forum participants with this parting thought:**

*“It boils down to how we want to be in the world...how do we want to spend our time here on this planet? Do we want to be in loving connection with others, or do we want to be in conflict?”*



## THE ESPERE PROGRAM

(Reference [YouTube video, @1:33:41](#))

Daniel Markus, Executive Director, CICR - Peace practitioner and social reconciliatory, spoke about the importance of listening to and addressing the underlying human needs as part of conflict resolution — those needs that are not evident in a conversation, negotiation, or mediation — for example feeling safe, acknowledged, and belonging to a community.

Daniel then shared with forum participants the first principle of CICR as a Third-Party Neutral peace practitioner — that dignity and respect foster trust — as well as the need to have conversations about our dignity needs and our right to be recognized as a human being. The conversation then turned to what can be done when those needs have been neglected, abused, or harmed.

Daniel explained that CICR partners with ForGiving ForRestoring Canada to help people and communities move forward after injustice and violence. Daniel also introduced the audience to the ESPERE program and how it came to be (ESPERE meaning “hope”).

**Since its inception, the program has reached:**

**23**

*countries and over*

**2,000,000**

*people who have participated in a one-week process of learning to work with, and deal with, the emotions that surface when someone has been harmed.*

Daniel then spoke about the process of forgiveness, including after violence has occurred. The audience then participated in a sharing exercise on the impacts of unresolved violations to one’s dignity in terms of the corrosive emotions experienced and their impact at the personal, interpersonal, and community levels.

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**Facilitator Lorna Lemay then provided some closing thoughts on the ESPERE program, sharing with the audience the following quote from Virginia Satir:**

*“Peace within, peace between, peace among.”*

(The personal, the interpersonal, and then at the community level)



## CLOSING REMARKS

(Reference [YouTube video](#), @2:03:25)

OPS Director of EDI Paola Jani provided closing remarks for the 2023 Human Rights Learning Forum.

Paola thanked the Community Equity Council, the Ottawa Guiding Council for Mental Health and Addiction, the Canadian Institute for Conflict Resolution, ForGiving ForRestoring Canada, keynote speaker Dr. Donna Hicks, and all who contributed to the 8<sup>th</sup> annual Human Rights Learning Forum.

On behalf of the OPS, Paola thanked all forum participants for attending and engaging in the day's activities and stressed the importance of love and care for one another in the healing journey.

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*"...the importance of love and care for one another in the healing journey."*

# CONCLUSION



The 2023 Human Rights Learning Forum provided a positive, supportive, and encouraging environment for all participants, prompting all who attended to consider what *A Journey of Healing and Restoration* means to them at the personal, interpersonal, and community level.

Leading experts in key areas shared their knowledge and experience of healing, not only as a response to trauma or conflict but also as a proactive measure towards cultivating dignity, freedom, and justice for all individuals. Beyond the individual, the forum focused on community wellness - emphasizing the collective strength, resilience, and harmony that arise when communities come together to nurture and heal. Discussions included healing as an overarching journey that encompasses personal growth, dignity, and the broader wellness of the community.

## POST FORUM SURVEY FEEDBACK PROVIDED THE FOLLOWING INSIGHTS:

### Safe Space:

**92%**

*of participants agreed that the forum offered a safe space for sharing and learning. Considering the broad representation of community members and stakeholders, this was a key success marker for the forum.*

### Interactive Approach:

**90%**

*of participants enjoyed the workshop format. Participants indicated they benefited from the table-sharing exercises and learning from each other. The format served to bring down barriers, begin to build trust, and foster networking opportunities. This approach should be strongly considered for next year's forum.*



**Work:**

**90%**

*of participants gained insights relevant to their workplace.*

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**Personal:**

**88%**

*of participants felt they gained something at a personal level.*

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**Community:**

**84%**

*of participants noted they could apply the learnings within their community.*

Participants left the forum feeling inspired and empowered to share and model what they had learned. This was supported by countless commitments to bring these insights to others.

**Recommend Forum:**

**88%**

*of participants would recommend the forum. Participants not only enjoyed and would recommend future forums to others, but many comments also requested to continue building upon the foundations that were formed.*

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**Dignity:**

**86%**

*of participants embraced the concept of dignity. This topic had a powerful impact on the participants and their sense of self and others. Dignity offered common ground on which to build conversations and collaboration for the future.*

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**Healing and Restoration:**

**80%**

*of participants felt the forum was a positive step, recognizing that it is a journey that begins with oneself and entails understanding the negative impacts of harm. Many participants commented that they were inspired to learn more.*

**Trust Level:**

**75%**

*of participants realized an increase in trust as a community partner.*

**A few factors that contributed to this score:**

- a. It served the needs of community partners rather than solely those of OPS.
- b. Participants felt safe.
- c. Peace officers and community sat together in dialogue. Even though this is a good score, it is the lowest, highlighting the role that the forum plays in building relationships and trust.

# APPENDIX A

## PRESENTER'S BIOGRAPHIES



### Liz Wigfull

Liz is an experienced leader in mental health and substance use, stakeholder engagement, facilitation, training, and knowledge mobilization. A person with lived experience, she worked at the Mental Health Commission of Canada for ten years managing population-based knowledge mobilization projects and overseeing the development of mental health training courses. Since March 2022, Liz has been the Co-Director of the Ottawa Guiding Council for Mental Health and Addictions Secretariat, along with Sahada Alolo, co-leading the development of the strategy for an alternate mental health and substance use crisis response in Ottawa. Liz serves on the Board of Options Bytown, a supportive housing provider that helps individuals move into stable, permanent housing in Ottawa. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from York University, a Bachelor of Education degree from the University of Ottawa, and a Master of Arts in Conflict Studies from Saint Paul University.



### Lorna Lemay

Lorna is a passionate and experienced peacebuilder who has spent many years in service to the community, building capacity and inspiring change. She is an expert facilitator, training designer, business strategist, mediator, and public relations communicator who is known for her dedication to consensus building, establishing trust, and empowering people. Among other philanthropic activities, her most recent is the launch and leadership of ForGiving ForRestoring Canada.



### Dr. Donna Hicks

Dr. Donna Hicks is an Associate at the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs at Harvard University and the former Deputy Director of the Program on International Conflict Analysis and Resolution (PICAR). She facilitated dialogues in numerous unofficial diplomatic efforts in the Middle East, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Colombia, Cuba, Libya, and Syria. She was a consultant to the BBC in Northern Ireland, where she co-facilitated a television series, *Facing the Truth*, with Archbishop Desmond Tutu. She has taught courses in conflict resolution at Harvard and Columbia Universities and conducts seminars in the US and abroad on dignity leadership training and on the role dignity plays in resolving conflict. She consults to corporations, governments, schools, churches, and non-governmental organizations. Her book, *Dignity: It's Essential Role in Resolving Conflict*, was published by Yale University Press in 2011. Her second book, *Leading with Dignity: How to Create a Culture That Brings Out the Best in People*, was published by Yale University Press in August 2018.



### Daniel Markus

Daniel is the Executive Director of the Canadian Institute for Conflict Resolution (CICR) and board director at ForGiving ForRestoring Canada (FFC) as well as two Latin American foundations which foster the practice of forgiveness and develop peace education programs. He holds a Third-Party Neutral certificate from CICR, a Master's degree in Conflict Studies from Saint Paul University, and a Master's degree in Human Development from Universidad Iberoamericana, Mexico. Daniel is committed to restoring human relationships and believes that victims can become victors and all communities can become agents of positive change and peace.

# APPENDIX B

## Important links

[Ontario Human Rights Code](#)

[Community Safety and Policing Act](#)

[Ottawa Police Service Board Strategic Priorities](#)

[DRIVE<sup>2</sup> Strategy](#)

[YouTube link for 2023 Human Rights Learning Forum](#)

## Links to 2023 HRLF partner organizations

[Ottawa Guiding Council for Mental Health and Addictions](#)

[Dr. Donna Hicks](#)

[Canadian Institute for Conflict Resolution](#)

[Community Equity Council](#)

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