



**Adirondack Diversity Initiative  
Police Cultural Competence EO 203 Workshops**



**Year 2 - Session 1 Write Up**

**April, 2022**



Thank you for engaging RENZ Consulting, LLC to complete this important project.

Many thanks to the members of the Adirondack Park and the North Country community and the law enforcement agencies who participated in the training sessions.

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## About RENZ Consulting, LLC

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The first pillar in the **Final Report of the President's Task Force on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing** is: "building trust & legitimacy".

*People are more likely to obey the law when they believe that those who are enforcing it have the legitimate authority to tell them what to do . . . The public confers legitimacy only on those they believe are acting in procedurally just ways (page 9).<sup>i</sup>*

It is from this perspective that RENZ Consulting, LLC enters into agreements with organizations, universities, and police agencies. Our plan is to bridge the gap between the police and the community ... particularly communities of color. Our motto is: SERVE. PROTECT. RESPECT.

RENZ Consulting, LLC specializes in strengthening police-community relations at the state and local level including within urban, suburban and rural settings. We address police/community issues head on, through assessment, and workshops supported by empirically-sound, evidence-based research, in order to bridge the gap between police and the communities they serve.

Whether in urban or rural environments, our goal is to help stimulate attitudinal and behavioral change through academically sound research, progressive public policy, and improved community interactions, particularly between police and the Black &

Indigenous (and other) People of Color (BIPOC) community. Our intention is both **diagnostic** and **prescriptive** in nature. The diagnostic piece is in recognizing the problem and addressing it, the prescriptive part is acknowledging the pain and beginning the process of healing.

Our team members leverage their collective experience in policing, law, and government in order to build trust among participants while facilitating group conversations about criminal justice problems and workable solutions. Our goal is to shape the conversation in such a way that all participants understand that their voices matter and that there are sensible steps that can be taken to build trust between the community and the police.

We design trainings based upon the needs and issues presented. Our trainings are rooted in the **contact hypothesis** - *the idea that controlled contact between members of two groups can promote tolerance and acceptance and tends to reduce tensions between them.*<sup>ii</sup>

By engaging both police officers and stakeholders in joint training sessions, we help to build bridges between them, which is a fundamental first step to reimagining policing.

We also provide scenario-based training sessions, which include introspective evaluation and cultural competence for sworn and non-sworn police employees as well as community members. For more information please see our website:

[www.renzconsulting.net](http://www.renzconsulting.net)

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## Scope of Work & Objectives

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On the dates of April 26, 27, 28, 29 in 2022, team members from **RENZ Consulting, LLC** provided part-one of a three part training series for the Adirondack Diversity Initiative (ADI). Part-one consisted of four, day-long, scenario-based workshops presented to a total of 52 officers in four locations in the North Country. The four locations were: Saranac Lake on April 26<sup>th</sup>, Ray Brook on April 27<sup>th</sup>, Essex County on April 28<sup>th</sup>, and Plattsburgh on April 29<sup>th</sup>



*(Pictured: presenters – Dr. Heather L. Pfeifer & Dr. Lorenzo M. Boyd in Saranac Lake)*

The day-long interactive workshops focused on the concepts of trauma-informed interactions for sworn law enforcement employees and recognizing and understanding vicarious trauma within the communities they serve. We noticed during our visits in

2021 that some officers displayed or reported situations that we believe may have stemmed from traumatic events that they witness, experienced, or were a part of as either a search and recovery mission, drowning, or other type of physical or emotional trauma. Because we know that officers who have unresolved, or unrecognized trauma tend to have psychological effects and/or burnout (Papazoglou & Henry, 2018;<sup>iii</sup> Henry, 2004;<sup>iv</sup> Alexander, 1999<sup>v</sup>), we wanted to spend more classroom time on these issues, offering officers a deeper understanding of trauma and some strategies to help address their own trauma responses.

Because law enforcement and corrections officers often have unresolved stressors as well as personal and professional traumas that they experience, we chose to dedicate a large portion of the class time addressing officer wellness. If police officers are dealing with their own personal trauma, they may not be at their best to serve community members who may also be dealing with their own or vicarious trauma.

The curriculum and sessions are in alignment with the agreement and scope of work between RENZ Consulting, LLC and the Adirondack Diversity Initiative (ADI) regarding training in response to the NY Executive Order 203 (**New York State Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative**). The objectives of this agreement and the training sessions are set forth as follows:

## **OBJECTIVES:**

The objectives of the training included:

- Reducing racial inequities in policing,
- An attempt to modify and modernize policing strategies, policies, procedures, and practices,
- To develop practices to better address the particular needs of communities of color, including both residents and visitors, in order to promote public safety, improve community engagement, and foster trust,
- Increasing the cultural competence of police personnel in the Adirondack Park;
- Increasing police - community engagement in the Adirondack Park; and
- Decreasing negative relationships between police officers and Black & Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) in the Adirondack Park.
- Heighten awareness of law enforcement officers related to perceived BIPOC and LGBTQ+ perceptions of police.

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## Methodology

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On April 26, 27, 28, 29 of the year 2022, team members from **RENZ Consulting, LLC** provided four, day-long, scenario-based workshops to 52 officers (police and corrections) in four locations in the North Country. The sessions were in the following locations with the following officers;

- Hotel Saranac on April 26<sup>th</sup> with 12 officers from the following agencies; Saranac Lake Police, Lake Placid Police, Hamilton County Sheriff's Department and Franklin County Sheriff's Department.
- April 27<sup>th</sup> at Department of Environmental Conservation Region 5 Headquarters in Ray Brook with 13 officers from the following agencies; the NY Department of Environmental Conservation Police and Forest Rangers.
- April 28<sup>th</sup> at the Essex County Public Safety Building with 9 corrections officers from Essex County, and 2 deputies from Franklin County.
- April 29<sup>th</sup> on the campus of SUNY Plattsburgh with 16 officers from the following agencies; the NY State Police, Plattsburgh city police, and the SUNY Plattsburgh campus police.

Based on lessons learned and officer feedback from the three training sessions in 2021, we decided to make a slight change to the order of delivery of our curriculum material. It appeared from officer comments in the previous sessions that some of the officers in the workshops may have been dealing with levels of personal or professional stress and/or trauma, and that may be indicative of their actions, behavior, or opinions. We decided to front-load the training with a trauma-workshop. In order for officers to



understand and appreciate community trauma or the vicarious trauma that many in the BIPOC community face, it was important to start this series of training with explaining in great detail what trauma is, how it affects the body, and how it permeates many communities. We defined the term *trauma* for the officers and gave statistics of how pervasive trauma is in the community and within the ranks of policing. We explained that the effects of trauma may manifest itself behaviorally not only in the actions of community members, but also in the actions and reactions of officers as well. We explained that many people who have a history of unaddressed or untreated trauma often come into contact with the Criminal Justice system because of their negative behaviors.



*(Pictured: members of the April 26, 2022 training in Saranac Lake)*

Acknowledging that often police officers may experience unresolved stressors as well as personal and professional traumas, It was important to address this issue head on, and early in the training. Many officers have physical manifestations of stress or

trauma while doing their jobs that hinders them from being their best and authentic selves. This will also negatively affect their relationship with local communities.

We started the day discussing the word “culture.” We went around the room and allowed each participant to offer their own definition. Then we offered a working definition that we would refer back to throughout the class. We wanted the officers to have a broad understanding of the concept of culture, and allow them to claim some level of ownership of the term before we moved forward to discuss the next step of cultural “competence” and empathy. We introduced the idea that shared experiences and trauma exposure were also part of a person’s culture. We wanted the officers to realize and acknowledge that cultural competence is not an attack on white people, nor is it an attack on the police. We framed it as an inclusive term and tool to help them understand and build bridges with the community. We wanted the officers to feel good about the terminology and how it applies to their jobs.



*(Pictured: members of the D.E.C. April 27, 2022 training at Ray Brook)*

In this training, like all previous training we spent a considerable amount of time discussing the President's Task Force's Final Report On 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing. We highlighted all six pillars of the report, paying particular attention to police legitimacy and officer wellness. The six pillars are;

- **Pillar 1 - Building Trust & Legitimacy**
- **Pillar 2 - Policy & Oversight**
- **Pillar 3 - Technology & Social Media**
- **Pillar 4 - Community Policing & Crime Reduction**
- **Pillar 5 - Training & Education**
- **Pillar 6 - Officer Wellness & Safety**

Once we had a basic understanding and agreement on the six pillars of 21<sup>st</sup> century policing, we spent time explaining why this training (all three sessions) is important to each individual officer, to their agencies, and the overall wellbeing of all in the North Country. We explained the consequences of unacknowledged/untreated trauma and how trauma informed policing practices can help to improve criminal justice outcomes. We explained that trauma is real, it's pervasive and can be debilitating. We did not and cannot diagnose personal or professional levels of police officer trauma, but there were signs, indications, and comments that lead us to surmise that there may have been some traumatic incidents that some officers may have been exposed to or are/were dealing with.

In discussing trauma, we explained how trauma affects the body and a basic crash course in the neurology of trauma. We wanted the officers to have a deeper understanding on where trauma comes from and how and where it manifests in the

body. We also illustrated how trauma will present in various ways. When officers see an emotion that they interpret as anger from a community member, it could actually be the emotion of fear, frustration, grief, or other emotions that are not easily described. It was demonstrated that individual trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional or spiritual well-being.

We explored four categories of trauma; *acute trauma*, *chronic trauma*, *complex trauma*, and *system induced trauma*. Then explained that the trauma is not in the event itself, it's how our mind and body interprets the event. Armed with this new information, officers now can build individual capacity for empathy, because they now have a better understanding of community trauma.



(Pictured: members of the April 29, 2022 training at SUNY Plattsburgh)

We explained that the benefits of trauma informed policing include; improved public safety by improving officers' investigative skills by teaching them to recognize

trauma and to deal effectively and compassionately with traumatized community members. Further benefits also include reduced risk of retaliation and use of force by officers - reducing the likelihood of negative reactions from the public by being aware of victims' personal space, establishing and maintaining appropriate boundaries, communicating clearly, and following through on promises made.

We focused on the concepts of trauma-informed policing and trauma informed interview skills and tactics in better serving victims of trauma. We introduced and explained the cognitive interview model. We explained that the phrasing of questions during victim interviews is important. Depending on how a question is asked, might be perceived by a victim as being hostile, blaming them for their actions, or for what they may be unable to recall, causing the victim to shut down.

We spent a significant amount of time addressing self-care for officers. The afternoon session shifted to discussing and much deeper dive into **Pillar #6 of 21<sup>st</sup>**

### **Century Policing: Officer Wellness & Safety:**

*The wellness and safety of law enforcement officers is critical not only to themselves, their colleagues, and their agencies but also to public safety... The 'bulletproof cop' does not exist. The officers who protect us must also be protected—against incapacitating physical, mental, and emotional health problems as well as against the hazards of their job.*

We explained acute and chronic stressors and how they affect the body, often manifests itself in serious physical conditions. Chronic stress can lead to a myriad of negative consequences such as; work related injuries, illness - police officers have higher rates of specific diseases (heart disease, different cancers, diabetes); and have an

increased risk of dying at an earlier age than general population; sleep disorders – consequence associated with shift work, and is contributing factor to higher injury and illness rates, alcohol and substance abuse; Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD); depression and anxiety; and police officer suicide. Many officers shared info about stress on the job.



*(Pictured: Dr. Pfeifer demonstrating hand-shake techniques and approaching trauma victims in Ray Brook)*

We explained and gave examples of secondary traumatic stress disorder (STSD), vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue, and burnout. We allowed officers to talk about these issues and offered self-help techniques to avoid them, or at least lessen them. We explained many of the warning signs and stressed self-care and personal maintenance habits. Some officers were relieved that we talked about PTSD, and STSD experienced by first responders.

We talked about the need for officers to be mentally well in order to properly serve the community. Helping officers to better understand trauma and traumatic events

certainly put them in a better frame of mind to accept and to fully participate in the sessions. We offered various stretching and breathing techniques that can lower levels of stress in the moment. We also talked about the importance of diet and rest on job performance. We noted that many officers were so enthralled with the information, that most took notes and many asked for (and received) information additional information and resources on dealing with trauma and officer self-care.

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## Conclusion & Discussion

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The tenor in the room for this session was markedly different from the spring session in 2021. When we started these session in 2021 the country was still reeling from the protests in the wake of the George Floyd and Brianna Taylor deaths. A year removed, the air in the room was lighter, but still apprehensive. It seemed that the officers will still under the impression that *RENZ Consulting, LLC* was there to beat them up and tell them that they were bad people.

On the contrary, officers reported at the end of the 8-hour training session that they not only did NOT feel beat up, but rather they felt empowered to increase their community contact because they had a better understanding of what trauma is and how is often presents. Many officers reported that our task of making the sessions a safe place to talk, be honest, and be heard was accomplished. Many officers stated in the student feedback evaluations (below) that it was refreshing to have a diversity training that was not judgmental.

We started this workshop with a share-out session. We asked the officers to share or recount a recent positive interaction that they had with a community member. Every officer mentioned positive interactions and many were proud of the interactions. Some officers recounted how positive interactions impacted and helped community



members, but also how it made the officers feel good about the jobs they were doing. It reminded them why they were in the job ... to help others.



*(Pictured: the training class at SUNY Plattsburgh on April 29, 2022)*

We ended the session much like we began by conducting a group share-out. Virtually all of the officers shared that this session was extremely informative and helped them better understand not only issues in the community, but also issues in policing. It is important that the officers think critically about the information and verbalize their thoughts. Having other officers also verbalize will help reinforce the information.

By helping police officers become more aware of community trauma, and how to address their own personal trauma, then they can better facilitate bridge building with members of the community. There was lots of conversations during the breaks where officers shared stories and thoughts on community and officer trauma. Many of the officers were introspective and appreciative of the new language they were given.

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## Participant Evaluations

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After each workshop session, all participants were given an eight-question evaluation in order to communicate their thoughts, agreements, and/or feelings about the workshops as well as what (if anything) they learned or would change. Responses to the questions were completely voluntary and were anonymous. Prior to giving the surveys, we conducted share-out sessions in order to have the officers think critically about the day's activities and lessons learned. We wanted the officers to be able to express their thoughts openly in hopes of building synergy with other officers as we completed the session. We tried to make the sessions a safe space where officers can ask hard questions, answer truthfully without judgement and be their authentic selves throughout the process.

The evaluation consisted of eight total questions; four fixed response and four open ended questions. Although all participants were provided with a survey and time to complete it, some officers did not return a survey and some did not answer all of the questions. The vast majority of the officers attended the whole session and participated fully. A total of 48 of 52 participants returned the survey.

The responses to the questions were as follows:

1. The instructors' objectives were clear?	Agree	Disagree
48 Agreed 0 Disagreed		
2. This session seemed useful to my daily job?	Agree	Disagree
48 Agreed 0 Disagreed		
3. The presentation was clear and easy to follow?	Agree	Disagree
47 Agreed 1 Disagreed		
4. I learned new information in this training	Agree	Disagree
48 Agreed 0 Disagreed		

**5. If agree with the above, what specifically did you learn in this training?**

**Saranac Lake**

- Additional officer wellness tips and resources
- How important it is taking care of your body
- I learned how the interview can be destructive to a vulnerable or a hurt victim. This reminded to take a step back to remember that what may be routine for a police officer is life changing for a victim
- That it emphasized the importance of narrative based interview techniques.
- New interview techniques to utilize
- How to better yourself with self-care on the job
- Officer wellness, little changes go a long way
- Additional resources available to police
- To treat people a little different
- Officer wellness

**Ray Brook**

- How the body responds to trauma and how it can have a lasting impact on people and the way we interact with them
- How trauma affects the brain. How we respond to trauma both immediately and down the road
- Though somewhat “in the weeds” a bit, reasons metabolic/physical reasons for stress and relief of stress – very informative
- Different methods of interviewing
- How to conduct trauma informed interviews
- Interview techniques, mechanisms of trauma
- To have more empathy when dealing with the public
- I learned the true nature of this training and its importance. I learned valuable interview techniques
- Interview skills

**Essex County**

- How to deal with victims in a different way
- Ways to deal with victims
- The different methods to do our jobs
- How to properly interview trauma victims
- How going into every situation can be different, the input being available can have on situations
- Diversity is a word that envelops more than just race

- I learned a lot, mostly the different aspects of anger
- How to use this at the facility
- That the public and our job environment are things that these tools we use every day
- I learned so much about how the criminal justice system and how the human brain actually works
- The interaction with officers from other departments

### **SUNY Plattsburgh**

- Trauma informed training was very useful. I plan on pursuing further training in this area
- E.Q.
- Very informative about trauma informed interviewing as well as how I can better myself
- Trauma, everyone has a “story”
- Officer Wellness, stretching and recharging
- To slow down and recognize trauma
- Police legitimacy = public trust
- A deeper dive into proper trauma informed interviewing
- How people can deal with trauma differently
- Different emotional states are best
- The Trauma informed interviewing process was very useful and will be used in the future
- I learned how to let victims predict how the interview will start
- Learned how trauma significantly impacts perspective
- How to conduct trauma interviews and how I can become empathetic in certain situations
- I learned new methods to decrease tensions, anxieties, fears, etc. most people may have about the police and police culture
- I learned about the dynamics of trauma response psychologically and physiologically on victims from their perspective and how to better deal with them affectively

## 6. What did you like most about the training?

### Saranac Lake

- How welcoming and honest you both were (smiley face)
- Instructors were very open, friendly and personable
- I liked the small class size and the room set up
- The engagement with the instructors
- Real life examples were used by both instructors
- Resources about officer wellness
- How open the instructors are
- Teachers were kind, respectful, and engaging
- Open and SAFE discussions, I was able to question what I was thinking
- Exercise
- Interaction with the teachers
- I think we should have more training with other departments, I thought it was helpful to see other departments perspectives

### Ray Brook

- The science, the way trauma affects the brain. I liked learning interview techniques and learning the quick stretches
- The personal stories shared that tied into the learning. It relates to absolutely every interaction we have, on duty and off
- Group type of response and input
- Different perspectives into traditional law enforcement and what they do
- End the day with wind down techniques, sleep/wellness tools
- Trauma based approach
- Personal story from instructor about trauma interviews
- I LOVED the passion and dedication of the instructors!
- PowerPoint
- Real story narratives

### Essex County

- Instructors
- The instructors
- The info that was given
- It fit the audience
- It was more elaborate than similar trainings
- Friendly staff
- The different aspect it put on things, especially with victims
- Trainers

- Everything?
- No complaints

### **SUNY Plattsburgh**

- Relatable
- The delivery by the two instructors made it easy to stay engaged
- I enjoyed the positive atmosphere
- The personal stories
- Openness, lack of judgement, this sets the foundation for the rest of the curriculum
- The interaction in the classroom
- Engagement of topics specific to our jobs and how we can do better
- The relatability of the material
- The interaction
- The presentation was very relatable and can be used in daily patrol
- Trauma informed interviewing
- Interaction between departments and real life examples
- This training is another tool that officers can use in responding to calls
- Interaction with instructors as well as with other officers from other jurisdictions
- An open setting where great discussions are had without feeling judged
- The information was very good. I found it very helpful and applicable to our profession. Very good presentation.

## **7. What did you like least about the training?**

### **Saranac Lake**

- No complaints
- Nothing – training was excellent
- I wish that there had been more feedback from the class
- I don't have any negative comments
- N/A
- N/A
- Sitting during the class
- Sitting so long

### **Ray Brook**

- For me a lot of the issues discussed hit home and I found myself getting very emotional. A heads up on topics to be discussed might be helpful
- Sometimes too much in the weeds
- PowerPoint heavy
- I enjoyed it all very much, aside from tactical rescues, this is the best training I've had so far
- PowerPoint with text, more pictures less words
- This was a great training, thank you!
- PowerPoints

### **Essex County**

- Everything was good, nothing should change
- Nothing
- Use more time to give info
- Could be more interactive
- Nothing
- N/A
- Nothing
- It was all good

### **SUNY Plattsburgh**

- Nothing
- Some of the technical/terminology of the brain was hard to follow
- N/A
- N/A
- More cookies
- N/A



- Honestly, there wasn't a "least" in this training ... I am very happy with this training
- Nothing
- Nothing
- N/A
- Nothing - Stretching (smiley face)
- Nothing. Keep up the good work
- Nothing! I learned a lot, more than I thought I would
- I feel there was nothing I disliked about this training
- All good info
- To be honest, I am pleasantly surprised with the openness of this training and lack of negative judgement

## 8. What would you add to the training to make it better?

### Saranac Lake

- No changes
- A little more interaction with the group
- Maybe more involvement with students in class
- More portions with discussions
- Nothing that I can think of
- N/A
- A little more movement

### Ray Brook

- More discussion or exercises
- More exercises / movement
- Review some actual incidents that our department is involved with i.e. rescues, manhunts
- More activities to get us out of the chairs
- More frequent breaks, long day. I am not used to being inside of a building for so long
- Better intro before the training so that we know what to expect
- Ask participants for personal examples
- More breakouts with exercise skills

### Essex County

- Group activities
- Nothing
- More hands on training
- More hands on activities
- More peer interactions
- Larger audience
- More time with instructors
- Change color of slides so we can see them better
- Nothing
- No changes

### SUNY Plattsburgh

- I do not know -what I haven't learned
- I thought this class was very well presented. I am very impressed
- Nothing so far
- Nothing at all, it was nearly perfect

- Nothing, speakers were great with great information
- Nothing. Looking forward to sessions 2 & 3
- Members of the community being present in the same course
- Nothing
- Nothing
- Civilian/public participations so they can see that the police are human
- The trainers were great, spaced out just right
- Media and policing, the cultural portrayal as police as villains is a significant problem. Fake narrative that “sells” but endangers
- Nothing, keep interacting and teaching us new things
- I feel like more interaction from the community (not police) learning some of these methods
- I will come back for the next session if I am able to

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<sup>i</sup> [https://cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/taskforce/taskforce\\_finalreport.pdf](https://cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/taskforce/taskforce_finalreport.pdf)

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.apa.org/monitor/nov01/contact>

<sup>iii</sup> Papazoglou, K., Tuttle, B. M. (2018). Fighting Police Trauma: Practical Approaches to Addressing Psychological Needs of Officers. Sage Open Monographs. Volume: 8 issue: 3

<sup>iv</sup> Henry, V. (2004). Death work. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

<sup>v</sup> Alexander, C. (1999). Police psychological burnout and trauma. *Police trauma: Psychological aftermath of civilian combat*, 54-64.