



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



Year 3 - Session Write Up

May 2023



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.

About RENZ Consulting, LLC

The first pillar in the **Final Report of the President's Task Force on 21st 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).ⁱ

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.*ⁱⁱ 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

Scope of Work & Objectives

On the dates of May 1-4, 2023, team members from **RENZ Consulting, LLC** started year three of the police training sessions for the Adirondack Diversity Initiative (ADI). Year three was a mixed series of trainings. Because session three was not scheduled in 2022, one of the sessions (May 2, 2023) covered part three of the trainings – **Ethical Policing** - (explained in detail below).

Sessions in May 2023 consisted of four, day-long, scenario-based, interactive workshops presented to a total of **41** officers in four locations in the North Country. The four locations were: Ray Brook on May 1, Plattsburgh on May 2nd and 3rd, and Essex County on May 4th, 2023.



**Cultural Competence, Empathy
and Ethical Policing**
Policing in the Adirondacks (Part 3)

Lorenzo M. Boyd, Ph.D.
Heather L. Pfeifer, Ph.D.

After having spent two full years conducting trainings, interacting with various officers from multiple agencies, and soliciting feedback from community members, we

have a clearer understanding of not only the concerns of community members, but challenges that state and municipal officers face as well. Session number one-of-three is built on information gained and issues observed in talking to officers and community members. Session-one introduces the concepts of community trauma, vicarious trauma, and trauma informed policing. We want officers to see what trauma looks like in the field and what some community members often go through. Trauma does not exist in a vacuum; cultural narratives play a major role in experiencing and recognizing trauma. We want officers to be aware of and able to recognize trauma responses and realize that the response is not about them personally but are borne out of larger traumas or trauma triggers.

By addressing trauma issues early in the training, we believe that the officers are better prepared to talk introspectively about the concept of community empathy while being introduced to the concept of cultural competence. After many training sessions, we posit that if officers understood and could recognize trauma that many in the community have - some trauma which may be triggered by the presence of uniformed officers - then the officers would have a better opportunity to address community issues as they arise from a place of empathy and compassion.

The revised session-three still addresses cultural competence and empathy, but we framed it with an understanding of ethical policing. We wanted officers not only to be familiar with the concept but also be able to explain it to community members and

other officers. We stressed the need for officers to be aware of and adhere to the core values of policing and to focus on public safety instead of just the reactive version of law enforcement.

OBJECTIVES – Week One Sessions (May 1, 3, 4):

The objectives of the training included:

- Understand community & vicarious trauma
- Identify trauma responses of community members
- Understand the effects of trauma on citizens interactions with police
- Understanding Cultural Narratives
- Understand the effects trauma has on individual officers

OBJECTIVES – Week Three Session (May 2):

The objectives of the training included:

- To understand and discuss police reform
- To learn about & understand Ethical Policing
- To understand the concept of community policing
- To understand types of justice
- To learn about 21st Century Policing

Methodology

On May 1, 2, 3, 4 of the year 2023, team members from **RENZ Consulting, LLC** provided four, day-long, scenario-based workshops to 41 officers (police and corrections) in four locations in the North Country. The sessions were in the following locations with the following officers.

- May 1 in Ray Brook with seven officers. Four Park Rangers, two from Saranac Lake, and one from Lake Placid.
- On May 2 we had 14 officers in the class. Five officers from SUNY Plattsburgh campus police, five officers from the Plattsburgh city police, three officers from Lake Placid and one state trooper from Malone.
- On May 3, we had eight officers in class. Five from the Plattsburgh city police and three from the SUNY Plattsburgh campus police.
- On May 4, we had 12 officers in class. Two from Ticonderoga, four Essex deputies, and six Essex jail officers.

The May 1, 3, 4 training classes were the first of three sessions. In session one we introduced and covered issues of trauma. These officers were new officers who we have never met, but many said that they had heard positive things about the training sessions. May 2 was the third session that was rescheduled from the fall of 2022 in which we covered ethical policing and procedural justice. This session has officers who we'd worked with twice before in 2022.

The sessions for week 1 focused on the concepts of being trauma-informed with the interactions that officers have when addressing service calls for community members. This day was broken into two distinct parts; the morning session described community trauma and the mental and biological effects that trauma has on a person physically and their often-stunted development due to extreme trauma. The afternoon session focused on officer stress and ways to address it. This is totally in line with Pillar Six of [21st Century Policing](#) (Officer Wellness & Safety). We wanted officers to be able to better recognize and understand acute and vicarious traumas within the communities they serve. It quickly became obvious that when we started the session by talking about trauma, officers were more willing to open up about their experiences, but they were also more receptive to the lessons we were teaching that day.



(Pictured: Dr. Lorenzo Boyd and officers in the Essex training 5/4/2023)

It was clear that some officers had been in situations that may have stemmed from traumatic events that they witnessed, experienced, or were a part in the course of their jobs. Because we know that officers who have unresolved, or unrecognized trauma

tend to have psychological effects such as compassion fatigue or burnout at work (Papazoglou & Henry, 2018;ⁱⁱⁱ Henry, 2004;^{iv} Alexander, 1999^v). Addressing these issues early gave the officers a safe space to talk openly about their experiences. The full day dedicated to these issues offered officers a deeper understanding of trauma and some strategies to help address their own trauma responses.

We felt that once officers had a better understanding of trauma, and traumatic events, then we had a good foundation to introduce the concept of compassionate policing. We demonstrated in great detail that many people who have a history of unaddressed or untreated trauma often encounter the Criminal Justice system because of their coping mechanisms which are often interpreted as negative behaviors.

Because many law enforcement and corrections officers experience unresolved stressors as well as personal and professional traumas, 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 acute or vicarious trauma.

We started the day reflecting on positive police-community relations. As an ice breaker, I asked officers to Share a recent **positive** interaction they had with a community member. We were pleased that most officers were able to recount a positive interaction quickly without hesitation. Very few officers either could not think of one, or were slow in relating such an event.

To set the stage for the materials outlines later, we started by discussing the word “culture.” I asked each participant to give me a working definition of the word culture. We went around the room and allowed each participant to offer their own definition of the word (which varied greatly). Then we presented an operational 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.



(Pictured: Dr. Heather Pfeifer from the training in the Ray Brook training 5/1/23)

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 any race 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 our verbiage, how it applies to their jobs and could be used as a tool to connect with community members.

In this training we spent a considerable amount of time exploring the concepts and usefulness of the [President's Task Force's Final Report On 21st Century Policing](#). We highlighted all six pillars of the report, paying particular attention to 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**

We took great care in elaborating on pillar #6 - officer wellness and 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.

Once we had a deeper understanding and agreement on the six pillars of 21st Century Policing, we spent time explaining why this training is important to each individual officer, to their agencies, and the overall wellbeing of the residents and visitors to the area. 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 often be debilitating if not addressed. Although we cannot diagnose personal or professional

levels of police officer trauma, we did note that there were signs, indications, and comments that lead us to infer that there may have been some traumatic incidents that some of the officers may have been exposed to or are dealing with.

We conducted an exercise where we described various events which may have been traumatic and asked the officers if they, or a family member, or friend have experienced any of the events mentioned. For each event that the officers answered in the affirmative, they were given a piece of candy (*Jolly Ranchers*). At the end of the exercise, we asked the officers to note the amount of candy they had. We used this exercise to illustrate how pervasive trauma is.



(Pictured: Dr. Heather Pfeifer and officers in the Essex Cty training 5/4/2023)

We then dissected various forms of trauma and explained the consequences of untreated trauma, and how trauma-informed-policing practices can help to improve criminal justice outcomes. We explained in detail that trauma is real, it's pervasive and

can be debilitating. We described how trauma affects the body. We wanted the officers to have a deeper understanding of the origins of trauma, and how and where it manifests in the body. It was revealed that individual trauma results from an **event, a series of events, or set of circumstances** that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening. We further explained that trauma often has lasting adverse effects on an individual's daily functioning as well as their mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.

We offered the classroom as a safe space for officers to speak freely, and we let them know that this class is a judgment free zone. We outlined the often-debilitating effects of trauma. We told the officers that chronic stress can lead to serious negative consequences for officers such as work related injuries or illness. We explained that police officers have higher rates of specific diseases than the general population. Those diseases include heart disease, various forms of cancer and higher rates of diabetes than civilians.

We further expounded on the fact that officers have an increased risk of dying at an earlier age as well as various sleep disorders, which are direct consequence associated with shift work, and are contributing factors to higher injury, chronic illness, alcohol and substance abuse, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD); depression, anxiety; and officer suicide. We allowed officers to talk about stresses they may face in policing the Adirondacks. Many officers spoke in general terms and some listed specific stressors,

like rescue or recovery of lost or injured hikers, many of whom are ill-prepared for the challenges of the North Country.

We again talked about and gave examples of secondary traumatic stress disorder (STSD), vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue, and officer burnout on the job. We gave officers space to talk about these issues and we offered self-help techniques to avoid these issues, or at the very least lessen their effects. We explained many of the warning signs of stress and trauma and we talked about officer self-care and personal maintenance habits. The officers really appreciated not only that their traumas were acknowledged, but we also thought through the issue and offered self-help guides.



(Pictured: Stress relieving techniques in the Essex Cty training 5/4/2023)

On May 2 the 14 officers were primarily the same officers from sessions one and two in 2023 (with a couple of exceptions). This class focused on empathy and ethical policing. We started this session discussion with police reform. We guided the officers

to a point where they were willing to admit that the term *police reform* is not an attack on the police, but rather it is a way to produce a more effective, more efficient, more user-friendly version of public safety.

We then spent time asking the officers about the core values they believe are or should be in policing. We allowed every officer to posit a set of core values, then we broke them up into groups. In these groups, we asked the officers to identify five core values in policing and then tell us how they look in action. I asked them to answer the following question for each of the values they identified. **We demonstrate** (*core Value*) **with** (*name group*) **by** (*actions*). This exercise allowed them to move from the theoretical into the practical with core values.

We then moved them into understanding the mission and vision of policing. We talked about five key concepts: *professionalism, service, understanding, integrity, and justice*. Then we moved into ethical leadership and explained why officers need to move beyond the moral minimum and do their jobs with integrity. This was a nice segway into the concept and philosophy of community policing. More involvement in community affairs as an essential component of their policing duties.

We gave them two more group exercises throughout the day. This practical part of the class allowed officers to consider some basic tenets of policing that are often overlooked. The second group exercise was to consider police recruitment with the backdrop of the core values discussed. The exercise was; *you've been tasked by your*

agency to build a recruitment plan for your department. Who would you target and why? What are the characteristics you would look for – Why? What are the characteristics you would avoid – Why? The third and final group exercise we asked them to consider their police training and decide which courses needed to be added or removed to make them better service providers.

We spent a significant amount of time defining and talking about the concept of justice. This is a term that most knew in the abstract, so we made the concept more tangible by describing the four major types of justice and giving examples of each. The types of justice are procedural, distributive, retributive, and restorative. We spent the bulk of the time on procedural justice (how people are treated) and restorative justice (repairing harm and rebuilding broken relationships. We explained the holistic approach to building better relationships with the community. Officers reported that they enjoyed the way these concepts were laid out and that they could incorporate these skills into their jobs.

Conclusion & Discussion

The training sessions were extremely positive. We believe that starting with addressing issues of trauma was the right way to start the sessions, which allowed us to move seamlessly into cultural competence and then ethical policing in the subsequent sessions. Once we gave the officers space to address their own trauma, they were more willing to address community trauma. Many officers felt like they were given a voice and that we honestly listened to them and because of that, they were more likely to open-up about their thoughts and actions. Many officers, when we told them that they successfully completed all three sessions, then asked if there could be a fourth session.



(Pictured: Dr. Pfeifer and officers in the SUNY Plattsburg training 5/3/23)

It was clear that the officers found value in the sessions and were allowed to ask questions, become introspective and consider a possible paradigm shift into a more

user-friendly version of policing. Officers have reported that they tend to initially be more understanding when addressing and/or dealing with community members. It was also clear that officers are talking about the training withing their departments. Several officers - who were new to the training mentioned - that they were told good things about the training. We were able to notice that the officers in years two and three had a markedly better attitude towards the material than the initial officers in year one.

It is very telling that many officers, after completing session three, stated either verbally, or in the evaluations that they were in favor of a fourth training session. It is a bit unusual for officers to request additional training. I think this speaks to the nature of the material, but also the idea that officers are allowed to have a voice in these trainings. I look forward to possible conversations about this option.

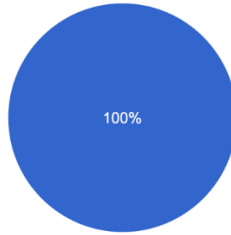
Participant Evaluations

After each workshop session, all participants were given an eight-question evaluation 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 an electronic survey via QR code and time to complete it, some officers did not complete a survey, and some did not answer all of the questions. The officers attended the whole session and participated fully. A total of 33 of 41 participants completed the survey.

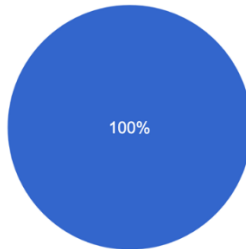
The responses to the questions were as follows:

The instructors' objectives were clear
33 responses



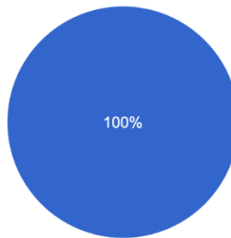
● Agree
● Disagree

The presentation was clear and easy to follow
33 responses



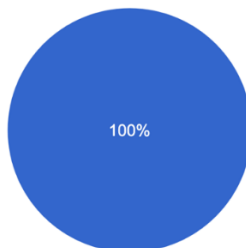
● Agree
● Disagree

This session seemed useful to my daily job
33 responses



● Agree
● Disagree

I learned new information in this training
33 responses



● Agree
● Disagree

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

Ray Brook (May 1)

- Specific officer awareness techniques
 - Trauma informed interviewing
 - Trauma informed policing
 - 6 Guiding principles to a trauma informed approach
 - Grounding techniques
 - The grounding technique

SUNY Plattsburgh (May 2)

- Outside prospective
- More about justice system
- I learned specific labels various types of justice
- How to better understand how to think about an empathetic response with contacts in my community.
- I learned different perspectives.

SUNY Plattsburgh (May 3)

- Being cognizant of how my interview affects the victim and victim's family
- Interview techniques
- To listen to victims more and talk less during interviews
- Great de-stress and interview techniques
- Giving people a voice can be more important than the outcome in the criminal justice system.
- Interview techniques
- Interview techniques
- Better interview techniques.

Essex County (May 4)

- The ways to interact with people
- How to talk to people
- Take time let them speak more
- Interviewing victims the right way
- Identify certain triggers people may have and step back and re assess the situation
- I learned the ability to read body language and decide my next course of action based on my observations.
- That at least 70 percent of people you meet have trauma
- different people have different things that trigger their trauma and it's important to understand them
- Understand trauma
- Trauma triggers
- Everyone responds differently to trauma

2. What did you like most about the training?

Ray Brook (May 1)

- How laid back the training was
- Open communication
- The fidgets
- Open forum. Small group
- The relaxed environment
- Very engaging
- Trauma responsive interviewing

SUNY Plattsburgh (May 2)

- Cross agency dialogue
- Group discussion
- The group discussions
- The open-dialogue group discussions.
- I liked the examples that were provided

SUNY Plattsburgh (May 3)

- Personality of the presenters
- The atmosphere
- The genuine nature of the instructors. They truly care about this topic
- Instructors were great
- The atmosphere the instructors created.
- Atmosphere
- Manner in which instructors provided the course information.

Essex County (May 4)

- Stories
- Interactive
- It was easy to follow
- Personal stories
- Instructors
- The individuality of the lesson
- Being able to learn that there are small signs that you can pick out if something is bothering them.
- the training was interactive and now boring
- Positive energy from instructors
- Relaxed atmosphere
- It hit a lot of topics most training wouldn't

3. What did you like least about the training?

Ray Brook (May 1)

- Nothing, we all learned a lot and had great food
- More resources should be offered
- Nothing
- Would like more breaks

SUNY Plattsburgh (May 2)

- One more day needed for wrap up session tying in all sessions.
- Nothing

SUNY Plattsburgh (May 3)

- N/A
- N/a
- All was great
- Nothing.
- Nothing
- N/A

Essex County (May 4)

- Na
- It was all great
- Sitting and listening so much
- Liked everything
- N/A
- Nothing, the training was very informative.
- Nothing
- Sitting

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

Ray Brook (May 1)

- Nothing the atmosphere was perfect
 - Nothing
 - Nothing
 - Not applicable

SUNY Plattsburgh (May 2)

- An extra session
- I would add a fourth day
- Scenario training.
- I have no suggestions.

SUNY Plattsburgh (May 3)

- Nothing
- N/A
- Keep it coming
- Nothing.
- Nothing
- I can not think of anything.

Essex County (May 4)

- More visual pictures
- It was great
- Na
- More class interaction
- Videos possibly
- Nothing. It was great!
- To have civilians and officers in one class to get their different perspectives of the situation.
- Nothing
- Nothing

ⁱ https://cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/taskforce/taskforce_finalreport.pdf

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

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

^{iv} Henry, V. (2004). Death work. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

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