



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: November 18, 2021

Contact: ANCA Communications Associate Audrey Schwartzberg, aschwartzberg@adirondack.org, (518) 891-6200

Fifty-two Officers Benefit from New Police Training

Inaugural cohort to complete Adirondack Diversity Initiative program

SARANAC LAKE, N.Y. — A total of 52 officers have enrolled in the Adirondack Diversity Initiative's inaugural effort to provide cultural competency training for North Country police agencies. The officers will complete the third and final training, as part of ADI's Community Policing Initiative, this December.

The first two sessions, which were provided free of charge for participating agencies, took place in May and September of this year. The 52 officers represent the Potsdam Police, SUNY Potsdam Campus Police, New York State Police, Lake Placid Police, and the Essex County Sheriff's Department.

"ADI's Community Policing Initiative represents our commitment to work positively with State and local police agencies in the Adirondack region to help them fulfill their equity and inclusion objectives," said ADI Director Nicole "Nicky" Hylton-Patterson. "With the help of generous donors, we are subsidizing the cost of cultural competency training so that together, ADI and the police can build safer and more equitable communities."

ADI's Community Policing Initiative is designed to strengthen the relationship between police agencies and their Adirondack communities with a specific focus on eliminating racial disparities that disproportionately harm Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) and other marginalized residents and visitors. Training affirms the importance of police agencies in making communities safer and healthier when they are free of racism and inequity. ADI is undertaking this work in partnership with police agencies in recognition of the difficult and vital work they do in public safety, law enforcement and helping North Country communities be more welcoming for all residents and visitors.

RENZ Consulting is providing the trainings. "RENZ specializes in strengthening police-community relations at the state and local level, including rural settings," said RENZ Founder and President Dr. Lorenzo Boyd. "We address police/community issues head on through assessment, training and workshops supported by empirically-sound, evidence-based research in order to bridge the gap between police and the communities they serve."

In September, the RENZ training included a significant amount of discussion and critical thinking questions — both practical and philosophical — about policing in general and policing in the North Country. RENZ wanted the officers to think about their personal role in achieving justice in the Adirondack region. All three training sessions are based upon initial conversations and visits to the Adirondack Park and were designed to respond to the needs and particular characteristics of North Country police agencies. The training sessions were also designed to be a substantive response to New York State's Executive Order 203, the New York State Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative.

The Initiative is already seeing ripples and waves beyond the training out in the community.

"The State Police have been strong partners from the very first," said Community Policing Team lead Pete Nelson. "They met with RENZ early on and helped us craft our approach to the North Country, and they have been sending Troopers to our classes. Now they have asked us to assist them with their recruiting plan and outreach, to help them build a more diverse workforce. That's exciting. I'm working on that now, and I really appreciate their professionalism and partnership."

ADI is now in the process of organizing a second year of training by RENZ for an additional cohort of 50 to 60 North Country police officers. The new 2022 cohort will also include Adirondack Park Rangers after the New York Department of Environmental Conservation committed to engage rangers in the RENZ training over the next two years.

The 2022 cohort will commence in Spring 2022. Interested agencies are invited to contact ADI at mreding@adirondack.org for more details.

Over \$100,000 was raised locally to underwrite the entire cost of three training sessions for the initial 52 officers. Additional funding is being sought to support training for this new group of officers.

"We're excited about recruiting a second group for training," said Pete Nelson. "The initial sessions were a real success and were well-received by the participating agencies. The second group will likely draw officers from the agencies we are already serving as well as additional agencies. Too often police reform is viewed as something that shines a negative light on police agencies. We don't see it that way at all. We see police agencies as vital partners."

Formed in 2015, the [Adirondack Diversity Initiative](#) (ADI) exists at the intersection of environmental and transformational justice, working to make the Adirondacks a more welcoming and inclusive place for both residents and visitors while ensuring a vital and sustainable Adirondack Park for future generations. ADI exists as the only program of its kind in the region. It is the result of unprecedented bipartisan support at the state level and endorsement by more than 40 community agencies across the Adirondack North Country. Moreover, and of critical importance to our educational initiatives, ADI's philosophy emphasizes the lived experiences of members of the community in all aspects of our work. This stems from our belief that communities must play a central role as actors and stakeholders in articulating,

facilitating, mobilizing and executing efforts that advance transformational justice in the Adirondack Park and surrounding areas.

The home organization for the Adirondack Diversity Initiative since 2019, [ANCA](#) is an independent, nonprofit corporation with a transformational approach to building prosperity across northern New York. ANCA's community-informed, results-driven strategies for local food producers, small business owners, aspiring entrepreneurs and municipal innovators offer targeted interventions that are designed to keep wealth and value in local communities.

Attached: one (1) PDF document and one (1) photo

Photo: Training participants at the SUNY Potsdam campus on May 5, 2021

