



Summary of the Learning Network Forum

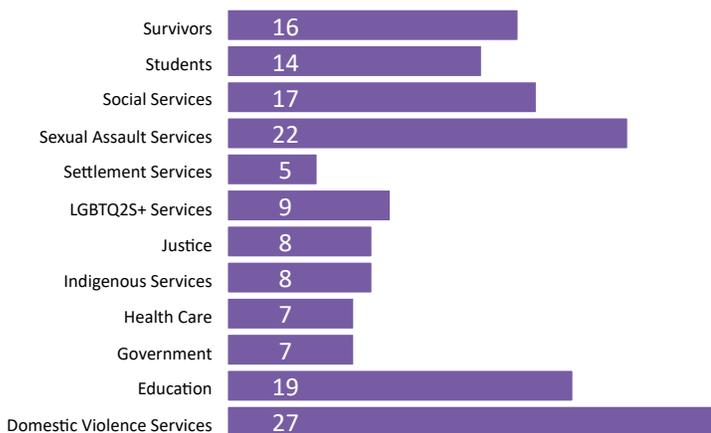
Gender-Based Violence Work in Context: *Addressing Structural Violence and Promoting Agency*

On Tuesday, October 8, 2019, the Learning Network hosted 135 participants in London, Ontario at a Forum focused on describing and analyzing structural violence and how it impacts gender-based violence work.

This summary shares information about the presentations, the participants' experiences of the day, and promising practices identified for moving forward with this knowledge.

WHO WAS IN THE ROOM?

Participants travelled from across Ontario to attend and they represented a variety of sectors/stakeholder groups:



*Note: Participants were invited to select all categories that apply to them, and may therefore have chosen more than one category.

Presenters likewise represented diverse sectors, ways of knowing, and organizational affiliations:

- Aging without Violence
- Canadian Federation of Students
- Egale Canada Human Rights Trust
- Fanshawe College
- Kind Space
- National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls
- Ontario Native Women's Association
- Osgoode Hall Law School
- Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women
- Queen's University
- SafeSpace London
- The 519
- University of Toronto
- Western University

[Learn more about our speakers: click here to read their biographies on our website.](#)

“We learned so much from all of the incredible speakers at the Learning Network Forum. We are all coming away with more knowledge & feeling empowered by the courageous & graceful speakers.” – Participant

WHAT WAS DISCUSSED?

As the Forum's presenters discussed throughout the day, structural violence operates in a variety of contexts and institutions including work to protect children, cover gendered news stories, develop and use online platforms, and administer justice.

They highlighted how structural violence impacts the people that we serve:

"[Structural violence] prevents people from meeting basic needs and from developing their capabilities causing multiple forms of harm to individuals and communities"

– Janet Mosher

They also explained the importance of ensuring that this violence is not reproduced by our own actions and institutions:

"What behavior are we re-producing in our environment? What resources are already there that we can implement to make our spaces more inclusive? And what is the power dynamic in inclusion? Who includes whom?"

– Marlihan Lopez

"There are repeated systems of oppression in different institutions... We are recreating these cycles to be re-hurt and re-traumatized—it is just compacting, and compacting."

– Olson Crow

"What kinds of violence are you paid to focus on and [what] is the history of how this has come about?"

– Rupaleem Bhuyan

"There's a difference between being safe and feeling safe."

– Julie Baumann and Jodi Hall

Some presenters also connected these themes to particular issues like media misrepresentations of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit People:

"Media is how non-Indigenous Peoples gain their information—3 in 4 people pay a great deal of attention to news stories about Indigenous Peoples... so media misrepresentations of Indigenous Peoples become truth."

– Elisha Corbett

Presenters also discussed how structural violence and oppressive social arrangements are reproduced in technologies:

"The way the application is constructed is a problem, not just the way it is being used. Algorithms can be discriminative. For example, Tinder blocking transgender people."

– Dillon Black

Across all these presentations, speakers emphasized the importance of promoting agency and well-being, both for others and for ourselves:

"What folks who face systemic oppression are looking for are not 'Allies.' Allyship is inactive. They need accomplices—someone to be next to them and be there for them." – Jade Peek

"Without self-care we cannot continue doing this work."

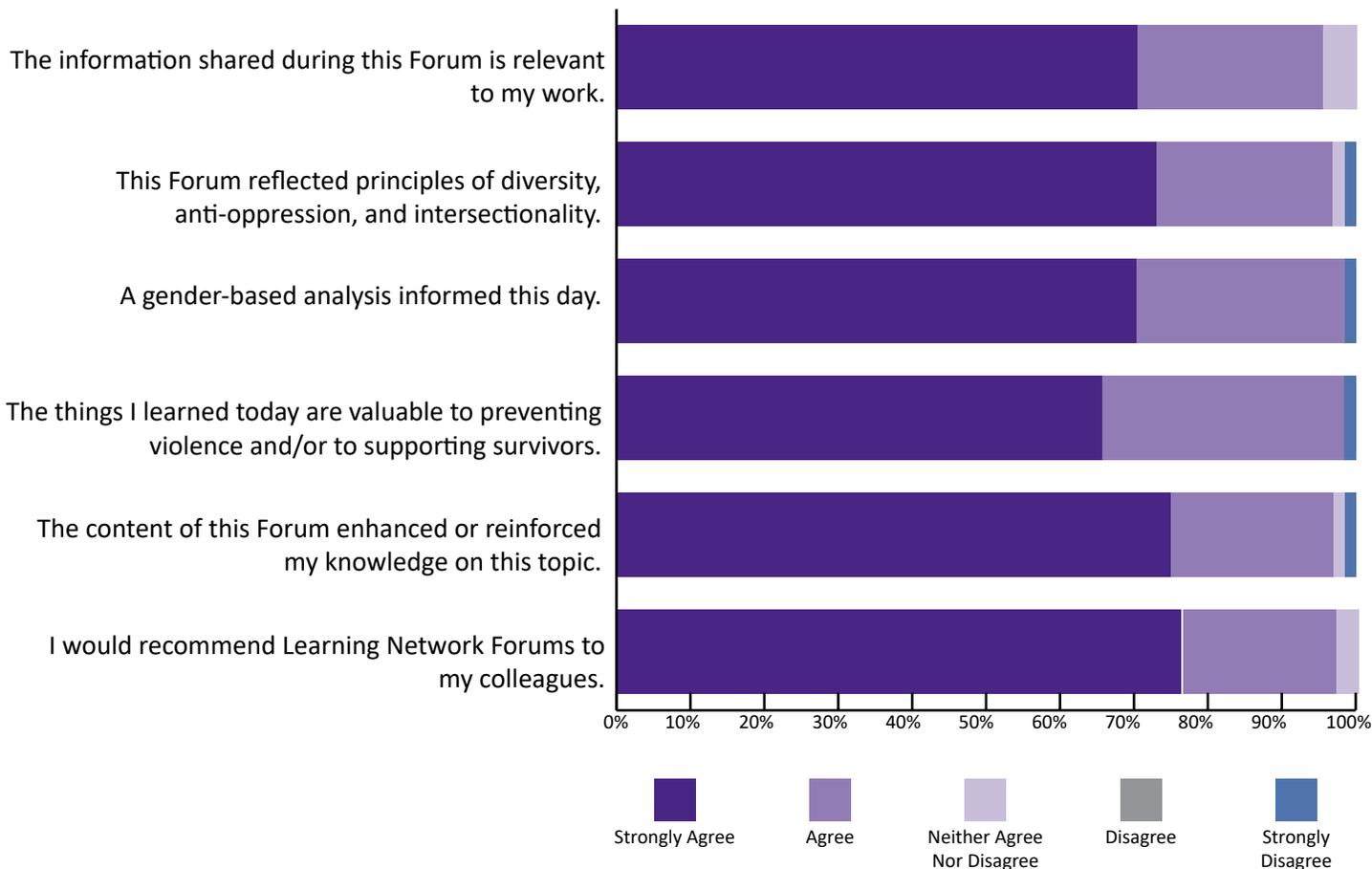
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[For the full list of presentations, click here.](#)



HOW DID PARTICIPANTS FEEL ABOUT THE FORUM?

Participants were invited share their feedback on what they learned at the Forum. The following figure summarizes participants' evaluations of the event's themes and content. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with favourable responses expressed by 95% of respondents for each of the survey items.



Common Forum themes that emerged from participant feedback include:

- Learning principles and theories of intersectionality
- Finding out about the gender-based violence work being done in Ontario
- Understanding challenges and barriers faced by individuals accessing services
- Making new contacts and networking with others in the field
- Discovering more inclusive and accurate language

For example, Kalimah Johnson shared that: "Some people do not call themselves survivors or victims but experiencers of some kind of sexual trauma."

Participants identified that:

"Today brought up questions for me about who is not accessing our services and how our center could do better to engage with and support those communities."

"Everything was extremely helpful—a lot of knowledge was shared about very important concepts and that conversation has to continue."

"This was an absolutely incredible conference. I was moved by the powerful presentations. Very emotional day as I really listened / valued the meaning behind speakers' messages!"

WHAT STEPS CAN WE TAKE TO MOVE FORWARD WITH THIS KNOWLEDGE?

(1) Participants were asked to rank the importance of possible next steps to build on this Forum. Among the three options provided in the survey:

71% of survey respondents ranked “Initiatives to ensure practice is informed by the realities of structural violence” as a top priority.

This objective was followed by “Dedicated advocacy to promote agency and resistance” and “Awareness campaigns on structural and gender-based violence” respectively.

Numerous participants also identified the need for more training and Forums like this one.

(2) Participants were also asked about how they will use the information they learned moving forward in their work, advocacy, and/or personal life. They responded by saying:

“Doing way more to challenge myself and my peers in our organization by asking who is

present and why?... For me specifically, I need to do a lot more learning around experiences of women and trans women.”

“Sharing all the information I have learned today with everyone in my personal and professional life.”

(3) Forum presenters shared a number of important actions that need to be taken to prevent and respond to violence at a systemic and institutional level:

“We need system reform with survivor-experts that works across government, disciplines, and sectors.”

– Tamara Bernard and Patricia McGuire

Thank you to the speakers, the participants, and the support that made this day possible.

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Centre for Research & Education on
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LEARNING NETWORK

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