



City of Peterborough 2025 RESPECT Workshop Summary Report

Strategic
Consulting
Services

December 10, 2025

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December 10, 2025

Dear Reem,

I am pleased to present you with this Summary Report which includes highlights of discussions from the Inclusion Workshop that took place Friday November 28, 2025, from 1:00 -4:30 PM at the Peterborough Public Library.

The Workshop was a joy to support. Witnessing your thoughtful leadership and the willingness of municipal staff to engage deeply and demonstrate their commitment to leading with respect during a divisive time instilled hope in me.

I appreciated the opportunity to connect with you throughout this process. You obviously care deeply about Peterborough and the betterment of our community. I look forward to working with you to determine how the results of this session may inform future Inclusion planning. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in brown ink, appearing to read 'Christie Nash', written in a cursive style.

Christie Nash, Co-founder
Arising Collective

Introduction

On November 3, 2025, City Council adopted the following motion:

“That the City of Peterborough calls on elected officials, organizations and community members to support the Elect Respect campaign and sign the online pledge at www.electrespect.ca; [...] and That the City's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Advisor be engaged in the implementation and communication of this initiative, and that staff explore opportunities to better integrate their expertise into Council's ongoing efforts to promote a safe, inclusive, and respectful civic environment.”

To begin co-creating what this process might look like with other Inclusion champions across the Corporation, the DEI Advisor convened a workshop on Friday November 28, 2025, to define “respect” for the City of Peterborough and better understand what respect looks like for and between individuals, teams, and across the organization. Suggestions of ways to hold people accountable to upholding respectful environments and relationships were also discussed.

This report outlines the activities of the afternoon and highlights of discussions from the sessions. The dynamic agenda for the session can be found in [Appendix A](#). A PowerPoint Presentation of the entire session and a workbook is available upon request to supplement this report.

Workshop Overview

Session Opening

The session began with a warm welcome by Reem Ali acknowledging the land while weaving the purpose of the gathering into one of the Seven Grandfathers Teachings: Manaaji’ldwin (Respect).

In this Anishnaabe teaching, Manaaji’ldwin means “To go easy on and honour one another and all of Creation.” Here, respect means recognizing the value in all beings and acknowledging the interconnectedness of life.

This was appreciated by Shelley Knott, Indigenous Relations Advisor, who shared a blessing and offered reflections on Thanksgiving and the practice of giving thanks.

Carley Nhem, Accessibility Program Manager, provided a brief overview of the City of Peterborough’s goals for Accessibility Standards and Integration.

Reem then highlighted the progress and challenges related to the DEI initiatives at the City of Peterborough over the past year and presented the DEI Impact Report. This was followed by a review of the session objectives and workshop agenda.

A series of questions from the participants followed, including:

- Defining Environmental Racism.
- The importance of grounding the DEI Inclusion Framework in tangible examples of behaviors and activities.
- The importance of acknowledging and celebrating milestones and accomplishments, both big and small.
- Acknowledging the importance of one-on-one coaching meetings with the DEI Advisor as a way of building organizational capacity in the area of DEI.

Review of Workshop Theme

Reem introduced the theme for the workshop: “Staying Inclusive in Divisive Times: Building Respect as a Core Value of Inclusion”. It was noted that we are living in very divisive times where DEI is becoming a very contentious topic. We are seeing a regression in safety, freedoms, and rights and losing the wins that we, and many before us, have worked hard to secure and protect. In this context, it is important to think through how and in what ways we can promote inclusive spaces and environments and going beyond the performative is even more crucial than ever before.

Providing context for the workshop, Reem introduced the motion put forward by Council and provided an overview of the [Elect Respect Pledge](#).

A Framework for Respect at the City of Peterborough

Reem introduced a working framework for respect (see Image 1), adapted from the RESPECT Women Framework (2019). The latter was developed by WHO and UN Women to prevent Violence Against Women (VAW) through a set of action-oriented steps that enable policymakers and programme implementers to design, plan, implement, monitor, and evaluate interventions and programmes using strategies to prevent VAW.

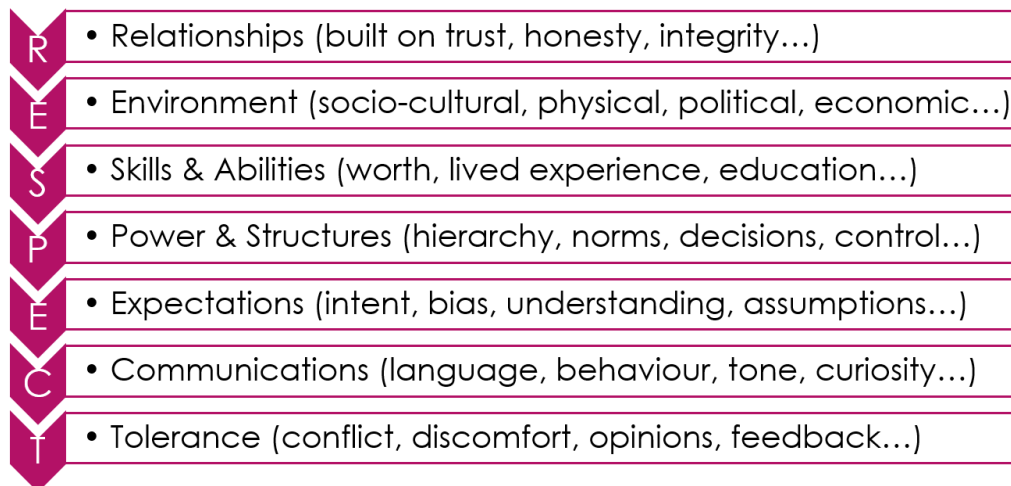


Image 1: Adapted RESPECT Framework

It was noted that the RESPECT Women Framework also calls for efforts by policymakers and others to strengthen the enabling environment for VAW prevention. The Framework offers four enabling factors that the City can further adapt and use for its own considerations:

1. **Political Commitment:** building political commitment from leaders and policymakers.
2. **Laws and Policies:** strengthening policies, laws, and institutions to address VAW and promote gender equality.
3. **Investment in Community:** investing in and supporting the work of women’s organizations.
4. **Resource Allocation:** allocating resources to programmes, research and capacity-building of health, education, law enforcement, and social services.

The remainder of the day was spent in facilitated sessions which included small and full group discussions. The following sections summarize the highlights of the discussions.

Small Group Discussion: The “What, Where, How, and Who” of Respect

Participants were asked to breakout into small groups and, using the adapted RESPECT Framework and the four enabling factors, discuss the following questions:

1. What do we mean by respect? How would you define it?
2. Where do we see respect? What does it look like in these spaces?
3. How do we action respect? How do we uphold/enforce it? How do we hold each other accountable to it?

4. Who is responsible for actioning, interpreting, enforcing, and upholding respect? Who is accountable?

Participants were asked to listen and take notes using a worksheet provided.

Following the small group discussions, participants were asked to share highlights of their discussions and discoveries with the larger group. Below are the highlights of the small group discussions that were shared with the full group.

What do we mean by respect? How would you define it?

When asked to define respect, small groups identified the following:

- Recognize and acknowledge other positions and perspectives.
- Be a good listener. This doesn't always mean agreeing, but allowing space.
- Avoid condescension and judgement.
- Support the development of Emotional Intelligence: Build window of tolerance to listen to others and have the ability to change one's mind. Learn together.
- There are different types of respect such as status (hierarchical or honourary) that can be assumed.
- Trust as a foundation to respect. It must be earned and not assumed.
- Recognize that each person has worth and value.
- Respect can be a cultural value that is informed by worldviews. It is also a behaviour and a perception.
- "Treat someone the way you want to be treated." This can be different for every person. Respect should be reciprocal.
- Respect might look different across generations and in different spaces (i.e. at home versus at work).
- Approach with kindness and curiosity. Assume that "everyone has something going on".

Where do we see respect? What does it look like in these spaces?

When asked about where we see respect show up, small groups identified the following:

- The importance of creating expectations/frameworks/norms in professional space for honesty, collaboration, understanding, safe space, teamwork (especially in person and online), checking assumptions, etc.
- Taking time to listen to people and build relationships to understand what respect looks like for each person and across teams.
- Checking in before having a conversation, for example: "Is now a good time?"
 - Give people grace and understanding if they aren't performing at their best.
 - Acknowledge that people are humans first and have a life outside of work.
 - Some quotes that were shared include:
 - "Life doesn't start when you walk in the door."

- “We are humans. We bring our knowledge and experiences. You don’t have to be a tenured person to deserve respect”
- “Building trust and credibility so you can have that flexibility.”
- Different cultures have different ways of showing respect. Traditionally, respect can be one directional, for example, “Respect your elders”.
- There are often “hidden rules” indicating respect that are not explicit or shared, for example, in some places people take off their hat.
 - This is also challenging with online culture and digital interactions such as email, Teams, and social media. It is hard to read tone, generational differences, etc.
- “You should be respectful everywhere”.
- Respect is when you see yourself reflected in spaces through visual representations, for example, pictures, art, posters, etc.

How do we action respect? How do we uphold/enforce it? How do we hold each other accountable to it?

When asked about how we action respect and hold each other accountable, small groups identified the following:

- Make time and space in the workplace to build relationships and be intentional about communication.
- Ensure that kindness is a central pillar to teamwork.
- Be courageous and address things that aren’t working well. Unpack power dynamics in the workplace and create appropriate pathways to deal with an issue.
 - Call out inappropriate behaviour and call in opportunities to learn and demonstrate accountability.
 - Find ways to address issues in a way that’s respectful without fear of repercussion.
 - Differentiate between speaking up and being rude.
- State clear and shared expectations about what respect looks like in the workplace and what is acceptable.
 - Model respect in the workplace.
 - Share “tools” to equip people with language and skills to gain comfort and confidence in upholding respectful behaviour and handling situations. For example, scenarios, scripts, timeliness.
 - Consider how these expectations can be upheld in the workplace. What does enforcement look like?

Powerful stories were shared about how people have directly experienced, or witnessed, harmful behaviour of colleagues. It was noted that when you are the target of harmful behaviour, it can be very challenging to respond or advocate for yourself. It was shared that people can often “go quiet” due to the trauma. It is imperative that people are comfortable and confident to speak out, when it’s appropriate, and address harmful behaviour.

A powerful discussion ensued about Freedom of Speech and how far it would go. Reem noted that Freedom of Speech is okay until it challenges the human rights grounds protected by the Ontario Human Rights Code. Human Rights should always supersede Freedom of Speech.

Concluding Discussion

It was noted that in this time we are living in, tolerance for disrespect is increasing. Upholding a culture of respect is everyone's responsibility, but the tone and expectations need to be set by leadership, including Council.

Staff who are on the frontline are having to handle difficult and disrespectful behaviour regularly, and they have no control over the system and don't have any authority on the conditions of their workplace. It is a privilege to be more inclusive when you are not on the front line.

Participants agreed that there needs to be clear expectations and intentions related to creating a culture of respect so that staff and management can hold each other accountable. It was suggested that City Council define respect and uphold expectations there as it is the most visible extension of the corporation. As a reflection of the community, Council should model the actions and behaviours they expect of others.

Next Steps

The session concluded with an expression of gratitude to participants for coming. Next steps and calls to action include:

- Participants were asked to continue to share comments to improve the implementation of the Inclusion Framework and ideas related to the RESPECT Framework.
- A report will be compiled summarising this workshop. It will be shared with participants.
- Reem will consider how to replicate this workshop with other groups across the City and continue to refine the RESPECT Framework.

Workshop Overview

Session Details

Date: Friday, November 28, 2025

Time: 12:00 – 4:00 PM

Location: Friends of the Library Room, Peterborough Public Library

Facilitated by: Reem Ali, with support from Christie Nash (Arising Collective)

Session Objectives

Define respect as a core value of inclusion and arrive at a common understanding of what it is, where and how it exists, and who is responsible for upholding it.

Agenda

12:00 - 1:00 pm	Networking and Lunch (provided)
1:00 - 1:10 pm	Welcome, Land Acknowledgement, & Indigenous Blessing
1:10 - 1:20 pm	Introductions & Overview of the Workshop Brief Summary of Previous Symposia
1:20 - 1:50 pm	Introduce Program Manager, Accessibility Standards DEI Impact Report: Celebrating Progress, Reflecting on Challenges
1:50 - 2:05 pm	The Why: Elect Respect & Going Beyond the Performative Break, as needed
2:05 - 3:15 pm	The “What, Where, How, & Who” of Respect
3:15 - 3:50 pm	Report Back & Full Group Discussion
3:50 - 4:00 pm	Wrap-Up & Next Steps