

Sharon Kniss

Mount Rainier, MD (DC region) | [linkedin.com/in/sharonkniss](https://www.linkedin.com/in/sharonkniss)

Collaborative process professional with 20 years of experience in rural and urban U.S. and internationally helping individuals, organizations, and communities embrace change and conflict as drivers for growth. Skilled in:

- *Mediation and Conflict Transformation*
 - *Facilitation and Process Design*
 - *Training and Participant-Centered Learning*
 - *Organizational Development and Capacity Strengthening*
 - *Community-based Peacebuilding*
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EDUCATION

- **Master of Arts in International Peace Studies** (Terminal Practitioner's Degree)
Track focus: Policy Analysis and Political Change | University of Notre Dame
- **Bachelor of Arts in Justice, Peace, and Conflict Studies**
Cords of Distinction, Summa Cum Laude | Eastern Mennonite University

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Conflict Transformation Process Design

- Mediated / facilitated 51 conflict cases with satisfactory outcomes; 67% were multi-party, organizational, or inter-organizational conflicts. Clients were a range of non-profit, government, and community individuals and groups.
- Facilitated ten contentious community dialogues, enabling participants to share diverse perspectives constructively to decrease tension, polarization, and isolation

Community Engagement and Peacebuilding

- Built capacity for a community-wide network for restorative justice implementation in South Bend, IN which is thriving today
- Engaged stakeholders and coordinated a network of organizations and community leaders building capacity for peace and inclusive community in South Bend, IN
- Strengthened cross-sector community partnerships to support a community center providing meals and supportive "last-mile" services in Harrisonburg, VA
- Served on volunteer board and advisory capacities for eight different organizations

Organizational Development and Capacity Strengthening

- Facilitated 11 organizational change process facilitations enabling a greater awareness of organizational strengths and challenges leading to clearer strategic vision and increased staff engagement
- Facilitated 19 retreats strengthening organizational capacity and improving team efficiency and connectedness
- Supported 10 executive leaders in coaching and capacity strengthening to address individual and institutional challenges and increase their leadership skills and confidence

Contributions to the Conflict Transformation Field of Practice

- Consulted to support mediation service practices start-ups in Northern Ireland and Germany
- Co-hosted two national mediation conferences in the U.K.
- Established a statewide network of Restorative Justice practitioners in education in Kansas
- Established the first-ever statewide conference on Restorative Justice in Kansas with a collaborative steering committee uniting RJ practitioners across the state
- Collaborated with community mediation experts in Indiana on statewide coalition building
- Participation in professional associations and working groups – Association for Conflict Resolution (Environment & Public Policy section); National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation; Alliance for Peacebuilding (Environment, Climate Change, and Conflict working group); Environment, Climate, Conflict and Peace Community of Practice; National Association for Community and Restorative Justice; Heartland Mediators Association; Maryland Program for Mediator Excellence; Circle of Restorative Initiatives for Maryland

Environmental Conflict Contexts

- Supported land conflict mediation in the Philippines
- Investigated community impacts of mining in Ghana
- Facilitated EPA-community engagement in environmental justice communities
- Managed an EPA Environmental Collaboration and Conflict Resolution services contract
- Facilitated natural resources crime and illegal logging courses with the U.S. Forest Service
- Facilitated a year-long engagement program of global environmental community leaders exploring urban ecology, community engagement, and environmental justice in the U.S.
- Facilitated USAID communities of practice exploring Solid Waste and Ocean Plastic concerns

Training and Participant-Centered Learning

- 24 Collegiate Courses (8 course topics)
 - Delivered at Goshen College (IN) and Bethel College (KS), subjects included Conflict Resolution, Mediation, Restorative Justice, and Peace and Justice
 - Oversaw the Certificate in Conflict Resolution and co-developed the Criminal Restorative Justice minor at Bethel College
- 51 multi-day (2-5+ day) training courses
 - Subjects include leadership, conflict transformation, facilitation, restorative justice, and environmental crime
 - Delivered in the U.S., U.K., Zambia, Botswana, Kenya, Panama, Senegal, Malawi, Rwanda, Uganda, Indonesia
- 42 Single Day Training Workshops
 - Topics include workplace conflict, restorative justice, conflict skills, mediation
 - Delivered in Virginia, Indiana, Kansas, and the U.K.
- 50 Single Workshop Sessions
 - Topics include communication and conflict in the workplace, DEIA, environmental justice, psychological safety, restorative justice
 - Delivered in Indiana, Kansas, Washington DC, Florida, and Paraguay

EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE

- *Adjunct Professor*, Goucher College, Baltimore MD (2025-Present)
- *Independent Conflict Consultant – Cooperative by Design*, Collaborent (2009-Present)
- *Organizational Development and Training Consultant*, Training Resources Group, Arlington VA (2022-2025)
- *Senior Program Officer*, United States Institute of Peace, Washington DC (2021-2022)
- *Director of Education and Training and Affiliated Professor*, Bethel College / Kansas Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution, North Newton KS (2016-2019)
- *Adjunct Professor*, Goshen College, Goshen IN (2015-2016)
- *Program Director*, Community for Peace and Nonviolence, South Bend IN (2014-2016)
- *Community Center Director*, Our Community Place, Harrisonburg VA (2010-2012)
- *Program Coordinator*, James Madison University / Mahatma Gandhi Center for Global Nonviolence, Harrisonburg VA (2009-2010)
- *Mediator and Trainer*, Bridge Builders, London UK (2006-2009)

ADDITIONAL TRAINING RECEIVED

Environmental Conflict and Collaboration:

- Crafting Collaborative Solutions to Environmental Conflicts, Udall/NCECR
- Collaboration with Native Nations and Tribal Consultation, Udall/NCECR
- Conflict Coaching, Heartland Mediators Association, Overland Park, KS
- Strategies for Trauma Awareness & Resiliency, New Market, VA
- Indigenous Peacemaking Processes (graduate training), Eastern Mennonite University, VA
- Mediation Training, Eastern Mennonite University VA and Bridge Builders UK

Community Engagement and Anti-Racism:

- Certificate in Public Participation (in process): Foundations and Applying Methods, IAP2
- Finding Freedom: White Women Taking on Our Own White Supremacy, Facilitator Training
- Anti-Racism Training, Roots of Justice, Newton, KS
- Community Trustbuilding Fellowship, Initiatives of Change, Richmond, VA
- Citizens Police Academy, Wichita PD and County Sheriff Department, Wichita, KS
- Citizens Police Academy, South Bend Police Department, South Bend, IN
- Developing Community Experiences (2 semesters), United Reformed Church, Cambridge, UK

Restorative Justice:

- Advanced Circle Training with Kay Pranis, Shambhala Meditation Center, Chicago, IL
- Restorative Justice: The Promise, The Challenge (graduate training), Eastern Mennonite University, VA
- Victim Offender Conferencing (training), Eastern Mennonite University, VA

Organizational Development:

- Coaching Certificate, Association for Talent Development
- DiSC Facilitator Certification, Everything DiSC of Wiley
- Building Blocks for Non-Profit Board Members, National Business College, Harrisonburg VA