

REPORT TO THE PRESIDENT

Launch of the Ottawa Community Court Hub

Jaku Konbit Black Justice Navigator Program

Subject: Attendance at the Ottawa Community Court Hub Launch

Date: 9th September 2026

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1. Introduction

The Jaku Konbit Black Justice Navigator Team attended the launch and stakeholder meeting for the Ottawa Community Court Hub, an initiative designed to strengthen connections between the justice system and community-based services and supports.

The meeting provided an important opportunity for Jaku Konbit to learn more about the emerging Community Court Hub model, understand the priorities of Ottawa's justice leadership, and identify opportunities for collaboration that could improve access to culturally responsive and trauma-informed services for Black individuals and families navigating the justice system.

The event brought together senior members of the Ontario justice system, community organizations and legal professionals, including Ontario Associate Chief Justice Aston J. Hall, Regional Senior Justice Vince Clifford, representatives of Legal Aid Ontario, lawyers and other justice-sector stakeholders.

2. Purpose of the Community Court Hub

The Ottawa Community Court Hub is being developed to bridge the gap between the justice system and community services. The initiative recognizes that many individuals appearing before the courts face challenges that extend beyond their immediate legal circumstances, including homelessness, poverty, mental health concerns, addiction, lack of identification, and limited access to basic social supports.

The Hub seeks to strengthen connections between individuals involved in the justice system and appropriate community organizations while improving collaboration among justice partners.

Its principal objectives include:

- strengthening connections to community-based services;
- improving collaboration among justice-sector and community partners;
- addressing underlying social and structural factors contributing to justice-system involvement;
- reducing re-entry into the criminal justice system;
- improving judicial and individual outcomes; and
- promoting more efficient and effective access to justice.

The initiative is informed by consultations with more than 40 local organizations including Jaku Konbit, which have helped identify existing services, gaps and opportunities for improved coordination.

3. Three-Phase Implementation Model

The Ottawa Community Court Hub is expected to develop through three phases.

Phase One – Integration and Referral

The initial phase focuses on establishing the Hub within the courthouse and connecting it to the broader community-service network. Initial referrals will be managed through the designated Community Justice Coordinator, with referral pathways expected to expand to the Crown Attorney's Office, Duty Counsel, defence counsel and self-represented individuals.

Phase Two – Increased Community Presence

The second phase will seek to bring community services more visibly into the courthouse environment. Discussions included the potential use of the courthouse atrium and other available spaces for information kiosks, service-provider access and community-resource displays.

This approach is intended to make the courthouse environment less intimidating and improve the ability of individuals to identify and access available supports.

Phase Three – Expansion and Innovation

The third phase will focus on identifying additional initiatives and partnerships that can further integrate community supports into the justice system and build upon the relationships established during the first two phases.

4. Community Justice Coordinator

The meeting also introduced Yvette, the newly appointed Ottawa Community Justice Coordinator.

The Community Justice Coordinator is intended to function as a full-time, non-legal bridge between the court and community agencies. The position is designed to help individuals facing multiple barriers identify and connect with appropriate services.

Yvette brings experience in child welfare and domestic violence, providing a background relevant to individuals whose justice-system involvement may intersect with complex social and family circumstances.

The meeting noted that Community Justice Coordinators are already operating in several Ontario communities, including Windsor, Brampton, Thunder Bay and Hamilton.

5. Relevance to Jaku Konbit

The development of the Ottawa Community Court Hub is highly relevant to the work of the Jaku Konbit Black Justice Navigator Program.

Jaku Konbit's Black Justice Navigator model similarly recognizes that individuals navigating the criminal justice system often require assistance that extends beyond legal representation.

Navigation may involve connecting individuals to housing, employment, education, mental-health and social supports, rehabilitation opportunities, community organizations and other resources.

A particularly important area of alignment is the emphasis on culturally responsive and trauma-informed navigation.

The Community Court Hub presents an opportunity to ensure that Black individuals are not only connected to services generally, but are also able to access organizations and supports that understand the particular barriers and experiences that may affect Black people within the justice system.

6. Strategic Opportunities for Collaboration

The Jaku Konbit team identified several potential areas for future collaboration.

First, Jaku Konbit could contribute its experience in Black-focused justice navigation to discussions concerning the Hub's referral pathways and community partnerships.

Second, Jaku Konbit could assist in identifying culturally relevant organizations and services that should form part of the Hub's community referral network.

Third, there may be opportunities for Jaku Konbit Navigators to participate in future courthouse-based information initiatives, including community information sessions, resource kiosks and other activities contemplated under Phase Two.

Fourth, Jaku Konbit could contribute to discussions concerning how the Hub measures success, particularly in relation to individuals from communities that experience disproportionate barriers to accessing justice and community services.

Finally, the Hub provides an important platform for strengthening relationships between community organizations, Legal Aid, defence counsel, Crown counsel, judicial leadership and other justice-sector stakeholders.

7. Key Observations

The meeting demonstrated a significant willingness among Ottawa justice-sector leaders to strengthen the relationship between the courts and community organizations.

Of particular importance was the recognition that effective justice outcomes cannot be achieved solely through the courtroom. Individuals may continue to experience justice-system involvement when underlying challenges such as homelessness, poverty, addiction, lack of identification, unemployment and other social barriers remain unaddressed.

The Community Court Hub therefore represents a movement toward a more integrated, community-based and problem-solving approach to justice.

For Jaku Konbit, this approach reinforces the importance of the Black Justice Navigator model and creates an opportunity to ensure that culturally specific navigation is incorporated into Ottawa's broader community-justice infrastructure.

8. Engagement

The Jaku Konbit team provided information about the Black Justice Navigator program to **35 participants** at the launch.

9. Conclusion

The Ottawa Community Court Hub represents a significant opportunity to strengthen the connection between the justice system and the community organizations that support individuals experiencing complex social and legal challenges.

Jaku Konbit's participation in the launch provided an important opportunity to establish relationships with senior justice officials and other stakeholders while gaining insight into the direction of Ottawa's emerging community-based justice infrastructure.

The Jaku Konbit Black Justice Navigator Team believes that its specialized experience supporting Black individuals navigating the justice system can make a meaningful contribution to the development of the Hub. Continued engagement should therefore be pursued with the objective of establishing Jaku Konbit as an important community-based, culturally responsive justice-navigation partner within the Ottawa justice ecosystem.