

## KEYNOTE ADDRESS



### **The role of culture in socializing children into violence**

**Dr. Opiyo Olaya**

York Catholic District School Board

Tuesday, May 10, 2016

11:30 AM – 2:30 PM

234 York Lanes

#### **Bio**

Currently the Superintendent of Education, **Opiyo Olaya** has been an educator with the York Region Catholic School Board for 23 years. He has worked to address important issues such as bullying and literacy, and has inspired student-led initiatives to reach out to students in Africa.

Born and raised in Uganda, Olaya became involved in national political activism for democratic reforms during the late 1970s. While president of the Makerere University Student Guild, he publicly condemned the 1980 national election as fraudulent, drawing the attention of Uganda's president, Milton Obote. After he rejected the president's request for a dialogue with students, Olaya was asked to surrender, but he chose exile in Kenya instead. Later that year, he was granted refugee status in Canada.

His activities – from founding the Karibuni African Music Program on CIUT in 1992 to his 2010 journey to Mogadishu, Somalia, with AMISOM troops – underscore his commitment to promoting peace and respect for all cultures and people. Olaya is also the founder of International Resources for the Education of African Deaf and Blind Children (I Read ABC).

#### **Abstract**

What happens when children are forced to become child soldiers? How are they transformed from children to combatants? In this presentation, I will address these timely, troubling questions by exploring how Acholi children in Northern Uganda, abducted by infamous warlord Joseph Kony and his Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), become soldiers. Based on interviews with former child combatants, I provide a cultural context for understanding the process of socializing children into violence. Specifically, I will detail how Kony and the LRA exploit and pervert Acholi cultural heritage and pride to control and direct the children in war.

#### **Discussants**

Prof. Lisa Korteweg

Tesa Fiddler