

Philip Moses – Introduction of Michelle LeBaron, Keynote Speaker

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PHILIP MOSES: I first met Michelle LeBaron 20 years ago, back in Washington D.C., when I had the opportunity to take a course with her she was teaching, a course at George Washington University on multicultural conflict resolution. Michelle and her colleague guided us through a process where we took the traditional model of mediation, a model that I suspect most of you are, if not somewhat familiar with, quite familiar with. So we took that model and we turned it upside down and inside out, not because the model is bad or ineffective or inappropriate. No, we deconstructed and then reconstructed in order to see the real possibilities that existed to get us out of our comfort zone, to nudge us to a far more powerful place than each of us, and I think everybody in that course was a practicing mediator, to nudge us out of that comfort zone, the comfort zone we all came into the room with. And that in many ways sums up what Michelle is all about. Not a nudge. She's really a shiftshaper. Shapeshifter. She's a shiftshaper too. She's shaping shifts. You'll see that. So along a winding path of a career that has taken her across many a time zone, she has influenced thousands to reconstruct their notions of what dispute resolution just might be about. When we decided to invite Michelle to join us for the symposium, I had to track her down in Switzerland, where she was working at the time, and which made for some interesting time zone challenges. So we're delighted that she found the opportunity to come to Oregon equally appealing as the opportunity to go to Switzerland. So I've long believed that the unlimited capacity for human creativity and imagination is our biggest asset. And Michelle's work, past and present, is a significant reinforcer of this. She has helped bring cultural fluency to the forefront of negotiation, mediation, teaching and training, really to the whole broader field of dispute resolution. More recently, Michelle's work has looked to the arts and the role artistic expression can play in transforming conflict, in building stronger communities, social cohesion. In beginning to understand her far-reaching interests, passions really, I've decided that Michelle isn't just someone with lots of various degrees in hand and appointments at different institutions of higher learning and an author of some wonderful books. Her fingerprints are on all sorts of things across many a time zone. She's a

professor, a mediator, a program director, an author, a lawyer, a trainer, a researcher. But when I think back to that course I took with her two decades ago, I realize that what she really is and has been all these years is a choreographer. Not in the sense that she tells us what steps to take and when, rather in helping us better understand ourselves, how we move and how that movement affects those around us, how our moves and the sequences of those we dance with can transform disputes and transform those relationships that are at the core of conflicts. So please join me in welcoming our dance instructor for the day, Michelle LeBaron.