

REVIEW OF YUKON'S POLICE FORCE 2010

Old Crow Community Meeting May 25, 2010 Old Crow, Yukon

Present: Estimate 40 Old Crow community members

Review Representatives: Superintendent Peter Clark, Dennis Cooley, Deputy Minister, Yukon Justice, Norma Davignon, Project Manager, Yukon Justice, Staff Sergeant Roger Lockwood, Caleb Behn, Summer Student, Yukon Justice, Lorraine Netro, Aboriginal Women's Representative, Simone Arnold, Council of Yukon First Nations, Justice Manager

Dialogue Summary:

- RCMP when handling arrests are insensitive and 'rough'. Community feels that there is not enough 'respect', particularly for those who are intoxicated.
- Some community members feel persecuted individually, they are 'singled out', leading to a decline in trust.
- The invitation of RCMP into the home leads to arrests and jail; again raising the issue of respect and cultural appropriateness in the eyes of the community.
- RCMP as 'social workers' are inappropriate, they lack the proper training and procedures to perform that service.
- Complaints process for the RCMP is poorly understood in the community, mistaken information was noted, and the community response is to go to the leadership (Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation and Member of the Legislative Assembly) to address issues, not the complaints commission.
- There is inconsistency between community expectations of the justice system and actual policing standards. For example, the legal rules around bench warrants are poorly understood by community members.
- RCMP internal investigations were criticized strongly.
- Prejudice and bigotry among the RCMP were noted as strong issues, awareness and assessment of the type of community RCMP are coming to (unique, high indigenous population) should prompt RCMP members with these attitudes 'not to come'.
- Community and RCMP relationship requires work on both sides. Welcoming ceremonies should be expanded and include a formal event welcoming new RCMP members.

- When the RCMP are on the river they should have a guide.
- The difference between Old Crow and large urban centers requires differences in police tactics and training, one-size-fits-all approach leads to inappropriate and damaging relationships.
- RCMP are front line workers with a great deal of responsibility to the public. There are worries in the community that RCMP become 'desensitized' to the humanity of intoxicated person for example. The treatment of Mr. Silverfox was noted in this regard.
- The RCMP issue tickets for drinking and "RCMP have saved his life quite a bit" but there should be discretion and flexibility in whether or not to arrest.
- The death of Raymond Silverfox has had an impact far beyond those individuals that knew him, that incident affected the whole Yukon and more. The Review must be aware of how badly this incident impacts the RCMP-community relationship. The Review must proceed with action, not delay, to be legitimate.
- Elder thanks the officials for coming to Old Crow; she is happy about today's meeting; police have made changes in the past and it was good work; her relation was a jail guard for the RCMP so she knows these things.

Elder advises that the community must work with the RCMP but also that meetings at lunch aren't a good idea. RCMP must be involved in the community.

- Respect for Elders is important in the community.
- The difficulty of this meeting (short timing, held at lunch) were noted, another meeting at a more appropriate time to engage the broader community is required.
- The Review should not drag on, stick to recommendations in September.

Ideas for Action:

1. RCMP must be cognizant of community expectations of respect when interacting with the community, especially in arrest/detainment situations and when entering homes. 'Disrespect' is the basis for negative relations in many community members experience.
2. Community awareness needs to be improved regarding RCMP complaints process. Patterns of addressing issues reflect lack of awareness of RCMP procedures (going to MLA or Chief and Council instead of other channels).
3. RCMP internal investigation process is viewed as illegitimate. One community member suggested a federal cabinet committee address the RCMP internal investigation process.

4. Welcoming ceremonies should be expanded, and the orientation process should include on foot patrol around the community with house-to-house introductions with commanding officer.
5. RCMP as social worker in the community is problematic-RCMP need verbal de-escalation skills, non-violent restraint training given the unique context of policing in Old Crow.
6. Urban policing tactics are not appropriate from the perspective of community members; see Idea for Action#1.
7. RCMP members who come to Old Crow may need to be assessed given the unique needs, one suggestion is a community interview process, another is a detailed pre-screening/assessment or selection process for potential RCMP recruits.
8. Community veto power or removal ability was recommended for problematic RCMP members.
9. Recruit First Nation RCMP to work in communities and establish a mentorship program to increase First Nation recruitment.
10. Auxiliary Program may be a way to 'bridge the gap' between community and RCMP, and as a way to increase local recruitment.
11. Consider successful community service projects and best practices from urban areas that work to foster relationships between RCMP and Community.
12. Identifying community members who could carry out special constable role as a good way to engage the community and facilitate the introduction and orientation process for new RCMP members.