

**REVIEW OF YUKON'S POLICE FORCE
Whitehorse Public Meeting Notes
August 5th, 2010**

Agenda

1. Welcome & Introductions
 2. Review of Yukon's Police Force – Overview Presentation
 3. Facilitated Table Discussions
 - 3.1. What concerns do you have with the policing service you receive?
 - 3.2. How can RCMP and community interact to improve public safety?
 - 3.3. How has the RCMP contributed to public safety in your community; what are the strengths to build on?
 - 3.4. What changes would you recommend to improve the policing service in the Yukon?
 4. Open Questions & Answers
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Facilitated Table Discussions Response:

Question #1: What concerns do you have with the policing service you receive?

- Mission school practice was to transfer problem people to a new area- RCMP is continuing this practice- transfer problem people out of Yukon and transfer problem people in to Yukon communities without telling the community about the police officer's history
- People are nervous to walk through the door
- The police being above the law, abuse of power
- Who's policing the police?
- No commitment to community
- Policing for a personal agenda
- Complaints- most people don't know how, or don't trust anything will be done.
- No response to families after deaths
- Training- need to be held to standards, such as recertifying in taser use
- No support for mentally ill in Yukon (nor coming out of jail)
- Public inquires need to happen when there is something big
- RCMP holds all info so there is no way to prove what's happened to me
- Impunity; lack of accountability and they hold more power than the citizens

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- Who polices the police? If we feel threatened we have no support for our "reactions". If police are threatened, they just say so as a means to act as they wish; private review board vs other RCMP detachments
- RCMP get away with lying on the stand, tampering with evidence etc and no discipline, at least visible to the public- just cover each other's asses
- Equal treatment for all
- Power imbalance- at a coroner's inquest or other, RCMP gets best lawyer in town and the victim's family gets no support- not even legal aid
- Coroner's lawyer is common law with a retired RCMP
- Attention to small stuff i.e. B & E's
- Complacency to repetitive issues
- Inexperienced officers
- Treatment of sexual assault victims as responsible for situation
- Difficulty with French language services
- Difficulty receiving police services outside of Whitehorse
- The preferred focus is glamorous crime busting rather than public service and safety
- Lack of community involvement
- City mentality; they need to stay more than 2 years
- Insufficient training for Northern Communities and distinct populations
- Officers feel entitled, and act as if they are doing the person reporting, a favour
- Careless and can cause accident as a result i.e. RCMP parked in the middle of a lane
- Require too much information when you complain
- Slow response time
- Lack of awareness about cultural issues/health issues
- Less intimidating presence required, and also in schools

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- 24 hour wait prior to a person being considered missing
- Abuse of authority and misuse of equipment i.e. personal use
- Abuse of clients; hitting, violence by police
- Lack of sensitivity to First Nations, racist
- Not responding to domestic violence calls
- No empathy when interviewing clients i.e. mother of missing daughter
- Keep closer eye on youth; preventive rather than responsive
- Public access of voice recordings and videos from cells
- Public image is negative; police have lost interest and humanity, they're jaded
- In groups, police become fascist pigs
- Women receive an overall disrespect towards needs and uniqueness of women's experience
- Misogynistic and sexist system
- Lack of professional ethic, responsibility, and problem solving skills
- Excellent police officers in the past, less at present
- Arrogant, macho, gender inequality, belittling
- Rumors of questionable conduct with regard to young women and homeless
- The subculture/"Brotherhood"
- Need voice recorders in the drunk tank so you can hear everything, address health issues, etc
- Problems in dealing with acutely intoxicated, i.e. not following processes
- Lack of training to provide service to persons with FASD and physical disabilities

Question #2: How can RCMP and community interact to improve public safety?

- Increased RCMP presence in schools
- Unsolved cases- what does the demographic look like? Consistencies- male/female. First nations/Non

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- Community participation with all community groups- out of the RCMP comfort zone, out of uniform
- Involve family before arrest
- RCMP members need to get to know community and stay in towns longer
- General public needs a say on procedures, i.e. domestic violence situations
- Communities should be able to screen potential officers, be a part of the selection process
- Regular interaction with community, members need to be approachable
- Need a process for families to get closure when there has been a death
- Higher profile at schools, events, and the community
- More training and more than 6 months in the community
- Work closer with the community to develop strategies to address common and arising issues (assaults, sexual, physical)
- More integrity with individuals
- Accountability; protect people, no power trips
- Better selection threshold to avoid racial profiling, prejudices, and community influence
- Open communication and build bridges with Elders; suggest Elder ride-a-longs
- More respect and leadership
- Justice system as a whole needs more leadership, not just individual RCMP members
- Proactive approach i.e. education
- Focus on health of community and less on enforcement and management
- Input openly from community; more actions that are a direct reflection of input
- Better community representation in RCMP; hiring practices to include all peoples
- Recruit with higher education

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- No more RCMP electing, officers chosen by the community; monthly review of each by a separate review board chosen by the community
- No guns
- Third party recording of all public interactions with the public's permission; attitude changes when the RCMP is recorded
- Restore public confidence before public can suggest improvements
- Open house
- Don't like to see the RCMP targeted and don't like this process
- This is a matter of leadership and individual member responsibility
- Strengthening public trust in the RCMP is key
- RCMP can inform citizens when public safety is an issue
- Ongoing public education is important; public education around the law
- Plain language information accessible and available
- Be more transparent about investigating member misconduct
- Communicate openly about violence issues to break the taboo in communities

Question #3: How has the RCMP contributed to public safety in your community; what are the strengths to build on?

- By responding to calls for help; by intervening in conflicts between individuals
- One officer came to the downtown area to give a talk to seniors about safety and security; it made us feel safer
- Lame question- this is not what we are here to talk about
- Crime stoppers
- SCAN operators
- Education in schools; further educate children on law and their rights
- Check stops, random patrols
- Promotion of Citizen on Patrol

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- RCMP role- keepers of the peace, order and good government around the clock
- Need to know officers in uniform; “keepers of societal trust” (ex. Watson Lake)
- Do not know enough about questions; need data/info on police force
- Help with emergency situations
- Youth and children’s programs
- Key volunteers in the communities
- Protect community assets from vandalism
- Road safety
- No answers for this question, more concerns than praise
- 70-80 percent presence in community; emergency situations only
- No training in FN; sent to communities and they’re out as soon as they become knowledgeable/comfortable
- I don’t know. Not enough presence
- Responding quickly to calls
- Positive interaction with citizens
- Basic law and order
- Police approach Yukon Aboriginal Women’s Council and the female Director to work on missing women
- Instilling fear should not be a future strategy
- Stolen bicycle program is great, because I got my bike back
- Intention to serve the community and willingness to take on the lifestyle and risk of policing
- Interest in improvement of their services
- Willingness to learn from and recruit FN people
- Being active in the community and in schools

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Question #4: What changes would you recommend to improve the policing service in the Yukon?

- If a police officer is disciplined, public should be told this- will improve trust in process and RCMP, accountability
- RCMP need more first aid training- for example that restraints need to be removed at first sign of medical distress
- Need change to come out of this review
- Police to stay longer than 2 years in communities
- Play a bigger role in the community (events, etc.)
- Better cultural competence; not just awareness, but better skills/training
- Closer screening for suitability; extensive cultural training before posting to a Yukon community
- Actively screen out racist attitudes; no bullies
- Training in advanced first aid, for alcohol, drugs or mental illness addictions
- Greater training in de-escalating situations, rather than physical takedown
- Greater representation of First Nations or other minorities on the force and more female officers
- Extensive orientation on empathy building with respect to vulnerable communities
- Lose sense of superiority and entitlement when dealing with the public
- Greater understanding that the RCMP organization is not unique and is subject to the same pressures as other organizations
- Loosen the laws; make sure their tasks are not impossible
- RCMP should not deal with intoxicated individuals
- Make foot patrols downtown
- More training around "dual charging"
- Communicate with public better (especially youth); show compassion/empathy in what are usually difficult situations
- Establish an independent body to hear complaints accountable to a review board

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- Serving the public, means serving everyone
- RCMP to be held fully and publicly accountable for any violations of the law to a higher standard than ordinary citizens
- No guns and ban tazers
- Abolish the RCMP and go to community based officers with monthly reviews
- Free shuttle service for people who are impaired
- Third party surveillance and recording of all police activities; cameras on officers at all times and linked to their badge
- Replace handicapped entry at RCMP stations with automatic doors
- When called, they often do not come. When they do come, they ask dumb questions
- When 911 is called they often say “ It is not serious” and hang up
- Have the police badge with the name or number in front and back of uniform
- Better citizen education on our rights, so police don't abuse them
- National structure needs to be looked at; Yukon RCMP are part of the National RCMP
- The Drunk tank is not appropriate (sleeping on cement is not okay)
- Longer conversations to asses drunkenness
- Police training should be longer than 6 months
- More transparent complaints process; public reports on the outcome of complaints
- More proactive in traffic control with respect to speeding in Whitehorse
- Teams of RCMP and social workers/councilors to calm people down and make appropriate referrals
- Yukon Mental Health Act is archaic and needs to be resolved
- More respect for risk groups
- “Listening to Superintendent Peter Clark speak in answering the questions, I honestly believe he is sincere and changes will happen...”

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Summary of Questions Asked by the Public

Will the report be released to the public?

Why isn't the Review using blogs and other media that would allow citizens to ask questions and get a response?

Is there any RCMP training at depot regarding the rights of Canadian citizens under the Constitution?

How long is the RCMP cadet depot training in Regina?

What's the relationship between a member of the RCMP and the law?

If I suggest to a member of the RCMP that he is breaking the law he would respond by screaming at me, and saying that he is the law.

We could be looking for an easier relationship between RCMP and citizens. In my father's generation RCMP were pretty much close to God. In the present society there's not much respect for RCMP and I very much regret about that.

What are the rights of a citizen regarding arbitrary search and seizure?

If an RCMP approaches you walking down the street can he ask you to empty your pockets and backpack?

A citizen asked me to ask about this issue. He was approached by RCMP and couldn't see the member's badge. He was intimidated and felt his rights were violated. After the search of his backpack the RCMP seized a small amount of marijuana, and released him from custody after two hours without charge.

Are RCMP required to identify themselves to citizens?

Did the Review's mandate including conducting research into practices elsewhere?

Have you looked at international experience of policing systems?

We heard a little about the content of RCMP training. A municipal constable gets 5 years of training. Why can't an RCMP officer like municipal police or New York City police carry an identification number, so I would know immediately who I might complain about if I have the temerity to do so?

We need to start from school age to educate people/youth on what their rights are.

In view of Mr. Silverfox's death and the Watson Lake sexual assault charges against two RCMP members, what is being done to change RCMP behaviour?

I would like to have seen a basic question asked of the public: What do you expect/ want to see from the RCMP? What do you think its purpose, vision, and mandate should be?

We need to remember the {Lord Acton's} saying, "Power tends to corrupt, absolute power corrupts absolutely." The national RCMP has become so powerful that it no longer serves the public it is there to serve.

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We have heard of RCMP members who have been convicted of sexual assault and have kept their jobs. Is this true? And are there any RCMP serving in the Yukon who have been convicted of sexual assault?

This needs to be looked at very seriously by the RCMP. They are not credible and not able 'to serve and protect' if an RCMP is being called to a sexual assault or domestic violence call and the member has been convicted of sexual assault.

It's convenient you [RCMP Co-Chair] said, "Some of the cars have cameras and tapes". Where's the accountability there? Somewhere in the budget they could put cameras in them. If a member of the public has a complaint they could be told "sorry that car doesn't have a videocam". That needs to be an absolute - all cars must have video cameras with audio recording.

In any other career, social worker, lawyer, teacher, they have four or more years of education. Do RCMP members have minimal training in empathy, compassion, humanity? How as a community can we have faith in them? I worry about some of the young men who are attracted to this job and who get authority and guns with only six months of formal training.

A lot of people didn't come out because they are afraid. Are you going to have another meeting with more time for the public to speak, and with more than one microphone? I'm just worried because this whole world seems to be all about talk. Where's the actual actions that are going to make people safe. It's a good turnout for a meeting that's been rescheduled two times.

I recognize that a few people left at the beginning because they had concerns and got overwhelmed. You should have identified there was a support present right at the beginning of the meeting. This is very difficult and very emotional for a lot of people. Three weeks ago I was pulled over riding my Harley, I've got long hair. The RCMP told me he pulled me over because he wondered if I'd been drinking. What are you doing about profiling? Profiling First Nations people? And others, anyone who is profiled? I just hope there is change that comes from this. It's long overdue.

What are you doing around profiling - training?

Why do you say, "The RCMP is the police force of choice?" Who actually made that choice? Do we get a chance to make a different choice? Will that choice ever be up for review? There are a lot of issues with the RCMP, and you act as if we have no other choice. Can we have a Yukon police board and force?

Could you have the Charter of Rights and Freedoms on an indelible surface? Billboards?

What impact will this have on the judicial system? On the courts?

I had problems with the exercise with the dialogue questions. "What is the community's role in interacting with the police to improve public safety?" Give me two weeks to think on that one - don't spring it on me tonight and give me two minutes to answer it. The real

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reason we're here tonight is the incidents with Mr. Silverfox, Mr. Stone and the Watson Lake sexual assault charges against two members.

People are asking very specific and pointed questions and we in the audience liked your answers or not. The format puts you in the role of an expert. If you want to change the relationship you have to change the conversations. What kind of a conversation do you want to have with the public? You've got control of the microphones and we can only hear you. That sends a bad message - I'm not exaggerating the concern.

In 2003 there was an RCMP car rollover on the Carcross Road where a woman died, and there was a very light charge against the constable involved. What is the relationship between the Crown and the RCMP when an officer is charged? It seems weird that someone with a criminal record should be an RCMP officer.

Police need to be held to a higher standard.

Why isn't the RCMP building accessible? It has a ramp but the door is too heavy to open, RCMP Detachments don't have TTY, or anything in large print, the counters are too high to talk to people.

RCMP came and wanted to arrest me for not appearing in court, they wanted me to get out of my wheelchair and get in the back of a regular car. If you want to arrest me at least get a wheelchair accessible van to do it.

It's key for public trust in the RCMP to be restored. And key to that is that RCMP are monitored by electronic surveillance. I think that's a viable, functional solution. Thank you for all the public putting pressure on to hold this Review, and to members of the committee for meeting with us. Whatever the Review's recommendations are, we need to see a reconsideration in four years time to see if its recommendations have been implemented.

It's been a long time coming, we're way overdue on this happening. I've been around for almost 90 years. When the RCMP first came to Teslin they always had a good reputation. You're skimming over the top of it - we need to get down to the grass roots. It's the lack of training. Aren't you concerned about the deaths of members, four at one time in Alberta, two in Saskatchewan, the recent drowning? We have to go down deeper and have more training. We need more training and more communications. We're equals. Treat people equal across the table.

It's time for a civilian investigative unit to respond to serious allegations or incidents.

I don't see why any RCMP officers convicted of a serious criminal offence should keep their jobs. Some years ago Vancouver city police beat an undercover RCMP almost to death while other undercover RCMP member watched, one was dismissed and one kept his job. Police who commit crimes should lose their job.

I'm talking about someone who is convicted of a serious offence. I don't buy the explanation about discharge and demotion boards and Treasury Board guidelines. As a Justice of the Peace the Lieutenant Governor would have decommissioned me in about 30 seconds if I were convicted of an offence.

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At Blood Ties I support a lot of vulnerable people who describe expansive use of threats and violence by the RCMP. There's a lack of the least bit of accountability on a day-to-day basis. I hear terrible accounts day after day, generation after generation about the RCMP beating people up. These are people who use alcohol, drugs, are homeless. I feel helpless to help those people who report being up. It's important to hear their stories. What are you doing to hear from them when they don't feel safe to come here to speak?

These are some matters of substance where you [Yukon RCMP] can't respond. Can you take them to Ottawa, to national RCMP, to the federal government?

END