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**Policing with Cultural Competency/
Police et compétences culturelles**

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Policing with Cultural Competency:

Are we going far enough, deep enough, fast enough?

By Norm Taylor

THE THEME OF THIS YEAR'S CACP Executive Forum Series, *Policing with Cultural Competency*, is generating interest among Canadian police leaders. Several such leaders gathered recently in Dalvay-by-the-Sea, PEI, to explore this theme and what it means in the current context. The event succeeded not only in raising new insights for the participants, but also in setting out a challenging agenda for our colleagues across the country. The three-and-a-half-day event will be repeated this fall, and according to the first group of delegates, continuing the session is precisely what is needed.

Delegates to the PEI session included members from the RCMP, The Ontario Provincial Police, the Canadian Forces and several municipal police services. Several of the participating members have direct involvement in the cultural diversity programs of their service, but the session spanned both the strategic and operational aspects of policing, and many of the discussions went well beyond traditional diversity programming issues.

CACP President and Cape Breton Regional Police Chief Edgar MacLeod opened the session with his "Accentuate the Positive" message. According to Chief MacLeod, "In the past 20 years we have made considerable efforts to change the culture of our profession so that it is both more inclusive and more responsive to our communities' needs." And, outlining the aims of the Forum, he added, "We have the opportunity to stand back, learn about and applaud what is working well both here in Canada and in societies around the world. We can openly and honestly acknowledge and address what is not working well. We can make a shared commitment to moving our profession ahead in a way that is true to the principles of our profession."

Provincial Commander Gwen Strachan



of the OPP and Assistant Commissioner Steve Graham of the RCMP represented last year's CACP International Best Practices Research Project. Among other topics, their team

studied diversity in several global settings. Strachan and Graham showcased some highlights from their study, including many which were a reinforcement of positive achievements in Canada. Still, the team also captured examples of a more widespread and institutionalized form of "cultural competency". After setting out what they called "the challenge for Canada", they had Forum participants asking, "are we going far enough, deep enough, and fast enough in this country to meet the challenges that are already upon us?"

Presenter Tom McCormack, of the Centre for Spatial Economics, provided an extensive analysis of the demographic trends across Canada and in selected communities. He also explained how recent trends in immigration have been vital to the Canadian economy and to our standard of living, and as such, are likely to continue, bringing a wide variety of changes to the national scene. Participants challenged

each other to consider how some of the less obvious of these changes might influence the policing agenda.

The message came through clearly to participants that our cultural landscape will not only change in terms of broad percentages, but also in far more subtle distinctions and variations in the nature of our increasingly blended communities. After the event, Steve Graham summarized his reflections on the discussions that arose: "The changing face of Canada is driving us all to rethink how we competently respond to our growing diversity, and ensure our organizations are internally welcoming, reflective and knowledgeable in facing this challenge."

With this backdrop well established, subsequent presentations began to delve deeper into the strategic and operational adjustments that may begin to define this cultural competency. Sandra Wilson, Community Services Officer for the Hamilton Police Service, provided a thorough case study of the many ways one agency can continue to build a meaningful partnership with its ever-changing community. Characterizing this full and sustained approach as "a journey",



"Successful police organizations will be judged in the future by their ability to develop organizational cultural competencies that will position them to link strongly and relate to their communities and to provide quality service to all diverse communities within their policing jurisdiction."

— Detective Chief Superintendent Frank Ryder, OPP

Sandra's material sparked an interesting and ongoing dialogue about the nature of perception, and the importance of engaging people within a long term process of mutual understanding. A similar idea served as the basis for the recent establishment of The LEAD Network (Law Enforcement Aboriginal and Diversity). Dr. William Beahan of the RCMP, a member of the LEAD Steering Committee, outlined how this national initiative, with a growing grassroots network of participating agencies, seeks to extend this 'journey' approach across the country. One tangible product of this initiative is the LEAD website (www.lead-alda.ca) which, when fully deployed, will offer the policing communi-

ty a best practices forum on diversity, along with valuable resources in such areas as hate and bias crimes, national crime statistics, community and police partnerships, and issues originating from within policing and from the community at large. Bill informed the Forum participants that the mission of LEAD is to "achieve a common professional approach by all Canadian law enforcement to relationships with Aboriginal and diverse communities". Several participants expressed the hope that the discussions and outcomes of this year's Forum series might contribute well to this aim.

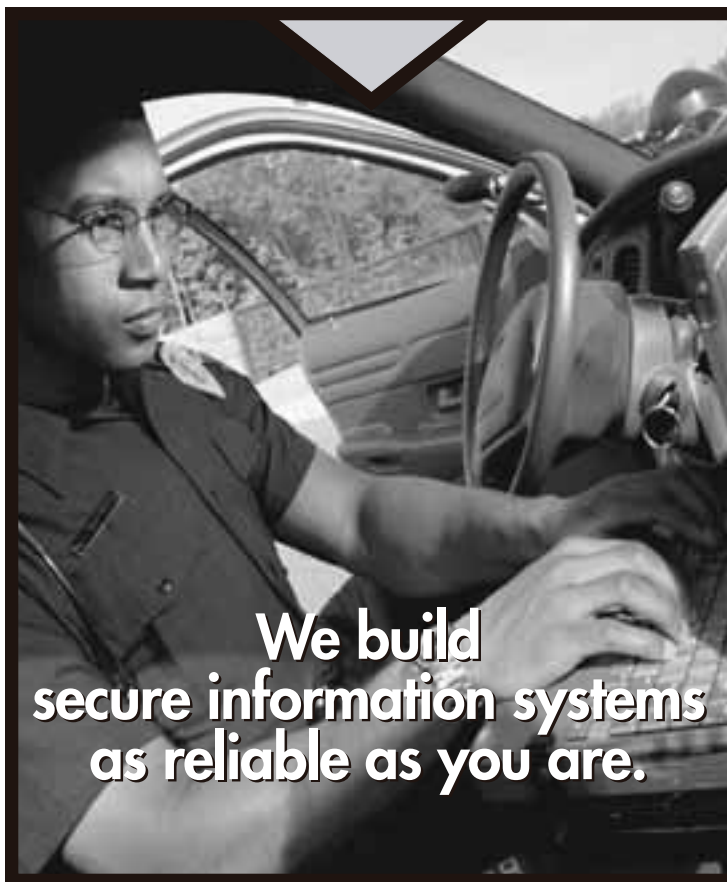
In the sometimes hard-edged world of policing, diversity-related programs and

workshops may seem to some too abstract or 'soft science' in nature. However, two presenters in particular brought the issues of cultural competency directly to the front-line challenges of policing. Deputy Chief Chris McNeil of the Halifax Regional Police traced that city's historical and more recent cultural dynamics as they shape and affect all of the core functions of policing, including law enforcement, public order, and criminal investigations. The recent Halifax experience with a high profile Human Rights Inquiry, and the resulting internal and external pressures it has brought to bear on police practices, is a powerful example of how a seemingly well-prepared and culturally conscious police agency can still find its diversity programs in need of renewal. Chris outlined some of the lessons learned, and the recommitted efforts that are now underway throughout the service to achieve and sustain an enduring cultural competency and a deeper interaction with the community.

Similarly, Professor Dave Perry of Durham College's Centre for Integrated Justice Studies took the issue of cultural competency directly to the level of major

“The changing face of Canada is driving us all to rethink how we competently respond to our growing diversity, and ensure our organizations are internally welcoming, reflective and knowledgeable in facing this challenge.”

— Assistant Commissioner Steve Graham, RCMP



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crime investigations. Recently retired from a high profile career as a Detective Sergeant with the Toronto Police Service, Dave used a before and after approach to showcase the differences in street level decision-making that are leading towards both improved investigative results and better community cooperation in that city. To further the goal of achieving effective witness cooperation amid growing diversity in our communities, Dave cited the critical need for investigators to minimize the harm to these communities that can flow from poorly managed police activity. Building cultural expertise directly into the case management model employed by investigators is one such strategy that Dave cited. Engaging the direct involvement of community leaders in media relations surrounding high profile crime cases is another.

Throughout these presentations and discussions, the role of the media emerged again and again as the third side of a triangle with a profound effect on the relationship between police and the culturally diverse community they serve. Rick Grant, a veteran police reporter with CTV's

Atlantic affiliate ATV, led a discussion which provided a candid and open exploration into these dynamics. Rick took the police leaders somewhat 'behind the curtain' to explore newsroom decision-making and how media leaders attempt to balance their societal role and their responsibilities as members of the community. New insights were gained on both sides of the discussion, and for the police leaders involved, the need to effectively, deliberately and sensitively manage information flows to and from the community was a theme that was well reinforced.

As with the Executive Forum sessions in the past, a great deal of value was also derived from the informal discussions that the residential retreat structure made possible. In a relaxed environment, participants and presenters together engaged in reflective discussions and debates over the challenging issues, and many individual and collective action plans emerged among the new alliances that were formed. One participant, Detective Chief Superintendent Frank Ryder of the OPP, summed up the benefits of the session this way: "I strongly recommend police leaders attend the

CACP Executive Forum Series. Police agencies face many challenges in the future but perhaps the most significant challenge will be the ever changing face of the communities we serve. Successful police organizations will be judged in the future by their ability to develop organizational cultural competencies that will position them to link strongly and relate to their communities and to provide quality service to all diverse communities within their policing jurisdiction."

The Executive Forum Series will continue in Whistler, B.C., beginning on Oct. 31. The Canadian police community can look forward to gaining cumulative insights, action plans and cooperative alliances from a fully national cross-section of police leaders committed to addressing this profound challenge of Policing with Cultural Competency in Canada. ♦

Norm Taylor serves as coordinator and facilitator of this year's CACP Executive Forum Series. He is a consultant to the Canadian police community, and also coordinates the Centre for Integrated Justice Studies at Durham College in Oshawa, Ontario.



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May 25 to 27:	Strategic Communications
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*** Des ateliers en français devraient être offerts prochainement par le Centre des cadres policiers en étroite collaboration avec l'École nationale de police du Québec.**

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