



Anti-Racism External Committee Meeting

What We Heard Report

April 2021

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Project overview

To fulfill the Calgary Police Service (CPS) Anti-Racism Action Committee (ARAC) mandate to re-imagine policing in Calgary through the co-development and delivery of a Calgary Police Service Anti-Racism Strategy with our communities and members, ARAC is doing extensive engagement with the community and CPS members to identify strategic goals and outcomes.

The ARAC project team has invited CPS Internal and External Anti-Racism Action Committee members to participate in conversations that will add value and influence decisions made during the development of this strategy.

A key deliverable at the end of each engagement meeting with the CPS ARAC Internal and External Committees will be a What We Heard Report.

Engagement meeting overview

This report is a summary of the Calgary Police Service External Anti-Racism Action Committee meeting on April 14, 2021. This report captures what was shared during the discussions, actions, questions, recommendations, and next steps.

Leadership Update

ARAC leads updated the Committee that the external website will be up and running shortly. Moving forward the Committee will be using MS Teams as an engagement tool to access information and share documents.

Deputy McLellan commented that today's subject matter experts were selected to present to the group based on what is happening in the community, activities with high profile in the media, as well as Calgary Police Commission priorities. The Deputy communicated the Service's desire and need for the Committee members' guidance and feedback pertaining to topics such as hate crimes, protests, and the Thin Blue Line (TBL).

What we asked

This was the Committee's second meeting with CPS members and the ARAC leads. Members attended virtually. The meeting was a blend of ARAC updates, presentations, and discussions.

Constable Craig Collins, CPS Hate Crime Coordinator, presented on the topic of hate crimes. He communicated the role of his position, the difference between a hate crime and hate incident, some of the challenges with protests and free speech, and a brief overview of hate crime offences and sentencing.





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Rebecca Davidson, Resource & Project Team Manager for the Bureau of Service & Community Support shared local hate crime statistics and trends, as well as upcoming changes to reporting on hate crimes in Canada.

Regimental Sergeant Major (RSM) Travis Juska explained his role as the CPS RSM, and presented on the history of the TBL, the meaning of the symbol (represented by a subdued Canadian flag with gray/black undertones with a blue line running horizontally) to the CPS membership, challenges and experiences other jurisdictions have had in prohibiting the use of the symbol, and the engagement plan that will collectively guide the Service’s decision on TBL next steps. The plan includes consultations internally, discussion with the External Anti-racism Action Committee, as well as presentations and conversations with the CPS Advisory Boards.

What we heard

The following tables are a summary of the topics and key discussion points raised during that topic by the Committee.

Topic	Discussion
Hate crime and hate incidents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee members reported frustration with acts of hatred and racism not being labeled as a crime, because implicit (micro aggressions) and explicit actions result in the same feelings. • Committee members discussed that hate incidents and hate crimes have the same effect/impact on victims. • Committee members discussed some of the challenges in labeling/proving that a crime is hate motivated and challenges with prosecution.

Most of the meeting was spent discussing the TBL and the Committee did agree that more time is needed for further discussion.

Topic	Discussion
Symbols and their meanings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee members discussed the meaning and purpose of symbols. A few key discussion items were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Symbols have power. They can unite or divide. ○ What is more important, the meaning and feeling of the symbol or the symbol itself? ○ A symbol’s meaning can change over time. • Symbols are tied to lived experience and attributed meanings by both the person and a group.





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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Committee members discussed the history of the TBL, as well as different perceptions of the symbol for members and their families, the general community, and racialized communities. ● Committee members talked about how symbols can be taken over or co-opted by radical groups. Examples discussed included different religious symbols, as well as more current use of the pride flag. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The group discussed some of the challenges with reclaiming versus letting go of the symbol.
<p>Limitations of symbols</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Committee members discussed some of the limits and challenges with symbols, specifically: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It is a problem when people get attached to a symbol. ○ It is hard to adopt a symbol that was not originally yours. ○ It is complicated when symbols have dual meanings.
<p>Symbolism and meaning of the TBL</p>	<p>Committee members discussed the meaning of the TBL to police officers and civilian staff, as well as the meaning to racialized communities. They also discussed the challenges with symbols having different meanings to different people, and the impact.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A Committee member asked the CPS representatives for their perspective on the symbolism and meaning of TBL. There was a strong emotional reaction in response from the sworn and civilian members. ● To many internal CPS members (police officers, civilian employees, and families) the meaning mostly represents a memorial symbol. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Specifically, the meaning as a memorial to those who have died in the line of duty, and the meaning and feelings it brings to family, friends, and colleagues. ○ It is seen as a sign of unity and comfort in times of grief. The TBL symbol provides support, strength, and resiliency to the law enforcement community. It speaks to the core oath and values of the work and community connection, as well as unity in the face of challenges and sacrifice that are part of the job for all (family, friends, and staff). ● For those outside of the CPS the meaning of the symbol varied. Committee members discussed the meaning of the symbol to those outside of the policing community and the difference between the general public's experience and interpretation, and the experience and history of the symbol for racialized communities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To some the symbol has a negative meaning and symbolizes an unsafe place. ○ It represents a divide between police and some communities. ○ Some individuals do not see the narrative that the CPS sees.





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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The group talked about the history of the symbol and the difference in experience/perception to racialized communities.
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Members discussed some options for the TBL symbol, including keeping it as is with strict parameters, getting rid of it, or redesigning something new.

Topic	Discussion
How the community interprets the TBL	<p>Some members discussed opportunities and challenges with the CPS' philosophical view on the use of the TBL.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Internal CPS members reported that if the organization amends its position, that the use of the TBL symbol will be guided by strict parameters, a robust communications plan affirming what the symbol means to the CPS (honouring the Fallen), and condemning groups attempting to misappropriate the symbol. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Some Committee members discussed the location of the symbol on the uniform. Could it be worn, where it is not visible to the public, such as on the inside of a police officer's uniform? ○ Some Committee members supported its use. ○ Others reported that the symbol is harmful and offensive regardless of how or where it is displayed by the CPS. ● The CPS cannot condemn an officer's meaning attached to the TBL symbol. The group discussed the challenges of not knowing what meaning someone is sharing/intending by wearing the symbol. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The internal CPS members acknowledged that there is a small percentage of members who may think/agree with the far-right interpretation of the symbol within the CPS. They shared frustration and anger at the symbol being misappropriated, corrupted, and politicized by far-right movements and racist groups. ○ Not everyone who wears a symbol wears it for the intended and communicated definition, some officers will wear it for a different insensitive meaning, but what are the impacts on those people in the community who are seeing the symbol? How do they know the thoughts/beliefs of the officer that they are dealing with? ● Some Committee members discussed potential implications and reactions from the community in response to CPS' decision on TBL next steps. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Out of respect for the community, a few members said the TBL symbol should not be worn; it is not enough to deny the racist undertones of the symbol. ○ It is about intention versus impact; the connection between intent and usage of the TBL are not the same, and some members of the community do not want to see it on a police officer's uniform.





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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ CPS' decision on the TBL symbol may impact marginalized and minority communities. ○ It is imperative to listen to the voices of the community and ARAC members during these conversations.
<p>Potential impacts of unauthorizing the use of the TBL by police officers</p>	<p>CPS representatives and Committee members discussed potential challenges with prohibiting a symbol that has been widely adopted by the CPS membership.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CPS members draw an extremely strong link between Sergeant Harnett's death and the TBL. ● To gain support organizationally, support of the policing culture is needed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Based on other Canadian law enforcement agencies that banned the use of the TBL, we can predict that the CPS membership may respond similarly. ○ If the symbol is taken away from the CPS membership the decision may create a subversive reaction among members. ○ Police officers may continue to wear the TBL if not authorized; officers may challenge the decision. ○ In an internal All Personnel Memo, it was recommended that CPS officers "avoid wearing or displaying the TBL on their uniform", resulting in an increase of the imagery on uniforms. ● Disallowing the TBL symbol may damage the Service's initiative of allowing other symbols to be worn on the uniform that promote and build trust. ● The CPS acknowledges the importance of listening to the voices of the community, but the organization also needs to listen to the voices of its members.
<p>Creating a symbol that is inclusive of all Calgarians</p>	<p>Some Committee members proposed the idea of creating a symbol that is inclusive of the whole community, that represents Calgary and the community policing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The CPS has made a commitment to reform practices, and although this symbol has existed for a while with a specific meaning, there is the chance now to possibly evolve it, or to make a new symbol that represents what it meant before it was co-opted. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We have an opportunity and the ability to create something new, that has the same feeling and intention. ○ A new symbol that represents the collective community could be a "fresh" start. ○ Create something that has not been tainted and does not taint the memory of the fallen officers who gave the ultimate sacrifice. ● Changing and/or redesigning the symbol seems like a small thing to change internally to demonstrate the organization's willingness to change. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Need to be proactive, not reactive.





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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Actions to build trust with the community are more important than simply condemning the use of a symbol. ○ This option will be discussed internally, but CPS members expressed concern if the “new” symbol is co-opted. We end up in the same position as today.
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Committee members reflected on the role of the ARAC Committee to make systemic change.

Topic	Discussion
<p>How will this Committee make systemic change and what does the work look like?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The work and role of the Committee to make sustainable systemic change will not be an easy task but will be important. ● The Committee recognizes the importance of difficult conversations and the difficult decisions that will be recommended by the Committee and shared with the community. ● Transformational change is important. ● Members made a commitment to the community. ● If the Committee produces action, will it stick and have the long-term impact that was intended? ● As a Committee dedicated to anti-racism work, we need to look at structures and policies that have been embedded and rooted for so long that people don't want to let go of them. ● Racism is racism, and it is problematic when we assign labels/levels to it [hate crime versus hate incident]; results in minimizing the narrative. To make systemic change we need to look at how it [the labeling of hate crimes/incidents] is framed. ● Surveys are not an effective tool to make an informed decision; need to gather information using multiple methods to get the broad spectrum.

Next steps

- What We Heard Report to be approved by the External Anti-Racism Action Committee Co-Chairs.
- Approved report will be distributed to External ARAC Committee members.
- Approved report will be posted online by the Strategic Communications Section.





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Summary of Questions, Actions & Recommendations

Question/ Action/ Recommendation	Answer/ Action
Concerns expressed with the amount of work to do and only meeting once a month	<p>The External and Internal ARAC members will be working in collaboration on subcommittees to do deep dives into the content; the first topic will be training.</p> <p>Deputy McLellan suggested meeting more frequent to achieve workload.</p>
Time constraints with hate crimes presentation and discussion.	<p>Committee members were invited to reach out directly to Cst. Craig Collins if they would like additional information on hate crimes or have additional questions. Cst. Collins will also provide hate crime and incident statistics to the group.</p> <p>In response to the great conversation and dialogue, this topic may become a subcommittee.</p>
<p>What are the metrics used to determine if an action is categorized as a hate crime or hate incident? Explicit and implicit actions result in the same hate feeling (e.g. micro aggressions)</p> <p>The narrative gets minimized in court.</p>	<p>A Hate Crime is defined as a criminal offence committed against a person or property, which is motivated in whole or part by the suspect's hate, bias or prejudice towards an identifiable group. Racism is not a criminal code offence. The CPS looks closely at each incident reported for bias and/or hate motivation to label it a hate crime.</p> <p>The CPS collects information on hate incidents, but most police agencies do not. Incident information is helpful for the Service to watch for escalation, hotspots, etc. It is important to report hate incidents also to the CPS.</p> <p>The CPS is limited in the ability to lay hate crimes charges by a high legal threshold and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms that protects most speech.</p> <p>There are several factors in the system that contribute to addressing this issue, the problem goes beyond just laying the charges but also being able to prosecute.</p>
Time constraints with the TBL presentation and discussion.	RSM Travis Juska is available for further discussion.





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CPS representatives were asked by external Committee members to share their perspective and what the TBL means to them.	Civilian and sworn members shared lived experience and their connection to the TBL symbol.
Committee members were asked to think about how they would feel if someone took something of tremendous value and meaning away from them.	N/A
Meeting time constraints	Discussion adjourned until next meeting.

