



## EDMONTON POLICE SERVICE

### REPORT TO THE EDMONTON POLICE COMMISSION

**DATE:** February 29, 2016

**SUBJECT:** Effective Communication and Cultural Safety Recruit Training

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#### RECOMMENDATION:

That this report and PowerPoint presentation be received for information.

#### INTRODUCTION:

This report relates to the attached presentation on the Recruit Training Unit's Effective Communication, Bias Awareness<sup>1</sup> and Cultural Safety<sup>2</sup> training.

The presentation includes:

- An overview of why and how the session was created (presented by Recruit Training Sergeant Jason Altmiks);
- A short video that outlines the training and highlights the value from recruit's, recruit trainer's and community member's perspectives;
- An overview of the objectives and content of the training day (presented by Sergeant Michelle Horchuk and Cst. Ryan Ferry); and
- Two testimonials by community partners on the value of the training and the impact it has on building understanding and trusting relationships with the community.

#### BACKGROUND:

In 2012, after returning from the "Problem Based Learning Instructor Certification" course, Sgt. Jason Altmiks and Cst. Brad Medwid identified a need to develop training for recruits that would assist them in developing knowledge and skills to effectively communicate with diverse communities.

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<sup>1</sup> **Bias Awareness** – Individuals are aware of their personal biases, stereotypes and prejudice and do not act on them.

<sup>2</sup> **Cultural Safety** – An environment which is physically, spiritually, socially and emotionally safe for people of all different identities; and where there is no assault, challenge or denial of a person's rights as protected by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Alberta Human Rights Act.

As this need aligned with the work of the Equity, Diversity and Human Rights Section to integrate bias awareness and cultural safety practices into recruit training, and also required a connection to patrol, Sgt. Altmiks, Sgt. Horchuk, Cst. Medwid and Ms. Goudar, Manager of the Equity, Diversity and Human Rights Section, worked together to develop a 6-hour training session to address this need.

In 2013, the first 6-hour “Effective Communication, Bias Awareness and Cultural Safety” session was delivered to Recruit Training Class 127 with the following overall goal, objectives and desired outcome:

**Overall goal:**

To equip recruits with the ability to practice cultural safety by identifying and managing their own biases while effectively communicating, and building relationships with diverse community members.

**Objectives:**

- To learn the art of communication;
- To develop self- awareness and strategies to manage biases;
- To identify barriers and strategize ways to effectively communicate with diverse community members;
- To learn the cultural safety equation (effective communication + bias awareness + compassion/humanizing one another = cultural safety); and
- To humanize one another through the effective communication process.

**Desired Outcome:**

Recruits will demonstrate that they can identify their own biases, and ask open-ended questions to carry on a genuine conversation with diverse community members while managing those biases and ensuring cultural safety.

**COMMENTS/DISCUSSION:**

The following is a list of some benefits that have been identified by recruits, trainers and community members:

- Recruits have an opportunity to develop self-awareness of their biases within a controlled and safe environment;
- Recruits engage with people outside of their everyday peer group and comfort zone;
- Community members and police officers humanize one another;
- The training creates a positive ripple effect within the community regarding EPS' commitment to building relationships;
- Community and recruits are able to address assumptions and misconceptions about one another;
- As recruits become more willing to open up to learning from others, they begin to learn more about themselves:

*"And this kind of training is huge. Because it really helps to give you a deeper understanding of different communities. For me, for example, I really learned a lot about Islam. I remember speaking to that Muslim woman about why she wears a hijab and it just gave me a totally different perspective. I think it made me a better officer. [...] Or my conversations with the member of the LGBTQ community. It made me aware of all the victimization in that community. I just had no idea" (Recruit Constable testimonial. The Somali Experience in Alberta 2015).*

- Recruits see the importance of collaboration across different areas of the organization to create the greatest impact and achieve organizational goals;
- By inviting the community, they are empowered to be a part of the change they want to see within their police service; and
- The community sees that EPS members are willing to learn from the community they serve and engage in open and transparent dialogue about how impactful biases can be.

### **CONCLUSION:**

While this training began with a focus on recruits, over the past three years, the demand for the training to be offered internally and externally has increased. The training has been integrated into the Entry Beats course, Call Evaluators training and was one of the most attended sessions at the Victim Services National Conference on Missing and Murdered Persons, held in Edmonton, AB, October, 2015.

This training is recognized as a collaborative initiative across all three bureaus, with ongoing commitment of Recruit Training Unit thereby allowing all recruits to experience practicing bias awareness and cultural safety before going out onto the street.

With regards to this training, it has been said that if one would like to see transformational learning in one day, this is it!

### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ATTACHED:**

- Attachment 1 – Effective Communication and Cultural Safety Training PowerPoint

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**Chief of Police:** Acting Chief of Police Brian Simpson 

**Date:** March 2, 2016