



## Reviewing the Current & Future Policing through an Ethnocultural Lens

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*Sadly, our communities have shared and experienced racism and specifically, anti-Black racism, time and time again. This situation of police brutality in the United States and Canada is not new. Racism is not new. Overrepresentation of incarcerated Black and Indigenous people is not new. However, we must continue to honor the lives of the people we have lost and ensure that our collective experiences of injustice do not continue.*

- ActionDignity Annual Report 2019/2020

### ***Our Why***

Address root causes of police brutality

Create generative dialogues between community and police

Promote healthy relationship between community and police



ActionDignity aims to create a just and equitable society in Calgary by facilitating the collective voice of ethnocultural communities towards full civic participation and integration through collective action.

## *Community-Based Participatory Action Research (CBPAR)*

LEAD for Change program hired six Policy Advocacy Team (PATeam) members (community connectors who advocate on behalf of another individual or group) who have established and trusted links with Calgary's ethnocultural communities, to co-create and conduct CBPAR to influence change towards policies that are more inclusive and responsive to the needs of ethno-cultural communities.

The PATeam consulted with their community network and equity-seeking groups to identify priority issues. Three PATeam members focused the CBPAR on policing system with the aim to review it using the ethnocultural lens. In consultation with community members, the focus group discussion questions were drafted and finalized.

The PATeam members mobilized focus group members who met one or more of the following criteria:

- represent racialized community or equity-deserving groups;
- has lived experiences that inform opinions and thoughts on the policing system;
- committed to critically analyze citizens' rights and inform decision making for equitable services, institutions and policies.

A total of 44 community members and youth from racialized communities participated in the focus group discussions. The participants signed consent for confidentiality forms that required them to respect the sensitivity and confidentiality of the discussion when they met online. During the focus group, participants watched a documentary video on police brutality and the discussions were centered around it and their lived experiences.

## **BACKGROUND**

Calgary's diversity continues to increase significantly. From 2006 to 2016, its visible minority population increased from 30.1% to 36.2% (Statistics Canada, 2016 Census). Members of ethnocultural communities collectively face barriers to full social, economic and civic participation in Canadian society<sup>1</sup>(Omidvar & Richmond 2003. Immigrant Settlement and Social Inclusion in Canada. Perspectives on Social Inclusion. January 2003). These are manifested in unequal access to services and resources, discrimination and racism, and immigration policies that disproportionately affect ethnocultural communities.

LEAD for Change promotes racial equity, inclusion and cultural awareness in public systems and policies and address systemic inequities in public institutions, government and service systems so members of ethnocultural communities can fully participate in economic, social and civic life. With recognition of the current concerns of ethnocultural communities, the Policy Advocacy Team (PAT) conducted the Community Based Participatory Action Research (CBPAR) on Reviewing Current & Future Policing System Through an Ethnocultural Lens to inform decision makers, service providers and Canadian policing system.

***“We have to speak up; we have to support each other and help each other” – Focus Group Participant 2020***



## As a member of the community, how do you define the role of the police?

### *The role of the police is:*

- *to enforce rules and regulations and laws*
- *to use their best discretion to address the situation they are in because every call might not be the same, there might be different calls you might be called to a domestic violence dispute or hit and run ...*
- *to think in the best interest of the community, what is going to help to make sure communities safe however we can see that that is not always the issue, there is a lot of internal biases of individual officers and then that translates into the whole unit*
- *obviously to serve and protect... The thing with the police nowadays, they have completely flipped that around and they use their power to enforce a negative stigma about themselves which affects the people they're dealing with, so I think that if the police were asked to do their actual jobs and play their roles properly, it would be a positive impact and positive shift within police-civilian relationship....a lot of these kids especially and young adults, immigrant youth don't like police... because of the way they are treated. ... the role that they play is totally misconstrued so they are missing mark entirely. You don't need to enforce violence, excessive force for no reason just because you're in that position of power. Because once you take that uniform off, you're the exact same as anyone of us and you still have to adhere to the same rules and the same constitutional orders that every other civilian has to follow.*



## As a member of the community, how do you define the role of the police?

### *Concerns of current policing system in Calgary:*

- *Because of the preconceived notions we have of the police **we don't really know the full extent of what they are there to do** ... so a lot of that gets lost in translation ...so at the end of the day you have a situation where you could really use somebody who has some kind of higher authority but you are not really comfortable telling them about that.*
- *We **have a very baseline idea...I didn't even know we could call the police to do wellness checks**...until I started seeing about people saying that the police are abusing the power when they are being placed in these wellness checks...if these people are suppose to be serving your community why is there such a disconnect between the people they are serving and who are doing the serving*
- *The reason for disconnect goes both ways ... it's the responsibility of the citizens to stay informed but at the same time **how are we to stay informed if there is not really a lot of access to telling us what they do***

### *Vision of an ideal police:*

- *The police should be **somebody that you can count on**...but at the same time should be **enforcing things on what is necessary**...for me the police should be **somebody who has emotional intelligence***
- *For me a policeman or policewoman **should be a role model, the one who spreads love, respect, safety and immunity to the people***



## How is the relationship between ethnocultural community members and the police?

### *Prior Trauma*

- *Our backgrounds have a big role to play... and it is related to the psychological and mental health ... a lot of our community members come from war zones or places like that , so even if it is not you who experienced it , your parents did, your grandparents did... **generational traumas are very much real...** you grow up hearing about those , you see them in the news you read about them and you know your families survived this ... **so the polices role and the governments' roles are to be able to bridge that gap between the police and the community** by creating trainings, creating events where those two sides can meet especially in immigrants and new Canadians **they should build some grounds for them to feel comfortable more at peace** because it is all part of that psychological healing*
- *One word to describe the relationship*
  - *terrible,*
  - *hesitation to approach them*
  - *authoritative person*



## How is the relationship between ethnocultural community members and the police?

### *Cultural perceptions*

- *there is a gap, there is a divide and I think it relates to the **backgrounds of the communities** themselves ... a lot of the countries we come from, police are scary people who break into your house and take your kids, take your things.....a lot us come from places where police is really not your friend.... Even here when you see a police ..taking to a person you still have that fear....because its deeply ingrained in your head...there is a very negative connotation related to that especially in new Canadian immigrants communities because of what they have experienced before....people from my community whenever they would see a police they would be **terrified because their experiences are not that positive from before** so they assume the worst every time they are **afraid to call the police** and anytime anything happens **they think the police will incriminate them even more***
- *Broken relationships*
- *I appreciate they are doing a good job*
- *Fear... **In order for the civilians, police and the government to work together they have to be kind and considerate to win our hearts.***



## How is the relationship between ethnocultural community members and the police?

### **Cultural Practices**

- There is always **an assumption of guilt when approaching black people**....I come from a culture where people are very respectful and the way they show respect is to look down, ...but in Western culture and Canadian culture, if you are looking to the ground it means you did something, it means you are guilty...those are some of the things that create a gap, so people just assume that you are guilty and you did something and things move to escalation because of that when it is in fact its you showing respect according to your culture
- A better approach between the police and the different ethnocultural communities is **to know what to expect from each other and to understand each other**, why we do things in a different way. That would be a good start. Because at the end of the day, we all are humans, but at the same time we do understand things because of the ethnocultural backgrounds maybe in a different way. So sometimes you can get in trouble with the police without even knowing because in your culture that may be that is not disrespectful...or the other way around"

### **Racism / Gender Stereotyping**

- I **feel like its unbalanced**...it feels like the police will look out for a certain race...one thing I notice in Calgary, ethnocultural business shops, those of specific origins were **targeted to be always searched on a continuous bases**, on a weekly bases maybe on a monthly bases when compared to their white owners... we are not talking here about brutality, we're talking here about targeting....and we are continuously seeing specific business of ethnocultural people failing, reason why is because of these things... and there is nobody recording this.
- The brutality ... **is gender thing**... it is more enforced for men than women



## Describe the Impact of Police Brutality on Your Life

### *Reduced Trust*

- Communities begin to **lose trust in the very system that is supposed to foster a welcoming environment**
- Clients they work with are brutalized, but nothing is reported because the clients are homeless and their voice holds no weight against police
- Police officers misuse their authority
- When extensive information is collected and there's no feedback, that implies that the information is useless
- **I feel very unsafe, more anxious navigating everyday life**
- Feels racially targeted as a black male

### *Loss of Hope*

- The situation is **disheartening and depressing**
- There seem to be no consequences for the police
- All complaints are minimized to speculation and are dragged along – the end result of no justice is just depressing
- Has not seen any improvement since 2001, and feels as though not only have we not been progressing but **we have been regressing**





## Describe the Impact of Police Brutality on Your Life

### *Fear / Frustrated with lack of equity in policing*

- *The police are supposed to be there to serve and protect not to inflict pain and injustice*
- *A blind eye is turned to police brutality here in Calgary*
- *At time reports are not taken seriously*
- *Alarming that the public is okay with cops being the voice of morality and justice, and giving the benefit of the doubt to when it comes to their decision making*
- *The ego of police officers cannot be challenged*
- *As a human, I am disgusted; I for one thought it happened only in the U.S. We have to speak up; we have to support each other and help each other*



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Recommendations to address

impacts of police brutality

The police must **create bonds and build bridges** in ALL communities

**More conversations** need to be held to highlight the issues and try to come up with solutions

**More educations on the issue** through videos and more awareness; **allow for justice**

**Sensitivity Training**

Bridge the gap and **become more culturally literate of minority groups/ cultural sensitivity**

**Diversity within the police force - more BIPOC**

**Create transparency** between citizens and authority

Try to find ways to **communicate this issue** to CPS

**Address the fear** that is instilled in the community

**Implement policies**

They need to **revise the policing system** here in Calgary

Show that consequences exist for their brutality to both the citizens and officers; **owe a responsibility to citizens**



## Lived Experiences & Stories

*It is every day struggle for me the moment I leave my house, I know for sure I have to face the reality of police brutality and I have to accept the idea that I will experience it every day,*

*I was out late at night in Downtown with friends and it was cold and snowing. Saw a man face down in the snow and there were some police patrolling around. Told the police officers about the man but they were “ callus and dismissive” . Since their job is making sure citizens are safe, they were not even doing that even on a cold night irrespective if the man was involved in the fight or under the influence of toxic substance.*

*While driving got pulled over by the police, 2 female cops came over - “and I have noticed it quite often that one is the good cop and the other the mean cop”.*

*One of them came over, flashed a flashlight with a “strange expression” on her face and was also flashing light on the kids too. “Was it power play or was that her trying to assert to come across as intimidating?”*

*In our community they will tell you no matter what is happening do not ever call the police because it will make it worst*



## Lived Experiences & Stories

*The police came couple of times to our house each time he behaved in a disrespectful manner and treated us in a very brutal way to the point the police spat on my mom face*

*One of our community members with mental health issue - he ran away from police just because of the gun the police was holding*

*My brother is 17 years old – he is always suspected by police because of the ethnicity*



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## From the stories and experiences that you have shared, what are the root causes of police brutality?

### ***Racism and Racial Profiling***

- *Lack of cultural knowledge*
- *They have constantly patrolling in specific ethnic communities just because they have a notion they are "bad people"*
- *Their primary intent when they are coming is to control people*
- *They have no trust in specific ethnic group and this cloud their thinking and make them hurt innocent people*

### ***Lack of Monitoring and Accountability***

- *Not monitored by their department*
- *They are not held accountable by their system and not punished for their wrong doings*
- *They don't have structural process; they do the way they want it*
- *They are dishonest when they are exercising their authority which cause tension in the community and this led to police brutality*
- *They are protected by laws; they know that they will not get punished*
- *They have the gun, power and they can break in, beat and abuse the authority*



Photo by Colin Lloyd from Unsplash website



## From the stories and experiences that you have shared, what are the root causes of police brutality?

### ***Need for more training***

- *They don't know how to de-escalate the situation they make it worst by holding their guns everywhere they go*
- *Lack of cultural sensitivity training*

### ***Need for stringent hiring process***

- *It doesn't seem they do thorough reference check during the hiring process*
- *There seem to be lack of representations from people of color in police department*

### ***Job Stress & Heavy Work Load***

- *Because they are playing many roles and they don't have division of labor this may cause them to feel overwhelmed and frustrated*

### ***Citizens not aware of their rights***

- *Some people don't speak up even though they know they are innocent which gives police more power to manipulate the system*
- *There is lack of People Rights and Responsibilities education and the police take advantage of this point and abuse vulnerable people*

### ***Lack of civic participation***

- *The community don't fight back and stayed silent which means to police an approval to do what they want*
- *I really don't know what is causing it*



## What new approaches should be implemented within the policing system to address the root causes that were identified?

### Wider Engagement of Diverse Communities in Policy and System Change Processes

- *Power and labor should be divided by putting every police officer where he/she fits.*
- *Police reform is important*
- *Legislation review to avoid any unfair clause that gives police power to escape a corruption*

### Expand Coordinated Systems to implement equity in policing

- *Education for both police and community to understand how both systems operate*

### More Trainings/ Support Services/ Guidelines to reduce police brutality

- *Training in de-escalation is required for police officer to understand that every case is unique and how and where should they hold their guns*
- *A team of psychologist should be assigned to work with police officers*
- *Senior police to mentor the new one*
- *Strict guidelines in reporting illegal acts among police*

### Stricter standards in Monitoring & Evaluating Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Practices

- *Police should learn to trust communities and stop labeling and pre-judgment.*
- *Duration on monitoring police officers record*
- *Increase ethnocultural police officers' representation in policing*



**What new approaches should be implemented within the policing system to address the root causes that were identified?**

**Greater Transparency of Police Brutality Cases and Statistics**

- *Statistics and record of police brutality must not be kept confidential; it must be shared with the public*
- *Court must be open for the public when police involved in corruption*

**Re-build and Strengthen Trust with Communities**

- *Effort from both police and community to repair the trust*



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## What are some of the recommendations that could be implemented within the policing system?

### Anti-racism and cultural sensitivity trainings/workshops

- *Cultural sensitivity trainings*
- *Cultural training for police officers*
- *Racial sensitivity trainings*
- *They should be trained in diversity...to better fulfil their jobs*
- *Anti-racism training workshop...getting them to interact with different members because bias comes from a place of ignorance and knowledge.... training on how to handle mental health issues*
- *Trainings regarding handling people with disabilities ....kids as young as 14 or 15 if they were misbehaving in school, the school have called the police on those kids and they have a hidden disability which is not apparent and the police are simply completely ignorant on how to deal with kids who have disabilities and that has pushed those kids into a more stressful situation because of the mishandling of the police*
- *Trainings for police regarding overcoming biases including gender biases and ethnocultural. The police department should adopt different tests which have been developed to determine the different level of biases within their officers*
- *Better levelling needs to be done - better programs mandated to CPS: assess potential biases, e.g. gender violence, racially targeted assaults, stereotypes.*



### What are some of the recommendations that could be implemented within the policing system?

#### Trust building with racialized communities

- *There needs to be more regard for the youth of Calgary...with everything that's happened this year there is a huge divide between the youth and the police*
- *Invite police officers to ethnocultural events which will improve the understanding of different cultures and develop a sense of closeness between the police and various communities. This will make them more in touch with the people;*
- *Inviting police officers to such discussions*
- *Have police at community events to normalize and humanize them within the community... be aware of and in touch with different cultures*

#### Citizens' Rights Awareness workshops/campaigns

- *As a public, to know our rights and responsibilities so we are aware of when a police officer is abusing their power of authority.*
- *Educating youth on the different resources*
- *Apply pressure to the system, use media tools ( social media, mobile devices) to obtain your power as a citizen*
- *Build a solid foundation for our communities, to sustain the movement to improve the role and issues that revolve around the CPS*

#### Police Wellness Programs

- *Incorporating police officers in mental wellness programs*
- *Work close to psychologists and officers to combat abuse*



## What are some of the recommendations that could be implemented within the policing system?

### Policy & System Change for greater accountability and equity

- *Accountably process police brutality cases and make the information accessible to the public.*
- *Collaborate with other organizations to make it a long-term project to monitor these hidden things. Involve third party advocacy group - for the public to report brutality cases*
- *There is a lot of barrier between police and community...there are over 200 diverse communities. Engage the diverse community members to support police services. So when you call the police, that member will be there to address language barrier*
- *Implement greater protection in legislations*
- *Police should define what authority means to them and address behavior/practices that are viewed as abuse of their authority*
- *Introduce policies on the consequences of police brutality and involve the public in decision-making process of police brutality cases*
- *Promote public transparency*



## Participants' Feedback on being involved in the focus group discussion:

- *Thrilled*
- *Great*
- *Curious*
- *Excited*
- *Grateful*
- *Mixed feelings; sadness, fear, hopefulness and resiliency*
- *Willing to learn more*
- *Understanding the challenges of creating better communication with CPS but in order for there to be a viable solution for citizens and police force, there needs to be a more extensive community engagement to gather the voices that need to be heard.*
- *Have hope and staying positive for an action plan*
- *Thank you for doing this*



We could see the glimpse of hope that change is possible because the community showed interest and commitment... we even established the first connection with the police. To keep the momentum, we should start implementing the community recommendations... and gain all stakeholders' trust.

- Policy Advocate Team 2020

## LEAD for Change team

### Policy Advocacy Team

Edwin Chavez	Filipino Community
Falak Shakir	Pakistan Community
Fauzia Khedri	Afghanistan Community
Patricia Bernal	Latin American Community
Rawya Gumaa	Sudanese Community
Widad Eltahir	Sudanese Community

### Staff

Nazia Amin	Community Engagement Coordinator
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### Funded by:



*“...to be a viable solution for citizens and police force, there needs to be a more extensive community engagement to gather the voices that need to be heard” – Focus Group Participant 2020*

