

CAPTURING HEARTS AND MINDS

Addressing hate crime and racial discord through community policing

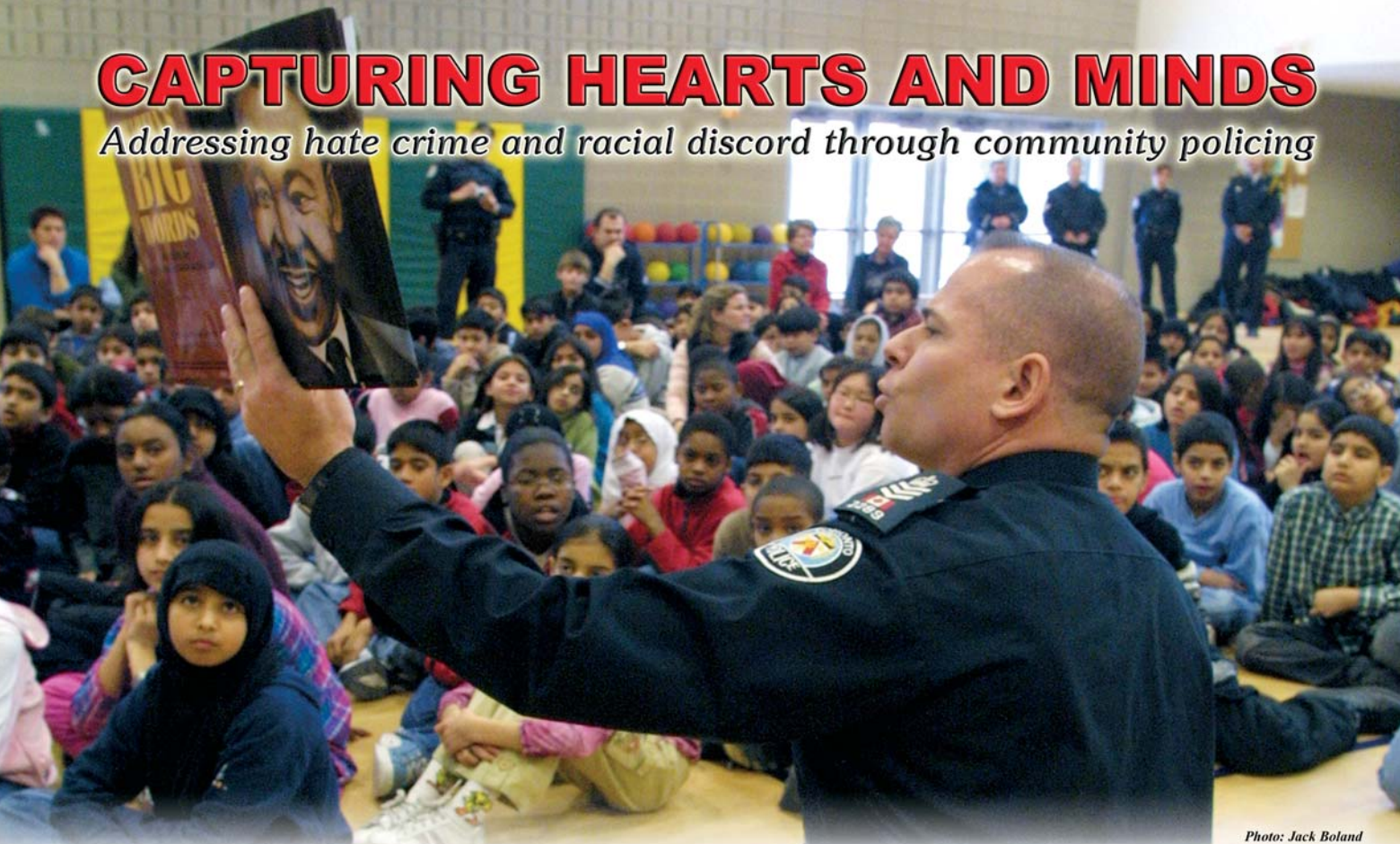


Photo: Jack Boland

by Heinz Kuck

Designed for 12,500 residents but home to 33,000, Toronto's Thorncliffe Park area is recognized as one of the most unique urban centres in Canada. Residents speak 77 different languages and dialects and practice Christianity, Judaism, Sikhism, Buddhism and Islam – all within a five square kilometre residential area.

Thorncliffe has Canada's largest concentration of Muslims and the most heavily populated public school in North America, with a JK to grade five student population of more than 1,600.

This magnificent diversity is not without its share of urban crime and racial and religious discord. Various people, especially youth, engage in behaviour ranging from shouting racial slurs and writing hate graffiti to committing assault. There's also inter-cultural discord, where people from the same country but different tribal regions or villages are involved in ethnocentric, tradition-based conflicts.

The Toronto Police Service designed and developed a 'quadrate' of events over the past five years to capture the hearts and minds of Thorncliffe Park residents by instilling a sense of cross-racial pride and community goodwill. We've also encouraged them to work cooperatively, irrespective of race, creed or colour, in an effort to reduce harmful ethnocentrism, religious discord, hate crime and criminal victimization.

The methodology used is bound to the process of community inclusiveness. We immersed ourselves in various cultural and reli-

gious practices, speaking with community elders, religious leaders and youth about complications, situations and possible solutions.

The quadrate takes place over four months and capitalizes on established, credible, anti-racism events. It's been embraced by the TPS, and the community, as an alchemy for achieving a proactive race and rights practice within a densely populated urban landscape.

A best practices model was undertaken using an innovative, seven-part, continuous improvement model. In the first step, officers and community members define race issues and opportunities within the racial/ethno-cultural/religious experience.

Results are established in the second step, with participants asking themselves what they want to see in their community at the end of the day, week, month and year – positive changes that they can invoke and maintain.

Step three involves evaluating and identifying alternative actions, including reviewing what was done in the past, whether it worked and other things that can be done.

New ideas are selected in the next step – we referred to them as 'breakthrough actions.' This involved constructing the quadrate and targeting youth specifically – focusing on the hearts and minds of a new generation of community leaders, then faith communities and families.

Step Five involves developing our schedule and ensuring that all our community, agency, political and local media partners were brought into the fold in developing each initiative, providing insight and attending events.

We implemented the schedule in the next

step, securing equipment, sponsors and venues for events and, in the final step, concluded the process with a review of activity and progress. The impact was immediate. Many volunteers stepped forward and shouldered the responsibility of rousing and rallying their various cultural groups to the cause.

These actions embrace a number of existing international initiatives – a well informed educational piece on the life and work of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and his path of non-violence in January, for example. The presentation was tailored for and delivered to an audience of more than 400 impressionable grade four and five students and included biographical information, selected readings, speeches and displays of pictures, posters and banners.

The outcome not only involved students participating in an interactive presentation, but also assigned them to go back to their classes and, throughout the rest of the month, do class projects on the King legacy.

In February, community-based fund raising initiatives were launched to pay for literature on the historical black experience, coinciding with Black History Month. We select and buy hundreds of books based on the black historical experience, including works on the arts, music, and poetry, written by such greats as Maya Angelou, Nelson Mandela and W.E.B. Du Bois.

The literature is distributed throughout the community. More than \$3,500.00 has been raised over the past few years exclusively to buy books for this program.

March sees us rouse the people to rally and come together as one during the United Na-

tions International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. There's a candlelight march and vigil through the heart of Thorncliffe Park, promoted using more than 1,500 multi-language (Urdu, Gujarati, and English) flyers. Hundreds of families pack the gymnasium to experience multi-cultural entertainers, and hear speeches on racial harmony from guests such as Ontario Lieutenant Governor James Bartleman, Toronto Mayor David Miller and Lincoln Alexander.

The event culminates with a vigil of silence; the gymnasium is darkened and 500 glow sticks are activated – the room erupts with the bright light of hope. We then assemble outside and together march behind banners of peace in an ultimate display of pride, consciousness and racial tolerance.

The quadrate is completed by researching and presenting a piece on the life and work of Mahatma Gandhi, again delivered to students ages 8-10, in an effort to shape and influence choices focused on peace, goodwill and paths towards non-violence. The event gives real life examples of not only what can be done, but what has been done, and provides a framework for individual and community replication.

Four months, four events, all woven into a tapestry of goodwill.

This initiative was evaluated within a three-part equation. The first involved its link with the continuous improvement model.

1. Defining the issues/opportunities
2. Establishing the results
3. Review alternative actions

Year	Calls for Service	Criminal Code Offences	Property Crime	Violent Crime
2001	2845	976	412	174
2002	2707	783	58	87
2003	2725	763	348	102
Reductions:	-4 %	-22 %	-16 %	-41 %
Total reduction (2001-2003): 11 per cent				

4. Select breakthrough actions
5. Develop the schedule
6. Implement the schedule
7. Review

Using this process, coordinators and their community partners can design, develop and reshape program processes following a comprehensive plan.

Once problems are identified, coordinators can keep actions that work, discontinue those that don't and start new ones suggested by both police and community input after discussing their cost, ease and effectiveness.

The second evaluation feature involves analysis of:

- The number of students attending the King commemorative day event
- Number of books purchased and distributed during Black History Month
- Number of attendees for the candlelight march and vigil
- Number of students attending the Gandhi presentation
- Media imprints (coverage) for all events
- Solidifying the partnership with community elders, leaders and youth
- Community satisfaction

The King commemorative day has been

presented to more than 1,200 students over the past four years. More than \$3,500 was raised during the same period to buy more than 400 books in celebration of Black History Month. The longest running component of the quadrate, the Candlelight march and vigil, now in its fifth successful year, will record an unprecedented exposure to more than 2,000 participants. Four hundred students took part in the Gandhi presentation, which was done for the first time last year.

Of special note, all events were fully covered by Toronto media, which gave the program an outstanding profile and city-wide exposure.

The third and final evaluation feature involved a year-to-year comparison of reductions in calls for service, Criminal Code offences, property and violent crime. *See chart above.*

Conclusion

The Toronto Police Service recognizes the value of community policing and celebrates this 'new way of doing business' philosophy. The quadrate is the first service initiative its ever undertaken that deals specifically with race, creed and colour within Thorncliffe Park.

We learned about Thorncliffe's extraordinary diversity, community inclusiveness and

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the value of forging partnerships with community elders, religious leaders and local youth. We also learned about the negative side of ethnocentrism, offender motives and hate crime. This experience became invaluable, as our front-line officers and community partners were taught new ways of analyzing and solving problems, identifying crime trends and evaluating prevention methods.

We learned the value of research and development, employing continuous improvement models, media marketing techniques and the potency of multi-level government inclusion – but most importantly, we learned that the solution to a community disorder problem is best solved by community development, police education, community/police partnerships and police re-engineering and enforcement. The job of maintaining order and preventing crime must be shouldered equally by the community and police.

Other agencies and communities can learn and adopt a great deal from the quadrate experience.

Ethno-Cultural misinterpretation and complaints of hate and bias crime was viewed as a legitimate disorder priority, instead of being ignored or minimized. A collective community voice was heard and reacted to, and a partnership was forged.

Within the realm of police education, specific problem-solving techniques, such as the continuous improvement model, were designed, developed and delivered within the context of strategic planning. A guiding coalition of police coordinators, community stakeholders, media contacts, local agencies and local politicians ensured continuous learning for both us and the community at large.

An essential educational component was also seen in the context of long-term, community-based problem solving. Both police and stakeholders focused their energies on mentoring young people to successfully deal with conflict resolution non-violently, in the spirit of good will, and to maintain that focus as they develop into community leaders. Another focus was to embrace the various faith

communities and draw upon their inherent strength and wisdom.

Ultimately, the success of quadrate was not measured by the numbers of arrests and charges but by the absence of crime, reduction in victimization and the winning of hearts and minds. Enforcement was not viewed as the first line of defence, as it is with so many other crime management initiatives, but secondary to negotiation, faith community mediation, consensus building, education, outreach and partnerships.

Community-based collaboration not only optimizes the delivery of police services to a disorder-affected community, but also, in our experience, creates a means of crime reduction, community protection and ultimately, an opportunity to win hearts and minds.

Toronto Police Service S/Sgt Heinz Kuck coordinated the quadrate program. He will present a number of policing theories, including stencil graffiti, April 26 and 27 at the *Blue Line Trade Show*. Visit www.blueline.ca/tradeshow to register or for more information. Kuck can be contacted at 416 808-5354.

NEWS CLIPS



EDMONTON — Edmonton's police chief Fred Rayner was terminated last month in lieu of events surrounding an alleged drinking-and-driving sting operation that targeted the head of the city's police commission and a newspaper columnist last fall. The dismissal came one day after Rayner told the Edmonton Police Commission he was taking an indefinite period of sick leave.

The following day after the firing the Police Commission sent out notice that it had hired a new chief of police but would not name the person until it was ratified by Edmonton City Council. The new person was later found to be former Deputy Chief David Cassels who had made an unsuccessful bid for the top job last year.

Two days after selecting Cassels as Chief Edmonton city council decided to not ratify

the appointment for the time being. Mayor Stephen Mandel summed up the feelings of council by stating that they felt uncomfortable with the haste at which the new Chief was hired by the police commission.

"I think we should slow things down, take a step back and make sure we do things properly," Mandel stated in Council. "There is no need to rush into this."

Accusations suggest newspaper columnist Kerry Diotte and police commission chairman Martin Ignasiak were targeted by police during a stakeout of a downtown bar last November. Rayner said Diotte was under surveillance because officers believed they had received a legitimate tip he might drink and drive.

According to a tape of police radio transmissions obtained by the media, Edmonton police discussed ways to avoid disclosing some information that could have potentially damaged their case in the event they caught Diotte drinking and driving. In radio transcripts, officers are heard trying to tailor the stakeout to avoid having to later admit they had officers acting as spotters in the bar.

The tape also reveals that after Ignasiak left the bar in a taxi, police officers in unmarked cars attempted to follow him in the faint hope that he might drive also.

Rayner, when he discussed the operation report publicly, said their target was Diotte and it was a coincidence that Ignasiak was attending the Canadian Association of Journalists event at the downtown bar.

"The commission is extremely concerned about what had happened, perhaps more concerned as to whether or not there is anything systemic to allow this incident to have taken place," said John Acheson of the police commission. "We desperately need answers quickly because there is a dark cloud over the entire force right now, unfortunately."

Subject to ratification by city council,

Darryl Da Costa has been given the role of acting chief. City police spokesman Annette Bidniak said Da Costa is "naturally" concerned about the perception of the police and it "hasn't been discussed yet" if Da Costa will play a role in addressing the bar room sting case as it continues to unfold.

"Much information is out there, but it's only part of the information and we're not in a position to release the rest. It has to come out through the process," Bidniak said.



MONTREAL — A troubled Mohawk community which incurred a standoff earlier this year over policing will assign aboriginal officers from the Quebec provincial police to patrol

the territory.

The 16-member provincial police unit at Kanesatake will consist of eight to 10 aboriginal officers, Public Security Minister Jacques Chagnon announced. This initiative will ensure "there are native members of the Surete du Quebec who are present at all times on the territory," said Chagnon.

Steven Bonspille who plans to run for grand chief in the Kanesatake elections and Grand Chief James Gabriel are Kanesatake political rivals who both agree this is a positive step.

Drawn-out political infighting has continued to plague the Mohawk community. Gabriel's house was burned to the ground last January as a result of the policing dispute.

Gabriel said the makeup of the Kanesatake Mohawk police patrols still has to be negotiated. The Kanesatake Mohawk police, which Gabriel supports, has been prevented from patrolling in the community.