

## **Preface**

The issue of race relations is one which Canada has been struggling with since its evolution into a nation of diverse peoples. The fundamental fact of Canada being a country that was built upon Aboriginal land and with the hard labour of immigrants was long denied, leading to the creation of systems and structures that effectively excluded many peoples and cultures that were not perceived by the dominant culture as being “Canadian”. This has left a legacy that the country continues to struggle with today in terms of Aboriginal issues, settlement issues, and definitions of what it means to be “Canadian”. As a society, we must continue to challenge systems and structures to be more accessible, culturally sensitive and accessible to everyone as legislated in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

One of the fundamental components of an inclusive, democratic and socially conscious society is the relationship between police and the community. Prior to public concerns about alleged racial profiling issues within the Toronto Police Services, Scadding Court had developed a new area of programming addressing race relations in the community in response to increases in racist activities locally. It was brought to the agency’s attention, through regular programming, incidents in the community and through formal and informal feedback from staff and volunteers that race-related intolerances were on the rise and were impacting on the ability of individuals and families to access programs and services in the area. Some concerns identified by members of the community involved their relationships with local police bodies.

Since the Fall of 2002, there has been much media attention dedicated to the relationship between law enforcers and members of different ethno-racial communities in Toronto as well. Residents from racialized communities especially, it has become known, perceive some members of the police service as racist, discriminatory and unapproachable. Many have articulated that they choose not to utilize the police complaints system available to them as they are intimidated by the system, treated poorly when attempting to access it, and discouraged from filing any type of formal complaint. There exists a divide between individuals who deny the existence of racial profiling and those who are targets of this practice. It has been our experience that many of our local community members who have encountered situations with the police force feel that the police complaints system is not accessible to them and for this reason do not consider utilizing it. Barriers that have been identified include, but are not limited to language accessibility, support through the process and adequate information.

The Ontario Human Rights Commission report, released in 2003, emphasizes the need to listen and respond to the concerns raised by individuals and community groups, rather than to continue debating whether a problem exists regarding the issue of racial profiling. The Commission also makes the point that our future depends on children and youth, and that our society as a whole benefits when children are able to reach their full potential and are not limited in their opportunities to contribute to the well-being of our

society.<sup>1</sup> The inquiry conducted by the Commission indicated that many children and youth feel they are victims of profiling, not only by law enforcers, but in the education system as well. Scadding Court's mandate is to promote the well-being and foster the development of opportunities for marginalized members of our community, with a focus on children and youth, and it is for this very reason that the agency is developing this project - to address the very concerns that have been brought forward by residents in our catchment area, many of whom are youth and members of marginalized and low-income communities.

In the context of our local community concerns, there is a need to respond to resident concerns and introduce constructive dialogue in order to focus on workable solutions that fit into our local plans to build community, ensure the safety of all of our members and that meet the new and changing needs of our community, while recognizing the responsibilities of public institutions and ensuring that they are accountable.

In order to address community concerns, Scadding Court and 34 partner organizations have developed an alternative model of service delivery: a **Community Education & Access to Police Complaints (CEAPC) Demonstration Project** where members of the community will be able to access supports when filing a police complaint. This project uses a culturally sensitive framework in which clients can access translation and interpretation services, a **Complaints Support Worker (CSW)**

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<sup>1</sup> Ontario Human Rights Commission, Paying the Price, the Human Cost of Racial Profiling, 2003, p.18.

for support at meetings and informal complaints resolution processes. This project also provides community education on the complaints process and other services provided by the police service. By having this service available in a familiar, community-based environment many goals are achieved simultaneously: building bridges between the police and community members, educating the police on the needs and issues within communities, providing access to an underutilized system and building common understanding around the roles and responsibilities of both community members and the police in creating and maintaining safe neighbourhoods in the City of Toronto. Scadding Court also believes that a project such as this will realize the Toronto Police Service's goal of ensuring that "the Toronto Police Service continues to promote and foster positive relationships with all citizens in all of the communities in the City of Toronto"<sup>2</sup>, as stated in the Toronto Police Service report entitled *Policing a World Within a City*, the Race Relations Initiatives of the Toronto Police Service. The 2001 Environmental Scan of the Toronto Police Service states that "The Police Service must work to ensure that members of all communities in Toronto feel they are treated professionally and fairly"<sup>3</sup>, and the agency believe that this project assists in actualizing this goal by strengthening the relationships and developing an understanding between community and the police.

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<sup>2</sup> Toronto Police Service, *Policing a World Within a City*, the Race Relations Initiatives of the Toronto Police Service, January 2003, Forward.

<sup>3</sup> Toronto Police Service, *Policing a World Within a City*, the Race Relations Initiatives of the Toronto Police Service, January 2003, pg. 8

This manual was developed as a tool to provide resources for community members, community workers, educators, schools and anyone else interested in learning more about their rights as they relate to police in Toronto. We invite people to copy the materials for educational and training purposes with appropriate acknowledgements and citation of sources.

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