

Press Release – The CEC’s Work

The OPS Community Equity Council started its work in late 2018/early 2019. There have been a number of situations that we have been following closely that have exposed the need for us to find ways to build strong relationships between Ottawa Police Services and the racialized, Indigenous and faith based communities in order to continue making and keeping our communities safe.

As CEC members, from the community and the police services, we are all committed to improving the Ottawa Police Service as a service that supports all citizens of Ottawa. There is a lot of serious and honest conversations that we are having in order to bring about change. As our Acting Vice Chair, Gérard Étienne has stated, “We have to find a different way to talk about these issues, so we don’t walk away from each other and instead we find really meaningful solutions.”

The Community Equity Council’s mandate is to support the OPS to improve its capacity to build and maintain meaningful relationships with communities. We have been reminded that when we work together we can co-create public safety in every community in Ottawa. That requires building relationships where relationships have been strained or do not exist.

Over the last three months we have been learning about the different initiatives that OPS has been embarking on, including the Outreach Report, Traffic Stop Report, Bias Neutral Initiative and the Gender Diversity Report. All of these are being integrated into the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion plan. We have also participated in the consultations for the OPS Diversity Audit. We have also had some frank conversations about the community issues that CEC members brought forward.

Some of the issues that we have been discussing to explore how to move forward includes:

- How does the OPS understand and address racism in its institutional structure? Particularly as it applies in the bias neutral approach that OPS has taken?
- How can the OPS improve its ability to assess and respond to mental distress and deescalate situations when they are working with communities that may have little or no trust in the police?
- What has been the impact on the community and on the OPS as a result of the death of Somali community member Abdirahman Abdi.
- What has been the impact on the Indigenous community and on the OPS when Greg Ritchie died?

Expect to hear more from us about the committees we have formed and the work we are engaged with to find solutions.

For more information or to have an interview with the Chairs of the Community Equity Council, contact Zoye Poulin at Diversity and Race Relations, Ottawa Police Services.