

Advancing Women in Policing at All Levels

Summary Report

Discussion Forum held
on September 30, 2014

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Advancing Women in Policing at All Levels: A Discussion Forum was a joint effort between the Government of Manitoba and the Federal-Provincial-Territorial (FPT) Forum of Senior Officials responsible for the Status of Women. Manitoba Status of Women thanks its FPT partners for their contributions in making this event possible.

The discussion forum was hosted as part of the 52nd annual International Association of Women Police (IAWP) Training Conference that took place in Winnipeg from September 28 to October 2, 2014. We extend our gratitude to the 2014 IAWP Training Conference organizers for allowing us to be part of their successful conference.

Finally, Manitoba Status of Women sincerely thanks the discussion forum panelists for sharing their expertise, experiences and insights throughout the session.

INTRODUCTION

Advancing Women in Policing at All Levels: A Discussion Forum was held on September 30, 2014 in Winnipeg. Approximately 60 participants attended the in-person discussion and the event was webcast for wider audience participation. The discussion forum featured a dynamic panel of presenters working to support and advance diversity and inclusion in policing. The panelists shared experiences from their own careers and discussed promising practices and strategies for advancing women in policing occupations at all levels.

Panelists:

Isobel Granger

**Staff Sergeant, Domestic Violence Unit,
Ottawa Police Service**

Staff Sergeant Isobel Granger's hard work, excellence, professionalism and service have made a profound difference in the lives of women and children in Canada and abroad. She has had many impressive career milestones, including being the first black officer to join the ranks of the British South Africa Police in Zimbabwe, the first black female officer with the Ottawa Police Service (OPS) and first black female platoon leader. Through her role with the Ottawa Police Youth Section (Diversity and Race Relations) and the OPS Partner Assault Unit (Domestic Violence), she has shown her lifelong commitment to social change and to empowering individuals to live better lives.

Granger has a bachelor of arts in policing studies and a master's in leadership. In 2012, she travelled to the Netherlands to receive training on investigating war crimes. She is now one of about 100 people from around the world (part of the Justice Rapid Response Roster, a United Nations women's initiative), who are qualified to investigate war crimes that involve sexual, gender-based violence at the international level.

Kathie King

**Staff Sergeant (retired), Member of the
Order of Merit (M.O.M.)**

Kathie King joined the RCMP in 1975 as a member of the second troop of female officers in RCMP history. Working her way through the ranks, King became the non-commissioned officer in charge of the 84-person Major Crimes Services Unit.

This unit is made up of the Serious Crime Unit (homicide), four major crime units scattered throughout Manitoba, an Internet Child Exploitation unit (Child Pornography/Exploitation), the Manitoba Integrated High-Risk Sex-Offender Unit, the Technological Crime Unit, the Violent Crime Linkage Analysis System, investigative interviewing team and polygraph. She has lectured, and worked as a resource person, provincially, across Canada and at the Canadian Police College, in the fields of child abuse investigation, crime scene management and major case management.

King has been a member of many Manitoba committees, such as the Community Notification Advisory Committee, Court Liaison, Disclosure, Search Warrants, Missing Persons and Found Human Remains. She is also a Member of the Order of Merit for the Police Forces.

Suki Manj

Inspector, Lloydminster RCMP

Suki Manj was born and raised in British Columbia (B.C.) as a first-generation south Asian. He joined the RCMP in 1995, at the age of 21, and has worked in small, medium and large detachments throughout the lower mainland of B.C. Manj is currently the Inspector of the Lloydminster Municipal RCMP, serving a population of 80,000 people. Throughout his career, he has enjoyed managing multiple units with employees from all walks of life. Manj is married to an RCMP officer and is the proud father of a nine-year-old son and a seven-year-old daughter.

Note: At the time of the discussion forum, Manj was the Officer in Charge of the Lloydminster RCMP. He assumed the position of Inspector a short time later.

Ruth Montgomery

President, Pyxis Consulting Group Inc.

Ruth Montgomery is a policing and criminal justice consultant, who specializes in police reform and capacity building; organizational development and performance management; and integrating gender into security-sector policy and practice. She has worked nationally and internationally on initiatives ranging from conducting needs analyses to building organizational structures, policies and procedures in developing countries. She also specializes in doing international research; introducing and improving multi-organizational programs, policies and practices; and designing and helping create national and international education programming. Montgomery is a former police superintendent.

Edith Turner

**Patrol Sergeant, Aboriginal Liaison Officer,
Winnipeg Police Service**

Edith Turner has served the community for approximately 20 years as a member of the Winnipeg Police Service (WPS). During this time, she has successfully taken on some of the most demanding assignments the job can offer. She has worked as a constable and investigator in the Divisional Crime and Community Support units and has served in the Organized Crime, Drug and Gang units of the Criminal Investigations Bureau – where she worked as an undercover operations specialist. Turner also developed an undercover technique that is currently being taught to police officers across Canada. She is now the supervisor of WPS' Aboriginal and Diversity Unit.

Turner grew up in the Mispawistik Cree Nation and, as a child of a residential school survivor, is keenly aware of the value of positive role models for Aboriginal youth. Her outstanding commitment to numerous initiatives has worked to strengthen the relationship between the Aboriginal community and the police.

The discussion

The panelists explored what makes them passionate about advancing diversity and inclusion in policing, shared some unique experiences that helped shape their own career development, and discussed what they think is key to helping women advance in their policing careers. Panelists also highlighted some of the successful gender and diversity strategies they have seen, and provided insight on what else needs to happen to keep women's advancement in policing moving forward. The panel discussion was guided by Barbara Bowes, President of Legacy Bowes Group.

Manitoba Status of Women prepared *Women and Policing in Canada: A Status Brief and Discussion Paper* to highlight the benefits of diversity in policing organizations and to stimulate dialogue on this issue. The paper was released in conjunction with the discussion forum and is available at www.gov.mb.ca/msw/publications/women_in_policing.pdf.

SUMMARY OF THE PANEL DISCUSSION

A Passion for Change

The forum began with the panelists describing from their own experiences and what made them passionate about advancing gender diversity in policing. Montgomery spoke about the pressing and ongoing need for change. Montgomery recalls that she was one of only five female patrol constables in her organization, eventually working her way up to become superintendent. She was disheartened because, after she retired from the executive ranks, her position was not filled by a woman for another 11 years. Montgomery now works internationally on this issue. She sees many female officers living very difficult lives, which inspires her to continue working for change.

King recalls her start in policing was similar to Montgomery's. She adds that decades ago, the leadership did not know what to do with female officers. She recounts seeing a big change in the RCMP in the past 40 years (there are now women in every rank and the force has seen witnessed its first female Commissioner in Beverly Ann Busson). King is committed to the benefits of diversity, owing largely to her experiences leading major crime units. She witnessed that women offered a different perspective to the investigations, and sometimes had a calming effect on the unit.

Granger's commitment to social change stemmed from being a product of segregation in her homeland of Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). Coming from mixed-race parents, and having the darkest skin in her family, she was particularly disadvantaged. Granger changed all that when, in 1978, she became the first, non-white officer to join the white ranks in Rhodesia. At that time, black officers were significantly limited in their ability to advance through the ranks – sergeant major was the highest position they could hope to achieve. And the discrimination went farther than that. A white person entering the police force as a constable would immediately out-rank a black Sergeant Major. When it came to salaries, the highest paid officers were white men, followed by black men, then white women, with black women remaining at the lowest pay grade. When women were finally permitted to do operational work – rather than only writing parking tickets – Granger recognized how important it was for her to succeed, and she rose to the challenge.

Turner explained that when she joined the Winnipeg Police Service 20 years ago, it was a novelty to be a female Aboriginal officer. She recalls it being a struggle just to convince complainants to let her in the door. This was because they didn't believe Aboriginal women could be police officers. Turner found that some of her superiors were helpful in those early days but others would not even speak to her. As a result, she made it her mission to win them over.

Manj was passionate about the benefits of diversity in policing from the outset of his career. His experiences supported the fact that women officers have much to offer in the way they present their ideas – often in ways men do not think of. As a result, he gives the same level of trust to everyone he works with right from the outset – something he finds can be lacking in organizations. Manj assesses each person's strengths regardless of their gender or other characteristics. His key belief is that leaders need to be leaders. Oftentimes, people are considered to be leaders by virtue of their rank, but Manj finds that problems arise when the person does not take the role seriously.

“We need leaders to be leaders.”

Opportunities

Panelists discussed the importance of looking for opportunities for advancement and taking advantage of opportunities that are presented.

Manj believes there are opportunities for advancement everywhere, but people often find excuses not to take those opportunities. He tries to inspire others to be proud of who they are, and to have confidence in what they bring to the table. People (often the female officers themselves) may think that, because there's a push to promote more women into the force's higher ranks, that the promotions are not earned. Manj disagrees 100 per cent with that notion, and says the women he has seen progress through the ranks possess all of the qualifications.

Montgomery spoke of research in Canadian policing organizations demonstrating that female officers are not applying for higher positions, compared, in representative numbers, to their male counterparts. Some organizations have examined why this is happening and are trying to determine what can be done to give women the confidence and reassurance to take advantage of the opportunities before them.

King added that she began working when she was 19, an age where she had no hesitation in taking on new challenges. Every opportunity she accepted gave her more confidence to succeed at other opportunities. It was important to get that initial boost from people who believed in her potential, and that set the stage for the rest of her career.

Granger spoke of the need for leadership to take a broader organizational view when considering opportunities to prepare female members for advancement. She recounted one example where a female officer risked being turned down for a training opportunity because she was transferring out of her current unit. However, in looking at her potential for development in the bigger picture of the organization, the training was deemed to be well-justified and she received the support to attend. In another example, a female officer with poor performance did a complete turnaround after her superiors let her know that she was a valued part of the team.

“When people are valued, they’ll do anything.”

Granger pointed out that it’s important for leaders to delve into these things, because police forces can create a culture of elitism and favouritism, and they may marginalize employees, often without intending to do so. She stressed the importance of doing gender-based analysis to root out the systemic barriers that are not visible to the naked eye. She believes we need to be asking what it is that hinders women from taking on particular jobs. Some women think they are just not good enough, but when we peel back the layers, we see that women are coming into structures designed for men.

Montgomery further stressed the need for an evidence base to move forward. Do we know which positions women are in versus men? How long have they been there? Are women getting the same opportunities to connect with the decision-makers, and to take jobs allowing them to expand their knowledge, skills and abilities – jobs that demonstrate they can function at a higher level?

“We need to know that the policies and practices are as fair for women as they are for men.”

Granger added individuals can choose to use difficult moments as educational opportunities. She found that the saying, “don’t hate, educate” served her well. As women, we need to be inclusive and engage men, realizing that we need to work with men to move the agenda forward. Gender inequality is not a women’s problem; rather, it is an issue for all of us. We need to recognize and appreciate that we have a lot of good men to work with.

Turner agreed, adding that women must keep pushing forward and persevering to let people see they are up for the job.

Overcoming Challenges

The panelists were asked to describe barriers or challenges they personally overcame in their own careers. A variety of common experiences were shared from points early in the panelists’ careers, including being subjected to sexist, racist and abusive comments; being shunned by colleagues; not being offered the help that other new recruits received; and being resented by others for taking advantage of opportunities for advancement. In some cases, the abusive behaviour subsided as these officers persevered and demonstrated they were capable and deserving of the opportunities that came their way.

King noted that, at the time she began her career, women were coming into a force that had been a males-only domain for about 100 years. Women entering police work was not only new to the members of the force, but to the community as well, requiring adjustments on both sides. King faced this reality by trying to see things from this perspective and just continuing to push forward.

Some panelists recounted experiences that persisted beyond their early careers. Inspector Manj spoke of occasions where false allegations of criminal wrongdoing were made against him in an attempt to destroy his career. He noted that some of these instances had occurred quite recently. King missed out on an anticipated posting in the North because the commanding officer in the new location called staffing personnel to have the transfer cancelled.

Panelists discussed the fact that some of these practices still continue today. They were quick to point out that strong leadership is the key to transforming the workplace culture. Many people who make inappropriate comments and circumvent staffing decisions simply need to be educated on the negative effects of what they are doing. Manj added that, in instances where he's taken someone aside to point out his/her inappropriate behaviour, he discovered it was often the first time anyone had taken the initiative to talk to the staff member about it. More often than not, these people appreciated the guidance, which quickly translated into positive changes in their behaviour. Manj said that while it can be uncomfortable to stand up for what is right, this is part of taking on a leadership role. It is disappointing that many do not take that responsibility seriously, he added.

“You lead most effectively by your ability and willingness to influence people, not by your authority.”

Seeking Work-Life Balance

The panelists were asked to comment on how they saw gender affecting the nature of work-life balance, given that research suggests the bulk of family caregiving is still being done by women. Panelists said things were gradually moving in the right direction due to legislative developments over the years, allowing more time for maternity leave; an increase in the number of male officers taking paternity leave; and an increase in job-sharing opportunities in many police agencies.

Panelists agreed, however, that problems persist. Granger offered one example of a female officer under her supervision who was reluctant to tell Granger that she was pregnant. When asked why she was apprehensive in sharing this information, the officer explained there were two reasons. First, she felt guilty about leaving the unit short-staffed. Second, she had received a very negative reaction upon divulging the news of her previous pregnancy to her former female supervisor, who had told her she should not even have become a police officer.

Panelists described conversations that were beginning to happen in some police agencies about staying in contact with women during their maternity leaves. The idea was to ensure they do not return to the force feeling completely out-of-touch with recent developments. The practice, too often, is to send female officers back to general patrol for a year upon returning from maternity leave. Many women see this as a punishment, as if they were expected to “pay their dues” for having a family.

Montgomery spoke of research about a continuum that ranges from a small group of women who are highly family-focused and not-at-all job focused to another small group of women who are highly career-focused and not very family-focused, with a much larger group in the middle who are both family-focused and work-focused. The women in the latter group are the ones often struggling to manage this balance.

When we look at men, we have the same groups, but the proportions are completely different. The size of the group that's highly career-focused is huge – in the 40 to 50 per cent range – and the group of men who are highly family-focused is very small.

Fortunately, the group that is balanced between the two (family-focused and work-focused) is beginning to increase. Montgomery said this demonstrates that police organizations need to consider policies that allow employees to more easily adapt to the lifestyles they are choosing. This shift is necessary to have happy, productive employees, who are not worried about what's going on at home, and who know that people at work care about them and their families. From an executive perspective, this poses real challenges because policing organizations must operate on a 24/7 basis, and care needs to be taken to balance the workload. Montgomery added she is very pleased to see more and more police executives across the country who are saying they need to make these changes, and are considering part-time, half-time and three-quarter time options to ensure their people remain happy, healthy and productive.

Strategies for Change

Panelists were asked to share some of the successful gender and diversity strategies they have encountered. Granger described what she found in Rwanda when she did some work there in 2010. Their Parliament made a commitment, at the 2010 Beijing world conference, to never have another genocide like the one that occurred in 2004. The Parliament is now 53 per cent female, and the national police force has 50 per cent female representation across the ranks. Within the positive political climate, there has been a top-down commitment from the Commissioner to ensure equal representation. Granger witnessed first-hand the mutual respect and cooperation between the men and women officers she worked with.

Montgomery commented on a number of positive examples from private industry that can be adapted to policing organizations. Some internationally successful companies are holding key leaders accountable for diversity management in their organizations. There are CEOs who've made public commitments to wanting women, and other diverse groups, to hold top positions in their companies, and they are continually striving to make this a reality. Coke and Shell are good examples, and they state the make-up of their workforce in their annual reports.

Montgomery added that we need to be careful about thinking only in terms of numbers. To simply state that we want "x" number of women in our agencies, is not, in and of itself, the answer. Unless we change the way we work with women in our organizations; unless we demonstrate they are valued and we care about them; and unless we ensure that these women have the opportunities to produce to the best of their abilities; we will only have a limited effect.

Turner described some initiatives within her organization. For instance, they have an internal women's network system as well as a diverse resource team they use both internally and in the community. These efforts are showing positive results.

Manj commented that success in attracting and advancing good people is rooted in recognizing them for the positive things they bring to the team, and demonstrating to them that they are valued. Too often, a lot of time and money is spent on recruiting and training people. Then, once the officers are on the force, they are not treated well. When police are out there doing their jobs, they work in an environment where the world is often against them, regardless of what background they come from. Instead of having a culture of competition among co-workers, it would be far more effective, and easier to deal with this reality, if there was an atmosphere of support and mutual respect among fellow officers.

Montgomery added it is absolutely critical that everyone in the organization take some responsibility to manage the diversity within their various groups. This will ensure that everyone feels included, needed and wanted, and that they can contribute something of value to the organization. For those in supervisory, management and executive positions, it is important to identify opportunities for people to contribute. Whether it's through an organizational development goal, or through work assessments, people need to know what is expected of them. As well, if they are interested in a certain promotion or job, it's important to help them understand what the position requires, and ensure they are supported in developing the skills, knowledge and abilities to do the job.

Advancement at All Levels

Panelists were asked to comment on what needs to happen to continue the advancement of women in all levels of policing organizations. Granger stressed the need for supervisors to be clear in their instructions to employees they're trying to develop and to make sure they understand what they are trying to achieve. She recounted a situation where a female officer, who had recently moved up in the ranks, believed her female supervisor preferred her male counterparts over her, because this supervisor routinely gave her the most difficult assignments. When the supervisor was asked about it, she said she was being tough on the female officer because she saw a great deal of potential in her and wanted her to succeed – however, she had never told her that.

Panelists agreed that, while progress is being made, the right people are not always in the room. Those who attend conferences and educational programs promoting diversity are most often the ones who already know its benefits, and embrace it. They reiterated that leadership needs to truly demonstrate that they buy into the concept through their actions.

“When you speak in clichés and the actions aren't there, the trust falls through the floor.”

Montgomery stressed the need for setting clear expectations of what is acceptable behaviour and what is not, and then holding people accountable for any unacceptable behaviours they are displaying. She summed up by adding that leaders must do their research. They need to examine their organizations carefully; if people are unhappy or not being productive, the leaders need to be asking themselves why.

Reflections

There was a lively discussion during the question-and-answer session at the conclusion of the forum. One audience member added to the earlier discussion on work-family balance. She said it is often not acceptable to share information about your family life within the workplace culture, but then assumptions are made about access to your time. She gave the example of female officers with children being given priority to take time off over the holidays, while the officers expected to take those shifts may have other family members they are caring for (ex: elderly parents) that equally deserve their time and attention. A discussion ensued with the panelists stating the importance of leaders getting to know their people and creating a culture of trust. This is a culture where employees can share information about their family life without fear of negative consequences or how one will be perceived on the job.

One audience member commented on the need to promote more women to run for political office at the municipal level, as these people have a great deal of influence on the budget that goes toward policing. Another added that it is equally important to examine the makeup of police boards and national policing organizations in terms of their diversity.

CONCLUSION

The five panelists shared a wealth of information throughout the discussion forum. They provided highlights from their own experiences, illustrating the importance of ensuring policing organizations work towards more diversity through recruitment, retention and promotion practices. They revealed that difficulties arise in the current police culture, which often rewards long working hours, aggressive and competitive behaviour, and attitudes strengthening the male-dominated status-quo, instead of changing to accommodate more women in senior command. However, the panelists also stressed they are seeing signs of positive change.

We believe that participants came away from the event encouraged by some of the promising practices already underway in forces across Canada and internationally. We are optimistic that they are continuing the conversation within their own networks to further advance the participation of women, and other under-represented groups, in policing organizations. Law enforcement personnel are best-positioned to understand the culture and dynamics of their organizations. We hope that through their unique perspectives, they will find ways to work within, and among, their various ranks and sectors to create more inclusive police agencies across the country.