

‘Policing Rural Communities in North America’: An *International Society for the Study of Rural Crime Roundtable*

Abstract

Rural crime and criminal justice practices and responses face different challenges from those experienced in urban contexts.

A practitioner-focused roundtable, convened by The International Society for the Study of Rural Crime (www.issrc.net), investigated challenges and innovations in international contexts on issues surrounding rural policing with a specific focus on rural policing in Canada and the United States. The roundtable was held online on 15 September 2021 and was moderated by Dr. Jessica Peterson, formerly of the University of Nebraska at Kearney (now an Assistant Professor at Southern Oregon University).

Panellists were asked to respond to three key questions:

1. What is the key element to successful community policing in your community?
2. What is one initiative in which you have successfully engaged the community in crime-reduction efforts?
3. What is the most significant challenge to successfully reducing crime in your community?

The following are transcripts of the four presentations from the panelists on this Roundtable.

Keywords: rural policing; law enforcement; International Society for the Study of Rural Crime; United States, Canada; challenges; innovations; community engagement



Farica Prince

Deputy Chief of Prince Albert Police Service, Canada

Deputy Chief Farica Prince joined Dakota Ojibway Police Service in 2001 and served her home community of Sioux Valley, in southwest Manitoba. In 2005, Farica Prince made the difficult decision to leave her home and joined the Blood Tribe Police Service (BTPS). The Blood Tribe, also known as Kainai, is the largest land-based Indigenous community in Canada. From 2008-2011, she served as an instructor/facilitator at Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) national training academy in Regina, Saskatchewan, and returned to BTPS to serve as the Inspector in charge of the Administrative Support Division until 2021. She also became a first-generation university graduate in 2019. In 2021, she joined the Prince Albert Police Service as Deputy Chief.

I started with Prince Albert Police Service in northern Saskatchewan on 1 October 2021. The reason that I think it's important to have the representation of Indigenous policing is because we're still here but there's a lack of awareness on the challenges that the First People of Canada face on a daily basis. I'm happy to share in any space I can, the public safety issues after having spent over 20 years in Indigenous policing and my entire life as an Indigenous person.

First of all, I will talk about the key elements to the success of community policing for the Blood Tribe Police Service. The key element to success for our community engagement was building trust. So we can go right back to the historical relationship between Indigenous people of Canada and the Crown, or even consider contact which is 500 years ago. The traditional style of security and policing for Indigenous Peoples was not the colonial institution that we know now as policing. You can imagine the difficulty, being an Indigenous person growing up in your home community, engaging with the local police service, becoming a police officer in your home community and the challenges of wearing that uniform that represents the Crown, which represents colonialism, being a walking reminder for your community of difficult circumstances that were put upon us or our ancestors.

So building trust with the community of Kainai – or the community of Blood Tribe – has been integral to the success of Blood Tribe Police Service. If you can think back to the United States President Abraham Lincoln or even a former Prime Minister of Canada, John A. MacDonald: both of these people were very significant leaders in North America who had very specific agendas to harm the Indigenous People. And, you know, police officers policing as an institute even to this day still represent those oppressive and harmful agendas. We look back on the history of police here in Canada and exactly the role they took when removing Indigenous children from their homes and forcing them into residential schools, removing children and splitting up families during the 60's Scoop.

Even more recently, we can look at the missing and murdered Indigenous women crisis, we can look at the over-representation of Indigenous people in incarceration and how Indigenous women are the fastest growing population of incarcerated people here in Canada. And Indigenous women only represent just over two percent of the population but our representation in jails and prisons is remarkable. The justice system, including policing practices, has been a big part of that. Are Indigenous women inherently bad people who deserve to be imprisoned? No, the system is not designed for us to be societal failures, the system is oppressive and harmful.

So, it was quite interesting and unfortunate and eye-opening, when so many dedicated themselves to raising awareness of the inequities when the events began unfolding after George Floyd was murdered. The different treatment of people from equity-seeking groups has been happening since before any of us were born. But I believe that George Floyd's murder caused people to examine or helped a lot of people understand, to recognize, see and become aware of the actual realities of the interactions between police and people from equity-seeking groups.

I think that with public safety in general, leaders are taking steps to make changes but it's slow. We're seeing changes with increasing accountability, transparency and representation of diverse people within police services, and focusing on oversight. Those are ways we make corrections or reparations moving forward. One of the biggest things for Blood Tribe Police Service that we did, was to engage the community and start building that trust. In 2018 we held significant engagement sessions with different community groups as part of a larger consultation process. This was professionally facilitated – we wanted to make sure everybody had a voice and no one subculture was left out. The questions were asked: What's working? What's not working? What do you need from your police service? What do you want to see from us? There was a lot of meaningful dialogue and, again, significant time and effort put into these community consultations.

It was eye-opening to see where our police services was failing, and it became clear that we had to focus on building trust because it wasn't there for many years. Our police service had been operating for over 30 years and the lack of trust was very astonishing, especially because many community members were and had been part of the organization. So the commitment was made to build that trust, and all of that dialogue that happened resulted in an organisational shift and a change in priorities – so much so that the vision, the mission and the values of the police service completely changed, and the direction changed. It was apparent that an organisational turnaround was not only needed but demanded.

This allowed, again through that community consultation, for members of the community to let the police know directly exactly what they wanted, how they wanted to be policed, and where we were falling down and where we were doing good. This did a few things for the community and for the police service. The members of the community were able to take ownership of the organisation. These community consultations in this new strategic planning created a lot of pride within the community for the police service. The

result of that was increasing trust, confidence and support. With that trust, competence and support, comes increasing reporting of crimes, an increase in informal resolutions like diversion programs, which are important right now, especially when we're seeing the continuous over-criminalisation of Indigenous people.

It was difficult to dedicate so much time, effort and resources to the meaningful dialogue. It was tough to find the funding from the very limited and restrictive budget but the results were transformative for the organisation and the community. We experienced an increased and overwhelming amount of support for our organisational initiatives, which were driven by community feedback and consultation. That was a big step that the Blood Tribe Police Service took in order to build that trust that was definitely missing from history. The government has been really good at telling Indigenous people what's best for them, without asking for their input. We can look at the current state of our society to see how well that's turned out.

One of the challenges that Blood Tribe Police Service and many police services deal with is de-sensitization and resulting low levels of compassion or empathy. It can be difficult for us to imagine what it's like to live an entire life being marginalised, being forgotten about, being invisible especially when we are in "enforcement mode." Balancing service and enforcement is key.

We have access to limited resources, we're funded for enforcement and not service; our funding is significantly less than our counterparts in municipal organisations or communities. This means that support units like school resource officers, special investigative, proactive and enhanced positions are not included in the funding allotment for Indigenous policing; it means we're funded for basic call response and law enforcement. When Indigenous police services are funded only for enforcement, what message is that sending? Indigenous communities deserve proactive community policing too, Indigenous communities deserve more than basic law enforcement. The bottom line is this: we're 500 years into contact, and we're still oppressed, marginalised and in a very vulnerable position as we work on healing the traumas of the last 500 years.

All of that unhealed trauma in our communities results in poverty, addictions and kinship breakdown. In 2015, our local leadership declared a state of emergency because of an opioid crisis that we're still battling right now. When we look at community services and organisations, we're all working towards healing, health and wellness but it's tough to do that when the resources are not there.

Things are improving – one initiative at a time, one family and generation at a time, one person at a time but I feel like we have a long way to go. It's going to take a very large group of supporters and believers in community health and wellness to advocate for the need to address unhealed trauma and the symptoms that come along with that. There have been many police leaders before saying: "We can't arrest our way out of poverty, we can't arrest our way out of addictions, out of trauma". Any way that the Blood Tribe Police Service has

been able to support the other services, we've definitely been doing that for the last number of years, and we've seen quite an improvement in collaboration and circumstances for our community.

Rob Davis

Chief of Police at Brantford Police Department (Canada)

Chief Rob Davis began his career in 1990, and has since served small rural towns and Indigenous communities throughout Canada. Prior to serving as Chief of Police, he championed the drive that led to Six Nations becoming the first Indigenous Police Service in Canada to join the Criminal Intelligence Service of Ontario and also served as an Inspector overseeing operations throughout reserves northwest of Ontario. Chief Davis is proud to be a Mohawk from the Six Nations of the Grand River Territory and a recipient of the prestigious Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police & International Police Association - Gimborn Scholarship for his dedication & efforts to combat gangs and organized crime.

I'm in my 31st year of policing – I started very young; I was a teenager. I started with a municipal service that did a series of small towns in a very rural sprawling area – those towns ranged from 2,000 people to the largest being around 12,000 people. I was one of the very few Indigenous people in policing in that police service in Ontario at that time. At that same time, there was a movement to create self-administered Indigenous police services. In 1990, we had a significant event, the Oka Crisis and out of that you saw a Federal commitment to see self-administered Indigenous police services be created, of which my home community, Six Nations of The Grand River, was one of the pioneers in becoming self-administered.

One of the challenges was, though, finding Indigenous applicants to come home to police. There weren't many of us. So my first real policing job was with the Six Nations Police Service serving my home community. I was in this fascinating position where I was one of a handful bringing experience from the outside to a brand new police service. It was literally starting from scratch, we were starting from scratch. I was bringing lessons that were learned in those small communities in rural settings to our reserve, which is the largest reserve in Canada based on population, but is rather rural in how it is configured and laid out.

But what was also interesting and especially now, where we sit in the context of North America and George Floyd, and a lot of the Black Lives Matter protests and rallies, as well as the defund the police movement; Six Nations police was created because the community wanted something different. They had been policed by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police from the 1800s up until 1972. After that, the Ontario Provincial Police took over policing duties. And in both scenarios, after being policed by both agencies, the community was very clear that they wanted something different. And so, as a result of that, the Six Nations Police were created. Like I said, we were created from scratch and as I look back now, we were created because of a community call for something different. And where we sit today, communities are calling for something different.

I really believe that a lot of the lessons we've learned in Indigenous policing – whether it be Six Nations Police or Blood Tribe, our brothers and sisters in the Manitoba First

Nations Police Service (formerly Dakota Ojibway Police Service), as well as Akwesasne Mohawk Police (AMP), Nishnawbe Aski Police Service (NAPS) and Treaty Three Police – we were all created because our communities wanted something different. I'm the first Indigenous officer in Canada to ever lead a non-Indigenous police service. And so what I have done is I've taken those lessons from Indigenous policing in the community wanting something different and have tried to apply them to the agencies I've led since I left Six Nations Police.

The first question asked of me for today was: What's the key element to successful community policing, policing in your community. And I think it's trust. But my initial service, Six Nations, was created because the community wanted something different. And it was sort of a running joke growing up on the reserve that the federal or provincial government would always be showing up and saying "We're the government, we're here to help". Yeah, we're here to help. And there was very little consultation. And so the lesson I learned from my time in Six Nations Police when it came to real consultation, the key is finding out what the community genuinely wants. We need their buy-in, we need their trust, but it can't be the police driving this. We need to have genuine consultation with the community to see what the community wants, what are the community's expectations.

During my time in policing, I've seen this as an evolution where 31 years ago the solution was to throw more cops at everything. Put an extra police officer on every corner, beef up this beef up that, but that's not sustainable. And so during the last 20 years of my career, that's become a very constant conversation - the sustainability of policing. Especially in my experience of transitioning from Indigenous policing to municipal policing where we are tax based. You have the competing demands of public safety, but there is also such a thing as tax fatigue. And now you throw in dynamics such as the pandemic, where you're having an impact at federal and provincial and municipal levels – it is straining the taxpayer. And so there's such a thing (as tax fatigue).

So what I've done in the communities I police is to take that lesson of genuinely engaging the community to find out what do they want, but then also to see what's their acceptance – what are they willing to try? Let's do something new and different because during the last 200 years of policing, we haven't changed. Policing is so slow to change in Canada. And so the critical part is getting that trust through real consultation. Finding what the community wants, their expectations, but also testing their tolerance for something different.

This segues into the second question of this roundtable – outline one of the ways or initiatives in which you have successfully engaged the community in crime reduction efforts. And so this isn't so much the practical solutions on the street – this is more about building that foundational piece. I got to do it on a smaller scale when I was Chief in Dryden, Ontario – a very small community of 10,000 people in Northwestern Ontario where your nearest big city is four hours away east or west. And other than that you are in the middle of the North,

you're surrounded by lakes and trees and beautiful country, but you're in a very small town amongst a very rural setting.

I tried it on a smaller scale in Dryden, but where I really got to really test it was when I was in Lethbridge, Alberta. And it was through partnering with one of our local post-secondary institutions, Lethbridge College. First, I went to the police board, and I said: "This whole Police telling the community what the solution is – I don't buy into that, that's not how I work. So let's see what the community wants."

I'm aware of such a thing as tax fatigue, I sincerely believe we do not need a cop on every corner; there have to be alternate models out there, for efficient deployment models. And let's test what the citizens are willing to accept. But I also have noticed throughout my career that when the police drive these types of surveys and consultations, there's always a segment (of the community) that are critical of us, saying that "Well, you're marking your own scorecard. You can consult all you want, you know in advance what the end result is going to be". At least that's the perception.

So we partnered with Lethbridge College, Dr. Faron Ellis, who was amazing. I sat down with him and I said, here's what I want to do and it's not the typical community safety survey. I could take one from Vancouver, from Saskatchewan, any city in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Alberta. They all generally say the same thing. I want to go beyond that. I want to know, what does the community want? We tested all the questions about safety and crime. But then we also built in, what's your willingness? What's your willingness for new deployment models? We talked about something in Alberta. It's called a Community Peace Officer. In Ontario we call it a Special Constable, where it's an officer that has training but they're not a full-fledged officer. They have very specific duties, they can be assigned to very specific geographic areas. They're financially more affordable.

What I liked about the Community Peace Officers or Special Constables is they became a testing ground for people that were on the fence about joining the police. Coming from Six Nations, I knew not a lot of people were lining up to be police officers in 1990. And so through the Special Constables, there was an opportunity for people to test the waters to see if it is a desirable career. So we did that. And we talked about volunteerism. One of the things you want to know is: "Okay, community, we've heard you. Now, what's your willingness to be part of the solution? Everyone has an opinion, everyone has lots to say, what's your willingness to be part of that solution?" It was beautiful.

Dr. Ellis had a research lab, and he would always use his second and third-year students to go and do the surveying. And we were blown away with the return rate; we were over 20 percent return rate, which we were stoked about because previous years it had been less than 10 percent. So we had this very significant return rate that actually they had to be cut off just because it would have kept going – it could stay manageable with a 20 percent return rate. With that, we then had a foundation as to what the community was willing to accept and what they wanted.

It was very interesting because the typical police lens was that if we apply all these police beliefs on to the citizenry, they will want a cop on every corner. And it wasn't that. A lot of it was "I just want to know that somebody is coming. I don't care who." It was fascinating –we (the police) get hung up on our rank structures, but the public didn't care. We get hung up on titles, whether it's a Constable or a Special Constable or an Auxiliary Constable or community volunteer. The community did not care about those titles. The police were hung up on it, but the community, all they wanted was: "I want to know that somebody is out there, that when I call someone will respond" and that the response is commensurate with what the crime is. "I don't need a 10-year veteran at the top of the salary band showing up to a stolen garden hose. But I want to report this stuff. And I want to know, somebody is taking this seriously".

So those are all eye-opening answers for us, very eye-opening. And then the willingness of people to be community volunteers. That was the best part, it was a resounding yes - "If there's an opportunity to volunteer, count me in." So we had, in my opinion, the perfect recipe. We knew what the community wanted. We knew what their threshold for trying new ideas and new deployment models was, and the biggie was their willingness to be involved. And so with that, we were able to roll out a stratified approach to public safety to deter crime, to address crime, and to address those perceptions of crime in communities.

And again, it started with volunteers. We had a hybrid of volunteers/summer students that were enrolled in post-secondary education. They volunteered throughout the school year, but they were guaranteed a summer job. We had the Community Policing Officers (CPOs) and in Ontario – Special Constables. And then from there, we also had the regular constables, which allowed us to deploy commensurate to the type of crime.

There was a fascinating byproduct: we created career pathways for people from diverse communities who typically did not trust the police. That quickly built a buzz in the community, in the diverse communities, about our willingness to work with diverse communities. And then that had a cascading effect. I compare it to pro sports. You start at one league, go up to the next league – in Canada it would be hockey. For me, I had my Western Hockey League, I had my American Hockey League and I had my National Hockey League, and it became a feeder League system, it also became a place for people to try to demonstrate their skills.

And the other part of that is I used it as recruiting just like pro sports, where I was very hands-on and had my team very hands-on in recruiting. We were going into the diverse communities that would typically not work with the police or liaise with the police or trust the police to show that, "hey, we're in this together".

The third question is what's the most significant challenge or barrier, and I could talk for three days on this. But if I encapsulate it into one phrase, that would be 'old attitudes.' And when I say old attitudes, a lot of those old attitudes are still within policing. That is,

“We’ve deployed the same way for 100 years, you can’t change, we can’t change.” The fact is we have to change. We’re not sustainable the way we’ve deployed for the last 100 years. The community is willing, it’s clear that they are willing; there’s a willingness from the community to have different models. But it’s those old attitudes.

But the other side of it is what I see in the political realm. This is my third police chief job; I’ve been a chief for a decade now with three agencies, just over a decade. In all of them, I was hired to be the change agent, to bring new, fresh ideas, and the minute you start rolling out the new fresh ideas, there’s always that political attitude like, “Whoa, whoa, slow down Chief! You know, I want to see a cop respond to this.” It’s frustrating because I was hired to bring new deployment models. And then, the minute there’s a hot-button issue that really is a social issue, whether it be homelessness, whether it be drug addiction, you name it, there’s this reversion back to “I want a cop there, and I want to see someone dragged out in cuffs.”

Well, I’m one of the chiefs that believe we cannot arrest our way out of these social situations. And so that’s where, if I had to encapsulate the biggest challenge into one phrase it is ‘old attitudes.’ The minute we have progress, old attitudes inevitably get in the way inside the police service, with the political leadership and with the public.

Jim Davis

Director of Law Enforcement Services at the University of Nebraska Kearney (United States)

Chief Jim Davis has 37 Years of Law Enforcement Experience ranging from Police Officer to Sheriff. His current position includes Chief of Police, Emergency Management Director, and Parking Director. Chief Davis is a guest instructor at the South Dakota Law Enforcement Training Center and an adjunct Criminal Justice instructor at the University of Nebraska Kearney. He has a Master's Degree in Criminal Justice and is scheduled to graduate with his doctorate in management in 2022. He also still enjoys working the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally.

I've been in law enforcement for 37 years, and I've had the opportunity to be on the streets, have been an investigator, been a sheriff and now I'm probably going to wrap up my career as a police chief here at the University of Nebraska Kearney Police Department.

First of all, what I would like to do is go even a little bit further back into time. With what we are dealing with now, we really need to look at what Sir Robert Peel was doing back in England, when he was talking about what the police department really does. There are two major components with policing in the community. First, that's developing community partnerships and engaging in problem-solving. I don't think that anybody would probably argue with that: the question is, how do we do that? Second, is to recognise always that the test of police efficiency isn't always in the number of tickets that I write, or the number of tickets my officers write or people that my officers take to jail, but it's basically the absence of crime. Are we working with our community? And are we making this crime go away? Are people calling us and are people relying on us that we will be around the corner when they call us to show up?

We also have to keep in mind that some of the old attitudes have to go. I have told my people time and time again that I never want to hear anybody say, "Well, that's always been the way that we've done it." We always should be looking at pressing forward and doing new things and listening to the public. Because the police are the public and the public are the police.

I have been asked to talk about reduction efforts. We do a lot of classes here on the university campus – and the university is a little bit different because I have new people coming in every year. And what we're doing is we're pulling these people in from different areas. I can have kids from Chicago here, I can have kids from Montreal here, I can have kids from San Jose here. And it's making sure that we as police officers are transparent to them, that we offer classes, that we have a Citizens Academy. We even talk about, "Alright, you're on a college campus, what's gonna happen if we have an active shooter? Where do we go? What do we do?" We teach those, and we also have education on house parties: see something, send something or say something.

All of those things and efforts that go into this, we have to remember that we were doing really good. When I first started in the 1980s, we were doing really good – we were doing community service and community policing really good here in the States. And all of a sudden 911 came. 912 was a good time for us, unfortunately. But everybody looked to us as we were people who could get things done for them during a crisis. But then we kind of let that slip into an area where we became more militaristic style leaders in the country, and that didn't sit well with people.

We have to listen to what the people want. And so now we're trying to make up ground. Both of the previous speakers talked about George Floyd. When something like that happens and you've already lost ground, it's not a good thing to try to get the game at ground back.

So here, just in our little pocket of community, we try to be so transparent and work with our students here on campus. This is my biggest challenge. It's a big challenge for me because when the students come in there, they're almost like our kids on campus. We hold these people near and dear to us. And when we have people from different backgrounds, and they already have experienced negative police contacts from home, and they arrive at different times during the year... and we have international students that come in who are used to thinking about the police as "Well to get out of jail, I got to come up with this kind of money." It is so different in different sectors of the world for them to have contact with the police, that it is so important for us to be so transparent, sit down with them in small groups and talk to them.

Mark Prosser

Retired Law Enforcement (United States)

Mr. Mark Prosser has over 40 years of law enforcement experience starting as a patrol officer in 1979. Until his retirement in 2020, he held positions including Chief of Detectives, Supervisor for a multi-jurisdictional homicide unit, and Chief of Police in Storm Lake, Iowa. Mr. Prosser was named Law Enforcement Executive of the Year for 2016 by the Iowa Police Chiefs Association. He holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Police Administration and has completed some Graduate Studies in Public Administration and Management. Mr Prosser taught for 19 years at the Illinois Police Academy, Buena Vista University, and Iowa Central Community College. Currently, he works for the Catholic Diocese of Sioux City, Iowa as the Director of the Pastoral Planning Office and remains a voice for immigration reform at the national level.

I bring just shy of 41 years of experience in law enforcement starting out in a larger jurisdiction in the metropolitan St. Louis area, and then moving to a rural community in northwest Iowa as their police chief, where I served just a little over 30 years as a police chief, and the Public Safety Director in the community of Storm Lake Iowa. And Storm Lake is kind of on the map, certainly in Iowa, and in different parts of the country as being an example of a community of rapid change, and how communities adapt to quick shifts in demographics. And then how do they provide services.

In the realm of that, we had to learn early on some real key elements on successful community policing. And there are many, many definitions of community policing out there. I quite often use the one that is the principal of the community taking ownership in their police department, and the police department taking ownership in their community. And what we learned right away is we just have to do business differently. We've heard some wonderful guidance and comments about how law enforcement needs to evolve, how we need to change.

That certainly was the case in our community that was experiencing growth. It was experiencing an increase in language barriers, and certainly cultural differences to the point now today where Storm Lake is the most diverse community percentage per population in the entire state of Iowa. Its community school system is over 90 percent non-Caucasian. There are somewhere between 25 and 30 languages spoken in a community of 14,000 people. So, you can see that impact and the need to adapt, and how to serve this rapidly changing community.

What we learned is, it's all about creating relationships. But we also have to understand that creating relationships and the success of creating relationships just isn't about going out and talking to people. It's about creating that mindset and philosophy within your own organisation, which is also time-consuming. It requires training, requires patience, it

requires good recruitment, and just walking that walk every day, and it's top-down. But it requires everybody to be a part of it. And that is always an ongoing process.

In our community and jurisdiction, we needed to create new types of relationships and new styles of communication, because we had so many people from so many different parts of the world speaking so many different dialects. And here we were in rural northwest Iowa, unattached to any urban centre, with really limited resources, we kind of had a creative process, through trial and error – of reaching out and serving everybody who called Storm Lake home or who came there for work or to play. And so we worked with success and with failure, implementing a variety of different outreach and relationship-related programs.

Understand that it is a never-ending, perpetual process. And I often, as my career moved forward and I started speaking in other jurisdictions that were changing, asked: What have you done? What have you learned? What have you failed at? What have you succeeded at? I always had to remind individuals and leaders that this isn't about a one-time effort. It's not about one event, one meeting, one festival. It has to be a mindset and it has to be a way of life for all of your officers, all of your public safety folks, and – critically – all of your government employees across every discipline, to understand that we all have to be in the business of creating relationships.

I often encourage folks to think about their own private and personal lives; Think about your marriage, the relationship with your children or grandchildren or your parents, office relationships – that is a work in progress every day. And in each one of those relationships, we make mistakes, we have bumps in the road, we learn more, we apologise. And we move forward in trying to create a strong relationship. And that's the same mindset and the same reality that law enforcement agencies have or should have, with the communities they serve – that it's always a work in progress and it's always an effort to continue to build relationships and build bridges.

The other thing we learned in seeing our community change into a very diverse jurisdiction is that people from different parts of just our country, urban versus rural, but most certainly from different parts of the world, they do business differently from what the traditional white, conservative Northwest dialogue business person did or do. They're not going to go quite often to city council meetings, they're not going to go to large forums to voice a concern, or to speak up about wrongs that have occurred or needs that they may have in the community. They're not going to come to the police department. And they're not going to come to the police chief's office. We learned with time that we have to take our show on the road and go to them and build relationships – one person, one family, one block, one apartment complex, one neighbourhood at a time.

So that's how we started to develop programming as time went on. We also knew we had to be transparent. If we made a mistake, if we did something wrong, if we were heavy-handed, if we made misunderstandings because of cultural differences, we had to admit that and continue to say, "You know, we need to learn as everybody needs to learn, and we're

going to do better.” And we certainly, as an organization, had to evolve with different types of officers. It was great to hear about the different types of specialised officers in Canada and not necessarily sworn officers. We use the same concept called Community Service officers which added value because they were bilingual and helped us bridge language gaps within our community. You have to be out there and not only understand and have your finger on the pulse of the changing community, but be prepared to change your organisation, or at least your processes and policies in such a way that you can adapt to them. You have to educate yourself.

We’ve all talked about outreach, and making relationships and so on – and we kind of indoctrinated that into everything we did, whether it was school programs or education programs and so on. We never missed an opportunity to go meet with any group when we were invited. We’ve made it a priority, even when there were some tough conversations.

The other thing that we did was enhanced that: one of the programs we did was neighbourhood outreach, where we took our police officers – joined by our firefighters, other community advocates – and we would roll into a neighbourhood, a parking lot, a park, whether that might be once a week, once every other week. It doesn’t work in the wintertime, as many of us know. But throughout the summer and warmer months, for the mere purpose of creating relationships, providing information, providing services. We were not there for a call for service, we were not there for a crisis or an emergency, we were there to go door-to-door, introduce ourselves and to create those relationships. And we have done it there. I’m retired – the new chief does it with great and wonderful grace, continuing to do that.

It was all about understanding that our safest communities are those where there’s a good partnership between citizens and public safety. And it was to help enhance and create those partnerships. And I will tell you in the early years – and we did the traditional things when we rolled in, turned on the lights, handed out candy and so on in the early years of this process – it was pretty much the kids running out and getting the candy and the pencils and the frisbees and the footballs and so on. But with time, as their parents and the elders of their neighbourhood saw that we were coming back, we weren’t there for enforcement. We were there to help and be advocates on their behalf in a variety of different ways and forms.

All of a sudden, the adults started to come out and join us at these events every week. And then they started to voice their concerns about the speeding motorist, the streetlight on, ‘I’m not happy with snow removal,’ right up to there might be a house with suspicious activity. And that’s how those relationships have formed and continue to evolve with these types of programming.

The important thing is – because we heard earlier about budgets and fiscal responsibility – and in smaller agencies, I know they have challenges just like our large urban counterparts where budgets and how we spend that budget is an issue. But these types of programs are designed around using on-duty personnel and partners and community advocates, where it does not impact on the budget and is not a drain on overtime having to

bring extra people in, and things like that to do this week in and week out. So we tried to address those issues.

And with time, all of a sudden, the community started to step up and see what we were doing. And the donations started to come in, of materials we could share and so on, or just money so that we can buy things for the children. That program has evolved today, to where the current department acquired a Humvee through a military surplus program, and the current chief took that military vehicle, and through donations he's got an ice cream machine in the back of it and it is called a "Yumvee" now. It travels the city giving ice cream out, again for one reason – to create those relationships, to show the human side of law enforcement and to get to know and understand the people that the law enforcement agency serves.

So those are the types of things we do. And this is one type of program that we use that helped with outreach as an initiative. But what we have to understand, and I constantly shout about this, is to remind folks that it doesn't end with one event. It has to be a mindset, it has to be a way of doing business. It has to be perpetual in nature, and it pays dividends.

To conclude, I will talk about significant challenges. We all have them. Most certainly, one of the challenges is knowing your audience, knowing your community – when it's rapidly changing, when there are cultural barriers, when there are language barriers. It's about bringing folks in to train your staff, it's about going into the field to learn and hear the stories of the challenges that so many of our neighbours have in that community and to educate yourself. The real challenge is language barriers, especially in rural America or rural Iowa. How many qualified interpreters can you find in dealing with so many different languages to appropriately interpret or translate materials, so that you are ensuring that their civil rights are being honoured and that you are providing the services that they're requesting? So language barriers when you're dealing with shifting demographics is a significant challenge in building relationships and building trust. And that translates into making your communities safer.

Cultural differences. It's our responsibility in law enforcement to know our citizens and to know where they've come from, and what they've experienced. We had folks coming from areas of the country, or I should say the world, where their experience with law enforcement is that the police officer was the officer, the jailer, the judge, and in some cases the execution. People also came from areas and regions where corruption was rampant in public safety. We have to understand it, we have to educate ourselves so that we can again, go out there and build bridges to say, hey, we're here for you. We're not that way. We're here to serve you.

You have to understand also, in our case, fear of immigration-related issues. I am a strong proponent that local law enforcement should not be involved in immigration enforcement. And we had a lot of folks who were undocumented, or they had visas expire, they were refugees, they had family members that may have documentation issues, and

they're just afraid. And when you're afraid, you go into the shadows and when you go into the shadows, you don't report criminal activity and you become targets to be victims yourself. We went out and we continue to go out and I continue in my retirement to advocate for immigration reform, immigrant rights and to create that clear difference that the Federal government is involved in, hopefully appropriate immigration enforcement – local law enforcement is there to serve anybody and everybody who lives works and plays in that community so that they can build that trust. Often what we experience in these diverse jurisdictions is the debate and the ongoing conversations at a national level, impacting the psyche, and the stress and the distress on the community and people that local law enforcement serve, and it pushes them into the shadows.

Lastly, with individuals moving from urban centres to rural centres throughout our country for a variety of reasons – I often refer to that urban philosophy moving to rural Iowa or rural America, and also bringing with it a different way of doing business and expectations for law enforcement. And that's another challenge and a barrier that local law enforcement, especially in rural America, needs to learn and work through.