WAYS FORWARD

The phenomenon of profiling is complex and varied. It definitely poses intractable challenges and seeming dead ends. In spite of the impasse, communities and the police themselves strive for solutions of varying kinds.

"IN A COMMUNITY, IT'S CHALLENGING TO MAINTAIN CONTROL; WITH THE POLICE TOO. IT'S EASIER TO COMMUNICATE WHEN PEOPLE CULTIVATE LOVE. WHEN PEOPLE STILL HARBOR HATRED TOWARDS OTHERS, THERE IS NOTHING WE CAN DO." [1]

- Jeannette Brazeau
Elder from the Anishnabe First Nation of Lac-Simon, near the municipality of Val-D'Or

"WHEN TALKING ABOUT HOMELESSNESS, IT'S NEVER SIMPLE, AND IT'S ALWAYS COMPLEX, THAT'S THE PROBLEM WITH COMORBIDITY, NOTHING IS EVER SIMPLE. SO, AT THAT POINT, WE NEED TO TAKE THE TIME TO TALK ... WHEN WE UNDERSTAND AND LISTEN TO THEIR VALUES AND HISTORY, I THINK WE WILL HAVE BETTER COMMUNICATION."[2]

- Julie Bouvier
Sergeant and Head of the Val D'Or First Nations Community Mixed Police Station

IN THIS SECTION

Over the years, people and communities have proposed and put into action various solutions to counter racial and social profiling. Though these solutions take a variety of approaches, they all consider people as central to the solution. While no single solution or approach can be seen as comprehensive or conclusive, they each hold part of the key to the issue, and are sometimes overlapping in nature. Three such approaches are presented here.

SOLUTIONS TO BUILD TRUST AND COMMUNICATION

A commonly agreed starting place is that we need to acknowledge the issue, and then to listening to the conversations, even when they are hard, like talking about residential schools, and understanding the realities of life in specific neighbourhoods where profiling is occurring. Working together in the community and being loyal to the community, and providing power to youth to voice themselves.

SENSITIZATION

One recurring theme among this category of solutions is the need to sensitize those with privilege and power to the lived realities of those who are profiled. Often it would seem that privileged groups have little understanding of what it means to be profiled and they have not had the scope to empathize with its dehumanizing nature.

"CREATING SPACES FOR DIALOGUE, CREATING PLACES TO GIVE PEOPLE A VOICE ... JUST KNOWING THAT OTHER PEOPLE ARE GOING THROUGH THINGS, THAT SPACES ARE BEING CREATED, THAT CHANGED A LOT FOR ME. BUT I KNOW IT'S NOT ENOUGH. THAT'S WHY WE NEED PEOPLE WHO ARE ANGRY TO HELP THINGS GO A LITTLE FURTHER ON OTHER FRONTS. I THINK THAT IT REQUIRES TEAMWORK. IF THAT ANGER GOES AWAY, WE STAGNATE. WE NEED TO FEEL ANGER, BUT WE ALSO NEED TO FOCUS ON SOLUTIONS."[1]

- Elsa F. Mondésir
Youth educator and member of the Youth Advisory Group of the Canadian Commission for UNESCO

"THIS CONNECTION MUST BE RECREATED, IT MUST BE CHANGED - EDUCATION IS ALWAYS THE KEY TO ABSOLUTELY EVERYTHING. IT IS SYSTEMIC WORK THAT MUST BE DONE TOGETHER. IT REQUIRES PEOPLE TO FILL LEADERSHIP POSITIONS, PUBLIC AND POLITICAL PERSONALITIES AND SO ON." [2]

- Will Prosper
Ex-RCMP, community activist, Hoodstock organiser and documentary filmmaker

Some have called to use well-designed, powerful visual and multimedia messages to create such sensitization. Given the current preference for visual content, some believe that the techniques of visual propaganda can be put to positive use.
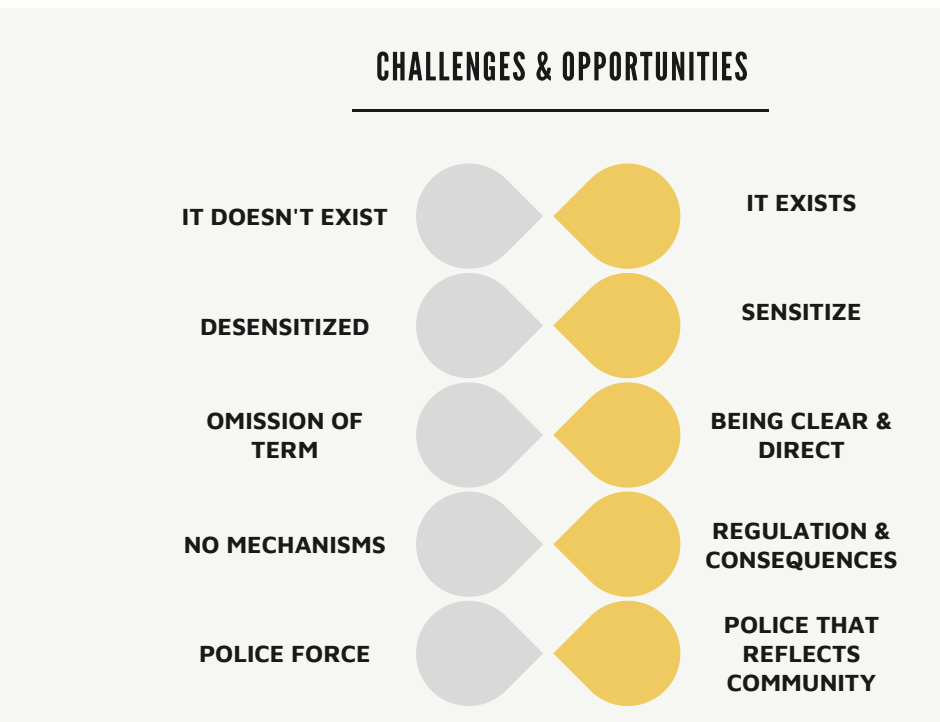
Source: [1] Project Someone [2] Project Someone

DOCUMENTING PROFILING

Activists as well as members of communities call for clearer statistics and research so as to better inform themselves about the situation. There is a desire to base solutions and understanding on facts rather than on perceptions and opinions. For example, the historic value of immigrants may be established through data in order to counter the perception that the immigrant "other" is at the root of social problems.

EDUCATING AND TEACHING EMPATHY

Finally, some educational solutions directly target police officers and those in power. The Longueuil police have experimented with an empathy-building exercise where police officers immerse themselves in the context of a community without their symbols or power, such as their uniform or their firearms. The experience was transformative to say the least. In a similar vein, training has been provided to police officers about the nature and extent of their implicit bias towards races and groups. However, it is unclear at the current time if being aware of one's biases actually changes behavior in any significant way.

The graphic below demonstrates the tensions between what is happening and the opportunities for change.

CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

IT DOESN'T EXIST		IT EXISTS
DESENSITIZED		SENSITIZE
OMISSION OF TERM		BEING CLEAR & DIRECT
NO MECHANISMS		REGULATION & CONSEQUENCES
POLICE FORCE		POLICE THAT REFLECTS COMMUNITY

SOLUTIONS TO BUILD TRUST AND COMMUNICATION

ACKNOWLEDGING THE EXISTENCE OF THE PROBLEM

The foundation of solutions that seek to build trust and communication require that those in power acknowledge the issue of profiling, both the current issues as well as historic ones involving extreme profiling as in the case of residential schools.

CREATING SPACES FOR DISCUSSION

Both activists and educators emphasize the benefits of art to help those who have been profiled recover from the dehumanizing experience. Humor, especially when it involves laughing at oneself, also has therapeutic effects. These approaches are however sporadically used and mostly in urban centers. There appears to be a strong case to develop arts-based approaches and make them available to a wider range of people.

"TO GIVE... TO CREATE A SPACE WHERE PEOPLE CAN EXPRESS THEMSELVES, CAN HAVE A VOICE IN A SAFE SPACE. THAT'S SOMETHING THAT DOESN'T EXIST AND I THINK THAT WE NEED MORE OF THESE TYPES OF OCCASIONS: TO HAVE WORKSHOPS WHERE YOUNG PEOPLE CAN TAKE LEADERSHIP BY CREATING ARTS THAT REFLECT THEIR OWN VOICES." [1]

- Vivek Venkatesh
Researcher, Concordia University

"I AM A MAN WHO GIVES PEOPLE HOPE. THAT IS OUR JOB RIGHT NOW; WE ARE WORKING ON RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS AND THOSE WHO CANNOT TALK ABOUT WHAT THEY LIVED THROUGH THERE. MANY PEOPLE DIED AS A CONSEQUENCE. THAT'S WHY WE MUST TALK ABOUT RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS TODAY; BECAUSE SOME PEOPLE ARE STILL UNABLE TO TALK ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCE. IT'S CRUCIAL FOR OTHERS TO TALK ABOUT IT AND TO HEAR THEIR MESSAGES."[2]

- Pierre Papatie
Elder from the Anishnabe First Nation of Lac-Simon, near the municipality of Val-D'Or

Sources: [1] Project Someone [2] Project Someone

BUILDING CONFIDENCE BY WORKING TOGETHER

Trust and communication building solutions also need to be based on creating a positive social capital with communities. There is no one single way to accomplish this, and it may take various forms based on the context. Yet, its importance cannot be understated. The communities themselves, especially indigenous communities speak of a more inclusive and human centered approach which values overcoming prejudice and racism, and the importance of having hope for the future. In Canada - and more specifically the province of Quebec - indigenous communities talk about the Ojibway term "mamawi": the importance of working together. This resonates as an important value to embody as a society, especially one who is into the habit of othering.

HIGHLIGHTED COMMUNITY RESPONSES

- **MTL Sans Profilage (2015-2018)** A three-year research project to understand racial profiling and its consequences for youth, in the culturally diverse neighbourhood of St-Michel. The report concludes that racial profiling is a product of police biases, but also of the organizational policies of the Service de Police de Montréal (SPVM). [1]

- **Alberta Human Rights Commission (2017)** The Commission hosted a series of conversations with organizations across the province to hear about the human rights issues their communities are facing. These conversations were summarized in the report *Your Voice: Advancing Human Rights in Alberta* and used by communities and the Commission to move forward on addressing these issues. [2]

SOLUTIONS TO CREATE PROCESSES AND SYSTEMS

"THIS IS WHAT WE WANT TO CONVEY IN THE ABORIGINAL REALITY TRAINING. IT IS TO SAY TO YOUR POLICE OFFICERS,"OKAY, YOU HAVE TOOLS THAT YOU LEARNED IN A CLASSROOM SETTING, BUT GO BEYOND THAT; IF IT DOESN'T WORK GO BEYOND THAT. LISTEN AND YOU WILL SEE THAT OTHER THINGS THAT CAN HELP THE PERSON IN FRONT OF YOU." [1]

- Julie Bouvier
Sergeant and Head of the Val D'Or
First Nations Community Mixed
Police Station

Systemic solutions make improvements sustainable. Several process proposals to address the issue of profiling have been offered by academics, researchers and the communities themselves. One call is to recruit more police officers from minority communities. In this way, there is already an in-built understanding with the police force about the needs and complexities of a particular community. They believe that instances of othering and therefore profiling may therefore be reduced.

"THERE ARE PEOPLE FROM BLACK AND INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES WHO ARE MORE OFTEN RACIALLY PROFILED THAN THE REST OF THE POPULATION - FOUR TO FIVE TIMES MORE DEPENDING ON THE PLACE."[2]

- Will Prosper
Ex-RCMP officer, community
activist, Hoodstock organiser
and documentary filmmaker

Other solutions are concrete interventions such as introducing a "billet de controle" or an acknowledgement of a stop check. Having such acknowledgement slips provides concrete data about the number and nature of the stops, which will in turn help assess the utility of stop checks in policing efforts vs their use in instances of profiling. Similarly, video surveillance has been suggested as a solution to provide an objective view of events and actions. However, this needs to be balanced with larger needs of privacy and avoiding a culture of pervasive surveillance. Lastly, there is a call for standardized processes across regions to collect and analyse data. This will make comparisons more reliable and valid.

RECOMMENDED APPROACHES FOR SYSTEMIC CHANGE FROM THE ONTARIO HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

Different reports offer a variety of best practices to approach the issue of profiling. Most of these are adapted from the Ontario Human Rights Commission report (2012-14) [1]. This report combines insights from human-rights and organizational-change theory to offer suggestions to bring about systemic change.

• Have a comprehensive approach. A piecemeal or department -level approach is less likely to be useful than a sustained, organization-level one.
• Ensure a unified, committed and involved leadership. Contradictory messages from leadership are counterproductive.
• Create a shared vision and terminology. A common understanding of what the issues are, what they mean and how they may be addressed.
• Empower capable lead -change agents. Skilled and equipped personnel to drive the intervention, lead communication and act as an interface between communities and the police.
• Ensure a multi-stakeholder structure and process. The voices of the communities impacted have to find a central place in the dialogue, and on an equal footing as the police, to balance the power dynamic.
• Monitor and evaluate. Collecting, analyzing and acting on data regarding profiling helps informed decision -making
• Communicate and report. Communicating the results of the analysis to all the stakeholders and addressing their feedback improve the process
• Identify and plan for resistance. Assessing the sources of resistance to such interventions, evaluating the nature of it, and finding potential ways to address it helps overcome blocks to the process.
• Choose strategic "areas of focus" for change. Specific aspects, processes, or behaviours may demonstrate quicker or more important results, and need to be selected strategically.

In order to address profiling within Canadian society and arrive at pathways that demonstrate plausible solutions to this problem, we must first learn to adopt a pluralistic approach. This means that we create spaces for dialogue where multiple perspectives are voiced, where hierarchical power structures are acknowledged, and wherein a culture of perspective-taking, empathy and humanism shine a much-needed light on the marginalized communities that have suffered the most from this persistent and systemic societal ill. Second, we need to favour the development of multi-stakeholder approaches to build community resilience and to implement prevention programs that focus on sensitizing those in power to the harmful effects of profiling, and to enabling marginalized communities to participate with state forces, social services and the public health sector in their ensuring their sustained and continued empowerment.

DEVELOPMENT TEAM

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RESOURCES

These bilingual resources were developed using frameworks grounded in critical digital literacy by Project Someone to broadly enable the public to counter hate –a well-known precursor to discrimination.Should you wish to adapt these resources for use in your curricular or professional training contexts please contact us at projectsomeone@concordia.ca
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Think Critically

The Online Other

Adult Education and Online Hate

These resources are presented for your reference and could be adapted for use in your specific community or professional contexts.

Human Rights in British Columbia: Racial Discrimination Fact sheet. (PDF)

Human rights and policing: Creating and sustaining organizational change. Ontario Human Rights Commission. (PDF)

Le Profilage Racial Dans Les Pratiques Policières. Points de vue et expériences de jeunes racisés à Montréal. (PDF) (In French only)

Ethical Health Assessment Tool. A tool for assessing ethical health frameworks in police services. (PDF)

Threat And Humiliation. Racial Profiling, Domestic Security, and Human Rights in the United States. (PDF)

Toward Peace, Harmony, And Well-Being: Policing In Indigenous Communities. The Expert Panel on Policing in Indigenous Communities. (PDF)

Racial Profiling (lesson plan grades 6-12), Teaching Tolerance

Lesson Plans and Tool Kits on equity and inclusion, Safe @ School