

## Guiding Principles Related to Provincial Policing Standards:

BCPPS 6.1 Community Partnerships & Equitable Policing

BCPPS 3.2.5 Training to promote equitable and unbiased policing

BCPPS 3.2.6 Training to enhance service delivery to vulnerable communities

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Police agencies, governments and communities throughout British Columbia share a commitment to ensuring policing is delivered in an equitable manner throughout the province. Work is occurring at all levels of government to recognize and address inequities, protect rights, and improve responsiveness of the criminal justice system for women affected by violence, Black, Indigenous and Persons of Colour, and marginalized communities. These standards are a component of broader efforts to promote unbiased policing and access to justice in BC.

These standards respond to the issues raised in many reports, inquiries, and by community-led advocacy. The final report of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry (MWCI), recommended standards to promote equality in the delivery of policing services, increase responsiveness to the needs of vulnerable persons, and enhance governance of policing.

Since then, additional reports have documented the experiences of socially and/or racially marginalized communities, including Indigenous peoples, within the justice system. Examples include related decisions from human rights tribunals, the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#) and the [National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls](#). These proceedings have produced recommendations and are driving further work in BC aimed at improving the experience of Indigenous peoples within the justice system, such as the [Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act](#), and the [BC First Nations Justice Strategy](#).

### ***The Missing Women Commission of Inquiry***

Between 1997 and 2002, numerous women were reported missing from Vancouver's Downtown East side, by friends and families who feared for the women's safety. Robert Pickton was arrested in 2002 and convicted of six counts of second-degree murder and sentenced to life in prison in December 2007. Twenty additional murder charges were stayed by the Crown Counsel in August 2010.

In 2010, in response to the horrific events and criticism surrounding the police investigations, the Province established the *Missing Women Commission of Inquiry*. [Forsaken, The Report of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry](#) was released in 2012 and included 63 recommendations, many of which related to policing.

The Commission found that systemic bias contributed to police effectively under-prioritizing and under-investigating reports of missing women, and that this was a manifestation of the broader patterns of systemic discrimination within society. Specifically, Commissioner Oppal found that negative stereotyping about women involved in survival sex work, many of whom were Indigenous women, existed within the exercise of individual discretion and collective decision-making by police during the investigations of their disappearances.

Further, efforts to reform and modernize policing in BC are ongoing. In 2020, the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia appointed the Special Committee on Reforming the Police Act to conduct a broad inquiry into policing, including examining the role of police with respect to complex social issues; examining the scope of systemic racism within policing in BC; and ensuring consistency of a modernized *Police Act* with the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. Other projects related to unbiased policing including regarding gender equity and anti-racism will inform further advances to these standards moving forward.

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The standards seek to provide consistent pathways for advancing equitable and unbiased policing throughout the province by requiring policies and procedures, training, audit activity, and community engagement. The standards will provide a basis for auditing and oversight by the Director of Police Services pursuant to Section 40(1) of the [Police Act](#).

The underlying principles of the standards are that:

- **Individuals and communities have the right to receive unbiased and equitable policing.**

Racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination are unacceptable in Canadian society, including in policing. The right to equal protection and benefit from the law without discrimination is embedded in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and human rights legislation. All actors within the criminal justice system share a legal and moral duty to provide unbiased and equitable services and to refrain from discrimination. For policing, these duties are also reflected in the [BC Police Code of Ethics](#).

- **Dialogue and collaboration are key to building trust and achieving common goals of unbiased and responsive policing.**

Police and the communities they serve work toward common goals for policing through partnerships and ongoing dialogue. Trust is key to achieving these partnerships and often starts from an acknowledgement of injustices and current impacts.

- **History continues to impact trust and relationships today.**

Throughout Canadian history, the justice system has systemically discriminated against women, Indigenous peoples, and socially and/or racially marginalized groups. It is important to acknowledge this history and its legacy today.

Police were often the frontline agents and enforcers of discriminatory laws and policies and, as a result, many people continue to view policing as oppressive. Acknowledging the role of policing in these events and the ongoing impact on police-community relations today is an important step in promoting equitable and unbiased policing.

- **Racism, bias, and discrimination are prevalent.**

Biases are cognitive shortcuts used to process information and all people, even well-intentioned people, have biases. However, biases are not acquired in a vacuum. They reflect and are the product of patterns of power and privilege, colonialism, racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination in society. Biases may be unconscious and may influence choices and actions without conscious thinking or decision-making.

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- **It is important to recognize and overcome bias, racism, and discrimination in policing.**

If policies and procedures fail to consider the diverse needs and experiences of the community, bias, racism, and other forms of discrimination can manifest in the actions and decisions of individuals or at a systemic level. Recognizing and taking steps to address this, such as through training, supervision, monitoring, policy development, and community engagement, are critical to promoting unbiased policing.

- **Unbiased policing must also include efforts to remove barriers to justice and police services.**

The compounding and intersecting effects of systemic racism and sexism, social marginalization, and different identity factors can result in an increased risk of being affected by violence and less likely to report it, further compounding vulnerability. Previous negative experiences with police and other public services can result in fear of police, of not being believed, of not being taken seriously, or that a positive outcome is not likely when making a report. Additional barriers may include difficulties connecting with police due to language or cultural barriers.

Adapting processes to reduce or eliminate barriers promotes inclusion and equitable access to justice, particularly for vulnerable groups and individuals who may be reluctant to contact police.

- **Promoting inclusion and diversity within police forces is important.**

Police agencies should aim to reflect the diversity in the communities they serve and promote a workplace culture that is supportive, inclusive, and free from harassment or discrimination.

- **Promoting equitable and unbiased policing is an ongoing process.**

Police agencies in B.C. are taking important and constructive steps to provide equitable and responsive policing. Equity in policing requires leadership, supported by ongoing monitoring of service delivery, data collection and analysis, transparency, accountability, and community engagement. Policing must continuously adapt to respond to the needs of diverse and evolving communities being served. These standards will also evolve to assist those persons and entities listed in s. 40(1.2) of the Police Act and will continue to clarify the actions and attitudes expected of them in relation to unbiased policing.