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The Saanich Police Department Media Relations Program:
Assessment and Improvement to better serve the Community.

By

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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In

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The concept for this project began in 2001. Since that time many individuals and organizations have contributed to the development and improvement of the Saanich Police media relations program. In addition, these individuals have all contributed to my own learning journey involving a better understanding of organizational leadership and learning:

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DEDICATION

At the start of this learning journey approximately two years ago, my daughter Emma was not more than a baby. As I finally complete this project, I find myself having conversations with her about why daddy is on the computer so much. At times like these, I feel the true need for balance and also feel the impact this project as had on my important family time

Looking at my daughter, I wonder about what the future holds for her and the role that education will play in her development. With recent news stories of increased tuition costs, elementary school closures, and shortened school weeks, I believe the educational world she is about to enter will be much different from the one I attended. My most recent academic foray at Royal Roads University has provided me with hope in relation to future academic standards and strategies for the future, and I believe my daughter will benefit from the changes taking place. The world of academia is changing, I am hopeful for the better.

Acting as a media relations' officer has brought me into contact with many of our local youth and in a few short years my daughter will be among them. Police assignments such as school liaison, youth investigations, and programs like Rock Solid have provided me with a unique insight into the teenage world of today. The stories are not all bad, the youth have been often labeled with stereotypical purpose by the media and a sense of unfairness is felt by many youth. My goal as a media relations' officer continues to remain focused on promoting the positive aspects of the many, many youth who fail to make mention in today's media. I hope the tide turns before my daughter reaches her teenage years and that our youth are treated with fairness and accepted as a vital part of our community.

While attending an office somewhere in downtown Victoria approximately 16 years ago, I observed a poster on the wall. It contained a brief yet powerful message:

"Some people dream of achieving great things, I choose to stay awake and do them."

I have never forgotten these words and have used them as the foundation for the many things I have accomplished in my life. I hope my daughter chooses to stay awake to make her dreams a reality.

For Emma Brianne

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CHAPTER ONE

Study Background

“The police will never be able to achieve the full support of the community without the help of the media”

Paul Akehurst, as cited by the Canadian Police College, (1998).

The Problem/Opportunity

In the summer of 1995, the Saanich police department recognized that a more structured media relations program was required to address the increase in media requests on police related issues. Up until this time, the department did not have an effective media program to deal with media requests. On the surface, it may have appeared that there was no policy or structure for addressing media concerns. The reality is that media issues were often not dealt with or were dealt with on an individual basis that did not provide any consistency to the communication between the department and members of the media. The simple order of the day was to not deal with the media if it was considered inconvenient. This approach was created by the officers who were in positions of authority within the department. Having an effective relationship with the media was not considered a priority and to some extent this mindset still exists today. Personal contacts between the police and media often formed the basis of an informal media/ police professional relationship of communication. Whenever the media had inquiries, they would phone their police contact in an attempt to acquire the police information they sought.

With the impending Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act coming into legislation in 1995, the Saanich police created a media relations policy, not only to assist with the increase in information requests, but to also ensure the requirements of the new legislation were being met. All media officers are currently directed to the media policy prior to conducting media releases. The policy was created to protect the interests of the department and to conform to the protocols of current legislation. The policy does not take stock of the overall goal of having effective community/public relations. Much of the previous feedback regarding the media program was conducted on an informal basis. If one member of the media contacted the department to complain about an issue, then meetings were often set to address the concerns. But how many members of the media take the time to actually complain? I have received more than one irate media member who felt they were being ignored, or they were not receiving a level of service from the department that was meeting the standard of good cooperation.

To understand the issues surrounding many of the complaints, a brief overview of the media relations program is required. The Saanich police work on a four-shift patrol division rotation. The patrol officers' work four twelve-hour shifts, and then receive four days off before returning to work. The patrol shift is from 7:00am until 7:00pm depending on whether you are assigned to day shift or night shift on that given day. The end result is four shifts providing 24-hour coverage within the municipality.

The department implemented a program in which an assigned media officer would be designated for each shift. This officer would conduct their normal patrol duties but would also carry a "media pager" so that members of the media could contact the officer at any time. This was to provide the media with 24-hour access to the department on all policing issues. Generally, the media officers are members of the Patrol Division and have been trained at the Justice

Institute of British Columbia in media relations. It is not uncommon however, to have an assigned media officer detailed to a shift who has not had the benefit of the media officer training.

Problems that have arisen regarding the media officer have included issues such as:

- 1) The media officer is too busy to return the pager or has forgotten to take the pager out of the office. The pager does not have a battery in it that works or the media officer on the previous shift has left the pager in their locker. Some members simply do not know how to work the alphanumeric media pager
- 2) There is no knowledge of the information requested by the media or there is no access to the information requested.
- 3) There has been no patrol officer assigned to act as the media officer that day, or there are long delays in responding to the media requests.
- 4) Assigned officers have not received any media relations training.

The systems are such that one negative experience involving a member of the media, and the media pager, has led to reluctance to use the pager system again. The members of the media want to talk to a person on their first contact with police. This is not possible under the current program. Over the years members of the media have told me that they refuse to use the media pager, and have given up on using it years ago because of the many listed problems above. This lack of confidence in the program has led to the creation of a disjointed system where different media members are using other means in an attempt to receive information from the department.

In short, the Saanich Police has returned to the era before the media program was created, and personal contacts are once again forming the foundation of the media program. One has to ask, is this the best possible way to serve the Saanich community?

With so much public perception at stake, the development and assessment of a strong media plan could be crucial to the continued successes of the department as a whole. The need to focus on a qualitative assessment of the program is essential to the department. There is a tendency in media/public relations to focus on quantitative measurement, rather than the quality of the media coverage. (McNamara, 2000) If the strategic goal is to improve the relationships between the police department and the public, then the process of achieving this goal is through a qualitative assessment of the media program that is currently in place.

The media program is a connected system of interpersonal contacts, which includes the media officer, other police members, management, members of the media, and the public in general. It is the perceptions and experiences with regard to the media program that will require a qualitative approach. Does the media program achieve the goals intended? What is the perception in regards to the current state of the program? Public perception is a critical component in gauging the success of the media program. The end product of reaching out to the community in a positive, timely, and pro-active manner is what the police hope to achieve. Public perception is qualitative in nature and will require community input to determine if the goals are being met or achieved.

The Organization

The Saanich police department is an organization that currently employs 150 full time sworn police members. The Municipality of Saanich is the largest incorporated municipal area on Vancouver Island and forms part of the larger Greater Victoria area and the Municipality of

Saanich has a population of approximately 109,000 people (Stats Canada, 1997). Saanich police have an organization consisting of three main divisions. The Uniform Division supports four platoons of officers that provide 24-hour police coverage to the community. Other responsibilities of the Uniform Section include the Traffic Safety Unit, Canine, Bike Squad, School Liaison, and Crime Prevention. The Detective Division is responsible for General Investigation, Youth, Financial Crimes, Street Crime, Child Abuse, and Forensic Identification. The Third Division is the Administrative Division and oversees such areas as Central Records and Telecoms. Although rather small in geographical size, Greater Victoria has five municipal police agencies providing police services to the area. These five police departments will routinely liaise with the Victoria media outlets. In Victoria there are currently three full time television stations, one daily newspaper, and several radio stations. The interaction between police and the media is inter-dispersed between the five police departments.

While there are many policies and processes required for the police department to meet a variety of legislated structures, the media relations program is an anomaly. The media relations program was started to ensure the department was meeting community expectations relating to openness on policing issues. The current media literature within the department is minimal in comparison to other internal documentation and regulation. Given the overall importance of having a sound media relations plan, the amount of research and literature on the subject within the police agency is sparse. The Saanich police does have a Strategic Plan that outlines a future direction in which the need to enhance the delivery of service with respect to issues such as police media presence, and the manner in which we exchange information with the community (Saanich Police, 2002). The value of having open dialogue within the community, and the need to keep the public informed on the many issues surrounding policing in Saanich is outlined in the

Strategic Plan as being significant in scope. Even though the Strategic Plan makes specific reference to increased media exposure (Saanich Police, 2002, page 13), there has been no formal assessment conducted to determine if the current media relations model is successful in achieving open dialogue with the community. Herein lies the opportunity to determine if the Saanich Police media relations program is achieving the goals as determined by the departmental strategic plan.

One of the most efficient ways in communicating with the public is through the local media, be it print, television, or radio. These mediums reach a maximum number of community members on many policing issues that are of interest to the public. But how is the department performing in the area of providing effective communications to the public? The task, here in the research project, will be an assessment of the current systems that have been developed by the department, and the delivery of information by the members who deal with the many media requests on a daily basis.

The problem is whether the departmental media relation's structures, and systems currently in place, are the best possible for the end goal of the effective release of information. How does the Saanich Police department improve the media program to achieve maximum exposure and effectiveness? There are obviously many issues that will come into play regarding the dynamics of the release of information to the public, including: security, confidentiality, legislation, and investigative protocol. The problem is not in the content of information that is being released to the public. This content area is already covered by legislation and policies currently in place. The opportunity is to conduct an assessment of the current systems of conducting the releases themselves, and the corresponding contact by the media.

Through conversations with various media members, the police, and members of the public, I have determined that there is a desire for an assessment to take place. The public expects a level of accountability from the police and the police department is expected to afford openness on policing issues. But how do we get from the structure of the printed words, to the actually delivery of the end product which is the release of information? It is these systems that require assessment to determine if the public is being served in the most effective manner, and if the Saanich police are achieving their strategic planning goal of open and timely communications with the community. As an overview of the media relations program, the purpose is to establish “two-way communication seeking common ground or areas of mutual interest, and to establish an understanding based on truth, knowledge, and full information”. (Black, as cited by L’Etang and Magda, 1996)

The Impact/ Significance of the Problem

The Saanich police department currently holds a good level of esteem with the community members. A recent community survey indicated that 93% of respondents were satisfied in the way in which their call for police service was resolved and 100% of the respondents stated that the attending police members were polite and courteous in their manner. (Saanich Police, 1999) The informal feedback from citizens on a variety of issues has been positive, and for the most part it appears the department is doing a good job serving the community. There is a great need to ensure that the highest standards of effective media relations are maintained and nurtured. However, the need to continue to develop a strong media presence is critical to future success. Relations between the police and the media have, in recent years, been strained and in some cases been close to breaking point.

Many sections of the media have seen the police as necessarily secretive and insular about themselves on matters that the media believe should be in the public domain (Police Federation of England and Wales, (1999). Many police agencies have had to endure tarnished reputations and relationships within their communities, and this has even included civil and criminal proceedings against the department or it's members resulting from public complaints.

Maintaining a good reputation is key in the realm of good police/community relations. Public relations are defined by the Institute of Public Relations as "the discipline that looks after reputation" (Beard, 1997, p.38). The need for new thinking in the area of public relations within policing is highlighted by historical institutional roles. The police must be prepared to challenge the definition of their own role. Failure to do so and the police run the risk of being trapped in their traditional role of enforcer or issuers of tickets. (LeBeuf, 1998).

The vast majority of community members have had little or no contact with their local police agencies. Statistically we know that still a very small proportion of the public actually comes into direct contact with police officers on a regular basis, yet most hold an opinion in regards to the level of policing service that they receive (Police Federation of England and Wales, 1999). The Saanich Police, (1999) Community Survey indicated that most persons who responded were generally happy with the level of police service that they received. They also indicated that their knowledge of the department and the services available was generally limited. Many community members only receive information about the Saanich police through media outlets they reference on a daily basis. Whether it is the evening news or the daily paper, the media provide the conduit for information to flow from the Saanich police to the Saanich public at large. The impact of the problem is that without a formal assessment of the media relations systems currently in place, how does the Saanich police know if the current media program is providing the best level of

service in this area. Current media trends would dictate a change in thinking within the police organization. Staszak states that progressive law enforcement agencies have institutionalized proactive media programs that understand that this endeavor will translate into sound public relations programs (Staszak, 2001). As a media relation's officer, I have been involved in high profile media events concerning the Saanich police. In all of the media crises I have been personally involved, a critical issue has always been lack of communication. The end result has been diminished communication between the police and the public, as the public is receiving, or in some cases not receiving, the information as disseminated by the media because of overriding communication breakdowns.

One such incident involved a Saanich Police officer who was being profiled in the media on a "use of force" issue. The police member had attended a residential alarm in the evening when he discovered a break and enter in progress. A fight ensued and the suspect was in the process of beating the police officer into unconsciousness when the officer fired his service pistol, hitting the suspect once in stomach. Both individuals were rushed to hospital as a result of their injuries. On the drive to work the next morning I heard about this incident on my car radio. The media coverage was very negative and described how the police had "shot" an unarmed man. The rest of the day was a long uphill battle for me as the media relation's officer. Much of the day was spent educating media members on the issues surrounding use of force, and the circumstance of this particular incident. The "mood" of the story slowly turned to a pro-police stance as the day progressed. Why the initial negative connotation with the media's story? From a media perspective, they simply explained that they had not received any information from the police department and did not understand the issues, largely in part because of the police lack or

response. No police information was provided for them to consider until the next day, when a media officer was assigned.

This problem is significant because the image of the Saanich police is in part, controlled by the media outlets within the Saanich and Victoria area and beyond. Without community support the department could not only lose efficiencies in investigations, but could lose the critical element of trust. If the public perceives the Saanich police in a less than positive frame of reference, then perhaps the public will become less involved with the department. Everyday occurrences such as becoming witnesses, calling in complaints, participating in crime prevention initiatives, and generally assisting the department in the many policing functions may decline. It in fact could be argued that without the trust of the public, crime could increase and prosecutions decrease, as a result of the public not reporting criminal activity that they witness. Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir Robert Mark stated,

Most members of the public come into direct contact with policemen infrequently and it follows that their image of and attitude towards the force, when not dictated by hearsay, is largely governed by the approach adopted by the news media. It is therefore of the utmost importance that every effort should be made to develop and maintain good relations with news media representatives in order to render it the more likely that the coverage of police activities will be full and fair. Furthermore, if the force as a public service is to be properly accountable for its actions the public has the right to fullest possible knowledge of its activities. (Sir Robert Mark, 1973)

The Saanich police department is the largest annual budgetary expense for the Municipality of Saanich accounting for 26.63% of all tax spending (District of Saanich, 2002). With ever increasing demands on resources, the police department needs to promote the excellent work

being conducted by the members. When budget requests are presented to police boards and municipal councils, it is the positive community image of the police department that is being presented. This good work needs to continue with members of the public being informed about their police department and the tax dollars being spent. Trust and accountability are critical in maintaining a positive relationship with the community. The Saanich Police must be able to “manage” their credibility (Kouzes & Posner, 1995) and essential a component of this management is a strong and effective media relations program.

The Saanich Police, (2002, p.24) Five-year Strategic Plan outlines the need for good public relations as follows:

Our success is measured by the impact we have on our community. If the community feels safe and secure we have gone a long way to accomplishing our Mission. The community’s perception of how effective we are as a police department is often based on what is seen in the media and on information received from other persons who have had first hand dealings with the Department. Our public image is therefore critical to our success. In order to ensure that the public views our Department fairly and in a positive light, we will improve existing relationships and promote the development of new relationships with residents, business owners, and the general public, including the media.

The Saanich Police Strategic Plan makes a direct reference to working with the media but does not indicate how this is going to be accomplished. Although acknowledging the need for improvement of existing relations with the media, no systems or planning has been indicated to for the implementation of this need. As the current Crime Prevention Officer at the Saanich

Police, part of my duties includes the liaison with the media. This position allows me to have both access to the media, and the opportunity to utilize personal skills that have been developed as a result of working with the media over the past six years.

The corporate world has the bottom line to help assess whether the company is working effectively and efficiently. Through the analysis of sales and production, an organization has a general benchmark to analyze in relation to performance. There is no such benchmark in policing. In fact, the slower a police agency is the better the reflection on the local crime rate. Less crime is good. Crime rates drop and it is perhaps a sign of a job well done. It is the communication between the police and the public that is used to articulate the effectiveness of the Saanich police. Through the use of a strong media relations' presence, a positive image of the Saanich police can be presented to the community.

The Research Question

The Saanich police department currently has a loosely organized media relations program that has been developed over the past seven years. At the present time, a formal assessment of the media program has not been completed, and the feedback regarding the effectiveness of the program has been on an informal basis only. This casual feedback has been varied, ranging from both angry or happy media members who contact the department, to citizens within the community who have felt compelled to respond to issues whether good or bad. Given the background of importance relating to police-media relationships, the research study seeks to create an assessment and improvement of the Saanich Media program by asking the question:

How can we improve the effectiveness of the Media Relations Program at the Saanich Police Department to best serve the community of Saanich?

Other areas for concern and enquiry include:

- 1) What tools, systems, and planning are the media officers currently using, and are they effective and efficient in providing a level of service to both the community and the Saanich police department?
- 2) What processes could improve the organizational structure and decision making in relation to the effectiveness of the media relations program currently in place at the Saanich Municipal Police Department?
- 3) What current assessment programs are in place with regards to the media program? If there are none, then;
- 4) What assessment models could be implemented to gauge the effectiveness of the media relations program?
- 5) Is there an overall need for the Saanich Police to have a designated media relations program?

An evaluation of the effectiveness of the Media Program was needed to determine if the systems currently in place were adequately serving both the needs of the department and the community. The research project utilized the principles of Evaluation Research to make the determinations regarding the media program. There has been a movement away from the historical quantitative research methodologies towards a naturalistic inquiry approach. As a result, many new and interesting forms of research have emerged. The process of Evaluation Research is described one of these methods. Although there are many variants of practice-as-inquiry, the researcher remains critically engaged throughout the process of research. Donald Schon, as quoted by Newman, 2000) asserts that practice-as-inquiry is conducted principally to

inform and change on-going practice. For Schon, inquiry occurs when the practitioner reflects both while engaged in action and subsequently on the action itself. This process of research and engagement was suitable for use in assessing the research question.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

This chapter examines two literature review components. The first review component is an examination of the relevant organizational documents. The second component involves a review of the literature discussing organizational culture, leadership, and the need for effective media relations.

Organizational Documents

The first section examines the relevant organizational documents within the Saanich Police, and the significance or relevance that each document holds within the context of police media relations. To achieve the desired goal of an effective working relationship between the Saanich Police and the media, an overview of the organizational literature within the Saanich Police is required. A review of the organization's goals, philosophy, and strategic objectives is an important component that requires examination. The current literature within the Saanich Police, relating to the project, will be examined to determine if the relevance of the organizational documents is congruent with the overall goals, philosophy, and objectives of the organization.

The legislation that provides the overriding template for the Saanich media policy is the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. The Saanich Police media policy states that all public releases must, "comply with the provisions of the Freedom of Information and

Protection of Privacy Act” (Saanich Police 2002). The scope of the Act will not be addressed within this project, but the media release provisions are clearly governed by this legislation. Issues such as the release of personal information, suspect names, young offender information, addresses, and departmental records are all covered by the legislation and the Saanich media policy conforms parallel to the legislation.

The Saanich Police (2002, p.24) Strategic Plan states that,

The community’s perception of how effective we are as a police department is often based on what is seen in the media and on information received from persons who have had first hand dealings with the Department. Our public image is therefore critical to our success.

The core statement is consistent with the need for effective media relations. In order to achieve the desired goal of improved or sustained public perception, the Department recognizes the role that the media play in the overall delivery of Departmental public perception. As a result, the strategic plan examines the need to, “ improve existing relationships and promote the development of new relationships with the general public, including the media.”(Saanich Police Strategic Plan, 2002. p.33)

The strategic plan further states the need to enhance media relations by ensuring that there is a mutual understanding of collective needs and strive to meet those needs. This Department recognition of the relationships between the department and the media is consistent with the goals of the research project. The need to establish or improve police/media relations has been addressed and articulated within the strategic plan.

The Saanich police departmental policy (See Appendix F) with regards to media relations provides insight into some of the dynamics at work within the realm of police/media releases. The media policy states that the Department is committed to being open and cooperative with the media where and when it is appropriate to do so. The policy further states however that;

The public has a right to be informed about the services the Saanich Police Department provides to them. However, the right to know is not absolute, The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act prohibits the release of personal information which we collect and hold, subject only to those exceptions provided in the Act. Moreover, investigative techniques and sensitive law enforcement issues must remain confidential if the Department is to remain effective in fulfilling its mandate. (Saanich Police, 2002, Media Relations Policy, p.2)

This requirement for the police to withhold information relating to investigative techniques and sensitive law enforcement issues, and yet maintain an open and forthright relationship with the community is where the break down in communication occurs. The Media Policy is structured to allow all officers of the Saanich Police to conduct media interviews relating to minor incidents. In fact, the policy dictates that an assigned member of the Uniform Division will be tasked with the added role of being the “media officer” for their twelve-hour shift. This is designed to ensure 24-hour/7 day coverage for media requests. The challenges facing this current system have been previously outlined and there are many instances where the system has broken down. When a more serious incident occurs, the policy allows for a media

officer to be assigned who will under the instruction of the officer in charge, release information to the public. The Saanich Police (2002) media policy states,

In keeping with the spirit of openness and cooperation, all officers at the scene of a minor incident will be empowered to release information to the media about the incident, subject to the conditions set out in the media relations policy and procedures. (p.2)

The media officers within the Patrol Division have a multitude of tasks and responsibilities as members of the front line police response units. Section 8 of the media policy (Saanich Police, 2002) states that media relations' officers' will:

- a) prepare media releases on incidents of interest and fax them to the media,
- b) monitor and update the media on incidents as they evolve,
- c) take part in radio or television interviews where the investigator at the scene is unavailable or prefers not to participate,
- d) handle all inquiries from the media,
- e) in an effort to inform the public or seek their assistance, prepare press releases and participate in interviews to disseminate information on:
 - i. human interest stories,
 - ii. current crime prevention campaigns,
 - iii. enforcement drives, and
 - iv. crime problems.

This current policy gives the patrol media officers' many options in dealing with the media. The policy creates a larger responsibility where media officers may not have the one critical resource available to deal with media demands, time. One media policy responsibility, "handle all inquiries from the media," may be so time onerous that the ability to respond to the media, and maintain the responsibility as directed within the media policy, may be simply impossible to achieve. If the front line duties of the media officer create demands on the officer's time, then it is the media requests that are put on standby, and the breakdown in information to the media, and therefore the public occurs. The overall requirement for the patrol officer to serve the public throughout the general course of duties can limit the officer's ability to respond to media requests

Another area of concern with the media policy is the ability of the media officer to release a "general description of the incident to the media." This puts the onus once again on the individual media officer to determine what constitutes an appropriate general description of an event. Too little information may leave the media feeling dissatisfied with the lack of detail in the release, and too much information may delve into the area of investigative techniques and sensitive law enforcement issues that are not for public knowledge.

Previous faxed media releases also were reviewed for the research project. These earlier media releases were saved and posted within the office for information purposes. An examination of these past releases helps provide insight into any potential issues that members of the police, media, or public may have. The vast majority of the releases examined were brief and succinct. Some of the examined releases appeared to have been prepared in a rush and little information was provided on the releases. An example of one such media release is,

The Saanich Police Department attended the 600 block of Kerr Ave. in response to a single vehicle accident. Police arrived and found the vehicle fully engulfed in flames. The one occupant was transported to the Victoria General Hospital with critical injuries. Police are investigating the cause of this accident. (Saanich Police Media Release, 2002)

The information provided within this media release is very brief. The nature of having an accident, fire, and critical injuries, would surely provoke further media enquiries in relation to this incident. The need to put as much information as possible into a media release is crucial in helping the media receive the necessary information, and thereby informing the public of the incident.

The review of previous media fax releases also highlighted the abundance of third party releases. Many of the media releases were created and distributed to the media by the officer who is on duty at the front desk of the Saanich Police. This officer, while still on duty, is assigned to remain within the police station to handle walk in enquiries from the public. As a result, the front desk officer is not on the road participating in calls for service. Could this create a situation where the police officer is releasing third-hand information to the public and does this hamper effective communication between the department and the media. This could create a situation where the front desk officer is unable to effectively relate the circumstance outlined within the media release.

Review of Supporting Literature

The improvement of the media relations program at the Saanich Police requires a reflective investigation into the relevant literature that is available. Key concepts such as Leadership,

Organizational Culture and The Need for Effective Media Relations will provide insight into some of the challenges and opportunities that the program face. This literature review will assist the researcher in the search for appropriate questions to help solve some of the issues and provide a contextual foundation for the research project. The media and the police are both part of the bigger system of “community” and the literature review hopefully addresses some of the “gaps” that are present within the current police/media relationship.

Leadership

The key concept of leadership speaks to the ability within the media relations program and the Saanich Police department to effectively achieve the goals within the Strategic Plan. My goal is to examine the current leadership culture within the scope of the project, and to create a container that will be of maximum benefit to the media relations program. How can the use of effective leadership be implemented to address the current state of the Saanich Police media relations program? How can personal leadership skills be used to foster change within the media program and the department overall? Through effective leadership skills the relationship with the media can be maximized to ensure that the community is best served by the Saanich Police media program. If we are successful in improving the leadership capacity of the media program then the foundation can be created that will lead to a sustainable media program for the police and the community. By achieving co-operation with the media and the community, we can succeed in making the media program better and therefore ultimately serve the public in a more effective manner.

“In cooperation, people realize that they are successful when others succeed and are oriented toward aiding each other to perform effectively” (Kouzes and Posner, 1995, p.133). To

determine if this leadership mindset is present within the media program is one of the goals of the research. What is the overall role of leadership within the media program at the Saanich Police department? Is there a lack of leadership that is having a negative effect on the program and in turn the information being provided to the community? A research enquiry into the principles of leadership and the resulting effect on the media program is necessary to address the research question.

What is leadership and how will it apply to the research question? Recent literature is full of a multitude of definitions regarding effective leadership. Margaret Wheatley (1996) observes, “leadership is knowing when someone needs help, and being prepared to do something about it” (Wheatley and Rogers, 1996).

Leadership has been described as the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how it can be done effectively, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish the shared objectives (Yukl, 2002) Regardless of the written words used, the premise of leadership involves the interaction between people and the process of communication and influence.

Kouzes and Posner (1995) describe five fundamental practices of exemplary leadership as: Challenging the process, inspiring a shared vision, enabling others to act, modeling the way, and encouraging the heart (Kouzes and Posner, 1995) The test of leadership being held in the eyes of others and the relationships that are developed between the parties. From what I have ascertained through the readings, the common themes are the positive influencing of others and the ability to foster relationships with those with whom you have contact. Where is the leadership within the Saanich Police media program?

How does one gauge or measure an effective leader? Kouzes and Posner (1995) highlighted the five competencies listed previously. Others like Yukl have listed measuring benchmarks that can be used to ascertain leadership effectiveness. Examples include; the effectiveness of the organizational unit, the attitude of the followers toward the leader, contributions to the quality of the group process, and whether the leader improves the quality of work life and the self confidence of others (Yukl, 2002)

Robert Greenleaf highlighted the principles of servant leaders as: great capacity to listen and truly understand others, objectivity and non-judgmental behaviour, accepting personal responsibility for making things better, rather than blaming, and lastly, respect for others is core to servant leadership and is indicative of “a deep belief in the unlimited potential of each person” (McGee-Cooper, 2000).

The underlying element of trust within the relationship is an area that appears to be consistent throughout the readings. Kouzes and Posner state, “the consistent living out of values is a behavioural way of demonstrating honesty and trustworthiness” (Kouzes and Posner, 1995, p.29) Yukl states “empowerment is more feasible when there is a high level of mutual trust” (Yukl, 2002, p.109).

Another area of enquiry is the differences between leadership and management. The terms are often used interchangeably within the workplace. Does a manager display the characteristics of leadership? Is a leader a manager? There are circumstances when leaders are not managers and vice versa, the role of leadership and management is contextual in nature. Some writers believe that leadership and management are qualitatively different and mutually exclusive (Zaleznik, as cited by Yukl, 2002). This definition would indicate that a person could not be a leader and a manager at the same time. Traditional management practice implies that the ideal organization can

and should be run like clockwork. This analytical approach is not consistent with the leader who makes sure that people benefit when behaviour is aligned with cherished values (Kouzes and Posner, 1995, p.14).

The need of the organization to have a unified approach appears to be incongruent with the principles of leadership. The ability to foster sufficient internal openness to encourage freedom of action and entrepreneurial initiative (O'Toole, 1996) is something that much organization would hope to avoid. The para-military structure of a police department is not conducive to "freedom of action" when there needs to be clear direction and task specific assignments. The freedom to choose action does not exist. Bennis states that conformity is the enemy of leadership (Bennis as cited by O'Toole, 1996). The need to find the balance between the individual need to be creative and the corporate need to have unity seems to be the great challenge of organizational leadership.

The common threads within the literature would indicate that management is about the process and that leadership is about the people with whom you interact. The need to instill purpose and willingness in others appears to come from within, whereas the management needs to control the environment and the external complexities of the organization, and does not include the elements of emotional relationships. Can a person be a leader and a manager at the same time? I believe they can and that the answer lies within the context of the moment. Certain situations will require the tools of a manager and other will need the relationship of a leader. In fact, elements of both are necessary for the survival of an organization. Kouzes and Posner describe leadership as "the art of mobilizing others to want to struggle for shared aspirations" (Kouzes and Posner, 1995, p.30) so does the leader within a given organization have to be the manager? The definition provided by Kouzes and Posner would indicate no. Anyone within the

organization can be a leader who has the ability to mobilize the shared vision. In the context of the research question, the ability to make improvements with the media relations program at the Saanich Police requires someone to champion the aspiration of improved communications with the community and encourage others to lead.

The need for effective leadership within policing has never been greater. The ability to foster leadership abilities in all police officers is paramount if the community is to be served by the police at its highest potential. Anyone working within the organization can be a leader and many police officers, regardless of rank, are already leading within their organizations. Issues relating to an officer's ability to lead from within are complex, but can certainly be associated and interconnected with the current organizational culture that exists within police work.

Organizational Culture

A literature review of organizational culture establishes the relevance of organizational culture to the research question. The media program is structured within the Saanich Police and is affected by the culture of both the media and the police organizations. Media relations issues are affected by the organizational cultures present within the Saanich Police department and the media members who work with the department on media issues. There may be systemic barriers to effective media relations as a result of ingrained values or assumptions by members of the police and media organizations. To assess the current media relations program within the Saanich Police there is a need to establish the current organizational culture that exists within the department and its effect on the effective delivery of the media program.

Culture, as defined in the Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, is "the integrated pattern of human behaviour that includes thought, speech, action, and artifacts and depends on man's

capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations” (Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary as quoted by Harrison, 1998, p.2). Anthropologist Clyde Kluckhohn defined culture as a “set of habitual and traditional ways of thinking, feeling, and reacting that are characteristic of the ways a particular society meets its problems at a particular time (Kluckhohn, 1949, p.17)

Organizational theorists began to associate the term “culture,” in the context of a corporate setting. In the 1980’s the phrase “organizational culture” was used as a metaphor for various leadership practices within organizational settings (Lakowski, 2001). The term then developed to a much broader scope and was described as a “system of beliefs and actions that characterize a particular group. Culture is a unique whole-the shared ideas, custom, assumptions, expectations, philosophy, traditions, morals, and values that determines how a group of people will behave”(O’Toole, 1995, p.71). There are many instances within our lives that this group characteristic applies. Besides professional life, there are many other instances ranging from the schools, clubs, and the neighbourhoods and communities in which we live.

Determining the organizational culture of an organization is not as easy as reading the espoused set of values framed on an office wall. These are the ideal beliefs that an organization hopes to achieve within the organizational setting. The reality of organizational culture is that the values, beliefs, and norms expressed in the actual practice and behaviour of an organization may not be congruent with the values that the organization is hoping to achieve (Hagberg and Heiftz, 2000). An organization may have the espoused value of open communication with all employees. The reality may be far from this if there is an underlying belief within the organization that criticism or disagreement should be avoided. The end result is a lack of communication and not the espoused value of open communication.

Corporate culture can be looked at as a system that is ever changing. The inputs received can include feedback from society, professions, laws, stories, heroes, values, etc. The process is based on assumptions regarding values and norms and result in organizational behaviours that can involve image, technologies, strategies, products, and appearance (McNamara, 1999).

Organizational culture operates at both the conscious and unconscious level. Many times, those who observe an organization from the outside are the ones who can observe the culture more clearly. The beliefs values, and norms are often firmly rooted into the unconscious minds of those working within the organization and it is the eyes of an outsider looking in to the workplace that can observe the culture best (Hagberg and Heiftz, 2000).

The underlying beliefs representing the culture of the organization are learned responses to problems of survival in the external environment (Yukl, 2002). This theory of learning to adapt to the surroundings are passed on from one generation to another as traits that are handed down to others. A person who is new to the group or organization may not be aware of the beliefs and assumptions. These would be developed as the newcomer is assimilated into the culture. But is there no ability to change once the organizational culture has been established and entrenched? Yukl would indicate that it is possible to change the organizational culture to improve the organization. One example of such a change involved the Chrysler Corporation. The giant automaker had suffered from poor customer service and media relations. The reputation of the automaker revolved around outdated products and poor customer service where there had previously existed a reputation of leading edge innovation. With a vision of leading the world as a quality truck and car manufacturer, Chrysler started a cultural change program called Customer One.

The resulting turnaround within the Chrysler Corporation was outstanding. Overhead was cut by \$4.2 billion dollars and a company that was starting to slide into bankruptcy was now profitable (Toolpack Consulting, 2002). The key component of the Customer One program was the involvement of people. People were included in every step of the process to harness the best ideas and creativity. Assembly line workers and mechanics were consulted six months prior before production started. The process of involving people even included those who did not work for the company, the consumers. Consumers were contacted and feedback was provided to the process prior to the beginning of production. The inclusion of people in the decision making process is key to establishing effective change. As described by Kline and Saunders, as cited by Gehl, 2000:

As they've moved towards a high tech environment, all too many companies have completely ignored the other half of the necessary balance, they've ignored high touch. But the human factor must be dealt with as effectively as the systems, the machines, the accounts and the strategic plans. Overlooking the human factor is bound to be the costliest mistake any organization can make (p.37).

Other areas of change included the agreement on objectives. Determining the objectives early and involving everyone in the process was very successful in transforming the organizational culture within the corporation. There was an ownership in the process at all levels. The end result was a slow, deliberate, transformational change within the organizational culture.

Is there an opportunity to change the organizational culture within the Saanich Police department? Unlike a business, there is no bottom line to make profit in the realm of policing.

There are however some very strong-shared assumptions that are unique to the policing profession. Edward H. Schein describes organizational culture as a set of shared assumptions about the world of work within a particular profession (Schein as cited by Wilkinson, Forgarty, and Melville, 1996). This is an apt description for the world of policing as a profession and the Saanich Police department as an organization.

Police culture is sustained through the way new members are selected, trained, accepted into the police ranks (Harrison, 1998). Through the initial selection process potential police officers are assessed to determine both their ability and their compatibility to the police organization. The criteria for employment selection is based on what the organization deem to be most important in the search for potential police officers. The outcome of the process is to ensure that only the most fit and best suited for a career in law enforcement will be hired. Even in these early stages of pre-employment, the assimilation into the police organizational culture begins.

Once the police employ a candidate they are sent off to the police academy for training. The teachers at these institutions are mostly police officers. The assimilation into the police culture continues with the use of police “war stories” for training purposes (Drummond, 1976, p.16). Throughout the training process the police culture is sustained by the para-military structure including uniform, rank, and department. This structure, mixed with the current process of field training a new recruit by an experienced member, guides the recruit through the process of assimilation. The traditions and values held by the police are “taught” as the recruit completes the training process within the department. The recruit will often be observed to excel during the training process if they meet the expectations of the fellow members. The natural instinct of wanting to be accepted by a peer group is powerful in creating a foundation of assimilation into the organization.

Researcher Jeffrey Sonnefield identified four types of cultures: The Academy Culture, The Baseball Team Culture, The Club Culture, and The Fortress Culture (Sonnefield, as quoted by McNamara, 1999). Within the Club Culture, the important requirement is for the employees within this culture to fit into the group. Usually employees start at the bottom and stay with the organization. The organization promotes from within and highly values seniority. Examples are the military and policing where new recruits are looking to be accepted by their peers. The desire to achieve the recognition of this peer group is often considered essential to achieve corresponding success within the organization.

The Need for Effective Media Relations

For there to be any value in moving forward with improvements within the media relations program, there will have to be evidence provided that would support the need for improvement. This area of the review will deal with literature and research that support the value of having good media/ public relations. There is not a great deal of research involving police organizations so much of the review will be focused on the corporate world. The other aspect of this sub-topic will involve the specific need for the Saanich Police to have good media relations. The benefits of the local program will also be researched through the use of local documents relating to community feedback, as well as outside documents relating to other jurisdictions. This will help support “the need” for having a strong media relations program.

The Saanich Police Department implemented a media relations program approximately seven years ago. The overall goal of the program is to increase the department’s visibility and the communication between the department and the community. But does the Saanich Police need to continue to develop and commit resources to a media program? As a public institution of the

Municipality of Saanich, there must be some justification for the expenditure of a committed media relations program for a service that is a requirement of the municipal government.

The Saanich Police currently has a good level of citizen satisfaction regarding the policing services provided to the community (Saanich Community Survey, unpublished data, 1999). The need to continue with a positive media program in policing is needed as the media continue to play an ever-increasing role in shaping the way people feel about the police (RCMP Media Guide, unpublished work, 1998). Police departments in Canada have tended to work in isolation and have been considered the sole experts in the field of public safety. Scrutiny from outside sources has increased in recent years (Lebeuf, 1998, p. 12). The Saanich Police departments is no exception to this increased scrutiny and needs the support of the community if the desired goal of the departmental Mission Statement is to be met; that is,

“To provide the highest quality of police service in order to ensure the safety and security of the community of Saanich.”

Saanich Police Mission Statement, 2002

In order to achieve this goal the police will require and depend upon the assistance of the public. All police work requires public support (Rivers, 1989). The community support for an organization is largely held within the reputation that the organization holds within the community. Many of the citizens of the Saanich area receive news in relation to the department through the local media. It is the image that is portrayed by the media that will help or hinder the departmental reputation within the community. Reputation is key in the realm of good police/community relations. Public relations are defined by the Institute of Public Relations as

the discipline that looks after reputation (Beard, 1997). The need for the police to have a good public relations program is critical to the continued success of the police organization as a whole. The need for new thinking in the area of public relations within policing is highlighted by historical institutional roles. The police must be prepared to challenge the definition of their own role. Failure to do so and the police run the risk of being trapped in their traditional role of enforcer or issuers of tickets (LeBeuf, 1998).

The relational frame of reference is described by Coombs as “relational stability” or “relational history” (Coombs as cited by Ledingham and Bruning, 2000). This relational frame of reference must be taken into consideration when dealing with police related media issues. The ongoing relationships that have been formed by members of the police and the media are vital to fostering a good relational framework. The existence of a strong relational history is an asset to an organization, as the benefits will include strong credibility, positive credits, and the halo effect (Coombs as cited by Ledingham and Bruning, 2000). I have been involved in media issues where previous relational history has been of benefit to both the department and myself. It is the building of these long-term relationships that will enhance the positive benefits of relational history. By highlighting the good news stories the “relational history” as described by Coombs will improve. A “progressive police department will make sure that good stories reach the media” (Staszak, 2001, p.12) and this will in turn assist with the relational history that the department is trying to establish.

One component of police/ media relations that provides an area for improvement is partnerships. There has been a long-standing wariness that exists between the police and the members of the media. This worldview has been identified in the police culture as an “us-them”

worldview. Many people within the policing culture see us (police) vs. them (civilians) (O'Connor, 2001). Obviously, the need for partnerships exists if the relational history is going to be positive. LeBeuf describes partnerships as any action designed to create durable working relations (LeBeuf, 1998). The police have recognized that they cannot deal with social problems alone and the need for partnership between the police and the community is vital to departmental success. One element of creating successful partnerships is the establishment of trust within the police department and the community.

Trust has been described as the heart of fostering collaboration (Kouzes and Posner, 1995). It is the central issue in human relationships and it is a vital component in building healthy police/media collaboration. The trust can exist on a professional level and there needs to be a healthy respect for the positions of both the police and the media to ensure that effective communication is being achieved.

The changing scope of media presence is also an issue that the modern police department has to cope with. Many media companies have decreased newsroom operations through budget reductions, smaller wages, and longer hours of work. Within the last few years' media companies have eliminated over 3100 newsroom jobs within the United States. (Harwood, as cited by Staszak, 2001) The resulting outcome of having fewer media reporters in a given organization has led to the need for reporters to cover a wider range of stories involving greater knowledge and expertise. The new age reporter is asked to cover a wide range of topics and stories and the covering of police issues may only be one of many tasks that a reporter will receive when assigned to a story. This has placed the police in the unique position of becoming the educator on police issues. The reporter whose primary assignment tasking may not be police related issues will be looking to the police for clarification on many issues within the policing

role. The end goal of the media relations officer within the police department will be to present the department in a positive image and to ensure that the “reputation” of the department as described by Beard (1997) is upheld. Many times this role manifests itself as that of an educator. The role of the media officer often involves explaining police actions to both the media and the public. This will ensure continued community support for the department and will form one component of the interconnected system of police/ community/ and the media.

The need to develop a good media relations program is critical to dealing effectively with police/media issues. Many experts are predicting that both private and public organizations will be confronted with critical incidents that are likely to increase in both number and severity (Vendrell, 1996). As a result the need to plan for critical incidents takes on a greater urgency. In the field of policing, the reality of confronting a critical incident involving media involvement is inevitable.

The need to address a critical incident is paramount in maintaining good relations with the public. Issues such as appropriate apologies, speed of media coverage, training for crisis, issues management, and spokespersons all need to be addressed prior to having to face a critical crisis (Ashcroft, 1997).

Positive relational history will become of value when this critical incident occurs but the need for an effective media relations plan to deal with a critical incident is crucial. Good relations with the media will only assist the critical incident and will not ensure success without a critical incident plan. Of course, an organization will need a media program to be in place to be in possession of such a plan.

Wells and Spinks state, “Community relations are some of the most important communication activities carried on by an organization (Wells and Spinks, 1999). In the realm of policing, an

argument could be made that community relations is the most important activity carried out by a department. To survive in its community an organization needs to be welcomed. Policing is dependent on the maintenance of favourable relations with the community in which it is located. Communicating with the media can be a life threatening function of organizational communication (Wells and Spinks, 1999). A positive effort to keep the media fully and timely informed about an organization's activities is another way to secure favourable media coverage. Police departments, like any other organization are no exception. The goal of achieving timely relations with the media and therefore the community may be one of the potential

CHAPTER THREE

Research Methodology

Research Methods

This chapter will examine the research methodology used in the study of this project. The project focused on the use of action research to help understand the "complex human experience" (Hamilton, Greer, Parsons and Dewar, 2002, p10). As a current member of the department, and an assigned media relation's officer, the researcher was actively involved in the research. A naturalistic inductive (Patton, as quoted by Ratcliff, 2002) view, utilizing aspects of participatory action research (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1990), was applied to this project. The theory that action research has no "perfect answer" to organizational problems, and that problem solving is a cyclical process that is characterized by ongoing reassessment and fine-tuning.

Action research allowed the researcher to work within the framework of the research project and engage people within the media relations program. The ability to foster a teamwork

approach within the appreciative inquiry into problem solving was critical to the success of the project. As presented by Mellish and Limerick (2000), Appreciative Inquiry has been broken down into four distinct principles.

The first principle of Appreciative Inquiry is Appreciation. The researcher's appreciation and positive outlook at delving into the participant's experiences forms the foundation and conduit for which shared meanings can evolve. The process of story telling goes far beyond mere functionality and the diversity that is present during the dialogue process is celebrated. This in turn allows a new reality to develop and new ideas of thinking and ways of being to emerge. The ability to appreciate the diversity and the depth of the participants increases the richness of the process and therefore the richness of the content of the discussion.

The second principle of Appreciative Inquiry is Application. The purpose of the inquiry "is to discover what works and to do more of it so as to generate energy," (Mellish and Limerick, 2000) and to ascertain the capacity of the group itself and the greater strength of the participants. This energy is used to develop a new future of what counts from an applied perspective.

Thirdly, the principle of Provocation is applied so that the participants are able to experiment because of the appreciation of their own unique contributions. The questions are put to the participants in such a manner so as to stimulate conversation and to indulge into the possibilities of 'what if.'

The last principle of Appreciative Inquiry is the Collaboration of the stakeholders. Once the contributions have been appreciated and the diversity of the participants has led to the developed of multiple options, the stories will unfold and interdependencies will become clearer. A new future and a new way forward will emerge, as participants are willing and able to operate in the

collective environment, which are both personally and collectively meaningful (Mellish and Limerick, 2000).

The collaborative search for solutions to problems assisted with finding solutions to the research question. As a result, the research utilized aspects of action evaluation within the project (Proust, as quoted by Rothman, 1999). Some of the main components of the Action Evaluation research process include; Focusing on promoting successful outcomes, integrating program development and implementation from the very beginning, identifying views that may be in conflict and creating a safe place for their engagement, and using the cycle of reflection-action-reflection-action to modify and revise action plans throughout the life of a project.

The systems of Action Evaluation research were suitable for addressing the worth of the media relations program and the improvements and challenges that were identified. The process of Action Evaluation research was condensed into three distinct research areas identified as information gathering, comparisons, and determinations of worth (Greer, 2002). The process of information collection begins with the information gathering. The process of quantifying or qualifying the “what is” component of the research is then followed by the creation of a statement of “what should be” based on what is valued by the participants of the research. This comparison forms the basis of the second phase of the research. The comparison of the knowledge gained against an already articulated standard reveals discrepancies between the “what is” and the “what should be.” The final stage is the determination of worth. During the evaluation we judge the worth, effectiveness, appropriateness, and outcomes of the activities (Stringer, as cited by Smith, 2001). We are then able to act and formulate possible solutions to any the identified problems. The participants had the ability to become involved and engaged in the research and to be part of the cyclical process of the research system. Action research created

an arena where the participant acted as an agent for the change process and their input to the research question provided experience, self-reflection, observations, and cooperation. The qualitative nature of the research allowed participants to express their personal insights into the research question. This in turn also provided insight into possible solutions to any perceived problems encountered by the participants. This process allowed for “ownership” of the participants comments, by including the participants in both the data gathering process and the solution oriented process of mutual enquiry to address any problems and opportunities.

Stage One: Information Gathering

The information gathered included both qualitative and quantitative data during the research project. Both the “what is” and “what should be” questions were addressed in relation to the media program, including the programs origins, goals, successes, and challenges. The information gathered was through a review of literature materials pertinent to the research topic including organizational documents, and research conducted. One goal of the participants’ involvement in the research was to confirm or contradict the available literature. The literature review formed a foundation that the media relations’ assessment was built upon, and ensured that the major project was sound with regards to the principles of evaluation research. Once the foundation was established, the process of gathering information specific to the project began. It was this gathered information that was used to proceed forward onto the next step of the process.

Stage Two: Comparisons (Judgments)

This stage was used when the information was gathered to compare other similar programs, and whether the current program is meeting the “goals” as defined within the internal documents such as mission statements and departmental policy. There was an analysis of the information

gathered, and a determination to assess the media program. The establishment of assumptions and the creation of a practical theory with regards to police/media programs were challenged by the collection of data. This theoretical perspective with regard to media relations' inferences was supported by the data obtained. Of course, the possibility also existed where the data did not support the predetermined beliefs. In this event, the data would challenge the theoretical perspective, and new mental models have to be created that could be supported by the know data. The research and data would either refute or support the practical theory established by the researcher and the prepossessed mental models regarding the research project.

The process of cycling through phases of developing, testing, and confirming or rejecting "working hypotheses" was required (Hopkins, as cited by Greer, 2002). The overall systems that exist between the many elements involved with the media program would also be examined. Looking at the issues within the media program from a systems perspective assisted with the critical thinking required to assess the implications of change, and the interactions that are present between all the participants including the police and the community. By examining the literature available, and the best practices of other organizations, a benchmark could be established that would determine the worth of the media program, based on the information and data gathered that is specific to the Saanich Police media relations program.

Stage Three: Determinations of worth

This area of focus relates to the successes and failures of the media program, and the addressing of areas that are considered current challenges. The intent is to approach the evaluation research in the context of Formative Evaluation. This can be described as a "a method of judging the worth of a program while the program activities are forming or happening." Formative evaluation focuses on the process (Bhola, 1990). With the intention of helping with

the growth and development of the media program that is currently in existence, there requires continuous feedback from participants in a program in order to revise the program as needed, with the intent that the media program will remain a critical component of the Saanich police department.

Although the overall worth of the program was addressed within the project, a Summative Evaluation did not take place, as the canceling of the media program was not an issue being addressed. The practical theory would be tested throughout the process of data collection, analyzing, and reporting to help determine the worth of the overall program and any issues that needed to be addressed. Once the benchmark or determination of worth is established, the project then moved forward into the areas of change supported by the data. The media program can benefit from the recommendations and implementation of any changes that increase both the effectiveness and impact of the program in relation to the overall strategic plan of the Saanich Police department.

The media program is a connected system of interpersonal contacts that includes the media officer, other police officers, police management, members of the media, and the public. It is the perceptions and experiences with regard to the media program that will require a qualitative approach. Does the media program achieve the goals intended? What is the perception in regards to the current state of the program? Public perception is a critical component in gauging the success of the program. The end product of reaching out to members of the community in a positive and pro-active manner is what good media relations are attempting to achieve. This perception is qualitative in nature and will require community input to determine if the goals are being met or achieved.

Is the media program achieving the goals as laid out with the documents? The answers to these questions are qualitative and subjective in nature, based on perceptions within the community and the department.

The quantitative data was provided by the external research involving an online survey. Some data is from other areas of policing related to the media and some are media/ public relations based, not specific to media issues but organizations in general. The data collected from these surveys and assessments is quantitative in nature and will help assess the practical theory that is established.

Data Gathering Tools

The means for gathering the information included an electronic survey, individual interviews, and a focus group. The individual interviews were taped with a cassette recorder, and were held in a neutral location. The interviews with the members of the police department were conducted in the “soft” interview room located at the Saanich Police department and the office of the researcher. Both rooms provided a quiet area conducive to conversation without distraction. The soft interview room is furnished to resemble a small living room with couches, chairs, tables, and lamps. The video and audio recording equipment are hidden from view in an effort to make people feel comfortable within the setting. The Saanich police utilize this room for the interviewing primarily of children. After setting up the physical environment for the interviews, a process for welcoming the participants, explaining the nature of the process including the consent form, and the collecting and signing of the consent forms was conducted.

Electronic Survey

The data gathering for this project occurred in three phases. The first phase was facilitated through the use of an electronic survey made available by Royal Roads University. Blockwatch members of the Saanich Police department tested this survey. The Saanich Police currently has approximately 5700 homes participating in the Blockwatch program (Saanich Police, 2002). This program includes 650 block captains and 16 area coordinators. It was the 14 area coordinators of the Blockwatch program who tested the electronic survey for both accessibility and content, and provided valuable feedback to the researcher. Once the feedback loop was completed, the updated survey link was forward to members of the Blockwatch community by the area coordinators. Members of the community completed a total of 79 electronic surveys.

The goal of the electronic community survey was to gather information from members of the public concerning the Saanich Police and the media presence currently established within the community. The need to learn more about our present community position was vital in determining whether the Saanich Police is conducting public relations in an effective manner at this time. The public perception of the Saanich police department is critical in maintaining public support. Another area of interest involved the manner in which members of the community receive their information relating to police activities. First, do the public receive a steady stream of pertinent police information? Second, what form does the information take, be it television, radio, print, or even word of mouth.

Interviews

The second phase of the information gathering process involved the use of personal interviews. Personal insights were required to analyze a variety of issues. Participants were selected based on positions of representation, with participants of varying backgrounds providing

a broad variety of feedback. The media members would have different concerns and issues than the police personnel. As a result, the research attempted to have representation from stakeholders from all the concerned user groups in order to accurately capture the issues at hand.

Focus Group – Retired Police Officers

The third phase of the information gathering process utilized a focus group of retired police officers. The purpose of the focus group was to generate discussion that was participative in nature. The strength of the focus group process as described by Dreaschlin (1998) was as follows, “among the greatest strengths of the focus group is its capacity to harness the power of human interaction by capitalizing on relationships and, consequently, generating insights that might not otherwise emerge (Dreaschlin, 1998, p.1). The group dynamics also provided an arena for positive challenge in relation to the current media systems and the organizational culture. The purpose of conducting the research group with retired members was to gain insight into the power of the police organizational culture and determine the role that culture has on the effective delivery of the media program

Study Conduct

Data Gathering

Overview

This following discussion will describe the various steps and processes used in completing the research project. Several factors were considered prior to the implementation of the three-phase research model utilizing the electronic survey, individual interviews, and a focus group. First, the creation of an information document was identified as being a critical element for the research project. The atmosphere within the working environment of the participants demanded a clear

and concise overview of the study and the reasons thereof. The need for the participants to understand the linkage between the researcher's personal educational endeavours, and the benefits to the Saanich police were outlined in the introductory literature.

The introductory literature provided a foundation for conducting the research process. It also allowed the researcher to set the context for the data gathering process and attempted to remove any angst or concern related to political or personal agendas that may have come into play within the working environment. The research involved the participation of volunteers from various groups to provide a broad spectrum for feedback in relation to the project.

Researcher Bias

Prior to engaging in the actual collection of data and working with the participants, there needed to be an examination of my own personal bias. Regardless of the information gathered, there is still the task of filtering that information through the predetermined mindset of the researcher. The conclusions drawn from gathered information can be affected by the predisposition of the researcher

According to Douglass and Moustakas, the first phase in any qualitative study must include the researcher looking at their personal bias and preconceived notions of what will be found before the research project begins (Douglass and Moustakas, as cited by Strevers, 1984). The researcher's influence on both research process and research findings are summed up by Palys (1997) "Researchers are people, too, after all: like everyone, they bring certain understandings and values along on their voyage of discovery. If that baggage goes unacknowledged, social scientists risk becoming 'knowledge lobbyists' whose 'truths' reflect little more than personal biases" (p. 6). As a result, there is a need to self-reflect on any personal bias that I may possess before entering into the research portion of the project.

Prior to conducting the research project, I recognized my position as one of the assigned media officers for the Saanich Police. Having acted in the capacity of media officer since 1996, I have encountered a great deal of successes and challenges through the process of interaction with the media. Also, I have instructed other police officers in media relations training and have interjected my personal opinions into the learning environment. My personal bias leaned towards the development of better systems for interaction between the police and the media. I have witnessed first hand some of the frustrations experienced by the police members and the media members. As a result, I entered into the research project looking for ways to improve the current media relations program. At the time, I had no qualitative or quantitative data that supported the need for change and improvement. The bias was clearly looking for change, yet there was no conclusive data to supporting a change in the program. While conducting the research project, I was cognizant of my predetermined position and worked to not impose this bias on any of the participants. The participants of the online survey were able to submit their feedback without any input from the researcher. The participants in the interviews and focus group portions of the research project worked within a framework of mutual enquiry to collaborate on the collection of knowledge. The researcher was careful not to interject personal opinions into the process. The use of open-ended questions assisted with maintaining a neutral position during the data collection and the ability to simply effectively “listen to the voices” of the participants was of incredible value.

Participant Groups

The key participants within the major project were the following four groups: media, current police, community, and retired police members.

Some of the practical considerations included the availability and schedule of participants. There was a need to be flexibility on the part of the researcher to work within the schedules of the participants and to ensure that there was good representation from the pertinent groups. Capturing experiences of the media members and the police management was critical to the process. Preliminary conversations with potential participants was positive, but the reality of actually booking time to meet with these parties proved to be more challenging and time consuming than first planned. All participants signed informed consents and all interviews were audio taped and transcribed by a confidential secretary. The focus group was also audio taped but was not transcribed.

The Media

Representation from the various media outlets was critical in determining the current mindset of those who deal with the Saanich Police and work in conjunction with the current media relations program. The interviews were a benefit to the researcher and provided firsthand insight into the effectiveness of the systems currently being utilized by both the department and the media officers. Many of the media members have dealt with the researcher on a weekly basis for approximately four years. Their input was beneficial to the project and to conduct this project without the media would have made it incomplete in scope. The professional overview from members of the media was critical to the success of the project. The working relationship with the media is important for attaining the goals of the Saanich police strategic plan. At the end of the day, a police agency can issue a news release, but the reality remains that others write the story, the professional media members do. The need for a good working relationship is critical to our success. The media members were selected using the principles of purposive sampling. The

basis of purposive sampling is to selective chose participants from a select group based on predetermined parameters. Palys describes this sampling method as “people who are intentionally sought because they meet some criterion for inclusion in the study” (Palys, 1997, p.137). The choice of this sampling method was based on the need to have media participants who were currently working with the Saanich Police department in a professional capacity. Potential participants were contact by a letter advising of the research project.

The original goal of the project was to interview members of the media representing all the major types of news sources including radio, television, and radio. The research conducted consisted of three audio taped interviews representing members of the local media. Two reporters from a local daily newspaper, and one reporter from a local radio station were interviewed. The combined experience between the reporters was vast and two of the reporters had professional experience in various forms of media. One reporter had worked in television, radio, and print media.

The Discussions

Members of the media were invited to participate through the delivery of an introduction letter. (Appendix A) The members who received letters from the researcher made contact by phone to arrange a time that was convenient for the media members. Written consent for participation in the research project was outlined in the consent letter (Appendix B) that was presented prior to the start of the meeting. The processes involved within the consent letter were outlined and it was again stressed that the research participation was of a voluntary nature, and that consent to participate could be withdrawn by the participant at any time. The participants were also advised that the interview would be audio taped, and that the interview portion of the

tape would be transcribed at a later date. The transcription services were provided by the Saanich police as part of their support for the research project.

The questions presented to the media were created to provide an atmosphere of appreciative enquiry. The process of appreciative inquiry dismantles organizational habits of distrust, animosity, and blame, and replaces them with a willingness to learn, mutual respect, and cooperation. The goal of conducting interviews with respect and collaboration that crossed functional lines of business was to generate respect and collaboration in both the workplace and the research process. By assuming the best of people, organizations, and relationships, Appreciative inquiry leaves deficit-oriented approaches behind and offers affirmative processes for organization development (Whitney and Cooperrider, 1999). The interviews were held at the Saanich Police Department in the office of the researcher during the afternoons of the Monday to Friday workweek.

Questions relating the media included issues such as,

- 1) Can you tell me about a time that was difficult for you to obtain information from the Saanich Police? Why? What did not work for you? What would you like to see happen?
- 2) What restrictions, if any, are hampering your ability to obtain police information from this department? What do you see as a possible solution?
- 3) Describe your working relationship with the Saanich Police concerning media relation issues? How do you think that this could be strengthened?
- 4) What strengths does the Saanich Police have in the area of media relations?
- 5) What areas of opportunity or improvement do you see with the current media relations program at the Saanich Police?

- 6) Can you tell me about a time or experience dealing with the Saanich Police that was ideal for your needs as a media member? Why? What worked for you?
- 7) In your opinion, has the media officer training been an issue in any of the professional exposure you have had with the Saanich Police media officers?

The purpose of these questions was to create a level of mutual enquiry that was not confrontational in nature and provided an opportunity for the media members to partake in a process that was both give and take.

Another form of qualitative feedback was presented when other members of the media contacted the researcher by email. It appeared that the participants had mentioned to other coworkers the circumstances of the research project and there was an unplanned source of data created. Several members of the media contacted the researcher and expressed an interest in the project and wished to add input regarding the media relations program. These participants were not originally contacted to take part in the research project because of the large numbers media members working in the area and the potential scope of the project if a mass mail out was conducted. Certain participant media members were contacted and they in turn passed forward information to their co-workers regarding the research project. This input did not form part of the research project as it was both unplanned and unsolicited. However, the researcher was grateful for both the feedback and the commitment displayed by the media personnel. The desire to improve the media relations program has obviously become an area of mutual interest.

The Police – Current Media Officers and Management

The police members who participated in the research project were contacted using interdepartmental email. The goal was to have representation from members of the department

who also acted in the capacity of media relations' officers. To keep the number of required interviews to a minimum, it was believed that the media trained officers could provide useful insight into the media issues, as well as providing insight as sworn officers of the department. The participation of the police officers was voluntary and the members had a genuine interest in making a contribution to the media program. From a research perspective, the most practical time to conduct interviews was during the day shifts when the participants were working. The sessions were held at the police department and the members involved were on duty at the time of the interviews. The participating members had received prior approval from their supervisors to take time during their shifts to assist with the project. However, prior consideration was given to the length of time that the interviews would take. The reality of participants having to leave the interview for urgent calls from service was considered when creating the questions. It was hoped that no interview would take no more than 30 minutes to complete so as to not impede with the participants ability to respond to calls for service.

One member of the Saanich Police management was interviewed during the project. Although not a current media officer, this interview was needed to bring the perspective of upper management to the project. The officer interviewed has many years of experience dealing with the media and provided insight into the media program.

Prior to conducting the interviews with the Saanich Police members, consideration was given to any predisposed bias on the part of the researcher. As an active media officer and the researcher, it was incumbent for the researcher to look at the interviews with an unbiased outlook. The researcher believes there are areas within the media relations program that need attention. As such, the removal of these opinions from the interview process was essential. The researcher also acts in the capacity of training officer for the media relations' officers. As some

of the participants may have been involved in a course taught by the researcher, it was vital to ensure the interviews flowed in the direction determined by the participant, not the researcher. During media relations' instruction provided by the researcher, it is assumed that many personal opinions regarding needed change within the media program would have been passed on the learners. One of the interview goals was to gather data that was objectively obtained without any attempt to infuse the position or bias of the researcher. The researcher recognized that the previous years of media relations work could possibly impede the mutual enquiry process, if any pre-interview biases were permitted to interfere with the data gathering process. The researcher strongly believes that there are areas of challenge facing the current media relations' program, based on years of media relations' experience. During the course of the police member's interviews, it was revealed that some of the participants also share this feeling, but others do not. It was incumbent on the researcher to maintain a non-committal stance when conducting the interviews with the participants to ensure that the data gathering was truly representative of the viewpoints of the participants.

The Discussions

The interviews were conducted at the Saanich Police department and were held in the officer of the researcher. The questions asked of the officers were similar in nature to those offered to the media members and are presented in Appendix D. Some questions specific to the media officers included.

- 1) Can you think about a positive experience that you have had with members of the local media? What worked for you during that experience?

- 2) What negative experiences have you had dealing with members of the media? How did it differ from the positive times? What could have been done differently from both the media and police perspectives?
- 3) How do you feel that the portrayal of the Saanich Police is within the local media?
- 4) What areas of improvement can be made to the existing media program to improve the communication to the public and uphold the image of the department?

Again, the process was one of appreciative enquiry with the overall goal of improving the media program

The Online Survey

The second phase of the project involved the implementation of an online electronic survey. The survey was created for the general public who reside in the Municipality of Saanich. The purpose of the survey was to generate feedback on public opinions in relation to the Saanich police, and to also ascertain the means in which community members were accessing their media sources. The survey involved 15 questions including short answers and multiple choices (See Appendix E). The electronic survey was implemented using the Royal Roads University survey generator and was anonymous in nature. All participants to the electronic survey were coded with a participant number and the survey did not connect with an email system of any kind. As a result, the participants were able to link to the survey by visiting an Internet website for completion of the questionnaire. This provided true anonymity to the participants, as there was no actual direct contact between the researcher and the participants. The researcher had access to the results of the survey only and could not access any further participant information.

The first part of the survey involved demographic information pertaining to the frequency of media information that the participants receive throughout the week. This was to determine if the participants were receiving news on a regular basis in the community. Topics also covered in the first part included types of media exposure, be print, television, or radio, and the whether the local Saanich media was represented in the views of the participants. The purpose was to determine if the local “Saanich News” which is delivered weekly to the homes of the participants was providing unique coverage for the Saanich Police.

The final portion of the survey involved the public perception of the Saanich Police, as portrayed in the media reports received by the participants. The survey included multiple choice – single select questions, scale questions from 0-5, short answer questions, and a combination of multiple choice, scale, and short answers. The feedback from the survey was vital in completing this report as it was received from the ultimate participant, the general public. The entire premise of improving the Saanich Police media program was to enhance the information being delivered to these participants, and therefore the general public.

The survey was available for an eight-week period from October 10, 2002 and was removed off line on December 15, 2002. The data from the survey was downloaded from the Royal Roads University server to a XML database for compilation. The individual survey submissions were also printed off individually for future reference and held by the researcher in hard copy form in the event that computer issues arose. The paper copies of the survey participant results were kept locked in the office of the researcher, and used as a back up in the event that server or system problems prevented access to the electronic portion of the survey generator.

Focus Group- Retired Police Officers

The final portion of the data gathering process involved the use of a focus group. Scheduling issues were taken into consideration and a focus group was developed that included several retired police members. The focus group session was scheduled for a Friday morning at 10:30 hours. The purpose for this time was to ensure that the participants were still in an active frame of mind and it was the researchers goal to avoid holding the session during the Friday afternoon, where the usual distraction prevail. An agenda was developed to assist with the focus session, and the time allotted was 90 minutes.

The researcher hoped that during the focus group session the participants would provide an historical view of police /media relations. This focus group was not originally considered during the proposal stages of the research, but during the data gathering process it was increasingly clear that police organizational culture is having an influence on the current media relations program. It was hoped that the members of the focus group would provide insight through conversation into the historical aspects of the police culture to provide qualitative support for the literature review.

The session commenced with the members of the focus group introducing themselves to the other participants. The researcher had not previously met some of the participants and the round table introductions assisted with starting and sustained momentum of the session. After the introduction, agendas were handed out to facilitate discussion, and a series of topics were also posted. The researcher provided the focus group with a brief overview of the research project. Emphasis was also placed on the literature surrounding police organizational culture that was researched for this project. The goal was to provide a foundation for mutual enquiry and to foster insightful discussion surrounding police organizational culture and how it pertains to effective media relations.

The session participants were advised that the session results, in addition to being used in the assessment of the media program, would also be used to form part of the researchers project report for Royal Roads University. The participants were reassured that their identities would be kept in confidence throughout the research process and that their involvement in both the research process, and the focus group, was strictly voluntary in nature.

During the focus group the long service history of the participants provided valuable information. There were 11 participants who represented 295 years of policing and security service. Many of the members taking part were former members of Municipal and RCMP police detachments and were continuing to work in their retirements in security fields. Coffee was provided for the session and individuals would get up from the table to serve themselves coffee and then sit back down to the discussion. As a result, there was no break for the focus group. The researcher utilized a flip chart to capture ideas as there were presented, and the session was respectful and energetic. After the session the researcher consulted the audio- tape of the focus group to theme the discussions as presented during the session. The flip chart papers were also retained and proved invaluable in refreshing the concepts for the researcher. The major concepts were then capsulated into working themes for submission in the major project.

After the session, the researcher received three follow-up emails from participants who stated that the session was enjoyable and that it was “good to be in a room with others who had shared many similar experiences.” Obviously, the strength of the police organizational culture has not waned.

If planned again the researcher would allow for more time to hold the session. The researcher was fortunate that the interest of the participants was strong enough that the overtime length was not a detriment to the data gathering process.

At the close of the focus group session, the participants were thanked for input and contribution towards the project. The researcher distributed business cards to each of the participants and they were urged to contact the researcher if there were any follow-up comments or outstanding concerns that needed to be addressed at a later time.

Ethical Considerations.

Before beginning the research project, an ethical review was completed as per the Royal Roads University policy, as a result of the research involving work with human subjects. The ethical Guidelines, as set out by Royal Roads University, were followed throughout the research process. All participants involved with the research received a consent form that outlined the circumstances of the research, and the overall nature and scope that the research project encompassed. The process also outlined the voluntary aspects of the research project and there was no requirement to participate in any of the research steps by any participant. The participants were advised about data capturing methods, how it was to be used, and who was to have access to the collected data.

There was no deception used within the research project. The researcher endeavoured to ensure that no harm came to the participants in the research project, and ensured that the confidentiality of the participants was maintained throughout the process. The focus groups participants and interview participants had all names removed from the research data, and the tapes and notes associated with the project were locked within a secure office at the Saanich Police department. The transcriber who conducted the work for the project, also protect the confidentiality of the research participants. The transcriber utilized was the secretary for the Community Liaison section of the Saanich Police. The transcriber is an 18-year member of the

department and routinely transcribed documents of both a confidential and sensitive nature. The transcriber is a civilian employee of the Saanich Police yet has full security clearance within the department pertaining to their secretarial duties. It was also outlined within the consent form that the participant could discontinue participation in the research project at any time if desired.

Some areas of ethical consideration considered for this project.

Respect for Privacy and Confidentiality

The members interviewed were all interconnected and dependent on each other in a professional sense. The need to ensure that the members of the media, police, and public were confident that the information provided was to be kept in strict confidence. Anything short of achieving this goal could have undermined the validity of the project, as respondents may not have answered in a truthful fashion for fear of disrupting their current working relationships. The researcher outlined within the consent form how the confidentiality was going to be maintained. This was verbally reiterated prior to the interviews or sessions taking place. There was no need to share the data gathered with any outside parties.

Free and Informed Consent

The participants of the research were advised fully in regards to the purpose of the project. There was no obligation to participate and the participants were advised of the purpose and structure of the research project. All participants completed and signed a consent form indicating their willingness to partake in the research project (Appendix B).

Respect for Vulnerable Persons

The researcher was cognizant of the implication when conducting the research and interviews. The need for honest and forthright dialogue with the participants was paramount in the successful data gathering and assessment of the media program on the part of the participants. Because of the unique position that the members of the media have in relation to the Saanich Police, it was essential that an element of trust be established so that media participants could provide honest input without the fear of complications arising with the working relationship between the Saanich Police and their respective media outlets.

Respect for Justice and Inclusiveness

The researcher ensured that all participants were included fairly within the research process. The process was fair and equitable, and did not discriminate against any persons on a professional or personal level.

Maximizing Benefit

The researcher strived to ensure that the outcome of the research was of optimal benefit to the participants, and the organizations involved. As a result of the nature of the project, the implications for improvements to take place within the police department were not only possible, but also certainly attainable. By maximizing the benefit of the project, there remains the possibility of having a direct benefit to the community at large, through the improvement of police/media relations.

Minimizing Harm

The researcher's intention was to minimize the number of media members interviewed in an effort to inconvenience the least amount of people. The research still needed to be viable and productive, however, the information provided to the researcher by members of the media was only a portion of the research project. The other research portion, involving members of the public, was less intrusive, as the public at large does not have the working relationship with the police that the members of the media contend with on a professional level.

Respect for Dignity

The intent of the research was to improve and assess the current media program at the Saanich Police. The participants involved in the project provided a valuable service to both the Saanich Police and the community. They in turn will benefit from the improvements in police/community relations and police/media relations. The researcher's goal was to treat all participants with respect and dignity, and to value all contributions made to this research project.

Process

The research was transparent in nature and the persons involved with the process were fully aware of the involvement of others (i.e. media, police, public). The transparency of the process was articulated within the research process itself.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH STUDY RESULTS

This chapter provides a detailed examination of the observations and results of the information gathering process associated to the research project. The process of gathering the information was outlined in Chapter Three and involved the implementation of an online survey, interviews, and a focus group.

The following section will expand on the previous research methodology by describing the study results and the researcher will draw on the study results to outline identified themes, conclusions, and recommendations generated from the research. The conclusions are identified within each section of the study findings.

Study Findings

As outlined in Chapter One, the overall purpose of this research project is:

How can we improve the effectiveness of the Media Relations Program at the Saanich Police Department to best serve the community of Saanich?

The study findings were required to fulfill questions on various levels relating to the Saanich Police media program. Firstly, what is the current status of the media relations program and the subsequent delivery of information to the public. Second, is there a need to have a dedicated

media relations program at the Saanich Police department? Included elements involve the tools and systems the media officers are currently using and their effectiveness at meeting the needs of the Saanich police department. This question formed the basis of a “where we are today” benchmark. Thirdly, What processes could improve the media relations program and therefore improve the communication between the Saanich Police and the community. The ability to administer the data during the research process was assisted through the creation of a filing system in which a paper copy of the collected data was kept. Sources of stored data included interview transcripts, online survey print-offs, and hand written notes. The use of a filing system aided the researcher in keeping order with the large amount of collected data.

For the online survey, the collected responses were all printed off and coded by participant. The researcher also printed off the same survey data coded by question to assist with the research. The use of a survey generator program was utilized to collate the collected data. The Royal Roads University survey generator was downloaded and the survey database was downloaded in XML format to allow for charts and graphs to be produced. The short answer questions were printed by each question and all the participant responses were listed as a group. The researcher examined the collected data and “meaning units”, as described by Davis, (Davis, 1997) were identified. The goal of identifying “meaning units” was to assist with the identification of higher order themes which could reconstruct or describe the underlying structure of the experience in a way that was faithful to the participants experiences. The themes were then physically marked on paper with the use of coloured highlighter pens. Several colours were implemented to identify emerging themes and two colours were also assigned to represent issues identified as challenges or strengths by the participants. A computer copy of the transcripts was then created and the colour-highlighted areas were transferred into newly created computer files

named for each theme. Using a “cut and paste” method the new files were created establishing a new source of data representing each identified theme.

For the participant interviews, the transcripts were processed in a similar fashion using the same colours representing identified themes.

The focus notes were hand written by the researcher during the focus group session. Another set of notes was created while listening to the audio-recorded tapes of the focus group. Both sets of notes were then coded using the same colour highlighting method as the online survey and the interviews.

The Online Survey – Part 1

The online survey was created for the general public who reside within the Municipality of Saanich. The purpose of the survey was to generate feedback and public opinion in relation to the Saanich police, and to also ascertain the means in which community members were accessing their media sources. The survey involved 15 questions that included short answers and multiple choices. The purpose of utilizing short answer responses was to increase the validity of the research results. Palys (1997) advises that,

Open ended questions leave a lot up to the respondent; they really are open to a wide range of responses, depending on the respondent’s own concerns. Closed or structured questions, in contrast, allow the respondent only a small range of responses...and involve some pre-supposition on the researcher’s part about which aspects or a given issue are important to address. (p.164)

The researcher included the open-ended questions in the online survey to determine if there were issues involving the media relations program that had not been considered by the

researcher. The intention was to solicit feedback from members of the community without the input of suggestions by the researcher.

The first section of the online survey involved demographic information supplied by the respondents. All the respondents to the survey identified themselves as residents of the Municipality of the Saanich, and therefore were recognized as participants within the targeted research group.

Police Contact within the last year.

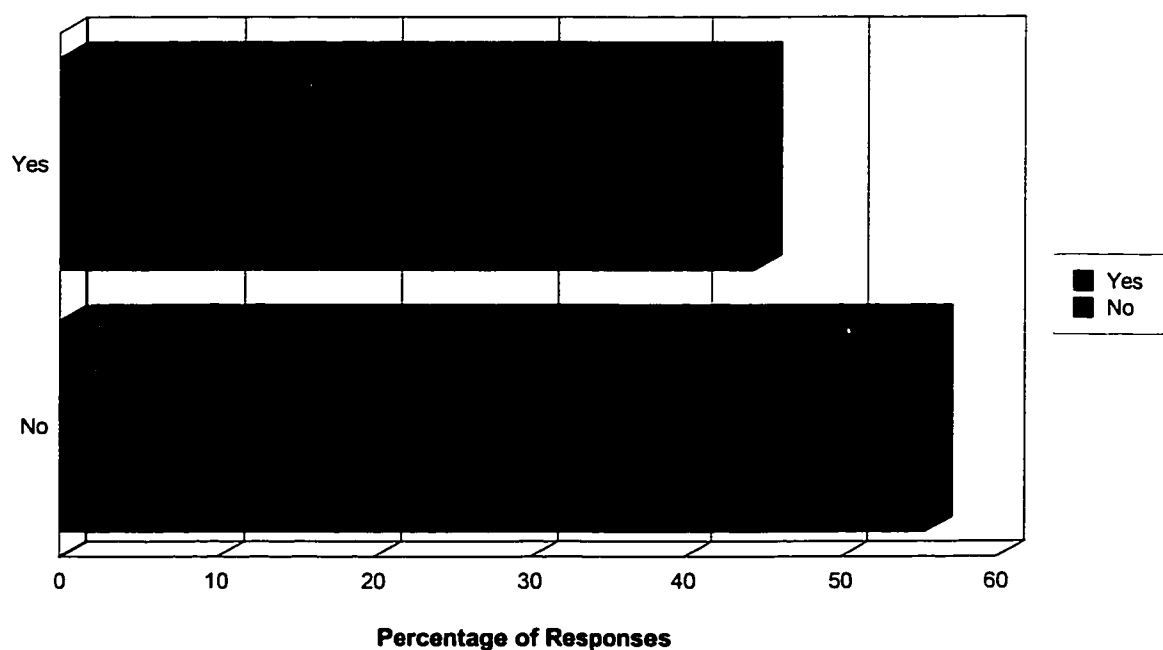


Table 4.1

The variety of police contact was varied. A number of the calls for police assistance could be categorized as “nuisance calls” involving late night noise, traffic complaints, or gathering youths. Other calls to police involved issues of a more serious nature such as car accidents and missing children. The purpose of obtaining this demographic information was to determine if the

participants were frequently involved with the Saanich Police, and if so did they have a pre-disposition towards the department.

Conclusion 1

A large number of the research participants do have contact with the members of the Saanich Police. Of the responding participants, 44 % had engaged in some contact with the Saanich Police in the proceeding 12 months.

Access to Media Relating to the Saanich Police

The majority of participants received some news media relating to the Saanich Police on a weekly basis. Only a small portion, 5.71 %, received some news daily.

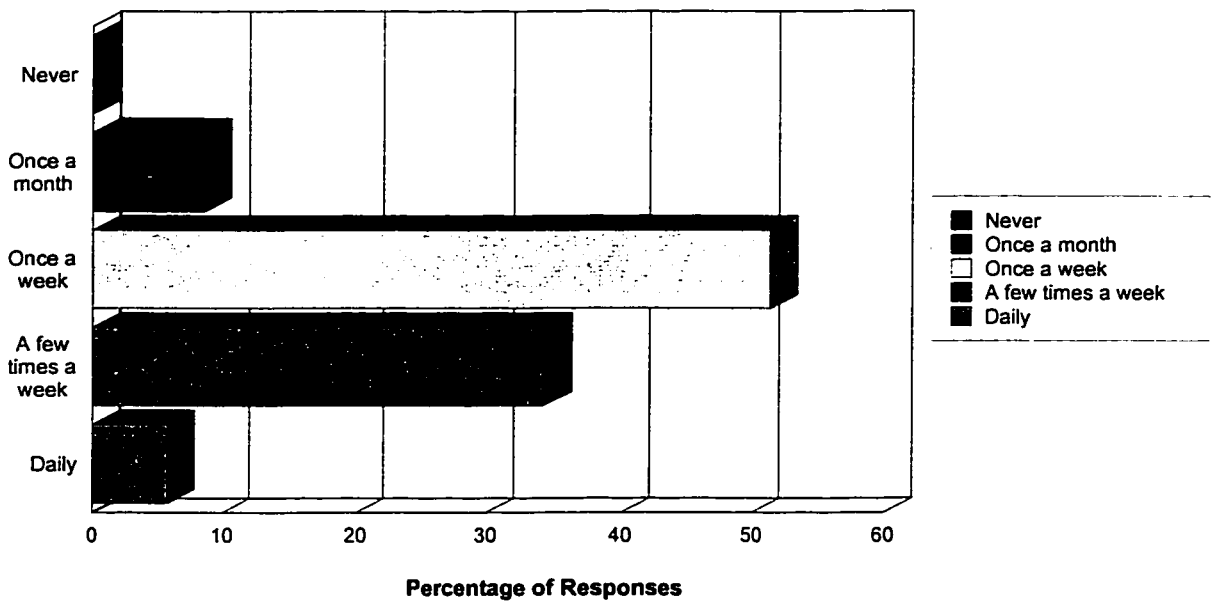


Table 4.2

Newspapers largely dominated the source of news media relating to the activities of the Saanich Police. 54.29 % of the respondents received information from local newspapers, whereas only 11.43 % garnered information from the television and 5.71 % listened to the radio.

Source of News Media

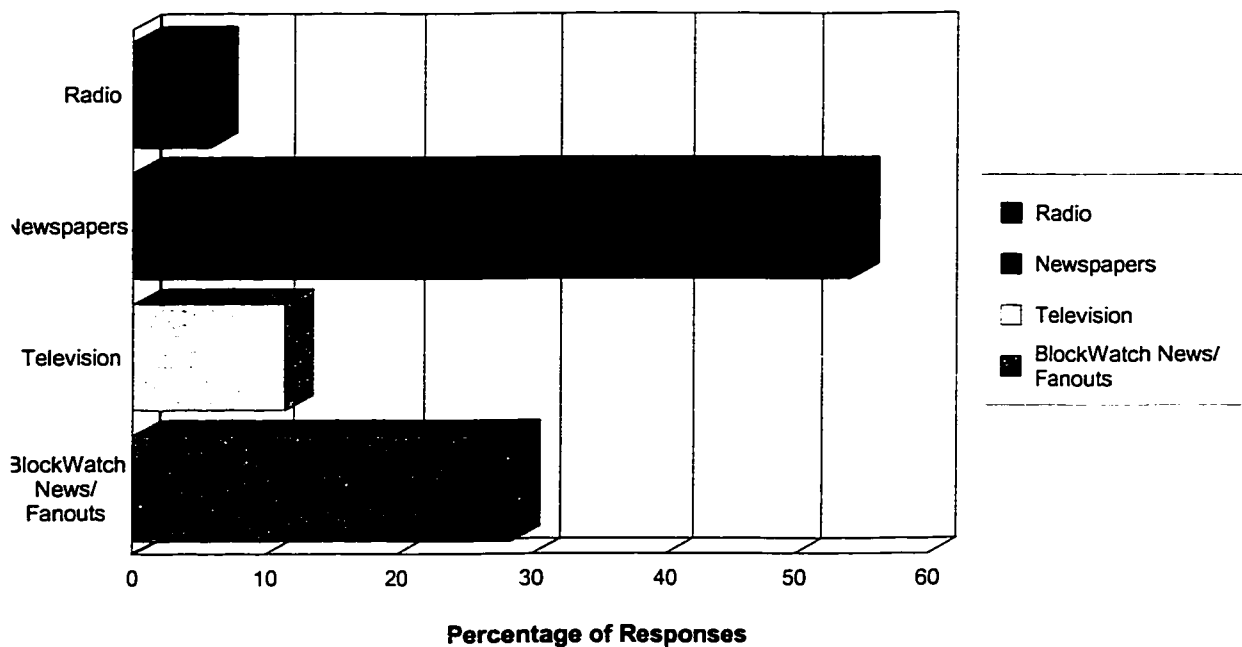


Table 4.3

The vast majority of participants received news through a combination of sources. Many identified that they received the Times-Colonist in the morning at their homes, but also listened to the radio while driving in their vehicles and watched the news on the television in the evening. As a result, the various news agencies including print, radio, and television accessed by the public were well represented among the participants.

Conclusion 2

All the participants accessed media sources, the majority doing so at least once a week. However, newspapers are the dominant single source of news information accessed by the participants and the Saanich News has a good readership within the community.

Participants who read the Saanich Police Crime Watch page.

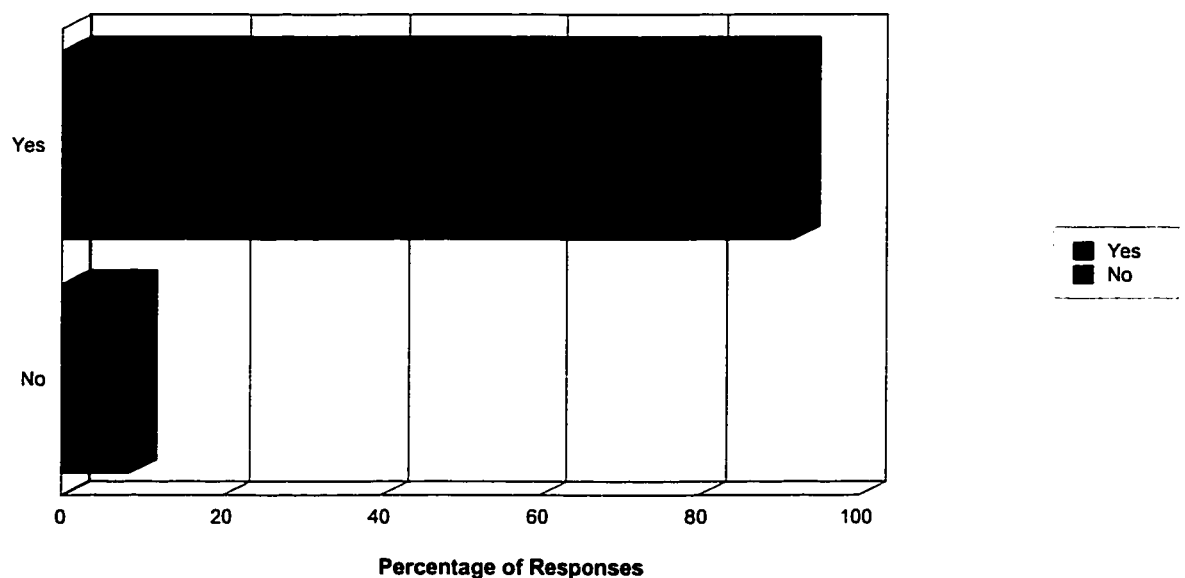
The online survey identified that 100% of the participants received the Saanich News delivered to the homes. The Saanich News is a weekly local paper produced by the Victoria News Group. The paper is delivered free of charge and is supported by the advertising revenues the newspaper generates. The Saanich News has a local focus and the Saanich Police have an added presence in the paper because of the local nature of the stories. The Saanich Police also have a dedicated page that runs weekly in the Saanich News. Approximately four years previous, the Crime Prevention Office of the Saanich Police, Constable Ian Ritchie, entered into an agreement with the Saanich news to provide weekly stories for the paper. This agreement continues today and although the submissions are now conducted using the Internet, I still provide stories for the paper on a weekly basis in my role as Crime Prevention Officer. The goal of this newspaper segment is to increase the visibility of the department and to address crime prevention issues within the community.

The Saanich News “Crime Watch” page has three segments. The first segment is a listing of the week’s residential break and enters including the municipal number blocks. This is displayed as a chart for easy reference. The second segment is a computer-generated map with icons, which identifies the residential and commercial break and enters, overlaid on a geographic map of the Saanich area. The third segment on the Crime Watch page involves written stories from

the police generated calls for service. The goal of writing the newspaper articles is crime prevention based. If a residence in the community is entered and there are lessons to be learned, it is hoped that the news articles will both inform and educate the members of the community to take action and steps to prevent becoming victims of crime. Also, the paper provides a forum to list community related events such as community meetings; Kiwanis school patrollers of the week, and community Police Posts. Establishing the frequency of Saanich News delivery was to determine if the participants were receiving the most possible news relating to the Saanich police.

The participants responded that 91.67% accessed the Saanich Police Crime Watch page when they received the Saanich News. Again, this increased the potential information flow from the police department to the participants and therefore the ability for the participants to respond to police-community communication issues.

Participants who read the Saanich News Crime Watch Page. Table 4.4



Conclusion 3

The Saanich News is an effective media for providing information to the Saanich Community. Also, the Saanich News Crime Watch Page supplied by the police is well read by the participants and provides an effective forum to communicate police issues with the citizens of Saanich.

The second portion of the online survey solicited the participant's perceptions regarding the Saanich Police and the department's presence within the community as portrayed within the local media. The goal was to determine a "bench mark" for the department to ascertain if the Saanich Police were achieving the goals as set out in the Saanich Police Strategic Plan. Again, the Strategic Plan states,

"The community's perception of how effective we are as a police department is often based on what is seen in the media and on information received from other person who have had first-hand dealings with the Department. Our public image is therefore critical to our success."

(2002,p.24)

The second portion of the online survey addressed this public perception of the Saanich Police department.

In general, do you think that the Saanich Police Department is portrayed fairly in the local media?

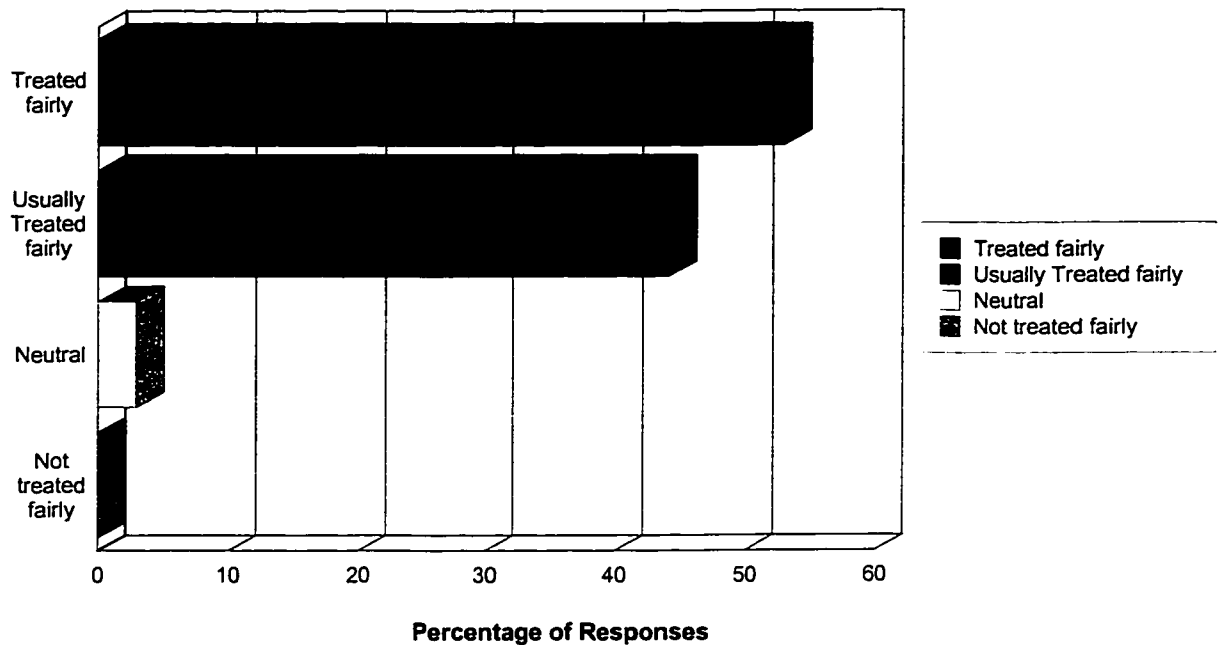


Table 4.5

The participants indicated that 52.94% believed the Saanich Police to be treated fairly by the news media. The second largest response, 44.12% believed the Saanich Police was treated “usually fairly.” The perception among the participants was that the police department is treated with some degree of fairness by the local news media. In fact, none of the online participants believed the department to be treated “not fairly.’ This perception within the community was in contrast to some of the opinions expressed by the police members during the research interviews.

Do you think that the media provide enough news coverage of the Saanich Police to keep you informed on issues within the community?

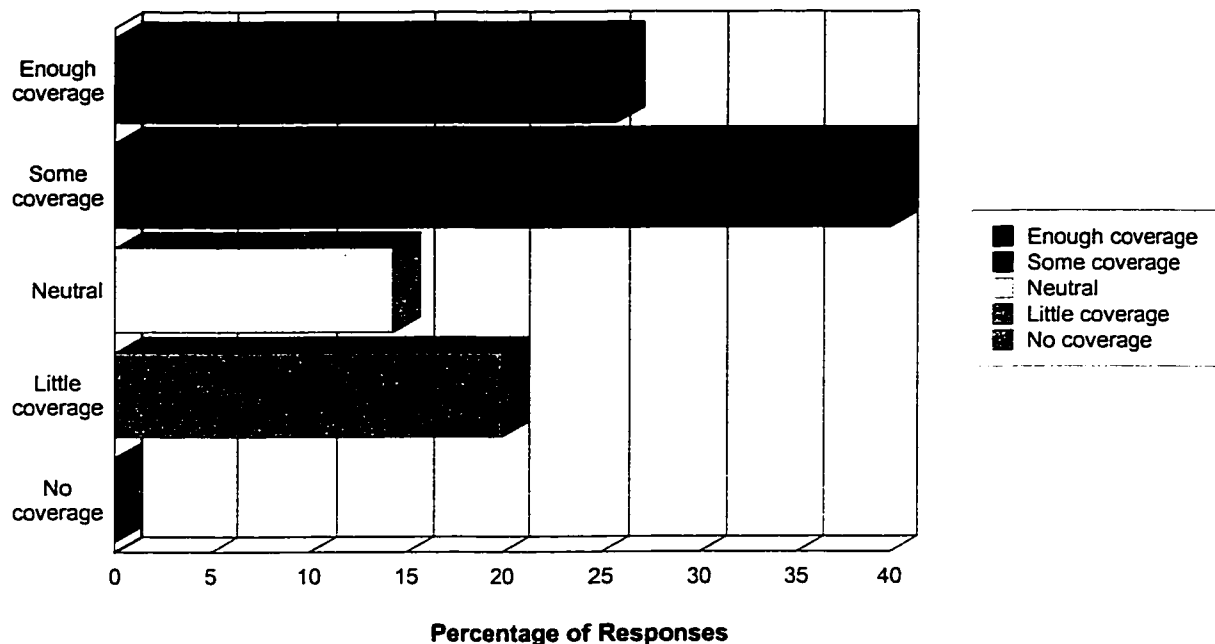


Table 4.6

The participant's responded that 40 % believe the Saanich Police provides some coverage on policing issues. There were also 14.29 % who remained neutral on the issue and 20% who believe the department provided little news coverage for the community. Only 25.71% responded that the community provided enough coverage to meet their needs in relation to police reporting.

Conclusion 4

The Saanich News Crime Watch Page supplied by the police is well read and provides an effective forum to communicate police issues with the citizens of Saanich. However, three quarters of the participants believe that the Saanich Police could be doing better in

the area of providing police information to the members of the community and informing the community through the media on policing areas of interest.

Do you think that the media provide a balanced perspective of the Saanich Department?

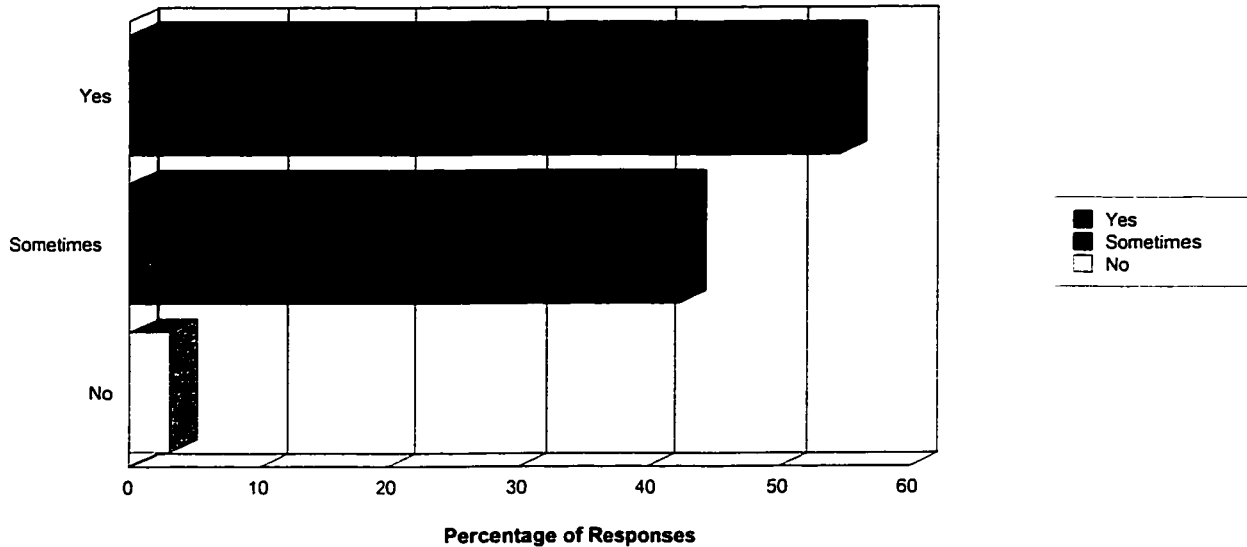


Table 4.7

It appears from the participants responses, that the Saanich Police is treated fairly by the media to the extent the police department is present within the community. The responses indicate there is room for a greater police presence within the community and there is also a demand for more information relating to police issues. The participants are actively referencing the general media and are also referencing the local media to obtain news that is pertinent to the participant's community. The need for a greater police presence had been indicated. Also, the participants believe that the media have treated the Saanich police fairly on most police related issues. In fact, 96.97 % believed that the news media reporting of the Saanich Police was either

“balanced” or “sometimes balanced.” Only 3.03 % held the opinion that the reporting of the police department was unbalanced.

Online Survey - Part 3 Short-Answer Questions.

The third segment of the online survey involved three short answer questions that were completed by the participants. The purpose of this format was to solicit feedback regarding the Saanich Police presence and the departments’ ability to communicate policing issues to the community.

The first short answer question solicited feedback concerning the perspective of the Saanich Police, as presented by the media. Four general answer themes emerged from the question identified as: sensationalism, balanced reporting, fairness, and regional representation.

The first theme identified sensationalism that takes place within the media reporting. Participants indicated a belief relating to media dramatization of police events and police reporting. The comments were aligned with a position of wanting more factual news reporting and less entertainment in police stories in the local media. One participant stated that the media “wants to print only news-worthy pieces that will attract attention and sell papers. Unless there is a huge drug bust, prostitute death or murder in the neighbourhood, the media isn’t really interested.” Another participant stated that the media will dramatise things unnecessarily and suggest blame before the facts are known.”

The second emerging theme involved balanced reporting between crime reporting and what the participants described as “good news” stories. The belief that the Saanich Police was not being represented when good police stories developed within the community was of concern, and influenced the perspective of the department as portrayed in the media. One participant indicated

that there was “very little news about kind actions or community work done by the police officers.” The supporting literature indicates that a “progressive police department will make sure that good stories reach the media” (Staszak, 2001, p.12). Is the Saanich Police achieving the desired balance of good coverage as presented by Staszak?

The third theme related to the fairness and the media portrayal of the Saanich Police. Although many of the participants believed the media portrayal of the department to be fair as a whole, there was also a concern relating to the business of selling papers or selling news. The participants identified the need for the police department to have a greater understanding of the role the media play in determining public image. Although the onus of creating news stories lies with the media, there is also a responsibility for the police department to understand the implications of the current media markets. Staszak states “law enforcement proactivity with the media begins with an in-depth understanding of the current role and function of the media....”(Staszak, 2001, p.11). One participant indicated that the media “portrays the police to suit their own purposes, whether positive or negative, in order to attain the best ratings.” A heightened awareness within the police department was suggested as being a response to the media portrayal of the police. Having an increased awareness of the media and the implications of the police stories could assist with the overall portrayal of the police department. The theme of the participant’s feedback is that the Saanich police need to address the challenge of positive police portrayal in the modern media.

The fourth emergent theme discussed the regional disparity between media coverage of the Victoria Police incidents and the Saanich Police incidents. One participant captured the theme by stating that, “Victoria Police seem to have the spotlight more than Saanich.” The participants did

not think the media were effectively delivering a balance between the departments, and the Saanich Police was not receiving proportional media coverage compared with their neighbouring police agency. The participants indicated a greater presence was required to fulfill the community's expectations and improve the portrayal of the department by the media.

The second short-answer question of the online survey enquired about areas in which the Community Liaison Section could assist in improving and increasing police information being distributed into the community. Two themes emerged from this question. The first theme involved the work already being conducted by the police department. Even though the question asked, "what areas do you think we could improve on...?" The vast majority of the participants indicated that the department was doing a good or great job of keeping them informed of policing issues. This feedback was indicated in relation to several methods of communication including, emails, phone fan-outs, BlockWatch newsletters, The Saanich News Crime Watch page, and annual BlockWatch meetings. The overall theme was one of satisfaction with the current systems in place.

The second predominate theme indicated by the participants involved the timeliness of the information. Although the participants believed the current system to be adequate or better, they also indicated a desire to have quicker access to information and more timely information. One participant identified the need to improve the information flow from the department out into community indicating that they "would be very much inclined to go to a website for updated information." Also, the implementation of a "Police Page" within the local paper was identified by the participants. The page would be utilized to report "more than petty crimes" as described by one participant and be used as an information conduit by the police on many different departmental issues. The participants identified that although the Saanich Police currently has a

proactive relationship with the Saanich News, there are still areas for providing further information to the public through this police-media relationship.

Conclusion 5

The majority of participants believe the Saanich Police is providing police information to the community at an adequate level. However, the Saanich Police are not achieving equal media representation in comparison with other police agencies in the Victoria area. The Saanich Police should consider increasing their media presence to have “good” news distributed to the community to help achieve the balance of good coverage indicated by the participants and the literature.

The last question of the online survey asked how the Saanich Police could improve the current systems of communicating police information to the community. The participants indicated the communication systems are providing good information, but there is a need to have the information out in the community faster. Many participants again stressed the importance of email communication or web based access as a method of delivering a faster information flow to the community. Web based communication with the community having the ability to access current police information online was addressed by the participants. Of course, the survey was conducted online so all of the participants are actively connected to the Internet. This may have been a factor in the web-based responses. Regardless, both of these technologies were identified by a number of the participants.

Another theme identified by the participants was the need to communicate through venues other than the media. As well as electronically, the police were urged to attend schools,

meetings, community events, parks, malls and recreation centers. The participants identified a need for the Saanich police to move beyond the traditional roles in policing, and to provide a police presence in other pro-active forums. One participant indicated the need to “have a police presence in a friendly way where you are there to give information and help to the public so that you’re seen as good guys, rather than the bad guys who give out speeding tickets and so on.” This feedback mirrors that supporting literature of LeBeuf who stressed the importance of new thinking within police public relations, and the pitfalls of the police being trapped within their traditional role of enforcer or issuers of tickets. (LeBeuf, 1998) The conclusion identified is that the Saanich Police need to continue with community based endeavours involving police officers out in the community in non-enforcing roles. Programs such as Police Post, where officers are assigned to high traffic areas such as shopping malls, are valued for simply having officers present out in the community in a non-threatening and approachable situation.

Conclusion 6

The Saanich Police should consider more programs that provide informal access for community members to interact with police officers including web-based solutions such as email and the Internet.

Interviews

The implementation of individual interviews provided information that was both insightful and significant to the research project. The participants provided feedback that generated themes concerning media relations and the interaction of the Saanich Police. The interviews also provided a forum for effective communication on many of the research questions.

The Media Interviews

The researcher interviewed three members of the media during the completion of the research project. During these interviews, three themes were developed that were insightful to the current media relations program. Although the three media members were positive in general terms when addressing police media issues in Saanich, there were areas of challenge identified by the participants. The first theme identified the need for a review of the media systems currently in place. All three participants indicated a level of frustration when attempting to gather information relating to police issues within the Saanich Police Department

One of the identified areas involved the use of the police media pager. The participants indicated the current Saanich media pager protocol is systemically unworkable. One participant provided data relating to media pager response time and media calls for service. Police officers currently assigned as patrol media officers carry a pager when on duty and are expected to return media pages in a timely manner. The goal of the media pager program is to provide the Saanich Police with 24-hour a day coverage to the media and to increase the departments accountability to both the media and the public. The participant submitted the results of their media requests for a one-month period to the researcher. The data has been recorded in the research project (Table 4.8) and clearly identifies a future challenge area for the Saanich Police. Another participant related, “why even use the media pager, I don’t even bother with it anymore. If I need something I will either page you or call the Staff Sergeant directly.”

Media Pager Data Table 4.8

Date	Time	Method	Enquiry	Police Action
Jan **, 2003	11:20	Pager	False Bank Deposits	No Response
Jan **, 2003	15:30	Pager	False Bank Deposits	No Response
Jan **, 2003	10:39	Pager	Undisclosed	No Response
Jan **, 2003	17:20	Pager	Hit and Run	No Response
Jan **, 2003	18:30	Pager	Hit and Run	No Response
Jan **, 2003	19:45	Call To Office	Hit and Run	No Response
Jan **, 2003	11:30	Pager	Robbery	No Response
Jan **, 2003	10:15	Pager	Hit and Run/ Robbery	No Response
Jan **, 2003	13:33	Pager	Regina Ave Disturbance	No Response
Jan **, 2003	10:59	Pager	Motor Accident	No Response
Jan **, 2003	15:27	Pager	Motor Accident	Police Reply
Jan **, 2003	15:32	Pager	Drug Overdose	Police Reply
Jan **, 2003	13:30	Pager	Hydro Problem	No Response
Jan **, 2003	12:20	Pager	Suspect Arrest	No Response
Jan **, 2003	14:59	Pager	Motor Accident	No Response
Jan **, 2003	18:25	Pager	Motor Accident	No Response

The data clearly indicates the majority of media requests sent through to the media pager went without a response from the assigned media officer. The data was collected for the month of January 2003, and of the 16 media pages requesting information, 87.5 percent of the time the on-duty media officer did not return the media page. In the other instances, there was a media officer who did respond to two incidents accounting for the other 12.5 percent of the data. The participant indicated that the search for police information has led to a sporadic system of calling

the police department, which is ineffective and inefficient. The participant stated, “I have attempted to follow the protocol and use the pager, I just don’t get a response the majority of the time.” The media members stated that calls to the police now involve a call to the media pager, the Crime Prevention Officer, the On-duty Staff Sergeant, and other known police members who may be able to give assistance or information.

The systemic problems with the media pager have led to a shift in participant protocol. The goal of the media pager was to provide members of the media with one easy avenue to access departmental information. Wells and Spinks state that a failure to effectively communicate with the media can be a life threatening function of organizational communication (Wells and Spinks, 1999). The participants identified the current pager system as not viable and failing to meet their needs and the participants also indicated that other police agencies were easier to access for information. One participant stated, “ It’s so much easier dealing with the City, their Chief has given the o.k. for any of the members to talk to us. I know you complain when all we print is Victoria stories but the truth is they are easy to deal with.” Of all the data collected during the research project, this is perhaps the most powerful. It clearly displays that the current systems in place are not addressing the needs of the media members as they seek information from the police. It also fails to meet the standard as set out in the Strategic Plan, which states to be “effective as a police department is often based on what is seen in the media” (Saanich Police, 2002, p.24). We are simply not being seen in the media through our failure to adequately communicate with members of the media. The media participants indicated that the current media pager system is not meeting the needs of the media; this indicates a future challenge for the Saanich Police, as the goals of the Strategic Plan are not being achieved.

Conclusion 7

The current media pager system is not meeting the demands of the media or serving the best interests of the community. As a result, the objective goals of the strategic plan are not being achieved.

The second theme that emerged from the media interviews involved reluctance. The participants indicated that although the police media members were cooperative when contacted, there appeared to be an overshadowing sense of reluctance to participate in the media interview process. When asked for greater clarification, the participants stated that there appeared to be some element of external restraint placed on the media members. One participant stated, "When I arrive at the department to conduct an interview, it's as though I am some dentist coming to perform a painful procedure on the officer, and the interview is the worst thing they are going to have to endure all day." The participants believed the restraint to be directed in nature, possibly from police management and that the members were reticent to conduct the interviews because of internal police pressure.

During the course of three interviews, it was indicated by the researcher that media officers' have the full support of police management, and that the researcher has experienced an overwhelming amount of both trust and faith on the part of police management when conducting interviews. The researcher presented this position of experience to the participants during the process of mutual enquiry, as a means of engaging into a deeper understanding of the issue. On many given police issues, the police management has been largely hands-off when dealing with media issues and has bestowed a large amount of responsibility and freedom on the individual media officers. The participants were presented with the researcher's insights during this two-

way interview. The issue of Organizational Culture was discussed and the participants were unaware of the many systemic issues at hand with the assigned media members. Issues such as family, co-worker pressure, career planning, and credibility were discussed. The emerging theme was of greater understanding between the participants and the researcher regarding police organizational culture and how it applies to media officers.

One participant indicated that a key element of a police related story was “colour.” Colour was identified as small talk, off-hand comments, or character elements within the story that adds something to the article other than the facts. The participants stated that all too often the police media officers provided the basic facts and the story-lacked colour. Unfortunately, the police media officers indicated that media releases should center on the incident, not the member releasing the information. As a result, the officers were avoiding the “colour” being sought by the media members. The participants stated that police organizational culture pulls the media officer away from such elements, and the focus of the officers is to simply state the facts and avoid “colour” in the story if possible. One officer stated to the media participant, “the media are trying to get personal comments from you, and this will become the story. If they print something I say on a personal level, I will never hear the end of it.” This divested positioning may be one of the reasons for the appearance of reluctance on the part of the media officers. The reporter is looking for colour to enhance their story, the media officers are attempting to avoid colour in case they are the focus of it. The internal demands placed on the media officer were unknown to the media participants. The participants indicated a need for more interaction between the police and the media in a non-threatening environment to create an atmosphere of mutual learning between the two organizations.

There are areas of misunderstanding that can be addressed by having an open forum and open dialogue between the parties where information, and therefore learning, can be fostered to assist with future communication. The end product will be better understanding between the parties, which will result in better media coverage for the police, and better police access for the media members.

The organizational culture within the police department remains a critical factor in addressing the need for effective media relations. Sonnefeld states that police departments align with the club culture, where the important requirement is for the employees to fit within the group (Sonnefeld, as quoted by McNamara, 1999). Clearly, the increased profile of the media officer affects their status within the group, as they are no longer considered part of the club. The added burden of colourful comments within the media story only pushes the media officer's profile farther from the group, and increases the pressures of organizational culture onto the media officer. The other three cultures as identified by Sonnefeld are the Academy Culture, the Fortress Culture, and the Baseball Team Culture. The media officer is often identified with the Baseball Team Culture where the employees are identified as "free agents" who have highly prized skills. Unfortunately, the people who may prize the skills of a good media relation's officer may not be those inside the Club Culture of police organizations. This Baseball Team Culture usually exists in fast-paced, high-risk organizations, such as investment banking, advertising, etc, certainly not in policing.

The third theme identified by the media participants was improvement. The participants indicated that lines of communication between the Saanich Police and the media have improved over the years. The participants indicated many instances where they were satisfied with the cooperation and response by the media officers. All three media participants are experienced in

dealing with police issues and advised that their working relationships with the Saanich Police have improved over their length of service as news journalists. Although there were challenges identified by the participants, the overall response was one of satisfaction when compared with previous years of experience. The shortfalls identified with the media pager were identified as a starting point for effective change. When the media officers did make contact with the participants, the results were satisfactory and the cooperation was forthcoming. The problem was often the establishment of initial contact with the assigned media officers. The participants indicated a desire to continue with the growth of police-media partnerships to address the needs of both organizations and were grateful for the opportunity to provide input into the research process.

Police Interviews

The research project involved interviews with two current members of the Saanich Police who are assigned as media officers during the course of their policing duties. During these interviews, three predominate themes were emerged.

The first theme identified during the interviews was time. The participating media officers stated that one of the concerns that they encountered while attending to their daily duties surrounded the amount of time required to adequately perform their media relations function. The officers clearly recognized and supported the need for effective communication with the media, but identified the lack of available time as being a critical element in completing their media duties effectively. One participant stated, “The media had to wait. The duties were my responsibility and I dealt with when it was appropriate.” The Patrol media officers are still required to attend calls for service from the public and the media officer role is an added duty in

their daily routine. Both participants identified times on-duty where they were not able to respond immediately to media requests as a result of patrol commitments taking priority. Other incidents were identified where the media were not contacted at all when there was a media page received by the officer. One such example involved the media pager being activated when the media officer was involved with a serious domestic dispute. The officer arrested an individual at the domestic dispute and their time was committed in dealing with the issues at hand. The media were not contacted to advise of the delay and the media request went unanswered. One participant stated that a particular media event could “take fifty percent of my time on a shift or even more.” The result being that added media demands and police calls for service have reduced the ability of the media officers to respond to media requests in a timely fashion. This inability to respond to media concerns was also addressed in the second theme that emerged from the interviews, which are systemic problems with the current media system. The previous review of the organizational documents also revealed a time management issue in relation to the media releases. The department keeps media releases on a clipboard after they have been sent out via the fax machine. The purpose for keeping the releases is twofold. One, accountability in the event there are issues of contention and two, they provide an easy reference for the police members. It was noted that many of the official media releases were not conducted by the attending officers but by the front desk officer. This police officer works in an administrative position at the front counter and does not attend call for service in the community. Many of the releases were drafted and sent out by the front desk officer who was not at the scene of the incident and the officer is in fact relating the story of other officers. This situation occurs when the assigned media officer is too busy dealing with incidents out in the community and is unable to attend to the police station to issue a fax media release. The front desk officer is contacted and

asked to issue the release on their behalf. The participants related that media officer time commitments impede their ability to answer follow up calls by the media. The corresponding conclusion is a reduction in the amount and quality of information being released to the media as a result of the third-hand information flow.

Conclusion 8

The media officers do not currently have the ability to meet the objectives of the media relations program as a result of time constraints. Also, current Saanich Police organizational culture is having an impact on the effectiveness of the media relations program.

The officers identified systemic issues that arose during the research process. One issue involved the use of the media pager. The need to have trained officers in the operation of the alphanumeric pager was discussed. When the oncoming media officer was given the pager for the duration of the shift, there was often written text messages left on the pager. One of the participants addressed the inability to determine if the media requests had been dealt with given the limited information available. The messages had not been deleted from the pager and media officer was not sure if the pages had been answered. It was discussed that often, media pages were left on the pager for days because media officers either did not delete the request after conducting follow-up, or did not know how to delete the messages from the pager.

The second systemic issue also involved the pager. One participant stated that the pager had been handed to them at the start of their patrol shift. It was later determined that the pager given to the patrol officer was not the media pager but the Operation Cooperation pager, which is of

similar make but holds a different purpose. The need to have a distinguishing feature on the pager to make identification easier was discussed to ensure that the media requests were actually going to the right police member.

Another systemic issue was the scheduling of media officer at the bi-weekly media briefings. The Saanich police currently conduct a media briefing every second Wednesday at the police department. This forum allows media members to attend and liaise with members of the department on current issues of interest to the media and the community. The participants identified an issue of concern relating to these briefings. When carrying the media pager on these briefing days, there are often follow-up requests by media members or requests from media members who were unable to attend the session. One participant stated, “ The media officer should be called to attend the media briefings, I’m finding that incidents occur and I have no idea of what’s going on.” Unfortunately, the assigned patrol media officers have not been attending these media session and are therefore unable to answer most of the follow-up request because they were not present at the briefing. The participants identified a scheduling need to ensure that patrol media officers are present at the media sessions so that they are informed about the events, or at the very least, could direct media members to the person who released the initial information.

The fourth systemic issue related to the current “zone” system that is utilized by the Saanich Police. The patrol resources for any given shift are divided to work in four zones, centre, east, north, and west. The participants stated that even though one media officer is assigned per shift, there are often media events taking place in a zone other than the zone assigned to the media officer. One participant identified the requirement of asking permission to leave the assigned zone to travel into another zone to field media enquires. It was the opinion of the participant that

assigned media officers should be given permission within the current organization policy to conduct media interviews and respond to media enquires in any zone within the municipality to improve both efficiency and media response. The current system involves asking of permission to attend to other patrol zones to conduct media interviews. The officer stated, “ I have to ask my supervisor to leave my zone to go and conduct a media interview, it’s a case of having to ask to do my job.”

The last systemic issue discussed with the participants surrounded accountability. There was an identified need to have some form of accountability associated with being assigned as media officer. Under the current system, there is little accountability in returning media requests. In fact, the participants believed they usually responded in an appropriate manner and time whenever possible, but they also acknowledged the decision to respond to media requests fell solely upon them as media officers. If work duties or other commitments prevented a timely response to a media page, there was no subsequent follow-up procedure in place to address media requests. The request simply went unanswered, and there was no further avenue of accountability for the media members within the police department. The participants acknowledged that their primary duty was patrol calls for service within the community. This prioritization has created a systemic problem where the media requests are continually being placed second to the obvious need to provide front line policing service. The participants also expressed a level of frustration in dealing with media requests when the time to respond simply did not exist. One participant expressed that true accountability would only be attained through the assignment of a media officer for the entire department. The participant stated, “I think there should actually be one media officer as opposed to one person adding that as an extra hat that they have to deal with.” The current system of adding the media relations’ role was believed to

be too onerous and without accountability. The need to have one media officer would allow the benefit of pro-active media relations and much of the current information concerning the Saanich Police would be released to the media and therefore the community. This need for community accountability would also address the previous issues discussed with the community members who took part in the online survey. There is an identified need for more information out in the community; are the Saanich Police willing to provide and dedicate the resources needed to provide it?

Conclusion 9

The systems and policies currently being used to manage the media pager require examination to improve the efficiency of the media program. Also, the police media relations' departmental policy currently does not address accountability issues.

Police Administration

During the research project an interview was conducted with a member of the Saanich Police Administration. The purpose of the interview was to determine if the information provided by the administrative participant was consistent with the current reality of the media relations program. This interview was enlightening on many levels. The main theme involved the current systemic structure of the media relations program. The participant was in agreement that the media program had developed over the years as an informal process. The role of having patrol officers conduct the daily media request goes back approximately ten years. There has been little change during the past ten years and yet the system has slowly developed into the current media system. The participant acknowledged the need for better communication within the department

and the media and agreed that the current system is a little difficult, as it “isn’t written down anywhere!”

The need to have a structured plan was also discussed. There is currently very little literature on the media program and it has been developed loosely by the members who conduct the media enquires. Some of the more recent changes to the media program include the bi-weekly media meetings and the newly expanded role of having the Crime Prevention Officer act in the capacity of resource officer for media requests. Many of the media requests occur during the weekday hours on Monday through Friday. These hours also correspond with the working hours of the Crime Prevention Officer and it was determined that this officer would be able to assist with the media requests if patrol members were too busy with other duties. However the Crime Prevention Officer also has commitments and duties throughout the course of the working week, but it was expressed by the participant that this extra outlet for media members would only assist with the communication between the police and the media.

The Saanich Police Strategic Plan identifies the need to increase and develop a presence with the media as mentioned in previous chapters. There is no reference within the Strategic Plan regarding how this goal is to be accomplished. The participant acknowledged that the wishes of the police administration are consistent with the Strategic Plan. There is however, no hard plan in affect to increase the exposure of the department with the local media.

The participant reflected on the bi-weekly media briefings as assisting with this goal and the need to maintain these meetings on a consistent basis. The meetings were originally started in the summer of 2002. After conducting the media briefings over the course of a few months, key police members went on holidays and the momentum of the media briefings ceased. There were no media briefings in the fall of 2002 and it was not until 2003 that media briefings continued.

The need to have consistency in relation to the media sessions was addressed and the corresponding effect on the credibility of the Saanich Police as a result of the start and stop nature of conducting the media briefings. The beginning of January 2003 ushered in a new commitment by police administration to have resources dedicated to the bi-weekly meetings. The participant believed this new commitment was working to both improve both the exposure of the Saanich Police in the media and to also make steps towards meeting the goals of the Strategic Plan.

One area discussed was the past history between the police and the media. The participant is a long serving member of the Saanich Police and has many anecdotal memories relating to police/media relations and the corresponding lack of understanding between the parties. One issue discussed with the participant involved the media attendance at serious crime scene and an apparent lack of understanding in relation to policing procedures. The participant believed there was value in conducting some form of training session for the media where both the media and the police could learn more about the role conducted by organizations. The focus of the session would be collaborative learning where there is no external pressure of work demands being placed on either group. This would assist with the facilitation of better communication and learning between the police and the media.

Other themes emerging during the conversation related to the organizational culture within the Saanich Police and the role in which senior members of the department shape the current culture within the workplace. The literature has supported the position that organizational culture plays an integral role in police work, the Saanich Police being no exception. The participant acknowledged the role that senior members of the department have in molding the organizational culture within the department. The participant identified an attitude within the department of, “

we're the police, we control the info, and when it suits our purpose we'll release what we think the public needs to know." This cultural stance by members within the organization clearly identifies an area of future challenge within the Saanich Police. The need for effective media relations and the development of strong partnerships has been discussed within the literature. LeBeuf describes partnerships as any action designed to create durable working relations (LeBeuf, 1998). The partnerships should also include those with members of the media who work with the police on a daily basis. The current organizational issues identified by the participant can operate as a roadblock to achieving the desired effective communication with the media. The belief of the participant was that senior members of the department "cherry pick when we talk to the media and when we don't talk to simply suit our needs."

The participant identified one recent property crime story that was not released to the media. The good police work of the officers was not communicated to the public and the participant had requested that a news release be conducted. The officers did not conduct the release and the issue dragged on for approximately two weeks with conversations for and against. At the time of the eventual release, the impact of the story had greatly diminished because of the delay. Although there has been consensus among participants that communication is improving between the media and the police, the participant identified challenges in getting support from even the senior officers of the department. The bi-weekly media briefings were identified as an issue with one senior officer who was not able to attend the briefings, or who chose not to attend. The participant stated, "things were going pretty well until I guess there was one of the Inspectors who was pretty good at being there and one who wasn't." The resulting influence on the organization culture is then defined by the lack of attendance. If a senior officer is not supporting the program, then how can there be real change within the organizational culture of the

department in relation to the media. Staszak states, “a progressive police department will make sure that good stories reach the media” (Staszak, 2001,p.12). In this regard, the Saanich Police are clearly failing to achieve this standard of progressive policing as many stories are not being released either from systemic or organizational culture issues.

Conclusion 10

The Saanich Police media program is incongruent with the objectives of the departmental strategic plan, including the training and communication with police members to address organizational culture. Once established, steps should be undertaken to ensure that the plan is followed to prevent further “stalls” in the media program.

The Focus Group

The focus group consisted of retired members of various police agencies. The purpose of the focus group was to explore the dynamics of organizational culture and the role it has in defining police/media relations. The two major themes that emerged from the focus group participants were trust and career planning in relation to organizational culture.

The participants became deeply involved in a discussion of general media issues, police media experiences- good and bad, and cultural issues within the workplace. Another benefit of utilizing retired members was the outspoken and truthful banter that was present during the session. There were no concerns displayed by the participants, as they were no longer under the employ of a police agency. In the words of one participant, they were “untouchable.” The emotion displayed during the session was a surprise to the researcher.

The first theme of trust emerged in relation to police organizations and the media. The participants believed that policing was a great career choice, but were cautious about their activities around the office. One participant stated, “if you went down on one knee at our place, it made it easier to get hit in the face.” Other members of the group echoed this sentiment and even though the retired police members had placed their lives and well being in the hands of their fellow co-workers, that trust did not seem to carry forward into the office environment. It was stated that working out on the road was far different than working in and around the office. The role of media relations’ officer was deemed by the participants to be too political in nature and many of them would not have accepted such a role if offered. The “risks” to their career would have been too great. The trust in their fellow officers did not extend to the duties performed as a media relations’ officer as this was deemed by one participant to be, “not really police work.” The members did not trust their co-workers to take a chance and work with the media on police issues. The possibility of being ridiculed or singled out by their peers was a powerful factor when deciding whether to deal with the media or simply avoid the issues. Only as a last resort would the participants willingly engage with the media, as this would reduce their chances of “screwing up and looking the fool.” One participant acknowledged the need for communication with the media and also expressed an understanding with relation to the changes in modern policing and the need to have a proactive media program. Even so, media relations’ work was deemed by the participant to be a “necessary evil.”

It would appear that the organizational culture and organizational history developed over the years as help shape the opinions of some of the focus group participants. The “relational history” (Coombs as cited by Ledingham and Bruning, 2000) between the retired participants and the media was deemed to be not healthy.

Many of the participants had stories involving bad experiences with members of the media. One participant stated that, “every one of the guys sitting at this table could tell a story of being burned by the media.” There was an identified lack of trust between the participants and the media. Many participants believed that the cooperation between the police and the media was improving. There were comments made about the coverage of police stories on the news and the participants had noticed an increase in police presence. It was also noted by the participants that many different police members were taking part in media interviews. “ It’s as though the cameras show up and the first police officer stands there and gives an interview, that would never happen when I was on the job. We would need to get permission and even then, we would get someone else to do it.”

The participants enquired about changes in organizational culture within policing and if the media relations’ officer role was becoming more accepted by the police membership. Also, was the role of acting as media officer beneficial to career movement?

The issue of career planning was discussed. The participants believed that risks were inherent when conducting media releases and one participant summarized it by stating, “ you could conduct a hundred great interviews but I can guarantee you, the one that you screw up is going to be remembered around the office for ever.” The increased probability of making mistake was considered a risk. Many of the officers worked during an era in policing when seniority was the critical element for promotion. With this system, why would an officer take a chance and conduct a media interview. “There was nothing to gain for your career and only lots to lose.”

The element of organizational culture and the influence on the police members was strong. Most worked with other officers during their careers who believed the police should not cooperate with the media. If this was the status quo for policing, then the Club Culture

(Sonnefield, as quoted by McNamara, 1999) was truly having an impact on media relations and therefore community relations. Career opportunities were deemed to be found in traditional roles within the police community. Investigative roles such as working within the detective division were identified by the participants as being beneficial to career movement. Other areas in policing were deemed by the participants to be neutral for their careers. The media relations' role was in fact considered a risk that had no real benefit for career movement within their departments. The retired members stated that, "the job had enough pressure of its own without putting self imposed pressure onto myself by dealing with the media." This dynamic interaction of career pressure, organizational pressure, media pressure, management pressure, and family pressures created a system in which the police officers worked. The need to keep pressure and risk taking to a minimum was considered crucial to success.

The conclusion drawn from the focus group was the improved role of media relations within the policing organizations. The noted improvement in communication between the media and the police is also helping to decrease the organizational pressure the media officer faces within the workplace. The issue of trust among co-workers, and the organizational culture that frowns upon risk taking, was of concern. It is the researcher's bias that trust is still an issue that needs to be addressed in modern policing.

Conclusion 11

The members of the focus group believed that trust within the workplace was necessary to achieve a workplace atmosphere conducive to effective media relations and that media relations were not perceived to be career advancing.

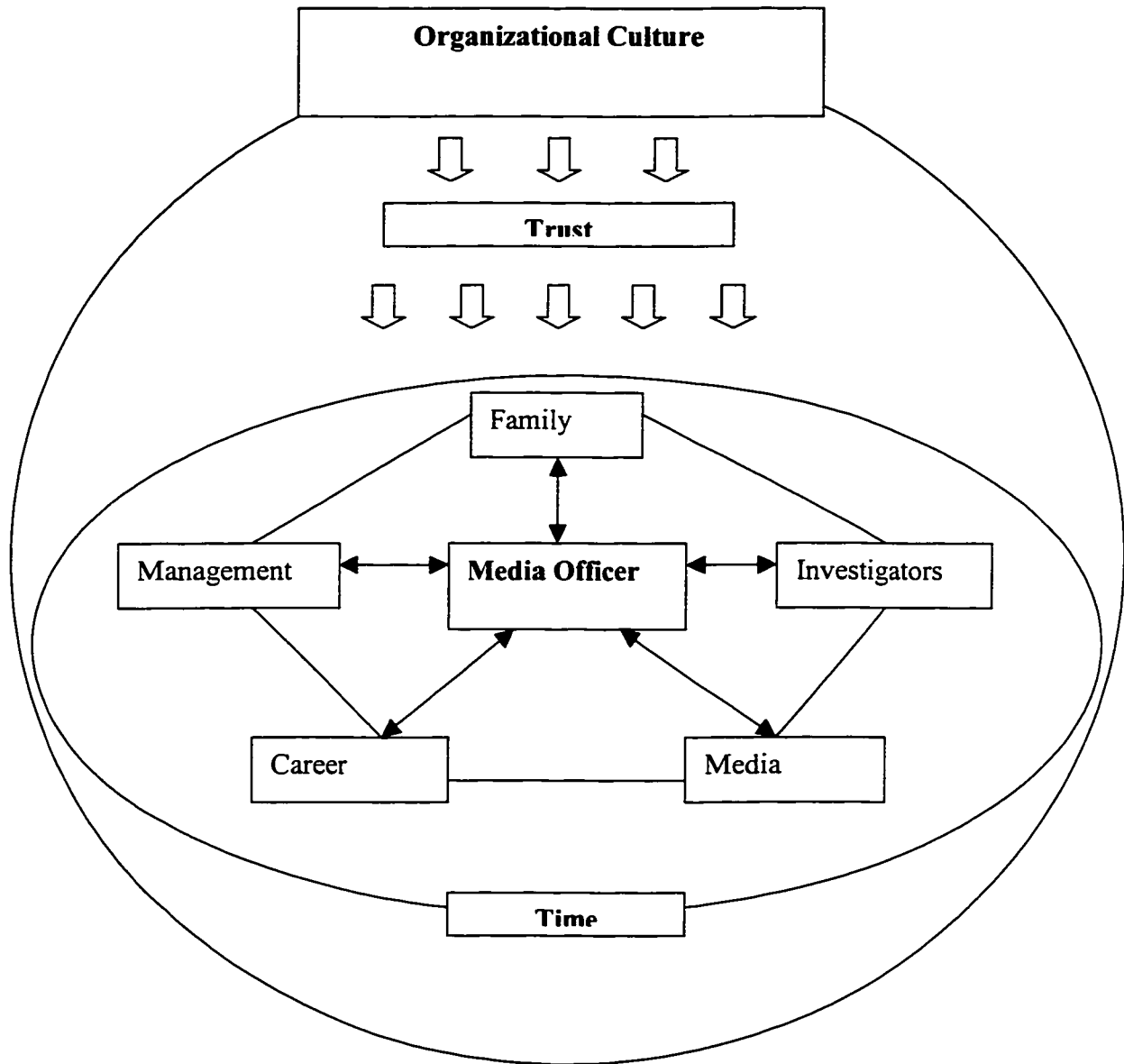


Table 4.9

The systematic relationship showing the tension and pressure demands placed on the media relation's officer. The balance between these demands and the ability to work within these systems creates opportunity for leading change within the media relations program.

The Research Question-Overarching Conclusions

The study findings from the phases of Action Research support the original purpose of enquiry into the research question and the corresponding sub-questions. The research question addresses these broad themes and examines the current systemic issues involved.

How can we improve the effectiveness of the Media Relations Program at the Saanich Police Department to best serve the community of Saanich?

The main research question was divided into sub-questions to address areas in which the Media Relations Program could be examined and perhaps be improved. The first sub-question addressed the tools, systems, and planning that media officers are currently using, and are these tools effective and efficient in providing a level of service to both the community and the Saanich police department? The conclusion from the research is time management and organizational culture issues largely dictate the effectiveness of the media program. The media officers have indicated that time demands from being committed to regular patrol duties impedes their ability to respond to the media in a timely fashion. The feedback from the media members also supports this finding.

The media members interviewed indicated frustration when attempting to contact members of the Saanich Police to obtain information. The media pager system was found to be ineffective in meeting the media member's needs for obtaining relevant police information. In fact, the media pager data supplied by one of the participants indicated the ability to return media pages is one of the greatest areas of challenge for the Saanich Police, as the vast majority of media pages to the

department are going unanswered. This inability to respond because of time constraints is greatly impeding the effectiveness of the media program. The system and tools the media officers are using include the current pager system and fax fan-out notifications to the media. The need to have 24-hour a day coverage for media members to obtain departmental information was the catalyst for the structure of the current media system. Although the basics principles of the current system are sound, the reality is that time commitments are making the system unworkable in many situations. The police participants stated there are often occasions when media requests simply go unanswered. This clearly does not meet the expectations of effectively serving the community or achieving the goals of the department's strategic plan.

The other area of concern with the media participants was the current organizational culture in policing. The media participants noticed that officers were often "reluctant" to take part media interviews. This was of concern to one media participant who indicated that unique "colour" was one of the elements that was required for a good story. The police members were observed to be reluctant to provide this type of information that went beyond the basic facts. The conclusion is that police media officers are reluctant to break away from the Club Culture held within the organizational culture of policing. There was an identified need by the media participants to have police officers who were willing to work with the media to provide the information required to effectively complete their stories, and in turn, to provide a better level of service to the community.

The community members who participated provided valuable insight into the current media program and the public perception of the Saanich Police as portrayed in the media. The feedback indicated most community members were satisfied with the conduct and presentation of the Saanich Police while in the media. The frequency of the media contact was identified as an area

of challenge. Issues such as balanced representation between the Victoria Police and the Saanich Police was addressed. Also, the need to have more media releases and communication with members of the public was identified by the participants. This is also identified as a goal within the Saanich Police Strategic Plan. The conclusion is that when conducting media releases the community response is good; the Saanich Police is simply not doing enough of it.

The next two sub-questions relating to the research project addressed the assessment and accountability of the current media program. At the time of this research, there has been no formal assessment of the media program. The current structure of conducting media releases has been assessed on a case-by-case basis. The final product as witnessed in the media, has formed the basis of whether the media releases were conducted in an appropriate fashion that supported the goals of the department. Only the individual releases have been assessed with feedback being provided pertaining to individual media releases. The actual systems that media officers' use was not assessed prior to the time of this research.

The participants addressed the issue of accountability. The media officers indicated the main responsibility at work was to frontline police duties. As a result, media enquires were prioritized and dealt with whenever time and commitments allowed. If other police duties demanded time, then there was no accountability to the media pager, the officers were simply "busy." The media participants addressed the need to have some accountability in responding to media requests. The two viewpoints involving accountability, or a lack thereof, were a systemic issue that needed to be addressed. The conclusion is the media officers, and the department as a whole, is not providing the accountability being expected from the media participants.

The last sub-question addressed the need for having more resources allocated to the media relations' role. Whether this would involve a full time police officer or some form of added

duties to assist with current media relations protocol was included within the research. Both police and media participants indicated a need to have more resources dedicated to the media relations' role. One police participant indicated that a police officer should undertake the role of media relations' officer on a full time basis. Another police participant suggested that the media role could be combined with other duties with media relations having the priority. The conclusion is that the media officers themselves recognize the value in having a dedicated officer who has the time to address the media requests. At present, the research indicates that the participants do not. Of interest, the media member participants did not address having a full-time media officer. The main concern of the media member participants was simply having a connection within the department to access information. The systemic makeup of the police media system did not appear to be of concern; simply the ability to contact the police and have an appropriate and timely response was the main aspiration. The conclusion is that an identified need to have either more resources allocated to address media concerns or a restructuring of current systems will need to occur to meet the objective goals of the media, the strategic plan, and the community.

Project Recommendations – Improving the Media Relations Program

The study findings indicate support for change within the Saanich Police Departments current media relations program. The following recommendations are based on the research findings, and aim to improve the media program to better serve the citizens of Saanich and to meet the goals of the departmental strategic plan.

Recommendation 1

Continue to develop the established relationship with the Saanich News. A large portion of the participants is referencing the ongoing “Crime Watch” page. The need to continue with this program and to possibly expand into other areas provides an excellent venue for reaching into the community and providing police information. The value of the current program should not be underestimated; it is a direct link into the community, which the police currently control through the relationship with the Saanich News.

“The regular police section in the paper would seem the best way to regularly delivery police news to the community.” Participant.

“The Saanich News does a great job of doing this already. An occasional article of crime prevention the success of Block Watch could be useful- Block Watch type articles right in the Saanich News.” Participant.

“Put more information in the paper on the type of house crime, items targeted, most common means of entry etc. Participant.

“Doing a great job of using the Saanich News.” Participant

The Saanich News Crime Watch page is a valuable resource for the Saanich Police. There ability to have information from the police department relayed out into the community on a weekly basis is instrumental in providing an accurate and timely source of police information. Also, the Crime Watch page is delivered to the Saanich News in a completed form. The area map, list of

break and enter locations, and the corresponding police stories are virtually unedited by newspaper staff. As a result, the Saanich Police have established a direct forum with the community that should be envied by other police agencies.

Recommendation 2

The Saanich Police should strive to develop further interactions with all media outlets in the Victoria area to ensure that there is a representative balance in police reporting.

"I think the media falls short on covering stories where the Saanich Police is involved."

Participant.

"Victoria Police seems to have the spotlight more than Saanich." Participant.

"Insufficient coverage re: property crimes. Saanich News is good whereas the Times Colonist is poor for coverage." Participant.

"It's so much easier dealing with the City, their Chief has given the o.k. for any of the members to talk to us. I know you complain when all we print is Victoria stories but the truth is they are easy to deal with." Media Participant.

An increased presence needs to be established with all local media outlets if the Saanich News is to achieve the equal representation indicated by the participants. The participants have clearly indicated that partial blame for the unequal representation identified by the participants lies with the current Saanich Police media program.

Recommendation 3

The Saanich Police should consider conducting police officer training to increase the level of knowledge surrounding media relations and the role the media play in determining public opinion.

When there is a genuine vision (as opposed to the all-to-familiar 'vision statement'), people excel and learn, not because they are told to, but because they want to. But many leaders have personal visions that never get translated into shared visions that galvanize an organization... What has been lacking is a discipline for translating vision into shared vision - not a 'cookbook' but a set of principles and guiding practices. (Senge, 1990)

The discipline of team learning starts with 'dialogue', the capacity of members of a team to suspend assumptions and enter into a genuine thinking together. (Senge, 1990)

The need to have a basic training program to assist members with understanding the dynamics and need for proactive media relations will assist both the organizational culture and the reported imbalance between police agencies.

The research indicated a need to address the organizational culture in relation to the media program. The department's organizational culture has been developed over many years and is interwoven into all aspects of work within the Saanich Police. One immediate method of addressing the current organizational culture issue would be the implementation of training days for police members involving media relations. These sessions should be for all members, not just

media officers. The goals of the sessions would be to address the background of media relations, and the need for effective media relations in modern policing. Through education of the police members about the media program and its position within the strategic plan, it is hoped that the organizational culture can be addressed through a process of mutual enquiry and learning. For the media relations program to truly fulfill the objectives of the strategic plan, attitudes involving the police organizational culture will have to change. By using a process of open dialogue and facilitation to conduct departmental training sessions, it is hoped that the effects of the organizational culture can be reduced. Senge states that one of the fundamental flaws in most change strategies is the lack of understanding with regards to organizational culture, structures, and norms and their impact (Senge, 1999). Also, by addressing the organizational culture through training, the opportunities for more interaction with members of the media could increase with the corresponding increase in awareness about the media and the role they play in shaping public opinion. Organizational culture within the Saanich Police is affecting the delivery of the media relations program. The need to have police/media communication, without the accompanying pressures of police culture, is paramount for true openness in policing. The members who act in capacity of media relations' officers must not be excluded from the Club Culture and it is hoped the training of all members on the importance of proactive media relations can assist with minimizing the cultural impact on the media officers.

The Saanich Police Strategic plan was developed with the assistance of all members of the police department. Sessions were held where police officers could voice opinions regarding the future direction of the Saanich Police and address areas that were of importance. Virtually every strategic planning session identified stronger media relations as an area for improvement and future consideration (Personal Conversation, Insp. Robert Downie, 2002).

It is the establishment of linkage between the theoretical planning to the daily operation of the department that is required to have success in this endeavour.

Recommendation 4

The Saanich Police should consider enhancing other avenues of interaction with the public other than the traditional roles of police enforcement. Programs such as Police Post, Block Watch presentations, Community Meetings, and any other venue where police officers can interact with the community should be promoted and expanded upon.

“Community meetings in local schools should occur regularly so that residents can talk to the police about issues that are of concern to them.” Participant.

“What about speaking at public events where adults are present- such community events perhaps at parks, malls, rec. centers? I’m always happy to see a police presence.” Participant.

“I saw a Saanich Police officer at a Restorative Justice seminar and got a totally different perspective on police views that what I was used to hearing.” Participant.

The Saanich Police should continue to support officers attending public meetings and public areas to interact with the public. The participants indicated a desire to interact with the police in an atmosphere that was non-threatening and outside of the normal role of enforcement. The department currently supports several initiatives involving police/community interaction. The community participants indicated a desire for continued or increased support for such programs. The media participants indicated an opportunity for informal meetings with members of the

police to assist with communications and develop working relationships. It was felt by the participants that this would assist with the current communication challenges. One recommendation includes the implementation of a training day for media members who wish to learn more about police protocol and investigations. The goal is to reduce confusion at serious crime scenes by educating media members of police procedure and protocol. An example illustrating this issue is offered here. At one recent incident within Saanich, there was confusion over the crime scene tape that was used to establish the perimeter of the police containment area. The Saanich Police had attended a home where a sudden death had occurred. Details from the police were very limited because of the nature of the death and a cause of death had not been confirmed. There was an assumption by the media that because the police tape had been up for more than two days, the department was surely investigating a murder and this was reported on the evening news. In fact, the death was eventually ruled accidental in nature.

It is hoped that a training session for media will reduce issues such as these in the future by providing police members an opportunity to meet the members of the media in a non-confrontational manner.

Recommendation 5

The current media pager system is not meeting the expectations of the media or the objectives of the strategic plan. A review of the pager system is advised if the goals of the research project are to be achieved. At present, the system is not working for the interests of the Saanich Police, the media, or the community.

“Why even use the media pager, I don’t even bother with it anymore” Participant

“I have attempted to follow the protocol and use the pager, I just don’t get a response the majority of the time.” Participant

The current media pager system needs to be reassessed to ensure it can viably meet the needs of the department and the media. At present the need for change is evident. If the Saanich Police is committed to continuing with the media pager system, the following challenge areas are identified as requiring consideration.

Areas to consider are:

- i) The training of all media officers in the use of the media pager.
- ii) The media pager should be clearly identified to ensure that it is not mistaken for another pager such as Operation Cooperation.
- iii) Media pages should be cleared off the media pager once the media request has been fulfilled. This will ensure that media officers are not left wondering if the department has responded to media requests.
- iv) The media pager should be kept within the Staff Sergeant's office when being transferred from one media officer to another at shift change. The pager should be accounted for by a Supervisor to ensure that it is being used. If the pager has been left in a police officer' locker, a Supervisor can contact that immediately to retrieve the pager. The media members do not know that the pager is out of service because it is in a locker. There is an expectation of 24-hour coverage from the media.

- v) Media Officers should be assigned to attend the bi-weekly media briefings to ensure they are aware of the information being released to the media.
- vi) Media Officers should be granted the ability to attend any area of Saanich, regardless of their assigned zone, to ensure that media commitments are being met.
- vii) All media officers should have received formal media relations training to ensure accountability to the pertinent departmental policy and relevant legislation.
- viii) If the duties of the media officer prevent them from immediately returning a media page, a Supervisor should be notified. Either they, or the on-duty Watch Commander, can then return the page for the media officer.
- ix) The current departmental media policy should be amended to address the need for accountability and outline the above protocol to ensure that media requests are being returned in a timely manner.

Effective changes are recommended for the media pager system to achieve the goals of the Strategic Plan.

Recommendation 6

The Saanich Police should consider other systems for the operation of the media relations program. An examination of best practices may disclose other options that meet the needs of the department and fulfill the objectives of the strategic plan.

“One big media call could “take fifty percent of my time on a shift or even more.” Participant.

“I think there should actually be one media officer as opposed to one person adding that as an extra hat that they have to deal with.” Participant.

Several options are available to the Saanich Police if there is to be change within the current media system. This research project does not encompass the varied forms of media relations programs that are operating within other police departments. Even within the city of Victoria, the various police agencies have differing approaches in dealing with the media. A variety of factors would have to be considered to ascertain which program fits best with the organizational structure of the Saanich Police and the objectives of the strategic plan. Options for the media relations program could be varied, one example is to remove the media pager system and have the media members contact the Supervisors directly. This process would allow the media members the ability to contact the Watch Commander directly and this does occur at present. The challenges with this option are the time commitments placed on the Watch Commander and the inability to return calls. Even though the Watch Commander's office is staffed 24-hours a day, there are times when the Watch Commander is on the phone or detained. At these times, the media members would be required to leave a voice message and the issue of timely response would once again surface.

Another avenue would be to implement multiple streams of communication with the media. These could include the media officers, the Platoon Sergeants, the Watch Commander, and others who would be available to the media. This system would provide the most coverage for the media members and would assist when the media officer is committed to other duties. There would be Supervisors or other police officers made available to the media when the media officer is detained. There is an identified need to have a process in place so that media members do not have to attempt contact with multiple persons to access information. One of the keys to success is having the assigned media officer communicate the media request to other police officers whenever a timely response is not possible so they can in turn respond to the media. The

media are not generally looking for one person in particular; they are looking for information, regardless of the police member conducting the release.

The current system of having the Crime Prevention Officer act as a backup contact source for media members is helpful during the daytime hours. The current challenges with the media pager has led to an increase in calls directly to the Crime Prevention Officer by media members seeking information. This in turn has increased the time demands on the Crime Prevention Officer who has other commitments and duties. Many of the daytime media requests involve some form of follow-up. Often the Crime Prevention Officer is simply researching a request and forwarding on the information to the police officer responsible for the case file.

Given the issues of time and accountability, a best-case scenario is to have a full-time media officer dedicated to communication with the media. The officer could assume other duties yet media relations would be the primary responsibility for the officer. The accountability would be encompassed within the job description for the officer and the media members would have a reliable and timely contact with the department. The determination in creating a full-time officer would obviously be dictated by budgetary and organizational parameters. This expense would be considered in conjunction with the benefits of having a full-time media contact, and whether the expense would be justifiable given the future direction and importance placed on media/community relations as outlined within the strategic plan.

CHAPTER FIVE

Research Implications

This chapter examines the conclusions and recommendations proposed within Chapter Four in relation to organizational implementation. What are the organizational implications for the implementation of the recommendations? Conversely, what are the implications of not undertaking the recommendations? This chapter examined two sections. The first section describes and analyzes each recommendation, and clearly examines the corresponding organizational implications. The second section addresses the area of future research and organizational implications.

Recommendation 1

Continue to develop the established relationship with the Saanich News. A large portion of the participants is referencing the ongoing “Crime Watch” page.

The need to continue with this program and to possibly expand into other areas provides an excellent venue for reaching into the community and providing police information. The value of the current program should not be underestimated; it is a direct link into the community, which the police currently control through the relationship with the Saanich News.

There is a relational history established between the Saanich Police and the Saanich News. The weekly contributions to the newspaper form the basis of the Crime Watch page. The research participants have indicated that this paper is widely accessed for police information within the Saanich community. The implication for the Saanich Police is time oriented. The participants indicated a desire to have more police information delivered to their homes using the Saanich News as the conduit.

Currently, the Crime Prevention Officer creates the Crime Watch page as part of their weekly duties. Every Monday morning, the Crime Watch page is created using computer generated reports and mapping programs highlighting specified crimes of interest including break and enters and theft from vehicle. These documents are created by the Crime Analyst of the Saanich Police who sends the documents through to the Crime Prevention Officer in both paper and electronic form. Previously, the Crime Watch page was hand-written by the preceding Crime Prevention Officer. The Community Liaison clerical support worker then typed this hand-written version and an employee of the Saanich News would attend and pick up the weekly edition in person. Today, the Crime Watch page is generated by computer and sent directly to the Saanich News via email. As a result, the time committed to creating the Crime Watch page has been reduced.

If there is to be an increased presence within the Saanich News, there will be a corresponding time demand for whichever police resource is involved. The current program has proven successful and there does not appear to be a negative implication in raising the profile of the police department in the local paper. The implication for the Saanich Police is an increased demand on resources and time, as police members engage in activities associated with communicating information to the Saanich news.

The implication for not continuing to develop the current relationship is twofold. First, the public may tire of the Crime Watch page in its current format and stories relating to crime prevention initiatives in the community may appear stale and recycled. Second, the Saanich News may restructure and seek other avenues of contribution for their weekly paper. The Saanich Police should continue to foster a good working relationship with the Saanich news and look for other areas of interaction such as weekly editorials or special feature pieces for the paper.

Recommendation 2

The Saanich Police should strive to develop further interactions with all media outlets in the Victoria area to ensure that there is a representative balance in police reporting. The participants indicated that a need exists to increase the profile of the Saanich Police in the local media.

The current participant feedback indicates that the Saanich Police needed to develop a better presence in relation to other local police departments. If there is to be balanced reporting representative of the Saanich Police in the Greater Victoria area, resources are going to be needed to increase the media profile and ensure the Saanich Police is not having media opportunities pass by without the information being released. Currently, the strategic plan for the Saanich Police outlines the need for better communication with the public and the media. If there is to be a change within the current media representation, the Saanich Police should consider the development of strategies to prevent Saanich Police news from going unreported.

This strategy may involve the dedication and allocation of departmental resources to fulfill this element of the strategic plan that clearly states a goal to “improve existing relationships and promote the development of new relationships with residents, business owners, and the general public, including the media” (Strategic Plan, 2002). This goal is echoed in the sentiments of Metropolitan Police Commissionaire Sir Robert Mark who stated that it was “of the utmost importance that every effort should be made to develop and maintain good relations with news media representatives in order to render it the more likely that the coverage of police activities will be full and fair.” With the participant feedback supporting this desire for reporting increased media friendly activities, the Saanich Police should ensure that efforts are being made to increase the departments’ media presence to create an atmosphere of fairness in media reporting sought by Sir Robert Mark. The need for a greater balance may require the dedication of police resources to ensure a fair balance is being sought in the local media. The time/cost analysis of committing resources would be measured against the benefits of greater Saanich media coverage.

The implication of not taking action in this area is to remain in a position where the community’s perceived lack of representation of the Saanich Police within the Greater Victoria area is deemed proportionally lower than neighbouring police departments. The participants clearly identified the profile of the Saanich Police be increased. The benefits of doing so are measured on many different levels including increased public confidence and public interaction with the department in reporting crime and becoming involved with proactive crime prevention initiatives.

Recommendation 3

The Saanich Police should consider conducting police officer training to increase the level of knowledge surrounding media relations and the role the media play in determining public opinion. The need to have a basic training program to assist police members with understanding the dynamics and need for proactive media relations will assist both the organizational culture and the reported imbalance between police agencies.

The departmental implication involves the commitment of time and resources for a media-training program including the creation, delivery, and implementation of the program. There would be costs incurred for the development of such a training program based solely in the time allotment for members to attend the session and members involved in the creation and delivery. Currently, the Saanich Police operate regularly scheduled training days to assist with the educational development of all members. Some of these “training days” are scheduled for annual qualifications such as “firearms” and “use of force.” There is an opportunity to minimize the financial burden by having the recommended media training encompassed into this existing training schedule. The loss of one of the regular training days would have to be examined to determine if the feasibility of dedicating a training day to media relations was possible.

The implication for not conducting some form of education will manifest itself in the current organizational culture. The need to use dialogue and learning to develop greater understanding about the issues of media relations, and the role in shaping public opinion, is vital. The public is the client of the Saanich Police. Every officer, regardless of media relations’ experience, is affected by the role local media play in public sentiment and opinion. When working out in the community, the media can largely effect the cooperation displayed by the public. Scott Cutlip

states, “ The power of public opinion must be faced, understood, and dealt with. It provides the psychological environment in which organizations either prosper or perish.” (Cutlip and Center, 1978, p.110) As a result, it is important for police officers to learn about the media, the police media program, and the direct connection linking the two with community opinion.

Recommendation 4

The Saanich Police should continue to pursue other avenues of interaction with the public, other than the traditional roles of police enforcement. Programs such as Police Post, Block Watch presentations, Community Meetings, School Liaison, and any other venue where police officers can interact with the community should be promoted and expanded.

The Saanich Police will need to assess the current proactive programs currently in place to determine if the function of the programs is meeting the objectives of the strategic plan. Currently, there are several programs designed to increase interaction between the police members and the community. Programs such as Police Post are designed for the sole purpose of increasing police officer exposure in a non-threatening role in places such as shopping malls and recreation centers. The participants indicated these programs to be of value and appreciated the police officers more when observed partaking in these activities.

The Saanich Police already is committing resources to these programs. The implication of placing more police resources into the community to assist with proactive endeavours will certainly increase the time commitment, especially from members of the Uniform Division. If a police member is assigned to conduct a Police Post, there is obviously a corresponding reduction of resources available to attend calls for service during this time. The best scenario is for

members to attend public areas whenever time dictates the ability to do so. This will reduce the impact on resources available to take calls for service as the police officers themselves will know when they have available time to attend public areas such as shopping malls, etc. The challenge lies in creating an atmosphere where it is deemed acceptable to attend public areas and interact with the public without being told to do so. The challenge for the police department is the creation of a culture where public interaction is not an assigned duty, but part of the total duty of being a police officer.

Recommendation 5

The current media pager system is not meeting the expectations of the media or the objectives of the strategic plan. A review of the pager system is recommended if the goals of the research project are to be achieved.

The implication for the Saanich Police will be determined by the action taken with regard to the recommendation. If the media pager system is to remain in its current state, the media program of the Saanich Police will continue to underachieve in providing service to the department and the public. The media pager system will need to be changed on the levels described within the recommendation, and there could be corresponding costs associated to training. Some of the recommendations listed are quite basic and would require a minimum of effort on the part of the department. Others may involve training expenses and time commitments from the members to ensure that desired goals were being achieved.

The implication for not taking action is to remain in status quo with a media system not effectively meeting the demands of any of the stakeholders. The expense of addressing the systemic issues would be weighed against the benefits of the creation of a media system that achieves the community goals and the objectives of the strategic plan.

The implication of not addressing the recommendation is simple. The current media system will risk being ineffective in providing the department with the sought objectives. Also, given the media members have been involved in this research process, they may develop a lack of confidence in the Saanich Police if positive changes in the pager system are not noticeable in upcoming months.

Recommendation 6

The Saanich Police should consider other systems for the operation of the media relations program. An examination of best practices may disclose an option that meets the needs of the department and fulfills the objectives of the strategic plan.

The implication of adopting another model of operating a media relations program will be varying depending on the options explored. The possible options are limitless and further exploration by the Saanich Police of other best practices could be initiated

Future Research

There are several areas in which the researcher would designate potential for future research. Although this project examines the specific needs of the Saanich Police organization, it is assumed there would be benefits for other police organizations. As a result, future research could examine the “best practices” of other police jurisdictions to determine if one specific media relations' model is more beneficial than another. The best practices from other police organizations may apply to the Saanich Police or they may prove ineffective for the department. There are many factors that could be examined including population base, police department size, amount of local media etc. Also, the actual media relations programs themselves could be examined to determine if one organizational approach is more effective in the community than another. Issues such as having one designated media officer assigned, having multiple officers releasing information, and having a separate civilian employee coordinating public relations could be examined to ascertain which framework works best?

Another police/ media research project could expand on this research project. Any further examination of the police/media dynamic would be of benefit. Palys (1997) refers to the “degree to which repeated observations of a phenomenon-the same phenomenon at different times, or the same instance of the phenomenon by two different observers-yields similar results” (p.424). By expanding on the current research project, areas of future data collection could be used to provide reliability to the current findings. This in turn could provide validation to the

researcher's findings by having similar studies completed or studies completed that expand and overlap this research project.

Regarding this research project, areas for future research could include expanding the scope of the research. The time constraints of the research project allowed for several interviews to be conducted. However, any one of the identified groups could be expanded upon. This could include, media members, police members, and the public. An in depth analysis of any of these specific groups concerning media relations' and the local police could parallel the current research project.

The strength of police organizational culture was identified as a powerful force in the workplace. Future research in this area would greatly assist with not only media relations, but also every facet of police work. The culture in place would vary from police agency but I believe there are enough similarities to apply the research in a broader context.

The last area of future research would involve a return to the current research project. This would establish if the recommendations, if implemented, had the desired effect. Would there be the desired change in participant response, which formed the basis for the development of themes in this project? It is hoped that future research regarding the media relations program at the Saanich Police would determine that action research did complete the cyclical phase and produced results with positive change.

CHAPTER SIX

Research Lessons Learned

There are several lessons the researcher learned during the course of the completing this project. First, the scope and breadth of the project was larger than first anticipated. Even after spending many hours reducing the research question into a simple sentence, the true enormity of the task was not appreciated until the research began. Much like peeling the layers off of an onion, the layers of this project continued to develop and demand attention. As each new consideration unfolded, the time and energy required to explore deeply into these avenues of enquiry demanded time and energy. An essential component of dealing with the added time requirements was to remain focused on the research question. I benefited in the form of secretarial support from the Saanich Police. The secretarial support workers at the department handled issues such as transcription and this allowed for more free time to conduct the research. I believe the project would have been too overwhelming if I had not received this support. The possibilities became truly endless and the need to focus on the specifics of the research project became more critical as the research process progressed. As well, the time commitments, schedules, and priorities of the participants and other stakeholders became a management issue for the researcher. The need to allocate extra time for scheduling interviews with the participants became critical. As the desire to complete participant interviews increased, the availability of the participants seemed to diminish. The angst of scheduling the interviews to meet my timelines increased with each cancellation. If completed all over again, I would certainly commit more time to actually managing my time! One critical component of conducting research is planning

and adequate amounts of time prior to each phase of the research process. Although completed, there was a feeling of hurriedness when completing the interview phases.

Another area of consideration was the selection of participants. The overall desire and goal of the research project was the improvement of the media relations program. I believed that a broad representation of stakeholders was required to fulfill a sense of fairness to all of the parties involved with the program. Looking back, I realize the participant numbers needed to have true representation were overwhelming. A smaller slice of the pie would have provided the ability to focus in on one area of the program. This could have been accomplished by conducting the research from the perspective of one of the participant groups only.

The Royal Roads University Online Survey Generator provided it's own set of unique challenges. After the completion of the second residency, Royal Roads updated the Survey Generator. As a result, the new program was unfamiliar to the researcher. When contacted, Royal Roads was helpful and the new generator was far more user friendly to program. As a result, the researcher chose to continue with this program. Once participants started to submit data, it was determined that the survey results were only available for download into the Microsoft Excel program. The older Royal Roads Generator provided graphs and percentages and the new program did not have the same quality product for the compilation of data. After negotiations with Royal Roads, the researcher was permitted to use a non-supported program previously made available by the University. The time and energy required to install the program to run the data was onerous. Next time, a commercial product such as Web Surveyor would surely be worth the investment.

Program Lessons Learned

This section examines the required competencies for the completion of the research project. Throughout the process, many of these competencies were displayed. In fact, the completion of this project alone, demonstrated a commitment to leadership and learning. The competencies have been formatted as per the Royal Roads University evaluation framework and examine a host of leadership qualities.

1b Demonstrate leadership characteristics.

Demonstrate personal qualities of leadership.

By completing the research project, the researcher reflected not only the departmental implications, but also the personal implications of the research findings.

The research has already begun with some integration of the major project recommendations into the existing media relations program at the Saanich Police. The Saanich Police administration has expressed a desire to continue with the development of the media relations program to ensure the goals of the strategic plan are obtained. The researcher continues to display leadership qualities by continuing to represent the Saanich Police in the media and the researcher is actively involved with the media relations' program development.

Treat others with respect and dignity.

The major project involved many participants in the research and data collection process. Many of the participants work with the researcher and confidentiality was of concern. The researcher respected the position of the participants and conducted the research project with the

utmost of confidentiality. Throughout the process, the participants were treated with respect and the ethical standards of Royal Roads University were adhered to.

Value, promote and celebrate diversity.

The research project involved participants from various areas of the community. It was the goal of the research project to ensure the diversity of various participants within the community was explored to support the research project. The viewpoints of the participants were at times differing with the researcher, yet the differing participant viewpoints were celebrated as being critical to the success of the project and assisting with the development of the media relation program.

1c Provide leadership.

This competency is the foundation of the MALT program. The media relations program requires leaders within the Saanich Police to assume the role of true leadership and present police issues to the community in a positive and professional manner. The researcher has performed the role of media relations' officer for approximately six years and continues to demonstrate leadership by representing the Saanich Police to the public at large. The completion of this project is merely an extension of this leadership role.

Demonstrate effective communications skills.

The research project involved participants from various sections of the police, media and public. The need for effective communication skills was vital in conducting and completing the major project. Also, ongoing communication with the project sponsor, fellow learners, and the faculty advisor helped fulfill the feedback loop necessary to complete the research project.

Demonstrate skills to facilitate a group dialogue.

The research project involved a focus group dialogue. Organizing and facilitating this process was required for the collection of data through a process of mutual enquiry.

Encourage equal participation of team members.

This competency was demonstrated by involving team members from various backgrounds to partake in the research project. Included were members of the media, public, and police. The police personnel were represented on various levels including media relations' officers and management to ensure that there was equal contribution on the issues.

Openly share own learning process.

The learning journey and the process of conducting the research project were transparent in nature. The openness of the project was already displayed with the sharing of information within the police environment. The learning journey was also documented to form a historical and contemporaneous reflection of the learning process. The researcher was also able to share the learning journey with two co-workers who are also involved in the MALT program. This connection provided great support and the ability to learn from each other's experiences throughout the major project.

Displaying initiative.

The researcher demonstrated a commitment to the successful completion and implementation of the project. The media relations program at the Saanich Police had never been the subject of review and the initiation of this project was instrumental in taking steps to ensure quality service to the Saanich Police and the community.

2b Apply systems thinking to the solution of leadership and learning problems.

Apply systems thinking theory to a complex organizational issue.

The research question involved two organizations that are currently working in a professional relationship. The systems that are interplaying within the research project were explored and the resulting dynamics examined. The examination included the systems involving the police and the media. Also, the system involving the media relations' officers and the corresponding pressures from family, co-workers, investigators, management, the community, and the media. This system of pressure is intertwined with the greater media relations system and the police department system. The complexity of these systems was examined in relation to organizational culture and the effect it has on the systems. The use of a historical systems perspective was also utilized through the focus group of retired members. Finally, the client/ community system was explored regarding the systemic issues of providing media relations to benefit the end user, the community.

The researcher also demonstrated this competency by effectively planning and managing the research project and selecting strategies that supported the successful implementation of change within the workplace. The use of action research methodology to facilitate the active participation of various stakeholders in the research project also demonstrated this competency.

Engage participants to extend learning from self to team to organization.

The involvement of participants within the research project allowed the researcher to receive data. Part of the research project was to return to the participants with the findings of the research

to confirm the validity of these findings. This allowed participants to reflect on the findings and the implications that the findings had for their own place within the systems and organizations.

The use of a focus group allowed for individual concerns and issues to be brought into a team setting. This process allowed for the participants to transfer their experiences into a team setting in a process of mutual enquiry.

The researcher also understood that the research project would only have viability if recognized by the stakeholders as important. The implementation of a project plan to address the whole system of police organizational culture with relation to the media program, and the connection between the police system and the end users, the community.

4c Create learning opportunities for others.

Recognize opportunities for mentoring others.

The process of conducting the major project allowed for the researcher to interact with the participants. This process involved a focus group, interviews, and a survey and allowed for the researcher to interact with the participants and contribute to the team learning.

There was also an opportunity to liaise with other members of the learning community and assist with their research projects. This liaison was developed within the work environment with two other MALT learners. The process involved proofreading surveys and conducting meetings to assist each other during the research project.

Model the way to create opportunities for others to learn.

There was an opportunity to assist others with their learning journey. There were also opportunities to model the way in the workplace through the conducting and completion of the research project. The participants and the non-participants were exposed to the research work that was taking place. There was opportunity to create an environment for others to learn and included areas such as the focus group, interviews, and the online survey.

4e During the project completion help others learn.**Create space for creativity and inquiry.**

The research project was an avenue for participants to share their experiences through creative listening and thinking and to assist with the research process. The researcher demonstrated this competency by creating the opportunities for participants to express their viewpoints on the various issues.

5a Identify, locate and evaluate research findings.**Utilize qualitative action research to gather findings.**

The literature review and data analysis in the major project demonstrate this competency. The depth of the literature review illustrates the need for media relations and the impact of organizational culture. The analysis of the research methodology and findings displays this competency. Also, the major project final submission, which utilized qualitative action research to generate data for the project demonstrates this competency.

5b Use research methods to solve problems.

The major project demonstrated the researcher's use of two processes to collect information toward improving the media relations program. The research methods involved qualitative and quantitative data collection. Research data from these action research phases contributed to the improvement of the media program.

This competency was displayed in the major project final submission. The use of research methods to solve the research question displayed this competency. There was also the process of interviews and a focus group that assisted with the use of dialogue to address the research question.

7a Listen effectively and value others different opinions.**Practice mutual inquiry and reflect on process.**

By conducting the focus group through a process of mutual inquiry the researcher demonstrated this competency. The need to have input from the participants was self-evident. The research project used the diversity of mutual inquiry during the interviews and the focus group to collect research data. Also, the researcher reflected on the data and the effect of the data in relation to the media program.

Respect and effectively harvest polarization.

The current media program is polarized by many viewpoints with regard to the media program. Throughout the research process, the researcher used these different viewpoints to analyze the current issues and develop possible solutions.

7b Communicate with others through writing.

The researcher demonstrated this competency by producing a final report for submission to the project sponsor, the Saanich Police, Royal Roads University, and the participants. Also, throughout the research process, the researcher communicated in writing to both internal and external participants. Also, there has been ongoing communication between the researcher and the faculty advisor with feedback being received on a regular basis.

Create team-learning environment.

This competency was demonstrated by assisting other learners at RRU and by producing a research document that could be utilized within the workplace. The end goal of the research project was the improved success of the Saanich Police team through the effective implementation of the research recommendations. The research project involved linking several groups within the community. The police members past and present, the media, and the community were consulted to provide information for this project. The participants were treated as members of the larger community team to help facilitate success.

It is hoped that displaying these learning competencies will assist me with my current and future leaning. The journey throughout the research process has been ongoing and rewarding and will continue after this research project is completed. The end goal of the research project was the improvement of the media relations program. The end goal of my own personal learning journey was the completion of a rewarding a beneficial experience. I believe that both goals have been achieved.

EPILOGUE

“Action Research in Action”

At the submission of this thesis, the media relations program of the Saanich Police has undergone some changes in structure. Some of the changes are the result of feedback provided by the researcher based on data gathered from the research project participants.

First, the bi-weekly media briefings are re-instated with a renewed commitment from management to conduct the briefings regardless of other ongoing issues. The media briefings have now become a priority for the department. Previously, this was not the case and the briefings actually stopped occurring for a period in 2002. Secondly, the media officers who carry the media pager are now attending the media briefings to ensure that information is not being withheld from them. The media officer participants in the research study articulated this need. Thirdly, the media releases have now been added to the Saanich Municipal Website for any member of the public to download. This actually creates a situation where the Saanich Police has the ability to directly communicate with the public without media interaction. The media releases are also being distributed into the community via email. The Blockwatch database used by the researcher to conduct the online survey is being used as a vehicle to distribute media releases. These releases are vetted by the Blockwatch coordinator, and it provides yet another method of providing direct police information to the public. The online participants addressed the need for more police information as being important for continued police/community relations.

The Saanich Police also embarked on a joint training day for members of the media. The media participants were presented with brief overviews from members of the Detective Division, Traffic Safety Unit, Use of Force Officers, and the Administration. The session was informal in

nature and many questions were answered. The session went overtime as a result of the interest from the media participants and the initial feedback was positive.

The closing hope for the research project is the achievement of even greater change within the media program. The Saanich Police has supported the need to develop a proactive media relations program. The recommendations included within this project are part of the departmental effort to create positive change. The fact that some of the research recommendations are already being implemented reinforces the process of action research as a tool for conducting change from within. The Saanich Police appear committed to making positive change within the media relations program and have articulated the need for effective media relations within the Strategic Plan. Kouzes and Posner state, “leaders must know where they are going if they expect others to willingly join them on the journey” (p.23). Hopefully, after a short period, the media program will be stronger as a result of the work and commitment of all of those who assisted with this project and the Saanich Police can continue the journey of providing effective police service to the community.

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APPENDICES

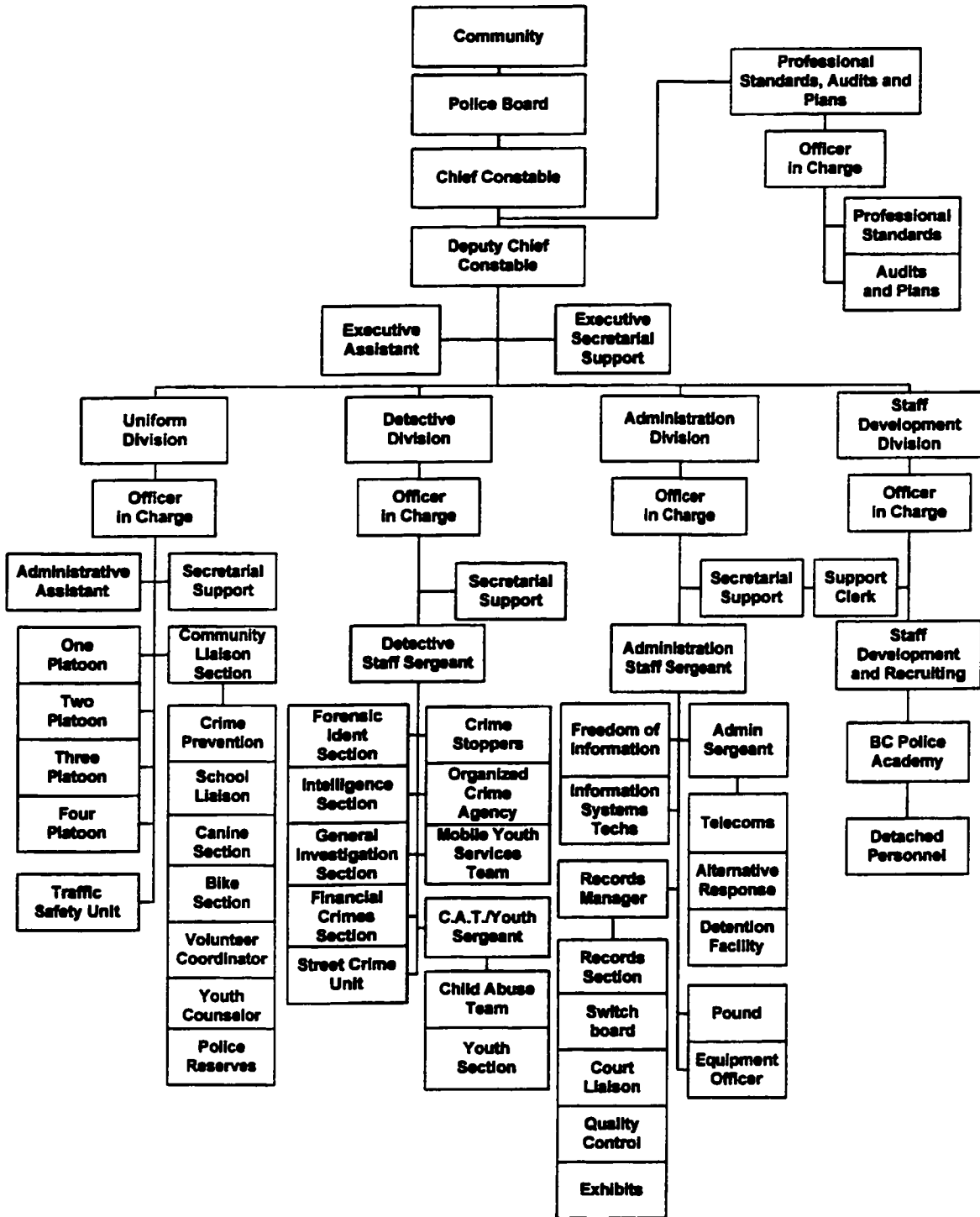
Appendix A

Individual Interview Questions - The Media

- 1) Can you tell me about a time or experience dealing with the Saanich Police that was ideal for your needs as a media member? Why? What worked for you?
- 2) Can you tell me about a time that was difficult for you to obtain information from the Saanich Police? Why? What did not work for you? What would you like to see happen?
- 3) What restrictions, if any, are hampering your ability to obtain police information from this department? What do you see as a possible solution?
- 4) Describe your working relationship with the Saanich Police concerning media relation issues? How do you think that this could be strengthened?
- 5) What strengths does the Saanich Police have in the area of media relations?
- 6) What areas of opportunity or improvement do you see with the current media relations program at the Saanich Police?
- 7) In your opinion, has the media officer training been an issue in any of the professional exposure you have had with the Saanich Police media officers?

Appendix B

Saanich Police Organizational Chart



Appendix C

Participant Consent Form

The researcher, Constable Chris Horsley is conducting a research project involving the Media Relations Program at the Saanich Police Department. This research project is being done through the Masters in Leadership and Training Program at Royal Roads University. The project is to provide community based information concerning areas relating to the current media relations program at the Saanich Police department. The question responses will form data that will help assist the researcher in making determinations regarding the current level of effectiveness of the media program and the areas for improvement. Your contribution will assist the researcher in making recommendations to the Saanich Police to better improve the flow of police communication to the media, and in turn to the community. The results of the research project will be submitted to the Saanich Police Department, and Royal Roads University.

Please read the following carefully. If you wish to participate in this research project, please do so by signing below:

- ▶ all information obtained in this project/study will be kept confidential in a safe and secure manner by the researcher.
- ▶ the project/study will not identify you in any way.

▶ the faculty advisor from Royal Roads University will have access to the cumulative data but not your identities.

▶ Questions and comments about the research process area welcomed at any time by you.

Over

Thank you for your consideration and your participation in the project/study.

Participant Name _____

Participant Signature _____

With Thanks,

Project Researcher _____

Cst Chris Horsley #50

Crime Prevention/ Business Liaison Officer

Saanich Police Department

Appendix D

Interview Questions Active Police Members

- 1) What are your current thoughts regarding the effectiveness of the Saanich Police media relations program?
- 2) What areas are we doing well at? What areas present an opportunity for improvement?
- 3) How do you think members of the media are treating the Saanich Police?
- 4) Do you think that an accurate depiction of the Saanich Police is being presented to the community through our relationship with the media?
- 5) Have you had any direct dealings with the media? If so, tell me an example of a good media encounter you had. What made it good for you?
- 6) Have you had any negative encounters with the media? What caused the negative recollection that you have been left with? What could have been done differently from both the police and media perspectives
- 8) Can you think about a positive experience that you have had with members of the local media? What worked for you during that experience?
- 9) What negative experiences have you had dealing with members of the media? How did it differ from the positive times? What could have been done differently from both the media and police perspectives?
- 10) How do you feel that the portrayal of the Saanich Police is within the local media?

11) What areas of improvement can be made to the existing media program to improve the communication to the public and uphold the image of the department

Appendix E

Community Survey Questions

Cst Chris Horsley of the Saanich Police department is conducting the following survey. This survey is forming part of a research project being done through the Masters in Leadership and Training Program at Royal Roads University. The survey is to provide community based information concerning areas relating to the current media relations program at the Saanich Police department. The question responses will form data that will help assist the researcher in making determinations regarding the current level of effectiveness of the media program and the areas for improvement. Your contribution will assist the researcher in making recommendations to the Saanich Police to better improve the flow of police communication to the media, and in turn to the community. Your help with this survey is greatly appreciated and **your answers to the survey are anonymous** and all respondents are coded to protect anonymity. The participant's names will not appear on any documentation. **You are under no obligation to take part in this survey** but your input to this process is appreciated. By completing this questionnaire, it will be assumed that consent has been given for participation. Please contact Cst Horsley at the Saanich Police at 250-475-4346 if you have any questions or concerns.

- 1) Are you a resident of the Municipality of Saanich? Yes or No
- 2) In the proceeding year have you had any reason to contact the Saanich Police? Yes or No. Comments.

- 3) What frequency do you receive news regarding the Saanich Police through the local media? 1-once a month, 2- once a week, 3- daily. Comments.
- 4) How do you receive the majority of your news information? 1- radio, 2-newspaper, 3- television.
- 5) Do you receive your local news through a combination of all three media? 1-never, 2-sometimes, 3- regularly, 4 frequently, 5- all the time. Comments.
- 6) Do you receive the Saanich News delivered to your home? Yes or No.
- 7) If so, do you read the Saanich Police Crime Watch Page located within the Saanich News? Yes or No. Comments
- 8) In general, do you think that the Saanich Police is portrayed fairly in the local media? 1-treated fairly, 2- usually treated fairly, 3- neutral, 4, treated somewhat fairly, 5 not treated fairly. Comments.
- 9) Do you think that the media provide enough news coverage of the Saanich Police to keep you informed on issues within the community? 1- enough coverage, 2- some coverage, 3-neutral, 4 little coverage, 5- no coverage.
- 10) Do you think that the media provide a balanced perspective of the Saanich Police? 1- yes, 2-sometimes, 3- no
- 11) What areas do you feel the Saanich Police can improve on to bring more police information to members of the community?

Appendix F

Saanich Police Media Relations Policy

PUBLIC INFORMATION

PUBLIC INFORMATION - MEDIA RELATIONS

OM 10

POLICY

PROCEDURES

RELEASE OF INFORMATION

Victims - Witnesses

Suspect

Charged Person

Young Offenders

Investigation

Court

INSTANCES WHEN INFORMATION CAN BE RELEASED

Victim - Witness

Suspect

Charged Person

Investigation

ROLE OF THE MEDIA RELATIONS OFFICER

MEDIA ATTENDANCE IN PUBLIC AND AT CRIME SCENES

RELEASE OF SUSPECT PHOTOGRAPHS TO NEWS MEDIA

FEATURE STORIES



POLICY (back)

Public Information Function

1. The Saanich Police Department will provide a public information function that will:
 - a. facilitate the dissemination of public information,
 - b. comply with the provisions of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act,
 - c. be described and maintained in writing,
 - d. be administered under the authority of OIC of Administration and the responsibility of Information and privacy Coordinator, and
 - e. be conducted using appropriately selected and trained personnel and the appropriate and required equipment and techniques.

DEPARTMENTAL POLICY (back)

2. The Department is committed to being open and cooperative with the media where and when it is appropriate to do so.

NOTE: The public has a right to be informed about the services the Saanich Police Department provides to them. However, the right to know is not absolute. The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act prohibits the release of personal information which we collect and hold, subject only to those

exceptions provided in that Act. Moreover, investigative techniques and sensitive law enforcement issues must remain confidential if the Department is to remain effective in fulfilling its mandate.

3. In keeping with the spirit of openness and cooperation, all officers at the scene of a minor incident will be empowered to release information to the media about the incident, subject to the conditions set out in the media relations policy and procedures.
4. Each Platoon, the Detective Division, and the Youth and Community Services Division will be assigned a Media Relations Officer who will be responsible for the dissemination of information to the media, in accordance with the Saanich Police Department "Operational Manual" and the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act .

NOTE: The purpose of this initiative is to foster a cooperative and positive relationship with the media.

5. When a serious incident or a major crime occurs, a Media Relations Officer will be identified to manage the media inquiries who, under the instruction of the officer in charge of the case, will release information to the media.
6. Information released will comply with the Saanich Police Department "Operational Manual" and the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

PROCEDURES (back)

RELEASE OF INFORMATION

1. Release of information to the media may only occur in accordance with this policy.

2. The media will NOT BE GIVEN ACCESS TO DEPARTMENTAL RECORDS unless the request conforms with Freedom of Information policies and procedures.
3. The following are guidelines WHEN NOT to release information:

Victims - Witnesses (back)

- a. the officer will not release:
 - i. information that may endanger the health or safety of a victim or witness, or
 - ii. the name of a deceased person, unless consent is given by the next of kin ,

Suspect (back)

- b. the officer will not release:
 - i. the name of the suspect, or
 - ii. information that may endanger the health or safety of the suspect,

Charged Person (back)

- c. the officer will not release:
 - i. the address or telephone number of the charged person,
 - ii. a confession or statement, or
 - iii. the racial origin,

Young Offenders (back)

- d. the officer will not release:
 - i. the identity of a young offender,
 - ii. any information that may reveal the identity, or
 - iii. the identity of family members,

Investigation (back)

- e. the officer will not release:
 - i. information that will jeopardize or interfere with an investigation,
 - ii. details known only to the perpetrator,
 - iii. confidential investigative techniques or operations,
 - iv. the use of an informant,
 - v. the amount of money stolen in a robbery,
 - vi. information about bait money,
 - vii. evidence held by the Department, or
 - viii. unsubstantiated opinions about an incident,

Court (back)

- f. the officer will not:
 - i. release information that would violate the rights of the accused,
 - ii. discuss evidence,
 - iii. reveal the criminal record of the accused,
 - iv. comment on the cases before the Court, or
 - v. release any information that violates the law.

INSTANCES WHEN INFORMATION CAN BE RELEASED (back)

4. The following are guidelines WHEN to release information:

Victim - Witness

- a. the officer may release:
 - i. the name or other particulars, IF THERE IS A GOOD REASON TO SUPPORT the

release of this information, and

- ii. the name of a deceased person, IF THE NEXT OF KIN CONSENTS TO THE RELEASE,

Suspect (back)

- b. the officer may release:
 - i. the name, race, colour, ethnicity, sexual orientation or any other relevant information about a suspect if the suspect is at large and the information is considered necessary to enable the identification and apprehension of the suspect or to protect the public,
 - ii. caution must be exercised in releasing this personal information so as to avoid any undue focus on the race, colour, ethnic origin or sexual orientation of the individual,

Charged Person (back)

- c. the officer may release:
 - i. the racial origin of the accused, IF THERE IS A VALID WARRANT FOR ARREST and the information is being provided in attempts to locate the accused,

Investigation (back)

- d. the officer at the scene may release a general description of the incident to the media.

NOTE: These are only guidelines. The officer does not have to supply a statement to the press.

5. If the officer is unsure of what information can be released, pursuant to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, they should contact the Information Coordinator (the Administrative Support Services Staff Sergeant) during day time (Monday - Friday) or the Media Relations Officer for advice.

6. If the officer is uncomfortable talking to the media, the officer should refer the media personnel to the Media Relations Officer assigned to their Section.
7. If a statement is not supplied to the media, the officer should give them an honest reason for not providing one.

ROLE OF THE MEDIA RELATIONS OFFICER (back)

8. The Media Relations Officer will:
 - a. prepare press releases on incidents of interest and fax them to the media,
 - b. monitor and update the media on incidents as they evolve,
 - c. take part in radio or television interviews where the investigator at the scene is unavailable or prefers not to participate,
 - d. handle all inquiries from the media,
 - e. in an effort to inform the public or seek their assistance, prepare press releases and participate in interviews to disseminate information on:
 - i. human interest stories,
 - ii. current crime prevention campaigns,
 - iii. enforcement drives, and
 - iv. crime problems,
 - f. use the ride-along program to develop positive relationships with the local media.

MEDIA ATTENDANCE IN PUBLIC AND AT CRIME SCENES (back)

9. The news media has the right to film or photograph anyone or any event that occurs in a public place including the police and their actions.
10. The police may deny the media access into a crime scene.

11. The media can take photographs and film from a public place but if there is a concern about the media filming a crime scene or a suspect from a public place, precautions should be taken to obscure the scene or the suspect from public view.
12. An officer of the Department will:
 - a. not permit the media to accompany them into residential or commercial premises without first obtaining the consent of the occupant in lawful possession of the premises, and
 - b. inform the occupant that they may refuse entry to the media.

NOTE: This policy applies to members of the media accompanying police officers on the Department's ride-along program.

13. Where a young offender is in police custody, any media members present should be notified that the prisoner is a young offender prior to entering into a public place.

RELEASE OF SUSPECT PHOTOGRAPHS TO NEWS MEDIA (back)

14. The release of a photograph of a suspect, accused or convicted person must be approved by a senior officer.
15. The release of a photograph of a suspect, accused or convicted person may be approved by a senior officer for the purposes of locating a suspect or an accused person wanted by the police.

FEATURE STORIES (back)

16. A request by the media to do a feature story or a detailed interview with any officer of the

Department, in relation to their employment with the Department, must be submitted in writing to the Chief Constable for approval.

17. Feature stories and detailed interviews will be subject to the approval of both the Chief Constable and any officer directly affected.