



MIAG

Multicultural Inter-Agency Group of Peel

Bridging the Gap with the Muslim Community



**A Concise Resource Guide for Identifying,
Addressing & Preventing Hate Motivated Crime**

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The 'Bridging the Gap with the Muslim Community' was a Community Hate Crimes initiative that was established to address the needs of Peel's diverse communities. This project was generously funded by the Ministry of the Attorney General and undertaken by the staff of the Multicultural Inter-Agency Group of Peel (MIAG). The Project's components took the form of carrying out three awareness-building workshops, hosting a regional conference and producing this concise resource booklet. All these components shared a common goal: to cultivate awareness of hate motivated incidents targeted at Canadian Muslims, and instructed methods of how to address and resolve this deeply problematic social issue, that has hindered the progress of Peel's safe and thriving communities. This tremendous task was accomplished by demonstrating hate crime prevention, clarifying definitions for the identification of hate motivated crimes and sharing reporting techniques. These activities also assisted in initiating sustainable dialogues, revealing community concerns and cultivating proactive discussions which were all based upon resolving and combating issues of ignorance, stereotyping, Islamophobia and racism.

This project would not have been possible without the persevering support of its advisory committee whom we remain indebted to. Its member's consisted of a variety of greatly experienced and committed individuals who understood this issue from an array of perspectives. They all brought with them a degree of expertise that combined to formulate a highly skilled decision-making entity, focusing on the delivery of this project with sustainable and productive outcomes.

The purpose of this booklet is to share with you the core issues required to promote understanding, effective reporting techniques, and clarify the process of working on hate motivated crimes and incidents targeting members of the Canadian Muslim Community. We hope you will join us on the task of combating community hate crime by availing this resource booklet, engaging yourself in community activities and taking initiative to identify and report if the needs arises.

This booklet was developed in September 2008.

Section 1- Insight into Hate Motivated Incidents

Where can ‘Hate Crimes’, ‘Hate/Bias Incidents’ or ‘Hate Propaganda’ take place?

‘Hate Crimes’, ‘Hate Bias Incidents’ or ‘Hate Propaganda’ can potentially take place in any given situation. A few examples can be: at work, at home, at school or a place of worship. Therefore it is wise to understand the definitions of these incidents in order to correctly identify them as they can potentially occur anywhere, and thus it is wise to follow safety tips and undertake preventive measures.

Who can become a Victim of a ‘Hate Crime’ or a ‘Hate/Bias Incident’?

Any individual who feels that race, national/ethnic origin, language, colour, religion, sex, age, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation, or any other similar factor is violated with an act motivated by hate.

What is the impact of a ‘Hate Crime’ or a ‘Hate/Bias Incident’?

‘Hate Crime’ or a ‘Hate/Bias Incidents’ are serious occurrences. Their impact upon the victim are always damaging and manifest themselves in a variety of forms requiring attention. These traumas can also transcend beyond individual suffering; their consequences have direct impacts upon the victim’s communities at large, and subsequently heighten communal fear, resulting in social tensions. Therefore, it is recommended that incidents should be discussed and not overlooked especially when victims are informing service-delivering professionals, who can in turn refer them accordingly.

Section 2 - Definitions: What is a ‘Hate Crime’, ‘Hate Incident’ and ‘Hate Propaganda’

Police services can assist in defusing a potentially dangerous situation therefore if you fear for your safety or the safety of a fellow citizen, contact the appropriate authorities.

What is a ‘Criminal Occurrence’ or ‘Criminal Offence’?

An act or occurrence punishable by law or an act that violates the law.

Examples:

Physical assault, vandalism, theft, or any other incident that breaks the law.

What is a ‘Hate Crime’?

A ‘Hate Crime’ is a criminal occurrence committed against a person or property which is motivated by hate/bias or prejudice based on race, national or ethnic origin, language, colour, religion, sex, age, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation, or any other similar factor.

Examples:

An individual who has been targeted and victimized for his/her race or religious beliefs. Or a home that has been vandalised and explicit evidence –such as a note or graffiti - indicating that the incident was motivated by hatred.

Hate Motivated Incidents

- A Muslim man was incarcerated and placed in a cell with a fellow inmate whom was imprisoned for an unrelated offence. The Muslim man knelt in prayer (salat) and was assaulted by the fellow inmate.
- A group of young individuals were participating in a game of basketball. One of the players was wearing a head-scarf (hijab). After a verbal confrontation whilst dribbling the ball, a player made a comment about the opponent’s appearance and pulled the head-scarf (hijab) off her opponent’s head.

Hate Crimes

HATE CRIME



A student is walking home from a bus stop, and a group of men intercepts him.



The student questions the perpetrators as to why they're harassing him when he was simply minding his own business.

Often, perpetrators are looking for opportunities to 'make trouble'. It is recommended not to engage them in discussion or communication for your own safety.



The group of men continue to harass the young man, while he continues to question the reasoning for their behaviour. Soon he finds himself overwhelmed as they close in on him.



At this point the young man is helpless as the group of perpetrators begin viciously beating him.

What is a ‘Hate/Bias Incident’?

A ‘Hate/Bias Incident’ is not a criminal occurrence, but an incident involving behaviours motivated by hate/bias or prejudice based on race, national or ethnic origin, language, colour, religion, sex, age, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation, or any other similar factor.

Examples:

Hostile speech or disrespectful/discriminatory behaviour without a threat.

Hate/Bias Incidents:

- A prominent community figure was participating in a public campaign and some of her promotional material depicted a poster of her with a head-scarf (hijab). Graffiti was found on one of these posters with the words inscribed ‘Terrorist under the veil, Canadians do not trust her!’
- A woman wearing a face-covering veil (nakaab) was awaiting her son’s return from school outside her building of residence. A group of individuals from the upper level balcony began uttering hateful obscenities and pointing at her.

What is ‘Hate Propaganda’?

‘Hate Propaganda’ is any written, verbal or electronic material that advocates or promotes genocide against any identifiable group or makes statements that are likely to promote hate based on race, national or ethnic origin, language, colour, religion, sex, age, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation, or any other similar factor.

Examples:

A website recruiting individuals to vandalise Muslims’ homes. Or an article promoting hate mongering or eliciting dangerous behaviour based on hate.

Hate Bias

HATE BIAS



A young woman is sitting on a park bench, enjoying the summer weather and reading a book. A man walking through the park begins uttering hateful obscenities at her.



The man takes full opportunity to victimize the woman, and continues uttering hate-motivated comments.



In her defence the woman warns him with threatening to contact the police.



Not knowing what else to do, in helplessness the woman silently cries.

In the event of an incident of this nature the victim should attempt to record all the details of the incident, in order to report the occurrence effectively to the police.

Section 3 - What to do if you become a Victim of a Hate Motivated Incident

- Unless you are in imminent danger - in which case you should contact emergency services at 911 without delay - attempt to identify the incident. Record or document the incident and the people involved, write down exactly what took place and what was said. Save any evidence and take photographs. Save any electronic links and information on how you found the material or were directed to it. Establish contact with the police by calling your closest police station to file a report.
- Once you have established contact with the police, explain that you have experienced an incident and would like it to be treated as a 'Hate Crime' or 'Hate/Bias Incident', or have found 'Hate Propaganda'. Share all the evidence with them and explain your incident in detail.
- If you do not believe the incident is specifically a 'Hate Crime', 'Hate/Bias Incident' or don't find 'Hate Propaganda', however feel violated and fearful, contact the police. Explain all the details to the officer and he/she will file an appropriate report. You can also contact CAIR CAN for support and further information of how to proceed.
- If you do not believe the incident is specifically a 'Hate Crime', 'Hate/Bias Incident' or not 'Hate Propaganda'. However would like to share your experience in order to prevent incidents such as yours from reoccurring, contact a community leader. Write a letter to a supervising authority on where or how the situation took place. For example, if you felt you were treated inappropriately by a security guard in a building, department store or bus/train/subway station, contact the supervisor or manager. If requiring further attention, move higher in the chain of command. Contact multiple individuals and inform members of your community to strengthen the validity of your concern.
- Remain persistent and stay abreast of the situation.
- Inform all those involved and your community if the issue is resolved and responded to appropriately.
- Do not ignore incidents, it is important for all issues to be recorded in order to assist in resolving hate motivated incidents.

Resources

CAIR CAN (Canadian Council on American-Islamic Relations – Canadian Chapter)
P.O. Box 13219, Ottawa, ON, K2K 1X4
Telephone: 1-866-524-0004
Website: www.caircan.ca

Crime Stoppers
1-888-222-TIPS (8477)

Peel Regional Police Communication contact: 905-453-3311

In the event of an emergency contact: 911

Section 4 - Preventive Measures and Safety Tips

Ignorance and fear are one of the many reasons that are the root cause of hate-motivated incidents, in which case this social problem requires attention at its very inception. Therefore community members need to work together in order to ensure that they take it upon themselves to objectively cultivate an awareness of their community. This can be accomplished by the undertaking the following:

- Becoming an invaluable member of your community by participating and volunteering in community activities. I.e. soup kitchens, schools, community drives, maintaining community spaces, youth events, social causes, sitting on boards or advisory committees.
- Cultivate friendships and dialogues with key members of your community and address your concerns to local politicians.
- Becoming a role model, shaping your character and behaving in a manner in which you would like to be treated.
- Introducing yourselves to your neighbours and community members, and maintaining good relationships with these individuals.
- Encouraging interfaith dialogue and meetings with followers of other faiths. Create an interfaith committee and speak collectively at community engagements and events, encouraging community members to befriend one another and speak positively about interfaith issues and relationships. Invite community members to religious events. For example, invite diverse community members to an 'Iftaar' (breaking of the fast during the holy month of Ramadan).
- Contacting organizations such as CAIR CAN to learn more about your rights as Canadian Muslims.
- Take the initiative to address social problems and misunderstandings in a proactive manner that seeks to resolve them. When you address a problem, attempt to present a solution or request one.
- Speak with your children and youth to bridge the gap of understanding that may exist between generations in Canadian society.

Section 5 – Guide for Working with the Muslim Community

- Islam is monotheistic (belief of a singular God) and like Christianity and Judaism is considered to be an Abrahamic faith.
- In 2001 nearly 580,000 Canadians identified themselves as Muslims. This figure is expected to grow to nearly 1.4 million over the next 4 years.
- The five pillars of Islam are fundamental practices for followers of Islam. These are: testifying (shahada) their belief in Allah (God) and the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon Him) as his final messenger, the annual giving alms (2.5% of one's savings), fasting from dawn until dusk during the holy lunar month of Ramadan, making a pilgrimage to Mecca (Saudi Arabia) at least once in their lifetime and are required to pray very briefly 5 times a day. These prayers are carried out at: Dawn - Fajr, Afternoon –Zuhr, Mid-Afternoon – Asr, Dusk – Magrib and Night – Isha.
- It is recommended that accommodations be made for the daily prayers of Muslim co-workers, clients and community members. Cleanliness is a very important component of the Islamic faith, therefore practises such as ablution before daily prayers and a clean area in which to pray is necessary. If you believe your client cannot be provided with these accommodations, please offer alternative suggestions to them.
- Muslims refrain from the consumption of alcohol or pork products.
- Muslims also follow specific dietary restrictions with the preparation of meat, and require that animals be slaughtered in adherence to Halal guidelines, wherein the animal is slaughtered in one strike whilst invoking the name of God (Allah), and the animal is drained of its bodily fluids. Halal meat is readily available at Butcheries and a variety of supermarkets.
- Muslims are recommended to dress modestly and veil themselves from distant relatives, with the exception of immediate family members. Thus, the head-covering (hijab) and loose clothing concealing the body and hair is a very common mode of Islamic Dress. Men are also required to dress modestly. For young girls participating in sports, it is recommended that accommodation be made for them to wear modest sports clothing such as track-pants and long-sleeved shirts.
- Sometimes Muslim women may not feel comfortable within very close proximity to unfamiliar men, or allowing them into their homes without a male member of the family or relatives present. It is recommended to service providers that accommodation be offered in this respect, to include a female member of staff specifically when physical contact is required.

Section 6 – Bibliography and Acknowledgements

Responding to Hate Crimes: An Ontario Police Officer's Guide to Investigation and Prevention. Ontario Police College.

Know Your Rights Guide: Pocket Guide for Canadian Muslims. CAIR CAN.

Community Awareness: Hate Crimes/Hate Incidents. Presentation by Constable Ingrid van Roosmalen. Peel Regional Police.

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