VANCOUVER POLICE BOARD

STREET CHECK REVIEW

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BC	British Columbia
BCCLA	BC Civil Liberties Association
BET	Beat Enforcement Team
BIA	Business Improvement Association
CFS	Calls for service
COMPSTAT	Comparison Statistics
CSI	Crime Severity Index
DTES	Downtown East Side
FIP	Fair and Impartial Policing
FTO	Field Training Officer
GCU	Gang Crime Unit
GO	General Occurrence report
Intel GOs	Intelligence general occurrence report
ISS	Immigrant Services Society
ITO	Information to Obtain Search Warrant
JIBC	Justice Institute of British Columbia
LGBTQ2S+	Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender/Queer/Two-Spirit
MAPVAN	Mobile Access Project Van - WISH
MCFD	Ministry of Children and Family Development
MNI	Master Name Index
NYPD	New York Police Department
OCS	Organized Crime Section
OPCC	Office of the Police Complaint Commissioner
PR&A	Planning, Research, and Audit Section
PRIME-BC	BC Police Records Information Management Environment
PwMI	Persons with Mental Illness
SRO	Single-room occupancy
TFA	Theft from Auto
UBCIC	Union of BC Indian Chiefs
VANDU	Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users
VPD	Vancouver Police Department

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Allegations of racial profiling and biased policing have prompted reviews of street check policies and procedures in Ontario, Alberta, and British Columbia (BC). These studies have raised questions about whether (a) street checks are a form of systemic discrimination, (b) the practice violates fundamental human rights, and (c) police disproportionately street check individuals from communities of diversity or who are otherwise marginalized and vulnerable. Community and provincial responses to street check studies have varied from making adjustments to street check policy and practice to placing a moratorium on them.

Although they are often used interchangeably, it is important to distinguish the practices of "street checks" and "carding." The Honourable Mr. Justice Tulloch in his *Report of the Independent Street Checks Review* in Ontario defined a *street check* as a stop in which "identifying information is obtained by a police officer concerning an individual, outside of a police station" (Tulloch, 2018:xiv). He emphasized that officers must have an articulable basis for the practice. *Carding*, on the other hand, occurs when the police randomly stop people and ask for their identification, which is then entered into a police database (Tulloch, 2018:35). He also stressed that street checks may have value as a police strategy for gathering intelligence, but carding does not (Tulloch, 2018).

In British Columbia, the provincial government's Commissions of Inquiry and advocacy groups raised issues and questions about the best way to ensure policing is unbiased, fair, and impartial, and addresses the safety and security needs of residents and visitors to BC. In May 2018, in response to a Freedom of Information request, the Vancouver Police Department (VPD) publicly released data on street checks conducted between 2008 and 2017 and provided data regarding the ethnicity and gender of persons checked by frontline VPD officers. In June 2018, the BC Civil Liberties Association and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs filed a complaint to the Office of the Police Complaint Commissioner, alleging the VPD was conducting street checks in a discriminatory manner. In response, the Vancouver Police Board commissioned a review of street checks in Vancouver. In 2019, the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre and Pivot Legal Society called for prohibition of street checks in Vancouver.

The primary objectives of the VPD Street Check Review were to analyze and interpret the VPD data on street checks practice, and to gain an improved understanding of the impacts of street checks on Indigenous peoples, and other ethnically diverse and/or marginalized communities who may perceive that they are being discriminated against by police in Vancouver.

A multi-method approach was developed for this examination. It included a literature and document review, a review of street check data to determine whether the methodology used to produce the data in the VPD's (2018c) *Understanding Street Checks* report was sound, and sought to determine if the conclusions reached were reasonable and emanated from the data. It also included interviews and focus groups with representatives of 36 Vancouver community organizations, with activists and advocates working with communities of diversity, and with users of their services to gain understanding of how Indigenous people, other communities of diversity, and/or those who are otherwise marginalized and vulnerable were impacted by street checks. Interviews and focus groups were also conducted with VPD executives, management, and operations personnel to gain an understanding of their perspectives on street checks, and ride-alongs and walk-alongs were conducted with patrol and Beat Enforcement Team (BET) members to observe police interactions. A depiction of the review process is outlined in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Vancouver Police Department Street Check Review Components

To date, few academic studies have assessed the effectiveness of street checks in preventing, solving, and reducing crime (Huey, 2019). However, an empirical 2016 study conducted in Chicago found that the fall in stop-and-frisks was responsible for an immediate significant spike

in homicides (Cassell and Fowles, 2018). The Honourable Mr. Justice Tulloch emphasized in his *Report of the Independent Street Checks Review* in Ontario that street checks may have value as a police strategy for gathering intelligence, but that carding does not (Tulloch, 2018).

In Canada, Mr. Justice Tulloch's (2018) review in Ontario recommended a series of amendments to regulations governing street checks. Wortley (2019), in his review of street checks in Halifax, recommended that street checks be banned or regulated. In their review of street checks in Edmonton, (Griffiths, Montgomery, and Murphy, 2018) recommended that, if street checks were retained, there be mechanisms put in place to monitor their use, educate the public and publish street check reports on a regular basis.

In Vancouver, opinions on the value of street checks in preventing, solving, and reducing crime varied. VPD members at all levels felt strongly that street checks were vital for maintaining public safety and security, that street checks contributed to public safety by proactively supporting the prevention and investigation of criminal activity, and that Vancouver residents expected them to conduct street checks. Community members' views ranged from perceiving street checks as valuable, to believing they could have potential value, to calling for an outright ban of street checks. While VPD members focused on the need for tools to accomplish their tasks, many community members framed their perspectives in terms of the historical trauma, oppression, racism, and experiences they and their communities have had with police. Community members' concerns generally focused not on the street check stops themselves, but rather on the attitudes and behaviours of police officers and how the police treated vulnerable and marginalized people.

This review of street checks, consistent with other reviews, found that the available data and information could neither confirm nor deny police racism or bias. Additionally, considering only the disproportionality of individuals in the street check data could not be used to confirm or deny the existence of bias.

This review reinforced the Honourable Justice Tulloch's call for a "critical balance to be struck between the interests of community safety and the protection of civil liberties and human rights" (Tulloch, 2018:30). While many Vancouver community members agreed that there was value in street checks, a number of the interviewees questioned the efficacy of this practice and whether

the social costs, loss of trust, and compromised community relations resulting from street checks outweighed the police benefits. Several interviewees suggested police needed to demonstrate why street checks were worth these risks and costs and why informing individuals who have been stopped that they are not obliged to speak with police and are free to go is problematic.

The review found the VPD has invested heavily in community partnerships and engagement at the executive and senior management levels and offers a broad range of community outreach, programs and services through the Diversity and Indigenous Relations Section and specialized liaison officers. Representatives of many community organizations held police in high regard, however, identified challenges with community engagement and relationship development at operational levels, and noted that these challenges had negatively impacted some people's trust and confidence in police.

The VPD offers leading-edge training for their officers. They have developed a 27-day mini-academy to supplement recruit training and provide cultural competencies and trauma-informed training for their officers. However, it is unclear what internal mechanisms exist to ensure that the training is being applied and whether there are protocols that require officers who are "deficient" to receive remedial training.

Street check policy and practice guidelines, monitoring, and quality control mechanisms are needed to ensure consistent definitions, practices, and documentation of street checks and to assure data collection and data quality is of the highest standard. A summary of findings and recommendations arising from this study is included in Table 1.

Table 1. Findings and Recommendations

A. The Efficacy of Street Checks	
Findings	**Recommendations for the VPD**
1. Canadian studies on street checks have varied in their conclusions about the value and effectiveness of street checks. In his study of street checks in Ontario, the Honourable Mr. Justice Tulloch (2018) distinguished between street checks and carding and concluded that street checks can be a valuable police strategy.	1. If not already underway, in collaboration with community stakeholders and all levels of the VPD, including patrol officers, initiate a dialogue on street checks processes and practices to develop a shared understanding of the value of street checks as an integral component of community safety and security.

Findings	Recommendations for the VPD
2. The VPD members who participated in this review felt strongly that street checks are a valuable policing tool, and they provided a number of examples to support their perspective. 3. Community member perceptions of the value of street checks varied from "very valuable" to "they should be banned."	

B. Community–Police Relationships and Partnerships	
Findings	**Recommendations for the VPD**
1. The VPD executive, senior managers, Diversity and Indigenous Relations Section, and specialized liaison officers have extensive, positive relationships and partnerships with a myriad of Vancouver communities.	1. Incorporate the extensive VPD partnerships with communities in the city into a comprehensive community policing plan. This plan would set out how collaborative partnerships with agencies and community organizations can be established, enhanced, and sustained by members at all levels and across all areas of responsibility in the VPD. 2. Include objectives and metrics to be used in assessing outcomes in the community policing plan. Identify the resources the VPD would require to successfully implement and evaluate the plan.
2. A common concern among organizations serving communities of diversity and members of communities of diversity was the limited number of opportunities to engage with VPD frontline officers in a non-enforcement capacity. This is due, in part, to the challenges that the VPD are currently experiencing in meeting demands for service	1. If they have not already done so, the VPD should employ a meaningful consultation process with the communities in Vancouver and with the VPD membership to develop a cohesive community policing plan.
3. The VPD does not have a cohesive community policing plan that incorporates how street checks might contribute to community safety and security.	1. Clearly articulate the role and objectives of street checks as an integral component of a community policing plan. 2. Explore ways to enhance patrol officers' proactive interactions with communities.

C. Community Perspectives on Street Checks	
Findings	**Recommendations for the VPD**
1. Community members provided a broad range of perspectives on street checks, ranging from very positive to very negative. 2. Some interviewees perceived that street checks had value and that the practice should be retained, often with restrictions. Many in this group reinforced that street checks should be considered as a "tool of compassion" and be guided by principles and guidelines. 3. Others felt street checks offered no value and should be banned.	1. Consider establishing a Street Check Advisory Committee modelled along the lines of the VPD Indigenous Advisory Council to facilitate communication and provide an avenue for feedback on street check issues.
4. There were significant differences in how people in different communities perceived the police generally, and more specifically, the issues of street checks. 5. A number of interviewees felt police stops of Indigenous, Black, and other vulnerable and/or marginalized people were racially motivated and biased. 6. People in communities of diversity and people providing services for them indicated officers often did not show respect toward some citizens, did not treat some people fairly, and at times did not exhibit culturally competent and trauma-informed approaches. 7. Many people expressed the view that there was no point in complaining about inequitable treatment by police, as complaints would not be taken seriously or responded to.	1. Develop strategies to address the perceptions and concerns raised by community members about police street check stops.
8. Community perspectives on whether or not police should conduct well-being checks varied considerably, with some citizens feeling it was very important that the practice continue, some perceiving that it should be restricted and more closely monitored, and others wanting it discontinued.	1. Develop a policy on well-being checks that considers community input, is communicated to the communities, and clearly distinguishes well-being checks from street checks.

D. VPD Street Check Policy and Processes	
Findings	**Recommendations for the VPD**
1. The VPD does not currently have a street check policy. This prevents the department from articulating the objective of this strategy to the community, contributes to confusion and inconsistency in the use of street checks by officers, and hinders the collection of reliable data for analysis.	1. If not already underway, develop a clear street check policy on the practice, use, storage, access, and retention of street check information that takes into consideration the issues and recommendations raised in this report as well as the findings and recommendations made by the Honourable Justice Tulloch in Ontario (2018) and by Scot Wortley (2019) in his report on street checks in Halifax. 2. Communicate the street check policy to the community as part of a public education plan. 3. Develop a system for monitoring the use of street checks. The New York Police Department (NYPD) and the Cincinnati Police Department provide examples of how analytics are used to monitor the use of street checks by officers.
2. There is considerable subjectivity and ambiguity in how VPD members and the public define street checks and how VPD officers classify and document interactions. 3. A number of community members questioned how street check information was stored and used as well as the length of time it should be retained.	1. Ensure VPD street policy and procedures articulate: • when officers should and should not conduct street checks and outlines the situations in which they should be conducted. • police officers should never arbitrarily or randomly stop, question, and search or request identifying information from a civilian. • the need for articulation of stops or street checks. • who can access street check information, including processes for how citizens can access their own street check records.
4. Community members viewed a formal street check policy and usage guidelines as vital for increasing trust in police, transparency, and accountability.	1. Ensure the primary focus of a street check policy is on the development of strategies and practices that enhance transparency, accountability, and trust in police.

E. VPD Street Check Data Review and Data Collection Processes	
Findings	**Recommendations for the VPD**
1. A brief snapshot of the VPD data raises some data quality issues and concerns relating to when and how data units are entered as a street check. The lack of a policy on street check usage within the VPD appears to be responsible for at least some of these data capture issues, such as when and why a street check should be used.	1. Conduct regular assessments of the integrity of street check data.
2. Overall, the conclusions reached of the Planning, Research, and Audit (PR&A) team were validated and reasonable, and the patterns emerging from their examination held when the 2018 sample data units were subject to a similar analysis.	2. Designate the PR&A to incorporate the suggestions laid out in this report to inform the proposed audit process and methodology.
3. Similar to Wortley's (2019) finding in the study of street checks in Halifax and the findings of Griffiths et al. (2018), the present study was unable to either confirm or disprove that VPD police officers engaged in biased policing and racial profiling through the use of street checks. However, the simple overrepresentation of Indigenous individuals in the street check data also does not confirm nor deny the existence of bias.	
4. Since the VPD did not have a published street check policy, the review focused on the lived experiences of individuals in communities of diversity, of key stakeholders in the city, and of VPD officers, supplemented by extensive in-field observations of police–citizen encounters.	
5. Over 40% of street checks were justified with a bylaw stop; 25% were justified as "possible criminal behaviour." Overall, very few of these street checks appears on its face to be unwarranted or unreasonable.	

6. Street check reports are entered directly into PRIME, a provincially controlled system. 7. Analysts find it challenging to search street check reports.	1. Request PR&A to draft a more comprehensive street check screen for consideration by PRIME Corp. 2. Ensure the new Street Check screen in PRIME is concise and brief, yet captures essential information such as date, time, location, and reason for check. 3. Designate the PR&A and the policy writing team to redesign the "Reason for Check" field to assure validity and descriptive accuracy of each category while also ensuring categories are appropriate and useful for tracking and audit on an ongoing basis. 4. Explore ways in which information contained in street checks can be tagged, coded, and routed to improve searchability for officers and analysts.

F. VPD Street Check Monitoring and Quality Control	
Findings	**Recommendations for the VPD**
1. The VPD lacks processes to monitor street checks, oversee street check quality, and maintain accountability in the use of street checks. 2. As in most police departments, the majority of VPD patrol officers are very "junior."	1. Ensure senior patrol members, supervisors, and managers receive the training and support needed to effectively guide and coach junior members' development of sound proactive policing and street check skills. 2. Ensure supervisors review street checks completed by their officers for quality and adherence to policy, and arrange for remedial training for officers who do not comply with standards set. 3. Involve supervisors and managers in the development and implementation of a review process that holds members accountable for meeting street check policy and processes.
3. VPD Quality Control Section returns street checks to members if the information provided should be captured in another report format.	1. Clearly define and integrate supervisor, manager, and Quality Control Section responsibilities for monitoring and ensuring the quality of street checks.
4. Sergeants, staff sergeants, and inspectors do not use the number of street checks produced as a measure of member performance.	1. Continue to ensure that street checks are not used as a performance measure. Incorporate this concept into the street check policy.

G. VPD Street Check Auditing and Reporting	
Findings	**Recommendations for the VPD**
1. Street checks are not regularly audited or publicly reported.	1. Ensure the Audit Unit of PR&A: • works with policy drafters to develop the proper metrics to be collected for an annual audit of compliance with that policy. • conducts an annual audit of a representative random sample of cases one year after approval and dissemination of the new VPD Street Check policy. • completes these audits in the second quarter of each calendar year and reports to the Vancouver Police Board in the Q2 Board Report. • offers regular report-outs to the community.
H. Street Check Training for VPD Officers	
Findings	**Recommendations for the VPD**
1. The introduction and placement of street checks in the first week of the recruit training program at the Justice Institute of British Columbia (JIBC) is not effective, as most recruits lack the contextual understanding of the policing environment, the legal framework within which they will be conducting their work, and police roles and responsibilities to be able to absorb and apply concepts learned.	1. Advocate for the JIBC to conduct street check training after recruits have foundational understanding of the policing environment, the legal frameworks, and police roles and responsibilities.
2. Officers often do not consistently explain to community members why they were stopped, or if they do, sometimes have difficulty articulating the reasons for the check stop in their report.	1. Develop a training program to ensure members stop and interact with people for valid reasons and that officers are able to articulate the reasons for the stop. The VPD should ensure that its officers clearly articulate the reasons for stops.
3. The VPD has invested heavily in training for their officers; however, there is some question as to the extent to which some VPD officers have an understanding of the lived experiences of the people they come into contact with. Although race and ethnicity have been the primary lenses through which	1. Review the course content in the VPD "mini-academy" for new recruits and in-service training courses to ensure that content incorporates a focus on competencies to build and enhance police legitimacy, human rights and trauma-informed approaches, procedural justice, cultural competency as it relates to

Findings (continued)	Recommendations (continued)
the police practice of street checks has been examined and debated, the lived experiences of those who are vulnerable, marginalized, and at-risk must also be considered. This includes people with mental illness, individuals who struggle with addiction, the homeless, and those who face other challenges.	acknowledging and seeking to understand and consider the perspectives of persons police are interacting with, and police accountability. 2. Incorporate into training considerations of how police power, authority, and privilege can impact people's perceptions and interactions with police.
4. The VPD currently does not have the capacity to monitor the extent to which officers understand and apply the principles of procedural justice policing in their interactions with citizens.	1. Ensure that officers, including field training officers, are trained in the principles of procedural justice policing and develop a protocol to assess the extent to which this approach is used by officers in encounters with citizens.
5. There is no training for supervisors on how to monitor and manage street checks or how to teach or coach their members to conduct and document quality street checks.	1. Provide training for supervisors to assist them in training and coaching members to conduct quality street checks.

I. Public Education and Communication

Findings	Recommendations for the VPD
1. VPD members and people in communities of diversity identified the need for a more proactive approach by the VPD to educate residents about street checks, their objectives, and their use. Uncertainty about the purpose of street checks contributes to the public perception that they are based on racial profiling and biased policing. 2. The VPD does not currently have an education and communication plan to inform the community about the purpose and objectives of street checks, how the data units gathered in street checks are stored, accessed, and retained, and how the use of street checks is monitored. 3. The public is generally unaware of what constitutes a street check, the police authority to conduct street checks, and citizen rights when stopped by an officer and asked to provide personal identifying information. 4. There are concerns among communities of diversity as to how the VPD uses street checks and a lack of accountability for this practice.	1. Approach public education about street checks as an opportunity that has benefits for the public and the VPD. 2. Develop and implement a plan to educate and inform community members about the use of street checks and the role of this strategy in contributing to crime prevention and public safety and security. 3. Where possible, share select cases of positive outcomes from street checks that have been sufficiently vetted to ensure privacy and confidentiality is not compromised.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND
OF THE REVIEW

The Vancouver policing environment has changed considerably over the past decade. Policing has become more complex, there are greater public expectations of the police, and police services and their officers are being held to higher standards of accountability. It is within this context that this study examined Vancouver Police Department street check policies and practices and the impacts they are having on people being checked. Although definitions vary between Canadian police agencies, street checks generally involve the police stopping people and collecting personal information outside of investigation. The data units are then stored in a police database. The information is used for a variety of purposes, including case investigation, locating missing persons, and identifying individuals in cases of death.

The police practice of street checks has been the focus of considerable debate across Canada for the past decade. Police services and others who support the practice contend that street checks are a valuable tool for keeping communities safe by preventing crime, assisting in case investigations, and enabling officers to check on the well-being of individuals. Among police scholars, there are concerns that the research on street checks conducted to date has significant shortcomings that preclude definitive conclusions as to whether this practice reflects racial profiling and biased policing.

Allegations of racial profiling and biased policing have prompted a number of investigations of street checks in Canadian cities. These studies have identified issues and raised questions about whether street checks are a form of systemic discrimination, whether the practice violates fundamental human rights, and whether police disproportionately street check people who are Indigenous, Black, are from diverse communities, and/or who are otherwise marginalized and vulnerable. Community and provincial responses to street checks have varied from making adjustments to street check policy and practice to banning street checks completely.

Background

In BC, over the past decade, the Murdered and Missing Women Commissions of Inquiry, British Columbia Civil Liberties Association, West Coast Leaf, and Pivot Legal Society, among others, raised issues and questions about unbiased policing, fair and impartial policing, and equitable

access to justice in the province. In response, in early 2018, the provincial government conducted a public engagement process to solicit insights on the development of a provincial standard for unbiased policing. The survey included a question about street checks: "How important is it to include the theme of street checks in the standards?" Of respondents, 55% strongly agreed or agreed that it was important to include this theme, while 28% strongly disagreed or disagreed (BC Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, 2018).

Some supporting comments emphasized the importance of proactive policing and the value of street checks as an aid to solving crime. Others supported the use of street checks with restrictions to prevent biased decisions. A third group opposed street checks, expressing concerns that they present too much potential for abuse of power, there is little evidence to support their utility, and that street checks may damage police–community relations.

In June 2018, following the public release of 2008–2017 street check data in response to a Freedom of Information request, the BC Civil Liberties Association (BCCLA) and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) filed a complaint with the Office of the Police Complaint Commissioner (OPCC), requesting an investigation into street checks conducted in Vancouver. The letter of complaint stated, "In 2017 Indigenous people accounted for over 16% of the checks despite making up only 2% of the population" and "in 2017 Black people accounted for 5% of the checks despite making up only 1% of the population." Based on these statistics, the complainants concluded that street checks were "being conducted in a discriminatory manner" and that the street check data are "statistical evidence of discrimination." An amended complaint, submitted when additional disaggregated information on race and gender was released under a Freedom of Information request in July 2018, added questions about the statistical overrepresentation of Indigenous women in VPD street check data, noting that, in 2016, (a) Indigenous women, who comprise 2% of Vancouver's women population, accounted for 21% of women street checked; (b) Indigenous men, who make up 1% of the population accounted for 12% of all street checks; and (c) Black men, who constitute 0.5% of the population accounted for 3% of street checks.

The complainants also raised questions relating to street checks and their use as a policing strategy, how street checks impacted the individuals and communities that are subjected to them,

whether the VPD's policies and practices on the collection, protection, and retention of personal and public release of street check information are appropriate and in keeping with provincial privacy legislation, and about stops that were not recorded as street checks, but where information was elicited.

Responding to a request from the Vancouver Police Board, the VPD investigated this complaint and prepared a report titled *"Understanding Street Checks: An Examination of a Proactive Policing Strategy"* (VPD, 2018c). The report was considered by the Vancouver Police Board in September 2018, who then adopted the following six recommendations in the report:

1. Formalize the existing VPD street check standards into policy and ensure that the policy adheres to new provincial standards that are currently being developed.
2. Offer additional training to ensure that VPD officers are utilizing street checks appropriated.
3. Commit to publicly releasing VPD street check data annually.
4. Build upon existing community relationships to better understand the unique experiences, perceptions, and histories of the communities that we serve.
5. Assign an Indigenous Liaison Protocol Officer to support greater communication between our patrol officers and our partners in the Indigenous community.
6. Establish a new street check category in the records system to specifically document when officers are dealing with an individual to ensure their safety and well-being.

The Board followed up with a request for an external review to analyze and interpret VPD data, practices, police, procedures, and guidance for street checks and to conduct a community-based research assessment of the impact of street checks on Indigenous and racialized people in Vancouver.

In 2019, the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre and Pivot Legal Society called for prohibition of street checks (Martin and Walia, 2019; Pivot Legal Society, 2019).

This report examines street check policy and practice in Vancouver from police and community perspectives and provides recommendations for moving forward in a manner that preserves police legitimacy and promotes community trust and confidence in policing.

Each chapter begins with a short overview, followed by the identification of the components of the topic, and concludes with recommendations. The review concludes with a summary of findings and recommendations for moving forward.

CHAPTER 2: PROJECT METHODOLOGY

The VPD Street Check Review project was designed to examine the use of street checks by the VPD and to provide recommendations that will assist the Vancouver Police Board in its governance and oversight role and contribute to its goals of enhancing public safety, fighting crime, and engaging and building trust with its diverse communities. The review was conducted between January and September 2019.

The review had two main objectives:

1. Analyze and interpret the Vancouver Police Department data on street checks practice, policy, procedures and guidance on street checks and use of them as a policing tool.

2. Assess the impacts of street checks on Indigenous and racialized (non-Caucasian) people including a community-based research assessment of police contacts to determine the satisfaction of particularly affected racialized or geographic communities with recommendations in relation to street checks in Vancouver.

The components of the review are set out in Figure 2.

| Street Check Literature Review | VPD Street Check Data Review | Environmental & Organizational Materials Review | Interviews | Focus Groups | Field Observations |
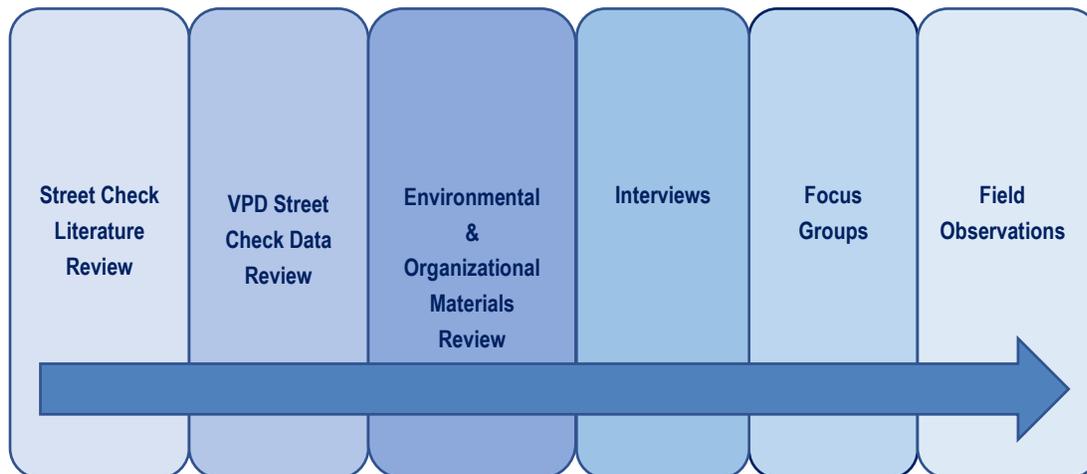
Figure 2. Vancouver Police Department Street Check Review Components

The review included examination of the VPD street check strategy, policies, and practices; an academic, grey literature, and documentation review; and a review of VPD street check data. The data review focused on determining whether the methodology used to produce the data in the VPD's 2018 *Understanding Street Check* report was sound and whether the conclusions reached reasonably emanated from the data.

Over 40 interviews and 10 focus groups were conducted with representatives of community organizations, activists, and advocates working with members and leadership of communities of diversity. The focus of organizational interviews and focus groups was to determine stakeholder's level of interaction and engagement with police and their perspectives on street checks, and to obtain their referrals for others we could speak with about street checks. Interviews and focus groups with members of communities of diversity focused on their experiences and perspectives on street checks in Vancouver.

Interviews and focus groups were also conducted with approximately 100 general patrol officers, and over 50 patrol supervisors, patrol command staff, VPD executives, and members of general and specialty investigative sections, planning and research personnel, analysts, and education and training personnel to determine if there were variations in street check perspectives and practices. Patrol officer focus groups were divided into two pools: officers with less than 5 years experience and more than 5 years experience. Patrol supervisors, command staff, executive, investigators, and administrative were also interviewed in separate groups.

Observations were conducted with VPD patrol members in each district and with the beat enforcement officers on day and afternoon/night shifts to develop a greater understanding of the operational context of VPD, observe the policing style of VPD members, learn about current VPD practices, and to examine how street checks are performed.

An overview of participating individuals and organizations is presented in Table 2. Wherever possible, interviews were conducted with individuals who were able to speak on behalf of an organization. In others, people who worked or volunteered for an organization provided personal experiences and insights.

Table 2. Participating Organizations

Community Participants
Indigenous
Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Council (MVAEC)
Luma Housing Association
Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC)
Aboriginal Front Door Society
VPD Indigenous Advisory Council
Newcomer Services
Immigrant Services Society
MOSAIC
Advocacy, Shelter, Housing and Support Services
Covenant House
Union Gospel Mission
Portland Housing Society
First United Church
BC Civil Liberties
Downtown Eastside Women's Centre
Carnegie Community Centre
Rain City Housing
The Vivian (low barrier SRO)
BC Housing
Youth Services
Pacific Community Resources, Broadway Youth Services
Covenant House
Directions Youth Services
LGBTQ2+
Transgender community activist
LGBTQ2S+ activist
LGBTQ2S+ human rights activist
Qmmunity
Sex Worker Support
Wish Drop-In Centre
PACE Society
Living in Community

Mobile Access Project (MAP Van)	
AESHA Research Project	
Cultural, Business and Religious Support and Advocacy	
Black Community Leaders and Activists (4)	
Hogan's Alley	
Nora Hendrix Place	
Organization of Caribbean Cultural Association	
Filipino Community Navigator	
Canada Pakistan Association	
Khalsa Diwan Society/Ross Street Sikh Temple	
Downtown Business Improvement Association	
Gastown Business Improvement Association	
Chinatown Foundation	
Chinatown Merchants Association	
Police Interviews and Focus Groups	
VPD Executive Officers	
Inspector in charge of Diversity Unit	
Training Officer	
Officer in charge of Street Check policy development	
Sex Worker Liaison Officer	
Constables (8 groups representing all divisions)	
Sergeants (8 groups representing all divisions)	
Staff Sergeants and Commanders (1 group)	
Investigators (2 groups)	
Analysts (1 group)	
Police Ride/Walk-Alongs	
Ride-alongs (12 representing all divisions)	
Walk-alongs with beat (BET) officers (2)	

Note. BC = British Columbia; BET = Beat Enforcement Team; LGBTQ2S+ = Lesbian/Gay /Bisexual/Transgender/Queer/Two-Spirit+; MOSAIC = Multi-lingual Orientation Services Association for Immigrant Communities; SRO = Single-room occupancy establishment.

Limitations

The project team made every effort to be as inclusive as possible with respect to soliciting the participation of organizations in communities of diversity. Stakeholders from the Vancouver

Police Board, the VPD executive, and people in the contacted community organizations recommended organizations and individuals to take part in the community interviews and focus groups. The information in this report is a snapshot of perceptions and experiences as presented by participating community organization representatives and community residents in interviews and focus groups. As such, findings cannot be generalized to a broader population.

Several organizations contacted declined to participate and several others did not respond to repeated requests to participate. As a result, research team members were unable to speak with organizational representatives from Black Lives Matter, Sister Watch, the DTES Women's Centre, VANDU, the Jewish Community Centre, Hastings Crossing BIA, and Afro Van Connect. It is not known if or how the outcomes of the review may have differed if more or a different group of participants had elected to take part in the study.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

Over the past decade, the police practice of street checks has been the focus of considerable controversy and has been a flashpoint for the larger issues of racial profiling and biased policing and the relationships between police services and communities of diversity. Studies of police street checks have most commonly been conducted within the framework of discussions as to whether the police discriminate in their decision making against people in communities of diversity and racialized groups.

Any study of police street checks must consider the larger context within which police–citizen encounters occur, including historical and contemporary relationships, power dynamics, and the mandated and assumed responsibilities of the police. The BC policing environment continues to evolve and increase in complexity. Providing safety and security services for increasingly diverse communities and dealing with challenges ranging from the opioid crisis to mental health issues, homelessness, and other issues requires officers to be well versed in the law and to have the knowledge, technical and soft skills, and cultural competency to effectively respond to the needs of their communities. Officers must exercise their authority fairly and ethically, treat everyone with respect, make sound decisions, take actions that are unbiased and focused on reducing harm, and be able to articulate to citizens how and why they are taking certain actions.

This section of the report presents the research literature on the police and communities of diversity as well as the findings from studies that have been conducted of police racial profiling, biased policing, and street checks. Extensive reference is made to two of the most in-depth studies that have been completed to date on police street checks in Canada: a study of street checks in Halifax, completed by Wortley in 2019, and a study of street checks in Edmonton, completed by Griffiths et al. in 2018. The method, analysis, findings, and recommendations of these studies can inform those of the present study as well as street checks regulations and guidelines that may be developed by BC provincial government and police departments and detachments throughout the province.

The Controversy Over Street Checks

A number of investigations have concluded that the police in some municipalities disproportionately street check people who are Indigenous or Black, are from ethnically diverse communities, and/or who are otherwise marginalized and vulnerable (Bennett, 2015; CBC News, 2016; Fine, 2016; Huncar, 2015; Julian, 2017; Labby, 2017; McGregor and MacIvor, 2017). Citing studies that have concluded street checks are a form of systemic discrimination, there have been calls from various stakeholder groups and politicians for the practice to be banned (Matys, 2016). The Law Union of Ontario (2012), for example, has taken the position that street checks represent a systematic violation of human rights, charter, and privacy.

There are also concerns that people may experience psychological detention during street checks. This occurs when individuals who have been stopped by a police officer feel that they have little choice but to remain in the encounter situation, even though they are not suspected of having committed a crime or intending to commit a crime. Weingarten, in Police Carding, "Investigative Detention," and Section 9 of the Charter, noted that if a street check results in the physical or psychological detention of a person and does not meet the requirements for investigative detention under *R. v. Mann*, then the detention is arbitrary and contrary to s. 9 of the Charter (2015).

Police services and others who support the practice contend that street checks are a valuable tool for keeping communities safe by preventing crime, assisting in case investigations, and by checking on the well-being of people. Among police scholars, there are concerns that the research on street checks that has been conducted to date has significant shortcomings that preclude definitive conclusions as to whether this practice reflects racial profiling and biased policing.

Despite the importance of the issues surrounding police street checks and the potential impact of this practice on police relationships with communities of diversity, a substantive body of empirically sound research is lacking on the topic. More specifically, as will be discussed below, much of the "research" has been conducted by the media, and studies that have been carried out by police scholars have a number of methodological limitations. Despite the increased emphasis

on evidence-based policing in the early 21st century, discussions, policies, and legislation relating to street checks have not been informed by empirically sound research.

Police Work in a Democratic Society

The Law Reform Commission of Canada (2006) identified four key values that form the framework for understanding police work in Canadian society:

- *Justice*: The police are to maintain peace and security in the community while ensuring that individuals are treated fairly and that human rights are respected.
- *Equality*: All citizens are entitled to policing services that contribute to their feelings of safety and security.
- *Accountability*: The actions of police services, and police officers, are subject to review.
- *Efficiency*: Policing services must be cost effective.

These are the ideal values that should underpin policing. In actuality, there are often conflicts between the role of the police in ensuring safety and security and upholding that the rights of Canadian citizens are protected. Many of the issues that surround street checks reflect this conflict: the potential for street checks to contribute to the safety and security of the community, while at the same time raising the specter that this strategy involves racial profiling and biased policing and an inordinate amount of attention to people in communities of diversity.

The Mandated and Assumed Responsibilities of the Police

The mandated responsibilities of the police include the tasks assigned to the police by legislation, including the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Act (1985) and the various provincial and territorial police acts, and regulations and policies formulated by government. Police services are also responsible for adhering to provincial policing standards and regulations. In some jurisdictions, such as Ontario, this includes adhering to a protocol that officers must follow when conducting street checks.

The *assumed responsibilities* of the police are those that are a consequence of community expectations, the expansion of police activities due to "downloading" (discussed later in this section), recommendations of task forces and commissions of inquiry, and the policies of individual police agencies as set out in strategic plans and documented in annual reports, among others (e.g., Kay, 2015).

Increasingly, the police are being required to fill gaps in services that are the mandated responsibility of other agencies and organizations. For example, when governments cut the number of social workers, mental health workers, funding for shelter beds and for specialized facilities for the mentally ill, there is a direct impact on the demands placed on police resources (Cotton and Coleman, 2010).

The assumed responsibilities of the police include the following:

- developing and sustaining partnerships with the community;
- taking initiatives to improve the quality of life in communities and neighbourhoods;
- providing reassurance to community residents and reducing the fear of crime;
- conducting outreach to newcomer groups, Indigenous peoples, and to at-risk and vulnerable groups; and,
- engaging in collaborative partnerships and integrated teams with agencies and organizations, including operating specialized patrol units. (Griffiths and Stamatakis, 2012:23).

The police role has become more multifaceted in recent years, which is often referred to as "diversification." Increasingly, police services are being asked to address non-law-enforcement issues and most police services have developed an extensive network of collaborative partnerships with agencies and community organizations to address concerns related to crime and disorder (Montgomery and Griffiths, 2017; Murphy, 2012).

The diversification of the police role has also been impacted by the downloading of responsibilities onto municipal governments. In a review of the cuts in federal and provincial funding, Beresford (2014) stated, "Local governments are finding themselves picking up the slack on housing, mental health, addiction, social services, wastewater treatment, diking and flood management, drinking water and recreation infrastructure" (para. 1). This transfer of responsibility resulted in a 134% increase in policing costs in Canada between 2001 and 2010 (Beresford, 2014). It has also led to increased response time to Priority 1 calls for service and a decrease in the amount of unallocated time that officers have to engage in proactive activities in the community (Griffiths, 2020).

An example is the increasing amount of police time and resources expended in responding to persons with mental illness (PwMI). The deinstitutionalization of mental health patients in the

15

1960s and 1970s resulted in a growing number of PwMI requiring care and treatment in the community. The concept of deinstitutionalization was primarily accepted on the premise that psychiatric units and community care facilities would be developed in all major communities (Higenbottam, 2014).

However, this often did not materialize. As a result, many PwMI became homeless and destitute and without the necessary supports to manage their issues. Governments cuts the numbers of social workers, mental health workers, and funding for shelter beds and for specialized facilities for PwMI, directly increase the demands placed on the police resources (Cotton and Coleman, 2010).

A review of police encounters with PwMI in Toronto, for example, found that there had been a failure of the provincial mental health system to provide adequate community-based treatment resources. The report also concluded police alone could not effectively address the needs of PwMI and that a robust response was required by the provincial mental health system and other agencies (Iacobucci, 2014:9).

Researchers estimated Canadian police services have about 1 million encounters per year with people who are mentally ill, are suffering from substance abuse, or both (Marcoux and Nicholson, 2018). In some police services, including the VPD, up to 40% of the calls involve a PwMI. Some PwMI have hundreds of contacts with the police annually (Thompson, 2010; Wilson-Bates, 2008).

The challenges have become even greater in cases involving individuals who are severely addicted and mentally ill and have complex treatment needs. This not only has a significant impact on police resources but also fails to provide a long-term solution to address the needs of this group.

Police Legitimacy

If police services are to be effective in carrying out their various roles and responsibilities, they must have the trust and confidence of citizens. To establish and maintain legitimacy, community members' notions of justice and fairness must be "enshrined in institutions and in the actions of authorities" (Tyler, 2006:392). Research studies have found police presence and visibility, the

effectiveness of the police in preventing and responding to crime, and the extent to which the police address problems have been identified by the community are positively associated with police legitimacy (Griffiths and Clarke, 2017; Mazerolle and Wickes, 2015; Mazerolle et al., 2013).

Police legitimacy has emerged as a core concept in the study of policing in the early 21st century. Legitimacy can be defined as "the belief that authorities, institutions, and social arrangements are appropriate, proper, and just" (Tyler, 2006:376). Regardless of whether it is the legitimacy of the authority of an institution, organization, or, in the case of police officers, individuals, it denotes "a property that when it is possessed, leads people to defer voluntarily to decisions, rules, and social arrangements" (Tyler, 2006:376). Applied to policing, the concept of legitimacy is often discussed in terms of public confidence and trust in the police, notions of procedural fairness, and the alignment of the police with community values (Myhill and Quinton, 2010; Tyler, 2001, 2004).

The extent to which the police are viewed as legitimate holders of power and can assert authority depends to a great extent upon the perceptions of those to whom this authority is applied. There is a fluidity in the dynamics of police legitimacy. As Bottoms and Tankebe (2012:129) noted, rather than being viewed as "a single transaction, it is more like a perpetual discussion, in which the content of power-holders' later claims will be affected by the nature of the audience response."

To establish and maintain legitimacy, community members' notions of justice and fairness must be "enshrined in institutions and in the actions of authorities" (Tyler, 2006:392). Legitimacy allows the police to effectively respond to crime and disorder and to rely upon public cooperation in their efforts (Tyler, 2004:85). Individuals do not view the police as legitimate are less likely to comply with the directives of police officers and to obey the law generally (Tyler and Huo, 2002). They may also be less likely to become involved in collaborative efforts to improve relationships between the police and the community.

Research studies have identified a number of factors that are related to the development of police legitimacy, including police presence and visibility, the effectiveness of the police in preventing and responding to crime, and the extent to which the police address problems that have been

identified by the community (Mazerolle and Wickes, 2015). There is evidence that police services can undertake initiatives that will have a significant impact on the levels of public confidence in the police and in increasing police legitimacy (Myhill and Quinton, 2010).

Policing in a Diverse Society

A key feature of Canada is diversity. This includes visible minorities, newcomers, Indigenous peoples, religious beliefs, and sexual orientation, among others. Canada is becoming more diverse. Nearly one quarter of the Canadian population self-identifies as belonging to a visible minority, with the three largest groups being South Asian, Chinese, and Black (Conor, 2018:8). By 2036, it is estimated that between 31% and 36% of the Canadian population will be visible minorities (Conor, 2018:8).

The projections are also that the newcomer populations will continue to be concentrated in Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal, with more than one half of this group coming from Asia and more than 25% of the population will not speak English or French as their first language (Morency, Malenfant, and MacIsaac, 2017).

Diversity highlights human rights issues that may arise in police–citizen encounters. Section 15(1) of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982) guarantees equality rights: "Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability."

Section 3(e) of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act (1985) states that it is the policy of the Government of Canada to "ensure that all individuals receive equal treatment and equal protection under the law, while respecting and valuing their diversity."

The Canadian Human Rights Act (1985) prohibits discrimination on the grounds of "race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, disability and conviction for which a pardon has been granted" (Department of Justice Canada, 1985). Many provinces, including Ontario, British Columbia, Alberta, and Manitoba, have human rights codes that mirror the federal human rights code, contain sections proclaiming the right of residents to be free from discrimination, and provide for human rights tribunals. The

controversy over racial profiling and biased policing is illustrative of the human rights issues that arise in urban areas.

Police relationships and encounters with people in communities of diversity are the focus of ongoing attention and, in some instances, controversy. There are, for example, ongoing tensions between the police and communities of diversity over the issue of whether police officers engage in biased policing and racial profiling (Griffiths, 2020; Griffiths et al., 2018).

It is important for police officers to have the requisite skill sets and cultural competencies to engage with people in communities of diversity, including utilizing the principles of procedural justice, which requires specific listening and communication skills.

The Police and Vulnerable and At-Risk People

A high number of the individuals with whom police officers come into contact are vulnerable and/or at-risk. This includes PwMI, those with addiction issues, people living in poverty, and individuals who are vulnerable to being victimized. There are, for example, high rates of victimization, particularly among Indigenous women (Perreault and Mahony, 2012; Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2014). The self-reported rate of sexual assault of Indigenous women is more than three times that of non-Indigenous women, as is the self-reported rate of spousal violence (Department of Justice Canada, 2017a).

Higher numbers of Indigenous youth are in foster care, and these individuals have higher rates of victimization than non-Indigenous youth (Department of Justice Canada, 2017b). Indigenous people are overrepresented in the criminal justice system, including in correctional institutions at a rate that is nine times their representation in the general population for adults and five times their representation for youth (Department of Justice Canada, 2017c).

Racial Profiling and Discrimination in Canadian Society

The issue of racial profiling is not limited to police–citizen encounters; rather, it can occur in the larger community. A survey of a non-random sample of Ontarians ($N = 1503$) found four in 10 individuals reported having been racially profiled, with being racially profiled by a private business or retail service (46.6%) mentioned more frequently than being profiled by the police (37.9%; Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2017:29). The same survey found that the majority

of Blacks (93%) in the sample felt they were profiled due to their "race or colour," while the majority of Muslim respondents (79%) identified their religion as the reason they were profiled (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2017:21).

An online survey ($n = 1,000$) in Vancouver found that 82% of visible minorities indicated they had been subjected to prejudice or other forms of discrimination (Merali, 2017). Of interest is the finding from an analysis of a national data set found that recent immigrants to Canada reported less everyday discrimination than native-born Canadians (Vang and Chang, 2018).

Police Racial Profiling, Biased Policing, and Criminal Profiling

Regardless of where they work, police officers must exercise their discretion in such a manner so as to avoid racial profiling and practice bias-free policing. The Ontario Human Rights Commission (2017:16) defined *racial profiling* as follows: "[Any] action undertaken for reasons of safety, security or public protection that relies on stereotypes about race, colour, ethnicity, ancestry, religion, or place of origin rather than on reasonable suspicion, to single out an individual for greater scrutiny or different treatment."

In *R v. Brown* (2003), the Ontario Court of Appeal defined racial profiling as involving "the targeting of individual members of a particular racial group, on the basis of the supposed criminal propensity of the entire group."

Racial profiling is a reflection of biased policing, which occurs when police officers make decisions on the basis of stereotypes rather than on probably grounds with reasonable suspicion. It is most often discussed in relation to police encounters with Blacks, Indigenous people, and other racialized groups.

Bias-free policing requires police officers to make decisions "based on reasonable suspicion or probable grounds rather than stereotypes about race, religion, ethnicity, gender or other prohibited grounds" (Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, 2004:7). Bias-free policing relates to the equitable treatment of *all* people of diversity (Fridell, 2017).

Racial profiling is different from *criminal profiling*, which is based not on stereotypical assumptions but on objective evidence about the wrongful behaviour of a person (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2003:6).

Racial profiling and biased policing are often spoken of with respect to police street checks and carding. These practices have been the focus of considerable controversy and have been a flashpoint for the larger issues of racial profiling and biased policing and in the relationships between the police and community, in particular communities of diversity. At issue is whether certain people and groups, because of their attributes, are singled out for attention by the police based on who they are rather than what they have allegedly done, or are about to do. This has been a focal point in the debate over, and controversy surrounding, the police use of street checks in Vancouver and in other jurisdictions.

Racial profiling and biased policing can also have a profound effect on the people who are profiled, including a loss of self-esteem and dignity and an impact to their individual sense of safety and security as well as the safety of their families. Racial profiling has also been identified as a contributing to the over-representation of Black people in the criminal justice system (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2017:26–27). There may be significant social costs for people who are profiled and subjected to biased policing, or who may perceive that they have been targeted (Tulloch, 2018:41). These may include feelings of indignation, humiliation, and a lack of trust in the police as well as various avoidance behaviours to reduce the risk of encounters with the police (Cohen, 2017).

These actions can also impact the social fabric of communities (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2017:6–7). For example, the Ontario Human Rights Commission noted (2017:35), "Racial profiling has a negative impact on Black communities from a historic and social perspective – it reinforces social exclusion and marginalization."

Over-policing and Pretext Policing

Two police practices that are associated with racial profiling are over-policing and pretext policing. Over-policing occurs when the police focus disproportionately on a racialized

population or neighbourhood. *Pretext policing* is when a police officer detains or investigates a person for one reason but really has a secondary purpose for doing so.

Pretext policing is commonly associated with police stops or searches and may occur for a minor reason, such as a traffic violation, which then leads to a more intrusive intervention, such as a vehicle search or asking a person for identification. Stopping people who are jaywalking or riding a bike on the sidewalk are two instances that often reflect pretence policing. These offences are generally not enforced but provide officers with the opportunity to speak with persons of interest. Although the officer may have the lawful authority to make the stop, only certain individuals may be subjected to being stopped (Griffiths et al., 2018).

These stops provide an opportunity for the officer to ask for a person's identification. In the words of a patrol supervisor in an urban police service, "If we want to speak with you, we'll find a way" (personal communication, June 16, 2018). Although the officer may have the lawful authority to conduct a stop, the issue is whether some people are more likely to be stopped than others.

Over-policing involves disproportionate police focus on a racialized population or neighbourhood. This often results in a disproportionate contact of visible minority or Indigenous people with the police and contributes to not only distrust of the police but also the development of stereotypes by police officers that the particular group is prone to criminality.

Street Checks and Carding

Although the terms "street checks" and "carding" are often used interchangeably, they are different. It is important to distinguish between the two practices. In his review street checks in Ontario, The Honourable Mr. Justice Tulloch (2018) noted, while street checks can be legitimately used to gather intelligence and have validity as a police strategy, carding cannot. This is a critical distinction that is often not made in discussions and reporting of street checks.

A *street check* occurs when officers have an "articulable" basis for the practice, that is, when they have reason to suspect the person is involved in a crime. Street checks generally involve the police stopping individuals to collect personal information that is then stored and used for a

variety of purposes, including case investigation, locating missing persons, and identifying people in cases of death.

If officers do not explain to people why they were being stopped and checked, this may contribute to the perception that the police were unfairly targeting those individuals through profiling and biased policing.

Weingarten (2015) noted if a street check results in the physical or psychological detention of a person and does not meet the requirements for an investigative detention under *R. v. Mann* (2004), then the detention is arbitrary and contrary to s. 9 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982). As the Honourable Mr. Justice Tulloch (2018:76) stated, "Police officers do not have an automatic right to detain a person for questioning…the police cannot prevent a person from walking away unless there are reasonable grounds to suspect that the person is connected to a particular crime and the detention is reasonably necessary."

Carding, on the other hand, occurs when the police randomly stop people and ask for their identification, which is then entered into a police database (Tulloch, 2018:35). This is a discriminatory police practice because people are asked to produce identification in the absence of any evidence they have committed a crime. A concern is that people in communities of diversity and racialized groups are disproportionately subjected to these random checks.

The legitimacy of the police may be undermined as other people in the community become aware of, or witness to, these encounters. Racial profiling is ineffective as a strategy for ensuring community safety and security (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2003). In addition, there is no evidence that random street checks (or carding) contributes to reduced crime or increased number of arrests (Tulloch, 2018:10).

The present study focused on street checks rather than carding.

Police Policies on Racial Profiling and Street Checks

Most police services have policies that explicitly prohibit racial profiling by their officers, The Ontario Provincial Police (2011:10) policy, for example, states,

Illegal profiling is not permitted and shall not be tolerated in any respect. Illegal profiling means taking law- enforcement actions, such as stopping/questioning/ searching/detaining/arresting a person, based solely on the person's race, sex, ancestry, age, sexual orientation, family status, place of origin, marital status, disability, creed, colour, citizenship, ethnic origin, [and/or] same-sex partnership status.

Research has found, however, that the extent to which policies on racial profiling are implemented and effective depends in large measure on the police organization itself and the strength of its leadership (Miller, 2009).

However, there is considerable variability across the country in the provincial regulations and departmental guidelines for police street checks. Some departments, including the VPD, do not have a street check policy. Within departments that do have a street check policy, there is often confusion among community residents and officers about the policy and its application in the field. As one officer in Halifax stated,

We need a clear street check policy. Officers need to be trained on this policy and supervisors need to review street checks to ensure policy compliance. Those strategies would lower the number of street checks, increase street check quality and minimize the impact of street checks on the community. They would also ensure that the police can still use street checks in their investigative efforts. (Wortley, 2019:97)

In other jurisdictions, although the police service has a policy and guidelines for street checks, officers may not be following these standards. This was evident in the study of street checks in Edmonton, where a high percentage of street check reports were noncompliant with departmental guidelines (Griffiths et al., 2018).

In an attempt to address what was perceived to be widespread racial profiling and biased policing in street checks, the Province of Ontario enacted Ontario Regulation 58/16, "Collection of Identifying Information in Certain Circumstances – Prohibition and Duties." The regulation sets out guidelines for police officers with respect to stopping people and attempting to collect identifying information by asking the individual, in a *face-to-face encounter* (emphasis added), to identify himself or herself or to provide information for the purpose of identifying the individual and includes such an attempt to do so, whether or not identifying information is collected. (O. Reg. 58/16, s. 4, para. 2; see also Draaisma, 2017)

Officers conducting street checks in Ontario are required to inform the person who is stopped, why the individual was stopped, that the person has the right to walk away from the encounter, that the person's participation in the encounter is voluntary, and, that the individual is not required to provide any information to the officer. The officer must provide a written record of the stop and of the encounter with the citizen, provide the person who is stopped with the officer's own information, including the officer's badge number, and inform the person about how to contact the provincial office of the Independent Police Review Director should the individual have any concerns about the encounter with the officer (Weingarten, 2015). The Ontario policy also requires police services to keep statistics on the age, race, and sex of people in all attempted, and completed, street checks and have this information reviewed via an independent audit (Ferguson, 2016).

The regulation also created a number of prohibitions related to the collection of information, including the direction that if one of the reasons for the collection of information is that the officer "perceives the individual to be within a particular racialized group," with certain exceptions, the collection of information should not be done in an arbitrary manner.

As of mid-2019, it is uncertain whether this regulation has reduced racial profiling and biased policing and if there are now fewer instances in which people who are stopped by the police feel that they have been racially profiled and subjected to psychological detention. This is due to the failure of research studies to set a baseline of police activity against which the impact of changes in policy and legislation could be assessed. The extent to which this regulation has improved police stops and police relations with communities of diversity has also not been examined.

The regulation does appear to have contributed to a significant reduction in the number of street checks conducted by some police services in the province. This is commonly referred to as *de-policing*, wherein police officers reduce their levels of proactive engagement with community residents. For example, there has been a precipitous decline in street checks in some jurisdictions in Ontario where it is estimated that the number of street checks conducted by the Ontario Provincial Police for 2017 was less than 100, down from over 40,000 (C. T. Griffiths, personal communication, April 8, 2017). The Ottawa Police Service recorded seven street checks between March and December 2017 (Cossette, 2018). In contrast, to the 45,000 street checks conducted

between 2011 and 2014. Police leaders have stated that their officers are reluctant to conduct street checks due to the complexities surrounding the regulations and legislation (Cossette, 2018).

In the study of street checks in Edmonton, a number of Edmonton Police Service (EPS) officers who participated in focus group sessions in that study indicated that the lack of consistency in the application of EPS street check guidelines, coupled with the negative public narrative surrounding street checks, may lead officers to reduce or cease conducting stops. As one officer stated, "If newer officers are being told not to street check or interact with people, it will create an environment and organization of no public contact. This is not ideal" (Griffiths et al., 2018:224). This could result in de-policing, as officers reduce their proactive efforts.

De-policing can result in reduced visibility of the police and can have a significant impact on a residents' feelings of safety and security. It also impacts police contact with the public as well as the amount of time that officers spend in proactive activities.

The Role of Police Officer Discretion in Street Checks

Police officers exercise considerable discretion in carrying out their mandated activities. Discretion is an essential component of policing because no set of laws or regulations can prescribe what a police officer must do in each and every circumstance. As it is impossible for officers to enforce all laws all of the time, officers practice selective or situational enforcement (Griffiths, 2020). The majority of the thousands of decisions that police officers make in the course of their duties are routine. However, their decisions may also stir controversy, as in cases involving allegations of racial profiling and biased policing.

Studies of police decision making have found that patrol officers utilize a set of cognitive lenses through which they make determinations about the people and events they encounter. They use a conceptual shorthand consisting of *typifications* and *recipes for action* to tailor their decision making to the particular area and population being policed (Lundman, 1980:110–111). Field research on police officers has found the decisions of police officers to initiate a stop may be based on categorical stereotypes that place certain people, including young men, Blacks, and

"regulars" (i.e., those known to the police), at a disproportionate risk of being stopped (Quinton, 2011:366).

Officers who are assigned to a fixed geographical area for an extended period of time develop knowledge of the issues in the area, including crime and disorder as well as of the people who reside in, or frequent the area. How a situation or a person is "typified" may play a significant role in the recipes for action. This determination may involve judgements by police officers as to who they regard as "good" and "bad" people (Westmarland, 2013:312). This may, in turn, affect how the officers exercise their discretion. A visual cue such as a poorly dressed individual in an upscale neighbourhood would attract the attention of officers on patrol, as would a behaviour or activity considered out of place in a particular area. A concern is that these cognitive processes may result in biased policing and the profiling of certain people and groups who may be disproportionately subjected to street checks and other forms of surveillance and police attention.

Generally speaking, the research on police decision making has found offender-related attributes, such as ethnicity and age, explain only a very small portion of the variability in police decision making. Other factors, such as community expectations, police resources and workload, and situational variables, and context generally explain more of the variance (Griffiths, 2020).

One challenge in the study of street checks is that there are many non-quantifiable nuances that are involved in the decision of an officer to conduct a street check and in the dynamics that occur during the encounter with the person who is stopped. In the absence of field observational studies, it is difficult to ascertain the cognitive processes that police officers utilize in making the decision to conduct a street check. Most often, officers are asked to recall the factors that influenced their decision to conduct a street check and this may not provide an accurate accounting of what actually transpired. This highlights the importance of including field observations as a core component of any study of street checks.

A variety of factors, including changes in policies, affect the reporting rates of police officers and police departments (Boivin and Cordeau, 2011:189). It is well-established that police officers exercise considerable discretion in their decision making and that many encounters with community residents dealt with informally and do not result in the creation of a file (Boivin and Cordeau, 2011; Griffiths, 2020). Researchers have found, for example, that "police officers can

27

have a significant impact on crime statistics by changing their recording practices" (Boivin and Cordeau, 2011:196). The challenges are compounded in the case of data on police street checks, which involve the exercise of discretion by police officers.

This contributes to the issues surrounding the use of police-recorded street check data for analyses that are attempting to determine whether a police service is engaged in racial profiling and biased policing through the use of street checks. This issue is discussed in the following section.

Street Checks and the Police Exercise of Lawful Authority

In all police work, it is essential that officers have the lawful authority to take action. This also holds true for police street checks. As an officer in the Halifax study stated,

> I believe that street checks could be improved by documenting the rationale for conducting the street check. The police do need to be held accountable for their actions or inactions. The checks should be lawful and conducted in all of our communities when and where needed. Police need to be reminded that we don't always have the authority to obtain someone's personal information. If they (a civilian) chose not to provide it, they are not in violation of the law. (Wortley, 2019:97)

Having lawful authority to conduct a street check, however, does not absolve officers from their obligations to not discriminate in their decision making, to adhere to the principles of procedural justice in their encounters with citizens, and to be trauma-informed in their interactions with people who are vulnerable and marginalized.

Street Checks and Procedural Justice

The requirement of procedural justice (often referred to as *procedural fairness*) in police–citizen encounters is a key component in contemporary policing and in the discussion of police street checks (Donner et al., 2015; Jonathan-Zamir, Mastrofski, and Moyal, 2015; Tyler, 2011). Procedural justice "refers to the fairness of processes by which the police exercise their authority: the way that police treat citizens and decide what to do" (Jonathan-Zamir et al., 2015:846). Research studies have found that the benefits of procedural justice include (a) greater public deference to the police during personal interactions, (b) increased public compliance with the law, (c) higher level of cooperation with police efforts to manage and prevent crime;

(d) greater trust and confidence and trust in the police, and (e) strong institutional support for police departments (Dai, Frank, and Sun, 2011; Murphy and Tyler, 2017:288).

The dimensions of procedural justice include the perception by citizens that their stories have been heard and the police have treated them with respect, are interested in their personal situation, and the decision making of the police officer is unbiased. Citizens also need to understand how and why the officer has made specific decisions and taken certain actions (Tyler, 1997). To the extent that officers adhere to the principles of procedural justice, the officers and the police service are given legitimacy by the community (Jonathan-Zamir et al., 2015:846).

As Sunshine and Tyler (2003:520) noted,

> When police change the way they interact with citizens, moving from a command-and-control orientation to a fair and respectful disposition, public evaluations will eventually become more favorable. Effectively controlling crime and maintaining positive public evaluations is not a trade off that the police have to make. In fact, on the contrary, the police can engage in effective crime control and increase public support when they exercise their authority fairly.

Although contact with the public is a routine aspect of policing, research has shown that being stopped and questioned (and sometimes searched) by the police can cause embarrassment, anxiety, or even fear (Stone and Pettigrew, 2000). Among Griffiths et al.'s (2018:229) findings of the study of street checks in Edmonton, for example, was that in the majority of instances, the officer had the lawful authority to conduct the stop; it was the *behaviour* of the officers in the encounter situation that contributed to people from communities of diversity feeling as if they had been profiled.

A UK study exploring this highlighted the importance of street checks being conducted fairly and with good reason, the legality of street checks as reflected in adhering to established guidelines and legislation, and the effectiveness of street checks by targeting their use in such a manner as to maximize interventions with active offenders and minimizing stops of law-abiding community residents (Quinton, Bland, and Miller, 2000:v). Research studies also found police services can implement measures to alter the dynamics of police–citizen encounters and address biases that may have been present (e.g., Davis, 2009).

The Lived Experiences of People in Communities of Diversity

The lived experiences of people in communities of diversity with the police and their perceptions of police conduct are essential elements of any study of street checks. Among the important issues are how community residents view the police, their experiences with the police, whether the police are viewed as legitimate, and the extent to which encounters with the police reflect procedural justice. While statistical analyses of street check data may reveal no evidence of racial profiling or biased policing, if people in communities of diversity perceive they are profiled and unfairly targeted for street checks, this is an important finding that must be addressed. For most people, perception is reality.

Members of the Black community in Canada, for example, have experienced racism, prejudice, and discrimination, historically and in contemporary times. Black children and youth, for example, are disproportionately represented in child welfare, child protection, and youth justice systems, in the numbers living in poverty, and among those at high risk of sexual exploitation and violence (Griffiths, 2019). A survey of Canadian Muslims ($n = 600$) found that one third of those surveyed indicated they had experienced discrimination or unfair treatment by others in Canada in the previous 5 years due to their religion, ethnic or cultural background, language, or sex (Environics Institute for Survey Research, 2016).

Among Indigenous people there is pervasive poverty, high rates of unemployment, low levels of formal education, and high death rates from accidents and violence (McNally and Martin, 2017). More than half of Indigenous students fail to graduate from high school, and the unemployment rate among Indigenous people is twice that of those who are non-Indigenous (McNally and Martin, 2017). The subordinate political and economic position of Indigenous peoples is a consequence of their colonization by Europeans and of Canadian government policies that have exerted control over virtually every aspect of their lives.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and two-spirit (LGBTQ2S+) communities have also faced discriminatory treatment both in society in general and by the police. Historically, the relationship between the police and the LGBTQ2S+ communities have been characterized by conflict and mistrust. From the late 1950s to the late 1990s, for example, Canadian police

services were involved in extensive surveillance, interrogation, and harassment of gays and lesbians (Griffiths, 2020).

The police used to criminalize homosexuality, as illustrated by the raids conducted by the police on gay bathhouses across Canada in the 1980s, including in Edmonton. The patrons of these facilities were arrested (Kinsman and Gentile, 2009). Officers were often unsympathetic to gay victims and police services were slow to respond to hate-motivated crimes. The members of these communities were often reluctant to report being victimized, and this was compounded by the attitudes of investigative officers. LGBTQ2S+ community members commonly had negative experiences with the police, and there is often the perception that police services are not aware of the issues within LGBTQ2S+ communities (Wolff and Cokely, 2007).

Transgender youth have reported barriers to accessing supportive and knowledgeable health care (Quintana, Rosenthal, and Krehely, 2010). These youth are more likely to encounter discrimination than their peers in the shelter system (Quintana et al., 2010). In a survey ($N = 762$, 54% of whom were Indigenous youth) of street-involved and marginalized youth in BC, participants reported a lack of both culturally relevant and LGBTQ2S+-related services as well as being discriminated against based on their race and/or skin colour (Saewyc et al., 2008).

A project focusing on youth in the Jane-Finch community in Toronto gathered the perceptions of young people ($N = 50$). One youth commented on the negative stereotypes that are often held of young Black men:

> People automatically see you as a Black young person and they feel that you being Black, you would never amount to nothing. Especially coming from the Jane-Finch community, automatically number one what they think is that you being Black, you're never going to be nothing good. But that's not always true. (Assets Coming Together Youth Project, 2010:5)

While the majority of studies on police street checks have relied exclusively on police-recorded data, the studies of street checks in Halifax and in Edmonton included extensive materials on the lived experiences of people in communities of diversity. These materials provide an important foundation for addressing the issues of police–community relations generally, and the issue of street checks in particular.

31

Caution must be exercised in assuming homogeneity in the lived experiences among communities of diversity. This is reflected in the comment of one participant in a project that focused on the lived experiences of Blacks in the Greater Toronto Area:

> I'm born in Montreal and I'm of Haitian descent, I have … nothing in common with you all like nothing, except that I'm Black and I'm here. … It's easier for me to identify with other Blacks in Toronto on negative things… I'm having this issue because I think my boss is racist or, you know, the cop stopped me because I'm driving a – like that kind of dumb stuff, right, but these are not things that rally people together. (Connely et al., 2014:10)

The Lived Experiences of Police Officers

The lived experiences of police officers and the contingencies under which they operate are an important component of any study of racial profiling and biased policing. Officers may struggle to effectively engage community residents, particularly people in communities of diversity, due to language barriers, a lack of training, limited resources, little proactive time, being downloaded on, and a failure of leadership.

Research studies have established the significant role that police leaders play in determining the type of organizational culture that exists in the police service. Officers who perceive that there is no organizational justice (e.g., officers are treated unfairly, the promotion process lacks transparency, etc.) are more likely to experience health and wellness issues, to engage in misconduct, to not subscribe to the notions of community policing, and to have conflict with community residents.

Unfortunately, other than the studies by Wortley (2019) and Griffiths et al. (2018), few materials can be found on the lived experiences of police officers with respect to street checks. This includes how the officers view street checks, their decision to conduct a street check, the perceived benefits of this practice, their concerns about the use of street checks, and how the practice could be improved.

The Potential Benefits of Street Checks

Police services and others who support the practice contend that street checks are a valuable tool for keeping communities safe by preventing crime, assisting in case investigations, and for checking on the well-being of people. Researchers argued that the controversy surrounding street

checks has often resulted in "de-policing," wherein officers limit their engagement with the public out of concern they will be accused of racial profiling and biased policing. This, in turn, is alleged to be responsible for increases in violent crime (Doucette, 2018).

Officers in the Halifax Regional Police Service noted that street checks served a variety of purposes, including gathering information that could be used "to identify potential suspects, victims or witnesses," "to clear individuals of suspicion," "to establish associations between known offenders, between offenders and persons previously unknown to the police, and between offenders and victims," to locate missing persons, and to check on the welfare and safety of street-involved at-risk people, including those involved in the sex trade (Wortley, 2019:78).

Officers in the study of street checks in Edmonton expressed similar views on the value of street checks. The information contained in the street check reports (SCRs) can play a significant role in case investigations. As one EPS investigator (as cited in Griffiths et al., 2018:230) noted, "For case investigators, street checks are a valuable source of information." Another stated that investigators are looking for little clues from many sources. For example, one investigator noted, "We can link clothing data from street checks to investigations." Another investigator cited an example of the value of the information contained in a report in which a partial plate captured in an SCR led to convictions in a multiple sexual assault investigation.

Many of the EPS officers who participated in focus group sessions expressed concerns that the department was not effectively defending police practices, including street checks, with one officer stating, "There has been a shortfall when it comes to defending our practices. We need to provide facts to substantiate that we are not profiling" (Griffiths et al., 2018:221). There was a broadly shared view that EPS members do not racially profile when conducting street checks, although it was acknowledged that it was possible that profiling by individual officers could occur.

In Edmonton, several of the representatives of organizations serving communities of diversity acknowledged that street checks provided a mechanism for checking on the well-being of at-risk people; however, the concern was that these checks should be conducted in such a manner so as not to give the person the impression they were being profiled.

The Value of Street Checks

Recall the Honourable Mr. Justice Tulloch's (2018) conclusion that street checks (as opposed to carding) may have value as a police strategy for gathering intelligence. This includes the information contained in SCRs being used by officers investigating serious crimes.

Findings from the study of street checks in Edmonton included specific cases in which the information contained in SCRs was instrumental in assisting case investigators in solving crimes, locating missing persons, among others (Griffiths et al., 2018). Investigators in the focus group sessions shared the following comments:

> For case investigators, street checks are a valuable source of information.
> (Griffiths et al., 2018:230)

> Street check reports are a wealth of knowledge. They are quick reads. Reading them and grabbing the intelligence is good for making warrant applications and conducting linkage analysis. (231)

> We need to conduct stops for intelligence reports. It is used for linkage analysis. If someone is missing or there is an assault or a homicide, the beat officers know the players because they have ongoing interactions with them. They know where they hang out, where they live, what they do. (231)

The perspective of EPS sworn and civilian members was that the information contained in the SCRs assisted the police in their efforts to protect marginalized and vulnerable people. The officers noted that street checks provided the opportunity to check on the well-being and to keep track of street-involved people, in particular vulnerable women who were reported as missing (Griffiths et al., 2018).

This view was reflected in the comments of one crime analyst who noted that the SCRs allowed them to link information from various sources:

> SCRS are useful for matching for vulnerable populations, for example, heavy users of services who become victims. Information can be useful for police, medical and paramedics. It's a mechanism for tracking them. These people don't have credit cards you can track. The information can be useful in identifying where sex trade workers were working; what they were wearing. It also assists with DNA matching for identification of bodies. (Griffiths et al., 2018:242)

> Street checks are the only way to track and document them, particularly with respect to heavy users of service. Street check information can provide the basis

for applying a holistic approach. They are useful for homicides, missing persons, and investigations. (242)

It is a good idea to street check vulnerable women, including sex trade workers. If they suddenly leave an area, is it because of a threat that should be investigated? (243)

Table 3 presents a case in which information contained in a SCR assisted in solving a crime.

Table 3. Case Example of the Value of Street Check Information

Type of Offence	Date SCR was Submitted	Date SCR was Used	How SCR Was Beneficial	
Property Offences	2016 March	2016 March	A suspect involved in property crimes was identified from a SCR.	Police conducted an investigation into a Break and Enter investigation. The victim provided a brief suspect description including clothing. A check of SCR submission of the area identified a male matching that description, specifically by his clothing. The proximity and time of the SCR was close to that of the Break and Enter. This SCR was instrumental in identifying a suspect who was later arrested and charged.

Source: Griffiths, C. T., R. Montgomery, and J. J. Murphy. 2018. *The City of Edmonton Street Checks Policy & Practice Review.* Edmonton: Edmonton Police Commission. p. 235. https://www.edmontonpolicecommission.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/EPS-Street-Check-Study-Final-REDACTED.pdf

The Police and Communities of Diversity: The Research

Among the findings of a survey conducted by the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission (cited in Wortley, 2019:75) were the following:

1. In general, Black respondents had less trust and confidence in the local police than white respondents;

2. Almost all Black respondents, and the majority of white respondents, believed that the police treat Black people worse than white people;

3. Almost all Black respondents, and the majority of white respondents, believed that police racial profiling is a problem in the Halifax region;

4. Black respondents were much more likely than white respondents to report that they themselves, and their family members and friends, had been victims of racial profiling by the police;

5. Black respondents were more likely than white respondents to report that during their most recent police stop the officers did not tell them the reason or justification for being pulled over;

6. During their most recent police stop, Black respondents were more likely than white respondents to report that they were treated with disrespect and unfairly by the police;

7. Two thirds of Black respondents reported that they have had at least one negative experience with the police, compared to only one third of white respondents; and

8. Two thirds of white respondents reported that they have had at least one positive experience compared to only one third of Black respondents.

All respondents were asked, "Have you ever had a positive experience with the police? Can you describe some of these good or positive experiences?" The results revealed that Black respondents were twice as likely to describe negative experiences with the police (63.6%) as they were to describe positive experiences (35.1%). However, it is important to note that half (48.9%) of the Black respondents who reported a negative experience with the police also reported a positive experience (Wortley, 2019:57).

Wortley (2019:44) noted differences in how Black and white respondents interpreted police street checks: "While Black respondents often focussed on racial bias, white respondents reported that they think they were stopped because the police were actively looking for criminal behaviour, for evidence of driving while intoxicated, or to meet traffic ticket quotas." He also noted,

> Although white respondents are less likely to complain about negative police experiences, when they do complain they tend to highlight many of the same types of behaviour as their Black counterparts: unfair or arbitrary police stops, illegitimate requests for personal ID, illegal searches, the dismissal or downplaying of criminal victimization, threats of arrest for non-compliance with police commands and other rude or aggressive police treatment. (Wortley, 2019:53)

As one white respondent stated on the Halifax survey,

> I agree that police are just doing their job when they do random street checks. Unless you have something to hide, it shouldn't be an issue. However, I do not think it is necessary in all circumstances for an officer to take an assertive or

aggressive stance. I believe they would create less intimidation and anxiety and thus receive more cooperation and respect if they did not act that way.

These results revealed significant issues surrounding police and Black community relations and interactions. The findings also highlight the role that the officer's behaviour in the encounter plays in creating the perception of racial profiling and biased policing. A challenge to further understanding the dynamics between officers and Black residents that are reflected in the above-noted responses is the absence of any data on the context in which the encounters and negative experiences occurred. Nevertheless, the police and community members must work together to address these perceptions and experiences.

Bucerius, Thompson, and Hancock (2016) strove to record the lived experiences and perceptions of people in communities of diversity in the Somali-Canadian community and of the police in Edmonton. The findings of a survey ($N = 301$) of Somali youth and young adults between the ages 16–30 years, conducted as part of the larger study of the Somali community and the police, provided important insights into the experiences and perspectives of this group. Bucerius et al.'s findings included:

- 57% felt that Somali Canadians were discriminated against in Canadian society.
- A number of places were mentioned in the responses as the location of the discrimination: public spaces, e.g. on the street, in stores, banks and restaurants (41%); at school (33%); and at work/applying for work/promotion (28%).
- Contact with the police or courts was listed as the site of discrimination in 20% of the responses.
- The sources of discrimination that were mentioned in the responses were teachers/professors (38%); other school/college staff (42%); co-workers (34%); employers (28%; members of the general public (44%); and police officers (22%).

The police were mentioned with far less frequency than others as a site and source of discrimination, although this may have been due to the respondents having less contact with the police. These findings highlight the diversity of opinion within communities of diversity, in this case among Somali youth and young adults who participated in the survey (Bucerius et al., 2016).

Notable findings were that a significant percentage of the responses were in the "neutral/no opinion" category, the view among 42% of the respondents that the EPS was responsive to the

issues in the Somali–Canadian community, with participants' opinions divided on whether the EPS treated Somali–Canadians worse than other groups in communities of diversity. The responses also suggested that there is considerable work to be done to improve relationships with the Somali–Canadian community.

Although the challenges of police and Black community relationships are well documented, less attention has been given to findings that reveal more positive Black experiences with the police. For example, the findings of a survey ($N = 1,504$) of Black residents in the City of Toronto and the Greater Toronto Area indicated, although 79% of Black men between the ages of 25 and 44 years reported being stopped by police in public spaces, 64% stated they had personal experiences socializing with the police, with 39% reporting they had been helped by the police (Environics Institute, 2017:47).

A common theme that emerged from the responses of Black respondents in Halifax was the need to eliminate racism and ensure equality of treatment across race and class categories. As one respondent stated, "The police just need to treat everyone the same." Another stated, "The police culture has to change. I do believe thing's can be done. Black men should be treated as individuals and respected as so not lumped into one feared category" (Wortley, 2019:65).

Similar findings were reported in the study of street checks in Edmonton. A representative of an organization that works with at-risk youth in Edmonton noted the police tend to focus on the street youth because of their appearance. Youth who appear to be doing well and don't "look the part" (e.g., don't look homeless) and are dressed normally, do not get stopped. However, youth who are struggling, and look it, are frequently stopped and treated differently by society overall. Part of the reason for the frequency of these street checks is because youth become known to police and, thus, "can't get away from it." The supervisor noted that street checks are "so much the norm in the lives of the youth that they do not really talk about it much" (Griffiths et al., 2018:155).

The Executive Director of an Indigenous organization who was interviewed as part of the study of street checks in Edmonton stated that there was considerable distrust of the police in the Indigenous community. Fear of authority, life trauma, and other factors affect Indigenous people contact with the police. Another representative from an Indigenous organization stated that much

of the animosity by Indigenous people toward the police was a consequence of the "mannerisms" of EPS members: "It's how they interact with [Indigenous] citizens. Their attitude just totally changes" (Griffiths et al., 2018:143–144). Another representative of an Indigenous organization commented that Indigenous people were respectful of the police "when they are doing the job well and respecting human rights" (Griffiths et al., 2019:144).

The Executive Director of an non-governmental organization in Edmonton who works with at-risk youth noted, while there have been "some good officers" who have worked to improve the relationship between police and youth, those have been "few and far between." This representative felt that the police either "just don't have the time to engage" or don't understand the significant impact of positive interactions on the youth (Griffiths et al., 2018:148).

These comments highlight the importance of officers having the appropriate training to engage effectively with people in communities of diversity and also stress the importance of officers having the time to apply the principles of procedural justice. Patrol officers who have little proactive time due to high workloads often do not have the opportunity to engage people in communities of diversity in other than a reactive, enforcement role. An officer who does not inform the subject at the outset of the encounter (e.g., why the stop is being conducted) may be contributing to negative perceptions of the police and their practices.

As noted in the report on street checks in Edmonton, "There was a widely-shared view among the community representatives that the EPS needed to be more engaged with the various communities in the city and to focus on community policing versus taking a reactive or an enforcement-based approach" (Griffiths et al., 2018:150).

There was a recognition among the EPS officers of the importance of the police–citizen interaction and its impact on street checks. One officer stated, "There is a difference between random interactions and street checks. Articulation is key. The officer must be able to articulate why an individual was stopped." Another stated,

> How much of the issues have to do with how the police officer talks and interacts
> with the members? It's huge. For example, newcomers. I've got grounds and
> lawful authority, but they've got a completely different perspective. We need to
> be sensitive and pick up cues. There still may be consequences for their actions,

but explanations and a culturally sensitive approach are critical. (Griffiths et al., 2018:252)

With the caveats noted in the next section, the findings from selected studies are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Selected Studies of Police Street Checks

Research Study	Findings
le Masurier, Wicks, and Miller (2000)	Examined police stops at five sites in the UK to determine if (a) residential population figures were a useful measure of the population available to be stopped or searched, (b) police disproportionately stopped or searched people from minority ethnic backgrounds among the available population, and (c) the geographic patterns of stops and searches reflected local crime problems. Overall, across the five sites, the research findings did not suggest any general pattern of bias against people from minority ethnic groups, either as a whole or for particular groups. Police stops and searches tend to be targeted at areas that had higher-than-average proportions of people from minority ethnic groups. This finding highlighted the importance of the police being able to justify targeting in the context of local crime problems. The disproportionality in police stops was, to some extent, a product of structural factors beyond the control of the police.
Appleby (2018)	In Kingston, Ontario, Blacks were overrepresented in both traffic stops (2.7 times their proportion of the city's residential population) and pedestrian stops (3.7 times their proportion of the city's residential population).
McGregor and MacIvor (2017)	In Halifax, during the period 2005–2016, Blacks were three times more likely to be stopped than whites. The study also found that people identified as Arab or West Asian were 1.9 times more likely to be stopped by police than whites.
CBC (2016)	In Ottawa, Ontario, an analysis of traffic stops over a 2-year period (2013–2015) found that Middle Eastern (3.3 times their representation in the Ottawa driving population) and Black drivers (2.3 times their representation in the driving population) and, in particular, young men, were more likely to be stopped by the police than other drivers. Study cautioned that the analysis did not prove that the Ottawa police were engaged in racial profiling; however, the findings suggested there might be problems with the way in which officers were conducting street checks that warranted further study. The analysis also revealed that no one group was disproportionately stopped in the vast majority of cases (97.19%) that involved provincial and municipal offences.
Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse (2011)	In Montréal, Québec, Although Blacks were estimated to be responsible for between 10–20% of crime (depending upon the type of offence), found that this group represented approximately 40% of those stopped and questioned.

Research Study	Findings
Rankin and Contenta (2017)	In Toronto, Ontario, while self-report surveys indicated that there was little difference in the rates of marijuana use between Blacks and other groups, an analysis of Toronto Police Service arrest data for 2003–2013 ($n = 11,299$) revealed that Blacks with no history of criminal convictions were three times more likely to be arrested by officers for the possession of small amounts of marijuana than whites with similar backgrounds. The authors concluded Blacks may be over-policed and racially profiled.
Huncar (2017)	In Edmonton, Alberta, Indigenous women nearly 10 times more likely to be street checked by Edmonton police officers.
Griffiths et al. (2018)	In Edmonton, Alberta, statistical analysis of reports was unable to determine whether EPS officers were engaged in racial profiling and biased policing in conducting street checks. Although officers generally had the lawful authority to conduct the street checks, the dynamics of police–citizen encounters often made people in communities of diversity feel as if they had been profiled.
Wortley (2019)	In Halifax, Nova Scotia, Blacks were six times more likely to be stopped by police than whites.
Ontario Human Rights Commission (2018)	In a Toronto, Ontario, interim report, an analysis of data from the Special Investigations Unit (2013–2017) found that Blacks were much more likely to have force used against them by the Toronto Police Service that resulted in serious injury or death. (Note: This was not a study of street checks.)
Vancouver Police Department (2018c)	The review's statistical analysis shows that the vast majority of street checks (80% of those conducted in 2017) involved people who were already associated to crime by Metro Vancouver police agencies and who, on average, had been the subject of 22 previous criminal investigations prior to VPD officers conducting a street check of the individual. The analysis determined that street checks occurred most frequently in areas of Vancouver where the violent crime rate was highest, which is an indication that these checks were being used as a proactive response to prevent violence in high crime areas.

The materials presented in Table 4 reveal that research studies have produced mixed findings with respect to the issues of police street checks and racial profiling of people in communities of diversity. This is not surprising given the variety of methodologies used by the various studies.

The Limitations of Research on Police Street Checks

A review of the research literature revealed the issues of biased policing, racial profiling, and street checks and carding are complex. A challenge in reaching definitive conclusions about these issues is the absence of independent evaluations and the methodological limitations of studies that have been conducted. Despite the increased emphasis on evidence-based policing in

the early 21st century, discussions, policies, and legislation relating to street checks have not been informed by empirically sound research.

Studies of police street checks have used a variety of methodologies that make it difficult to compare findings and to make conclusive statements about whether the pattern of street checks in any one jurisdiction is due to racial profiling and biased policing. Descriptive analysis is the most frequent methodology used by many studies of street checks in Canada. This involves reviewing police street check data and tabulating the number of street checks of people in communities of diversity in proportion to their representation in the residential population (i.e., "counting cards"). A finding that certain groups are more likely to be street checked than others has often led to the conclusion that the police are engaged in racial profiling and biased policing.

The media has produced much of the "research" on police racial profiling and street checks. These reports do not meet academic requirements. Media reporting generally involves requesting information from police services and counting up the number of street checks as compared to a group's representation in the community population. This methodology is prone to significant errors. In Edmonton, for example, a CBC news reporter concluded from a review of data provided by the Edmonton Police Service that "Indigenous Women Nearly 10 Times More Likely to be Street Checked by Edmonton Police, New Data Shows" (Huncar, 2017). Needless to say, studies of this type lack the methodological rigour required for scholarly work.

Among police scholars, there are concerns that the research on street checks conducted to date have significant methodological shortcomings that preclude definitive conclusions as to whether this practice reflects racial profiling and biased policing (Griffiths et al., 2018).

These include, but are not limited to, (a) the issue of disproportionality in street checks, (b) the dynamics of police–citizen encounters, (c) the use of police-recorded data for research on police racial profiling and street checks, (d) the ethnicity variable, (e) the context of street checks, (f) the officer conducting the street check, (g) police encounters with citizens that do not result in a street check report, and (h) the challenges of proving racial profiling in police street checks. These limitations are discussed in the subsections that follow.

The Issue of Disproportionality in Street Checks

Concerns about police street checks and assertions that the police are engaged in racial profiling and biased policing are based largely on findings that certain groups of citizens are disproportionately street checked by the police in relation to their composition in the population.

There are at least three possible explanations for disproportionality in street checks: (a) there is bias in officer decision-making on the street about who to stop or search; (b) the populations *available* for stops and searches include a larger proportion of people who are Indigenous, Black, marginalized/vulnerable, and from other diverse communities; and (c) stops are targeted at areas which have high concentrations of people from minority ethnic backgrounds (le Masurier et al., 2000:v).

Researchers have noted the importance of distinguishing between the *resident population* and *available population* in a municipality. This is illustrated by the findings of an in-depth study of police stops in the UK:

> Measures of resident population give a poor indication of the populations actually available to be stopped or searched. The available populations in the five sites were quite different from the resident populations of the areas. Most significantly, within pockets of high stop and search activity, young men and people from minority ethnic backgrounds tended to be over-represented in the available population. (le Masurier et al., 2000:vi)

The majority of Canadian studies of police street checks have used the residential population as the key variable. The study of street checks in Edmonton (Griffiths et al., 2018) and the VPD report on street checks submitted to the Vancouver Police Board (VPD, 2018c) are notable exceptions.

The Dynamics of the Police–Citizen Encounters

Research suggested, for some people in communities of diversity, it is the *dynamics* of the encounter with the police officer during a street check stop, rather than the stop itself, that contributes to individuals feeling they have been racially profiled and subjected to biased policing (Griffiths et al., 2018). The recommendations of the UK study of police stops suggested, "Police officers should manage stops and searches in ways which maximize public trust and confidence" (le Masurier et al., 2000:viii). This highlights a key issue in the study of police

checks, that is, whether the *dynamics* of the street check encounter may play a significant role in the perceptions that people in the community have of the police generally and, particularly, of street checks.

A notable feature of studies of police racial profiling, biased policing, and street checks is the absence of field observations of police–citizen encounters. To date, only two studies—the study of street checks conducted by the EPS (Griffiths et al., 2018) and the present study of the VPD—have included observations of police–citizen encounters. A key finding from the study of street checks in Edmonton was that it was the dynamics of the officer–citizen encounter that were a primary factor in the perception of residents that they had been racially profiled. This requires that officers have the requisite skill sets to effectively interact with adults and youth from diverse communities. The absence of engagement skills, coupled with a lack of knowledge about the cultures and communities they are policing, may contribute to officers over-relying on their authoritative powers and less on effective communication and conversational skills (Griffiths et al., 2018:290–291).

Further, street check reports completed by officers provide only the officers' narrative of the decision to conduct a street check and the interaction that occurred. There is no way to independently verify the officer's version of events. Report forms do not capture nonverbal and other more nuanced features of the police–citizen encounter, including body language, the tones of voice of the officer and of the stopped person, and other factors that may influence the dynamics and outcomes of the encounter.

The Use of Police-Recorded Data for Research on Police Racial Profiling and Street Checks

Police-recorded data sets have been used to study a wide variety of police-related topics, including racial profiling, biased policing, and police street checks (Tiratelli, Quinton, and Bradford, 2018; Wortley, 2019). These data sets have a number of benefits for the researcher (Brimicombe, 2016). The data sets contain important information on incidents, alleged offences, the date, time, and location of the incident, as well as the identity of the responding officers, response time, and service level time. These data sets are easier and less expensive for police services to collect compared to other methods such as citizen surveys and community consultations (Lundman, 2012:45). Large data sets also facilitate in-depth analysis of the issues

at hand, the findings of which can be used to provide evidence-based police policies and operations.

The challenges of police-recorded data, however, have been extensively documented (Mayhew, 2014). Researchers and others, including the media, who have accessed and analyzed police-recorded street check data have given little attention to how the information is recorded by police officers and whether all of the incidents that are contained in street check files are compliant with guidelines. There are concerns that these data may be biased and/or incomplete and that caution should be exercised in using the findings from the analysis of these data units to inform police policies and operations or as a measure of the effectiveness of specific police initiatives (Shinar, Treat, and McDonald, 1983).

In many instances, little is known about how the data were gathered by the police service, the extent to which the recorded information is accurate, consistent, and reflects what occurred in the police–citizen encounter, and the effectiveness of the quality assurance protocols within the police service. Police services vary widely in their capacities for ensuring that data are "clean" (i.e., that the data are accurate, consistent, and reflect the actions of officers).

Researchers noted, "Police departments sometimes struggle to provide reliable data for what seem like straightforward items" (King, Cihan, and Heinonen, 2011:450). Further, as Worley (2019:101) noted, "A street check DOES NOT capture all police traffic stops, pedestrian stops or other types of investigative police–civilian encounters."

It is likely that the data may be contaminated by the inclusion of incidents that were not street checks but rather other encounters that were incorrectly reported by officers. This is a critical dimension of any analysis of street check data, as the failure to remove files that do not fall within the purview of a police service's guidelines or other regulations result in flawed analyses and findings.

Studies that have compared police-reported data with independent sources have found extensive data quality problems, including missing and inaccurate information, duplication of records, and underreporting (Chokotho, Matzopoulos, and Myers, 2013). These issues have also affected

police-recorded data that have been analyzed in an attempt to determine whether the police engage in racial profiling and biased policing (Lundman, 2012).

The study of police street checks in Halifax (Wortley, 2019), for example, concluded that Blacks were street checked at a rate that was six times higher than whites. The study relied heavily upon an analysis of a street-check data set provided by the Halifax Regional Police covering the years 2006–2017 (Wortley, 2019:102). Similarly, a report commissioned by the Ontario Human Rights Commission (2018) made extensive use of official police-recorded data in its examination of racial profiling and biased policing of Blacks in Toronto. There is no evidence to suggest that the integrity of the data was assessed prior to conducting analyses.

There has been some attempt to determine whether officer noncompliance with departmental reporting protocols is random or systemic (Cordner, Williams, and Velasco, 2002). A review of completed SCRs in the Edmonton Police Service for the year 2017 revealed that only 16.5% of the completed and approved SCRs were in compliance with departmental guidelines (Griffiths et al., 2018). Other incidents that had been incorrectly classified as street checks included "assist other agencies," "curfew checks," and responses to calls for service, among others. This calls into question the validity of previous analyses of street check data from this department (e.g., Huncar, 2017).

The Ethnicity Variable

An important variable in the study of police street checks are the identities of the people who are subjected to these stops. The race or ethnicity of a person who is street checked may not appear in police reports. Further, the dichotomy of white/non-white does not capture the full range of attributes of people that may play a role in street checks. The dichotomy may also exclude many refugees and immigrants as well as others who may be marginalized or vulnerable, including the homeless.

A subject's race or ethnicity is most often determined by a visual assessment of the officer, rather than by self-identification. As the authors of one study of street checks noted, "Information in each police report was gathered by the lead officer on scene, therefore variable values were based on *officer observation* [emphasis added]" (Shore and Lavoie, 2019:161). This

may not only result in misidentification, but may also have the consequence of the same person having multiple racial and ethnic identities in police records.

There were significant problems with the variable of ethnicity in the Edmonton Police Service data set. This is a key item of information in the study of police officer decision making in encounters with people in communities of diversity. The determination of a person's ethnicity is generally based on officers' in-field observation and assessment (Wortley, 2019; Griffiths et al., 2018). In a large percentage of the Edmonton SCR files, this item of information was missing; in others, the same person was variously identified as being a member of several ethnic groups.

On the other hand, Wortley (2019:103) reported no problems with consistency of this variable, which was centred on whether the person stopped was Black or white:

> The race of persons subjected to a street check was recorded by police officers at the time of the street check incident and entered into the Versadex data management system.… I could not locate a single case where a person was listed as one race during their first street check incident and another race during their next street. At the individual level, the racial identity information in the Versadex data is remarkably consistent.

The Context of Street Checks

A major limitation of the majority of studies that have been conducted on police street checks is the failure to consider the context within which the stop took place. Part of the difficulty in determining whether a police service and its officers engage in racial profiling is distinguishing between racial profiling and criminal profiling. Officers often state that they profile criminals, with particular attention to "signals and 'unusual fits'" (Satzewich and Shaffir, 2009:210).

The time, location, and circumstances of the stop; whether the person stopped is known to police; whether the stop occurred in a high-crime area as part of a hot-spot policing strategy; or other factors that may have influenced the decision of the officer to conduct the street checks (Renauer, 2012). Contextual information is essential in efforts to determine whether a street check conducted by an officer reflected racial profiling and biased policing. This information includes but is not limited to the following:

- appearance, including youth, clothing, types of vehicle, incongruence, in some cases ethnicity, being known to the police and fitting suspect descriptions;

47

- behaviour, including 'suspicious activity' and observed offending;
- time and place, which results from officer availability for proactive duties and officer expectations about where and when people raise suspicions; and
- information and intelligence—the reliability of which is important, in particular the accuracy of suspect descriptions, local intelligence on crime and how they inform generalisations made by officers. (Quinton et al., 2000:vi)

The perspective of officers that they profile situations, not people, is illustrated by the comments of officers in the Edmonton Police Service:

> The public expects police to be in certain high crime areas more than in others. More street checks will likely be done in those areas. It's driven by high crime, not by ethnicity. (Griffiths et al., 2018:244)

> If I find someone hanging around an alley at midnight in residential area, there is the potential to capture intelligence. Information on transients and homeless persons going from one high density property to another may provide information for a starting point. For me it is context first, then the person. If numbers are skewed, it's probably because of the demographics of the area. (244)

> Checks are conducted based on criminal data and problems and concerns in neighbourhoods and are used as a tool to identify and help vulnerable people who are often susceptible to victimization. (210)

> Street checks are basic, grass roots policing. A good cop will know crime trends, people, bad guys, etc. and then go out and engage people. (243)

Similarly, a visible-minority officer in an urban police service in Eastern Canada stated, "When we're out on the street, we rely on our instincts. We are trained investigators in the sense that we need to do profiling. And what kind of profiling is that? Criminal profiling. It has nothing to do with racial profiling…We profile criminals" (Satzewich and Shaffir, 2009:210).

As a group, the Edmonton officers did not feel they engaged in racial profiling and biased policing in conducting street checks. As one officer commented, "We could care less about your race, religion or class" (Griffiths et al., 2018:247) Additional comments that reflected the view of the officers and crime analysts included the following:

> People are so worried about being politically correct that they forget that physical descriptors are an important factor. People are stopped based on intelligence and physical descriptors, but not on race. They are two different things. If a suspect is described as Black, I'll look for, and stop a person with black skin. (Griffiths et al., 2018:246)

It's the behaviour we are documenting, not the colour they are. If you weren't doing this, we wouldn't be doing this. Behaviour comes first. SCRs come second. (246)

We focus on behaviour. We don't care about the colour of their skin if you're not doing something wrong. (246)

We are not profiling the person. We are profiling the situation. (246)

You street check persons you don't know; persons who are new in the area. (246)

We target specific areas to impact the crime going on in that neighbourhood. (246)

You don't stop a person to write an SCR. You stop a person, then determine whether to write one. It doesn't matter whether you are Black, white or other. It's the behaviour. (247)

The study of street checks in Edmonton found that 38% of the SCRs produced during 2017 were from Downtown Division, a high-crime area in the city (Griffiths et al., 2018:95). Similar findings were reported by the VPD in their study of street checks prepared for the police board. The data further revealed that street checks in the Downtown Division were concentrated in certain beats and neighbourhoods, in particular District 1 (Griffiths et al., 2018:98). Approximately 50% of the street checks were conducted between 3:00 p.m. and midnight, with an additional 19% conducted between midnight and 3:00 a.m. The street checks were concentrated in high-crime areas.

To ensure that a street check was justified, officers should document the rationale for conducting a street check, noting the particular circumstances of the incident. This view is reflected in the comments of a patrol officer in the Edmonton Police Service: "You need to be able to articulate cause for why you are doing what you're doing" (Griffiths et al., 2018:246). Another Edmonton Police Service officer stated, "You need to be able to articulate why you are stopping someone. You want stops to be quality not quantity. We don't want information that is based on profiles" (246).

In discussing the findings from his study of street checks in Halifax, which found Blacks were disproportionately street checked by police, Wortley (2019:153) acknowledged the limitations of his study:

Since this was only a bivariate examination, it would be important to further examine this relationship using multivariate models in order to control for other important covariates such as demographic and socioeconomic characteristics at the zone- or district-level, extent of proactive and/or aggressive policing, citizen perceptions of t rust in the police, among others.

Wortley (2019) did not examine the context within which street checks were conducted, did not conduct field observations of police–citizen encounters, nor did he consider the relationship between patterns of crime and street checks.

The report prepared by the VPD for the police board did include an analysis of the patterns of street checks in relation to crime in the city, as did the study of street checks in Edmonton (Griffiths et al., 2018). Both the EPS study and the VPD report on street checks found that there was a direct relationship between the patterns of crime and the frequency of street checks.

It is also important to determine whether there is a relatively small group of individuals who are stopped on numerous occasions and how this may contribute to the overrepresentation of certain groups and people in the street check data. Through a Freedom of Information request, Bennett (2015) discovered, "Of the 46 people stopped more than 5 times in one year in street checks, 44 of them were recorded in the police database as visible minorities, either Black, Aboriginal, 'Mid East,' or 'S. Asian/E. Indian.'" There was no examination of why these subjects were stopped, or any information of the subject's behaviour or whether they were residents of the neighbourhood in which they were stopped (McGregor and Maclvor, 2017).

The studies by Griffiths et al. (2018) and the VPD (2018c) found that a relatively small number of people with lengthy criminal records comprised a large portion of the street checks. These individuals were stopped in high-crime locales.

The Officer Conducting the Street Check

Studies of street checks conducted to date have not explored whether a disproportionate number of street checks are conducted by a specific number of officers. Rather, police services are spoken of in generic terms when the police-recorded data indicate that disproportionately more people who are Indigenous, Black, or members of other diverse communities are represented in the street check data. Police services as a whole are often generically labelled as being racist, with little attention to individual officers who may be biased.

It is also unknown whether a relatively small number of officers may be responsible for a disproportionate number of street checks and whether this is a reflection of racial profiling and biased policing or is a function of the type of policing they are engaged in. A study of 500,000 pedestrian stops conducted by the NYPD in 2006 found that some officers were stopping more non-whites than their fellow officers (Ridgeway, 2009).

There is considerable variability in how individual police officers exercise their discretion and this may be reflected in their patterns of street checks. Even within police services, it is not known if the frequency of conducting street checks is distributed across the areas of a community and patrol and investigative units. It is likely that beat officers will have more proactive encounters and, potentially, conduct more street checks, than their patrol-unit based colleagues.

It can also be expected that there will be considerable variability among the patrol districts in a municipality in terms of the socio-demographics, patterns of crime, the nature, type, and volume of requests for service, police–community relations, and the demands that are made on police officers. These factors, in turn, may influence the use of street checks by officers.

Police Encounters with Citizens that do not Result in a Street Check Report

Many of the encounters police officers have with citizens do not result in a police report or the completion of an SCR. This includes informal conversations, the officer providing information in response to citizen queries, and a variety of other circumstances. A key finding from the study of street checks in Edmonton was that beat officers who worked in high-crime and disordered areas in the downtown core often did not complete street check forms. Rather, these officers engaged in what one described as an "ongoing conversation" with vulnerable and marginalized people whom they know and have extensive interactions with.

A question that has remained unanswered by researchers is at what point in an officer's conversation with a person does it turn into a street check. Is the threshold when an officer asks the person for identification, begins a line of questioning, or do other features of the interaction represent a "tipping point." It is important to recall that a person may feel psychologically detained; this feeling may vary between individuals and may be a function of the nature and

extent of their vulnerability and/or their prior history of on-the-street contacts with the police. In essence, while one person may feel psychologically detained, another person in the same circumstance may not. Little is known about the extent to which Indigenous people as well as adults and youth in other diverse groups experience psychological detention.

There may be variability among officers as to when an encounter with a citizen becomes a street check, requiring the completion of an SCR. How police officers exercise their discretion with respect to deciding to complete an SCR, the nature and extent of variation among officers in this decision making, and the impact of EPS protocols on their decision making has not been studied. In the absence of field studies, it is not possible to identify situations in which officers decide not to conduct a street check and the variation among officers in this regard.

This limits any analysis to those instances in which the officer completed an SCR. These reports may not capture the universe of proactive police encounters, which, in turn, limits the generalizability of the findings of the analysis. A high percentage of traffic stops, for example, only result in a warning. This presents challenges and further limits the extent to which incidents that resulted in a report can be generalized.

Despite the methodological shortcomings of much of the research on police racial profiling and street checks, the findings from the methodologically sound studies conducted in Halifax by Wortley (2019) and by Griffiths et al. (2018) indicated significant issues with police relations with communities of diversity that need to be addressed. This supports the conclusions of the Ontario Human Rights Commission (2018) and the findings from the study on street checks conducted by Mr. Justice Tulloch (2018) in Ontario.

The Challenges of Proving Racial Profiling in Police Street Checks

To date, due to a variety of methodological and analytical challenges, it has not been possible to empirically determine that any one police service engages in systemic racial profiling through the use of street checks. Merely counting the number of street check reports written on individuals in a community does not capture the complexity of the issue. There are, however, numerous cases in which officers, in specific cases, have been found to have engaged in racial

profiling (e.g., Gallant, 2017). Reflecting on the findings of his study that found Blacks were overrepresented in street checks in Halifax, Wortley (2019:154) stated,

> Overall, do these findings prove that the police in the Halifax region engage in racial profiling? Technically, as many will note, racial disparity does not equal racial discrimination. That being said, it can be argued that racial bias is much more likely to exist when certain racial groups are hugely over-represented in negative life outcomes – as Black people are with respect to police street checks in Halifax. Nonetheless, it is almost impossible to determine what proportion of the racial disparities documented above are the result of racial profiling and what proportion reflect racially neutral police practices. Critics will be quick to question the use of census benchmarking techniques and cite a long list of variables – type of car, driving habits, time of day, type of clothing, group membership, type of criminal involvement, furtiveness, etc. — that must be accounted for before racial profiling can be determined.

Wortley (2019:154) further noted,

> Personally, after years of examining these issues, I believe that only a small proportion of the racial disparity in police street checks can be explained by over, malicious racism…However, I do think that implicit or unconscious racial bias can play a role in who the police "feel" are suspicious and thus deserving of police attention (including street checks).

A review of published research on racial disparities in police activities found, while minorities were often overrepresented in police enforcement activities, "almost all of the current studies that have reported racial disparities in the exercise of police authority lack the methodological rigor or statistical precision to draw cause and effect inferences" (Smith et al., 2017:166). The authors of the review stated,

> [Observed] racial disparities may or may not reflect actual racial bias. Racial bias refers to an observed racial disparity that is the result of some conscious or unconscious decision by a law enforcement officer or agency to treat one racial group differently than another. Concluding that an observed disparity is the result of racial bias requires careful analysis and attention to the methodological considerations necessary to establish cause and effect…Researchers must be cautious in concluding that observed racial disparities in aggregate police enforcement decisions are the result of racial bias. Studies that find statistical disparities in the treatment of minorities are rarely, if ever, able to account for all relevant variables that might influence the observed outcome and therefore, careful social scientists do not claim that evidence of disparity proves racial bias. (Smith et al., 2017:175)

Wortley's (2019) comments and those of the researchers in the Edmonton street check study are illustrative of the challenges that researchers have encountered in determining, empirically, whether the police engage in racial profiling and biased policing in conducting street checks.

Police Officer Training and Cultural Competencies

A common thread in studies of racial profiling, biased policing, and street checks is the need for officers to have the training to interact effectively with people in communities of diversity and those who are marginalized and vulnerable. In Edmonton, for example, there was a general view among the representatives of community organizations that EPS members must have knowledge of the communities they police and the challenges faced by people in communities of diversity. This included a demonstrated understanding of the sensitivities required in interacting effectively with people in communities of diversity (Griffiths et al., 2018:157).

In recommending that the Halifax Regional Police Service and the RCMP, in collaboration with municipal government, the Board of Police Commissioners and the provincial government develop a regulation that would provide guidelines for street checks and investigative stops, Wortley (2019:166) also recommended, "All police officials, from new recruits to frontline officers to police executives, should receive mandatory training on the new street check policy."

A frequent recommendation of commissions of inquiry and investigations into incidents involving the police and people in these communities is that police officers receive training to have the competencies, including cultural competencies, to understand and more effectively work with vulnerable and at-risk people. This includes having the skills set to conduct trauma-informed policing. There are concerns that officers often lack knowledge of the of the history, culture, and contemporary circumstances of the people encountered, and this may create a dynamic with negative consequences for the individuals who are checked and may influence their attitudes toward, and trust in, the police. It is often a lack of training in cultural competencies that results in officers abusing their discretionary authority, rather than innate racism. Officers who have only a limited understanding cultures and communities may over-rely on their authority, which may lead to a negative encounter, one in which the resident may perceive they have been subjected to profiling and biased policing.

To improve police community relationships and to provide officers with the cultural competencies to effectively engage with communities and interact with people in encounters requires resources, training, and organizational support, all of which have been in short supply in Canadian police services for a number of years.

Trauma-Informed Policing

People in communities of diversity may experience racial trauma or race-based traumatic stress as a consequence of "racial harassment, witnessing racial violence, or experiencing institutional racism" (Turner and Richardson, 2016:3) and/or as a consequence of historical events such as the residential schools that significantly impacted their cultures and communities (see also Bryant-Davis and Ocampo, 2006; Comas-Diaz, 2016; Geller et al., 2014).

In recognition of this, increasing attention has been given by criminal justice and social service providers to develop trauma-informed approaches to respond to the needs of people in communities of diversity (Crosby, 2016; Ko et al., 2008). Some police services have also recognized the importance of ensuring that their officers have the competencies to do trauma-informed practice (Gill, Gottfredson, and Hutzell, 2016; Hochman, 2016; Vera Institute, 2016).

It is important for officers to understand that how a person behaved in a street check encounter may be influenced by a history of trauma and/or prior experiences with the police in that individual's country of origin. If the officer does not manage the encounter in an appropriate manner, the person's issues may be exacerbated.

Communicating with and Educating the Public

The findings from the study of street checks in Halifax conducted by Wortley (2019) and by Griffiths et al. (2018) in Edmonton suggest that there is a need for police services to mount a public education campaign about the purpose and use of street checks. A key finding of the Edmonton study was that it was the absence of public information about street checks, how the data gathered in street checks was stored, accessed, and used that was of concern to people in communities of diversity. Also, the EPS had not taken the initiative to explain to the community the value of street checks and to publish street check data that were accessible to the community.

Materials gathered in the focus group sessions with people from communities of diversity in Edmonton revealed a general lack of knowledge about street checks and other reasons why police officers stop people. There was widespread agreement among the sworn and civilian members of the EPS that the general public had very little information about street checks and that this contributed to the narrative that street checks reflected racial profiling and biased policing. A commonly voiced view in the focus groups was that the EPS should develop a strategy to educate the public and counter what the officers perceived to be incorrect information about street checks.

Two officers commented on the consequences of the negative view of police that, in their view, had been created by the media and interest groups in the community: "The media has poisoned what we do. In my area a 9-year-old girl was missing. I rolled up to four Black guys standing on a street corner because she was last seen walking in that direction. I said, 'How's it going?' They walked away before I had a chance to even ask them about the missing girl" (Griffiths et al., 2018:226).

Several of the officers who participated in interviews and focus groups in the Halifax study suggested that the department should develop a public education program to share information with the community relating to the purpose and objectives of street checks, including an explanation of how the use of this strategy contributed to community safety and well-being (Wortley, 2019:96). As one officer stated,

> I think if people were provided with a much clearer picture of what an actual street check looks like, they would have less of an issue with it. Again, for the most part, there is no contact between the police and the person being checked. Improvements? I think if all street checks entered were high quality ones, it is easier to reinforce our position that they are an intelligence gathering tool. Low quality checks make it look like a check was entered for no real reason. (Wortley, 2019:97)

It is important for police services to clearly articulate street check policy, communicate with communities on the use of street checks, and work with communities to establish relationships. A representative of an Indigenous organization highlighted the importance of this, stating, "Most importantly, creating opportunities for conversation with the Indigenous communities – just to talk would go a long way to better relationships" (Griffiths et al., 2018:194).

It is also important that police services educate the community about what street checks are, why this strategy is used, and what is done with the information that is gathered (Griffiths et al., 2018). Research studies have found considerable confusion in communities of diversity about street checks, which may contribute to the perception of racial profiling and biased policing (Griffiths et al., 2018; Tulloch, 2018:16).

One challenge is that the general public, particularly people in the communities of diversity, often have little information about street checks, why the police use them, and what happens to the information that is gathered during the stops.

Canadian police services have generally not taken the initiative to provide this information and there has been a lack of communication between communities and the police on this issue (Griffiths et al., 2018). A report on street checks in Ontario found that failure to inform the public about the regulation governing street checks has resulted in "mass confusion" about its terms and operation in practice" (Tulloch, 2018:17).

A study of street checks in Edmonton also found that among the officers there were various interpretations of the street check procedures and the service's expectations for conducting street checks and completing SCRs (Griffiths et al., 2018:222). A key theme in the comments of the sworn and civilian members was the need for a street check policy and procedure that can be applied consistently. One officer stated,

> There is a need for consistency and a clear strategy. We need to know what a street check is and when it needs to be put in. Recent training tightened the scope but there are still real differences [in what is recorded as a street check]. (Griffiths et al., 2018:223)

The officers in the focus groups sessions noted, even among officers on the same team, there were misunderstandings about SCRs. As one officer stated, "There is variation among the supervisors. Some want street checks done, and others don't. We need consistency about why we are doing it or why we are not doing it. We need a consistent policy" (Griffiths et al., 2018:223).

Creating and Enhancing Police–Community Relationships

A key finding from Griffiths et al.'s (2018) study of street checks indicated a high level of interest in building or enhancing relationships with the EPS. This inclination was expressed by a wide variety of organizations representing communities of diversity and included a number of organizations that were critical of EPS street check practices (Griffiths et al., 2018).

Recommendations from the Halifax Study

In his report on police street checks in Halifax, Wortley (2019:166–173) sets out a number of recommendations that could guide the development and application of a new street check policy. These can provide a framework for the VPD and other police services where street check policies are either nonexistent or outdated.

Wortley's (2019) recommendations included following suggested actions:

- **Recommendation 2.3:** The new street check regulation should clearly articulate the conditions under which officers *should not* conduct investigative stops or street checks. Decisions must be based on individual level, not group-level suspicions. Group-level suspicions are consistent with the concept of racial profiling.

- **Recommendation 2.4:** The new street check regulation should explicitly state that police officers should never arbitrarily or randomly stop, question, and search civilians as part of a general crime identification strategy or "fishing expedition." Police officers should also never arbitrarily or randomly request identifying information from a civilian for general police intelligence purposes.

- **Recommendation 2.5:** The new street check regulation should provide a clearer, more detailed description of the conditions under which investigative stops and/or street checks can be legally conducted. Emphasis must be placed on the requirement for officers to provide an articulable justification for the stop or street check.

- **Recommendation 2.6:** Street checks should not be routinely used to establish associations between law-abiding citizens and criminal offenders. The police should not have the power to establish guilt by association.

- **Recommendation 2.9:** Consistent with practices in the United Kingdom and some North American jurisdictions, the new regulation should require officers to provide citizens with a receipt when subjected to a formal street check. This receipt should include the time and date of the interaction, the reason or justification for the street check, and the name and badge numbers of the officers involved. The receipt should also include information on how the civilian can retrieve their full street check record as well as information on how to contact the Police Complaints Commissioner.

- **Recommendation 2.11:** The new regulation should ensure that the street check dataset is

revised to better capture important information. First, the dataset should capture the context from which the street check emerged. Second, the street check dataset should clearly document why a street check was conducted or the type of information the street check documents.

- **Recommendation 2.12:** The new street check regulation should require police to standardize all related collection, recording, and storage methods.

- **Recommendation 2.13:** The new street check policy and/or regulation should explicitly state that officer performance should, under no circumstances, be evaluated on the basis of the number of street checks collected during a shift or other time period.

- **Recommendation 2.14:** The new regulation should set standards for street check quality and ensure that police supervisors routinely review and evaluate the quality of street checks within their unit. Poor quality street checks should be immediately purged from the system. Officers who repeatedly submit low-quality street checks should be targeted for additional training.

- **Recommendation 2.15:** The new regulation should, therefore, compel police managers to use internal benchmarking techniques to identify individual officers who are engaging in racially biased street check practices.

- **Recommendation 2.16**: Consistent with the views of Justice Michael Tulloch (2018) and Nova Scotia's Information and Privacy Commissioner, the new regulation should explicitly limit who may access street check information and clearly identify the purposes for which street check data can be used. At the very least, access to street check information should be limited to crime analysts and investigators.

- **Recommendation 2.19**: The new street check policy should clearly articulate that civilians have the right to immediately access their full street check record upon request. Furthermore, civilians should be able to access their street check record at no financial cost.

- **Recommendation 2.20**: The new street check recommendation should explicitly limit the retention of legally collected personal information to a maximum of 5 years from the date of collection.

- **Recommendation 2.23:** The new street check regulation should require police services to produce annual reports that document the previous year's street check activity.

- **Recommendation 2.24**: If street checks are to continue, it is recommended that the police embark on a public education program that will explain the purpose of the new street check regulation, the justification for conducting street checks, the type of information contained in street checks, and how street checks might contribute to crime prevention and public safety. These education sessions should also describe safeguards designed to prevent the misuse of street check information.

These recommendations could be used to inform street check policies in police services across Canada.

A key factor in improving the street check process is ensuring that police officers have the competencies, including cultural competencies, to apply the principles of procedural justice in their encounters with citizens. This will assist in mitigating any perceptions that the person may have that the stop was a result of that individual being profiled. It is also important that officers be trained in trauma-informed policing, which will assist in ensuring that people who are stopped by the police are not re-victimized and re-traumatized by their experiences.

To date, studies of street checks have not been sufficiently robust to determine whether this strategy increases community safety and security and whether it reflects racial profiling and biased policing. The studies have not included in-depth analyses that would explain why certain groups are disproportionately represented in street check and carding data. Racial profiling and biased policing by police officers are one, but not the only, possible explanation. There are others, which can be identified through a mixed-method approach that involves not only an in-depth analysis of police street check data, but also the collection of qualitative data on the lived experiences of people in communities of diversity as well as those of the police. More specifically studies of street checks must also examine the context within which street checks occur and the dynamics of the police–citizen encounter.

The absence of statistical evidence that a police service is not engaged in racial profiling and biased policing in the use of street checks does not diminish the responsibility for soliciting and understanding the lived experiences and perceptions of people in communities of diversity. The perceptions of people that they or members of their community have been profiled through the use of police street checks must be given the same amount of attention and weight as the findings from a quantitative analysis of police data. It is incumbent upon police services and researchers to address both sides of the equation: statistical and perceptual. The challenges of determining statistically whether a police service is engaged in racial profiling through the use of street checks are in the subsections that follow.

Wortley's (2018:154) insightful, concluding comments in the report on street checks in Halifax are instructive for governments, police services, and communities as they address the issue of street checks:

> In the end, I hope that this report does not devolve into another heated debate about whether racial profiling exists or not. This is an argument that cannot be won. The opposing sides are too entrenched, too blind to insights that oppose their world view, too invested in winning. Too often debate leads to stagnation. Rather, I hope this report highlights the huge racial differences in how policing is experienced in Halifax and produces a plan to reduce the consequences associated with those disparities.

The relationships between the police and communities of diversity are important as is addressing the issue of police street checks. The issue is best addressed through consultation among all of the stakeholder groups. This can provide the basis for determining whether street checks as a police practice should be banned and, if not, the content of any regulations and guidelines that will be developed to ensure that the rights of community residents are protected, while ensuring that police services assist in securing the safety and security of residents.

The Potential of Community Policing

> I believe community policing is part of the solution. Honest, real community policing. Positive engagement. At the end of the day [officers] are not meeting these people where they're at. [Officers] need to come in [to the organization] as human beings. Not with their guns and all their power. Come out of uniform. (Staff member with an outreach organization, Edmonton, as cited in Griffiths et al., 2018:151)

Studies of police relations with communities of diversity, including those focusing on police street checks, have highlighted the importance of police–community relationships and of efforts to build trust and confidence in the police. Community policing provides the framework within which this can be accomplished. It also offers the best opportunity for the development of police–community relationships centred on trust and understanding.

Community policing is based on a recognition that the police cannot prevent and respond to crime on their own. The participation of community residents and agencies is needed. It is, therefore, important that the police be connected to, rather than separated from, the community. Community policing is an organizational strategy and philosophy based on the idea that the police and the community must work together as equal partners in order to proactively identify, prioritize, and solve problems such as crime, drugs, fear of crime, social and physical disorder, and overall neighbourhood decay (Griffiths, 2020; Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux, 1998). The

goal is to improve the overall quality of life in the area by systematically leveraging partnerships and problem-solving techniques (U.S. Department of Justice, 2014).

Past studies have found that community policing can increase the job satisfaction of police officers, as well as their productivity and their commitment to the organization. It can also improve relations with co-workers. In addition, officers become more knowledgeable about the communities they police and develop a more positive outlook on community residents (Crowl, 2017).

Importantly, community policing involves much more than introducing new structured programs. It requires substantial changes in how police departments are organized, an expansion of the roles and responsibilities of officers, and the development of new ways to measure police performance. Within a community policing model, all police personnel (both sworn and civilian) must balance the need to maintain an effective police response to calls for service against the goal of exploring proactive initiatives aimed at preventing problems before they arise, or at least solving them before they escalate.

In some jurisdictions, community policing has evolved into community-based strategic policing, a model that focuses on the importance of community engagement and strategic partnerships by police departments (Griffiths, 2020). This model of policing incorporates proactive crime prevention, enforcement-oriented crime response, and crime attack strategies.

A key finding from the study of street checks in Edmonton was that organizations representing communities of diversity identified the need for frontline officers, not just the officers at the more senior levels (i.e., "white shirts"), to be involved in developing relationships and partnerships with communities of diversity. One representative of a community of diversity stated, "The Deputy Chief does a good job of engaging the community, but he's not on the front lines" (Griffiths et al., 2018:152).

The exception was the officers who walked the beat in the downtown area. The representatives working in areas with police beats indicated that they had a good relationship and open dialogue with the beat officers and that they were "working well" on issues ranging from street checks, to youth-related issues, to murdered and missing women (Griffiths et al., 2018:152).

A community policing approach was also identified by officers in the Halifax study as providing the framework to improve police–community relations:

> Community policing was particularly popular among those who participated in focus group discussions. Many officers felt that the police relationship with the Black community could be significantly improved with additional community outreach efforts (i.e., educational sessions in schools, youth sports and recreational programs, barbecues, officer involvement in local churches, social events, etc.). Others felt that it was important to establish more community liaison committees so that civilians can have a say in the police services they receive, and officers can learn about the communities they work in. It was argued that the police need to get to know the public they serve, and community members need to get to know the police who serve them. There needs to be an emphasis on building personal relationships rather than just crime detection and law enforcement. (Wortley, 2019:98)

Community Consultation and Community Engagement

Community consultation and community engagement are two key components of community policing, both of which have been found to have a significant impact on residents' fear of crime and perceptions of police (Lockey et al., 2019). This involves creating protocols and processes by which police services can involve the community in identifying priorities and soliciting feedback from community residents (including complainants and victims) regarding their experiences and satisfaction with the police.

Community consultation can take a number of forms. Police–community meetings provide a forum at which the problems and concerns of community residents can be identified and strategies can be developed for addressing them. However, community meetings are generally not effective in mobilizing residents and in raising confidence in the police. These meetings are often attended by only a few members of the community, including people representing specific interests. Marginalized at-risk groups and visible minorities are less likely to attend.

Community consultation committees (also known as community–police liaison committees) are another strategy leveraged by police departments to develop community partnerships. For example, the Toronto Police Service has established community consultative committees with the city's Indigenous, Black, Chinese, French, LGBTQ2S+, Muslim, and South and West Asian communities. There are also liaison committees for every police division in the city. These

committees include community residents and police representatives who work together to identify local issues, prioritize them, and develop solutions. The committees play an especially important role in fostering positive relationships with diverse groups in the community, including visible minorities and the LGBTQ2S+ community.

The Peel Regional Police, for its part, operates patrol-based Community Mobilization Teams. These teams are involved in a variety of activities designed to increase community engagement and improve trust and confidence in the police. A community engagement strategy must be multi-faceted and inclusive. Not all communities and sub-groups in a municipality are concerned with same issues or have the same interests. Communities can be defined by location, socio-economic attributes, or demographic features. All communities are multi-faceted and overlapping, in the same way that any individual usually belongs to several different communities at once. Prominent communities include, for example, seniors, adults, parents, youth, students, LGBTQ2S+ people, at-risk and vulnerable people, Indigenous people, religious and cultural groups, and immigrant and refugee populations.

Europeans have introduced the notion of *inclusive justice*, "the process by which the people using a service become involved in the planning, development and delivery of that service to make improvements" (Weaver, Lightowler, and Moodie, 2019:6).

The studies of street checks in Halifax and in Edmonton both found a strong interest in communities of diversity for more police engagement (Griffiths et al., 2018; Wortley, 2019). Community engagement efforts must be designed to ensure that all community voices are heard, in particular those that have been historically muted. There are strategies to accomplish this that have been demonstrated to be effective. These include methods of personal communication between the police and the community and special initiatives targeting isolated and hard-to-hear communities. Ultimately, the police must involve marginalized community residents. Otherwise, these residents may feel that police interventions are targeting them and may develop a sense that the police are intruding on their neighbourhoods.

The ideal approach is for police services and communities of diversity to establish and maintain an ongoing dialogue on police–community relations generally, and, more specifically, the use of street checks if they are to be permitted as a police practice.

The Role of the Community in Discussions of Police Street Checks

Police officers are given considerable discretion in carrying out their mandated tasks, and it is incumbent upon officers to have the requisite skill sets, including cultural competencies and an understanding of the principles of procedural justice, to ensure that their decisions are fair and unbiased. This will not only contribute to increased public confidence in the police but also reduce the likelihood that community residents will perceive that they have been subjected to racial profiling and biased policing in their encounters with police officers.

Most discussions and research studies on community policing have focused on only one part of the police–community equation: the police. Little attention has been paid to the role and responsibilities of community residents in developing and implementing community policing. This lack of attention raises a number of concerns, especially in terms of the *community* part of community policing.

First, it is one thing to declare that communities are actively responsible for participating in partnerships with the police, and quite another thing to bring this about. Who is responsible for ensuring that communities become involved? The police? The community? Municipal and provincial governments?

Second, while the term *community* arises quite often, the *who* and *what* of the community is rarely specified. Too often it is assumed that all of the community's residents have a common interest and live in the same neighbourhood. There is considerable diversity in Canadian communities and within communities of diversity (Statistics Canada, 2019; Statistics Canada, 2017). To date, studies of police street checks have not explored the role of communities in developing collaborative partnerships and relationships of trust with the police. Police scholars have noted that this has remained an ill-defined and unexplored dimension of community policing (Griffiths, 2020).

Community Policing and Street Checks

Community policing is generally viewed as a model that facilitates positive police–community relationships, and street checks can play a positive role in community engagement. As a representative of an Indigenous organization in Edmonton stated,

With respect to the use of street checks as an engagement tool, the representative stated that street checks can be way for police to engage, but it depends on how they are conducted. If EPS does the "preliminary work," that is, building positive relationships with the community, then street checks can be an engagement tool. However, if this work is not done then, "it's just a street check. (Griffiths et al., 2018:176)

This raises a number of questions with respect to street checks, including the extent to which communities of diversity should or can take the initiative to educate their members about street checks and their rights when stopped by the police. In Edmonton, an Indigenous non-governmental organization produced a booklet outlining the rights of people stopped by the police.

The representative of an Indigenous organization in Edmonton noted that the way officers conducted themselves in encounters was important, but that the work done prior to these interactions through community engagement was equally, if not more, important. The representative stated, "If the groundwork hasn't been set, it's just an intrusive interaction. Although there are instances in which racial profiling occurs, generally speaking there is a meaning and intent behind them that are not based on profiling" (Griffiths et al., 2018:161).

This representative described the current discourse surrounding checks as a "witch hunt," adding, "I think it does happen like that sometimes, but not in my experience" (Griffiths et al., 2018:161).

One organization that worked with Indigenous people developed and distributed thousands of cards that set out people's rights when interacting with the police. They asked the EPS to collaborate on developing a better card (see Figure 3).

My Rights: ➊ Silence (see over). ➋ I can say "NO" if the police ask permission to search me or my things. Saying "NO" does not mean I have something to hide. ➌ I can leave unless I am being detained or arrested. ➍ If I am being detained or arrested, I have a right to know why, and a right to speak privately to a lawyer without delay - even if I can't afford to pay. ➎ I can only be strip-searched in private and by officers of the same sex. ➏ I have a right to know a police officer's name and badge number. ➐ I can report a police officer who abuses me, swears at me, or violates my rights.

STATEMENT FOR POLICE

Officer, if I am under arrest or being detained, please tell me so. If I am free to go, please tell me so. If I am not free to go, please tell me why. I wish to exercise all my legal rights including my right to silence and my right to speak to a lawyer before I say anything to you. I do not consent to be searched. I wish to be released without delay. Please do not ask me questions, because I will not willingly talk to you until I speak to a lawyer.

Thank you for respecting my rights.

POLICE ARREST: Silence is Golden

Each situation is different and you must use your common sense. Stay calm and remember everything that happens. **Remember your rights!**

➊ **Silence:** I can refuse to talk to police or answer their questions, unless I am in a bar or a cinema, driving a car, or they say I broke the law. In those cases, I must give my name, birthdate and address, or show my ID, but I do not have to say any more.

If you are stopped by police against your will, give them the top part of this card or read it out. Then, **do not say anything** until you talk to a lawyer.

To speak to a Legal Aid lawyer call: 1-866-845-3425

Figure 3. Informational card distributed by an organization in Edmonton with the aim to inform community members on their rights when engaging with the police.

Should Street Checks be Banned? An Ongoing Dialogue

> There appears to be a stark ideological and political void between those who believe that street checks should be subject to an outright ban, and those that feel that street checks, when used legally, have potential crime prevention benefits. However, even among supporters, there is an awareness of possible abuses and the need for additional street check monitoring, regulation, training and supervision. (Wortley, 2019:159)

From their review of the police practice of street checks, Doob and Gartner (2017) concluded that street checks can do more harm than good, regardless of whether there is demonstrated bias on the part of the police. In their words, "It is easy to exaggerate the usefulness of these stops, and hard to find data that supports the usefulness of continuing to carry them out" (Doob and Gartner, 2017:A22). However, these researchers did not analyze police street check data, conduct any interviews or focus groups with stakeholder groups, including the police, community representatives, and community residents, nor were any field observations conducted of police–citizen encounters. As well, similar to many of the other studies conducted to date, their analysis failed to consider the context within which police street checks occur.

Similarly, commenting on the findings of his study that found Blacks were disproportionately represented in police street check data, Wortley (cited in Bundale, 2019) stated, "Street checks have contributed to the criminalization of Black youth, eroded trust in law enforcement and undermined the perceived legitimacy of the entire criminal justice system."

In April, 2019, in response to a study of street checks in Halifax, the province of Nova Scotia placed a moratorium on "random street checks" following the release of a study that found that Blacks were street checked at a rate six times higher than white people (Prentiss, 2019). The moratorium was put in place to provide an opportunity for the provincial government to develop policies to regulate the practice. News reports indicated that the provincial justice department had reviewed the findings of the study conducted by Scot Wortley (2019) and the report produced by the Honourable Mr. Justice Tulloch (2018), "which found last year that *street checks, or carding*, have little or no value as a law enforcement tool" (Prentiss, 2019). Note that, once again, the terms "street checks" and "carding" are inappropriately used interchangeably.

In discussing the results of his study of street checks in Halifax, Wortley (2019:159–160) cautioned, while banning street checks "would have great symbolic value … a ban on street

checks would will not in any way monitor, control or regular police stops." A Halifax officer (as cited in Wortley, 2019:161) stated, "With or without street checks, cops will continue to collect information on people, places and situations. That's what we do. We collect data, we make observations, we investigate, we take notes. We have always done this, but it has become even more pronounced with the rise of intelligence-led policing."

The general view of police officers is that street checks are an important investigative tool that can be used to prevent and investigate crime. As one Ontario officer stated, if the practice is banned, "We will do whatever the rules say we are legally entitled to do. If we have to change our tactics, well then, so be it. That is the way of the world" (Matys, 2016).

Wortley (2019:160–161) noted, "A ban on street checks may not change how the public in general – and the Black community in particular – experience policing on the street." Wortley also acknowledged, "Although the available evidence is somewhat underwhelming, there is anecdotal evidence to suggest that, when done properly, street checks can help solve crimes, identify missing persons and increase public safety" (161). A study conducted in Edmonton found evidence that street checks could be useful in case investigations and in ensuring the safety and security of at-risk and vulnerable people.

Wortley (2019:153) also noted, "It would be important to systematically examine the effects of street checks both in terms of the positive effects in aiding investigations and solving crimes but also the potential negative effects on crime and community relations." There is general agreement that carding, which involves random stops of people without any lawful authority on the part of the police officer, is not an acceptable police practice. However, as Mr. Justice Tulloch (2018) has noted, if conducted within appropriate guidelines, street checks are legal and can be a valuable tool for ensuring public safety. The authors of the report on street checks in Edmonton reached a similar conclusion:

> The materials gathered for this study and the analysis conducted on the SCR data suggest that the practice of street checks should not be banned. When properly conducted, street checks can assist in maintaining the safety and security of the community. However, there are a number of initiatives that could be taken to address the issues surrounding street checks and the concerns expressed by community organizations and residents. (Griffiths et al., 2018:158)

The challenge is to ensure street checks are not conducted on the basis of racial profiling, officers have the lawful authority to stop a person, and that the street check does not result in an unlawful detention. It is also imperative for people who are stopped to understand their rights and that officers have the competencies, including cultural competencies to engaged in procedural justice policing.

Concluding Thoughts

The study of racial profiling and biased policing is important. It is also complex and requires sophisticated methodologies and the expertise of independent university-based researchers who are familiar with all of the nuisances of the topic. To date, with the exception of the study of street checks in Edmonton (Griffiths et al., 2018) and the report submitted by the VPD to the police board (2018), there have been few attempts to examine the spatial distribution of street checks in the city and the relationship between people stopped and the available population (rather than the residential population) in that area, considering census data and crime data. Further, the descriptive analyses conducted by other studies of street checks do not allow for an examination of the context within which the street checks were conducted.

The present study of street checks in the City of Vancouver was designed to address many of the issues that have plagued research studies to date. It involved the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative materials and included a specific focus, via field observations on the dynamics of police officer–citizen encounters. An attempt was made to explore the more nuanced dimensions of police street checks that are not adequately captured in either police-recorded data or in interviews and focus groups.

CHAPTER 4: POLICING IN VANCOUVER

A key premise of the present study is that any review of street checks must consider the context within which these stops occur. This includes the larger demographic context of the municipality as well as the dynamics of the interactions that occur between police and citizens during street checks.

Vancouver is the third largest census metropolitan area by population in Canada. In 2016, the Vancouver metropolitan area had a population of 2,463,431 residents, and the City of Vancouver had a population of 631,486 residents. Population growth in Vancouver between 2011 and 2016 was 4.6%. Vancouver has the highest density of any city in Canada, and its population is diverse. The 2011 census revealed the following racial and ethnic composition of Vancouver:

- European: 46.2%
- Chinese: 27.7%
- South Asian: 6%
- Filipino: 6%
- Southeast Asian: 3%
- Japanese: 1.7%
- Latin American: 1.6%
- Mixed visible minority: 1.5%
- Korean: 1.5%
- Aboriginal: 2% (1.3% First Nations, 0.6% Metis)
- West Asian: 1.2%
- Black: 1%
- Arab: 0.5%

These population figures do not include many people who are transient, homeless, marginalized, vulnerable, and/or who do not have a permanent address in the city.

The Vancouver Police Department

The Vancouver Police Department is responsible for providing policing services to the city of Vancouver. The VPD is guided by an executive that is comprised of one chief, three deputy chiefs, six superintendents, and two civilian senior directors. Seven members of the executive are men and five are women. Two men and two women are visible minorities. The management

team, consisting of four civilian directors, 13 civilian managers, and 28 inspectors, includes 27 men and 18 women. Nineteen of sworn officers in this group are male and nine are female, while in the civilian cadre, eight are male and nine are female.

As of April 2019, the department had 1,486 sworn members and 359 civilian members. A total of 26.6% of the sworn members and 69% of civilian members are women. Table 5 highlights the visible minorities represented in sworn officers.

Table 5. Visible Minority Officers in the VPD (2016)

Visible Minority	Number of Visible Minority Officers	% of Percentage of VPD Officers
Chinese	135	9.08
South Asian	97	6.53
Indigenous	29	1.95
Singaporean	1	0.07
Japanese	24	1.62
Filipino	19	1.28
Hispanic	16	1.08
African	19	1.29
Persian	11	0.74
Vietnamese	12	0.81
Thai	3	0.20
Burmese	1	0.07
Korean	5	0.34
Malaysian	1	0.07
Indonesian	3	0.20

The VPD has a large and active Diversity, Inclusion, and Indigenous Liaison Section that "seeks to engage with the community … and partner agencies to improve public safety and to address victimization motivated by bias, prejudice, and hate." This section aims to develop and implement "community-based initiatives and programs to build relationships with Vancouver's diverse communities" (Vancouver Police Department, n.d.). The section includes Indigenous and LGBTQ2S+ liaison officers, a hate crimes investigator, and a diversity liaison officer. It coordinates VPD attendance at community events and develops and officers programming and education that connect police with diverse communities. They also produce a regular internal

newsletter for members that provides overviews of community engagement activities that VPD members are involved in.

While the bulk of references in this report will be to Operations Division, and in particular to Patrol and their interactions with communities in Vancouver, it is important to note that many service providers complimented the great work the VPD Executive, members of the Diversity, Inclusion and Indigenous Liaison Units, and the Sex Liaison were doing.

The Vancouver Policing Context

Crime and the Demands for Service

The data in this segment sets the crime context for policing in Vancouver. In 2018, the municipality of Vancouver Crime Severity Index (CSI) score of 87.67. The score changed only minimally from the 2017 score of 87.27; however, it is higher than the Canadian CSI of 74.6. The violent crime CSI decreased 1.59% over the same time period to 73.42 (Statistics Canada).

The *Year-End 2018 Key Performance Indicators Report* indicates that VPD calls for service decreased from 267,937 in 2017 to 265,653 in 2018, a decrease of 0.9%. Reported violent crime in the city in 2018 was down 0.2% over 2017 and reported property crime increased by 1.5% over the same time period. Of note is that reported thefts from auto, which comprise 35% of property crime, increased 35% between 2017 and 2018 and mental health apprehensions increased by 1.1% over the same time period (Vancouver Police Department, 2019b, 2019c).

In 2018, VPD responded to 265,653 calls for service.[1] Table 6 presents a break down the 2018 calls for service by district and reveals that the highest number of calls for service occurred in District 2, with the lowest number in District 3.

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[1] Values not included represent errors or missing data in the "by District" database (per Manojlovic, D. VPD PR&A).

Table 6. VPD 2018 Calls for Service

District	2018 Calls for Service
1	67,335
2	84,973
3	49,125
4	56,385

The data in Table 7 provides details of the increases and decreases in reported incident statistics by district between 2017 and 2018. It highlights that District 2 has the highest level of reported violent crime, offensive weapons, and other Criminal Code occurrences, while District 1 has the highest incidence of reported property crime. While thefts of auto have decreased in all districts, there have been significant increases in theft from auto in District 1 (23.6%) and District 2 (19.9%). Sexual offence reports have risen most dramatically in District 4 (35.1%) and have risen 13.9% in District 1. Weapons offences have decreased in Districts 1 and 3 but have increased in Districts 2 (16.6%) and District 4 (12.3%). Possession of stolen property incidents decreased in District 2 (-9.5%) but increased dramatically in District 4 (34.9%). Incidents of arson have skyrocketed in District 1 (118.2%) and in District 4 (30%).

Table 7. Selected Vancouver Police Department Reported Crime Incident Statistics

	2018					% Change 2017 to 2018				
	D1	D2	D3	D4	City	D1	D2	D3	D4	City
Violent Crime	**1545**	**2118**	**857**	**694**	**5297**	**1.6%**	**-0.5%**	**-1.4%**	**2.7%**	**0.6%**
Sexual Offences	164	157	130	131	636	13.9%	4.0%	-8.5%	35.1%	8.5%
Assaults	1196	1745	602	468	4039	0.3%	0.4%	2.0%	-8.2%	-0.2%
Robbery	180	200	118	90	589	4.7%	-13.0%	-7.1%	38.5%	-1.3%
Property Crime	**13458**	**9698**	**7718**	**10459**	**41708**	**6.4%**	**0.8%**	**-0.8%**	**1.6%**	**2.4%**
B&E - Total	791	917	994	1663	4365	-2.9%	-4.1%	5.3%	-14.3%	-6.2%
Business	648	494	356	505	2003	-0.2%	-2.4%	1.4%	-28.2%	-9.3%
Residence	107	285	491	685	1568	-12.3%	-9.2%	5.6%	-20.1%	-10.8%
Theft of Motor Vehicle	297	407	414	417	1542	-6.9%	-23.5%	-24.9%	-20.9%	-20.4%
Theft from Auto (<>$5K)	5302	3483	2412	3339	14596	23.6%	19.9%	-0.9%	16.7%	16.2%
Theft (<>$5K)	4657	2560	2022	3014	12343	-5.6%	-11.5%	-1.4%	2.2%	-4.4%
Possession Stolen Property	75	338	69	58	540	-8.5%	-32.3%	16.9%	34.9%	-20.9%
Fraud	871	477	783	764	3094	0.0%	-8.6%	20.8%	-0.9%	3.4%
Arson	72	66	62	52	252	118.2%	-1.5%	1.6%	30.0%	24.8%
Mischief (<>$5K)	1393	1450	962	1152	4976	6.4%	15.9%	-7.1%	-1.0%	4.2%

Other Crime	1669	2261	1041	1027	6012	-7.1%	0.5%	4.0%	3.9%	-1.2%
Prostitution	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Disorderly Houses, Gaming & Betting	2	0	0	0	2	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	-100.0%	0.0%
Offensive Weapons	120	352	69	64	605	-28.6%	16.6%	-17.9%	12.3%	-1.0%
Other Criminal Code	1547	1909	972	963	5405	-4.9%	-2.0%	6.0%	3.5%	-1.2%
Total Criminal Code	16672	14077	9616	12180	53017	4.4%	0.5%	-0.4%	1.8%	1.8%

Note. From *Reported Crime Incident Statistics,* Vancouver Police Department. 2019. Retrieved from https://vancouver.ca/police/organization/planning-research-audit/district-statistics.html

[1] Please refer to the website for data disclaimers and limitations.

[2] Data run on 2019/01/15.

[3] City total includes offences coded as location unknown.

The increases in reported property crime are consistent with the perceptions of police and community members interviewed; however, most community members' views that violent crime and break and enters were increasing are not supported in the reported incident data. A number of people interviewed indicated that they no longer report many incidents to police for a variety of reasons (detailed in Chapter 8).

The varying task environments and operating contexts in which patrol officers work provide officers with a variety of call-types, crime-types, demands, and challenges and affect officers' decisions on when to initiate interactions, when to document interactions, and how to classify these interactions. General patrol officers provide frontline, uniform policing in the city of Vancouver and are responsible for conducting and documenting the majority of street checks that are generated. As the most visible branch of the VPD, they have the most frequent contact and most diverse interactions with the public.

The VPD divides the Vancouver geographically into four patrol districts, defined by community boundaries. Each district is staffed by dedicated patrol teams. Districts 1 and 2 are in the north of the city, and Districts 3 and 4 are in the south. Districts vary in geographic size, population size, residential density, demographics, community needs, calls for service volume, crime trends, and safety and security concerns. Focus groups and ride-alongs revealed that many of these factors have an impact on policing strategy and practices, including the practice of street checks. Figure 4 provides an overview of how the VPD policing districts are organized.

Figure 4. VPD Policing Districts

District 1

District 1 includes the neighbourhoods of the West End, Yaletown, Coal Harbour, and the Central Business District of Vancouver. The residential population of District One is over 80,000 people, who reside mostly in high-rise apartment buildings in densely populated areas. The daytime population (including workers, students, tourists, and others) rises to over 300,000 (City of Vancouver, 2017, 2019).

District 1, the downtown core of the city, is a major tourist centre and includes a number of prominent landmarks, sports venues, beaches, green spaces, hotels, restaurants, bars, and clubs. It includes a mix of residential and commercial spaces and includes a large concentration of retail establishments. The district is home to a diverse mix of residents and visitors with a variety of ethnic, cultural, sexual, and socio-economic backgrounds. The West End neighbourhood is a prominent centre for the LGBTQ2S+ community in Vancouver.

District 1 draws large numbers of people, many from other jurisdictions, for shopping, work, and entertainment, including concerts, sporting events, pubs, and cabarets. The large and dense population and visitors present challenges for policing. District 1 typically has the highest number of calls for service on a day-to-day basis. Patrol officers and supervisors emphasized that the high call volume in District 1 leads to the majority of their time being spent on call-response or reactive policing and leaves little time for proactive policing or engaging with the public. This phenomenon was observed during ride-alongs in District 1, in which the call board consistently had over 100 calls. On one occasion, a patrol sergeant pointed out that District 1 had over 130 calls holding, with no units available because all units were tied up on calls for service.

District 1 is also home to a number of marginalized and vulnerable at-risk and homeless youth, people with mental illness, individuals struggling with addiction, and individuals living below the poverty line. The scarcity of affordable housing, mental health and addiction resources, and shelters results in many people living on the street. Others reside in single-room occupancy (SRO) establishments located in the district. These SROs are often in close proximity to high-end residential apartments, retail shops, and bars and restaurants. Police noted that a significant amount of crime is reported by residents and business owners in these areas.

Many of the community residents and service providers interviewed for this review reinforced that the shortages of resources and housing available for vulnerable and marginalized people in Vancouver places them at increased risk for victimization and increases the likelihood of involvement in crime (both low-level and violent), which increases their likelihood of contact with police. Officers noted individuals from these populations were high drivers of calls for service. As one of the few 24/7 government services that operate in the city, police are often called on to respond to all incidents, crime related or otherwise. Observations during ride-alongs supported this.

Many of the attributes of District 1 that attract visitors also attract offenders, who reside both within and outside the area. Officers stated that a key crime concern in District 1 are non-violent and violent property crimes including residential break and enters, bike thefts, shoplifting, robberies, and thefts from autos. Representatives of local businesses echoed this, stating that while low-level property crime continues to be a significant concern, the level of violence or

threat of violence related to property crime has increased over the past several years. One interviewee noted that there has been an increase in the level of desperation of property offenders, resulting in incidents of offenders' brandishing weapons ranging from needles to guns. He also noted that business owners have noticed an increasing frequency in property crime, with some businesses being victimized multiple times a day. The level of violence was observed on a ride-along when officers responded to a call in which three individuals used bear spray in the robbery of a high-end makeup store and stole $3,000 in perfume and makeup. One of the suspects was apprehended shortly thereafter, en route to the Downtown East Side.

Officers noted that while individuals from marginalized and vulnerable populations commit property crime in the district for survival and/or to support substance addiction, the majority of property crime is committed by a small population of chronic and prolific offenders. According to officers, many of the individuals within this group have extensive criminal histories, have had a significant number of contacts with the police, and are frequently in and out of the criminal justice system. They also noted that many of these offenders reside in SROs close to high-rise apartments and condominiums, stores, and parking lots that provide easy targets for property offenders.

According to officers, the majority of their proactive policing efforts and street checks are driven by property crime in the area and are focused on these prolific offenders. Officers felt it was important to interact with suspicious people in the area, to get to know them, recognize them, and gather intelligence on them for investigative purposes. They also stated that they are more apt to stop these individuals if they are seen in and around public parking lots, private parking garages, and in residential areas neighbourhoods such as the West End and Yaletown.

District 1 also uses "Beat Cars" that focus on high-crime areas and crime hotspots and are tasked with getting to know problem people and known offenders who are in and pass through the district. Patrol supervisors and officers stated, in District 1, officers in these units conduct the majority of street checks, based on their knowledge and interactions with suspicious people and known offenders. Officers and supervisors noted, given the high call volume in District 1, Beat Cars are often required to assist with call response, preventing them conducting street checks or taking other proactive measures.

District 2 and the Downtown East Side

District 2 includes the neighbourhoods of Strathcona, Grandview–Woodlands, and Hastings-Sunrise. The district is home to a number of diverse communities including historical the Chinatown neighbourhood and much of the Vancouver harbour. It has a mix of residential, retail, and drinking and dining establishments, many of which are located along East Hastings St. and Commercial Drive, two major traffic arteries. While it does not contain as many entertainment and tourist venues as District 1, District 2 contains the historic Gastown area, which attracts large numbers of visitors who sightsee, shop, and patronize the numerous restaurants and bars in the area.

Most prominently, District 2 contains the Downtown East Side (DTES), an area of concentrated disadvantage, inhabited by a largely marginalized, vulnerable, and ethnically diverse population. Many in the DTES reside in SROs or on the street. Most residents in the DTES live at or well-below the poverty line and many suffer from a range of (undiagnosed and diagnosed) mental health issues, physical health issues, and addiction issues. The DTES has a high level of visible disorder, violent and non-violent crime, and victimization, particularly of the most vulnerable residents. The DTES generates frequent calls for emergency response services and garners significant police attention.

The increase in recent years of residential properties and businesses moving into the areas immediately buttressing the DTES, when coupled with the location of the DTES, immediately adjacent to the historical areas of Chinatown and Gastown, has created an increasingly complex and challenging policing task environment. Street-level disorder and property crime are prominent concerns for community residents and business owners.

The issues and challenges in the DTES are complex, wide-ranging, and persistent. The absence of appropriate wrap-around services has created an environment in which people dealing with significant mental and physical health challenges are living either on the street or in substandard housing and are often self-medicating with drugs and/or alcohol. While there is a safe injection site, many people continue to use on the streets, doorways, and alleys of the DTES. This leaves individuals vulnerable to victimization, leads to participation in criminal activity, and compels them to take part in risky lifestyles that increases their risk of non-violent and violent

victimization. Interview participants also noted that the complicated and dark history of sex workers in the DTES has created a tense and tenuous relationship between police and many of the women who live and work in the area.

VPD officers stated that violence is a major concern in the DTES, with officers expressing concerns over an increased presence of weapons, particularly knives and guns, which they are recovering from people. Drug trafficking and intravenous drug use in the DTES is a significant concern for police, particularly in relation to the opioid crisis. Police stated that drug dealers, among others, prey on vulnerable people, many of whom are at a heightened risk of being sold substandard and toxic narcotics as well as being violently victimized. These concerns were observed on two ride-alongs that included a drug dealer being stabbed in the head and arm; the seizure of a large quantity of fentanyl; the seizure of a large quantity of narcotics from a 70-year old female drug dealer; the discovery of a knife hidden in the lining of a chair in a popular bar; the seizure of a knife and two large machetes from a young man; the arrest of a man who threatened to assault a nail salon employee; a fist fight between two men over a bag; and the violent assault of a man with a baton. On these two nights, in addition to dealing with these incidents, police conducted numerous informal checks on individual's well-being, typically people who were passed out in alleys or who looked to be in some physical or emotional distress.

Due to the unique and challenging nature of the DTES, the VPD has established a dedicated foot patrol team in District 2. The Beat Enforcement Team (BET), posted in the DTES, works a designated patrol area and is largely responsible for call response and proactive patrolling in the DTES. While BET officers can and do patrol the DTES in vehicles, much of what they do is on foot patrol. As they spend much of their time on foot and work in a relatively small patrol area, they typically have more short conversations, conduct more checks of people for well-being, and conduct more investigative detentions and arrests than general patrol officers. This is viewed by some community members as unwelcome, with the DTES Women's Centre, for example, noting, "While the VPD says its intention is to increase trust through greater engagement with local residents, the arrival of police onto street corners has only increased the climate of criminalization" (Martin and Walia, 2019:130).

The DTES is one of the most challenging policing environments in Vancouver, in part because the police are required frequently interact with people with mental and physical illness, severe psychological trauma, and considerable addiction issues. Due in great part to the lack of availability of other services, police are often tasked with responsibilities that are typically the domain of other service providers, particularly as they pertain to people who have mental health and addiction challenges.

District 3

District 3 includes the neighbourhoods of Sunset, Renfrew-Collingwood, Mount Pleasant, Killarney, Victoria-Fraserview, and Kensington-Cedar Cottage. Much of District 3 is a residential mix of low-rise apartments and single and multi-family houses. The district is home to a diverse population, income groups, industries and businesses (City of Vancouver, 2017, 2019). For example, a large South Asian Community populates much of South Vancouver, with the Ross Street Sikh temple being a major religious and cultural centre in the area. District 3 also has well-established Filipino and Chinese communities. It is an area that is growing and changing, highlighted by the development of the Fraser Heights area in the southern most part of the district. Taken together, these factors create a diverse policing environment and require officers to deal with a broad spectrum of issues that are more common to District 3 than other the other patrol districts.

In terms of crime concerns or calls for service drivers, officers stated that in District 3 they deal with a lot of domestic disputes, family disputes, landlord-tenant issues, neighbour disputes, property crime, stolen autos, and break and enters. Street-level sex work was also raised by police as an issue in the district, especially in the area known as the "stroll" on the Kingsway corridor. Although marginalized people reside throughout District 3, officers stated that the homeless and vulnerable population is small in comparison to Districts 1 and 2.

Officers reported that the ethnically diverse communities in District 3 pose language and cultural challenges for them, particularly when they respond to calls for service involving newcomer families. These challenges can complicate interactions and efforts to effectively address and resolve situations. For example, during ride-alongs in District 3, a researcher observed a response to an assault involving a landlord and tenant, where the homeowner spoke very little English. He

was quite volatile until an officer who could translate arrived and was able to calm the situation. In another call, officers responded to a family dispute, in which the cultural practices of the family significantly complicated and hampered officers' efforts to resolve the situation.

District 3 officers indicated that they do not conduct many street checks, largely because of the nature of the district. The volume of calls for service in District 3 is lower than those in Districts 1 and 2; however, officers stated that while they are not necessarily rushing from call to call, the complexity of the calls they respond to can be time consuming, preventing them from doing proactive work. Domestic disputes in particular were described as often being very time consuming, both in terms of resolving the situation and in completing the required documentation.

District 3 officers indicated that time for proactive policing, including conducting street checks, can be temporal and context specific. For example, one officer indicated that in District 3 proactive activities, including street checks, are more likely to be conducted on weekend evenings when more people are out of their houses, leaving the homes vulnerable to break-ins. Proactive activities generally involved searching for stolen vehicles and suspicious people who may be involved in property crime, including residential break and enters and thefts from autos. They indicated they are more apt to interact and check people when they are less busy with calls for service.

District 4

District 4, which comprises 48% of the geographic area of Vancouver, is the largest patrol district in Vancouver. It includes the neighbourhoods of West Point Grey, Kitsilano, Fairview, Dunbar-Southlands, Arbutus Ridge, Shaughnessy, South Cambie, Riley Park, Musqueam, Kerrisdale, Oakridge, and Marpole. It has a residential population of approximately 234,000 residents (City of Vancouver, 2017, 2019). The VPD provides policing services for the Musqueam Indian Band, located in the southwest of District 4, under a service agreement that includes an officer dedicated to the community. The size of the area creates challenges for officers, particularly in terms of providing visibility and responding to calls efficiently.

District 4, also referred to as the West Side of Vancouver, is denoted by its beaches and parks, and its significant high-end residential real estate, particularly in the neighbourhoods of Shaughnessy, Point Grey, and Kerrisdale. Officers stated that work in most of District 4 is often slower paced than in the other districts because calls for service and the level of crime are typically lower and there are fewer opportunities for proactive policing. Officers stated property crime in the form of residential break and enters, thefts from stores, and thefts from autos are an issue for them.

Officers stated they do not conduct a lot of street checks or interactions in District 4. They indicated that they are more apt to stop people who do not live in the area or look like they should not necessarily be in a specific area during a specific time, such as individuals behaving suspiciously in residential areas late at night or early in the morning. Ride-alongs in District 4 supported that police did not conduct a lot of street checks and interacted with few individuals beyond when responding to calls for service.

Officers noted the changing and evolving dynamics of District 4, particularly with the relatively recent arrival of low-cost and modular housing facilities, have placed increased demands on police resources and are causes of concern for them. Multiple officers in the district cited one address as an example of an location that is a considerable driver of calls for service and a drain police resources, noting that this building houses a number of high-risk, high-need individuals who are in often in crisis, fuelled by mental illness and addiction. They noted residents required much more care and attention than what officers perceive was available to them.

For example, on a night shift ride along in District 4, officers were required to respond to the address on a call about a male resident with significant mental health issues who had destroyed much of his third-floor suite, barricaded himself in the suite, smashed out all his windows, had thrown several large objects out the window, cut himself and claimed that he had doused himself in lighter fluid, and had threatened to jump out the window. While officers were able to resolve the situation peacefully, the call required the presence of six patrol officers, including officers equipped with less-lethal options, a patrol sergeant, the Emergency Response Team, Emergency Health Services, and multiple fire engines, including a Hazmat response unit.

They related that offenders typically travel into the district via public transit or along the sea wall that connects District 4 with Districts 1 and 2. They added that it is common for property offenders to take the property they steal in District 4 to the DTES, where they attempt to sell it, often in the DTES "street market."

Building and Sustaining Relationships with Communities of Diversity

Comparatively speaking, the VPD can be considered to be at the leading edge in taking initiatives to build and sustain relationships with communities of diversity. The department was one of the first, and in some areas, the first, in Canada to develop specialized liaison units to work with communities of diversity and with vulnerable and at-risk communities. The document *Breaking Barriers & Building Bridges: Vancouver Police Department Initiatives with Indigenous Peoples* (VPD, 2018a), exemplifies the efforts the department has made in these areas. The document builds on the submission made to the *National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls* (Buller et al., 2019) and discusses the relationships and partnerships that have been established with Indigenous communities and organizations in the city and the protocols that have been put in place in the department to ensure that the needs of Indigenous communities in the city are met. The report notes, for example, that the VPD's Diversity and Indigenous Relations Section "has been in place for over 20 years and is an over-arching support to help the VPD build trust and confidence with the Indigenous, and other vulnerable communities, in Vancouver" (VPD, 2018a:1).

There is the potential to utilize these relationships and partnerships to address issues that surround street checks in the city. Again, it is important that these initiatives not be just within the purview of individual officers who are involved in them, but rather should become part of the core values of the department such that all officers have an awareness of the issues that surround police relations and interactions with communities of diversity.

CHAPTER 5: ANALYTICAL REVIEW OF UNDERSTANDING STREET CHECKS

Introduction to Analytics

This section of the report focuses on the validation and exploration of the data found in the VPD Planning, Research, and Audit (PR&A) Section report *Understanding Street Checks: An Examination of a Proactive Policing Strategy* that reviewed VPD presented to the VPD Board on September 13, 2018, which reviewed street check data from 2008 to 2017 (VPD, 2018c). The objective of this portion of the report is threefold:

1. To understand and inquire about the nature of the street check data, including how it is inputted into the system, how it is extracted, and how it is utilized.

2. To validate both the methods and the conclusions of the VPD PR&A team with respect to the Street Check report.

3. To make recommendations concerning future audit processes for the ongoing monitoring of street checks, likely in tandem with the development of a usage policy.

This chapter commences with the initial questions that were raised following an in-depth review of the PR&A Report.

VPD Street Check Data Questions

Following a review of the report presented to the Vancouver Police Board, the project team laid out several questions for clarification or further inquiry by PR&A going forward. Many questions were simply to understand the data flow of the street checks, while others were focused on the methods and/or conclusions that were reached. The questions/observations were grouped by theme and discussed with the VPD PR&A Team during a focus group session. These topics are outlined below in Table 8.

Table 8. Questions for Discussion with PR&A Team

Data Entry/Extraction	Methods	Conclusions Drawn
What does the 'street check' data entry form look like? Is it a page on PRIME, or is it a GO file?	How did you parse out the street checks that were actually wellness checks on Indigenous women?	Can the data support the statement "street checks are conducted on homeless individuals in the winter months to check well-being"? Is there a way to support that statement with the data? There should be a way to pull out the date of the street check and correlate it with weather data.
Are there any other way street checks may be entered into PRIME?	When doing the geographic comparison, were all calls used (on view & 911) or just 911?	Is there any way to validate the statements on attending mental health calls? How is this related to street checks in a more concrete way?
Is there a way of knowing when/if street checks are conducted, but not recorded in PRIME or elsewhere?	When making the statement "street checks occurred in high crime locations," was that based on count, or some sort of rate? Thoughts on the pros and cons of either method?	Is there a way to statistically validate the claim that street checks resulted in positive outcomes for missing persons cases?
The section on data limitations addresses some of these concerns. What are the options for fixing this?	How did you estimate that 23% of the street checks were for homeless people?	
"Even when a street check record is created in police databases, it does not always explicitly capture all the demographic, social, and professional information related to the people involved; where and when the stop occurred; the specific reasons for the stop; what took place during the stop; why the action took place; how long the street check took; and what the ultimate outcome of the check was. As generally is the case with police data, it is collected for public safety reasons and may not specifically align with FOI or media requested information (Understanding Street Checks; p. 42). Based on the limitations on the data input, is there a way to restructure the street check screen to capture more relevant data without becoming too onerous on officers?	Of the checks on Indigenous women, were the street checks done before or after they were subjects of a missing persons report?	

Data Entry/Extraction	Methods	Conclusions Drawn
	So, with 8% of all street checks being citizen initiated, that means that 92% of street checks were officer initiated?	
	The statement that "*23% of street checks done between 2008 and 2017 were individuals with NFA.*" What was the population of individuals street checked during that time frame? What percentage were homeless? Is there an issue with double counting the homeless if one homeless individual was checked over and over?	
	Are most of the stats possibly double counting individuals? Is there a way to at least provide a comparison statistic on the population of those street checked?	
	Is there a way to quality control the ethnicity variable? Is there a way to see whether an individual is coded the same way each time they are checked? Or is the MNI (Master Name Index) always used?	
	The report uses "previously suspects" as a metric for the street checks. Is there a way to determine what percentage of those were eventually charged?	
	What was the formula for the correlation analysis on hot spots vs. street checks? - Did the calls for service (CFS) include on view calls as well? - Would there be a way to normalize the data or provide a rate?	

Note. CFS = calls for service; FOI = Freedom of Information; MNI = Master Name Index; NFA = no forwarding address.

Following a lengthy focus group with the team members from PR&A, the above-noted questions were discussed and clarified in subsequent meetings. Several key themes for follow up emerged. Overall, the project team was satisfied with the level of methodological rigour and analytic processes that the PR&A team used for their report on street checks. Notably, the team was able to discuss and address most questions within the meeting; however, some issues necessitated

further follow up, as they were seen as the most impactful and/or important to address for the purposes of this report.

Prior Criminality of People Being Street Checked

The first theme or issue involved a "role" code examination, which was used to demonstrate 'prior criminality' in the vast majority of individuals who were street checked (VPD, 2018c:37). This project team members for this review determined the role codes included within this analysis should be modified to exclude individuals who were noted as "suspects" in an investigation, as their involvement had not reached a high enough legal standard to justify inclusion for the purposes of demonstrating criminality. Moving from a status code of "suspect" to "suspect chargeable" involves a significant increase in legal authority and evidentiary support. Therefore, if a subject is noted in the file as "suspect chargeable," the case investigation has reached the level that would be accepted in court and is beyond merely suspicion. Although this is a higher bar to reach, excluding the instances in which individuals were merely suspects would ensure a more persuasive argument, if it was found that these individuals continued to exhibit the same pattern (i.e., that their past criminality was well-established by the number of instances where they were "suspect chargeable" or higher). Therefore, team members recommended that the PR&A team run the same data again using the more stringent parameters to assess whether this pattern continued to be valid and the same conclusion could be reached. Table 9 compares the results from the modified query:

Table 9.   Comparison of Role Codes from Complete PR&A Dataset

Including Suspect Role Code	Excluded (Suspect Chargeable or higher only)
Data from the VPD (2018c:37–38) report:	*New analysis:*
6,322 street checks in 2017 of 4,130 individuals.	6,322 street checks in 2017 of 4,130 individuals.
• Of those 4,130 individuals, 80% (3,306) were **suspects** in other police criminal investigations before the 2017 street check occurred.	• Of those 4,130 individuals, 77% (3,182) were **chargeable** in other police criminal investigations before the 2017 street check occurred.
• On average, each individual (of the 3,306) had been a suspect in 22 separate criminal investigations before the 2017 street check occurred, by police departments in Metro Vancouver.	• On average, each individual (of the 3,182) had been chargeable in 17 separate criminal investigations before the 2017 street check occurred, by police departments in Metro Vancouver.

The more stringent parameters resulted in a slightly smaller group who had been chargeable in a previous offence before the street check; however, this decrease was so small as to be almost negligible. More than 75% of the individuals street checked had previously been chargeable with an offence, and, on average, each individual was chargeable in 17 separate criminal offences. This confirms the overall conclusion that street checks are more often conducted on individuals who have demonstrated significant past criminal activity.

The project team recommended to PR&A that this more stringent parameter be maintained for future audits or reviews, as it results in a more compelling and persuasive conclusion about the prior criminality of the individuals who are subject to the street check. Overall, the team's conclusions regarding the population being street checked appear to be sound with respect to this metric.

"Check Well-being" Code

The next primary theme that emerged was when and how encounters should (and were) being coded as a street check. There were several sub-issues, such as the existence of 'well-being checks' within the historical data as well as street checks that were erroneously coded following a call response (for instance). While there was little definitive solution for the data-entry issues, as there will undoubtedly always be some element of human error or subjective decision making, some errors could be lessened or alleviated with training or modification of the input screen. For instance, the issue of well-being checks had been dealt with prior to the commencement of this review, as the data-entry screen in PRIME had been modified to allow for "well-being check" to be a reason code that could be parsed or queried. This allows for better monitoring of street checks going forward, as data analysts can now examine instances that are true street checks as opposed to police contacts that are the result of officers checking on an individual's well-being or health.

Due to the timing of the implementation of this code in PRIME, it is not advantageous at this point to make any sweeping observations with such a small data set. However, PR&A is in a good position going forward to better parse out these reason codes and examine the motivation behind the street check more closely.

One issue that was specifically examined, however, had to do with an initial examination of whether or not officers appeared to be using the new reason code in PRIME in October of 2018. Again, this is preliminary and valid conclusions cannot be made; however, the project team did find this helpful to assess some deeper issues. Specifically, it was suggested that, since there was no "reason code" for "check well-being," many checks on Indigenous women that were coded as street checks were actually more appropriately coded as a check for well-being. At the project team's request, PR&A pulled the data to look into this issue. This encompassed reviewing all street check data involving Indigenous women from October 2018 (when "check well-being" went live in PRIME as a "reason code") through to February 2019.

The total number of checks on Indigenous women was 48, with four of those being reported using the "check well-being" code. Of the 48 that were checked, 10 of them were reported missing in PRIME before the check, including one person coded as Check Well-being who was missing in PRIME before the check. While this does not definitively point to any conclusion that Indigenous women are only being checked for well-being, it does suggest that that concern for welfare and safety plays into street checks at least some of the time. VPD PR&A provided a table of the 48 street checks on Indigenous women to illustrate some of the reasons behind the checks. This information is summarized in Table 10.

Table 10. Street Checks on Indigenous Women, 2018 partial snapshot

Street Check Summary	Count	Notes
Checked for Behaviour	15	Good street checks.
Suspected Criminal	9	Two were not spoken to – observed and noted.
Call for Service	7	One could be '*Check Well-being*.'
File could have been coded *Check Well-being*	6	Files were coded *Problem-Oriented Policing* or *Other*.
Coded *Check Well-being*	4	Good '*Check Well-being*' code use.
Female checked with a Suspect	4	Other person had the suspicious behaviour.
Female was not on scene	3	Name mentioned in street check, but was not on scene.
Total Indigenous Female	**48**	

This brief snapshot of the data raises numerous data quality issues and concerns as to when and how data are entered as a street check. While this is a pervasive theme throughout this report, the lack of policy on street check usage within the VPD is responsible for at least some of these data

capture issues, such as when and why a street check should be used. Referring back to Table 10, the fact that three Indigenous women were mentioned in a street check but were not even on the scene is disconcerting. Although the officer involved likely felt there was a solid reason for doing so, at first glance this does not seem to reach the threshold for a street check insofar as it generally should be used to 'check' someone's behaviour to ensure public safety and/or well-being is established. If the individual is not even on scene, it is difficult to justify the use of the street check classification under these parameters. Again, the development of an internal policy should address these issues. This discussion leads into the related issue of Indigenous women and missing persons reports.

Street Checks of Indigenous Women and Missing Persons Reports

A conclusion reached in the VPD report concerned the confluence of missing persons reports and street checks, particularly Indigenous women. More specifically, the VPD (2018c) report indicated the following:

- Across 10 years (2008–2017), there were 3,988 street checks with Indigenous women.
- The majority of these women (53%) had been the subject of a missing person's report. (16)

The project team requested that VPD further clarify this finding with information concerning the temporal order of these events. Specifically, what percentage of checks occurred after a missing persons report had been filed, or vice versa.

The results indicated that 45% of the 3,988 Indigenous women street checked between 2001 and 2017 had been reported missing prior to being street checked (VPD, 2018c). Further, in 19% of the street checks, the Indigenous woman was reported missing in the Lower Mainland after the street check occurred. This largely supports the conclusion in the VPD (2018c) report on street checks insofar as nearly half of the checks were on women who were previously reported missing and could, therefore, be reasonably presumed to have at least some element of well-being checks as a motivating factor. The observation that 19% of the checked Indigenous women were reported missing after the checks supports the observation that a large percentage of these women being checked are vulnerable, at risk, and likely should be checked to ensure a record is kept of their whereabouts to better address safety and security issues.

The review of the PR&A report and resultant discussions with PR&A enabled team members to form a solid understanding of the capabilities for the analytics within the section. The methods used for the street check report were appropriate, valid, and accurate. The few modifications suggested and discussed above were taken and will be incorporated into future analysis as appropriate. Overall, PR&A has the capability and capacity to develop ongoing metrics and audit analytics once a policy for street checks is in place. However, this process will not alleviate errors that make their way into the data by way of subjective decision making or inadvertent data recording mistakes. Only policy, training, and audit feedback processes can assist with that.

The following sections, however, seek to further explore the patterns and conclusions noted by the PR&A report by creating a new database of additional coded information as well as the database populated by information recorded on the ride-along survey instrument. Both of these will be discussed in turn, and the overarching recommendations presented at the end of this section.

2018 Street Check Expanded Database

The purpose of the creation of a 2018 expanded database was to properly validate the findings and conclusions set out in the report on street checks completed by the VPD and submitted to the police board (VPD, 2018c). As noted, the data-entry screen in PRIME for a street check is relatively simple, with limited details about the offence in mandatory fields that can be queried. The observation that a great deal of essential information was only contained within the text field prompted the need for this database to better understand the nature of these checks and to compare the independent conclusions reached in with the VPD report.

The database was created using a random sampling technique. The population of interest was all street checks in 2018 ($N = 4,217$). In order to obtain a 95% confidence level with a 5% confidence interval, a sample size of 352 files was needed. Following this approach, any statistical conclusions presented within the sample database will reflect the entire population with a high level of accuracy. The PR&A Team built the database by reading through the text files of all sampled file numbers and populating numerous data fields such as date, time, check reason, how received, brief synopsis, classification of check, concern flag, along with ethnicity

and gender. The results of this database creation are shared in this section and discussed with reference to the overall themes within this report.

Of the 352 checks, most occurred within Districts 1, 2, and 3, with the fewest being entered from District 4. As this database was randomly selected from the entire population of street checks, this disproportionality is reliable insofar as District 4 is concerned and would be seen in the total population as well. In contrast, Districts 1, 2, and 3 show a relatively similar number of street checks, as seen in Table 11.

Table 11. District of Street Check (2018 Sample)

District	# of Street Checks
1	103
2	100
3	103
4	46

Note. Data gathered from PR&A, Vancouver Police Department, PRIME (2019).

One aspect of street check 'procedure' that was discussed with PR&A was the number of files that were entered following a 9-1-1 call or another call for service. As a typical street check would most often occur with an officer seeing activity worthy of follow up 'on view,' there should not, therefore, be a large number of street checks entered as a result of a call for service, as that information should be contained within the call for service file, not in a separate street check. However, there are instances whereby an officer may respond to a 9-1-1 call but is led towards a street check by happenstance, so this does not immediately negate the validity of street checks initiated as 9-1-1 calls. However, this would be an area whereby an audit could assess whether these files were incorrectly coded and/or entered. In this sample, over 90% of street checks were initiated 'on view,' while just over 6% were following a call for service (see Table 12). A few entry errors are expected, and can never fully be eliminated, so this breakdown is entirely acceptable within the boundaries of accuracy. As a follow up, any audit should examine the checks originating as a call for service to ensure adherence to a policy (once established).

Table 12. Initiation of Street Checks (2018 Sample)

Check Reason	Count	%
On View	318	90.3%
Call for Service	23	6.5%
Investigating Other CFS	9	2.6%
Empty File	1	0.3%
File browse	1	0.3%
Total	**352**	**100.0%**

Table 13 highlights that the majority of street checks (74%) involved a single individual who was subject of the street check, while 22% involved two or more individuals. Of note is the observation that 16 cases had zero individuals subject to the street check, which is odd without further context (see Table 13). Phenomena such as these would be a good avenue for an audit to ensure compliance with a future policy.

Table 13. Number of People Involved in a Street Check (2018 Sample)

# of Individuals	Subject to the SC
0	16
1	259
2	60
3	14
4	2
5	1

Table 14 explores the PRIME check reason codes that are available through extraction (i.e., problem-oriented policing, suspected criminal). These reason codes are chosen by the officer, but are not populated through the text field. Therefore, they may not suit the circumstances well or may not provide adequate detail about the rationale behind the check. As is shown in Table 14, most street checks (34%) were noted as "problem-oriented policing," with 20% being noted as "suspicious activity," and another 17% noted as "suspected criminal." On its face, these are all reasonable rationales for using a street check. The remaining categories are shown in Table 14.

Table 14. PRIME Check Reason Codes

Check Reason	Count	%
Problem-oriented policing	120	34.1%
Suspicious activity	69	19.6%
Suspected criminal	59	16.8%
Other	36	10.2%
Motor vehicle act	30	8.5%
Suspected drug dealer	14	4.0%
Theft from auto suspect	4	1.1%
Suspected sexual offender	4	1.1%
Break and enter suspect	4	1.1%
Gang affiliation	3	0.9%
Check well-being	3	0.9%
Sexual services	3	0.9%
Liquor act	2	0.6%
Suspected impaired	1	0.3%
Grand Total	**352**	**100.0%**

Continuing to build on the information presented above, Table 15 examines the justification for the street check. This field was created from the text file in order to better understand the reason why the officer initiated the street check. Adding this field would enable analysts to better expand on the PRIME check codes already contained within the street check field (see Table 14). Over 40% of the street checks were justified with a bylaw stop or a street stop, with another 25% justified as 'behaviour' or 'possible criminal behaviour.' Known criminal identification was relied upon in 8% of the street checks, and nearly 9% of the street checks were justified as traffic stops. Some categories are appropriate to follow up on, such as 'homeless check' and 'observation only.' Some of these file classifications are perhaps more appropriately coded as well-being checks, which in the future should be better categorized now that there is the 'check well-being' code as part of the street check screen in PRIME. Others may warrant further scrutiny, particularly those without a prima facie legal footing, such as "street stop" and "person check." Table 15 provides the complete breakdown of check rationales for the sample.

Table 15. Justification for Check (2018 Sample)

Check Justification (from text file)	Count	%
Bylaw Stop	75	21.3%
Street stop	72	20.5%
Behaviour	46	13.1%
Possible Criminal Behaviour	43	12.2%
Traffic Stop	31	8.8%
Known Criminal	28	8.0%
Homeless Check	14	4.0%
Suspect Search	13	3.7%
Vehicle check	12	3.4%
Street vending	5	1.4%
Person Check	5	1.4%
Observation Only	4	1.1%
File update	1	0.3%
Call for service	1	0.3%
Intel	1	0.3%
Empty File	1	0.3%
Grand Total	**352**	**100.0%**

To further illustrate the reasons behind these stops, the largest categories and detailed rationales are shown below. Table 16 presents the reasons behind street checks justified as 'bylaw stops.' As is shown, most stops are legally justified from the individual not wearing a helmet (45% of bylaw stops) and jaywalking (25% of bylaw stops). The remainder of bylaw stops range from public urination, to walking infractions, to driving infractions.

Table 16. Bylaw Stop Details

Bylaw Stop	75 overall	21.3% overall
No Helmet	34	45.3%
Jaywalking	19	25.3%
Public urination	4	5.3%
Cycling on sidewalk	2	2.7%
Smoking near entrance	2	2.7%
Drinking in public	2	2.7%
Cross street against light	2	2.7%
Leaving curb when unsafe	2	2.7%
Riding on sidewalk	2	2.7%
Traffic stop, no DL	1	1.3%
Traffic stop, no sign lane change	1	1.3%
Traffic stop, no N	1	1.3%
Speeding	1	1.3%
Car swerving, aggressive on stop	1	1.3%
Tinted windows liquor in car	1	1.3%

Most of the street checks classified as 'street stops' were noted as being justified as "in area," which likely involved individuals with known 'no-gos' or other restrictions on where they are permitted to be. Other cases would also benefit from further examination, as their legal ground is difficult to assess based on the limited description. This includes "riding bike" or "walking in the rain." It is likely, however, that these instances prompted suspicion on the part of police, which is the reason for the street check. Others may have been similar to a check well-being activity, such as individuals seen walking in hospital clothes, staggering in the street, or wandering aimlessly. Some could also be justified under bylaw grounds, such as panhandling and/or loitering, while others are likely best described as possible criminal activity such as 'carrying bike parts' or possessing drugs. It appears that several instances of street checks were initiated either by an individual coming up to speak to an officer or running away from officers. Either distinction is arguably a reasonable rationale for street checking someone. The remaining categories are shown in full in Table 17.

Table 17. Street Stop Details

Street stop	72 overalls	20.5% overall
In area	9	12.5%
Standing in lane	4	5.6%
Riding bike	3	4.2%
Smoking marijuana	2	2.8%
Panhandling	2	2.8%
Male in lane	2	2.8%
Problem premises	2	2.8%
Staggering in street	1	1.4%
Sitting in alcove	1	1.4%
Walking in rain	1	1.4%
Entered store when seeing police	1	1.4%
Sitting on steps, jumped up when police came	1	1.4%
Exiting building	1	1.4%
Truck Idling	1	1.4%
Flagged PC down to talk	1	1.4%
Came to talk to police	1	1.4%
Back in forth in lane	1	1.4%
Sitting in parking lot	1	1.4%
In lane	1	1.4%
Sitting under bridge	1	1.4%
In lane beside school	1	1.4%
Behind problem premises	1	1.4%
In parking lot	1	1.4%
Vehicle at problem premise	1	1.4%
In front of building	1	1.4%
Walking with suitcases	1	1.4%
Leaving problem premise	1	1.4%
Seated at bus stop near incident	1	1.4%
Loitering	1	1.4%
Sitting in lane	1	1.4%
Clean couple in poor hotel	1	1.4%
Sitting on stairs	1	1.4%
Male in lane with shopping cart	1	1.4%
Sitting outside read door	1	1.4%
Male smoking marijuana	1	1.4%
Driver of car didn't match RO	1	1.4%
Males in lane	1	1.4%

Street stop	72 overalls	20.5% overall
Staggering on sidewalk	1	1.4%
Conversation with police	1	1.4%
Standing on corner	1	1.4%
Vehicle with light on, males exiting	1	1.4%
Turned around when saw police	1	1.4%
Walking bike in rain	1	1.4%
Drugs in parkade	1	1.4%
Walking in hospital clothes	1	1.4%
Walking dog on church lawn	1	1.4%
Pushing bike	1	1.4%
Walking in lane	1	1.4%
Riding bike	1	1.4%
Walking with bike parts	1	1.4%
Wandering neighbourhood	1	1.4%
Wandering aimlessly	1	1.4%
Approached officers about warrant	1	1.4%
Running male	1	1.4%
Riding electric bike	1	1.4%

Table 18 outlines more of the behaviour details that initiated street checks in this category.[2] Many "behaviours" that resulted in a street check included yelling at police, masturbating, and drinking in public or public intoxication. Most of these behaviours range from suspicious to concerning or outright illegal. Several appear to be related to homelessness or substance abuse.

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[2] There appears to be significant overlap with other categories discussed above, so the necessity of creating more defined categories within PRIME is an issue for VPD to discuss more with PRIMECorp. Leaving this categorization to be done at the back end is time consuming and often relatively subjective, so while it is important to examine within the context of this review, a more stable and reliable coding scheme should be developed by PR&A in conjunction with the policy development to ensure categories are clear and discrete.

Table 18. Behaviour Code Details

Behaviour	46 overall	13.1% overall
Yelling at police	3	6.5%
In doorway of closed business	2	4.3%
Pushing bike with bags in parkade	2	4.3%
Tapping on store window	1	2.2%
Picking at ground	1	2.2%
Male masturbating	1	2.2%
Dressed black and running	1	2.2%
Slumped on driver wheel	1	2.2%
Drinking in public and getting loud	1	2.2%
Carrying bike in alley, loading into truck	1	2.2%
Driving around area in circles	1	2.2%
Pacing in lane	1	2.2%
Hospital clothes	1	2.2%
Sitting in chair on road	1	2.2%
Hunched over on steps	1	2.2%
Subject inside clothing bin	1	2.2%
Binning	1	2.2%
Walking with metal detector	1	2.2%
In lanes binning	1	2.2%
Male chasing vehicle	1	2.2%
Inside storage bin	1	2.2%
Male taking tires off bikes	1	2.2%
Intox at casino	1	2.2%
Panhandling	1	2.2%
Punching hand	1	2.2%
Circling area	1	2.2%
Riding bike avoiding police	1	2.2%
Intox female	1	2.2%
Sitting by fire exit inside building	1	2.2%
Intox male in traffic	1	2.2%
Sitting on stairs inside building	1	2.2%
Jaywalking	1	2.2%
Smoking in parkade	1	2.2%
Loitering in lane	1	2.2%
Swinging broom	1	2.2%
Looking in backpack	1	2.2%
Walked away from police	1	2.2%
Looking through a backpack	1	2.2%
Wandering aimlessly	1	2.2%
Looking through backpack	1	2.2%
Bike riding fast, avoided police	1	2.2%
Lying on sidewalk	1	2.2%

Table 19. Possible Criminal Behaviour Details

Possible Criminal Behaviour	43 overall	12.2% overall
Looking in cars	7	16.3%
Sex trade worker in vehicle	2	4.7%
With sex trade worker in car	1	2.3%
Standing in parkade	1	2.3%
Peering through closed business window	1	2.3%
Cans taken from female	1	2.3%
Behind car with broken window	1	2.3%
Car hood up trying to start car	1	2.3%
Parked in bay	1	2.3%
Drinking on construction property	1	2.3%
Sitting in alcove	1	2.3%
Drug use in Park	1	2.3%
Stealing from donation box	1	2.3%
Drug use in parkade	1	2.3%
Walking in parkade	1	2.3%
Dumping backpack on seawall	1	2.3%
On bike with box of wires	1	2.3%
Graffiti	1	2.3%
Passing drugs to another person	1	2.3%
Hiding bolt cutters	1	2.3%
Buying drugs	1	2.3%
Riding bike with second bike	1	2.3%
Hiding in construction shadows	1	2.3%
Speaking to known drug dealer	1	2.3%
In fenced off area	1	2.3%
Stealing donation box change	1	2.3%
In gated off area	1	2.3%
Striping wire	1	2.3%
Suspicious vehicle	1	2.3%
Trespassing	1	2.3%
Trying door handles	1	2.3%
Looking in closed businesses	1	2.3%
Walking through parkade	1	2.3%
Looking through a backpack in lane	1	2.3%
Axe on ground	1	2.3%
No Helmet & looking in vehicles	1	2.3%

Table 19 shows the various reasons for the street checks grouped under "possible criminal behaviour." Looking into cars was the most frequent rationale for the street check, which could signal to an officer that an individual was priming to break into vehicles. Similarly, individuals either in or near vehicles with broken windows or raised hoods seemed to elicit a response from officers. As many of the behaviours listed within the other categories already discussed could also qualify as "possible criminal behaviour," this speaks to the need to redesign the street check entry screen in PRIME to better capture the street check process and the reasons behind it, without placing an onerous burden on officers to enter information. Overall, very few of these street checks appear on to be unwarranted or unreasonable.

Street Checks Flagged for Errors

PR&A, as part of the database creation, was able to identify files where there were concerns with how they were coded or concerns regarding the actions and/or justifications of the officers. In all, 109 files were flagged for concerns, representing just over 30% of the total sample (see Table 20). These included 38 in which the reason for the stop was perhaps not valid; 32 that were likely better classified as well-being checks; 16 that were observations where the person was not spoken to; and 12 that were deemed more appropriately classified as a GO. On an ongoing basis, the Audit Unit can follow up annually to ensure compliance with a policy, once one is in place. Files flagged for noncompliance or miscoding can be integrated further into training materials and provide better tracking and use of the tool going forward. Some error in coding and entry can be expected; however, in the absence of a guiding policy, it is premature to state that VPD officers are not following protocol when deciding to initiate a street check. These determinations of errors, therefore, are based on generally accepted protocols and a subjective interpretation of when and how street checks should be used. This further supports the need for a guiding policy, and an audit structure going forward.

Table 20. Checks Flagged for Potential Errors

Reason for Stop	38
Possible Well-being	32
Entity not spoken to	16
Should be GO	12
Entity Not on Scene	9
Empty File	1
Not a Street Check	1

Location of the 2018 Street Checks

As part of the PR&A report, the comparison was made between the location of street checks and the location of crime concentration throughout the city. The argument that street check locations coincided with crime locations was used to demonstrate the utility and reasonableness of the use of street checks to control crime and reduce the number of occurrences. In order to validate this assertion, the 2018 database was geographically analyzed to compare it with the results presented in the street check report submitted to the police board in 2018.
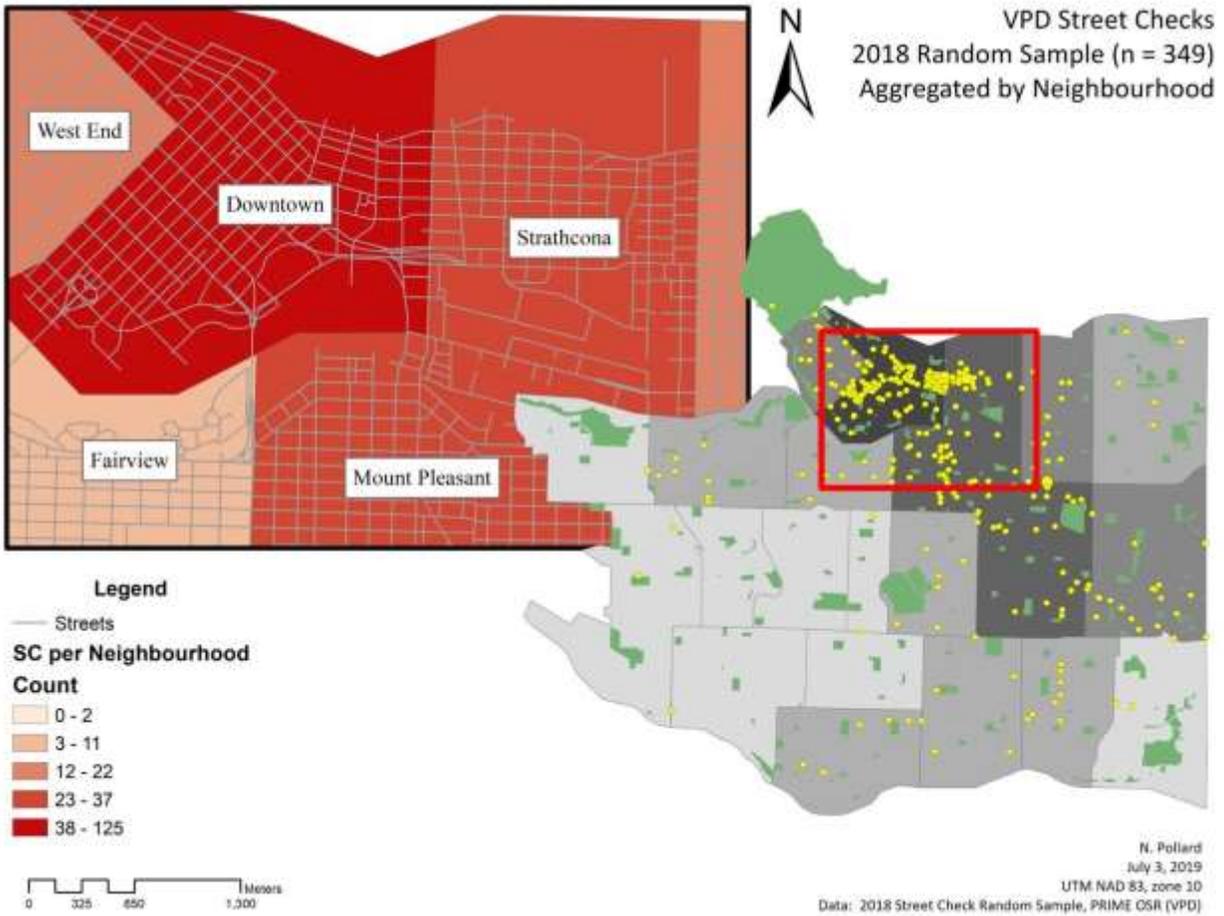
Figure 5. VPD Street Checks (2018 sample)

As is shown in Figure 5 the street checks in 2018 were heavily concentrated in the Downtown and Strathcona neighbourhoods as well as in the Downtown Eastside and into Vancouver East.

This corresponds with data from the VPD report on street checks, which indicated that the overall pattern of street checks and crime was highly similar in geographic distribution, despite the differing databases and visualization techniques used (see Figure 6). Thus, the conclusions from the PR&A report regarding the locations of both crime and street checks appear to be valid.
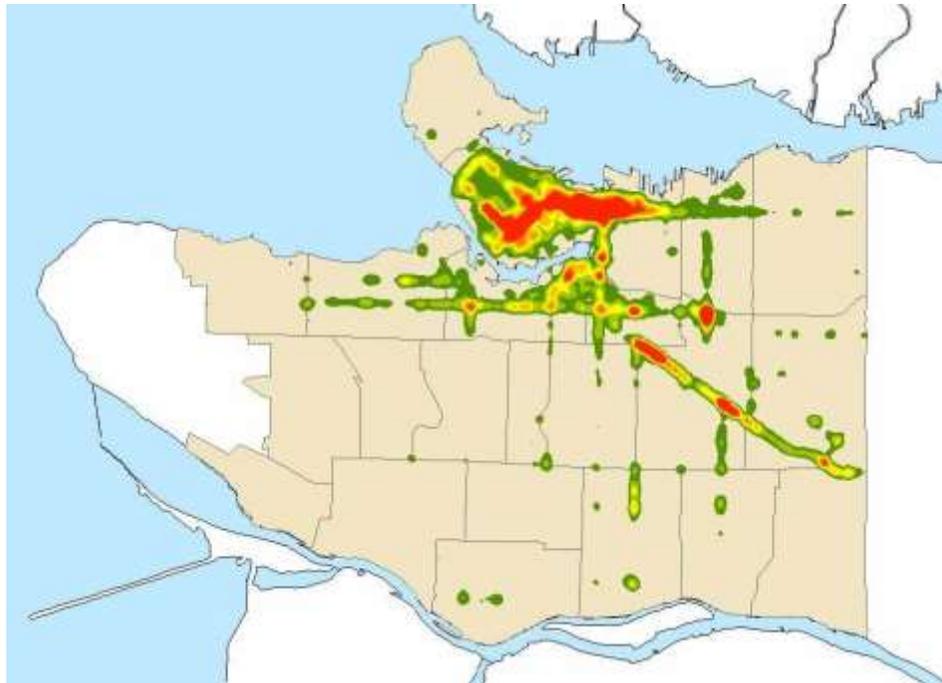
Figure 6. Crime Locations from VPD Report

Timing of Street Checks

Most of the street checks (61%) were conducted between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m., with 46% of the checks occurring more specifically between 9 pm and 6 am (see Table 21). Outside of these general trends, more specific patterns were difficult to identify (if they exist at all). Very broadly, the initiation of street checks due to an individual demonstrating suspicious or dangerous behaviour appears to peak during the early morning hours. Bylaw-prompted street checks peak in the late afternoon, and possible criminal behaviour appears to be a nighttime-focused category (see Table 21). These are all understandable and reasonable given the nature of what may be considered suspicious at any time. For instance, an individual looking into a business during open hours may not appear suspicious, but the same individual looking in at 2:00 am may become subject to a street check on the basis of suspected criminal behaviour.

Table 21. Timing of Street Check

Timing	# of Incidents	Percentage of Incidents
0600 to noon	57	17%
noon to 1800	76	22%
1801 to midnight	106	31%
midnight to 0600	99	29%

Note: All the data in this section, starting from "2018 Street Check Expanded Database" are from the VPD 2018 Sample Database (PRIME).

Ethnicity

A central concern emerging from the report on street checks submitted by the VPD to the police board was that Indigenous and other minorities were overrepresented in the street check data (VPD, 2018c). The rationale and explanation for this phenomenon was explained both within the report as well as in follow-up public forums. This report does not seek to counter any of the explanations put forward, as they are reasonable and plausible given the nature of demographics within the city, movements of people around high-crime areas, and the overrepresentation of Indigenous and minorities in the Downtown Eastside, where most street checks occur. However, a review of the ethnicity data within the 2018 database is prudent given the impetus behind this review.

Table 22. Ethnicity of 2018 Street Check Individuals

Ethnicity	Count	%
Caucasian	195	55%
Aboriginal	64	18%
Black	21	6%
Middle Eastern	19	5%
Blank	19	5%
Asian	14	4%
Unknown	8	2%
Hispanic	6	2%
South Asian	5	1%
Other	1	0%

Note. The variable of "ethnicity" should be viewed with extreme caution, as the person's ethnicity is determined via a visual assessment by the officer. The authors of the Edmonton Street Check study report found that, in many instances, the listed "ethnicity" of the person was not accurate (Griffiths et al., 2018).

The recording of ethnicity within the VPD database is largely subjective and sensitive to officer interpretation and/or personal knowledge of an individual. Any analysis on the data should, therefore, be taken cautiously and with full appreciation for the error-prone nature of this type of information. With that said, the ethnicity of the individuals within the 2018 database are shown in Table 22. As with the PR&A report, most individuals who are street checked are white, followed by Indigenous individuals. Simply presenting the data makes no commentary on whether or not there was bias in these encounters. It is just as plausible, without any contrary indications, that these encounters were based purely on behaviours that the police were met with and the available population (not residential population) that was prominent in the area.

Similar to the VPD (2018c) report on street checks, the project team found that the prior history of the subjects of the 2018 street checks (noted as "Suspect Chargeable," "Recommended Charge," or "Charged" before the street check) was extensive. In all, nearly 89% of the individual subjects were chargeable in other police criminal investigations before the 2018 street check occurred. On average, each individual had been "chargeable" in 24 separate criminal investigations before the 2018 street check occurred. This supports and validates the conclusion reached by the original PR&A report that street checks were most often initiated on individuals with extensive criminal histories and who were undoubtedly known to police.

Summary of Data Examination and Conclusions

The purpose of this component of the review was to both validate the findings from the VPD (2018c) report on street checks submitted to the police board and to examine a more in-depth and updated database to ascertain whether or not the conclusions reached by PR&A in their report were validated. Overall, the conclusions reached by the PR&A team appear valid and reasonable, and the patterns emerging from their examination held when subjecting the 2018 data to independent analysis. The issue of ethnic bias on the part of VPD officers, however, can be neither confirmed nor refuted by the data. The overrepresentation of Indigenous individuals in the street check data also does not confirm nor deny the existence of bias. Attempts to determine whether the manner in which police officers conduct street checks reflect officer bias must, therefore, rely on in-field observations of the dynamics of police–citizen encounters, and/or through an examination of whether street checks adhered to departmental street check policies

and procedures. Since at the time this review was conducted the VPD did not have a published street check study, the focus of the review was on the lived experiences of people in communities of diversity and other key stakeholders in the city as well as the lived experiences of VPD officers. These materials were supplemented by extensive in-field observations of police–citizen encounters. With the exception of the study of street checks in Edmonton conducted by Griffiths et al. (2018), this is the only study of street checks that has conducted in-field observations.

CHAPTER 6: VPD STREET CHECK POLICY, MANAGEMENT, AND TRAINING

Policy and Procedure

The VPD has been working on the development of a street check policy and procedure for several years. Members working on the policy indicated that the VPD is awaiting the outcome of this review and the introduction of provincial standards to finalize the VPD policy. The absence of a formalized policy and procedures has left the definition, practice, and documentation of street checks open to interpretation. The impacts of this will be discussed in Chapter 7.

Interviews and focus group sessions with community members and VPD members revealed that perspectives on the value of a street check policy varied. The majority of community members and VPD patrol command staff felt that a policy was a necessity, while the majority of patrol officers, BET officers, and sergeants were resistant to the introduction of a formal policy and perceived that it would limit their ability to do their work. These perspectives are discussed in the following section.

VPD Member Perspectives on Street Check Policy

Perspectives of patrol officers and sergeants regarding a street check policy were relatively consistent, regardless of their years of experience. Most felt that the VPD did not need a formal street check policy. They perceived that they were already subject to a significant amount of oversight, regulation, and formalized policies and that to implement yet another layer of accountability and administrative responsibilities would be excessive. A number of participants expressed that a policy would limit their ability to exercise discretion and constrain their ability to talk to people. The quotes below reflect the focus groups' concerns about implementation of a street check policy:

> The Charter already supersedes any policy. It already protects people from arbitrary detention. So, you already need to have grounds to stop someone when you talk to them.

> We don't need a formal policy to define what [a street check] is. A street check is exactly what it says. You're stopping someone in the street.

I think members would probably stop doing street checks. This is what citizens want us to do. They want us to stop people, to talk to people. If you create a policy, then you're going to get people who stop doing that.

If you define a street check by a box, you remove an officer's discretion.

People will be reluctant to check people to avoid getting in trouble or become the subject of an investigation.

No matter what the policy is, I can't control what someone is doing in front of me. Their behaviour is dictating what happens.

We have a discrimination policy. Why do we need another one?

Why would we establish a policy to cater to a special interest group's priorities? We don't randomly victimize people. We don't pick on specific people. Our stops are based on circumstances.

A number of officers raised concerns about the development of a street check policy, expressing that it could restrict or limit police officers' ability to conduct street checks. Officers cited Toronto, where the practice of "carding" had significantly limited proactive policing and noted the recent "skyrocketing of gun violence" was a direct result of the limits imposed.

Some officers expressed the need for a policy to provide a formal definition of a street check that could be consistently applied and also noted it should contain guidance on documentation requirements. Participants shared the following:

Framing policy around how we do it says, "If you don't do this, you're doing it wrong."

There probably should be a policy from an organizational perspective. For CYA [cover-your-a**] purposes.

The public needs a clear definition of what a street check is. Like, "This is what a street check is. This is what it isn't."

If you're looking for uniformity in documentation, then you'd need [a policy]. Because right now everyone documents it differently.

Most patrol supervisors also agreed that a formal policy would be very restrictive, would unnecessarily limit discretion, increase the administrative burden, and discourage officers from conducting street checks for fear of violating policy and being subject to a complaint or a professional standards investigation. They felt that academy and in-service training on legal

grounds and articulation were sufficient but added that the department should implement more training rather than create a formal policy. Some supervisors agreed with the commanders' perspective that a policy would add value, would assist in providing guidance and regulating street check practice. They noted that a lack of policy, consistent definition, or procedures that provided guidance and direction instruction could result in situations where mix-ups are made. Participants in the command group noted the importance of structuring any policy developed to take into account the unique needs of each division.

Community Perspectives on the Need for a Street Check Policy

Community representatives viewed a formal street check policy as vital for increasing trust in police. Indigenous leaders recommended that increased transparency and accountability should drive and inform street check policy. Several Black advocates also stated that independent oversight of street check data and policy would increase transparency and trust, with one person noting, "If you're doing a check, you need to document it. And you should be doing it based on policy every single time. If you don't you should be held accountable."

A Sikh representative and a business representative acknowledged that street checks could be valuable if they were guided by principles or guidelines. They advocated for a formal street check policy and detailed criteria to guide when and how street checks should be conducted. Representatives of newcomer service organizations also felt that a formal street check policy would be helpful to establish the boundaries for what police can and cannot do. A shelter manager also suggested that VPD needed to develop a street check policy and added that police may need to consider a separate, unique policy that that includes a relationship building component for the DTES.

Comparison of Policy Recommendations from Canadian Street Check Reviews

Table 23 provides an overview of the policy-related recommendations made in the Ontario, Edmonton, and Halifax street check reviews that could be useful in developing a street check policy for the VPD.

Table 23. Comparison of Policy Recommendations from Canadian Street Check Reviews

Recommendations for Street Check Policy	Ontario	Edmonton	Halifax
General			
Conditions under which officers should and should not conduct street checks.			X
A clear, detailed description of conditions required for a legal street check or investigative stop.	X	X	X
Decisions must be based at an individual level, not a group level.			X
Police should never arbitrarily or randomly stop, question, and search civilians as part of a general crime identification strategy or "fishing expedition."	X	X	X
The types of stops for which policy should apply.	X	X	
Policy should define suspicious activity.	X	X	
Officers should be directed and trained to first make inquiries to confirm or dispel officer suspicion without requesting identifying information.	X		
The policy does not apply to attempts to confirm the identity of an individual who matches the description of a missing person, human trafficking victim, or other victim of crime.	X		
The policy does not apply to interactions that have a community- or relationship-building purpose. Identifying information secured by officers during these interactions should not be recorded or stored in any regulated interactions police database.	X		
Street checks should not be used to routinely establish associations between law-abiding citizens and criminal offenders. Police do not have the power to establish guilt by association.			X
Conducting Street Checks			
Officers should be trained and informed that they must have articulable reasons for initial inquiry or gathering of information.	X	X	
Individuals should be informed of the reason for the stop, information may be recorded and stored, participation is voluntary, and some identifying information (e.g., religion) is being requested by law to help eliminate racism.	X	X	
If person stopped may be under 12, confirm age before requesting information, and if under 12, conduct interaction in the presence of a parent or guardian.	X		
The interaction should take no longer than is reasonably necessary to satisfy the purpose of the interaction.	X		

Recommendations for Street Check Policy	Ontario	Edmonton	Halifax
Collection of Usage of Identifying Information			
Policy should apply whether or not an officer retains and records identifying information.	X		
Requests for identifying information should be conducted in a professional and civil manner that respects the rights of the individual.	X	X	
Police should never arbitrarily or randomly request identifying information for general police intelligence purposes.	X	X	X
No collection permitted if the reason for the attempted collection is a prohibited ground of discrimination under the Ontario Human Rights Code or is done in an arbitrary way.	X		
Identifying information should be defined in policy. It should not include video, photography, or recording during an interaction.	X		
Policy should apply when identifying information is requested from passengers of vehicles when the passenger is not in violation of the Highway Traffic Act, Criminal Code, or other legislation.	X		
Policy does not apply to collection of information for the purpose of investigating an offence or the person stopped has some connection to an offence.	X	X	
Standardization of all street-check-related collection, recording, and storage methods.	X	X	X
Specify the purposes for which street check data may be used.	X		X
Access to Street Check Information			
Civilians have the immediate right to access their full street check record upon request at no financial cost to them. Records of access should be maintained.	X		X
Specify the types of investigations for which access to restricted information may be obtained.	Z		
Limit who may access street check information.	X		X
Documentation and Receipting			
Specify data to be documented for anyone stopped, including passengers of motor vehicles.	X		
Officers must provide citizens with a receipt when subjected to a street check; policy must specify the information required in the receipt, including how to file a complaint with the OPCC.	X		X
The information that should be captured in the street check data set, including the reason for the stop.	X	X	X

Retention of Identifying Information			
Retention of identifying information should be capped at a maximum of 5 years, unless being used for a purpose identified in regulations.	X		
Guidance for destroying identifying information.	X		
Information identified as incorrect should be restricted and purged.	X		
Quality Control, Performance Management, and Reporting			
Guidance for determining whether there was a disproportionate number of street checks.	X		
Police departments are required to produce an annual report that documents the street check activity of the previous year.	X	X	X
The standards for street check quality.			X
Ensure that supervisors routinely evaluate the quality of street checks and arrange for officers who submit low-quality checks to receive additional training.	X	X	X
Police managers should be compelled to use internal benchmarking techniques to identify officers who are engaging in racially biased street check practices.			X
Specify that officer performance should not be evaluated on the basis of the number of street checks collected during a shift or other time period.	X	X	X
Public Education			
Develop a public education program to raise awareness, explain street checks and related practices, and detail how they can contribute to crime prevention and public safety.	X		X

Note. OPCC = Office of the Police Complaint Commissioner.

Street Check Processing and Management

Street check reports are completed electronically on the BC Police Records Information Management Environment (PRIME-BC), a province-wide computer system connecting the information from all police agencies in BC. Its use is legislated and regulated by the BC Ministry of the Solicitor General.

Street check reports are not routed to specific investigative units. Rather, analysts assigned to operational and investigative units search PRIME for street check reports that contain information and intelligence that may be of value to members in their respective units. They analyze statistics and intelligence reports to identify crime hotspots, peak times for the highest probability of crime, and link persons of interest, gleaned from street checks and intelligence

general occurrence reports (Intel GOs), to crime in specific areas. Hotspot maps are regularly distributed to patrol officers. Patrol supervisors alert their officers to identified areas for proactive policing, including street checks, in their non-committed time. District commanders, analysts, patrol supervisors, and investigative supervisors use the information in weekly COMPSTAT meetings to link crime data and identify problem areas and crime hotspots.

Access and Confidentiality

Data entered into PRIME is immediately accessible to all authorized users. Any external non-police agencies desiring access are required to make a request for access through the VPD Information and Privacy Unit.

Retention

There is no retention schedule for street check data on PRIME. Officers and analysts felt strongly that street check data should be retained indefinitely.

Detectives cautioned against deleting street check reports from the system, stating that this could have a negative impact on historical investigations, and added that historical street checks could have value and be utilized if/when a suspect is identified. Analysts noted that street checks and intelligence reports assist in the creation of offender profiles that provide officers with important information and details about the people analysts are searching for. They felt that purging of street checks would impact their ability to access critical information about potential offenders that officers could use to identify suspects when a crime occurs.

The officer in charge of drafting the new street check policy stated that he is recommending a retention schedule that specifies a 5-year limit on retention unless the information is linked to an investigation within that time period.

Quality Control

There is no process in place in the VPD to monitor the quality of street check reports submitted. Data quality issues are addressed in detail in Chapter 5 of this report. Only two officers out of the approximately 100 officers interviewed indicated that they had ever had a street check report

returned. Both were returned from Quality Control Section, who advised that a different report was required based on the actions documented in the street check report.

The majority of staff sergeants and commanders indicated that they did not have time to read and follow up on street check reports. District commanders stated that quality control of street checks is the responsibility of district patrol staff sergeants. However, participating staff sergeants concurred that this is not done on a consistent basis: "Staffs look at files every day, but to be honest we don't spend much time reading street check files. We are looking more at high-profile files like property crime and sex crimes." Similarly, another participant noted, "In [my district] we have a lower call load so I can [look at street check reports]. In [a different district] they have huge property crime issues and they can't always do that."

While no guidance on quality management for street checks has been provided for sergeants, staff sergeants, and inspectors, one inspector undertook an audit of street checks in the district for which they hold responsibility. The audit found that 45% of the street check reports reviewed were not correctly articulated. After speaking with the members, the inspector found, "They have the grounds. They have the reasons. But they just can't explain them."

This inspector indicated that meetings with the patrol teams were planned to provide further instruction and support to assist them in properly documenting street checks. The inspector added that while there has been a lot of education, VPD has not addressed articulation as an "identifiable gap" in documentation in patrol operations. All district commanders agreed that the lack of articulation is the biggest deficit in the quality of street checks.

VPD Analysts Suggestions for Improving Street Check Data

The analysts made several suggestions for improving the searchability of street checks. Suggestions included adding "text tags," similar to "hashtags," or unique keywords when coding street checks. This would align with the approach used for intelligence files, which label files with topics they are related to (e.g., drugs, sex crimes, homicide, property crime). They also suggested that it would be helpful if street checks could follow a similar process to intelligence files and be routed to specific sections.

Several analysts stated that the content of the street checks could be improved by the inclusion of more detailed clothing descriptions, which they find particularly valuable. Another suggested it would be very helpful if police could take photos of the people they are checking and geo tag them, so a street check would be a literal "snapshot" of an interaction in time and space.

Use of Street Checks for Performance Management

District commanders agreed that street checks were an important component of proactive policing. One inspector stated, "I've always wanted frontline members to be equipped with the tools to be proactive and engaged. Street checks are a tool."

However, commanders cautioned against their use as a performance measure. Inspectors generally agreed that street checks should be about quality rather than numbers. One inspector stated that he did not like that the department counts the number of street check reports submitted by officers but does not count other interactions. Participants shared the following comments:

> Street checks have been used as a performance tool and that's incorrect. The problem is people felt they have to put in a check when it's just an interaction. My officers have 20–25 interactions a day that aren't formally documented as checks and they shouldn't be penalized for it…. I feel that if members on the street feel like they're putting in a lot of checks they're doing great work.

> We care about quality, not quantity. Are we checking the right people? That's what's important.

One inspector agreed but was concerned that street checks and vehicle checks were declining in their district. This inspector has worked with analysts to identify crime hotspots in their district and has emphasized to patrol supervisors that an increase in the number of street checks is being sought to identify persons of interest. This inspector does not intend to use street checks to gauge performance, but rather, is focused on encouraging members using all available tools to identify, prevent, and reduce crime.

Supervisors stated that there is currently no organizational mandate to conduct street checks and that they do not put pressure on their officers to conduct a specific number of street checks. They too espoused quality over quantity, explaining that they provide direction to officers to do good police work and that quality street checks will be a product of that good work. They also

cautioned against "chasing stats" or using street checks as a performance measure or accountability tool. Sergeants' comments included the following:

> If someone puts in two [street checks] in a month, so be it, as long as they are quality checks. Numbers don't matter.

> What you get is a collection of garbage. You get 75% crap and 25% quality. So, you have these disparate groups [in patrol]. Some who are doing sh** [checks], a small number doing a bunch of good ones, and some who don't want to go anywhere near them.

> Good police work is all about interacting with people and that is a generational thing. I can't recall ever being told to do X number of street checks. It's about encouraging officers to do good work and to document that work.

The sergeants noted, because patrol in VPD is very "junior," it is important that supervisors and more experienced officers provide direction and explain the importance of proactive policing and conducting good street checks to the junior members.

Street Check Training in British Columbia

There is an increasing recognition that both police recruits and in-service officers should receive training to ensure they have the requisite skill sets to effectively police in communities of diversity. This includes training in cultural competencies, trauma-informed policing, and procedural justice policing.

A review of VPD training courses with respect to communities of diversity reveals that the department has gone far beyond the provincially mandated training requirements in this area. More specifically, the document *Learning from Lost Lives – Examining the Calls for Justice for Police from the National Inquiry Into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls* (VPD, 2019a) described the myriad of initiatives taken by the department to strengthen community relations through liaison officers who work with many communities of diversity and at-risk and vulnerable populations, including the Indigenous, LGBTQ2S+, and homeless communities. The department has developed culturally appropriate and gender-neutral policies, practices, and procedures, increased training in cultural competencies and trauma-informed police practice, and conducted a review of investigative practices in areas including missing

persons and victim services as well as improving communication with the families of missing and murdered persons.

This training goes far beyond what recruits receive at the JIBC Police Academy and what in-service officers in most Canadian police services receive. The challenge is to put systems in place within the VPD to ensure that the training manifests in improved relationships and interactions between VPD officers and people in communities of diversity as well as vulnerable and at-risk populations.

JIBC Police Academy Training on Street Checks

The JIBC Police Academy Director advised that recruit training on street checks is limited. Street checks are introduced in Week 1 of Block I of training. The pre-reading for Week 1 includes two chapters that introduce concepts that apply to street checks, and during Day 2 in the recruit program, recruits are provided with an introduction to street checks from instructors. During Weeks 1 and 2, recruits complete and are evaluated on a street check scenario. They also receive instruction and practice completing a street check on PRIME during PRIME training based on their notes from one of the practical scenarios they participated in.

The recruits revisit street checks in Weeks 2 and 3 of Block III of their training program when street check information is again included in their pre-reading materials. Recruits participate in an instructor-led session and by interacting with their peers in an instructor-led debrief discussion. Recruits work through documenting a street check in PRIME and using that information to complete a report. Recruits are challenged to critically analyze their authority to detain an individual and to demonstrate understanding and application of their street check related knowledge in a scenario, a case study, and a quiz.

Introduction and placement of street check concepts at the very beginning of the program may not be effective, as most recruits lack the contextual understanding of the policing environment, the legal framework within which they will be conducting their work, and police roles and responsibilities. At this point in their development they also do not have the knowledge of legislation, human rights, and documentation and classification systems to be able to lawfully and competently conduct street check stops. This misalignment of timing, the delivery method,

121

(reading) and lack of contextual understating may leave the recruits confused about what a street check is and how, when, why, and where they can and should conduct a street check. This, combined with the lack of a policy, process guidelines, and supplementary training on related topics (e.g., procedural justice, psychological detention, cultural competency), may result in VPD members being vulnerable to inconsistent practice.

Fair and Impartial Policing© for British Columbia Police

In 2016, as part of the provincial response to the police training-related recommendations of the BC Missing Women's Commission of Inquiry, the province customized the US-based Fair and Impartial Policing (FIP)© program (Fair & Impartial Policing®, LLC) content for delivery to BC police officers. This is now a provincially developed and mandated course, delivered in 8 hours of face-to-face training sessions. All BC police recruits since 2016 have completed this training. This course was also delivered to approximately 650 VPD frontline patrol officers in the spring of 2018 by VPD sergeants and constables who had successfully completed the VPD Effective Facilitation Course and the FIP train-the-trainers course offered by Policing Services at the JIBC. The FIP course continues to be delivered to all new recruits at the JIBC. The course explored implicit bias and its application to frontline officers' everyday decision making to enhance their ability to police more effectively, justly, and safely in general, and in particular when working with vulnerable and marginalized people.

The member in charge of the VPD street check course noted that the fair and impartial training was generally received well; however, "there was a vocal minority that had a very visceral response to the program and made comments like, 'I'm not a racist. I'm not a bigot.' … most members quietly sat and took it for what it was." This member added, "However, we don't know if it changed practice."

VPD Street Check Training

A review of VPD training courses with respect to communities of diversity reveals that the department has gone far beyond the provincially mandated training requirements in this area. Training sessions on topics related to street checks are offered by VPD as in-service training. Topics include community awareness, interacting with communities of diversity, cultural sensitivity, Aboriginal competency training, and fair and impartial policing.

122

The document *Learning from Lost Lives – Examining the Calls for Justice for Police from the National Inquiry Into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls* (VPD, 2019a) described the myriad of initiatives taken by the department to strengthen community relations through liaison officers who work with many communities of diversity and at-risk and vulnerable populations, including the Indigenous, LGBTQ2S+, and homeless communities. This training is more extensive than what recruits receive at the JIBC Police Academy and what in-service officers in many Canadian police services receive.

VPD Patrol Information Session on Street Checks

A short street check refresher training session was provided for Operations personnel in the fall of 2018. The member in charge of developing and delivering the training stated that there was nothing specifically noted that officers were doing that was deemed to be an issue that required immediate attention. Rather, the purpose was to ensure that everyone was "on the same page" regarding the purpose, authority, and documentation expectations for street checks conducted by VPD officers. The training, based on the proposed street check policy and guidelines, was developed by the VPD Training Section, reviewed by the sergeant in charge of training and a member of the City of Vancouver Legal Department, and approved by the Operations Deputy Chief for delivery.

The training was rolled out for all members in patrol, traffic, and other operational units, including the gang unit. Emergency Response Team, Canine, and Investigation sections received a "quick, 15-minute refresher training session" prior to a shift deployment.

The VPD Street Check Presentation entitled "Patrol Information Session on Street Checks" had four major objectives (VPD, 2018b):

- Develop an awareness of the legal framework that members of the VPD operate within when they are carrying out their duties by conducting street checks.
- Articulate the duties, roles, and responsibilities of a VPD member in conducting street checks.
- Articulate the duties, roles, and responsibilities of VPD member in documenting street checks.
- Discuss how street checks assist in solving and preventing crime.

The sessions introduced the operational definition as (Slide 4): "A street check is the contact with a person where there is suspicious activity or suspected involvement in a crime or a concern for the safety of an individual(s)."

The training referenced Justice Tulloch's (2018:94) definition of suspicious activity as "an activity where, under all of the circumstances, there is an objective and credible [basis] to request identifying information." The VPD Street Check Presentation went on to state the following:

> [Members shall] only conduct street checks for reasons that serve a valid investigative and/or safety purpose, which includes investigating a suspected offence or series of offences, preventing an offence, ensuring the safety of a member(s) of the public, and ensuring the individual who is the subject of the contact is not at risk of harm. (Slide 14)

The VPD member developing the street check policy is proposing to augment the definition with the following:

> The information may be relevant to current or subsequent law enforcement investigations, as well as necessary for future officer safety and situational awareness … [and] information is lawfully gathered through the cooperation of individual(s) or through compliance with legislative requirements (e.g., BC Motor Vehicle Act).

The training identified the three major components of a street check, then focused on an officer's legal authority to conduct a street check and discussed the four different types of detention. The training reinforced the difference between an arbitrary stop and a legitimate street check and included discussion on police legal authorities to stop individuals based on prohibited grounds set out in the BC Human Rights Code (1996). The training then discussed the requirement to conduct a street check only for reasons that serve a valid investigative and/or safety purpose and reviewed how to document a street check in PRIME, emphasizing that a street check report will not be used for reporting any incident for which a general occurrence report would normally be submitted (PRIME-BC policy s. 2.3).

The VPD refresher training course provided limited guidance on documenting street check reports, referencing only that "a Street Check will not be used for reporting any incident for which a General Occurrence Report would normally be submitted" (PRIME-BC policy s. 2.3; Slide 16).

The member charged with responsibility for developing the VPD policy on street checks advised that he will be proposing that the reporting requirement be expanded to include the following:

> The contact may, where warranted, be recorded in PRIME to document the fact of the interaction and information was obtained from that person by a police officer. This may include details about individuals, vehicles, locations, dates, times, and a brief report on the circumstances and justification for the contact by the police. (M. Wheeler, personal conversation, July 2, 2019)

The trainer reported, "I was told by a few members that it helped clarify when a street check report should be submitted and what criteria should be present." However, training officers advised that members are still submitting reports of interactions that have no value.

Members of the Training Section stated that further street check training is planned, pending completion of this review. They added that they would like to expand upon the fair and impartial training by incorporating a scenario-based approach into the current training.

Supervisor Training

Training Section personnel advised that supervisors receive the same training on street checks that frontline members receive. They do not receive any training on how to help monitor and manage street checks or how they can teach, coach and support their members to conduct and document quality street checks.

Police Street Check Review Training Recommendations

Table 24 provides an overview of the training related recommendations made in the Ontario, Edmonton, and Halifax street check reviews that could be useful in augmenting street check training for VPD members.

Table 24. Street Check Review Training Recommendations

Recommendations	Ontario (Tulloch)	Edmonton	Halifax
General			
Mandatory training on new street check policies and regulations	X	X	X
Regular refresher training	X (annual)		
Officers transferring to a department should receive training	X		
Trainer selection criteria	X		
Supervisor training	X		
Interactive training	X	X	
Training should involve testing and evaluation	X		X
Joint training development and delivery with Indigenous, ethnically diverse, and marginalized people.	X	X	
Training Content			
Focus on professionalism in all training	X		
Standardized training topics: legal framework, documentation, Charter of Rights, initiation of contact, rights of the individual, bias awareness, acknowledging social costs of historical police practices, benefits of respectful language, tone and demeanour, strategic disengagement and conflict de-escalation, community specific issues, adolescent interactions, impact of technology, individuals' rights to access information about themselves	X	Additional training recommended: cultural awareness, sensitivity and cultural competency Engaging effectively with diverse communities,	Anti-bias, cultural competency and race relations training Local Black history and the contemporary social and law enforcement concerns of the Black community
Adherence to principles of procedural justice and respect for civil rights in conducting street checks.	X	Police legitimacy and procedural justice.	X
Anti-bias/bias avoidance	X	X	
Race identification not mandatory		X	
Focus on behaviours and not on race		X	
PTSD in newcomer populations		X	
Engaging with diverse communities training for police call-takers		X	

Note. PTSD = Post-traumatic stress disorder.

CHAPTER 7: DEFINING AND DOCUMENTING STREET CHECKS

This chapter focuses on the definitions of street checks and discusses how VPD members document street checks. It concludes with a brief overview of officer perspectives on public perceptions of street checks as well as their experiences with the public during street checks.

Defining Street Checks

Although there are varying definitions of street checks used by police agencies across Canada, street checks are generally viewed as a practice in which police stop individuals in public, question them, and record their personal information for storage in a police database. In BC, conducting street checks falls within the scope of the duties of police officers under Section 34(2) of the BC Police Act (1996), as well as the common law duties of police officers to preserve the peace and prevent crime.

However, regardless of how street checks are defined, they must comply with the duties of police set out in statutory or common law. Police can speak to anyone; however, unless police have the authority to detain an individual as set out in statutory or common law, the person they are speaking to is not compelled to respond, to provide their personal information, or to remain and speak with the officer. If an individual feels forced or obligated to stay or is prevented from leaving, the stop becomes a psychological detention under *R. v. Mann* (2004) and is in contravention of s. 9 of the Charter of Rights (1982). The VPD is in the process of confirming their definition of what constitutes a street check in Vancouver.

Street Checks and Carding

The terms "carding," "street checks," and "information stops" are often used interchangeably. The Honourable Mr. Justice Tulloch (2018:36), in his *Report of the Independent Street Checks Review* in Ontario, distinguished carding from street checks by "loosely referring to a street check as being information obtained by a police officer concerning an individual, outside of a police station, which is not part of an investigation. Carding constitutes a small subset of what falls under the overarching street checks umbrella." Tulloch defined carding as "collection of identifying information from people not suspected of involvement in crime, for the simple purpose of creating a police database" (36). Tulloch went on to caution, "Carding is not the same

as what police services commonly refer to as conducting street checks, although the two terms have erroneously become synonymous … [and] carding is a practice that no longer has any place in modern policing" (36).

One VPD inspector emphasized that it is important to differentiate between the practice of street checks in Vancouver and the practice of "carding," which he commonly associated with police stop practices in Ontario, stating, "Carding is random. We don't do that here. [Vancouver] is a different [policing] environment. It's not Toronto.… When police conduct stops of individuals in Vancouver, they do so with lawful authority and the legal grounds."

A BET officer noted, "I think street checks leave it open to the perception that we're stopping people for no reason. It's not just random. Generally, we have a reason to stop someone."

VPD Police Officer Definitions of Street Checks

Interviews and focus groups conducted with VPD police officers revealed significant variability in how police officers defined street checks. Members appeared to use the words 'street checks' as a catchall for a variety of interactions. The variations in definition, especially when combined with community members' lack of familiarity with their rights when they are stopped by police, has significant implications for any attempt to determine whether the police are engaged in racial profiling and biased policing and for the development of policy guidelines to address these issues. The primary areas of ambiguity identified in this research related to whether street checks were actions or reports, if they required interaction with people, how street checks were defined, and if, how and when street checks were documented.

Police members highlighted that, in addition to calls for service and investigations, police officers have myriad interactions with the public, only a limited number of which qualify as street checks. Patrol supervisors noted the nature and purpose of police interactions with the public and of the amount of undocumented interactions that police have is difficult to quantify as the number of interactions police have, who they interact with, and why they interact with them varies and is dependent upon the nature of the work officers are doing, the area in which officers are patrolling, the time of day, the person they are interacting with, the reason for the interaction, and the nature of the relationship between the officers and the individual.

Are Street Checks Actions or Reports?

Focus group discussions with officers at all levels highlighted disparate views about whether a street check is an action or a report. For the most part, inspectors viewed street checks as a report of an interaction, while constables, sergeants and staff sergeants viewed street checks as actions:

> A street check is the act. It's the interaction. How that act is recorded can vary.

> It's not an actual written report. The purpose of street check for me is, "Oh this is important."

> Part of a street check is you're engaging in a conversation.

> [It is] an interaction in good faith to ensure public safety, catch people, and identify individuals.

One inspector, however, argued that, "It's an interaction. We enter it in our database as a street check. The term [street check] makes it sound like a specific practice. It's not a practice. It's a way of classifying an interaction."

Do Street Checks Require Interactions with People?

This question highlighted another area of significant subjectivity and ambiguity. One sergeant noted that the term "interaction," as it relates to street checks, is in itself challenging to define: "How would you define an interaction? Our job is to talk to people all day long. We speak to all kinds of people for all kinds of different reasons. Some are as simple as saying hello, while at other times you could end up arresting someone."

Officers perceived that it was dangerous to use street checks as a blanket term for all interactions because it can create the sense that police are randomly stopping people for no good reason. For these officers a check, while random on the surface, typically had a purpose that was connected to enforcement and investigation. However, many officers stated that a street check does not have to involve an interaction, and that they can and do conduct and submit street check reports based solely on observations of people, residences, and vehicles for the purpose of connecting them to a particular location at a particular time. For example, one officer stated, "I'll put in a check on someone I observe or a car. I won't even talk to the person." Another officer noted, "For someone we do know, we'd probably put in a check without talking to them. We'll just note where they are and what they're doing. We can do that with cars and with people."

Some sergeants added that a street check is not necessarily the product of a proactive interaction, but that it could also emerge from a call for service if that call produced details that were not strictly related to the call but that an officer "may find interesting or potentially relevant."

VPD Officer Definitions of Street Checks

VPD patrol officers variously defined street checks as: simple interactions, informal or formal consensual interactions when there was no offence, conversations, an observation, a non-random stop of a person, a lazy intel report, and an intelligence gathering tool. If patrol officers had a legal pretext for a stop, they defined the street check as an investigative detention. Sergeants consistently defined a street check as an interaction in which the police have stopped someone through lawful means, in an area in which a certain type of crime is happening or in a crime hot spot where the person is behaving in a suspicious manner, or the individual's presence in the area is itself suspicious.

Officers perceived that a street check was a step below a detention or arrest and could be a prelude to an arrest. They noted that a consensual encounter could evolve into something more complex, depending on the person's actions, or on the information that officers received during the course of the interaction. A number of officers noted that they often waited until an individual committed an infraction before they would stop and speak to them. Officers shared the following comments:

> A lot of checks are how we define it after the fact. A lot of times at the start, it's just a conversation.

> You start with a consensual encounter. Then if they break the law, police have a duty to do something.

> [A street check] is when you haven't quite made it to an arrest. It's a mere suspicion or reasonable suspicion, but with no observable action. You have enough to quantify that [the person] is in pre-crime mode, but you don't have enough information to arrest them yet.

A theme that emerged from the BET focus groups was that, given their specialized mandate and the unique and challenging environment they work in, the bulk of their job was talking with people, interacting with them, and developing relationships. BET officers acknowledged that they have many interactions throughout a shift that could technically be defined as "checks," but

that few are worthy of being formally recorded. One BET officer stated, "We have daily ongoing conversations with people in our community. We know them. They know us." Another BET officer noted, "You mean that box we tick in PRIME? If that's what you mean by a street check, then in 5 years I've done like one or two street checks. But I 'check' people every day."

Documenting Street Checks

VPD member perspectives on when and how street checks should be documented also varied significantly. This section discusses the analyst's and officer's perspective on street checks.

Analyst Perspectives

The analysts interviewed identified that police interactions can be coded as street check reports or intelligence reports in PRIME. They stated that the nature of an interaction can impact how it is documented, noting, for example, that most drug-related interactions are generated as intelligence files and are flagged for the Drug Section. Analysts emphasized that how an interaction is documented often involves a lot of nuance and that interactions that may have started as a street check could end up being coded and documented as an intelligence file, a general occurrence report, or an arrest, depending on the outcome of the initial conversation. For example, the District 2 analyst noted that officer's searches of the DTES Street Market, which may have started as a simple interaction with patrons and vendors, often resulted in seized property, which must then be entered in PRIME as a general occurrence (GO) report. Another analyst noted that "a fair amount" of vehicle stops were coded as street checks, even though they could have been coded as a traffic file.

Police Officer Perspectives

BET officers, sergeants, staff sergeants, and district commanders agreed that if an interaction does not result in an arrest or enforcement action, it is up to an individual officer to decide, based on the context and their perceived utility or value of information resulting from an interaction, if and how the interaction should be documented. VPD officers can choose to document street check interactions or observations in their notebooks, on a street check report, an intelligence general occurrence (Intel GO), or an investigative GO. The decision to document an interaction

or observation as a street check or as an Intel GO is subjective and depends on the experience, judgement, and preference of the individual officer.

BET officers advised that often observations of people they know may be recorded without direct interactions with those individuals; however, interactions they have with people they know are rarely recorded. Officers stated,

> I can probably count on one hand the times I've done a street check.
>
> [A total of] 90% of the interactions we have go unrecorded.
>
> If I know the person by name and there's no offence and I talk to them, that's a street check. But there is no reason to put it in a report.
>
> For someone we do know, we'd probably put in a check without talking to them. We'll just note where they are and what they're doing. We can do that with cars and with people.

Other BET officers, however, indicated that they regularly conduct and document street checks, with one noting, "I do quite a few. We have a lot of mid-level drug bosses here, so if I see them, I'll document them … especially if they've been away for a few months." Several BET officers pointed out that although they do not formally record interactions in PRIME, they regularly document people, interactions, conversations, and observations in their notebooks, with one officer stating, "Our job in BET is to know about the people down here and what is going on. I will document things regularly, just not electronically. I'm always taking notes and writing stuff down. It's how we learn about the people down here."

Many patrol and BET officers, sergeants, and staff sergeants perceived street checks and Intel GOs as quite similar and, in some cases, interchangeable, while others noted that a check that has generated more substantive information will likely be documented as an Intel GO. Most sergeants utilized the length of the report as a determining factor, while commanders generally focused on the need for an interaction to have a nexus to crime to be deemed worthy of being documented in a street check report.

Most police officers at all levels agreed a street check is a formal record of a physical interaction between officers and people and noted, in addition to people, the report could include information about vehicles, residences, and locations. Inspectors, on the other hand felt that

observations should be documented as intelligence files (Intel GOs). Members noted that their ability to route Intel GOs to the appropriate investigative units often made them preferable to street check reports, which cannot be routed.

Members agreed this loose approach has led to inconsistent reporting, which could result in interactions and observations that should be recorded as street checks being recorded as Intel GOs and vice versa. Many agreed that clear guidelines for documentation would be valuable.

Factors Shaping Decisions to Document a Street Check

VPD members confirmed that a variety of factors can shape their decision to document an encounter or interaction, noting again that these decisions are highly subjective and largely discretionary. Sergeants explained that street checks reports, while less formal, were valuable:

> I think it's a good way to document good police work. It's at the lower end of what we do, but it's critical to policing.

> When you don't have enough to write a GO, but you wanna put them to a time, place or vehicle based on what you get from CPIC [Canadian Police Information Centre] or PRIME [use a street check].

> Any time you go to something violent or drug related, if you can't make an arrest or put in an occurrence report, you can at least put in an intel or a street check to [document] the relevant info. In Drugs, that's how we matched up different crews. We used [checks] to put people together.

Some officers explained that, depending on the area, if they encountered a person who looked like they did not "fit" in the area or who looked out of place, they may be more apt to conduct a check and document the encounter to record who was stopped, what they were doing, and why they were in a particular location. Several officers noted,

> The last check I did involved a federal parolee who was here from another province. So I did a check to put him down in the area.

> Depends on the area of the city you're working in. You know the neighbourhoods and the lifestyle in those places, and you can tell who doesn't fit in.

> If we see someone engaging in suspicious activity or in a place known for [thefts from autos], like a parking garage or something, we might ask them what they're up to or we might just watch them and document [their activity].

Downtown we have a lot of people who don't belong. They commit a lot of thefts from autos. So, if we see someone suspicious in an area that is known for TFAs [thefts from auto], like a parkade, then we may want to stop them and record them. We can connect them to the location at a specific time.

Many members indicated that they documented interactions and observations when they felt the information was about something or someone that other officers should know about. Other officers cited situational and contextual factors in making a decision to document an interaction. They noted having good knowledge and familiarity with individuals in their district allowed them to better identify unfamiliar people or people new to the area. Encountering someone they don't know, or who they haven't seen in a while, in their district acting suspiciously or associating with known offenders increased the likelihood that they would approach that person and document the encounter. Others related they would be more likely to check someone they knew as an offender, particularly if the individual had recently been released from jail. Documenting the encounter or observation was viewed as a way to make other officers aware that a known offender was back in the area. Officers presented considerations they took into account in making a decision to document a street check:

Where we work, we know a lot of the people. We can ask people [we don't recognize] or talk to people about why they are in a certain place. We can ask them why they're there [referencing an area known for drug trafficking] and then document it.

If you see a chronic prolific [offender] in a place they shouldn't be, then you definitely wanna document it.

Does the person have a history of criminal activity? If yes, then I might want to put in a check.

Officers and supervisors also concurred, in many cases, interactions with, or observations of known offenders with whom they frequently interact often did not merit documentation because the interactions failed to produce new information about associations or linkages that should be documented. Officers stated,

We get to know these people. We like a lot of them, but we check them so we can get to know them. I don't document many, but I check these people all the time.

If you are working in the skids, what's the point of putting in a street check on a lot of these people? We know who they are and what they do. But if you see

someone who's associated with the Hells Angels, then you'd put that in. Maybe it is the usual guy, but now he's with two big players and you'd wanna put that in. You are forming a linkage that wasn't there before.

I know a guy is a drug dealer. I know he stands on the same corner every day dealing dope. That's his corner. He's gonna be there tomorrow and the next day, unless he gets arrested or stabbed. I know when he's gonna be there, and I know who he hangs out with. I talk to him all the time. What is the point of me putting in a check very time I talk to him or see him? I'd just be saying the exact same thing.

A number of officers emphasized that simply being known, unknown, or unfamiliar with a person was not in and of itself a reason to check a person. Rather, the person also had to be engaged in suspicious behaviour or be associating with certain people. They also reinforced that police had to be able to articulate the lawful reasons for initiating the check. According to one officer, "If that person I don't know is with a suspicious person or someone I know is a criminal then I want to talk to them. But if they're just chilling and I don't know them, then why would I stop them or check them? You have to have a reason."

Considerations for Conducting Street Checks

Executive officers and senior managers highlighted that the public has an expectation that police will prevent crime, maintain public order, and arrest criminals. They spoke of the importance of and the challenges inherent in conducting street checks in a manner that balances the protection of citizens' rights with conducting legitimate police functions. Most officers agreed that street checks are a component of proactive policing and that they are a tool to identify and apprehend criminals and to support investigation and intelligence-gathering purpose. Officers stated that street checks can be used as a temporal marker to document that police were present at a given location with an individual and to link people to certain places at certain times. Officers also used street checks to capture descriptors such as clothing and tattoos that could link individuals to a crime. They noted that street checks are often conducted in high-crime or hot-spot areas. A sergeant added that the overriding reason for the check was an individual's behaviour, stating, "It's nice to focus on problem areas, but sometimes you just see something that doesn't quite jive."

Suspicion coupled with an individual's actions and behaviours were key factors in officer decisions to conduct and document a street check, and, to a great extent, determined whether an interaction was classified as a street check or a detention, and when an interaction became a detention. BET officers often conducted street checks based on their policing experience, familiarity with a particular individual or group, and knowledge from working in a particular area. Officers acknowledged that profiling was a component of street checks, but were adamant that they profiled appearance and behaviours rather than race. As one officer stated, "You have to profile a criminal. Absolutely we're trying to find criminals. There's a method to our madness."

One officer directly commented on this subjectivity, noting, "It's so subjective too. A street check is kind of a hunch. There's no black-and-white answer of what goes into a street check." Another officer provided an example to illustrate how police make decisions to observe, stop, and record information about suspicious individuals: "There's a guy walking through a parkade looking inside vehicles. That's enough to give me suspicion. If we see him checking door handles, we can detain, but we aren't there yet, so we'll observe him for a while. He might not do anything, but we want to know him and document his activities."

In conclusion, it became readily apparent that VPD members have varying definitions of street checks, differing perspectives of when street checks should be documented, and a range of opinions on how that information should be documented. This has led to inconsistent practice and highlights the value a street check policy could have in guiding actions and reporting.

CHAPTER 8: THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Communities of Diversity

A key component of the project was to record the lived experiences and perspectives of youth and adults in communities of diversity with respect to the police and the practice of street checks, and to obtain their suggestions about how the issues surrounding police–community relations generally, and street checks specifically, could be successfully addressed. The Vancouver Police Board identified a number of organizations involved with communities of diversity and/or vulnerable and at-risk people. A letter of invitation to participate in the research study was sent to these people under the signature of Ms. Claire Marshall, Chair of the Street Checks Committee. Members of the project team interviewed individuals and conducted focus groups with people who responded positively to the invitation. The VPD executive also recommended and facilitated interviews with a number of organizations and individuals. A number of community representatives who were interviewed subsequently facilitated the identification, and participation, of staff from their organization.

Focus Groups with Organizational Staff and People from Communities of Diversity

Focus group sessions were conducted with staff from numerous service organizations and with adults and youth from communities of diversity to explore their lived experiences in greater detail. The number of participants in the sessions ranged from 3 to 12 and the sessions lasted from 45 minutes to 2 hours. There was considerable diversity represented in these focus group sessions.

The topics covered in the focus group sessions included: (a) perceptions of crime and safety in Vancouver; (b) general perceptions of the VPD and its activities in the community; (c) the extent to which the VPD is viewed as being concerned for and interacting with their community; (d) their lived experiences with the VPD generally and, more specifically, with street checks; (e) views of the value of street checks; and (f) suggestions for improving relations with the VPD generally, and, more specifically, with respect to street checks.

Limitations of Focus Groups

Time and resource limitations precluded full coverage of diversity in the city and validation of perspectives provided. The community representatives and residents who participated in the interviews and focus group discussions offered a broad range of perspectives on police–community relations, street checks, and initiatives that could be taken to improve police–community relations. Comments are presented as expressed by participants, and cannot be generalized to the broader population without further research.

Community Perspectives on Police–Community Engagement

The vast majority of service providers and community residents perceived that it was important for the community and police to work together to build and strengthen community–police relationships at all levels. Several Black community members emphasized that they would like to see more outreach and engagement with their communities, and that police officers needed to develop their knowledge on how to engage effectively with diverse communities, with one person noting, "For me, I would like my community to be more accepting of police, but the police also need to be more positively engaged." Others expressed regret over relationships that were built but have not been sustained noting, "We have to start over again."

Many service organization representatives stated that they have a good relationship with the VPD executive and senior levels. The Chief and VPD executive were recognized by senior leadership and managers in many community and business organizations for their demonstrated commitment to building and maintaining relationships with Vancouver communities and local organizations, with many describing the Chief and some superintendents as very responsive, caring, and genuine. Many complimented them for being accessible to the community and for the many community events and meetings they participated in, ranging from lunches with the Chief at the Carnegie Centre, to cultural events, parades, the Pulling Together Canoe Trip, the New Kids program, and the Citizens Police Academy, to name just a few.

The VPD Diversity, Inclusion and Indigenous Relations Section was recognized for the breadth and depth of programming and liaison functions the VPD has established. The inspector in charge stated that in addition to programming the section produces a regular newsletter to draw attention to the many events and outreach activities members throughout the VPD are involved

in. However, the inspector added that the section does not often connect with patrol members to share philosophies, approaches, and learning that officers may find valuable in their work. Specialized VPD liaison members were lauded for their exceptional service and the special efforts they made to build and enhance positive community–police relationships. In particular, community members recognized the efforts of the sex industry liaison, the Indigenous liaison, school and youth liaison, and LGBTQ2S+ liaison officers. Participants shared the following comments:

> Linda Malcolm [the sex industry liaison officer] is different. She takes the time to listen and goes out of her way. She can find a bed for a woman when no one else can in the middle of the night. But there is only one of her—we need a team of Lindas.

> Linda Malcom is the only one who is welcome and works regularly with sex workers at the drop-in. She has a huge workload, but she still has regular Tuesday evening appointments. Long lines of women wait to talk to her. She doesn't wear a uniform and her gun is not visible. Her focus is on ensuring the women's safety.

> Linda has built relationships with the organizations and with sex workers. We know her. They know her. We trust her.

> Work that the Indigenous Liaison did in his time at the Broadway Youth Resource Centre was outstanding. I saw [the liaison] dealing with youth—even super high-risk youth—in the calmest, trauma-informed way. That level of interaction was so impressive. If that were the model for other officers, it would be huge.

A number of people interviewed related positive experiences with patrol members who went out of their way to make a difference for them. A number of frontline VPD members have been recognized for their engagement with, and contributions to communities of diversity. For example, recently, two women officers were recognized internationally for the work they have done on their own time with the *Her Time* program to prevent women and girls from becoming involved with organized crime and to assist and support women and girls already involved in organized crime to develop and implement exit strategies.

However, many of the interviewees expressed concern that the executives' and senior managers' ideals, commitment, principles, and approaches were not translating to many frontline members in their day-to-day interactions with members of the community. One person commented, "The

higher you go [up the chain of command], the more willingness of the VPD to address our issues. That engagement is not as visible on the frontlines."

A youth worker noted, although relationships with the police have improved over the past decade, relationships with frontline officers are still tenuous. Some interviewees stated the VPD has some officers whose engagement skills are good, but noted, regrettably, that many did not possess good engagement skills.

Several community members interviewed noted that the Chief hosts regular lunches at the Carnegie Centre but that frontline officers do not often participate. A member of one community organization, who had participated in these lunches for 8 years and felt privileged to be a part of them, went on to say,

> When I started here years ago, I asked VPD to get cops to come in and say hello to us. Ten years later, they still don't come. They still walk by with their heads in their asses [laughing]. They don't look in here because they don't know us. But we [would] welcome them in.… We want them to come in. Let us know what's going on … [and] see how we're doing.

On the other hand, an LGBTQ2S+ activist highlighted her wish for engagement with the executive and leadership group, rather than just with the Diversity Section:

> We want the person at the top to come down here. We don't want a liaison We need them to come down to the community level and hear what's going on, on the ground firsthand.… They fail because there is such a disconnect between the boss and the workers. There's so much disconnection between the bottom and the top in the VPD.

Chinatown, Gastown, and Downtown business organizations expressed respect for the VPD and the challenges they face in their areas and for the professional way VPD members responded when called. However, from a proactive engagement perspective, they described police as reactive and as "not present, not engaged, and not willing to help." Business people shared the following comments:

> I don't think they're very engaged right now. I look around and don't see much of a [visible] presence. Where are the officers? Why aren't they out walking the beat? And I know they talk about resources. Well, make the f***ing resources. I think it's critical that police are out and about engaging with the public.

When officers are interested in [engagement] that matters.

A number of business representatives stated that they feel abandoned by police. They recognize police have many responsibilities, but noted that the lack of police presence to prevent and address crime and public order issues has had a negative impact on their businesses and their livelihoods.

VPD Frontline Officer Interactions with the Communities

Perspectives on VPD members' interactions, communications, and community engagement skills varied. Many interviewees and focus group participants reported police responding to calls have generally been very helpful and professional and that officers acting less than professional are rare. However, some participants highlighted that they have had unpleasant encounters with police.

A number of citizens sensed that patrol officers are generally not invested or engaged with their communities. Service providers expressed concern that police stereotyped newcomers, Indigenous and Black people, youth, and sex workers in particular. One community advocate stated that police are not engaging with his community and described their approaches as dismissive and deflective.

Many community members expressed that engaging with people from different backgrounds equitably and with respect and compassion appeared to be limited and often lacking in police interactions with vulnerable and marginalized people. Several comments are provided here as examples of the perspectives participants offered:

> If they come in plain clothes and want to engage, they're ok. If they come in uniform, they walk in like they own the place. Their attitude is condescending and authoritarian.

> They can be really ignorant and make me feel like a piece of crap. Their tone of voice is scary.

> We want to be respected and treated like a human, listened to and not discriminated against.

> There's always one that looks so hard and one that looks like you could talk to them, but you don't wanna talk to either of them because they're together.

Community members and organizational representatives stressed the need for police officers to be aware and consider, at all times, that many vulnerable and marginalized people have had a less than positive experiences with police in Canada or in their countries of origin, and that these experiences have made them afraid to have contact or communicate with police.

A number of participants indicated informal engagement was critical and noted that it would be valuable to have opportunities for more personal, informal, face-to-face interactions with police out of uniform in a nonthreatening and safe environment. Participants shared the following statements:

> The [VPD] logo brings a lot of credibility, but it's not enough on its own. Police–community relations should be done in community hubs, like the Croatian Cultural Centre or the Jewish Centre.

> When it's [engagement] less formal, it's less intimidating and less threatening.

> Just talking and connecting with them as humans, that can be huge. If we could have a liaison that worked with agencies like ours, that would be really helpful.

> [Sex worker liaison officers, for example], they don't arrest. They make relationships. They're not in uniform and that is huge. It removes the shame. People will talk to you without fear of being viewed as a rat. I would strongly encourage liaisons to not be uniformed.

A manager who believed that VPD officers needed to engage more with the public cautioned that people would initially be suspicious and that relationship building would take time. However, the manager stressed, such efforts would yield positive results in the long run.

Perceptions of Police Power and Authority

Many organizational representatives and members of communities of diversity spoke of the "huge power imbalance" between police and vulnerable and marginalized communities that police often do not consider in their interactions with citizens. These participants reinforced that it was critical for police to recognize and consider how people in general, and the marginalized and vulnerable in particular, view officers' power, authority, and privilege. The participants highlighted that these perceptions impact community members' interactions with police.

One service provider noted that, even in situations that are not specifically related to law enforcement, most police officers still see themselves as "law enforcers" and give the impression

143

that they don't want to be there. He also highlighted the importance of matching officers' aptitudes with the communities they work within.

Community members emphasized that how police officers communicate can positively or negatively impact if and how people report personal safety concerns and victimization. They reinforced that police officers must be culturally competent and trauma informed to be able to communicate effectively with diverse people in the communities they serve. They must be able to listen and respond respectfully and preserve the rights and dignity of the person they are interacting with. They must also be able to engage in ways that do not intimidate or cause fear and that demonstrate that they want to assist people in meaningful ways.

Community Recommendations

Many interviewees also felt that VPD officers could improve their outreach, engagement, and interactions with communities of diversity. Participants viewed consultation, identification of legitimate community leaders, and continued and ongoing engagement as key to developing good practices and improving accountability. The interviewees put forward the following recommendations:

> I want to see more officers walking the beat. I want to see them talking to people, engaging them, and I'm not seeing that. They never get out of their cars.

> Many places have really good community police centres with really active volunteers—VPD could and should do more of that.

> Show up at events when we invite them.

> For me, I would like my community to be more accepting of police, but the police also need to be more positively engaged.

The Lived Experiences of People in Communities of Diversity

This segment provides an overview of the perspectives of the representatives of communities of diversity who took part in the interviews and focus groups. These participants provided insights on their personal positive and negative experiences, described challenges their communities have encountered when interacting with police, shared their perspectives on the VPD in general and on street checks in particular, and expressed their recommendations for moving forward.

The Indigenous Community

The VPD Indigenous Advisory Council highlighted challenges with systemic racism, police, and the law. They noted that Canadian law is in conflict with First Nations peoples, as it is unjust and racist, and that the system is designed to illegalize, marginalize, and criminalize Indigenous peoples. One member of the Council stated, "We didn't write those laws. They don't serve our interests. Police enforce those laws and those laws are unjust. As much as police are there to enforce the law, they're enforcing laws that don't serve us."

An Indigenous outreach worker from an organization that provides shelter and other support services echoed these comments, noting that response of police when dealing with an Indigenous person is stronger and more aggressive than when dealing with others. He stated, "There's a lot of racism to it. People say racism doesn't exist in Canada, but when you're Aboriginal you see it. You live it."

Council members highlighted that police are reflective of society in general, and that they reflect systemic racism and an ignorance of Indigenous issues. They explained that the Western worldview is more about properties, while Indigenous practices are more about the relationship with the creator and earth, balance and responsibilities, and being good human beings. The approach of Indigenous people is to heal and repair, while the intention of police is to enforce and recommend charges. One council member noted, "Maybe that's the difficulty of today. We have a say, but when we don't know where our is voice is headed, that created so much suspicion and frustration."

Other participants highlighted that the history of Indigenous people and law enforcement is based on fear, suspicion, hatred, and distrust, and stressed that not enough work has been done over the past 300 years to heal that relationship. One participant stated that people are angry with the police and shared the following comment: "The people in this room have been here for 30 years and they've been telling these stories for 30 years." Another participant noted, "Police are doing what they're taught, and I can tell you not much of their training addresses historical trauma or historical issues of Indigenous peoples."

Participants also noted Indigenous people are intimidated by police: "Police are in the power position. Our people aren't. Our people are automatically intimidated by police. It doesn't matter where it is." Another participant stated, "Most Aboriginal people probably want to run and hide when they see police, but they can't."

Representatives of Indigenous service and support organizations also highlighted the severe historical trauma that Indigenous people have suffered, and in many cases continue to suffer. Participants noted, for many, relationships with police and government have historically been rocky. One individual explained that 14 of his family members have died premature deaths, stating,

> There is a problem—a huge problem. There has been a lot of racism, profiling, and mistreatment of Indigenous people ongoing over the years and nothing has changed. The impacts of chaos and poverty have left many people fighting for survival. Policies against drugs have failed. We need police to listen and understand and not make assumptions.

Similarly, another participant noted, "There's lots of fear—[for both] young and old—when stopped. Their history influences their reactions."

Interviewees felt that cultural competency and trauma-informed training were "absolutely necessary" for police. They acknowledged that several VPD officers have undergone training on the history of Indigenous peoples in Canada, but cautioned that hands-on, experiential learning was often lacking. Several interviewees reported, although the police say their officers understand the trauma and inter-generational effects of trauma on Indigenous peoples, it is hard to believe given what they are hearing from people on the street. Council member participants shared the following statements:

> Without it [cultural competency and trauma-informed training], [police] make it worse. Without it, they don't know how to operate.

> A big part of the police's problem is that they're still reading from a book. It's not hands on.

> We're helping to get them up to speed as quickly as we can.

> They're going into these vulnerable communities with their own traumas. Compassion fatigue is huge.

Several participants noted, although there is some outreach to organizations serving Indigenous people, there is virtually none to individuals in the community. One Council member noted, "They don't come to community events. Come to an event, serve at a soup line—firemen are doing it, but we never see a police officer doing it. They keep themselves separate from the community they are working in." Similarly, another council member stated, "I've seen police officers in Richmond at kids' games—we don't see that in areas of poverty. We need connections."

One group of Indigenous representatives applauded the positive changes they have noted in 911 operators over the past several years. One interviewee highlighted that the "VPD is trying really hard with reconciliation and spoke about the work that is being done with three tribes represented in the DTES Indigenous community. Representatives of a DTES Aboriginal society stated that the VPD is becoming more aware of the issues within the city and have started making improvements in how they respond to Indigenous people. As one participant commented, "They have started awakening themselves to the uniqueness of Vancouver. They are not as bad now, especially compared to the RCMP."

Many people in the Indigenous focus groups agreed that they have lost trust in the VPD. Several noted that the police are a product of colonization and their actions demonstrate that. They viewed the police as an authority, rather than as a helper, and did not feel police officers were approachable. One participant related the following example: "A known Elder, an old grandmother, was called a dealer by the police and brought to court. She was wrongly accused and won her case with the help of Pivot [Legal Society], but after that she was afraid to go out to the street."

Others reported that many Indigenous people have lost so much trust that they do not even contact police when they have been victimized for fear that they will be re-victimized. Several participants acknowledged that interactions between police and Indigenous communities continue to be "a little rough" because a lot of Indigenous people suffer from addictions.

A number of participants reported Indigenous people do not feel accepted as citizens of the community and that police interact with Indigenous people with condescension and superiority, as if they are better than them. They perceived many police officers as wielding power and

authority inappropriately and noted police were often suspicious of them, and, when interacting with Indigenous people, did not believe them. Participants shared the following comments:

> A VPD member speaking at a large conference stated, "Anyone wearing a Native Pride hat or t-shirt is a gang member."

> The message we get is "stay in your poverty pen. You don't belong here."

> Both male and female officers have lots of power and authority. It sets them apart —they need to use that power wisely.

> My vehicle was damaged by a white guy, but I was treated as the perpetrator—the bad guy … and I was told to forgive the bad guy!

> My son is adopted from Kenya. He was jumped on by white kids. The police came and took the white kids' side. I complained but the complaint went nowhere.

An Indigenous leader who was formerly a Chief stated that he "feels for police working in the DTES," but agreed that interactions with police people residing in the area were often "quite traumatic." A number of interviewees expressed concern that it appeared that police officers were unaware of Indigenous culture, history, and community dynamics, were not culturally sensitive or competent, and regularly made assumptions. They reported often being treated poorly by police, noting that many police officers were prejudiced and dismissive in their approaches and did not interact with Indigenous people in a respectful manner. Many participants stated they felt obligated to speak with police officers when approached. Participants shared the following comments:

> Their approach needs to change—we need them to become human.

> Not all Indigenous people are drug addicts, drunks, or have done something wrong.

> At 2 a.m. they think I'm doing something, that I'm behaving suspiciously. Why don't they think that at 2 p.m.?

> They make assumptions that you are scoping things out, even if you are visitor looking around.

> The DTES is almost all young men. They attract police attention. I'm real worried about them. The presumption is they are up to no good.

Many felt that police should be held more accountable for their actions. Those who had complained about police behaviours or actions stated that they felt dismissed, in some cases got no feedback, and in other cases got "bad results."

The VPD Indigenous Advisory Council highlighted the importance of connecting with police and making police feel a part of their community, noting, "Even though there is a lot of negativity, the police on the streets are still our community members. They are part of our community."

Perspectives on Street Checks

Many interviewees and focus group participants felt that stops were often random, and that it was police bias that led to profiling and indiscriminate stops of Indigenous people. They perceived that they could be stopped if police "think you are not acting right." Several participants related incidents when they had been stopped by police and told, "You look like someone we're looking for," but when asked, the police would not or could not describe the person they were seeking. Participants emphasized that stops should be conducted only if police had a bona fide concern. As one member of the focus group stated, "Stops need to be relevant to something. You can't just pick on any Black or Indian guy. There has to be something there."

An Indigenous leader related an example of walking with a visually impaired friend in the DTES. A police officer approached and asked his friend what he was up to. When his friend responded with a swear word, he was "choke slammed" by the officer.

A number of focus group participants emphasized that police and the public need to understand why street checks are done and what they are being used for beyond being "an extra tool for the police to keep Aboriginal people in jail."

Several participants questioned police authority and policy for stopping people who are walking or driving. A number of people questioned the definition of street checks as consensual encounters, with one person noting, "You can say consensual. I beg to differ on that. Only half of it is consensual."

Articulation

Interviewees noted that it was crucial for officers to articulate to the person they stopped why they were stopping someone. They also felt officers should submit reports on stops and that the reason for the stop should be clearly spelled out in the report. One person suggested that forced documentation of a stop would give people an opportunity to challenge the stop if needed.

Street Check Reporting and Data Collection

Street check review and monitoring processes were also raised as issues by a number of participants who noted that police have considerable freedom to exercise discretion in conducting and documenting street checks. One person commented, "I can't imagine what the monitoring is like."

An Indigenous leader found the data presented in the VPD report problematic, stating, "The incomplete information and not good tracking compounded the situation and the measure of jeopardy for community members. If it is an unremarkable interaction, say so and capture it as such. I think the drop-down menus may be missing some options."

Although this individual indicated that he had never been street checked, he noted that Indigenous people experience racism at every turn and often feel targeted. He suggested that the systemic racism, in and of itself, should drive police to ask and answer some difficult questions. He felt strongly that the outcome of carding could have some lingering consequences for the person being checked. He asked if the efficacy of carding had been researched, called for increased transparency and accountability, and recommended that these considerations inform a street check policy.

Several interviewees expressed worry about individuals who are repeatedly checked, and asked about the extent to which the number of documented checks would influence police to "watch and harass people." One person described how street checks perpetuate the "revolving-door justice system," stating that people who get out of jail one day will be repeatedly stopped over the next few days or weeks. He expressed particular concern with repeated checks, noting that because it can take up to 2 weeks to get ID back after leaving jail, this group of people is particularly vulnerable to continued problems in interactions with the police.

A number of people also voiced concern that street check data is not representative of how many street checks are actually conducted. They noted it is important to consider the number of interactions, including street checks, that were not being recorded, and asked how, if that information was factored into the street check analysis, would change the outcomes reported. Some participants expressed concerns about the lack of an authentication process to determine the ethnicity of individuals being stopped. One participant stated, "I think there are way more Aboriginal people getting searched by police and it's not getting recorded or reported." Similarly, another participant asked the question, "What about people who are not visibly Aboriginal? How are they recorded?"

Another person asked, "And what about the parameters of carding? What happens to the information? If an individual is carded a number of times, does this compound against the individual?" Yet another individual noted if drugs were found during a street check, it could lead to federal charges and put this person into the federal system. The same participant expressed concern that this involvement with the system impacts access to jobs and people's ability to cross borders: "It stays on their record and keeps them in the system. Involvement in the system stops Aboriginal people from living the life the way they want to live it. Street checks are just a way for police to keep Aboriginal people in the system."

Bias, Profiling, and Stereotyping

Indigenous service providers related that they and their clients are being profiled and stopped, often simply because they are Indigenous. Participants shared the following statements:

> I still get stopped because I'm an Indigenous man. Does it bother me? Yeah, it bothers me because we're all the same.

> What makes a lot of people upset [with police] is the profiling.

> No matter where in the city (or the Lower Mainland), the situation is the same. Police watch Indigenous people and stop them because they're Indigenous.

> The problem is when you profile one person, it's not just one person. It's an entire people.

> Even when I go to work early in the morning, I notice cops slow down and look at me. I just laugh now. I'm too old to worry.

> It's not even if you fit a description.

I've heard stories from this community of profiling. Being stopped by police for no reason.

Police need to understand that profiling any person is against the law.

Representatives of DTES service and support organizations estimated that 90% of Indigenous people stopped by police are men, many of whom are under 35. They perceived that their involvement with police is due, in part, to gang violence and crime.

Moving Forward

VPD Indigenous Advisory Council members felt strongly that street checks should be prohibited until police can demonstrate that they will conduct them in "a reasonable way." They felt that there were alternative approaches to policing, with one council member stating, "Maybe it's the easiest. Maybe it's the most convenient. But there are other ways."

Other interviewees also focused on oversight, accountability, and transparency. They cited the lack of Indigenous consideration and promotion of colonization as significant problems with existing oversight models. One participant noted, "That system is working perfectly to move Indigenous people out of the way on the road to colonization." Similarly, another participant stated, "We're just rearranging deck chairs on a sinking ship. The foundation of the system has failed."

Many interviewees and focus group participants cited the lack of confidence in the complaint process as a significant problem. Several suggested that strengthening the complaint process would encourage better policing.

Black Communities

Priority areas of concern for the Black communities are police transparency and accountability, police approaches when conducting street checks, and the impact of street checks on the community. A number of interviewees spoke of pervasive and systemic racism in Canada, Vancouver, and the VPD. The relationship between Black people and the police was cited as a concern by Black organizational and community representatives. A number of interviewees spoke of the history of police in Canada and abroad, noting that police have been used as "enforcers of bigotry" and that the role of police is, therefore, viewed by many Black people "as

one of suspicion." Many participants applauded the mayor's and provincial government's acknowledgment of anti-Black racism as an issue, noting that it has led to more open discussion and has increased awareness.

Interviewees emphasized the need for police to understand and appreciate the trauma Black people have suffered in their countries of origin and in Canada to understand why Black people often fear police. Members of the Black community shared the following comments:

> Trauma is huge … for people from oppressive countries, the presence of police can be extremely triggering.

> Many people are still traumatized from past experiences with the police. Being a person of colour, it is the idea that I can be stopped by the police for wearing the same clothes as you and you won't be stopped.

> I'm from Toronto. Carding was an everyday experience for me.

Several interviewees related positive experiences with VPD members, noting police were helpful and kind to them. Although many organizational representatives and activists indicated they had never been street checked, several noted that the experiences of Black people living in poverty and battling addiction is that they are often discriminated against by police. These participants noted people of privilege were often treated differently than vulnerable individuals. One participant noted, "I have never been targeted by police. I ascribe this to being a light-skinned Black professional woman. My brother's experience has been very different." Similarly, another participant stated, "My Black friends I know who are out of poverty do not seem to have issues with the police like those living in marginalized conditions."

Many people spoke of challenges in the DTES in particular, noting that people on drugs needed to commit crimes to maintain their habits, which invariably led to more interactions with police. They stated that although there is currently a focus on addressing homelessness, unless there is treatment and rehabilitation assistance available to help people get off drugs, their problems will not be solved. As one member of the community stated, "It's just a drug den. When you put a bunch of people in the same place who all have the same issues it expands those issues exponentially."

The Impact of Good Police Intentions on Vulnerable People

A number of interviewees and focus group participants stated that police may have the best of intentions, but that they are not considering the impacts their actions have on vulnerable and marginalized people. Several people related their disappointment with VPD responses to questions about the department's report on street checks, noting that the VPD did not prioritize people's rights and the impacts street checks are having on communities, but focused instead on their intentions. One person stated, "Impacts should not be accepted as collateral damage of intentions. Good people can do bad things. If you have good intentions and the impact is bad it is not right."

Several people explained how police actions taken years ago continue to impact the community. One interviewee recalled that approximately 10 years ago there was a lot of fear and disgust in their community for police generally, and the VPD specifically, because Black men were "constantly harassed by VPD." The police would stop them for no reason and ask if they owned the cars they were driving. This activist went on to point out that men who experienced racial profiling by VPD 10 years ago are now fathers and are telling their sons to avoid the Downtown area: "It's heartbreaking to hear. A fear now for our children. They don't want their kids to have the same experiences they had."

Some people noted that the officers they have interacted with had good intentions; however, because the people the officers are interacting with lack trust in police, they are often disrespectful and aggressive toward the police, and "it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy." One participant also noted that many people in the DTES have a negative perception of police and have spread those perceptions to others, stating, "It's like a disease that spreads. Negative experiences carry more weight than positive ones."

Perceptions of Bias and Racism

Many Black people related concerns about how Black individuals specifically, and marginalized people in general, have been viewed and treated by police. One interviewee described police as a "racist institution," but noted that he is not "anti-police." However, he felt that police should be doing more peacekeeping, rather than focusing exclusively on enforcement. He strongly believed that Canadian police use force indiscriminately against people of colour. When asked, he related

154

that he has not been approached by police in the year that he has been in Vancouver and has not witnessed anyone being street checked, however he remains fearful, stating, "I'm cautions when I'm approached by a police officer. I don't know how it is going to end."

A number of interviewees felt that police were unduly influenced by media and social media reports of crimes and police interactions involving Black people. Several interviewees referenced that Black people are often stopped for "driving while Black" or because *"they are a person of colour driving a fancy car."* Participants shared the following comments:

> Street checks used to have a particular meaning for Black people—it used to be checking anyone sleeping on the street or having difficulty. Now it's often used to stop people going on their own way and minding their own business.

> When we're stopped, in their minds we're guilty.

> They think someone is a criminal before they even get there and find out what is happening.

> Black people are stopped to make sure they haven't stolen a vehicle.

A Black LGBTQ2S+ male cited institutional racism, systemic oppression, victimization, and barriers to services as part of everyday life:

> As a Black male I face discrimination every day.… People of colour are continuously being told they don't belong—both within and outside the LGBTQ2S+ community.… Trans women of colour are being violently abused and victimized.… People are being rejected [from accessing services]. It hurts that those who serve us are actually preventing us from doing what we need to do to survive.

Several participants referred to the findings of the VPD's (2018c) *Understanding Street Checks* report and indicated that the disproportionate numbers of Black and Indigenous people stopped and checked was confirmation of racism by VPD members. Participants shared several statements on this subject:

> Systemic and unconscious bias is rampant. People with mental health and addiction problems should be treated with compassion and respect, not discriminated against.

> In dominant circles we have to learn about ourselves. How the world is built to enable white persons. We need to deconstruct white supremacy.

155

There is a lot of anti-Black racism. It shows up differently in different areas. The definition of racism in Canada is not consistent with the USA. There are lots of microcosms in Vancouver. There is invisibility for Black persons. There is no critical mass so Black doesn't show up in policy.

There is a hypersensitivity to Black people who stand out when advocating; Hypervisibility erases the focus on humanity and individuality.

Racism is entrenched. Look at who is sitting around the VPD decision-making table.

There are pervasive stereotypes particularly around Black males that affect and infect our thinking, even within the community—lots of unconscious bias.

We need more officers of colour in Black neighbourhoods who are able to relate to people of colour instead of stereotyping them. There is a presumption of Blacks in public spaces—they are seen as out of place [and], therefore, bear the presumption of guilt. Checks reflect this mindset.

A number of service providers and advocates reported women drug users and women living in poverty noted that they are regularly stopped by police. They expressed concern that these stops are race and class driven. Interviewees also cautioned that although they are speaking for the Black community, racism also affects other communities. One advocate noted, "I have Muslim friends who have told me about their experiences with racism and discrimination. This is not an isolated reality for dark skinned people living in in Vancouver. Police need to recognize and admit this."

Police–Community Interactions

A number of interviewees and focus group participants felt that police focus unnecessary attention on people of colour. One interviewee related that she has made a point of observing police in the Olympic Village community centre area where she resides. She was disheartened to see that police "stop only Black and Indigenous people, and no one else."

A number of participants shared examples of police stops of Black people that they found concerning:

I was in the car with my husband who is white. He was driving and I was in the passenger seat. We were stopped by police. I was asked for identification; he was not.… Even though I am a professional and sit on boards, I felt people looking at me as if I was a prostitute.

A [Black] friend who is a lawyer was visiting Downtown Vancouver to meet a client. He was detained by police because they thought he was soliciting a prostitute.

A young [Black] man was downtown with two white and two Asian friends walking around. A police officer stopped him and asked him when he came to Canada. The young man was 16 and was born and raised in New Westminster. The officer asked him for ID, but did not ask any of his friends for ID.

A young Black male told me that he'd been stopped in Vancouver more times than he can remember. He said, "If three or four Black guys are together, [police] stop us because they think we're a gang."

I personally have been followed by police wile walking my neighbourhood in in East Vancouver. The car slowed down and followed me. The officer was on the radio and the computer for a while but did not stop me. Why?

A Black man and his young son were shopping one morning in Chinatown. Police accosted them and told the adult that he "fit the description of a suspect." Officers made no further inquiry and showed no civility, only total disrespect."

I like to hand out "you are beautiful" stickers. I gave one to a cop and tried to talk to him. I asked if he is happy with his job. He told me he didn't need to answer that and walked away.

A Black child was followed by police to his home in a high-end neighbourhood. When parents enquired what the child was doing that warranted police attention, police replied that they "were just doing their job."

Fear of the Police

One interviewee noted that Caribbean people respect police, but that when they come to North America, they become fearful of police, often because of what they see happening in the US. Many noted that the negative perceptions and experiences relayed by their parents, media reports, and social media have significantly impacted their perceptions, behaviours, and fears. This person commented, "They see a lot of young Blacks getting mistreated by police in the US and they are petrified."

This poses particular challenges for young people who live in the suburbs and want to go Downtown to socialize but are reluctant to do so because they don't trust the VPD. An interviewee related how young Black males told him that they will try to avoid police on the street because they fear getting beaten up by police and added that young Black males who had been invited to participate in this study were reluctant or unwilling to do so because "they don't

think it's worth it. They don't think anything will change." Reluctance to call police was also cited by other interviewees, with one person stating, "If you were in my shoes and have been discriminated against, why would I want to call police?"

One individual stated that community members are reluctant to complain about inappropriate police actions and added that the pervasive sense is that "you just keep your mouth shut and don't complain." Another interviewee noted many people do not know their rights and are afraid of police officers. This lack of knowledge, coupled with fear of police, and fear of being harassed can make them feel obligated to answer questions when approached by police.

Police Engagement and Outreach

Black community representatives emphasized that they would like to see more outreach and engagement with their communities and noted police officers needed to develop their knowledge on how to engage effectively with diverse communities of Vancouver. One participant stated, "If Black youth are scared to talk to police and if police are scared to talk to Black people, when they do come together, it's going to come to a head."

One community advocate stated, "[The] community needs to be engaged rather than dismissed and deflected." By way of example, this participant related that, although he was pleased to see the Police Chief at the Vancouver vigil for the Montreal mosque massacre, hearing him say, "We don't have to worry about that here," indicated to people of colour that this was not a legitimate concern and that "we don't have Islamophobia in Vancouver." This participant emphasized that it was important for police to participate in this event, but that the focus should have been on honouring and expressing solidarity and sorrow with the community.

A number of interviewees stated they would like to hear about the good things police are doing and would like to see VPD frontline officers more engaged in outreach. They noted that police officers rarely come to cultural functions. Several participants suggested the VPD needs to have a greater social presence in the community and be more socially progressive. They acknowledged that their community needed to promote that desired role. Participants' desire for this change was reflected in the following comment: "A lot of people see the police as an authority and that's it. They only show up when things go wrong." Another participant stated,

"Presence has a lot to do with it. Involve Black officers in community functions." Another participant noted, "We need to reach out to police a bit more." Conversely, because of negative past experiences, some representatives of other organizations wanted police to stay away from their functions.

The Cultural Competencies of Officers

Interviewees noted that police often do not seem aware of how context shapes their assumptions and approaches. Participants perceived that many officers are not culturally sensitive or aware of the impacts of trauma that many marginalized people may have experienced, stating officers focus their attention on these people based on their own biases and assumptions. Engaging with people from different backgrounds equitably and with respect and compassion were cited as traits that appeared limited, and often lacking, in police interactions with marginalized people.

A number of participants perceived, based on their personal experiences, that police lacked cultural knowledge and had limited awareness of cross-cultural differences. One participant noted, "That's why I think a lot of Black parents tell their kids how to behave around police." Similarly, another participant stated, "My nephew tells me that with police, if it's not about a crime—they don't know how to ask a question. They don't know how to initiate a conversation."

Several interviewees commented that they did not expect police to know everything, but that they expected police to have enough knowledge to approach people of colour, noting, "They need to learn cultural competency. It has to be done!"

Perspectives on Police Street Checks

Many interviewees from the Black community did not perceive a difference between "street checks" and "carding." Some perceived street checks as discriminatory and police explanations for conducting street checks - crime investigation, deterrence, and well-being—as not valid. This view is reflected in the following comments:

> If [criminal investigation] was the reason, they'd be carding every single person, but they're not doing that.… The numbers show it's not the case. It seems like they're only recording information on people of colour.

> I see carding as a racist and discriminatory tool.

> If carding was used with the intention of saving people or helping people, then it wouldn't be done in the way it is now.

In general, interviewees agreed that interactions should be documented, with one person stating, "If you're doing a check, you need to document it. And you should be doing it based on policy every single time. If you don't you should be held accountable."

Building Trust and Confidence in Police

Building trust and confidence in police were cited as essential to improving community–police relationships. Participants identified the following key areas of focus as essential to achieving that goal: governance, rights-based approaches, accountability, transparency, and effective complaint management processes.

One activist stated it was important for police to acknowledge "there is a level of corruption, even though it is not indicative of the entire department." This participant stressed the importance of the VPD examining the officers working in the DTES, noting, "A lot of these problems happen out of sight." She shared stories and rumours she had heard, ranging from police corruption, to police compelling sex workers to have sex with them, to abuses of power, and rumours of police misconduct with Indigenous people in the DTES. This participant further noted that these stories, whether true or not, fuelled negative perceptions of police.

Several people expressed the view that, at present, VPD values image management more than focusing on rights, compassion, and understanding. Interviewees acknowledged that the VPD has many good liaison officers and diversity programs but felt that if frontline officers developed and used a rights based approach and interacted with people in a more compassionate and caring manner, the community would be more trusting of police.

Many interviewees noted police have little or no appreciation of the privilege their power and authority bestow upon them and remain unaware of how that power and authority impacts the people they are interacting with. Participants highlighted that officers can come across as threatening to some groups, especially those who have not historically been well treated by police. Interviewees described interactions in which police were demanding, abrupt, and rarely articulated the reason for a stop, noting that if police were respectful and explained why they

were stopping someone, street checks would be less likely to become confrontational and people's perceptions and trust of police would improve.

Interviewees stated accountability and transparency in all activities, including street checks, are key to building and maintaining public trust and confidence in policing. Several people suggested that more police and civilian interaction is necessary to achieve accountability. All service providers agreed that street check data need to be publicly available. The majority also felt that independent oversight of street check data and policy would increase transparency and trust.

Several interviewees also highlighted that complaints about police behaviour did not get results. They referenced examples going back to the 1960s when the singer Leon Bibb was stopped by police and questioned about a robbery, solely for his skin colour (Hawthorn, 2015). Bibb fought for, and eventually won, an apology (Hawthorn, 2015). Participants expressed concerns that "not much has changed." An interviewee related a current example of a Black woman who drives a "nice car" daily from Surrey to the University of British Columbia every day for work and recorded the number of times she was stopped by police. When she complained, the police told her "they were looking after her," but "she does not want that."

Interviewees and focus group participants noted that it was important for the VPD to evaluate programs and activities to determine not only if members are behaving in discriminatory ways but also to consider and demonstrate the impact of their actions on the communities they are serving. The majority of interviewees focused on the need for police and the community to move forward together beyond discussion to action to build trust, with several participants noting that if the community became aware that police strived to be advocates of the people in the DTES, it would increase trust in police and improve police legitimacy.

The Lived Experiences of At-Risk Youth

The Challenges Faced by At-Risk Youth

Representatives of service organizations who work with vulnerable and marginalized youth provided services for a diverse group of 16 to 24-year olds. These participants highlighted the variety of youth served and the many challenges they experience, with one participant stating, "A

real variety of youth here. Some are very street entrenched. Some have deep at-home issues." Another interviewee noted, "There is not a lot of normality in these kids' lives. They know how they're seen and treated is different."

These participants reported youth are more vulnerable than adults because of age and developmental issues, with a small cohort of high-risk and high-needs youth under 19 being described as the most vulnerable. Participants from one organization noted 25% of the youth they serve are First Nations and 6% of their shelter youth population are trans. Other participants similarly stated that a high proportion of their youth are First Nations and LGBTQ2S+.

Service providers identified food security, shelter, and other basic needs as the most urgent for vulnerable youth. In addition to the lack of affordable housing and high cost of living in Vancouver, youth often faced also faced more complex factors such as racism, stigmatization, and discrimination. Youth unemployment is high. Youth often have limited access to resources and participants described their ability to obtain stable housing as very poor. Major health, safety, and security issues plague these youth. Opioids are described as a "huge issue," with one Director estimating at least one overdose death per month for their youth population. New issues continue to arise, making it increasingly difficult for outreach organizations and service providers to respond effectively. A housing manager noted, "It's like plugging holes in the dam."

Participants working with LGBTQ2S+ youth emphasized that these individuals experienced a higher level of victimization with many subjected to violent assaults. One Director suspected that much LGBTQ2S+ victimization is underreported. Service providers indicated that LGBTQ2S+ youth, and especially trans and two spirit youth, were particularly impacted by street checks in that they have no ability to change their identification to reflect their transition or their gender markers, leaving them with identification that does not match their gender. This is problematic in interactions with police, where they are accused of lying or presenting false identification.

Additional challenges identified for LGBTQ2S+ youth included trading sex for shelter, being misgendered, denied access to gendered environments (including shelters), harassment by police, and immediately having negative interactions when they access services, largely because people do not know how to address them and work with them. One participant noted, "We don't see [LGBTQ2S+] youth doing well in housing environments, in rehab environments. There is really

no place for them to go." Another participant stated, "These youth have not run away. They've been thrown away."

Participants described refugee and immigrant youth as particularly vulnerable, with language barriers, permanent residency issues, and no financial resources. A newcomer support agency representative noted that many of the newcomer youth have come from countries with militarized backgrounds and are, therefore, very reluctant to engage with police. Youth service agency representatives reported seeing increasing numbers of refugees and first-generation immigrant youth whose families have fractured, resulting in them being on the street. One service organization representative noted that they are seeing increased numbers of youth seeking legal advice related to immigration status.

Service providers noted that youth sex work is becoming more visible and is prevalent for young women and trans youth. Participants explained that youth have become involved in or have fallen victim to human trafficking and sexual exploitation, and those who have become involved in prostitution are often subject to violence and threats of violence by pimps and traffickers. Participants further noted many youth suffer from mental health issues and/or have a history of trauma and abuse. One interviewee stated, "At any given moment 30–40% of our kids have a diagnosed mental health issue." In addition, another interviewee explained, "35% of our youth have a chronic mental health issue. They range from borderline personality disorders to psychosis and more serious conditions."

Service providers stated that at-risk youth often have negative perceptions of authority figures, with one participant noting,

> A positive relationship with a person in authority can go a long way in a person's life. In most cases, not one person of authority in their life has come through for them. That sets the stage for a lot of these interactions. An officer should be coming from that place with empathy and understanding. Just be dignifying. It's not rocket science, you know.

Participants identified poverty as the primary driver for "survival-type activities" such as sex work and property and violent crime committed by these youth that results in contact with the police. Although involvement with formal gang activity has not been observed, service providers reported that some youth are involved in more informal, street-level gang activities.

Police often interact with youth who experience mental health challenges when they present a danger to themselves or others and with youth who are victims, often of sexual abuse and physical violence. Youth worker participants noted that youth are often unwilling to report victimization to officers because they perceive that involving the police increases their risk of becoming a bigger target or exposing themselves to further harm. Others do not believe the police will do anything about it. One worker provided an example of police calling the centre to find a youth. Every time the manager relayed the message to the young man, he would blanch and resist because "his only thought was that the police were out to get him." The youth worker noted this example is not atypical and that this individual's belief is shared by many other youth service providers deal with.

Service providers acknowledged that police officers' jobs can be challenging: "It's hard because we're on the other side of the fence and it's easy to say these things, but they [police] have to deal with safety and security concerns." Similarly, another participant noted, "From someone who comes from a community who loathes the police, I acknowledge that bad things do happen, and we need them [the police]."

At-Risk Youth and Youth Service Provider Relationships with Police

Service providers offered varying descriptions of their relationships with police. The majority stated that they have a good relationship with the VPD at the executive and senior levels and with specific liaison officers who do outreach, but that day-to-day interactions between frontline police officers and vulnerable youth have been tenuous. One worker noted, "The relationship building is missing," and asked how the needed relationship with frontline police officers could be extended and strengthened. This worker further commented, "It's not like we're not cooperative with the police. In the past it has been a bit oppositional from police."

Several participants described the great relationships they currently have with a school liaison officer and an Indigenous liaison officer. One participant noted, "When we've needed support, [the VPD] have been responsive and respectful." Another participant stated, "When sh** really hits the fan, they've been fantastic."

Several service providers acknowledged that building positive police–youth interactions can be challenging, as in the youth's world "it is very important to not be perceived as being nice to the police." Service provider participants further explained that police need to be aware that, in some cases, rudeness and aggression towards police can be a cover. One worker noted youth workers' attempts to speak with police in private, stating, "Even for us as workers, we don't want to be seen cooperating or speaking with police."

Interviewees reinforced the value of having consistent officers interacting with youth, stating that having consistency allows for the development of trust, making connections, and building positive, meaningful relationships. One participant commented, "Cops shouldn't be nameless, faceless people." Similarly, another participant noted, "This city has a huge problem with drugs and cops and robbers policing won't address that. That "catching bad guys mentality needs to change."

Police Interactions with Youth

Perspectives on the VPD's interactions with youth varied considerably. Some service providers reported police responding to calls have generally been very helpful and professional and that staff cooperate because the issue is generally a safety issue. When police make proactive visits, "good officers" often call ahead to say they will be attending. The service provider participants noted that officers acting less than professional are rare.

However, a senior manager in another organization noted that vulnerable youth populations are "constantly targeted" by police. She believed that the roots of this marginalization are racial and political and are often intended to remove youth from communities. This participant noted, "We see people targeted so they don't return to neighbourhoods."

This same service provider participant also expressed concern that being "frequently targeted and constantly harassed" by VPD, Transit Police, and Transit Security and being given fines and tickets puts youth in repeated contact with the justice system, which prevents them from pursuing employment opportunities and obtaining housing. Subsequent homelessness and joblessness often leads to more involvement with the justice system, perpetuating that cycle. Many interviewees noted police contacts are less of an issue once youth have housing.

One service provider stated that he has heard youth speaking of unpleasant encounters with police but felt that much of this was due to youths' actions. Others perceived that at-risk youth do not have positive views of the VPD as a source of safety and support. In their experience, police officers demonstrated only a limited understanding of procedural justice, often lacked empathy and understanding, and were often aggressive and coercive. Youth support workers did not perceive most police officers as culturally competent or aware of the issues facing youth and the trauma that many of them are suffering from, and noted that this contributed to negative interactions.

Several interviewees noted that many interactions between youth and police occur when youth are in crisis, and that in these cases VPD often resort to physical force rather than verbally de-escalating the situation, which increases fear in youth. For example, one participant commented, "I have one young woman who will break down every time she believes the police will be called."

One manager indicated that they have made formal complaints about excessive police use of force toward youth; however, these complaints have not resulted in satisfactory outcomes. Several service providers noted the importance of police working in partnership with social service organizations and reinforced the need for police to have a positive presence and to build and maintain good relationships with youth and trusted organizations. One youth worker participant suggested that police should do a better job of working with outreach organizations, stating, "We deal with people who are mentally ill and addicted regularly. Trust should be levied in our direction. We've got experience and we have skills. It often feels like police devalue our skills and abilities." Another participant noted, "Police could do a better job of working with staff in situations where youth are in crisis. Often a police show of force can trigger a person or make a situation worse."

Youth worker participants also highlighted the value of workers and youth experiencing informal, face-to-face interactions with police out of uniform and in a nonthreatening, safe environment. One youth worker stated, "Just talking and connecting with them as humans. That can be huge. If we could have a liaison that worked with agencies like ours, that would be really helpful."

Street checks

Youth staff workers stated that often police involvement often becomes a cycle for at-risk youth. One youth worker noted, "Once a youth begins involvement with police, they get recognized and stopped more frequently. They become a target. It is hard for police to forget youth criminality—[they] will generally always view them as criminals." Similarly, another youth worker stated, "Back when we didn't have a great relationship with VPD and I used to live in the DTES and I looked like an at-risk youth, how many times was I stopped? Every f***ing night when I was on my way home."

A staff member in one organization expressed concern that racial profiling was a regular practice for VPD officers. This participant stated, "We all know that police love racial profiling. That is drilled into them at the Academy."

Although some representatives of youth service organizations were not sure how often youth were the subject of police contacts, many viewed street checks as a big issue for at-risk youth generally, and even more so for LGBTQ2S+, minority, and homeless youth. These participants expressed concern that the power imbalance between youth and police creates fear in youth and could prompt youth who don't know or understand their rights to acquiesce and speak with police when they do not want to do so.

One youth worker suggested that street checks shouldn't necessarily focus on enforcement, stating, "Why not just hi or a simple interaction?" Others echoed this participant's comments, indicating that neutral, positive initial interactions in which police could ask youth about their safety issues could create a "different rapport." One worker suggested, "Go back to being a little more human. Not every interaction should start with a power play."

One interviewee expressed that street checks were being used in a discriminatory manner and as a way for the police to harass vulnerable youth. This youth worker stated that, while street checks could have investigative value in an ideal world, the way they are currently being done undermines their value.

One staff member felt expressed police are concerned that if they don't stop someone, it could be a liability issue. He stated, "It gets built into procedure. They feel like they have to stop people who meet a description."

There was general agreement that it is important for police to explain why an individual is being stopped and that street check data should be made public. One senior manager believed that street checks as a practice should be banned or, at the very least, fall under the oversight of a civilian review board to allow for accountability against targeting specific populations, biased policing, and racial profiling. Other youth service providers were adamant that street checks should not be banned, with one person recommending they should be re-thought as a "tool of compassion rather than a weapon of oppression."

Ride-along researchers did not observe police stopping or interacting with any street youth.

Youth Perspectives

The perspectives of youth who participated in focus groups also varied. Several youth related good experiences with police, which included being warned about bad drugs, dealing with a compassionate officer when they reported a sexual assault, and being rescued when they tried to commit suicide by jumping off a bridge. One group, however, presented particularly negative perspectives:

> I think they're ignorant.
>
> I have a lot of Aboriginal friends and the way they treat them is sickening.
>
> I watch how they treat some of the people on Hastings Street. The way they kick people when they're on the ground. There's a better way [to revive people] when people are OD'ing [overdosing].

Fear and distrust of police were common among the youth, with one youth participant stating, "The more cops you see, the more on edge you feel." Similarly, another youth participant noted, "I've had the cops call on me twice. Both times I was terrified the police wouldn't believe me. I ran away from the cops because I was terrified, they wouldn't believe me. That was a big thing for me. If I heard a siren, my heart started racing."

Youth perceived that police did not understand the belief systems of the people that they deal with, made assumptions based on how they looked and what they wore, and generally lacked empathy toward people who are homeless and suffering from addictions. One youth participant stated, "Police don't look at the reason why people commit the crimes they do. They just see a criminal or the crime you commit." Another youth interviewee noted, "You can be the nicest person in the world, but you commit a crime because you have no options. But all they see you as is your actions not the person you are or the reasons for why you did it."

Some youth felt that police lacked integrity and misused their power. Youth participants also felt stigmatized by police, especially if they had a criminal record or history with police, as reflected in the following comments:

> If you have a past, they assume you've never changed. Because of their past people get ridiculed 90% of the time.

> People can change, but police don't realize that. They see you as a criminal. Once a criminal, always a criminal.

> People do learn their lesson and they do change, but because of that record, [police] just pull it up and assume you're still a criminal.

> Several youth stated that some police are nice and that some are good at their job.

> The ones that are good are the ones that actually do their job. They don't just assume things about people.

> Nice cops actually think about the people they're trying to look after. They don't just profile people.

Several youth participants related examples of positive experiences with the police:

> I was in the VPD student challenge. How they treated us and how they interacted with us was really eye opening. It was so different than what I see on the street.

> I was at the Roxy being harassed by a guy, so I punched him in front of a cop. After I explained the situation [the officer] understood and let me go.

> I feel like they do care and do have some empathy or sympathy, but they're just trying to do their job.

When asked how they would like to be treated by police, youth responded with the following statements:

> I wanna be treated with respect.

If I'm being honest, believe me.

A little more understanding and getting to know the story before judging me.

If all of us were chilling at the park right now, I guarantee you a cop would stop us and question us. Just leave us alone when we're not doing anything wrong.

Street Checks

Several youth said they had been stopped and street checked by police. One youth provided the following example: "A person had robbed a liquor store and was wearing a white backpack. I was stopped because I had a white bag. The cop said I fit the description. He ran my name and let me go."

Youth described street checks as "when they just run up on you and go, 'Hey, what's your name?'" Another youth stated, "They just become nosy."

Youth perceived that police generally did not care about privacy, are often stern and condescending, and ask "a bunch of questions." Youth participants reported police "usually act like they know what is going on before they actually have all the facts." Youth participants shared the following comments:

If they act nice, it is not genuine. They do it to get you to incriminate yourself.

There's always one that looks so hard and one that looks like you could talk to them, but you don't wanna talk to either of them because they're together.

If you don't say anything it looks bad. They treat you like you're guilty.

We don't have to be accused of things just because we're out and about.

Youth stated that sometimes they felt like they couldn't say no or ask questions of police stopping them. In their experience, police rarely told them the reason for the stop, and usually provided a reason only if they were asked. Youth participants shared the following statements:

Half the time they stop me, they cuff me because I won't cooperate, but I don't even know why I'm being stopped. They don't give a reason or anything. Then they just let me go.

They pull you over for no reason, run your name, and then accuse of something you did months ago.

You feel obligated to talk. If you refuse you are causing them to get out of their cruiser and to deal with you physically.

Several youth felt that they had been profiled by VPD because of how they looked or how they were dressed or tattooed. Some youth felt they were more likely to be stopped in some areas than in others. Youth participants shared the following statements:

> If you look shady, they find a reason to stop you.

> It could be down to whatever sweater you are wearing.

> Sometimes it comes down to skin colour.

> Places you hang out too. If you're hanging out there, you're more likely to be stopped by a cop.

One senior manager stated that private security personnel posed "a huge problem" to at-risk youth, noting that they attempted to criminalize them "for no reason." For example, the participant shared, "We see private security a lot of times preventing them from entering their SRO. We see youth who won't even go into communities because of the presence of private security and because they've been so harassed."

The Sex Worker Community

The perspectives and experiences of sex workers and representatives of organizations that provide support services for them varied. One interviewee noted, "Sometimes police are great. A lot depends on who shows up—good or bad." Another participant stated, "There are many good officers. Too bad more can't be good."

Many representatives in the sex worker community perceived police officers' approaches to be racist and biased, noting that communications between police and sex workers was often dehumanizing. Participants shared the following comments:

> Police don't know how to consider their own biases when they approach. They criminalize drug users and sex workers and think we're all up to no good.

> They think of Indigenous women as dirty Indians.

> They are arrogant and make you feel like you are less than they are. They look down at residents on the DTES. They assume a lot. A bit more understanding of the issues and what people have gone through would be good.

Outreach workers acknowledged that working with sex workers can be challenging, and stressed that police needed to be aware that a sex worker can be volatile, with one participant noting,

"[Officers] have to realize that they are going to be called all kinds of names and threatened one day by a woman, but the next day will have to help her and possibly save her life."

Fear of police was articulated by a number of women who spoke about the power that police have as well as their failure to recognize that power and the effect that has on vulnerable people. These participants indicated police are not being held accountable for the harm and fear they create. Several women participants shared the following comments:

> Their body language says, "I'm in power."

> Don't use the badge and power to intimidate and oppress. We don't feel healthy or safe. We here as a matter of survival—we have no choice.

> Police don't understand the power they hold.

> There is a real imbalance of power and control and a real abuse of power. This decreases trust.

Fear was cited by many who stated when hey were scared they became defensive, and this resulted in escalating situations. They stated that arrests result from escalating interactions didn't need to happen. On interviewee noted, "These women are scared of cops. Aggressive and assertive cops trigger people. Defining yourself against cops lands you in court. Many women are fearful."

Several representatives of service provider organizations referenced the BC Civil Liberties Association's definition of street checks and the concepts of psychological detention (Mazur, 2018). One interviewee recalled that a number of years ago the Vancouver Area Drug Network of Drug Users (VANDU) provided members with cards that spelled out citizen's rights and questions they should ask when stopped; however, the participant noted that she has not seen those cards for a long time.

A number of interviewees perceived that police had limited knowledge of the history of Indigenous people, especially as it relates to police behaviours and actions toward Indigenous people, and that they were not culturally sensitive or trauma informed in their approaches. Participants shared the following comments on this subject:

> Police don't know how to be a humanitarian. They don't understand our situations and take charge. They make assumptions. I wish it would stop.

172

Police need to be culturally sensitive. They are not so.

They need awareness of our vulnerabilities. The majority of us have had negative experiences with the child welfare system and the police. Now we are labelled as drunks, violent etc.… We may act belligerent or be evasive … it's because having police around can make things worse for us.

When we need the police, they don't arrive. They don't understand that we have survival needs—that means we can't wait for days for police to respond when we call on the non-emergency line. We can't make appointments. The sex liaison officer can't take reports. Sister watch is not working—8 years ago it sounded like a great idea. Now we have no respect for it. The program has backfired.

Women spoke of how gentrification in the Kingsway Corridor has impacted street sex workers' ability to work in groups in the neighbourhood. Women now work individually, noting that they have been pushed by residents and increased police activity in the area to places that are less safe. As a result, they now have to make agreements faster, which increases both their risk and vulnerability for harm.

MAPVAN staff, who operate a mobile sex workers support unit, and sex worker participants reported harassment and intimidation by police who are parking for extended periods of time on their streets and made comments like, "I'm heating up your corner," which is preventing them from working. Participants also reported police following sex workers after they have been picked up by a john, stopping the vehicle, and leaving the sex worker stranded far away from her workplace. Outreach workers noted that the sex worker liaison officer has asked police to leave these women alone unless there is a problem. The sex worker liaison officer confirmed that she has had to ask officers to move their vehicles. When asked what they would like to see, an interviewee stated, "We just want to be respected and treated like a human, listened to and not discriminated against."

The LGBTQ2S+ Community

Again, perspectives from members of this community varied. An LGBTQ2S+ advocate and activist described that through persistence she has developed a positive relationship with the VPD and with their LGBTQ2S+ liaison officer, but that this relationship has led to her being excluded by other activists in the LGBTQ2S+ community. Her priority concerns were assaults and violence in the community and police response to that violence. This participant emphasized

173

that ongoing communication with VPD members was crucial and could impact how people report personal safety concerns and victimization. She was also concerned about the risk of interpersonal and sexual violence for sex workers.

People working with newcomers to Canada stated that many LGBTQ2S+ newcomers have come to Canada because they were persecuted in their home country, especially by the state, so they are afraid to have contact or talk with police. Participants also reported that the majority of trans newcomer women have been sexually assaulted in their home countries by police and others. One worker noted, "They are a minority within a minority, within a minority."

All LGBTQ2S+ interviewees felt that it was important for police to understand their background and the unique challenges they face. They also wanted police to recognize that a poor community–police relationship could have significant and traumatic impacts on LGBTQ2S+ people.

A Black trans activist noted, "There has been an undertone of racism and that undertone has been around as long as I've been in Canada." She stated that although everyone deserved to be treated with respect and humanity, some people are treated more harshly than others based on their appearance. She noted that the problems faced by many in the community were related to a complex web of issues that included addiction, mental health, and limited housing. This participant stated, "We aren't giving them a place to stay after we give them treatment. We set them up for failure." Another participant noted, "When you have a shelter that has only 60 beds and there's 150 people in a line-up outside to get one of those beds, that's a problem."

The activists stated that they had met some good and some "amazing officers," but had also witnessed police using excessive force, and feared that the bad actions of a few overshadowed the good work officers do. One noted that police–LGBTQ2S+ relationships were improving but described progress as "slow and uncertain." She expressed concern about how police culture shapes officer's beliefs and behaviours, noting, "[Police] have a difficult job, don't get me wrong. And it's a lot more challenging than we understand. But at the same time there are some that overdo it. Their personal beliefs and ideology take precedence over everything else."

One interviewee described most officers as being "clear and cognizant" of the concerns of people in the LGBTQ2S+ community, but noted that she has encountered officers who are disconnected from the LGBTQ2S+ community and from diverse communities in general. Anecdotally, she has seen some officers who are reluctant to deal with LGBTQ2S+ individuals. She believed that in many cases this may have been driven by fear and discomfort rather than by malice or bias. She felt strongly that to be effective, officers must have cultural knowledge and be exposed to diversity.

Another person stated that, based on her experiences, many VPD frontline officers didn't know the community, and didn't want to get to know the community either. This participant expressed, "They're just there for work and nothing more." Some felt that young officers in particular were not well equipped or well prepared to interact with diverse communities and to deal with trauma.

One activist was adamant that police were not engaging in discriminatory policing. This activist stated, "I don't think they are. People just want to play the victim. How about how they talk to the police? I've heard how some people talk to the police. It's awful. I really believe a lot of how police react is based on how they're spoken to by the public. They deal with a lot of s**t."

However, other activists who noted that they have been subject to, and have witnessed discrimination and racial profiling by VPD officers, described an "overall lack of trust in the LGBTQ2S+ communities toward police based on negative past experiences." This same participant went on to state, "Trust is both ways and we've lived with a lot of distrust for many years and a lot of us don't want to take that first step. So, if the police want to build that relationship, they need to jump in with two feet. They have to show that they want to get to know the community and that they want to build those relationships."

One participant expressed that the most important elements of building positive relations between police and the LGBTQ2S+ community rested on how officers interacted with people on a day-to-day basis. They described the value of a simple smile or a hello, and an officer taking the time to talk with people and really listen to them. Several participants suggested that, at the community level, ongoing education for all parties was required to dispel myths.

One activist acknowledged this can be challenging because, at present, there are considerable divisions within the LGBTQ2S+ community about perceptions of and attitudes toward the police. She cited the current debate around the participation of uniformed officers in the PRIDE parade, stating that she felt police officers should be allowed to march in the parade in uniform. This participant stated that many people in the community agreed with her, but they were not willing to say so publicly. She highlighted that the negative portrayal of police on social media platforms has significantly impacted people's perceptions of police. She attributed some of the negativity to "special interest groups spreading misinformation" and to people "hanging onto past transgressions." She emphasized her commitment to improving interactions, saying, "I have the strength and resolve to work with [the VPD] and get the public interacting with them and having police interact with the public. That's my goal. That's my resolve." This participant also noted, "There seems to be a blanket statement that all police are the same, but they're not. People just don't get that. The officers that I've met and worked with here genuinely want to do good."

One individual believed the VPD executive was putting a lot of effort into diversifying the workforce and striving to engage diverse communities; however, this participant agreed with the VPD that there is room for improvement. She added that she believed that VPD officers were expanding their knowledge and views and that the department was creating more opportunities for engagement and understanding of LGBTQ2S+ issues and challenges.

Many interviewees recognized the VPD executive and diversity section for doing great work and being responsive and engaging; however, the majority of the LGBTQ2S+ participants felt that there was a lack of positive community engagement by frontline patrol officers. Several individuals highlighted that engagement with diverse communities should not be the sole responsibility of the Diversity Section; rather, it should be driven by leadership through to the frontline. Interviewees also stated that police needed more training on how to deal effectively with their diverse populations and how to become more engaged with communities. One person suggested taking the time to meet with community leaders was important, as it would demonstrate that officers cared about people, and that doing so would go a long way toward developing a collective new vision for community building. Another interviewee stated, "It's not we against them and them against we. It's how they deal with people and the value they put on

them that will change the dynamic." Similarly, another participant expressed, "You have skilled officers. Use them. You catch more flies with honey than you do with vinegar."

This representative felt strongly that police needed more cultural competency training, stating, "In the past they did the best they knew how in that era. But with time they haven't changed with all that. You're getting all these new people being trained under an archaic system. They're getting taught by these old people who worked under prior regimes."

This participant concluded the interview by noting that it was critical that officers had access to people who could help them manage their own stress and mental health. This participant further stated, "That ability to care for themselves filters onto the street and manifests in how these officers interact with people."

Street Checks

One activist stated that street checks were a good thing, noting, "If I see someone acting suspiciously, I have no problem with the police stopping them and asking for their ID." She felt it was important that police learn the names of people and what they are doing, and acknowledged that many people living on the street do not have ID. She also felt that it was critical that police explain the reasons why they were stopping people, stating that it was important for people to "know what the police are doing and why they're doing it." She recognized that street checks often occur in certain areas and that certain demographics appear to get checked more often than others. She noted, "If you are doing checks, you shouldn't have boundaries or be focused on just a selection of people who drive a certain way or look a certain way. It can't be selective."

Another activist advocated for some form of independent oversight of police street checks, stating that "internal oversight leads to questions of bias." She added that VPD should be as transparent as possible with their street check data and share it with the public on an ongoing basis. She also believed that increased transparency and better information sharing was critical to improving and maintaining strong police–community relationships.

The Sikh Community

A senior executive member of a Sikh society stated that he was surprised that when he consulted with 10 friends, half of them stated that they have been pulled over by VPD for no reason. This had generally occurred in the downtown area, later at night, and when his friends were driving high-end cars. He acknowledged, "Young men who are gang affiliated often drive expensive cars," so he was unsure if police were profiling people or profiling the vehicles. The participant stated, "In my opinion, it's activity based. Police are stopping vehicles; they aren't stopping based on race."

He stated that gang involvement is not a major issue in the area of Vancouver where his temple is located, but that it is more of an issue in Surrey and Abbotsford. He added however, that youth from these communities congregate in downtown Vancouver alongside South Asian youth from Vancouver. This interviewee stated that South Asian youth who fear police will treat police with more disrespect and aggression than those who don't, adding, "If they view police as a resource, the interactions will be more positive." He described the current relationship between the temple and the VPD as great and gave credit to the community policing centre located in the temple for building that relationship and enabling community members to relate to police in and out of uniform, noting, "It allows us to humanize them. Here the interactions occur in an informal manner. That's where the relationship begins."

This participant felt strongly that having a uniformed liaison officer was not the answer, stating, "It's about having the opportunity to have those informal, out of uniform interactions. We have created that here. It's very unique." He cited the VPD's growing number of South Asian officers, and the VPD's South Asian Deputy Chief as "really important and helpful to building the positive relations." He added, "The only way you can—for any institution—be culturally sensitive and understanding is to ensure that people from that culture or background are represented and given opportunities to succeed and make decisions."

This same participant noted, however, that while diversity in frontline patrol and the executive is good, he has concerns about the sustainability of the relationship between the VPD and the South Asian community because there are few South Asian officers in middle-management or supervisory positions. He feared that when the South Asia Deputy Chief moved on, the

178

relationship would deteriorate and the community policing centre that the Deputy Chief had championed would disappear. He emphasized that it was important that VPD remain committed to the relationship.

This participant also expressed concern about the lack of South Asian representation on the Police Board, noting the importance of having South Asian representation at all levels of police governance. He emphasized the value of investing in partnerships and relationship building, stating, "The people who benefit are the people who are able and willing to help out. It's about people being given the opportunity to help their own community with police assistance."

He also spoke of the need for VPD members to understand the communities they are policing and suggested that police going to a place in the community where people gather regularly and identifying a resource person or a key community representative to work with was critical. He added that engagement did not have to be formal, adding, "The [VPD] logo brings a lot of credibility, but it's not enough on its own. Police–community relations should be done in community hubs, like the Croatian Cultural Centre or the Jewish Centre. When it's [engagement] less formal, it's less intimidating and less threatening."

The interviewee related that his brother is a VPD member and that he does a lot of positive engagement in the community, and commented, "Every single shop owner knows him. He's super engaged. He frequently visits their businesses. He's got a customer service approach to problem solving." He expressed sadness that most frontline patrol officers did not share this mindset and posited that VPD members working in the area may not feel the need to come to the temple because the community policing office is located there. He felt, however, that this was simply used as an excuse not to engage. He also felt it was critically important for police officers to be positively and proactively engaged with the community and added that he did not feel that this is something that is difficult to do. The participant noted, "There's nothing preventing them from going into a business and asking, 'Hey, how are you doing? How are things?' And they don't even know how to do that with a smile."

The same participant cited a lack of positive police engagement and involvement in the community, providing an example where a broken-down vehicle was left by the side of the road for 3 weeks and ignored by police until the temple called. He felt that actively engaged police

officers would have dealt with it much more quickly. He rued that this kind of day-to-day engagement between patrol officers and community members "never takes place." He also viewed procedural justice in interactions as critical, stating, "When people are treated fairly, they will view the police with more positivity and legitimacy. Nobody should be afraid of the police. They should be seen as a resource. People want to feel supported by the police."

Street Checks

The temple's executive member stated, to his knowledge, he had never been the subject of a street check and that he did not believe that VPD engaged in targeting or profiling of South Asian people. This participant commented, "From the questions I've asked and from the feedback I've received from people I've spoken to, most admit that it was their actions or the circumstances that led to the stop, not their race."

This participant perceived that street checks have a significant role in criminal investigations, crime control, and crime deterrence, but felt street checks should be guided by principles and guidelines. He advocated for a formal street check policy and detailed criteria to regulate the circumstances in which they are conducted, and how they are conducted. He stated that street check data should be made public. He was not certain that independent oversight of street checks was required, but suggested that perhaps the Police Board could play an oversight role in monitoring street checks.

Newcomers to Canada

Interviews with newcomers to Canada and management and staff of organizations providing services for refugees and immigrants highlighted the challenges newcomers to Canada faced, how their experiences shaped their perspectives of police and the justice system, and emphasized the critical need for police to be culturally competent, trauma informed, procedurally just and willing to engage personally with newcomers.

Cultural competency and trauma informed practices were deemed essential for effective policing for diverse communities. Some interviewees felt that police officers viewed their role strictly as law enforcement, and that this inhibited the development of culturally and trauma informed practices. Other participants cited incidents in which Indigenous people had been treated poorly:

Are police curious about the people they are dealing with? They need to now more about the communities they serve and the people they interact with. It can't be a one-way street.

They need more training for dealing with Aboriginal people because you can see how they treat them.

Most African friends I have still deal with trauma. Police need education and trauma-informed training on that. Police [officers] need to be able to understand their trauma. It's a matter of equity.

Management and staff of newcomer service and support organizations stated that immigrants and refugees are the second-fastest growing population in BC. These participants noted that they see upwards of 25,000 immigrants and refugees per year, and that 20% of refugees do not have legal status. They also advised that they are seeing an increase in the number of LGBTQ2S+ refugees and estimated that 15% of immigrants and refuges come to Canada with untreated trauma related, at least in part, to their experiences with police in their country of origin. Workers reported that although immigrants and refugees settled throughout the greater Vancouver area, most settled in low-income, less safe neighbourhoods.

Settlement workers highlighted many issues that police should be aware of and take into consideration in their interactions with newcomers. They noted that many newcomers come from countries governed by totalitarian regimes where people are fearful of police, do not trust police, and want to avoid any contact with police or the criminal justice system. Many newcomers find badges and uniforms to be very intimidating. Many do not understand that, unlike the countries they have come from where police defend "the system," the role of the police in Canada is to defend the law and to serve and protect the public. They cautioned that newcomers are required to process a significant amount of information when they arrive in Canada, including information about the justice system and police in Canada, but that they often do not have the capacity to immediately internalize all of the information they receive.

Negative experiences and perceptions of police, coupled with a lack of understanding about Canadian police, increases their reluctance to reach out to police when they are victims or witnesses of crime, contributes to fearfulness when interacting with police, and shapes their responses. One newcomer stated, "Even when I see police, I'm scared."

Workers expressed concern that police stereotyped newcomers and lacked cultural competency. They noted there was a "huge power imbalance" that police often did not consider when interacting with newcomers, and especially when speaking with newcomer women who have been victims of domestic violence. They observed that police questioning of clients, many of whom were victims, was often "oppositional." Clients have told staff that they feel that they were not believed, and that police were judgemental and stigmatizing. They also perceived that a lack of cultural competence and understanding of trauma-informed practice caused police to interpret the behaviour of people with trauma as suspicious.

Language barriers were a significant issue for newcomers dealing with the justice system and police or attempting to access services. A lack of or limited English skills exacerbated their fear and reactions to police. Workers reinforced the importance of police securing appropriate translators for interviews, taking the time to ensure victims understood the reporting process and next steps that would be taken, and ensuring victims and their families were referred to organizations and people who could ensure they receive needed supports and services.

They also emphasized the need for police to be knowledgeable about cultural certain practices such as marital rape that may not have been classified as crimes in newcomers' countries of origin, to recognize that many women may not even perceive a crime has taken place, and to have sufficient awareness to ask the right questions in these situations. Women's violence toward men is also a concern, with staff reporting that men were afraid to call police and report such violence, as their perceptions were often that the criminal justice system is punitive toward men.

Service providers stated that police can play a significant role in making newcomers feel safe and secure by demonstrating that they are there to protect and serve the public. However, service providers perceived a significant gap between the police and the communities they serve. One worker stated, "I have seen in my almost 30 years in Canada that the police are safe, but there are exceptions, particularly in regard to biases toward people of colour."

Several people who worked with newcomers cited racism and a lack of knowledge of the justice system as prominent issues of concern for newcomers. Staff also noted that, in some instances, newcomers were not prepared to accept the law, highlighting that there is a need for newcomers to be educated about the law and their rights under the law.

Several interviewees perceived that negative experiences with police can significantly impact perceptions. The majority agreed that Canadian police officers were generally good. Settlement workers had not heard of specific incidents of VPD officers engaging in racial profiling or discrimination, but noted that it was important that officers learn about bias, unconscious bias, the risks of making assumptions based on ethnicity, and how intimidating interacting with police could be for newcomers. They stated that when newcomers are victims of profiling, whether real or perceived, they feel powerless to do anything about it. One support worker stated, "In my opinion, newcomers do feel safe and secure around the police here. But, in terms of individual interactions, they do not know how do deal with [police] or know if they can trust them."

Immigration status is a primary concern for newcomers in interactions with police. Newcomer support service providers stated that many newcomers are not aware of their rights, and even if they are, cannot or are not willing to exercise those rights. An outreach worker in a DTES support service organization expressed concern with how police deal with newcomers who are unsure of the law and their immigration status, noting that some people have been misinformed by officers about their legal rights.

Workers stated that many refugees and immigrants suffer from trauma, and some have significant mental health issues. Many do not understand the Mental Health Act (1996) and are not aware that calling 911 will lead to police intervention. They cautioned that police need to be aware of these issues and can tailor their interventions appropriately to ensure they are not re-traumatizing people.

MOSAIC settlement services included a partnership with VPD school liaison officers to divert youth from gang involvement. The Director was pleased with the relationship and support they received from these officers. Workers highlighted that positive community–police relationships required officers to engage in ways that do not intimidate or cause fear and that demonstrate that police wanted to work with the newcomer population in positive and meaningful ways. Management and staff stated that building awareness through education for communities of diversity would help to reduce stigma, but only if police demonstrated that they are committed to developing and maintaining good relationships. Settlement service workers felt that VPD could improve their outreach, engagement, and interactions with newcomers if they were better

183

educated about newcomers, with one participant stating, "I would say they could do better." Another participant noted, "Many places have really good community police centres with really active volunteers – VPD could and should do more of that."

The Immigrant Services Society (ISS) model of embedding a police officer within the organization was viewed as a valuable leading practice. One respondent from another service agency noted, "This can be very positive. As someone who has worked at ISS, I've seen the importance." ISS managers and staff agreed, with one participant stating, "This should be a no-brainer." Similarly, another ISS participant noted that the program allowed an early introduction to police, stating "When a refugee lands in this province, they meet a VPD officer within two weeks of arriving."

ISS managers explained this partnership allowed police to better understand how newcomers perceived police, and emphasized the importance for ISS and the VPD to continue ongoing planning and programming for immigrants and refugees. Feedback has been positive. For example, a young Syrian male who met a VPD officer at ISS came away from the interaction wanting to become a police officer.

In a focus group session, women from a variety of countries who have been in Canada less than 3 years echoed these comments. A number of them relayed positive stories about their own, and their family's experiences with Canadian police. Several focus group participants noted that interacting regularly with a police officer assigned at the newcomer centre had been very helpful in advancing their understanding of the Canadian legal system and policing. An interview with a Filipino community navigator who works with newcomers from the Philippines also highlighted that Filipino newcomers' interactions with police in Vancouver have been generally positive.

Street Checks

A focus group discussion with newcomers revealed that none of them had been street checked; however, several participants related that people they knew had been checked. Management and staff of newcomer support organizations confirmed street checks were a foreign concept to newcomers and that police needed to be prepared to educate newcomers they stop about police powers and practices and citizens' rights and responsibilities. Education developed and delivered

must be reflective of diversity and, where possible, should be delivered in multiple languages. Staff working with newcomers perceived value in police being proactive and suggested they could that developing key messages about practices like street checks and share them with newcomers in the English language classes. One participant noted, "There's so much police can learn from newcomers by allowing them to ask questions." Another participant stated, "There's some really tangible, low-hanging fruit in terms of activities that would significantly pay off."

The challenges experienced by newcomers reinforce the importance for police to operate with procedural justice, to inform people why they are being stopped, and to inform people of their rights. Police need to be aware that because newcomers, especially refugees, are not familiar with Canadian law and policing and are fearful that a stop by police could negatively impact their immigration status. As a result, they may be reluctant to cooperate with police. Participants agreed that it would be helpful if police could make a street check policy available to service providers to share with newcomers to help them understand what police and cannot do, as well as their rights when they are stopped by police.

Service and Support Providers for Marginalized and Vulnerable Communities

This segment is based on interviews and focus groups with representatives of organizations that provide meals, education, shelter, safe and affordable housing, drug and alcohol recovery programs, and support services to vulnerable and marginalized people, including high-risk high-needs individuals struggling with homelessness and addiction in and near the DTES. Staff in one organization noted 25% of the addicted population they work with have borderline personality disorder and emotional dysregulation and that this group in particular has a high likelihood of coming into contact with police.

Case managers, outreach workers, and staff described the relationship between VPD and the DTES community as "extremely tenuous" and "underlined with mutual distrust and suspicion." These service providers recognized that the primary role of police in the DTES is crime control and order maintenance; however, they noted that the combination of people not understanding their rights or the powers of police, police not recognizing their own power and authority, and

police not "understanding what they can and cannot do legally and legislatively" have created mistrust and have made police officers reluctant to engage.

Workers stated they have heard officers make demeaning comments about people under their breath, and in some instances have seen officers dealing with people in crisis be forceful and escalate the situation rather than defuse it. An outreach worker who serves vulnerable women reported police interactions with sex abuse victims "have not been great," and noted that this has contributed to the deterioration of trust between residents and police.

Interviewee experiences with police ranged from "very positive" to "decent" to "very negative." A case manager noted that the relationship between shelter staff and police who respond to calls at the shelter have improved over time, but that concerns remain. In general, these participants agreed interactions with more seasoned officers who know the people in the DTES are the better than those with other officers. Relating to this, one participant stated, "Either cops are great or really negative. There have been times where I wish I hadn't called them."

Staff from one organization perceived that many of the poor interactions occur when officers failed to show empathy or compassion for people. They cited examples of when they have called police to remove unwanted people, and police dragged the people out quickly and threatened them with arrest. Staff expressed concern with how police referred to communities of diversity and people of colour. Participants described police officers' responses to people in crisis and/or suffering from mental health issues as "suboptimal" and explained that this remained a primary area of contention and concern.

Staff viewed police officers as their "best back-up" and stated that the good officers asked staff what was going on and used their help to guide their response. They explained that staff have developed relationships with people they are working with, are well trained in crisis intervention, and have unique skills and abilities in dealing with people with mental illness and those in crisis. They suggested that staff and police working together would be optimal for identifying the best approach for dealing with people in crisis. However, in their experience, the majority of officers did not consult or work with staff, but rather used their uniform presence and "acted more militaristically" to address the problem. The staff perceived police did not acknowledge case workers' and service providers' expertise and that most officers tended to take a very us-versus-

186

them approach. One individual stated, "We don't have weapons [and] we don't have authority, so we have to spend hours talking to people. So, our background is in de-escalation, as well as mental health."

Another area of contention between service providers and officers related to police requests to enter a property. A shelter case manager explained that it was shelter policy to not assist police with warrant arrests—that is, they do not identify people with active warrants to police. When asked why, the manager stated, "We can't. We'd lose all trust we have with those people." This policy has created tension with police and led to challenging situations, particularly when staff will not let police into the shelter when it is closed. When police enter the shelter to search for people when it is open, staff will not assist them; however, they will not obstruct them or refuse them entry. Staff emphasized that better communication with VPD was needed to "help them understand respect our boundaries." Several workers and managers wanted very much to work with frontline officers to develop protocols for consistent practice.

Another contributing factor to the erosion of trust between police and the community was that community members felt that they were under-served and under-policed. A case manager described that the slow response or lack of response of police to mental health calls was frustrating, stating, "I get that the process is annoying, but we really need them to respond. Not 5 hours later when it escalates, but when we need the police. That is a huge frustration for us. I think that's what makes this community feel forgotten or not valued."

This participant also felt that many of the pervasive issues in the DTES, including domestic violence and sexual exploitation, did not receive necessary attention from the police, and noted that residents are reluctant to call the police because of this. They are often unable to wait for a response or do not believe that the police can or will do anything for them. The case manager stated domestic violence victims in the DTES often struggle to get police attention, explaining that the VPD Domestic Violence Unit is often inaccessible for many DTES residents who required low-barrier services. Their challenges were exacerbated by the fact that many uniform patrol officers lack knowledge and expertise in domestic violence or responded in a way that was counterproductive to creating positive outcomes.

When asked what was needed to address this issue, the case manager cited the benefits of specialized liaison officers, such as the sex worker liaison and the homeless liaison. She credited the liaison officers with helping to build trust with community members, and felt they were more successful because their roles were focused more on relationship building than on enforcement. Citing the sex worker liaison officer as an example, the participant stated, "They don't arrest. They make relationships. They're not in uniform and that is huge. It removes the shame. People will talk to you without fear of being viewed as a rat. I would strongly encourage liaisons to not be uniformed."

The case manager felt it was important that the VPD consider creating domestic violence liaison positions for the DTES to address the unique needs of the community. In her opinion, the needs of DTES residents cannot be addressed through an enforcement-based response. She stated, "We need so badly for a domestic violence liaison in this community. There are some officers who go above and beyond, but that's their file. There's not continuity. We need a regular presence to deal with that. A liaison officer who could build relationships and connect people to resources would be huge."

A number of outreach workers felt it was important for frontline police officers to engage with people from marginalized populations and learn from them, noting, "The problem is a lot of police have no idea what it's like to be marginalized, racialized. When you talk to police, it's like talking to someone from a different world." One service provider described making complaints to the OPCC, but stated those complaints were never followed up on. Another service provider highlighted that police needed to receive cultural competency, cultural sensitivity, and trauma-informed practice training, stating, "Police need to be aware of what they represent to people. Own the impact that their uniform and car can have."

Street Checks

An Indigenous staff member stated he had never been stopped by police in the 20 years he has been working in the DTES. However, many of his friends have been stopped "for one reason or another." This participant went on to say that a lot of these interactions start with police asking individuals why they are there, and then the situation escalated from there. He noted that a lot of

188

people "feel violated by these experiences" because they are not usually told why they are being stopped. He noted that many of these community members were not involved with drugs.

One individual stated that the VPD "does not really care about the concerns that have been expressed about street checks." An outreach worker noted that on outreach patrols they do not see many police out on patrol. He stated, "When I started, I used to see them on foot a lot more. So, I'm wondering where the street checks are even happening."

Managers and staff in shelter and service organizations stated that the relationship between street checks and racial profiling is complicated and multi-layered. They perceived that racial profiling is "present everywhere," but that most people do not do it on purpose. In one manager's view, the situation in the DTES was complicated because there was a considerable visible minority population and "their likelihood of having contact with the police is naturally higher than in other areas." She added that, in her experience, she has not seen police targeting or street checking people because they are a minority.

She did not believe that street check data should be made public; however, she felt that the VPD needed to develop a street check policy, noting that a separate policy that is unique and includes a relationships-building component may be required for the DTES. This participant concluded by saying, "The policing in this neighbourhood needs to be unique to this community. Street checks are perceived as a negative thing here. They should be called wellness checks. But [police] should actually be checking wellness, not necessarily trolling for criminal activity."

Businesses and Business Associations

Chinatown

Chinatown cultural and business association representatives expressed respect for the VPD and the challenges they face in the area, noting that when police respond they are professional in their interactions. However, they described police as reactive and as "not present, not engaged, and not willing to help." One participant noted that the role of police has shifted from enforcement to social work, stating,

> They've been backed into a corner where they're now more social workers than law enforcers. They have abandoned their crime control role.

189

I think there are a lot of people who benefit from the police social worker ethos, but there are people who abuse that and engage in repeat victimization of people in this community.

Another participant noted, "I feel badly for police. They are trying to do their job, but they just don't have the tools to do the protect and serve aspect of their job right now."

Several interviewees indicated that the community had lost faith in the police. They cited concerns that the safety and security environment in their community had deteriorated over the past 3 years and that many people were reluctant to report crime or contact the police because they perceived that the city and the VPD could not or would not do anything. These participants noted that in cases where people had called, many of their situations were not been resolved.

Concerns expressed included people with mental health issues, open drug use, uncapped needless, overdoses, increasing violence, increasing property crime and theft, trash and human waste on streets and in doorways, and general disorder. The majority of interviewees had personally been victimized multiple times. They expressed frustration, fear, despair, and an overall sense of helplessness that crime has become normalized and accepted as a regular occurrence.

It's no longer just perception. It is happening. The lack of safety in Chinatown is real. People are right to be scared when they're walking down here right now.

Yesterday I called 911 about a person apparently in drug psychosis, but because the person was not overdosing the 911 operator said police would not come. So, nothing was done about it. This person was just left in the street to scream and yell.

I spend 20% of my time dealing with safety and security issues. I feel so helpless.

These people need help and we can't or won't get them help. They're in crisis and it just seems like people are okay that they are like that.

People are living behind stores, using drugs regularly. Owners won't go to the police because they don't think [VPD] can do anything about it. They don't know who to go to.

The impacts of these activities on business owners, workers, residents, and visitors have been considerable. Interviewees shared the following statements:

Before we leave here, we have to do a stairway check to make sure it is safe. There's this normalization of illegal behaviour here that we can't do anything about.

A lot of new people who are coming to Chinatown to open a business, they want to improve the community. But they almost immediately regret it because it's just not safe here.

We are paying a price in so many different ways. Property values are lower, but there are other hidden costs. There's a human cost. People are scared. They've been robbed, assaulted, threatened. They can't live like this.

Interviewees described that violence and the threat of violence typically occurred in 2-week cycles, noting, with violence generally ramping up just before and on the day social assistance checks are issued. Incidences of violence then decreased before they ramp up again.

Downtown Business Improvement Association

Members reported increased property crime and more threats of violence and use of violence in robberies, shoplifting, and thefts over the past 2 years. Participants also reported a perceived increase in the desperation of offenders and increased numbers of people brandishing weapons, ranging from needles to guns. The Business Improvement Association (BIA) members advised that most offenders were addicts or had mental health issues and were from marginalized populations.

They expressed a high level of frustration and dissatisfaction with poor police response and a lack of follow up, with Crown handling of charges, and with the criminal justice system in general. The BIA continues to encourage business owners to report so that they have statistics; however, the members' lack of confidence in police has impacted their willingness to report crimes.

The BIA reported good interactions with upper level officers but noted, "Engagement is not as visible on the frontlines." Several participants stated some officers "are as frustrated as we are" because they cannot focus more resources on crime outbreaks and hotspots. However, participants' general sense was that patrol officers were not invested or engaged, with interviewees stating that few officers ever checked in with them. They would like to see a return to a beat-type or foot-patrol policing in the Downtown Core, especially along Robson and

Granville streets. They have requested police to provide them with the names and descriptions of chronic offenders so they know more about who they could be looking out for but noted that the request has not yet been met by the VPD. The BIA would also like to see a more visible and approachable police presence, but felt that the VPD were resistant to that.

Gastown Business Improvement Association

The executive director of the Gastown BIA expressed significant concern and frustration about crime and disorder in Gastown, which she attributed, in large part, to the high density of SROs along Water Street in close proximity to restaurants, bars, and shops. This participant explained that there were over 500 people, many of whom suffered from mental health issues and addictions, living in these accommodations, and that a relatively small percentage of these people were responsible for much of the crime and disorder that occurred in the neighbourhood. Business owners in Gastown reported walking through human waste to open their businesses and having SRO residents pour urine on patios from windows above. They perceived that safety and security in the area was decreasing, that offender aggression was increasing, and that threats, harassment, and uncapped needles have become "everyday occurrences." The executive director reported that she has tried to build positive relationships with residents, but to no avail, noting, "[Business owners] have tried to be very inclusive and yet now we ourselves as business owners do not feel included. We feel targeted. We feel victimized. Nobody seems to care."

The executive director added that while crime and disorder have not necessarily impacted tourism, it has directly impacted the number of locals who visit Gastown, emphasizing that businesses in the area depended on locals outside of peak seasons to maintain their viability. She stated that the lack of police presence and apparent failures to address growing concerns of crime and disorder in Gastown were due, in large part, to police having to spend so much time in the DTES and Oppenheimer Park.

Priority issues of particular concern included the chronic property crime, particularly break-ins and attempted break-ins at night, and the apparent acceptance of "you steal it here, you go to East Hastings and you sell it there." The second major issue identified was open drug use in the alleys and in congested areas, which meant that "they are in people's faces." Participants described mental health issues as "huge and getting worse, especially with fentanyl." In

192

particular, participants noted the absence of mental health and drug treatment facilities, leaving these people with nowhere to go.

The lack of police presence and the less than satisfactory response to many of the identified issues has left business owners frustrated and increasingly reluctant to file complaints because "they believe that nothing will be done." The executive director also noted, "There is not a lot of trust in the police here because they often don't show up when we need them."

There is currently no proactive engagement between police and business owners, and business owners reported seeing police only when they've been called. The executive director felt strongly that foot-patrol or beat-style policing could help to establish and build relationships and reduce some of the anxieties and problems in the area, stating, "We need police presence to deal with these issues. Like, with aggressive panhandling, loitering … there's nothing we can do. Only the police can deal with it. I want the police here frequently, walking the beat and engaging positively with the people down here."

In the absence of a regular police presence, the BIA has tried to educate owners and provide them with information on crime trends. They have hired a private security firm to do patrols, but noted that although they have a strict hands-off policy and are intended to be eyes and ears only, they are often put at risk because they are called on to perform first-responder duties. The executive director noted, "Most of our security are people of colour. They frequently get verbally abused with racial slurs, they get spat on, and they get physically abused all the time. We tell our people not to engage. To walk away and call the police. Our [security] people are more social workers than anything else."

Street Checks

The business association representatives interviewed felt strongly that, given the context in which they are conducting business, police should be conducting street checks. They stated that if police had legitimate reasons to stop people, they should be doing so, noting, "We are at a crisis point."

These participants perceived that police have no consistent presence in their areas, and expressed strong desires for a more visible and consistent police presence. Several interviewees reiterated

that context mattered, that the high level of crime in the business areas was fuelled by the opioid crisis, and that this alone should drive police to stop people known to engage in property crime in these areas. Participants shared the following comments relating to this:

> There is a high level of property crime in this area. You should be stopping people known to engage in property crime. That property crime is fuelling the opioid crisis.

> I don't think it's unreasonable to stop known property offenders in high property crime areas.

> Business owners and residents need the police to be checking people. If there's aggressive behaviour, then yeah, [street checks] are necessary.

> We want and expect the police to be engaging with suspicious individuals and checking on their activities.… If anything, the police should have a greater presence in the area and be doing more street checks, not less.

> If there's aggressive behaviour, then yeah, [street checks] are necessary.

One executive director felt that while police should be conducting street checks and patrolling the area, they needed to do so in a professional manner, but in a way that avoided harassing or overly criminalizing people. She emphasized it was important for the police not to be overly aggressive toward the vulnerable and marginalized, stating that positive engagement should come first and enforcement should only occur when necessary. This participant commented, "These people are part of Gastown. We have to find a way to live together. We don't want them to be terrorized or excluded. Right now, probably only 5–10% of the 500 SRO residents we have down here that are causing the most problems."

Interviewees did not feel that police were abusing street checks or engaging in biased policing or racial profiling but agreed that there needed to be a process in place to ensure that street checks were not being abused. One executive director commented, "I try to put myself in the shoes of someone else. How would I feel if I was stopped by the police?" Another executive director stated he would be concerned if street checks were banned or discontinued: "I don't believe in throwing [street checks] out just because some groups say it is profiling or discriminatory."

Community Perspectives on Well-being Checks

Community perspectives on whether or not police should be conducting well-being checks varied. Many community members perceived that having police conduct well-being checks was useful, while others raised questions about why and how such checks were conducted, and others still felt that police should not be conducting well-being checks.

Responsibility for Well-being Checks

When asked if police should be doing well-being checks, a Black community activist said simply, "Well-being checks? Really? I don't see Elders being stopped or people with disabilities."

Several Indigenous focus group participants felt that police have a certain job, but were being forced to do other jobs, and suggested it would be wise to invest in alternative service providers to do street checks, noting they could be taught to direct people to organizations or individuals who could link them with needed services and supports, and that this would allow police to focus on fulfilling their mandate. One person suggested, "Let police look for the killers or gangsters. The mission of police will never have that value system for those non-police issues."

Sex worker support service providers questioned whether police should be doing well-being and safety checks of sex workers, which they generally perceived as attempts to gain information rather than to ensure an individual's safety. One participant questioned, "Is it the job of police to know where sex workers are at all times? No."

Some youth service providers echoed these sentiments, with one noting, "We work with other service providers to do checks. Uniforms scare kids and make them disappear."

A case manager for an organization providing services for marginalized people in the DTES suggested that if police had to conduct street checks, they should be informal, and police should be doing them in plain clothes. This participant went on to state that officers should "absolutely not" be conducting well-being checks in uniform:

> If police were walking around in plainclothes on the beat and approached people with permission and with a cigarette [they could] build rapport, introduce themselves and legitimately ask people how they're doing. Build those contacts

gradually over time. It needs to be on that level. Not two uniformed officers pulling up beside a sex worker and running her ID.

When asked who could or should be conducting well-being checks, a number of interviewees suggested that these checks should be conducted by service providers who were better trained and equipped than police to connect people with needed supports and services. An Indigenous person suggested that checks on missing Indigenous women should be done by an Indigenous group. Similarly, sex worker support service providers stated that other service agencies should be doing safety checks. They noted that sex workers knew a lot about each other and that sex worker support service providers worked closely with them and were better placed to maintain contact. One participant noted, "Service providers can check more thoroughly through their contacts. It's safer that way for women. If we haven't heard from a woman for a long time and other colleagues and support organizations haven't seen her, I would go through Linda Malcolm."

Several people working with vulnerable and marginalized people advocated for an increase in funding to service providers rather than to police for well-being checks. They noted that if they could work with police, they could be a buffer for people who often fear the police.

Other interviewees indicated it was important for police to be checking on people's well-being. Business representatives in Districts 1 and 2 felt police should be checking on the well-being of people who appear to be in distress, with one stating, "I think our first responders are probably best equipped to identify people in crisis and they should be allowed to do that."

An LGBTQ2S+ activist stated police should be checking on people's well-being and that such checks should not be construed as violating individual's privacy. This participant noted that making sure people are doing okay is more important than privacy.

Many focus group participants suggested that well-being checks were acceptable under certain conditions. One Indigenous leader stated that checks on well-being should be for the individual's safety only, adding, "It needs to get tightened up. We need a 'known quantity of parameters.'" Black community members echoed this comment and raised questions about when it would be acceptable to conduct well-being checks and how to ensure that those checks are conducted in a caring way. Participants shared the following comments on this subject:

Can do [well-being checks] if there are reasons for concern. For example, if a person is in distress and police say is something wrong? Can I help? A check must be non- accusatory if there is nothing obviously criminal going on.… We want a caring society – if that's what we want how it is done makes a big difference.

Checking on the welfare of women – is that acceptable? We need good [community–police] relations and responses based on the women's recommendations. Has anyone every asked them? Same for young people.

Considerations for Conducting Well-being Checks

Several sex workers support service providers questioned how a well-being check was defined and conducted. They reinforced that being seen talking to police puts sex workers at greater risk from other sex workers who would view them as a "rat," and put them at increased risk of violence from men. Several participants perceived that street checks of sex workers were more about the "safety of the public" than the sex worker's safety. A common theme of sex workers and support providers interviewed was that they don't trust the police or believe them when they say they are interested in their wellness. Participants shared the following comments:

All they want is information about other people.

Police are looking for intelligence and information. They don't care about us. It's what they can get from us.

[Police] ask, "Where is your boyfriend? Doing anything you shouldn't be doing?"

They stop me like they care. Then they start asking for information about Black people. Do they think I know all Black people in Vancouver?

Some youth workers felt police checks on well-being could be useful but that value depended on how they were done. Youth worker participants shared the following comments:

You want police to be able to talk to people who look distressed.

The officer has to be empathetic, sympathetic, and caring. The problem is police don't start there.

A wellness check is a stage of a relationship. We don't just go up to people and start asking questions. Those relationships need to be built over time.

Workers also noted that it is important that a wellness check is not an "are you doing anything else" check. They questioned, "Why do you need a person's name if you're checking on their well-being?"

Outreach workers working with marginalized people also perceived that well-being checks were potentially useful if the officer's motive was to genuinely care about that person and how that individual was doing. These participants emphasized that if officers conducted a wellness check, they needed to be aware of the impact that interaction could have for that individual.

CHAPTER 9: THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF VANCOUVER POLICE OFFICERS

VPD executives, commanders, investigators, and patrol staff sergeants, sergeants, and officers were interviewed to determine how they used and viewed street checks. This chapter provides an overview of their perceptions of the value of street checks and offers examples of how street checks have been used. It concludes with a discussion of officers' perspectives of how the public view street checks and some of their experiences with the public during street checks.

Perspectives on Interpersonal Skills of Officers

When district inspectors were asked to assess the interpersonal skills of skills of VPD patrol officers, they characterized them as "variable," and noted good interpersonal skills were, to a great extent, dependent on if and how field training officers (FTOs) helped to develop those skills in junior members. One inspector added, although he wants his officers to have good interpersonal skills, high-call volumes have created a "call-taking culture" among patrol officers, thereby reducing the amount of time available to spend on the development of proactive skills such as engagement, communication, and other interpersonal skills. Another Inspector indicated, "I just spent two weeks as the duty officer and I'd say [interpersonal skills] are variable. But some of our people are really nice."

Several sergeants echoed the inspectors' concerns about junior officers, noting that while their officers were professional, they struggled with legal knowledge and articulation owing to their relative inexperience. They also noted that as many patrol teams were comprised of officers with less than 5 years of experience, there were few officers available to provide guidance and mentorship on a variety of topics including producing quality street checks. Participants shared the following comments:

> I think every [patrol team] would have … differences in articulation ability and legal knowledge … when issues arise it's not because they don't know, it's because they have trouble articulating themselves.

> I will say, street checks, detention, search incident to arrest are things we constantly need to work on. That's policing in general.

> Mentorship is so important to massage what officers are doing.

> We lack senior people in patrol to mentor the young officers. There are more and more junior people mentoring that don't have the experience.

> There's not enough people in patrol.… That mid-range - even the six-seven-year guy is a rarity right now.

Sergeants perceived that patrol officers had strong communication abilities and professionalism and interacted well with people; however, they noted that patrol officers were not having as many interactions as they could have because they were not willing to get out of their cars and engage with people. One Sergeant noted, "When I see my people interacting with the public, I'm impressed by how good they are.… Are they getting out, walking and talking? No. But when they do interact with people, they do very well."

Perspectives on Use and Value of Street Checks

Value of Street Checks

VPD executive officers felt strongly that street checks were a vital tool in helping police to meet their mandates of protection, prevention and investigation, and that losing street checks would be a "huge, potential loss." They emphasized that the public has an expectation that police "will use a common-sense lens" to determine the best approaches, in both reactive and proactive efforts. They likened a street check to a police response and investigation of a citizen's call about a suspicious person, noting that in the case of a street check, it was the police officer who identified and stopped a suspicious person to determine if further inquiries were needed.

The majority of VPD officers and investigators agreed that street checks were worthwhile and should be continued. Several officers expressed concerns that they would not be meeting the public's expectations if they did not conduct street checks. For example, the High-Risk Offender, Gang Crime, and Organized Crime detective stated, "If we don't have those interactions and make those documentations then we'll be criticized for not doing anything when bad things happen." This same detective went on to state, "Literally, we can't lose street checks. They're critical to us. Especially with the gang conflict going on right now."

One detective highlighted the potential negative impacts of discontinuing street checks, noting that changes in Toronto police policy resulted in a significant decrease in street checks and interactions. He expressed concern that reduced engagement in Vancouver could negatively

impact informant handling, and related that in his experience as a beat officer in the DTES, it took a long time to develop sufficient trust in a relationship for people to feel comfortable enough to provide him with information. He perceived that opportunity would be lost if street checks were discontinued.

Use of Street Checks

Detectives and analysts in general, and specialized investigation units in particular, discussed cases in which street checks had proven valuable.

> Two of the biggest investigations I've been a part of have come from two street checks. One major file we had started as a vehicle stop. [The passengers] were doing $11 million in property thefts from break and enters all over the West Side [of Vancouver].

> We had a file in our unit involving a suspect who had really distinctive shoes. [Officers] had done a street check of a guy and he was wearing those shoes. We were able to identify our suspect because of the clothing description [in the street check].

> We had a complex fraud case. A street check allowed us to cultivate that person as an informant. That informant was an entry way into identifying and finding the fraudster.

> If you're an investigator and you're tracking a guy, you'll be running [their name on PRIME/CPIC every day. And you'll be seeing the street checks that have been done on him. That's huge. It's a way for us to get a picture of what he's doing and where he's going. If we didn't have that information, we'd be in trouble.

The following segment provides an overview of occurrences where patrol officers and investigators found street check information valuable.

Information to Obtain Search Warrants

Street checks can yield data that form the basis of information to obtain search warrant (ITOs) and enable detectives to prepare articulable grounds to obtain warrant applications, search orders, and production orders. One detective noted, "Sometimes it's even a really small street check that can be the one you need to get your warrant. It could be the last piece you needed. It just has that one important detail that completes the picture."

High-Risk Offender Monitoring

Detectives explained that they rely heavily on patrol to gather information on the high-risk offenders they are monitoring. They described street checks as invaluable in helping them remain aware and up to date on what these offenders are doing, if they are meeting or breaching specific conditions they are required to abide by, who they are associating with, and to identify specific risk factors. This information can provide evidence they can use to inform investigations and high-risk offender monitoring strategies. Detectives emphasized that intelligence is one of the key foundations of policing.

> When we talk about intelligence-led policing, you need that intel.

> When we read street checks we're looking for risk factors that could indicate certain people are re-offending or are at risk for re-offending. If we can identify those risk factors, we can figure out how to manage them. Do we go the mental health stream, or do we go the corrections stream?

> It's information we don't have or that the parole officer doesn't have. So, we can provide that evidence to their parole officer, who can breach them or to revoke their probation.

Developing Behavioural Profiles of Suspects

Detectives and analysts used street check information to develop behavioural profiles of suspects and to build timelines that track their behavioural patterns, including evidence of possible behavioural declines, to determine where a person is in his or her crime cycle, and to develop monitoring and preventative intervention strategies. A detective explained, "It's how we regulate and control parolees.… We can use that information to recommend [parole] conditions … strategies too. For example, do we need to start doing surveillance on that person?"

A domestic violence detective stated harassment and stalking are often preludes to more violent behaviours, and documentation and tracking of this type of behaviour can assist in developing risk assessments, enforcement and treatment strategies, and investigative plans. This detective went on to state,

> I know my suspects, so I need to know the behaviours [they're exhibiting], but more importantly, I need to know the context of those behaviours.… You can use [street check information] to establish a good understanding of their pattern of

behaviour. I use it all the time in my risk assessments.… I need to know, what are the person's triggers? What are their risk factors? What are their support systems?

Detectives provided an example of where they used street check to disrupt the actions of a stalker. They explained a street check provided information on an individual's whereabouts and identified him. From this information they were able to determine that he was violating a "no-go" condition prohibiting him from going to a residence. He was arrested for breach of conditions, charged with criminal harassment, and the detective was able to have additional prohibition conditions added.

Locating Missing Persons

Detectives related that street checks play an important role in helping to find a "small handful" of people every day only because patrol members are stopping and checking them.

Sexual Violence

Detectives stated that they have used street checks to assist in identification of suspects and to place suspects near the scene of sexual assaults.

Prostitution, Criminal Exploitation, Child Exploitation, and Human Trafficking

Detectives used street checks to check on the well-being of sex workers and to gather intelligence on sex trafficking and sexual exploitation. They stated that historical street checks have proven particularly helpful to corroborate victim's stories and descriptions of events. A detective provided the following example:

> [Patrol] members do a vehicle check. The girl is a sex worker. We have [her] flagged as at-risk for sex exploitation. The information they [the patrol members] enter can help us get a clearer picture of what is going on. Without the information, we as investigators don't have enough [information] to get warrants to pursue investigations.

Gangs and Organized Crime

Detectives and analysts identified checks as valuable intelligence for mapping gang associations and tracking the movements of gangsters. Analysts noted that although Gang Crime Unit (GCU) and Organized Crime Section (OCS) officers conduct numerous checks of known and suspected gang members and their affiliates, they seldom code their interactions as street checks. Many of

these checks are Barwatch checks, which are documented as a Trespass Act (1996) file or Intel GOs.

The GCU analyst explained that businesses participating in Barwatch permit police to enter and search bars and restaurants for people involved in gangs and organized crime. Bar staff call police to remove a patron or enter the establishment proactively. When they come across known or suspected gang or organized crime people, they approach the table, request identification, and may remove them under the Trespass Act (1996) and submit a Trespass Act report. If the officers do not remove the individuals, they may submit an Intel GO.

GCU and OCS members and analysts stated that Barwatch checks were a significant source of intelligence and provided the following example:

> Two targets were checked at a bar and ejected via the Trespass Act. Several hours later one of them was dead. We were able to identify the other guy as a possible target [for violence] and he actually ended up being killed two months later. That check established their location and earlier checks established their relationship.

Kidnapping, Robbery, Homicide, and Arson Examples

Major Crime Section detectives noted that much of their work requires them to rely on the information gathered by patrol and documented in street checks reports and intelligence files to piece together larger events. Several examples are provided in the subsections that follow.

Kidnapping

Police investigated a kidnapping with five suspects. They were only able to identify one suspect and had grainy photos of the other four. They were able to track one suspect to an address. Detectives queried the address and found a street check submitted 2 years earlier. The address included in that street check was determined to be the address of another of the kidnapping suspects. The person who was checked was identified as a third suspect in the kidnapping investigation. Detectives were able to use the information from that street check to obtain a warrant to search another residence where they located weapons related to the kidnapping.

Robbery

Following a robbery in Downtown Vancouver, the people involved parked the vehicle they had used and disposed of their masks. Detectives matched a street check from 7 months earlier to the robbery vehicle and one of the individuals involved in the robbery. The street check information was used to obtain search warrants and ultimately charge four people with robbery and two with arson.

In another robbery example, a suspect armed with a firearm robbed six convenience stores in various areas Vancouver. He threatened to shoot victims if they did not cooperate and in one instance struck the victim in the face multiple times with the firearm, causing injury that required treatment in hospital. When a suspect was identified, a detective learned that a street check of that individual had been conducted around the time of the robberies. Information from the street check report indicated that the suspect had been stopped in the company of his girlfriend and that they were residing in a motel. Further investigations at the motel determined that the suspect had stayed at that motel until the date of the final robbery. Closed-circuit TV footage provided additional evidence that linked the suspect to five of the six robberies. He was subsequently arrested for these offences.

Homicide

RCMP in the Lower Mainland stopped a vehicle for possible impaired driving. The officer spoke to all individuals in the vehicle. After determining the driver was not impaired the officer released the group and entered a street check that included the vehicle information, driver information, information provided by passengers in the vehicle, and a short synopsis of the interaction. The following day, VPD officers were called to the scene of a homicide and two attempted homicides, where witnesses observed two suspects running from the scene and getting into an SUV. Hours after the shooting, a vehicle arson was reported in another jurisdiction. Officers at the scene of the arson extinguished the fire and arrested two suspects who had fled the vehicle. The vehicle that had been set on fire was determined to be the suspect vehicle and was also the vehicle that had been street checked 2 days prior. One of the street check passengers became a suspect in the homicide. Officers further advised that in addition to linking the vehicle

and suspect to the homicide, the information on the street check also provided other pieces of information crucial to the investigation.

Arson

In an arson investigation, detectives found the suspect had been street checked twice in the days leading up to the arson. The street checks noted that he was displaying some "sketchy behaviour." The information was used to show the suspect's behavioural timeline leading up to the arson. The detective stated that the information in those street checks "probably allowed us to keep him in custody."

Crime Analysis

Analysts described the role of street checks in crime analysis and intelligence-led policing. Patrol district crime analysts stated that they are not often asked to search for street checks for investigative purposes, but that they review street checks weekly to identify intelligence patterns, crime trends, and people of interest. They generally check for "who was stopped where" and for clothing descriptions. When a crime occurred, analysts searched checks for possible suspects or information on suspects.

Conversely, the organized crime analyst stated that, in her role, street checks and intelligence are used to build offender profiles. If an individual is checked multiple times, additional information and intelligence gathered can be added to build a more complete profile. Street checks assisted her in establishing the closeness and lengths of relationships and associations between people involved in organized crime, in establishing locations (e.g., organized crime residences, meeting places, businesses involved in organized crime), and in linking people to vehicles. She provided an example, stating, "[Organized Crime Unit] had a tracker on a target vehicle but they couldn't say for sure who was driving it. The vehicle ended up being street checked by patrol, who verified that the target was driving the car. That allowed investigators to track his movements and the locations he visited." Analysts further noted that checks could also be a useful tool to establish or confirm if associates were no longer together or if they were possibly in conflict.

Perspectives on Well-being Checks

All police officers interviewed felt that well-being checks were important and useful. They explained that they used them to ensure that vulnerable people (e.g., at-risk youth, people with mental health problems) and people involved in risky lifestyles (e.g., sex workers) were okay. One member questioned what could happen if police could no longer approach people. Another officer offered the following perspective, "A lot of time you may be checking on someone's well-being. Just seeing if they're doing all right and if they need our help. When it comes down to it, it's about community outreach. That's part of our job."

Executive officers and commanders shared the following perspectives:

> The public has an expectation that police officers will check on vulnerable persons and that police officers have a role in checking o the well-being of mentally ill and homeless persons.

> With the missing and murdered women report, my thought is that almost all checks of Indigenous females are check well-being.

> A lot of the work we are doing is to check on the well-being of homeless people, of which we have a lot.

> I would expect my officers to check on vulnerable people and to document those interactions in order to track them.

Inspectors noted that street checks of high-risk, high-need people with mental health problems helped to bring these individuals to the attention of the Mental Health Unit who could then assist them in getting the attention and supports they require. They added mental health interactions should be documented as a Mental Health GO that would be immediately routed to the Mental Health Unit, rather than as a street check.

Conversations and observations with DTES BET officers revealed that they conducted frequent well-being checks, generally on people who appeared to be passed out or asleep to see if they were ok. If they saw people injecting narcotics they also checked to see if they were okay and suggested they visit Insite. Once they ascertained people were not in physical or mental distress they moved on. BET officers stated that they rarely document these interactions as street checks, intel files, or as anything else unless the check was the result of a specific call for service. One officer noted that documenting street checks or intelligence files related to well-being could

208

sometimes be useful but that usefulness was situation dependent, as determined by the individual officer. He provided an example of a time when he entered such a check: "I've done one in the past for a female. She looked really young and was hanging out with three guys who were in their thirties. So, I put in a check to document her and who she was with." Well-being checks have also resulted in missing people being located. Officers provided additional examples, which are detailed in the subsections that follow.

Example 1

The Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) reported an 18-year-old woman reported missing, noting that she was a high-risk youth, a chronic missing person, and a known crystal meth and heroine user. She had been suicidal in the past, suffered from seizures, was not consistent with her medications, and had fetal alcohol syndrome. A week later police located her while conducting a well-being check in the DTES.

Example 2

A 38-year-old male was reported missing from an SRO in the DTES in a cold November. Information provided indicated he had suicidal ideation, used drugs, and that he had been recently injured from a vehicle accident. Police located the male sleeping outside during a street check.

Police Perspectives on Public Perceptions of Street Checks and Experiences with the Public During Street Checks

The focus of the vast majority of discussions with community members was on the need for police to change. There were a number of people who acknowledged that policing is challenging and that in many cases, police were not treated well by people they were interacting with, or by bystanders. An LGBTQ2S+ activist, for example, stated, "How about how they talk to the police? I've heard how some people talk to the police. It's awful. I really believe a lot of how police react is based on how they're spoken to by the public. They deal with a lot of sh**."

Several people highlighted that the community also had a responsibility in helping to create a different community–police interaction dynamic. For example, the executive director of a

Caribbean community association stated, "We in the Caribbean community need to reach out a bit more."

Participants in patrol focus groups were asked do discuss their perceptions of the issues surrounding street checks and to explain why they felt that there was concern about street checks. Officers attributed the negative discourse around street checks, and police interactions in general, to a number of factors, the most prominent being a lack of public understanding and awareness of what street checks were and how they are used; selective, inaccurate, and uninformed media reporting on policing; and a vocal minority of people who were critical of policing and who drove the public discourse on policing and community–police interactions.

One of the key themes that emerged from focus groups with officers, especially in Districts 1 and 2, was the perception that they were experiencing increased animosity from members of the general public when they are in the midst of interactions, especially in the Granville Mall area and the DTES. Officers related that it was becoming increasingly more common for bystanders or passers-by to not only stop to film interactions but to make derisive comments toward the police. Officers explained that people being checked rarely presented any issues and were largely cooperative, while members of the public who were not involved in the situation were more likely to take issue with the presence and conduct of the police. Officers characterized this as follows:

> We don't usually have any trouble from the people we're checking. It's usually the 9–5 people who think we're being heavy handed. They stop and question us or take out their phones [to film]. I feel like it happens a lot Downtown during the day.

> Oh yeah, people will yell things at us as they walk by. "Police brutality." "Why don't you go after the bad guys?" "Do your job."

> I almost find the people we're checking are fine with us. I've rarely had a criminal we've checked complain about us. It's the public. The social justice warriors.

> If you're talking to a Black guy on the Granville Strip, even if it's just a pleasant conversation, people will confront you. Yell at you.

> But as police officers we want to be able to talk to the public. Just because a cop is talking to a member of the public doesn't mean it has anything to do with the public.

As soon as people go in handcuffs is when the phones come out and the accusations start. Most times people don't even know why we're there or what the person did.

Sometimes we get pushback from the people we are dealing with, but that's pretty rare. It's the people passing by that give us the most trouble.

There was widespread agreement within the focus groups that the public was generally uninformed about crime, proactive policing, and street checks and the contexts within which street checks are conducted. Officers noted that in many cases the public were likely unaware of the criminal history of the person that they are checking. These perceptions are reflected in the selected comments of officers below.

So much of what we do is misconstrued by people who enter into the situation after the fact or have no context.

A person walking by doesn't know that the guy I'm talking to might have a history of assaulting women or is a chronic TFA [theft from auto] guy. People would be surprised if they knew the criminal histories of who we deal with.

Have you read any of the Facebook comments? People think we're just rolling down the street going, "Hey there's a minority, let's stop them." They don't understand we're there for a call for service or that we have a legitimate suspicion.

The public sees police as more reactive. They don't understand the proactive, preventative side of policing.

It's never about race. It's that [suspicious] walk. It's where they are. It's what they're wearing. It's what they're doing.

There are so many more things that go along with why you do a check that people have no idea about.

It's a public misunderstanding. I think that the term street check has been misconstrued by people and activists.

The public has no idea how much crime is going on in the city. If its not happening to them or they're not seeing it, they have no idea. They just see us talking to a homeless person.

In a way we're the only normality they have. Most of these guys know why we're checking them. They know the deal. It's the people that have never been checked that give us trouble.

> [Hostility] doesn't usually come from the person we're checking. It's from people walking by. They're the ones that yell at us or start filming.
>
> People who get hostile don't know why we're having that interaction or why we're doing what we're doing.
>
> Most times the guys we're checking are decent. It's the looky-loos walking by that have an issue with us.
>
> Even with the guys we deal with a lot. For many of them, we're the only person they can have a normal conversation with. We usually have pretty good interactions with those guys.
>
> It's like the [Road Runner] and Wil-E Coyote. You're all good with each other and then you go off and do your separate jobs and that makes you cross paths and there's conflict. When it's over, you're fine again.

Police attributed much of the negative attention around street checks and policing in general to news and social media. Officers believed that because many people get their information about policing from news and social media, they have a largely unrealistic and uninformed view of what police do and why they do it. This included street checks. Officers expressed concern over what they perceived to be a media-driven narrative about police relations with communities of diversity generally, and about street checks in particular. They felt that media reporting on the street check issue was 'sensationalized' and that it fuelled bias towards the police. They added that they felt that social media and the news have led people to believe that many of the issues prevalent policing related issues in the US and Ontario are present in BC, when in reality, that is not the case. This is reflected in the following, selected comments of patrol officers:

> There's a lot of misunderstanding over why we do [street checks]. We're doing it to protect the public, but a lot of that is fuelled by the media and people assuming that Canada and the US are the same. They even confuse us with Ontario.
>
> The media sensationalizes a lot of negative police interactions.
>
> If you've never interacted with the police, your only information on police comes from the media. So, that forms the basis of your perceptions.

The comments of the officers, and of people in communities of diversity and other stakeholder groups, reinforced that there is a need for the VPD to develop a comprehensive plan to educate and inform the public about street checks.

CHAPTER 10: FIELD OBSERVATIONS

Field observations were conducted to gain insights into the dynamics of street checks and police–citizen encounters, to develop a greater understanding of the operational context of VPD, to observe the policing style of VPD members, to learn about current practices within the VPD, and, most importantly, and to learn how street checks are used by officers. Accompanying the officers also provided an opportunity to discuss their views experiences with street checks, the decision-making processes they applied during street checks and other interactions with the public, and to gain understanding of the nuances behind street check related data collection.

Researchers conducted 12 full shift ride-alongs with officers in each of the four districts (3 per district) and 2 full shift walk-alongs with beat officers. Attention was paid to obtaining observations from various shifts, times, and areas. Researchers completed a survey for each observation of a street check and inputted their interpretations of what occurred. Where appropriate, the officer's input was sought to validate and/or clarify interactions and the reasoning applied to come to decisions and actions.

Observational Data from Ride-alongs and Walk-alongs

A total of 66% of encounters ($n = 35$) were prompted by the on-view actions of the officer, after seeing someone or a behaviour that drew attention. In 21% ($n = 11$) of cases, the street check was prompted following a casual conversation, and in a small percentage of cases (7.6%), officers initiated a street check following a 911 call. In 57% of cases ($n = 30$), the individual being checked was described as a suspect, while in 15% of cases ($n = 8$) individuals were noted as known offenders. In 15 (29%) of encounters, the individual was noted as a suspicious person or was unconscious. Of the encounters, 43 (81%) were with men, and 10 (19%) were with women. In 55% of cases, the observed age of the individuals was noted as mid-20s or mid-30s, with the other encounters being with those between 35 and 55 years of age. A total of 4% ($n = 2$) of encounters were with individuals under 24 years old. Of the encounters 59% ($n = 31$) were with white individuals; 32% ($n = 17$) were with Indigenous individuals; and the remaining 8% were spread amongst Hispanic or other individuals.

Researchers were asked to assess and rate the individual's demeanour prior to the encounter according to the scale depicted in Figure 7.
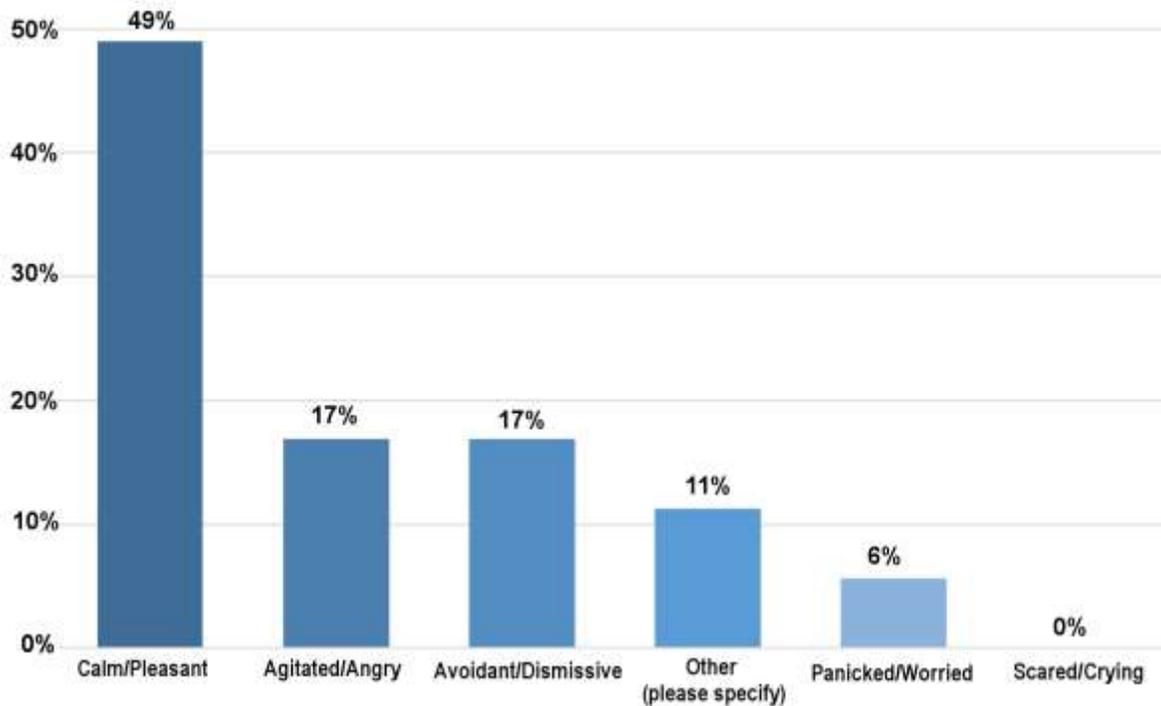

Figure 7. Citizen's Demeanour Prior to Encounter

As can be seen in Figure 7, most individuals were calm and/or pleasant prior to the officer's approach. Nearly 35% of individuals, however, were already agitated or avoidant before the encounter.

Researchers were asked to assess the officer's interaction on a number of different scales taken from prior field research on procedural justice and citizen's perceptions of encounters. The first question concerned whether officers actively asked for information and sought the individual's viewpoint. In 94% of cases ($n = 50$), this was determined to be the case. Similarly, in the same cases, the citizen provided their viewpoint and/or information requested. Overall, the exchanges were conversational and fruitful from an information-sharing perspective.

The next scale assessed the officer's listening style, ranging from a dismissive listener (one who is not interested in hearing the other person out), to active listener (one who actively listens and

takes in information from the other party). Researchers were asked to assess the officers on this scale in each encounter. The results are shown in Figure 8.
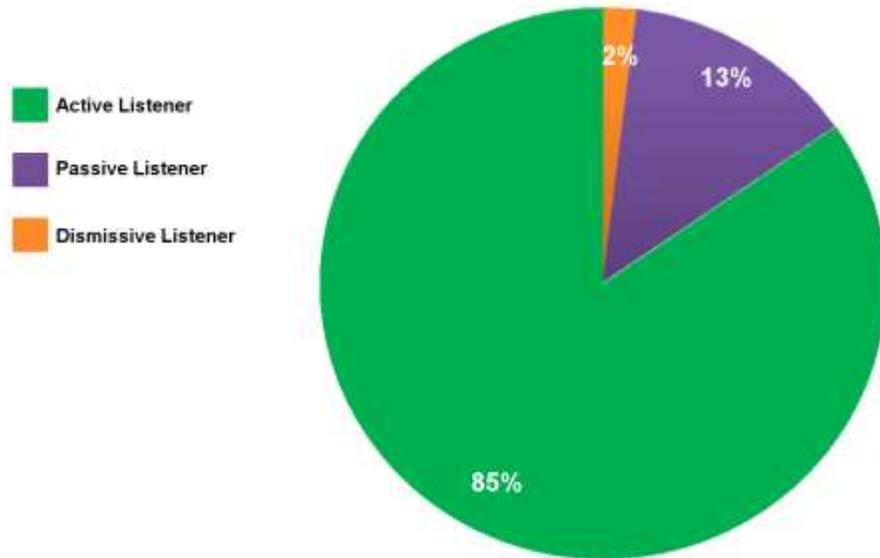

Figure 8. The Officer's Communication and Listening Style

In the vast majority (85%) of encounters, the researchers coded the officers as being "Active Listeners." In 13% of encounters ($n = 7$), officers displayed a passive listening style, which indicated they were not fully engaged with the individual. In only one encounter was the officer assessed as being "inattentive" in terms of listening style. Overall, in this sample of encounters, the vast majority of officers displayed the appropriate communication/listening style.

The next assessment focused on the officer's neutrality in the encounter on five dimensions, all of which were coded as "yes" or "no." The results are shown in Table 25.

Table 25. Neutrality Assessment Dimension

Neutrality Assessment Dimension	Yes %	N
Officer indicated s/he would seek all viewpoints about the matter at hand	96%	46
Officer indicated s/he would not make a decision about what to do until s/he had gathered all the necessary information	96%	45
Officer did not indicate that his/her decisions in this situation were influence by the personal characteristics (race, age, sex) of anyone present	100%	50
Officer explained why the police became involved in the situation	88%	42
Officer explained why s/he chose to resolve the situation as s/he did	77%	37

Although officers displayed appropriate neutrality on all dimensions, this was particularly high with respect to officers not indicating any influence according to personal characteristics. It should be noted that this does not mean these elements did not form part of their decision, but rather that it was not verbalized nor implied as a contributing reason in any decisions in any of the encounters. Officers in almost all encounters indicated that they would consider all viewpoints and gather all the information prior to making a decision. However, those elements scoring the lowest in this sample concerned the verbalization of the rationales the officers used to become involved in a situation, and how they decided to resolve the situation.

This is a very important point to examine further, as it may be a crucial element to consider for inclusion in training or policy development to further bolster the procedural justice of the street check encounters. If officers are unable to explain, or find it difficult to explain, their reasons for becoming involved in an encounter, individuals they stop could perceive that they are being unfairly targeted or stopped due to unarticulated grounds. Similarly, if officers decided to resolve the situation in a particular way, and only articulated this to three quarters of the individuals involved in the encounter, this leaves one quarter of individuals without sufficient information on why a situation occurred or was concluded in a particular way. Again, this leaves officers to open to the presumption of bias or fairness issues.

The next assessment was on officer's display of dignity and/or respect towards the individual involved in the encounter. This ranged from a score of 0 ("the officer showed disrespect") to 4 ("the officers showed dominant respect"). The results are shown in Figure 9.
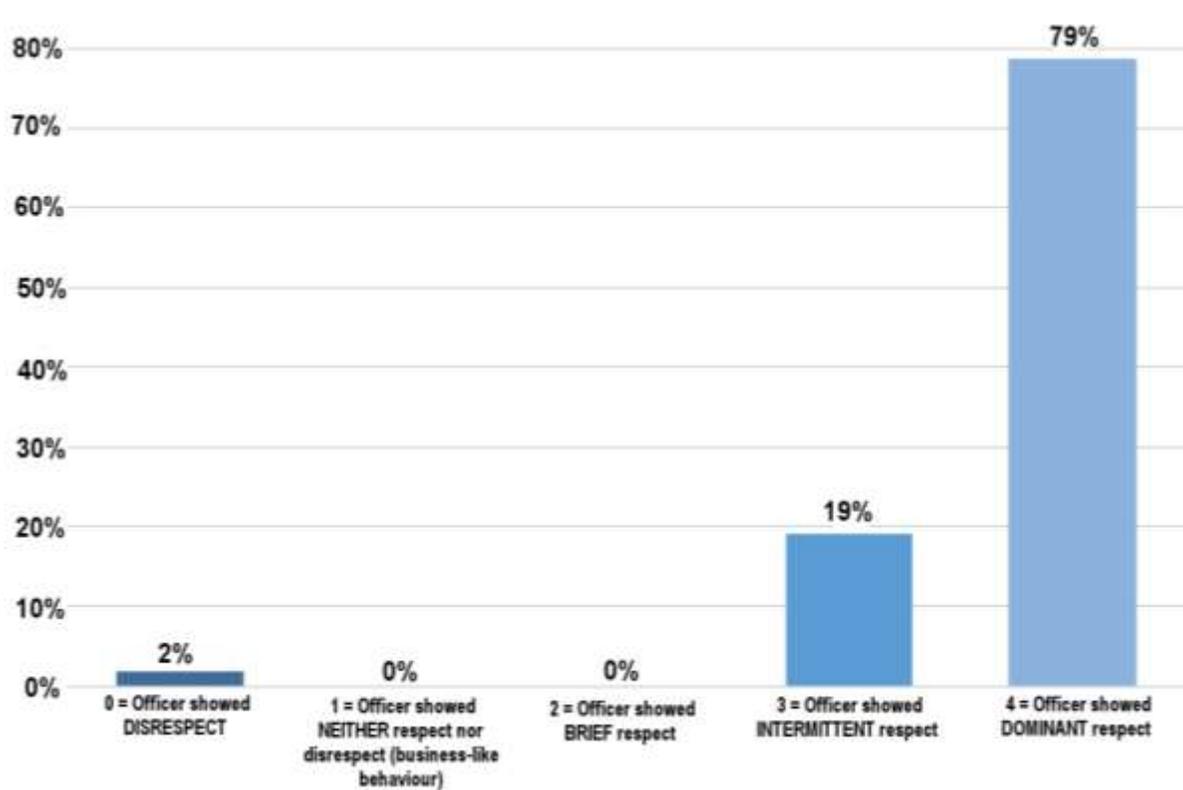
Figure 9. Assessment of Respect in Encounters

Note. Responses to the question: "To what extent did the officer behave respectfully toward the citizen?"

Overall, the researchers determined that in 79% of encounters ($n = 41$), officers showed dominant respect. To clarify, "dominant" in this assessment means continual or "most of the time." In 19% of encounters ($n = 10$), officers were assessed as showing intermittent respect. In one encounter, the researchers determined that the officer showed disrespect to the individual.

The next set of questions sought to assess the officer's motives, and their demonstration of care and concern for the individual involved in the encounter. This involved the following seven behavioural questions w:

1. The officer asked the citizen about his/her well-being or asked others in a way that the citizen observed it.

2. The officer offered comfort or reassurance to the citizen.

3. The officer provided or promised to exert control or influence over another person for the citizen.

4. The officer filed a report or promised to file a report for the citizen.

5. The officer acted or promised to act on behalf of the citizen with a government agency or private organization.

6. The officer provided/arranged or promised to provide/arrange physical assistance to the citizen.

7. The officer provided or promised to provide advice on how the citizen could handle the situation or deal with the problem.

Several of these questions garnered no response, as presumably the encounter did not necessitate a particular action, and thus, responses were left blank to many. The two questions that could be assessed for all encounters were #1 and #2, which involved asking about the individual's well-being and offering comfort or reassurance. These were assessed for 47 and 37 of the encounters respectively. For Question 1, 94% of the officers ($n = 44$) asked the individual about their well-being, or asked others about their well-being. For Question 2, 76% of officers ($n = 28$) offered comfort or reassurance to the individual. Based on these two dimensions, it would appear that in most instances in this sample, officers showed appropriate care and concern for the individuals they are checking.
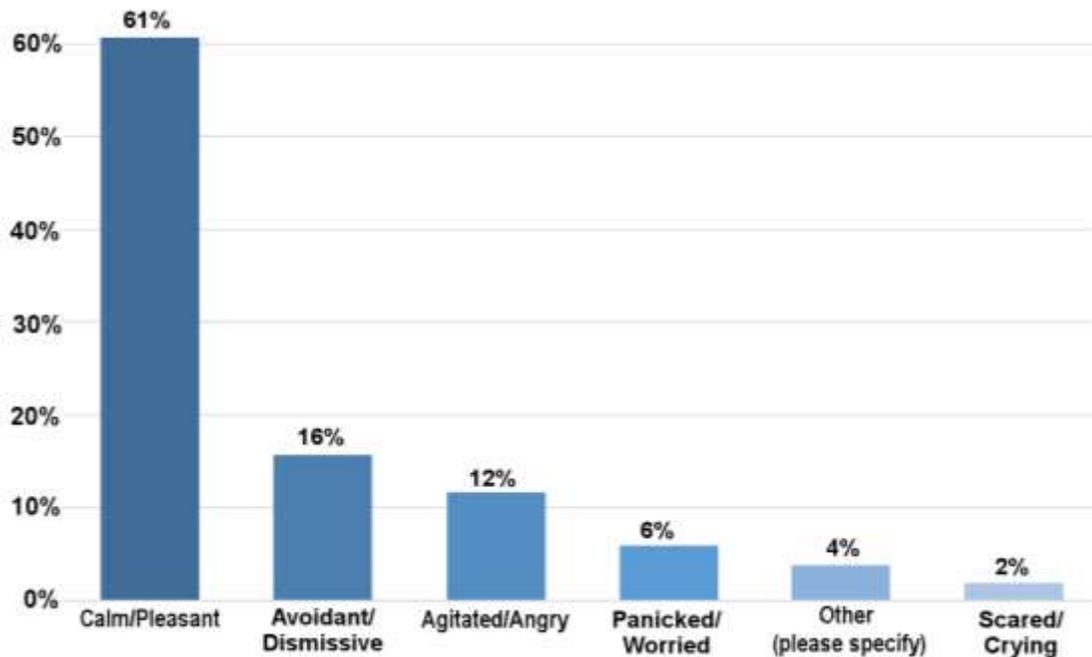

Figure 10. Citizen's Demeanour After Encounter

Note. Responses to the question, "What best describes the citizen's demeanour after the encounter?"

The next question assessed the citizen's demeanour following the encounter with the officer, using the same categories as the pre-encounter assessment. The results are shown in Figure 10.

As is shown, a larger percentage of the individuals were calm/pleasant following the encounter (49% prior to encounter vs. 61% after the encounter). The percentage who were avoidant or dismissive following the encounter dropped just slightly to 16% (vs. 17% prior to the encounter), while those who started off agitated and angry dropped from 17% to 12%. For those in the "other" category, two responses noted the individual was passed out, while the other individuals demonstrated more dismissive, but calm responses.

To assess how these attitudes changed, a comparison was run on these two response variables. The results are show in Table 26.

Table 26. Demeanour Before/After Comparison

		AFTER				
		Calm/pleasant	Panicked/worried	Agitated/Angry	Scared/crying	Avoidant/dismissive
BEFORE	Calm/pleasant	92%	4%	0%	0%	4%
	Panicked/worried	33%	67%	0%	0%	0%
	Agitated/Angry	14%	0%	71%	14%	0%
	Scared/crying	-	-	-	-	-
	Avoidant/dismissive	11%	0%	11%	0%	78%

This comparison shows how attitudes may have changed following an encounter. Those attitudes that remained the same are shown in gray. In total, 92% of individuals were calm and pleasant both before and after the encounter; 67% remained panicked or worried; 71% remained agitated or angry; and 78% remained avoidant or dismissive.

Only a very small number of encounters involved a change in demeanour. Overall, it appears that while these police encounters do not necessarily have a positive effect on most individuals who are demonstrating negative demeanours, they did not inflame the situations either. Rather, it would appear that the police in this sample of situations had more of a settling effect, as three individuals who were displaying behaviours on the negative end of this spectrum left the encounter with a more positive demeanour, while two individuals who started with positive demeanours ended with negative demeanours.

At the completion of the encounter, the officers were asked questions pertaining to how this encounter should (or was) initiated and recorded. This was used as a way to validate the researcher's perception of the event, as well as observe the officer's stated intent and the rationale for the initiation of the street check. Officers were asked, "What classification of encounter this event started as" and "What the officer decided to classify this encounter as once it was completed."

The officer's choices included (a) conversation only, (b) street check, (c) investigative detention, (d) probable cause for arrest, and (e) other (please specify). Most encounters both started and were recorded as a street check. This was similar for the classification of most encounters. Rarely did officers change the classification once an encounter had been initiated. This is shown in Table 27.

Table 27. Classification of Encounters

Classification of Encounter	Start	Recorded as
Conversation only	10	11
Street check	26	27
Investigative detention	8	5
Probable cause for arrest	4	6
Other	9	8
Skipped	*9*	*8*
	57	**57**

The only category of encounter that showed much 'movement' in terms of classification by the officers between the beginning and the conclusion were those encounters that started as an investigative detention. In two cases, an investigative detention was recorded as a conversation only. This is somewhat problematic, as it did not properly portray what the encounter was or why it was initiated. However, as the numbers are very small, they should not be taken too far out of context, nor interpreted as an indication of a pattern.

What did emerge from this question were several other justifications for the start of these encounters beyond the categories above. Nine additional descriptors were noted as being reasons why the encounter was initiated and included the following:

- Traffic stop.

- Disturbance in store.

- Welfare check.

- Suspicious activity.

- Arrested for threatening behaviour.

- Traffic stop but putting into system as street check.

- Police considered a BMW parked outside of an SRO as suspicious. After running the vehicle license plate they found it was of special interest to police with regard to an active homicide investigation. The registered owner also had a history of violent crime. Police legally detained and lawfully obtained identifying information from the owner because the vehicle had expired insurance tags. They searched the vehicle and owner for officer safety purposes.

- Check well being in response to a call for service.

- Well-being check.

Three interactions were to check someone's well-being and three were for traffic-related issues. Two encounters appeared to be initiated by criminal behaviour, which likely should have been coded and classified as an on-view (officer-initiated) call on an Intel GO, or perhaps an addendum to the homicide file, rather than documented on a street check. In the case of the BMW outside of the SRO, for example, upon discovering the potential link to an active homicide investigation, and considering this stop could have significant implications for the investigation and the successful resolution of the case, would another type of report been more appropriate?

The final section of the survey involved a narrative about the encounter, and some details not captured within the survey itself. Numerous checks involved individuals who were openly involved in drug or alcohol use, or disturbances caused by individuals in stores. Researchers noted the overwhelming respectfulness with which officers conducted themselves. Many encounters that appeared to be with individuals who were known to police were either well-being checks, or in the case of known offenders or known drug dealers, warrant checks or ID checks.

Overall, there were no overt indications that officers were basing any decisions to street check individuals on their personal biases. While it is impossible to know what may have been in an officer's mind, officers' actions on the whole were noted as respectful and were based on behaviours and could rightly be considered lawful and reasonable under the circumstances. As

mentioned, a focus area for improvement could be on the verbal explanation for the reasons behind the street check to the individual being street checked and on the report submitted.

Additional Observations

Researchers who participated in ride-alongs offered the following additional observations. These observations are captured in the subsections that follow.

Police Professionalism

Observations on ride-alongs and walk-alongs revealed most officers to be highly professional and polite in interactions. They were not overly aggressive and were largely respectful to people. Often, they made casual conversation and asked about people's life circumstances. Officers also displayed professionalism when interacting with people during calls for service, navigating complex situations with patience and strong communication skills.

Researchers observed on several occasions that BET officers handed out cigarettes to people and often asked if they needed anything. Further, officers did not appear to engage in any overt racial profiling. When police did initiate contacts, it was generally to either check on the well-being of people who appeared to be in some distress, the result of a call for service, or because of some observable behaviour on the part of the individuals being stopped.

None of the contacts police initiated appeared to be based on race or the result of bias. There were legitimate reasons for stops. In most instances police initiated the stop because the behaviour of the individuals caught their attention.

Proactive Policing and Community Engagement

The observations of researchers who participated in ride-alongs confirmed the largely reactive nature of patrol. Many officers stated that they didn't do many street checks or proactive policing aside from running licence plates and conducting the odd traffic stop. While officers generally displayed professionalism and strong communication skills during interactions and calls for service, they only rarely interacted with citizens outside of an enforcement or investigative context. They did not engage with business owners nor did they visit any resource centres, cultural centres (e.g., temples, mosques) or participate in community-oriented activities. Positive

community engagement does not appear to be a priority for most VPD patrol officers at this moment in time.

During unallocated patrol time officers engaged in little to no proactive policing or community engagement of any kind. It was rare that officers exited their vehicles other than responding to calls, grabbing food, or for administrative purposes. On several ride-alongs, officers spent most of their shift being responding to calls and writing reports, leaving them very limited unallocated time. On one occasion in District 1, a Patrol Sergeant noted that there were over 120 outstanding calls on the callboard for the district alone. The only available units were the Sergeant and the officer being observed.

However, on other ride-alongs there were periods of time where officers had no priority calls to respond to, were not being dispatched to anything, and so were free to be proactive. Yet, during this time most officers simply drove around and had very few contacts with the public. While there were occasions where officers stopped to speak to citizens, they rarely left their vehicles to do so. While it is important for officers to be in or near their vehicles in the event that a high priority call comes in, they did not park their vehicles and get out on foot or visit businesses or organizations in the area.

Officers stated that on most shifts they are too busy responding to calls and have too many administrative tasks to do any proactive work, however, even when they were not being dispatched to calls, officers appeared to simply wait for another call to come in, rather than seek out crime or positively engaging with the public.

Plainclothes or unmarked patrol units were the exception. These units are generally reserved for responding to high-priority calls or calls where a non-uniform presence is required. As such, they had the potential to do more proactive work. Plainclothes officers typically had more proactive contacts with people and entered more street checks than uniformed officers. However, plainclothes officers still rarely left their vehicles. Even when checking people, unless they were surveilling or "footing" a suspect or suspicious person, they mostly remained in their cars.

Variability in Patrol Interactions with Citizens by Shift Rotation

On patrol with BET officers, field researchers observed contrasting dynamics between officers and citizens when officers patrolled in vehicles and on foot. They noted that the even side shift rotation members generally stayed in vehicles, while odd side rotation members spent the majority of their time patrolling on foot. It appeared that the officers who spent more time in their vehicles were less engaged, had fewer opportunities for positive proactive engagement with the public and seemed to have less of a rapport with residents. This was particularly evident on one ride along with officers new to the DTES, who did not seem to have a strong knowledge of the DTES. While they did have several interactions, they did not leave their vehicle for any of them.

Conversely, officers who spent the majority of their time on foot appeared to have a far greater knowledge of the area and of DTES residents. In particular, two of the BET members were extremely knowledgeable about the area. They greeted many people by name and were able to point out a number of known offenders. For example, one of the officers greeted a known drug dealer by name and shared a brief, pleasant conversation with him. On another occasion, they recognized a known gang member and approached him for a casual conversation.

They had a number of simple, pleasant interactions with residents and had a higher number of interactions overall, engaged with more people, and generally seemed to do more proactive patrol work. These officers appeared to have a good sense of the rhythms of the area and seemed to be able to sense when trouble was brewing For example, while standing in the midst of the street market, one of the officers expressed the sense that a fight would soon break out. Several minutes later a fistfight erupted between two males and both officers had to intervene. They were able to break up the fight and to de-escalate the situation without any arrests.

These officers also had considerable knowledge about the drug trade in the DTES, and used that knowledge to arrest one drug dealer, seize a significant amount of fentanyl, and to seize drugs from another dealer. Additionally, the officers identified problem establishments and took time to walk through them to deter potential criminal activity, while also searching for weapons and narcotics. While on one such patrol, officers recovered a knife that was hidden in the back of a chair in one particular drinking establishment.

While walking with two other BET officers, one interaction in particular underscored the value of this rapport building. Officers had contact with a young, Indigenous male who was in possession of weapons. One of the officers knew the male and that seemed to immediately de-escalate the situation. The male willingly allowed the officers to search him and recover a large knife. He then told the officers that he was in possession of two machetes in his backpack. Following the arrest, the officer who knew the male stated that the young man was often "very violent" but that she liked him because he was always compliant and respectful with her.

Ride-along Observations of Street Checks

On ride-alongs, researchers observed that most interactions were not lengthy, and that officers did their best to ensure that the people they stopped were allowed to go on their way as soon as possible. In higher intensity situations, officers skilfully de-escalated the situation, calming people down and resolving most interactions peacefully.

Following are several examples of encounters that were observed during ride-a-longs with patrol officers. These examples cannot be taken as representative of the wide variety of encounters that VPD police officers have with citizens. However, they do provide insights into the context in which street checks are conducted and, as well, the dynamics of the encounter between officers and the people who are stopped. As discussed in the literature review section, the dynamics of the encounter can play a significant role in the lived experiences of people in communities of diversity and may contribute to the perception that they have been racially profiled and subjected to biased policing.

Example 1

Officers pointed out a young homeless couple and stated that earlier in the year the woman had been street checked several times, as she was pregnant, and the officers wanted to help ensure her continued her well-being. When requested to explain this, the officer provided the following details:

> When we first met the woman (approximately fall of 2018), we learned that she was under- age, addicted to meth, pregnant and likely suffering from some type of mental and / or developmental disability. As a result we did our best to check up with her during our beat patrols to ensure she was getting to her doctor's

appointments and receiving the help we needed. While she was initially hesitant to accept housing, we reached out to some people who attempted to set her up with housing (which she ultimately rejected).

Although the woman still resides on the street, street checks provided a valuable resource for trying to locate her even though she has no fixed address, no cell phone, no driver's license and no family in the area (to the best of our knowledge). If street checks were taken away from us as a tool we would not be able to keep tabs on her location during a time where we were trying to connect her with services to help herself.

Example 2

Officers were conducting a patrol of multi-level public parking garage, which they characterized as a common target of theft from autos and theft of autos. They observed a young Indigenous male with a backpack, wearing what appeared to be old-fashioned welding goggles walking slowly through the ground floor of the garage. The officers announced themselves, called the male over to the car and asked him if he owned a car in the garage. When he stated he did not, the officers asked him why he was walking through the garage and where he was going. The male responded that he was going to "meet a friend" and was just cutting through the garage. Officers asked the male for his name and date of birth and conducted a database search where they ascertained that the male had no fixed address, was currently unemployed, and had no outstanding warrants or conditions. The officers then asked him if he needed anything or if they could do anything for him. He asked for a cigarette, which one of the officers gave him before sending him on his way. The officers indicated that they would put in a street check report because the male had a history of property crime, had no fixed address and was in an area known for property crime.

Example 3

A ride-along with a designated proactive unit assigned to crime hotspots and high crime areas demonstrated how one officer conducts street checks. Prior to going out on patrol, this officer had printed out a list of known offenders that included their names, booking photos, and descriptions. While parked outside the Murray Hotel, an SRO, she observed a Caucasian male a male whom she knew to be a prolific theft from auto (TFA) offender. She knew he had a 7 p.m. curfew, and that he usually committed thefts between 4-6 p.m. in underground parking garages

227

in close proximity to the Murray Hotel. As he walked past the vehicle, she confirmed the individual's identity from her list, and entered a street check of the observation, noting that he was out during a period that was typically his "crime time." The street check report included time, date, and location and detailed clothing description. She stated that if a TFA occurred in the area during this time period, she would have a record of him in the area and a description of what he was wearing that could help to dismiss or substantiate him as a possible suspect.

Example 4

Officers observed a luxury SUV parked outside of an SRO. They noted that this was both uncommon and suspicious, so they exited their vehicle and initiated a conversation with the apparent owner. The man was cooperative and affable, provided his name to the officers, and stated he was waiting for his wife who worked at the SRO. A check revealed the vehicle's insurance had expired. The owner was advised he would not be able to drive the vehicle until the insurance was updated and agreed to do so. The officer stated he would be documenting the interaction and forwarding it to Homicide Section as an intel GO because checks had revealed that the vehicle was flagged as being of interest in an active homicide investigation and the driver had a history of violent interactions with the police.

Example 5

On a night shift in District 1, police observed a Caucasian male without a helmet riding a BMX bike in between parked cars in an area popular for property crime. Given the time, the area, and knowing that it was common for property crime offenders to ride bikes, the officers followed the male around the block and observed that he was riding the bike somewhat dangerously, failing to signal and not riding in the designated bike lane. The officers initiated a stop, based on the grounds that the male was not wearing a helmet and had engaged in a number of reckless manoeuvres on his bike. They asked the male what he was up to. He told them he was waiting to meet friends; however, his story was quite vague and didn't make much sense given that he had just been riding around on his bike. The male did not have ID, but willingly gave his name and date of birth to the officers. After running his name, the officers told the male that he couldn't continue to wait where he was and to move along. The officer entered a street check because the

male was acting suspiciously, had a history of property crime, and his explanation for being in the area was vague.

Example 6

On a night shift in District 4, officers observed a male attempting to go through a clothing donation bin. The officers yelled out to the man, announced their presence and asked him to come over to the vehicle. They asked the man what he was doing, and he admitted to going through the bin. One of the officers told him that he shouldn't be doing that because it was illegal and dangerous. The man agreed and said he would move along. The officers obtained his name and date of birth. After determining that the man had only a minor criminal record (and nothing recent), they concluded the interaction, telling him to have a good night and to stay away from the clothing bins for his own safety.

Although one of the officers characterized the interaction as a street check, she stated she would not document it because she did not believe he was involved in crime, and did not view his activity as especially suspicious, and that documenting the interaction would be of no informational value.

Example 7

On a night shift in District 1, officers encountered an individual rifling through bags in a doorway. The officers pulled up to the individual, introduced themselves as the police and asked the person what they were doing. The individual stated he was looking through his things and would be moving on shortly. One officer asked for the person's name and birthday, which were willingly provided. While one officer ran the information, the other officer made causal conversation, asking where the person resided, asking about their plans for the evening, and joking about how he and the individual shared Norwegian ancestry. When a database search revealed that the individual had no outstanding warrants, members concluded the interaction and moved on. The officer stated that he would enter the interaction in a street check report because the individual had a history of arson, specifically setting fire to a garbage bin in an alley.

Walk-a-Long Observations

BET officers had numerous contacts with people throughout the course of their shift. These contacts varied in terms of the length of the encounter, the tone or formality of the encounter, and the reason for the encounter. Most interactions were brief (often less than a minute), and informal checks on people's well-being. Generally, one or both officers approached a person who appeared to be passed out or sleeping and asking if he or she was okay. Once the person stirred and stated that he or she was okay, officers usually moved on immediately. In most of these interactions, officers did not request names or identification and did not record any information. From the officers' perspectives, they were simply checking to see if people were alive and making sure that they were not in any physical or mental distress, and once there were able to confirm this, moved on.

Other contacts were often the result of suspicious or possibly criminal activity. Examples of this include stopping a couple who appeared to be engaged in a minor domestic dispute; stopping a woman who appeared to be urinating between two cars in a parking lot; and checking on a young couple who were camped out in a parking lot. These interactions were also brief (approximately 3–10 minutes), and typically involved officers requesting the individuals' names and dates of birth and running them in PRIME. In addition, officers would usually ask the individuals what they were up to and what their plans for the rest of the day were. If nothing significant arose from the conversation or the database search, the officers would move on, again without completing any formal documentation. Several examples of beat officer encounters are presented in the subsections that follow.

Example 1

In addition to the presence of weapons, BET officers noted that they commonly encounter situations involving violence or the threat of violence. On one night shift walk-along, while BET officers were en route to assist another unit that was responding to a call of a male with a knife outside of a store, they were flagged down to assist a young Black male who had been stabbed in the face and arm. While the two officers attempted to render assistance to the young man, they were immediately surrounded by a hostile crowd who yelled at the officers, called them names, and accused them of failing to properly assist the male. As more officers arrived to secure the

scene, the crowd grew louder, demanding officers call an ambulance, even though the officers had called for an ambulance immediately upon arriving on scene. In addition to people yelling at the officers, several took out their phones and began to film.

BET officers related that complaints or accusations often do not come from the people they have stopped or arrested, but from bystanders or members of the public passing by. They noted the increased presence of camera phones during interactions as well as what they perceived to be an increased vociferousness from members of the public towards the police. They felt that people are more willing to openly challenge the police and question their actions.

While BET officers did not believe they engaged in biased policing, they felt that it had become a prominent consideration in their interactions with members of the public and was something that they were factoring in to their decisions to interact with people. One officer articulated it thusly: "I'm scared to stop Black people now. It's always about race. As a white cop, I often get yelled at for stopping a person of colour. People walking by call me racist [and] tell me to leave the person alone. It's brutal."

One BET officer expressed that he was cognizant of the perception by some people of colour that the police are only stopping them because of their race, and, as such, indicated that he made a point of telling people the reason for the stop. He noted, "I always tell people there is a reason I've stopped them. I always have a valid reason."

Example 2

Two BET officers observed a young Indigenous male in convenience store. The officers recognized the male and indicated that he was a member of a prominent First Nations gang and had an extensive criminal history. One of the officers stated that he had not seen the male in the DTES recently and wanted to speak with him. Both officers approached the male, asked him how he was doing and what he was up to, and then moved on. One of the officers explained that he approached the male because he wanted to make his presence felt and to warn him to stay out of trouble. As the officers were on foot, they did not immediately document this interaction and it was unclear if they would ultimately do so.

Example 3

On one walk-along researchers observed an example of the hostility of bystanders and passers-by that officers encounter during contacts. As two BET officers told street vendors at the makeshift street market along the 90 block of East Hastings to pack up their goods for the night, they had to break up a violent fistfight over a backpack between two males. As the officers took the men into custody, an aggressive crowd formed around them and began yelling insults toward the officers, calling them "f***ing pigs and "f***ing a**holes" and encroaching upon their space. A special community constable assisted the officers with crowd control and the officers ultimately took control of the situation, but admitted it was concerning.

CHAPTER 11: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The primary objectives of the VPD Street Check Review were to:

1. Analyze and interpret the Vancouver Police Department data on street checks practice, policy, procedures and guidance on street checks and use of them as a policing tool.

2. Assess the impacts of street checks on Indigenous and racialized (non-Caucasian) people including a community-based research assessment of police contacts to determine the satisfaction of particularly affected racialized or geographic communities with recommendations in relation to street checks in Vancouver.

The review incorporated a literature review, a review of findings from the VPD's *Understanding Street Checks* report, interviews and focus groups with representatives of Vancouver communities of diversity and representatives of community organizations providing services and supports for them, and interviews and focus groups with VPD personnel. The research raised a number of questions and issues that are important to consider.

Street checks cannot be considered in isolation of the social, economic, political, and environmental contexts in which they are conducted. Building safe and secure communities requires the involvement of all levels of government, service providers, and community members. Multi-disciplinary approaches are essential to developing and implementing strategies to address the multiple, complex and interrelated socio-economic, health and mental health challenges. Addictions, housing, provision of support services for vulnerable and marginalized communities, and community–police relations are but some of the factors that may affect the effectiveness of street checks as a component of a community safety strategy.

There is considerable debate about the value of street checks. Studies assessing the effectiveness of street checks in preventing, solving, and reducing crime have been limited (Huey, 2019). However, one empirical study conducted on homicides in Chicago in 2016 found that the decrease in stop and frisks was responsible for an immediate significant spike in homicides (Cassell and Fowles, 2018). The Honourable Mr. Justice Tulloch in his review of street checks in Ontario (2018) noted in his report that street checks may have value as a police strategy for gathering intelligence, but carding does not.

VPD members at all levels felt strongly that street checks were vital to fulfilling police roles and responsibilities and that Vancouver residents expected them to conduct street checks. While many community members agreed there was value in street checks, others questioned their efficacy and questioned whether the social costs, loss of trust, and compromised community relations resulting from street checks outweighed the benefits derived. Several interviewees suggested that police needed to demonstrate why street checks were worth these risks and costs and whether there were other tools and strategies they could employ to achieve the outcomes they were seeking.

The current review identified that police and community members perceived police–community relationships and interactions very differently. In discussions, VPD members focused on the numerous programs they offered and managed in cooperation with community organizations, their extensive engagements and relationships with Vancouver communities and community organizations, and the activities they participated in with community members. Community members, on the other hand, focused primarily on the impacts crime and disorder were having on their neighbourhoods and on the safety and security concerns they and their communities had that, in many cases, were not being addressed.

Many community members acknowledged and praised the VPD executive, senior managers, Diversity and Indigenous Relations Section, and specialized liaison officers for their commitment and efforts to strengthen community–police relationships and interactions, and the participation of these senior and specialized representatives in a plethora of community events and activities. However, a significant number of community members noted that police engagement, relationship building, and interest in building and advancing community–police relationships and cooperative efforts was lacking at frontline levels.

Community members related that they have few opportunities to engage with VPD frontline officers, except when they are responding to calls or are working in an enforcement capacity. Representatives of organizations who work with many of the same people the VPD deals with regularly specifically noted that there are no strong working relationships, agreements or protocols in place to define staff and police expectations and commitments, roles and responsibilities, and that this had resulted in inconsistent approaches and responses. Many

community organizational representatives expressed concern that police often devalued their experience and knowledge and tried to address issues on their own, rather than capitalizing on the considerable expertise and contributions community members could make. Although some community members wanted nothing to do with the VPD, the majority of community representatives expressed a strong desire to work collaboratively with the police to build bridges that could assist in building more effective and inclusive community safety and security strategies.

Many community members agreed with police that street checks had the potential to be a valuable component of maintaining community safety and security. However, a number of community representatives noted that while police street checks may be done with the best of intentions, they often negatively impact communities of diversity and vulnerable and marginalized populations. A number of people suggested that police may not be aware of how their approaches and interactions in street checks impacted people from communities of diversity or of the long and widespread ripple effects a negative encounter could have for community members and for police. They felt that many issues could be resolved if police interacted with all people in a professional, accountable, culturally competent, and trauma informed manner.

Challenges specific to street checks were identified both within the VPD and in the community. Community members lacked understanding about street checks and about their rights as citizens when stopped by police. VPD members on the other hand, due to a lack of policy, monitoring, and quality control processes were confused and inconsistent in their use of, and documentation of, street checks. This combination of internal and external challenges has led to considerable frustration for police officers and community members, and has raised questions about police accountability and transparency, and for some, has reduced trust in police.

Overall, the conclusions reached by the Planning, Research, and Audit (PR&A) team in their report were validated and reasonable, and the patterns emerging from their examination and the patterns emerging from their examination held when the 2018 sample data units were subject to a similar analysis. Similar to Wortley's (2019) finding in the study of street checks in Halifax and the findings of Griffiths et al. (2018), the present study was unable to either confirm or disprove that VPD police officers engaged in biased policing and racial profiling through the use of street

checks. However, the simple overrepresentation of Indigenous individuals in the street check data also does not confirm nor deny the existence of bias.

The majority of community and police interviewees perceived that addressing identified policy, practice, data management, accountability, communications, and internal and external education challenges had the potential to assist in improving understanding and support for street checks and ensuring that street checks are conducted in a way that preserves individual's rights and dignity and assists in achieving community safety and security objectives. An overview of findings and recommendations from the review are presented in Table 28.

Table 28. Findings and Recommendations

A. The Efficacy of Street Checks	
Findings	**Recommendations for the VPD**
1. Canadian studies on street checks have varied in their conclusions about the value and effectiveness of street checks. In his study of street checks in Ontario, the Honourable Mr. Justice Tulloch (2018) distinguished between street checks and carding and concluded that street checks can be a valuable police strategy. 2. The VPD members who participated in this review felt strongly that street checks are a valuable policing tool, and they provided a number of examples to support their perspective. 3. Community member perceptions of the value of street checks varied from "very valuable" to "they should be banned."	1. If not already underway, in collaboration with community stakeholders and all levels of the VPD, including patrol officers, initiate a dialogue on street checks processes and practices to develop a shared understanding of the value of street checks as an integral component of community safety and security.
B. Community–Police Relationships and Partnerships	
Findings	**Recommendations for the VPD**
1. The VPD executive, senior managers, Diversity and Indigenous Relations Section, and specialized liaison officers have extensive, positive relationships and partnerships with a myriad of Vancouver communities.	1. Incorporate the extensive VPD partnerships with communities in the city into a comprehensive community policing plan. This plan would set out how collaborative partnerships with agencies and community organizations can be established, enhanced,

	and sustained by members at all levels and across all areas of responsibility in the VPD.
	2. Include objectives and metrics to be used in assessing outcomes in the community policing plan. Identify the resources the VPD would require to successfully implement and evaluate the plan.
2. A common concern among organizations serving communities of diversity and members of communities of diversity was the limited number of opportunities to engage with VPD frontline officers in a non-enforcement capacity. This is due, in part, to the challenges that the VPD are currently experiencing in meeting demands for service	1. If they have not already done so, the VPD should employ a meaningful consultation process with the communities in Vancouver and with the VPD membership to develop a cohesive community policing plan.
3. The VPD does not have a cohesive community policing plan that incorporates how street checks might contribute to community safety and security.	1. Clearly articulate the role and objectives of street checks as an integral component of a community policing plan.
	2. Explore ways to enhance patrol officers' proactive interactions with communities.

C. Community Perspectives on Street Checks	
Findings	**Recommendations for the VPD**
1. Community members provided a broad range of perspectives on street checks, ranging from very positive to very negative. 2. Some interviewees perceived that street checks had value and that the practice should be retained, often with restrictions. Many in this group reinforced that street checks should be considered as a "tool of compassion" and be guided by principles and guidelines. 3. Others felt street checks offered no value and should be banned.	1. Consider establishing a Street Check Advisory Committee modelled along the lines of the VPD Indigenous Advisory Council to facilitate communication and provide an avenue for feedback on street check issues.
4. There were significant differences in how people in different communities perceived the police generally, and more specifically, the issues of street checks. 5. A number of interviewees felt police stops of Indigenous, Black, and other vulnerable and/or marginalized people were racially motivated and biased. 6. People in communities of diversity and people providing services for them indicated officers often did not show respect toward some citizens, did not treat some people fairly, and at times did not exhibit culturally competent and trauma-informed approaches. 7. Many people expressed the view that there was no point in complaining about inequitable treatment by police, as complaints would not be taken seriously or responded to.	1. Develop strategies to address the perceptions and concerns raised by community members about police street check stops.
8. Community perspectives on whether or not police should conduct well-being checks varied considerably, with some citizens feeling it was very important that the practice continue, some perceiving that it should be restricted and more closely monitored, and others wanting it discontinued.	1. Develop a policy on well-being checks that considers community input, is communicated to the communities, and clearly distinguishes well-being checks from street checks.

D. VPD Street Check Policy and Processes	
Findings	**Recommendations for the VPD**
1. The VPD does not currently have a street check policy. This prevents the department from articulating the objective of this strategy to the community, contributes to confusion and inconsistency in the use of street checks by officers, and hinders the collection of reliable data for analysis.	1. If not already underway, develop a clear street check policy on the practice, use, storage, access, and retention of street check information that takes into consideration the issues and recommendations raised in this report as well as the findings and recommendations made by the Honourable Justice Tulloch in Ontario (2018) and by Scot Wortley (2019) in his report on street checks in Halifax. 2. Communicate the street check policy to the community as part of a public education plan. 3. Develop a system for monitoring the use of street checks. The New York Police Department (NYPD) and the Cincinnati Police Department provide examples of how analytics are used to monitor the use of street checks by officers.
2. There is considerable subjectivity and ambiguity in how VPD members and the public define street checks and how VPD officers classify and document interactions. 3. A number of community members questioned how street check information was stored and used as well as the length of time it should be retained.	1. Ensure VPD street policy and procedures articulate: • when officers should and should not conduct street checks and outlines the situations in which they should be conducted. • police officers should never arbitrarily or randomly stop, question, and search or request identifying information from a civilian. • the need for articulation of stops or street checks. • who can access street check information, including processes for how citizens can access their own street check records.
4. Community members viewed a formal street check policy and usage guidelines as vital for increasing trust in police, transparency, and accountability.	1. Ensure the primary focus of a street check policy is on the development of strategies and practices that enhance transparency, accountability, and trust in police.

E. VPD Street Check Data Review and Data Collection Processes	
Findings	**Recommendations for the VPD**
1. A brief snapshot of the VPD data raises some data quality issues and concerns relating to when and how data units are entered as a street check. The lack of a policy on street check usage within the VPD appears to be responsible for at least some of these data capture issues, such as when and why a street check should be used. 2. Overall, the conclusions reached of the Planning, Research, and Audit (PR&A) team were validated and reasonable, and the patterns emerging from their examination held when the 2018 sample data units were subject to a similar analysis. 3. Similar to Wortley's (2019) finding in the study of street checks in Halifax and the findings of Griffiths et al. (2018), the present study was unable to either confirm or disprove that VPD police officers engaged in biased policing and racial profiling through the use of street checks. However, the simple overrepresentation of Indigenous individuals in the street check data also does not confirm nor deny the existence of bias. 4. Since the VPD did not have a published street check policy, the review focused on the lived experiences of individuals in communities of diversity, of key stakeholders in the city, and of VPD officers, supplemented by extensive in-field observations of police–citizen encounters. 5. Over 40% of street checks were justified with a bylaw stop; 25% were justified as "possible criminal behaviour." Overall, very few of these street checks appears on its face to be unwarranted or unreasonable.	1. Conduct regular assessments of the integrity of street check data. 2. Designate the PR&A to incorporate the suggestions laid out in this report to inform the proposed audit process and methodology.

8. Street check reports are entered directly into PRIME, a provincially controlled system. 9. Analysts find it challenging to search street check reports.	1. Request PR&A to draft a more comprehensive street check screen for consideration by PRIME Corp. 2. Ensure the new Street Check screen in PRIME is concise and brief, yet captures essential information such as date, time, location, and reason for check. 3. Designate the PR&A and the policy writing team to redesign the "Reason for Check" field to assure validity and descriptive accuracy of each category while also ensuring categories are appropriate and useful for tracking and audit on an ongoing basis. 4. Explore ways in which information contained in street checks can be tagged, coded, and routed to improve searchability for officers and analysts.

F. VPD Street Check Monitoring and Quality Control

Findings	Recommendations for the VPD
1. The VPD lacks processes to monitor street checks, oversee street check quality, and maintain accountability in the use of street checks. 2. As in most police departments, the majority of VPD patrol officers are very "junior."	1. Ensure senior patrol members, supervisors, and managers receive the training and support needed to effectively guide and coach junior members' development of sound proactive policing and street check skills. 2. Ensure supervisors review street checks completed by their officers for quality and adherence to policy, and arrange for remedial training for officers who do not comply with standards set. 3. Involve supervisors and managers in the development and implementation of a review process that holds members accountable for meeting street check policy and processes.
3. VPD Quality Control Section returns street checks to members if the information provided should be captured in another report format.	1. Clearly define and integrate supervisor, manager, and Quality Control Section responsibilities for monitoring and ensuring the quality of street checks.
4. Sergeants, staff sergeants, and inspectors do not use the number of street checks produced as a measure of member performance.	1. Continue to ensure that street checks are not used as a performance measure. Incorporate this concept into the street check policy.

G. VPD Street Check Auditing and Reporting	
Findings	**Recommendations for the VPD**
1. Street checks are not regularly audited or publicly reported.	1. Ensure the Audit Unit of PR&A: • works with policy drafters to develop the proper metrics to be collected for an annual audit of compliance with that policy. • conducts an annual audit of a representative random sample of cases one year after approval and dissemination of the new VPD Street Check policy. • completes these audits in the second quarter of each calendar year and reports to the Vancouver Police Board in the Q2 Board Report. • offers regular report-outs to the community.

H. Street Check Training for VPD Officers	
Findings	**Recommendations for the VPD**
1. The introduction and placement of street checks in the first week of the recruit training program at the Justice Institute of British Columbia (JIBC) is not effective, as most recruits lack the contextual understanding of the policing environment, the legal framework within which they will be conducting their work, and police roles and responsibilities to be able to absorb and apply concepts learned.	1. Advocate for the JIBC to conduct street check training after recruits have foundational understanding of the policing environment, the legal frameworks, and police roles and responsibilities.
2. Officers often do not consistently explain to community members why they were stopped, or if they do, sometimes have difficulty articulating the reasons for the check stop in their report.	1. Develop a training program to ensure members stop and interact with people for valid reasons and that officers are able to articulate the reasons for the stop. The VPD should ensure that its officers clearly articulate the reasons for stops.
4. The VPD has invested heavily in training for their officers; however, there is some question as to the extent to which some VPD officers have an understanding of the lived experiences of the people they come into contact with. Although race and ethnicity have been the primary lenses through which	1. Review the course content in the VPD "mini-academy" for new recruits and in-service training courses to ensure that content incorporates a focus on competencies to build and enhance police legitimacy, human rights and trauma-informed approaches, procedural justice, cultural competency as it relates to

the police practice of street checks has been examined and debated, the lived experiences of those who are vulnerable, marginalized, and at-risk must also be considered. This includes people with mental illness, individuals who struggle with addiction, the homeless, and those who face other challenges.	acknowledging and seeking to understand and consider the perspectives of persons they interacting with, and police accountability. 2. Incorporate into training considerations of how police power, authority, and privilege can impact people's perceptions and interactions with police.
5. The VPD currently does not have the capacity to monitor the extent to which officers understand and apply the principles of procedural justice policing in their interactions with citizens.	1. Ensure that officers, including field training officers, are trained in the principles of procedural justice policing and develop a protocol to assess the extent to which this approach is used by officers in encounters with citizens.
6. There is no training for supervisors on how to monitor and manage street checks or how to teach or coach their members to conduct and document quality street checks.	1. Provide training for supervisors to assist them in training and coaching members to conduct quality street checks.

I. Public Education and Communication

Findings	Recommendations for the VPD
1. VPD members and people in communities of diversity identified the need for a more proactive approach by the VPD to educate residents about street checks, their objectives, and their use. Uncertainty about the purpose of street checks contributes to the public perception that they are based on racial profiling and biased policing. 2. The VPD does not currently have an education and communication plan to inform the community about the purpose and objectives of street checks, how the data units gathered in street checks are stored, accessed, and retained, and how the use of street checks is monitored. 3. The public is generally unaware of what constitutes a street check, the police authority to conduct street checks, and citizen rights when stopped by an officer and asked to provide personal identifying information. 4. There are concerns among communities of diversity as to how the VPD uses street checks and a lack of accountability for this practice.	1. Approach public education about street checks as an opportunity that has benefits for the public and the VPD. 2. Develop and implement a plan to educate and inform community members about the use of street checks and the role of this strategy in contributing to crime prevention and public safety and security. 3. Where possible, share select cases of positive outcomes from street checks that have been sufficiently vetted to ensure privacy and confidentiality is not compromised.

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