INDIGENOUS PARTICIPATION IN POLICING – FROM NATIVE POLICE TO NOW – HAS ANYTHING CHANGED?

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There is a tendency for those who are the victors to write history to suit their own purpose. We would be naive if we were to expect that the history of Australia was any different. Indeed, whole sections of Australian history have been conveniently 'forgotten' or written to suit the purpose of that particular author. The history of Indigenous participation in policing is one of those slabs that has either been rewritten or forgotten, depending on the perspective. Indigenous police were often portrayed as collaborators, traitors or 'noble savages', where Indigenous participation was an adjunct to the so-called explorers of colonisation. The truth lies somewhere in between and the perspective of one person differs from another. And what one may believe to be satisfactory or even outstanding may be viewed in an entirely different light by those people who it is designed to serve.

This paper explores the history of Indigenous involvement in policing, starting with the Native Police and ending with the implementation of the current Royal Commission Recommendations. The subsequent waves of attracting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women into policing are lauded by many police organisations as innovative, but are these policies new and have any real changes been made since the days of the Native Police?

**Background**

In 1991 Commissioner Elliott Johnston released the report into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. Some 330 recommendations were made designed to improve Indigenous welfare. In relation to policing and the criminal justice system, Commissioner Johnston concluded to combat the problems of endemic and systemic racism there was a need for more Indigenous involvement in policing. He believed this was *of central importance to the long term issue of policing* (29.7 Vol 4). Indigenous participation would give us police that were truly reflective of the community. Since Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders were more likely to have contact with police, Indigenous police eventually would be able to lessen or make that contact more positive. The crux of this chapter translated into recommendations 225, 229 and 230 and related to each police organisation having its own Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander unit to oversee the implementation of any recruiting strategy - with an Indigenous person heading the unit; the need to implement bridging courses for those Indigenous people who wished to join but whose education level was insufficient; particular attention to be paid to recruiting women and that successful applicants to be taken in groups rather than singularly (29.7.3 Vol 4). He recommended that jurisdictions pursue their chosen initiatives for improving relations between Aboriginal people and police in the form of police aides, auxiliaries and liaison officers.

Commissioner Elliott devoted a whole chapter of the RCIADIC report to 'The question of Aboriginal police and Police Aides and Police Liaison Officers' (Vol 4). He found there was general agreement for increased Indigenous participation but this brought with it a unique set of problems. As the decade unfolded and those recommendations began to be implemented those problems and more came to the forefront. Some of those problems were anticipated ie racism, tokenism and some were totally unanticipated ie colour, Aboriginality, difficulty of implementation.

To ascertain the success or failure of these recommendations some historical perspectives need to be explored.
Background

Our system of policing has its genesis in the control and enforcement methods from England. This form of policing was transplanted to Australia and followed closely along the lines of the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) (O'Malley 1983, Northam 1986, Reiner 1986, Finnane 1994, Blackler 1996). Recruits to this model of policing were single, had some military training, were posted to areas with no family or friends; and were frequently transferred to prevent fraternisation with the local population. The rationale was that policing of the population was more effective if the population was alien (Hill 1986:127).

This form of policing meant the population, both Black and white were seen as 'natives' who could be treated with whatever force was necessary to do the job. This form of social control was established in the colony in all areas except Sydney and Melbourne. These two cities enforcement followed the lines of the 'new police' or London Metropolitan model (Northam 1986:127)

What distinguished Australian policing from other colonial forces is its relationship with Indigenous Australia. Laws for Indigenous Australians were implemented on an ad-hoc basis, changing from one area to another. The laws expanded or limited their control over Aborigines. (Finnane 1994:111).

By the 1820's Indigenous men were being used as guides for explorers and travelers. Shortly thereafter they were employed as trackers and the authorities used their expertise to deter would-be convict escapees. Authorities and colonials were actually scared of a people whose bush craft and survival skills were so vastly superior to theirs they believed it gave them superiority over Europeans. As a result there was a push to formalise these skills into employment in the forces as trackers of miscreant whites. From this point it was only a matter of time before "an attempt was made to employ black bush craft in the struggle against Aboriginal resistance" (Reynolds 1990:46).

Indigenous participation in policing was formalised around 1840 with the Aboriginal Police of Port Phillip District. The Northern NSW Native Police began in 1848 and the Southern Force which operated in all parts of the colony and was disbanded in 1852 (Fels 1988, Reynolds 1990). The Northern Force became the Queensland Native Police administered by the NSW Government until 1856 and then the Queensland Government, until their disbanding around the end of the 19th century.

Native police were a coercive body designed to control, enforce and remove any dissidence by non cooperative Aborigines. Their main objective was to "disperse Aboriginal tribes and make their land safe for pastoral enterprise" (Parbury 1988:63). As a response to a series of Aboriginal attacks on frontier settlements (Hornet Bank 1857, Cullinargoe 1861), native police were encouraged to participate in revenge expeditions. Many settlers, who believed themselves to be at war with the Indigenous people, thought the Native Police had been set up to 'shoot Blacks' (Reynolds 1990:53). Like the RIC model, recruits to the Native Police forces were employed in areas far from home and "never allowed to fraternise with the local tribes" (Parbury 1988:63). This made the doctrine of divide and rule, easier to establish.
Indigenous participation in policing appeared to be a means to an end. With the gradual recognition of their bush craft skills meant there was a need to control these skills. Control came in the form of Native Police whose job included repression of any Aboriginal resistance; assistance in removal of people from their lands and enforcement of squatters possession (Reynolds 1990, Finnane 1996). At no time were Native Police given the opportunity for decision making. They were merely employed as troopers with non-Indigenous superior officers.

The southern Native Police forces often recruited amongst young men learning to survive on the fringes of white society. Many had been stock boys and had prior contact with European life. They were allegedly better off than their contemporaries, having a regular wage to buy themselves consumerables and had better food, clothing and equipment. Their way of life was predictable and secure, much more so than others struggling to survive in European society (Fels 1988, Reynolds 1990). In Queensland however, the conditions a native policeman faced were poor in relation to a native stockman. In 1901 a tracker received 13s 6d along with rations. Corporals received a higher wage. Native police were also encouraged to marry as their wives would be used as free domestic labour (Ross Johnston 1992).

The native police were finally disbanded in the early 20th Century. Their passing was lamented by the then Commissioner of Police as:

"the well known fact that the only control possible to be obtained at the outset and maintained by wild or uncivilised blacks is by the exercise and exhibition of superior force by people whom they recognise as capable of competing with them in their own tactics"

(Parry-Okeden 1896 cited in Finnane 1996:117)

The dilemma to policing this so-called problem was to find men who would take over these roles. The only ones thought capable of doing so were bushmen and stockmen and many of these men believed themselves to be at war with the Indigenous people. Parry-Okeden was concerned that there were men who

"think it good fun to shoot a nigger at sight or ravish a gin. So long as such villains live in our country the Blacks shall and will be...protected"  (1896 cited in Finnane 1996:117)

Protectionism 1900-1984

In the past colonials were actively dispossessing Indigenous people of their lands but without the guise of prescriptive legislation. Subsequent legislation was enacted to make dispossession 'legitimate' and to 'protect' Aborigines from unscrupulous whites and themselves (Bennets and Castle 1979). The system was founded on the premise that Indigenous people were not the equals of non-Indigenous people. This premise was reflected in all government policies. NSW passed the 1909 Aborigines Act which legitimated a series of State controls. The aim of this Act was to break up centres of Aboriginal population. Further powers obtained in 1915 allowed wholesale welfare intervention, resulting in the removal of children from their families, to be relocated into institutions, missions or non-Indigenous families (Finnane 1994).
Queensland enacted the 1897 Protection Act which was the model for Northern, Western and Central Australia. These policies concentrated and segregated the community according to the amount of Aboriginal 'blood' a person possessed. 'Full bloods' were removed to protected reserves. Those of 'mixed blood' were removed to missions and subjected to scrutiny and control (Finnane 1996). As a result, Indigenous people were being made criminals by virtue of their race. In Western Australia a 'half-caste' male could obtain an exemption certificate which gave him the status of a full blood white man. To obtain this he had to renounce his Aboriginality and not associate with any Aboriginal people again (Biskup 1973).

The dog licence act of Western Australia was another piece of legislation designed to make Indigenous people criminals. This included:

- no Indigenous person (other than a half-caste male who had renounced his Aboriginality) could move from one place to another without the permission of the Protector
- parents did not have custody of their own children
- the property of a minor was automatically managed by the Protector
- Aborigines could be ordered out of town or ordered to a reserve or mission and confined there
- the Commissioner of Native Affairs could object to any marriage (Elder 1988)

In NSW in 1938 Aborigines could not vote, obtain alcohol, receive a pension if their Aboriginal blood was dominant, obtain cash payments for family allowance - only orders for goods and any other restrictions in accordance with the Act (Elder 1988).

Obtaining work was also a problem. Indigenous work was associated with domestics or labouring. Work was hard to come by and wages were lower than those of non-Indigenous people in the same employment and social status was low, lower than the working classes. The Vagrancy legislation of the 1820's meant that police had substantial powers over the working classes and poor yet the amount of power delivered into the hands of police by virtue of the protectionism legislation was phenomenal. In 1932 in Moree NSW, lobbying by hostile rural whites on health grounds, resulted in the removal of ALL Indigenous people, including those in local employment, to the banks of the Moree River. This act of policing earned the local constabulary great praise from the Chief Protector (Finnane 1996).

Social control was all pervasive and administrative. It gave absolute power to police with little scrutiny by the courts. Yet in 1932 Queensland Police were instructed not to make notes of the orders issued for the removal of Aboriginal people as these orders may be called upon to be presented in court (Queensland Police Circular Memo 2 Feb 1932, A/36282 cited in Finnane 1996:123).

The words 'Aboriginal problem' now begins to emerge in writings from this era. Indigenous people were starting to be seen as one big homogeneous problem. The solution to the problem was to control by containment. Although statistics show the acceleration of of Indigenous incarceration increased after the 1950's, the general consensus is that after the 1967 referendum, the intense policing policies changed (Biskup 1973, Elder 1988, Reynolds 1992, Finnane 1996). Far from being inclusionary, many policing practices became covert and exclusionary. Without specific legislation there was an increase in arrests and incarceration for offences that non-Indigenous people would be unlikely to be arrested for. This was and still is colloquially known as the offence of 'being Black in a public place' and encompasses the notorious trifecta legislation of offensive language, resist arrest and assault police.
There is limited information on Indigenous participation in policing during this era. With the disbanding of the native police few records were kept. Queensland Police kept records of native trackers but few other organisations did. Against this backdrop there was limited Indigenous participation in policing. If non-Indigenous police were seen as traitors by the working classes then Black police were pariahs to both Blacks and whites.

**Domestic and International Policy**

Although the last of the protectionism era's policies were not repealed until 1984 in Queensland, by the 1960's pressure was being placed upon the government in relation to Indigenous policies. Our own hypocrisy was being questioned in International forums. Australia was publicly challenging South Africa in relation to apartheid whilst covertly enforcing the same policies here (Tatz 1979). Australia had been a voting member of the United Nations (UN) since its inception but until 1961 had a policy of dissenting or abstaining from UN motions condemning apartheid. During the protectionism era, Australia was in direct violation of 9 of the Articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This convention was adopted and proclaimed by the General Assembly in 1948 (see Articles 9, 10, 13, 16, 17, 21, 22, 25, 26).

In 1949 Australia was openly questioned by the international community in relation to protectionism policies. The Kim Beazley Snr wrote to the Prime Minister requesting special Indigenous representation in parliament and the States to relinquish Aboriginal control to the Federal government as:

"Commonwealth representatives at international conferences are constantly being held responsible for Aboriginal policies pursued in Australia by State governments" (cited in Tatz 1979:101)

In 1965 Australia was a signatory to the International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD). This convention came into effect in 1969 (Report of National Enquiry into Racist Violence 1991). In August 1978 the Australian delegate to the World Conference on Racism condemned apartheid and racism saying:

"We are utterly opposed. Australia (coyly) recognises that Aborigines have been particularly disadvantaged in the past. However our contribution to this the anti-Apartheid Year of 1978 and to the decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination (which began in 1973), is the Racial Discrimination Act" (Cited in Tatz 1979:101)

The frustration continued. In response to the Liberal government's Aboriginal Affairs Policy a tent embassy was established on the lawns of the then Parliament House. There the Aboriginal flag was raised for the first time. Prime Minister William McMahon claimed in the policy that land rights would 'threaten the security and tenure of every Australian' (Parbury 1988:133).

The Labor government came to power in 1972 and with it a promise to legislate land rights. The first Department of Aboriginal Affairs, the precursor to ATSIC was established. A land fund was established to buy land for communities. Consultation featured heavily and an Aboriginal elected advisory council advised the government on Indigenous matters. Land Councils were also implemented. In 1975 there was another change of government and Indigenous funding was cut by 30%. Yet the Prime Minister of the day, Malcolm Fraser, was denigrated by members of his own party for being pro Aboriginal (Parbury 1988).
In 1983 Labor was elected. Labor's land rights policy was seen as political suicide. The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Clyde Holding said "we would like to recognise your rights but our white constituents won't let us" (Parbury 1988:137). It is against this background that our contemporary policies are founded. High Court decisions such as Mabo and Wik acknowledge the need for serious redressing of earlier atrocities as well as RICADIC and the Stolen generation enquiries.

Since the election of the coalition government in 1996 we have seen a gradual erosion of the advances made during the past decade. Funding cuts and a desire to denigrate anything seen as 'politically correct' has given rise to a form of respectable racism. The reemergence of the white superiority argument and the misguided belief that Indigenous people receive more in the way of pecuniary advantage than the average non-Indigenous person are enjoying support from sections of the community.

**Return to Policing 1980-1995**

It is against this background that we start to see a return to Indigenous representation in policing. Almost 20 years ago the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) on Aboriginal Criminological Research was discussing the;

"**Disappointing experience of police forces trying to recruit and keep Aboriginal Officers showed a need for research on what is needed to keep Aborigines culturally content within the police**" (1981:23)

In South Australia, an Aboriginal/ police steering committee was implemented to bring advice to police from a variety of Indigenous organisations. Community affairs and information service officers were acting as field liaison officers and in 1976 13 non-Indigenous police were acting as district liaison officers. Aboriginal field officers were appointed to assist Indigenous people in custody. By the 1980's the South Australian police were actively recruiting Aboriginal Police Aides to work in Aboriginal communities (Pathe in Hazelhurst 1985).

By 1985 the New South Wales Police had established an Aboriginal Liaison Unit. This unit was implemented as a direct result of continued representations made from the Redfern Aboriginal Community, from 1975 (Hazelhurst 1985).

The Australian Federal Police's ACT Region established a call out roster of 'Aboriginal Friends' to assist Indigenous people in custody. It has only been this year (1999) that people on the friends roster have been trained and remunerated, by the ACT Government.

Western Australia established a special cabinet committee on Aboriginal/police relations after several racist incidents (Skull Creek 1974, Laverton 1975). This committee was generally regarded as unable to provide any lasting impact. The Ruddock Report (1980) stated;

"Although the committee provides a forum in which Aboriginal people can express their views, it is continued to an advisory role and the police department is under no compulsion to implement its recommendations" (in Hazelhurst 1985:53)

What appeared to be happening was that police organisations were aware of the need to have proportional Indigenous representation but their motives for doing so were rooted firmly in the past. That motive was to deal with the so-called Aboriginal problems when they emerged. Representation also extended to the token gestures such as aides and liaison officers.
At the 1985 Justice Programmes for Aboriginal and other Indigenous Communities Seminar, Dr Roberta Sykes argued recruiting Blacks to the ranks of aide and liaison officer would achieve very little. She went on to state;

"While the authorities pretend to us that they are acting in our best interest, very little can be achieved regardless of motivation. We recognise when we are being patronised and do not like it. Patronisation is not a relationship which exists between equals. It carries with it the continuation of a power relationship which is mean to keep one part powerful and one part powerless" (in Hazelhurst 1985:24-25)

Community pressure was being brought to bear on the government in relation to the disproportionate numbers of Indigenous men and women dying in custody. As a result a Royal Commission was established. In 1991 Commissioner Johnston release the report along with some 300 recommendations. He discussed the need for increased Indigenous involvement in policing and concluded that any initiatives were on an individual officer/unit level rather than a collective departmental commitment.

To combat these problems, especially racism he cited the need for Aboriginal police. In summary he believed participation was 'of central importance to the long term issue of policing'. He found there was general agreement that it was desirable that there should be increased participation in the police however some people suggested those Indigenous men and women who had become police officers had joined the enemy or had not been able to stand the strain and resigned.

The Royal Commission found a direct link between employment status and custody levels. As a result, the Aboriginal Employment Development Programme (AEDP), which had been started in 1986 was supported wholeheartedly by the Royal Commission. The objective of this programme was to achieve proportional Indigenous representation in the Australian workforce by the year 2000. This proportion was 2%.

The AEDP became the mechanism by which police organisations would be able to recruit Indigenous police. Under the auspices of the RCIADIC substantial funding ($50,000.00 per police organisation - see response to Rec 225, 1992 Commonwealth Implementation Report) had been set aside for each organisation to commission its own strategy. Once the strategy had been written, the organisation was to negotiate funding through the then Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) over a period of five years. The amount of money negotiated was directly reliant on the amount of funding the police organisation was prepared to commit. This began to satisfy Recs 225, 229, 230. By 1995 most organisations had taken advantage of the funding.

In 1999 most police organisations have a recruiting strategy. Some have an Indigenous unit but there tends to be an ad hoc approach to Indigenous recruiting. In 1997 Inspector Greg Boland of the Victorian Police studied police practices in NZ, Canada and the USA and how they deal with First Nation People, specifically relating to policies, procedures and in particular, recruitment. Inspector Boland made a number of recommendations in relation to Indigenous recruiting and First Nation - police relationships and highlighted some best practice examples. Perhaps we could learn from other countries successes and mistakes instead of the current parochial approach.
Comment

The one question that constantly presents itself is that despite the recommendations, funding and training, why is there such a paucity of Indigenous police officers? The RCIADIC report attempted to address some concerns but these were mainly from the community. Little research has been conducted into the experience of serving Indigenous men and women. I have attempted to address some of the issues highlighted by the RCIADIC report and explain some of the unique set of challenges and problems faced by former and serving Indigenous police officers.

Racism

The term 'institutionalised racism' is a very harsh way to describe police organisation. Lord Scarman defined institutionalised racism as

"If, by [institutionally racist] it is meant that it [Britain] is a society which knowingly, as a matter of policy, discriminates against black people, I reject the allegation. If, however, the suggestion being made is that practices may be adopted by public bodies as well as private individuals which are unwittingly discriminatory against black people, then this is an allegation which deserves serious consideration, and, where proved, swift remedy". (Para 2.22, p 11 - Scarman Report).

Scarman argues further in his report there is not wholesale racism in policing nor do police have a policy of racism. This is hardly likely when there are laws which regulate against racism. Nor could Lord Scarman totally understand what it is like to have to operate within an organisation that is inherently racist. Consider the submission of the Metropolitan Police Black Police Association to the Stephen Lawrence Enquiry in 1999;

"... institutional racism .... permeates the Metropolitan Police Service. This issue above all others is central to the attitudes, values and beliefs, which lead officers to act, albeit unconsciously and for the most part unintentionally, and treat others differently solely because of their ethnicity or culture"

"The term institutional racism should be understood to refer to the way the institution or the organisation may systematically or repeatedly treat, or tend to treat, people differentially because of their race. So, in effect, we are not talking about the individuals within the service who may be unconscious as to the nature of what they are doing, but it is the net effect of what they do".

"... the majority of police officers are white, tends to be the white experience, the white beliefs, the white values. Given the fact that these predominantly white officers only meet members of the black community in confrontational situations, they tend to stereotype black people in general. This can lead to all sorts of negative views and assumptions about black people, so we should not underestimate the occupational culture within the police service as being a primary source of institutional racism in the way that we differentially treat black people. Interestingly I say we because there is no marked difference between black and white in the force essentially. We are all consumed by this occupational culture. Some of us may think we rise above it on some occasions, but, generally speaking, we tend to conform to the norms of this occupational culture, which we say is all powerful in shaping our views and perceptions of a particular community". (Inspector Paul Wilson Part 2, Day 2, p 209):
The problem of racism is a difficult one. Despite policies and training, police organisations are racist. Proportional representation of all communities are minimal. Recruiting policies still reflect middle class non-Indigenous non-migrant sensibilities. The AFP Indigenous Career Development and Recruiting Strategy receives many applications - which fit the AFP recruiting criteria. Few of these applicants make it through the testing. The barrier being the psychological profile which appears to favour non-Indigenous middle class applicants.

".... racism can be systemic and therefore institutional without being apparent in broad policy terms. Racism within the police can be both covert and overt, racism can be detected in how operational policing decisions are carried out and consequently implemented, and indeed how existing policy is ignored or individual officers' discretion results in racist outcomes". (Inspector Paul Wilson Part 2, Day 2, p 209)

Recruitment

"It is often suggested that the recruitment of Aboriginals into the Police Service would be a solution to many of the problems with Aboriginals." (Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody Vol 4 New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania - Aboriginal police officers)

This statement has superficial merit. Many of the so-called problems with Aboriginal people do not dissipate merely because the officer policing them happens to be Indigenous. Recruiting Indigenous people into policing and then sending them to work in communities can cause its own unique set of problems. Some Indigenous police feel they were recruited as police therefore they are being marginalised if sent to a community. Another problem relates to the misguided belief that Indigenous people are one happy harmonious society. One police officer in Queensland was sent from the academy to a country town because he was Black. The local community could not identify with him because they thought he was a Torres Strait Islander. The white community did not identify with him because he was Black. The result was that he was so unhappy and lonely that he resigned. In another instance a Murri man was given the job of Aboriginal Liaison officer in a large town where he had never been before. He had no links to the community. His job was made harder by having to establish community ties. The Royal Commission expressed hope that Aboriginal police would broaden and change police culture. Yet often the culture is so pervasive that it changes the person involved. This problem was cited to me on many occasions. It was suggested that some of the harshest enforcement was metered out by the 'obviously' Aboriginal police. However, again this shows a lack of understanding on behalf of both groups. Firstly many police, Black or white suffer from the need to prove themselves to their peers. This often leads to situations which escalate due to lack of experience and bravado/machismo eg. Old Parliament House riots 1996. The other issue here is Black officers are often harsher on their own people. This is especially in relation to what they perceive as stereotypical behaviour or behaviour which would be likely to bring disrepute on the community. This however is not withstanding human nature. White and Black officers alike also have to deal with their own attitudes and behaviour.

Another issue many Indigenous police officers spoke of was the conflicting pressures placed upon them by the job and community. There was pressure brought to bear by both sides and on more than one occasion I was asked "Am I blue first or Black?" This is obviously an issue that could only be solved by the person concerned but it goes a long way in explaining the problems discussed above.
'The difficulties which Aboriginal police officers have with the conflicting pressures on them is reflected in the high turnover rates. Several Aboriginal police or former police spoke to me of unpleasant experiences of racism amongst other new recruits at the Police Academy, many of whom did not react positively to attempts to instruct them in Aboriginal culture and history. Perhaps the situation might be improved by the recruitment of Aboriginals in groups, so that they can give each other mutual support." (Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody Vol 4 New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania - Aboriginal police officers)

Other problems occur once inside the job. Many Indigenous men and women have been placed in situations which compromises their Aboriginality. These situations would not have occurred if the person involved was from another culture. During the Old Parliament House Riots an obviously Aboriginal police officer was sent to defend the building. The result being that every camera used his image in their news footage. In another instance a Sergeant of Greek descent told me the reason he was not chosen for the UN Cyprus contingent was his ethnicity. Yet one of the police officers assigned to protect Pauline Hanson (One nation Party) during the 1997 elections was Aboriginal.

Retention - How Black is Black?

"The fact that skin colour is such a powerful symbol due to our colonial history. It is not a sign of our innate and fundamental inequality. It is not a difference itself which is the problem but the social problems based on it"  (Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody Vol 4 )

Some of the experiences that were cited to me in the course of preparing this paper was the problem many Indigenous police had in having their Aboriginality accepted by their peers. Commissioner Elliott addressed this drawing attention to the denial of Aboriginality;

"One of the cruelest, although usually unwitting, manifestations of racism is the attempt to deny the Aboriginality of persons who have grown and lived and suffered as Aboriginals, by imposing some category of genetic fractionalism." (RCIADIC Vol 4)

One of the reasons he gave was that many non-Indigenous people believe that Indigenous people claim their ancestry for some sort of advantage, usually a pecuniary one. The same is true for policing. Many non-Indigenous police believe that Indigenous recruitment strategies will "lower the standards for entry" and that people will claim Aboriginality just to circumvent mainstream recruiting practices. Surprisingly it was the younger supposedly 'new breed' of police who said this. The older so-called 'dinosaurs' of the organisation were the most accepting and accommodating.

"This is particularly cruel because the persons who would so deny the Aboriginality of their fellow citizens would for similar reasons deny them full admission to the white community, and leave them in a social limbo. They are neither 'real' Aboriginals nor 'real' (ie fully accepted) whites. Indeed the refusal for the most part of the white community to give full social acceptance to persons of mixed Aboriginal/European ancestry has been part of the reason why such persons are indeed real Aboriginals." (RCIADIC Vol 4)
The AFP had this problem with the first recruit course after the implementation of its recruitment strategy. On this course were a number of people who were not easily identifiable as Aboriginal. Not only did they attract comments from non-Indigenous people about their Aboriginality, but some of them were questioned by other Indigenous members of their course. The result being that some of these people no longer overtly identify as Aboriginal within the police.

When I last attempted to get statistics from Victoria Police I was told they don't keep statistics on Indigenous police because "some people do not wish to identify". Identification or non-identification causes a number of problems. Firstly, from a purely statistical point it means there appears to be less Indigenous police than there really are. Secondly it means a person's willingness not to identify shows racism is alive and well in police organisations. This highlights recruiting and training practices and questions their effectiveness especially in relation to community attitudes. Thirdly, as police are supposedly microcosms of general society, it becomes a sad indictment on Australia that as a country we encourage either overtly or covertly the invisibility of First Nation people. When I began to write this paper I was confident of getting the recent statistics of Indigenous police and staff from the various organisations. Not one police service was able to furnish me with current statistics.

The AFP has as many Indigenous people who will not identify as those who do. Many of the reasons given to me for not identifying were; "That was my mother/father/ grandparents/great grandparent, not me" or "I don't want to be marginalised, I'm a police officer first" and "I have to work with these people (meaning non-Indigenous police) I don't want to be stereotyped". Obviously the issues that are associated with identification are complex. Unfortunately skin colour is still considered by many members of our society the marker of what Aboriginality is about and this is especially true in police organisations.

Resignation

Many of the strategies that began with such promise have become worthless pieces of paper. One of the major problems for many police services is retention of Indigenous staff. Whilst many of the reasons that cause Indigenous members to resign are similar to those of other minority groups, it remains that Indigenous recruiting strategies have objectives for the retention of Indigenous staff. Many of the serving and former members have said the same thing, "we're recruited because we're Black but when we get in, we aren't allowed to be Black". On the whole, reasons for resignation were similar to the same problems any marginalised group faces in an organisation that has institutionalised racism. The difference with Indigenous officers is that police organisation have government funded strategies that specifically target retention.
Conclusions

History shows that "covert" insidious racism is more difficult to detect. Institutions such as Police Services can operate in a racist way without at once recognising their racism. (Stephen Lawrence Enquiry)

The question that can be asked here is has anything changed from the past? Superficially there have been great changes. We now have recruiting strategies and units, liaison, community participation and representation. But on the whole there are not a lot of dramatic differences. We still had to have a Royal Commission to tell us these things are needed. Police organisations are not recruiting Indigenous police because they wish to be truly representative of the community. Funding is still coming from outside agencies such as DEET(YA). Many Indigenous police feel marginalised and isolated. The poor retention rate has also given cause in some police arenas for a 'told you so' attitude. On more than one occasion I was told "we want to recruit Aborigines but they just won't stay".

Whilst there has been some change from the days of the Native Police, there is not a dramatic difference. There is no collective want or need to change within police organisations and this is reflected by the government who dictate policy. Lip service is paid to most initiatives yet there is no real support behind them. In most organisations there is a vision of whose face 'fits' and this is especially true of policing when the dominant police culture sees Black as the 'other', that 'other' equals criminal. As a result many Indigenous police are made to feel they don't fit.

When Commissioner Elliott released the RCIADIC recommendations he stated that each jurisdiction should pursue their own programs and pursue what worked for them. Clearly when it comes to recruiting practices, the various jurisdictions are lacking. Some jurisdictions actively recruit support staff, others mainstream police and others still claim to be supporting Indigenous recruitment policies which are policies in name only. The rate of Indigenous participation in policing has decreased in some jurisdictions in the two years since the last statistics were done and now no official statistics are obtainable. The trial and error approach favoured by most jurisdictions, coupled with a healthy dose of protectionism means yet again Indigenous people are the losers. Instead of using the resources and experience of other countries with First Nation People, our police organisations prefer to muddle along recruiting in a piecemeal fashion. I believe if our various police jurisdictions maintained a united front in relation to recruiting and learned from the overseas experiences as well as sharing information with other jurisdictions then we would see a marked improvement in recruiting practices. And as a society who deserve to have police that are truly representative of our community, we will only benefit. If we do not learn from history we are doomed to repeat it.
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