

St. John's, Newfoundland



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For the first time in Newfoundland and Labrador, the RNC/RCMP host the 2006 AWLE Conference

November 7th - 10th, 2006

CONFERENCE SUMMARY

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary hosted the 14th annual Atlantic Women in Law Enforcement (AWLE) training conference in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador from November 7 - 10, 2006. We were so pleased to announce that it was the largest conference to date. One hundred and eighty six officers were in attendance, to focus on this year's theme "It takes a village to raise a child"

The training the delegates received covered numerous topics and included world renowned guest speakers, including Dr. Elliot Leyton, a Memorial University of Newfoundland professor, anthropologist and author of several best-selling works on serial murder. He has lectured to police agencies and universities across the globe.

Comdr. Andre Baker, Deputy Director HQ Intelligence, Serious and Organized Crime Agency, UK is a leading international authority on ritual crimes, ritual murders and prevention of homicide. He presented "Adam's story", the compelling story of how an agency placed the value of humanity as its highest priority and thus gave both a name and justice to the 4-year-old unclaimed/unreported African boy whose torso was found in the Thames River. The investigation began several years ago and is still under investigation today.

Det. Janet Sobotka, Toronto Police Services, shared "Laura's Story", a successful investigation which epitomizes the value of one little girl despite jurisdictional and political boundaries. This investigation stressed the importance for all peace officers to work together.

A/Commissioner Barb George, from Bell Island, NL is now posted at National RCMP Headquarters, Ottawa, ON. She shared with us her story of success and coached us through her example of balancing life personally and professionally.

Motivational speaker Anne Marie Hagan of St. John's NL shared her personal story of forgiveness. Anne Marie watched her father being murdered with an axe when she was a teenager. Anne Marie had two choices: live with hatred and perpetuate revenge, dooming herself to becoming the second victim or allow the healing power of forgiveness to give her freedom. She shared her message of hope with us and showed us her path to forgiveness.

Sgt. Sue Swan of Winnipeg Police Services shared her personal and inspirational story of how she overcame multiple hurdles that may have destroyed others. In the end, she achieved her dream of becoming a police woman.

Cpl. Chris MacNaughton, RCMP Atlantic Region Integrated Technological Crime Unit, Fredericton, NB has worked with various international child pornography cases and is a forensic computer analyst. Her presentation "First Responding Police Officers at Computer Crime Scenes" walked the officers through the proper steps in seizing and investigating the various types of electronic evidence used in today's crimes.

The conference highlights were the annual uniformed parade and awards banquet. Officers marched from the Fairmont Hotel to the Lieutenant Governor's residence for a Wine and Cheese social prior to the awards dinner. The awards presentation took place at the Fairmont Hotel.

AWARD WINNERS

S/Sgt. Gail Courtney, RCMP St. John's, NL was named the Officer of the Year. She was recognized for her leadership, dedication and professionalism, not only within the ranks of the RCMP but as a mentor and role model for all women in policing. She was recognized for the many achievements she has accomplished during her 33 year career with the RCMP.

Medal of Valour was awarded to Cst. Lisa Comuzzi, Fredericton Police Force, Fredericton, NB for her quick response to a vehicle that left the road and entered the Saint John River. Cst. Comuzzi entered the water and was able to locate the vehicle but despite her efforts, she was

unable to reach it. She remained in the cold and forceful water for 45 minutes as a point of reference until the Underwater Recovery Team attended the scene. It was later learned that the driver had suffered a heart attack prior to his vehicle being plunged into the water.

Cpl. Sharan Sidhu of the RCMP, Halifax, NS was awarded the Leadership Award. Over the past three years Cpl. Sidhu has been involved in over 20 homicide investigations, the MK Airline Crash and over 175 serious sexual assault complaints. Cpl. Sidhu and her co-worker single handedly took on the responsibility of building the Sexual Assault Investigation Unit for the RCMP Atlantic Region. In 2003, Cpl. Sidhu's newly developed Sexual Assault Unit was integrated with the Halifax RCMP Major Crime Unit and the Halifax Regional Police Major Crime Unit to form the Sexual Assault Investigation Team. Cpl. Sidhu has been a major factor in the success of this team and continues to meet the challenges of its high paced atmosphere.

The Community Service Award was presented to Sgt. Paula Walsh of the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary, St. John's, NL. Sgt. Walsh has been with the RNC for 23 years and has volunteered with organizations such as the Canadian Red Cross, YMCA, Child Find, and Big Brothers/Big Sisters. Most recently she co-chaired the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police Conference held in St. John's in August, 2006 and assisted in bringing this event with over 500 participants to an overwhelming success.

Cpl. Kim Hendricken of the RCMP received the Excellence in Performance Award. Cpl. Hendricken has been a member of the PEI's Crisis Negotiation Team since 2001 and most recently has been its coordinator. She is recognized nationally as an expert in the field of crisis negotiation and has been known to live and represent all the values of a modern police officer. She is professional, compassionate, and her integrity is of great value to her. As an experienced negotiator, she does not seek any type of recognition, yet she routinely saves lives by intervening in potentially tragic situations by negotiating and convincing persons to surrender peacefully.

The Team Endeavor award was presented to Cpl. Pat Fox and her co-workers Cst. Glen Tunerand, and John Letourneau. Approximately one year ago the Codiac RCMP POPS Team responded to a community in crisis when a group of street prostitutes took over a quaint and peaceful neighborhood. The POPS Team organized a public education forum to raise awareness on why prostitution was so prevalent in the area and a committee called "Residents Against Street Soliciting" was born. A poster was designed with a hotline number so residents could report suspicious activity without fear of repercussions. As a result of this new program funding was provided to research the exploitation of women and children under the umbrella of the Sex Trade Research Initiative in New Brunswick. The efforts of the POPS Team have resulted in the near elimination of prostitution in this particular area.

The 2006 AWLE award winners will have their names submitted to the Awards Committee of the International Association of Women Police (IAWP) to be considered for awards at the next international conference, which will be held in Denver, Colorado in September, 2007.