

Hate crimes rare on campus: EPS

MARIA KOTOVYCH
News Staff

Members of the Edmonton Police Service were on campus recently to discuss the hidden impact that hate-motivated crimes have on campus and the larger Edmonton community.

"The community impact [of] it is huge," said Sergeant Robinder Gill, of the EPS Hate and Bias Crime Unit. "There is a victimization to the entire community."

On 21 March, Gill and Kristopher Wells, a member of the Edmonton Police Chief's Advisory Committee and co-founder of the campus organization Inside/OUT, presented a talk entitled "Hate Crimes and Human Rights: What you Should Know and What you Can do to Create a Safer Campus Community." Inside/OUT is a campus-based network for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (GLBTQ) and allied students and staff.

According to Gill, the Criminal Code of Canada defines a hate crime as an offence where the person who commits a crime is motivated by hate or bias towards an identifiable group and targets an individual from that group.

The biggest difference between hate crimes and "regular" crimes, Gill said, is that hate crimes are intended

to send a message to a particular community. They may have a much larger impact on the victim and on the community as a whole and are often under-reported.

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SERGEANT ROBINDER GILL

For this reason, statistics don't accurately measure hate crimes, Gill stressed.

In one set of Canadian statistics, Gill showed that ethnic/racial hate crimes were most common in Canada, followed by those targeting religion, and subsequently by those targeting sexual orientation. Gill said the black community was the group most targeted for their ethnicity, and the Jewish community was the most targeted for their religion. He also noted that more recently, when Canada saw a debate over same-sex marriage, the nation

experienced a spike in the number of hate crimes committed towards gays and lesbians.

But hate crimes on campus are minimal, according to Al Belanger at Campus Security Services.

Out of approximately 10 000 calls Campus Security received last year, only four of those were hate crimes, Belanger said. He noted that since 2003, there have been 15 incidents on campus that have been considered hate crimes, but he stressed that these statistics only consider hate crimes that have been reported. Most of the hate crimes that do happen at the U of A are vandalism-related.

"99.9 per cent of the time it is graffiti-related incidents that degrade groups and/or other individuals," Belanger said.

Belanger also noted that no specific group has been targeted on campus recently and there also hasn't been a repeated pattern of the same type of graffiti reoccurring.

But while hate crimes are rare on campus, there are still numerous hate groups present in Alberta and in Canada, said Gill.

"One of the surprising things coming into the hate crimes unit is to see how many organized movements there are within Alberta and within Canada," Gill said. "That is sad to say, but there's a fair amount."



TAYLOR MERRITT

I SEE SAW Logger Sports teaches people about the forestry industry, says Snively. But Kleercut says it's only one view.

Green groups cut into Logger Sports

Annual event celebrates vital industry, says organizer, but others up in arms

VICTOR VARGAS
News Staff

For the third consecutive year, the University of Alberta Forestry Society, an organization of undergraduate and graduate students with specific interests in forestry, ran Logger Sports in Quad on 30 March. But others worry that the event may not be educating students on forestry issues.

Jeron Snively, organizer of the event, explained that Logger Sports featured things like log barrelling, axe throws, and a chainsaw demonstrations.

However, Jolene Shannon, coordinator of the environmentalist group Kleercut, said that the event doesn't show students the big picture. She cautioned that, while students may benefit from information on the industry's management practices received from organizations like Logger Sports, they should seek a well-rounded understanding of the environmental issues facing the industry.

"We really need to look at the information we receive from people and events like Logger Sports to make sure that we are forming our own judgments on the nature concerns," Shannon said.

"Education on [the] management practices, [that are] facing society today is always good, it helps us form our own opinions, like whether or not our endangered foothills are worth flushing down the toilet."

Shannon believes it's important to celebrate traditions like Logger Sports, but students should also recognize that the industry has made some mistakes in the management of natural resources.

Snively acknowledged that some people have had problems with the industry, but he also believes the forestry industry is an essential part of our world.

"A lot of people protest and point out that cut blocks (areas of forest that are cut down) are because they don't like to see them. [You've] got heavy machinery in the bush, you're wrecking stuff and tearing everything up. But ... everybody needs wood products. Everyone uses wood products," Snively said.

He believes that the forestry industries has listened to protests and has realized that previous practices were wrong. He said that there have now been major strides in technology and old, more harmful techniques are being replaced by ecologically friendly

methods. Snively also noted that the government has restraints that keep forestry companies in check.

"They have limitations and restrictions on what they can do and what they can't do," Snively said.

But Curtis Wesolowsky is convinced that these restrictions aren't enough. A graduate in biology with a focus in conservation studies, he thinks that the government needs to do more.

"The current legislation gives the forestry corporation a large degree of powers and latitude over their forest management zones. I would like to see the legislation strengthened to ensure that in the long run, the forest industry remains as viable as possible for the province," Wesolowsky said.

He believes that people and students need to have a general awareness of the industry because it's so large in Alberta. He also said events like Logger Sports are useful as long as it's more than just about recreation, and aims to educate.

"I certainly hope that it will get students involved more with the forestry industry. I also hope that students become more aware of forestry issue and have fun doing it at the same time," Wesolowsky said.

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