

Citizen Protection Project

Hamilton's Safe Havens
2005



Background

- Project proposed on United Nations Day in 2001 as response to Hamilton incidents following 9/11
- Proposed by United Nations Association, Culture of Peace, and Inter-Faith Council
- Embraces UNESCO Manifesto 2000 & Hamilton's Social Vision
- Engage community in social responsibility

Vision & Mission

- Vision – The City of Hamilton is a safe, respectful, caring & welcoming community for all members of its diverse population
- Mission – To decrease the number of violent acts related to racial, cultural & religious discrimination in Hamilton within the next 5 years by implementing a harassment prevention strategy & service

Objectives

- Community based response to racially & religiously-motivated crimes thru safe havens
- Timely interventions to allow victimized to regain control
- Train personnel at Safe Havens to effectively respond to victims who come for help
- Help victims connect to appropriate supports
- Provide diversity training to volunteers & public

Objectives, continued

- Consult with communities most affected by hate crimes & harassment in order to understand their needs and experiences
- Provide a forum for members of vulnerable communities to share their concerns
- Promote positive social values of a culture of peace in order to reduce the number of perpetrators and victims of racial & religiously motivated harassment

Results of Project to Date

- Initial funding approved by National Crime Prevention Program mid-2003
- Board of Directors established & Project Manager hired
- Safe Haven Training manual prepared
- One Safe Haven opened at St. Joseph's Women's Immigrant Centre
- 12 workshops: "Building Together a Culture of Peace"
- Anti-Oppression/Diversity workshop for diverse community members

Consultation – Communities at Risk

- Black youth, Vietnamese, Chinese, Afghani, Muslim women, Indian Women's group
- Purpose
 - Advise groups of safe haven project
 - Learn about experiences of diverse groups with harassment & prejudice in Hamilton
 - Evaluate whether & how the safe havens would meet their needs
 - Adjust strategies & goals & training manual accordingly

Emerging Themes

- Disrespect & insensitivity to diverse cultures, races & non-Christian faith communities is REAL
- Harassment incidents—humiliating; result in anger & fear
- “Speaking out” - viewed as hysteria & un-Canadian
- Victims made to feel that incidents were preventable, and that they should have been aggressive
- Asking for justice & equity seen as unreasonable; no power, & language is sometimes a major barrier
- Some communities comfortable seeking help from Police, others uncomfortable & suspicious- negative experiences with Police; here or in country of origin

Next Steps

- Open more Safe Havens
- Undertake more training & community education programs
- Address sustainability
- Develop further partnerships to mobilize resources & strengthen community capacity

General Benefits

- Help to achieve “Social vision” of “safe, healthy & caring environment, fostering sense of belonging & pride
- Education of community about causes & effects of racially-motivated violence will help in overcoming ignorance that fuels prejudice
- Community engagement
- Community capacity building to prevent & respond to incidents

Specific Benefits

- Safe havens offer immediate relief to victims of harassment
- Safe haven hosts will receive cross-cultural sensitivity training, anti-racism training, knowledge about victim services & community resources

Thanks to Funders & Community Partners

- National Crime Prevention Program
- Department of Canadian Heritage
- City of Hamilton
- Hamilton Police Services
- Social Planning & Research Council
- SISO
- Our safe haven hosts
- United Nations Association in Canada – Hamilton Branch
- Culture of Peace
- Hamilton Inter-Faith Council