

Former long-time Peterborough police officer Cory MacKay receives Award of Tolerance



By [Emily Mountney-Lessard](#), The Intelligencer
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Belleville Police Chief Cory MacKay, who was previously an officer with the Peterborough Police for 22 years under her previous name Cory McMullan, is seen in her office in Belleville with the Award of Tolerance she recently received from the Friends of the Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies at the group's State of the Union dinner. Emily Mountney-Lessard/Belleville Intelligencer/Postmedia Network

A 22-year veteran of the Peterborough Police who is now chief of police in Belleville has been recognized with the Award of Tolerance for her role in gaining a greater understanding of discrimination, hate and working towards change.

Cory MacKay, along with Chief Kai Liu of Cobourg and Chief Jeff McGuire of Niagara Region, was presented with the Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center (FSWC) Presents the Award of Tolerance last week in Toronto. The event featured speakers U.S. politician Joe Lieberman and ex-Islamic radical and British author Maajid Nawaz.

MacKay was recognized for her effort to gain a greater understand of the Holocaust on a FSWC Compassion to Action mission and for continuing to work the FSWC to further tolerance education in her community.

MacKay was introduced to the group in 2012 when she was invited to take part in the Compassion to Action mission, touring Poland and Israel.

"We saw first-hand the horrors that have happened," she said. "It was a life-changing experience."

"A lot of it was on the education of what hate and discrimination can do. Even the smallest of acts."

The mission - including a visit to Auschwitz - made a lasting impression on the chief and has since brought what she learned on the trip to the policing community in Belleville.

On the trip she met Holocaust survivor Max Eisen. He was just 15 when he was sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Eisen later left Auschwitz in the "death march" to Ebensee, another camp. It was there, on May 6, 1945, where they were liberated by the 761 Black Panther tank Battalion.

When she came back from the Compassion to Action journey, she wrote a brief article highlighting the journey for the FSWC board of governors. She later wrote a second, extended article for the Ontario Women in Law Enforcement magazine.

"Part of that was an opportunity to share the experience. The idea of Compassion to Action is that we take what we saw, what we learned and we bring it back to our communities," she said. "The other thing is to work towards stopping bullying, hate, discrimination, anti-Semitism."

The police force, as a whole, can take a pro-active role in teaching respect, inclusion, teaching about bullying and that "everybody in society has a role to play, it doesn't matter how old or young you are."

"When our children are born, they're not born full of hate and discrimination. You can see that out in a school yard. Children don't see the difference, they have to be taught. Unfortunately, there are some individuals in society that teach very negative and very damaging ideals."

MacKay, who is a member of the local Rotary club, was able to bring Eisen first to speak to the club and later to students at Loyalist College in 2014. Eisen's Loyalist talk coincided with a visit from the FSWC Tour for Humanity bus -- a mobile human rights education centre to teach students, educators, community leaders, and front-line professionals about topics of diversity, democracy, and Canadian civic rights and responsibilities.

After the city of Belleville joined the Canadian Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination in 2014, MacKay began working with Dr. Aruna Alexander of the Quinte branch of the United Nations Association in Canada to fight intolerance.

Through the joining of the Canadian Coalition, the city has formed a committee which will look at steps to take in the future to make a greater impact.

"We all have the same goal. We know there has been a lot of work done and more to be done."

MacKay, the former Cory McMullan, became chief of police in Belleville in 2009 after 22 years with Peterborough Police, where she rose to the inspector rank in 2007.

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