The Signal System™:

Practical Strategies to Shift Norms and Prevent Gender-Based Violence in Male-Dominated Settings

sh!ft
THE PROJECT TO END DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
FACULTY OF SOCIAL WORK

Financial contribution:

Public Health Agency of Canada | Agence de la santé publique du Canada

MARCH 2026

AUTHORS

Elizabeth Dozois · Lana Wells · Melissa Innes

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors gratefully acknowledge the Calgary Police Service (CPS) for partnering to implement and evaluate a range of prevention initiatives across the organization. Thank you to all the CPS members we worked with for their candour, guidance, respect, and engagement. It has truly been a pleasure working and learning together.

We also want to thank the following individuals for research and administrative support: Elena Esina, Caroline Claussen, Catherine Pandila, Iya Hall, Naomi Phung, and Winta Abera. Finally, we acknowledge the Public Health Agency of Canada for funding this project. Production of this document has been made possible through a financial contribution from the Public Health Agency of Canada. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the official views of the Public Health Agency of Canada.

INTENDED AUDIENCE

This report is written for the gender-based violence sector in Canada and beyond, including those working in prevention, policing, policy, research, and community response. By sharing these findings, we aim to support evidence-informed decision-making and encourage the scaling of primary prevention approaches that can stop violence before it starts, particularly in male-dominated workplace settings.

SUGGESTED CITATION

Dozois, E., Wells, L., & Innes, M. (2026). *The Signal System™: Practical strategies to shift norms and prevent gender-based violence in male-dominated settings*. Calgary, AB: Shift: The Project to End Domestic Violence, University of Calgary.

CONTENTS

Introduction	4
Key Features of the Approach	7
What it Look Like in Action	14
Evaluation Highlights	22
What We Learned About Engaging Men in Primary Prevention	27
Where We're Headed	30
Appendix A: Skills & Behaviours	31
Appendix B: Signals	32
References	33

INTRODUCTION

A NEW APPROACH TO PREVENTING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

The Signal System™ is a *primary prevention approach* designed to change social norms and behaviours that contribute to gender-based violence (GBV) in male-dominated workplaces. Originally developed by Shift: The Project to End Domestic Violence (University of Calgary) in collaboration with 14 government and community agencies, The Signal System is:

- Based on research
- Proven to engage men
- Showing positive results
- Focused on changing *behaviours*, not just attitudes
- Shaped by four years of real-world testing in a Canadian police service

THE SHIFT TO BEFORE

While all forms of prevention are important, Shift is committed to primary prevention—working upstream to stop violence before it starts by addressing the social conditions and structural factors that contribute to gender-based violence.

This report briefly explains how the approach was developed, what makes it unique, how it works in practice, and what impact it has had so far. It concludes with insights and lessons for the GBV sector and other professionals who may be interested in leveraging workplaces for primary prevention.

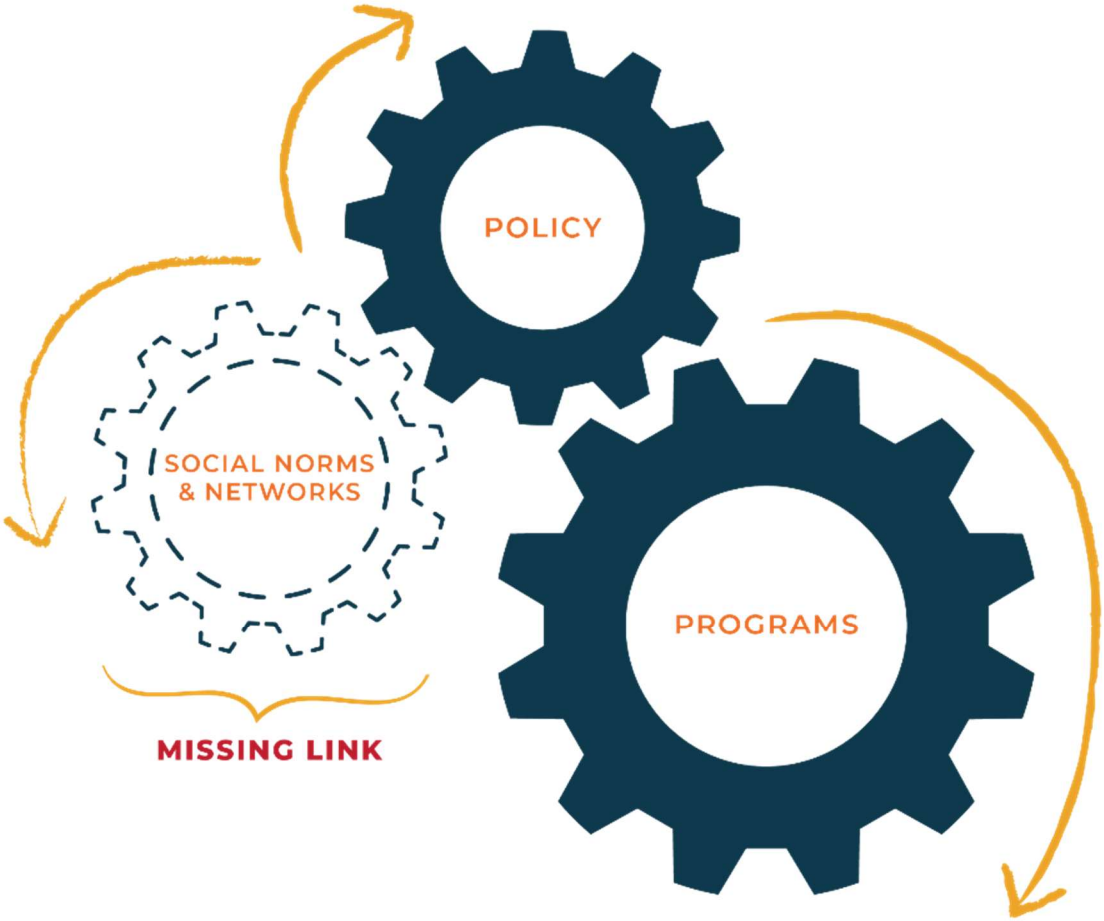
WHY DESIGN A NEW APPROACH?

Research shows that men are key to solving the issue of GBV. But, while the 'why' of engaging men is clear, the 'how' is not. When we scanned the research and spoke to practitioners across Canada,[1] we found that:

- GBV professionals want to engage men but lack effective, evidence-informed strategies[2]
- Engagement efforts are often program-based, but recruiting men into violence prevention programs remains challenging[3]
- The majority of evaluated initiatives show improvements in attitudes, with little evidence of behavioural change[4]
- Workplaces have played a role in some GBV prevention efforts, but rarely in *primary* prevention, even though research shows prevention works best in spaces where men naturally gather[5]

We wanted to create an approach that would address some of these gaps. We also noticed that, while the GBV sector has invested heavily in programs and policies, there has been much less focus on leveraging social norms and networks—especially in the Global North.[6] Social norms are essential to sustaining behaviour change and making policy stick, which makes them central to primary prevention. As the diagram below shows, policies and programs alone can't drive change. When norms and networks are missing, prevention efforts can grind to a halt.

FIGURE 1. GEARS OF CHANGE: EXPLORING THE SPACE BETWEEN PROGRAMS & POLICY



BOLD AMBITIONS

Hoping to address these gaps and limitations, we undertook a multi-year, collaborative, research-based process (2017-2020) to design an intervention that would:

- Engage men
- Cultivate the skills required for safe, equitable, respectful relationships
- Change *behaviours*, not just attitudes
- Reshape social norms within pre-existing networks so that positive behaviours would be socially rewarded and sustained
- Reduce the likelihood of significant or sustained backlash and resistance

The approach we developed worked on all these fronts.

HOW WAS THE SIGNAL SYSTEM DEVELOPED?

This approach has been over a decade in the making. It started with global research scans to identify promising practices for engaging men in violence prevention. When we realized there was no 'magic bullet,' Shift convened a group of researchers, community agencies, and government representatives to collaboratively develop an approach. This three-year process resulted in a Practice Framework called *Changing Contexts: A Framework for Engaging Male-Dominated Settings in Gender Equity and Violence Prevention*.[7] The framework laid out the theoretical underpinnings of what is now called The Signal System as well as the principles and practices associated with implementation. With the support of Public Health Agency of Canada, the approach was implemented, refined, and evaluated within a Canadian police service for several years (2021-2025).

KEY FEATURES OF THE APPROACH

The Signal System works by tapping into social norms and networks. It engages key influencers to shift group expectations through small, visible actions, strengthening bystander behaviours while also building the types of pro-social skills that support primary prevention. The approach works best when it's backed up by structural changes—like policy—so the broader system reinforces the new norms and behaviours. In this section, we briefly explore each of these ideas and highlight the specific takeaways for GBV professionals.

1. CHANGING THE WATER, NOT (JUST) THE FISH

The Signal System is designed to change social norms within a pre-existing network. Social norms are the unwritten rules about how people are expected to behave in a group or community. They shape what feels normal, acceptable, or risky, and often influence behaviour more strongly than formal rules or personal beliefs:

> *"Social norms are not the only determinant of people's behavior [...], but they are especially powerful because they are grounded in people's desire to belong, and they are backed up by social pressure or punishment from people whose approval or disapproval matter to the individual making the choice of how to act. This is why social norms can be more influential than personal attitudes, knowledge, or morals in behavioral choices. These social expectations and the prospect of social reward or punishment often lead people to engage in practices they personally do not agree with."*[8]

KEY TAKEAWAY FOR GBV PROFESSIONALS:

Changing attitudes is not enough to prevent GBV. If group norms stay the same, people are unlikely to act on new beliefs, especially when there's social risk involved. If we want to change behaviours, we need to change the context in which those behaviours are shaped and reinforced. We need to change the water, not just the fish, which means working on individual skills while changing the surrounding culture and norms to reinforce the new behaviours.

2. TRIGGERING A SOCIAL CONTAGION

We've talked about norms, but where do social networks come in? Norms don't exist on their own; they are developed and sustained within social networks,* which is why The Signal System focuses on pre-existing networks—people who are connected to each other in some way—rather than focusing on groups of strangers whose only connection is a program.

Research shows that our behaviour is highly influenced by others in our network.[12] In fact, researchers have found that attitudes and behaviours spread through networks like a type of social contagion, up to *three degrees of influence*—meaning your friends' friends' friends can be affected by your attitudes and actions.[13]

THREE DEGREES OF INFLUENCE

Christakis and Fowler first observed this pattern while studying the impact of network connections on obesity.[9] They found that "If your friends are obese, your risk of obesity is 45 percent higher…. If your friends' friends are obese, your risk of obesity is 25 percent higher… If your friends' friends' friend, someone you probably don't even know, is obese, your risk of obesity is 10 percent higher."[10] They then went on to explore other behaviours (e.g., problematic drinking, smoking, voting patterns) and found the same pattern.[11]

We still have a lot to understand about how to create social contagions, but one thing is clear: It doesn't typically happen with a single person or action. To achieve a tipping point where the behaviour will spread, about 25% of the network needs to be on board,[14] and ideally, that group will include key influencers, a term we'll unpack later in a section called *What It Looks Like in Action*.

KEY TAKEAWAY FOR GBV PROFESSIONALS:

Because behaviours spread through social networks, GBV prevention efforts do not need to reach everyone to have an impact. By strategically engaging key people within targeted networks, we can spark a social contagion. This creates enormous potential for scaling positive behaviours beyond the individuals directly involved. But this only works in *networks*—you can't pull a group of random strangers together and expect to achieve the same effect, which is why we go to settings where men naturally congregate, rather than asking them to come to us.

*Networks are made up of people who are connected to each other in some way—through friendship, work relationships, family ties, shared interests or activities, etc. It's the set of relationships through which information, attitudes, and behaviours spread.

3. INFLUENCERS, NOT ALLIES

So, who are those key influencers in a network? Called 'social referents' in the research literature, they are the people that others in the network reference to understand how to behave. Typically, they are people who are respected, trusted, and liked. If behaviours travel through networks like a social contagion, key influencers are the super spreaders—the people whose behaviours have the most power to signal a change in social expectations.

Key influencers are not always allies. In fact, in some networks, GBV allies have limited social capital. Among groups of socially conservative men, for example, allies are unlikely to serve as a social referent because they are often seen as too progressive.

This is why we target influencers (although in some circumstances, an individual might be both an influencer and an ally). This can be challenging as we are not always working with those who are ideologically aligned with us. But as we'll discuss next, we are focused on changing *behaviours*, not beliefs.

KEY TAKEAWAY FOR GBV PROFESSIONALS:

Allies are critical to supporting the broader social agenda of gender equity and violence prevention. However, they might have a limited (or even negative) impact within some male-dominated settings or networks. To shift behaviours, we need to work with those who have social capital—people the network itself approves of—rather than those *we* approve of.

4. BEHAVIOURS, NOT IDEOLOGY

The Signal System focuses on changing behaviours, not beliefs—so, we don't get into debates about masculinity. Instead, we focus on teaching concrete skills that support respectful, prosocial behaviour, and we connect those skills to the workplace outcomes men care about, including performance, safety, and retention.

This is a skills-first approach, but that doesn't mean values are ignored. It just means that we prioritize practicality over morality, pragmatism over preaching, and engagement over ideological framing. For example, rather than telling people to be respectful, equitable, and inclusive because 'it's the right thing to do,' we demonstrate how related behaviours help men achieve what they already care about.

This allows us to drive immediate engagement and action without needing to overhaul a person's worldview (which is a very challenging thing to do—one that comes with no guarantee of behaviour change). And interestingly, research shows that once people change how they act, their attitudes sometimes follow suit.[15]

KEY TAKEAWAY FOR GBV PROFESSIONALS:

Many male-dominated networks will be uninterested in discussing masculinities or gender norms, so that approach is unlikely to gain traction.[16] On the other hand, focusing on violence-related skills and behaviours has many advantages:

- It's engaging because it helps men address issues they care about
- It focuses on what people can *do* rather than what they should believe
- It feels practical and non-threatening
- It builds capacity without requiring agreement
- It creates immediate, observable behaviour change
- It can shift norms (because we often figure out what is normative by observing how others behave)

5. FINDING THE SWEET SPOT

Tapping into a group's internal motivation is critical for meaningful engagement and lasting change. When people see personal relevance, resistance drops, buy-in grows, and new behaviours are more likely to stick.[17] But what do you do when their priorities don't line up with yours? You look below the surface to find the 'sweet spot' where their concerns overlap with yours. This is easier than it sounds because behaviours associated with equity, inclusion, and respect aren't just morally right; they make for better relationships and higher-functioning groups—and who doesn't want *that*?

When we take The Signal System into a new setting, we work to understand what matters to that group and then frame our work around their priorities. For example, most of the police officers we worked with cared about team performance, physical safety, individual wellbeing, and employee engagement.

Research shows that psychological safety and belonging significantly impact each of those factors,[18] so that became the framing for our work.

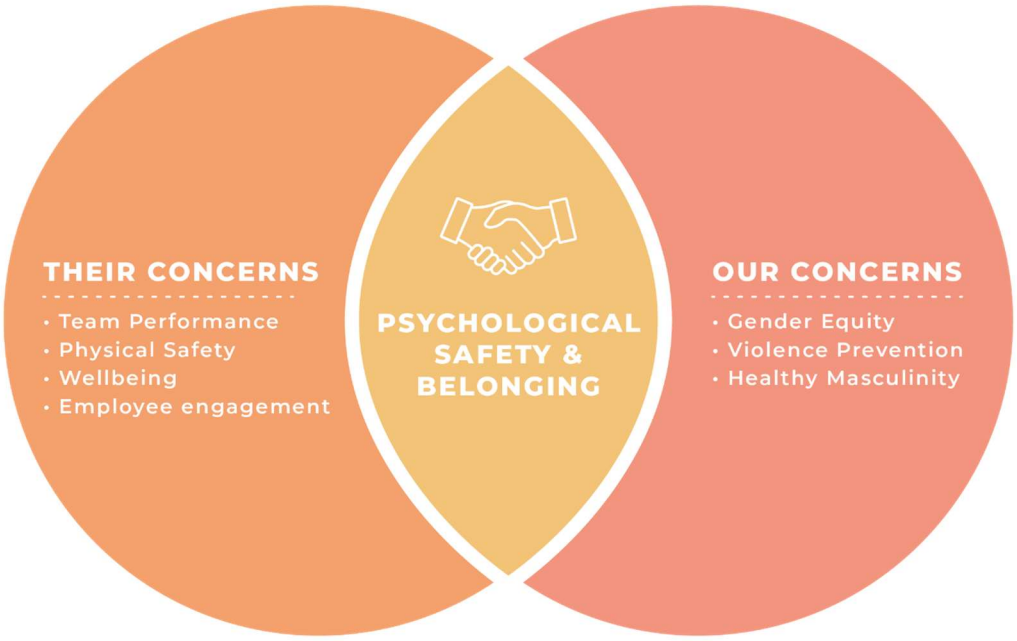
ENTRY POINT

You may be asking yourself, 'Is it dishonest to avoid putting gender equity and violence prevention front and centre when approaching a group?' It could be – but we were always open about the organization we represented (Shift/UCalgary) and the fact that it is focused on gender equity and violence prevention.

If participants then asked about the link between that mandate and our work with them, we connected the dots by saying that helping teams to achieve healthy, high functioning relationships is a win-win: it helps to enhance what they care about while also serving a primary prevention agenda.

What skills and behaviours are associated with psychological safety and belonging? Turns out, they're the same skills that are needed to prevent violence and enhance gender equity (see *Appendix A*). That became our 'sweet spot'—as the diagram below indicates.

FIGURE 2. FINDING THE SWEET SPOT WHERE PRIORITIES OVERLAP



KEY TAKEAWAY FOR GBV PROFESSIONALS:

Teaching concrete skills and behaviours is a key engagement strategy—but those skills and behaviours need to be linked to something that the men you're working with actually care about. Fortunately, respectful, equitable, non-violent relationships are not just the right thing to do morally; they make for better social environments—ones that support learning, achievement, and wellbeing—which means finding the sweet spot is easier than you might think.

6. PLAYING THE LONG GAME

Due to time and funding constraints, GBV initiatives often end up being short-term or one-off engagements. The Signal System is different—it's a longer-term, embedded approach that allows us to build relationships, cultivate trust, and understand the social environment we're trying to change. Yes, it's resource intensive, but not as expensive as investing in one-offs that have little evidence of impact.[19] While time-intensive, the investment is worthwhile because it gives you the opportunity to:

- ***BUILD A FOUNDATION OF TRUST*** **–** Sensitive discussions become productive rather than defensive when they are built on trust and understanding.
- ***CUSTOMIZE INTERVENTIONS*** **–** Tailoring interventions to specific settings makes them more relevant, do-able, and appealing.
- ***UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT*** **–** Policy and system changes are more likely to succeed when they are informed by the unique realities of the local context.

KEY TAKEAWAY FOR GBV PROFESSIONALS:

One-off training, standardized curricula, and superficial engagements aren't getting the results we want. What we've learned is that meaningful prevention requires a different way of working: digging deep rather than spreading ourselves thin, taking time to co-create with members of the group, and learning alongside those with lived experience.

7. UPSTREAM SIGNALS

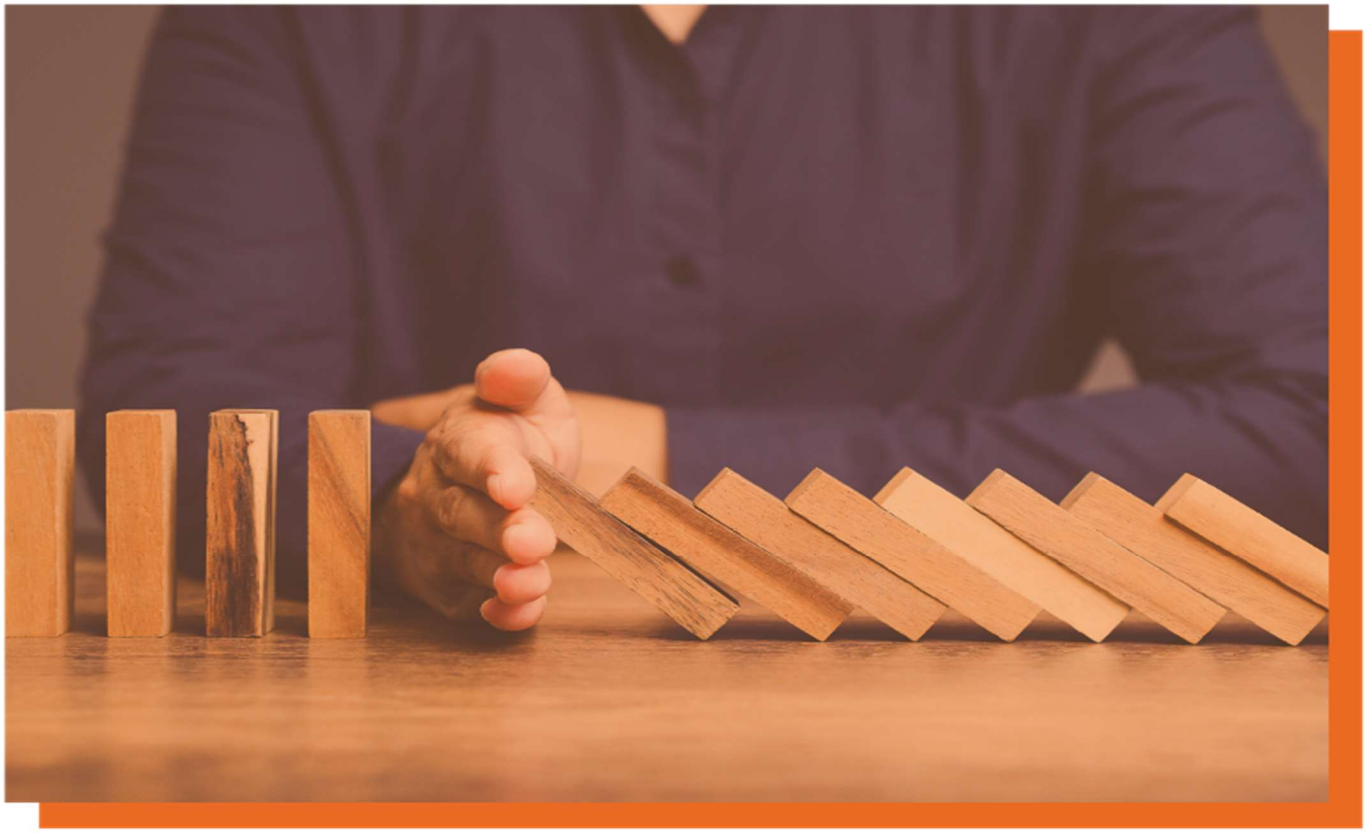
Bystander interventions are an important part of any prevention initiative, but bystander responses are inherently reactionary—they only kick in once a line has been crossed. The Signal System complements active bystander skills with *proactive* measures: small ways of signalling prosocial expectations early and often so that harm is less likely to happen in the first place.

The pro-social signals we develop for each setting are:

- Small and easy to incorporate
- Customized to the specific network we're engaging
- Designed to communicate caring, openness, curiosity, humility, fairness, inclusiveness, and other qualities associated with healthy relationships and masculinities

KEY TAKEAWAY FOR GBV PROFESSIONALS:

We need to think about how to add proactive strategies to our GBV resources so that we create the conditions that support positive, equitable relationships and stop violence before it starts. For example, bystander training could be complemented with strategies for modelling equitable, respectful relationships and coaching others to do the same. (Please see *Appendix B* for examples of the prosocial signals we developed for Calgary Police Service constables.)



WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE IN ACTION

How do the key features of The Signal System play out in a real-world context?

From 2021 to 2025, we transitioned The Signal System from theory to practice, implementing it within several Calgary Police Service (CPS) districts and evaluating its impact.* Policing organizations are ideal sites for this approach because they are typically:

- Male-dominated (in Canada, 77% of police officers are male[20])
- Hypermasculine[21]
- Associated with high rates of sexual and gender harassment[22]
- Associated with high rates of domestic violence[23]

Here's what implementation of The Signal System looked like in a law enforcement organization.

1. THE 'IN'

In 2020, based on the recommendations and advocacy of two officers who had come across our research, senior leaders in CPS asked us to work with them to increase gender equity, reduce sexual harassment, and create a safer, more respectful workplace. This work pre-dated the implementation of The Signal System, but it laid the foundation because it gave us an opportunity to build relationships and better understand the system.

It also gave us an opportunity to work with leadership in a sustained way, building their capacity to enhance the organization's culture and support the approach. Then, in 2021, the Public Health Agency of Canada awarded Shift a multi-year grant to implement and test The Signal System in CPS.

2. UNDERSTANDING CALGARY POLICE SERVICE CULTURE & OPERATIONS

We can't change what we don't understand. Before deciding where to implement the Signal System in CPS, we needed to understand CPS culture and the day-to-day experience of frontline officers—what they do, what they care about, how they think, how they treat each other, what frustrates them, what they worry about, what they're proud of, and so on.

*This project was approved by the University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board (REB20-1020).

The process we used for this included:

- Reviewing the research literature on police culture in Canada
- Pulling together an internal advisory committee of sworn and civilian members to help us understand and navigate the system
- Conducting interviews with key informants
- Reviewing internal documents
- Reviewing media coverage of CPS
- Going for coffee with CPS members
- Meeting with senior leaders
- Going on ride-alongs with patrol officers*
- Attending meetings, parades,† and operational training sessions to get a better sense of their job

3. IDENTIFYING A NETWORK

The Signal System is designed to be implemented within a pre-existing network. An organization is not necessarily a network—especially one as large as CPS which has about 3300 employees, multiple networks, and many sub-cultures. We needed to find a group of individuals who were connected to one another and impacted by the same norms and culture.

CPS has eight patrol districts with about 125 to 150 staff per district. Working with a district ticked a lot of boxes for us: the size was right, and each district has its own unique culture, meaning members are governed by the same social norms. Ultimately, we fully implemented The Signal System in three CPS districts.‡

SIZE MATTERS

Research suggests that 150 people is the approximate network size at which individuals can still recognize one another, track social cues, and influence norms, while being large enough for behaviours to spread beyond immediate peers. At this size, changes in visible behaviour are more likely to circulate through the network and take hold, rather than remaining isolated.[24]

4. FRAMING

We were invited into CPS to enhance gender equity and prevent sexual harassment—but it's important to note that this was *senior leaderships'*

*A ride-along is an opportunity for a civilian to accompany a police officer during their shift to observe day-to-day policing activities firsthand.
†In policing, 'parade' is the briefing meeting at the start of each shift.
‡We implemented 'lighter' versions of the approach in two other areas as well.

agenda, not the agenda of many frontline officers. Going into districts with that framing was unlikely to be successful because many frontline officers:

- Did not think gender equity or sexual harassment were problems in their organization
- Felt these types of initiatives had little personal or professional relevance
- Were highly cynical of gender equity initiatives because past initiatives had not led to change and/or had resulted in backlash, making things worse for females
- Were experiencing disengagement and fatigue related to diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives

Because involvement in the initiative was voluntary, we needed to frame it in a way that would entice engagement despite these obstacles. To be successful, we knew we needed to connect our work to something the group cared about. Police officers have dangerous jobs, so operational excellence and individual health are important to them. That was our hook: enhancing psychological safety and belonging in the district would enhance performance and wellbeing.

We made the pitch by meeting with all the sergeants in the district and going into each team's parade. It was still a tough sell—officers have a healthy level of skepticism about initiatives like this—but we got there by:

- Showing how the project would benefit them through better performance, increased mental health, reduced stress leave, etc.
- Using our knowledge of CPS to anticipate and respond to pushback or resistance
- Explaining how and why this initiative would be different from what they'd experienced in the past.
- Using humour

PROVING YOURSELF

In high-stakes, hypermasculine environments like policing, credibility is earned. We navigated this dynamic by leaning into the tension rather than avoiding it. We didn't just present our project, we invited them to push back, challenge and ask questions—and when they did, we handled it with humour, composure, and curiosity, rather than defensiveness or judgment. Taking their pushback in stride was the fastest way to prove ourselves, demonstrating that we were partners who understood their skepticism and weren't intimidated by it.

- Highlighting that the initiative would be customized to their district and based on their priorities
- Inviting them to be direct with us

5. MUTUAL ORIENTATION & RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

Those initial meetings in the district were just the start, a way to introduce ourselves and the work we'd be doing. Before we moved into implementation, we still needed to understand district culture and build relationships with that group. This meant more ride-alongs, more conversations, and a series of consultations to identify the workplace dynamics that district members wanted to strengthen or change.

6. IDENTIFYING THEIR PRIORITIES

A principle that we apply to all of our work at Shift is 'doing *with*, not *to*.' When you honour the priorities and concerns of the group you're working with and develop resources and initiatives with their input, you create opportunities for trust, buy-in, relevance, and engagement.

We conducted consultations in each district to find out what members wanted to change. This process looked different depending on the district, but usually consisted of one-on-one, confidential interviews and a survey.

We focused the consultations on the work environment, using a mix of open- and closed-ended questions. While the findings across districts varied, most identified the following areas for improvement:

- Giving and receiving feedback
- Managing conflict
- Accountability/work ethic
- Bias/double standards
- Gossip
- Bullying and harassment

CLOSING THE LOOP

We summarized the consultation findings and shared them with everyone in the district. This step is important to build trust and demonstrate that the findings are for them, not just for us. We then debriefed the findings in our learning sessions with sergeants and constables.

This gave us lots to work with. On the surface, something like giving and receiving feedback may not seem directly related to violence prevention, but there is significant overlap between the skills required for both. Receiving feedback, for example, requires:

- ***SELF-REGULATION*** – Feedback triggers the threat response, so to be able to actually 'hear' the feedback, you need to know how to manage that response.

- ***MANAGING BIASES AND DEFENSIVENESS*** – To effectively receive feedback, you need to stay open and manage self-serving biases and defensiveness.

- ***ACTIVE LISTENING*** – If you're serious about taking feedback well, you need to be able to listen in a way that furthers understanding—which means asking questions, checking your understanding, and listening in a way that makes the other person feel heard.

- ***HUMILITY*** – Taking feedback well requires humility and a recognition that there's always more to learn.

- ***ACCOUNTABILITY*** – Feedback only matters if you're willing to act on it. The process of closing the loop—acknowledging impact, taking responsibility, and changing behaviour—is at the heart of violence prevention.

All of these skills are associated with healthy masculinities and healthy relationships, both of which are fundamental to primary prevention of GBV. It's a win-win. The table in *Appendix A* explores this idea more fully, showing how the skills we taught connect to healthy masculinities, gender equity, and violence prevention.

7. RECRUITING KEY INFLUENCERS

Once we'd built relationships, oriented ourselves to the district, and figured out members' priorities, we were ready to recruit key influencers to participate in customized learning sessions. You'll remember that key influencers are the 'super spreaders'—people who have enough social capital to trigger a social contagion. There are formal influencers (people in leadership roles), and informal influencers (respected peers and natural leaders).

Formal influencers are usually easy to identify—in this context, they were the sergeants who supervised patrol officers. To identify *informal* influencers, we asked district members to fill out an anonymous peer nomination form listing two members on their team who were liked and respected, as well as one person from another team who people in the district looked up to.*

*Districts in CPS tend to have about 13 teams.

We analyzed the forms and listed nominees in order from most to least nominated. We then emailed the top 40 nominees and invited them to participate, aiming to recruit about 30 (which is what we needed to achieve *a tipping point* within the district). We framed the sessions as a leadership development opportunity and let them know our discussions would focus on the issues and priorities that district members had identified. The framing worked, and we had no trouble getting volunteers.*

TIPPING POINT

A tipping point is just like it sounds - the moment when the system 'tips' and begins to behave differently. Tipping point research shows that a system will 'tip' or change its behaviour when a critical mass of 25% of the network adopts a new behaviour.[25] Once this threshold is reached, change can spread quickly through the network, reinforcing new norms and behaviours.

8. CONTENT DESIGN & DELIVERY

Drawing on the priorities identified through each of the district consultations, we designed interactive learning sessions for both sergeants (formal influencers) and constables/detectives (informal influencers) in the following content areas:†

- Enhancing psychological safety and belonging in the workplace
- Managing conflict within and across teams
- Preventing & addressing bullying and harassment
- Combatting negativity on teams
- Mitigating bias
- Holding members accountable
- Navigating humour on teams
- Handling mistakes/creating a positive learning environment
- Addressing discrimination/double standards‡
- Cultivating curiosity/understanding the value of diversity
- Addressing malicious gossip
- Cultivating resiliency

*Participation in both the learning sessions and the research were voluntary. Members could participate in the learning sessions without participating in the research (i.e., without providing feedback on the approach).

†This is a list of all the content we developed, but not all of these pieces were delivered in every district. Overall, however, there was a lot of thematic consistency across districts, making content development easier as we were able to adapt previously developed materials.

‡This was our opportunity to talk about gender norms and gender discrimination.

Customization like this takes a lot of time and effort—but our evaluation findings suggest that it was worth it. Participants appreciated that the sessions addressed their issues and concerns and liked that the scenarios and discussions were tailored to their work environment. This enhanced engagement and increased our credibility.

Participants completed 9–12 hours of in-person sessions over a three-month period. Based on the evaluation findings, there were a number of factors that made these sessions effective:

- *PRACTICAL* – We offered them concrete and do-able actions and collaboratively developed key messages or scripts for tricky situations.

- *CONTEXT-SPECIFIC* – The scenarios we worked through were based on common experiences within the CPS—things that happened all the time and were familiar to them. We also used their language and drew on our knowledge of their system in our discussions, which signalled that we cared enough about them to understand their work.

- *DISCUSSION-BASED* – We made a lot of room for discussion because there is far more power in hearing a peer talk about gender discrimination than in hearing it from us.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PEER-BASED LEARNING

Peer discussions were critical in this context. As outsiders, our ideas carried less weight than insights that emerged from within the group. Peer discussions allowed officers to test ideas with people they trust, surface shared realities, and hear messages in ways that felt credible and relevant. They also helped shift norms by making new perspectives visible and socially reinforced, reducing the risk of speaking up alone and increasing the likelihood that insights would translate into practice.

- *STAGED* – We started with topics that were less sensitive (e.g., managing conflict, giving and receiving feedback) and waited until we'd built some trust to introduce topics related to discrimination and sexual harassment.

- *ANTICIPATORY* – We worked to understand what might get in the way of being an active bystander or being a positive role model, then we developed strategies to address those barriers. For example, we developed ways of intervening that were less likely to elicit blowback.
- *NOT PREACHY* – We never talked down to participants and regulated ourselves during difficult discussions by staying open and curious. This was key because judgment can produce defensiveness, and defensiveness shuts down learning.
- *FUN* – We injected humour, used entertaining and informative videos where possible, provided snacks, and tried to make the sessions as engaging as possible.
- *RESPONSIVE* – We acted on the feedback we got from the feedback forms collected at the end of every session to make the next session even better.

9. BOOSTERS & COACHING

For up to a year after the learning sessions, we followed up with customized 'booster' emails. Each booster briefly revisited one content area discussed in the sessions and offered resources, tips, and/or stories related to the theme. We also offered one-on-one coaching during the intervention and in the months that followed. While only a few people took us up on this, those who did clearly wanted to use what they'd learned to solve problems they were experiencing in their district.

10. SYSTEM REINFORCEMENTS

The Signal System is a social norms and networks intervention used to shift behaviours, but it's not intended as a standalone approach. The intervention is most effective when reinforced structurally through policy, operational procedures, training, and so on. The more ways to reinforce the desired behaviours, the better. This is why, in addition to implementing The Signal System with frontline officers, we worked with CPS on a number of structural initiatives. For example, we:

- Reviewed and made recommendations related to CPS' sexual harassment policies and reporting processes
- Reviewed the Alberta Police Act through a gender lens and, together with CPS, jointly submitted recommended amendments to the Government of Alberta[26]
- Designed and delivered customized training for all leadership ranks on preventing and addressing sexual and gender harassment

- Reviewed CPS recruiting and hiring practices and collaboratively redesigned processes to mitigate bias and attract more female officers to the CPS
- Conducted internal research and recommended ways to enhance career development and advancement for female members

Through our sessions with the frontline officers, we also learned of various system issues and ways that existing policy was having an unintended impact. We briefed senior leadership regularly on each of these issues so that CPS had an opportunity to address them.

11. EVALUATION

Evaluation was an important part of this project. Not only did it help us understand the impact we were having, but it also helped us constantly improve our approach.

Our evaluator used a variety of methods to gather qualitative and quantitative data throughout the project, including:

- Participant observation
- Anonymous feedback forms
- Qualitative interviews six months post-intervention
- Surveys six months post-intervention with participants and district leadership
- Review of the Project Lead's journaling

EVALUATION HIGHLIGHTS

Preliminary findings show strong engagement and meaningful impact. One hundred thirty-six (136) CPS members volunteered to serve as key influencers, and 117 agreed to participate in the evaluation. The Signal System was fully implemented and evaluated in three districts, with a lighter implementation in one additional district and one frontline unit.

Evaluation methods included feedback forms after each learning session, followed by interviews and a survey six months later to assess sustained learning and behaviour change. Early findings suggest that The Signal System is a promising approach for engaging men in male-dominated environments, leading to increased skills, behaviour change, cultural shifts, and longer-term effects. Key evaluation findings are summarized below.

1. ENGAGEMENT

Many participants spoke of the value of the 'embedded' approach we took, where we invested time in learning their culture, language, and priorities, suggesting this tactic worked to engage men.

> *"Honestly, I was a skeptic going into it. I was like, 'Oh great another snowflake sort of thing,' you know, 'deal with everybody with kid gloves kind of thing'. But you guys showed me that it wasn't that. I mean it's kudos to you because understanding police culture and emergency responder culture was certainly something that you put a lot of effort into, which we all certainly appreciated."*

> *"Well done. Not preachy. Down to earth information that can be practically put into use."*

> *"The familiarity you had with the CPS terminology and some of our norms. [It] did not feel like you were outsiders. Everyone was engaged in the conversation."*

Perhaps the greatest indicator of engagement was the number of people who volunteered to participate. In our first district, where we didn't yet have a reputation to rely on and hadn't yet learned how to 'pitch' the project well, we had a fairly small cohort (n=24). Word spread, however, and others in the district asked if they could take the sessions, so we ran a second cohort. Police officers talk, and recruiting was easier in subsequent districts.

A staff sergeant from that district wrote to us afterwards, saying: "In my 24 years with CPS, I have never seen a program implemented where there was such acceptance from the patrol group, and I truly believe it had a lot to do with your delivery and approach in the sessions." Engagement is something many GBV prevention initiatives wrestle with. Through the Signal System, we identified approaches that consistently make engagement easier.

2. KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND BEHAVIOURS

Over 85% of the respondents reported increased understanding, confidence, and skills related to psychological safety, belonging, bias, and inclusion in the workplace after the learning sessions. The vast majority described a greater ability to self-regulate, model pro-social behaviours, and disrupt problematic behaviour six months post-intervention. Respondents were not only engaged in the sessions but were also applying what they learned to strengthen workplace culture and signal pro-social norms.

“I’m more attuned to enhancing safety and belonging, and a little more on the lookout for those little comments and stuff that can derail and make people not super happy or not safe in the workplace.”

“It's a bit embarrassing really for me to admit this, but I haven't ever looked at it through a gender perspective, so I was completely blind to it. If it wasn’t for these sessions, I wouldn't have picked up on it.”

“For me, it was just the self-awareness factor—how do my biases affect me?”

“I have more patience. More patience for the public, more patience for our peers. More patience for even accused persons, right? Like that's a big thing.”

“… noticing interactions in myself because I'm constantly now transitioning my mind in policing to think ‘Is what I'm saying going to be harmful?’ Or ‘Is the conversation I'm engaging in going to hurt somebody else?’ Or ‘Am I being useful, or am I just gossiping?’ I'm trying to be like, ‘Oh no, actually this is not a good conversation, it’s going to hurt somebody.’”

“[Now I say] ‘Hey, dude, you can't do this’ and then have a discussion with people afterwards. So, I’ve implemented those strategies, just to not make it super awkward, but to at least address it.”

Interviews (n=37) conducted with key influencers six months after the intervention confirmed that the effect had lasted. More than half of the respondents were modelling prosocial behaviours and disrupting problematic ones, and many provided examples of how they were doing that (e.g., managing conflict more productively, signalling safety and belonging, setting expectations with peers and direct reports, handling mistakes in ways that support learning).

“[Now I’m] encouraged to take a breath … to take a step back and try to look at the situation through a clean lens rather than a filtered lens, to reevaluate.”

“I’ve tried to maintain generous assumptions. This person probably isn’t doing this for, like, a malicious reason, and to kind of give them that grace to start with. And then I found that took some molehills that could have been mountains and kept them molehills.”

“I’ve started simply saying ‘we don’t do that here.’ I feel more comfortable just to do that.”

“You just have to make the decision that you're going to step in and say something, which we all have the ability to do … I had a situation where that occurred and was able to step up and intervene.”

"It's a nudge. It's not a push. It's not like shoving them off the hill into this thing. It's just little nudges to keep things on track."

"I've had a few times where I just sent somebody like a quick text message, like "Hey you need to drop that right now."

3. CULTURE CHANGE

Culture takes years to change; however, we are already seeing small cultural shifts in the districts we worked with, suggesting that a tipping point was achieved and new norms are spreading through the district. A leader in one district we worked with reached out to say, "There has been a change in [name of district] that is just about palpable. Not only did our folks value the training, they actually use the tools… Which for cops is just about unheard of."

This observation was supported by evaluation data that showed that 76% of all interview and survey respondents (n=65) noticed improved psychological safety and belonging in their district. The following are examples of changes they saw.

- *INCREASED 'SPEAK UP' CULTURE* – When people feel safe to speak up, harmful behaviour and escalating aggression are addressed early instead of being normalized or ignored.

  "[W]hen somebody has a negative bias towards a certain group or gender, I'm starting to see more and more people kind of speak up about that."

  "[It] strengthened the group internally. You know you are okay to speak out and say 'Hey man, that stuff's not good, […] that's not cool. So please, you know, stop doing it.' So, it really strengthened not just my team, but the whole district."

- *INCREASED OPENNESS AND VULNERABILITY AMONG TEAMS* – Openness and vulnerability reflect healthier forms of masculinity. These shifts support violence prevention because when individuals can express stress, uncertainty, or mistakes without shame, they are less likely to suppress emotions that later surface as aggression.

  "I've had the team slowly open up to me about stuff, one-on-one … I think they feel safe."

  "A shift from blaming and criticizing to learning … people feel more included and [can be] vulnerable."

- *MORE SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS* – Strong peer relationships create emotional buffering and informal accountability, reducing isolation and interrupting harmful behaviour before it escalates.

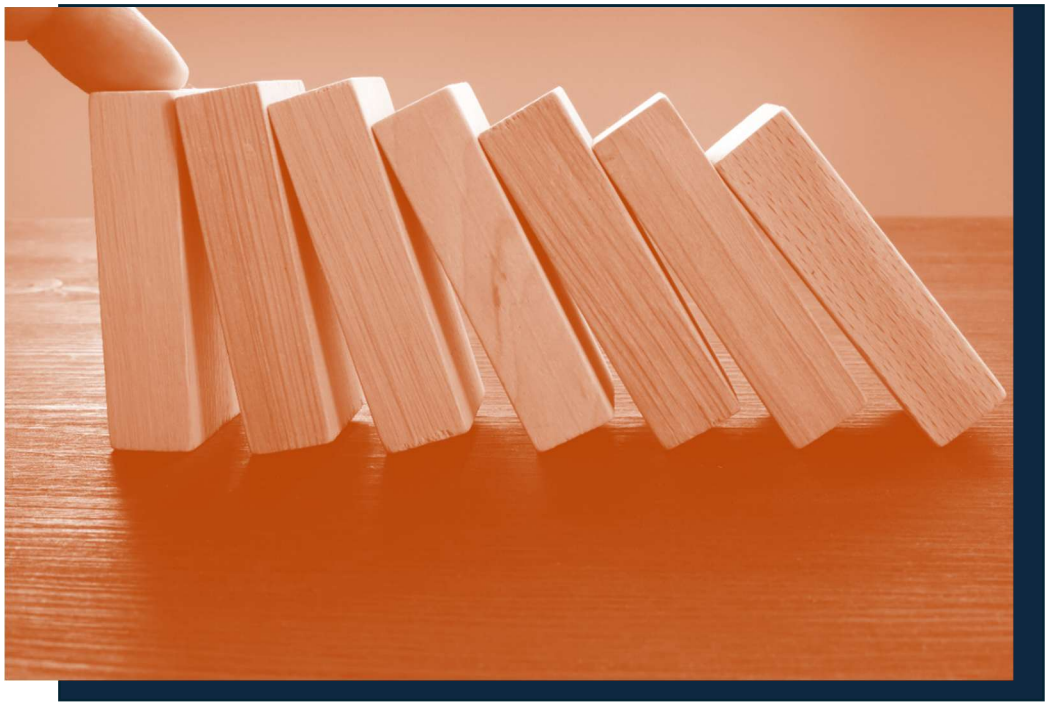
  "I've found that our team now really checks on each other. We razz each other for sure and have fun but it's never hurtful and at the end of the day we have built a safe, strong, fun environment."

  "I see people treating each other better. I see a little bit more understanding of where maybe there's something else going on … [now they're] able to see the good in someone."

- *INCREASED SENSE OF BELONGING* – When people feel secure and valued within a group, they are less likely to engage in defensive, status-driven, or dominance-based aggression. A strong sense of belonging also signals a more inclusive culture—one where women and racialized members are not merely present, but genuinely accepted, heard, and able to participate fully.

  "They are trying harder … trying to create more of a team and family feeling across the whole district. I think the […] project spurred them to be more thoughtful as well and try different things."

  "People want to come in—even if they are working from home, they'll come in and show up for an hour because they like to be here. That is new. We feel more like a team."



WHAT WE LEARNED ABOUT ENGAGING MEN IN PRIMARY PREVENTION

The opportunity to implement and test an approach that has been so many years in the making was a gift, and we are grateful to the funders and our collaborators (CPS), research participants, and our research team who made this possible. Their investment produced many valuable returns, including learnings that will shape and inform future work. Here are some of the insights we gained about engaging men in GBV primary prevention.

1 *A STAGED APPROACH IS KEY.*

What you can do at the beginning of the relationship is very different from what you can do once you've established trust and rapport. In the initial stages of engagement, we focused on issues that were important to them. We introduced conversations about gender equity and sexual harassment only after we'd built trust.

2 *THEIR PRIORITIES, NOT OURS.*

Want to engage men? Start with what matters to them. That doesn't mean abandoning your agenda—it means finding the overlap between their priorities and yours. This is more achievable than it sounds because the skills that create healthy, high-functioning groups are the same skills that reduce harm and prevent violence. Make that connection explicit.

3 *RELATIONSHIPS ARE EVERYTHING.*

We know this and say it often in our sector, but due to time and funding constraints, we don't always put it into practice. We found relationship building to be the secret sauce, a key factor in how and why we were able to engage men. Relationship building also serves another purpose: as practitioners, we should be modelling the behaviours we want to see—which means modelling reciprocal, mutually supportive relationships. As Einstein said, "Example isn't another way to teach. It's the *only* way to teach."

4 *MAKE IT DOABLE, NOT DEBATABLE.*

While attitudes are important, they don't always translate to behaviour—and ultimately, isn't that what we should care about? Changing attitudes and worldviews is hard and there's no guarantee it will make a difference. Focus on behaviours. Men

change when they're given something to do, not just something to believe.

5 *LEAD WITH EMPATHY, NOT IDEOLOGY.*

We learned a lot from some of the CPS equity initiatives that predated us—and the lesson was clear: ideology divides. It may not feel like ideology from *our* perspective because things like power, privilege, gender norms, and toxic masculinities are observable phenomena; but it feels like ideology from *their* perspective, and ultimately, if we want to engage men, it's their perspective that counts. Does this mean we put all of that aside? No – we use it to inform our work; we just don't make it front and centre. Instead, we cultivate curiosity, empathy, and perspective-taking to support learning.

6 *LEVERAGE INFLUENCERS; DEPLOY ALLIES STRATEGICALLY.*

Allies are critical to the gender justice movement, and we wouldn't be where we are without them. But they don't always have the social capital to trigger shifts in norms and behaviours, particularly in male-dominated environments that trend toward a more socially conservative ethos. We need to be strategic in our approach, leveraging influencers and discerning when and where an ally approach will and will not work.

7 *SOCIAL CONTAGION IS A POWERFUL WAY TO PREVENT GBV.*

One-on-one work can be rewarding, but if we really want to move the needle on GBV, we need to think *big*. That means figuring out how to leverage social contagion to change behaviours. The Signal System's norms and networks approach shows promise, not only in changing individual behaviours but also in changing *culture*—the unspoken set of rules that guide how we think and what we do. We strongly believe cultural interventions are the future of GBV prevention.

8 *FUNDING APPROACHES NEED TO CHANGE.*

There's a reason that short-term, one-off approaches are still common in our sector despite limited evidence of their effectiveness. It's because they're reinforced by the way resources are allocated and success is measured. From a funding perspective, it might be hard to justify hours spent learning a culture, but you can't change what you don't understand, so we need to reorient our funding and reporting structures. Front-end investments are key to engagement and a game-changer when it comes to impact.

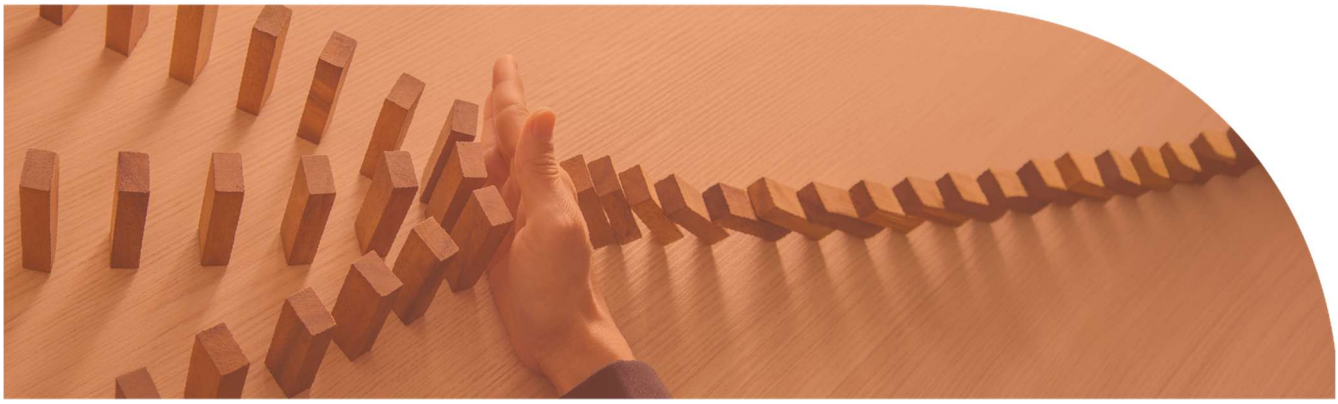
9 *NOT A PLUG-AND-PLAY APPROACH.*

One of the challenges associated with scaling this approach is that it requires a range of skills, including strategy, design, relationship building, facilitation, self-regulation, and the capacity to adapt your materials to the needs and priorities of the group. Implementing The Signal System is very different from implementing a standardized, one-size-fits-all program. While we can offer training around this approach (more on that in a moment), it takes the right set of skills to implement it effectively.

10 *NOT A STANDALONE APPROACH.*

This intervention led to measurable improvements in individual behaviour and shifts in social norms and culture. To sustain and amplify these gains, we conducted complementary work at the systems level. This is how The Signal System is ideally intended to be implemented—as part of a comprehensive approach. The best part is that information gathered during implementation of The Signal System gives you valuable insights for policy and systems change—the kind of insights that only come through spending time in the target system.

Some frontline CPS officers brought a healthy skepticism to this initiative, but our approach engaged them meaningfully in conversations about gender equity and sexual harassment suggesting that, combined, the practices associated with The Signal System are effective in engaging men. We believe these practices can apply to any initiative—not just The Signal System—and hope that the GBV sector will draw on, scale, and extend this approach.



WHERE WE'RE HEADED

We are excited about the success of The Signal System and are eager to see it implemented worldwide. Here are some of the steps we're taking to make that dream a reality.

- *DEVELOPING PHASED OR TIERED VERSIONS OF THE APPROACH.* We recognize that The Signal System is a resource-intensive approach. While we believe this level of investment is warranted, we recognize that funder expectations will need to evolve over time. In response, we are developing lighter-touch applications that preserve the core components while defining clear minimum specifications for effective implementation.
- *DEVELOPING TRAINING FOR GBV PROFESSIONALS.* We have already started training GBV professionals in Alberta, Canada on this approach, and are hoping to extend this opportunity to others across Canada and the world through a training centre—The Stack Institute—that we'll be launching soon.
- *TESTING THE APPROACH IN OTHER ENVIRONMENTS.* We are currently testing the approach in another industry to gauge its effectiveness in other types of work environments.
- *TAKING IT ON THE ROAD.* We are committed to working with GBV leaders and practitioners across Canada and elsewhere to share the approach and gather their insights. To this end, we will be convening discussion groups (2026-2027) to further refine the approach and make it part of standard practice in primary prevention.
- *BUILDING A REPOSITORY OF RESOURCES.* We're creating a digital library of presentations, handouts, tools, and examples that others can draw on, making it easier to put the approach into practice without reinventing the wheel.
- *MAKING THE APPROACH SUSTAINABLE.* We are currently working with the University of Calgary to commercialize the approach so that we can make these services available to businesses and other police services without relying on further government funding.
- *BUILDING THE FIELD.* We are advancing the field of primary prevention in workplace settings through peer-reviewed research, applied reports, practitioner tools, and ongoing evaluation, while sharing lessons learned with policing, community, and workplace partners.

We hope this has sparked some excitement in you! If you have questions or would like to find out more, please contact Lana Wells at lmwells@ucalgary.ca.

Appendix A: Skills & Behaviours

We framed our work with police around promoting psychological safety and belonging in the workplace because this connected to their needs and priorities. This worked because it served our agenda as well: the skills and behaviours associated with psychological safety and belonging in the workplace are the same ones needed for violence prevention and gender equity, as the table below shows.

VP = Violence Prevention • HM = Healthy Masculinities • GE = Gender Equity

BEHAVIOURS & SKILLS	VP	HM	GE
Self-regulation: Breathing, walking, delaying, etc.	✓	✓	
Humility, openness, curiosity: Asking for feedback, asking questions, admitting when you don't know how to do something, perspective-taking, etc.	✓	✓	✓
Communication: Being direct* (vs. passive-aggressive), active listening, etc.	✓	✓	
Checking for bias & assumptions: Understanding common biases (including gender bias) and how they impact yourself and others; understanding how the need to feel good about yourself impacts how you see things and often distorts reality, etc.	✓	✓	✓
Managing biases & thought distortions: 'Just-in-time'(in the moment) strategies for managing bias, asking questions vs. making assumptions, etc.	✓	✓	✓
Preventing bullying & harassment: Dealing with problematic behaviours early, coaching, calling in, leading by example, positively influencing team dynamics, setting expectations, etc.	✓	✓	✓
Disrupting harmful norms/Intervening to address problematic behaviours: Overcoming barriers to intervening, intervening in ways that mitigate risk, etc.	✓	✓	✓
Gender norms & discrimination: Understanding gender dynamics in the workplace, understanding how gender norms impact judgments, understanding other forms of discrimination in the workplace, intervening, etc.	✓	✓	✓
Empathy/perspective-taking: Learning from people who are different from you, trauma informed thinking ('what's happened to you' vs. 'what's wrong with you'), asking questions/examining assumptions, etc.	✓	✓	✓
Mutual support: Checking in with one another, showing others that they are valued through your words and actions, etc.	✓	✓	✓
Self-Awareness: Understanding your own patterns of behaviour (e.g., in terms of how you receive feedback), using what you know about yourself to anticipate and manage your reactions, etc.	✓	✓	✓

*Dependent on the cultural context and not appropriate in every setting.

© 2026 University of Calgary, Shift: The Project to End Domestic Violence

Appendix B: Signals

Ideas like equity, inclusion, and supportive relationships can be abstract. We wanted to show what they looked like in action to give participants small, concrete, context-specific ways to signal psychological safety and belonging every day—so we created a list of 20 signals for each of the ranks. Below are some of the signals we developed for constables. These actions are easy to implement and can be integrated into everyday practice. While they may seem simple, each action signals something related to a psychologically safe, respectful, equitable work environment—as the table below shows.

Action	What it signals
Ask for feedback from your supervisor and peers.	Humility, learning orientation
Invite questions and signal that it's okay to ask for help.	Psychological safety, support
Offer support to teammates who may be facing difficulties; acknowledge challenging calls or life circumstances and ask how they're doing.	Caring, support, vulnerability
Treat mistakes as learning opportunities and avoid shaming the member who messed up.	Learning orientation, psychological safety, support
Nudge teammates when you see aggressive behaviours and/or ribbing that goes too far.	Standards, accountability
Help to unload other members' cars at the end of your shift.	Caring, support
Create space for quieter folks to speak up in parade or at coffee; draw them out.	Inclusion, belonging, caring
Remember that modern-day policing requires a huge range of tools and skillsets—there isn't 'one way' to police. If you're bothered by someone else's approach, have a conversation with them (a non-threatening conversation where your mission is to *understand their perspective* rather than persuade them to adopt *yours*).	Diversity, openness, humility, learning orientation
Ask questions vs. making assumptions ("When you're furious, get curious"); give people the benefit of the doubt whenever you can rather than jumping to negative conclusions.	Openness, curiosity, psychological safety

© 2026 University of Calgary, Shift: The Project to End Domestic Violence

REFERENCES

[1] Wells, L., Fotheringham, S., & Pascoe, L. (2023). Insights on engaging men and boys in creating a more gender equal future in Canada. *Violence Against Women, 30*(1), 297-322. https://doi.org/10.1177/10778012231203621.

[2] Casey, E., Carlson, J., Fraguela-Rios, C., Kimball, E., Neugat, T. B., Tolman, R. M., & Edleson, J. L. (2013). Contexts, challenges and tensions in global efforts to engage men in the prevention of violence against women: An ecological analysis. Men and Masculinities, 16(2), 228-251. https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184x12472336; Wells, L., Fotheringham, S., & Pascoe, L. (2023). Insights on engaging men and boys in creating a more gender equal future in Canada. *Violence Against Women, 30*(1), 297-322. https://doi.org/10.1177/10778012231203621.

[3] Hansen, B., Wells, L., & Claussen, C. (2021). Engaging men across the violence prevention continuum: An Exploratory Study. *Advances in Social Work, 21*(1), 199-216.

[4] Flood, M. (2019). *Engaging men and boys in violence prevention.* Palgrave Macmillan.

[5] Campbell, H., and Chinnery, S. (2018). *What works? Preventing & Responding to sexual harassment in the workplace: A rapid review of evidence.* Canberra, Australian: CARE Australia. Available online at: https://www.care.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/STOPRapid-Review.pdf; Wells, L., Lorenzetti, L., Carola, H., Dinner, T., Jones, C., Minerson, T., & Esina, A. (2013). *Engaging men and boys in domestic violence prevention: Opportunities and promising approaches*. Calgary, AB: The University of Calgary, Shift: The Project to End Domestic Violence. https://preventdomesticviolence.ca/engaging-men-and-boys-in-domestic-violence-prevention-opportunities-and-promising-approaches/.

[6] Pascoe, L., Wells, L., Esina, E., & Phung, N. (2022). Using social norms approaches to engage and mobilize men for violence prevention and the advancement of gender equality, diversity, justice, and inclusion: Rapid evidence review. Calgary, AB. The University of Calgary, Shift: The Project to End Domestic Violence.

[7] Dozois, E., & Wells, L. (2020). *Changing Contexts: A framework for engaging male-dominated settings in gender equity and violence prevention. Retrieved from https://preventdomesticviolence.ca/changing-contexts-a-framework-for-engaging-male-oriented-settings-in-gender-equality-and-violence-prevention-practitioners-guide/* .

[8] Scharbatke-Church, C., & Chigas, D. (2019). *Understanding social norms: A reference guide for policy and practice.* Medford, MA: Henry J. Leir Institute, The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University.

[9] Christakis, N. A., & Fowler, J. H. (2007). The spread of obesity in a large social network over 32 years. *The New England Journal of Medicine*, *357*(4), 370–379. https://doi.org/10.1056/NEJMsa066082.

[10] Christakis, N. A., & Fowler, J. H. (2007). The spread of obesity in a large social network over 32 years. *The New England Journal of Medicine*, *357*(4), 370–379. https://doi.org/10.1056/NEJMsa066082, p. 373.

[11] Christakis, N. A., & Fowler, J. H. (2009). *Connected: The surprising power of our social networks and how they shape our lives*. Little, Brown and Co; Thompson, D. (2016, April 12). Why the poor die young. *The Atlantic*. https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2016/04/why-the-poor-die-young/477846/.

[12] Christakis, N.A., & Fowler, J.H. (2009). *Connected: How your friends' friends' friends affect everything you feel, think, and do*. New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company.

[13] Christakis, N.A., & Fowler, J.H. (2009). *Connected: How your friends' friends' friends affect everything you feel, think, and do*. New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company.

[14] Centola, D. (2021). *Change: How to make big things happen*. New York: Little Brown.

[15] Festinger, L., & Carlsmith, J. M. (1959). Cognitive consequences of forced compliance. *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, *58*(2), 203–210. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0041593.

[16] Casey, E., Carlson, J., Bulls, S., & Yager, A. (2018). Gender Transformative Approaches to Engaging Men in Gender-Based Violence Prevention: A Review and Conceptual Model. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 19, 231 - 246. https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838016650191; Flood, M., Dragiewicz, M., & Pease, B. (2021). Resistance and backlash to gender equality. *Australian Journal of Social Issues, 56*(3), 393–408. https://doi.org/10.1002/ajs4.137; Ratele, K. (2015). Working through resistance in engaging boys and

men towards gender equality and progressive masculinities. *Culture, Health & Sexuality, 17*(sup2), 144–158. https://doi.org/10.1080/13691058.2015.1035577.

[17] Casey, E., Carlson, J., Two Bulls, S., & Yager, A. (2015). Strategies to engage men and boys in violence prevention: A global organizational perspective. *Violence Against Women, 21*(11), 1406–1428l; Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist, 55*(1), 68–78; Pereira, H. V., Silva, M. N., et al. (2025). Self-Determination Theory mechanisms in men's long-term behavior change. *Journal of Physical Activity and Health*.

[18] Research shows that psychological safety and belonging are associated with increased job performance, fewer sick days, increased team engagement and effort, increased mental health, increased resilience/stress management, better physical health, better decision-making, and increased physical safety. Sources: Carr, E. W., Reece, A., Kellerman, G. R., & Robichaux, A. (2019, December 16). *The value of belonging at work*. Harvard Business Review. https://hbr.org/2019/12/the-value-of-belonging-at-work; National Safety Council. (2023, May 25). *Workers who feel psychologically unsafe more likely to be injured at work*. https://www.nsc.org/workplace/safety-topics/psychological-safety-correlates-to-physical-safety; Theisen, A. (2021, December 8). *Is having a sense of belonging important?* Mayo Clinic Health System. https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/hometown-health/speaking-of-health/is-having-a-sense-of-belonging-important.

[19] A comprehensive review of nearly 1000 studies found no substantive evidence to support the effectiveness of diversity training. Furthermore, research shows that this kind of training can have a backfire effect (i.e., make people more biased, not less), perhaps because of moral licensing (where doing something good—in this case, diversity training—gives us license to do something bad). (Bohnet, I. (2016). What works: Gender equality by *design*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press: An Imprint of Harvard University Press. p. 51).

[20] Statistics Canada. (2024, March 26). Police resources in Canada, 2023. *The Daily*. www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/daily-quotidien/240326/dq240326a-eng.pdf?st=n6q6beBU

[21]Rawski, S. L., & Workman-Stark, A. L. (2018). Masculinity contest cultures in policing organizations and recommendations for training interventions. *Journal of Social Issues, 74*(3), 651-674. https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12286.

[22] Khoury, J. M. B., Andrews, K. L., Fletcher, A. J., Jamshidi, L., Asmundson, G. J. G., Teckchandani, T. A., & Carleton, R. N. (2025). Sexual victimization among Royal Canadian Mounted Police. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy, 17*(2), 289–297. https://doi.org/10.1037/tra0001753; Reil, L. L. (2019). *Gender issues in policing: Women's experiences in Canadian law enforcement* (Master's thesis, University of British Columbia). http://hdl.handle.net/2429/70943; Saini, R. (2021). Systemic discrimination in policing: Four key factors to consider. *Journal of Community Safety and Well-Being, 6*(3), 109–112. https://www.journalcswb.ca/index.php/cswb/article/view/179.

[23] Blumenstein, L., & Fridell, L. (2017). Domestic violence perpetrated by law enforcement officers: A review of the literature. *Journal of Family Violence, 32*(3), 339–349. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-016-9881-4; Ling, J. (2024, January 25). More than 600 RCMP officers faced gender-based violence disciplinary charges since 2014, CBC analysis finds. *CBC News*. https://www.cbc.ca/news/investigates/rcmp-gender-based-violence-analysis-9.7077762.

[24] Hill, R. A., & Dunbar, R. I. M. (2003). Social network size in humans. *Human Nature, 14*(1), 53–72. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12110-003-1016-y.

[25] Centola, D., Becker, J., Brackbill, D., & Baronchelli, A. (2018). The experimental evidence for a tipping point in social convention. *Science*, *360*(6393), 1116–1119. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aas8827

[26] Wells, L., Claussen, C., & Dozois, E. (2021). *Reforming the Alberta Police Act, Police Service Regulation, and Provincial Policing Standards to better respond to sexual and gender harassment in the workplace*. University of Calgary, Shift: The Project to End Domestic Violence. https://preventdomesticviolence.ca/reforming-the-alberta-police-act-police-service-regulation-and-provincial-policing-standards-to-better-respond-to-sexual-and-gender-harassment-in-the-workplace/.