

Aboriginal RCMP officers face racism, says ex-Mountie

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A former RCMP officer who claims to have faced racism and bullying in the police force says she was not the only aboriginal Mountie to have experienced discrimination.

Marge Hudson, who was Manitoba's first female aboriginal RCMP officer when she joined the force in 1979, says she quit in 2009 as a result of years of harassment, bullying and racism in the workplace.

But Hudson says she was not alone, as almost every aboriginal RCMP officer she knows has experienced some kind of racial discrimination and harassment on the job. Some of them turned to her for help, she added.

"One night I got a phone call from a member stating that they're holding their gun against their head and they were going to shoot themselves. I spoke to that member for many, many, many hours on the phone until I knew that she was going to be OK," Hudson told CBC News in an interview.

When asked what the member was troubled about, Hudson replied, "The organization, the bullying ... just everything. And I understood that, because that's the way I was treated, too."

Officers fear retribution

CBC News has spoken to about a dozen current and retired aboriginal RCMP officers who claim they have also faced discrimination, but Hudson has been the only one willing to talk openly about her experience.

Other members have declined interviews, saying they fear retribution if they speak out.

One current RCMP member, who did not want to be identified, told CBC News about feeling deeply depressed after being mistreated by a superior.

"He told me, 'Hush, don't say anything. You're opening a can of worms, and in the end you're going to be at the bottom.' That sounded like a threat," the member said.

The RCMP's commanding officer in Manitoba, Assistant Commissioner Bill Robinson, says he has no knowledge of racism, bullying or intimidation.

"These can be rumours, they could be anything. They can be people, they can be one person," Robinson said.

Willing to look at concerns

When asked if the problem is rampant, he replied, "I don't think it's rampant, no. But I will say this: if there are people in the organization ... that would like to bring those comments forward, and they're concerned about them, we'll look at them, absolutely."

Robinson said he had no prior knowledge of Hudson's concerns, but added that he is willing to talk to her about them.

But Hudson said it's too little too late, and she wants to speak directly to RCMP Commissioner Bob Paulson, who has promised to deal with allegations from current and former female RCMP officers who say they have experienced sexual harassment.

Hudson said she hopes to discuss with Paulson some solutions to make the RCMP more inclusive for its aboriginal members.