

The Royal Canadian Legion

Policy Statement

Wearing of Outlaw Motorcycle Club/Street Gang Colours At Legion Events

“In the last few years, researchers and psychologists have looked beyond motorcycle riding as purely an adrenaline kick. They’ve discovered that motorcyclists find riding to be a therapeutic process that allows them to de-stress. Riding motorcycles is good therapy.”¹

Background

Veterans come in all sizes, shapes and forms but what is clear is that the motorcycle community attracts many veterans for various reasons. As mentioned above, riding a motorcycle is a form of therapy and also camaraderie that some veterans find appealing.

In Canada, there are many Veteran motorcycle groups across the country that support and ride on behalf of causes supporting Veterans. In a majority of instances, monies raised through these rides assist Veterans in their daily lives either through direct support and / or research activities. Legion Riders, <http://www.legion.ca/communities-youth/legion-riders>, is one way for Legion members to become involved in both communities.

Motorcycle groups, regardless of cause, are often viewed in a stereotypical manner that may be less favourable than other groups. It is interesting to note, that groups like the Hell’s Angels

¹ <https://motorcyclershippers.com/2016/07/veterans-riding-therapy/>

were started by Second World War fighter pilots who continued to seek the thrill and exhilaration they had in a fighter airplane.²

Groups such as the Hells Angels and others have now been classified as outlaw motorcycle clubs (OMCs) because of their actions and involvement in criminal activities.³ Members of such motorcycles clubs, which are considered organized crime groups,⁴ can be identified by the distinctive clothing (i.e. “Colours”⁵) and patches they wear (i.e. 1% patch⁶), which clearly identify them as a member of an OMC.

The Issue

Last year, during a Remembrance Day Ceremony at a branch in Ontario, members of the Outlaws MC and Black Pistons MC⁷ attended the ceremony dressed in full patch colours. The members of these OMCs were Veterans who wore their service medals on their colours. They placed a wreath at the ceremony than attended the post ceremony functions inside the Legion branch. At the same ceremony, there were uniformed service members and RCMP in full dress uniform.

Following this incident, an inquiry was received both at Dominion Command and at the branch level as to the appropriateness of allowing OMC members wearing colours to participate in a Legion event. A meeting with members of the Criminal Intelligence Service Canada (CISC), the RCMP, Military Police, and local law

² <https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2018/03/09/members-of-canadian-military-banned-from-associating-with-outlaw-bikers.html>

³ <http://nationalpost.com/hells-angels-in-canada>

⁴ RCMP. Organized Crime, definition. <http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/fs-fd/org-eng.htm>

⁵ “Colours” refer both to the official emblem of the gang and a member’s sleeveless denim or leather jacket

⁶ A distinguishing mark between a riding club and an outlaw biker club is a “1%” inside a diamond patch.

⁷ <http://nationalpost.com/hells-angels-in-canada>

⁷ Both groups, Outlaws and Black Pistons MC, have been identified as 1% OMCs by CISC.

enforcement then took place to address concerns regarding OMCs and Street Gangs.

As a result of the meeting, the following was ascertained:

- Although the members of the Outlaws and Black Pistons MCs were veterans, it was clear that they were attempting to use the good image of the Legion and CAF to support a level of legitimacy for the group and acceptance.
- The wearing of OMC / street gang colours, while not illegal, serves to act as a level of intimidation in local communities.
- For service and law enforcement members, it is not advisable that they associate with known members of OMCs/street gangs as this could compromise their security.
- The policy of the CAF is clear: “to ensure that the CAF reflects the Canadian ideals of diversity, respect and inclusion, and that it provides a workplace free from harassment and discrimination, the following conduct is prohibited:
 - Participation in an activity of, or membership in, a group or organization that a CAF member knows, or ought to know, is connected with criminal activities, promotes hatred, violence, discrimination or harassment on the basis of a prohibited ground of discrimination as defined in the Canadian human rights act (CHRA). Prohibited activities include those related to groups that a CAF member knows, or ought to know, promote racism, sexism, misogyny, violence, xenophobia, homophobia, ableism and discriminatory views with respect to particular religions or faiths. If in doubt, CAF members are expected to seek guidance from their chain of

command as to whether the activity or the membership would contravene these rules.”⁸

- In many jurisdictions, there are laws *and understandings amongst local business leaders that prohibit the wearing of OMC colours and access to local businesses and certain public events.*
- CISC representatives have made themselves available for further support to the Legion when required.
- The Legion’s own Article of Faith state: Maintaining in and for Canada the rule of law - encouraging the national and united spirit - ordered government - and striving for peace, goodwill and friendship between Canadians and among all nations.⁹

The Solution

Clearly, associating with known members of an OMC / street gang does not easily coexist with the notion that our Veterans served and sacrificed to protect our way of life and our laws. **Nor does it comply with our own Articles of Faith.** Although some Veterans have become part of the OMC culture, it would be considered disrespectful to continue to permit those individuals, while dressed in OMC / Street Gang colours, to participate in Legion Events, such as Remembrance Day Ceremony, even though they want to honour their Comrades. It would not be considered disrespectful to participate if they refrained from wearing their colours *or other groups that support and promote ideologies that are contrary to the Article of Faith and to values of Canadian's.*

Therefore, the following policy statement is offered for consideration and dissemination across the Legion:

⁸ CANFORGEN 016/18 CMP 008/18 012210Z FEB 18 - CDS DIRECTION ON PROFESSIONAL MILITARY CONDUCT

⁹ General By-Laws RCL page vii.

RECOMMENDATION: It is recommended that the following policy be adopted by the Legion. The wearing of OMC / street gang colours not be permitted at Legion events and premises as this is contrary to the Legion's Articles of Faith and disrespectful of the sacrifices made by our Veterans.

The implementation of the policy will be a matter of communicating in our local communities that the practice of wearing OMC / street gang colours is unacceptable and persons wearing these colours will be asked to remove their colours, or invited to leave the event should they choose not to remove their colours. In considering the above, street gang colours *and other groups who promote similar ideologies* are considered to represent the same identification symbolism as does OMC colours.