



Calgary Police Discovery Centre Trip Report April 28 – May 1, 2026



Purpose of Visit

Mike Hesse and Denver Police Museum (DPM) Board members attended the North American Association of Law Enforcement Museums Conference in 2019 hosted by YouthLink Calgary Police Interpretive Centre. At that time the attendees were very impressed with their museum and determined it would be an ideal model for the DPM to replicate. Since that time their Police Chief and Executive Director have visited Denver to continue the relationship between the two Museums. Calgary held a 30th Anniversary Celebration and rebranding announcement on the evening of Thursday April 30th and invited members of the DPM to attend in recognition of that important relationship between the two organizations. In addition to attending the celebration, the hope was to gain more insight in to their model and give other Museum volunteers the opportunity to experience the museum in person as a proof of concept.

Attendees

Mike Hesse (President), April Overman (Treasurer and Youth Program Coordinator), Kenny Overman and Diane Degenhart (Volunteers)



Model

The primary focus of the Calgary Police Discovery Centre is youth engagement with law enforcement and crime reduction. The Calgary model does include some artifacts and historical items and stories as part of their model but that is a secondary emphasis. Denver has been building both their youth programs and artifact collections in preparation for a brick-and-mortar location.

Calgary is co-located with their police headquarters which allows for a large amount of collaboration between the two organizations. They are a line item on the Calgary police budget and have utilities and other routine expenses paid by the department. They also receive funding from their state government. At the celebration their State Public Safety Director presented the Centre with a check of \$1.4 million.

In addition to their Executive Director, Tara Robinson, they have 29 other staff including two full time female officers assigned to the Museum.

Youth Programs



They host youth programs focusing on crime prevention primarily for Grade 6 and 9 students. Programs are typically Monday – Thursday of each week with Friday/Saturday the two days the Discovery Centre is open to the public. There may be several programs going on each day and the students are bused in. In addition to the day programs, they also host a 4-day police school and 4- or 5-day summer camps. Everything is no cost to the families, except for the summer camps. Teachers must sign up in advance to visit the museum and programs include some advance work necessary to maximize their visit. Last year nearly 8,000 students visited the Centre to participate in their activities.

Cyber Safety

The Discovery Centre recently remodeled their cyber safety lab in recognition of the important role and potential danger cell phones and other technology plays in young citizens lives. There is a round area the students can sit around and the officer talks from the center. Topics include social media, bullying, healthy relationships cybersecurity and human trafficking. They are also host zoom presentations from that lab.



Forensics: Discover the Clues

The latest TV shows and community interest around law enforcement today revolves around forensics. From fingerprints and footwear impressions to blood spatter, hair and fiber, insects, skeletal analysis, and facial recognition, this is where evidence transforms into answers. Watch what appears under black light and see how science guides investigation. This is where you discover the science behind the scenes.



Gang membership and recruitment

A display with actual gang members and their current status (i.e. deceased, prison). Also, there is a jail cell that they can “lock” students in and show a video interview with an actual gang member.



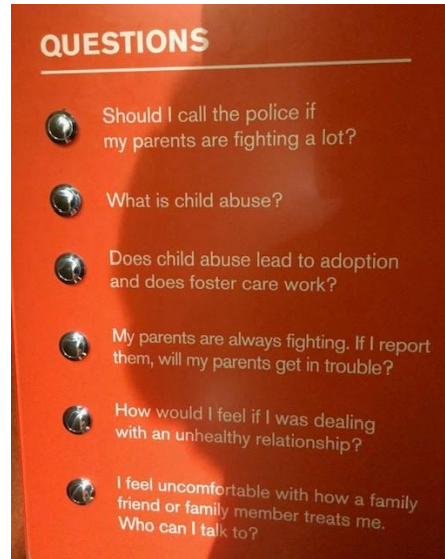
Drugs

This exhibit includes information about various types of drugs with pictures and what effect they can have on you. The purpose of this area is to educate young people about the harmful life long implications that can impact someone's life.



Lab space

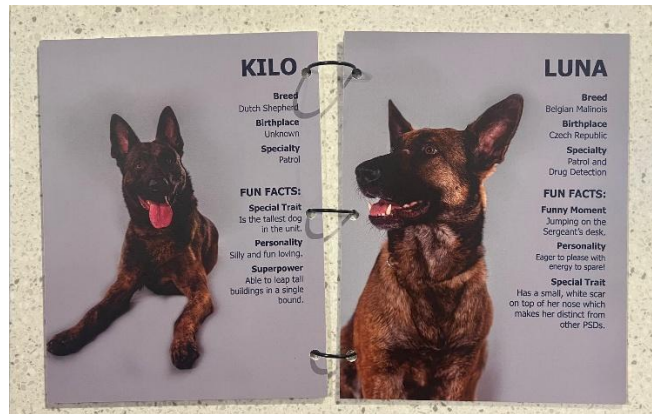
They deliberately don't call them classrooms. It is where parts of the youth programs are held. One of the newer programs is about Healthy Relationships.



Fallen officers

As you enter the Museum there is a smaller stone obelisk with the names of the twelve fallen officers and a book next to it with more detailed information on each officer.

K-9 Unit



Display highlights the role canines have played in Calgary Police History.

Collections

This area is on the second floor of the museum and is secure and climate-controlled. This space houses many of the historical artifacts of the Calgary Police Service. These items include old uniforms, badges, police equipment, guns and other official records and photos associated with the organization. Several professional museum trained individuals manage and catalogue these important artifacts. Some artifacts are displayed on the floor of the centre including old vehicles, communication equipment, etc. The artifacts provide an educational opportunity to see how technology has changed throughout history.





Funding of Centre

As noted earlier the Centre is a line item on the police budget approved by the City Council and Mayor of Calgary. They also receive funds from various foundations and private sector organizations throughout Canada, primarily from the province of Alberta.



Partnership/Conclusion

We continue to be very honored to work and learn with the leadership and staff from the Calgary Discovery Centre. We routinely share ideas and learn from their outstanding programs and partnerships. Former Calgary Police Chief Rick Hanson who served from 2007-2015 has been particularly helpful. He traveled to Denver in 2019 to meet with potential funders and Denver Police Leadership. In addition, Tara Robinson, Executive Director and former TV Anchor person has really provided much needed support and encouragement. During our trip to Calgary, we presented Former Chief Hanson and Tara Denver Police Museum challenge coins and an honorary 250/150 Denver Police badge.

