

## Dear police: keep posting racist remarks to highlight systemic issues

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### **APTN: National News**

Another day, another police officer allegedly posting racist remarks about Indigenous people online.

This time, it was in Thunder Bay where an officer is under investigation by the police service for his alleged posts.

On Monday, it was in Ottawa where police there are investigating one of their own.

For Christa Big Canoe she welcomes the posts in a way – they show how bad things really are and have been for years.

“I’m not surprised,” said Big Canoe, of Aboriginal Legal Services in Toronto. “It’s unfortunate but if they keep doing it, we keep being able to say ‘look, it’s not a bad apple it’s a systemic issue.’”

APTN National News alerted Thunder Bay police to the comments made allegedly through an officer’s Facebook page last week.

The comments were posted on a newspaper’s page regarding a letter to the editor by Nishnawbi Aski Nation Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler.

The Facebook account used by Rob Steudle stated on Sept. 17: “Give your head a shake Alvin Fiddler. I think it’s too foggy to see the truth.”

The Facebook posting then followed up with: “Natives are killing natives and it’s the white mans fault natives are drunk on the street and its white mans fault natives are homeless and its white mans fault and now natives are lying about how they are treated by white men an explanation is given and it’s the white men who are lying. Well let’s stop giving the natives money and see how that goes.”

Rob Steudle is a Thunder Bay police officer but it’s not confirmed he was the one who posted through his account.

Either way, Thunder Bay police say it's not acceptable and launched an investigation.

"It is alleged that these comments had the involvement of members of the Thunder Bay Police Service," police said. "These types of comments are not acceptable. They do not reflect the values of the Thunder Bay Police Service. We would like to apologize to our Indigenous community for the hurt these comments may cause."

This follows a similar case in Ottawa, but the comments were made around the same time involving a different matter.

Ottawa police said one of their members was under an investigation stemming from a complaint from the chief of police over "racist" online comments posted in response to a story about the death of Inuit artist Annie Pootoogook.

The comments were posted Saturday by Sgt. Chris Hrnchiar who used his personal Facebook to log into the Ottawa Citizen's comment section. Hrnchiar was responding to a story about the death of Pootoogook who was found submerged in the Rideau River on Sept. 19.

Pootoogook's death is being treated as suspicious by Ottawa police investigators.

The Office of the Independent Police Review Director (OIPRD) is conducting a review of the Thunder Bay police and how the force handles investigations into deaths of Indigenous people.

The city was the site of an inquest into the deaths of 7 First Nations students.

Five of the seven dead students were pulled from the city's rivers drowned.

Jethro Anderson and Jordan Wabasse, both 15, were found in the Kaministiquia river while Curran Strang, 18, Reggie Bushie, 15 and Kyle Morriseau, 17 were discovered in the McIntyre river.

Julian Falconer, the lawyer representing the Nishnawbe Aski Nation at the inquest told APTN in October 2015 that investigators, pathologists and toxicologists who worked on the cases between 2000 and 2011 focused on the "drunken Indian" scenario where alcohol was the root cause.

Click the link below to listen to the audio.

<http://aptn.ca/news/2016/09/30/dear-police-keep-posting-racist-remarks-to-highlight-systemic-issues/>

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