

One officer suspended, 4 reassigned in investigation of Facebook posts - Chronicle Journal: News

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Posted: Wednesday, October 5, 2016 3:06 pm | *Updated: 3:53 pm, Wed Oct 5, 2016.*

THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL | 38 comments

A Thunder Bay police officer has been suspended in connection with investigation of comments which appeared on The Chronicle-Journal's Facebook page regarding a letter to the editor by Nishnawbi Aski Nation Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler.

The primary comments are alleged to have been made from Const. Robert Steudle's personal Facebook account. Steudle has been suspended with pay. Four other officers have been assigned to administrative duties while allegations surrounding the Sept. 17 and 18 Facebook postings are examined.

Police did not name the other four but posts in the name of Jeff Saunders, another city constable, also appeared.

Chief J.P. Levesque has made a formal request to the Office of the Independent Police Review Director to take control of the investigation.

"This request was made to ensure public confidence and transparency in this process," a police statement says. "This step recognizes the compelling public interest in this matter."

Fiddler wrote a letter to the editor that was critical of police and the newspaper concerning a story about interaction between officers and a facilitator at a training session into awareness of aboriginal issues.

Facebook posts in Steudle's name, among others, were in turn critical of Fiddler.

"We recognize the issues of trust and respect that this matter raises in regard to our relationship with indigenous people," police said in the statement. "We will co-operate with the OIPRD's investigation to resolve this matter in the most efficient means possible."