

## Police bashing rhetoric has to stop - Chronicle Journal: Columns

### **Police bashing rhetoric has to stop**

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### **LETTER TO THE EDITOR | 9 comments**

*An open letter to Alvin Fiddler, Grand Chief, Nishnawbe Aski Nation.*

*This letter was prompted by one from Grand Chief Fiddler published here last week titled, No Justifying Police Conduct, but concerns wider issues.*

You don't know me. We have never met, never shaken hands, yet you have called me, a police officer, a "systemic racist."

I have to send this letter asking for anonymity, for fear of repercussions. This is an offer to work collectively, not a negative letter.

Mr. Fiddler, I don't know you or your family. I'm willing to find out, in hopes I can understand. Would you be willing to sit down and do the same with police officers?

All things being fair Mr. Fiddler, you don't know me either. Was my childhood hard? You have no clue. You don't know where I came from. I acknowledge the horrors your ancestors went through. I don't negate the travesties that occurred. It's horrible.

I ask you Mr. Fiddler, when do we move forward? Do you accept and understand the hills I climbed? At what point will fingers of blame stop being thrust? Blame solves nothing. Only positive action does.

Yes, I'm a police officer. Does that make me a "systemic racist"? I hope not. I was raised to respect everyone. I had friends of all races, religions. My upbringing was not easy.

I agree that I was born into the world with some unearned privileges such as my gender, race, class. I cannot change these privileges but I am willing to use this power to help others. This is why I have dedicated my career to helping make the community a better place for everyone. Will you allow me to walk alongside you? Don't you think that collectively we can accomplish much more?

I am not the "privileged" white child who thinks to be the only race in the world. Rather, I am a child taught respect by my parents — respect for all. No limitations. No exceptions.

But I am painted with the brush of racism. I've never been a racist, I work with brothers and sisters of many races, religions and colours in my police family.

Have I been hugged by the family of a young person who I talked out of committing suicide? Yes. Have I rendered life-saving first aid to stabbing victims

who would have died if I hadn't? Yes. Have I cried when I have had to notify a family of a senseless homicide where a child has died? Yes.

I see the person first. I treat every person I encounter with the utmost respect.

When I deal with children who spit on my feet because of the uniform I wear, I question where that comes from. I respect all people until I am given a reason to change my demeanor. Being spat on, having racial slurs thrown at me, hearing children being told that "the police are bad guys, don't talk to them," or "You are only arresting me because I'm native," being called "F-----g whitey" . . .

This police bashing rhetoric needs to stop as it only perpetuates the problem. Mr. Fiddler, I am not asking you to help the Thunder Bay Police to solve crimes. I am asking you, and high-priced lawyers from southern Ontario to step forward and help us prevent crimes. No more bashing. No more half-truths. As you so often say, these are your people. When will you come forward to help them? Not just the occasional jab in the media.

The inquest into missing and murdered indigenous women is a retroactive investigation. I am asking that you direct your energy away from pointing fingers at those you say are not doing their jobs.

Instead, come forward, acknowledge the problem exists, no matter where the problem stemmed from, and help.

I know that the Thunder Bay Police would much rather work on preventing homicides than solving them. Do you feel the same? So when will you come to the table? When will you spend a week or two riding with our officers? Or longer. As long as it takes? When will you see what gets dealt with on a daily basis? When will you look at changing a flawed system where band administrators receive money, and none gets to the grassroots level where it belongs?

Most importantly Mr. Fiddler, as the Grand Chief when will you work towards making it better for the people the so-called "systemic racists" deal with on a daily basis? Or is sticking your head in the sand, only to come out in the media, the way to operate?

As for me being a "systemic racist," put your paintbrush away. It is a gross generalization and it is very offensive.

Help us help the people you were elected to represent, not just fire off rhetorical media and Facebook posts.

Please do your job.

Thank you.

*Editor's note: The newspaper has agreed to withhold the writer's identity out of concern for potential impacts on employment.*