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## Terms of reference for Thunder Bay police review includes whether officers handled cases in 'discriminatory way'

National News (<http://aptn.ca/news/category/national-news/>) | November 3, 2016 by Mark Blackburn (<http://aptn.ca/news/author/mblackburn/>) | 0 Comments ([http://aptn.ca/news/2016/11/03/terms-of-reference-for-thunder-bay-police-review-includes-whether-officers-handled-cases-in-discriminatory-way/#disqus\\_thread](http://aptn.ca/news/2016/11/03/terms-of-reference-for-thunder-bay-police-review-includes-whether-officers-handled-cases-in-discriminatory-way/#disqus_thread))

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**APTN National News**

Ontario's independent police investigator will review nine different areas of how the Thunder Bay police examined the deaths of Indigenous peoples in the area including whether those cases were handled in a "discriminatory way."

"Alarming questions have been raised about the way the Thunder Bay Police Service investigates the disappearances and deaths of Indigenous people," said Gerry McNeilly, director of the office for police review in a statement released Thursday in Toronto.

The review was announced by McNeilly in September.

The other areas of the review will cover:

- Existing policies, practices and attitudes of the Thunder Bay police as they relate specifically to Indigenous missing persons and death investigations, and more generally, to issues around racism-free policing, such as "over-policing" and "under-policing".
- Whether missing persons and death investigations involving Indigenous peoples are conducted in discriminatory ways.
- The adequacy and effectiveness of existing policies and identified best practices relating to the above issues.
- The adequacy of training and education provided to supervisors and front-line officers relating to the above issues.
- The extent to which compliance with existing policies or identified best practices is monitored and supported.
- The extent to which officers are held accountable for non-compliance.
- The extent to which the service communicates with Indigenous family members, communities and their leaders, engages in community outreach or has specialized liaison units.
- The extent to which complaints about the service's interactions with Indigenous Peoples are inhibited by reprisals or fear of reprisals.
- Whether policies, practices, training, education, oversight and accountability mechanisms, and community outreach should be created, modified or enhanced to prevent discriminatory and ineffective policing, particularly in the context of investigations into the disappearances and deaths of Indigenous peoples.





(<http://aptn.ca/news/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2016/11/Gerry-McNeilly.jpg>)  
Gerry McNeilly, director of the office for police review in Ontario released 9 review points for Thunder Bay police Thursday.

"Indigenous leaders and community members say that these investigations, and other interactions with police, devalue Indigenous lives, reflect differential treatment and are based on racist attitudes and or stereotypical preconceptions about the Indigenous community.

"It is critical that these issues be independently examined through a systemic review, which would enable me to effectively address the issues and make meaningful recommendations for improvement," said McNeilly.

In October, the Thunder Bay police service made national news when it came to light that one of its officers allegedly posted racist comments to a local online news site via their facebook account.

After an inquiry by APTN about the comments, Thunder Bay police suspended Const. Robert Steudle and put four more were put on administrative duties over the issue.

Steudle is suspended with pay, as per the Police Services Act.

The Thunder Bay police service also came under heavy criticism for how it investigated seven First Nation teenagers who died in the city over a span of 10 years.

Five of the students drowned in local rivers. The cases were largely dismissed because officers believed alcohol was a factor in the deaths. But at a Coroner's inquest into the deaths and evidence suggested there was more to what the Thunder Bay police found including signs of a struggle. The inquest found that in the end, four of the deaths were undetermined, three were accidental.

Christa Big Canoe of Legal Services of Toronto represented six of the seven families at the inquest told APTN that's good for this review to take place. But it will be better if real change comes from it.

"I think we always try to be hopeful that the police are going to recognize and I think we kind of like to believe a wave of change as peoples knowledge increases but we still stand in a position of it's not good enough until we actually see realistic change," she said.

"Complaints being taken seriously regardless of race or sex or age and investigative practices of police have to be equal for everyone and there has to be a recognition of the high victimization of Aboriginal people and until all of that occurs and everyone's trained and actually implementing the policies that exist, it's not good enough, it's just not good enough, it's status quo."

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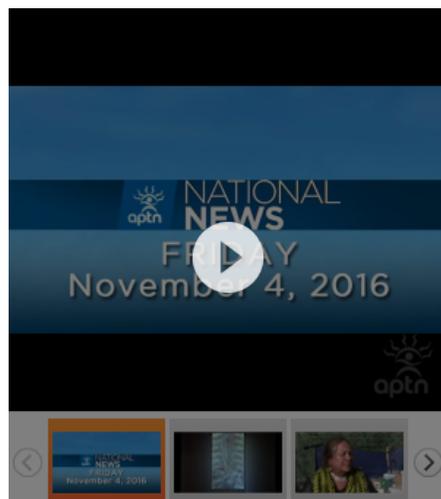
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