

Thunder Bay

Thunder Bay police board responds to systemic review by Ontario's police watchdog

'We're going to find out some things that we can improve on,' Jackie Dojack says

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Recommendations from Ontario's police watchdog regarding investigations of the disappearances and deaths of Indigenous people will be taken very seriously, says Thunder Bay Police Services Board chair Jackie Dojack, (left), seen here with incoming deputy chief Sylvie Hauth. (Thunder Bay Police Service)

The chair of the Thunder Bay Police Services Board says a sweeping review of the police service is an opportunity to learn.

Ontario's police watchdog — the Office of the Independent Police Review Director — is conducting a systemic review of the way the Thunder Bay police investigates the disappearances and deaths of Indigenous peoples.

It comes after complaints that Thunder Bay police "devalue Indigenous lives," according to a Nov. 3 news release from the agency.

"The board sees it as an opportunity to have an outside review done of the organization and we're going to find out some things that we can improve on," said police services board chair Jackie Dojack.

The five-person board is responsible for setting the objectives and priorities of the police service.

Board members are "all residents of Thunder Bay, so we really want to have a safe and inclusive community for all people in Thunder Bay," Dojack said.

The board met with the police review director last week and members will consider being interviewed individually, and attending community meetings organized as part of the review, Dojack said.

It's expected to be completed by spring, 2017.

"There will be recommendations and so we will take them very seriously," she said.

Meanwhile, Dojack said the board will discuss a letter from the Ontario Human Rights Commission in closed session, as part of its public meeting on Tuesday.

The letter asks the Thunder Bay Police Service and its board to publicly commit to a new human rights strategy.