

## **Thunder Bay police pledge 'organizational change' in letter to human rights commissioner**

**Police officials say the goal is improving relationships with the  
Indigenous community**

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Thunder Bay police say the service is committed to working with Ontario's human rights commissioner to affect change in the force. (Cathy Alex/CBC )

The Thunder Bay Police Service says it's vowing to make changes in the force with regard to human rights, and it wants Ontario's chief human rights commissioner to help guide its progress.

The service sent a letter to Renu Mandhane, the Chief Commissioner of the Ontario Human Rights Commission after a police services board

meeting on November 15. In it, Thunder Bay police stated it is "dedicated to improving our human rights and policing procedures and practices."

Thunder Bay police's letter to Ontario Human Rights Commission

**An October 27 letter from Mandhane** called on Thunder Bay police to take "proactive, immediate and independent steps," to combat allegations of racism and systemic discrimination within the force.

"We feel that with your assistance, we can take what we have done and build upon it to make it an effective project that will help us see the desired results," the letter, signed by Police Chief J.P. Levesque and services board chair Jackie Dojack read, adding that the service has pursued internal training and engaged senior staff about cultural awareness.

The correspondence finishes with a request that Mandhane call the chief's office to set up a date to meet about the police's efforts and how to move forward.

### **Police say details about the project to be made public in 2017**

In a written statement from Levesque and Dojack issued late Thursday morning, police confirmed that a "change project" is being developed to "address many of the key issues facing our organization," and that a human rights component will be a central piece.

Thunder Bay police expect to release more details about the project early in 2017, and added that it will also be informed by an upcoming review by Ontario's police oversight body.

"Our goal is to improve our relationships with the Indigenous community and increase our cultural competencies for all those we serve," the statement read.