
OIPRD to Review Thunder Bay Police Service Practices for Policing Indigenous Peoples

November 3, 2016

TORONTO – The Office of the Independent Police Review Director (OIPRD) is conducting a systemic review of the Thunder Bay Police Service’s practices for policing Indigenous Peoples, and specifically, their policies, practices and attitudes regarding missing person and death investigations involving Indigenous Peoples.

“Alarming questions have been raised about the way the Thunder Bay Police Service investigates the disappearances and deaths of Indigenous people. 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.”

— Gerry McNeilly, Independent Police Review Director

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The systemic review will examine the following:

- Existing policies, practices and attitudes of the Thunder Bay Police Service 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

The systemic review will consult and meet with Indigenous leaders and communities. It will also be informed by the findings and recommendations of the coroner's jury arising out of the deaths of seven Indigenous youths; by the findings of an ongoing OIPRD conduct investigation into the Thunder Bay Police Service's handling of an investigation into the death of Stacey DeBungee; and by the findings of an ongoing OIPRD investigation into allegations of racist comments posted on the Internet by Thunder Bay Police officers. It will be informed by, and if requested, share its systemic work with the ongoing National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS INVITED

The OIPRD invites written submissions from individuals and organizations with expertise and interest in the issues and topics that fall within the Terms of Reference for the systemic review. Submissions should include the name of the organization or person delivering the submission, along with reasons for their interest in the issues of the OIPRD's systemic review of the Thunder Bay Police Service's practices for policing Indigenous Peoples. The OIPRD requests written submissions by January 31, 2017. Submissions may be emailed to OIPRD@ontario.ca or mailed to:

Office of the Independent Police Review Director
Thunder Bay Police Service Practices for Policing Indigenous Peoples Systemic Review
655 Bay Street, 10th Floor
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 2T4

OIPRD FACTS

- The OIPRD receives, manages and oversees all public complaints about Ontario's municipal, regional and provincial police.
- The OIPRD is an independent arm's length agency of the Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General.
- The Police Services Act gives the Independent Police Review Director the power to conduct systemic reviews. A systemic review examines the systems – policies, procedures and practices – and the root causes that promote or perpetuate systemic issues within a police service. The purpose of a systemic review is not to assign individual fault, but to determine whether systemic failings have occurred and to identify issues to be addressed in order to make recommendations to enhance public confidence in policing.