

OPP refutes claim it refused to probe Stacy DeBungee's death

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OPP

THUNDER BAY An allegation by a First Nations leader that Ontario Provincial Police refused to independently investigate the death of Stacy DeBungee in Thunder Bay has been contradicted by the OPP.

The claim was made last week at a news conference in Toronto by Treaty 3 Grand Chief Francis Kavanaugh, who along with other First Nations leaders called for RCMP to take over investigations into DeBungee's death and the more recent deaths of two indigenous youths.

Forty-one-year-old DeBungee's body was found in the McIntyre River in October 2015. The Thunder Bay Police Service issued a news release the next day deeming his death to be non-criminal in nature, before a post-mortem was conducted.

The man's family hired a private investigator to look into his death, saying Thunder Bay Police had treated them disrespectfully in response to requests for information. Ontario's Office of the Independent Police Review Director subsequently stepped in to look into how TBPS handled the case, now part of its ongoing systemic review of the city's police force.

But in a news release on Monday afternoon, OPP Commissioner Vince Hawkes said that the OPP "in fact recently completed a review of the investigation relating to the death of Stacy DeBungee referred to OPP by the Chief of Thunder Bay Police Service. The report has been provided to the Thunder Bay Police Service."

The statement went on to say that when OPP are requested by another police service or an agency such as the OIPRD to conduct an investigation, the final report is provided to the requesting agency, and it is up to that agency or its leadership to determine whether to make the results public.

Hawkes clarified, however, that if during the course of such an investigation it is determined that criminal charges are warranted, the OPP would lay those charges.

The commissioner said the OPP has not received a request from the TBPS to investigate the two recent deaths of 17-year-old Tammy Keeash and 14-year-old Josiah Begg. Both disappeared on May 6 and were subsequently found dead in local waterways.

Hawkes said he was releasing the statement in order "to clarify the role and responsibilities of the OPP with regard to investigations outside of its jurisdiction...to address inferences" made at the Toronto news conference on May 31, and to correct the record.

The news release also detailed the provincial police service's efforts to work with Indigenous leaders and communities in combating violent crime, with the commissioner concluding that "Ontarians can be confident in the OPP and our ability to conduct professional investigations and bring those responsible to justice."

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**Charlene Youmans** · Business College Thunder Bay

What is meant by serial killers now there are more then one running around Thunder Bay and if they were killed by a serial killer or killers do you not think that the police would say that there was foul play involved. it is their duty to announce to the public that they believe there are killer or killers involved in these unfortunate deaths. And if they are running about I am sure that they would be targeting more then just natives. I am truly sorry that these two young people were found deceased but in all reality I do not think that this is the work of serial killers. But then on the other... [See More](#)

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**Peradice Bebaamaash** · Anishinaabe Language Teacher and Adult Education. at M'Chigeeng First Nation

What a bunch of garbage the all those police agencies, there are serial killers laughing around Thunder Bay and not a dam thing being done, that is Canada's image.

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**Harold Bruce Woodbeck** · Thunder Bay, Ontario

Treaty 3 boundary does not include Thunder Bay. Are these Treaty 3 individuals?

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