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Officer linked to Facebook posting charged with discreditable conduct

Charge is connected to comments about Indigenous people

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THUNDER BAY -- A Thunder Bay Police officer who was suspended with pay after racist comments were allegedly made on Facebook last year has been charged with discreditable conduct under the Ontario Police Services Act.

Constable Rob Steudle's case is scheduled to start Friday, November 3 with a first appearance.

The charge follows an investigation conducted at the request of Police Chief JP Levesque by the Office of the Independent Police Review Director.

The Thunder Bay Police Service announced in October, 2016 that Levesque had made the request after Steudle was suspended with pay and four other members of the force were reassigned to administrative duties.

The online remarks attributed to Steudle were ostensibly in reaction to a letter to the editor sent to the *Chronicle Journal* by Nishnawbe Aski Nation Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler accusing the newspaper of attempting to justify the actions of officers who were accused of verbally abusing a female trainer during an anti-racism seminar.

The Facebook post said "Natives are killing natives and it's the white man's fault. Natives are drunk on the street and it's the white man's fault," and went on to accuse the trainer of lying about how she was treated. The author added "Let's stop giving Natives money and see how that goes."

Steudle was initially suspended on September 30, 2016 but was taken off suspension the week of December 12, 2016. A Thunder Bay police spokesperson was unable to confirm on Tuesday whether or not the officer has been performing administrative duties since then.

Steudle was served notice of the charge on October 18, 2017, following completion of the OIPRD investigation.