



# Rainy River First Nations

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## BACKGROUND

### OIPRD RELEASES SYSTEMIC REVIEW OF THUNDER BAY POLICE SERVICE

**THUNDER BAY, ON (DECEMBER 12, 2018)** – Today, the Office of the Independent Police Review Director (“OIPRD”) released the findings of its Systemic Review of the Thunder Bay Police Service (“TBPS”). The Systemic Review was announced in November 2016 following a formal complaint by Brad DeBungee and former Rainy River First Nations Chief, Jim Leonard, alleging systemic racism in the way that Thunder Bay police officers handle the deaths and disappearances of Indigenous people.

The OIPRD’s Systemic Review process involved reviewing nearly forty (40) TBPS sudden death investigations involving Indigenous men and women, as well as numerous interviews and meetings with Indigenous community members and organizations, civilians, government officials and police officers. The result is a comprehensive 200-page report that unequivocally finds systemic racism exists within the TBPS at an institutional level.

The Systemic Review found that TBPS investigators failed on an unacceptably high number of occasions to treat or protect a deceased individual and his or her family equally because the deceased was Indigenous. The OIPRD also found that the failure to conduct adequate investigations and the premature conclusions drawn in these cases is, at least in part, attributable to racist attitudes and racial stereotyping among TBPS officers. Officers were found to have repeatedly relied on generalized notions about how Indigenous people likely came to their deaths, and acted, or refrained from acting, based on those assumptions and biases. Acting on those biases, officers were found to have failed to take even the most basic investigative steps in a number of sudden death cases. Overall, the evidence before the OIPRD, including input from some former and current TBPS officers, overwhelmingly supported the existence of racism and the need for fundamental remedial action in TBPS.

The findings of the Systemic Review echo many of the concerning findings of the OIPRD Investigative Report into the TBPS’ investigation into the death of Stacy DeBungee released in February 2018.

The Systemic Review includes 44 recommendations to address the issues identified by the Director. Rainy River First Nations calls upon TBPS and the TBPS board to ensure these recommendations are implemented fully, and promptly. Rainy River First Nations thanks the OIPRD for carrying out this critical investigation and supports the full implementation of the recommendations outlined in the findings. It is of utmost importance that this Systemic Review is the catalyst for meaningful change in the way Indigenous people are treated by the Thunder Bay Police Service.