

# A DAY IN THE LIFE OF THE IIO



This section offers a look into what happens when a police agency notifies the IIO that there has been a police-involved incident that may meet the criteria of their mandate.



## THE CALL COMES IN

No matter when a call comes in to the IIO, there is someone there to answer it. A Team Director or a delegate takes the call, whether it is 4 p.m. or 4 a.m. Every day of the year, the call will be answered.

The Team Director makes the assessment of whether the incident meets the criteria of the IIO's mandate.



When it is clear that there is no connection between any action of a police officer and the injuries sustained by an affected person (AP), and no or minimal investigative work is performed by the IIO, the notification is assigned a file number and it is closed. It is considered to be an advice file.



If there is the possibility that the notification meets the IIO's mandate, the Team Director immediately reviews the initial information provided and makes sure that the evidence is secured and preserved. The Team Director then determines the appropriate response for deployment and identifies the required resources. The Chief Civilian Director (CCD) and the Chief of Investigations are informed of the situation. The Media and Communications Liaison is also involved, when appropriate.

At this point, the CCD determines if the information available meets the IIO's threshold for investigation. In the event that the injury or circumstances clearly do not meet the IIO's mandate to investigate, the file will

be concluded at this stage. However, if they meet or appear likely to meet the threshold to investigate, the CCD authorizes the investigation to continue.

A media release is developed by the Media and Communications Liaison, if and when directed by the CCD. Once the release has been reviewed and approved internally, the Media and Communications Liaison will connect with the media officers of the relevant police agency to confirm that the facts in the media release are accurate. Said Rebecca Whalen, Media and Communications Liaison for the IIO: "Accuracy is crucial in the media release. It has to be accurate, factual and only provide verified information. There can be no assumptions reflected in the tone or language of the news release."

The media release is published on the IIO's website ([iiobc.ca](http://iiobc.ca)) and is linked on the IIO's Facebook and Twitter pages. The IIO's information bulletins often coincide with a news release that is distributed by the police agency.

"Keeping the people of B.C. informed about the work that we do is a priority for the IIO. We have a commitment to being as transparent as possible, given that we often deal with highly confidential information. We know that it is crucial to keep the public informed and to provide timely, relevant and useful updates on the work that we do. We have established a measure of trust with the public and police agencies throughout the province because we are independent, unbiased and our only investigative objective is the truth."

– Rebecca Whalen, Media and Communications Liaison

## OUR BAGS ARE PACKED

The investigators at the IIO bring a wide range of experience and expertise to their role at the organization. This includes police agencies, military intelligence, first responders, private and commercial investigators and more.

The decision of when and who to deploy to an incident is made by the Chief of Investigations, Operations, with input from the on-call Team Director and the investigators already working on the file.

Investigations that are complex may involve several investigators from the IIO's three investigative teams. The forensic and support services team may also be involved. Complex cases may require ongoing resources over a longer period of time.

The investigations team can be deployed anywhere in the province at a moment's notice. Depending on the location, they may need to be away from home for days or weeks at a time.



**"We investigate incidents all over British Columbia, working with a wide variety of people. My goal for each investigation is to make sure that all involved parties feel heard, seen and respected."**

*– Jacqueline Breton, Investigator*

## ASSIGNING THE TEAM

The Team Director assigns a Primary Investigator and a File Co-ordinator to each investigation. Additional investigators and team members may also be assigned, depending on the file.

The Primary Investigator engages with the local police agency that is involved in the incident, as well as with other relevant agencies, regarding the management of exhibits and concurrent investigations into the situation.

At the IIO office, Investigative Assistants start an electronic file and begin recording all elements of the investigation including tasks, actions and managing file documentation.

An Affected Persons Liaison (APL) is also assigned to the investigation. The APL communicates with and supports the affected person(s) and/or their family. This support includes providing the AP and/or their family with updates on the investigation process and status, answering questions, and helping to connect

the AP with community resources. It can also include reaching out to health care providers to request medical records and other information.



**"We continue to build and maintain strong working relationships with community members, police agencies, members of the broader justice system and B.C.'s Indigenous communities. That is – and always will be – a priority for the IIO."**

*– Crystal Robinson, Affected Persons Liaison*

## GATHERING EVIDENCE

When the investigative team is working on a file – no matter where they are in the province – there is ongoing oversight of the investigation by the CCD; the Chief of Investigations, Operations; and the IIO’s General Counsel. This occurs from the start of the investigation through to the file being closed and reported out to the public.

When an incident meets the IIO’s mandate, the IIO takes over jurisdiction of the investigation into the actions of the officer(s) from local law enforcement. Relevant exhibits are seized, processed and preserved according to best practices. Potential witnesses are also identified. This is done to maintain the integrity of an independent investigation. This is crucial in every investigation, and even more so when there is a police officer involved.

During the investigation, any special resources that are required to address specific aspects of the work that the IIO does are identified. This includes specialized forensic skills, such as digital research and the review of cell phones, video and other elements from ballistics to forensic autopsies. The IIO has the capacity to perform some of these tasks internally and uses external experts for other needs.

The police officers, the AP and witnesses who were on the scene when the incident occurred are interviewed. The IIO investigative team submits requests for third-party records at this time. These requests for information could include medical records, toxicology lab reports, ballistic details and more.



“The entire IIO team is committed to doing their best on behalf of the people of British Columbia to achieve a sound, defensible, unbiased, independent investigation. We find the truth of an event, regardless of what that looks like.”

– Trent Rolfe, Director Team 1



The IIO team processes the evidence as they move through the investigation. This could include closed circuit television (CCTV) and other video evidence, in addition to scene analysis data and an examination of medical and autopsy reports. IIO investigators work continuously to identify additional evidentiary sources to determine the facts of what happened.

Extensive work goes on behind the scenes during an investigation. This includes briefings, meetings and file reviews. All of this is done to ensure accuracy and to facilitate the sharing of relevant and timely information between team members and other stakeholders. During the investigation, a consistent review is undertaken to identify whether additional resources are needed.

The CCD is actively involved throughout the process and receives regular updates from the IIO investigative team.

“The IIO provides the people of this province with insight into the work of police through the lens of unbiased investigations. Having this insight from an independent agency ensures that law enforcement agencies are held to the highest standards. In the majority of cases, it serves to confirm and promote confidence in the work that the police do to serve and protect the public.”

– Frida Tromans, Investigator

## WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The next steps in any investigation depend on how the investigative process moves forward for the file. If enough evidence has been gathered that determines that the injury does not meet the threshold or that there is no connection between the injury or death and the actions or inaction of the police, the CCD will make a determination to close the investigation.



“The IIO brings transparent oversight into policing, especially when a person is severely injured or killed. The IIO allows the public to feel confident that the investigations are conducted without bias.”

– Aubrina Culp, Affected Persons Liaison

If more investigation is needed, the team continues to move forward with interviews and gathering documents from third parties – such as hospitals, doctors or laboratories – and evaluating evidence. They continue to meet regularly, holding briefings and file reviews throughout the process.

## CONCLUDING AN INVESTIGATION

When all relevant witnesses have been interviewed, all information has been gathered, and all other required investigative avenues have been exhausted, the CCD determines whether enough evidence has been gathered to make a decision.

Based on the evidence, the CCD will conclude a file in one of three ways: via a public report, without a public report, or with a referral to Crown Counsel for consideration of charges. Concluding an investigation with or without a public report indicates that the CCD found that no officer committed an offence in the execution of their duties. On the other hand, if the CCD finds that reasonable grounds exist to believe that an officer may have committed an offence, the matter is referred to Crown Counsel who will make the decision of whether charges will be approved.

When the CCD has made a decision, the investigative team continues to move forward with the tasks that are required at this stage of the process. This could be administrative work, preparing a public report, liaison with the agency of jurisdiction or other agencies involved, and returning evidence.

The electronic file of the investigation continues to be updated and formally processed to perform quality control. This includes ongoing preparation for disclosure until the file is closed. If required, the investigative team prepares the disclosure for submission to Crown Counsel.

In cases where a death has occurred, the BC Coroners Service will conduct an inquest into the death. The IIO file will be disclosed, and the coroner and an investigator may be required to give evidence at the inquest.

At the conclusion of the process, the Media and Communications Liaison issues any required media releases and the public report, if one is being released. The media release and public report would be made available on the IIO's website, Facebook and Twitter pages.

