

June 30, 2022

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Chief Civilian Director
Independent Investigations Office

Civilian Monitor Report to the Chief Civilian Director - IIO File 2021-046

I started at the Independent Investigations Office on June 13th to 17th for my first week as Civilian Monitor. The second week was June 27th to June 30th. I knew I was going to review files but didn't know the extent of my role and didn't know what to expect. Not knowing came to rest the day I started.

Methodology

At the start, I didn't know fully what the Civilian Monitor role entailed, but I had reviewed the contract and Terms of Reference. I didn't know any details of the file; I only knew of the shooting. I didn't know of the 911 call. As I got through the file, the picture got clearer. The Director SPE and the Primary Investigator talked to me about my role and provided me the details I needed to understand. Reviewing the file settled me in and got me comfortable.

At the start of the week, I was given a laptop with all the files. Once I had that, I was able to understand and adapt to the work. The Primary Investigator was very helpful to me in navigating through the statements of the witness officers and civilian witnesses, as well as the 911 call, scene photos, exhibits, and forensic evidence. There were photographs and videos and recorded statements provided. I reviewed the house and lighting layout, the gun magazines, the autopsy and toxicology reports.

I learned a lot of the details of each account and was able to visualize second by second details. The IIO investigation gave me excellent details, in terms of house layout, lighting, where each person was, how many people in the house, the 911 call, and the responding officers (only one was trained CEW operator - an area for possible training?). I visualised the frame-by-frame moments. I asked myself questions while reviewing, like "was there any lights on in the room?", or "what was each person doing at the time?".

I reviewed the 3D scan of the scene and thought it was a really impressive format explaining the location of things in the house. I also looked at the house plan and with my carpentry background I understood the layout of the house.

I asked for further explanation regarding taser equipment from the IIO taser expert, regarding the range and technical operations. He explained the use and limitations of taser weapons.

I spoke with the lead Forensic Investigator. I asked questions about magazines and how many bullets they held, and we discussed related topics such as gunshots. He was very thorough in his investigation.

I discussed with the Primary Investigator, the RCMP members threat level when they would feel they need to shoot at someone. He explained that the room was dark, the RCMP had seen the AP was carrying something that they thought looked like knives, and there was not much space between the AP and the RCMP officers, I agreed with this based on my independent review of the file. The Primary

Investigator was my main contact throughout my time at the IIO, and The Director, SPE assisted me throughout the file review as well.

During the second week I looked at the autopsy evidence and it showed the bullet direction and also the one CEW probe was clearly defined which was consistent with the other evidence I had seen.

Nothing was withheld from me. Everything was thoroughly explained and made accessible to me. If I had a question, The Primary Investigator would find the answer for me. I met others during the pancake breakfast and pizza lunch events.

Integrity of the investigation

Listening to and viewing audio and video statements, etc., helped me understand that these details are part of the whole job - understanding the details. The 911 call shows that the safety and wellbeing of the caller starts the process of how the RCMP will respond. They receive the call, they had previous experience with the caller, and with the situation at hand they cannot leave. At that point things escalate.

I looked into the details of the recollections of the witnesses and saw their interviews. The investigators didn't rely on just one recollection, they re-interviewed to clarify. Everything was broken down to make it clear. The interviewers made the witnesses feel more comfortable with answering questions. I think it was well done for me to understand, and the witnesses to understand. It helped me process the information from the alleged rape to the shooting.

I do not think there were any investigation steps not covered by IIO.

Recommendations:

I have no recommendations for the integrity of the investigation; the investigation was carried out with excellent procedure. I do not see that anyone else needs to be spoken to in order to complete this file. The interviews and evidence collected were fulsome. I am content with the way the IIO conducted the investigation.

Comments:

I learned about the emotions of the RCMP members. The stereotypes that the community has is that the RCMP officers are hard-nosed and non-emotional. Not all are this way. The officer interviewed on this file broke down during his interview – they are people, too. Our Nation needs to have more awareness of when cultural healing circles should happen for individuals or group sessions. Cultural healing is necessary for the alleged rape victim and the family involved with the shooting victim. More safe homes should be established for victims of rape. There is a communication gap between the medical team and RCMP. RCMP made a call for ambulance, but it was only accessible by boat. The only person that could get them across was the coast guard and the coast guard thought there were safety issues involved. RCMP's job is to make sure the scene is safe for ambulance workers, and they were waiting for the medical help. The medical staff were cancelled 1 hour after the initial call after the coast guard failed to provide transportation.

As part of the autopsy report, I read the AP had a history of mental health challenges. I am not sure our health workers knew this. This is one of the things we can make aware for our Nation: understanding

the communication gap between mental health workers and members who need assistance. As a preventative measure, individual mental health concerns should be shared with the community for awareness and assistance with monitoring. Our health workers need to communicate better.

From everything I've seen in the evidence and been told through the Primary Investigator and the IIO Forensic Investigator, everything was excellent in how they interacted with members of the community. The IIO investigators were friendly but neutral and weren't on either side: the RCMP's or the family's. Looking back and understanding what IIO does, everything was clarified.

I have nothing to suggest the IIO could do better in interacting with the community, everything was thoroughly done.

At the time of the shooting, I was an elected Council leader, and emergency member who dealt with all the safety procedures for our community (two communities on Meares Island). When we heard about the shooting, it was in the midst of high-volume in media due to the previous two shootings of our members (NB and Ucluelet). Members had questions, but I couldn't give answers.

Involvement of RCMP in communities is critically important. City life and small community life is very different. Being in the small community, you know everybody. You know how people react; you know who is involved in cultural activities. Frequent RCMP transfers leave a small window of gaining knowledge of cultural activities. Local cultural knowledge is important – local to the area you are working in.

The IIO understanding is important as well. Not all cultures are the same. The wisdom and knowledge of culture comes from Elders. This is a crucial part in understanding the hierarchy of each Nation. IIO's source of contact for First Nations can be an elder, tribal administrator and/or elder council.

I haven't spoken to anyone in the community or sought information elsewhere than from the IIO. I don't think anyone knows about my job other than the tribal administrator and the newly elected elder council and elected chief. They know about the job, but not the details of what the job is. My traditional/ cultural role is Wiit-waak – a high role in hierarchy to create a calmness in the community, with responsibility to remove the elected Chief, if required, and mediate large family arguments.

Conclusion:

Overall, I think the roles and responsibilities of the IIO were handled very clearly on the investigation. I think the investigation brings awareness to the public - they are neutral and are not trying to point fingers. The thoroughness of the investigation is front-and-centre of their job. The impact of every investigation is different, but the detail of the investigation is important to make sure everything is followed by rule of thumb.

Signed,

Thomas George,
Civilian Monitor
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