



**IN THE MATTER OF THE SERIOUS HARM OF A WOMAN
WHILE BEING APPREHENDED BY MEMBERS OF THE
RCMP IN
NANAIMO, BRITISH COLUMBIA
ON FEBRUARY 2, 2026**

**DECISION OF THE CHIEF CIVILIAN DIRECTOR
OF THE INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATIONS OFFICE**

Chief Civilian Director:

Jessica Berglund

IIO File Number:

2026-031

Date of Release:

October 8, 2026

This report details situations that may be distressing to some readers. If you are in crisis, help is available:

- Call 310-6789 to be connected to the crisis centre nearest you (no area code required)
- Crisis Services Canada: crisisservicescanada.ca
- British Columbia: crisislines.bc.ca
- Vancouver and surrounding areas: crisiscentre.bc.ca
- Vancouver Island: vicrisis.ca
- VictimLinkBC: 1-800-563-0808

INTRODUCTION

On the evening of February 2, 2026, RCMP officers responded to a complaint of an intoxicated person (the Affected Person or “AP”) outside a treatment centre in Nanaimo. The AP was arrested and brought to cells. The AP cut her wrist with a blade inside the back of a police vehicle. The injuries required surgery to repair, so the Independent Investigations Office (“IIO”) was notified and commenced an investigation.

The narrative that follows is based on evidence collected and analyzed during the investigation, including the following:

- statements of four witness officers;
- police Watchguard video from RCMP vehicle;
- CCTV footage from RCMP cells;
- police Computer-Aided Dispatch (“CAD”) and Police Records Information Management Environment (“PRIME”) records;
- radio transmissions;
- 911 calls;
- RCMP policies; and
- medical records of the AP.

The IIO does not require officers whose actions are the subject of an investigation to provide evidence. In this case, the Subject Officer did not provide evidence to the IIO.

NARRATIVE

On February 2, 2026 at 12:56 p.m., the RCMP received a call for service from an addiction and mental treatment centre (the “treatment centre”) in Nanaimo. A staff member (Civilian Witness 1 or “CW1”) reported that the Affected Person (“AP”) was damaging property and had assaulted staff.

Witness Officer 1 (“WO1”) and Witness Officer 2 (“WO2”) were dispatched to the call. When they got to the treatment centre, they found that the AP had left. Officers located the AP at a nearby pub, and drove her back to the treatment centre with the permission of the staff.

At 5:35 p.m., a different staff member from the treatment centre (Civilian Witness 2 or “CW2”) called the RCMP and reported that the AP was very intoxicated and falling down. CW2 said that the AP was not violent, but that the AP could no longer remain at the treatment centre. CW2 said that the AP would be better in the “drunk tank.” (The “drunk tank” is a reference to the place in cells where police hold intoxicated prisoners.)

The Subject Officer (“SO”) attended the treatment centre and arrested the AP. The SO placed the AP into the police vehicle and transported her back to the RCMP detachment. It is not clear from the evidence available whether or not the SO searched the AP prior to placing her in the vehicle.

The SO arrived to the Nanaimo RCMP detachment vehicle entrance bay at 6:26 p.m. CCTV recordings from the entrance bay area show that the SO got out of her vehicle and left the AP temporarily unattended in the rear of the police vehicle while she went inside the jail cell area. Approximately 11 minutes later, the SO returned to the police vehicle to bring the AP in. Upon opening the rear door, the SO discovered that the AP had cut her wrist and was bleeding.

More officers attended the entrance bay area and first aid was provided to the AP. Emergency Health Services (“EHS”) arrived and the AP was transported to hospital for treatment. The AP required surgery to repair the cut to her wrist.

The police vehicle was searched and a small blade was located inside the AP’s purse, which the AP had with her in the rear of the police vehicle.

IIO investigators made several attempts to interview the AP, but the AP said that she “blacked out” and does not remember the incident.

A senior RCMP officer (Witness Officer 3 or “WO3”) was interviewed regarding RCMP policy and procedures as it relates to arrest, search and transport of prisoners. WO3 said that it was best practice to handcuff a prisoner for transport, but the determination as to whether or not to handcuff a prisoner is done on a case-by-case basis. The practice of searching prisoners prior to transporting them also varies amongst officers and the individual circumstances of each case.

Policies were also gathered by IIO investigators. The RCMP Policy regarding searching states:

Personal Searches – OM ch 21.2

1. General

...

1.2 All prisoners must be thoroughly searched.

1.3 All persons in RCMP custody must be searched by a member/guard/matron before being placed in cells.

1.4 Members must consider the totality of the circumstances and their risk assessment when determining the scope of the search.

ANALYSIS

The Independent Investigations Office of British Columbia is mandated to investigate any incident that occurs in the province in which an Affected Person has died or suffered serious physical harm and there appears to be a connection to the actions (or sometimes inaction) of police. The goal is to provide assurance to the public that when the investigation is complete, they can trust the IIO’s conclusions, because the investigation was conducted by an independent, unbiased, civilian-led agency.

In most cases, those conclusions are presented in a public report such as this one, which completes the IIO’s mandate by explaining to the public what happened in the incident and how the Affected Person came to suffer harm. Such reports are generally intended to enhance public confidence in the police and in the justice system as a whole through a transparent and impartial evaluation of the incident and the police role in it.

In a smaller number of cases, the evidence gathered may give the Chief Civilian Director (“CCD”) reasonable grounds to believe that an officer may have committed an offence in

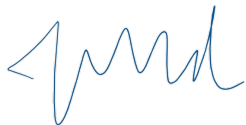
connection with the incident. In such a case, the *Police Act* gives the CCD authority to refer the file to the BC Prosecution Service (“BCPS”) for consideration of charges.

The SO was acting lawfully when she arrested the AP. The AP was intoxicated and no longer welcome at the treatment centre. Police had a duty to act in response to CW2’s complaint, and it was recognized that the AP needed to be in a safe place given her state of intoxication. Safety was not available at the treatment centre, nor was it safe to leave the AP on the street.

In a case such as this one, the IIO investigation gathered evidence about whether the SO met the relevant standard of care of a reasonable police officer, due to the fact that the AP injured herself in police custody. In order to constitute an offence, the actions of the SO would have to fail to meet the required standard of care in a marked and substantial way, such that the SO showed a wanton and reckless disregard for human life.

In this case, the AP harmed herself while she was in the back of a police car, and before she was brought into the jail cell. The AP was able to harm herself because she was not handcuffed and had access to a blade. Evidence gathered indicated that the practice among RCMP officers related to handcuffing and searching prisoners before they are transported varies, and is dependent upon the circumstances of each situation. There is no RCMP policy in place that required the SO to either handcuff or search the AP prior to transporting her to cells. Instead, the policy requires a thorough search upon arrival at cells. The SO did not depart from the standard of care of a reasonable police officer. It is unfortunate that the AP harmed herself in this case.

Accordingly, as Chief Civilian Director of the IIO, I do not consider that there are reasonable grounds to believe that an officer may have committed an offence under any enactment and the matter will not be referred to the BCPS for consideration of charges.



Jessica Berglund
Chief Civilian Director

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