



Royal Canadian Mounted Police Gendarmerie royale
du Canada

Commanding Officer Commandant divisionnaire

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May 29, 2024

Chief Coroner
Saskatchewan Coroners Service
Ministry of Justice and Attorney General
1050 – 2010 12th Avenue
Regina, SK. S4P 0M3

Chief Coroner;

RE: Inquest into the deaths at James Smith Cree Nation and Weldon

On January 15-31, 2024, an inquest respecting the deaths at James Smith Cree Nation and Weldon was conducted in Melfort, Saskatchewan. Upon conclusion of the inquest, the jury had fifteen findings of which three were directed to the RCMP. The Inquest Coroner had eight additional recommendations for the RCMP.

Please find attached “Appendix A” which provides the RCMP’s response to each finding and recommendation.

Regards,

Assistant Commissioner Rhonda Blackmore
Commanding Officer “F” Division

Encl.

Appendix A

RCMP response to the recommendations from the Coroner's Inquest respecting the deaths at James Smith Cree Nation (JSCN) and Weldon.

Jury Recommendations

The following recommendations are directed to the RCMP:

1. Any photo of an individual on a police database or police access tool must display the date of the photo in a prominent way.

The RCMP agrees with this recommendation. This will be addressed through the implementation of a standardized process throughout the division which will ensure all subject photographs obtained pursuant to Section 2 of the Identification of Criminals Act are uploaded to both the Police Records Occurrence System (PROS) and the Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC). The photographs will contain an identifying occurrence number, the detachment responsible for obtaining the photograph and the date the photograph was obtained. These photographs will be viewable upon conducting a subject query utilizing the PROS, CPIC or Police Access Tool (PAT) applications.

2. It is mandatory to provide more resources to specialized RCMP teams, such as the drug enforcement team, to dedicate more services to apprehending individuals involved in the trafficking of drugs.

The RCMP agrees with this recommendation and understands the importance and effectiveness of these specialized teams. The division is undertaking significant efforts to increase the resources available to frontline policing, including specialized teams. The apprehension of individuals involved in drug trafficking continues to be one of division's highest priorities, and specialized teams in the Saskatchewan Enforcement Response Team (SERT) are essential to this.

As a result of human resource pressures, SERT currently manages a 30% vacancy rate among Regular Member (RM) positions. The division is in the process of staffing a number of the vacant positions and it is anticipated that the vacancy rate will decrease significantly within the coming months. The division will continue to address human resource pressures and remains committed to providing a high level of service, utilizing crime prevention and crime reduction strategies to increase effectiveness.

3. We encourage collaboration and attendance at community events such as ceremonies and celebrations that will foster positive relations and trust between the two parties.

The RCMP agrees with this recommendation which is addressed by existing and future initiatives. The RCMP promotes policing services that are professional, dedicated, and responsive to the needs and cultures of all Indigenous persons. The RCMP also has an existing and evolving commitment to Reconciliation with the Indigenous persons and communities we serve. The RCMP remains committed to building upon these relationships while fostering an environment of cultural awareness and humility.

All members posted to detachments who serve Indigenous communities are encouraged to attend community events in order to build positive relationships and a greater understanding of individual community culture, history, and beliefs.

As a part of the commitment to community policing, all RCMP detachments are required to build an annual strategic plan that is responsive to the communities served. Community consultation, as well as a focus on building relationships and trust, are mandatory components of each detachment's plan. As such, the Melfort detachment has met with the leadership at James Smith Cree Nation to develop initiatives to promote positive community and youth engagement such as attendance at community events, ceremonies, and celebrations.

Melfort detachment has completed the development of the strategic plan for the 2024-2025 fiscal year and is already undertaking efforts to achieve the planned initiatives. A specific goal was set to ensure detachment members engage with the communities they serve in addition to their core policing responsibilities. The detachment is tracking and reporting on specific initiatives to accomplish this, including efforts to:

- Attend community events.
- Engage with youth through school involvement, visitations, and programing.
- Remain involved with community programs and organizations that support community safety.
- Ensure detachment members are involved in Reconciliation efforts (which includes a commitment to attend cultural ceremonies and celebrations).
- Ensure the detachment commander remains engaged with local elected officials.

Progress towards achieving these initiatives is reported quarterly and monitored at both the district and divisional levels.

Coroner Recommendations

The following recommendations are directed to the RCMP:

1. Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Melfort Detachment Commander and James Smith Cree Nation Leadership meet on a regular basis, and no less than quarterly per year, to establish and implement a public safety strategy for James Smith Cree Nation.

The RCMP agrees with this recommendation and has existing practices in place to accomplish it. Currently, the Melfort Detachment Commander and James Smith Cree Nation (JSCN) leadership formally meet on a quarterly basis. These meetings afford a platform to discuss observed crime trends, promote community safety and Reconciliation initiatives, and establish community-specific priorities and crime prevention objectives.

Development and subsequent progress in these areas are documented in the detachment strategic plan and monitored at the district and divisional levels.

The Detachment Commander maintains a working dialogue with both the local leadership and the JSCN Security Team in addition to these prescribed meetings to ensure any identified issues receive the appropriate focus and are being addressed accordingly and in a timely manner.

2. Immediately adopt and implement best practices and technologies that will make available to patrol officers the most current photo, including but not limited to the SGI photo, of a queried person.

The RCMP agrees with this recommendation. This will be addressed through the implementation of a standardized process throughout the division which will ensure all subject photographs obtained pursuant to Section 2 of the Identification of Criminals Act are uploaded to both the Police Records Occurrence System (PROS) and the Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC) in a timely fashion.

The photographs will contain an identifying occurrence number, the detachment responsible for obtaining the photograph, and the date the photograph was obtained. The photographs will be viewable upon conducting a subject query utilizing either database. Administrative photographs obtained by Saskatchewan Government Insurance (SGI) will remain accessible to investigators utilizing the SGI AutoFund application.

The National Computer Aid Dispatch (CAD) system Computerized Integrated Information and Dispatch System (CIIDS), has the ability to make photographs available to view on office workstations and mobile workstations (MWS) using the Bulletin Board feature. Divisional Operation Communication Centre (DOCC) dispatchers can utilize this function to upload photos for defined users to retrieve and view. The source for the photographs can be taken from any available digital media.

The CAD mobile application is in the process of being replaced this fiscal year. The new mobile application has the ability to search and display prisoner photographs from the Public Safety Portal (PSP). Additionally, an enhancement to allow any digital photograph to be included in mobile messaging capabilities has been approved for implementation. Once implemented, it will provide the ability to forward photographs from CPIC, PSP, police RMS, other available government databases such as SGI, and private source photos for police operational response and critical incidents between in-car mobile work stations and CAD workstations. This update is likely to be included with a planned software update in the next fiscal year.

3. F Division Commanding Officer should take all reasonable measures to ensure that the Warrant Enforcement & Suppression Team (WEST) is fully staffed and consider expansion beyond the current establishment of positions.

The RCMP agrees with this recommendation in principle. The positions associated to the Saskatchewan Enforcement Response Teams (SERT), including the Warrant Enforcement & Suppression Team (WEST), are allocated and funded by the Government of Saskatchewan. The Saskatchewan RCMP continues to work towards staffing the current compliment of WEST, which was previously experiencing a 35% vacancy rate among Regular Member (RM) positions. Through recent staffing actions, we were able to reduce the vacancy rate to the current level of 20%.

Any potential prospect of expansion beyond the current footprint is independent of the RCMP and would require a request for additional resources to the Provincial Government. At this time, a request for supplementary resources would not be pragmatic in consideration of the current vacancy rates among the already established positions.

Current projections are for 1,280 new RCMP applicants to attend training during the 2024-2025 fiscal year, followed by 1,600 new applicants for each 2025-2026 and 2026-2027 fiscal years. If successful, this forecasted recruiting increase will afford the division the opportunity to begin replenishing its resource base across all programs and business lines.

4. F Division Commanding Officer should take all reasonable measures to ensure that the Crime Reduction Team (CRT) is fully staffed and consider expansion beyond the current establishment of positions.

The RCMP agrees with this recommendation in principle. The positions associated to the Saskatchewan Enforcement Response Teams (SERT), including the Crime Reduction Teams (CRT), are allocated and funded by the Government of Saskatchewan. The Saskatchewan RCMP continues to work towards staffing the current compliment of CRT, which is currently experiencing a 40% vacancy rate among Regular Member (RM) positions. It should be noted that this vacancy rate includes two teams that had been previously approved by the Province. There was a delay in staffing these positions as accommodations were required prior to staffing. Accommodations have been secured, and the positions are currently in the process of being staffed. Once these teams are staffed in the near future, the vacancy rate will be far lower.

Any potential prospect of expansion beyond the current footprint is independent of the RCMP and would require a request for additional resources to the Provincial Government. At this time, a request for supplementary resources would not be pragmatic in consideration of the current vacancy rates among the already established positions. Current projections are for 1,280 new RCMP applicants to attend training during the 2024-2025 fiscal year, followed by 1,600 new applicants for each 2025-2026 and 2026-2027 fiscal years. If successful, this forecasted recruiting increase will afford F Division the opportunity to begin replenishing its resource base across all programs and business lines.

5. F Division Commanding Officer should take all reasonable measures to ensure that the Saskatchewan Trafficking Response Team (STRT) is fully staffed and consider expansion beyond the current establishment of positions.

The RCMP agrees with this recommendation in principle. The positions associated to the Saskatchewan Enforcement Response Teams (SERT), including the Saskatchewan Trafficking Response Teams (STRT), are allocated and funded by the Government of Saskatchewan. The Saskatchewan RCMP continues to work towards staffing the current compliment of STRT, which is currently experiencing a 30% vacancy rate among Regular Member (RM) positions. It should be noted that this vacancy rate includes a new team that is currently in the process of being staffed. There was a delay in staffing these positions as accommodations were required prior to staffing. Accommodations have been secured and this team will be staffed in the near future, reducing the vacancy rate.

Any potential prospect of expansion beyond the current footprint is independent of the RCMP and would require a request for additional resources to the Provincial Government. At this time, a request for supplementary resources would not be pragmatic in consideration of the current vacancy rates among the already established positions. Current projections are for 1,280 new RCMP applicants to attend training during the 2024-2025 fiscal year, followed by 1,600 new applicants for each 2025-2026 and 2026-2027 fiscal years. If successful, this forecasted recruiting increase will afford F Division the opportunity to begin replenishing its resource base across all programs and business lines.

6. RCMP WEST Commander should provide a list and details of their Most Wanted (60 highest priority targets as established by WEST) to all Saskatchewan RCMP detachment commanders on a regular basis and no less than quarterly per year.

The RCMP agrees with this recommendation which will be addressed with an upcoming procedural change. As presented at the JSCN inquest, the SERT analytical program has developed a prioritization matrix that scores and ranks offenders who are either Unlawfully at Large (UAL) or have outstanding warrants for violent offences issued by the Saskatchewan RCMP.

At present, a Top 10 Most Wanted list is distributed to the Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge (NCO i/c) of the two WEST teams on a monthly basis. Regional lists are also provided upon request if a deployment is planned in a specific detachment area. Beginning in March 2024, the SERT analytical program expanded their monthly ranking program and now distributes a list of the most violent offenders in a detachment area to each detachment commander in the division. The list includes information that will help prioritize the apprehension of these offenders, such as: warrant status, severity of violent crimes, and whether they are unlawfully at large.

In addition, the SERT analytic program is developing monthly reporting utilizing a newly developed dashboard to analyze violence trends within Saskatchewan to assist with prioritizing CRT deployments. Monthly Person of Interest reports are being developed which will rank violent offenders based on their PROS occurrence history over the previous 18 months including a detachment level breakdown That can be distributed to detachments should that information be of value to them.

7. RCMP West Commander should adjust the WEST matrix to prioritize apprehension targets so that individuals who are repeat domestic offenders are ranked higher.

The RCMP agrees with the recommendation in principle. Presently, domestic violence is not considered in the violence prioritization matrix. Much of the violence prioritization process is automated, therefore the identification of a history of domestic violence would be a manual task. Further to this, the analyst team is exploring which parameters will be utilized for the purposes of this procedure. Essential to this process is determining: what constitutes domestic violence, intimate partner violence, or violence within the family or household; to what degree historical information regarding domestic violence be queried and considered; whether queries will be exclusive to RCMP data or extend to partner agencies; and whether this will include single occurrence offenders; and whether it will be restricted to only include occurrences where formal charges have been laid.

Conditional on what factors are considered, the process of manually flagging could prove to be extensive. Further discussions surrounding a more automated process and efficient ways to track and flag domestic violence will occur in consultation with internal and external stakeholders. In the interim, a new template for the monthly top 50 Most Wanted list has been developed. Each offender will be queried manually and a flag placed on their record to denote a history of domestic violence. The presence of the flag will not affect the overall score but instead inform investigators of the offenders' history to assist in determining which offenders to concentrate their efforts on.

It is important to note that data collection for these processes is labour intensive and is not without limitations. There are confines concerning how frequently pertinent data is received from outside sources, for example the Correctional Services of Canada or the Canadian Police Information Centre, the composition of the data and the overall data quality. New processes will be examined to enhance prioritization efforts and the ability to access the required data.

8. Where a Most Wanted target is affiliated with or is a member of a First Nation within their detachment area, and subject to situations that might compromise an underway investigation or apprehension, RCMP Detachment Commanders shall liaise with the First Nation's leadership or Justice Designate to advise them of the wanted status of that individual.

This recommendation is addressed in existing national policy, however, internal enhancements to the Most Violent Offender list and distribution will allow for increased collaboration between Detachment Commanders and First Nation's Leadership or Justice Designates.

The RCMP national Operational Manual 18.3 directs that Detachments or Units holding warrants are expected to make all reasonable ongoing efforts to execute the warrants. The provisional guidelines contained within the policy is not exhaustive in nature but does include the requirement for conducting inquiries with anyone or any entity who may have knowledge of the individual. Sharing this information with any community or leadership group(s), First Nations or otherwise, is expected in the efforts.

The previously described distribution plan for the Most Violent Offender list will allow all Detachment Commanders to regularly receive the list. Within the next month, the Saskatchewan RCMP will release written direction to all Detachment Commanders to regularly review the list and determine which offenders have active warrants or are currently unlawfully at large. The Detachment Commanders will also be directed to determine when they can have discussions with First Nations Leaders and Justice Designates to ensure they are aware when a Most Violent Offender is affiliated with or living in their community.



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May 29, 2024

Ms. Glennis Bihun
Deputy Chief Coroner
Saskatchewan Coroners Service
Ministry of Justice and Attorney General
1050 – 2010 12th Avenue
Regina, SK. S4P 0M3

Deputy Chief Coroner Bihun;

RE: Inquest into the death of Myles Brandon Sanderson

On February 26-29, 2024, an inquest respecting the death of Myles Brandon Sanderson was conducted in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Upon conclusion of the inquest, the jury had four recommendations of which three were directed to the RCMP.

Please find attached "Appendix A" which provides the RCMP's response to each recommendation.

Regards,

Assistant Commissioner Rhonda Blackmore
Commanding Officer "F" Division

Encl.

Appendix A

RCMP response to the recommendations from the Coroner's Inquest respecting the death of Myles Brandon Sanderson.

Jury Recommendations

The following recommendations are directed to the RCMP:

1. That the RCMP consider implementing mandatory enhanced driver training including the "pit maneuver".

The Precision Immobilization Technique, commonly referred to as the PIT maneuver, is not currently a component of advanced driver training due to the expertise and precision required to successfully employ this inherently hazardous and dynamic intervention. The maximum recommended speed to conduct the PIT maneuver is 60 km/hr. Conducting this technique at speeds greater than 80 km/hr is considered an application of lethal force, where the expected outcome is the death of the driver. Furthermore, the incorrect application of this technique carries a significant risk of death or grievous bodily harm to the suspect, the police and the general public.

The current national Operational Manual guiding Emergency Vehicle Operations allows for the use of a police vehicle as an intervention option to stop a fleeing vehicle. These maneuvers are only considered in situations where exigent circumstances involving danger to life or grievous bodily harm exist, and may only be utilized when approved by a pursuit supervisor following a complete risk assessment in consideration of the totality of the situation.

The Advanced Emergency Vehicle Operators Course (AEVOC) is currently undergoing a national update. This will include an evaluation on the potential of including an optional module in the use of the PIT maneuver that would be delivered to members identified as having an aptitude in advanced driving skills.

The National Emergency Response Team (ERT) policy center is currently finalizing the Tactical Vehicle Intervention Training (TVIT), which provides ERT and Police Dog Service (PDS) members training on the application of the PIT maneuver in addition to supplementary dynamic vehicle intervention procedures. The ERT and PDS members who have received the TVIT training can respond to and intervene in incidents involving high risk pursuits. This training concept was the subject of a successful pilot project conducted by the Alberta RCMP from 2022-2023. It is anticipated that this nationally approved TVIT training will form the core training standard for the optional module component of the updated Advanced Emergency Vehicle Operators Course referenced in the previous paragraph.

2. That the RCMP consider a review in policy of criteria in a high-speed pursuit in the interest of safety to all involved.

This recommendation is addressed by existing national policy. The national Operational Manual relating to pursuits received a complete rewrite in 2020, and was further enhanced in 2023. Among these revisions was the elimination of explicit "pursuable" and "non-pursuable" offences from the policy.

The criteria required for a pursuit are no longer named specifically, as it is the totality of the situation as it relates to the urgency to apprehend the suspect that must be considered when initiating, continuing or discontinuing a pursuit. The primary pursuit member and the pursuit supervisor responsible for authorizing a pursuit must conduct a continuous risk assessment taking into consideration a number of factors associated to the safety of everyone involved to determine if the requirement to apprehend the suspect outweighs the risks created by the pursuit itself. This revised policy seeks to provide a less restrictive ability to justify the necessity for a continued pursuit. Included in this policy revision was the implementation of the mandatory Emergency Vehicle Operations on-line training course which includes modules on conducting and applying pursuit related risk assessments.

Any incidents involving a pursuit are accompanied by a mandatory reporting requirement in which the primary pursuit member must articulate their risk assessment and the justification for initiating and continuing a pursuit. These reports are reviewed by the division Criminal Operations unit for policy compliance. Incidents of policy non-compliance may be addressed through remedial training or disciplinary action.

3. That the RCMP consider implementing additional training in the form of enhanced extraction techniques for the purpose of arrest/takedowns.

This recommendation is addressed by existing formalized training. The National Police Intervention Unit (NPIU) currently has several lesson plans that provide instruction on vehicle extraction techniques. Any further enhancement of physical vehicle extraction techniques would need to be collectively developed by the Depot Police Defensive Tactics (PDT) and the NPIU. The current lesson plans include:

The Compliant High-Risk Vehicle Stops and Extractions training session teaches techniques on safely taking subjects into custody from a vehicle during a high-risk event.

The Vehicle Tactics training session provides training on working around vehicles, bail out tactics and physical extraction techniques. All physical extraction techniques are derived from the Police Defensive Tactics (PDT) training standard delivered at RCMP Depot.

The Working Around Vehicles training session is delivered as part of National Block Training and includes a review of vehicle approach and extraction tactics. National Block Training is mandatory recertification training sessions delivered over the course of 5 days that must be completed by Regular Members (RM) every 3 years.

"F" Division provides supplementary training sessions derived from these lesson plans during the Police and Public Safety User Workshop (PPSUW) to assist in maintaining these skills between formalized training sessions.