

Craig Hooker Shiskin*

Criminal Defence & Criminal Appeals

*An Association of Independent Practitioners

Jared N. Craig
C. John Hooker
Gillian Shiskin

Suite 990 630 6th Ave SW
Calgary, AB T2P 0S8
Office: 403-402-8698 | Fax: 587-317-3937
Email: admin@craighookershiskincriminaldefence.com
Web: www.craighookershiskincriminaldefence.com

VIA EMAIL: parlvusupport@parl.gc.ca

Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security
Wellington Building – 415

To whom it may concern:

Re: Meeting No. 6 SECU – Systemic Racism in Policing.

I am a white-passing Metis man from northern Alberta. I spent 17 years as a constable with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. I am writing to provide information on my experiences with systemic racism in policing. My experiences are specific to the RCMP.

I will end with some recommendations that I hope will assist in addressing this issue.

I was a sworn member of the RCMP from 1995 through 2011. Prior to that time I was an aboriginal summer student. During my time in the RCMP, the following incidents typify the attitude of police officers toward indigenous people and of the systemic barriers I experienced in trying to address those issues:

- When asking for a transfer, I was only offered FNP (First Nations Policing) positions. My wife at the time, also a Mountie, pointed this out. The response from the staffing officer: “we prefer to keep native officers in native postings”;
- A co-worker left me a note telling me that I was hired because I was indigenous so I should be working on the reserve. Advice from S/Sgt and Inspector - don’t complain, you’ll be labels as a whiner;
- My 2nd cousin was also RCMP and transferred nearby. When he was at my detachment for coffee and mentioned that we were related, Sgt says, “figures, all you Indians are related”;
- Comments about “drunken Indians”, “wagon burners”, “redskins”, and similar were frequent experience;
- The inability to make complaints, or the hurdles placed in the path of official complaint are indicative of a systemic issue;
- I am prepared to present to the committee if that is desirable or appropriate.

Recommendations

The following are recommendations that will help to address the individualized and systemic racism that exists in the RCMP:

1. A structured Indigenous training program for RCMP officers.

A training plan delivered to RCMP officers, specifically to recruits, relating the history of the RCMP *vis a vis* indigenous people in Canada. The role of the RCMP in both the settling of western Canada and during the implementation and operation of Residential Schools impacts the RCMP relationship with Canadian Indigenous people.

At present, no formal training is provided to RCMP officers. Consequently, RCMP officers in general have a lack of understanding of the intergenerational trauma experienced by indigenous people. This lack of understanding limits the ability of front-line police officers to address the issues that are manifestations of that trauma.

This education would be the first step in the RCMP adopting a trauma-informed approach to service delivery.

2. Amending the *RCMP Act*.

The *RCMP Act* governs RCMP activities, procedures, and oversight. Amendments to the *Act* are required to allow for greater transparency and accountability in RCMP governance.

There is a diminishing level of respect and trust between Indigenous Canadians and police agencies in general and the RCMP in particular. Part of this decrease in trust is the result of an inability on the part of complainants to remain aware of the manner by which their complaints to or against RCMP officers is handled.

The establishment of an autonomous external review committee tasked with the investigation of public complaints is a vital step in the RCMP regaining public trust. Key to this would be the removal of the clauses authorizing the Commissioner to be the final arbiter of such complaints. This role should properly fall to the government or to their externally appointed designate.

3. Mandatory Body Cameras for police officers

Recent event hadve demonstrated that, although hopefully uncommon, police officer can slant the story presented to investigators and the general public when it comes to police behaviour. A sober second look is being taken at incidents from all parts of the country. These second looks are being

taken due to the release of police video that depict differing accounts of police action that had been admitted to previously.

Cultural and legislative reform take time. The public demands the ability to review and critique police behaviour without having to view the incident entirely through the lens provided by police.

I appreciate your time in reviewing this submission. I apologize for the late delivery and hope that it is accepted.

I would appreciate the opportunity to speak before committee if that is possible.

Kind regards,

Chad Haggerty, Student-at-Law
RCMP Constable (ret), Reg #45068
Craig Hooker Shiskin
Calgary, Alberta