

## Summary of Findings of the Independent Officer Review – Office of Investigative Standards and Practices – E Division RCMP

---

### Mandate of the review:

- The Commanding Officer of the Yukon RCMP mandated British Columbia RCMP to conduct an Independent Officer Review (IOR) into the Hidden Valley Investigation in order to evaluate the Yukon RCMP's operational response to this occurrence. The IOR is meant to determine the timeliness, thoroughness, and quality, or lack thereof, of the investigation. The IOR identifies shortcomings and makes recommendations with regards to, but not limited to policy, procedure, training, operational supervision, guidance and oversight as well as administrative and reporting practices.
- The findings and recommendations of the IOR, were provided to the Commanding Officer of the Yukon RCMP to determine which actions were required to address those recommendations.

### Methodology for the review:

- Relevant RCMP documents, including the Whitehorse Detachment investigative file and all related materials were reviewed and considered.
- Relevant policies and best practices for the investigation of sexual offences in place at the time, as well as those current to the date of the report, were also reviewed and considered to assess compliance and to determine possible recommendations to be included in the final report.

### Independent Officer Review Findings:

1. There was a lack of documentation which made it difficult to follow rationale for decisions. The direction from Criminal Operations was not documented, and the subsequent Supervisor review did not address that direction. Further, no documentation was found to reflect official discussions between RCMP, Department of Education and Public Prosecutions to suggest considerations of a plan to search for other victims.
2. The Whitehorse Detachment Managerial Review, completed in December of 2019, concluded Supervisors needed to increase documentation of their review over investigative files. That finding was consistent with what was found in this investigation.
3. Although direction was provided by Criminal Operations to the Specialized Response Unit to follow up on a strategy to identify further victims, it is unknown if that direction ever made it to the Primary Investigator since the direction was not documented on the investigative file. (Note: It has since been confirmed that direction was not relayed to the Primary Investigator.)

4. Policy states a supervisor review must occur within 48 hours and will continue until the investigation is complete, however it does not appear that policy was followed.
5. Investigative decisions regarding the collection, or exclusion, of potential evidence which may have been considered during the investigation were not documented.
6. Parental concerns were raised regarding the effectiveness of Yukon RCMP resources in conducting interviews of children with autism spectrum disorder, and other specific challenges.

**Independent Officer Recommendations:**

1. Any Direction from Supervisors, including the Criminal Operations Officer, must be documented on future investigations.
2. Since December 2019, new processes, such as a check sheet system for Supervisors, have been implemented by the Officer in Charge of Whitehorse Detachment. The objective of these processes was to increase Supervisor direction on investigative files, which has been successful. Those processes should be periodically reviewed for effectiveness.
3. Review of M Division Policy related to the Specialized Response Unit with consideration to include the role and responsibility of providing written guidance and direction on files within their mandate.
4. The Specialized Response Unit should become the primary investigating Unit on select files that are sensitive in nature involving victims and survivors that are part of a vulnerable population.
5. To provide the Specialized Response Unit and General Duty members of M Division with opportunities to improve their knowledge and expertise to follow best practices and improve investigative accountability as it relates to sexual offences.
6. Any investigational guidance from Supervisors at any level to be aligned with direction in National Operational Policy regarding Sexual Offences and Child Abuse/Crimes against Young Persons.
7. The Specialized Response Unit must clearly articulate which investigator is accountable for which investigative steps in the file and confirm action has been taken.
8. The Specialized Response Unit continue to explore options for interagency cooperation and collaboration to continue utilizing all resources to provide services that promote public safety and health for the people in the Yukon. This includes the use of a victim centered approach that offers trauma-informed techniques and practices.
9. M Division should consider the implementation of the Investigator Development Program for some Primary Investigators in the Yukon. This training program is offered at the Pacific Training

Center in British Columbia.

10. M Division RCMP continue to review partnerships and methods of utilizing media releases and external publications for assisting investigations. National RCMP policy provides guidelines however each investigation must be reviewed on a case by case basis.
11. M Division continue to explore partnerships with outside agencies to interact effectively with victims who experience developmental or communication challenges.

**Accountability Process Improvements implemented by M Division:**

- It is important to note that since December 2019, and independent of the IOR process initiated for this investigation, the M Division RCMP have been reviewing and evolving their investigative polices, best practices, and supervisory responsibilities to be consistent with the recommendations of the National RCMP Sexual Assault Review Team.
- Many of these changes, initiated by the Criminal Operations Officer and OIC Whitehorse, have since been implemented and have significantly contributed to increased supervision, documentation and accountability of all investigations.
  1. The implementation of Supervisor check sheets at Whitehorse Detachment, to increase Supervisory direction and documentation on investigations.
  2. The creation of a High Risk Review tasking system, which specifically flags investigations involving sexualized violence and the requirement for increased monitoring.
  3. The implementation of an additional review process conducted by M Division Criminal Operations provides ongoing and consistent oversight on all investigations involving sexualized violence.
  4. National Policy for Sexual Offences updated on June 3, 2021, as a result of the review work conducted by the National Sexual Assault Review Team, and to reflect modernization of sexual assault investigative best practices. As a result, and after extensive consultation with Territorial Partners, M Division policy was updated on September 8, 2021. Both of these policies have increased the frequency and depth of Supervisor review and documentation of investigations involving Sexualized Violence.
  5. The implementation of a new Specialized Response Unit mandate in January of 2021, which clarified the specific responsibility of the Unit, and dedicated specialized resources to lead complex investigations involving sexualized violence.

6. The implementation of mandatory training for all members of M Division related to the modernization of Sexual Assault investigative best practices including victim centered and trauma informed approaches.
7. The development of important local and Territorial partnerships, such as the Yukon Sexual Assault Response Team, and the implementation of the Sexual Assault Investigation Review Committee.
8. Dedicated Strategic Communications resources within M Division, along with the renewal of the Together for Safety Communications Protocol, which provides a trauma informed and alternative perspective to communications related to the sensitivities surrounding incidents of sexualized violence.

Follow up Tasking Remaining from IOR Recommendations:

- Many of the actions listed in the previous section address the majority of the recommendations from the IOR. The following items are what remain to be addressed and implemented by the Yukon RCMP.
  1. Consider the addition of the specific Sexual Assault investigation training aids identified by the Independent Officer to be included in the mandatory learning for M Division members.
  2. The implementation of an additional Quality Assurance review process to ensure Supervisors are consistently following Operational Manual polices and procedures.
  3. Review the standardized incident reporting requirements and submission of Situation Reports to Criminal Operations to ensure consistency.
  4. Consult with the Pacific Region Training Center to explore the Investigator Development Program training opportunity for some M Division primary investigators.(ie: Specialized Response Unit investigators).

Prepared by S/Sgt. Eric Lane for C/Supt. Scott Sheppard M Division Commanding Officer

Date: 2022-10-17