



OFFICE OF POLICE OMBUDSMAN COMMISSION
City of Spokane | 808 W. Spokane Falls Blvd. | Spokane, WA 99201

February 07, 2018

Dear Chief Meidl,


The most recent Officer Involved Shooting (OIS) on December 26, 2017 was and continues to be a great source of concern in the community. It has highlighted some shortcomings in the communication between the police department and the local Native American community, as well as unmet historical expectations from previously made agreements.

Members of the local Native American community and advocacy groups turned out at the last Office of the Police Ombudsman Commission monthly meeting to communicate their frustrations over the latest OIS. Concern was voiced that some leaders of the Native American community did not feel adequately informed by the Spokane Police Department (SPD) once it was learned that the person involved in the OIS was Native American. The primary focus of all the concerns raised was the duration for which the body of Mr. Spottedhorse was left exposed to public view, reportedly over a time period of multiple hours.

In public comment, a citizen referenced an OIS in 2003 where the body of Michael Eagle was left exposed to the public for an extended period of time. That incident was the catalyst for discussions between the local Native American community and SPD at that time. The Native American community left these discussions with the impression that SPD had agreed to implement a practice where every patrol officer would carry or have access to screens in his or her vehicle to shield exposed bodies of deceased individuals from the public view. In discussions with various members of SPD, it is unclear if this agreement was ever formalized or followed up on. In considering the community impact of this case and in consideration that SPD may be involved in similar incidents in the future, I recommend that a solution to shielding critical scenes from public view be implemented quickly. SPD should refresh or implement the practice of shielding the bodies of deceased individuals from the public. As a minimum safeguard, SPD should consider a practice, when possible, of diverting traffic in incidents where a deceased individual is in public view far enough away to minimize the chance of public exposure.

Sincerely,


Ladd Smith, Chair


Jenny Rose, Commissioner


James Wilburn, Jr., Commissioner


Gardner, Colleen, Commissioner


Elizabeth Kelley, Commissioner

cc: Bart Logue, Police Ombudsman