



Overview of the Facts

On November 29th, 1990, two construction workers discovered the frozen body of a young male in a field in the northwest section of the City of Saskatoon. The deceased was subsequently identified as Neil Stonechild, age 17.

As the police investigation unfolded on that day and subsequently, it was established that Mr. Stonechild had last been seen on November 24/25 in a residential area in the western part of the City. The coroner attended the death scene as did members of the Saskatoon Police Service, including an Identification Officer and a Canine Unit Officer.

The death scene lay in an industrial area north of 57th Street. The field was undeveloped land. An autopsy was subsequently performed at St. Paul's Hospital in Saskatoon. The Pathologist who conducted the autopsy concluded that Mr. Stonechild died of hypothermia. The weather at the time of his disappearance was extremely cold. On the night of his disappearance the temperature fell to -28.1 degrees Celsius. The Saskatoon Police Service investigated the death and determined that there was no evidence of foul play.

Subsequent events raised the question as to whether the youth had been in police custody on the evening of November 24/25. In particular, it was suggested he had been picked up after a complaint was made against him of disorderly conduct at an apartment complex called Snowberry Downs. His companion of the evening was Jason Roy, age 16. Mr. Roy told various persons at the time and later that he had seen his friend, Neil, in the back of a Saskatoon Police cruiser on Confederation Drive on the evening of November 24/25, and that his friend was bloody and calling for help.

Newspaper reports appeared from time to time setting out the Stonechild family suspicions that the Saskatoon Police Service had not adequately investigated the youth's death. There were early suggestions he had been killed by Gary Pratt. This allegation proved groundless. It was suggested that the two Saskatoon Police Service members who answered the call to the disturbance attributed to Mr. Stonechild had taken him from the scene to the remote area of the city and abandoned him. It was confirmed that he was drunk on the evening in question and that he had caused a disturbance at Snowberry Downs and apparently an earlier disturbance at a 7-Eleven store located on Confederation Drive, close to the Snowberry Downs site.

There were other complaints against the Saskatoon Police Service during this time and later about members transporting Aboriginal persons to remote locations in and outside of Saskatoon. Two police officers were ultimately charged and convicted of unlawful confinement of an Aboriginal male, Darrel Night. Night survived.

In the year 2000, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police were instructed to carry out an investigation of Neil Stonechild's death and that of other persons who had been found dead in remote locations. On February 19, 2003, the Minister of Justice of the Province of Saskatchewan established a judicial commission to inquire into the death of Neil Stonechild and the investigations carried out by the Saskatoon Police Service and the RCMP. The Commission began sitting on September 8th, 2003, at the City of Saskatoon. The Inquiry was concluded on May 19, 2004.