



Family Violence Death Review Committee  
Case Review Public Report No. 4

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## Table of Contents

Incident.....	3
Background.....	3
Key Findings .....	4

## Incident

In 2011, a male was stabbed by his female partner during an argument in their home and died from his injuries while in the hospital. The female was convicted of second-degree murder and sentenced to life in prison with no chance of parole for 10 years.

## Background

The couple met in 2003 and, shortly after, the female and her three children from a prior relationship moved in with the male into his mother's home. During their seven-year relationship, the couple had three children together. The couple had alcohol and prescription drug addiction issues, as well as mental health issues.

Child and Family Services (CFS) were involved in an incident that involved the couple's children and their extended family in September 2006. The RCMP were called to the home of the female partner's sister to respond to a domestic violence complaint. When RCMP arrived, they found the female partner's sister and several other adults intoxicated and unconscious. Eight children were present in the home, (four children belonged to the female partner, three were from a previous relationship and one was from her current relationship with the male partner.) The couple was not present in the home at the time of the incident. Child and Family Services contacted the female partner to inform her that her children were in their care. When contacted, she explained that she wanted the children to be placed under the care of their respective biological fathers and provided the contact information for each. Her partner picked up their youngest child and the other three children remained under the care of Child and Family Services until they were picked up by their biological father two weeks later. The file was closed at the end of September 2006. Eventually the three eldest children returned to live with the couple.

The RCMP had direct involvement with the couple in January 2009, when they responded to a domestic violence complaint. After speaking with the couple, RCMP declined to charge either partner and drove the female partner and her six children to a relative's house (three children were from a previous relationship and three were from her relationship with her current partner). Child and Family Services (CFS) visited the home a few days later to speak with the couple who stated they were having relationship issues and the female partner was staying with a close relative while they worked things out. The couple explained to CFS caseworkers that they did not usually fight and that their argument escalated that particular night. After this incident, the couple had no further contact with child intervention or law enforcement.

## Day of Incident

On the afternoon of the incident, the male partner drove to visit family. When he returned home that evening, he admitted to the female partner he had been drinking. The female partner was angry at the violation of their agreement to stop drinking and an argument ensued in their basement bedroom. As their argument became more intense, a relative of the female partner, who happened to be visiting at the time, took all of the six children into another room upstairs. During the argument, the male partner threw items and "trashed" the room. After arguing for a while, the male partner decided to end the argument by leaving the room. As he turned his back and proceeded towards the stairs, the female partner stabbed him in the back several times.

Despite the numerous stab wounds, the male partner continued upstairs and went outside. Once outside, he lost consciousness. The relative of the female partner dialed 911 and tried to resuscitate the victim using CPR. The female partner informed the dispatcher that she stabbed the male partner in self defense. The female partner was convicted of second-degree murder and sentenced to life in prison with no chance of parole for 10 years.

## Key Findings

### Systems Involved

There was minimal involvement with Children's Services and Police Services. The couple also had cursory involvement with Health Services with doctors and pharmacists.

### Recommendations

- 1) Children's Services, in partnership with Indigenous expertise in child welfare, develop an on-line training tool for staff of all agencies that work or deal with aboriginal communities in order to increase the knowledge and skills required to respond to the effects of intergenerational trauma and the residential school system on Canadian Indigenous individuals, families and communities.

The Ministry must make services and supports available to Indigenous persons working in agencies to ensure that they also have the supports available to them to heal from the trauma they have experienced in their lives so that they are healthy and effective community leaders.

The Ministry of Advanced Education, Children's Services and Indigenous Relations, in partnership with Indigenous expertise in child welfare, work with post-secondary institutions to develop, implement and evaluate mandatory curricula for all social services disciplines on the history of colonialism in Canada; and the effects of intergenerational trauma on Indigenous individuals, families and communities.

- 2) Government of Alberta identify and increase support for successful programs aimed at reducing family violence in Indigenous communities. Programs must be community-based, culturally relevant, led by Elders and incorporate a collaborative community development approach. The lessons learned need to be disseminated and shared.
- 3) In partnership with Indigenous expertise in child welfare, Ministry of Children's Services must ensure that child welfare standards are adhered to when dealing with Indigenous families and communities. The Ministry must regularly audit and evaluate interventions and work with relevant Indigenous partners and communities to improve and enhance practice standards and risk assessment tools to ensure child welfare practice standards are being complied with.
- 4) Taking into consideration the history of colonialism and the effects of intergenerational trauma, it is recommended that the Government of Alberta, in collaboration with relevant Indigenous partners, develop an action plan to prevent family violence in Aboriginal communities in Alberta, with the action plan focusing on the root causes of family violence in Alberta's Indigenous communities. The action plan needs to complement and inform the provincial Framework to end family violence and be published and be made publicly accessible.

- 5) Given the findings from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and recent reports and recommendations by the Auditor General of Alberta and the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate regarding child welfare practice in aboriginal communities, the Committee recommends that the Government of Alberta engage the federal government with the goal of adequately resourcing designated First Nation's agencies in Alberta