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'Set up to fail?' An analysis of self-administered indigenous police services in Canada

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ABSTRACT

In 1992 the First Nations Policing Program (FNPP) was introduced in order for Indigenous peoples in Canada to establish their own self-administered police services. The intent of the FNPP was for Indigenous communities to work toward self-determination and their residents to receive professional and culturally appropriate policing. Like other criminal justice interventions, there was a disconnection between the vision and the actual operation of these agencies, thus over one-third of these fledgling police services disbanded. Even today, many of these First Nations police services are struggling. Police officials report their agencies were intentionally 'set up to fail' and this study critiques that proposition. We find these agencies are hamstrung by a lack of funding, suffer from the disadvantage of size, struggle to meet the demands of high crime and community dysfunction, and are delivering a less culturally-appropriate service today than provided when the program was first established years.

KEYWORDS

Indigenous policing; life cycle of police organizations; police amalgamation; liability of newness

Introduction

Policymakers in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States have struggled for over a century to provide effective and appropriate police services to their Indigenous peoples, who are over-represented in the jails and prisons in these four countries (Jones, Lithopoulos, & Ruddell, 2016; Kiedrowski, 2013). Of these nations, Canada is distinctive in that it has a comprehensive national policing strategy, the First Nations Policing Program (FNPP). The FNPP provides that Indigenous communities can establish their own autonomous police services, which are 100 percent funded by provincial and federal governments. Despite having established this policing strategy, there is a significant disconnect between the objectives of the FNPP and the police services that are delivered in many Indigenous communities; what some have called third-world policing (Tryon & Lindell, 2013). While our current study focuses on the efforts to establish independent Indigenous police services in Canada, the lessons learned are important for any nation confronting the challenges of over-representation of Indigenous peoples in their justice systems, and the desire to develop police services that match the distinctive needs of these peoples.

When the FNPP was enacted, it was in response to a series of provincial and federal task forces and panels that found Indigenous peoples were receiving inadequate police services by a patchwork of federal, provincial, and local agencies, and delivered by a variety of sworn and non-sworn officials (Lithopoulos & Ruddell, 2011). The FNPP also gave Indigenous communities a choice between

establishing their own police agencies (called self-administered police services or SA) or entering into contracts with existing federal, provincial, or regional police services to deliver said services, which are called community tripartite agreements (CTA). Although the FNPP was introduced with much optimism, a quarter century after its introduction, residents and other stakeholders are critical of the efficacy of the police services delivered on First Nations reserves – lands set aside for Canada's Indigenous peoples (Auditor General of Canada, 2014; Canadian Association of Police Governance, 2016; Kiedrowski, Petrunik, & Ruddell, 2016).

Lithopoulos (2016) reports that 58 SA police services had been established since the introduction of the FNPP in 1992, but over one-third (20) had disbanded by 2010, and 38 were operational on 1 January 2017. Some of these 38 agencies have struggled to provide effective services (Curtis, 2016; The Canadian Press, 2014). In a provocative statement the Chief of the First Nations Chiefs of Police Association, asserted that 'Aboriginal policing was set up to fail' (Barnsley, 2002). When Wes Luloff made this statement, the FNPP was only a decade old, four SA services had already disbanded, and over a dozen other First Nations police services that were struggling to survive were disbanded.

Other police officials have also suggested that SA services were set up to fail (as reported in Clairmont, 2006), a position that has been reiterated in government reports (Linden, 2007) and by the media (The Canadian Press, 2014). The Auditor General of Canada (2014) identified several shortcomings in the administration of the FNPP, and in response, the Deputy Grand Chief of the Nishnawbe Aski Police Service ([NAPS] the largest Indigenous service in Canada) stated that 'First Nations have been set up for failure and the federal approach to First Nations is seriously flawed' (The Canadian Press, 2014). Two years later, the Chair of the NAPS community board (that provides governance to the police service) told a coroner's inquest that their agency 'has neither the resources nor the legal foundation to do its job properly' (Porter, 2016).

In 2017, the FNPP entered its 25th year. Recognizing its quarter-century anniversary, the purpose of our current study is to take a critical look at SA police services and determine whether they were ever given the resources or supports required to deliver effective police services to Canadians living on First Nations. In the following discussion, we present a brief overview of the historical factors that led to the establishment of the FNPP, the contemporary FNPP arrangements and then examine the internal and external political and economic factors influencing these agencies. From the findings of our study, we offer a number of observations about the 2018 renewal of the FNPP and how the viability of First Nations policing can be improved.

Literature review

A short history of policing Canada's indigenous peoples

Policing in Canada evolved along with patterns of settlement and economic development. Similar to occurrences in the United States, the first large groups of colonists settled on the Atlantic coast and moved westward over the next two centuries. Although policing became a provincial responsibility after Canada became a nation in 1867, large portions of the west, that had relatively high populations of Indigenous peoples, were federal territories and were thus policed by the federal government. Several political crises and the need to establish sovereignty in the west led to the founding of the federally-funded North-West Mounted Police (NWMP) in 1873 and they, and their progeny – the Royal North-West Mounted Police, and Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) – delivered most policing in Indigenous communities until the 1960s. These police services were also tasked with conducting a wide range of non-policing responsibilities that included acting on behalf of the Department of Indian Affairs (Dempsey, 1987). Besides maintaining the peace, the NWMP served as a principal intermediary between the federal government and Indigenous peoples. In some cases, the federally-funded RCMP were the only representatives of the government in sparsely populated regions, including the Arctic.

Any history of Indigenous policing must acknowledge the distrust that developed between Indigenous peoples and the police, most of which grew from police actions in carrying out discriminatory and

paternalistic federal government policies. The federal government broke many of their agreements with Indigenous peoples and their policies in the 1800s resulted in starvation, the spread of disease, and high mortality rates (Daschuk, 2013; Dempsey, 1987). As part of the attempt at assimilating Indigenous peoples, their religious and cultural practices were forbidden (Adams, 1995; Ray, 1996).

Perhaps the most destructive practice undertaken by the police on behalf of the government was their role in the placement of Indigenous children in Indian Residential Schools (LeBeuf, 2011; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). A key objective of these schools was to remove children from their families in order to assimilate them into the European culture (Graybill, 2007). School officials forbade these children from speaking their first languages or observing their cultural or religious practices, corporal punishment for these children was a common sanction, mortality rates were very high, and some residential school employees physically and sexually abused these children (Graham, 1997; O'Connell, 2010; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). The RCMP were involved with the transportation of children from their homes to these schools. The police officers were further responsible for searching for truant and returning them to school (LeBeuf, 2011).

The dissatisfaction with the police continued to increase after many First Nations experienced a withdrawal of police services in the 1960s and 1970s as the federal and provincial governments squabbled over responsibility for policing these lands (Department of Indian and Northern Affairs [DIAND], 1990). Not satisfied with existing policing arrangements, several First Nations established their own police services, (Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, 1990) and by 1982, there were about 500 Aboriginal officers policing First Nations (Clairmont, 2006). While most policymakers considered these steps to be positive, there was also concern about the inconsistency of these arrangements. This was, however, just one more issue in a long-standing concern about the relationships between Indigenous persons and the justice system.

During the 1980s the federal government solicited feedback from Indigenous communities about their policing arrangements. Lithopoulos and Ruddell (2013) summarized the results of these consultations as including: a lack of preventative patrol, crime prevention programs, understanding and sensitivity to Aboriginal culture by non-Aboriginal police officers, and clear federal policy or provincial legislation, leadership and professional standards for Aboriginal police services across Canada. They further noted a chronic under-policing, confusion over jurisdiction and responsibilities with and between governments, and insufficient and inequitable funding of Aboriginal policing. These issues were consistent with many of the observations and recommendations made in a series of 25 reports produced by the federal and provincial governments between 1967 and 1991 about Indigenous persons and the justice system (Alberta Government, 1991). Dalton (2006) and Rotman (1994) also note that Supreme Court decisions giving the provinces more responsibility for Indigenous affairs were additional drivers for changes in policing arrangements. Last, there was also a growing amount of Indigenous political resistance, activism, and protests occurring at the same time (Coulthard, 2013).

The evolution of the FNPP

The shortcomings of policing arrangements prior to 1990 increased the political willingness to create a coordinated, national-level strategy to deliver policing to Indigenous communities and this ultimately led to the creation of the FNPP. The foundation of the FNPP is that Indigenous communities enter into tripartite agreements with the federal and provincial governments (and in several instances municipal governments) to provide police services to their communities. These police services are cost-shared by the federal (52%) and provincial governments (48%). A First Nations community can use those funds to establish their own SA police service, much like any other Canadian municipality, or to contract with another police service – such as the RCMP or Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) – to provide police services. The absence of an obligation of Indigenous communities to contribute to the direct costs of establishing and maintaining their own SA police services provides a strong incentive for their participation (Kiedrowski et al., 2016).

When established, the FNPP was intended to provide ‘a practical way to improve the level and quality of policing services for First Nations communities through the establishment of policing agreements’ (Solicitor General of Canada, 1992, p. 1) although these objectives have evolved over time (Public Safety Canada, 2016; Solicitor General of Canada, 1996). Emphasis was placed on delivering policing services that are professional, dedicated, and responsive to the First Nation and Inuit communities they serve (Public Safety Canada (2016, p. iii). A cornerstone of Indigenous policing was that police services would deploy officers who are of Indigenous descent to police these communities.

Persons with an Indigenous identity (First Nations, Métis, or Inuit peoples) are the fastest growing ethnocultural population in Canada. They accounted for about 1.4 million people in 2011 or 4% of the national population (Kelly-Scott & Smith, 2015). On 31 March 2016 there were about 420,000 persons living in 416 communities served by police under FNPP agreements; most communities received contracted services ($n = 280$) while 170 communities were served by SA agencies (Public Safety Canada, 2016). SA police services tend to be small, and in 2014, the average police service had 22.1 officers, policed a population of 4509 residents, and provided services to 4.6 communities (Lithopoulos, 2016, p. 13).

Given the diminutive size of these agencies, most officers are generalists who are expected to respond to every situation they encounter (Ruddell, 2017). Because of their small size many SA agencies have memorandums of understanding with larger police services, such as the OPP or RCMP to provide

mutual support, exchange of information, using radio communications and data collections systems, specialized services like canine and Emergency Response Teams, and other services that we don’t have for ourselves. We call on them and in return, we provide support to them when they call on us. (Canadian Association of Police Governance, 2016, p. 6)

With respect to funding, FNPP contribution agreements are re-negotiated every five years, and each SA agreement is negotiated independently.¹ As a result, communities with more effective negotiators are apt to have better outcomes when it comes to securing operational funding (Auditor General of Canada, 2014). There is also some suggestion that the First Nations that were the first to sign these policing agreements received the most favorable terms (Kiedrowski et al., 2016). The contribution agreements also provide guidelines on how funds can be spent as well as specifying which expenditures are ineligible (e.g., overtime budgets in excess of 10 percent of the budget for officer salaries). The last SA police service was established in 2002, and although 16 communities had applied to join the FNPP since 2006, none were approved due to a lack of resources (Auditor General of Canada, 2014).

Set up to fail: an analysis of self-administered police services

When it comes to organizational survival, all corporations (Shepherd & Patzelt, 2017), non-profit agencies (Altman, 2016), and government organizations (Kettl, 2000), including police services, are vulnerable to disbanding within their first decade (King, 2009). In his lifecycle theory of law enforcement organizations, King (2009) posits that police organizations pass through a series of evolutionary stages that shape the behaviors of their employees and the relationships between the police service, external agencies, and the communities they serve. In order to fully understand police organizations, King argues, we need to determine the histories of these agencies, the leaders who founded them, the changes these organization have undergone as well as the internal and external influences on the police service. Perhaps more controversially, King (2014) argues that every organization will eventually disband. King’s (2009) proposition provides a theoretical lens for understanding the evolution of the FNPP and disbanding over one-third of these agencies. One factor making this analysis distinctive is that all 58 SA Aboriginal police services were founded at approximately the same time; all received similar funding; and share a common set of objectives and oversight structures. Examining the factors that contribute to disbanding SA police organizations will shed light on whether they were really set up to fail.

Methodology

In order to examine the extent to which self-administered Indigenous police services were disadvantaged by internal and external forces we analyzed data collected in two prior empirical studies, and those qualitative and quantitative data were supplemented using the results from a content analysis of web-based information on First Nations policing, and observations retrieved after a review of the extant literature on Indigenous policing. To organize and interpret our data in a structured manner we employed the framework used to explain decline and organizational death in North Carolina police organizations (Brunet, 2015). This typology is based on quadrants classifying the sources of decline based on internal and external causes, as well as political or economic/technical forces (see Levine, 1978).

Brunet's (2015, pp. 326–328) framework for examining organizational atrophy and failure is based on two broad factors; political and economic/technical issues. Brunet further delineates these conditions into internal and external factors summarized into four categories. These four categories provided the researchers with a priori operationalized core concepts and their relevant indicators used in the analysis (representationally presented in the quadrants depicted in Figure 1). The first, *Political Vulnerability* (Political/Internal), includes larger, older, and more bureaucratic organizations posited to be more durable and less vulnerable to failure. In addition, an agency is susceptible to failure if 'political changeover' (e.g., change in Chief of police with very different political ideologies than their predecessor) exists is observed within the agency. *Community Crisis* (Political/External) consists of community factors external to the organization that influence agency operations – including changes in the level of crime for police organizations (either increases or decreases) as well as high rates of social dysfunction can create a crisis for the organization (see King, 2009). Category three, *Organizational Atrophy* (Economic/Technical), incorporates how poor agency performance, turnover of key personnel (such as an agency's founder or leader), as well as issues relating to unethical officer behavior can contribute to organizational decline. Finally, *Environmental Entropy* (External Economic/Technical), relates primarily to a decline in external supports that has adverse impacts upon an agency, including high unemployment or a declining population that results in a smaller tax base.

Conditions	Internal	External
Political	<p><i>Political Vulnerability</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small agency size and populations served • Political instability and interference • Age (“Liability of newness”) 	<p><i>Community Crisis</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High rates of “unsolvable” social problems • High crime rates create a crisis that hastens organizational uncertainty • Demands can exceed the ability of the police service to respond. • Presence of alternative police services (e.g., RCMP) • Mistrust between community and police
Economic/Technical	<p><i>Organizational Atrophy</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turnover/retirements • Poor performance • Fewer officers of Indigenous descent 	<p><i>Environmental Entropy</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate long-term funding • Lack long-term funding structures • Stressed tax base (unemployment / population decline) • Inadequate infrastructure

Figure 1. Causes of police organization decline and mortality in self-administered First Nations police services. Source: Adapted from Brunet (2015).

With respect to our analyses, we grouped the qualitative and quantitative data from the different sources of information into the four classifications identified by Brunet (2015). Where quantitative or qualitative data were not available to inform the classification, we relied on the information retrieved in our review of the literature. This is a strategy used in similar health and social science research (Gale, Heath, Cameron, Rashid, & Redwood, 2013). This typology enables us to examine whether the political and organizational arrangements specified by the FNPP do place these SA police services at a greater disadvantage of failure.

The data used in these analyses came from three primary sources, and was supplemented using findings from a review of the extant research. The first source of data was the results from 827 sworn officers policing in Indigenous communities across Canada who participated in a socio-demographic survey carried out between 27 October 2014 and 22 December 2014 (Jones, Ruddell, & Summerfield, 2016). This voluntary online survey was available to all sworn officers who were policing Indigenous communities (approximately 1200 officers in 2014). Participants were asked 165 questions about their experiences policing Indigenous communities and perceptions about the places they policed, as well as the respondent's thoughts about practices such as community policing, or whether policing Indigenous communities was different than policing Non-Indigenous communities. From this survey, we use two sets of questions in our analyses: First, we report descriptive statistics for officer perceptions of the seriousness of community problems. Second, chi-square analyses are used to examine the perceptions of resource adequacy between officers working for self-administered police services and those working for the largest police organizations (the OPP and RCMP).

The second source of information we used was the transcribed interviews conducted with police executives from 10 First Nations, and 10 Non-Indigenous police services throughout Canada in 2016 (Kiedrowski et al., 2016). The police services selected to participate in the interviews provided geographical representation, this ensured police services from the different regions in the nation were included, and were of different sizes and compositions because different sized organizations have different resource needs and policing challenges. Representatives from these agencies first completed a general survey, where we asked questions about the characteristics of their police service. Next, we did follow up telephone interviews that averaged approximately 45 min in duration, with survey participants. Respondents answered questions that flowed from a semi-structured interview guide. Conversational paths included discussions about the location of their police service and the special geographical factors that influence their operations, such as being in remote or isolated locations with no year-round road access. Other questions on the interview guide asked about the nature of police operations in these communities, the challenges of delivering police services (i.e., staffing, and crime reduction strategies), and how their police service measured their effectiveness.

Three key themes emerged from the analysis of the interviews with the police leaders from the SA services that we grouped, in order of importance, into the following categories: (a) Operational and capital expenditures for policing service (including insufficient funds to pay salaries or provide appropriate infrastructure, such as detachments that were unsafe for officers and prisoners); (b) Community crime and public safety, particularly the impact of domestic violence on families and the negative influences of gangs and organized crime; and (c) Economic conditions such as high levels of poverty, unemployment, and poor economic development.

A third source of information was a content analysis based on an internet search of terms related to Indigenous policing. Other scholars have used a similar approach in studies of criminal justice operations (see Welch, Weber, & Edwards, 2000). These searches produced articles and news releases published by academics, Indigenous advocacy organizations, police services in Aboriginal communities, newspapers printed by First Nation's organizations or communities, letters to the editor, and television or radio broadcasts from 1 January 2013 to 30 June 2016. The content analysis focused on specific terms such as Aboriginal and Indigenous policing, FNPP, and First Nations Policing Programs. The search resulted in 351 articles from Canada, although ultimately only 52 were directly related to organizations funded by the FNPP, and therefore issues related to the urban policing of Indigenous peoples, which is carried out by municipal police services, were not included. Additional items excluded from the

analyses included police hiring announcements, information about training related to Indigenous policing, public notices, or scholarly articles and theses, or organizational reports that had already been considered in the literature review.

We identified a large number of themes in the analyses of these articles, which were subsequently consolidated into five major themes and reported in their order of prevalence. The first is inadequate funding which includes inappropriate infrastructure; second, distrust between the police and Indigenous peoples; third, under-policing including reports of an inadequate number of officers and lengthy response times. Fourth, is the lack of standards such as the fact that self-administered police organizations are not considered essential services; and fifth, the inappropriate police use of force.

Results

The data from the qualitative and quantitative studies described above were assessed with respect to Brunet's (2015) typology and the results presented within the quadrants. Figure 1 presents Brunet's typology using examples from SA Indigenous police services. The following section describes the information presented in the quadrants, and a rationale of why these observations were used.

Political vulnerability

Some police agencies are prone to failure because of their political vulnerability. Of the 20 disbanded police services, most were smaller and newly-founded. The average lifespan of the failed police services was 9.2 years, whereas surviving agencies had an average lifespan of 19.3 years (Lithopoulos, 2016). In addition to this 'liability of newness' Lithopoulos also found that failed agencies had fewer sworn officers and staff members, served smaller populations, and fewer communities, although he did not find a relationship between the remoteness of the community and whether its police service disbanded.

One potential shortcoming of new organizations is they do not always have founders or leaders with the depth of experience they require. Cardinal (1998, p. 3) examined the operations of SA police services in Alberta six years into the FNPP and found that inadequate leadership and management skills were evident in some of these agencies. These leadership shortfalls could have contributed to an ambivalence regarding program objectives, roles, responsibilities and accountability (Cardinal, 1998). Some of these shortcomings are predictable in new organizations. Federal government audits completed on Indigenous police services between 2009 and 2012 revealed problems with record keeping and documentation of police training, such that Clark, noted, 'First Nations take on responsibilities, and rightfully so, but very often, at the beginning anyway, don't have the capacity—particularly the administrative capacity—to really manage in the way that the federal funding agency would want them to manage' (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2013).

Some First Nations also suffer from internal political tensions and a common problem confronting SA agencies is political interference. Jones, Ruddell, et al. (2016) found that over half (51.6%) of the officers working in SA services reported that political interference in policing was a somewhat serious or very serious problem (46.3% of OPP officers and 42% of RCMP officers had the same perceptions). When officers were asked the same question in 2007 about one-quarter of those (23.1%) working in SA agencies said that their police service was independent of political interference compared to 37.1% of RCMP officers (Ruddell & Lithopoulos, 2011, p. 162). It is plausible that the high levels of political interference contribute to instability within police operations, such as personnel turnover, which in turn leads to other organizational problems, including being caught in an ongoing cycle of recruitment, hiring and training that can tax the human and economic resources of a small organization (Ruddell, 2017).

Environmental entropy

Perhaps the most contentious issue regarding the operations of SA police services is a lack of funding. Unlike their municipal police counterparts that can draw upon community resources to modify police

budgets according to demands, most First Nations do not have a revenue stream based on property taxes that can be increased. SA police services are therefore reliant on federal and provincial revenue and, in consequence, almost all evaluations of the FNPP describe the challenges of these agencies in providing an effective service with the resources they are provided with. A number of studies have found that SAs are not provided with sufficient funding to meet their mandates and to meet provincial policing standards (Auditor General of Canada, 2014)

After 2013, FNPP funding arrangements were negotiated for five-year periods. This provides more stability but falls short of a permanent funding relationship. Although FNPP funding has become more stable, there is no guarantee that funding levels will be sufficient to meet the requirements of SAs. In 2007, for example, the federal government froze the FNPP budget for five years making it difficult for communities to expand access the program (Public Safety Canada, 2016). Furthermore, in 2013 the government continued to freeze the FNPP budget at 2006 levels until 2018.

One of the most significant problems in FNPP funding arrangements is that officers are contractually entitled to annual salary increases and this, combined with inflation, makes it almost impossible to keep up with rising costs if the community cannot contribute to these costs. Insufficient funding has resulted in tragedies. For example, inquests in Ontario and Quebec found that Indigenous arrestees died or were victimized in police custody because of a lack of safe or appropriate holding cells (Lerner, 2005; McDonald, 2016; Ontario Government, 2009; Wilson, 2016).

One shortcoming in the manner that Public Safety Canada allocates funds to SA police services is the lack of a uniform or consistent approach. Kiedrowski et al. (2016) noted that agency funding is independently negotiated rather than being based on policing performance measures such as arrests made, clearance rates, personal safety within communities, geographic location (e.g., whether the agency is close to an urban center or in a remote location) or any other standard indicator such as population served or officer workload (e.g., number of *Criminal Code* offences per officer). Similar concerns about how budgets are determined for the FNPP were also raised by the Auditor General of Canada (2014). Although the federal and provincial funders recognize that policing expenditures such as overtime for carrying out an investigation or transporting prisoners are necessary, they are ineligible for reimbursement. Funds are also limited for equipment required for police operations. Curtis (2016) observes that officers are wearing bullet-resistant vests that are past their expiry dates and agencies are forced to borrow breathalyser machines from other police services.

In addition to inadequate operational funding, one of the major complaints of SA police stakeholders is the lack of infrastructure funding in the agreement. Infrastructure funds are required for facilities such as holding cells, secure storage (e.g., for armouries or evidence), garages, docks, communication requirements (towers), requirements for consistent internet access and other basic requirements that a police service needs to do its job effectively (DPRA Canada, 2016).

Many remote police services also require funding for upgrading police detachments and detachment housing, especially where there are no homes for officers. One of the challenges of self-administered agencies is that few had the infrastructure in place, such as a free-standing police detachment when their initial agreements were signed. As a result, communities lacking an existing detachment relied on a variety of 'make-do' arrangements that might not provide the appropriate levels of safety or security, such as hardened cells for arrestees or amenities (e.g., secure interview rooms) required by professional police agencies.

The Hunter-Courchene Consulting Group (2014) found the lack of funding for infrastructure makes it difficult for SA police services to recruit and retain police officers, particularly in sparsely populated and remote communities. The inability to pay 'market rates' for police salaries makes it difficult to recruit and retain sworn officers. Large police agencies such as the RCMP, for example, provide housing for officers, whereas SA police services cannot match that benefit, which in turn leads to officer turnover and recruitment issues. Other investigations have identified the lack of funding for infrastructure and equipment (Auditor General of Canada, 2014; Hunter-Courchene Consulting Group, 2014; Kiedrowski et al., 2016; Public Safety Canada, 2010). These perceptions were consistent

Table 1. Perceptions of resource adequacy of sworn FNPP officers working in CTA roles (OPP and RCMP) and self-administered (SA) police services ($n = 578$ respondents).

Survey Item	SA Officers: proportion agreeing (%)	CTA Officers: proportion agreeing (%)	p value (%)
Does your service have adequate resources for conventional policing?	48.7	68.9	.000*
Does your service have adequate resources for community policing?	42.3	54.8	.027*
Do your police service have adequate personnel?	32.9	50.3	.003*
Does your police service have adequate facilities?	41.0	55.9	.010*
Are the resource needs of your police service understood by local leaders?	39.4	59.0	.002*
Are the resource needs of your police service appreciated by the federal government?	23.0	35.4	.024*

Source: Jones, Ruddell, et al. (2016).

* $p \leq .05$.

across CTA and SA police executives, federal and provincial government officials, and other police stakeholders.

The perceptions of officers working in these Indigenous communities were consistent with the findings produced in our review of the literature. Table 1 shows a comparison between the SA and CTA officers on six survey items that were asked in the Jones, Ruddell, et al. (2016) study of sworn officers policing Indigenous communities. These questions sought the officer's perceptions about resource adequacy and the results in Table 1 shows that in all six categories, the officers working in SA agencies were less likely to agree they had adequate resources to carry out their work, and chi-square analyses revealed that all of those differences were statistically significant at $p \leq .05$. Altogether a higher proportion of SA officers felt they did not have enough resources for conventional or community policing, and they did not have enough personnel or infrastructure to meet community expectations. Only two-fifths (39.2%) of the SA officers believed their local leaders understood the shortcomings in resources, and less than one-quarter of these respondents felt their resource needs were appreciated by the federal government.

Organizational atrophy

A combination of newness, insufficient funding, and police chiefs who lack leadership skills have contributed to the difficulties experienced by newly-created SA services. These include inadequate standards for recruitment and selection, and insufficient training, inappropriate use of policing funds, poor quality of service and a lack of knowledge, skills, and abilities (Cardinal, 1998, p. 3). With sufficient time, police agency leaders can build on their existing resources and overcome these problems.

One of the challenges today is that working for SA agencies is undesirable due to the low pay (when contrasted against other police services), the high crime rates and entrenched social problems. As a result, personnel turnover is often high in these organizations as an officer gains a few years of experience and then moves to urban police organizations that offer higher pay and more diverse work opportunities (Alderson-Gill & Associates, 2008; Murphy & Clairmont, 1996). For example, the Kativik Regional Police Force, an agency in Northern Quebec, lost almost half of their officers (30 of 66 officers) in a five month period (George, 2013).

As envisioned, one of the cornerstones of the FNPP was that police services would deliver culturally-appropriate services, although this concept was never clarified. It was posited that SA officers would be more responsive to the cultural and linguistic features of the communities they policed. Research in Saskatchewan with First Nation communities confirmed the value of cultural awareness and language proficiency among officers working in First Nation communities (Jones, Mills, & Ruddell, 2016). Survey research of officers policing Indigenous communities, however, has revealed that the proportion of non-Indigenous officers policing First Nations communities has been increasing. Murphy

and Clairmont (1996) found 89% of officers policing Indigenous communities identified as having an Indigenous identity (Status Indian, Métis or Inuit), whereas that proportion dropped to 69% in 2007 (Alderson-Gill & Associates, 2008) and a 2015 survey reveals that only 26.7% of officers were Indigenous (Jones, Ruddell, et al. 2016). Caution must be used when interpreting those figures, as not all respondents answer questions pertaining to their ethnocultural identity, but these figures show a dramatic drop in the proportion of Indigenous officers.

Community crisis

Brunet (2015) notes that low levels of crime can result in organizational instability: as demand wanes, there is less need for police services. This was referred to as ‘problem depletion.’ King (2009), however, contends that high levels of crime or significant increases in crime can also contribute to crises in police organizations, and we adapted Brunet’s model by naming this condition as community crisis. There are 453 communities policed under the FNPP. Although some of these communities experience very little crime and disorder, others have very high rates of disorder and crime. The rates of crime in some First Nations communities is several times the national average (Brzozowski, Taylor-Butts, & Johnson, 2006; Lithopoulos, 2013). Average levels of crime in the provincial north and the territories are also much higher than the averages in the southern parts of the nation (Allen & Perreault, 2015).

Indigenous peoples are disproportionately represented as homicide victims and offenders. Mulligan, Axford, and Solecki (2016, p. 4) report that indigenous persons accounted for 25% of homicide victims in 2015, or at a rate of about seven times higher than for non-Indigenous peoples. According to the head of the First Nations Chiefs of Police ‘Many of our communities have the highest crime rates in the country with the lowest number of officers’ and that ‘We’re not invested in the right areas; there are no mechanisms to deal with it’ (Canadian Association of Police Governance, 2016, p. 12). Crime does not occur in isolation and tends to be higher in communities with high rates of community dysfunction, such as poverty, unemployment, and addiction (Kiedrowski, 2013). In the survey of officers policing Aboriginal communities conducted by Jones, Ruddell, et al. (2016), the researchers found a high percentage of officers who indicated that these issues were either ‘very serious’ or ‘somewhat serious’ in the communities that they policed. See Table 1.

The figures in Table 1 indicate that the three most significant problems are substance abuse, family violence, and child welfare. Nearly 85% of the officers who responded to the survey ($N = 825$) said they were dealing with “unsolvable” social problems. The findings presented in Table 2 are very similar to those found in a survey conducted by Alderson-Gill & Associates (2008) and earlier research carried out by Murphy and Clairmont (1996). Taken together, the combination of high crime rates along with the seriousness of community problems identified by officers shows demands on SA police services can become overwhelming and may contribute to a crisis in their organizations.

Several other external factors contribute to organizational instability, the first being that SA police services are not designated as essential services (Canadian Association of Police Governance, 2016) and according to the President of the First Nations Chiefs of Police Association, ‘This affects quality of service and shakes the foundation of our existence’ (p. 10). A second external threat is the presence of provincial or federal police services that may be able to contract with these communities to provide policing. These large police services are typically able to quickly enter into an agreement and start delivering contracted services if a SA service disbands. Representatives of the RCMP, however, have pointed out they have deployed officers in secondment roles to work in SA police services grappling with staff shortages (Ruddell, R., *Self-administered police services*. Personal communication with RCMP stakeholders, 2016).

Discussion

In an attempt to improve the delivery of policing services in First Nations communities, the government of Canada developed the FNPP. Although the FNPP was distinctive in that it provided full funding for

Table 2. Community Problems: FNPP Officers agreeing that the problem was ‘very serious’ or ‘somewhat serious’ in their community (*n* = 825 respondents).

Issue	Proportion (%)
Violent crime	44.4
Feuding families/groups	70.6
Gang activity	38.9
Suicide	55
Organized crime	25.7
Family violence	85.4
Child welfare problems	82.1
Alcohol or drug problems	91.8

Source: Jones, Ruddell, et al. (2016).

First Nations police services, the manner in which the program has been implemented has compromised its potential efficacy. The experience of the FNPP in Canada is instructive for other jurisdictions that are considering ways to improve the delivery of justice services to Indigenous communities.

An analysis using Brunet’s (2015) framework for understanding the factors contributing to disbanding police services shows that SA agencies are vulnerable to political and economic factors that places them at a higher risk of failure. With respect to political vulnerability, the analysis in the present study indicates that these police services often suffer from internal challenges, including their small size, the small populations served, and political interference in policing. The study also found that SA police services are vulnerable to external political factors, such as high crime rates and community disorder.

SA agencies must also overcome a number of economic/technical issues that are associated with organizational failure. In terms of internal factors, examples of organizational atrophy include high rates of turnover, poor performance, inadequate infrastructure, and fewer officers of Indigenous descent deployed in 2014 than in 1996 or 2007. The evidence presented above shows that many of the challenges confronting SA police services are related to environmental entropy, which are economic factors external to the agency. This includes the lack of stable and consistent funding that is appropriate to meet the demands in Indigenous communities (DPRA Canada, 2016).

The delivery of policing services to First Nations communities is expensive, due to the large geographic areas that must be patrolled, the isolation of many of the communities, high crime rates, as well as high levels of community dysfunction. Not only is a lack of appropriate funding a significant challenge, but budgets do not allow for the development of the physical infrastructure (such as police buildings), equipment – such as bullet-resistant clothing or breathalysers – annual training, contractual salary increases, as well as allowable expenditures, such as overtime required to carry out an investigation as these expenditures are not reimbursed by the federal or provincial governments.

In sum, the present analysis reveals that there are numerous political and economic disadvantages SA police services must overcome that their larger regional, provincial, or federal police service counterparts do not confront. Moreover, the time, creativity, and resources of these police organizations are being invested in trying to manage these challenges, rather than investing their energies in crime prevention strategies. As a consequence, these police services are vulnerable to being disbanded.

There are a number of limitations to the present study. We, as researchers, relied on secondary data and the analyses of existing historical records, online content, and government and technical reports. Investigators examining these issues in future studies might find surveys and interviews of stakeholders, including those who drafted the legislation and the first leaders of these organizations, are able to shed additional light on the founding of these agencies.

Our lack of knowledge about Indigenous policing is not surprising, as this is one of the most under-researched aspects of Canadian law enforcement. Apart from government technical reports, or reports commissioned by the federal government as a result of major inquiries, there is a dearth of academic literature on Aboriginal policing and a lack of a critical analysis of the FNPP since its inception in 1992 (Kiedrowski, 2013, 2014; Lithopoulos & Ruddell, 2013). While an Aboriginal policing research initiative was established in 2003, Griffiths (2014, p. 38) observes that it failed due

to 'an absence of leadership, a lack of funding, and the challenges of moving an idea from concept to operational reality.' Lithopoulos and Ruddell (2013) observed that this lack of scholarly interest is rather surprising considering that Canada's Indigenous peoples have a high involvement in crimes reported to the police and are disproportionately incarcerated. Lithopoulos and Ruddell argue that research efforts in Aboriginal policing have been undermined by the Canadian government's withdrawal of support for policy-oriented policing research. This has subsequently led to policy-making and decisions based on intuitive and ideological judgments (sometimes proven to be wrong), rather than on deliberate reasoning based on research.

Although our research question was based on SA Indigenous police services, we question whether most small municipal police services are similarly disadvantaged. Lithopoulos (2014) found that the number of police services in Canada dropped by 65% between 1988 and 2012. While some communities disbanded their police services so they could contract with other police organizations, other agencies entered into partnerships to form regional services. When it comes to policing, it seems that many small services are confronting a similar set of disadvantages as their Indigenous counterparts. Mills (2012) cites the mayor of Perth, Ontario – a town with a 15 officer department – who said that 'I truly think that small-town municipal police forces are an endangered species.'

A key outcome of these findings is that while a fully-funded national policing strategy was a significant step in the right direction, the execution of this approach failed due to the reliance upon SA police services that were small stand-alone agencies; the type of law enforcement agency that is disappearing everywhere else (Maguire & King, 2007). An alternative approach to Indigenous policing is to develop regional operations that would police larger geographical areas and thus benefit from economies of scale. Moreover, these agencies are able to provide a more diverse set of career experiences for the agency personnel, thus reducing turnover and improving morale. These larger agencies may also be better able to weather the economic and political challenges that all police agencies confront (King, 2014). Moreover, given their larger size and regional orientation they may be able to better resist political interference from officials in First Nations governments. Regionalization of police services, however, is not a simple undertaking and poses another set of challenges for the participating agencies (Kiedrowski, Melchers, Petrunik, & Ruddell, 2015; Lithopoulos, 2015; Wilson & Grammich, 2017).

Conclusion

The key question posed in this study is whether SA Indigenous police services were set up to fail. Although no direct evidence was found that the officials responsible for the design of the FNPP could foresee the barriers these agencies would have to overcome, perhaps a more accurate term to describe the administration of the FNPP over the past quarter-century is one of *benign neglect*; that by doing nothing or ignoring the problem, the challenges confronting Indigenous policing would somehow manage or resolve themselves. This status of benign neglect is in keeping with a long history of promising much, but delivering little to Indigenous peoples. In 2016, the Minister responsible for Public Safety told the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation that a complete review of the FNPP was required, as the program 'does not cut the mustard' (Parry, 2016). With respect to a new vision for the FNPP the 'Renewal goals are to: create financial sustainability; update the policy to reflect current policing and policy landscapes; build on what works to respond effectively to policing and public safety challenges; consider alternative and innovative approaches to service delivery' (Canadian Association of Police Governance, 2016, p. 19).

While growing recognition of the problems associated with Indigenous policing, modest funding increases for the FNPP to 'address [their] most immediate needs' (see Department of Finance, 2017, p. 169), and a stated intent to renew the program are positive steps in the right direction some argue these efforts are 'too little, too late.' Given the broken promises and failed reforms of the past, the stakeholders in Canada's SA police services have a right to be skeptical, and the Chair of the NAPS community board told a Coroner's inquest 'Enough is enough' ... 'We can't do this all the time where you promise something and then turn around and say you can't do it' (Porter, 2016).

Note

1. For an overview of the current *Terms and Conditions* for the agreements, see <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/cntrng-crm/plcng/brgnl-plcng/cntrbnt-fndng-frst-ntns-eng.aspx>.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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