



TRUECRIME

VANCOUVER POLICE DEPARTMENT | 2018 ANNUAL REPORT

EARLY IN THE MORNING OF APRIL 9, 2009, THE BODY OF A MALE WAS DISCOVERED, PARTIALLY HIDDEN, IN THE BUSHES ON THE GROUNDS OF SIR GUY CARLETON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN VANCOUVER. AN EMPTY WHEELCHAIR WAS FOUND NEARBY. IT TOOK VPD INVESTIGATORS FIVE YEARS TO BUILD A STRONG CASE AND ANOTHER FOUR FOR THE CASE TO WORK ITS WAY THROUGH THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM. THE FILE CAME TO A CONCLUSION IN 2018 WHEN THE SUSPECT WAS CONVICTED OF SECOND DEGREE MURDER.

A BEHIND-THE-SCENES LOOK INTO THE WORKINGS OF THE VPD INVESTIGATION DIVISION

Early in the morning of April 9, 2009, the body of a male was discovered, partially hidden, in the bushes on the grounds of Sir Guy Carleton Elementary School in Vancouver. An empty wheelchair was found nearby.

It took VPD detectives five years to build a strong case and another four for the case to work its way through the criminal justice system. The file came to a conclusion in 2018 when the suspect was convicted of second degree murder.

GATHERING EVIDENCE

The Vancouver Police Department was called that morning when a mother, dropping her child off at school, discovered the body. When detectives arrived, they determined that the man had not died of natural causes. Crime scene tape went up around the entire schoolyard, as investigators began processing the scene and collecting evidence.

The first break in the investigation came the very first day. The victim did not have any identification on him and no one matching his description had recently been reported missing. A bystander approached a patrol officer guarding the crime scene. He was the victim's friend.

The victim was identified as Michael Nestoruk, a 41-year-old homeless father of two. In an interview with investigators, the friend relayed the events leading up to Michael's murder.

Michael had approached his friend the day before, asking if he had any identification he could borrow. He had the money to rent a hotel room, but he did not have any ID. The friend did not have any ID either, but he knew someone who did.

He introduced Michael to a man named Aaron Power. The three of them went to a motel on Kingsway, where they used Michael's cash and Power's ID to rent a room. They spent the afternoon doing drugs and then the two men departed.

Michael checked out of the motel that evening. He headed to Kingsway and Joyce, where he rejoined the two men, along with a few others.

By 4:30 a.m. Michael was left alone in the schoolyard. His body was found later that morning.

Detectives had reason to believe the attack was not random. They began looking into Michael's background further and

interviewed other friends and family to learn about his life, and whether anyone had ever threatened to hurt him.

They learned that, in a cruel twist of fate, Michael's life had ended at the exact location where it had begun a downward spiral years earlier. In 1983, when he was only 15, Michael had fallen off the roof of the same school, breaking his back and injuring his spinal cord. He was forever confined to a wheelchair.

Ongoing infections had led to the amputation of his left leg. Michael was in chronic pain and had several surgeries. He became dependent on drugs. He got clean for a period of time and was married in 1992. Michael and his wife had two daughters. Eventually, he fell back into the cycle of drug addiction and ended up homeless.

Initially, detectives focused their efforts on the school grounds where Michael's body was discovered and the motel where he had spent time the day before he died. However, soon after, they expanded their efforts to the surrounding neighbourhood and conducted an extensive search for witnesses and surveillance video.

They found video from a 7-11 in the area, which clearly showed Michael in his wheelchair with a backpack on his lap, alongside his friend. The backpack was not beside Michael's body when he was discovered and it was never located. This helped investigators to confirm information from witnesses and began to shed light on a possible motive.

Investigators continued with information gathering, as evidence collected from the forensic examination of the scene and the body was analyzed. It was a lengthy process and detectives had to prioritize the most urgent and critical evidence to send to the lab.

INVESTIGATIVE TECHNIQUES

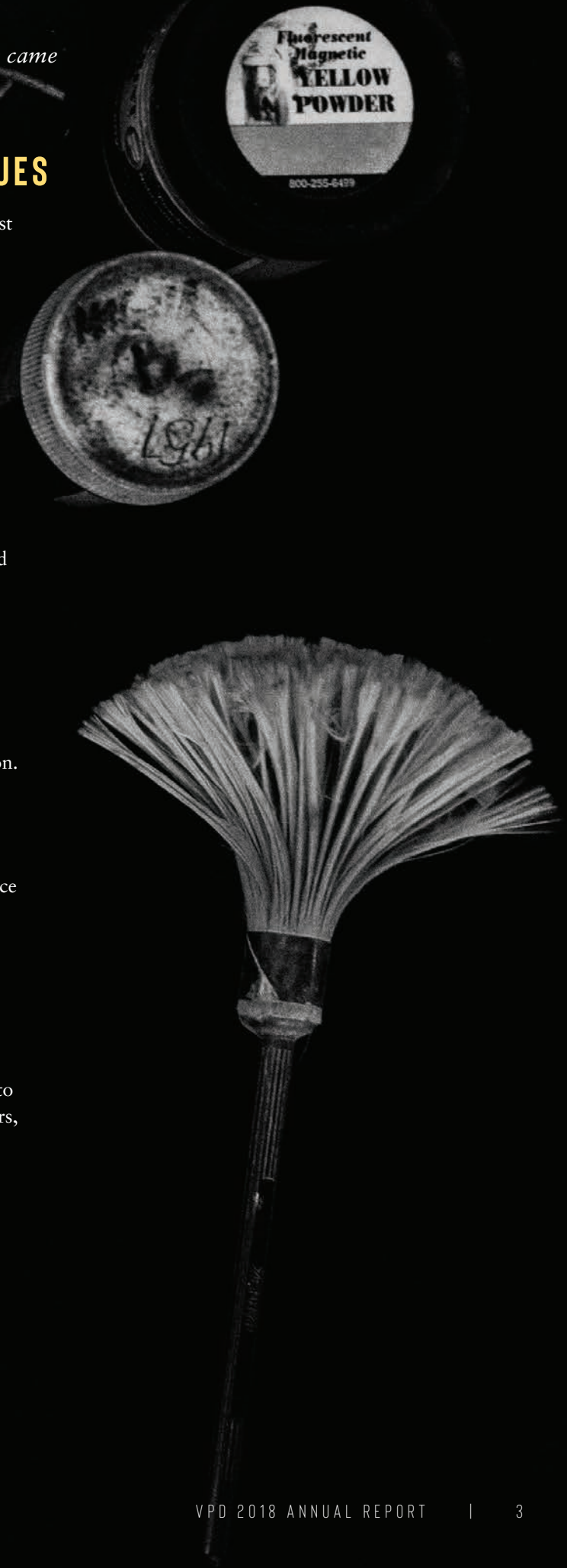
Power had quickly become a person-of-interest in the investigation – partly because he was well-known to police and had an extensive criminal background involving violence, but also because of his suspicious behaviour following the murder. However, investigators could not tie him to the murder.

A plea for information was made through the media the day Michael's body was discovered, asking people to contact the VPD Homicide Unit or Crime Stoppers. This generated numerous tips quickly, which were all investigated. A year later, detectives applied to the Vancouver Police Board for an award for information in the case. A news release announcing the \$10,000 reward and another appeal for information in the case was made.

Perhaps the greatest tool that eventually led to a conviction in this case was the use of an elaborate and exhaustive undercover operation. The goal was to determine what role Power had played, if any, in the murder of Michael Nestoruk.

The operation led to a confession. The evidence gathered by police and crime scene analysis corroborated Power's confession.

Around 5:30 on the last morning of Michael Nestoruk's life, Aaron Power returned to the schoolyard and attacked him with a rock, killing him. He dragged Michael's body over to some shrubs to try and conceal it. Thanks to the determination and patience of investigators, Aaron Power was convicted of the second degree murder of Michael Nestoruk, and sentenced to life in prison.



SUMMARY

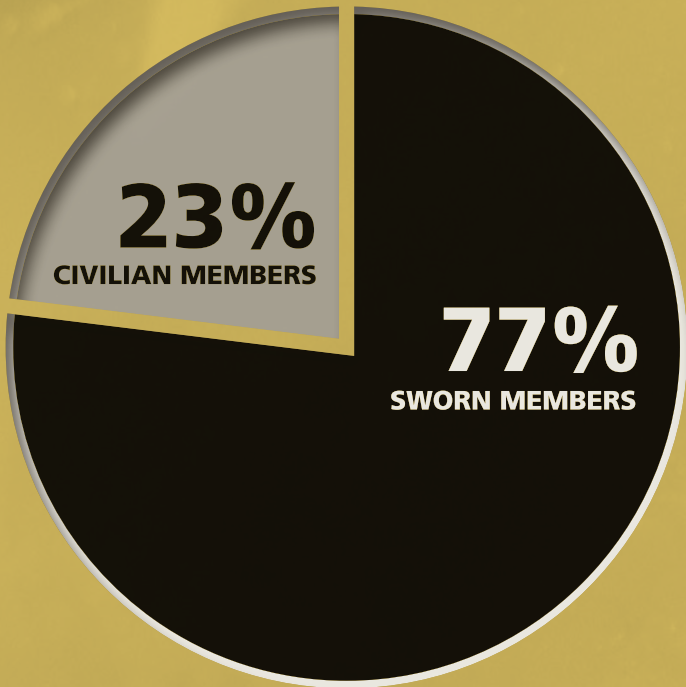
CRIME BY THE NUMBERS

FINANCIAL SUMMARY	2017 (\$1,000)	2018 (\$1,000)	% CHANGE
Budget	\$273,817	\$286,756	4.7%
Cost	\$273,772	\$286,740	4.7%
UNDERBUDGET	\$45	\$16	

This is the 14th consecutive year the VPD has finished the year within budget.

For more details, visit:
vancouver.ca/police/policeboard/financial.htm

AUTHORIZED STRENGTH	2017	2018
VPD Sworn Members	1,327	1,327
VPD Civilian Members	388.5	389.5
TOTAL POSITIONS	1,715.5	1,715.5



ANNUAL

CRIMINAL OFFENCES	NUMBER OF INCIDENTS 2017	NUMBER OF INCIDENTS 2018	2017 RATE /1,000 POP	2018 RATE /1,000 POP	% CHANGE (RATE)
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VIOLENT CRIME	5,268	5,308	7.91	7.89	-0.2%
Culpable Homicide	19	15	0.03	0.02	-21.8%
Attempted Murder	16	18	0.02	0.03	11.4%
Sexual Offences	588	640	0.88	0.95	7.8%
Assaults	4,048	4,042	6.08	6.01	-1.1%
Robbery	597	593	0.90	0.88	-1.7%

PROPERTY CRIME	40,711	41,732	61.10	62.01	1.5%
Break & Enter	4,655	4,368	6.99	6.49	-7.1%
Theft of Motor Vehicle	1,937	1,539	2.91	2.29	-21.3%
Theft from Auto	12,560	14,598	18.85	21.69	15.1%
Theft (Over/Under \$5K)	12,905	12,350	19.37	18.35	-5.2%
Possession of Stolen Property	683	542	1.03	0.81	-21.4%
Fraud	2,993	3,095	4.49	4.60	2.4%
Arson	202	253	0.30	0.38	24.0%
Mischief (Over/Under \$5K)	4,776	4,987	7.17	7.41	3.4%

OTHER CRIME	6,094	5,984	9.15	8.89	-2.8%
Offensive Weapons	611	607	0.92	0.90	-1.6%
Other Criminal Code	5,483	5,377	8.23	7.99	-2.9%

TOTAL CRIME	52,073	53,024	78.15	78.79	0.8%
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DRUGS	1,665	1,589	2.50	2.36	-5.5%
Cannabis	645	448	0.97	0.67	-31.2%
Cocaine	479	461	0.72	0.69	-4.7%
Heroin	372	264	0.56	0.39	-29.7%
Other	169	416	0.25	0.62	143.7%

TRAFFIC	2,017	1,945	3.03	2.89	-4.5%
Dangerous Operation of MV	67	76	0.10	0.11	12.3%
Impaired Operation of MV	1,116	1,109	1.67	1.65	-1.6%
Fail/Refuse Breath/Blood Sample	23	18	0.03	0.03	-22.5%
Fail to Stop/Remain at Scene	585	530	0.88	0.79	-10.3%
Driving while Prohibited	226	212	0.34	0.32	-7.1%

	NUMBER OF INCIDENTS 2017	NUMBER OF INCIDENTS 2018	2016 RATE /1,000 POP	2017 RATE /1,000 POP	% CHANGE
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TRAFFIC FATALITIES	13	13	0.02	0.02	0%
CALLS FOR SERVICE	267,937	265,653	402.12	394.75	-1.8%

	2017	2018
POPULATION	666,310	672,963

For more information on our data and disclaimers and limitations, please refer to:
vancouver.ca/police/Planning/info.htm



VANCOUVER POLICE BOARD



Left to right: Mayor Kennedy Stewart, Dr. Sherri Magee, Patricia Barnes, Barj Dhaban, Claire Marshall, Thomas Tam, and Dr. Peter Wong.

THE VANCOUVER POLICE BOARD is the VPD's governing body. The Board provides strategic oversight and direction and fosters police services which reflect the needs, values, and diversity of Vancouver's many communities. The Board is made up of eight volunteer citizens who are all residents of Vancouver. The Mayor is the Chair of the Board.

One of the Board's most important priorities is to ensure an open and transparent link between the community and the VPD. The Board encourages opportunities for citizens to engage with the VPD, and with the Board, to ensure that police services are responsive to the needs and priorities of Vancouver citizens.

Other priorities of the Board include:

- Supporting a healthy workforce. Giving employees access to appropriate health and wellness services makes the VPD more effective and cost efficient.
- Improving safety, care, and quality of life for those living with mental health issues and addiction. By partnering with local health authorities, the Board promotes innovative treatment and support initiatives.
- Fostering a diverse workforce. The Board encourages police programs, services, and recruiting efforts which are accessible to everyone.

The VPD is widely recognized as one of the best police departments in North America. The Board takes great pride in the work of the VPD, and particularly, in the respect and trust it has earned with Vancouver citizens.



MESSAGE *from the chief*

THE VANCOUVER POLICE DEPARTMENT is made up of more than 2,000 talented, dedicated people who work together to keep our city safe. The most visible to the public are the police officers in the Operations Division. These are the women and men in uniform who work 24/7 on patrol. They are our first line of contact and respond to various types of 9-1-1 calls – ranging from lost children to reports of shots-fired. They do incredible work every day to keep our city safe.

What the public doesn't often see is the hundreds of people – civilian professionals and police officers – who work behind-the-scenes, investigating robberies, assaults, homicides, arsons, gang crimes, break-ins, and many other crimes, as part of our Investigation Division. For our annual report for 2018, we are looking back at the year with a focus on their work.

Specifically, we are taking an inside look at a 2009 homicide that concluded in 2018 when the killer was convicted of second degree murder. This case shows us that investigations don't always wrap up quickly. The focus for our investigators is getting charges approved by Crown counsel based on the evidence collected, and helping to bring closure for victims and their families. This means that our detectives need to be thorough, meticulous, and strategic as they gather evidence.

Even when a case takes years to complete, it's important to know that our investigators don't ever give up: an unsolved case is never forgotten about. Even when investigative leads dry up, we keep working the cases – even assigning new detectives to bring a new perspective.

Within our Investigation Division, we have dedicated sections for: major crimes (e.g. homicides), special investigations (e.g. sexual assaults), organized crimes (e.g. violent drug trafficking networks), and general investigations (e.g. property crimes). The Investigation Division also includes officers trained in highly-specialized areas like forensics, youth crime, cybercrime, surveillance, wiretap, and undercover operations. However, detectives and civilian professionals in each of these sections work together and collaborate on cases. For example, a homicide investigation could also have an organized crime connection. Whether it is through collaboration, innovation, or just good old-fashioned police work, the staff in our Investigation Division always go 'beyond the call' to solve a case.

Supporting the work of our Operations and Investigation Divisions are the members of our Support Services Division, which includes key organizational functions such as human resources, training and recruiting, information and communication technology, financial services, fleet, facilities, and information management.

In this report, you will also find our year-end crime statistics for 2018. Although the overall crime rate went up slightly (by 0.8 per cent), there was a decrease in violent crime (by 0.2 per cent). Property crime increased by 1.5 per cent. I am pleased to report that we finished 2018 within budget for the 14th consecutive year.

CHIEF ADAM PALMER
VANCOUVER POLICE DEPARTMENT

VANCOUVER POLICE FOUNDATION

THE VANCOUVER POLICE FOUNDATION was established in 1976 to help support the Vancouver Police Department with funding needs that fall outside of its regular operating budget. As a non-profit society and registered charity, the Foundation works with the VPD to help prevent crime; engage with the community; support marginalized and at-risk groups; and build safe, and vibrant neighbourhoods.

Funding requests originate from VPD members who manage projects and initiatives, often on their own time. The Foundation provides grants in one of four pillars: youth programs, mental health and addiction, community outreach and engagement, and specialized equipment and technology.

At first glance, it might not be obvious how the Foundation can support a core element of the VPD's work – investigations. Yet over the years, the Foundation has funded nearly \$500,000 worth of requests to directly support investigations. One grant provided funds to upgrade GPS surveying equipment for use in collision investigations. Another grant funded the completion of a cold case website which allows the public to provide tips to the VPD. In 2017, the Foundation awarded a grant to the Treehouse Child and Youth Advocacy Centre, which takes a holistic approach to investigations involving children. In a specially designed safe space outside of police facilities, Treehouse brings together VPD detectives with social workers and parents for interviews and ensures that the families have access to the resources they need. Families are supported throughout the investigations and connected to counselling and victim services resources.

As crime continues to evolve, the Foundation supports efforts to help the police keep pace with changes and to leverage new technology. This includes funding for forensic technologies.

The Foundation plays an important role in prevention by funding a number of programs aimed at supporting young people to make positive life choices. Some of these initiatives are geared toward keeping youth out of gangs and organized crime.

These innovative programs, modern technology, and equipment are funded by generous members of the community – every single gift makes a difference. The Foundation thanks and salutes donors and community leaders for their donations.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
ABOUT THE VANCOUVER POLICE
FOUNDATION, TO MAKE A DONATION,
OR TO GET INVOLVED THROUGH
VOLUNTEERING, PLEASE VISIT
VANCOUVERPOLICEFOUNDATION.ORG.



VPD FORENSICS LAB

SIR GUY CARLETON ELEMENTARY

