

# Project Floodway

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*2018 Interim Report*



## Background

“Project Floodway” is a Thunder Bay Police project submitted by Detective Constable Brooke PILLEY #765 in response to recommendation #115 of the Inquest into the Deaths of Seven First Nations Youth (River Safety Audits).

The goal of this project is to locate, assist, and prevent intoxicated persons from injury near waterways and organize Thunder Bay Police Service efforts by implementing several directives, including:

- Identification of study areas
- Implementation of foot patrols in these areas
- Collaboration with partners on terms of reference and next steps
- Completion of a Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) safety audit
- Providing statistics on police incidents and encounters related to waterways

The original incident number is P16072556, though many other incident numbers have been created and cross-referenced since to manage the abundance of data.

## Study Areas

**McVicar Creek** (between Algoma St N and Marina Park)

**Neebing/McIntyre Floodway** (between Home Depot and Balmoral Street)

**Lower Neebing River** (walk bridges between Northern Avenue and Southern Avenue)

**Kaministiquia River** (between Dock Street and the James Whalen Tug Boat)

## Collection of Data

Data for this report was collected using NICHE and I/NetViewer between the dates of November 17, 2016 and January 31, 2018.

Data was incomplete due to some incidents being cleared non-reportable without providing sufficient clearing remarks or personal details.

The first task was to compile a list of incident numbers related to Project Floodway. This was done by gathering all incident numbers cross-referenced to the original incident number. In addition, fire incidents related to water/ice rescue were cross-referenced to police incident numbers not already linked. Finally, a database search was completed using water-related terms in addition to the terms “intox” and “11-8.”

A thorough review of each incident was then completed and specific information was gathered in a spreadsheet, including **incident number, date, time, location, names, ages, genders, total involved persons**, and a brief **synopsis** of each incident.

A summary of the information collected so far is presented in this report.

## Data Summary 2017

<b>Average age</b>	35.5
<b>Median age</b>	33
<b>Oldest person age</b>	69
<b>Youngest person age</b>	13
<b>Persons under 21 *</b>	27
<b>Persons under 20</b>	16
<b>Persons under 19</b>	13
<b>Persons under 18</b>	9

**Total persons \*\*** 1211

**Total males** 335

**Total females** 157

**Total incidents** 459

**Total incident #s** 376

**Neebing/McIntyre Floodway** 307

**McVicar Creek** 93

**Lower Neebing River** 27

**Lake Superior** 16

**Kaministiquia River** 12

**Current River** 1

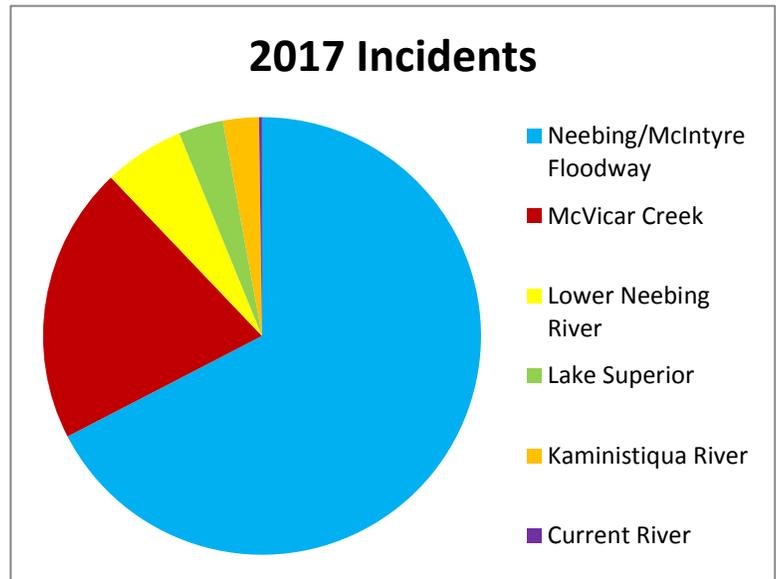
### Neebing/McIntyre Incidents

**Thunder Center** 210

**CN Rail Bridge** 50

**Silver City** 15

**All others** 32



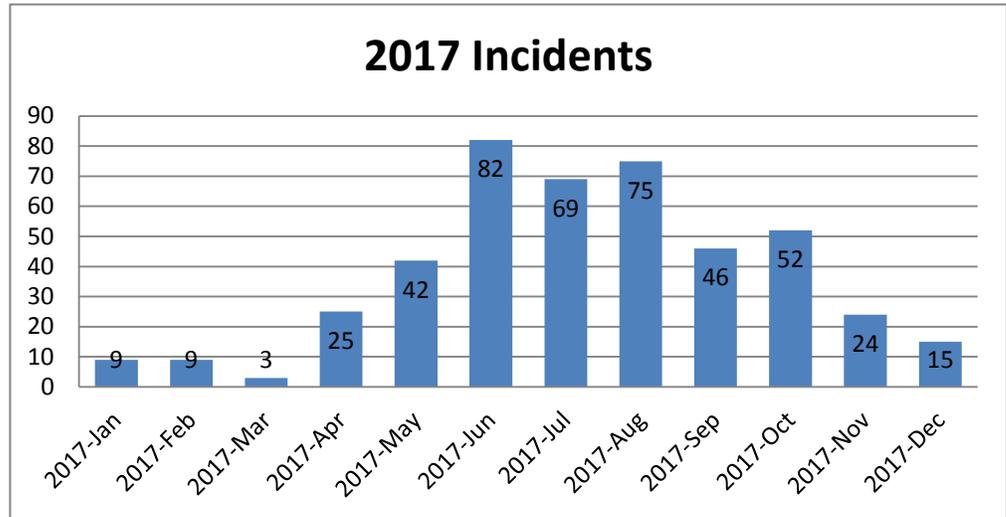
\* Total involved persons less than 21 years of age

\*\* Total number of persons who interacted with police – the same person may have multiple interactions, so this value includes duplicate persons

## Incident Frequency 2017

### Incidents 2017

2017-Jan	9
2017-Feb	9
2017-Mar	3
2017-Apr	25
2017-May	42
2017-Jun	82
2017-Jul	69
2017-Aug	75
2017-Sep	46
2017-Oct	52
2017-Nov	24
2017-Dec	15
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>451</b>



### Incidents 2016 \*

2016-Nov	1
2016-Dec	7

\* Annual data incomplete due to project start date

## Data Summary 2018

<b>Average age</b>	34.11
<b>Median age</b>	33
<b>Oldest person age</b>	42
<b>Youngest person age</b>	22
<b>Persons under 21 *</b>	0
<b>Persons under 20</b>	0
<b>Persons under 19</b>	0
<b>Persons under 18</b>	0

**Total persons \*\*** 21

**Total males** 6  
**Total females** 7

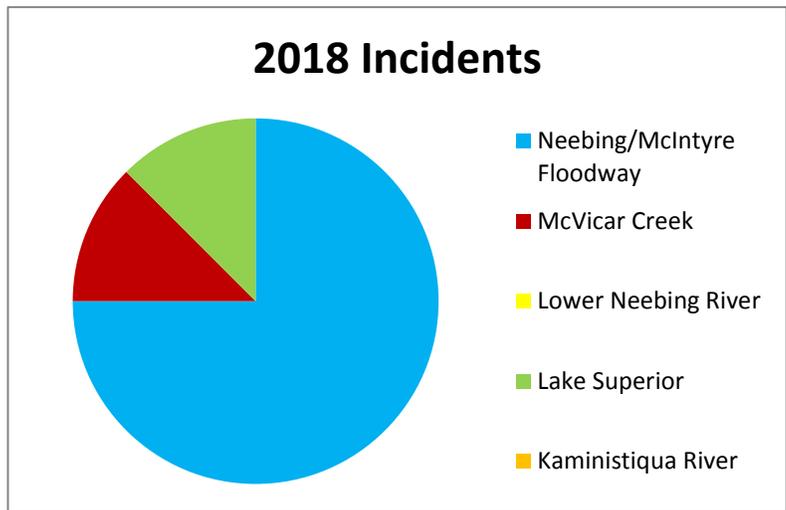
**Total incidents** 9

**Total inc #s** 8

<b>Neebing/McIntyre Floodway</b>	6
<b>McVicar Creek</b>	1
<b>Lower Neebing River</b>	0
<b>Lake Superior</b>	1
<b>Kaministiquia River</b>	0
<b>Current River</b>	0

### Neebing/McIntyre Incidents

<b>Thunder Center</b>	5
<b>CN Rail Bridge</b>	1
<b>Silver City</b>	0
<b>Balmoral St</b>	0

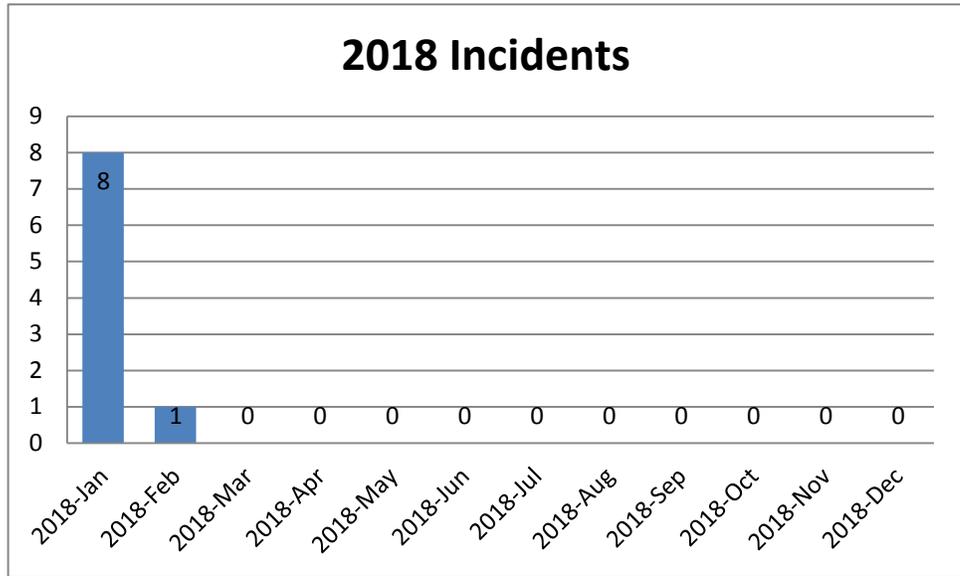


\* Total involved persons less than 21 years of age

\*\* Total number of persons who interacted with police – the same person may have multiple interactions, so this value includes duplicate persons

## Incident Frequency 2018

2018-Jan	8
2018-Feb	1
2018-Mar	0
2018-Apr	0
2018-May	0
2018-Jun	0
2018-Jul	0
2018-Aug	0
2018-Sep	0
2018-Oct	0
2018-Nov	0
2018-Dec	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9</b>



## Data Interpretation

Thunder Bay Police Service responded to 468 Floodway related incidents tracked by 384 separate incident numbers since this project began. Eight incidents were tracked in 2016, but tracking did not begin until late November. 451 incidents were tracked in 2017. So far, nine incidents have been tracked in 2018.

Duplicate incident numbers were removed to streamline data. Some incidents were linked, however, upon review of the information, were not included as they were not in fact related to waterways. For example, intoxicated persons in Canadian Tire, Starbucks, Subway, or EBGames at the Thunder Centre were not included, unless there was some indication that the persons had been nearer to the waterway at some point. The author is satisfied that most incidents were captured in this report, however, admits some may have been missed due to improper cross-referencing.

At least 1232 persons were involved in project-related incidents. This number is on the low end, as in some cases, incidents were cleared non-reportable with insufficient information provided to determine total number of persons involved. For example, the original complainant may have reported a “group” of persons near a waterway, but when police arrived on scene, they were unable to locate anyone. So as not to inflate the statistics, the author rounded the total number of persons in these cases down to 2.

Of the total persons involved, 341 were identified as male and 164 were identified as female. Again, these numbers are on the low end and do not add up to the total number of involved persons reported above due to insufficient information being provided in clearing remarks and/or reports.

While youths have been encountered during this project, they make up the minority of involved persons. It is impossible to calculate the exact percentage due to incomplete data. True age is only known for persons identified in the project, and in many cases, persons have not been identified.

Of the study areas, the Neebing/McIntyre Floodway is the most frequently occupied, followed by McVicar Creek, Lower Neebing River, Lake Superior, and Kaministiquia River. Current River was not identified as part of the study area, however, there was an incident reported relevant to this project. Two-thirds or 67% of all project-related incidents occurred at the Neebing/McIntyre Floodway.

The most commonly occupied areas along the Neebing/McIntyre Floodway were near the Thunder Centre, McIntyre Centre, Silver City, and Balmoral Street in descending order. It should be noted that there are several bridges crossing the floodway near these locations and unlawful users of the space are commonly found on, under, or near bridges. Furthermore, beer, spirits, and other alcohol-based intoxicants are highly accessible in this area due to the close proximity of the LCBO, Beer Store, Shopper’s Drug Mart, and Dollarama.

Of all 2017 project-related incidents, there were 116 incidents of probable life-saving intervention of adults, 24 incidents of possible life-saving intervention of adults, 16 incidents involving persons 18 years or younger, and one incident of probable life-saving intervention of persons 18 years or younger.

Probable and possible life-saving interventions are subjective in most cases. In cases considered to fit these criteria, persons involved were extremely intoxicated and intervention by first responders very likely resulted in saving lives (e.g., unconscious in close proximity to water, transportation to the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre, water rescues, etc.).

There were five sudden deaths tracked by this project.

There were five water/ice rescues involving police.

Most incidents involved persons who were intoxicated and either unconscious or sleeping near rivers. In those cases, subjects were either transported to a place of safety, the Detoxification Centre, the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre, or arrested for public intoxication, warrants, and breaches.

In most cases where people were either consuming alcohol or had recently been consuming alcohol but were not intoxicated, they were moved along to a safer place and cautioned for risky behavior.

In several cases, persons were completely sober and lawfully using the space. It is the opinion of the author that these numbers are skewed toward the low end due to the public and police not reporting numbers of persons lawfully using the space.

During 2017, occupancy in study areas increased as the weather improved and fell off during the colder months. There were nearly as many incidents in June (82) as there were from January to May combined (88). July saw a small drop off in incidents from the previous month (69). Incidents in August increased again (75). Incidents in September (46), October (52), and November (24) remained moderate, perhaps due to a warm fall season.

In December 2016 there were 7 tracked incidents and in December 2017 there were 15 incidents. According to weather data tracked by timeanddate.com, the average temperature for December 2016 was -8°C (high of 5°C and low of -27°C) and the average temperature for December 2017 was -12°C (high of 6°C and low of -31°C) in Thunder Bay, Ontario. While weather appears to be the driving force behind occupancy in the floodway areas, in this case, it could be that an increase in public awareness led to the increase in incidents.

In general, police have been doing frequent patrols in the study areas, yet unlawful users of these spaces seem undeterred. Police often encounter the same people over multiple incidents, and whether they are arrested, taken to the hospital, taken to a place of safety, or moved along with a caution, they often come back. This highlights a need to deter such behavior through other means such as modification of the natural environment, increased positive community activity, surveillance, and referral of persons commonly encountered to appropriate mental health and addiction services.

Of all unique persons identified by police in this project (144), 63 persons were encountered more than once. One individual was identified as part of this project 15 times. Another was identified 13 times. It is possible these persons were dealt with many more times, however, not identified by reporting officers.

## Recommendations

The author has several recommendations after reviewing data and compiling this report.

1. Continue with directed police patrols throughout the colder months. Calls for service and occupancy in these areas will likely decrease if the last year of data is an indication, however, it is evident that police intervention is saving lives. Examine the possibility of engaging Thunder Bay Fire and Rescue as their mission statement is: *To Save Life, Property and Environment by Providing Fire Protection, Rescue, Public Education and Medical Assistance to Our Community.*
2. Engage the community. Members of the community and lawful users of these spaces can provide additional eyes and ears to report risky behaviors at these locations. Doing so will alleviate pressure on police to increase routine foot patrols already being performed. Ideas include involving Bear Clan and residents who live along the edges of these waterways through a “river watch” program. Additionally, support the efforts of the Shelter House Street Outreach Service program as well as educational on-call workers who routinely patrol these areas.
3. Implement CPTED recommendations. A river safety audit was completed by Barry HORROBIN of the Windsor Police Service and members of the Recommendation #115 working group. A report, including recommendations was submitted in September 2017. Having visited these locations on numerous occasions, it was apparent that changes to the environment could reduce unlawful activity (e.g., lighting, barriers, etc.), or at least help police solve crimes after they have been committed (e.g., cameras).  
\*\*Note: A working group is in place to develop an advanced camera surveillance and analytic system which will include coverage for the key areas mentioned in Project Floodway.\*\*
4. Encourage Thunder Bay Police officers to continue the collection of valuable information through detailed reports or clearing remarks. Under Ontario’s Collection of Identifying Information in Certain Circumstances legislation, police officers have the authority to ask anyone for identifying information as long as the stop is not arbitrary. Depending on circumstances, officers must inform the person they are not required to provide such information, and should give a receipt of contact.
5. Update the data collection spreadsheet every six to eight weeks to examine emerging trends and properly inform police decision-making. This will also allow police to provide timely updates to the Recommendation #115 working group. Year-over-year comparisons will be made as more data is gathered and analyzed.