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**Politically correct, morally wrong**

**By Robert Marshall**

In a country where so many believe that cops can get away with anything, what happens when extreme politics and the need to placate special interest enter the fray? Does holding the police to a coveted higher standard mean dumbing-down what's needed to convict?

Remember Evan Maud? Just before Christmas the aboriginal man set the Winnipeg police on its ear with accusations that he'd been subjected to a so-called starlight tour - kidnapped by the cops, driven to the edge of town and abandoned in freezing temperatures.

With just a few public words, the allegation took on a head of steam with family members, aboriginal groups and even academia stoking the fire.

Saskatoon, for years labeled the starlight-tour capital and where three aboriginal men years ago were found frozen to death, supplied the credence needed to make Maud's accusations plausible.

We've since been told that Maud's allegations were thoroughly investigated and he's been charged with making up a phony story.

But a decade ago in Saskatoon, race relations were in crisis. Official inquiries and media coverage were thick with political correctness suggesting starlight tours were the cause of the city's freezing deaths.

Civil unrest was in the air and something had to give as Saskatoon recorded a fourth case.

Darrell Night, an aboriginal man, huge in stature with a criminal record to match, complained that he too had been taken on a starlight tour, but lived to tell the tale.

Officially, when the dust settled, the nation was left to believe that these tours were a fact of life, but that we could breath easier because some of the cops had been outed and fired. And in Night's case, sent to prison.

But now, is the politically loaded Night case falling apart? Does anybody give a damn?

Journalist Candis McLean worked it for several years and produced an explosive documentary, *When Police Become Prey*, which gathered rave reviews.

It explores the plight of fired Saskatoon officers Ken Munson and Dan Hatchen and their descent into hell as they entered prison as Night's assailants, branded as monstrous racists and implicated, without evidence, in other freezing deaths.

The documentary takes a sobering look at what should have been seen as a farcical case, a sub-par investigation and the witch-hunt proceedings that convicted them.

Night says that at 5:30 a.m., Jan. 28, 2000, the cops picked him up. Police confirm that, after he attacked and pounded on a patrol car. For the police it was a usual case of too many calls and not enough cops. Once in custody, a belligerent Night settled down and came to an agreement with his arresting officers: If they drove him toward home and let him go, he'd be good.

Here the stories take different paths.

Night says he didn't know where he was dropped. The police say it was where he wanted to be and that he directed them to within walking distance of the Clancy apartments where he flopped regularly.

Night never froze. He never got frostbite. He was dressed appropriately. But he did renege on his reported deal. Instead of walking home he used a nearby phone to call a taxi that took him, the cabbie believes, to a party.

Days later, amid the international controversy that came with the discovery of two frozen aboriginal male bodies, Night made his complaint and sued for millions.

The RCMP was called in to investigate and, incredibly, with no injuries to Night, a court sent Munson and Hachen to prison where death threats loomed large.

Munson had been a British police officer, seasoned before moving to Canada in 1982 with a naive dream of working with the aboriginal population that he'd studied from afar.

Munson was no racist.

He bought groceries for a particular aboriginal family when they were short of money. He mentored a young aboriginal man who considers him, "the father I never had." When interviewed, Don Grey says, "they put Ken out as racist, but he had a humongous effect on me. To this day I phone and tell him, 'If it weren't for you I'd be in jail or dead of suicide.'"

In his complaint, Night supplied the wrong car number. Munson and Hachen volunteered that they had dealt with him, never dreaming that the politics of the day meant they had just drawn their go-directly-to-jail card.

McLean details simple pieces of evidence that, if presented, could have swayed any jury and should have the wrongful-conviction industry licking its chops.

Among them: Nobody bothered to track down the manager of the nearby Clancy Apartments who says that Night did in fact flop there (Night never mentioned that) and expresses surprise that the squad of RCMP investigators never checked with her regarding the officers' alibi. The manager's daughter also knew Night and said, "the outcome of that trial would have been totally different if the RCMP had done their job."

Other twists include the trial judge refusing to have the jury hear a rambling, drunken 911-call made by Night four days later and before any complaint was lodged. He wasn't concerned about the police. In fact, he demanded their help "because two "f\*\*\*ing (white) guys just tried to run me over." The judge ruled that Night's profanity, racist comments and incoherent speech might have prejudiced the jury against him.

What of fairness and what of politics when some of the simplest but most compelling evidence is overlooked or suppressed? Or when the questionable word of a hardened criminal is taken over that of two officers with exemplary records.

Support for the former cops has come from some interesting quarters, including Joyce Milgaard, an outspoken police critic, representative of the Association in Defence of the Wrongly Convicted and mother of David, who spent 24 years behind bars for a murder he did not commit.

Since their release Hachen has worked with computers and Munson finds odd jobs.

The former cops have lost faith in the system and don't have the funds to continue their legal battle with political correctness gone wild.

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