

Souris Man Charged with Sexually Assaulting Boys
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A retired Souris businessman, well-known in the community as a volunteer and former court magistrate, has been accused of sexually assaulting young boys.

Following an 18-month RCMP investigation, the suspect was formally charged in January with three counts of gross indecency.

The charges have not been proven in court and a hearing is scheduled for Thursday in Brandon.

"We were targeted by someone we trusted when we were children, when we were kids," claims Man 1, one of several individuals interviewed by police. None of the alleged victims can be identified because they were minors at the time.

Man 2 claims he was assaulted for several years during the 1980s, beginning when he was age 12.

"It messes you up. You hide it. You bury it. Then, you start thinking about it," he says. "It strains relationships. It changes your family life, no two ways about it."

The accused was a prominent resident in Souris for more than 60 years, owning and operating a car dealership, auction mart, real estate company and opening a franchise restaurant in the 1970s that continues today.

"Our fear is, that he's an older gentleman looked upon as a perfect person. But, he is a pedophile," alleges Man 1.

The accused also served as president of the Souris & Glenwood Chamber of Commerce, secretary-treasurer of the volunteer fire department and executive board member with the town's golf, curling and flying clubs. In addition to singing in the church choir, he was active in fraternal and service groups for over 50 years.

"The man spent several years with the Block Parent sign in his window," says Man 2. "I remember that."

The investigation began in the summer of 2015 when an individual, concerned whether RCMP in Souris could thoroughly and impartially investigate, filed a complaint with police in Regina SK.

As the 1,800 residents in Souris became aware of the investigation, Man 2 says he experienced both support and awkward avoidance in his home town.

"It's no secret in this town, by any means," he says. "You can see the different looks. People treat you differently. But one guy came up to me the other night...and he was really supportive. That was a huge relief."

"We don't believe we were the only ones targeted," says Man 1, and is encouraging others who may have information to step forward. RCMP have interviewed people in at least three provinces but did not respond to Southwest Post requests for information about the case.

"Every community has them. They are everywhere," says Man 2. "Crime happens proportionally in population. If it happens one-in-a-thousand, that just means it happens more in Winnipeg than Souris but it still happens in the same ratio. I really believe that. Location doesn't matter."

Man 1 says the person whose complaint triggered the investigation has been communicating with both Sheldon Kennedy and Theo Fleury, former professional hockey players from small Manitoba communities and survivors of childhood sexual assault.

Man 2 says the investigation, charges and pending court case are helping him to heal.

"July 15, when I gave my statement, was the start of getting better," he says. "There's always been that fear that somebody is going to find out. Then, what will they think of you? It's that ghost in the closet."

RCMP have charged George Reginald (Reg) Lang, 86, with three counts of gross indecency under former Section 157 of the Criminal Code. This particular offense, which carries an imprisonment term of five years, was law at the time of the alleged incidents but removed from the Code in the late 1980s and replaced with sexual assault.