



VERDICT AT INQUEST

File No.: 2010:0216:0063

An Inquest was held at the Coroners Court, in the municipality of Burnaby in the Province of British Columbia, on the following dates June 27 - 29, 2011 before Mr. Rodrick H. MacKenzie, Presiding Coroner, into the death of DIFFNER, Jason Brent 37 Male Female and the following findings were made:

Date and Time of Death: July 9, 2010 at 22:33 Place of Death: Surrey Memorial Hospital Surrey, British Columbia

Medical Cause of Death

(1) Immediate Cause of Death: a) Death is attributed to acute combined cocaine and heroin intoxication DUE TO OR AS A CONSEQUENCE OF

Antecedent Cause if any: b) due to self administered cocaine and heroin DUE TO OR AS A CONSEQUENCE OF

Giving rise to the immediate cause (a) above, stating underlying cause last. c)

(2) Other Significant Conditions Contributing to Death:

Classification of Death: [X] Accidental [ ] Homicide [ ] Natural [ ] Suicide [ ] Undetermined

The above verdict certified by the Jury on the 29th day of June AD, 2011

Rodrick H. Mackenzie Presiding Coroner's Printed Name

Handwritten signature of the Presiding Coroner



## VERDICT AT INQUEST

### FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS AS A RESULT OF THE INQUEST INTO THE DEATH OF

FILE No.: 2010:0216:0063

DIFFNER

SURNAME

Jason Brent

GIVEN NAMES

#### **PARTIES INVOLVED IN THE INQUEST:**

Presiding Coroner: Mr. Rodrick H. Mackenzie

Court Reporting Agency: Verbatim Words West Ltd.

Participant / Counsel: Attorney General of Canada (R.C.M.P.) / Helen Park

The Sheriff took charge of the jury and recorded the exhibits. Twenty one (21) witnesses were duly sworn and testified.

#### **PRESIDING CORONER'S COMMENTS:**

The following is a brief summary of the circumstances of the death as set out in the evidence presented to the jury at the inquest. This summary of the evidence is to assist the reader to more fully understand the Verdict and Recommendations of the jury. It is not intended to be considered evidence nor is it intended in any way to replace the jury's verdict

Mr. Diffner started to use drugs in his teen years. His drug use seems to have become seriously problematic following the death of his father. From time to time he was able to control his drug use. When he was in control he had a successful family and work life.

In 1998 Mr. Diffner was fully in the grip of his drug addiction and found himself living in the downtown east side of Vancouver. He lost everything of his successful life. He supported his addiction as a shoplifter. In 2001 he was assisted by the Salvation Army who accommodated him in their Miracle Valley facility. Just over a year later he was back in the downtown east side. In 2005 he was taken in by the operators of the Freedom House in Surrey. His time with Freedom House was successful. He started a business and all appeared well.

He was at his place of business when he began to act in an agitated and bizarre manner. He removed most of his clothing. Witnesses to this became concerned for his welfare and called 911. Police, Fire and Ambulance all arrived to assist.

He was violently thrashing about and had an elevated body temperature. Police determined that to accommodate necessary medical treatment by the attending fire and ambulance personnel and for the safety of those individuals, he needed to be restrained. He was secured hand and foot with police handcuffs. As well, he was strapped to the ambulance gurney.

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Just as the ambulance departed for Surrey Memorial Hospital, his breathing stopped. At the hospital his restraints were removed, and he was treated by the Emergency Room staff. Unfortunately, he was unable to maintain a pulse and the Doctor order cessation of all efforts.

A Post Mortem Examination (autopsy) was performed by Forensic Pathologist, who reported as set out below:

*Toxicologic (sic) analysis revealed the presence of significant quantities of morphine and cocaine in postmortem blood. Benzoylcegonine and small amount of codeine were also detected. Analysis of urine revealed the presence of 6-monacetyl morphine, which is an unambiguous indicator of prior heroin intake.*

*Based on the available information, death is attributed to acute combined cocaine and heroin intoxication...The clinical circumstances, specifically, bizarrely agitated behavior with elevated body temperature and eventual respiratory arrest in the context of cocaine use, are typical of cocaine-associated agitated delirium. Physical restraint is a possible risk factor for death in patients with agitated delirium, possibly due to complex metabolic derangements including adrenaline excess and electrolyte imbalance. The extent to which restraint may have contributed to death in this case cannot be determined by the autopsy examination.*



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*Pursuant to Section 38 of the Coroners Act, the following recommendations are forwarded to the Chief Coroner of the Province of British Columbia for distribution to the appropriate agency:*

#### **JURY RECOMMENDATIONS:**

To: The British Columbia Ambulance Service

- 1. Increase the number of Advance Life Support Units available in large metropolitan regions with corresponding training.*

Coroner's Comment

The jury heard evidence that the number of Advanced Life Support Units available in the lower mainland is limited.

- 2. To provide a memorandum including a protocol respecting the recognition of the signs and symptoms, handling, and treatment of suspected agitated delirium patients.*

To: The British Columbia Association of Chiefs of Police

- 3. Establish scenario based training respecting recognition of the signs and symptoms of suspected agitated delirium situations and the appropriate use of force required to ensure the safety of the patient, first responders, and bystanders.*

Coroner's Comment

The jury heard from an experienced police officer that scenario based training (hands on) is to be preferred over the lecture style now sometimes employed in this area.

To: The British Columbia Ministry of Health

- 4. That the level of aid, treatment, and intervention services available to drug addicted individuals be reassessed.*

Coroner's Comment

The jury heard that sometimes when Mr. Diffner may have been ready to enter a treatment facility there was no place available for him.