

CORONER'S COURT OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



held at FORT ST. JOHN, British Columbia

VERDICT AT CORONER'S INQUEST

We, the Jury, having been duly sworn and serving at the inquest, commencing on 25th of September 2007 at Fort St. John, British Columbia, and continued on the following dates 26th and 27th September 2007 into the death of Jickels, Christopher Gordon find he came to his death at approximately 1453 hours, on the 27th day of September AD, 2006 at or near Fort St. John, British Columbia.

MEDICAL CAUSE OF DEATH

(1) Immediate Cause of Death: a) Methadone Overdose

DUE TO OR AS A CONSEQUENCE OF

Antecedent Cause if any: b)

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: Fungal pneumonia

CLASSIFICATION OF THE EVENT ACCIDENTAL HOMICIDE NATURAL SUICIDE UNDETERMINED

The above verdict certified by the Jury on the 27th day of September AD, 2007.

TONIA GRACE

Presiding Coroner's Printed Name

Presiding Coroner's Signature

TO BE COMPLETED BY PRESIDING CORONER

Age: 29	Gender: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female						
Date of Birth: 27 June 1977	Native: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No						
Coroner's Case No.: 2006:0666:0058	Post Mortem: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Full <input type="checkbox"/> External <input type="checkbox"/> None						
Police File No.: 2006-12760	Toxicology: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No						
Police Department: Fort St John RCMP	Identification Method: <input type="checkbox"/> Visual <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (specify below)						
Court Reporter: Alanna Siemens	Identified by: Fingerprints						
Phone: 250-561-0048	Premise of Injury: Police detachment cells						
<table border="1" style="display: inline-table; width: 100px; height: 20px;"><tr><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td></tr></table>							Premise of Death: Police detachment cells



CORONER'S COURT OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

held at FORT ST. JOHN, British Columbia

VERDICT AT CORONER'S INQUEST

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS AS A RESULT OF THE INQUEST

INTO THE DEATH OF

JICKELS

SURNAME

Christopher Gordon

GIVEN NAMES

INTRODUCTION

This inquest into the death of Christopher Gordon Jickels commenced at 0930 hours on September 25, 2007 at the Fort St. John Courthouse, Fort St. John, BC and continued on September 26 and 27, 2007. Dr. S. Pilley was counsel to the coroner. Mr. A. Kemp appeared on behalf of the Attorney General of Canada. Deputy Sheriff C. Mahood took charge of the jury and recorded the following exhibits.

1. Cell block plan of Fort St. John RCMP detachment
2. Cell block photographs (4) of Fort St. John RCMP detachment
3. Autopsy report by Dr. Charles Lee
4. Toxicology report by Dr. Stuart Huckin
5. RCMP "Assessing prisoner responsiveness" flowchart
6. Registration of death

The following witnesses testified:

1. Krista Vocal – cousin
2. Karen Morgan – probation officer
3. Diane Ball – motel employee
4. Jo-Ann Cloughton – motel guest
5. Cst. Don Graves – arresting officer
6. Cpl. Gerry Slivorsky – arresting officer
7. Terry Randall – cell guard
8. Mario Soares – cell guard
9. Cst. Graeme Greig – officer attending cell
10. Cst. Erin Davis – officer attending cell
11. Cst. Kevin Weeres – officer responded to cell
12. Wayne Moi – BC Ambulance paramedic
13. Dr. Bruce Jamieson – ER physician
14. Dr. Charles Lee – pathologist
15. Dr. Walter Martz – toxicologist
16. Inspector Keith Redl – Fort St John detachment commander
17. Cst. Derek Santosuosso – major crime investigator



held at FORT ST. JOHN, British Columbia

RECEIVED

VERDICT AT CORONER'S INQUEST

NOV 16 2007

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS AS A RESULT OF THE INQUEST

MINISTRY OF SOLICITOR GENERAL
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CORONER

INTO THE DEATH OF

JICKELS
SURNAME

Christopher Gordon
GIVEN NAMES

PRESIDING CORONER'S COMMENTS

The following is a brief synopsis of the issues reviewed during the inquest. The purpose of these comments 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.

At the beginning of September 2006, Christopher Gordon Jickels travelled to Fort St. John to attend a drug rehabilitation/treatment centre. As he was subject to a probation order, he reported for an intake interview at the Fort St. John probation office on September 7, 2006. The probation officer who conducted this interview gave evidence that Mr. Jickels had a long history of heroin and cocaine addiction. He had declined to enrol in the methadone program. Both the probation officer and Mr. Jickels' cousin stated that he left the treatment centre without completing the program. He had told his cousin that he was uncomfortable with the religious base of the program. The probation officer confirmed that on September 14, 2006 having been made aware he had left the program; a referral to addiction services for another placement elsewhere had been made. Mr. Jickels did not attend the follow-up appointment on September 18, 2006 and had only sporadic contact with probation officers thereafter. When he attended their offices on September 26, he was noted to be under the influence of drugs.

At around 0430 hours on the morning of September 27, 2006, a hotel employee, who was starting her shift, noted a male behaving strangely outside the Four Seasons Motel in Fort St. John. She gave evidence that he was taking his clothes off and lying on the floor. She called 9-1-1 resulting in the arrival of Constable Graves and Corporal Slivorsky shortly thereafter. Corporal Slivorsky recognised the male as Christopher Jickels. Mr. Jickels was rolling around on the ground in the parking lot. He was wearing jeans but no shirt and only one shoe. His erratic behaviour continued but he was not combative. He was compliant and got into the back of the police vehicle unassisted. He was notified he was under arrest for causing a disturbance and transported to the Fort St. John RCMP detachment.

Upon arrival at the RCMP detachment at approximately 0520 hours, Mr. Jickels' erratic behaviour continued. After being searched and booked in, he was placed in a cell without incident. Both police officers formed the view that Mr. Jickels was under the influence of drugs. This view was shared by the cell guard, Terry Randall, who felt his behaviour was similar to behaviour he had seen from Mr. Jickels when he had been brought in earlier that week. Prior to his arrest on September 27, Mr. Jickels had been in custody at the police detachment on three previous occasions in the preceding week.

Cameras at the detachment monitor the cells. All motion is also recorded. After being placed into the "drunk tank" cell, Mr. Jickels initially banged on the door and thereafter was noted to continue rolling around on the



CORONER'S COURT OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

held at FORT ST. JOHN, British Columbia

VERDICT AT CORONER'S INQUEST

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS AS A RESULT OF THE INQUEST

INTO THE DEATH OF

JICKELS

SURNAME

Christopher Gordon

GIVEN NAMES

floor and practising martial arts movements for approximately 10-15 minutes before lying down on the floor and going to sleep.

Detachment policy required guards to physically check on the prisoners by looking through the celldoor window at least every 15 minutes. The cell guard, Mr. Randall, confirmed that he had done so. As he finished his shift at 0543 hours, he noted in the prisoner log that Mr. Jickels was breathing shallow and noted there should be an "extra watch". The oncoming cell guard, Mario Soares, did not carry out the regular physical monitoring checks, as policy required, but instead relied heavily on visual monitoring by the cell camera.

At approximately 1319 hours, Constable Greig and Constable Davis were requested by the court liaison officer to check to see whether Mr. Jickels was fit to attend court. They entered the cell and approached Mr. Jickels who was lying motionless on the floor. Constable Greig shook him and repeatedly called his name but received no response. Constable Greig then decided to try recognised pain stimulus techniques by applying pressure to his ear. Mr. Jickels responded with a loud snore and a slight head movement. Having satisfied himself that Mr. Jickels was still breathing and had a pulse, it was decided that Mr. Jickels was not fit for court and should be left to continue "sleeping it off". Neither Constable Greig nor Constable Davis considered whether Mr. Jickels was rousable in accordance with the RCMP policy guideline flowchart, a copy of which was posted on the wall in the cellblock. At the time, Constable Greig was an officer with only one year service who had only returned to duty that day after 20 days of leave. Evidence from the commanding officer, Inspector Redl, heard that sixty days earlier, Constable Greig had signed a document, which acknowledged he had read the care and handling of prisoners' policies, which included the responsiveness/rousability flowchart. Constable Davis had two years service at another detachment that did not have cells. This was her first day on the job at Fort St. John and she had not read the care and handling of prisoner guidelines.

At approximately 1452 hours, Constable Davis returned to the cell area to check on Mr. Jickels as she had "a feeling" and "felt uneasy". She enquired of the cell guard, Mr. Soares, if Mr. Jickels had been moving and was told he had only been snoring. She told Mr. Soares she was going to get her supervisor. At this stage, Mr. Soares went to the cell, briefly opened the cell door and then he too decided to call for officer assistance.

At approximately 1454 hours, Constable Weeres and Constable Greig entered the cell. Both officers gave evidence that Mr. Jickels had no pulse and was not breathing. He also felt cool to the touch. Constable Weeres immediately called for BC Ambulance Service assistance. After ascertaining that cardiopulmonary resuscitation was appropriate, they both then began performing this on Mr. Jickels. A few minutes later the ambulance personnel arrived and Mr. Jickels was taken to the Fort St. John hospital.

held at FORT ST. JOHN, British Columbia**VERDICT AT CORONER'S INQUEST****FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS AS A RESULT OF THE INQUEST****INTO THE DEATH OF****JICKELS**

SURNAME

Christopher Gordon

GIVEN NAMES

Dr. Jamieson gave evidence that at hospital resuscitation procedures were continued with further measures undertaken to no avail. Mr Jickels was pronounced deceased at 1525 hours.

The forensic pathologist, Dr. Lee performed an autopsy on Mr. Jickels. He noted recent track marks on Mr. Jickels' left arm consistent with self-administered drug use. He determined that the cause ~~was~~^{of} death was due to methadone intoxication and fungal pneumonia. He noted that both of these can affect the ability to breathe. He stated that irrespective of the methadone, the pneumonia might have killed Mr. Jickels anyway - though not that night. If Mr. Jickels had been treated, he possibly would have survived. He said that the methadone level was consistent with an overdose as it was within the lethal range. He further added that even without the pneumonia, it was possible that he would have died that night anyway. He stated that it was likely he had the pneumonia for a day or two before going into cells and that he certainly had it before he went into the cells.

The toxicologist Dr. Martz gave evidence that Mr. Jickels tested positive for both cocaine and methadone and presented the levels in accordance with the toxicology report prepared by his predecessor, Dr. Huckin. He agreed that the behaviour of Mr. Jickels prior to arrest and then subsequent to arrest was consistent with someone experiencing the fast effects of cocaine and the fast decline of those effects followed by the slower but long lasting effects of methadone. He stated that cocaine did not play a contributory role in the death and was at a very low concentration. He presented lethal methadone levels found in a UK pathology study entitled "Methadone deaths: toxicological analysis". The median fatal level was 0.435 mg/L. The lethal range was from 0.084 – 2.7 mg/L. Mr. Jickels had a methadone level of 0.5 mg/L. He explained that the tolerance of an individual was a significant factor and that those (unlike Mr. Jickels) who were regular users of methadone would be more tolerant than those who were naïve or sporadic user. Tolerance could be lost after a week. Route of administration was also a factor.

Inspector Redl, the detachment commander, presented detachment policy that requires cell guards to physically check on prisoner at intervals of no less than 15 minutes. He accepted that this was not carried out in Mr. Jickels case by Mr. Soares. He stated that the policy that intoxicated people be held for no more than eight hours did not apply to Mr. Jickels as he was to be charged and brought to court. There was no policy in place relating to rousing prisoners after any length of time and therefore, those who were awaiting court were not required to be roused. He stated that there was an RCMP policy already in place that incorporated a flowchart which set out some guidance as to assessing prisoner responsiveness and when medical treatment should be sought. All police officers were required to read this policy and a copy of the chart was in fact on the cellblock wall at the Fort St. John detachment, as it was on September 27, 2006. He accepted that had this flowchart been followed, medical assistance should have been sought for Mr Jickels at 1319 hours. He informed the court that in the previous week, he had received a copy of a proposed new policy to consider which had come from Ottawa via the divisional headquarters (E Division). This policy would require all prisoners to be roused



CORONER'S COURT OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

held at FORT ST. JOHN, British Columbia

VERDICT AT CORONER'S INQUEST

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS AS A RESULT OF THE INQUEST

INTO THE DEATH OF

JICKELS
SURNAME

Christopher Gordon
GIVEN NAMES

every four hours. He had been required to supply an opinion about the implementation of this policy and he considered it was "do-able" and should be implemented. He recommended this policy to the jury.

Constable Santosuosso, the major crime section investigator, presented evidence of the timeline in this case. A portion of the cell tape was then shown to the jury. It showed the events from 1319 -1322 hours and then from 1452 until the BC Ambulance Service transported Mr. Jickels from the cell on a stretcher.

After deliberation, the jury classified the death of Christopher Gordon Jickels as accidental.

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:

[Handwritten signature]

Tonia Grace
Presiding Coroner



CORONER'S COURT OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

held at FORT ST. JOHN, British Columbia

VERDICT AT CORONER'S INQUEST

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS AS A RESULT OF THE INQUEST

INTO THE DEATH OF

JICKELS

SURNAME

Christopher Gordon

GIVEN NAMES

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE JURY

To: Gary Bass
Deputy Commissioner
E-Division RCMP
5255 Heather Street
Vancouver, BC
V5Z 1K6

1. We recommend that the proposed 4-hour rousability check become policy.
2. We recommend that the RCMP develop guidelines pertaining to rousability and what constitutes being roused.

