



VERDICT AT CORONER'S INQUEST

File No.: 2008:692:0001

An Inquest was held at Terrace Courthouse, in the municipality of Terrace in the Province of British Columbia, on the following dates September 22-23, 2008 before Marj Paonessa, Presiding Coroner,

into the death of WILLIE Percival Alexander, 39, Male, Female

and the following findings were made:

Date and Time of Death: January 3, 2008 0614 Hours

Place of Death: Mills Memorial Hospital Terrace, BC

Medical Cause of Death

(1) Immediate Cause of Death: a) Blunt force head and neck injury.

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:

Classification of Death: Accidental Homicide Natural Suicide Undetermined

The above verdict certified by the Jury on the 23rd day of September AD, 2008.

MARJ PAONESSA

Presiding Coroner's Printed Name

Paonessa

Presiding Coroner's Signature

Handwritten mark



BRITISH COLUMBIA

VERDICT AT CORONER'S INQUEST

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

FILE NO: 2008:692:0001

WILLIE

SURNAME

Percival Alexander

GIVEN NAMES

**PARTIES INVOLVED IN THE INQUEST:**

Presiding Coroner: Marj Paonessa

Inquest Counsel: Mike Shaw

Court Reporting/Recording Agency: Verbatim Words West

Participants/Counsel: Andrew Kemp, Attorney General of Canada representing the RCMP; Richard Meyer, B.C. Ambulance Service.

The Sheriff took charge of the jury and recorded seven exhibits. Eleven witnesses were duly sworn in and testified.

**PRESIDING CORONER'S COMMENTS:**

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

The jury heard evidence that Mr. Willie and his common law spouse spent the afternoon and evening of January 2, 2008, drinking and smoking crack cocaine in Terrace. In the early morning hours of January 3, 2008, a family member awakened to loud yelling coming from the spouse's bedroom and recognized Mr. Willie's voice. He was aware of a 'No Contact Order' in effect and advised them that he was going to call the police.

Terrace RCMP officers arrived on scene and entered the home. After discussion with Mr. Willie's spouse and a search of the bedroom and entire residence, it was determined that Mr. Willie was not present. His spouse told the police he had left a half hour earlier. One police officer went around to the back of the residence and found a man whom he did not recognize lying prone approximately seven feet below the bedroom window in about eight inches of snow. Mr. Willie's spouse opened the window and stated that that was not Mr. Willie but another family member. She was described by the officers as extremely intoxicated and abusively yelling at them through the window.

Mr. Willie was assessed by one of the officers who determined that he had a pulse. At the time of this incident, there was snow mixed with rain and the temperature was near freezing. The officers noted an empty shopping cart in the backyard near where Mr. Willie was lying. They were concerned that this unidentified man had wandered into the backyard, had collapsed and was becoming hypothermic. Mr. Willie was wearing a jacket but no shirt and his chest area was directly exposed to the snow on the ground. They were unable to obtain a significant response to painful stimuli and an ambulance was summoned. In order to expedite the transfer of this man to the ambulance, the two officers rolled him over onto his back and with the assistance of a third officer, transferred Mr. Willie to the end of the driveway at the front of the house. Their evidence was that Mr. Willie was difficult to carry in the snow and at one point he was put down so they could secure him properly but at no time was he dropped onto the ground. The third officer on scene was able to positively identify Mr. Willie from previous encounters.





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It was the evidence of the police officers that they were initially dealing with an unidentified man who was unresponsive and possibly suffering the effects of hypothermia in a snow covered yard. They did not know this to be Mr. Willie until after he was being transported to the front of the home and did not consider that he may have jumped from the bedroom window.

The ambulance arrived within minutes and Mr. Willie was placed on the stretcher and assessed by one of the paramedics. He did not appear to have any significant injuries other than a slight abrasion on his forehead but was cold to the touch. He had a strong radial pulse and was breathing without difficulty. The paramedic elicited some arm movement to painful stimuli. Mr. Willie was covered with blankets and placed in the ambulance for transfer. While en route, he was reassessed and found to be without vital signs. Resuscitation efforts were initiated and continued while at hospital, however, Mr. Willie could not be revived and was pronounced dead by the emergency room physician shortly after arrival.

The postmortem examination determined that Mr. Willie died as a result of a dislocated atlanto-occipital joint. The jury heard the explanation from the pathologist that it takes a significant amount of force, such as a deceleration impact to cause this injury. A fall from a height onto one's head from a height of approximately seven feet would have enough impact to cause this damage and the hemorrhage noted within the brainstem. The pathologist indicated that this injury in and of itself can cause death. He further testified it was possible but not likely that subsequent movement after such a traumatic insult would have exacerbated an injury such as this.

The jury heard that Mr. Willie had a level of alcohol and cocaine in his system that was not within a lethal level, but would have likely caused impairment.

At the conclusion of evidence, the jury classified this death as accidental and put forward no recommendations.

Marj Paonessa  
Presiding Coroner