



VERDICT AT INQUEST

File No.: 2009:0666:0064

An Inquest was held at the Supreme Court, in the municipality of Fort St. John in the Province of British Columbia, on the following dates August 29 - September 1, 2011 before Rodrick H. MacKenzie, Presiding Coroner, into the death of George, Valeri 41 Male into the death of and the following findings were made:

Date and Time of Death: September 30, 2009 1310 hours Place of Death: #18683 Atkin Road, Buick British Columbia

Medical Cause of Death

(1) Immediate Cause of Death: a) Gunshot Wounds Of The Chest 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 1st day of September AD, 2011.

Rodrick H. MacKenzie Presiding Coroner's Printed Name

Presiding Coroner's Signature



## VERDICT AT INQUEST

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

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GEORGE  
SURNAME

Valeri  
GIVEN NAMES

**PRESIDING CORONER: Mr. Rodrick MacKenzie**

**COURT RECORDING: Verbatim Words West**

**PARTICIPANT/COUNSEL: Attorney General of Canada/Mr. Andrew Kemp**

The Sheriff took charge of the Jury and recorded two Exhibits. Twenty-six 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.

Evidence presented to the Jury established that Mr. George was a hard working husband and a loving father of twelve. The Jury heard that difficult circumstances caused him to be depressed and that he commenced to do things described by those who knew him as "out of character."

It was indicated to the Jury that on September 26<sup>th</sup>, 2009 near Fort St. John British Columbia Mr. George took a borrowed single shot .22 rifle placed the barrel against the tires of a stationary van containing members of his family and in a state of agitation, anger and possibly jealousy pulled the trigger. This caused great concern. The local detachment of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police was informed and they commenced an investigation. As a result of that investigation, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police North District Emergency Response Team (ERT) was summoned. The ERT is what some might refer to as a SWAT team.

The Jury was informed that following the afore described van incident Mr. George drove to and remained at the family home which was in a rural area outside of the town of Fort St. John and that his wife and children stayed in town. Police witnesses described how over the morning hours of September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2009 the ERT set up a line of fire along the driveway to the family home and a blockade across that driveway.



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The testimony indicated that there were many unsuccessful attempts to establish communications with Mr. George. Language and technical issues were described. As well, the jury heard evidence indicating that Mr. George resisted the establishment of dialog.

Just after 1:00 PM September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2009 Mr. George left the family home and drove his van down the driveway at what a police officer described as at a high rate of speed toward the blockade. That police officer then took aim at Mr. George through the scope of his M16 rifle and fired one shot through the windshield of the van striking Mr. George. Mr. George slowed the van and got out with the .22 rifle. The ERT then fired 46 more shots toward Mr. George and the van. Four bullets struck Mr. George. He fell and there died in the driveway.

*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 Commissioner and Commanding Officer 'E' Division  
Royal Canadian Mounted Police

1. That they investigate the stationing of an armoured vehicle with the North District ERT (Emergency Response Team).
2. That they investigate the purchase of a robot for the North District ERT .

*Coroner's Comment: The Jury heard from a senior police officer that the two items described above would have greatly assisted in the attempt to establish communications/negotiations with Mr. George.*

3. That the ERT members have more regular and detailed training.

*Coroner's Comment: The Jury heard of the difficulties of training where the members of a team are part time and scattered across a District.*



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4. That every local RCMP Detachment determine the predominant second language(s) in their communities and have a local officer fluent in that second language(s).

*Coroner's Comment: The Jury heard of the great difficulty caused by the fact that Mr. George did not understand English and that there was in the local area a need for police services in his language. The Jury was advised that in Fort St. John this issue has been addressed.*

5. That a database be created of officers that speak a language other than English.

*Coroner's Comment: The Jury heard that it was only the personal knowledge of a local officer that identified an available member that could potentially speak to Mr. George.*

6. That other communication technologies be investigated where "normal" communications are non-existent or unusable

7. That they work with the CRTC to establish upgraded phone systems as required for RCMP purposes in remote areas where the capabilities of the phone systems are limited

*Coroner's Comment: The Jury heard of issues of concern raised by police officers involving party line phones and radio communications in rural areas.*

8. That there be timely Critical Incident counseling for all involved, such as RCMP members, families, and neighbors, etc

*Coroner's Comment: The Jury heard that the officers involved the neighbors and family could all have benefited from earlier counseling. In particular there was evidence that delay in getting the team away from the area and getting them assistance was an issue.*



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To: British Columbia Ambulance Service

9. That at least one Advanced Life Support Paramedic be employed per shift in the service areas.

*Coroner's Comment: The Jury heard that there is a lack of ALS in the North.*

To: British Columbia Ministry of Health

10. That pamphlets regarding available health services in the language(s) of the local communities be provided in the local rural post office and community centers.

*Coroner's Comment: The Jury heard that such pamphlets were not available in the area in languages commonly spoken.*