



VERDICT AT CORONER'S INQUEST

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS AS A RESULT OF THE CORONER'S INQUEST PURSUANT TO SECTION 38 OF THE CORONERS ACT, [SBC 2007] C 15, INTO THE DEATH OF

Beek

SURNAME

Joshua Colton

GIVEN NAMES

An Inquest was held at The Burnaby Coroners Court, in the municipality of Burnaby

in the Province of British Columbia, on the following dates: March 16-18, 2026

before: Carolyn Maxwell, Presiding Coroner.

into the death of Beek Joshua Colton 31 Male Female
(Last Name) (First Name) (Middle Name) (Age)

The following findings were made:

Date and Time of Death: April 24, 2022 12:15pm
(Date) (time)

Place of Death: North Island Hospital, Comox Valley British Columbia
(Location) (Municipality/Province)

Medical Cause of Death:

(1) Immediate Cause of Death: a) Complications of acute alcohol withdrawal

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: Steatosis of the liver

Classification of Death: Accidental Homicide Natural Suicide Undetermined

Homicide is a neutral term that does not imply fault or blame.

The above verdict certified by the Jury on the 18th day of March AD, 2026

Carolyn Maxwell
Presiding Coroner's Printed Name

Maxwell
Presiding Coroner's Signature



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PARTIES INVOLVED IN THE INQUEST:

Presiding Coroner:	Carolyn Maxwell
Inquest Counsel:	Steven Liu & Rolf Warburton
Court Reporter:	Helga Sievewright

The Sheriff took charge of the jury and recorded 10 exhibits. 8 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 is to assist in understanding, but does not replace, the jury verdict and recommendations. This summary is not evidence.

This inquest dealt with the death of Joshua Colton Beek, aged 31. Mr. Beek died from complications of acute alcohol withdrawal, with steatosis of the liver considered a contributing factor.

At approximately 0430 hours on April 23, 2022, Comox Valley RCMP received a call from a local citizen reporting an unknown male was on his property. Two officers attended the scene in separate vehicles. On their way to the residence, one of the officers phoned the owner of the property who advised that he and his family member had spoken to the unknown male and that this individual referred to more people being on the property. Upon arrival, one officer went to the front door of the residence and spoke with the property owner, who advised that he no longer knew the unknown male’s location. The officer went to the backyard to try and locate the unknown male, only to learn from the property owner that the male was now in the front of the property. As the officer approached the front of the property, she could see the male pulling on the handle of the back door of one of the police vehicles.

The two officers approached the male and noted he had dirt on the front of his clothing. The male identified himself as Joshua Colton Beek and provided his date of birth. However, he was unable to provide his home address. Mr. Beek informed the officers that he was on the property to fell trees and stated that he was running through the forest and got dirty when he fell. The officers noted that Mr. Beek’s speech was rapid and disjointed, jumping from one topic to another with no clear association between topics. The officers did not smell alcohol on Mr. Beek, leading them to believe his behaviour was the result of being under the influence of another drug.

The officers arrested Mr. Beek with the intent of taking him to the detachment until he sobered up. One of the arresting officers testified that Mr. Beek was not aggressive at any

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time during their interaction with him. Mr. Beek was placed in the back of the police car without handcuffs. The same officer testified that if they had had a current address for Mr. Beek and could confirm that there was someone at that address who was willing and able to care for Mr. Beek, they would have taken him home. But not knowing his current address, they took him to the detachment to hold him in cells until he was sober enough to be released. Another officer testified there are no other locations in the Comox Valley to take non-violent individuals who are unable to care for themselves due to intoxication. It was noted by one officer that a facility such as a sobering center, with personnel trained to aid intoxicated individuals, would be beneficial in these types of situations.

At approximately 0500 hours, Mr. Beek was brought into the police detachment. One of the arresting officers asked Mr. Beek if he had any injuries. Mr. Beek indicated that his knees hurt but did not mention any other medical concerns. Mr. Beek was lodged in a cell. Two involved police officers testified they were not trained to identify signs of alcohol withdrawal.

The civilian jail guard who was on shift while Mr. Beek was lodged in the cell testified that he was alert the first time she checked on him. She also testified that throughout her shift, Mr. Beek's behaviour remained consistent and that he was more alert than other individuals who were lodged in other cells at the same time. It is standard protocol for guards to check on detainees four times per hour. This is generally done through physical checks, but can also be done through the CCTV footage of each cell. The civilian guard testified there was a checklist posted on the wall outlining a protocol for rousing detainees. Other than that, the guard made no mention of checklists outlining what to look for when checking on detainees, nor of a protocol for medically assessing detainees. The civilian guard testified that if there was a medical incident in one of the cells, the standard protocol was to alert one of the officers on site. The guard could also alert officers on the road by radio, so they could return to the detachment if more assistance was needed. But there was no mention in standard protocol of how to determine if a medical event was occurring. The civilian guard confirmed that she was not trained to identify signs of alcohol withdrawal.

CCTV footage showed Mr. Beek moving in his cell until approximately 1304 hours. At approximately 1314 hours, the civilian guard noticed that Mr. Beek did not look well and went to get an officer to come and check on him. The officer arrived at the cell and found Mr. Beek unresponsive. Officers started CPR and the civilian guard contacted 911. Officers also utilized an AED and, over eight cycles, no shocks were advised. Paramedics arrived and used a ventilator and administered naloxone and epinephrine. Mr. Beek's pulse returned and he was taken to the ambulance for transport to hospital. In the ambulance his pulse was lost again but returned after more epinephrine was administered. Mr. Beek arrived at North Island Hospital – Comox Valley, at approximately 1357 hours, April 23, 2022. Hospital staff provided medical support to stabilize Mr. Beek, however his condition continued to decline, and death was confirmed at 1215 hours on April 24, 2022.



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The Independent Investigations Office of BC (IIO) is mandated to conduct investigations into police-related incidents of death or serious harm. An investigator from the IIO testified that the IIO investigated the death of Mr. Beek and issued a public report. The IIO found there were no reasonable grounds to believe an officer may have committed an offence under any enactment. The report included findings by the IIO Chief Civilian Director that officers and jail guards are not trained medical personnel and jail cells are not the best place for holding intoxicated persons. The Chief Civilian Director went on to state in the report that holding intoxicated persons in police cells guarded by persons who are not trained health professionals is an outdated practice and is proven not to adequately guarantee their safety and health. The report identified other options, including sobering centres and having health professionals on site to assist with the care of intoxicated people.

A pathologist testified that Mr. Beek died from complications of acute alcohol withdrawal, with steatosis of the liver as a significant contributory factor. The pathologist noted there was nothing in the toxicology screening that was relevant to Mr. Beek's death. The pathologist testified that the presence of a medically trained professional at the detention centre would help in situations where detainees are experiencing withdrawal symptoms. The pathologist testified that both the professionals' medical training and potential access to medical history would be beneficial in these circumstances.



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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: RCMP "E" Division

1. Consider staffing police detention facilities with medically trained professionals such as nurses, paramedics, and doctors.

Presiding Coroner Comment: *The jury heard from pathologist Dr. Elizabeth Brooks-Lim that acute alcohol withdrawal symptoms may be mistaken for substance use symptoms. This was confirmed in testimony from Cst. Megan Plankenhorn and guard Hannah Smith of their assessment of Mr. Beek. Dr. Brooks-Lim also testified that a trained medical professional such as a nurse would have been more likely to identify symptoms of acute alcohol withdrawal. Finally, the jury heard watch commander Sgt. Aaron Hamilton also endorses this additional resource.*

To: The Minister of Health and Island Health

2. Establish at least one sobering centre in the area served by Comox Valley RCMP, staffed with trained professionals to care for non-violent intoxicated individuals.

Presiding Coroner Comment: *The jury heard that a high proportion of detainees are under the influence of substances and approximately 10% are detained for public alcohol intoxication. The jury also heard Sgt. Aaron Hamilton state there is a staffing shortage within the RCMP and bringing intoxicated individuals to sobering centres would therefore allow the RCMP to better focus on other policing duties.*

To: RCMP National Headquarters and "E" Division

3. Expedite the implementation of passive biometric systems to monitor the vital signs of detainees.

Presiding Coroner Comment: *The jury heard the only technology currently available to assist with monitoring the Comox Valley RCMP holding cells is CCTV. Passive biometric systems give monitoring staff real-time knowledge and understanding of a detainee's health status. The jury heard a related RCMP pilot project in Saskatchewan has been successful.*



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To: Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General

- 4. Consider protocols to improve the initial medical assessment of detainees who demonstrate symptoms of intoxication on intake, including the use of checklists and requiring qualified medical attention where a detainee's symptoms do not improve over time.

Presiding Coroner Comment: *The jury heard that officers believed Mr. Beek was under the influence of drugs because they could not detect the smell of alcohol on him, but he still displayed symptoms of intoxication. Multiple witnesses stated they were not trained to identify the symptoms of alcohol withdrawal. The jury also heard it can take anywhere between 4 and 10 hours for an individual to sober up. Detainees must therefore be monitored for improvement over their time in detention.*