



FOR PUBLIC RELEASE: Coroner Judgement of Inquiry and Inquest Inquisition and Recommendations

Department of Justice, Legal Services
Yukon Coroners Service
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Yukon Coroners Service: Judgement of Inquiry into the death of: Nicholas Close-Silverfox

Coroner Investigative File No.: 4520201317

Name: Nicholas Close-Silverfox Date of Birth: 1993/08/24 Date of Death: 2013/07/11
YYYY/MM/DD YYYY/MM/DD

Address: 404B 37 Lewes Boulevard, Whitehorse, Yukon
Street Address Province/Territory Postal Code

Ethnic Origin: First Nations Location of Death: Whitehorse General Hospital

Cause of Death

Drowning (due to) Yukon River currents and undertow

Manner of Death

Accidental

Autopsy Findings

No autopsy

External examination revealed limited injuries, which included two superficial lacerations on the forehead and above the right eyebrow. There was a small contusion anterior of the left ear. The remainder of the body showed no obvious signs of gross injury. There was no previous health history which may have contributed to this death.

Toxicological Findings

Blood tests revealed a blood alcohol content of .12% and negative results for common illicit drugs of abuse.

Circumstances of Death

On the evening of July 11, 2013, 19 year old Whitehorse resident Mr. Close-Silverfox was walking along the Millennium Trail in Whitehorse with his dog and two females. A couple hundred meters upstream of the pump house on Nisultin Drive, Mr. Close-Silverfox threw a stick into the water for the dog to retrieve. The dog entered the water and soon was being overtaken by the swift current.

Mr. Close-Silverfox entered the river water in an attempt to rescue his dog. Mr. Close-Silverfox was overcome by the swift current and undertow. A friend on shore tried to rescue Mr. Close-Silverfox by wading out into the water and reaching out a stick for Mr. Close-Silverfox to grab onto.

RCMP received a 911 call for assistance and immediately attended the scene. An RCMP member observed the body of Mr. Close-Silverfox under the surface of the water. The RCMP member waded out into the cold water and pulled Mr. Close-Silverfox's body to shore. The RCMP member immediately started cardio pulmonary resuscitation (CPR). Emergency Medical Services arrived on scene and took over care of the patient. Mr. Close-Silverfox was transported to Whitehorse General Hospital where he was pronounced deceased at 20:05hrs on July 11, 2013.

Significant Factors/Conclusions

Mr. Close-Silverfox had a blood alcohol content of .12% which has documented effects of impairing judgement and coordination. Individual reactions to alcohol vary greatly from person to person. Blood alcohol content and the rate at which it rises in the blood is affected by many factors, including the number of drinks consumed, body size, food in stomach, weight, gender, functional tolerance, and how quickly the alcohol was consumed. Alcohol has been determined to be a factor in the drowning death of Mr. Close-Silverfox.

There are three large warning signs on the bank of the river where Mr. Close-Silverfox entered the water. The signs are highly visible and read "CAUTION Strong Undercurrent."

In an attempt to rescue Mr. Close-Silverfox a friend also waded into the river. Although understandable and well-meaning in a time of great distress and emergency, the friend could have also quickly become victim to the river.

There is a real and demonstrated danger of drowning due to strong currents and undertow in this area. This is not the first loss of life in this area due to drowning. The public must heed warnings of dangerous water conditions and take appropriate safety precautions at all times.

Recommendations

No recommendations.


Signature, Chief Coroner

Yukon

Province/Territory

August 7, 2013

Date

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