

**Yukon
Coroner's
Service**

News Release

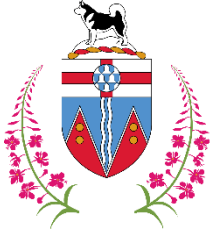
Update from Chief Coroner regarding substance use-related deaths

April 20, 2023 – The Yukon Coroner's Service is investigating 4 deaths that occurred between April 15 and April 18. All 4 deaths appear to be related to substance use. These deaths, while unrelated to each other, may have been preventable. Communities continue to struggle with the grief and pain associated with the loss of life due to substance use. The rapid succession of so many deaths in a short amount of time across multiple communities highlights how widespread the challenges of substance use are in the Yukon.

We are able to provide the following information on these 4 tragic deaths:

- 2 occurred in Whitehorse and 2 occurred in Yukon communities:
 - In the early hours of April 15, a death was reported in Watson Lake.
 - Later in the morning of April 15, a death was reported in Haines Junction.
 - In the morning of April 16, a death was reported in Whitehorse.
 - In the evening of April 18, a second death was reported in Whitehorse.
- The investigations into these deaths are pending toxicological analysis and have included a full autopsy.
- The circumstances surrounding each of these deaths suggest that substance use was a contributing factor.
- The deceased were both men and women, between 27-52 years of age.
- 3 of the deceased were members of Yukon First Nations.

No part of our society is unaffected by the substance use emergency and the toxic illicit drug supply. Alcohol and illicit drugs are still taking the lives of our loved ones while causing irreparable harm to our communities. We urge all Yukoners to remain aware of this and to take steps to address this with urgency. Every life is a valued part of our communities and we are losing far too many to these preventable deaths.



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It continues to be increasingly important to ensure the availability of safe, confidential, and non-judgemental spaces and supports for those who use drugs.

The Coroner's Service asks all Yukoners to demonstrate kindness and compassion for those who are struggling and those who are grieving the lives lost; these deaths continue to impact families and communities deeply.

We are very appreciative of the support and work that the RCMP has provided to our investigations. Their assistance is invaluable to the work we do. Equally important is the dedication of Emergency Medical Services who often attend these deaths and provide important first responder support.

Quote:

The Yukon Coroner's Service is growing increasingly concerned with the progression of the substance use crisis. The impact of the pain and grief of the families and friends of those who have lost their lives continues to be felt deeply. The heartbreak continues and these are wounds that never fully heal for those who are left behind.

We continue to offer our sincere condolences and support to the families and communities who have been severely impacted by these deaths.

Chief Coroner Heather Jones

Contact

For media inquiries contact the chief coroner [email heather.jones@yukon.ca, or phone 867-667-5317; toll free 1-800-661-0408, extension 5317].