



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: Michael Groening

Coroner Investigative File No.: 45202015018

Name: Michael Groening Date of Birth: 1995/10/22 Date of Death: 2015/06/15
YYYY/MM/DD YYYY/MM/DD

Address: Whitehorse, Yukon
Street Address Province/Territory Postal Code

Ethnic Origin: First Nation Location of Death: Yukon River @ Miles Canyon

Cause of Death

Drowning due to Jump from Robert E. Lowe Bridge

Manner of Death

Accidental

Autopsy Findings

An autopsy of the late Michael Groening was performed at Vancouver General Hospital on July 8, 2015. The autopsy was performed by Dr. Matthew Orde, Forensic Pathologist.

The autopsy indicated features consistent with water immersion. There were no significant injuries identified. There was no identifiable significant natural pathology.

Toxicological Findings

Toxicology testing was performed at BC Provincial Toxicology Centre on September 10, 2015. Toxicology testing was performed on blood and vitreous. The blood alcohol level was detected at .11% with vitreous detection at .19%. Use of cannabis was detected in the blood.

Circumstances of Death

At approximately 15:45hrs on June 15, 2015, 19 year old Michael Groening was at Miles Canyon with friends. There is a suspension bridge spanning Miles Canyon which is named the Robert E. Lowe Bridge. This bridge is also commonly referred to as Miles Canyon Bridge.

The Robert E. Lowe Bridge is approximately 32 feet over the Yukon River. The Yukon River in that area has dangerous currents, undertow and is very cold water even in the warm summer months. There are steep vertical rock cliffs on either side of the canyon which create a narrowing of water until it empties into Schwatka Lake.

Mr. Groening was consuming alcohol and hanging out with three friends. Witnesses stated that they saw Mr. Groening trying to jump from the bridge and being held back by his friends.

Mr. Groening was observed to jump from the bridge into the river below. He was observed by several witnesses to attempt to swim. A boat operator in the area observed Mr. Groening in the water several hundred yards away. The boat operator dove into the water to try to rescue Mr. Groening. Despite the valiant rescue attempts, Mr. Groening could not be rescued. His body was found downstream in Schwatka Lake on July 1, 2015.

Significant Factors/Conclusions

Jumping into Miles Canyon is a dangerous activity with significant risk of death.

The river is cold, fast moving, and has strong currents and undertow.

Use of alcohol and cannabis can reduce inhibitions and impair judgment related to risk-taking behavior.

Mr. Groening deliberately jumped off the bridge into the water. He drowned as a result of this action.

Recommendations

To: City of Whitehorse and Yukon Government, Department of Community Services:

1. Install signs in the area of the Robert E. Lowe Bridge warning the public that the river is cold, fast moving, and has strong currents and undertow. Signs should be strategically placed in highly visible locations.


Signature, Chief Coroner

Whitehorse, YT
Province/Territory

March 24 / 16
Date

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