

FOR PUBLIC RELEASE:
Yukon Coroner's Service
Circumstances, Investigation and Recommendations
Into The Deaths of
Valérie THÉORÊT (DOB: 20/4/81) and Adèle ROESHOLT (DOB: 02/01/18)
Date of death: 26/11/18. Place of death: near Einarson Lake, Yukon

Coroner's Investigative File Nos: 4520-20-18-050 and 4520-20-18-051

CIRCUMSTANCES:

On November 26, 2018 the Mayo detachment of the RCMP received notifications of emergency inReach activations at 1545 hours. Both activations had come from the Einarson Lake area in northeast Yukon (215 kilometers from the village of Mayo). Shortly after, an inReach message was received from a male whose family had been trapping in the area. He reported that his female partner and infant had been killed by a bear.

At 1224 hours on November 27, 2018, the first team of investigators arrived at the scene of the attack. The remains of 37-year old Valérie THÉORÊT and 10-month old Adèle ROESHOLT were located near a trail about 250 meters from their cabin. The body of an adult male grizzly bear lay a few meters from the bodies of Valérie and Adèle.

INVESTIGATION:

The bear attack occurred within 250 meters of the cabin at Einarson Lake, used for trap-line concession #51. This concession had been purchased by Valérie THÉORÊT and her male partner in the fall of 2015. The couple, along with their infant daughter, Adèle, were flown into their trap-line cabin on October 4, 2018. Their intent was to stay at the cabin and trap until shortly after the new year when Valérie was scheduled to return to her teaching position in Whitehorse.

The couple had set trap-lines north and south of their cabin. They also set up a short trap-line within close proximity to their cabin that could be checked in about 20 minutes while on foot.

They also hunted for large and small game as well as game birds to utilize as sources of food. The small amount of offal salvaged from the small game and game birds was stored in a secured plastic container in the shed, located 40 meters from the cabin.

On the morning of November 26, 2018 the family had had breakfast together as was their normal routine. The partner left the cabin on his snowmobile at 0930 hours to run the larger trap-line to the north.

It had snowed lightly throughout the morning and on his return trip along the trap-line shortly after 1430 hours, he noticed fresh bear tracks at the north end of Einarson Lake. The tracks were following his earlier snowmobile track and seemed to be heading towards the cabin. As he got closer to the cabin he found that the bear tracks did not go all the way. There were also no other tracks in the fresh snow outside of the cabin and he initially thought that Valérie and Adèle must have been sleeping. It was now just before 1500 hours. He quickly discovered that Valérie and Adèle were not in the cabin and he walked down towards the sauna, some distance a way, calling out for them. He had his loaded 7 mm Remington Magnum rifle with him and as his concern heightened, he had this at the ready.

In not finding Valérie and Adèle at the sauna, he started on the small trap-line trail that leads in a southerly direction from the cabin. At approximately 240 meters from the cabin he heard a loud growl and a grizzly bear came out of the bush 15 meters away charging directly towards him. When the bear was within 2 meters he was able to shoot and fatally injure it to stop the attack on him.

He saw Valérie laying close to where the bear had fallen and was quickly able to discern that she was no longer alive. Adèle's remains were found to be lying nearby.

Investigation by Department of Environment Conservation Officers at the scene determined that the bear had wandered through an outfitters camp located approximately 1.2 kilometers from the scene of the attack. The bear exited the main snowmobile trail leading from the lake to the trap-line cabin near the edge of the lake and proceeded to travel east approximately 300 meters along the creek, passing the sauna (and all other human developments) before returning to the trap-line trail running to the south of the cabin. The investigation suggests that at the same time the bear was making his circle from the east of the cabin, Valérie, with Adèle on her back in a carrier, was walking on the trail having departed the cabin heading south.

Prior to the attack, the bear exited the main trail cutting a corner and changing its step pattern from a lazy dragging of the feet to an intentional picking up of its feet. Investigators suspect that this was because the bear detected that something was coming towards him on the trail that could be food. The bear then moved approximately 2 meters off the trail, going under the branches of a large spruce tree that would have concealed it from anything approaching on the trail. It was from this point that the bear launched its attack on Valérie and Adèle.

Post Mortem Examinations:

External post mortem examinations were performed on November 29, 2018.

Valérie's injuries were consistent with the bear striking out and biting her. It is evident that these injuries quickly proved to be fatal and those of Adèle were instantly incompatible with life.

Toxicological analysis was not deemed to be necessary for this case.

Necropsy on the bear:

A necropsy of the bear was performed on November 30, 2018. The bear was determined to be an 18-year-old male grizzly bear weighing 137.5 kg. Although the animal had received multiple gunshot wounds, it is believed it died as the result of a single shot to the head. At the time of its death, the bear was emaciated and would not have been capable of hibernation given its complete lack of body fat. Further, given the scarcity of quality food during late November, it seems unlikely that the bear would have been capable of acquiring sufficient body fat to survive the winter. The bear may have also been in significant and chronic pain due to multiple porcupine quills penetrating its digestive system from mouth to stomach. The animal also bore a large injury along the mid-line of its abdomen. This injury was partially healed and appeared to have occurred in the weeks prior to its death.

Significant factors and conclusion:

The grizzly bear that attacked Ms. THÉORÉT and her daughter, Adèle ROESHOLT, was an 18-year-old male, in an emaciated and injured condition.

The bear had followed the fresh snowmobile trail from Einarson Lake ultimately finding the small trap-line which ran south from the cabin on Trap-line Concession #51.

The wind direction at the scene of the attack on that day is unknown.

Valérie, with her daughter Adèle on her back in a carrier, were walking the trail along the small trap-line.

The bear became aware of something moving towards it on the trail (it may or may not have known it was a human) and moved into a position of advantage under the cover of thick spruce tree branches near the trail from which it attacked Valérie and Adèle.

Both Valérie and Adèle received fatal injuries and were dragged off the trail by the bear.

Later, the bear, who had remained with the bodies, vocalized and charged Valérie's partner from about 15 meters away. The bear was fatally injured by shots from a 7 mm Remington Magnum rifle in defense of life at a distance of 2 meters.

Valérie's partner was experienced using a firearm and was carrying a loaded firearm.

Investigators conclude that this bear was acting entirely predatory in nature throughout the attack on Valérie and Adèle.

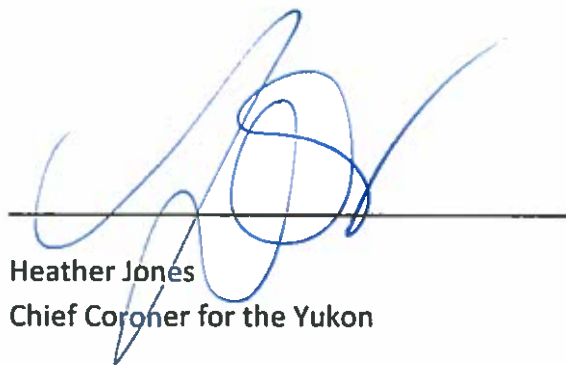
I therefore find that **Valérie THÉORÉT** came to her death on **November 26, 2018**, from Unnatural causes, to wit: **Multiple Injuries due to Grizzly Bear Attack** and classify her death as **Accidental**.

Further, I find that **Adèle ROESHOLT** also came to her death on **November 26, 2018**, from Unnatural causes, to wit: **Head Trauma due to Grizzly Bear Attack** and classify her death as **Accidental**.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

To the Department of Environment, Government of Yukon:

1. Continued efforts to inform the public that bear encounters can happen in the Yukon anywhere and during any season. This must continue to include strong messaging around the carrying of deterrents like bear spray and their effectiveness/limitations in winter environments and the need to have them accessible at all times.
2. Continue to offer education opportunities, resources and one-on-one access to conservation officer services specifically for hunters and trappers to ensure they are exercising caution when hunting/trapping. Bears can be drawn to bait sites or carcasses in early winter and there is always the potential for one to be present when checking sites or field dressing an animal. This must include attractant best management practices including carcass/bait disposal and storage in and around camps/cabins through all seasons.
3. Ensure these continued education efforts to emphasize the high risk injured/distressed bears may pose in all settings and environments at all times of the year.



Heather Jones
Chief Coroner for the Yukon

March 27, 2019