



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: Olexiy Valentyn Klochko

Coroner Investigative File No.: 4520201328

Name: Olexiy Valentyn Klochko Date of Birth: 1973/11/19 Date of Death: 2013/07/16
YYYY/MM/DD YYYY/MM/DD

Address: _____
Street Address Province/Territory Postal Code

Ethnic Origin: Ukrainian Location of Death: Teslin Lake

Cause of Death

Drowning (due to) Canoe Capsize

Manner of Death

Accidental

Autopsy Findings

An autopsy was performed by Dr. Carol Lee of Vancouver General Hospital, Department of Forensic Pathology on February 24, 2014.

The autopsy showed somewhat heavy lungs despite moderate decompositional changes and fluid in the sphenoid sinuses, which are findings that can be seen in cases of drowning.

In the opinion of the pathologist, the cause of death is most consistent with drowning, based on circumstantial information (obtained and provided through the Coroner investigation) and in the absence of a more pertinent anatomical or toxicological explanation for death.

The pathologist further suggested that an element of hypothermia due to exposure to a cold environment may have played a role in the death. However, hypothermia is often not associated with specific anatomical findings at autopsy.

Toxicological Findings

Toxicology testing performed at the Provincial Toxicology Centre in British Columbia indicated no alcohol, prescribed medications or illicit drugs detected.

Circumstances of Death

On the evening of July 16, 2013, Mr. Klochko and his wife set out on Teslin Lake. The boat is described as a 16-foot fiberglass model with a 70hp Johnson outboard motor. The boat was overloaded with gear and there was only one lifejacket on board. The waves picked up and the weather deteriorated. It became cloudy and windy. The boat started to take on water and ultimately capsized. As a result, both occupants entered the frigid water. Mr. Klochko was last seen on July 16, 2013 at approximately 22:00hrs by his wife as they tried to swim to shore. As the two individuals tried to swim, they passed the only lifejacket that was onboard the boat back and forth between them. The spouse of Mr. Klochko made it to shore and was able to hike to a local cabin to call for help. It is believed that the two individuals were in the water for approximately 60-90 minutes prior to the spouse being able to make it to shore. With the assistance from community members, RCMP from Teslin, Whitehorse, Carcross and Watson Lake undertook an extensive search by air and water over a period of several weeks. Yukon RCMP contracted SeaVeyors Environmental and Marine Services of British Columbia to utilize a Remote Operated Vehicle to conduct a search under the ice. On February 18, 2014 with the assistance of sonar and video, the body of Mr. Klochko was located in Teslin Lake at a depth of approximately 145 feet.

Significant Factors/Conclusions

Wearing of life jackets or personal flotation devices is the most effective tool for reducing boating-related drowning. Incidents on the water can happen very quickly and without warning. Yukon lakes and rivers are very cold, at all times of the year. Even in the summer months when the air temperature feels warm, a sudden cold water immersion can be fatal, regardless of your ability to swim. Cold water can cool the body four times faster than air at the same temperature, and attempting to swim in cold water may double the rate of heat loss.

Safe boating practice requires that life jackets and/or PFD are worn by every individual, every time they are on the water. However, the use of life jackets and PFD's should not create an overconfidence which overshadows the dangers associated with cold water. The effects of cold water are often underestimated, but can be life-threatening. Cold water effects include cold shock, swimming failure, hypothermia, and death.

Recommendations

No recommendations

Macdonald

Signature, Chief Coroner

Whitehorse, Yukon

Province/Territory

April 9, 2014

Date

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