

JUDGEMENT OF INQUIRY

Into the Death of Jean –Francois Pagé

Address: Km. 12, Fish Lake Road, Whitehorse, YT

I, **Sharon Hanley**, Chief Coroner in and for the Yukon Territory have inquired into the death of the above stated which was reported to me on April 28, 2006 and as a result of such injury have determined the following facts:

Age: 28	Sex: M <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> F <input type="checkbox"/>	Ethnic Group: Caucasian
Date of Birth: February 3, 1978		Estimated Date of Death: April 28, 2006
Place of Death: 28 km. north east of Ross River, YT		
Estimated Time of Death:		
Place of Injury:		28 km. north east of Ross River, YT
Date & Time: April 28, 2006		
Type of Premises:		Outdoors
Identification Method:		Visual
Body Released to:		N/A
POST MORTEM EXAMINATION: Yes		Date: May 5, 2006
Conducted by:		Dr. Laurel Gray
TOXICOLOGY EXAMINATION:		Yes Date: May 23, 2006
Conducted By:		Dr. Stuart Huckin
Relevant Findings:		Negative for Alcohol and Drugs
MEDICAL CAUSE OF DEATH:		
(1) Immediate Cause of Death:	(a)	Multiple Injuries Consistent with Bear Mauling
		Due to or as a consequences of
Antecedent Cause if any:	(b)	
		Due to or as a consequences of
Giving rise to the immediate cause (a) above: <u>Stating the underlying cause last</u>	(c)	
(2) Other Significant Medical Causes Contributing to Death:		

BY WHAT MEANS:

CLASSIFICATION OF THE EVENT:

Natural Accidental

Homicide Suicide

Dated this 12th day of June, 2008

Undetermined

Sharon Hanley
Chief Coroner

Circumstances and Recommendations as a Result of the Inquiry

Into the death of

Jean-Francois Pagé

CIRCUMSTANCES:

On April 28, 2006, Jean Francois-Pagé was fatally mauled by a grizzly bear while staking claims. The fatality occurred at approximately 26 kilometers east of Ross River, YT, between False Canyon and Weasel Lake.

Jean Francois-Pagé was employed by Aurora Geosciences Ltd. who was under contract to Klondike Star Mineral Corporation to stake mining claims.

On the morning of April 27, 2006, Pagé, co-worker, Larry Brault and Heiko Mueller, an employee of Klondike Star Mineral Corporation traveled by truck to Ross River, YT. The three men discussed the plan for the claim and prepared for departure by helicopter the next morning.

On the morning of April 28, 2006, the men flew by Trans North Helicopter to the claim site. The helicopter dropped Pagé first and then dropped Brault and Mueller approximately 3 kilometers from Pagé. Brault and Mueller began staking in different directions. Mueller was later moved by helicopter to another location, approximately 2 km. north of where Pagé had started.

At approximately 12:45 pm, Mueller had a call from Brault stating that Pagé would like the helicopter to transport him across the creek. However, the helicopter had returned to Ross River.

At approximately 1:00 pm, Brault heard Pagé on the radio advising that he had an encounter and then saying "he is charging". Brault heard Pagé saying "alright" three or four times as if he were trying to calm the bear. Brault then heard a scream and the radio went silent.

Brault called Mueller on the radio and Mueller contacted the hanger by satellite phone, leaving a message saying that Pagé was in trouble and that the helicopter should come to the work site as soon as possible.

Mueller was picked up by helicopter and a search began for Pagé. Since the helicopter was getting low on fuel, they decided to pick up Brault. The search continued and at this time, Brault noticed a bear crossing the flag line and then going into a den. The helicopter returned to Ross River due to the low fuel situation.

RCMP and a Conservation Officer continued the search by helicopter and as they flew over the den, the grizzly was observed acting in an agitated manner. The bear was coaxed out of the den and shot.

The search continued on foot where they found the body of Jean Francois-Pagé, partially buried but not consumed. The distance from the den to where the victim was found was 19.2 meters south. It is believed that the mauling occurred at this site.

Investigation

This fatality was investigated by the RCMP, Occupational Health and Safety, Conservation Officers and the Coroners Service.

Investigation revealed that Pagé received bear safety training as part of the Yukon Chamber of Mines Prospecting Course. Aurora Geosciences Ltd. Health, Safety & Environmental Protection Manual makes reference to new employees being briefed on hazards posed by large animals. The manual also makes reference to bear bangers and bear spray canisters. No bear bangers or bear spray were found on the deceased or at the scene.

Results of the investigation indicated that Aurora Geosciences was under the impression that the bear spray that they used did not work at the temperature that it was that day. Although Environment Canada does not keep temperatures for Ross River, they list a high of 3.6C and a low of -0.6 for Faro. Bear spray manufacturers indicate that the bear spray works in temperatures as low as -17.8C. For temperatures lower than this, the bear spray can be carried in a chest holster. There was indication from Aurora Geosciences that they did not expect bears to be out of hibernation at that time of year. Bear experts say that one can encounter a bear at any time of the year. Some bears do not hibernate.

Postmortem Examination

Toxicology

The screening for alcohol and both prescription and illicit drugs was negative.

Autopsy

Dr. Laurel Gray conducted the autopsy on May 5, 2006. Results of the autopsy concluded that the cause of death was **Multiple Injuries Consistent with Bear Mauling**. The injuries were such that they would have rapidly proved fatal.

Conclusions/Recommendations:

Directed to Aurora Geosciences Ltd.

Recommendation #1- The employer should ensure that workers receive training prior to commencing field work on recognizing bear den habitat and on bear safety. This should include training on precaution and preventative measures that workers can take regarding bear encounters

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Recommendation #2- The employer should consider scheduling flights over survey and claim lines prior to deployment of crew to access potential hazards including bear dens and animal movement.

Directed to Aurora Geosciences Ltd.

Recommendation #3- The employer should provide animal deterrents such as bear spray, air horns and bangers. Training should be provided on the use of these deterrents including training on use of bear spray.

Bear spray has halted bears, allowing time for people to escape. It is noted that the deceased had time to use his phone and therefore may have had time to deploy the bear spray. Canisters can be placed in chest or hip holsters. Aircraft-approved sealed canisters can be used for air transport to field locations.

I therefore find that **Jean-Francois Pagé** came to his death on **April 28, 2006** from **unnatural** causes, to wit: **Multiple Injuries Consistent with Bear Mauling**

I classify his death as **Accidental**.