



News Release

July 13, 2026

Livestream options available for the 10 a.m. (Pacific) media event:

- UBCIC's [Facebook](#)
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Coroner's inquest into Tatyanna Harrison's death raises serious compliance, accountability concerns

Justice for Girls, BCCLA and UBCIC call for review by Ministry of Public Safety

Unceded territories of the x^wməθk^wəyəm, Skwxwú7mesh and səliwətał Nations / Vancouver, B.C. | July 13, 2026 — The B.C. Coroner's Inquest into the disappearance and death in 2022 of Tatyanna Harrison, a 20-year-old Cree, Métis and Brazilian woman living in Vancouver, exposed numerous missteps that occurred with policing agencies and the B.C. Coroners Service. New information that emerged during the inquest raises fresh concerns regarding the adequacy of the death investigation, compliance with standards, as well as broader issues of accountability and coordination within these agencies, say Justice for Girls, the B.C. Civil Liberties Association (BCCLA), and the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs (UBCIC).

The organizations are calling for accountability and **for the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General to direct resources towards a review and renewal of the investigations** into Tatyanna's disappearance and death, and to determine how each of these agencies failed. The unanimous, five-member **inquest jury disagreed with the conclusions by the BC Coroners Service about Tatyanna's cause and manner of death.** The [jury found](#) that Tatyanna's cause of death was undetermined because the investigation left more questions than answers about how she died.

Sue Brown (Justice For Girls), legal counsel for Tatyanna's mother Natasha Harrison, says: "Tatyanna's case needs to be reviewed in light of what was learned at the inquest. It's clear the respective investigations by the RCMP and the Coroners Service were not sufficiently thorough and appear to have been heavily influenced by investigators' initial assumptions at the scene. Her case has yet to be properly investigated and the police have a due diligence obligation to determine whether more investigative avenues can be pursued because there are so many unanswered questions: how did Tatyanna get to Richmond, with whom, and when? Most importantly, we still do not know what caused her to die."

Key evidence regarding the role of the RCMP

Policy for the RCMP—the entity responsible for investigating Tatyanna's death— [requires that](#) "all reportable deaths occurring within RCMP jurisdiction must be treated as suspicious and thoroughly investigated." Evidence at Tatyanna's inquest, however, revealed that officers failed to execute a series of basic investigative steps, including:

- Collecting or preserving evidence at the scene;
- Following-up with key witnesses;
- Verifying witness statements;
- Looking for non-obvious signs of possible homicide, sexual assault or other crimes such as trafficking.

The RCMP testified they found drug paraphernalia at the site, and assumed Tatyanna—who was unidentified at the time—used illicit substances, noting in their initial report that she was "possibly [involved in] prostitution" based upon finding condoms and soap, found in a bag, and despite knowing nothing about who she was or whether the bag belonged to her.

The RCMP determined that Tatyanna's death was not suspicious and had no concerns about the possibility of sexual assault, even though she was found alone in a derelict, dry-docked yacht, unclothed from the waist down, with visible unexplained sores on the front of each hip and pelvis, and had facial bruising. She was barefoot and her shoes were never found. None of the items on the boat were conclusively linked to her.

Key evidence regarding the role of the BC Coroners Service

The BC Coroners Service—the entity responsible for investigating the cause of Tatyanna's death—persisted with the RCMP's initial drug-toxicity theory. Firstly, by triaging the

investigation to the Acute Substance Toxicity Unit, [tasked with](#) “investigations into all accidental deaths resulting from illicit drug use.” Secondly, by failing to follow evidence that refuted the overdose theory. Toxicologist Dr. Aaron Shapiro and Coroner Cynthia Hogan each testified the preliminary toxicology report found very low levels of fentanyl in Tatyanna’s body, quantities that were specified to be within “therapeutic levels.” This was known to the Coroners Service as early as May 9, 2022, and confirmed twice by July 2022.

Despite this, Cynthia Hogan told the RCMP and Tatyanna’s family that her death was “likely due to drug toxicity” on multiple occasions, and did not tell the RCMP that the fentanyl levels in Tatyanna’s system were deemed to be at therapeutic levels until mid-August 2022. The BC Coroners Service also told the Vancouver Police Department (VPD) that the cause of death was a drug overdose, information the VPD posted publicly in August 2022.

Sue Brown says: “We don’t know how, or to what extent, these assumptions impacted the quality of the investigations by the RCMP or the BC Coroners Service, but the inquest has raised further concerns. Working theories and assumptions must be tested and investigations must be thorough and driven by the evidence. Nobody questioned these assumptions, even as the evidence emerging was unable to substantiate them—and that should be concerning to everybody. The Coroners Service got it wrong.”

The jurors heard that the Coroners Service got it wrong twice: In February 2023, the BC Coroners Service changed Tatyanna’s cause of death from drug toxicity to sepsis, a finding firmly disputed by an independent Forensic Pathologist, Dr. Matthew Orde, who testified he would have pursued permission to do a sexual assault forensic exam (SAFE) at the initial autopsy, based on the circumstances, and that the manner of death was more accurately classified as undetermined.

The inquest jury agreed with Dr. Orde, unanimously ruling that Tatyanna’s cause and manner of death should be classified as undetermined.

Key evidence regarding the role of the Vancouver Police Department

For its part, the VPD failed to properly assess Tatyanna’s disappearance as high-risk, in part, because the VPD does not use the [Provincial Standards](#) for Missing Person Investigations. These standards require police departments to conduct risk assessments without delay in missing persons cases, a policy derived from the Wally Oppal-led Missing Women Commission of Inquiry

(2012) to prevent systemic police failures that led to the deaths of some 50 women on the farm of serial killer Robert Pickton. The jury also made recommendations around mandating regular training on missing persons investigations for police agencies, after the VPD testified there is none.

Jury Findings

1. Ensure adequate training for missing persons investigations.
2. Include Indigenous liaison officers in missing persons investigative units.
3. Ensure effective communications regarding related disciplinary proceedings with the Office in charge of Policing Standards.
4. Ensure police agencies are accountable for compliance with the standards, including response timelines to determinations of non-compliance.
5. Consider requiring police agencies to verify investigative findings from other agencies and seek those agencies' approval before communicating such findings to the public.
6. Ensure missing persons risk assessment templates used by all police agencies meet the provincial policing standards and clearly define high risk.
7. Consider developing community networks and self-identification programs to help locate missing persons.
8. Amend the registration of death and document control number 19979844 to reflect the Aboriginal status of Tatyana Harrison, and identify Natasha Harrison as her mother.

Justice for Girls, BCCLA and UBCIC welcome these recommendations and urge that they be implemented immediately. The organizations firmly support the family of Tatyanna Harrison, as well as the families of Chelsea Poorman and Noelle O'Soup, who continue to support one another as they await justice and answers into the deaths of their loved ones.

QUOTES

Natasha Harrison, Tatyanna Harrison's mother

"The Coroners Service released my daughter's body to the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction without my consent or knowledge. I went into this inquest seeking answers. I am coming out planning a burial ceremony for my daughter, who has been lying in an unmarked grave in Surrey for three years, something I learned during last week's inquest. I need to know—and the public needs to know—how could the Province bury my daughter without my knowledge or involvement, and without my

name or her ancestry on the Registration? This cannot be explained away as an oversight, was it negligence, was it racism? The severity of the missteps in every aspect of Tatyanna's case continue to come to light, even after the coroner's inquest has concluded. Tatyanna deserves dignity. I kept hearing the word dignity in the inquest, yet there is nothing dignified about the way she was treated. They failed my daughter and then they buried her like she didn't matter, along with any hope of learning more about what killed her. Shame on them."

Sue Brown, Lawyer, Legal Counsel for Natasha Harrison

"The investigation into Tatyanna's death failed from the beginning, when essential investigative decisions were made based upon assumptions and stereotypes about who she was, rather than thorough investigation. We are witnessing a repeat of the systemic failures identified in the Pickton investigations, where discriminatory assumptions shaped investigations and basic steps were not followed. Natasha Harrison has endured anguish and has had to fight at every turn to get answers about what happened to Tatyanna. And yet, here we are at the end of an inquest with a list of questions that may never be answered because the evidence was never collected, including Tatyanna's cause of death. All of the agencies involved need to be accountable for what went wrong here, and we need assurances that this will never happen again."

"It is clear from this case that the recommendations and findings from The Missing Women's Commission of Inquiry, along with multiple other human rights investigations and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls have not gotten to the root of the problem when it comes to inadequate investigations of vulnerable girls and women's deaths."

Latoya Farrell, Policy Staff Counsel, B.C. Civil Liberties Association

"Tatyanna Harrison didn't slip through the cracks; she fell through canyon-wide gaps in a system that has continually failed vulnerable Indigenous women and girls. The inquest highlighted how a multitude of systems failed Tatyanna at every turn. VPD failed to designate her as a high-risk missing person. Rather than properly investigating the circumstances of her death, Richmond RCMP and the BC Coroners Service relied on prejudicial assumptions to erroneously conclude that she likely died of fentanyl toxicity. We now know this was not the case. Tatyanna deserved better, and we must hold these public bodies accountable for their systemic failures."

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, UBCIC President

“The results of this tragic Inquest are one small step closer to truth—yet they also uncover the profound errors in this investigation, the missteps of justice, and the magnitude of preventable suffering. While we welcome its findings, we are reminded that Tatyanna’s death is part of a deeply systemic crisis of gendered and racial violence and the Missing and Murdered Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit+ epidemic. UBCIC shares our grief and our unwavering commitment with Tatyanna’s family and with the many families who are still awaiting justice, among them those of Chelsea Poorman and Noelle O’Soup. We urge the Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General to meaningfully enact these recommendations to prevent further harm.”

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BACKGROUNDER ON TATYANNA HARRISON

Tatyanna Harrison was a 20-year-old Cree, Métis and Brazilian woman living in Vancouver, from Treaty 6 (Alberta Plains Cree, St. Paul) and Métis nations whose family was impacted by the sixties scoop and day school system. She was reported missing on May 3, 2022. Unbeknownst to the VPD or her mother, Tatyanna’s remains had been discovered two days prior in Richmond. She was found partially unclothed on an abandoned yacht in a dry dock, but her identity was not determined until three months later. Despite the suspicious circumstances of her disappearance and the condition of her remains, her death was quickly announced as non-suspicious and likely a drug toxicity death, before it was changed to sepsis, when the final report was released in February 2023. A second pathologist refuted sepsis as cause of death and suggested the manner of death was more accurately classified as undetermined.

Tatyanna Harrison, Chelsea Poorman and Noelle O’Soup are young Indigenous women and an Indigenous teenager, whose deceased bodies were discovered in close succession under highly suspicious circumstances in Metro Vancouver in 2022. The three cases draw striking similarities and are connected to the widespread crisis of Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirit+ people. All three deaths were treated as ‘unsuspicious’ or ‘not criminal’ by police.

Calls for Coroners Inquests. On May 5, 2025, UBCIC, Justice for Girls and the Harrison, Poorman and O'Soup families [called on the Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General](#) to direct inquests into all three deaths. Police officers involved in the three cases are involved in misconduct complaints, or decisions, with the Office of the Police Complaints Commissioner.

About Justice For Girls

Justice for Girls is a Canadian non-profit founded in 1999 that advocates alongside teenage girls who live in poverty, are racialized, Indigenous or face other barriers that contribute to marginalization and discrimination on the basis of their age, gender, disability, race, class or Indigeneity to promote their equality and human rights. We believe that teenage girls are the experts of their own experiences, we provide support to amplify their voices in policy discussions on issues that impact them or their rights directly. We work to remove barriers to accessing justice for teenage girls and to promote accountability for violations of their rights. Justice for Girls has had Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) since 2009, www.justiceforgirls.org

About the BC Civil Liberties Association (BCCLA)

BCCLA is a non-partisan, non-profit organization that works to promote, defend, sustain, and extend civil liberties and human rights in British Columbia and Canada. BCCLA works on a broad range of issues at the heart of civil liberties and human rights through strategic litigation, policy advocacy and law reform, and public legal education. Relentless in our fight for human rights and justice, BCCLA strives to achieve a society in which people benefit from meaningful, equal assertion and protection of their *Charter* rights and liberty interests in a free and democratic society, www.bccla.org

About the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs (UBCIC)

The UBCIC is a First Nations political advocacy organization founded in 1969 with a mandate of advancing and protecting First Nations title and rights. The UBCIC strengthens First Nations' assertions of their title, rights, treaty rights and right of self determination as peoples, working collectively among First Nations in B.C. as a cohesive advocacy body. UBCIC has a robust history of advocacy for First Nations women and girls and is committed to ending the harms of systemic

gender-based violence and the MMIWG2S+ crisis alongside First Nations women in the pursuit of justice, health, and safety. UBCIC is a member of the B.C.-based Coalition on Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit+ people. www.ubcic.bc.ca

RESOURCES

Mental and Emotional Support Services

- First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Helpline. If you're experiencing emotional distress and want to talk, contact the toll-free number at 1-855-242-3310, or the online chat at hopeforwellness.ca, open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Hope for Wellness Help Line offers immediate mental health counselling and crisis intervention to all Indigenous peoples across Canada. Call the toll-free Help Line at 1-855-242-3310, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, or use the chat box on their website.
- KUU Crisis Line Society is a First Nations and Indigenous specific crisis line available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, toll-free from anywhere in British Columbia. KUU-US Crisis Line can be reached toll-free at 1-800-588-8717. Alternatively, individuals can call directly into the Youth Line at 250-723-2040 or the Adult Line at 250-723-4050.
- National 24/7 MMIWG2S+ Support Line 1-844-413-6649 An independent, national, toll-free support call line is available to provide support for anyone who requires assistance. This line is available free of charge, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Battered Women's Support Services (BC): BWSS offers immediate, short-term help to survivors of violence in intimate relationships, childhood sexual abuse and adult sexual assault. CRISIS LINE 604-687-1867 | Toll Free 1.855.687.1868

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UBCIC is an NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. For more information, please visit www.ubcic.bc.ca