

Canucks win Game 5, lead series 3-2 > SPORTS, B3



City of Victoria bylaw officers clear camps in the 900-block of Pandora Avenue on Thursday. DARREN STONE, TIMES COLONIST

Pandora Avenue encampment cleared by city bylaw officers

Campers in downtown Victoria told to ‘pack up and go,’ but ask: ‘Where to?’

ROXANNE EGAN-ELLIOTT
Times Colonist

Victoria bylaw officers conducted a massive cleanup of the 900-block of Pandora Avenue on Thursday, with the number of tents where people had been living reduced from dozens to three.

The area was cleared of people, tents and belongings in what staff at Our Place, which offers support services in the neighbourhood, said was the biggest cleanup of the block staff had ever seen.

As bylaw officers accompanied by Victoria police officers worked their way down the block, they cordoned off sections of the street using yellow caution tape and photographed items before packing them into trucks to be impounded.

Joseph, who didn't want his last name published, arrived to find bylaw officers had taped off his belongings. They wouldn't allow him into the area where he said he had "everything to live, like a bedroom." Bylaw officers took his name and information and told him he could

retrieve his things at a later date.

"I'll never get it back," he said, adding that, in his experience, it's difficult to recover seized possessions.

Bylaw staff returned a wheelchair and a box of drug paraphernalia to him, but he was threatened with arrest when he grabbed a bag of his clothing from behind the tape.

Victoria police officers accompanied bylaw staff to keep the peace and allow the city to conduct enforcement, said police spokesperson Const. Terri Healy.

Mayor Marianne Alto told media at a briefing outside city hall that bylaw officers were "doing the job they do every day."

Bylaw staff had not been to the block for a couple of days, because they've been busy in other parts of the city, so there was more cleanup work to do than usual, she said.

"Everyone can understand that when you do things regularly, it's incremental. If you lose a couple of days you can be seen to be doing a bit more," Alto said.

While bylaw officers are on the block each morning to clean up garbage and

ask a few people to remove their tents, this event was different, said Jordan Cooper, director of services for Our Place.

"The approach was more people having to actually pack up and go. So, folks were coming in asking us: 'Where am I supposed to go?' And we didn't have answers for them," said Cooper, calling it an "emotional and tough morning."

By 10 a.m., many people who had been sheltering for months on Pandora Avenue had dispersed, and Our Place staff didn't know where they had gone, he said.

"We're worried because we don't know where they're going to have to go and get the supports that they need," Cooper said.

People are used to the daily bylaw actions on the block, but Thursday's response, with multiple large container trucks taking away belongings, took staff and people sheltering by surprise, he said.

> See PANDORA, A2

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Port Alberni couple get 15 years for killing boy, 6

LOUISE DICKSON
Times Colonist

PORT ALBERNI — A Port Alberni mother and her partner have both been sentenced to 15 years in prison for brutalizing and killing her six-year-old son in March 2018.

Dontay Patrick Lucas died on March 13, 2018, of blunt force trauma to the brain after being transitioned back into the care of his mother, Rykel Charleson, by USMA Nuu-chah-nulth family and child services.

His death has illuminated systemic issues in B.C.'s Indigenous child welfare system, prompting a promise from Premier David Eby to provide answers about the boy's horrific death to prevent similar child deaths in the future.

Charleson — who has legally changed her name to Hannah Frank — and stepfather Mitchell Frank were originally charged with first-degree murder, but in November, they pleaded guilty to manslaughter.

The couple abused Dontay, biting him, hitting him and making him hang by his knees from the top of a door.

They deprived him of sleep, food and water, said Justice Michael Tammen, who accepted a joint submission from the Crown and defence for the 15-year sentence.

"The death of any child is tragic on a grand scale, more so when the death is caused by unlawful homicide, more so still when the perpetrators are parents, those in trust with the caring for and nurturing of the child," Tammen said on Thursday at the couple's sentencing hearing in B.C. Supreme Court in Port Alberni.

"Clearly, both accused caused Dontay's death by committing wanton acts of cruelty. It is unfathomable they would engage in such behaviour with a defenceless child."

The couple, who have no previous criminal record, have been in custody since May 2022. With almost three years credit for pretrial custody, they will serve close to 12 years in a federal prison.

> See DONTAY, A4

UVic accused of ‘systematic failures’ after student dies from overdose

LORI CULBERT
Vancouver Sun

One Tuesday last January, after attending her first-year chemistry class, Sidney McIntyre-Starko texted her father looking for help with a physics question.

"Are you able to solve this? I've gotten all the other questions on this assignment, but I'm stuck here," the University of Victoria science student messaged Ken Starko, an engineer. It was 4:51 p.m.

Sidney, 18, then FaceTimed her mother, Vancouver emergency room physician Dr. Caroline McIntyre, at 5:07 p.m. She wanted her mom to pack a grey sweater for a family wedding they were to attend that weekend in Toronto.

"She was looking forward to the wedding, but was nervous to miss school on the Friday," McIntyre recalled.

"She mentioned that she would not stay up late that night because she had an early lab or class in the morning."

It would be their last conversation.

Five hours later, at 10:30 p.m., McIntyre and Starko received a frantic text from their son Oliver, a fourth-year UVic student, who had heard from his sister's friend that Sidney had been rushed by ambulance to Royal Jubilee Hospital in critical condition.

"The doctor is saying that she took something with friends, some of them are here, too," Oliver wrote.

"She is on a ventilator, but the doctor says she is stable. They are about to move her to the ICU. I will be here with her."

At 6:32 that evening, while dressed in her fuzzy grey pyjamas, Sidney had collapsed in a dorm room from fentanyl poisoning, and suffered a cardiac arrest

soon after. Starko and McIntyre struggled to absorb the news. To their knowledge, their daughter, who loved music, dance and Greek mythology, had never used illicit drugs before.

Too late to catch a ferry or plane from her Vancouver home, McIntyre stayed up all night on Jan. 23, making panicked phone calls to the hospital and Sidney's friends to try to piece together what had happened.

As a doctor at a large hospital, she was familiar with the toxic drug crisis, which the province declared a public health emergency in 2016.

"I know that it is easy to reverse and treat an opioid overdose, but it has to be treated quickly before the brain suffers damage from lack of oxygen," she said.

> See STUDENT, A3



Sidney McIntyre-Starko. FAMILY PHOTO

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