



Judge sent sentencing remarks to the minister in charge

Sexual assaults of inmates in Hay River youth centre

by Karen Lajoie

Corrections officials are at a loss to explain how a young offender serving in Hay River's secure facility managed to physically and sexually assault four other inmates over the course of several months last year.

Doug Friesen, coordinator of young offenders for the department of Justice, says during the day, supervisors rarely leave youths unattended, and if they do, it's for a very short period of time.

But at night, there are four youths to a dorm room without constant supervision.

"It would be ideal to have single rooms, but it's just too costly to build," Friesen says. In a case like the one last year, he says there's no way of knowing someone is being abusive in the dorm unless the victim comes forward and asks for help.

The secure facility houses up to 16 youths, but youths aren't

normally locked up and there is no evidence that the perpetrator was locked up while this case was developing.

Attention turned to conditions in the secure youth facility last November, when territorial court judge Michel Bourassa ordered a copy of his sentencing remarks be sent to Justice minister Stephen Kakfwi.

The case that so incensed him involved a then 17-year-old young offender who was convicted of two counts of sexual assault and three charges of common assault on four different male inmates while he was a prisoner in 1992.

During his sentencing remarks, Bourassa said "I have to question the supervision of inmates under secure custody. No judge and no law contemplates sentencing people to secure custody to be abused physically and sexually, and that's what is happening here I think it's terrible

that this is going on."

According to the facts of the cases, the abuse went on for some time before charges were laid.

The youth, described by his lawyer as a tall, stocky "bully," was sent to the facility February 17 for convictions on break and enter with intent, and theft charges. The assaults began the same day and continued through April 15. Other incidents happened in May.

"When I sentence someone to secure custody I'm not sentencing them to be beaten up and sexually poked at. Just because they're in jail doesn't make them lesser," Bourassa said. "I must confess a degree of unease, surprise, and great concern that this kind of conduct... is going on in what I would call our secure centre."

"The secure custody centre is not a great big jail. Surely, it's easy to supervise. Surely, I would assume, there are sufficient staff. If there isn't, there should be. But I find it amazing this kind of conduct that we all know goes on in major institutions can be going on in a little microcosm here in the NWT," the judge said. "There is no place for (a victim) to hide in the Hay River Secure Centre. Apparently the staff aren't there to protect him and there's no place for that boy to hide."

The convicted youth was given an opportunity to address the court during his sentencing hearing. He said when he first went to jail in 1989, boys there treated him in a rough and sexual way. "I had nowhere to run, nowhere to hide, didn't have people to talk to. So after that, I just got fed up with people pushing me around and that I just



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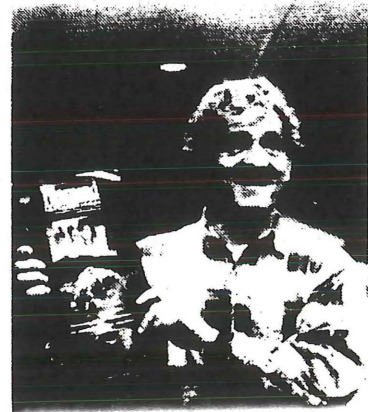
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The area covered by the Lac de Gras pipe is about 25 hectares, Schiller said, making it the ninth largest in the world.

"We're going to find hundreds and hundreds of kimberlites that are diamond-bearing.

"Diamonds are going to be found here, I predict in quantities equal to or greater than anywhere in the world.

"We're going to find them from Great Slave Lake to the Coronation Gulf," he said — adding that there's already staking going



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Bourassa asked the court reporter to send a copy of the teen's remarks to the minister of Justice, saying, "I think it's awful that that kind of conduct is going on for want of a supervisory staff. It's not right."

Justice officials say the department is aware of the problem and is investigating.

Hay River Secure Centre manager Doug Soroff avoided comment.

Corrections is trying to solve the problem. Friesen says cameras have been installed in the hallways and supervisors make rounds and check rooms both by entering them and by peering through door windows. He says supervisors keep irregular times for their night rounds, and avoid establishing other detectable patterns.

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"We're going to find them from Great Slave Lake to the Coronation Gulf," he said — adding that there's already staking going on near Snowdrift and Cambridge Bay. "If the Russians can mine diamonds on the Arctic Circle, we can mine diamonds here."

If the discoveries prove to be economically viable, mines will spring up, making great cone-shaped, tiered holes in the earth. If a mill is built at Lac de Gras, it could cost \$600 million, Schiller said.

"I can see a cutting centre here in Yellowknife and all kinds of wonderful spinoffs. Hopefully, it's going to make Yellowknife a diamond centre."

Local prospectors in the crowd figured they'll enjoy more action in the diamond play as interest spreads south from Lac de Gras. But with the publicity machine and stock market speculation pumping down south, it wouldn't take much to spark an invading swarm of novice stakers to land first explored by Dene. Inuit and Inuvialuit.



Ed Schiller

"We knew five years ago there was something going on here of major proportion," Schiller says. "The secret was well kept."

Bits of diamond history crop up in his presentation. Back in 1947, geologist Bob Follonsby found minerals that are telltale signs of diamonds at Lac de Gras, Schiller says. "But he didn't know what he was looking at."

And even the NWT mining community was skeptical. "John Zigarlick (of Echo Bay Mines) said there can't be diamonds in the NWT because it's not diamond country. We found a pipe under the Lupin (mine) road," Schiller says.

"I was a resident geologist (with the Geological Survey of Canada) here in the '60s. I was a dumb schmuck," he jokes. "I never thought about diamonds."