

saturdayreport



Police officers set up a work tent on the acreage.
Citizen photo by Brent Braaten



Officers unload forensic equipment at the site.
Citizen photo by David Mah

Neighbours recall convicted killer that lived at Isle Pierre acreage

Mark Nielsen
Citizen staff

That the RCMP is searching a property once owned by convicted killer Leland Vincent Switzer came as no surprise to anyone familiar with the area.

Judging by comments from passersby and one neighbour, Switzer kept neighbours on edge during the years he lived on the five-acre plot, part of a dozen-home rural subdivision along Pinewood Road, a short drive past the Isle Pierre sawmill and about 40 kilometres west of the city.



ANDERSON

“Hopefully they come up with something to keep that guy in there,” said Wally Anderson from his pickup truck before making his way through a small throng of media stationed in front of the property.

Cindy Mortimer, a friend of Anderson's who was along for the ride and had also lived in the area, portrayed Switzer as someone with a bad reputation.

“He threatened a lot of people and he bragged about everything. He bragged about killing his brother, he bragged about that,” Mortimer said.

It was a reputation that was well known at the Isle Pierre sawmill, 5.5 kilometres south of the property, according to two employees of the operation. Neither of the two, who declined to give their names, were surprised by the latest development. “He (seemed) psychotic,” said one.



RCMP investigators work on the scene of a property on Pinewood Road.
Citizen photo by Brent Braaten

As it stands, if not for the large RCMP mobile forensic response truck parked in front of the property and another large RCMP trailer unit set up in the driveway, there would be little that makes the site stand out from any other rural lot around Prince George.

A modest white trailer home, a few outbuildings and a small vegetable garden occupy the site where an RCMP member wearing

a reflector vest spent part of Friday morning slowly walking the property, ribboned off with yellow tape, in search of clues. Two plainclothes officers showed up early in the afternoon, but there was little apparent activity.

The current residents, who are not suspects in the investigation, will be living in a motel in the city for the duration of the search, police said.

None of the immediate neighbours were home Friday morning but a resident further down the road was reluctant to say anything to the press other than to note that Switzer is eligible for parole in about five years.

Switzer can seek day parole as soon as Sept. 6, 2011 and full parole by Sept. 14, 2014, Corrections Canada spokesperson Alain Charette confirmed, but added

whether he will be granted any form of release will remain up to a parole board.

Switzer was sentenced to life without eligibility for parole for 10 years on Dec. 2, 2004 for the second degree murder of his brother on June 23, 2002, less than two days after Nicole Hoar went missing from the Petro Canada gas station on the western edge of the city.



Barb and Jack Hoar, the parents of Nicole Hoar, are shown at a press conference in Prince George on June 19, 2003.
Citizen file photo

Hoar family hoping for breakthrough

Citizen staff

The following statement was released Friday by Nicole Hoar's parents, Jack and Barb Hoar of Red Deer, Alta.:

“Our family is aware of the police search currently going on west of Prince George. We are supportive of the police investigation and hoping it may further their investigation into the case of our missing daughter.

“Our thoughts continue to be with Nicole. Nicole is just one of many missing persons in that area and our thoughts continue to be with their families as well. This is a difficult time for us, and we would ask that the media please be respectful of our privacy.”

Search limited to Hoar, police say

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Linteau said a former owner of the property is a “person of interest” and is “not a threat to any member of the general public” but declined to provide a name.

“I can't go into specifics without going into this person's personal information,” she said.

The search is related strictly to Hoar's disappearance, Linteau added.

“We have no information at this time to suggest that we are looking for remains of more than one person,” Linteau said. “It's certainly a possibility; it's something we have to be aware of but we have no information to suggest that we could find the remains of more than one person.”

At least 18 women have gone missing along the so-called Highway of Tears between Prince George and Prince Rupert since 1969. The search, which began Thursday morning, is in the “very preliminary stages,” Linteau said, and added no remains or other evidence have been located so far.

“If remains are located, it will take some time (to confirm the identity) because obviously we have to use scientific expertise in order to conduct a variety of examinations,” she said.

No other properties have been searched but a variety of interviews have been conducted in relation to the case, according to Linteau, including with some people living in the area.

Linteau declined to say specifically what prompted RCMP to launch the search.



RCMP forensic investigators mark and ribbon an area of interest at a home on Pinewood Road.
Citizen photo by David Mah

“I can say that in order to obtain a search warrant, it has to be backed by very strong evidence,” she said. “The

evidence that we are looking for, we have to be pretty confident that it is where we think it will be. It's never a guarantee but of course we are hopeful that we find what we're looking for.”

Hoar was making her way to Smithers to visit her sister at the time of her disappearance.

She was last seen wearing army-coloured capri pants, sandals, glasses, a tank top, a red shirt with a yellow collar with the word “Ravens” on it, and she carried two bags.

The first one was a dark green bag

with an orange patch on it, while the other was a large purple and black backpack.

Anyone who may have seen anything suspicious in the Isle Pierre area during the weekend of June 21 to 23, 2002 is asked to call the RCMP's E division homicide unit at 1-877-543-4822 or Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-8477 (TIPS).

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LINTEAU



HOAR