

Body found following swimming tragedy

The Canadian Press

MAPLE RIDGE — A body has been recovered from a creek in a park east of Vancouver where two young men from the Lower Mainland disappeared while swimming, says an RCMP sergeant.

Ridge Meadows RCMP Sgt. Dale Somerville said the 19-year-old residents from Surrey and Delta were with friends in the lower falls area of Gold Creek in Golden Ears Provincial Park on Friday.

He said they were swept away in the fast-flowing current, which had been swollen by the spring snow melt.

"At this point in time we're not really saying anything about identification until next-of-kin is notified," said Somerville. "At this point in time the second outstanding male hasn't been found and we're still searching."

Somerville said the area is a very popular swimming hole in the summer but has turned dangerous because the recent hot weather has melted snowpacks, resulting in significant run-off.

In fact, the rapidly-moving water made conditions dangerous for searchers who have been combing the creek's banks.

"The swimming area has got a significant current, and there was some human error," said Somerville.

"According to the group of friends that were with them, they said they slipped and were taken away by the current."

Somerville said an RCMP helicopter spotted the body in the creek's lower falls.

The search continued for the second young man.

Winds of change blow foul for Maverick, the flying car

The Canadian Press

VERNON — A pilot whose flying car would be right at home in a James Bond movie says his life flashed before his eyes Friday when the contraption went out of control as it was landing at the airport in Vernon.

"It seemed there was an anomaly on our approach to landing," Ray Siebring said in a phone interview with The Canadian Press from the crash site.

"It was just a sharp left turn that turned into a spiral, so the spiral took at least three rotations."

As the Maverick — which looks like a dune buggy with a large propeller on its rear — started losing altitude, Siebring realized there was a semi-populated area that included a school directly in his path.

The situation called for quick thinking.

"I experienced one of those ... moments where time slows down," he said. "The training kicked in so that we were able to operate the aircraft and move it to a safe area."

"We were able to stop the rotation, but our altitude was critically low. I gave full power to dampen the forced landing and directed the aircraft ... away from the school and into some woods."

RCMP spokesman Gord Molendyk said the road-worthy flying car, the creation of a Florida company, crashed near the school with the pilot and one of his relatives aboard.

"It made a circle like it was going to approach, [then] obviously something happened," said Molendyk. "They heard it from the airport power up and then it crashed into the trees, through the fence on the edge of the school [grounds]."

Both occupants were taken to hospital but were expected to recover from their injuries.

No one was hurt on the ground although children from the school were preparing take to the nearby grounds for a track and field day.

Dale Olsen, a teacher at the nearby Fulton Secondary School, and said it was the talk of the morning.

"A lot of the kids saw it around school this morning," he said.

"They said it looked like it stalled, the parachute started crumpling up and they couldn't get it going again."

Siebring defended the safety record of the Maverick.

"This is an aircraft that has been demonstrated and is airworthy so we passed all our aircraft certifications," he said.

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First Nation threatens action over infrastructure trespasses

Keven DREWS The Canadian Press

VANCOUVER — Southwestern British Columbia's St'at'imc Chiefs Council is threatening to block a highway and rail line and "embarrass" private companies and the next provincial government over trespasses on its traditional territory.

Chief Garry John said he wants the next government in Victoria to deal with the issue urgently and he raised the topic, triggered by a recent B.C. Supreme Court decision, at a public event attended by about 200 people in Lillooet on Friday.

In her Feb. 7, 2013 ruling, Madam Justice Loryl Russell found the Douglas Trail Road, also known as the High-line Road and which runs through the band's traditional lands, is a public highway.

Local resident Wolfgang Skutnik filed the action, which the First Nation opposed.

"I guess the bottom line is we want to let people know that the St'at'imc are very reasonable people," said John in an interview.

"We've tried to be good neighbours for the past, since point of contact, I guess, and we don't want to have to do things this way."

"We'd much rather sit down at the table with the next government that's coming in."

The conflict is not unique. The Squamish Nation and Lil'Wat Nation launched a lawsuit in B.C. Supreme Court Wednesday over the provincial government's approval of Whistler, B.C.'s Official Community Plan.

The First Nations want the court to quash the plan because they were not consulted, a right they argue they have, as they have "unextinguished aboriginal title and rights" over Crown lands covered by the document.

At issue for the St'at'imc, though, are the Sea to Sky Highway, formally known as Highway 99, the Canadian National Railway line, and a Telus fibre-optic line.

Representative from CN and the provincial government were unable to comment by publication.

John said CN's main line runs north through the middle of the First Nation's territory, starting near Whistler.

Land was taken from the First Nation without any consultation or accommodation along northern sections of Highway 99, he added, and Telus runs its line on BC Hydro poles but doesn't necessarily have an agreement with



Xwisten Grand Chief Saul Terry, left, and St'at'imc Chiefs Council Chair Chief Garry John pose on the Bridge River First Nation near Lillooet on Friday.

each of the First Nations' communities.

However, Jim MacArthur, an adviser to the chiefs' council, said Telus has done a good job recently of negotiating leases on reserves.

Shawn Hall, a spokesman for Telus, said the issue is "baffling" for the company, which has a good working relationship with the First Nation, and in one case, the company was in a community just weeks ago to celebrate an Internet broad-band connection.

He said the company has permits from several of the First Nations' communities to run its fibre optics over the land and is currently sitting down with chiefs to work on a larger agreement for infrastructure on the traditional territory.

"It's critical infrastructure in small communities," he said. "It provides tremendous economic development opportunities, education opportunities, health-care opportunities," he said.

"It really makes a real difference in people's lives."

He said the company is passionate about connecting remote First Nations to the infrastructure.

Meantime, Scott Fraser, the New Democrat's aboriginal affairs critic and a candidate in the riding of Alberni, didn't comment on the specific infrastructure issue, but he said the party has a larger action plan for First Nations.

He said the party has committed to building a government-to-government relationship with First Nations, and within the first 100 days, NDP Leader Adrian Dix and the minister responsible

for aboriginal issues would meet with the First Nations Leadership Council and all chiefs.

"I mean a four year action plan: let's lay it out, let's lay out an action plan to move us where we've got to be to have that strong government to government relationship," said Fraser.

If he were minister, Fraser said he'd commit to meet with the St'at'imc even sooner.

"We want to get out of the pattern of litigation that just doesn't seem to end and the conflict that never seems to end," said Fraser.

According to the B.C. Supreme Court ruling, the Douglas Trail Road is 24-kilometres long and connects the communities of D'Arcy and Seton Portage.

The private BC Electric Company, a precursor to BC Hydro, built the road in the late 1940s and early 1950s, and the route overlaid sections of a trail developed in the late 19th century, states the ruling.

The provincial government expropriated all of the shares of the BC Electric Company in 1961, and with the BC Power Commission, was amalgamated into the BC Hydro and Power Authority.

The Pacific Great Eastern Railway also built a right-of-way over the trail between 1912 and 1915, states the ruling.

Russell found a variety of groups, including BC Hydro, BC Rail, loggers, residents and tourists, used the road, which is an "essential access" to nearby communities, and enough public money has been spent on it.

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