



CITIZEN PHOTO BY JAMES DOYLE

## Snowbirds head north

The Canadian Forces Snowbirds took off from the Prince George Airport on Thursday evening. The planes had made at stop to fuel up as they make their way north.

# Trio guilty of shooting man in Mackenzie

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A B.C. Supreme Court Justice found three people guilty Friday of participating in a shooting of a Mackenzie man and torching a stolen pickup truck.

Meranda Leigh Dingwall, 24, Kelly Michael Richet, 32, and Christopher Ryan Russell, 30, were each found guilty of 11 counts related to the July 7, 2016 early-morning incident in which two men were shot at with one suffering a wound to his calf.

Most significantly, each was found guilty of two counts of discharging a firearm with intent to wound or disfigure. They had also originally faced two counts of attempted murder but those charges

were later dropped.

In reaching his decision following a nine-day trial, Justice Patrice Abrioux said the Crown's case was based entirely on circumstantial evidence – the two men targeted in the shooting refused to testify – but found there was enough to prove guilt beyond reasonable doubt.

According to witness testimony, a white pickup truck pulled up in front of a 200-block Crysedale Drive home in Mackenzie and two passengers got out.

One walked around the back of the truck and up to the curb, then raised a handgun and fired two to four shots at three people standing on the front lawn. All three ran towards the house but one collapsed while the shooter jumped into the

pickup's back and the other got into the cab and the truck sped off.

Images from the video surveillance camera of a restaurant looking over Mackenzie Boulevard showed a pickup truck of the same the description heading north shortly before 4 a.m. and then a few moments later heading south, this time with something large in the box, possibly a person.

About 20 minutes later, a truck later determined to have been stolen from a Prince George home the day before was found alight on a logging road a short distance off Highway 39 about 20 kilometres south of the town.

Just prior to coming across the truck, a witness also saw a truck heading south on Highway 39.

An RCMP officer who had been

called out from Prince George in answer to the call saw a vehicle matching the description at a gas station in Bear Lake. As it turned out, Dingwall was driving the vehicle and Richet and Russell were with her. RCMP also found a pass for handicapped parking from the stolen truck in her vehicle. And at the site where the truck was found on fire, glass from a broken light matching that from Dingwall's vehicle was found.

With the help of a tracking dog, a .45 calibre semiautomatic handgun was found in the bush about 100 metres away from the burn site. Cartridges from the firearm were found at the scene of the shooting. Because they were wearing baggy clothing, hoodies and covers over their faces, the witness

was unable to provide accurate descriptions of the shooter and the accomplice. Abrioux also had problems with the way gun smoke residue found on the three was collected – he had concern their hands may have been contaminated during the arrest.

But he also noted the three all live in Prince George and found that on the totality of the evidence, the three had at least aided and abetted in the shooting even if possibly none had pulled the trigger and found them guilty of the counts.

Abrioux said there was a chance others may have been involved but did not speculate on the motivation for the incident. The three will be sentenced after pre-sentence reports are completed.



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CITIZEN FILE PHOTO

**The Pacific BioEnergy plant on Willow Cale Forestry Road is seen in a 2010 file photo. Tokyo-based Sumitomo Corporation has purchased a 48-per-cent stake in the pellet producer.**

## Japanese firm buys stake in Pacific Bioenergy

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One of Prince George's flagship companies in the alternative forestry sector has gotten an international boost.

Sumitomo Corporation of Japan has acquired a 48 per cent equity interest in Pacific BioEnergy Corporation (PBEC), one of Canada's leading producers of wood pellets. It has its head office in Vancouver but its original manufacturing facility is in Prince George on the Willow Cale Forest Service Road, built in 1994 then rebuilt and expanded in 2007.

It has timber supply locations in Kitwanga near Terrace and Nazko near Quesnel, plus manufacturing facilities in Quesnel and Fort St. John. Combined, the company produces in excess of 550,000 tonnes per annum of industrial grade pellets that go to market in Asia and Europe. Over the years, PBEC has manufactured more than 3.5 million tonnes of wood pellets sold onto the global market.

"PBEC welcomes the acquisition of 48 per cent of our company by Sumitomo Corporation," said PBEC's chair and CEO Don Steele. "We see the acquisition as a vote of confidence in our vision to continue to build PBEC and the biomass energy sector in British Columbia."

For Tokyo-based Sumitomo Corporation, this was a sensible move to secure an energy supply. They operate power generation plants. They need the fuel, so they now have their own stake in where it comes from.

"Sumitomo Corporation began importing biomass fuel into Japan for power generation in 2008," said a statement by the company. "Biomass fuel is seen as a promising energy source for encouraging wider use of renewable energies in Japan, and Sumitomo Corporation has been developing reliable sources overseas to complement domestically produced biomass fuel. In acquiring a stake in PBEC, Sumitomo Corporation is seeking to establish a steady wood pellet

supply for the long term and thereby help spread and promote renewable energy."

Pacific Bioenergy has become Canada's second largest producer of these energy pellets, many of which utilize waste wood, unusable slash from logging and trim-off from the lumber mill side of the forestry sector.

"Global pellet demand is dominated by Europe today but new geographic markets for our product are beginning to develop," said a statement by PBEC. "At present, global demand for coal is approximately six billion tonnes per annum. Replacing just five per cent of this with wood pellet fuel results in annual demand of approximately 400 million tonnes of pellets, or roughly 40 times the current level."

Japan has set legislated targets for using renewable energy instead of dirty, unsustainable options like coal or other fossil fuels.

According to Sumitomo, "Wood pellets have attracted particular attention in Japan as a means of improving power generation efficiency to achieve the FY2030 energy mix formulated by the (Japanese) government in 2015."

In order for the investment in PBEC to occur, company officials acted to buy out a previous partner from Europe that held a 34 per cent share in the Prince George facility. Once that was 100 per cent in PBEC hands, they took on their new Japanese partners.

"Japanese utilities have been increasing their use of renewable biomass fuel at their power plants and Sumitomo views its purchase of 48 per cent of PBEC as a means to ensure access to a stable supply of renewable biomass fuel for the long term," said the PBEC statement.

Wood pellets are environmentally beneficial at both ends of its manufacturing arch. The wood used to make the energy pills would usually be burned, with smoke going into the local airshed. And where the pellets are burned, they are usually replacing a dirtier option so it spares the atmosphere those pollutants.