

British Columbia

Robert Pickton: Stephanie Lane's family seeks new murder trial after remains returned

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Family learned of remains in storage after more than a decade

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Daughter's partial remains were found on Robert Pickton's farm 1:00

The family of Stephanie Lane, whose partial skeletal remains were found on Robert Pickton's B.C. farm, wants the case reopened and a new murder charge laid against the serial killer.

Lane disappeared in January 1997 when she was 20, and is believed to be Pickton's youngest victim. Her family knew her DNA had been found on Pickton's farm in 2003, but was later told there wasn't enough evidence in her case to proceed with murder charges.

"I accepted that as fact," said her tearful mother, Michele Pineault, at a news conference Wednesday.

Last August, Pineault learned the Coroners Service of British Columbia wanted to speak to her.

"My first thought as a mother was wow, they've made a mistake, it wasn't her."

In fact, she learned that her daughter's vertebrae had been found on the farm, but forgotten in storage for 11 years.

"They apparently sat in a storage locker," Pineault said.

"They just repeated over and over that it was an oversight ... I think it's more than an oversight."

The bone fragments were held in RCMP storage from 2003 until 2010, and then by the B.C. Coroners Service before being returned to the family last fall, Pineault said.



Michele Pineault wraps up the box containing her daughter's remains, which were returned to her in the fall of 2014. (CBC)

'They have made me relive this'

The nature of the remains found on the farm is important, because the family was told it made the difference between charging and not charging Pickton in Lane's death.

"Two pieces of her vertebrae was certainly enough to charge him with ... I want Robert Pickton charged with my daughter's murder," Pineault said.

The remains or DNA of 33 women, including Lane, were found on Pickton's farm.



A court sketch of B.C. pig farmer Robert Pickton as he appeared during his 2007 murder trial. (CBC)

Lane was not among the 26 women Pickton was originally charged with killing. He was [convicted of the second-degree murder of six women](#) in 2007, with the [remaining 20 charges stayed](#).

Pineault believes charges should have been laid long ago in her daughter's case.

"They have made me relive this. I have no justice for my daughter ... I've lost my daughter, what worse can I go through," she said.

The family wants the coroner to re-examine the remains, confirm the woman's identity, and for the Crown to lay criminal charges.

No additional prosecutions: Crown

Crown prosecutors have previously said they do not plan to put Pickton on trial again because he has already received the maximum sentence possible: a life sentence with no chance of parole for 25 years.

That hasn't changed, said Crown spokesperson Neil Mackenzie Wednesday.

"The branch has taken the position that any additional prosecutions were not going to be undertaken," he said.

The coroners service apologized for the "unfortunate delay" in returning the remains to the family, but said the bones do not represent new evidence in the Pickton case.

Police knew about Lane's remains as part of their original investigation, said Barb McLintock, a spokesperson for the coroners service.

It's not clear why charges were not laid in Lane's case.

No charges laid against coroners service

This isn't the first time the family of one of Pickton's victims has complained about the handling of remains by the coroners service.

- [Pickton victim's remains forgotten by coroner, family says](#)
- [Pickton victim suffered indignity by coroner, family says](#)

A year-long investigation by the RCMP has ended with no charges laid against the coroners service.

The family of Cara Ellis were initially told the only thing that remained of her was a strange green substance, sealed in an urn, but after pushing for three years, they were finally given a box full of overlooked remains.

The family of Marnie Frey said her bone fragments were smashed by a hammer to fit into an urn that was returned to them. They alleged this was a criminal act by the former coroner and the funeral director involved, and said they should be charged with indignity to a human body.

Rick Frey, Marnie's father, says he is angry and disappointed that no charges will be laid, but says he's not finished trying to get answers.

"These women are our daughters and sisters and mothers. They were marginalized people. They didn't deserve to die the death they did and this is what happens? ... I'm not going to roll over. There's something wrong here," Frey said.

B.C. Attorney General and Minister of Justice Suzanne Anton said in an emailed statement that the delay in returning the remains to the victims' families did not impact the criminal proceedings.

"This is a terrible tragedy for the families and for everyone involved. It's very concerning that there was a delay in returning the remains to the victims' families," she said.

Anton said the current chief coroner has done a review of policies and practices to ensure this doesn't happen again.

"Efforts were undertaken to contact the families involved to advise them, and to extend the BC Coroners' Services' sincere apologies to the family members for the distress that delayed return of their loved ones has caused them."

source: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/robert-pickton-stephanie-lane-s-family-seeks-new-murder-trial-after-remains-returned-1.2934834>