



INFORMATION BULLETIN

Aug. 20, 2007

Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General
BC Coroners Service

MISSING WHISTLER WOMAN IDENTIFIED

WHISTLER – The BC Coroners Service has identified remains found in Whistler to be Susanne Tam who went missing on July 13, 1996.

Partial remains were found by a hiker on Alpine Way in Whistler on Sept. 27, 2005. Early in its investigation, the Whistler RCMP collected DNA samples from Tam's family, which were stored for possible future testing.

Initial standard DNA testing was unsuccessful as the remains were too degraded.

Recently, using an advanced forensic technique called mitochondrial DNA analysis (mtDNA), Dr. Dean Hildebrand of the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT) was able to determine a positive mtDNA match with Tam. Mitochondrial analysis is more sensitive than regular DNA testing and is sometimes used in cases where the remains are degraded and not suitable for standard testing. Standard techniques analyze DNA extracted from the nucleus of a cell. mtDNA technology analyzes DNA from a different part of the cell, the mitochondrion.

With the positive identification made, the Coroners Service case is now completed.

The mandate of the Coroners Service is to ensure that a thorough and independent inquiry is made into all sudden and unexplained deaths in the community.

The BC Coroners Service is part of Emergency Management BC, an overarching body mandated to ensure co-ordinated emergency response in crisis and disaster situations. EMBC also leads prevention initiatives aimed at improving the quality of life for all British Columbians through enhanced public safety

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