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HARPER GREY'S BRYAN BAYNHAM, QC ONE OF FOUR LAWYERS TO REPRESENT GROUPS AT MISSING WOMEN INQUIRY

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BRYAN BAYNHAM, QC TO PROVIDE PRO BONO REPRESENTATION TO ABORIGINAL GROUPS

Harper Grey LLP partner [Bryan Baynham, QC](#) will serve as pro bono counsel to groups who represent the interests of First Nations women at the probe into the Vancouver Police and RCMP investigations of women reported missing from the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver between 1997 and 2002. The investigations eventually led to the arrest and conviction of Robert Pickton. The scope of the inquiry has been expanded to include investigations into missing women and multiple murders throughout B.C., including those along the 'Highway of Tears' between Prince George and Prince Rupert.

FOUR LAWYERS NAMED TO REPRESENT GROUPS AT MISSING WOMEN INQUIRY

by Neal Hall, Vancouver Sun

August 11 – The missing women inquiry announced Wednesday the names of four independent lawyers, including two working for free, who will represent the interests of first nations women and the Downtown Eastside community at the inquiry.

Inquiry spokesman Chris Freimond said the commission is confident the appointments will boost its ability to conduct a relevant inquiry leading to findings and recommendations that will make a difference.

When the hearings begin on Oct. 11, he said, the commission believes "it will become clear that the resources and structure are in place to deal thoroughly with the important issues in a way that satisfies British Columbians."

The appointments come after a number of first nations and women's groups dropped out of participating in the inquiry because the government would not fund lawyers to represent them.

The lawyers are Jason Gratl, a past president of the B.C. Civil Liberties Association, and Robyn Gervais, who previously represented the Carrier Sekani Tribal Council at the inquiry before the group decided to withdraw because of lack of funding.

The two Vancouver lawyers who will work pro bono – a Latin term meaning "for the public good" – are Bryan Baynham and Darrell Roberts.

The four lawyers will work independently of the commission with a mandate to serve the public interest.

They will not represent specific clients but will be expected to take guidance from unfunded participant groups, organizations and individuals.

Freimond said the knowledge and understanding of the Downtown Eastside community and aboriginal women's issues that Gratl and Gervais bring to the inquiry will help ensure that the perspectives of these communities are presented at the hearings.

The cost of hiring the two new lawyers is unknown but the inquiry says it has the funds to do so because of cost savings in its investigations, which took less time than previously anticipated.

Missing women inquiry commissioner Wally Oppal had granted 13 community groups standing to participate in the inquiry.

But the attorney-general only provided legal funding for the families of serial killer Robert Pickton's victims and has repeatedly refused to fund the community groups, saying inquiry lawyers can represent them.

Groups who have withdrawn from the inquiry because of the lack of government funding included the Native Women's Association of Canada, the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs, the Carrier Sekani Tribal Council, the Native Courtworker and Counselling Association of B.C., the Women's Equality & Security Coalition, the Ending Violence Association of BC and West Coast LEAF.

The commission was appointed by the B.C. government last year to probe the Vancouver police and RCMP investigations of women reported missing from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside between Jan. 23, 1997 and Feb. 5, 2002, when Pickton was arrested.

The commission's terms of reference were expanded to include making recommendations on the investigations of missing women and suspected multiple murders throughout B.C.

Starting Sept. 12, the inquiry will hold community forums in nine communities between Prince George and Prince Rupert, the so-called Highway of Tears because so many girls and young women have disappeared or have been found murdered along it.

Pickton preyed on women living in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, offering them drugs if they came to his pig farm in Port Coquitlam.

The inquiry will also investigate the decision by the criminal justice branch in 1998 to stay charges against Pickton. Pickton had been charged in 1997 with the attempted murder of a woman who fled naked and bleeding from his farm. After his arrest in 2002, Pickton was initially charged with the murder of 26 women, with the charges being divided into two trials. He was convicted at the first trial in 2009 on six murders. After exhausting all his appeals, the Crown elected not to proceed on another 20 charges at a second trial.

Pickton is considered Canada's worst serial killer, admitting to an undercover officer that he killed 49 women.

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