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FAMILY OF VICTIM AND FSIN OPPOSE EARLY RELEASE FOR A SASKATOON MAN CONVICTED OF BRUTAL HOMICIDE

Treaty 6 Territory, Saskatoon SK – A First Nations family from Sweetgrass First Nation and the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN) are expressing concern for public safety and oppose the early release of a man found guilty of first-degree murder and sexual assault 21 years ago in Saskatoon, Sask.

“We pray no family must go through the hell on earth that we have had to navigate, through the darkest of evil, at the hands of this murderer,” said the family of Crystal Paskemin.

The family told the parole board that they opposed the release of their sister’s killer, but they have not been heard said FSIN Fourth Vice Chief Heather Bear.

January 13, 2023, the national parole board granted the man convicted of the crime day parole for six months, allowing him to live in a community residential facility on Vancouver Island, British Columbia where he will have full access to women in the public. No current photo of him was released to warn those living in the area. Due to the oversites, FSIN is speaking out in support of the family and releasing the photo.

“Once again, the justice system of Canada has failed another Indigenous family who lost a loved one who suffered a horrific death. There needs to be more measures to ensure our voices are heard by the parole system and longer sentences for those who perpetrate violence against Indigenous women and girls. Sentences don’t seem to be a deterrent. The lack of compassion and rehabilitation in this crime shows the perpetrator deserves the maximum time behind bars,” said Vice Chief Bear.

A jury in Saskatoon found Kenneth David Mackay guilty of first-degree murder for the death of 21-year-old Crystal Paskemin, June 18, 2002. Mackay was sentenced to life in prison with no chance of parole for 25 years but despite concerns expressed by the family and federal corrections staff, he was granted parole and is living in the community at an undisclosed location on Vancouver Island.

December 29, 2000, Mackay drove Paskemin out of town where he sexually assaulted her and brutally murdered her by running over her head with his truck. Paskemin’s family says she had been having a girl’s night out with friends at a popular Saskatoon country bar when Mackay, a total stranger to her offered her a ride home. Instead, he drove past her home.

Paskemin is survived by her four younger sisters who say she was a loving, kind young woman.

“The essence of Crystal was, and always will be, one of kindness, compassion and love. From her early years at Eston Bible College, to her moving alone to Saskatoon from Sweetgrass First Nation, she touched many lives with her contagious smile, accepting warmth and magnetic character,” the family said in a statement.

The brutality of the case and Mackay’s lack of remorse detailed at a parole board hearing are reasons why the Paskemin family say they fear for others.

Information provided to the Paskemin family by Correctional Service Canada shows that Mackay is assessed as “high risk as determined by the Psychopathy Checklist.”

In 2019, while in jail he was found to have been to have committed “inappropriate treatment of a female staff member.” And he was shown to have poor decision-making skills and trouble setting boundaries with female staff members 19 years into his sentence. Federal prison staff also spoke against Mackay’s release.

Until 2020, he still claimed the murder was accidental. A professional assessment of Mackay found he has a “chronic need for power and control with a high risk of violent reoffending.”

Mackay expressed little emotion during a parole board hearing where the details of the offence were read out and he lacks an understanding of the harm caused by the crime.

Her family says facts established by the Crown at the trial in 2002 show Mackay sexually assaulted Crystal in his truck but she managed to escape, fleeing by foot until he caught up to her and hit her in the jaw with such force that she lost a tooth. She was rendered unconscious in the attack.

“He then got back in his truck and ran over Crystal’s head,” said the family in a statement. “He got went back his truck and took the time to light Crystal’s body on fire. He then retrieved a chain from his truck, attached it to the truck and wrapped the other end of the chain around Crystal’s feet and dragged her body down the icy grid road. He then stopped driving, got out of his truck, dug a shallow grave and tossed Crystal’s naked body into it, covering it with snow. He then went home and cleaned his truck and disposed of Crystal’s clothing.”

The Paskemin family say they spent over a month in anguish as police searched for her body.

“As a family, we bear the burden of having to remember her beauty for longer than we got to enjoy her beauty. We bear the burden of re-traumatization every time the Parole Board of Canada sends letters about his activity for the past 23 years. The whaling cry of our mother, whose child has been tortured and killed is indescribable but forgettable - these memories are permanent. A dedicated father, brought to his knees because he feels like he failed in protecting his family when he truly was the rock that held his family together - a modern cross no man should have to bear,” wrote the Paskemin family.

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