

Mock Coroner's Inquest for Martin Evans: Witness Roles

This mock inquest was based on the actual inquest into the death of Aaron Fursstedon, a 15 year old boy. In August 1985 Aaron Fursstedon and his friend were on their way to the P.N.E. and while waiting for the bus in New Westminster, decided to play around the newly constructed Sky Train guide way. Aaron was hit and instantly killed by a Sky Train car on a training run.

In that inquest, the jury found that Aaron's death had been accidental, and made the following recommendations:

1. To ensure an adequately trained person be in supervision at the Sky Train control centre to understand the complete workings of the Sky Train system. This person has the authority to immediately de-energize the system upon request of the emergency services people. This person must understand the consequences of de-energizing the system.
2. There be available a qualified Sky Train electrical expert that can be dispatched immediately to any emergency site with the equipment necessary to assure emergency services personnel that the system is safe. This Sky Train electrical expert will work closely with the emergency services people enabling a quick response by each emergency service.
3. In all districts served by the Sky Train each emergency service, i.e., fire, police and ambulance should have a direct phone line to the Sky Train supervisor in the control centre, to ensure there is no delay in receiving and dispatching vital information.
4. Encourage an organized training program between the Sky Train and emergency services to guarantee they are working together as a unit, each operating under the same guidelines.
5. Supply information to the general public, including all lower mainland schools, as to the working operations of the Sky Train system.
6. Maps are produced detailing the Sky Train system noting the location of marked points on the guide ways. The maps should be supplied to all emergency services to that any incident site can be geographically located.
7. Structural changes should be made to substations to further deter access to the roofs.

Instructions for the Teacher

The witness statements are on the pages following and are easy to copy for your students. Choose the students who will play each of the roles and give them their specific role to read and learn before the inquest takes place.

Look at the Teacher's Guide for the Mock Coroner's Inquest for the roles of the coroner, counsel, jury, court clerk and sheriff.

Inquest Counsel Witness #1

Tim Lau – Friend of Deceased

In this mock inquest you will play the role of Tim Lau, the best friend of the deceased, Martin Evans. At the time of the inquest you are 16 years old. You've known Martin since Grade 1.

On August 6 this past year, you and Martin were hanging out together. It was a Wednesday, and you were off school for the holidays. You both live in Richmond, but Martin often spends weekends in Vancouver with his dad because his parents are divorced.

The plan that day was that you and Martin would take the bus into Vancouver to Martin's dad's house and the next day you would go to the PNE and Playland. You were both excited to go because you had been pretty bored over the last week or so.

You both got ready to take the bus, and were dropped off at the bus stop at around 6:30 pm. Unfortunately you had just missed the bus and that bus only comes once an hour. You guys were both bored at the bus stop, so you decided to walk to the next stop. You started walking under the new Canada Line Sky Train elevated guide way not far from where the Bridgeport station will be.

Martin opened up his backpack and took out two bottles of beer that he had taken from his fridge at home. He offered you one and you each started drinking the beer as you walked.

Near the guide way was an electricity substation. There were warning signs around it, but Martin decided it would be fun to climb and didn't seem worried about getting electrocuted or anything. Martin climbed up the side of the substation by climbing up one of the two pipes running down the side. He got to the roof and told you to climb up too. Martin had always been a risk taker. You were a bit afraid, but thought it must be okay because he had gotten to the roof without a problem. You went ahead and climbed to the top of the substation too.

You were both standing on top of the substation which was just under the guide way. The guide way was about 10 feet higher up. You and Martin decided that it would be fun to walk along the guide way because you knew that the Canada Line was still being constructed and wasn't in operation. You hadn't seen any trains on the guide way while you had climbed up.

To get up to the guide way one of you needed to boost the other one up. Martin asked you to give him a boost which you did. Martin was a heavy guy, and you concentrated on lifting him up. Near the guide way, Martin was concentrating on pulling himself up, and did not notice that there was a train coming towards him on a test run.

Martin was hit by the train and was catapulted onto the top of the substation below where you were standing. You knew immediately that Martin was seriously hurt. He was unconscious and he looked badly injured. You climbed down from

the substation right away and flagged down a car. You asked that person to phone 911. You can't remember what time it was, but was probably about 7:30 pm.

After the driver had called 911 you ran back to the substation to check on Martin. The ambulance arrived about 20 minutes later. You don't remember much after that. You feel terrible that your best friend has died. It's hard to believe it really happened.

Inquest Counsel Witness #2

Surjit Bains – Paramedic

In this mock inquest you will play the role of Surjit Bains, paramedic with the BC Ambulance Service. You have been a paramedic for the last 17 years. You are an Advanced Care Paramedic, which is a paramedic with the highest level of training. You do Advanced Life Support transport and are called out for the most serious cases. About a year ago you started working exclusively in the Richmond area.

On August 6th you and your partner were dispatched to the Bridgeport area of Richmond to attend to a call. You understood that there was an unconscious 15 year old somewhere near the new Bridgeport Canada Line station and that he had been hit by a train. You weren't given an address for the location of the injured person, but were given the closest intersection to the Canada Line station.

You got to the intersection provided by dispatch, but the only person there was the person who had called 911. She didn't know where the hurt boy was, but knew that the other boy had run off eastwards. She pointed to where he had come from.

You assumed that the boy was badly injured, so you decided to drive your van in that direction instead of heading that way by foot with all your gear. After about 5 minutes you found the boys.

The injured boy was on the top of the substation. You were unsure whether it was safe to climb up the substation and so decided to call BC Hydro to make sure it was de-energized. It took about 15 minutes before BC Hydro confirmed the substation was safe and de-energized.

When you and your partner then got to the top of the substation you found the boy was unconscious and without a pulse. You began the CPR protocol and used the defibrillator as you are trained to do. After several minutes of CPR without a response you called an emergency room doctor at Richmond General Hospital, which is part of your CPR protocol. At this time your partner continued doing CPR compressions. You explained to the doctor the circumstances of the boy's injuries and the lifesaving measures that you had taken. The doctor told you to stop doing compressions and declared the boy dead.

You then received assistance from some Richmond firefighters who had arrived on the scene in bringing the boy down from the top of the substation. You transported the boy to the morgue at Richmond General Hospital and called the coroner.

Inquest Counsel Witness #3

Dr. David Chow – Pathologist

In this mock inquest you will play the role of Dr. David Chow, the pathologist who conducted the post-mortem (i.e. autopsy) of Martin Evans. You work as a Forensic Pathologist at Vancouver General Hospital and as a Clinical Instructor in the Faculty of Medicine at the University of British Columbia. You graduated from the University of Toronto Faculty of Medicine in 1991 and completed post-graduate training in forensic pathology at the Cook County Medical Examiner's Office, Chicago, Illinois between 1992 and 1993. You have worked at Vancouver General Hospital since that time.

You were called by the coroner on August 7th to conduct the post-mortem of Martin Evans. The post-mortem took place on August 8th at Richmond General Hospital.

The post-mortem revealed that Martin Evans had suffered extreme trauma to the upper half of his body. You observed that Mr. Evans had severe facial injuries. His skull and jaw were each fractured in several places, and that he had fractures to his C1 and C2 cervical vertebrae. In addition Mr. Evans suffered from cerebral hemorrhaging (that is, bleeding within the brain).

It is your medical opinion that Mr. Evans died upon impact with the train. His cause of death was a cerebral hemorrhage due to penetrating head trauma.

Counsel for the Deceased's Family Witness

Sheila Evans – Mother of Martin Evans

In this mock inquest you will play the role of Sheila Evans, Martin Evans's mother.

On August 6th you drove Martin and his friend Tim to the bus stop to take the bus into Vancouver from Richmond. Martin and Tim were going to have a sleep over at Martin's father's house and go to the PNE the next day.

You dropped them off at the bus stop at about 6:30 pm. Martin had taken this bus on his own a number of times in the past year – probably about 30 times and had never had a problem getting to his father's house.

Both Martin and Tim were really excited to go, which you thought was natural, as they were 15 year olds and both loved rides. Martin had always loved rides – the scarier the better.

You had always liked Martin's friend Tim, but now maybe think he was a bad influence. You don't know how an accident like this could have happened as Martin had never been in any serious trouble before.

Martin was a good boy and an only child. He was a pretty good student and enjoyed sports – he played volleyball and soccer. He had been a bit moody lately and had been rude to you at times, which was unusual, but you just chalked this up to his being a teenager.

You and Martin's father got divorced just over a year ago. Since that time Martin's grades had slipped a bit and had been acting out a bit more in defying you (you will only offer up this last bit of information if counsel asks you about it directly).

You believe that Martin has never had a drink before the date of the accident. You do keep beer in your fridge, but have never noticed any missing. You don't think that Martin would do something like take beer without asking as you would never allow him to drink alcohol as he's a minor.

You feel that overall you are a good parent and that Martin is a good boy who obeyed you. You don't think he was much of a risk taker, and you can't believe what's happened. You feel that somebody should be accountable for Martin's death.

Counsel for Party with Standing (Translink) Witness

Mr. Dominic Laplante – TransLink CEO

In this mock inquest you will play Mr. Dominic Laplante, TransLink's Chief Executive Officer. You became CEO last year. You have a Bachelor of Commerce in transportation and logistics from the University of B.C., and a Master's in Business Administration from the University of Western Ontario. Prior to working for TransLink you were a Senior Vice President of Safety for the Toronto Transit Commission.

At TransLink you are responsible for preparing plans and reports for approval by the board of directors and for overseeing the building and operating TransLink's many transportation services.

The Canada Line was the biggest building project TransLink had ever undertaken. It was nearing completion and because there was only a year and a half to go before the Olympics, it was necessary to start testing the trains on those parts of the track that were complete.

In July TransLink had put advertisements in Richmond community newspapers that testing of the Canada Line guide way was going to start in August. The purpose was to alert residents that it was hazardous to trespass on the Canada Line property while the testing was being carried out. Those ads did not specify where on the track, the days or the time the testing would occur but did say that the track would be charged with electricity throughout the day and night.

You are also aware that TransLink implemented safety measures to ensure that all stations were locked, and monitored by security guards at night.

In terms of maps of the Canada Line, you know that general maps with the stations marked are made available on TransLink's website. TransLink has more detailed maps of the entire Canada Line route at its office, with each 100 meters of the track numbered. These detailed maps are generally used for maintenance and engineering purposes, and are not made available to the public.

TransLink has not yet liaised with local ambulance districts and fire departments to create emergency protocols for the Canada Line, but such protocols do exist for the Expo and Millennium Lines. It is anticipated that those protocols will be developed some time in the next year.

You have spoken to the safety department of TransLink and know that that department was aware of the proximity of the hydro substation to the guide way. It is your opinion that it is the responsibility of BC Hydro to secure its substations and not TransLink's responsibility.