

Children's Aid found files on couple after death of girl in their care: inquest

 www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/katelynn-sampson-childrens-aid-testify-1.3322439

Child welfare authorities realized they had files on a couple tasked with caring for a seven-year-old Toronto girl only after the child was found dead in the pair's apartment, a coroner's inquest heard Tuesday.

After learning of Katelynn Sampson's death from police on Aug. 3, 2008, the Children's Aid Society of Toronto searched its records and found Donna Irving had two children who became wards of the Crown, while Warren Johnson had been accused of sexually abusing his nieces, the organization's chief operating officer testified.

The agency convened senior managers to examine what services it had provided to the girl and her family and to "really make sense of this terrible tragedy that had befallen this child," Nancy Dale said.

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That prompted the agency to scrutinize its practices and eventually overhaul its referral and information-sharing practices, Dale said.

Among the changes that followed Katelynn's death was the creation of a uniform referral system shared by Toronto's four child welfare agencies, which also tracks whether the information has been received, she said.

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A third agency, the Catholic Children's Aid Society, also received a call in early 2008 from a neighbour claiming that Irving was using crack and working as a prostitute, leaving Johnson – who also had substance abuse problems -- to care for Katelynn and the couple's other children, the inquest heard.

The Catholic agency sent the information to a caseworker at CAS who had previously dealt with Katelynn, but the caseworker doesn't recall receiving it, Dale said.

Children's Aid closed Katelynn's file in 2005

The Children's Aid Society had been involved with Katelynn's mother, Bernice Sampson, between 1983 and 1995 because of her drug use. As a result, five of Sampson's children became wards of the Crown, she said.

The agency was called twice about Sampson in 2003, but found she was staying on the wagon and provided assistance on a voluntary basis for a few months, then closed her file in 2005, she said.

Irving had also had two children taken from her by CAS. Johnson didn't have a case file under his name, but he appeared in his sister's file and was accused in 1991 of sexually abusing his nieces, Dale said.

The agency felt it was able to verify the abuse against one niece, but did not add Johnson to the Child Abuse Register to spare the young, vulnerable girl from having to testify, Dale said. Police did not lay criminal charges, possibly for the same reason, she said.

That information was disclosed verbally to Native Child and Family Services when they started working with Irving and Johnson, but there is no record that NCFCS requested a hard copy of the files, she said.

Katelynn came to live with Irving and Johnson in the spring of 2007 after her mother started using crack again.

Sampson thought her daughter would fare better with the couple, who also had two young boys.

Instead, Katelynn was beaten for months and died of septic shock.

It was later revealed that a judge granted custody to Irving despite her criminal convictions for prostitution, drugs and violence. Johnson also had several convictions.

The couple pleaded guilty three years ago of second-degree murder in the girl's death and were sentenced to life in prison with no chance of parole for 15 years.

A handful of Toronto police incident reports involving the pair were also added as evidence at the inquest Tuesday.

The documents were requested in a notice of motion filed last week by the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, which argued the reports provide crucial information that will help understand the circumstances that led to Katelynn's death in 2008.

The reports "could form the basis for important recommendations," the advocate's lawyer, Freya Kristjanson, said in pushing for the documents to be included.

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Children's Aid found files on couple after death of Katelynn Sampson: inquest

 www.ctvnews.ca/canada/children-s-aid-found-files-on-couple-after-death-of-katelynn-sampson-inquest-1.2661939

Paola Loriggio, The Canadian Press

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 globalnews.ca/news/2343671/childrens-aid-society-expected-to-testify-today-at-katelynn-sampson-inquest/

By Staff The Canadian Press

Katelynn Sampson is shown in this undated handout photo. Seven years after Katelynn Sampson's small, battered body was discovered in a Toronto apartment, a coroner's inquest will investigate just what allowed the little girl to be beaten to death by her legal guardians.

THE CANADIAN PRESS/The Toronto Star - HO

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TORONTO – A coroner's inquest into the death of a seven-year-old Toronto girl killed by her legal guardians is expected to hear from the Children's Aid Society today.

The inquest into Katelynn Sampson's death has heard that two child welfare organizations – CAS and Native Child and Family Services – were contacted about her or had dealings with her guardians while she was living with them.

[Story continues below](#)

Katelynn's mother, Bernice Sampson, was addicted to crack and gave her daughter to Donna Irving and Warren Johnson in a misguided attempt to give Katelynn a better life. Sampson's other children had already become wards of the Crown and she did not want to lose access to Katelynn in the same way.

It was later revealed that a judge granted custody to Irving despite her criminal convictions for prostitution, drugs and violence. Johnson also had a several convictions.

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Sampson inquest to include police reports about her guardians

 www.citynews.ca/2015/11/17/sampson-inquest-to-include-police-reports-about-her-guardians/

A handful of Toronto police incident reports involving a couple who killed a seven-year-old girl in their care will be included as evidence in the coroner's inquest into her death, the presiding coroner ruled Tuesday.

Other police reports will not be entered as exhibits but witnesses testifying at the Katelynn Sampson inquest can be asked about their content, Dr. William Lucas said. And one report will be fully excluded as it dates back to 1998, far beyond the time frame examined by the inquest, he said.

Police on Friday turned over nearly 1,000 pages of documents detailing past interactions with Donna Irving and Warren Johnson, including domestic incidents during their relationship and with previous partners.

The documents were requested in a notice of motion filed last week by the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, which argued the reports provide crucial information that will help understand the circumstances that led to Katelynn's death in 2008.

"The question that this raises is what should police be doing" when it comes to flagging incidents that don't lead to criminal charges, the advocate's lawyer, Freya Kristjanson, said in pushing for the documents to be included.

The reports "could form the basis for important recommendations," she said.

Most parties had expressed some support for the motion, although some raised concerns that including the reports would lengthen the inquest or broaden it beyond its original scope.

Three incident reports involving Irving in a household where children were present will now be included in the proceedings, and the content of more than a dozen reports involving the pair in a household without children may be put to witnesses.

In delivering his ruling, Lucas said it was reasonable to ask child welfare workers whether the information would have been useful in assessing the risk to Katelynn or in planning the services offered to her guardians. But he stressed they shouldn't be asked whether police should have disclosed the information, since they have no knowledge of police procedures.

The inquest has heard that two child welfare organizations — the Children's Aid Society of Toronto and Native Child and Family Services — were contacted about Katelynn or had dealings with her guardians while she was living with them.

Katelynn's mother, Bernice Sampson, was addicted to crack and gave her daughter to Irving and Johnson in a misguided attempt to give Katelynn a better life. Sampson's other children had already become wards of the Crown and she did not want to lose access to Katelynn in the same way.

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The Children's Aid Society is expected to testify at the inquest later Tuesday.

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Katelynn was failed by CAS

 www.torontosun.com/2015/11/17/katelynn-was-failed-by-cas

By Michele Mandel , Toronto Sun



Katelynn Sampson

- Katelynn Sampson inquest hears 911 call

TORONTO -

In the months before she was murdered by her guardians, little Katelynn Angel Sampson came to the attention of the Children's Aid Society of Toronto no less than six times.

One was a referral from its sister agency, the Catholic CAS, which had received a disturbing phone call from a Parkdale neighbour concerned about Katelynn living with guardian Donna Irving, who was doing crack and partner, Warren Johnson, who was a violent drug user. The CAS CEO admitted for the first time at an inquest Tuesday that the alert got misplaced and no one acted on it.

In April 2008, two months later, Irving herself called the CAS and said she and Johnson couldn't care for

Katelynn anymore. That call was passed on to the Native Child and Family Services — a referral which the agency insists it never received.

Four months later, Katelynn was dead, failed by the very child welfare authorities responsible for her protection.

“The alarm bells were ringing,” Justice John McMahon said three years ago in sentencing the couple to life in prison for second-degree murder, “but no one was responding.”

Irving and Johnson may have been the ones who actually inflicted the 70 blows that broke her young body, but at least they’re being held accountable. How much less blameworthy are the child protection agencies repeatedly alerted to the horrors going on in her Parkdale apartment, and yet did shockingly little.

At the long-awaited inquest into her preventable death — seven long years after her murder — the CAS is finally being questioned about what they knew. Native Child and Family Services — which had carriage of the file because Irving was part-aboriginal — will have their feet held to the fire following the CAS.

CAS executive director Nancy Dale, with her prim blonde bob and glasses, has the unfortunate task of outlining how her organization dropped the ball so many times — though she was loathe to describe it that way. Instead, she focused on how procedures have been changed and tightened so no other children will slip through the cracks.

Which is laudable. Unfortunately, it comes far too late for Katelynn.

The girl’s biological mother, Bernice Sampson, had a history with the CAS from 1983 to 1995, Dale explained, during which five of her children were apprehended. When Katelynn was born in 2000, she was “committed to getting it right with this child.”

In 2003, Sampson was once again referred to the agency for substance abuse concerns and she agreed to co-operate with CAS workers. Her file was closed in 2005.

Two years later, struggling with crack once more, Sampson made the fatal mistake of asking her neighbours to care for her daughter. Unwittingly, she had handed Katelynn to the devil. And to their shame, the CAS had abundant files about the dangerous couple now caring for her.

With two of her children seized by the CAS, Irving should have been well known to the agency. So, too, was Johnson. In a shocking disclosure, Dale said they have a record of a 1991 investigation that concluded he’d sexually abused a five-year-old girl. No charges were laid because the child was too traumatized to testify, she said.

After Katelynn’s murder on Aug. 3, 2008, the CAS searched its records and discovered six interactions with her file in the eight months before she was killed.

Six chances to intervene.

Instead, Katelynn died of septic shock, her body a horrific map of 70 bruises and broken bones. Police found traces of her blood in every room and almost every cupboard of that Parkdale apartment, on a plastic baseball bat and on a paperback entitled *The Devil’s Chimney*. She died in excruciating agony, convinced she was unloved and alone.

“I am A awful girl that’s why no one wants me,” Katelynn had been forced to write out 62 times, lines of punishment that echoed the invisibility she was accorded by government agencies who owed her so much more.

Read Mandel Wednesday through Saturday.

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Children's Aid found files on couple after death of girl in their care: inquest

 www.cp24.com/news/children-s-aid-found-files-on-couple-after-death-of-girl-in-their-care-inquest-1.2661965

Paola Loriggio, The Canadian Press

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