



A127 A Multiple Fatality Response to Nine Indigenous Deaths in a Burned House in Pikangikum, Ontario: An Overview of the Procedures of the Hosts of the Triennial Meeting of the International Association of Forensic Sciences, 2017, the Ontario Forensic Pathology Service (OFPS)

Kathy L. Gruspier, JD, PhD, Ontario Forensic Pathology Services, 25 Morton Shulman Avenue, North York, ON M3M 0B1, CANADA*

After attending this presentation, attendees will learn about the host institution of the triennial International Association of Forensic Sciences 2017 meeting, the OFPS. The OFPS is housed in a new complex in Toronto that was purposely built to manage a multiple fatality response — up to a Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and Explosives (CBRNE) Level II. The OFPS has a multiple fatality implementation plan for its physical plant and is an integral part of the Provincial Mass Fatality Plan. The OFPS' response to a multiple fatality event occurring on a remote indigenous reserve will be shared.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by illustrating that a death investigation system must draw upon its daily practices in order to successfully address a multiple fatality in its jurisdiction. If those regular practices do not include appropriate experts (or at least an established network of expert consultants) and good communication, then there is a real probability that an agency's response will be problematic. The use of inexperienced experts, the lack of a teamwork attitude, and the use of unfamiliar Disaster Victim Identification (DVI) tools would all have created problems with this multiple fatality response and would have delayed returning the decedents to the community.

A multiple fatality is defined as a single event in which two or more people die. A multiple fatality can occur with little or no warning and vary in its scope and nature. In Ontario, all death investigations fall under the jurisdiction of the coroner, regardless of the cause of the death, although there are often parallel investigations, most commonly criminal. The guiding principle for the implementation of the plan is: "Business as usual, just more business than usual." The OFPS provides qualified expertise in the areas of anthropology, pathology, odontology, medical imaging, and photography. For many years, anthropologists and sometimes pathologists have been integral members of scene examination and recovery teams when needed. This is business as usual. In addition to daily casework, a partnership with the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) called the Resolve Initiative is maintained by the researchers. This is the vehicle used for comparing missing persons with unidentified remains. In the event of a multiple fatality, the OFPS has access to a clean copy of this functional relational database, in order to compare cases for DVI.

In the early morning of March 30, 2016, the OFPS forensic anthropologist was notified of a house fire on the Pikangikum Reserve. As the person responsible for the OFPS multiple fatality implementation plan, the anthropologist opened communications with partners in the Office of the Chief Coroner (OCC), the OPP, and the Office of the Fire Marshall (OFM) and also began planning responses with the staff of the OFPS, as well as expert consultants in anthropology and odontology. As the scene processing continued, she liaised with team members with regard to timing and records to accompany the bodies. Communication was often hampered by the lack of cell phone and internet access in the community. Communication with the OCC was also maintained with regard to transport of the remains to Toronto. The scene work was completed and the bodies were transported by



Anthropology - 2017

April 2. Postmortems took place on April 3 and the identifications were completed and the bodies flown back to the community on April 4.

Multiple Fatality/DVI, IAFS 2017, ON Forensic Pathology Service