



For Immediate Release

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Public Inquest into the Death of Terry Baker

The public inquest into the death of Terry Baker begins on Monday, January 22nd.

Terry, a 30-year-old woman, was incarcerated at the Grand Valley Institution (GVI) for Women in Kitchener, Ontario, when she died in segregation on July 6, 2016. Through the inquest process, the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies (CAEFS) is hopeful that the public will learn the truth about what happened to her and is participating in the inquest after having been granted standing in 2020.

Inquests are public hearings conducted by a coroner in front of a jury of community members. An inquest is automatically triggered under the Coroners Act when someone dies while in custody. The purpose of an inquest is to determine the circumstances of a death and to establish recommendations by the jury aimed at preventing a similar death from occurring again. The recommendations are not binding, but if implemented, can lead to important systemic change and the reduction of harm to others.

The inquest will be held [virtually](#) and is expected to take 15 days, with approximately 19 witnesses set to speak. The inquest has already seen multiple delays. The first delay was caused by the pandemic in 2020 and subsequently, was delayed further in 2023 pending document disclosure from the Correctional Service of Canada.

Since 1978, CAEFS has worked to address the persistent ways in which women and gender-diverse people impacted by criminalization are denied humanity and excluded from the community. As part of this work, CAEFS monitors conditions of confinement in the federal prisons designated for women and had worked with Terry Baker while she was incarcerated at GVI.

"In addition to uncovering the specifics about the death of Terry Baker, we expect that the inquest will bring awareness to how we continue to incarcerate and often segregate people with mental health issues" said Emilie Coyle, Executive Director of CAEFS, emphasizing the broader significance of the inquest. "What the public may not know is that Terry Baker died in the same range of segregation cells where Ashley Smith died in 2007," Emilie continues,

"Similar to Ashley, Terry struggled with mental illness as do a significant percentage of Canada's federally incarcerated population. To have someone with diagnosed mental health considerations die in the same physical location nine years later should raise serious concerns for all of us."

For Comment:

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