

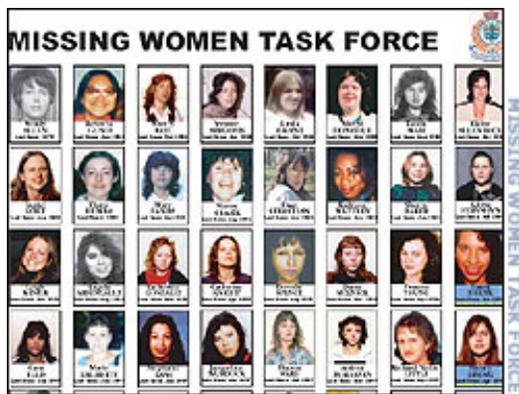
Wednesday, Oct. 13, 2004

TOP NEWS

NEWS

Updated Oct. 13, 2004, 6:17 p.m. ET

As Canadian farmer awaits trial, DNA from 30 women linked to pig farm



Almost half of the women on the Vancouver Missing Women Joint Task Force's list have been linked to pig farmer Robert Pickton's property through DNA.

By **Emanuella Grinberg**
Court TV

In February 2002, Canadian police executed a search warrant on a 14-acre pig farm located in Port Coquitlam, British Columbia, about an hour's drive from Vancouver.

By the end of the 21-month search of the property — the longest and most expensive in Canadian history — investigators had found DNA belonging to at least 22 women, 21 of whom were identified as missing or dead.

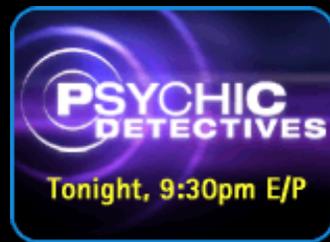
At the height of the search, 102 forensic anthropologists sifted through 370,000 cubic yards of soil from the property, owned by Robert William Pickton, including his home, the farm where he slaughtered pigs, and a warehouse called Piggy's Palace where he threw parties.

Three weeks after the search began, Vancouver Police arrested Pickton and charged him with murdering Sereena Abotsway, 29, and Mona Wilson, 26.

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WEEKLY SCHEDULE



TODAY ON COURT TV

DAYTIME

Today's Trial Coverage

9am-5pm ET/PT:
TN v Morton - Wife

Charged With Attempted Murder

PLUS:
Laci Peterson Murder Case

EVENING HIGHLIGHTS

Catherine Crier LIVE
5:00pm

The Investigators

8:00pm: "Scoutmaster's Secret" - Did a Boy Scout leader influence a child to kill his parents and sister?

Forensic Files

9:00pm: "Muddy Waters" - A forensic geologist proves that a man's death was not a hunting "accident."

Psychic Detectives

9:30pm: "The Longest Mile" - Psychic Carol Pate does a

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More charges followed as a mix of personal belongings and human remains led investigators to believe they had a serial killer on their hands — possibly Canada's worst. Pickton currently faces 15 counts of murder, with seven more pending based on DNA found on the farm in 2003.

A common factor among the women quickly emerged: All were prostitutes known to roam Vancouver's notorious Downtown Eastside, a slum neighborhood notorious for its sex and drug trades and their side effects, including a high rate of disease and violence.

Some had last been seen as far back as the early '90s, although most hadn't been reported missing officially until at least six years later.

At a press conference Wednesday, authorities confirmed eight new DNA samples had been linked to the farm since January 2004, bringing the latest count to 30. Twenty-seven are listed as missing and presumed dead, and three have not been identified.

Spokespeople for the Vancouver Police Department and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police's Missing Women Joint Task Force also announced they had added eight new names to their list of women missing from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. One of those has been linked to DNA found at the farm.

reading and urges investigators to revisit a suspect who had an airtight alibi.

The System

10:00pm: "The New Profilers" - Take an in-depth look into the world of criminal profilers.

Caught

11:00pm: From car theft to stealing from the church collection plate, why do people make unscrupulous, even criminal decisions? Cameras caught it all.

*All times ET/PT

To date, 27 of the 69 women missing have been linked to the Pickton property.

The investigation has been hailed by some as an acknowledgement of the disproportionate and largely ignored violence against prostitutes and drug addicts, while others, including the families of the missing women, have railed against police for taking so long to begin their search.

"There were so many instances of friends who tried to report these women missing, but since only family was able to file a missing person's report, many of them went unreported for years," said Wayne Leng, who last saw his friend, Sarah de Vries, in 1998. Her DNA was found on the Pickton farm in August 2002.



Robert William Pickton has been in jail since 2002 awaiting trial for at least 15 murders.

A quiet loner

Pickton first came to the attention of authorities in 1997, when he was arrested and charged with the attempted murder of a prostitute, who allegedly fled his home in the middle of the night on March 23, 1997, bleeding from several stab wounds.

The charges were dropped, and a judge recently sealed all records from the arrest, stating the Canadian government would be using them as "similar-fact evidence."

Corporal Catherine Galliford, spokesperson for the mounted police on the task force, would not comment on specific evidence that brought authorities to Pickton's farm five years later, except to say that in reviewing hundreds of missing persons files, Pickton was zeroed in on as a potential suspect.

"We are still looking at hundreds of other potential suspects. We have to be extremely open-minded," Galliford said, although Pickton is the only person

currently facing charges.

In numerous media reports, Pickton's acquaintances have described him as a quiet loner who never drank or smoked but simply dedicated his life to working on the property he and his brother and sister inherited when their parents died in the 1970s.

Neither of his siblings has been charged in connection with the crimes.

He reportedly worked long days tending to the salvage business he ran with his brother, David, on the property they grew up on, in addition to looking after the slaughterhouse he ran on his own.

But Leng claims there was a dark side to Pickford that few were aware of, one he says he notified police of as early as 1999, one year after de Vries went missing.

After her disappearance, Leng began talking with her acquaintances in Downtown Eastside. He says he soon discovered she wasn't the only one to have vanished mysteriously.

Leng published a Web site dedicated to finding deVries, through which he says he was contacted by a former Pickton employee.

"He told me about this crazy farmer named 'Willie' he worked for, and that his stepsister had seen all these women's IDs and some bloody clothing in his house," Leng said. "I told police about it, but I didn't hear any more about it from police until the investigation began."

'Gruesome' evidence

Once authorities completed their search of Pickton's farm, an equally exhaustive preliminary hearing followed in January 2003.

Testimony from the six-month proceeding was sealed from the public, as is standard in Canada, to prevent media reports from biasing potential jurors.

A trial date has not been set, but reports cite a spring 2005 date at best.

Pickton faces a number of consecutive life sentences if convicted. There is no death penalty in Canada.

Leng, who says he was present for the preliminary hearing, describes his emotions as both anticipatory and dread-filled as he prepares to face trial evidence he describes as "very gruesome."

"These women were addicted to a lifestyle that they couldn't escape," Leng said. "Sarah was tired of it. She wanted to get out, but she didn't do it in time."

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