

Jesse Margison violently assaulted at Port Coquitlam's North Fraser Pretrial Centre

By Gary McKenna
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A Port Coquitlam man with a long criminal history who was being held at the North Fraser Pretrial Centre is in serious condition after being violently assaulted over the weekend.

Jesse Margison, who was arrested last winter on kidnapping charges, was viciously beaten by another inmate in one of the general population cells at the facility Sunday evening.

The Coquitlam RCMP is investigating and internal charges within the institution are expected for the man believed to be responsible for the attack.

Margison grew up in Port Coquitlam and has a long history of criminal activity. He was arrested in a previous kidnapping and torture case, however the charges were thrown out when the victim refused to testify.

In 2009, Margison's then girlfriend, Brianna Kinnear, also a PoCo resident, was shot to death in Coquitlam while driving a friend's truck.

Dean Purdy, chair of the corrections and sheriff services component of the BCGEU, said the recent assault is just one more example of the issues facing the provincial jail system.

The inmate population has become increasingly complex, he said, with rival gangs often housed within the same facility.

"Right now it is a mess," he said. "You throw in all the different gang affiliated inmates... you run into problems like what we had on Sunday."

Purdy commended correctional officers for intervening and stopping the assault. He could not get into specifics of the incident but said the attack was extremely violent.

"It was a vicious assault," he said. "It is a very big concern. Had our correctional officers not intervened so quickly it could have been worse."

These types of assaults occur routinely, he added, stating that since the beginning of the year there have been more than 24 assaults on correctional staff at North Fraser Pretrial Centre. An assault can range from spitting and pushing to punching and throwing feces at a staffer, he said.

Purdy is calling on the provincial government to implement rotational lockups, which would give correctional officers a way of limiting the number of inmates that are allowed out of their cells at a given time.

Margison's most recent arrest came last February, when he was taken into custody along with five other men, including Cody Sleight of Coquitlam, on kidnapping charges.

The pair were arrested along with Troy McKinnon, Van Van Vu, Derek James Stephens and John Ross Powers.

Some of the men charged were under police surveillance as part of a months-long investigation of the group when the alleged kidnapping occurred.

Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit Sgt. Ghalib Bhayani said at the time of the arrest that police were surprised as they watched the suspects grab a man and attempt to pull him into a vehicle.

"As the kidnapping was occurring, police observed it," he said. "They were able to rescue the victim prior to him sustaining severe injuries. He took quite a beating but police were able to intervene."

The suspects, who police said were believed to be aligned with the Independent Soldiers gang, used GPS devices attached to the victim's vehicle in preparation for the kidnapping. Investigators also recovered several laptop computers that showed the victim had been tracked for nearly three months.

Police believe the group targeted people to kidnap them for financial gain.