

Did Tammy Keeash have bite marks on her hand? Her mom thinks so

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APTN National News

When authorities released the body of Tammy Keeash to her mother Pearl Slipperjack she noticed what she thought were two bite marks on the back of her daughter's hand.

Slipperjack asked Thunder Bay police about them and she said an investigator told her they believed it was actually the indentation of a .25 cent coin left on the 17-year-old's hand.

"That's what they told me. It was the impression from a quarter. But it looked like bite marks," she said pointing to two different spots on her hand where she saw the marks.

There was also what appeared to be a large bruise or marking on the side of her daughter's face.

Again, Slipperjack said police told her this was common in people who died in the fashion Keeash did.

Slipperjack didn't learn about these markings until about a week after Keeash's sudden death last month in Thunder Bay and also after police determined her death is "consistent with drowning".

"At this point, there is no evidence to indicate criminality in this tragic death," said Thunder Bay police in a statement May 12.

Slipperjack asked to see the body before that statement was released but said police didn't let her.

She didn't get to see her daughter's body until it was at the funeral home.

Slipperjack still believes the markings on Keeash's hands were bite marks.

"I think something happened to her. Something more than what cops are telling me," she said. "I didn't even bury my daughter yet and they told me it was a drowning."



Pearl Slipperjack in Thunder Bay Tuesday.

Keeash was one of several First Nations youth to die in Thunder Bay waterways in the last decade which sparked an inquest last year. Shortly after Keeash was found, the body Josiah Begg, 14, was also found in a river. Both of their deaths are part of an on-going systemic review by the Office of the Independent Police Review Director.

In an interview with *APTN National News* Slipperjack explained other details of her daughter's death that she can't make sense of.

First, she said Keeash was last seen with three members of her family at the very place her body was found. They had been drinking up on a hill overlooking the Neebing McIntyre floodway near Chapples park.

According to Slipperjack, Keeash's cousins told her and police, that Keeash left around 10:30 p.m. on May 6 saying she didn't want to be late getting back to her group home, as she was in child protection.

"She said, 'I'm going home because I don't want to be late for my curfew. I don't want to get grounded,'" said Slipperjack explaining what the cousins had told her.

Somehow, and it's something that baffles Slipperjack, Keeash must have made her way back to the spot and, according to police, drowned in the floodway that had little to no water in it. The floodway is also full of heavy reeds.

APTN has tried to reach the cousins for several days but has not been able to. Slipperjack said she believes their story.

"I practically begged my cousins to tell me the truth," she said.

Slipperjack said police told her Keeash was found just off the shore in the thick reeds. Slipperjack said she didn't see any water there just after her daughter was found.

"I got mad," said Slipperjack. "How the hell does somebody drown if there is no water?"



A cross marks the spot where Tammy Keeash is said to have been with friends the night she died last month. Her body was found just below in the Neebing McIntyre floodway where police say the 17-year-old drowned.

She said police told her Keeash was found lying face down with one shoe on.

Where was the other shoe?

Back on the hill, said her mom.

“Right on the top of the hill,” she said.

Keeash may have been in protective care but she saw her mom daily who lives a few streets over from where the group home is.

Slipperjack last saw her daughter May 6 at about 2:40 p.m.

She remembers it because Keeash wanted to go to the mall and asked her mom when the next bus was leaving.

The bus came at 2:45 p.m.

And Slipperjack never saw her daughter again.

Police have told her despite their initial findings ruling out foul play the file is still open.

“I’m not stupid,” said Slipperjack.

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