

# Mand: Inquest for troubled teen finally begins



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A coroner's inquest into the suicide of Ashley Smith, 19, inside the Grand Valley Institute for Women is now underway in Toronto.

TORONTO - Mentally troubled and hard to control, Ashley Smith was locked up for much of her teenage years, pepper spray cocoon and banished for the equivalent of two full years to solitary confinement.

Her crimes? She threw a crab apple at a postal worker. She stole a CD. And while in custody, she refused to behave — so th

Smith was just 19 when she finally tied a ligature around her neck while in segregation at the Grand Valley Institute for Women. A desperate act for attention and it always worked — the guards would rush in to save her.

She didn't know that when she again tied those cloths around her neck on Oct. 19, 2007, the rules had changed. Corrections

And so they didn't. They stood by as Smith choked to death.

Did the traumatized New Brunswick teen finally end her tortured imprisonment by killing herself? Or was it simply a tragic acc

Those are the questions to be answered by a five-member jury as the long-delayed mandatory inquest into Smith's death fin

From the very first day of an inquest expected to last several months, the evidence told the disturbing story of a teen desperate for attention in its stead.

Det. Patrick Colagiovanni said Smith was 10 when she began acting out in school and her behaviour became increasingly desperate, including sexual assault, making harassing phone calls and pulling fire alarms.

Diagnosed with borderline personality disorder, she spent the next few years in and out of custody in the New Brunswick Youth Centre, where she was restrained from harming herself or assaulting prison staff.

By the time she was 18, Smith's desperate attention-seeking misbehaviour in jail had added an incredible five years to her or

And because her incarceration term now exceeded two years, she was shipped off to federal prison in October 2006 where she spent time in different institutions before finally taking her life.

Her family has been fighting for four years to see justice done and ensure other mentally ill teens do not suffer the same fate.

"Kept in isolation for years on end, deprived of the most basics that a teenager could hope to have, treated in a fashion that y why she did what she did," he told reporters.

"How in the world would we shuttle anyone 17 times in 11 and a half months and expect anything but what we got — which is expect anyone to survive that kind of treatment? That's what this case should be about."

But there have been roadblocks at every turn, the latest being the Correctional Service of Canada trying to have all exhibits s

Smith's mother, Coralee, has just had open heart surgery and remains in New Brunswick, unable to physically or emotionally are the casualties," their lawyer says. "They want the full truth to be known about what happened to Ashley and what is obvic Coralee Smith is that it has been such a hard struggle."

A month before her transfer to the federal system, her despondent daughter wrote in her journal that she wanted to speak to

"Most people are scared to die. It can't be any worse then living a life like mine," she wrote. "When I use to try to hang myself pay attention. Now it's different. I want them to f\*\*\* off and leave me alone."

Thirteen months later, that troubled child's wish would come true.

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