

One year since Wilno murders

This week marks the one-year anniversary of the Wilno murders.

On Sept. 22, 2015, Basil Borutski, 58, was charged with killing 36-year-old Anastasia Kuzyk, 48-year-old Nathalie Warmerdam, and 66-year-old Carol Culleton. He had a history of violence, criminally on record for incidents with Kuzyk and Warmerdam. He was known for breaking probation, but was released, even after refusing to sign a probationary clause to stay away from Kuzyk. *CBC's fifth estate* calls the violence one of the worst cases of multi-partner violence in Canadian history.

The three murders, which happened separately on a Tuesday in Renfrew county, resulted in a five-hour manhunt. It covered over 100 kilometres and ended in west Ottawa after police "used a cellphone to triangulate [Borutski]'s location."

Who were the women he took from our rural communities?

The *CBC* reported that Kuzyk was remembered fondly. She was a server at the Wilno Tavern, after which she became a real estate agent. She was described as "driven". The *Ottawa Citizen* reported Kuzyk had a love of horses and was beloved at the tavern.

The *CBC* reported Warmerdam was a woman who was "courageous" and who had "integrity". She was known for her volunteer work as treasurer for Co-operative Policing: Killaloe Area. The *Ottawa Citizen* noted she was the mother of two. She had a son and a daughter.

The *Ottawa Citizen* reported that Culleton had just retired as a compensation adviser with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. She was working towards selling her cottage in Combermere.

Borutski has since been accused of killing these three women. He will stand trial for their murders on Sept. 18, 2017. Where is yet to be determined as the *CBC* reported both Ottawa and Pembroke courts have reserved the dates of the trial.

According to the *CBC*, as of Aug. 4, Borutski had not entered a plea nor had he hired a lawyer. In an interview with the *fifth estate*, it is implied that Borutski blames police harassment for his killing spree.

Borutski was convicted for threatening to kill an animal that belonged to one of the victims in 2012. He was also charged for "assault, choking, theft of a motor vehicle and possession of a weapon despite a weapons ban against him in relation to an incident involving Kuzyk" in 2014. For these offences he was sent to prison for 19 months and released Dec. 27, 2014 with a "lifetime weapons ban" probation order.

In much of the coverage of the story, the victims' families are conflicted about what happened to their loved ones. Many blame the justice system and view the murders as attacks that could have been avoided. Questions still remain unanswered of why Borutski was let out even after refusing to sign the clause to stay away from Kuzyk. They also ask why a better eye was not kept on him "especially when one of the women had a panic button for Borutski. One account wonders why he did not have something restricting his vicinity to these women, such as an ankle bracelet.

This tragic incident wasn't something anyone expected to happen in a small, sleepy, rural town outside of the country's capital. The *CBC* even recorded Borutski's brother as being "in disbelief" while sending his family's condolences and sorrow for the victims' family and friends.

It's times like these that are a wake-up call. The best way to honour the victims is to make sure that something like this never happens again. Perhaps it was only Borutski's fault, that doesn't mean that as a connection of communities we shouldn't be evermore vigilant.