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## **Sled dogs kill four-year-old Nunavut boy**

### **Pangnirtung coroner drives dogs away from body, then shoots all three**

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Three sled dogs that escaped from their chain while their owner was out of town on medical travel killed a four-year-old boy in Pangnirtung March 22.

The victim is Sabock Akpalialuk, the adopted son of his biological grandparents, Jimmy Uniuqsaraq and Leena Akpalialuk.

David Kooneeliusie discovered a dog tearing into Sabock's body as he rode his all-terrain vehicle along the beach that morning.

The body had been partly stripped of its clothing and lay face down while another dog stood nearby, its muzzle still bloody.

Kooneeliusie, who serves as Pangnirtung's coroner, realized right away that Sabock was dead.

"The kid's neck was almost chewed through," he said.

Kooneeliusie shouted and threw snow at the dogs to drive them away from the body.

Kooneeliusie then ran to Pangnirtung's fish processing plant nearby and told staff there to call the police.

After that, Kooneeliusie returned to the body to make sure the dogs did not defile it further, and also to make sure the scene was not disturbed by any passers-by.

Kooneeliusie had taken the beach route home as a detour to keep an eye on three loose dogs he had noticed recently.

Kooneeliusie had seen the dogs near the rest of their team, which was still chained on the ice below Pangnirtung's fish processing plant.

Once police arrived, Kooneeliusie got a gun from a fish plant worker and told police he intended to kill the three loose dogs.

Although Kooneeliusie had only seen two dogs near the body, he said the third dog needed to be killed as well, because a dog team is a pack, and the third dog had almost certainly taken part in the attack before he arrived.

There were no objections.

“I shot the three loose dogs right away, instantly,” Kooneeliusie said. “Before I shot, they both went for me. They were ready to go for another one.”

RCMP received a call that at 11 that morning reporting the attack, but when they arrived it was too late to intervene. The boy was pronounced dead at the Pangnirtung health centre. No medevac was deemed necessary.

The information released by police says that three dogs broke loose from their main chain.

Pangnirtung’s assistant senior administrative officer, Moe Keenainak, said a looney-toonie sale the next day raised almost \$7,000 to help family members fly in for the funeral.

“There were so many items given that they moved venues from the radio station [where such sales usually take place] to the community centre,” Keenainak said.

Family members are expected to arrive as soon as the weather clears in Pangnirtung.

Keenainak said the community is “devastated” by the loss.

“We were going to have a community feast on the day it happened,” Keenainak said. “We had to postpone it. It was part of the trade show we just had at the school. It happened exactly the same day that the dog mauling happened.”

A former mayor Manasa Evic, the owner of the dogs, was away on medical travel at the time.

Evic’s family is reportedly horrified by what happened.

RCMP Sgt. Jimmy Akavak said Evic had been travelling back and forth on medical travel frequently over the past year.

Akavak said an investigation is underway to find out how the dogs were able to escape their chain and possibly make recommendations to prevent such accidents in the future.

“It has happened in the past,” Akavak said. “Luckily it’s rare, but it does happen. Big husky dogs are cousins to the wolf.”

Akavak stressed the need for public safety where sled dogs are concerned.

Local residents have said that loose dogs are a common sight in Pangnirtung, but most are not as big as sled dogs. There are not many dog teams in town.

Pangnirtung MLA Adamee Komoartok spoke about the incident in the legislative assembly on March 23:

“Our hearts go out to the distraught parents and other members of the community affected by this sad event,” Komoartok said. “Even though we are not there to console them in person, we send them our prayers and thoughts and our condolences.”