



Authorities told girl was beaten in care: source

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Cries for help for a toddler suspected of being beaten in foster care fell on deaf ears, according to a source familiar with the child welfare system.

Heaven Traverse died almost a year after being removed from her parent's home due to alleged poor parenting.

The two-year-old's death is considered a homicide case and is under investigation by the RCMP.

The source said Heaven's parents suspected the tot was being physically abused, and went to the local child welfare agency.

"They complained a lot about that little girl being abused but nobody listened," said the source. "Nothing was checked upon, I can guarantee that."

Heaven's father, Lawrence Traverse, told the Sun last week his daughter was badly bruised when she died Jan. 14, 2005, while in foster care.

Lawrence, who is physically disabled, wasn't taken seriously, the source said, and was told to be grateful that he was getting help with his six children while his wife recovered from a stroke.

"They were scared to say anything, beaten down like little dogs," the source said.

Lawrence Traverse said child welfare officials told him social workers were checking on his daughter, but his children told him they were hardly ever visited.

'DID NOT HELP'

The source criticized the local office of Intertribal Child and Family Services (ICFS), and believes they failed the Traverse family.

"(ICFS) did not help to the fullest extent," the source said.

"They're doing half the job," the source said, alleging at least one worker would spend much of the work day seated at a client's kitchen table, drinking coffee and smoking cigarettes.

No one from the Child Protection Branch, the top provincial agency responsible for child welfare, could be reached for comment on the allegations.

While Fisher River Chief David Crate insists he isn't involved with the operation, he defended Intertribal Child and Family Services. "There 's no problem with our agency. It's got a good reputation," he told the Sun.

He was hesitant to say much about Heaven's case, saying he was "leaving it up to the child welfare people," noting the band council has a different governing board than ICFS, Crate said.

Though they're "the most beautiful family," the source admits it was necessary to remove the Traverse children from their parents' home, at least for a while.

"I think just for the time being, after Heaven was lost, just so they can get strong again ... These people have a lot of love. Maybe they can't deal with their children right now, but they love them, they would never hurt them," said the source.

The source wants to see someone take responsibility for Heaven's death.

"It's everyone trying to pass the garbage onto the next ... Nobody's taking the blame," the source said. "People can't get away with this. That little girl's story has to mean something."