

Report blames social workers in death of Reena Virk

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Suman and Manjit Virk, Reena's mother and father, blame government social workers who they say scooped up their daughter and put her in foster care based on nothing more than Reena's adolescent (often fantastic) tales of abuse.

It was while living in foster care that their daughter met the streetwise teens who would eventually kill her.

"They [child-protection workers] failed miserably. They failed miserably. There is no excuse for how they failed," Suman Virk said in an interview Monday.

Reena died at the age of 14 on Nov. 14, 1997. First, she was the victim of a group beating that night. After most of her assailants had left, two of the teens, a boy and girl, remained behind and beat her again. Then they dragged her into the Gorge Waterway and drowned her.

Six teenage girls were convicted of assault causing bodily harm. Warren Glowatski, 16, was raised to adult court and convicted of second-degree murder in March, 2000. Kelly Ellard, 15 at the time Reena was killed, also was raised to adult court. After three trials, she was convicted in April 2005 of second-degree murder.

The fatality review report was initiated by the B.C. Children's Commission, now defunct. It was completed by the commission's former chief investigator, John Greschner, on behalf of the B.C. Coroners Service.

A Ministry of Children and Family Services spokesman said the ministry is not prepared to make a comment at this time.

While the report stops short of pointing fingers, it notes omissions when social workers became involved with Reena.

Investigations were closed prematurely, stories were not corroborated with sources outside the family, and social workers failed to work with the Virk family as a unit, the report says.

The report details many of Reena's allegations that began when she was 12. These included tales of physical, mental, emotional and even sexual abuse. All proved to be groundless. The allegations of sexual abuse began with Reena levelling accusations at unnamed relatives in India and progressing later to her father.

Manjit Virk was arrested after a social worker took Reena to police to fill out a complaint. All charges were eventually dropped, but not before their entire family was nearly destroyed, the Virks said.

"Due to concerns about the youth's credibility and her history of fabricating events, criminal charges against her father were stayed in court," the report says.