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Black Press

**Killer teen's
sentencing
delayed**

**Convicted of
stabbing Surrey
man to death**

by Sheila Reynolds

THE FAMILY and friends of a man stabbed to death on a Surrey street two years ago are frustrated they will have to wait even longer to learn the fate of the teen convicted in the killing.

A sentencing hearing for the teen, who cannot be identified under the Youth Criminal Justice Act, was scheduled last week after he was convicted of manslaughter in June in B.C. Supreme Court in New Westminster.

But on Thursday, defence lawyer David Tarnow asked Justice Laura Gerow that an additional report be prepared prior to the boy's sentencing. Tarnow's request was granted, postponing the sentencing hearing until early December.

In August 2009, the then-14-year-old, and a friend, committed two robberies, stealing cellphones from a pair of teens – one of whom was Sam McGowan's son.

McGowan, 42, gave chase, finding the youth under a porch. The teen, who defence lawyers said feared for his life because others were chasing him as well, plunged a knife into McGowan's chest, killing him.

The teen was initially charged with second-degree murder but a jury found him guilty of the lesser charge of manslaughter. During trial, he also pleaded guilty to two robbery charges.

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Sam McGowan

HOPE ON THE WATER

**Paddlers prove there is life after breast cancer
– and an active one at that**



BOAZ JOSEPH / THE LEADER

Abreast In A Boat paddlers practise in False Creek for a dragon boat regatta that takes place in Malaysia next week. The crew is composed of breast cancer survivors – two of them from Surrey.

by Boaz Joseph

ELISABETH VILLENEUVE was recuperating at home from breast cancer surgery in 1997 when she saw a clip from a dragon boat regatta on TV that took place the previous year in Vancouver.

The regatta she was watching was a rerun of an event taped on June 21, 1996.

It was the first race for Abreast In A Boat, the world's first dragon boat paddling club for breast cancer survivors.

The date of that race was also the same date when Villeneuve was diagnosed with the disease at the age of 44.

Nine months after diagnosis, she was on the water at False Creek, paddling in unison wearing a pink life jacket with women who would become lifelong friends. Sharing their stories brought them together for a common cause – to encourage those living with breast cancer to live full and active lives.



Patricia Tanaka

Breast cancer "hangs over your head," explains Villeneuve, 59. "But we don't dwell on the negative. We tell jokes that other people can't."

The focus is on fun rather than on breast cancer. Villeneuve prefers paddling on the right side of the 20-crew boat, in which racers face forward, unlike competitive rowing.

The crew sits in two rows abreast in the boat – hence the group's moniker. Paddlers are joined by a drummer at the bow and steerer at the stern, with the coach usually on a nearby motorboat with a loudspeaker during training.

What would become Abreast In A Boat actually started as a medical experiment in 1996, explains society president Patricia Tanaka.

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Paddling: 'It just makes your spirits soar'

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Up until that time, citing health concerns, doctors advised breast cancer patients to avoid vigorous, repetitive upper-body exercise.

But Dr. Don McKenzie, a sports medicine physician at the UBC, put volunteers on the water to put the myth to the test and quashed it.

"Our findings are all anecdotal but nevertheless compelling," he later wrote. "The paddlers showed a marked improvement in both physical and mental health. We did not see the cases of lymphedema we had been warned about. In terms of impact on patients' lives, it has been the most significant experience in my professional career."

The non-profit society was launched the following year, and now has six separate crews throughout the region, with about 130 members.

Abreast In A Boat has also spawned about 150 similar organizations throughout the world.

Surrey's Marie Lane has just finished paddling her first season.

While she heard mention of Abreast In A Boat at a mastectomy shop years ago, it wasn't until recently, at the age of 66, 14 years after her breast cancer diagnosis, that she was persuaded to try it by a friend at the gym.

"I love it," she says. "I'm sad the season is



Neoma Quintin (left) and Elisabeth Villeneuve are heading to Malaysia in late October for a dragon boat regatta with Abreast In A Boat, a paddling club for breast cancer survivors.

BOAZ JOSEPH / THE LEADER

over. I can't wait for next year."

During this past season (March to July), while training twice a week out of Deas Slough in Ladner, she participated in four regattas.

"We're really pleased with ourselves, but we worked hard to get there."

Lane says she didn't realize until the season was over how much she cherished the bonding and camaraderie of her crew mates.

While there are newcomers with each season, several Abreast in a Boat paddlers today were in the original 1996 crew.

Three of them – Esther Matsubuchi, Coro Mohr and Deb Middleton – will take part in a major international regatta in Malaysia later this month.

The International Dragon Boat Festival Cancer Survivors World Cup 2011 will take place Oct. 22-23 at Putrajaya, about 25 kilometres south of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The cancer survivors' regatta (for different types of cancer) will be under the umbrella of a larger race, the Malaysia International Dragon Boat Festival.

There will be about 10 teams racing for the breast cancer cup, with Abreast In A Boat the sole Canadian team.

Villeneuve, who started in Abreast In A Boat's second year, is one of two women from Surrey heading to Malaysia.

The other is Neoma Quintin, who has just finished her second full season of rowing.

Diagnosed at 34, Quintin, now 37, considers herself a seasoned regatta veteran – having participated in each of the three regular-season races, as well as a couple of optional ones.

This will be her first international regatta.

Quintin says training was initially tough, but the hard work has paid off, improving her health and spirit, she's excited about the upcoming race.

"It's a neat feeling. It showed me that I could do physical stuff."

Newton's Lois Felkar remembers seeing a photo of an Abreast In A Boat crew in the office of a colleague at Fraser Health years ago.

"I put that in my memory bank," she says, after talking to the breast cancer survivor.

Diagnosed herself in 2006 at the age of 52, Felkar went back to her colleague's office and told her: "I'm going to make it. I'm going to paddle on that crew."

Her breast cancer was particularly aggres-

sive, and brought with it six months of chemotherapy (with rounds every two weeks) and 30 radiation treatments.

With each visit, she recalled the picture of the boat crew.

"That image is what kept me going through all of it."

The treatments left her in poor shape; loss of balance meant she had to learn to walk again.

Six months after the all-clear, she signed up with Abreast In A Boat in late 2007 and began paddling the following spring.

Felkar has just finished her fourth season of paddling.

She describes her crew as kind and patient, where every individual is considered a blessing.

"It's a floating support group," she says.

"There's no feeling in the world like walking onto the dock with the salt air and the wind. It just makes your spirits soar."

Honouring tradition, fuchsia or pink-colored flowers will be thrown into the water at the end of the October regatta to remember and honour those women who have passed away from breast cancer and those who are still fighting.

Abreast In A Boat crews:

■ Abreast Up The Creek, which practises from Granville Island, on False Creek, Vancouver.

■ Abreast Deas Divas, which practises from Captain's Cove Marina in Ladner.

■ Abreast with FORT-itude, which practises at the Fort Langley Canoe Club.

■ Abreast in Richmond, which practises at the Richmond Yacht Club.

■ Abreast with Hope, which also practises in Ladner.

For more information, visit <http://abreastinaboat.com>