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**Homicide investigators probe shooting death of 14-year-old in Surrey**

*Tequel Willis is believed to be the youngest victim of gang violence in B.C. history*

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Homicide investigators are probing the shooting death of a 14-year-old boy in Surrey on Monday.

The shooting occurred as the boy stepped out of a cab near 148A Street and 110th Avenue around 7:30 p.m. on Monday. Emergency crews arrived to find the teen dead from gunshot wounds, the Integrated Homicide Investigation Team (IHIT) said Tuesday as they appealed to the public for information and witnesses.

A recent photo of 14-year-old Tequel Willis of Burnaby with a pet hamster on his head. Willis was shot and killed on Monday, Dec. 28 in Surrey. PHOTO BY DAVID WEISGARBER /PNG

The victim was known to police but his name wasn’t disclosed. He has been identified by his father, however, as Tequel Willis of Burnaby.

David Weisgarber, who lives in Kelowna and last saw his son in the summer, said he learned about Willis’s death early Tuesday, shortly after Surrey RCMP informed the child’s mother.

“They went to his mother’s home at five o’clock in the morning and told her Tequel is dead, and turned around and left,” Weisgarber said.

Weisgarber said Willis “had a hard life” and was let down by systems put in place to protect him, including child protection services, the courts and the police. The father added that he often worried about what might happen to his son.

“I even warned them … there’s a lot of shootings in town,” he said. “This boy could get shot one day or something … and of course that’s what happened.”

Weisgarber insisted Willis’s age be prioritized in media coverage, frequently comparing the gang violence in Surrey with that of South American countries.

“There’s children down there being shot every day,” he said. “We’re no different than they are. Why are we trying to pretend that we don’t have children being shot here? He was only 14.”

Willis is believed to be the youngest victim of gang violence in B.C. history. Alfred Wong, the Coquitlam teen caught in a shooting crossfire at East Broadway and Ontario streets in Vancouver on Jan. 13, 2018, was 15.

Sgt. Frank Jang of IHIT said the shooting is believed to be a targeted incident.

A dark sedan was seen quickly leaving the area afterward, Jang said, and investigators are working to determine whether a vehicle fire near 214th Street and 76th Avenue in Langley is related to the homicide. A burning vehicle was reported to Langley RCMP around 8 p.m.

The cab driver is co-operating with the investigation, police said.

Jang said IHIT will be working closely with Surrey and Langley RCMP, and the B.C. Coroners Service, as they work to determine a motive and make arrests.

“Most of us cannot begin to fathom that someone as young as 14 years old could be shot and murdered; it’s very disturbing,” said Sgt. Elenore Sturko of the Surrey RCMP. “There will be an overt presence of police in the community with an increased number of officers conducting targeted enforcement across the city.”

The shooting was the second in Surrey in 24 hours. On Sunday night, a young man was found clinging to life inside a vehicle after being shot. He later died in hospital. Jang said the victim, Harman Singh Dhesi, 19, was known to police. IHIT has also assumed conduct of the investigation.

A continuing Lower Mainland gang conflict has led to dozens of shootings and several murders over the last two years.

On Nov. 30, a 29-year-old Surrey man with gang links was shot to death outside a Fleetwood shopping plaza crowded with vehicles and shoppers.

The most recent escalation this fall is related to friction between the Brothers Keepers gang and members of the UN gang over control of lucrative drug lines.

Anyone with information on either incident is asked to call the IHIT information line at 1-877-551- IHIT (4448), or by email at [ihitinfo@rcmp-grc.gc.ca](mailto:ihitinfo@rcmp-grc.gc.ca).

Should you wish to remain anonymous, please contact Crime Stoppers at [1-800-222-TIPS (8477)](tel:1-800-222-TIPS%20(8477)).

— With files from Kim Bolan, David Carrigg and Mike Raptis