



IDENTIFICATION

Department	Position Title	
Justice	Deputy Chief Coroner	
Position Number	Community	Division/Region
82-3684	Yellowknife	Directorate/HQ

PURPOSE OF THE POSITION

The Deputy Chief Coroner provides technical, investigative, professional expertise and supervision to the NWT Coroner Service, relevant to the management of all sudden and unexpected death investigations according to the *Coroners Act*, R.S.N.W.T., 1988 c. C-20, and in accordance with best practices, death investigations standards, and ethical guidelines.

The Deputy Chief Coroner is also a quasi-judicial decision-maker and the decisions made, and the inquests conducted have impacts upon government, the private sector and the public at large.

SCOPE

Reporting to the Chief Coroner, the Deputy Chief Coroner is a medical-legal death investigator and has considerable latitude to exercise independent judgment when carrying out or assisting in investigations. The incumbent does this by providing guidance and training support to coroners and other individuals in regards to death investigations. The incumbent also provides coroner services. The incumbent is instrumental in effecting change in the development of policy; legislation, business plans for the service, and is accountable for ensuring that evidence-based best practices are carried out. At times, a death investigation will lead to recommendations that will contribute to the improvement of public safety and prevent future deaths of a similar nature.

The Deputy Chief Coroner must perform the professional and legal duties set out in the *Coroners Act*, also in accordance with the *Evidence Act*, *Canada Evidence Act*, *Vital Statistics Act*, *Public Health Act*, together with such ancillary or incidental duties as may be reasonably

expected of or pertain to the effective performance of the Chief Coroner and the Coroner Service.

The Coroner Service investigates approximately 100 reportable deaths annually in the Northwest Territories. A "reportable death" is one that occurs in circumstances set out under subsection 8(1) of the *Coroners Act*.

The incumbent provides supervision for 40 fee-for-service community coroners from across the NWT and provides support, advice and assistance to ensure that they carry out their responsibilities in accordance with applicable legislation, policies and procedures. Each and every death investigation must be and is supervised, as community coroners have different levels of literacy and language skills, as well as different levels of training.

The incumbent provides professional direction and supervision, and on day-to-day basis monitors the quality of professional services offered to individuals and families by the NWT Coroner Service. The Deputy Chief Coroner is responsible for making recommendations as required to improve public safety and prevent future deaths.

The incumbent works cooperatively and liaises with all partners and stakeholders, such as the RCMP, health and medical professionals, Workers Safety and Compensation Commission, Transportation Safety Board, Fire Marshall's Office and Funeral Directors. The incumbent will also work with these and local stakeholders when developing Mass Fatality Response plans, ensuring the correct resources are brought together and best practices of the NWT Coroner Services are in place.

The Deputy Chief Coroner has the responsibility of presiding over public inquests. This is a quasi-judicial proceeding that allows for the public presentation of all evidence relating to a death. The Deputy Chief Coroner chooses a six-person jury, presides at the inquest, controls the proceedings, determines witnesses to be called and issues subpoenas requiring their attendance.

The Deputy Chief Coroner writes public reports. These reports determine the identity of the deceased, and stipulate how, where, when and by what means the deceased came to his or her death. The death is then classified as Natural, Accidental, Suicide, Homicide or Undetermined.

Every coroner case is considered for recommendations, which are directed to improving public safety and preventing future deaths in similar circumstances.

RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Managing Investigation of all sudden and unexpected deaths reportable under the *Coroners Act*, ensuring all deaths are Investigated thoroughly by:

- Interpreting and applying the Coroners Act and all other relevant legislation.
- Maintaining and analyzing statistics for the NWT Coroners Services and providing statistical reports and analysis as requested by the Chief Coroner, Ministers or public agencies.

- Maintaining regular contact with the Chief Coroner and Community Coroners regarding ongoing investigations.
 - Overseeing the preparation of documentation including case notes, file management, report writing and recommendations.
 - Directing coroners/staff with regards to ethical and legal issues and assisting them in dealing with work impacts.
 - Debriefing difficult and complex cases and managing crisis situations in order to limit burnout and trauma.
 - Liaising with family members of the deceased.
 - Liaising with media.
 - Managing an on-call roster to ensure the NWT Coroner Services is accessible on a 24 hour basis.
- 2. Exercises the statutory powers and responsibilities of a Coroner or Deputy Chief Coroner pursuant to the Coroners Act and acting as a resource for other Coroners with less experience by:**
- Receiving notice of reportable deaths, attending death scenes, taking possession of the body and conducting an investigation.
 - Directing the death investigation and providing leadership and coordination at the scene, interviewing witnesses as required.
 - Making findings on the cause of death, manner of death and making recommendations when warranted.
 - Supervising the investigations of deaths carried out by community coroners and providing professional advice and assistance as required.
 - Performing post-mortem examinations and collection of bodily fluid samples or authorizes autopsies.
 - Interpreting and analyzing autopsy, toxicology and other medical reports.
 - Providing support, advice and assistance to families and relatives of the deceased.
- 3. Arranges for and presides over Coroner's Inquests (formal proceeding) to ensure the goals of the Inquest are protected and relevant facts are presented to the jury by:**
- Determines potential witnesses to be called at Inquest.
 - Prepares documents and arranges for the service of summonses for potential jurors and witnesses.
 - Questions witnesses as required and assists the jury members by suggesting recommendations for their consideration.
 - Develops, prepares and provides inquest information and documents for legal counsel.
 - Develops Coroner Briefs for legal counsel.
- 4. Provides recommendations to the Chief Coroner for reform, official communications and educational resources to contribute to the Improvement of public safety and prevent future deaths of a similar nature**
- Reviews evidence from investigation reports and inquests, and brings relevant findings or recommendations to the attention of the Chief Coroner

- Provides recommendations on legislative reform;
- Provides information on the status of ongoing and concluded cases as requested;
- Assists the Chief Coroner with managing crisis situations to limit burn-out and trauma of coroners;
- Provides information to the next of kin or legal representatives concerning details of the investigation, and explains medical-legal reports, autopsy reports, and toxicology reports to them;
- Communicates with legal representatives and insurance companies to provide assistance, direction, and information relating to estate settlement;
- Assists the Chief Coroner with the development and delivery of presentations to students, stakeholders, officials, Government agencies, medical and legal professionals, and the public;

5. Plans, develops, administers and evaluates new coroners' orientation support, in-service training programs, and annual coroners' training.

- Conducting evaluations of materials based on information and recommendations from community coroners, the Chief Coroner, and other stake holders on knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA) requiring acquisition and/or development.
- Determining most appropriate means to acquire and/or develop KSA's, and recommending training and development plans to the Chief Coroner.
- Developing, delivering and/or facilitating the delivery of orientation and training programs.
- Orientating coroners/staff to new and revised procedures, protocols and practices.

WORKING CONDITIONS

Physical Demands

There is a combination of field and office work.

Physical effort is required approximately 65 times per year for approximately 8-10 hours per occurrence, depending on investigation and scene location.

Must access and retrieve human remains and severed human remains, and be able to lift and carry human remains with assistance, and in some cases search for and retrieve severed body parts in the vicinity of an incident scene. The scene can be a detached or attached residence (i.e., house or apartment building). There are often many stairs inside and out, or the scene may be a remote location on the land or ice. Often the incumbent is working in awkward and difficult positions.

The incumbent must be able to walk and carry human remains a considerable distance in difficult terrain many times of the year. Many times stairs and walkways or residences are not shoveled clear of snow.

Human remains are flown in on a regular basis to Yellowknife. Remains need to be loaded into the coroner van, sometimes for taking to the morgue for further examination and sometimes for loading into a shipping container for transportation to Alberta.

External examinations must be completed on human remains, which requires lifting, pulling and pushing to turn human remains onto their side or turning right over. This is done either alone or with the assistance of another person, with human remains that can weigh as much as 300 pounds. While working at the scene or morgue the incumbent must be able to lift, stretch, and pull and push remains for the examination, and must be able to stand for long hours without sitting.

The incumbent must handle many different sized objects as exhibits while carrying out their death investigations.

The incumbent must pick up the shipping containers which are approximately 100 pounds. The incumbent must lift and load containers into the van for delivery to the morgue or airport or for return to the storage location.

Environmental Conditions

The incumbent collects bodily fluids from human remains for toxicology examination. Exposure to, and handling of, and contact of human remains and bodily fluids that may be contaminated, decomposed, mutilated and/or arthropod infested, or infected with communicable diseases. There is frequent exposure to putrid odors.

Death investigations will be performed in all weather conditions in remote environments on the land or ice. Primitive sleeping accommodations may be provided, from a tent to the floor of an RCMP detachment.

The incumbent is frequently required to travel on small aircraft or helicopters, or by boat to reach remote death scenes.

Sensory Demands

The incumbent will be required to use the combined senses of touch, sight and smell simultaneously during an investigation, both at the death scene and during subsequent examinations of the remains and/or the death scene.

Mental Demands

The incumbent is expected to be on-call 24 hours a day, approximately half of the year, and is expected to travel to a death scene in remote locations on little or very short notice.

The incumbent is contacted any time of the day or night to investigate and attend death scenes. The incumbent often goes without food during investigations, and is required to remain at incident scenes for long periods of time with no breaks.

The incumbent will be exposed to very graphic and traumatic death scenes, including the mutilation of human remains through violence or trauma.

It is typical for the incumbent who is on standby to be called back to work almost every day, which can cause significant stress on incumbent's personal life. Living up to the expectations of personal life demands, public and media, both in the office and in the community, can have a negative impact on the incumbent's private life and emotional well-being in the long term.

Many of the investigations are unique, complex, and always confidential, and discretion always demands a high degree of mental awareness and sensitivity, and pressure leads to mental fatigue and stress.

For the incumbent there can be significant lack of control over the work pace, which can lead to mental fatigue and stress.

The incumbent must be supportive to individuals who are emotionally distraught by the death of a loved one, and can sometimes be difficult to communicate with. Some family members can be very aggressive, potentially abusive, volatile or in crisis, raising concerns about personal safety.

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ABILITIES

- Demonstrated ability to be mature, objective, fair, honest, empathetic, tolerant, patient and courteous;
- Demonstrated and comprehensive knowledge of relevant legislation, relevant regulations, an investigative procedures, best practices and policies;
- Proven ability to direct and conduct complex death investigations;
- Knowledge of technical aspects of the investigation of death, including forensic identification, medical, social and public perception;
- Ability to identify issues and weigh facts to draw supportable and appropriate conclusions;
- Proven expertise and analytical investigation skills to assist coroners with determining the cause and manner of death;
- Strong evaluation, analytical, problem-solving and decision-making skills;
- Proven ability to interpret autopsy, toxicology and other medical reports;
- Proven knowledge of medical/legal terminology to facilitate the ability to interpret medical/legal reports for community coroners with less experience;
- Working knowledge of the rules of natural justice and evidence in order to preside over and successfully run inquests;
- Proven ability to preside over inquests, control the proceedings, determine appropriate witnesses to be called and issue subpoenas requiring their attendance;
- Ability to organize investigations and lead multi-faceted teams at death scenes;
- Proven ability to audit investigations conducted by coroners, and conduct quality assurance reviews to ensure completeness, uniformity and compliance within established classification and content standards;

- Proven expertise with respect to the application and interpretation of the relevant legislation to coroners, police officers, jury members, members of the public, representatives of Government and the media;
- Proven ability to assess risk and propose mitigative strategies;
- Proven ability to identify public safety issues and make recommendations for reform;
- Proven leadership abilities, including demonstrated mentoring skills, interpersonal and communication skills
- Proven ability to effectively train adults and create and lead workshops;
- Excellent verbal and written communication skills to write complex quasi legal and medical reports, proposals, and briefing documents;
- Strong communication skills to deal with the public, concerned parties, the media and interdisciplinary teams;
- Proven ability to render written public decisions, write complex quasi legal and medical reports, proposals, and briefing documents;
- Proven ability to listen, understand and respond in a helpful and responsive and empathetic manner;
- Proven ability to work cooperatively in a team approach with peers, subordinates, the public, and community agencies and groups;
- Knowledge, understanding, and respect of diverse cultures and communities to promote an effective balance between legal and cultural needs in the handling and disposition of human remains;
- Excellent delegation, organization and time management skills in order to manage a diverse workload, conflicting demands for attention, and unexpected changes in priorities and assignments;
- Proven knowledge of and ability to use computers, software and computerized office equipment;
- Proven abilities in the areas of crisis intervention, anger diffusion, interviewing, assessment, and conflict intervention and resolution;

Typically, the above qualifications would be attained by:

A baccalaureate degree in the social sciences, sciences, or legal fields, and a minimum of 5 years of related experience. Equivalent combinations of education and experience will be considered.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

A valid Class 5 NWT Driver's license to enable travel to death scenes is required.

Must have or be eligible to receive a statutory appointment as a coroner in order to perform the duties of this position.

Position Security (check one)

- ☐ No criminal records check required
- ☐ Position of Trust – criminal records check required
- ☐ Highly sensitive position – requires verification of identity and a criminal records check

French language (check one if applicable)

- ☐ French required (must identify required level below)

Level required for this Designated Position is:

ORAL EXPRESSION AND COMPREHENSION

Basic (B) ☐ Intermediate (I) ☐ Advanced (A) ☐

READING COMPREHENSION:

Basic (B) ☐ Intermediate (I) ☐ Advanced (A) ☐

WRITING SKILLS:

Basic (B) ☐ Intermediate (I) ☐ Advanced (A) ☐

- ☐ French preferred

Indigenous language: Select language

- ☐ Required
☐ Preferred