



HER MAJESTY'S CORONER'S FINDINGS + PATHOLOGY TEAM REPORTS

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Inquest into the death of Hurricane Dorian Victims (Part One)

Marshall: W/Insp Edna Pratt

Hearing Dates: 12th - 15th, 20th, 21st, 29th April 2021, 6th May 2021

Hurricane Dorian was the deadliest hurricane to strike the Bahamas in recent history we have not in modern day seen an event which has caused so much havoc death and unspoken pain.

I along with Deputy Coroners accompanied a team in early September 2019 to inspect the Island. The delay in this inquest like most things in 2020 was due to the restrictions placed on the country and the entire world for that matter due to Covid 19.

During late March of this year permission was granted by the Attorney General pursuant to statute to conduct this inquest without a jury.

The loss of life and significant damage to property was widespread, however certain areas in Abaco were more impacted than others in particular Bay Street, Pigeon Pea and The Mudd appeared to have suffered most from the event with a number of its residents deceased or missing.

Over the past few weeks a number of persons were called to assist at this inquest with the circumstances surrounding the death and disappearance of persons

on the Island of Abaco during the Hurricane the evidence was either in person via Zoom, Skype or Whatsapp.

To summarize all the information contained in the exhibits would be impractical due to the sheer volume of the material. However it is necessary to shed light on some of the evidence to understand the findings I have made.

This was by no means a trial and there is no question of attributing blame. As coroner that was not my role.

The purpose of this inquest was to inquire into the circumstances surrounding the death and determine as far as possible the relevant questions:-

- Who the deceased was
- How he/she came to their death
- When
- Where
- And by what means did he/she come to their death

Firstly a précis of the evidence specifically relevant to the hurricane itself, search and rescue and subsequent investigation.

Evidence of Michael Stubbs

During the first day of this Inquest, Mr. Michael Andrew Stubbs Deputy Director from The Bahamas Department of Meteorology Office gave evidence.

The witness stated that he had served as a hurricane forecaster for some thirty (30) plus years. He explained the procedure used by the Met office once they became aware of a tropical storm and the various notices generated by the Department to the general public from Tropical Storm to Hurricane until after a hurricane.

He stated that the first news item issued with respect to Dorian was sent out on 25th August 2019 to NEMA and other agencies and that public notices followed thereafter.

He stated that Dorian quickly progressed from a Tropical Storm to a major hurricane and by the 30th August 2019 it was forecasting winds of one hundred ten (110) miles per hour then graded as a category three (3) and thus was considered as a major hurricane with the potential for major damage to property and possible loss of life. By the 31st August 2019 we were faced with Category four (4) hurricane with winds quickly intensifying. As we moved to 1st September 2019 the centre was two hundred (200) degrees east of Abaco with winds of one hundred sixty (160) miles per hour and that the system began to not only intensify but to slow down which was a major concern for them at the Met Office.

He said that by the time Dorian arrived, the winds were reaching one hundred eighty five (185) miles per hour across Abaco with some indication that the winds had increased to over two hundred (200) miles per hour with sea surge at twenty (20) to twenty eight (28) feet above sea level. And that such a situation would have made it very difficult for people to survive. He said they were also satisfied after the review of Dorian there would have been tornadoes in Abaco at the time the hurricane made landfall.

Copies of the notices sent out to the public before during and after the hurricane were produced by the witness and tendered into evidence as “Exhibit A”.

Evidence of Sgt Nelson Bolton

Sgt 3137 Nelson Bolton was stationed on Marsh Harbour on 1st September 2019 he said that prior to the hurricane he along with C/Supt Mortimer, Min Darron Henfield, Officer Rolle and a team went into areas including The Mudd, Pigeon Pea and with the aid of an interpreter spoke to the residents about the magnitude of the hurricane and impressed on them the importance of leaving those areas as it was not safe for them to remain there and directed them to shelter. He said that the minister also stressed to the residents that it was not an immigration issue but a safety issue and they need not be concern if they were undocumented.

He said they also impressed on the residents that if the storm came it would be impossible for them to then be rescued.

He said that a decision was also taken to evacuate the Marsh Harbour Police Station because information coming in was that the storm had exceeded one hundred fifty (150) miles per hour prior to land fall so they took up command at the Government Complex.

Sgt Bolton said that as the storm made land fall a number of calls came in for assistance and that he along with other officers assisted some eleven (11) Haitian Nationals all males.

He said that during the eye of the hurricane they went into the Central Pines area and rendered assistance to persons that were trapped due to the hurricane.

After leaving Central Pines they went to Murphy Town via S.C.Bootle Highway but due to the water, the down trees and debris he was forced to make his way by foot where he again not only meet people who were fleeing the storm but came upon people that had perished.

He stated that with the assistance of a school bus they were able to rescue a number of persons and took them to the government clinic but due to the conditions at the time it was extremely difficult a five (5) minute drive took them approximately one (1) hour twenty (20) minutes.

He said on the morning of the 2nd September 2019 he was again apart of a rescue team under the supervision of W/Supt Neely in the Marsh Harbour and Murphy Town Area where over one hundred (100) people were rescued. He described the conditions on the ground as total destruction. That they were unable during their rescue efforts to access the areas of The Mudd and Pigeon Pea because they were by his approximation still under some twenty five (25) feet of water.

Evidence of Sgt. Austin Bowles

Sgt 2959 Austin Bowles in September 2019 was attached to Crime Scene Investigation unit and was instructed to travel to Abaco with other officers. Where he visited areas of Marsh Harbour devastated by the storm in addition to taking photographs he assisted in retrieving bodies, a job he said that was made extremely difficult because of the conditions on the island from the sheer destruction. Those bodies that were retrieved were placed in body bags tagged and taken to the make shift morgue at the government clinic.

Upon his return to Nassau he compiled a CD and a photo album which was entered into evidence as Exhibits C & D respectively.

He took the court through the photo album and concluded his evidence by stating that the devastation could not be depicted on camera and the photos were only a tip in the bucket to what he saw on the ground in Abaco during his time

there. He described it as the worse he had ever seen in his fifteen(15) years as a member of the Royal Bahamas Police Force.

Evidence of W/Insp Altida Bowles

W/Insp Altilda Bowles stated that in September 2019 she was and still is attached to the Missing and Exploited Persons Section at CDU. On the 10th September 2019 she received instructions from her superior to collect statements and samples from family members with a view to completing missing persons reports and DNA testing. As a result of the information taken some thirty four (34) persons were reported missing. Based on DNA samples there have been to date five (5) matches. She stressed that work was still being done in this regard.

Evidence of A/Supt Sheria King

A/Supt Sheria King from the Forensic Lab RBPF was deemed as an Expert Witness in these proceedings. She explained that testing was conducted by Forensic Scientists to obtain matches for DNA profiles. However they faced numerous challenges were faced by the laboratory that had been sorced with the samples that were taken. However recently additional samples were forwarded to another laboratory using different technology although there has been delays in the testing due to Covid 19 there has been some sucess and in January 2021 they

received completed DNA files for forty six (46) out of forty seven (47) samples that was forwarded as a result of which they got a total of eleven (11) positive identifications nine (9) of which were matches.

She explained that the process is an ongoing one and that the profiles generated will be retained in the data base for future testing.

Evidence of Dr. Kiko Bridgewater

The evidence of Dr. Kiko Bridgewater was that he and Dr. Caryn Sands along with several junior doctors and mortuary staff traveled to Marsh Harbour Abaco As part of the Mass Fatality Response Team on 10th September 2019 and on various occasions thereafter to examine victims that were recovered.

He stated that the bodies were recovered in varying stages of preservation ranging from a few well preserved to mostly skeletonized and in some cases body parts only.

He said that the vast majority of the victims were not identified by visual means because of the extent of the decomposition. Attempts were made to fingerprint victims where possible and samples of soft tissue, muscle, bone and teeth were kept for DNA analysis. The bodies were thereafter tagged with unique identification numbers and placed in new body bags and labeled accordingly.

Death certificates were thereafter prepared in the name of the few victims that could be identified and others were labeled as “unknown” with the cause of death being undetermined or likely drowning. He stated that between 10th September 2019 and 9th March 2020 fifty nine (59) human remains were examined and fifty five (55) were buried by the Government of the Bahamas in May 2020 whilst the others were released to family members.

Dr. Bridgewater tendered a report at this inquest labeled F which highlights in great detail the work done by the Pathology and Forensic team to date.

He concluded his evidence by highlighting several recommendations some of which I have adopted and will be included at the end.

Secondly evidence specifically relevant to each of the deceased and missing persons.

Julyn Outten Penn Re: Antonio Outten

Julyn Outten Penn gave sworn evidence that her eldest son Antonio Outten was a resident in Abaco and that she spoke to him between 12am and 1pm on 1st September when he told her he was okay and at a safe place. She said that she was relieved because she knew that her son lived on the second floor of a two story building. However after not hearing from her son after the hurricane had passed

and going from shelter to shelter and being told by a friend that he did not make it she completed a missing person report and gave a sample for DNA. She said that after going back to Abaco last year and seeing the condition of the building her son lived in she was satisfied that her son perished in the hurricane.

She said just days before attending at the Inquest she received word from CDU that there had been a match based on the DNA sample she provided and that his body was one of the victims interred in Abaco last year May.

Merlene Capron Re: James Capron

The evidence of Merlene Capron was that her husband was employed as a security officer with Albury's Fast ferry and lived in Treasure Cay and that the last time he came to Nassau was to spend his birthday on 23rd August 2019.

She said that on the 1st September 2019 she spoke to him via a video call when he showed her the safety measures he took and assured her that he was safe nor did he make mention of going to a shelter. She said that during the night she phoned her husband several times but his phone continued to ring. That on the 6th September 2019 she received word that her husband had passed when someone sent a photo of her husband's body to his sister. She further said that her sister in law Cathy Capron made a missing persons report on her behalf and that she was aware that his mother Virginia Capron gave blood for DNA testing.

Mrs Virginia Capron also gave evidence and not only confirmed that she provided a sample but stated that she was made aware that her son's body had been found and taken to the morgue in Abaco where unsuccessful attempts were made by the family to retrieve his body. She said that she was now satisfied that her son perished as a result of Hurricane Dorian.

Equally as heart breaking was the evidence of now retired police officer Kenwood Capron the brother of the deceased who said that he spoke with his baby brother some two (2) weeks before the hurricane and that shortly after the hurricane he was sent to Abaco to work for some three (3) to four(4) weeks as part of the search and recovery efforts but did not conduct a special investigation to ascertain what had happened with his brother, he too said that he had been privy to the photos that were sent with respect to his brother but he could not confirm if they were ever turned over to the police.

He said that sometime in January of this year he was requested by the police to give a sample for DNA testing and that he has only recently been informed by CDU that there was a match and that his brother's remains would have been one of the persons buried at Abaco last year.

Mr. Capron stated that his impression upon his arrival in Abaco on his assignment was that there was total devastation and he was not at all surprised that his brother went missing given the circumstances.

Michelena Williams Re: Melida Almazie

The evidence of Michelena Williams was that her mother Melida Almazie lived in Pigeon Pea Abaco with friends and despite her family's best efforts to have her return to Haiti she was not willing to do so. However she felt that her mother would be safe during the Hurricane but was unable to reach her prior as her mother told her that her phone was not working.

She said after the hurricane she along with her brother went to several shelters looking for their mother or information about her. She said that she met several persons at the Wulff Road Shelter in particular a lady from Abaco whose phone her mother used from time to time who told her that during the Hurricane something hit her mother on the head and the water just kept rising and as a result her mother did not make it. She said that she gave samples for DNA testing and she too learnt about two (2) weeks ago that they found a match and that her mother was one of the bodies recovered after the hurricane and later buried at Abaco last year by the Government

Donnette Marie Henton Re: Claudene Byfield Etienne

Donnette Marie Henton gave evidence at this inquest that she spoke everyday to her sister Claudene Byfield Etienne who on the 1st September 2019 was living in Dundas Town Abaco.

She said that the last time she spoke with her sister was sometime around 8:00am on the 1st September 2019 and they concluded their conversation after her sister said it started to rain and that she might go and park her car by her friend Cherry Rolle.

She said after the hurricane and several unsuccessful attempts to contact her sister she went to the shelters, the hospital and contacted persons and posted her sister's photo on social media with no positive results.

She then traveled to Abaco some two (2) weeks after the hurricane with another sister that came from Jamaica to try and find her sister but they received conflicting stories as to her sister's whereabouts.

Her evidence was that with the help of Jamaican soldiers she went to the place where her sister's house was located but the house was no longer there.

She said that her sister gave a sample for DNA testing but they were later told that there was no match and that as she has not spoken to her sister since 1st September 2019 she presumed her to be dead and that in her opinion given the

devastation of her sister's house and the area surrounding it if her sister stayed in her house during the hurricane she may have been blown away or out to sea.

Ellen Jean Jacques Re: Jeffrey Danis

Ellen Jean Jacques told this court by sworn evidence that her brother Jeffrey Danis was a carpenter who lived in Abaco and that on the 25th September 2019 she made a missing persons report because she and her mother were worried as they hadn't heard from Jeffery since the hurricane. She said that she was aware that another sibling had asked him to leave The Mudd prior to the storm because he was concerned for his safety there. They were later told by her brother's roommate that he left but then went back to his house to collect his passport when he got caught in the storm.

She said that her family was also told by persons from the village that when the storm died down and they went back to the area they saw Jeffrey's body on the ground and that his body was later picked up by the police but his friend said that he was too distressed to give the police his identity.

She said she later took her mother to the hospital to give blood for DNA testing and she and her mother has now been informed by the CDU that there was a match and that his remains were buried in Abaco last year.

Jason Farquharson Re: Kathleen Smith

Jason Farquharson's evidence was that his estranged wife Kathleen Farquharson nee Smith lived in Marsh Harbour with her son Kahlel Smith and their daughter and that after making several unsuccessful attempts to reach his wife after the hurricane he received word from his wife's brother that she did not make it but the children were safe. He said that he later met with his step son who told him that his mother was swept away after the balcony of their top floor apartment they were staying in fell into the water from the storm surge during the Hurricane.

He said that he found out from people who were part of the cleanup effort that the water front structure his wife resided in had collapsed.

He said that his son later gave a swab for DNA testing but they were told that there was no match.

Kahlel Smith also gave evidence at this inquest he said that Kathleen was his biological mother and that on 1st September 2019 he resided with her in Abaco and after the hurricane he made a missing persons report and gave a sample to be tested for DNA.

He said that on the morning of the 1st September 2019 after the water came up to the second floor of their residence and the roof of the structure had collapsed he and his mother went outside on the back of the balcony seeking shelter whilst there the balcony fell into about ten (10) feet of water. He said that he swam away

from the building and that was the last time he saw his mother. He said that he tried to find his mother's body to secure it but he could not find her and that he was rescued by a boat which was floating in the area where the roof had collapsed. He said that he concluded that his mother drowned when she fell as she could not swim.

Feurilia Santil Re: Emmanuel Saintil

The evidence of Feurilia Santil was given through an interpreter Charlene Jean. She said that prior to 1st September 2019 she lived in Pigeon Pea Abaco with her husband and child and that on Saturday after asking her husband to leave the area several times she put her child on her shoulders and left for family in Murphy Town. She said her husband told her that he would follow but he never did.

She said that on Monday following the hurricane after being told that Marsh Harbour was "mash up" and a number of people died she left her child and walked to the area that they lived in Pigeon Pea and searched for her husband for three (3) days.

On day three (3) after being told by a guy name Ricky that someone was dead by his car she went to the area and looked and saw that it was her husband. She said that he was later placed in a body bag and taken away. That the police

came to the shelter and took a swab from her infant child for DNA but to date no one has said anything to her.

David Cornish Re: Modina Hepburn

David Cornish was called to give evidence with respect to a missing persons report he made to police in connection with his aunt Modina Hepburn whom he and a niece lived within Abaco. He said that notwithstanding his attempts to encourage his aunt to leave her home she refused and told him that it was in God's hand.

He said that sometime around 11:00am on 1st September 2019 it got so bad that the water came into their home with such force that the entire back exterior wall of their home disappeared. He said that he was standing by the front door and his aunt was a few feet away when the force of the water took him outside. He said that he was able to return to the house just before it crumbled and came down and there was no sign of his aunt. However he continued to search for her for six(6) days after the hurricane and that it was his belief that the force of the water took her into the ocean as the house they occupied was literally right on the water he was able to jump from his back door into the sea. He said that as his aunts closest relative he provided a sample for DNA but he has never been informed if there was a match.

Carlean Edgecombe Re: Jenayia & Myeisha Edgecombe

Carlean Edgecombe gave evidence with respect to the disappearance of her two (2) daughters. She said that the evening before the hurricane her daughters were collected by their father Samuel Edgecombe who informed her that he was taking the girls to be with him at Calvary Baptist Church which was being used as a shelter.

That on the day of the storm she spoke to her daughters via Whatsapp telling them that if they wanted to return home she would collect them; they assured her that they were okay.

At about 10:30-11am her daughters called her to say that water was coming in the church when she told her eldest daughter to hold on to her little sister and not let go and in the middle of the conversation the phone cut off.

She said during the eye of the storm she was forced to evacuate her home with elderly relatives and went to the Government complex where she began searching for her daughters when on day three (3) she saw her husband and asked him her daughters he simply shook his head and began to cry and walked away. She said that judging from what her sister said who was also at the church she believed her daughters drowned.

She later went to the area where the church stood and only the foundation remained. She was told that her daughters had been found and were placed in the morgue. Mrs. Edgecombe said she was never able to provide a sample for DNA because every time she went to do it they could not get their act together and she was turned away.

Maleine Laguerre-Alteme Re: Alphonso Laguerre

Maleine Laguerre-Alteme of Marsh Harbour gave evidence through an interpreter. She resided with her husband and their twelve (12) year old daughter in The Mudd. 31st August 2019 was the last time she saw or spoke to her husband when she told him that she was going to the shelter. She think he died like a lot of other people in the hurricane and she made checks at her husband's sister residence and all over the island after the hurricane looking for him but she never found him.

Natasha Laguerre-Taylor states that she too spoke with her father Alphonso Laguerre on the 1st September 2019 at around 10:00am when he told them that the hurricane was bad and that he was at his house. She said he told her he was leaving to come to them and later called back to say that he was in the roof and could not come down as the wind and the water was coming in and he could not swim.

She said that she later got reports from persons in The Mudd that her father had died and as a result gave sample for DNA match but she has never heard from the police.

Michael Dawkins Jr. Re: Michael Dawkins Sr.

Michael Dawkins Jr. gave evidence that the last time he spoke to his father Michael Dawkins Sr was father's day 2019 and that while he was aware the hurricane was approaching Abaco he did not know the force of it and that he tried to contact his father via telephone but got a busy signal.

He said that after the hurricane he asked family members in Abaco to locate his father and that he too went to the house where his father lived and the roof and windows were gone.

He said that he had been informed by his mother that the lady with whom his father resided informed her that the water came into the house and broke the windows and that after the water level got high in the house they tried to escape and that whilst his dad was exiting he was hit with a piece of the roof in his head and whilst swimming out he told the female he could no longer make it and when she looked back she saw white foam coming from his mouth and another storm surge came and took him out to sea.

He said that he provided a sample for DNA evidence but to date he has not received word from the police of a match.

Clarice Swain Re: Malik Moultrie

Clarice Swain of Hope Town Abaco the mother of Malik Moultrie gave evidence via Zoom she said that the last time she spoke to her son Malik was when he messaged her on Saturday 31st August 2019 and informed her he was with his boss and other friends in the Harrison Building but he could not sleep as the wind was just picking up.

She said that some four (4) days after the hurricane had passed after not hearing from her son she received word from her niece that her son had passed.

Further that she had been told that her son who was a good swimmer had gone to assist another co-worker and that they were both missing. She said that she gave a sample for DNA evidence but was never informed if there had been a match.

Emily Bethel Re: Juanita Lowe & Leroy Lowe

Emily Bethel gave evidence via Zoom. She stated that she had made a missing persons report for her aunt Juanita Lowe and her Uncle Leroy Lowe who resided together on Waterfront Street Marsh Harbour and that she and other

relatives had seen them on the evening of 31st August 2019 when they both appeared to be fine.

However when her son visited her on the Tuesday after the hurricane he told her there was nothing left save for the foundation where her aunt and uncle lived. She said that her mother who was their eldest sister gave a sample for DNA testing but they were never contacted about matches.

Peter Davis Re: Ezra Davis

Peter Davis in his sworn evidence stated that Ezra Davis was his older brother and that he communicated with him prior to the storm when his brother told him that the storm that was coming was going to be a big one and he told him that he was okay and that they both told the other to be safe.

He said after not hearing from his brother after the storm he went to his house but it was no longer there and his brother could not be found. He said that to date no family member has heard from or seen his brother. He gave a sample for DNA but he did not get any word back.

Liann Key Kaghin Re: Astrid Emily Stratton, Constance Schneider, Emili Raphael, Nildies Vincent

Liann Key Kaghin's evidence was that she has been a resident of Marsh Harbour her entire life and was present in Abaco during Hurricane Dorian on 1st September 2019.

She said that she made a missing persons report with respect to her aunt Astrid Emily Stratton on 21st September 2019 after being reasonably satisfied that her aunt and their other friends Constance Schneider, Emili Raphael, Nildies Vincent who were staying at her aunt's residence during the hurricane were missing and had perished.

Ms Kaghin stated that her last conversation with her aunt and the others was about 6:30pm, on 31st August 2019 when she asked her aunt to leave her home built in 1936 to come and stay with her at her home which is located on a high hill where it was safer she said that her aunt refused and told her that she was born in her house and she would die there. The house was located on the Harbour Front some seventy (70) feet from the shoreline in Marsh Harbour. She said her mother gave a sample for DNA evidence for her aunt but to date they are not aware of a match. She further stated that she was not permitted to make a missing persons report for the three (3) other persons that stayed with her aunt during the hurricane as she was not their next of kin they were:

Constance Schneider- US Citizen- was not only reported missing by her but by Ms Schneider brother who was very instrumental in the search and rescue efforts in Abaco.

Emili Raphel- Haitian National- She said that Emili was likely family and that he and his lady friend Nildies Vincent (Haitian Bahamian) were there because she had asked him to stay with her aunt during the hurricane.

However to date none of them have been seen or heard from since the evening of 31st August 2019. Although search and rescue efforts were made even with the assistance of trained dogs brought in from Florida but none of them have ever been found and she is of the view that they were washed out to sea and drowned.

She said that as a result of the hurricane the house was completely destroyed and only the front concrete steps of the structure was left standing.

Patrizzio Gozito Re: Rose Marie Lubin

Patrizzio Gozito stated that just days prior to Hurricane Dorian her sister Rose Marie Lubin left Fort Lauderdale to visit her mother who resided in The Mudd in Abaco.

She stated that on the evening of the 31st August 2019 she spoke to her sister who told her that she was safe and that she did not think the hurricane would be that bad and promised to call her the following day.

That she has never heard from her sister again as a result she has made numerous enquiries to the police, Social Services, the numbers listed for the shelters and her sister's place of employment in Florida all without success. Given the accounts she has seen and read of Hurricane Dorian she thinks that her sister was dead.

She said although she has made a missing persons report she has not been able to give a sample for DNA testing.



These are my **FINDINGS** in relation to the death and suspected death of the persons listed above as a result of the hurricane.

1. Identity of the deceased: Antonio Outten

D.O.B 29th January 1979

Manner of Death: Perished as a result of Hurricane Dorian

Place of Death: Abaco Bahamas

Date of Death: 1st September 2019

Cause of Death: Likely Drowning

Death certificate be completed by the Pathologist to reflect the same.

2. Identity of the deceased: James Capron

D.O.B 23rd August 1970

Manner of Death: Perished as a result of Hurricane Dorian

Place of Death: Abaco Bahamas

Date of Death: 1st September 2019

Cause of Death: Likely Drowning

Death certificate to be completed by the Pathologist to reflect the same.

3. Identity of the deceased: Melida Almazie

D.O.B 3rd October 1943

Manner of Death: Sheltering from Hurricane Dorian

Place of Death: Abaco Bahamas

Date of Death: 1st September 2019

Cause of Death: Likely Drowning

Death Certificate to be completed by Pathologist to reflect the same.

4. In the circumstances there can be no doubt that **Claudene Byfield Etienne** is in fact deceased.

Identity of the deceased: **Claudene Byfield Etienne**

D.O.B: 2nd April 1965

Manner of Death: **Sheltering from Hurricane Dorian**

Place of Death: **Abaco Bahamas**

Date of Death: **1st September 2019**

Cause of Death: **Likely Drowning**

5. Identity of the deceased: **Jeffrey Danis**

D.O.B 1st June 1980

Manner of Death: **Perished as a result of Hurricane Dorian**

Place of Death: **Abaco Bahamas**

Date of Death: **1st September 2019**

Cause of Death: **Likely Drowning**

Death Certificate to be completed by Pathologist to reflect the same.

6. In the circumstances there can be no doubt that **Kathleen Smith** is in fact deceased.

Identity of the deceased: **Kathleen Smith**

D.O.B 25th August 1973

Manner of Death: **Sheltering from Hurricane Dorian**

Place of Death: **Abaco Bahamas**

Date of Death: **1st September 2019**

Cause of Death: **Likely Drowning**

7. In the circumstances there can be no doubt that **Emmanuel Saintil** is in fact deceased.

Identity of the deceased: **Emmanuel Saintil**

D.O.B 14th July 1981

Manner of Death: **Sheltering from Hurricane Dorian**

Place of Death: **Abaco Bahamas**

(SEE POSTSCRIPT)

Date of Death: **1st September 2019**

Cause of Death: **Likely Drowning**

8. In the circumstances there can be no doubt that **Modina Hepburn** is in fact deceased.

Identity of the deceased: **Modina Hepburn**

D.O.B 21st April 1933

Manner of Death: **Sheltering from Hurricane Dorian when a wall of water smashed through their home and swept her from it into the ocean.**

Place of Death: **Abaco Bahamas**

Date of Death: **1st September 2019**

Cause of Death: **Likely Drowning**

9. In the circumstances there can be no doubt that **Jenayia Edgecombe** is in fact deceased.

Identity of the deceased: **Jenayia Edgecombe**

D.O.B 13th December 2001

Manner of Death: **Sheltering from Hurricane Dorian**

Place of Death: **Abaco Bahamas**

Date of Death: **1st September 2019**

Cause of Death: **Likely Drowning**

10. In the circumstances there can be no doubt that **Myeisha Edgecombe** is in fact deceased.

Identity of the deceased: **Myeisha Edgecombe**
D.O.B 27th July 2011

Manner of Death: **Sheltering from Hurricane Dorian**

Place of Death: **Abaco Bahamas**

Date of Death: **1st September 2019**

Cause of Death: **Likely Drowning**

11. In the circumstances there can be no doubt that **Alphonso Laguerre** is in fact deceased.

Identity of the deceased: **Alphonso Laguerre**
D.O.B 26th November 1961

Manner of Death: **Perished as a result of Hurricane Dorian**

Place of Death: **Abaco Bahamas**

Date of Death: **1st September 2019**

Cause of Death: **Likely Drowning**

12. In the circumstances there can be no doubt that **Michael Dawkins Sr** is in fact deceased.

Identity of the deceased: **Michael Dawkins Sr**
D.O.B 7th April 1955

Manner of Death: **Perished as a result of Hurricane Dorian**

Place of Death: **Abaco Bahamas**

Date of Death: **1st September 2019**

Cause of Death: **Likely Drowning**

13. In the circumstances there can be no doubt that **Malik Moultrie** is in fact deceased.

Identity of the deceased: **Malik Moultrie**

D.O.B 5th February 1996

Manner of Death: **Perished as a result of Hurricane Dorian**

Place of Death: **Abaco Bahamas**

Date of Death: **1st September 2019**

Cause of Death: **Likely Drowning**

14. In the circumstances there can be no doubt that **Juanita Lowe** is in fact deceased.

Identity of the deceased: **Juanita Lowe**

D.O.B.23rd February 1938

Manner of Death: **Sheltering from Hurricane Dorian**

Place of Death: **Abaco Bahamas**

Date of Death: **1st September 2019**

Cause of Death: **Likely Drowning**

15. In the circumstances there can be no doubt that **Leroy Lowe** is in fact deceased.

Identity of the deceased: **Leroy Lowe**

D.O.B 21st November 1950

Manner of Death: **Sheltering from Hurricane Dorian**

Place of Death: **Abaco Bahamas**

Date of Death: **1st September 2019**

Cause of Death: **Likely Drowning**

16. In the circumstances there can be no doubt that **Samuel Orelion** is in fact deceased.

Identity of the deceased: **Samuel Orelion**

D.O.B 5th May 1958

Manner of Death: **Sheltering from Hurricane Dorian**

Place of Death: **Abaco Bahamas**

Date of Death: **1st September 2019**

Cause of Death: **Likely Drowning**

17. In the circumstances there can be no doubt that **Ezra Davis** is in fact deceased.

Identity of the deceased: **Ezra Davis**

D.O.B 4th January 1971

Manner of Death: **Sheltering from Hurricane Dorian**

Place of Death: **Abaco Bahamas**

Date of Death: **1st September 2019**

Cause of Death: **Likely Drowning**

18. In the circumstances there can be no doubt that **Astrid Emily Stratton** is in fact deceased.

Identity of the deceased: **Astrid Emily Stratton**

D.O.B 20th March 1942

Manner of Death: **Sheltering from Hurricane Dorian**

Place of Death: **Abaco Bahamas**

Date of Death: **1st September 2019**

Cause of Death: **Likely Drowning**

19. In the circumstances there can be no doubt that **Constance Schneider** is in fact deceased.

Identity of the deceased: **Constance Schneider**

D.O.B

Manner of Death: **Sheltering from Hurricane Dorian**

Place of Death: **Abaco Bahamas**

Date of Death: **1st September 2019**

Cause of Death: **Likely Drowning**

20. In the circumstances there can be no doubt that **Emili Raphel** is in fact deceased.

Identity of the deceased: **Emili Raphel**

D.O.B

Manner of Death: **Sheltering from Hurricane Dorian**

Place of Death: **Abaco Bahamas**

Date of Death: **1st September 2019**

Cause of Death: **Likely Drowning**

21. In the circumstances there can be no doubt that **Nildies Vincent** is in fact deceased.

Identity of the deceased: **Nildies Vincent**

D.O.B

Manner of Death: **Sheltering from Hurricane Dorian**

Place of Death: **Abaco Bahamas**

Date of Death: **1st September 2019**

Cause of Death: **Likely Drowning**

22. In the circumstances there can be no doubt that **Rose Marie Lubin** is in fact deceased.

Identity of the deceased: **Rose Marie Lubin**
D.O.B 11th June 1992

Manner of Death: **Perished as a result of Hurricane Dorian**

Place of Death: **Abaco Bahamas**

Date of Death: **1st September 2019**

Cause of Death: **Likely Drowning**



Among the sorrow loss and suffering there were acts of courage compassion and dedication. There were instances of police and defense force officers family members of those at risk and members of the public assisting in rescue efforts that were clearly extremely treacherous and dangerous. However without these acts of bravery and commitment it is clear much more lives would have been lost. I sincerely thank and commend all those that were involved in any rescue or attempt. I wish to again convey my sincere sympathy to the family and friends of all the victims.

Recommendations

I now set out herewith my recommendations and those of Dr Bridgewater.

- a. Methods must be taken to develop and implement public communication methods and in particular the mobilizing of a missing persons call centre
- b. Preparations should be made to ensure victims staff and volunteers receive professional help to reduce the adverse impact on their mental health.
- c. Steps should be taken to invest in amphibious crafts to better assist persons during a hurricane.
- d. That a mass facility team be incorporated with all the stakeholders and proper training exercises take place to better prepare for such instances (Dr. Bridgewater)

- e. That a national forensic morgue be established separate and apart from the Princess Margaret Hospital (Dr. Bridgewater)
- f. That a mobile mortuary unit be established which can be transported by sea to any island or cay where mass fatality events may occur (Dr. Bridgewater)

Current climate and meteorological literature points towards an increased risk of weather related disasters in the future therefore it is important we continue to take steps to be better prepared.

It is my opinion that in such situations our goal must be to show respect for the dead as well as compassion for the living.

J. M. Weech-Gomez _____

Jeanine M. Weech-Gomez

Her Majesty's Coroner

20th May 2021

I direct that a copy of this finding be provided to the next of kin for all the families.

POST SCRIPT

After the conclusion of this Inquest it was brought to my attention that there was a DNA match for Victim Listed under Missing and Presumed Dead as No.7 Emmanuel Saintil. In light of the foregoing a death certificate will now be issued by the Pathologist in place and instead of a Record of Inquest.

Summary of work performed by the Pathology Team with Respect to Abaco Hurricane Dorian Victims

Prepared April 28, 2021

The pathology team comprised of myself and Dr Caryn Sands (senior pathologists) along with several junior doctors and mortuary staff traveled to Marsh Harbour Abaco as a part of the mass fatality response team.

The victims were examined on Sept 10, 12, 16, October 29, January 27 and March 9. The pathology team was accompanied by Police photographers, other CSI officers and forensic lab scientists on various occasions. Dr Sands traveled on Sept 10 and March 9, 2020. I travelled on all occasions except for Sept 10. The reason for this is that the victims were being recovered on an on-going basis and will continue as more remains are discovered. The bodies were received in varying states of preservation ranging from well preserved (few) to skeletonized (most) and in some cases body parts only. The bodies were housed in a single 40 foot refrigerated trailer which we also used as a temporary morgue facility for the examination of the remains given the difficult logistics of moving bodies back and forth to the Marsh Harbour Healthcare Center morgue which is only designed to house 6 bodies.

18 of the body bags were labeled with some type of identifying information including:

- “The Mud”
- “Bay Street”
- “Abaco Hardware”
- “Treasure Cay, Hummingbird Way”
- “Central Pine”
- “Albury Ferry Dock, Red Bay”
- “Don McKay Blvd”
- “Forest Drive, Murphy Town”
- “Stratton Drive Marsh Harbour”
- “7th Day Adventist Church”

The vast majority of victims were not identifiable by visual means because of the extent of decomposition. Attempts were made to fingerprint victims where possible, however this was not successful. We performed external examinations on each of the victims at least twice including measurement of body length, estimation of weight, descriptions of clothing, tattoos, gender, age, level of decomposition, hair color, and presence of identifying documents on the deceased individuals. Any descriptions written on the body bags were recorded. Samples of soft tissue, muscle, bone and teeth were kept for DNA analysis where available with the exception of individuals with identifying documents on their person. Photos were taken of all of the bodies. The bodies were tagged with a unique identification number and placed in new body bags which were labelled accordingly. Temporary death certificates with the unique identifying number assigned were prepared for each individual and left with the clinic administrator to be handed over to the island administrator.

5 victims were visually identified and released to relatives, including:

- AB0001 Alisha Liolli
- AB0003 Lachino Dean
- AB0004 Donna M. Johnson
- AB0005 Ralph Kemp
- AB0029 Lorelda Woodside (DOB Mar 3, 1962)

DNA samples were obtained on Sept 12, 16, October 29, January 27 and March 9. Special additional DNA samples were taken on October 29 in an effort to try a rapid DNA technique that became available with unsuccessful results.

Between September 10, 2019 and March 9, 2020, there were 60 sets of remains recovered. One was non-human remains.

Of the **59 human remains** examined, there were **50 adults, 6 children, 3 uncertain age. 37** were identified as **male, 20 females**; sex for 2 could not be determined. The causes of death were written as **'Likely Drowning'** for **28** and **Undetermined** for **30** (see appendix). One victim may not be deceased (AB0034-19 male forearm attached to an adult female AB0021 determined to be first degree relatives (parent/child).

On learning that plans to bury unidentified victims were underway the entire team returned to Abaco under the instruction of the Coroner along with Police photographers, forensic lab scientists and representatives of the United Funeral Directors Association on March 9 to examine the last set of recovered victims, cross check previously examined victims, attach additional permanent labels obtained to all victims, and take further back up DNA samples from all victims as precautionary measures to eliminate the possibility anything going wrong. Any newly discovered remains were also similarly processed and death certificates prepared and handed over.

The following presumptive identifications were made based on presence of identification on the body

AB006-19 Duvernat Sainjusmat (DOB Jan 2, 1972)
AB0014-19 Jeffrey Danis Sr (DOB Jan 1, 1980) Passport R288245
AB0015-19 Iscarne Carmilus (DOB Jan 5, 1975) Haitian Passport CH4180304
AB0019-19 Wilner Casseus Paul (DOB Aug 8, 1978) Work Permit ID# 2057478024
AB0027-19 Emmanuel Saintil DOB (July 14, 1981) VISA #W0046833

The following individuals had names written on their body bags and are presumed to be:

AB0016-19 Dereck Joseph
AB0018-19 Louis Bossuet (DOB Sept 11, 1973)
AB0024-19 Walter Cyntelia

The above names were written on the death certificate with the prefix PTB (Presumed to be).

The following victims were identified by DNA analysis (results reported on February 26, 2021):

	<u>Deceased</u>	<u>Relative</u>
1)	AB0010-19 James Capron (DOB 23/08/70)	Virginia Capron
2)	AB0014-19 Jeffrey Danis	Jeancilia Jean-Jacque
3)	AB0017-19 Melida Almazie	Michelene Williams
4)	AB0025-19 Name not provided; Brother	Sitha Silien (Sitha Silpen)
5)	AB0027-19 Emmanuel Saintil (DOB 14/07/81)	Jimano Saintil
6)	AB0046-19 Name not provided; Father	Dana Agenor
7)	AB0048-19 Antonio Outten	Julyn Outten
8)	AB0053-19 Francillion Odeus	Wilna Odeus
9)	AB0058-19 Name not provided; Mother	Sitha Silien (Sitha Silpen)

A total of 54 of the 59 human remains recovered up to March 9, 2020 were buried by the Government of the Bahamas. The remaining 5 individuals were returned to their families.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. There is need for a national mass fatality plan that incorporated all stakeholders including police officers, defense force officers, funeral directors, the pathology team, counsellors and others. Training exercises are needed so that:
 - Structure and command chain be established for better organization of the response
 - The appropriate stakeholders are alerted at the right time
 - Provisions are made to properly mobilize the necessary human and physical assets
 - First responders know how the recovery of bodies should be done
 - All vital information is appropriately recorded
 - Proper scene photos are taken prior to body removal
 - Correct labeling of body bags is done
 - Remains are appropriately stored
 - There is issuance of appropriate instructions to family members in order to ensure quick identification etc
 - Counseling of surviving family members is made available
2. There needs to be the establishment of a **national forensic morgue** separate and apart from that at the Princess Margaret Hospital for processing of all deaths coming under the jurisdiction of the coroner.
3. The national forensic morgue should be fully staffed and budgeted for by the government and have its own protocols independent of the Public Hospitals Authority directly under the Coroner with support from various ministries including the Ministry of Disaster Preparedness, National Security, and any other appropriate ministry.
4. There is need for a **mobile temporary mortuary unit** outfitted with examination tables and a temporary body storage refrigeration unit which can be transported by sea to any island or cay in the Commonwealth of the Bahamas where a mass fatality event may occur.

Dr. Kiko Bridgewater
Consultant Pathologist

Appendix A

Name	PM #	Sex		Age	Location Found	Cause of Death	Date Examined	DNA Samples	Comments
Alishia Liolli	AB0001	F	Adult	27	Abaco Lodge	Likely Drowning	10/09/19	No	Canadian
Unknown Black Male	AB0002	M	Adult		Abaco	Undetermined	05/03/20	No	Body Embalmed; Believed to be a Haitian national
Lachino Dean	AB0003	M	Child	8	Abaco	Likely Drowning	10/09/19	No	Bahamian
Donna Johnson	AB0004	F	Adult	51	Abaco	Undetermined	10/09/19	No	Bahamian
Ralph Kemp	AB0005	M	Adult	75	Abaco	Likely Drowning	10/09/19	No	Bahamian
Duvernat Sainjusmat (Jan 2, 1972)	AB0006	M	Adult	47	The Mud	Likely Drowning	12/09/19	Yes	
Unknown Black Male	AB0007	M	Adult		Abaco	Likely Drowning	12/09/19	Yes	
Unknown Black Male	AB0008	M	Adult		Abaco	Likely Drowning	12/09/19	Yes	
Unknown Black Male	AB0009	M	Adult		Abaco	Likely Drowning	12/09/19	Yes	
Unknown Black Male	AB0010	M	Adult		Albury Ferry Dock Red Bay	Likely Drowning	12/09/19	Yes	
Unknown Black Male	AB0011	M	Adult		Abaco	Likely Drowning	12/09/19	Yes	Upper and lower dentures
Unknown Black Male	AB0012	M	Adult		Abaco	Likely Drowning	12/09/19	Yes	Cell phone in left pocket
Unknown Black Male	AB0013	M	Adult		Abaco	Likely Drowning	12/09/19	Yes	
Jeffrey Danis Sr (DOB June 1, 1980)	AB0014	M	Adult	39	Abaco	Likely Drowning	12/09/19	Yes	Passport R288245 in left front pocket of jeans

Iscarne Carmilus (DOB Jan 5, 1975)	AB0015	M	Adult	44	Abaco	Likely Drowning	12/09/19	Yes	Haitian Passport CH4180304
"Dereck Joseph"	AB0016	M	Adult		The Mud	Likely Drowning	12/09/19	Yes	
Unknown Black Female	AB0017	F	Adult		The Mud	Likely Drowning	12/09/19	Yes	
Louis Bossuet (DOB Sept 11, 1973)	AB0018	M	Adult	45	7th Day Adventist Church	Undetermined	12/09/19	Yes	Blue jacket, orange polo shirt, long blue jeans, white rubber boots
Wilner Casseus Paul (DOB Aug 8, 1978)	AB0019	M	Adult	41	7th Day Adventist Church	Undetermined	12/09/19	Yes	Work Permit ID# 2057478024
Unknown Black Male	AB0020	M	Adult		Don McKay Blvd	Likely Drowning	12/09/19	Yes	5'5" 160-180 lbs
Unknown Black Female	AB0021	F	Adult		Treasure Cay, Humming bird Way	Likely Drowning	12/09/19	Yes	May be related to AB0034; Received with AB0034 (forearm)
Unknown Black Male	AB0022	M	Adult		Central Pine	Likely Drowning	12/09/19	Yes	Elderly man; Gray hair; full beard, mustache; 5'5" 130 lbs;
Unknown Black Male	AB0023	M	Adult		Abaco	Likely Drowning	12/09/19	Yes	Young male with dreadlocks; Tattoos back of right hand 'Okay' back of left hand 'Then'
"Walter Cyntelia"	AB0024	M	Adult		Forest Drive, Murphy Town	Likely Drowning	12/09/19	Yes	
Unknown Black Male	AB0025	M	Adult		7th Day Adventist Church	Undetermined	12/09/19	Yes	5'10.5", 200 lbs Goatee
Unknown Black Male	AB0026	M	Adult		Bay Street	Likely Drowning	12/9/2019		Bald; plaited hair at back of head
Emmanuel Saintil (DOB July 14, 1981)	AB0027	M	Adult		Abaco	Likely Drowning	12/09/19	Yes	Silver earring in right ear; W00046833 ? Visa
Unknown Black Male	AB0028	M	Adult		Bay Street	Likely Drowning	12/09/19	Yes	
Lorelda Cornish-Woodside	AB0029	F	Adult		Abaco	Likely Drowning	12/09/19	Yes	Identified by photograph; body released to relatives
"Emiel"	AB0030	M	Adult		Stratton Drive, Marsh Harbour	Likely Drowning	12/09/19	Yes	230 lbs, 5'11"

Unknown Black Male	AB0031	M	Adult		Abaco	Likely Drowning	12/09/19	Yes	170 lbs, 5'6"
Unknown Black Female	AB0032	F	Child		Marsh Harbour	Likely Drowning	12/09/19	Yes	80 lbs, 4'6" Clothing: pink, purple and green shirt, white pink and blue shorts, tan panties
Unknown Black Male	AB0033	M	Adult		Abaco	Likely Drowning	12/09/19	Yes	280 lbs, 5'9"; black ring on left ring finger
Left forearm	AB0034	* likely Male	Adult		Treasure Cay, Humming bird Way	* May not be deceased.	12/09/19	Yes	Came in body bag with #AB0021; May belong to a living victim (possibly related to AB0021)
Unknown Caucasian Female	AB0035	F	Adult		Abaco Hardware, Marsh Harbour	Undetermined	16/09/19	Yes	Caucasian; Gold neck chain, gold wrist chain, black leather band wrist watch
Unknown Black Female	AB0036	F	Adult		Abaco	Undetermined	16/09/19	Yes	Obese; Black weave cap; Approx 180 lbs; Green floral top;
Unknown Skeletal Remains	AB0037	* likely male	Adult		Abaco	Undetermined	16/09/19	Yes	Body without a head
Unknown Skeletal Remains (Child)	AB0038	M	Child		Abaco	Undetermined	27/01/20	Yes	3'5", 50-60 lbs; green t-shirt, blue t-shirt, blue basketball shorts
Unknown Black Male	AB0039	M	Adult		Abaco	Undetermined	27/01/20	Yes	5'6" 160 lbs; chin stubble hair; apparent facial trauma
Unknown Black Female	AB0040	F	Adult		Abaco	Undetermined	27/01/20	Yes	5-8" 200 lbs
Unknown Female (child)	AB0041	F	Child		Abaco	Undetermined	27/01/20	Yes	Found 25/09/19; black and white t-shirt, pink boy short underwear (size 10)
Unknown Skeletal Remains	AB0042	F	Adult		Abaco	Undetermined	27/01/20	Yes	Elderly ?female with long gray hair; navy blue shorts and dark blue t-shirt
Unknown Black Female (Child)	AB0043	F	Child		Abaco	Undetermined	27/01/20	Yes	Multicoloured top
Unknown Skeletal Remains (Child)	AB0044	M	Child		Abaco	Undetermined	27/01/20	Yes	Green Cargo pants size 36R; 4'8"; probably male

Unknown Black Female	AB0045	F	Adult		Abaco	Undetermined	27/01/20	Yes	150 lbs, 5'3"; partial lower denture; long black hair down to mid-back; blue stretch pum-pum jeans shorts
Unknown Black Male	AB0046	M	Adult		Abaco	Undetermined	27/01/20	Yes	5'2" 135 lbs; Pink plaid pants; gray polo shirt; gray converse shoes
Unknown Black Male	AB0047	M	Adult		Abaco	Undetermined	27/01/20	Yes	6'6" 210 lbs; long black hair
Unknown Black Male	AB0048	M	Adult		Abaco	Undetermined	27/01/20	Yes	5'7.5" 170 lbs; Hoodie jacket khaki shorts, Reebok tennis; Rope around torso
Unknown Skeletal Remains	AB0049	F	Uncertain		Abaco	Undetermined	09/03/20	Yes	5'4"; black and blue jacket; purple 'Panthers' basketball shorts ; Silver ring on right 4th finger; pink boy shorts
Unknown Black Female	AB0050	F	Adult		Abaco	Undetermined	09/03/20	Yes	Braces on teeth; African print black, green and blue skirt; lakefront wig cap; gold ankle bracelet with heart charms
Unknown Black Male	AB0051	M	Adult		Abaco	Undetermined	09/03/20	Yes	Mummified; partially skeletonized
Unknown Skull	AB0052	?	Adult		Abaco	Undetermined	09/03/20	Yes	Gray hair attached
Unknown Black Male	AB0053	M	Adult		Abaco	Undetermined	09/03/20	Yes	Mummified skeletonized; Elderly male; 5'3"; green cargo pants; gray, red and white shirt
Unknown Female	AB0054	F	Uncertain		Abaco	Undetermined	09/03/20	Yes	Skeletonized torso; pink skirt with black underwear
Unknown Black Female	AB0055	F	Adult		Abaco	Undetermined	09/03/20	Yes	Long blue jeans, blue and gray tennis shoes, beige-white top, beige white singlet, pink & white panties; gray-black hair

Unknown Female	AB0056	F	Adult		Abaco	Undetermined	09/03/20	Yes	Beige bra, t-shirt, girdle; skeletonized = left hip, multiple ribs, scapula, left hand
Unknown Skeletal Remains	AB0057	F	Adult		Abaco	Undetermined	09/03/20	?	Plaid Camisole top, short pants; No skull present
Unknown Skeletal Remains	AB0058	?	Uncertain		The Mud (Feb 6, 2020)	Undetermined	09/03/20	No	Remains found Feb 6, 2020; Two pelvic bones (left and right)
Unknown Black Female	AB0059	F	Adult		Abaco	Undetermined	09/03/20	Yes	Green dress, tan t-shirt, tan bra;