



## Inquest ends

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**Levi Schaeffer's mother Ruth and father John speak to media Friday afternoon**

While the family of Levi Schaeffer is relieved and grateful that the inquest into his death is over, it hasn't brought them any closure.

The five-member jury made seven recommendations Friday, most dealing with communications policy of the OPP when officers are in remote locations. But Schaeffer's family is happy their recommendation, that the Ministry of Safety and Correctional Services should consult relevant professionals for police officers to receive further training on how to deal with people who have mental issues, made it onto the list.

"I am really happy that the jury brought back a recommendation that the OPP get some more training in recognizing mental illness in dealing with the public and how to cope with mental illness when they're dealing with people," Schaeffer's mother Ruth said to media Friday following the inquest's final day.

"I still have some questions," she added. "This doesn't really bring closure to us".

Levi Schaeffer was camping on a remote peninsula on Osnaburgh Lake near Pickle Lake on June 24, 2009 when he was questioned by two OPP officers looking for a stolen boat. Nine minutes later, Schaeffer was dead from two gunshot wounds after he threatened Const. Kris Wood, who fired the fatal shot, and acting Sgt. Mike Pullbrook with a knife and bear spray.

Sunil Mathai, the Schaeffer family's lawyer, said it was obvious the jury listened to the evidence in the six-day inquest.

"They considered it thoroughly when making their recommendations including making a recommendation recognizing the critical role that mental illness played in this incident," Mathai said.

Schaeffer had been diagnosed with schizoaffective disorder, panic and personality disorders. While she was satisfied with the coroner's inquest, Rush Schaeffer said the family still has questions.

"I am not happy that I am still unable and will probably never know what happened to my son on that peninsula due to the conduct of the officers in their note taking procedures and in the way they interacted with the (Special Investigation Unit's) investigation" she said.

Const. Wood and acting Sgt. Pullbrook had satellite phones but left them in their SUV before taking a boat to investigate Schaeffer. They left their phones behind because of the unreliability of the equipment.

The jury recommended that the OPP and ministry review communications systems in OPP-policed areas.

Another recommendation states that Iridium phones are now improved and are supposed to provide better coverage. If not, officers should be required to report problematic areas.

Const. Wood did not have his duty belt with him at the time of the incident, which includes pepper spray and a baton. OPP policy states officers are not required to wear the belt while on a boat.

The jury recommended that the policy be amended so that officers still need to have the belt with them so they can put it back on once they are off the boat.

Other recommendations state that the OPP should have the best available communication equipment and marine equipment.

Mathai said while the recommendations aren't obligations, the family is hopeful they will be implemented.

"If we are to put our trust in the system of the coroner's inquest we can only hope that the government that established that system will follow through on the recommendations," Mathai said.