

## N. Van man given 14 years for slaying

News

Published: January 28, 2009 4:00 PM

Updated: January 30, 2009 2:31 PM

0 Comments

Calling his actions "callous and cruel," a judge sentenced a North Vancouver man to 14 years behind bars without the possibility of parole for brutally beating to death a hitchhiking teenager and leaving his body in a ditch.

In October, a jury found 59-year-old Brian Townsend guilty of second-degree murder in the death of 15-year-old Vivien Morzuch, whose battered body was found outside Kamloops more than eight years ago.

"There was certainly a callous disregard shown for Mr. Morzuch's life," B.C. Supreme Court Justice Robert Powers said.

"This was a brutal beating of a vulnerable young person."

"(Townsend) showed particular disregard for whether Mr. Morzuch lived or died when he dumped him in a ditch," Powers said.

"In my opinion, it was a callous and cruel act."

Morzuch's body was discovered on July 31, 2000, outside the entrance to Steelhead Provincial Park.

The teen, who had hitchhiked to B.C. from his home in Montreal, hoping to find summer work as a fruit-picker, met Townsend at a Revelstoke gas station three days earlier.

Townsend became a suspect in 2005 after his thumbprint and DNA were lifted from a piece of bloody duct tape found near the body. He was arrested the following year after an elaborate RCMP undercover operation.

In what is commonly referred to as a "Mr. Big" operation, Townsend was targeted by undercover cops posing as gangsters. Over a period of months, he was flown across Canada, performing various tasks for the supposed "gang."

The investigation culminated in a December 2006 meeting in a Kelowna hotel room, where Townsend confessed to the "crime boss" that he had beaten Morzuch with a bat and left him for dead.

Video of the meeting was played for jurors at trial.

Following the guilty verdict on Oct. 25, 2008, the 11-person jury recommended Townsend serve 15 years before being eligible for parole.

During sentencing submissions, Crown prosecutor Iain Currie echoed the jury's recommendation, noting the "extreme vulnerability" of Morzuch.

"This was a brutal beating with forceful blows with a bat to the skull ... Vivien Morzuch was obviously alive when he went in (the ditch)."

-Black Press