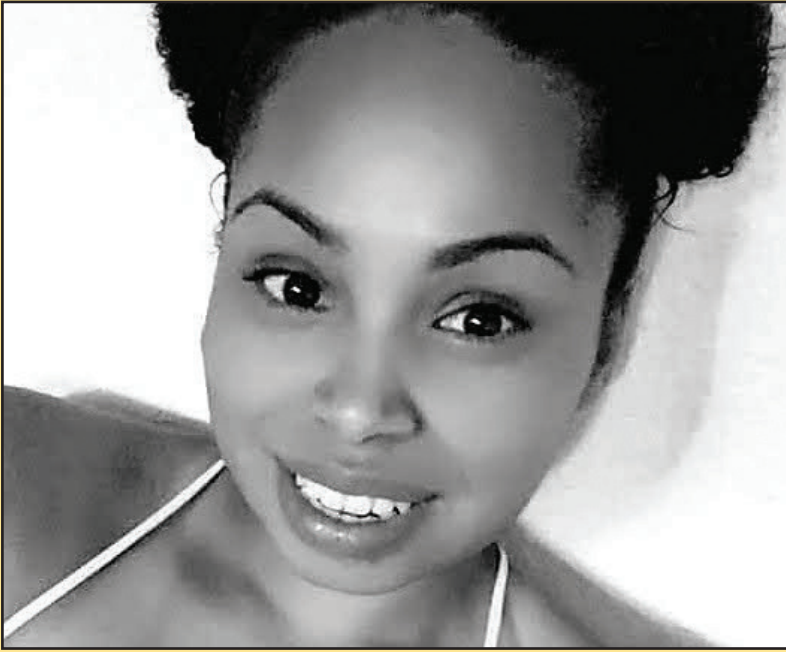




SPECIAL REPORT: The Renee Davis Inquest



Since the death of Renee Davis and her unborn son Massi Molina on October 21, 2016, the community has been in a difficult situation, since tradition requires that we refrain from discussing and showing photos of a loved one that has passed away until a year has gone by.

However, the circumstances surrounding Renee's death have continued to be the subject of intense interest. In recognition of this fact, Tribal Chairman Virginia Cross has asked that we publish the following account of the recently held King County Inquest.

We are grateful to The Stranger for granting us permission to reprint the article in our publication, and to its author, award-winning journalist Sydney Brownstone, for her steadfast coverage of this tragic event. The photo above was chosen by the family to accompany the article.

[EDITOR'S NOTE: The article will be presented day by day, as it was originally published.]

King County Sheriff's deputies shot and killed Renee Davis, a 23-year-old pregnant woman living on the Muckleshoot Reservation, on the night of Friday, October 21, 2016. Davis had most recently worked as a teacher's aide at the Muckleshoot Head Start program, the *Seattle Times* reported.

According to the Sheriff's Office, the deputies were there to check on Davis's welfare. Davis's foster sister, Danielle Bargala, told the *Seattle Times* that Davis, who dealt with depression, had texted someone earlier in the night "to say she was in a bad way" and that person called law enforcement to check on her.

"Deputies said the children were running around in the house but no one answered the door," the Sheriff's Office said in a statement released later that night. "Two deputies entered the house to check the welfare of the woman and children. They found the woman inside the house armed with a handgun. Both deputies fired at the woman and she was struck at least once."

Bargala told the *Times* that she wasn't sure Davis owned a handgun, but that she had a hunting rifle. She also told the newspaper that the children running around the house were two of Davis's children, age 2 and 3.

#ReneeDavis immediately took off on Twitter, connected to #SayHerName and #NativeLivesMatter. According to the *Guardian's* "Counted" project on police-involved shootings, police killings of Native Americans have doubled in 2015 and 2016.

The Inquest

An inquest into the death of Renee Davis was convened on May 22, 2017 in Kent, Washington. King County Code requires that "any death involving a member of any law enforcement agency within King County while in the performance of his/her duties" shall have a formal inquest convened. The purpose of an inquest is to determine who died, what was the cause of death, and what were the circumstances surrounding the death, including the identification of anyone who may be criminally liable for the death. It is a fact-finding hearing and not a criminal proceeding.



A still from surveillance video shown to jurors during inquest into the fatal police shooting of Muckleshoot tribal member Renee Davis. (King County Sheriff's Office)

DAY ONE: Inquest Hearing Begins on Police-Involved Shooting of 23-Year-Old Pregnant Muckleshoot Woman

A six-person jury will spend a week in a Kent courtroom listening to testimony and deciding the facts of what happened when King County sheriff's deputies shot and killed Renee Davis during a welfare check at her single-story home on the Muckleshoot Reservation last October.

The shooting rattled tribal members, as well as the family of Davis, who was five months pregnant at the time of her death. She also had a history of depression.

King County Sheriff John Urquhart has maintained that the deputies followed their training when they entered Davis' home after receiving a tip from her boyfriend, TJ Molina, that Davis had threatened to shoot herself. But lawyers for Davis' family say that the deputies didn't do enough to protect her two children who were in the home at the time of the shooting, and didn't take enough time to de-escalate a crisis situation. After the inquest, the sheriff's office will hold a use of force review to evaluate if the deputies' use of force was justified.

"What this process will not tell us is what could we do differently in the future to avoid this kind of result," said Bree Black Horse, one of the attorneys for Davis's family. "When officers are doing a welfare check, the person

they're doing the welfare check on shouldn't end up dead."

Neither of these positions will likely be decided by the inquest jury, which will only determine the facts of what happened that night.

On Monday, jurors watched Muckleshoot Housing Authority surveillance footage, aired publicly for the first time, that captured what happened outside Davis's home when she was shot. Danielle Bargala – Davis' foster sister – and her cousin, Sherina Sam, another member of the Muckleshoot Tribe, also sat in the courtroom.

The video shows two deputies, Nicholas Pritchett and Tim Lewis, entering the home before a toddler moves in and out of the home near the front door's entrance. (The Muckleshoot Tribe contracts with the King County Sheriff's Office for law enforcement, as it does not have a police force of its own.)

The toddler moves into the home before multiple gunshots blow a hole in Davis' bedroom wall. Following the shots, a third cop, Auburn police officer Garret Pedersen, can be seen arriving on the scene, grabbing two small children from the home, and taking them to his car. Sixty two-seconds elapse between the deputies entering the residence and the gunshots.

Pedersen, the Auburn officer who responded to the scene late and moved the children, testified that he heard the shooting as he was exiting his car. He also said he saw the children run outside, past the two deputies, from inside the house.

Deputies Pritchett and Lewis did not testify Monday, but will give their own version of events later in the week.

Tears rolled down Bargala's cheeks as she watched the surveillance footage. "[The video] kind of shows that it happened so fast that they didn't really take time to de-escalate it," Bargala told The Stranger after the inquest hearing finished for the day. "The video is kind of hard to watch because the kids were in the house."



Lawyers for the deputies, the Sheriff's Department, the Muckleshoot Tribe, and Renee Davis' family approach Judge Susan Mahoney's bench. (Sydney Brownstone photo)

Timeline from Sheriff's Office

According to a timeline from the sheriff's office, Molina showed Deputy Pritchett a text from Davis in which she threatened to shoot herself. Pritchett, who had worked on the reservation for years and knew Davis, then communicated to his dispatcher that he had received a report of a "suicidal female possibly armed with a rifle and has her two kids with her."

Pritchett also told the dispatcher that Molina had showed him more texts from Davis with "pictures of fresh wounds," though it was unclear from the photos who was injured or where the wounds were. Deputy Lewis radioed in to say he would provide backup.

The Sheriff's Office said that when the deputies arrived at Davis's home, the two officers yelled Davis's name and knocked on the front door, but received no response. The deputies also saw Davis's two children—aged two and three—inside the single-floor home. The sheriff's office said both deputies were worried "that Davis has taken her own life and [were] concerned about the children."

The deputies then asked the children where Davis was, and they pointed to a room behind a closed door. The deputies knocked on that door repeatedly, but did not hear a response. Fearing that Davis had bled out from the reported wounds or otherwise killed herself, the Sheriff's Office said deputies moved the children to the porch, then entered Davis's room.

The deputies saw Davis lying on the bed under a blanket and asked her to show her hands. When she didn't show her hands, Pritchett pulled off the blanket, revealing Davis holding a handgun in one hand and a magazine in the other. The sheriff's office says that Davis pointed the handgun, which later turned out to be unloaded, at the deputies. That's when the deputies fired.

In an e-mail interview earlier this year, King County Sheriff John Urquhart told The Stranger that the deputies had followed the rules and moved two children away from the home, though it appeared from surveillance footage they may have run back inside.

Urquhart said that if the deputies had known that Davis was in the room, alive with a gun, and not bleeding out, the deputies' training would have been to call in a crisis negotiator. "But they did not know that," he added.

Both Dreveskracht and Bree Black Horse, attorneys representing the Davis family, told The Stranger that the deputies failed to move Davis's children out of harm's way according to crisis intervention protocol.

Black Horse says that no matter what happens during the inquest, some questions will remain unanswered: Why did this happen? Were the officers trained to deal with someone going through a mental health crisis? What kind of training did they have to effectively handle this situation?

DAY TWO: Boyfriend Gives Emotional Testimony Recounting Day of Renee Davis' Death

On the second day of the inquest into the police shooting of 23-year-old Renee Davis, a pregnant Muckleshoot woman, the father of Davis' unborn child recounted how he asked sheriff's deputies to check on his girlfriend after she expressed suicidal ideation, and then later, how he found out about her death.

Throughout his testimony, TJ Molina, 34, became emotional while detailing the events leading up to Davis' death, including an argument between the couple earlier in the day, and displayed visible anger toward the two deputies who shot at her. He also claimed another officer told him Davis killed herself, when in fact she died from police gunfire.

"I always hear people, (say) don't blame yourself," Molina told jurors as he broke down crying on the witness stand. "How can you not blame yourself when you're the one who got the g***** cops to go and shoot her in her bed? I wake up everyday... I don't sleep. It haunts me."

Molina told the jurors that earlier in the day, he came home to find Davis, a mother of three, getting ready to go to the King County Fair, where they had planned to buy a crib for their unborn child. Davis had straightened her hair and put on a dress. At five months pregnant, she looked beautiful, Molina told



TJ Molina, Davis' boyfriend, contacted one of the deputies that ended up firing at Davis, and was also the father of Davis' unborn son. (Sydney Brownstone photo)

jurors.

Davis met Molina when both worked in the tribal fisheries. Davis loved working with her hands, working with salmon all day, Molina said. They started dating nearly seven months prior to her death, and enjoyed hunting and riding motorcycles together.

When Molina came home earlier on the same day of the shooting, he told jurors that he was exhausted from work and went to take a nap. Upon waking up, he said, he and Davis got into a fight over canceled plans to go to the fair.

Molina said he left, and later Davis asked him to return her motorcycle. When Molina returned the motorcycle to Davis' home, he also asked for his hunting rifle back – an item he referred to as old, with sentimental value. Molina told jurors he found the hunting rifle at Davis's home, smashed to pieces in the closet.

"I got angry again," he said. "And I looked at her and I said, 'You're messed up.'"

Molina said he left to go to his mother's home after that, and later started receiving text messages from Davis in which she threatened to shoot herself. He said Davis texted a photo of a bleeding cut – one he assumed she had inflicted on herself.

"I didn't know where [the cut] was, but I freaked out," Molina said. He decided to go to the police station to ask for help.

Molina told jurors that he didn't see anyone inside the police station on the reservation when he arrived, but spotted a deputy, in a car near the pow wow grounds.

"Renee lost it, and she's really scaring me, and she's sending these messages, and I'm scared for her and I'm scared for my child," Molina said he told the deputy.

Molina said he asked the deputy to make sure Davis was safe. But while Molina told jurors that he informed Pritchett that Davis owned a handgun and had a concealed carry permit, Pritchett later said he couldn't recall Molina telling him those details.

When asked by the state prosecutor if Molina knew the deputy's name, Molina also said he didn't. "I don't know any of the cops' names, and I don't care, and I don't want to know their names," he said.

Later, when Molina said he heard sirens and saw emergency vehicles drive past his window, he first thought it was an accident in Enumclaw. Then, when he saw the direction they were going, he feared for Davis.

"Every direction I look, there's cops," he remembered. "I think maybe something's wrong because my heart dropped, and I'm shaking. And I'm sitting there just crying."

Molina said he asked his mother to go check on Davis, and while she was gone, a coworker approached him and told him he was sorry for his loss. That was when Molina found out Davis was dead.

Davis' boyfriend told jurors he jumped in his truck and drove to the scene. "A cop grabs me, looks like he's going to tackle me, stiff-arms me and says, 'Who are you?'" Molina said. "I said, 'Who are you, this is my woman's house.' 'What's your relationship?' And I'm like, 'What the hell happened, man?'"

At that point, Molina said he asked if Davis had killed herself, and the cop he spoke to said she did. (Danielle Bargala, Davis' foster sister, and Sherina Sam, Bargala's cousin, told The Stranger they had also been told that Davis killed herself.) It wasn't until later that someone told her that she had been shot by the deputies who went to check on her.

"I didn't say go over to her house and shoot her in her bed," Molina said.



On Wednesday, Judge Susan Mahoney said that emotional responses from Davis' friends and family in the galley could distract the jury. The next day, more than 30 tribal members showed up in matching Muckleshoot Tribe t-shirts and sat in on the proceedings. Renee's sister, Rose Davis, a former Skopabsh Princess pictured third from left in the front row, wore tribal regalia in her hair. (Sydney Brownstone photo)

DAY THREE: Deputies Say They Feared For Their Lives Before Fatally Shooting Renee Davis

There are lots of questions that jurors will have to answer at the end of the inquest into the police shooting of Renee Davis, a pregnant, 23-year-old Muckleshoot woman, killed during a welfare check last October. Perhaps most

