

Wayne Braid

CSI and Beyond

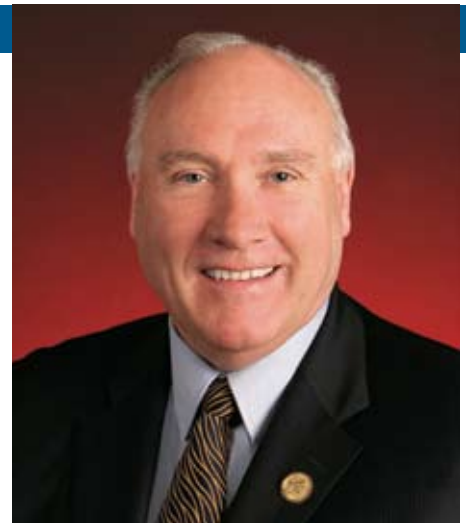


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For those who have not met our Cover Story personality, Dr. Rob Gordon, let me introduce him to you.

He is the Director of the School of Criminology at British Columbia's Simon Fraser University.

I am always amazed at the tremendous energy and passion this man brings to his work and am impressed by the diversity of his interests and his knowledge of his chosen profession.

Dr. Gordon is the "expert" to whom the media and the public turn regarding issues ranging from elder abuse, gang violence, and home invasions to the psychology of criminals.

And he has worked tirelessly to attain a very useful decision-making tool for British Columbians—Representation Agreements.

Bill 29—new legislation that passed this Fall—will give the citizens of our province access to a document that has the legislative authority to allow them to plan for the time when they may be disabled or unable to make health care and financial decisions for themselves.

Such planning documents have been available in most provinces in Canada and countries in the world

for years. Many of our Notaries work closely with their clients in the area of personal planning and we are now looking forward to assisting our clients in an even more effective and meaningful manner.

In this issue, you will get a close look into the School of Criminology, their work here in British Columbia and in Canada, their international connections with the academic world, and some of their forensic and restorative justice models that have gained international acclaim.

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I have more than a natural curiosity about the subject of CSI—Crime Scene Investigation. For the better part of 12 years, I served as a coroner in Northwestern British Columbia. It will come as no surprise that my favourite TV shows are *CSI*, *CSI Miami*, and *CSI New York*.

It seems I am not alone. Those programs regularly win awards for the highest viewer audiences in North America. Now there are board games,

Internet games, and games for the PS2 and Xbox—all to do with the science of crime scene investigation.

The proliferation of CSI-focused programming has sparked wide interest in the forensic science of determining "what happened?" CSI Websites everywhere offer all forms of information. I recently looked at one site that offers a handbook of evidence and terms such as "Abrasions." For example, there are four stages of abrasion healing, by which forensic experts can construct a timeline of trauma.

1. Scab formation
2. Epithelial regeneration
3. Hyperplasia (abnormal increase in the number of normal cells in tissue)
4. Regression of granulation tissue (the tissue that first replaces a wound's fibrin clot)

And how about "Contra-coup contusion"? Injury occurring at a spot opposite the point at which the body was struck, a coup contusion takes place on the same side as the impact.

In British Columbia, the coroner's role is quite different from the one portrayed on *CSI* TV. The coroner in BC is the facilitator in the investigation process for fact-finding—not fault-finding. *(continued on next page)*

Responsible for ascertaining the details surrounding a death, the coroner must determine

- the identity of the deceased; and
- how, when, where, and by what means the deceased died.

The coroner gathers all the information from various parties—such as police; medical personnel (pathologist, forensic pathologist); paramedics who may have attended the scene; the workforce personnel that gathered the evidence; and the eyewitnesses.

Once the investigation has been completed, the coroner classifies the death as

- natural;
- an accident;
- suicide;
- homicide; or
- in certain cases, simply undetermined.

Sometimes the coroner will conduct an inquest where various involved parties provide sworn evidence of their knowledge of the matter.

The BC Coroners Service Website (www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/coroners/) points out that community coroners do not perform autopsies or other specialized procedures.

Once all the evidence has been gathered and analyzed, the coroner can make recommendations to various levels of government that may prevent a similar event from occurring in the future. The *Coroners Act* (www.qp.gov.bc.ca/statreg/stat/C/96072_01.htm) governs the coroner's scope of activity.

So, if one of the *CSI* programs has really captured your attention and you would like to work in a field of good-looking young men and women, attend crime scenes in low-cut blouses or muscle shirts, drive Hummers, and wear the latest eyewear, you will need to move to Miami, Las Vegas, or New York.

In the meantime, enjoy this issue of *The Scrivener!* ▲