

Cowan sentenced to eight years for assault

By Brock Weir

The man who pled guilty to what police describe as 'the most serious incident' that has happened in Shelburne in decades received an eight year sentence, and ten years' status as a long-term offender last week.

Jade Cowan, now 21, received his sentence last week following the July 27, 2014 assault of a 14-year-old Shelburne girl in a wooded area on the west side of Town, which left her fighting for life.

At the time of the assault, Shelburne Police say the victim, whose identity is being protected, only knew Mr. Cowan for a few days.

'On the evening of the offence, the accused and victim were texting each other and the accused met up with the victim and took her to a wooded area on the west end of Shelburne,' said local police last November when Cowan entered a guilty plea to aggravated assault. 'While there, and with unknown provocation, the accused used a rock and struck the victim numerous times in the head and proceeded to strangle her. The victim ended up passing out.'

'The victim was later found by some passing cyclists who found her severely injured and almost completely covered in blood. A motorist driving by also assisted the victim and 911 was called. The victim was rushed to Headwaters Hospital and then taken to the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto.'

Cowan was arrested the same day and charged with numerous offences, including aggravated assault and attempted murder.

Handed down a sentence last week of eight years in custody and a ten-year status as a long-term offender, he was given 1.5 days credit for every day he spent in custody and, therefore, has just over five years left in custody. According to police, he will be monitored for 10 years following his release with conditions, including weapons condition, 'and in that kind of scenario, if anything does go wrong, even a minor offence of concern, he could find himself back in custody.'

'First of all, we are happy this matter has been brought to a close, mainly for the victim and her family, as this is something that has been following them for almost two years,' says Constable Paul Neumann of the Shelburne Police Services, who led the investigation. 'I am happy to see it is at an end as well. The investigative teamwork, which included the OPP, completed the majority [of the investigation] several months ago and there was a preliminary hearing where several officers and the victim also testified, but since that happened, it has been in the court's hands.'

'For Shelburne, it is, for sure, the most serious incident that has happened here in 20 to 25 years. These incidents do happen everywhere and nowhere is permanently exempt from these things, but it was a shock to the Town. For the Town as well, it is good to see this is now resolved and is now becoming part of the Town's history.'

The family of the victim, he says, is happy it is over as well, although they will have to live with the reminders.

'The victim has life-long effects from the attack, including blindness in one eye that is expected to be for life due to severe head injury,' says Neumann. 'I do know the family is happy this is now behind them and they can start looking forward.'

The time it has taken for this matter to come to a close, he added, is 'pretty standard.'

'There were a lot of questions if this girl was going to survive,' he says. 'It was definitely a very serious investigation and the OPP provided a lot of services in this investigation to help us out, from forensics to dog services, to an investigative team working together with us.'

'Even though he was arrested the same night, in these types of investigations, we interviewed a lot of people and collected an awful

lot of evidence, complete cell phone records and all kinds of things to get an understanding of the background of what caused this to happen.?

Yet, the motive is still the big question mark hanging over the case, he adds.

?That is still be biggest question. Jade Cowan is relatively young, but has a history, including violent history, but the true motive, I think, only he knows right now.?

While these kinds of incidents are clearly not common in Shelburne, Neumann says no community is ?immune? to crime, violent or otherwise. Shelburne might be a small town, but he says it is important to always know where their kids are, including teens, and who they are staying with, especially in the evenings and nights.

?It is the basic rule you hear all the time: that you are in a group, don't walk alone, don't meet up with somebody you don't know well or don't know you can trust, and always report anything suspicious or concerning to us, no matter how minor you think it is or how irrelevant you think it might be,? says Neumann. ?We would rather look into it and find out there is nothing to it and is completely innocent than miss the opportunity to potentially prevent something from happening. We don't mind having things reported and find out it is perfectly innocent. We would rather that than people hesitate to report.?