

Edmondson convicted of assaulting young girl

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MELFORT -- A 26-year-old man has been found guilty of sexually assaulting a then-12-year-old girl on a gravel road outside Tisdale in the fall of 2001.

"Guilty" was the only word spoken by the foreman, one of the three women on the 12-person jury. The verdict, which was unanimous, was delivered about 10 a.m. Friday on the third day of deliberations.

Dean Edmondson, wearing black dress pants, a white shirt and a tie as he has throughout the two-week trial, showed no emotion as the verdict was read in the Court of Queen's Bench.

His parents, who attended every moment of the proceedings, sat expressionless with hands folded on their laps.

Before he was led out of court, Edmondson stared briefly out of the courthouse window.

He was not taken into custody, and is free until sentencing. That will occur June 27 following the trial of the two other Tisdale men accused in the incident, Jeffrey Brown and Jeffrey Kindrat.

Edmondson and his parents left court, and said only "no comment" as they walked past reporters.

"My client and I are disappointed," said Edmondson's lawyer Hugh Harradence.

"Dean's concerned and so are his mom and dad."

Harradence said he'll recommend Edmondson appeal the finding.

Justice Fred Kovach allowed Edmondson's 2001 video statement to police to become evidence at the trial, even though Kovach said Friday the RCMP officer's conduct was "close to the line of what should be tolerated."

The officer came close to making promises to Edmondson in exchange for disclosure, and Edmondson also asked about his lawyer more than once during the interview.

"The (police) practice should not be encouraged," Kovach stated, but said the statement was still admissible.

Harradence thinks the police officer's conduct went "over the line" and the statement should not have been admitted.

The aboriginal girl's parents, who attended much of the proceedings, also left the courthouse without commenting.



**Dean Edmondson
leaves court Friday**



(Hugh) Harradence

Robert Whitehead, chief of the Yellowquill First Nation, said the verdict was "encouraging" but said he had mixed feelings about the process.

Some critics were concerned there were apparently no aboriginal people on the jury for an assault allegedly committed by three white men on an aboriginal girl.

"As aboriginal people, we do have some compassion for those who are wronged, but also (for) those who do wrong," Whitehead said.

The jury had told the judge Thursday afternoon they were "not making any progress" in their deliberations, but came up with a verdict an hour after getting together Friday morning.

"I'm surprised and disappointed that they would come back so quickly this morning," Harradence said.

Harradence noted Edmondson has no previous criminal record and has a good job, but wouldn't say what type of sentence he'll be arguing for.

Regional Crown prosecutor Gary Parker said he couldn't talk about the verdict or specifics of the case, as he didn't want to affect the Brown and Kindrat trial.

He said only that it was apparent the jury took the necessary time and care to reach its verdict.

"It is a significant decision (and) it speaks well of the jury process," Parker said.

The case has drawn many observers, and included a loud aboriginal drumming and singing performance outside the courthouse. It could be clearly heard in the courtroom, and continued throughout most of Harradence's closing remarks Wednesday.

Other groups, such as the Saskatchewan Coalition Against Racism, were highly critical of the process, claiming an aboriginal girl cannot get justice in a place like Melfort or from an all-Caucasian jury.

The girl's father also became the subject of discussion during the trial. His DNA sample showed he was a probable match to the semen found on the girl's panties. The girl also confided to her foster mother that her birth father had sexually abused her since she was two years old, court heard.

But the girl denied this in her testimony, although she admitted he beat her and her mother repeatedly.

The father attended much of the Edmondson trial, and denied in an interview he ever abused his daughter.

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