Man jailed for 'vicious' attack on family pet

Dog had to be euthanized

by Andrew Raven
Northern News Services

A Nunavut man who used a screwdriver, hammer and caribou antler during a grisly attack on a family dog was convicted Tuesday of an animal cruelty charge.

Joseph Poodlat, 54, admitted to torturing the animal during a "disgusting" attack in the small community of Taloyoak last December.

"This was disgusting and cowardly," said territorial court judge Brian Bruser after Poodlat pleaded guilty to four charges: injuring an animal, theft and two counts of break and enter.

Crown Attorney Sandra Aitken stayed charges of bestiality – sex with an animal – and possession of marijuana after Poodlat entered the guilty pleas. Bruser sentenced Poodlat to a total of one year in jail – including four months for injuring the dog, Daisy. The judge gave Poodlat credit for the five months he spent in custody awaiting trial.

> ***"This was disgusting and cowardly."***

In court Poodlat, who stole Daisy from his Taloyoak neighbours, asked for forgiveness.

"I'm sorry about everything I have done on this earth," he said. "I'm sorry to those people I have hurt."

Daisy's family found her in Poodlat's basement, crying in pain and bleeding profusely from her vagina, Aitken told the court. Poodlat was seen leaving the cellar naked.

Police searched his home and discovered a hammer, screwdriver and caribou antler covered in blood and dog hair.

Daisy, crying in agony, was euthanized by her family, Aitken said. She had recently given birth to a puppy which later died without its mother, the court heard.

"It was a horrible, disgusting crime," said Aitken. "This was a cruel and vicious attack on an innocent, vulnerable animal."

People gasped

While Aitken read an account of the attack, several people in the gallery gasped while others covered their ears.

"I would have given him 10 years," said one woman in the audience.

The maximum penalty under the Criminal Code for injuring an animal – aside from cattle – is six months behind bars.

Robin Weber, vice-president of the Yellowknife branch of the Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Animals, said the case is a prime example of why Canada's century-old animal cruelty laws need to be reformed.

"The Criminal Code is not severe enough. This type of things happens all too often," she said, referring to violence against animals. "It's horrible."

A bill that would have increased penalties for animal cruelty died in the Senate in November of 2003 and was not revived following the last federal election.

A renowned carver who has travelled to the United States and Russia to showcase his skills, Poodlat has a lengthy criminal record with nearly 30 convictions, including 18 for crimes of violence.

His last conviction came in 2000 when he received a conditional sentence for indecent assault.

The charges were waived to Yellowknife from Taloyoak.

Poodlat said he does not plan to return to Taloyaok after his release from jail. "I'm not going back to where I was before," he said.

"It is too small for me."

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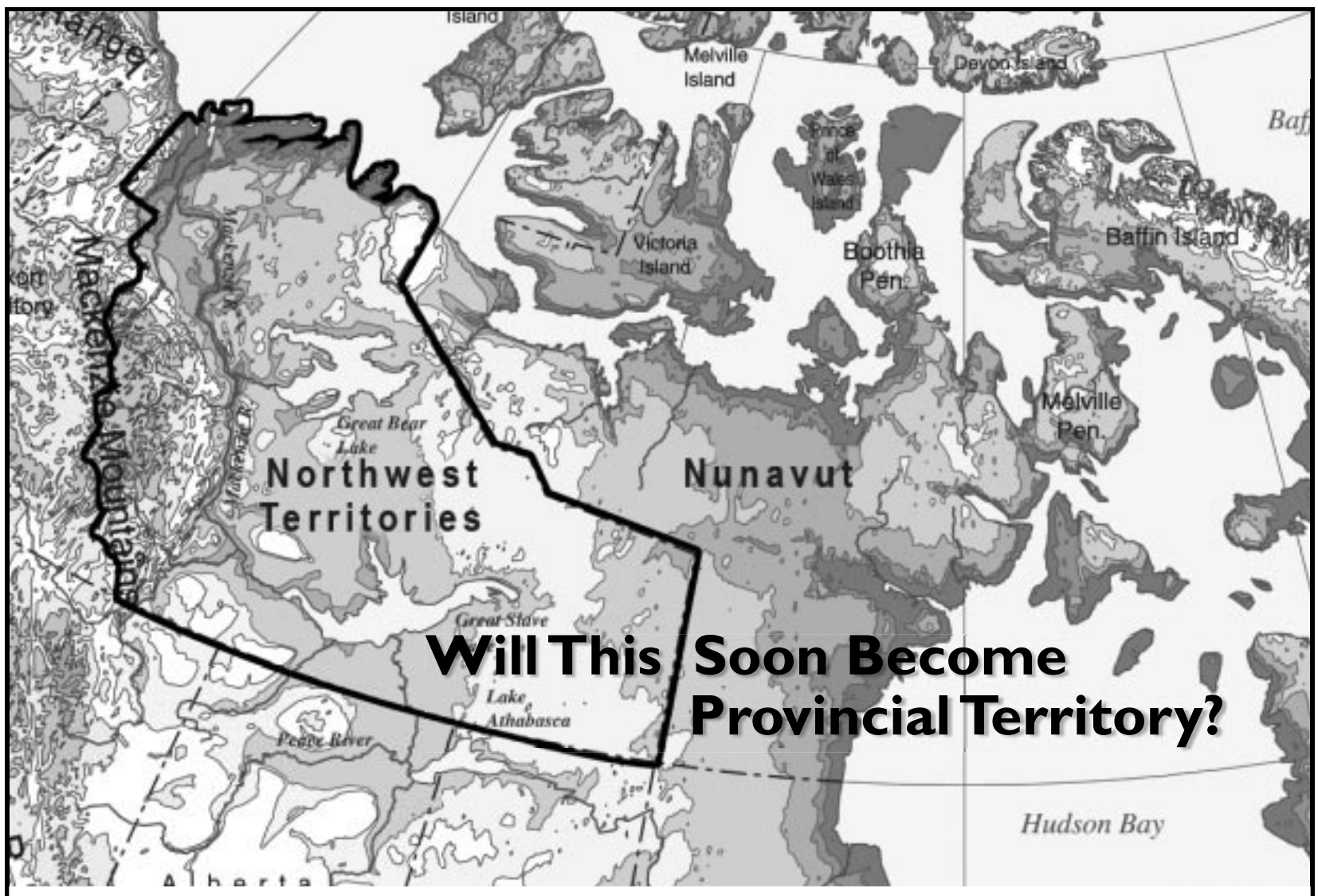
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