

Name change for convicted pedophile

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Convicted pedophile Matthew Harks, shown in a 2010 police handout photo after completing a three-year federal term for a sex assault in B.C., has legally changed his name to Madilyn (Rebecca) Harks, according to National Parole Board documents. (SUN FILE PHOTO)

Parole Board of Canada documents show a convicted pedophile under a long-term supervision order apparently prefers life as a woman.

Matthew Harks “legally changed his name ... to Madilyn (Rebecca) Harks,” according to documents dated Aug. 22.

Parole officials would not comment on any specific case but it is believed the name change coincides with Harks’ move to change his sex.

In April 2010, corrections officials were concerned the convicted pedophile might re-offend and put special monitoring provisions on the convict, who has a history of befriending parents to sexually prey on their children.

At the time, and on the heels of completing a three-year federal term for a sex assault in B.C., Calgary police issued a public warning about him living in the community.

It was Harks’ first federal offence and followed a nine-month conditional sentence in 2004 for a sex assault in Surrey, B.C.

The 10-year supervision order was imposed to allow officials to keep tabs on him in the community and, ideally, ensure public safety.

Conditions include living at a halfway house, adhering to a curfew and not going near playgrounds or those under age 18.

Parole documents stated he had a strong preference for girls aged five to eight.

He earned his federal term for a premeditated attack on a seven-year-old while on probation.

The documents reveal the man had a habit of taking so-called trophies from his victims, such as underwear.

In documents released earlier this month, the board chose to extend Harks’ residency condition by 180 days, which means he will have to live at a place approved by corrections officials.

It is not known what Calgary-area community he currently lives in.

Parole officials state Harks is taking medication in a bid to reduce inappropriate urges and his “sexual fixation with underage children.”

He “appears to be making an honest effort to change for the better and address risk factors,” documents state.

Harks isn’t alone in looking to change his life.

Changing gender, however, is rather rare.

Correctional Service Canada recognizes some offenders may have gender identity disorder and “inmates with diagnosed gender identity disorder shall be able to initiate or to continue hormone therapy as prescribed by either a psychiatrist who is a recognized expert in the area of gender identity or other specialist.”

Corrections officials do assessments to ensure diagnosed offenders are accommodated “with due regard to vulnerabilities with respect to their needs, including safety and privacy.”

If sex reassignment is deemed necessary, Corrections pays the cost and most “diagnosed with gender identity disorder shall be permitted to cross dress.”

Correctional Service Canada spokesman David Harty said Friday “gender identity disorder is (rare) both in the community and in CSC’s offender population.”

Offenders are legally entitled to change names and other law enforcement and correctional agencies are advised.

“Victims are entitled to be informed of offender name changes,” Corrections states.

“CSC works closely with police and other agencies as well as community partners to ensure public safety.”

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