

Slain UBC student was 'full of life and enthusiasm'

By NEAL HALL and KIM BOLAN, VANCOUVER SUN January 7, 2012



- [Story](#)
- [Photos \(1\)](#)



The bodies of 39-year-old Carmen Ximena Osegueda Magana (shown), who went by the name Ximena Osegueda, and her male friend, Alejandro Honorio Santamaria, 38, were found on a Mexican beach on Dec. 27.

Photograph by: Screen Capture, WordPress.com

VANCOUVER -- A University of B.C. student found slain in Mexico was full of life and was a huge loss, a UBC professor said.

"What happened to Ximena is a great tragedy and a huge loss," Jon Beasley-Murray, an assistant professor of Spanish at UBC, said Friday. "She will be very much missed in the department here at UBC."

Ximena Osegueda Magana, 39, and her boyfriend Alejandro Honorio Santamaria, 38, went missing on Dec. 14.

Their bodies were found on a beach in Huatulco, Oaxaca, south of Acapulco, last week. They were not identified by family members until this week

"She was tremendously full of life and enthusiasm, and very popular with both fellow students and faculty. The news has come as a shock to everyone," Beasley-Murray said

The young woman, known as Ximena Osegueda, came to UBC after completing her undergraduate degree and masters in Latin studies at McGill University in Montreal. She had been awarded the prestigious Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada doctoral fellowship.

"She had completed all her coursework and qualifying exams and was working on a doctoral thesis on Huatulco, the town where she lived," Beasley-Murray said.

"It was on the history of the town from the conquest to the present, with a particular focus on the ceremonies and celebrations surrounding the so-called 'holy cross' of Huatulco. Most recently, she was planning to broaden her research to cover similar ceremonies elsewhere in Oaxaca."

Several days after Osegueda and her boyfriend disappeared, their car was found near Oaxaca airport.

On Dec. 27, two bodies with stab wounds in the neck were found buried in the sand on Punta Arena beach.

A Facebook page dedicated to Osegueda says that a memorial service will be held at noon on Saturday in Mexico City. Friends expressing their condolences on the page describe Osegueda as "very cheerful and positive."

"I remember Ximena from our undergraduate days at McGill over a decade ago," Jacky Celemencki wrote. "She was a beautiful spirit and a bright light in this world. May you rest in peace."

Osegueda's friend Troy Millington, who trained with her at a Vancouver capoeira gym, doesn't understand how anyone could have overpowered the elite martial artist.

"She was not a timid person. This is somebody who could take care of herself," Millington told the Sun. "I am 6'6' and she and I tussled a couple of times....She must have been facing something she couldn't stop - like a gun."

He is devastated over the loss of his friend, who he had known for more than five years.

And he is disturbed by reports coming out of Mexico that she and her boyfriend were stabbed in the neck and found on a beach that officials described as a dumping ground for organized crime.

"What enabled something like this to happen? That someone could manage to inflict stab wounds in both their necks?"

He said he hopes the Canadian government demands answers and justice for Osegueda.

"What has to happen so the people who did this are brought to justice?"

Osegueda was so vivacious, she could light up a room, he said.

"It is not every day that someone who is such a bright, happy, intelligent person gets struck down like that."

"Ximena was lively, generous, and open-minded. Her keen interest in Subaltern Studies and deep concern with social injustice inspired everyone around her. We will miss her tremendously," Kim Beauchesne,

assistant professor in the department of French, Hispanic & Italian Studies at UBC said.

Osegueda is the second person with ties to B.C. to have been killed in Mexico in recent days.

On Tuesday, Saltspring Island resident Robin Wood, 67, was shot to death during a home invasion in Melaque, where he was staying at the home of a friend.

Thousands of B.C. resident flock to Mexico every winter to escape the wet and cold weather.

A year ago, a Penticton man, Mike DiLorenzo, 68, was shot in the Mexican coastal town of Mazatlan while he and his wife were walking to the local market.

A group of masked men fired dozens of shots from automatic weapons at a 25-year-old Mexican man, who was passing on a motorcycle. The man, who was thought to be involved in the drug trade, died from gunshot wounds.

Mexico has been plagued by drug-gang violence, prompting the Canadian government to issue this travel warning for Mexico:

"Canadians travelling to Mexico should exercise a high degree of caution due to a deteriorating security situation in many parts of the country. While most major tourist areas have not been affected by the extreme levels of violence in the northern border region, it is highly advisable to travel to Mexico by air. High levels of criminal activity, as well as occasional demonstrations and protests, remain a concern throughout the country.

"Presidential elections are scheduled for July 1, 2012. In the period leading up to and during the elections, Canadians are advised to remain vigilant, avoid large crowds and demonstrations, exercise caution, follow the advice of local authorities, and monitor local media."