

Vancouver Sun

Sex tourist's sentence longer than expected; B.C. Supreme Court justice gives Neil six months beyond Crown's request

Thu Jun 2 2016

Page: A4

Section: City

Byline: Daphne Bramham

Source: Vancouver Sun

Illustrations: Jonathan Hayward, The Canadian Press Files / Christopher Neil, seen in 2012, has been sentenced to five and a half years in prison for sexual offences against two boys and child pornography offences.;

Christopher Neil, once known as Swirl Face during an international manhunt, was sentenced in New Westminster on Wednesday to five and a half years in prison for sexual offences against Cambodian boys as well as accessing and possessing child pornography.

The sentence is a year longer than Neil and his lawyer had hoped for, and six months longer than the prosecution requested.

In addition to the longer sentence, the judge ordered a lifetime ban on Neil going to parks, schools or anywhere commonly frequented by children. He extended previous prohibitions on Neil owning electronic devices and on his accessing the Internet except for work to five years beyond his parole.

"Regardless of the (sentencing) submissions," B.C. Supreme Court Justice John Harvey said, "I believe that (the extended restrictions) are in the best interest of the community at large and for Mr. Neil as well."

The judge also left open the possibility those restrictions could be further extended on application to the court before they expire.

As a registered sex offender, Neil must

provide DNA samples and is prohibited from applying for a passport until his three-year parole is up.

The longer sentence plus the extended conditions mark a slow ratcheting up of the penalties given to child sex offenders from established precedents.

Yet even with an extra six months added to what the prosecution had asked for, the former teacher will spend only two years, two months and 21 more days behind bars before parole. That is because he gets credit for the time already served in jail, in solitary confinement for his own safety, awaiting trial and sentencing.

The five charges the former teacher pleaded guilty to last December span 12 years - two counts each of sexual touching and invitation to sexual touching of two Cambodian boys aged nine and 13 in 2003, one count of possession of child pornography in 2007, one count of possession of thousands of images of child pornography (including some of him abusing boys) in 2013, and accessing child pornography in 2014 in breach of his parole conditions.

In the midst of those 12 years, Neil was the subject of an international manhunt after German police found hundreds of images

of a man with a digitally swirled face abusing boys. Neil was arrested in Thailand in 2007 and spent five years in a Thai prison before being deported to Canada.

On Wednesday, the judge said denunciation and deterrence as well as the protection of children were his primary considerations.

Harvey said even though Neil was convicted in Thailand on sexual abuse charges, under Canadian law he is a first-time offender on those charges. But he noted Neil is a repeat offender when it comes to possessing child pornography, with the first offence in 2013 and the second in 2014. As a repeat offender, the judge determined Neil should be sentenced to a year, six months more than the prosecutors suggested.

Among the reasons given in his oral judgment for the higher sentence, Harvey highlighted the fact Neil not only took "significant steps" to conceal his electronic devices and his Internet searches, he also gave tutorials to two men - known as H. and G. (another convicted sex offender) - on how to access the so-called dark web and how to encrypt messages, send and receive images anonymously, and wipe search histories.

Harvey also noted a text message Neil sent to one of them proclaiming: "The Swirl Liveth Still."

While two psychiatric reports put Neil's risk of reoffending as low to moderate and Neil was both apologetic and contrite at his sentencing hearing, the judge said he believed the 41-year-old is at a high risk to reoffend if the opportunity presents itself.

He referred to both Neil's optimism and the psychiatrists' evaluations as "a triumph of hope over experience."

Neil's sentence and restrictions were surprising to Brian McConaghy, a former RCMP forensics specialist who worked on the Neil case as well as on the cases of two other convicted sex tourists, Donald Bakker and Orville Mader, given what McConaghy called Canada's "miserable" track record on sentencing sex tourists.

But it's still not enough, said McConaghy, who 30 years ago founded a non-profit called Ratanak International that works with child victims of sexual predators in Cambodia.

A lifetime ban has been put on Neil getting anywhere near kids in Canada. But after his parole is completed, there is nothing to stop him from getting a passport and heading back to Asia once more.

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CHRISTOPHER NEIL TIMELINE

2001: B.C. Superintendent of Independent Schools grants the Maple Ridge native a teaching certificate. 2004: German police find more than 200 online images of a Caucasian man sexually abusing young boys. He is called Swirl Face because his face has been digitally obscured.

Oct. 11, 2007: Interpol posts unscrambled photo of suspect on their website. After a family member identifies Neil, Thai police arrest Neil and charge him with four unrelated counts of molesting and distributing pornographic images of two Thai boys, aged nine and 13.

2008: Neil pleads guilty. 2012: Neil is pardoned after five years in prison, deported and arrested in Vancouver. He agrees to court-ordered conditions for 18 months, including surrendering his passport, staying away from children and not using any devices to access the Internet. 2013: Neil is arrested for breaching those conditions. March 2014: Neil is charged with sexual offences related to two Cambodian boys, including production and distribution of pornography. Dec. 16, 2015: Neil pleads guilty to five charges, including sexually interfering with and sexually touching the Cambodian boys as well as possessing and accessing child pornography. June 1, 2016: Neil is sentenced to five and a half years in prison, which is reduced to just under 15 months because of time already served.

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Vancouver Sun

A Canadian Gives Hope To Victims Of Sexual Tourism In Cambodia; Brothel that became pedophile magnet slated to be safe house for children

Thu May 5 2016

Page: A6

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Byline: Daphne Bramham

Source: Vancouver Sun

Illustrations: Courtesy Tim Doak - www.Timdoak.Me.Uk / The interior of the former Cambodian brothel where Brian McConaghy collected forensic evidence that helped convict Donald Bakker.; / Brian McConaghy;

It's rare that any crime scene is refurbished as a place of healing for the victims let alone one in Svay Pak, the Cambodian village infamous as the go-to place for sex tourists and pedophiles seeking very young children.

Yet it's happening and it's another improbable chapter in a very Canadian story.

The rehabilitation of both the building and the children is the work of Brian McConaghy, a Richmond forensics expert whose work helped nail Canada's first convicted sex tourist, Donald Bakker, and Canada's most notorious sex tourist, Christopher Neil.

The story really begins 30 years ago when Cambodia was still a killing field in the midst of a civil war and McConaghy chose to go there on his first vacation after joining the RCMP as a civilian weapons expert.

What he saw was devastating.

So, he came home and set up a charity called Ratanak International. Over the years, the volunteer work in Cambodia, which eventually focused on rescuing children from the sex trade, balanced the

paid work on high-profile murder cases.

Those worlds collided in 2003. Police had arrested Bakker for assaulting a Vancouver woman and found home videos of him assaulting pre-pubescent Asian girls. Sgt. Ron Bieg knew McConaghy from working together on the investigation of serial killer Willie Pickton. He also knew about Ratanak and asked McConaghy to take a look.

Almost immediately, McConaghy identified the girls as Cambodian or Vietnamese, and narrowed the search to Svay Pak. Later, he went along with Vancouver police to collect evidence. Similarly in 2007, RCMP showed McConaghy some of the hundreds of images of child pornography from Interpol along with a worldwide warrant for a man who turned out to be Maple Ridge teacher Christopher Neil.

The following month, McConaghy located a building of interest in Svay Pak within a stone's throw of where one of Ratanak's buildings is used as a community centre.

But RCMP interest in Neil waned after Neil was found in Thailand, convicted and sentenced to nine years for sexually exploiting two young boys.

McConaghy's interest hadn't. But by spring 2008 he'd resigned from the RCMP to work fulltime for Ratanak.

All that changed in the fall of 2012.

Neil was pardoned and deported to Canada. RCMP reopened its investigation, despite Neil agreeing to conditions that included no Internet use, no electronic devices and not going to places frequented by children.

Coincidentally, the gangsters who owned the brothel had fled and the Svay Pak building was up for sale.

On his next trip to Cambodia, McConaghy went for a look and took a camera.

Over the next few months, he painstakingly compared the photos and Neil's videos.

The window and the dangerously wired electrical panel were the same. There were marks on the wall that matched where a cloth calendar that provided the backdrop had been nailed up.

A room little bigger than a jail cell was the one that they'd been looking for.

McConaghy also concluded that it was the building where Bakker had abused his victims, possibly even while Neil was there as well.

Ratanak began negotiating to buy the building. Not only did McConaghy want the crime scene preserved, but Ratanak needed the space to expand its programs in the troubled community.

Meantime, he completed and sent a forensics report to the RCMP.

Ratanak finalized the purchase of the skinny, two-storey building for \$15,000 US in November 2013.

A month earlier, Neil pleaded guilty to breaching his agreedupon conditions and was jailed. RCMP asked McConaghy to help find the two Cambodian boys.

A month after one victim - by then a 23-year-old man - was located in February 2014, Neil was charged. There were 10 charges - four related to the sexual abuse of the two boys, plus possession and distribution of the pornographic images of them as well as hundreds of other images that he'd stored at his mother's home in Maple Ridge.

Evidence at the preliminary hearing later that year included the victim's interview as well as McConaghy's forensic work.

In December 2015, Neil pleaded guilty to five charges; the other five charges were stayed. He will be sentenced June 1. It's only after that that the former Svay Pak brothel will be thoroughly cleaned, painted and refurbished as a dorm and safe house for sexually exploited and at-risk children.

McConaghy had expected to feel as if evil had been banished and justice triumphed. But he didn't.

"All I felt was sadness," McConaghy said after last month's sentencing hearing.

"There are a lot of lives ruined in Asia as a result of him (Neil).

"His life is ruined and I often think of his family. ... It's loss, loss, loss."

That's why converting the brothel is so

important to him. Not only will it give kids a safe place to go, it may also give them hope that change and transformation are possible.

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Vancouver Sun

Voice of justice is not always easily heard; The system is meant to be transparent, but B.C.'s courts are stuck in the past

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Byline: Daphne Bramham

Source: Vancouver Sun

Illustrations: Steve Bosch, Files / Modern conveniences such as electronic records and audio recordings are taken for granted across society, but they're anything but commonplace in British Columbia's justice system.;

With his head down, the defence counsel read from his notes so softly that even the judge sitting in front of him had to ask him to speak up.

The Crown prosecutor was better. Still, his voice also at times dropped below hearing level of the accused as well as the journalists who had scored seats in the front row of a New Westminster courtroom for last week's sentencing hearing of Christopher Neil.

And, as you can imagine, if you can't hear the lawyers, their comments certainly are not going to be picked up by the recording devices that accredited journalists are allowed to bring into courtrooms.

Journalists are often criticized for getting things wrong both by prosecutors and defence lawyers. When it comes to courtrooms, the reason is simple: We often don't have easy access to even the most basic information - what is said.

None of the B.C. courtrooms I have been in has amplification, even though many - including, or perhaps especially, the architecturally lauded Vancouver courthouse - are burdened by such notoriously awful acoustics that journalists sometimes get together at the breaks to puzzle out what was said.

That this problem persists seems inexcusable given the stated principles of the open court system, which are that any individual should be able to see - and, presumably, hear - justice being done.

There is a provision under the 2011 B.C. Supreme Court Access Policy to make an application to the judge, chief justice or associate chief justice to listen to official recordings. But that can only be done after the case is completed.

Even then, the judge can restrict the use and further distribution of those recordings. And, as the policy itself points out, there's another technology problem: Not every court registry is equipped for the public to listen to the recordings.

You might think that because technology seems such anathema that printed transcripts of criminal trials might be more readily available. But they are not. Getting a transcript also requires an application and a court order.

Beyond not being able to hear in the courtroom or having any guarantee that you can listen to a recording or read a transcript later, none of the information discussed during the hearing is available either. In this electronic age, court files are

all still on paper, and during hearings those papers are all in the courtroom.

So, for example, when the prosecutor and defence lawyer repeatedly referred to the courtordered pre-sentence report on Neil, journalists had no access to it. The same was true for other reports by psychologists and psychiatrists, exhibits, and even lawyers' submissions on case law and the facts of the case itself.

Even when the hearing ends and up until after sentencing, the court registry is only allowed to provide the list of charges and the dates that hearings have been held.

In Neil's case, Justice John Harvey reserved a decision until June 1. But even after sentencing, gaining access to the pre-sentence report and other documents in the file (including victim impact statements) requires an application to Harvey, the chief justice or associate chief justice.

Then, unless the court directs otherwise, a hearing must be scheduled and arguments made.

Not everything presented in court ought to be open to journalists or the public. There are things that need to be well protected, such as the names of children and youths, the names and histories of sexual assault victims, and exhibits such as those in Neil's case, which include child pornography.

But upholding the fundamental principles of an open justice system requires more than just opening the doors and letting people in. At very least, once through the door they can both see and hear justice being done.

Yet surely an open court system ought to extend beyond that. It should mean that the public - and, especially their surrogates, the journalists - can access documents without a court order.

It shouldn't mean having to go to a court registry and either retyping or paying \$1 a page to copy them, especially since most of those pages were first received as PDFs and then printed.

Other jurisdictions have modernized without any seeming harm. Some like Utah have gone further than most: It - gasp! - live streams the daily arguments made in its Supreme Court, which can be downloaded later at no cost.

British Columbia's technological and organizational impediments to seeing and hearing justice being done are more than a little frustrating to journalists trying to get it right.

More important, it's unfair to defendants and the public, and an insult to the idea of a transparent justice system.

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Vancouver Sun

'Swirl Face' Pedophile Pleads To Court For A Chance To Change; Judge set to rule on restrictions, jail time for former teacher on June 1

Sat Apr 23 2016

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Section: City

Byline: Daphne Bramham

Source: Vancouver Sun

Illustrations: Afp, Getty Images Files / In 2007, Interpol released two images of a man it said had posted pictures on the Internet of himself with young boys. The original image, left, was digitally "swirled" to disguise his face but a police unit in Germany managed to reverse the distortion, right. The man was later identified as Christopher Neil.;

Confessed pedophile, sex tourist and child pornographer Christopher Neil struggled to compose himself before addressing the judge Friday at the end of a twoday sentencing hearing. "I do not believe that sex with a child is acceptable in Thailand or anywhere in the world," the 41-year-old former teacher from Maple Ridge read from his notes that trembled in his hands.

"In fact, I believe the opposite."

It was the first time Neil has spoken publicly since 2007. That's when he was dubbed Swirl Face by Interpol in what was then its largest global manhunt. More than 315 images of him with young Asian boys had been found on the Internet.

"I will do everything that I can and it is my full intention to change my life," Neil told Justice John Harvey.

"I know that (Crown prosecutor) Brendan McCabe said, 'He's a pedophile. He can't change.'

"Well, I want to challenge that.

I say, yes I can and I will try my best and do everything that I can to not offend again."

After being identified and arrested in Thailand in 2007, Neil spent five years in a Thai jail for sexually abusing two boys there before being pardoned and deported to Canada.

Neil voluntarily agreed to conditions when he returned in 2012 including not accessing or possessing child pornography or electronic devices to access the Internet.

Within months of his return, he was charged under the sex tourism provisions of the Criminal Code with offences against two Cambodian boys in 2003 as well as with accessing, distributing and possessing of thousands of images of child pornography.

Last December, Neil pleaded guilty to five charges - two counts each of sexual touching and invitation to sexual touching of two Cambodian boys in 2003, one count of possession of child pornography in 2007 and one count each of possessing and accessing child pornography in 2013 and 2014.

Neil concluded his statement saying, "I'm very sorry and I just want to say that to all of the victims that this court heard about

and all the others that have been harmed by my acts that I am sorry."

It's hard to judge the sincerity of his promise or of Neil's remorse.

By Friday, he had spent two years and 25 days in jail here, segregated from other inmates for his own safety and allowed out of his cell only two hours a day.

Even among criminals, pedophiles and child sex offenders are loathed; their crimes seen for the grotesque acts that they are.

There is no doubt that Neil is a deeply troubled, even pathetic man.

"I am homosexual and even now, I don't feel comfortable saying that," he said. "But that's another story."

He has enough self-loathing or at least embarrassment that Neil barely looked up from the floor at the judge, his lawyer, the prosecutors or anyone else over two days that he sat in the prisoner's box.

The psychologists whose reports were filed with the court agreed on the diagnosis: He is a pedophile, who - given the opportunity - has a moderate to high risk of once again accessing and collecting pornography that features pre-pubescent boys.

They also agreed that he is at low to moderate risk of re-offending with children.

However, the court-appointed psychologist emphasized that Neil's risk of re-offending would be substantially raised if he were to return to countries like Thailand or Cambodia where children are considerably

more vulnerable to predators because of poverty, corruption and failures of various institutions to protect them.

But as Neil and his lawyer pointed out, both Cambodia and Thailand now have tougher penalties for child sex abusers than Canada does.

Here, the maximum sentence that the Crown prosecutor could ask for was five years - three-year, concurrent sentences for the offences involving the two Cambodian boys, a year for the 2007 count of child pornography, six months and a year for the two counts of accessing child pornography in 2013 and 2014.

Justice Harvey said he would hand down his sentence on June 1. But because Neil gets doubletime credit for most of the time he has already spent in jail, he could be out within 10 months to a year.

That's why the prosecutor asked for extensive restrictions, including a lifetime ban on Internet access, a lifetime ban on travel outside Canada, mandatory counselling and therapy, and mandatory registration as a sex offender.

Is it enough? Is it enough to prevent him from reoffending or enough to protect children in the future?

But, as importantly, is there going to be enough help and support for Neil so that he can make good on his promise to change?
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Vancouver Sun

Maple Ridge Pedophile Could Be Released From Jail In 10 Months

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Section: City

Byline: Daphne Bramham

Column: New Westminster

Source: Vancouver Sun

Illustrations: Sakchai Lalit, The Canadian Press, The Associated Press Files / Prison guards escort Christopher Paul Neil of Maple Ridge, centre, in Bangkok, Thailand in 2008. Known as 'Swirl Face' for the way he concealed his identity, he served 31-2 years in prison before being deported to Canada in 2012.;

Ten more months. That may be all the time that admitted pedophile and notorious sex tourist Christopher Neil spends in jail.

It doesn't seem like much considering what he's done.

The 41-year-old former teacher from Maple Ridge first came to global attention as "Swirl Face" in 2007 when a worldwide warrant for his arrest was issued by Interpol because of the 315 images found on the Internet of him abusing prepubescent boys.

Neil, who fled his teaching job in South Korea the day his swirled image was released, was arrested in Thailand a week later. There, he was charged with sexual offences involving two Thai boys aged nine and 13.

Neil pleaded guilty and because of a pardon, served only 3½ years of his sentence before being deported to Canada in 2012. He was later charged with 10 counts, including two for abusing Cambodian boys and others related to possessing and accessing child pornography in Canada in 2007 and again after 2012.

He pleaded guilty to five charges in December and the others were dropped.

One reason Neil may be out as early as February 2017 is that he's spent two years and 24 days in jail awaiting trial here. For that, he gets double-time credit.

So even if Justice John Harvey agrees with Crown prosecutor Brendan McCabe's submission Thursday that Neil ought to be sentenced to five years, it works out to 10 more months.

But if spending a total of less than three years in jail seems like a very short time for a guy who is pretty much the poster boy for sex tourism and online child pornography, a five-year sentence is the most that McCabe can ask for given the law and its precedents.

McCabe's clearly not happy about that and is pushing for extreme parole restrictions that include Neil never be allowed access to the Internet and never allowed to leave Canada.

The psychologist who prepared Neil's sentencing report diagnosed him as a pedophile with a high risk of possessing child pornography in the future and a low to moderate risk of reoffending with children. But that risk rises to high, the report said, if Neil travels to countries such as Thailand and Cambodia, where

accessing children in the sex trade is much easier.

Neil did take treatment while he was in jail and, apparently, passed with flying colours. But, out on bail after the treatment, Neil reoffended by once again accessing child pornography on the Internet.

Worse, police found evidence - including texts and emails - that Neil was teaching two other sex offenders how to access the dark reaches of the Internet where the most egregious child pornography is stashed.

In one text, Neil bragged: "The Swirl liveth still." In others, he explained encryption as well as other ways to mask one's Internet identity.

Throughout his day in court, Neil sat impassively in an oversized pinstriped suit with an open-necked white shirt. Balding with his fringe of hair cut short, he mostly stared down at the floor regardless of who was speaking or what was being said.

He barely even glanced at Brian McConaghy, a forensic scientist and the founder of a Cambodian non-profit organization, who testified about one of the two victims.

Even 13 years after his encounters with Neil, McConaghy described John Doe 2 as "profoundly disturbed" and even possibly suicidal. He has never admitted the abuse to his family and is fearful of anyone knowing what happened to him. He told McConaghy he was paid \$5 for servicing Neil and being photographed.

McConaghy described postgenocide Cambodia as a place of extreme poverty where children are especially vulnerable

because their parents are traumatized, social services non-existent and institutions corrupt.

It was McConaghy and staff from his non-profit organization, Ratanak International, who located John Doe 2 and facilitated the videotaped interview that he conducted with RCMP in Phnom Penh.

That evidence introduced at the preliminary hearing last fall is likely what convinced Neil to plead guilty in December.

It is possible that the judge could sentence Neil to more time than the prosecutor is asking for. But it's also possible that it could be much less, which is what Neil's lawyer will be pushing for Friday when he gets a chance to make submissions.

He will be calling for evidence from a psychologist who is likely to challenge Neil's diagnosis as well as predictions for what his future holds.

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Vancouver Sun

B.C. sex tourist guilty on five counts; Predator: Christopher Neil, a.k.a. Swirl Face, admits to offences involving boys and possessing child pornography

Thu Dec 17 2015

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Byline: Daphne Bramham

Source: Vancouver Sun

Illustrations: Jonathan Hayward, The Canadian Press / Convicted pedophile Christopher Neil is seen at Richmond provincial court in 2012. He is part of a small group of Canadians who have been jailed under rarely used legislation aimed at stopping sex tourism.;

A notorious pedophile and child pornographer known as Swirl Face pleaded guilty Wednesday in B.C. Supreme Court to five charges including sexual interference and possessing and accessing child pornography.

As each charge was read out, Christopher Paul Neil of Maple Ridge softly said "guilty" and became part of a small group of Canadians who have been jailed under rarely used legislation aimed at stopping sex tourism.

Guilty, said the former schoolteacher, to sexual touching with a part of his body or object of a Cambodian boy under the age of 14 identified only as John Doe.

Guilty to sexual touching of a second Cambodian boy under the age of 14 called John Doe 2. Guilty to each of the two charges of possessing child pornography in Maple Ridge and one count of accessing child pornography.

Justice Kenneth Ball asked Neil to confirm that his guilty pleas were voluntary. The judge also warned Neil that any agreement made between Neil's lawyer and crown prosecutors would be independently evaluated by the sentencing justice.

Neil will remain in custody until his sentencing hearing in February.

Outside court, prosecutor Brendan McCabe said the remaining five charges - two counts of invitation to sexual touching with a child under 14, one count of making or publishing pornography and one count of possessing child pornography - would likely be stayed after sentencing.

Neil's lawyer Mark Thompson said he couldn't comment on why his client had decided to plead guilty. Neil is now 40 years old. He's been in jail almost constantly since his first arrest in Thailand in October 2007 after Interpol issued a worldwide warrant for his arrest.

As with most pedophiles, Neil is unassuming looking, not scary or monstrous.

Under different circumstances and dressed in something other than bright red prison garb, Neil might even be described as a pleasant-looking man.

But his story is a grimy dive into the world of pedophiles, child pornographers and predators who stalk vulnerable prey across

international borders to some of the foulest and most frightening neighbourhoods on the planet in Pattaya, Thailand and Svay Pak, Cambodia.

Neil's story isn't unique. In fact, the Internet has made it both increasingly common and increasingly challenging to police. Laws are being hastily written to try to keep up and then, often, rewritten to plug holes that the predators have slipped through.

Neil's story begins in 2004 in Germany when police there launched an investigation after finding close to 200 photos posted on the Internet of a Caucasian man abusing Cambodian and Vietnamese children as young as six. The abuser's face had been digitally obscured - hence, the name Swirl Face.

It wasn't until 2007 that German police unscrambled the image.

By then, Neil was teaching school in South Korea.

Neil was soon identified and a worldwide manhunt began. He fled to Thailand, where he was arrested.

But he wasn't arrested and convicted of the Interpol charges. Instead, Neil was given a 6½-year sentence for sexually abusing a 13-year-old Thai boy and his nine-year-old brother and distributing child pornography.

Bizarrely, in September 2012, Neil received a royal pardon to mark the 80th birthday of the Thai queen and was deported to Canada, where he was immediately arrested in Vancouver. Initially, Neil wasn't charged, even though RCMP told a provincial court judge that

they had hundreds of images of child pornography seized in a 2008 raid of Neil's Maple Ridge home and storage locker.

Despite the lack of charges, Neil agreed to a dozen courtordered restrictions that were to remain in place for 18 months, which is longer than the Criminal Code's minimum. Those preventive measures were aimed at protecting children. Neil quickly breached those conditions. He bought three electronic devices - a cellphone, laptop and ereader - and downloaded child pornography on the laptop. Neil went back to jail.

In 2014, Neil was charged with 10 new offences including the five he pleaded guilty to on Wednesday.

Neil has done his victims no favour by pleading guilty. Unlike in the United States where victims must testify in person, Canada's laws don't require that. So Neil's victims have already been intensively interviewed by RCMP. They've already been forced to relive their trauma. They've already had to relate the details slowly and painfully through a translator. Neil's guilty pleas are neither merciful nor altruistic. Quite the opposite.

If the sentencing judge agrees, by pleading guilty and having the five other charges stayed Neil will serve less time in prison because every one of the 10 offences he was charged with carries sentences ranging from one to 14 years in prison.

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