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# THE VANCOUVER SUN

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## Vancouver company joins Reese Witherspoon for film on Virk murder

### Infamous teenage bullying episode may be filmed in 2011

BY JOHN MACKIE, VANCOUVER SUN

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Reese Witherspoon.

Photograph by: Olivier Douliery, Abaca Press/MCT

VANCOUVER -- Vancouver's Brightlight Pictures is teaming up with Reese Witherspoon's production company to bring Reena Virk's infamous murder to the big screen.

Brightlight, Witherspoon's Type A Films and Toronto's Rhombus Media announced Tuesday they will partner on *Under The Bridge*, a film based on Rebecca Godfrey's award-winning book about the Virk case.

The 14-year-old Virk was accosted by a group of teenagers who beat and drowned her on Nov. 14, 1997 near Craigflower Bridge in Saanich.

Witherspoon's company optioned the film rights to Godfrey's book in 2007. Shawn Williamson of Brightlight said he first met with Witherspoon and her producing partner Jennifer Simpson about the project a couple of years ago.

"It seemed like a slam dunk at the time, making it Canadian," he said. "Now with the combination of us and Rhombus, it finally happened."

Williamson said the story "is compelling" and Godfrey's book "is brilliant."

"Her research is impeccable," he said. "She spent years and years getting inside, getting to know all the kids around it, the families, and certainly the court side of it."

"Much of what we're going to focus on is what happened after the incident, and how it went through the courts. [We'll] try to tell the story in a very careful, tasteful manner, because this is such a personal, difficult situation."

Williamson said Witherspoon and Simpson are "incredibly passionate about the whole issue of violence and bullying in school, specifically with women. It's a story that's been very close to their heart."

At present Witherspoon's involvement will be as a producer, but Williamson said "there's discussion [of] her acting in it."

"We have to figure out the script first, to see if there's a role that would make sense for her," he said.

There is a script in development, but Williamson doesn't want to say who's doing it because the deal hasn't been finalized. The director is unknown at this point.

"We need a script to get a director," he explained. "The soonest we would have it in production would be fall of next year [2011]."