

Harron Kaykaitkw

Hello my name is Harron. I'm Syilx and Nlaka'pamux which is Thompson and Okanagan and I'm from all over in those areas.

I think families that have gone through a tragic loss they need a lot of support and they need a lot of guidance on what to do and how to address certain issues if their loved one has gone missing especially in situations where it's critical that they act upon it right away so that they can find their loved one because a lot of times I think when people go missing you have that time period where if you don't act upon it there's a chance that you won't ever find them.

I think the action that people need to take is talking to RCMP right away and explaining to them what the situation is. Trying to go through all their contacts of the missing person and finding out who they had contact with last and when and where and how many times and having those people forward that information to RCMP and if the RCMP aren't listening then you need to bang on their doors and occupy those spaces every day to push the case forward.

I know this from my family's experience what we did is we contacted everyone that we knew in my cousin's circle and we jotted down information and kept our own case - we did our own investigation basically that's what it boiled down to we did our own investigation along with RCMP and every time we found critical information we would ask those people to come forward and make statements and we would follow up with RCMP and ensure that they had those contacts and they had the information and I know in those cases I think there's a sensitivity with the issues and RCMP can't tell you what's going on with the case and I think that, I think that kind of hinders the situation in some aspects.

So I know part of the protocol is for RCMP not to report back to family on statements or information that witnesses share but I think it's important for those families to know because RCMP we don't know whose in the community

Sensitive information RCMP can't pass along to families but it's important for them to know those details so they can dig up more information that could lead to possibly finding their missing loved one.

So when my family and I first found out that our loved one was missing we held a vigil in honour of her and it was actually it wasn't a vigil it was a walk of faith, a walk of faith that we would find her and that she would come back to us and at that point we thought she would come back to us safely but during the walk of faith we had media, we had RCMP, Aboriginal RCMP liaison accompany us and I think that added pressure on those that committed the crime to come forward because we walked in their neighbourhood to ensure that they knew what we were doing and that they would be held accountable.

For those folks that are at the beginning of a journey of looking for their loved one my advice to you would be stay strong, be patient and really push for, and advocate that they come home, whether that's through media or through talking to the police or talking to the general public, they need more people who are knocking down doors and making those phone calls and doing that investigative research on the ground.

We need to train our own people to be qualified in looking for a missing person and to conduct those searches that we can do independently and that is at the same level as the police and RCMP because we're not getting results with them so we need to create our own body, whether it's having, what are those dogs that sniff around? Search dogs and having people trained in searching for missing people I know for Aboriginal women the cases are slightly different because a lot of times we're not looking in wildernesses but I think those qualifications could be relevant to our situation.

I know even when my relative went missing they suspected that she was out partying and that's what they reported in the media 'hopefully she's just out partying and will come home soon even though we informed the RCMP that no she hasn't contacted anyone and I think when they reported her as somebody that was partying even the community members they kind of took a step back from looking for her because they believed in that stereotype and that stereotype is getting reinforced within social media, within the police system, within our communities and we really need to stop reinforcing those images of our women and understand that when we don't contact somebody especially when they're in contact with somebody every day that's something's wrong and that something needs to be addressed.

That was they need to create like a communication protocol within like the band office or the First Nation community or within some type of organization that's Indigenous run and led ... when pertinent information comes up, that the family members could have that information right away or that things are acted upon sooner.

I think the things that we have found helpful is that we've been working together and we've been working diligently together to push the case forward and we've been communicating and talking about what happened instead of hiding it or being ashamed of what somebody else did because I think that kind of happens in our communities because it kind of remarginalizes families a little bit more: where it becomes a shameful thing where like oh my sister, my daughter, my relative went missing and there's a guilt there in that remorse. So I think just talking about that and sharing it with each other and sharing it with community it helps a little bit I think looking to culture has been really helpful I know a lot of times my family they go and sweat or they go to the water and they pray. One of the things that we did during the walk of faith is that we, as much as it was a like an act to let the population know that she was missing it was for us to do in prayer so that we could

so that we could resolve within ourselves and within each other what had occurred and that she was gone and to have that kind of I guess that connection to her spirit. I think for the children of the women that go missing there needs to be... I know we hear a lot of information about missing and murdered Indigenous women but we don't hear about their children and a lot of them are mothers and what happens to their children? Where do they go? Who do they live with? Do they have any support, do they have anyone to talk to and share their experiences? I haven't seen anything like that and I worry about that.