

On the evening of July 19th into July 20th 2013, my sister Bella was found dead and I received the phone call to tell me and my family the news, late into the evening on the 20th it was probably the most horrifying experience of my life. I dropped the phone screaming and crying, yeah it was a really horrible night that I will never forget I had to tell my family that my sister had been found dead. So it was really hard for the first years especially I was in a lot of shock my whole family was and a lot of numbness it was a really horrifying experience and it really at many points to talk to the police some of the police were ok but some of the police were pretty insensitive about what had happened to my sister

I would say to family members that are just coming into what me and my family found ourselves in with the death of my sister was to try to reach out if you can to people that do support work for family members, I feel like that was a really helpful thing because it was such a new experience for me and my family that leaning on people that have experience supporting families was of most importance and very significant for me because pushing for justice for my sister's case it felt very alone at first and working with It Starts With Us, No More Silence, organizations that actually do support work for family members and advocacy work, really helped me in knowing how to speak with police, speak with media, how to obtain a lawyer, how to look for a private investigator. All of these things that I really and my family before we had no experience around that so we were really clueless so walking into it really felt invaluable to have that type of support and not feel alone in what was the most horrifying experience.

I think what was really important for me and my family was that the organizations that supported my family like No More Silence put on vigils and that was because we were doing ceremony and had the funeral here in Alberta and my sister had passed away in Toronto so we weren't able to be present at the place or where she was found dead. We weren't able to make a physical presence to raise the alarm bell about my sister's death but No More Silence and It Starts With Us and Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto were really helpful and pivotal in giving my family information and support but also making / physicalizing that space doing a vigil alongside the funeral that we were having here in Alberta was of great significance and really garnered and made people aware of what had happened to my sister Bella.

Where we are right now is, we're in the traditional territories of and the homeland of my family and my people the Lubicon Cree, so we're in Northern Alberta in the Peace River region and it's really beautiful here, out on our traditional territory. This is the third annual anniversary and memorial for my sister Bella's passing and we have a cultural camp for four days leading up to the memorial that we will be having tonight with a traditional round dance and a candle light vigil. So that's where we are right now and it's a part of the healing and restoration that our families and communities need to go through to try to heal from this type of trauma because it's

not easy. I feel like it's been it'll be three years today into tomorrow and I'm feeling just now feeling, feeling like I'm actually in more of a healing path as opposed to for the first while shock, trauma, grief and the continual cycle of being traumatized and retriggered with dealing with police, dealing with media, dealing with a private investigator, our lawyers and constantly having to relay information and messages back and forth between my family and the police and my family and talking to the media. It's been a really long and hard journey and now I feel like I'm finally more able to be on the land and enjoy the camp as opposed to being in this constant pain that you feel for a long time missing your loved one.

For my family because it was such a surprise and shock, my sister had just graduated and she was really planing for her future and so we thought she was going into this new phase of life and then her life ended abruptly and so it was very difficult for our family to come to terms with and my youngest sibling, my little brother, he because he was so young when Bella passed. He was 15 turning 16 when Bella passed and she was closest in age to him and she was 25 when she passed. He really reeled from her death and it basically was my family having to make sure that he, he was in and out of hospital and he was suffering from depression and he was suffering from suicide attempts because he really became suicidal and he was in and out of hospital and mental institutions for the first year after Bella's death. It was really difficult for our family to make sure that he was ok and also dealing with Bella's cases and also dealing with our own grief. So it was a lot to handle the first year especially for the younger siblings and for all of us really. It still, the grief comes and goes in waves and so that was really hard on my parents to see another one of their children, to have to deal with another sibling at that point in time. It was a lot of trauma and a lot of grief.

He is doing better now. Ceremony helped him. You know I think western society can only do so much. It was really our ceremonies that helped him being home with family feeling supported and going to ceremonies to kind of rebalance and connect with the spirit world in that way to not feel so disconnected from Bella and her death because she still lives on, probably in a lot better place than we do at this point, but it's really hard to come to terms with the way that she died

I'm not going to lie and pretend that it's easy because it's not – it's hard. But I would say that for family members that are just coming to this experience to say that the first six months to a year there is a lot of numbness and a lot of shock and pain and after the first year it continues and but it comes in waves and bouts. Now that we are in the third year I'm finally looking at what healing is and how to become resilient in the pain and the anger and the sadness and the grief that it comes in waves and some days are better than others and that your family members will visit you either in dreams, you'll feel their spirit some times, you'll hear them in the wind you'll feel them singing in the birds. There's a lot of ways that you'll be able to connect with them, that they're not gone, you know that the elders have said that they continue on to the next world and that they journey on and they come back and visit us, so you have reprieve in that. It's not easy but I would say just like feel, push

into it and try to if you can find support that's really helpful for you, through friends through family, through ceremony, if you can and try not to drown your sorrows in substances that really aren't going give us the help that we need the healing that we really need. I found that ceremony is really the most helpful for us and the family and also being on the land and with other family members if you can find them too because they understand too. You know there's family members I talk to and we share stories about our loved ones and we also share how we are feeling and how we are in pain and don't ever let anybody tell you that to get over it because we're never really going to get over it because the way that we lose we've lost family members is unnatural so it's never going to feel ok and that's ok to not feel ok and the best advice that I've got from people is just to feel through it and that we can continue on and be stronger from it so hiy hiy.