

Michelle DJ -SWUAV

I'm DJ Joe – I've been down here 24 years my cousin was murdered down here 24 years ago and there's still no closure – there's no closure and it's hard on the family for anyone on the downtown east area, until you get closure too. My cousin was murdered 23 years ago, left 3 kids behind, and it's been very hard on them and hard on me because I see my nephew and he looks identical to his mom. When he grows his hair long he looks exactly like his mom. When you'd look at him from behind and he was walking in front of you, and his hair was the same length it was very hard to tell who it was until he turned around. And I still haven't gotten closure yet, she was murdered down here 23 years ago.

I'm DJ Joe – I'm from the downtown eastside – I've been down here 24 years now because my cousin was murdered down here. Her body was found three days later. I got a phone call from my niece and nephew saying that their mothers hasn't been home for three days, she was missing, and they couldn't identify who she was so I had to go down there and identify the body to find out who she was and to find out it was my cousin. And she was beaten and raped and she had heroin needle scars in her arm and she wasn't even a drug user. It's still an open case and I still haven't gotten any answers and if they found the person yet that did it. As far as I know she came down here to meet somebody for dinner and then he slipped something into her drink and knocked her unconscious. I don't know anything more than that and wish I could get closure for this, not only for my feelings but for the kids and for the rest of the family. The family didn't know how to go about this and to deal with it right now at the moment. I'm trying to start dealing with because I live right across the street from the hotel. I tell my family that they are going to get closure to this but I haven't got any closure to this in 24 years. I just wish that we could get help down here for the Aboriginal women because, I remember the first Aboriginal woman who went missing down here in '78 and the case still hasn't be closed yet. I've noticed that when Aboriginal brothers and sisters do pass on, we don't get closure, we don't get the help that we need. And we do have questions and we do want people to be there for us. Because, when my cousin went missing for 3 days and we couldn't find her and that was hard.

An Aboriginal girl went missing in 1978 and they found out that she was Aboriginal and she was only 18 years old and they only had the search on for an hour. But when it's someone else, a white family they have the search on it, make a big media event out of it. When it's first Nations people, we don't get the help that we need and I wish we could get closure to all the sisters and brothers who have fallen and that we have lost over the years,

We definitely need training on how to get closure and need help that is the best that we can get down here. But I know on these days I go down to the water and talk to the creator and try and put closure to it –it's not an easy thing to try and do on your own, what we need is to get more support for people around here and around the world for Aboriginal people more than anything right now. We're struggling its

hard trying to move on and trying to put our friends and family to rest. Because we can't get closure and how are we supposed to get help if they don't want to help us? We're First Nations but why don't we get on the news like other people do? Other people get on the news for at least a week or two but when it comes to aboriginal people only get one day. They only had the search on for one hour for that young lady. And we still haven't found her yet since 1978 and it's very hard and very uncertain for a family to try to put closure to it now.

When it comes to non-native people it's like they have more power and more attorneys helping them but when it comes to aboriginal people we don't get the help that we need. I wish people would be there for us, we are human too, and we all bleed red, and we're all put on this earth for a reason we are here to help each other, we don't need to look at each other and judge people, who they are and what they are, and what they do, as I said, we're all human. We need help now and not later. I don't see why we didn't get the help then that we need now because, a lot of sisters and brothers are hurting right now—and that need to get closure to these things. With me and my family, twenty five years is a long time, and we still can't close that door and put my cousin to rest yet. It's very hard, and I walk through the downtown eastside thinking I'm going to run into her one day, because you can feel her spirit, and feel her around you, down here, in certain places where we used to hang out. And just feeling her spirit still, is very hard. I want to put her to rest. And that's not an easy thing to try to do.

I'm just hoping that there will be somebody out there later on after for the next generation helping them, and to put closure to their loved ones. It's not an easy process, I wish we had it right now so we could get closure. And put our friends and families, and sisters and brothers to rest right now. And it's like, why isn't anybody here to help us? You know, they are there for the other people, for white people, but for aboriginal people, we don't have any help right now. And we need help now, not later. I've been fighting for this for 24 years now and I still can't get anybody to come down here to help us out and so, the woman who went missing in 1978, I wish we could still get closure for that one. Thank you.

I've been on board SWUAV, for 23 years now. I'm one of the member of when SWUAV first formed, there were four of us: me, Laury, Debbie, Sherry. And we do have another member but she doesn't come to the meetings. We try and help out the women on the downtown eastside, and we do media talks and we go on board trips from here to Ottawa, to Toronto, and we just let people know how we are trying to work on the downtown eastside. And how women can try and exit the trade, and try and make it safe and that, for them, out there when/where they're working. And we try and reach other workers out there too. Being part of an outreach team with the community is very awesome because, we get to meet some of the women out here and some of these women are struggling and they don't know what to do. And now we have this red alert paper—we should have brought one with us, sorry—with the red alert paper we have them fill it out and if they had a bad day, violence or

something, we get them to fill out a form, and then it gets put on the red alert and then we let the rest of the community know and let the rest of the women know and what to look for. So the women know what the guy looks like and what area to stay out of and we hand out harm reduction, condoms and make it safer for the women out there. When they see us they always seem happy because they know that we are out there for them.