

Michelle Mainsville Atkinson

I live in Sheguiandah First Nation, Manitoulin Island.

On the morning of April 26th, OPP came to my door and they asked me who I was, if I was Michelle Mainsville? I said yes and then they asked me if there was anybody else in the house and I said yes and they said well whose in here? Whose in the house I said my husband and he goes what's your husband's name I said Jim Atkinson and he goes well can you go get him so I asked my husband to come out because I thought that he was in trouble and then he told me, it was just something I knew in my heart, but I didn't know what child of my was gone and he said I have to apologize for Cheyenne she passed away last night. I didn't want to believe it. I fell to the ground. My husband picked me up.

I didn't want to believe it. I asked, I asked that OPP officer to give me the number to Toronto, the division that found her so I called because I didn't want to believe that she was gone. The officer that I spoke to, I asked him, I said: I'm Cheyenne's mother, I want to make sure this make that it is Cheyenne. I said: how do you know it's Cheyenne? And he goes well they found her I.D.s on her and I said what happened because I still didn't want to believe it. And he says to me did you know that she was a prostitute? And she was on drugs and she jumped. You know I live that every day. And I told him: you don't have to say it that way. I'm her mom. And he said well it is what it is. I had to hang up. That officer, the OPP, decided you know what? He was really good, he was really good to me but he said I'll phone the victim and family what is it?

I think it's the victim witness program.

He called them it was a male and a female and they were juganosh (white people) and I'm trying to absorb what's happening and I'm trying to call John to make sure that it was her. He wasn't picking up his phone because I still didn't believe it. Anyways these people came to my house and I couldn't still I was so lost and that one woman it was like she laughed. She was laughing. Meanwhile I was just all confused and I looked at her and I said why are you laughing don't you realize I said I think I lost my daughter because I still didn't believe it. I told those people to leave because I didn't need them there. I called my mom, I called my family and told them what happened. They didn't tell me. I didn't know anything what happened but John knew.

Is that her dad?

He went and found the answers. You know like I have always been quiet about my daughter's death but I know in my heart that she was murdered. My son, her brother told me he goes mom don't worry he goes don't worry mom you just make

sure you take care of her up here and her son and we'll do the rest we'll fight for her. I put in a complaint about that police officer that said that to me and when I talk to that Mr. Rivieira he promised me that he would give that guy, you know that guy that was last seen with her a polygraph and he said when the toxicology come back we'll open up the case again. They didn't do nothing. They promised but they didn't do nothing. And to this day they still haven't done nothing. What kind of fucking cruel people telling you that, parents, that they promise that they will look into and they haven't. I just think, she was nothing to them. When that police officer told me that she was just a prostitute and on drugs. She was more than that. She was my everything. She was everything. She was like my mini me. She was like me, you know, in your face. Tough. Crazy. Always laughing. She was like my mini me.

I had her buried and had her wake there at my place, in my apartment. I brought her home. I didn't want her in Wiki (Wikwemikong). I wanted her here where I am. I take care of her. I don't know. This is her. I don't know what more...

I think they should have brought an elder and let, brought an elder to break the news to me. You know like it just seems so cold. There's no feelings and yet you know when that OPP officer came, came to my place, he was kind and everything but he didn't understand. I think that they need to be more culturally sensitive. I think that they need to bring an elder to tell a parent that their loved one is gone. It's bad enough when I called Toronto about my daughter and they just they were so cruel. They don't understand and when I heard that her father was not allowed to go where she passed away. When I heard that he wasn't allowed to go have a ceremony where you know everything ... and it's just like and they were going to charge him.

What were they going to charge him with?

Trespassing. They didn't want to tell him where she had fallen. And that's not right. When our women pass away they stay until they are brought home but when her father wasn't allowed to go where she fell. It's not right. It's not right. You know what I held her a traditional ceremony for my daughter because we are traditional people I never baptized my baby. She was baptized in a sweat lodge. And she was buried traditionally. I don't know.

What's gets you through? Every day?

I'm on happy pills. I had a breakdown. I went into deep depression. I had to medicate. Things like this always gets me going again. Like it brings up everything again but when I see my grandson, Cheyenne's son, when I see him I have a part of her.

What would your advice to someone who is going through this?

I think that they need to start sharing their story and just share because like I have this one friend that she just went at me and she pushed me out there yeah you know

what those mothers and even the fathers you know what it's going to hurt as long as all the years that they were on this earth that's how long you are going to hurt. Eventually you'll be able to smile and live again. Eventually. I can't do it.