

Terri Monture

My name is Terri Monture – I'm Mohawk of the Wolf Clan.

So I'd like to talk a little bit about what it's like to have to deal with the aftermath of losing a loved one. And I think it's really important that we talk a little bit about how you do that through your work and it's really important for you to know that you can get leaves of absence. You don't know how long this is going to take and you're going to have to go through, not only the mourning process, but also dealing with the authorities because you are going to have to have time off from work: in order to talk to detectives, give over personal evidence etcetera and hopefully aid as much you can in the investigation so for that you need to have a leave of absence from work so make sure that you can do that through your work. If you can't there are programs through employment insurance Canada that allows you to take time off and still get a small amount of money so that you can support yourself while you are doing that so it's always important to go and find out what your company or your workplace can provide for you to take some time off. I think it's really important that people know that. A lot of people don't and then they get into trouble and they are dragged back to work before they are ready to do so or they have to quit. So make sure you got places where you can get support that way through whatever work you are doing. It's really important.

I think that the number one thing people need to do is they've got to take on the role of advocate – you've got to be able to be strong enough to advocate for your daughter, or your mother or your sister or your loved one. It's really important that you address that because nobody else is going to do it for you. You have to be that voice pushing so it's really important that you start to educate yourself about what an advocate can bring to the process. And I think it's really important to know that people can make a difference. Like calling a contact in the police department is really important and I think somebody in the family should appoint a spokesperson and constantly be badgering the police because they're not going to take this seriously unless you do so it's really important right off the bat that people designate a spokesperson from the family who is the liaison with the police.

I'm not a big fan of the poster thing. It reminds me a little bit too much of the lost dog but also places where people may not have access to internet or having telephones it actually is a good idea. So make a poster with a picture of your loved one in a really casual setting where they look happy and relaxed and laughing because that's how a lot of people will remember your loved one is in a position where they look happy, so that might tweak someone if they are able to look at the

visual. And put them in places where your loved one was last seen. That really helps. The other thing to do is really try some social media outreach, twitter is great. Find a person that has a large following and ask them to tweet the picture. Ask them to put it up on Facebook. Ask your friends and family to share the information and most importantly, a contact number with the family so any information can be channelled through to you and not necessarily to the police because the police may not pass the information on to you and you may need to pass it on to them. It's better if you can kind of control that narrative of how you want your loved one to be seen because otherwise the cops are going to try and bury it as just another missing Indigenous person 'who cares'... you care! You need to be able to tell people that.

The other thing that I think is really important is that when you are talking to mainstream media and this is something that I have a little bit of expertise in, again appoint a spokesperson, that person should be seen to be kind of consistent through all of the stuff that goes into television, radio and other forms of broadcast. You kind of want somebody to identify with for your loved one with that person so that if people see you on television or hear you on the radio they'll know who to contact so I always recommend somebody who is fairly articulate, whose not afraid of the camera and the glaring lights and is able to represent the family and can say things to the media and directly address not only your loved one but whoever may have taken them. It's really important that you have a face that's facing the media and that face is consistent so if you can do so appoint a family spokesperson. The media also likes that because they know who to contact and it's really important that that person be the same one all the way through the process.

I think the number one thing that the family can do in this instance is kind of rally the community around you. You know whether that's through spiritual and ceremonial aspect of how you gather your culture together but I think it's really important for you as the family to come to a place of comfort and support in the community so that's the number one thing. Finding out through ceremony how you are going to process this loss. The next thing to do is that you are going to have to be able to talk to your loved ones, friends and acquaintances and ask them is there anything that you know about your loved one's last known whereabouts, who they were with what they were doing, what they were wearing any little detail is important to the police and that might give them a detail that they may not have had before so please when you're talking to other people during the funeral arrangements through all of those sort of horrible shocking things that you are going to have to deal with, ask people for information: did they see them, do they know where they went, do they know who they talked to, do they know where they

were, do they know what they were wearing? Sometimes even as simple as that is going to help the police in figuring out a lead, no matter how small because a lot of these cases it's really important that even the smallest detail be recalled so build that community support around you. Use your family spokesperson but make sure that any leads no matter how inconsequential they seem are gathered by that person so they can hand on to the cops I think one of the problems that we and our communities have is that we tend to isolate ourselves back into our communities because this is such a monumental loss so there's a natural inclination to kind of want to turtle and be insulated and supported by the people you love but at the same time you still got to remember you still got to be the advocate because nobody is going to advocate for us - we have to do it on our own. And that's a really important thing to remember.

Well, I think in that instance you've got to - when the police are not being as responsive to your families inquiries and you don't think that they are investigating to their full abilities I think that one of the things that you kind of have to do is figure out a way to let your displeasure be known. Social media these days is a really good way of doing that. One of the instances where social media had a lot to do is the recent case with Adam Capay where a lot of people basically shamed the minister of corrections and the attorney general of Ontario and they actually did something. So if you can have if you know any media savvy people, maybe, this is something you mention in your dealings with the press get a hashtag. Hashtags are easy you know you could say #findsoandso or #whokilledyourlovedone as a hashtag and start tweeting them at the police because the police don't like to be embarrassed. So in some cases you've got to do everything at your disposal to get them to start looking and starting to look means they've got to want to do it. You've got to make it so that they want to do it and something with a little bit of controversy often will get them off their butt so if there's anything where you know that they said something to the family or they said something that was a little questioning about your loved one's reasons for having gone missing turn that on them and make it sort of like why are they not doing something? We as indigenous people really have to force the system to work for us. It's never going to work for us it's not built that way so we have to force it and embarrassing them I think is the fastest way to do it.

I also think that it's important that when you are asking people to take on the social media and the press that it's not related to you directly like a cousin a first cousin or someone in the community that you trust or an organization like No More Silence become your spokesperson because then they can needle the police in the way that you need without you alienating yourself and your family and also you don't want the memory of your loved to become on trial. You don't want them to be on trial you

want the person who is responsible for this heinous act to come to justice so we have to support people trying to get that action happening so I always like to think if anybody ever needs help reach out a hand and somebody will take it on for you it doesn't have to be you and it shouldn't be you. You are already dealing with enough.

Unfortunately the way the system is set up in the country because it goes back to English common law because of the fact that people are presumed innocent and have to be found guilty – it means that their defence is going to be based on ripping your loved one apart. Unfortunately that's the way this justice system is set up. It's adversarial so that means they are going to utilize any crumb of knowledge that's negative about your loved one to their advantage which is why you end up with 'oh she was just asking for it' or somehow there's that implication that somehow your loved one was implicit in their own death and that's really hard for a family to hear and have to listen to and in the case where it's another community member who is at the heart of it and who is responsible for the murder – that is really hard because your community is going to start to get polarized so the best thing to do is ask people to remain sticking to the facts: this is what happened this is what we know.

You know in the case of a murder only the two people who were there know what happened so you have to give them the benefit of the doubt but when the evidence is so strong to support the fact that yes that person did it then you've got to ask people to look at the facts try to remain as neutral as possible and I think it's really difficult for family members to do that because the sanctity of their loved one's memory is on the line and that's really hard. We know that but they've also got to be able to remember that they've got to let the process play out, they've got to let that person mount their defence that's their right and they're entitled to it but you've got to hold on to the memory of your loved one, hold on to that and try and help that guide you through the whole entire process because it's going to be an ordeal you're going to watch them get murdered again essentially before your eyes in court as the details come out and you've got to hold on to the memory of their life to get you through that because it will be awful and we can't I wish there was some way we could shield people but we can't it has to come out and let the truth come out. Thomson Highway once said in his play *The Rez Sisters* or no *Dry Lips Out To Move To Kapuskasing* before healing can begin the poison has to be drawn from the wound so look at the trial as that's the process: the wound is going to be lanced at that point and then the healing can start. And unfortunately the adversarial justice system is going to make it so that you are going to have a lot of pain in your life before there's some kind of logical conclusion to it.

The role of the crown, this is the interesting thing that I've always because I've actually sat in adversarial processes in labour relations in labour relations the

adjudicator takes on the role of the crown, the crown's job is to present evidence because justice is not a case of you getting justice for your loved one against that person, essentially the state is the person getting the justice. So you're not in this equation at all. You have to sit through it and hope that the process is going to work out in your favour. And part of the crown's role is to make sure that all of the facts are brought to light so the facts regardless of how they're going to show your loved one, they are going to have to come out. So as many as the facts as the crown has at its disposal is better. There is going to be a lot of forensic evidence, circumstantial evidence there's going to be a lot of supposition about what people were doing and what they were thinking and what the motive is so the crown's role is to draw all that out but the crown's not there to be your friend. The crown's there because there has been an egregious breach against society's contract not the contract between you your family and the person who perpetuated the crime. So you got to remember you've got to take yourself out of it. Justice you know we always say justice delayed is justice denied, there is going to be justice delayed for you. This process takes a really long time the crown is going to, a good crown is going to leave no stone unturned and they might find some unflattering things about your loved one so you have to be prepared for that. But their job is to bring all the facts to light so that the judge can sort of preside over the hearing and decide which facts they are going to use to decide whether that person is guilty or innocent. And that's the thing you've got to remember they're not in it for you. They're not doing this because your loved one was killed they're doing it because there was a breach of society's contract in how we look after each other that's what they are doing it's not about you and your loved one and if people can remember that it might make the whole process a little easier because that way it takes the personal aspect out of it and makes it very cold and bloodless. But it's also a way of protecting you so if you remember that they are not in for you, it might make it a little easier to deal with. The only problem with that, it does depersonalize it to the point that your loved one is not a person any more and you are going to have to learn how to deal with that issue. The fact that they're just the victim and not a real living person. It's up to the family to keep the spirit of that person alive so that the crown remembers that when they are presenting their evidence. That's the role of the family if I had anything to do with it – they're there to keep the fire of that person burning.

I think the only person that's going to be there for the family is support from the community quite frankly in these cases. The victims are not the issue at issue really in the way this adversarial system is set up is the person who perpetuated the crime. They get their day in court to say whether not they did it and to present their best defence but the problem with that again is that you're leaving the person who had this heinous crime committed against them out of the equation. And it's really

hard for people to understand that. We really have to kind of remember that we have to center our loved one in the middle of this horrible adversarial process because it's easy to lose sight of who they were. But the defence gets its chance to present that person in the best light so you are going to hear stuff in the course of the trial that you're going to be like what? That can't possibly have been happening but that person has to make it look like they were actually, oh they didn't mean to do it or oh that's not them, it couldn't have been them. Their job is to cast doubt on the facts that the crown has put forward and a lot of them do it to devastating effect so you have to remember that the defence is going to say and do stuff in the course of defending the person who did it that's going to seem completely terrible to you. And it's going to be revictimizing your loved one again but that's part of the process they get to do that and that's the hard part for people to sit through so you got to remember that your job in the court room is to present the fire of your loved one there. You're burning that fire for them.

Keep thinking about that because they have to be present in all of this. The only way they are present is by you being there so it's something that you have to do. It's kind of the last thing that you can do for them, I think.

I also think that it's really important that you have as many friends and family to support you through the process as possible I know some times if it is a really sensational trial there's going to be a space limitation but I would try and arrange with the crown and the court beforehand that you say: I need to bring 10 people. I need to bring 20 people in. As many as I need to support me through this process. You've got to. You should be holding your loved one front and centre and I think in this instance you can demand that presence. So demand it, demand the fact that you need to have support, bring the people that are closest to you, make sure that they can get off work and come and support you because the more people you have holding you up and lifting you up during this process the better it is for your loved one.

I think one of the best things about being Indigenous in this country, that we've had to scabble for every little piece, is that people really do know how to take care of each other. At any given moment on my reserve here, people are doing fundraising dinners and having dances and doing things for other people. What little money we have they're raising it. And so all you have to do is ask. We have extended, our families are extended, we have giant families. Get your family onboard, have them hold vigils and have them hold dinners and have them hold dances and have them...People have an understanding of what the phenomenon of missing and murdered Indigenous women is about because we're in crisis right now in this country with how women are being treated. I mean if we had all of the women who

had gone missing and been murdered in a room it would be the size of a small town. We need to make sure that we are all on the same page about how we support people and families going through this. Our communities already kind of have that set up, right, we can do fundraisers, we can do teach ins, we can do little dances and things that help, that lifts the spirits of the family, make sure that we are remembering the person that we lost but also are really good ways of information gathering. When you're at a community breakfast or community supper and people can share information that's probably where some of those weird little clues will come from. So just talk to people, don't isolate yourself off and have people gather information as much as possible. Oh we heard that so and so was here that night, oh really that's a clue, may be the police missed talking to them. You have to surround yourself with your community. The community is going to take care of you. And quite often, in the cases where it was another member of the community who perpetuated the crime, your community is going to get really polarized. But at least there's going to be a part of that community that's going to support you and yours. So find that out and let them come forward. And let them help you. Everybody wants to help you and that's the thing that's really good about this. Let your community do it. There's also a lot of things that they can do in terms of support: making food, making sure you get to appointments, making sure if you can't even drive ask the community the community will provide I'm always amazed when I look at my social media networks where all my family and my friends are supporting stuff. They support people on facebook all the time all you have to do is ask and don't be afraid to ask for that help it's there.

This is always a big dilemma and especially for Haudenosaunee people who had our governance systems ripped away – the other part that was ripped away was essentially an internal justice system that I'm learning more and more was actually administered by the women. So when you've got a colonial system imposed on something that was already matriarchal in the first place it's really cut us off at the knees. So one of my things about if we are going to restore governance we have to look at the justice systems that were also obliterated how do we get back to that a lot of it has to do with community based policing in a lot of ways we have to look after ourselves so whether or not that justice is going to come whether it's in sky world or whether it's here part of us getting back to a balance between men and women between settlers and indigenous people is finding a balance and part of that is going to be restoring our governance systems whatever was actually in place before how can we get back to that and if we can't get back to that how can we bring in pieces that would have seen a justice system in our own communities I think that's the piece that's really missing that sense of restorative justice 11;34;59;02

because back in the old days if you harmed somebody your family was expected to offer some kind of retribution. Essentially how do you get back to that and whether that was, maybe you brought them meat for a whole year, maybe you sowed a patch of corn in your field that was specifically for that family, maybe you had to perform some other act of penance right. We don't know what that was but our governance systems they were ripped away and the justice system that followed underneath was ripped away as well. So that whole adversarial system that we've essentially inherited because of colonization may not be suiting our communities. So I think that there's going to have to be a long term looking at how do we make it right in our own communities. And part of that is going to have to follow on the heels of abolishing the Indian act, looking at restoring our governance systems and looking at a form of restorative justice that's going to work because right now the way things are set up, it's not working for us. I don't think, really believe there's a kind of justice for Indigenous people under the English common law system in this country.

In 2004, my old childhood friend, Shelley Joseph, was killed at the hands of her intimate partner. At that point, I had no real conscious understanding of what was going on in terms of missing and murdered women. When I heard the news about Shelley I was shocked I didn't think it could happen to anyone I knew. I thought that my reserve somehow escaped that kind of scourge. I thought that you had to be on the margins of society for this phenomenon to be happening to you so when somebody I had gone to school with and really liked as a child and I heard about this news it was like getting hit in the gut that this could happen to anybody. It could even happen to me and so for me all of these things what's happening in our communities is so tied in to colonialism and dispossession and the residential schools and the sixties scoop and the enforced poverty and the marginalization that we are dealing with. It's like we are at the centre of this giant tangled ball that is going to take a lot of unravelling. So for the families who have to deal with this most devastating, this, I can't even imagine. I was on the periphery of something and it was still devastating so to those families all I can say is we lift you up. We have to lift you up in order that your spirits be healed. That's kind of the way of our condolence ceremony among the Haudenosaunee and how all of our communities we have to lift each other up and we have to make sure that we love at the centre of what we do love and mourning and responsibility to that person that we all lift them up and remember that we have to figure out a way for this world to be better for our women and it's on all of us to try and make it that way.