

Families hope for justice

Loved ones of two Nanaimo women wait and pray for some answers

PAUL WALTON DAILY NEWS

The mother and grandmother of two young Nanaimo women whose deaths remain unsolved are still waiting for that one piece of evidence that will end their anguish.

Laura Lee "Raven" Banman, 23, was reported missing in August 1999, and her skeletal remains were found on a logging road outside Campbell River in May 2000. While police will not release details, they say an autopsy revealed that Banman met with foul play.

Lisa Marie Young disappeared on the Canada Day long weekend in 2002. Within weeks the police determined that she had met with foul play, but have yet to gather enough evidence to charge anyone.

"It's not acceptable, it's pure murder," said Evelyn Sarsfield, Banman's grandmother, from her home near Grande Prairie, Alta. "Whoever did it deserves to be in jail like (Robert) Pickton."

Sgt. Dwight Dammann, who has investigated the Banman case since May 2000 but is planning to retire from the RCMP in six months, said they have now exhausted every lead and tip, interviewed anyone connected with her and even put up a sign near where the body was found on Highway 19 asking motorists to report any suspicious activity in that area leading up to May 2000.

Nothing. Serious crimes investigators from Nanaimo sought leads on the streets. Even the missing woman's task force looked at Banman's file and could draw no conclusions.



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"It's been reviewed by different sections, there's not a heck of a lot we can do with the information we have right now," said Dammann.

Sarsfield, now 68, raised Banman for eight years.

"How much longer have I got to wait to see someone brought to justice?" she asked. "If I had the money,

and I don't, I'd put up a reward. I'll more likely die not knowing what happened to Laura."

She said Banman was drawn into drugs at a young age in the Grande Prairie area, and from there into the sex trade. Within a short time she was headed west to Vancouver and Nanaimo.

"She just followed the trail," said Sarsfield.

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EVELYN SARSFIELD, Laura Lee Banman's grandmother

Lisa Marie Young was not a drug user nor in the sex trade. She was last seen at a Nanaimo nightclub. Joanne Young, her mother, said people have been forgetting after six and a half years.

"It's been really difficult in the last while," said Young.

In both cases, someone other than just the killer knows what happened, and the police want whoever knows what happened to either woman to do the right thing and call them.

"I believe they need to step out of the darkness and say what they need to say for our family to put Lisa to rest," said Young.

Sarsfield is concerned that her granddaughter may not be the only victim.

"How many others are there?" she asked.

Dammann said he will likely retire in six months, but a new Mountie will be trying to find Banman's killer.

"We never close a murder file," he said.

Young said that in the New Year she intends to start a new campaign to seek information.

"I don't want anyone to ever forget about my daughter."

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Nanaimo Daily News (Paul Walton) - Friday December 21, 2007

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