

Family seeks closure after daughter's disappearance

By Denise Fries
Shilth-Sa Reporter

Nanaimo's then 21-year-old Joanne Young, Shilth-Sa (Denise Titian) reporter, who's a mom, and even though it's not extremely painful to relive the experience, Joanne and her husband Don want to find out what happened to their daughter.

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Walk for Lisa Marie

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In 1997, 21-year-old Lisa Marie Titian, age 21, was arrested and charged with the murder of her husband, Robert Pickton, the founder of the Vancouver Sex-Worker's Health and Safety Society. She was charged with the murder of her husband, Robert Pickton, the founder of the Vancouver Sex-Worker's Health and Safety Society.

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Family seeks closure 10 years after daughter's disappearance

Ha-Shilth-Sa (Denise Titian) - Tuesday May 15, 2012

Nanaimo — It's been nearly 10 years since Joanne Young's daughter Lisa disappeared without a trace, and even though it's still extremely painful to relive the memories, Joanne and her husband Don work hard to keep their daughter's memory alive.

Joanne and her children are members of Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation. Her family includes her husband Don, their two sons and their missing eldest child Lisa. The family lived quietly and comfortably in Nanaimo until the summer of 2002.

Lisa Marie Young, then age 21, went to a downtown Nanaimo nightclub with friends on the evening of June 29, 2002. She was wearing a black skirt, black top, black high boots and a silver hoop necklace.

At closing time, Lisa and her friends struck up a conversation with a man they had just met in the club parking ride in his older model red Jaguar to a local house party. The group of friends accepted the ride and attended that house party, then moved to another party together.

At the second house party in the Cathers Lake area of Nanaimo, Lisa said she was hungry and was offered a ride to a sandwich shop by the driver of the Jaguar. She accepted his offer and left alone with him.

Lisa's last communication came at 4:30 a.m., June 30, when she texted a friend expressing concern about the driver and her situation.

Joanne believes that her daughter would have been anxious to get home and did something she wouldn't normally do — put herself in danger by accepting a ride from a stranger.

"She had plans. She had a big day the next day. Her dad was going to help her move into her new apartment," Joanne explained. She said Lisa was excited about her new apartment and a new job she would start the following Monday.

RCMP tracked down both the car and the driver, but never found Lisa.

Over the past decade the Nanaimo RCMP has been investigating Lisa's disappearance. A Crime Stoppers re-enactment of Lisa's last known activities was aired in early 2011.

RCMP did not respond to requests for an interview, however, it appears no new leads were generated from the re-enactment, which can be viewed on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ctgiBrd4QVM>.

"We know there is more than one person who knows what happened and we hope someday they do the right thing and come forward," said Joanne.

"I try to think of different ways to keep my daughter's memory alive so people don't forget her...that's my biggest worry."

In the early days of the investigation, Joanne made a conscious decision to avoid appearing in front of cameras. "You couldn't tell by looking at her that she was First Nations and I didn't want people to know that and judge her...to discriminate against her because of that," Joanne explained.

There are dozens of unsolved missing/murdered aboriginal women cases in B.C. and hundreds of similar cases across Canada. The women who went missing from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside and whose DNA were later found at the property of serial killer Robert Pickton, for example, is the subject of a Missing Women's Inquiry into the investigations of their disappearances.

"It was never about me; we wanted the message to be to be that she's still missing and we need closure," she continued.

Back in 2002, Joanne would find herself calling Lisa's cell over and over just so she could hear her daughter's voicemail greeting.

"I wish I kept that," she said, wiping her tears away.

She talked about the fear; the realization that something was terribly wrong, and the helplessness that follows.

Joanne said she doesn't call the RCMP very much anymore.

"I don't hear from them often and I don't like calling anymore because there's never any news, just rumours," said Joanne.

And it's those horrible rumours that have led to another source of suffering for the family. They have endured late-night calls from what they call crazy people.

"We got a call at about two in the morning from someone telling us they were moving her body right now," Joanne recalled. When she asked the caller why they didn't call the police, the reply was that the police don't believe them.

The RCMP eventually contacted the caller and asked them not to call the "Youngs anymore."

"Even though we think it's not true, there's always a little part of us wondering... what if they're telling the truth?" said Joanne.

Needless to say, the past 10 years have been a nightmare for the family. They live on hope and for the love of their two sons, ages 29 and 27.

"People say I coddle them too much, but that's not fair," said Joanne. "We've lost one; we will always take care of them now more than ever."

The boys were only 19 and 17 when their sister went missing. According to Joanne, Lisa was very protective of them and the boys miss that.

The youngest has special needs and Joanne does her best to take care of him. During the interview the phone rang several times and she excused herself to take each call in order to make sure her son was okay.

"He's been having a real hard time lately," Joanne explained.

Now the boys look after each other and their parents. They understand their parents' need to know where they are at all times.

"They come home right after work and they call us and tell us where they are and when they will be home," she said.

The Youngs have been following the Tyeshia Jones/Karrie-Ann Stone cases in Duncan. The two women were found murdered in Duncan; Stone in July 2010 and Jones in January 2011.

'Walk for Lisa Marie'

In April 2012 William Gordon Robert Elliott, age 24, was arrested and charged with two counts of first-degree murder.

"It's hard to believe someone would hurt your beautiful child," said Joanne.

The Youngs are grateful that the families in Duncan know where their girls are and have their answers.

"I'm really amazed at the support the families had in Duncan; they are going to have their justice," said Joanne, adding her family may never get that.

"Thinking about justice, even if we get it, it won't change much, but it would be good to put that person away," said Joanne.

Joanne suffers from hypertension and, just over four years ago, became very ill and was taken to emergency. That was when she discovered her kidneys had failed and she is in need of a kidney transplant. Without one, Joanne must have dialysis four times a week to clean her blood.

Hooked up to the dialysis machine for four hours at a time gives Joanne plenty of time to think.

Joanne is now on the waiting list for a kidney transplant and hopes she can find one so she can live a healthy, normal life. The good news is that live donors can donate a kidney, but she has a less common B+ blood type.

While she waits for a kidney Joanne endures her dialysis treatments and thinks of happy memories of Lisa, like the day she was born or her first day of Kindergarten.

"One thing they can't take away is our memories of her," said Joanne.

The pain of not knowing is something Joanne said she wouldn't wish on her worst enemy. In desperation, the Youngs have turned to psychics for help, but have come up with nothing.

"It's hard to go there," said Joanne, saying she puts so much hope and faith in that, only to be disappointed.

"You can tell when they've gone off track and that it's not going to work," said Joanne. But, she said, they have good intentions.

Lisa would have celebrated her 31st birthday on May 5th and Joanne is sure it would have been a big occasion.

The Youngs' home is tastefully decorated, and, in the middle of May, there are Christmas decorations still up. A shelf is stacked with beautiful Christmas angels. Joanne admits she loves holidays and pulls out all the stops for each one.

Lisa was a girly girl; she loved pretty things and making gift baskets and decorations with her mother for every holiday.

"I miss doing that with my daughter," said Joanne, wiping away more tears. "She had the sweetest little giggle," she remembers.

Joanne recalls a recent trip on a city bus when she sat near a group of teenage girls.

"I heard them giggle and I sat back, closed my eyes and pretended it was her," she shared.

Joanne wonders if she would have been a grandmother by now.

"I know my daughter so well and I know she would have had a good career," said Joanne, adding that her daughter wanted to be a sports broadcaster. She loved the Canucks.

When she's not caring for her boys, Joanne continues to pound the pavement armed with Lisa flyers, stopping in businesses and asking them if she can put  in their windows. Some are great about it; some will say they will put them up later but never do and then there are those who flat out say they don't want clutter in their windows. Such remarks deeply offend Joanne.

She listens to music that speaks to her, like 'Where is the Love', by Black Eyed Peas; a song that begs people to set aside hatred, anger and hurting one another.

"I hope to find her one day," said Joanne. She said she has dreams where Lisa is home and she's okay and in her dream Joanne wonders if it was all a nightmare and that it never happened; but then she wakes up.

As in previous years the Youngs are planning a walk and candlelight ceremony on June 24 to remember Lisa. "We really are her voice now," said Joanne.

The theme for the 2012 gathering will be called 'A voice for Lisa Marie'. We will walk for Lisa Marie, to keep her memory alive, said Joanne.

Today Joanne says the most important thing is to get people more aware of staying safe.

"You never know what's going to happen. She never thought she'd be in harm's way," said Joanne.

<https://lisamarieyoung.ca/n/hss20120515>

<https://hashilthsa.com/news/2012-05-15/family-seeks-closure-10-years-after-daughters-disappearance>

<https://web.archive.org/web/20201219201100/https://hashilthsa.com/news/2012-05-15/family-seeks-closure-10-years-after-daughters-disappearance>

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