“Someone’s Mother, Sister or Daughter”: Street sex workers, their families, and transitioning out of street sex work
University of Victoria-
Coast Salish territory

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What’s Happening?!  

2010 Sisters in Spirit Report  
Over 600 missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada

Statistics:  
Indigenous women and girls represent 10% of the total female homicides between 2000 and 2008 despite making up 3% of the total female population of Canada

Location:  
the majority of known disappeared and murdered Indigenous women occurred in western Canada, with 28% of cases located in British Columbia

Disappeared Indigenous Women in Western Canada
LEADERSHIP

The often unacknowledged, informal and formal ways that sex workers and their families strive toward bettering the lives of their children, families and communities.
NUTSA MAAT/ALL MY RELATIONS

- Leadership (in family and community)
- Confronting systemic barriers
NUTSA MAAT/ALL MY RELATIONS

• Using knowledge and experiences of struggle to empower others
• Remembering the disappeared & murdered
• Demanding justice for the families
“We are Aboriginal Women. Givers of life. We are Mothers, Sisters, Daughters, Aunties and Grandmothers. Not just prostitutes and drug addicts. Not welfare cheats. We stand on our mother earth and we demand respect. We are not there to be beaten, abused, murdered, ignored”
Leading Within the Family

“...the desire for belonging, hope, and a sense of self that can come with family, however family is defined.”
Confronting systemic barriers

“[...] That’s usually how those girls have to get help cause the police aren’t listening so they have to go to the media to let people know. These people are missing. We need to dig out the families of where they came from. Because otherwise nobody will know”
“And I don’t want them to be men like the kind of men I know so...I’m learning to break that cycle is to go and pray...like in our culture, you know? Like take them to pow wows and...show them the pride...in their people rather than...look pitiful on them. I’m trying to teach them to be proud of us... By breaking I just want to show...I don’t know how I’m going do it you know, like, but I just try every day”. 
It was hard, it’s hard to get out of when get categorized. People don’t look at me like oh she’s a mom. Or a sister. You know. They don’t see that. They’re not looking at me. They’re looking at me but they don’t see me.”

(Calgary Participant)
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