

Welcome to MoNA Moments, a podcast hosted by the Museum of Northwest Art located in La Conner, Washington.

The Museum of Northwest Art resides on the land of the Coast Salish peoples, specifically the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community. With gratitude, we honor their stewardship of these lands since time immemorial to the present day. This land acknowledgement does not take the place of authentic relationships with indigenous communities.

This episode of MoNA Moments is connected to the exhibition, "*Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls: Honoring Our Stolen Sisters*", on view in the Outside In Gallery at the Museum of Northwest Art from October 22, 2022 to February 5, 2023. Curated by Pat Paul and Candice Wilson, this exhibition was created to remember, honor and bring awareness to the thousands of Native women and girls who go missing or are murdered each year. This podcast and the artwork in the exhibition represent many tribes in Washington, Alaska and British Columbia, Canada.

In this episode of MoNA Moments, you will hear the story of one anonymous survivor. Listeners should be advised of sensitive content.

Thank you for listening to MoNA Moments.

This is my story of how I survived from becoming a missing and murdered indigenous woman. A little background to see where I'm coming from is, I grew up on the reservation and my family, they were upstanding and involved in the community while I was younger to shield us from the dangers of the world and to try to keep us on that red road of traditional ways. And it seemed to be all going very well, we were protected, we were involved with [the] community, would attend pow wows, feasts, community gatherings, church gatherings and this was to shield us children from experiencing what they had experienced, as they were children growing up. When tragedy struck our family, in deaths, disputes between adults, we all separated after the death of matriarchs, and it created a ripple effect of depression and anxiety which led to alcoholism and drug use. Try as they might, my parents were affected by childhood trauma from alcoholism and drug abuse; partying on the reservation. These are all direct results from intergenerational trauma handed down by our grandparents, who had to attend residential schools, in which they were abused by the teachers there, which created their trauma. Which later on in life, they develop coping mechanisms of alcoholism. And there was sexual abuse, physical abuse, that was taught by these schools to our grandparents, and then handed down to our parents, and then handed down to us. As such, when the alcoholism came due to post-traumatic stress, due to trauma as children, my parents would cope with alcoholism and with those coping mechanisms came sexual abuse, physical abuse, and grooming. The grooming, which many of us young adults had went through, was to accept the physical [and] sexual abuse, and to be silenced about it. To know better than to talk about it to anybody. To hide it, which many of us have done. So that is something that made me get through what I had gone through, is learning to be silent in acceptance of the abuse and go along with it, as to not, you know. You learn how

to go along with your abuser and how to hide it. How to stay silent about what has happened to you, and how to fawn, how to make it so they do not suspect you of telling on them or to get further in trouble. So that is a part of how I got through the ordeal that I had gone through.

Growing up on the reservation, my parents were into alcoholism a lot, so at some point we left my paternal family's home lands and went over to a larger reservation on my maternal side. And there I experienced even more alcoholism, more partying. They also were involved with drug abuse. And the parties went on daily, and there were adults always coming in and out, partying. And we learned snitches get stitches, right? So we knew not to talk about these things. We learned how to be silent about these things. The girls who would be sexually abused at younger ages, which there was many of us, many of us were sexually abused in these alcoholic homes, where the adults would party all the time, day in day out. There was drug use and when these girls, us girls would come of age, some girls would start running away to escape the sexual abuse that was happening inside of the home. And a lot of the times, girls were always demonized for the sexual abuse that they went through, from older adult males. So to escape getting whipped or beat for the atrocities of older men, they would run away. Young men would also go through these things of sexual abuse and physical abuse, and they would run away at very young ages. And so many, many of the youth would join gangs, or you know, be taken under the wing of older adults and be introduced into drugs and alcoholism. Even hanging out with other kids that were already introduced into this lifestyle, so there was a lot of addiction and alcoholism that had been handed down. And, I know, it was a struggle through life. It was a struggle through life and we soon moved out of some family homes, jumping from family home to family home, to finally getting our own place in the Native American housing projects, where alcoholism and partying continued on. You know, everybody, all the adults, had that coping mechanism and when they'd get drunk, they'd cry, cry about being sexually abused, being physically abused. They remember when they were younger and their parents or guardians would party and they would be sexually abused by adults around. And there was really no escaping this because the ones that had to attend the residential schools were abused by the teachers, the priests, the nuns, and they came back with that knowledge of sexual abuse. So it was always handed down, handed down, through many families and that's where all the alcoholism, the trauma, the post-traumatic stress disorder, all were rooted from. And to get through this, I remember the parents would always take off, they take off, so the younger ones would, you know, have house parties, a bunch of underage minors drinking and partying. And we always had like older males that would come around to buy us alcoholic beverages, you know, or drugs. Bring them around and a lot of the girls got hooked. I remember sitting there, I was always quiet, the quiet one. I didn't talk to nobody. Nobody was really my, my real friends. You know there are just people around, hanging out with my cousins and family members. I was always the quiet one in the background, watching everybody. And you know, some days, you know when they ran out of money it would be calm, quiet. A lot of people living off food stamps, lack of transportation, lack of jobs, you know, lack of mental health provided to cope with these things. And me being timid because as a young [girl], I was groomed into being silenced about what had happened to me. I was always quiet, I didn't talk to people. And I used to be envious of the pretty girls that had friends and they'd always seem happy and you know, laughing and caring, and you know, beautiful to me. But since I was so quiet, I never really tagged along with

them. And when I did start to tag along with them, we were going out partying, and you know, it was like, always just a tagalong. And we would run off and be hanging out with older guys that would buy us drinks, buy us marijuana, whatever. But that's what this life had led us to, and a lot of the younger adults dropped out of school. You know, they didn't go to school. They were always running around, and there was no actual parental, you know, supervision. So, and if there was, they weren't really paying attention to what was going on with the girls in the family, because as I said, the girls would be punished for you know, things, even for older men, you know, messing with them, raping them. The women always got you know, the short end of the stick, I guess, the shitty end of the stick. But I was surprised one time, one of my relatives came over to my house and wanted me to hang out with her and her friends, which was unusual. You know, I never knew nothing about what they did, they had secret lives. They were always wearing makeup and running around together. So, I told my mom I was gonna go hang out with [them], this one time. And well they took me with them, and me, knowing there is a background of drug abuse in my family, and they knew drug dealers that would provide them with cocaine, meth. I didn't think that they were gonna take me there, I thought they were gonna hang out with me and we were gonna hang out and have a good time like girls do. I was naive and I didn't know of the world that they were really living [in]. But these young girls, they took me with them and it was a couple times they would take me with them and they would go out and they would meet up with a drug dealer. One of them would go behind a building, or go into a building with them then come back out. And those girls would do their drugs that they got from that man, and I wasn't really into that, I was into smoking marijuana. But they would talk about how girls would go missing for being blamed for stealing drugs from drug dealers, and how body parts would be found out in the middle of nowhere because of what happened. So, me, I thought that was scary, I thought that was scary, but it was more like they were preparing me, grooming me. And they would bring me back home, drop me off. But then they'd come back again, pick me up. And this one time they picked me up and they brought me with them, they took up to a house to where their drug dealer was and they sat me down at a table and when I sat there, he came over and he was looking at me, you know, looking at me and you know, trying to hang out with me and I was like what the heck is going on here? And you know, he took out his gun, started waving it around, acting real badass and me, I just knew that I should just, you know I just played along. Then the girls, they went outside, they said they're just gonna go outside for a minute and they never came back in. Some time passed, and I looked outside and I realized that they left me there. They left me there with that man. And me knowing that they previously talked about how women would go missing, you know, women being killed and blamed for stealing drugs from him. You know I was scared. I was scared. And I was thinking like, did they steal from him and leave me there to take the blame? You know, him not knowing me, as well as he knows them. So I was sitting there, I was afraid, you know. And my survival kicked in and I was like, I need to go along with this, I need to play this off, you know, cause I can't act scared. I can't sit there and threaten to call cops or anything like that, you know, so I had to play along. I played along and he was like, don't be scared, don't be scared, you know they brought you to, I asked them to bring you to me. And you know, I felt betrayed. Cause what are they gonna do to me, you know? I mean if I act out of line once, you know, cause they're on meth. And this is a drug dealer, a known drug dealer that had been known to, you know, kill women. So I played along. I was just quiet and I just nod yes, you know. And tried to be as nice as I could, act like I

wasn't scared even though I clearly was scared. They all tried to calm me down, the woman there was like you just stay calm, you know, you'll be okay. So he took me with him, he took me with him in his car. Every second I was thinking, like, I don't know this man very well. I don't know if they set me up, I don't know what's gonna happen. He took me to these other people's houses, like, as if we were on a date or like we knew each other and they would think he was making deals, drug deals. Because he was a known drug dealer of the area. And those people would be extra nice to me, you know, they would give me liquor or give me beer and I start drinking it so, like I wouldn't be so scared. But I was, I was scared. I wasn't gonna fight back you know, because I knew if I fought back or if I showed fear or if like indicated that I was gonna call the cops or anything, that that would surely instill my demise. But he ended up taking me to a motel and um, he had his gun with him the whole time. He took me in that room and he took his gun out and he set it on the bedside table. I think it mostly was to keep me in line, you know, make sure I did what I had to do. And that's where you know, that's where I had to perform sexual acts with him. And he was trying to be kind to me and you know, I wanted to make sure that I came out of this alive. So I did what he wanted and after it was all done, you know, he said like, not to tell nobody about it. And I said I wouldn't. And he end[ed] up bringing me back to my mother's house and dropping me off there. And the thing is, I didn't do meth, I didn't do coke then. But he gave me a bag of meth and a pipe, I guess [as] payment to me for the night. And that's when I felt used and devalued. And after that, I was just glad to be back home. The thing is I tell this story because those girls probably lured other girls into the same place that I was. Those girls probably didn't go along with it. They probably freaked out, tried to call the cops. I think that's where girls go missing. I don't know where that guy is now, but I know those girls are still running around, probably luring other girls in. I later found out that I was there to pay off a \$300 debt of drugs that those girls owed him and I was the payment. If I didn't go along with it I probably wouldn't have been here today.

In addition to the artwork in the exhibition, this podcast was created to raise awareness of the murder rates and to provide hope to return our stolen sisters. The story you just heard reflects the strength, resilience, and determination of our Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls survivors and their families.

For more information about the "*Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls: Honoring Our Stolen Sisters*" art exhibition and for educational resources, you can visit www.monamuseum.org/outside-in-gallery-mmimg.

It is our hope that these resources will help raise awareness about this human rights crisis and to support survivors and families impacted by this national tragedy.

Thank you for listening to this MoNA Moment.