

Autumn: Survivor Stories

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SEASONS OF LIFE

The Medicine Wheel, symbol of peaceful interaction and connection among all living beings on Earth, lends itself to limitless interpretations and teachings. In Medicine Wheel tradition, time and space are circular, Sacred and Life are one. All power comes from Creator at the center of the unbroken circle. As days and seasons mark changes of time, there is an endless connection to past, present and future. Four directions reach to embrace all people of Mother Earth, supported and united nurtured by healing energy. Dimensions of body, mind, heart, and spirit balance the journey of creation and the seasons of life.

My story ends with **Autumn**, “letting go” time.



Survivor Voices

Autumn is the season of MIND, thought, mental and communal development. In the evening of our life, we celebrate understanding. The integrity and maturity of our collective wisdom is symbolized by the essential flow of water and tears of healing. This is a time for gratitude and discernment, reflection and release, for exploring ideas and learning to connect. We claim the vision of unity under one Creator.

Autumn in Canada offers bright leaves, changing colors, harvest, new school terms, shorter days, and the beginning of frost in the air. It is a time when people hope for the generously sunny days of so-called “Indian summer.” The first holiday, Thanksgiving, is traditionally a celebration for the bounty that would provide sustenance through the cold months ahead. As provisions are prepared for storage, attention also turns to shoring up shelters and ensuring adequate fuel for winter warmth.

The brilliant panorama of autumn colours is caused by trees adapting to survive the cold months of winter. They become dormant, alive without actively growing, to maintain their water balance and store energy. As the leaves prepare to fall, different coloured pigments appear. Birch trees and aspens are yellow, poplars orange, and Canadian maples bright red.

Weather plays a role in how long the colours last. On the prairies, cold wintery gusts often strip the trees quickly. In eastern provinces, the pigments last longer, mellowing into metallic shades of copper, gold, bronze and rust rather than dispersing in the wind.

The spiritual animal for the West is the bear, the element, water. The bear symbolizes reflection and introspection, hibernating for half the year after nourishing itself. Water is essential for continual refreshment. In autumn we seek the ability to go deep within ourselves to heal what is necessary. Warriors transcend polarity for peace and understanding.



The West symbolizes contemplation and gratitude. The setting sun blesses the earth with fire and comfort as we gather our energies and reflect on our journey. This is a time of contentment when we trust that all we need has been provided. We give thanks at the end of each day and each year. The healing we seek is to become whole. We strive to bring balance to our life, deal with unresolved trauma and grief, rediscover our spiritual selves, and offer a model of love and protection for our children.

We are all called, sometimes by circumstances we do not chose, to make the world a better place. Autumn (mind) represents our retirement, the collective acceptance of the life we have lived, after conceiving our unique spirit (winter), birthing and raising a family (spring) and achieving our heart's creative work (summer).

September 21: [Fall Equinox - Peace and Gratitude](#)

1981: The **International Day of Peace** was declared by the United Nations.

1986: The body of **Melody Joy Riegel**, age 21, was found on a bed in an Edmonton hotel. She was last seen going there with a customer.

2005: **Tamara Chipman**, age 22, disappeared while hitchhiking along Highway 16 in northern British Columbia, from Prince Rupert to her home in Terrace. Her memory was kept alive by her aunt Gladys Radeck who organized Walks For Justice.

2010: A memorial service was held in Vancouver for **Georgina Faith Papin**, one of Pickton's victims, among the 33 whose remains or DNA was found at the farm after his arrest in 2001. Georgina, the mother of seven children, is remembered as a warm and funny woman who took pride in her Cree identity and tradition. She was born March 11, 1964, in Edmonton, grew up in foster homes, and ran away at age 12.

Georgina moved frequently, ended up in Vancouver, and disappeared March 1999 from Downtown Eastside. Hand bones, found buried under a platform in the slaughterhouse three years later in 2002, were identified as Georgina's and released to her family for burial only in 2010 after Pickton's final appeal was heard. Geprgina's story is shared on the NWAC website.

Dear Cara,

2005: You would be 30 years old if you were still on earth, but you've been gone eight years already. Somehow I managed to cope through the first winter without you and took a few months off work the next summer. Will and I decided to embark on a European vacation, my first, and his second. It was a wonderful opportunity to experience a larger world as we travelled through England, Scotland, Wales, France, Italy, Austria, Germany, and Holland. The only time I shared my sorrow was with a new friend on the bus. She said simply, "I can't believe you are even walking around" and I felt understood.

Approaching my 60s feels like the Autumn of my life. While still employed, I also volunteered many hours with CEASE: Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation. It was important to me to pay my own way while speaking on behalf of vulnerable young women.

Today my task was presenting to Police and Security students. My co-presenter Dawn was frustrated that police would not file a missing person report on a friend she had not seen for three weeks. They said they needed proof she was missing. Eight years since you disappeared and not much had changed. After discussion with the students around popular euphemisms, we emphasized the sordid business of exploitation would not exist without consumers.

2014: I learned September 21 is also World Gratitude Day. Celebrations began in Hawaii in 1965 when an international gathering decided to choose one day to formally express appreciation for all the wonderful things in the world. The hope was that, by reflecting on what was amazing in our lives, we would be more happy and content. When our hearts are full of gratitude, it is easier to be optimistic about the future. I am fortunate in my personal life to have known many respectful men and believe they are an integral part of building a better world.

Freedom Relay Canada took place in Edmonton and other cities across Canada, aimed at ending human trafficking. Freedom Relay operates as a “journey for justice” on the belief that while the problem of human trafficking starts in a community, solutions can also be found there. We must speak out if we believe all people are entitled to fair employment. About one-third of trafficking is identified as labour exploitation, with unfair working conditions. Of course, the larger part of trafficking is related to sexual abduction, coercion, and forced sexual “services.” CEASE has worked for decades to raise awareness and provide support to survivors.

September 22: HeForShe

Gender equality is a human rights issue.

1986: **Florence Whitford** was found dead in Edmonton, shot by her husband in what appeared to be a murder-suicide.

2010: Will and I were hit by a service truck while driving along an Edmonton street. Although it was a relatively minor incident in the history of the world, our vehicle was demolished and I was effectively disabled for several months, left with permanent pain, and remain humbled by how hugely life can change in a moment.

Dear Cara,

2005: As I walked through the mall, the food court reminded me of your last picture. “Think of Patch,” I said and you flashed a bright smile. Although your portrait has been shared many times, a closer look shows your poor little hands swollen from IV drug use.



2014: I love what I learn on Facebook. According to their Google page, HeForShe is a “solidarity movement for gender equality which brings one half of humanity in support of the other of humanity, for the entirety of humanity.” It recognizes gender equality is a human rights issue that requires participation of men to take action against all forms of violence and the discrimination faced by girls and women.

HeForShe was sponsored by the United Nations Women Campaign for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. British actress Emma Watson, then 24 years old, was appointed UN Women Goodwill Ambassador earlier in 2014. She extended a formal invitation to the men of the world to become advocates of change.

Emma used the same quote I cited over 50 years ago in a grade eleven presentation on “Government is Your Business Too.” Edmund Burke, an 18th century Irish statesman, declared: “All that is needed for the forces of evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing.”

Ducks Fly Moon, in Medicine Wheel tradition, occurs at the time of autumn equinox and teaches strength and introspection. People learn to draw energy into their being and to understand the message of peace.

September 23: Ducks Fly Moon

“Let’s raise children who won’t have to recover from their childhoods.”

Pam Leo @ Lessons Learned in Life Inc. (Jan 11, 2016)

2002: A burned body was discovered in a field east of Leduc. She was later identified as **Edna Bernard**, age 28, mother of six boys, from Whitefish Lake First Nation north of Edmonton. She was last seen the night before.

2016: **Marjorie Auger**, age 44, was killed by her husband as a murder-suicide in their Wabasca-Desmarais residence in northern Alberta. They had two adult children.

Dear Cara,

My quest for healing approaches a spiritual realm, embracing concepts such as blessing, belief, grace, mercy, faith, awe, opportunity, hope, innocence, surrender, forgiveness, prayer, wisdom, joy, and love. All experiences help prepare us for life challenges. The sacred is life seeking life, however humbly or heroically, gently or passionately, with chaos or charisma.

1992: Back in our real world, you were 17 and attending high school. I gave you a ride most mornings if you were ready in time. This evening we phoned Grandma A to wish her “Happy Birthday.” She was 90 years old, still living in her own little house in British Columbia.

2005: The *Edmonton Journal* announced breaking news that half of Albertans who seek help with addictions also suffered from mental health problems. The two conditions fed on each other, clients were often a challenge, and the population dealing with both problems was becoming younger. That was the story of your life. Now it’s news... I thought of a little boy interviewed on TV many years ago who sold bumper stickers for peace. When he was asked if he thought he was making a difference, he said, “Well, the Berlin Wall came down...”

2014: Emma Watson shared further inspirational wisdom and passion:

“We want to end gender inequality and to do this, we need everyone involved... We want to try to galvanize as many men and boys as possible to be advocates for change... We want to make sure it is tangible...”

HeForShe is about freedom. I want men to take up this mantle so their daughters, sisters and mothers can be free from prejudice but also so their sons have permission to be vulnerable and human too... and in doing so be a more true and complete version of themselves...

In my nervousness for this speech and in my moment of doubt, I told myself firmly:
‘If not me, who? If not now, when?’ ”

Thank you, Emma.

September 24: STOP - Sex Trade Offender Program

Consumers need to be educated about the negative consequences of their actions.

2013: **Roxanne Marie Isadore**, age 30, from Valleyview was officially reported missing although she was last seen six year earlier, 2007, in Edmonton. Roxanne was reportedly molested as a child and suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder. Her grandparents were raising her three children.

Dear Cara,

1996: Edmonton's then named Prostitution Offender Program, aka "john school," began from the clear perspective that street activity harmed individuals, families, and communities. The program began through the collaboration of community mobilization, a responsive police service, and a receptive political structure. Edmontonians recognized that consumer-driven activity exploited a vulnerable and disadvantaged population. The hypothesis of the program was that if sex-trade buyers were educated as to the negative consequences of their actions, some would voluntarily change their behaviour.

In 1985 public solicitation replaced "vagrancy" as a status offence under section 213 of the Criminal Code. The significance of that legal change was that liability extended for the first time to the buyers as well as sellers of sex. Although provisions existed (from 1892) to protect women from being coerced, and despite the fact that many "street walkers" were pimped, women bore the brunt of arrests and convictions. After 1985, men in Canada could be charged and this provided the opportunity for Offender Programs. In Edmonton, men facing a first charge of "communicating" (i.e. public solicitation) had the option of attending an educational curriculum specially designed for purpose of educating them about the consequences of their actions.

Morning agenda of the Offender Program includes information around vice laws and street facts, the ugly reality of pimping, and health risks around sexually transmitted infections.

The exchange of money for sex may sound like a victimless transaction, assuming both parties are of legal age, fully informed, and consenting. That scenario, however, is far from the case in most situations. Women are frequently coerced to “work” from circumstances of abuse and desperation and are further brutalized and degraded by buyers.

Regarding health hazards, illustrations of cauliflower-shaped growths and open sores are enough to cause even the most careful to flinch in horror and commit to prevention. The point is simply that both parties are at risk when precautions are not taken. Confidential testing for sexually transmitted infections is provided to participants as part of the program.

The afternoon curriculum moves to the symptoms of sexual addiction and the impact of buyers on community residents and merchants. Volunteers share stories of vehicles cruising around their neighborhood, needles tossed in their yards, young girls being harassed at bus stops, children playing with freshly used condoms, and parents having to initiate extra safety education in schools to help protect students from these dangers.

The day ends with personal stories from “service” survivors who describe their harsh and disturbing experiences of exploitation, and from parents who share the anguish of losing children to the street. See Coco’s story September 26 and Kendra’s story November 9.

All monies raised from program fees in Edmonton are returned to the community, via CEASE: Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation, to help repair the harm caused. Three main pillars of support for victimized women are poverty relief, trauma recovery, and education. Emergency assistance provides support not covered by existing agencies, counselling programs have been developed, and bursary programs help exited women improve their education.

The good news is that very few sex-trade buyers who attend the Offender program are charged again with a similar offence. Many men express remorse at the end of the day and appear to be genuinely grateful for the opportunity to have learned a new perspective. They often apologize, confess they now realize the harm of their behaviour, and promise they will never again attempt to buy sex. Some commit to educating their peers, some to seeking treatment, and others to building a better relationship with their families.

2017: The downside is a continual surge of new arrests. Thousands of men in Edmonton have been educated over the last twenty years, one classroom at a time, and we need more tools to take the message to the larger community. The name of the program was changed in 2017 to STOP: Sex Trade Offender Program.

September 25: National Day of Remembrance for Murder Victims

2007: A National Day of Remembrance for Murder Victims was designated in the U.S.A. The date was chosen by Robert and Charlotte Hullinger, founders of Parents of Murdered Children, in honour of their 19-year-old daughter Lisa who was killed in 1978.

Dear Cara,

2005: As I pondered how much energy to dedicate to my writing project, the morning *Edmonton Journal* carried a story of the missing women of Canada with comments such “stolen sisters,” “victims of predators,” “public apathy,” and “an epidemic that defies easy cures.” That reinforced my mission. Our daughters deserve protection; Canada needs empathy and cures.

An evening documentary featured a man rescued after being hostage for many months in Iraq. He was held in a dark underground room most of that time and was apparently warned by his psychiatrist he might suffer flashbacks after his return home. Yes, quite possibly.

Trauma tends to follow us. Senator Romeo Dallaire, speaking on post-traumatic stress disorder, explained that, although he had transformed his horrific experiences to a teaching opportunity, it would never be completely over for him. Those who have been traumatized, tortured, and exploited need ongoing support and understanding from their communities.

Two quotes of Romeo Dallaire from goodreads.com include:

“Lack of hope in the future is the root cause of rage.”

“The global village is deteriorating at a rapid pace, and in the children of the world, the result is rage... Human beings who have no rights, no security, no future, no hope and no means to survive are a desperate group who will do desperate things to take what they believe they need and deserve.”

September 26: Triumph over tragedy - Coco's Story

“You're sitting on a gold mine baby; you'll never be hungry.”

Dear Cara,

2017: My friend Coco, who overcame a horrendous childhood to become a strong and compassionate advocate, is one of the most generous and courageous people I know. Her mother was my age so it is possible you and Coco knew each other on the street.

The tragedy of Coco's life stemmed from several generations of trauma, with many tragic details lost to history. She describes her parents as a “hot mess.” Her mother was a First Nations woman who lived with her grandparents as a youngster between residential schools and hospitals; her father was raised by his black grandmother.

The history of residential schools included generations of children forcibly removed from their parents, punished for expressing their own language and culture, dressed in unfamiliar clothes, and forced to conform to strange new routines. As well as enduring these indignities,

many children were singled out for acts of sexual abuse from their care-givers. Coco's mother, "Deedee," later became a ward of the government at age 13, removed from her grandparents with placements in several different foster homes and institutions.

Deedee met Dayton, three years her senior, when she was 16 years old and they had three children together. Coco was the second child, born when her mother was just 18. Deedee and Dayton's relationship was short-lived and their children were frequently in government care, as Deedee herself had been, returning intermittently to various family members.

Coco's understanding is that her mother lived in oblivion and drank through all three pregnancies. Deedee had endured years of physical and sexual abuse where she learned "don't talk, don't trust, and don't feel." Everything that was done to her, she acted out on Coco - beatings, face slapping, name calling, hair pulling, and even turning a blind eye when visiting men molested her. Pretending to sleep was a protection Deedee learned in residential school, when the girls who were awake at night were the ones taken out of their beds to be raped.

Coco's father, Dayton, also learned to survive in a harsh environment. Born in British Columbia to a white woman, he was reportedly abandoned in hospital until claimed by his black grandmother. "Nelly" was part of a movement of Black Americans who left Oklahoma in the early 1900s to escape racism. Whatever had been done to her, she too probably acted out on the children in her care. Young Dayton became Nelly's personal servant, constantly reminded that he was indebted to her for having been rescued.

Dayton grew up with alcohol and drugs, as Grandma Nelly ran a bootlegging operation in north Edmonton. Such establishments, with adjunct brothels, were part of the anecdotal folk lore of western Canada before, during, and even after Prohibition (1916-1923) as chronicled by

James H. Gray in *Red Lights on the Prairies* (1971). Coco often spent time, between foster homes, with her father Dayton and his Grandma Nelly. There she used to watch girls come in the front door to meet men and leave by the back door with a supply of drugs.

Dayton's alcohol use led him to experience massive black-outs. He used to wake Coco when he was drinking, call her names, beat her, and the next morning be friendly and loving with no recollection of what he had done the night before.

Coco was a hungry 8-year-old when a man offered her \$20 to lift her shirt. She did as she was asked because she wanted to feed herself and her brothers. She remembers going to the corner store that day and eating "like a king." The man returned regularly and his requests became more intrusive as the weeks went by; Coco consoled herself with knowing that, on those days, she would eat.

Later Coco was groomed by a neighbor who addressed her physical and emotional needs by offering gifts, compliments, safety, meals, and love. Such positive attention would be comforting to any young girl hungry for belonging, but "grooming" is simply manipulation. After gaining Coco's trust, her new "friend" sold her to a pedophile, a man who handcuffed her to a bed, injected her with drugs, and raped her for hours. The tragedy was that no one told and no one seemed to care. Coco ended up being the man's sex slave for two years when she was only 9 to 11 years old. She thought she would be free when the man was shot on his front yard, but she was addicted to speed after frequent forced injections.

Coco remembers Grandma Nelly telling her she would never be hungry because she was a girl. All she had to do was open her legs. Dayton in turn positioned Coco to procure income by arranging for her to have sex with strangers 8 to 10 times a day while he watched from inside

the closet. Dayton and Coco would shoot up together between times. Coco accepted their association as love because it was the only father bond she knew at the time. They remained allied when Dayton later provided childcare for Coco while she “worked” from the street.

Coco’s mother, Deedee, had attempted suicide on many occasions during her life. After separating from Dayton, she continued to be involved with abusive men, unable to protect herself or her daughter. Coco recalls rescuing Deedee many times after she cut her wrists or over-dosed with pills. Coco was age 24 with her own baby girl when she received the last phone call from her mother and found her body in bed, the phone still clutched in her hand.

Coco calculates that she endured over 50,000 sexual violations during 27 devastating years of drug abuse and exploitation. She survived many broken condoms, seven attempted murders, two babies kicked out of her stomach, and needles in every vein of her body. She thought she was living the life she was born to live, didn’t know how to quit, and did not believe she was worthy of anything different.

Amazingly, Coco was slowly able to turn her life around. Although plagued with chronic health concerns from years of abuse and addiction, she is finally able to celebrate her new life with healthy children. “There’s no shame to my game anymore,” she proclaims. “I broke the cycle of abuse and I want to save young people from having to go through what I went through.”

Coco credits many supportive people with teaching her new skills and helping her channel the inner strength she didn’t know she had. She is a regular speaker with Edmonton’s STOP: Sex Trade Offender Program and passionately volunteers to educate youth about the dangers of grooming and exploitation.

September 27: “Hope changes everything”

“They say beauty comes from a spirit that has weathered many hardships in life and somehow continues with resilience. Grace can be found in a soul who ages softly, even amid the tempest. I think the loveliest by far is the one whose gentle heart bears a hundred scars from caring, yet still finds a way to pick up the lamp, one more time, to light the way for love.”
Susan Frybort from *Open Passages*

2014: A little girl known only as **Serenity**, age 4, died in Edmonton after being removed from life support. She was in foster care and placed with distant relatives, a great-aunt and great-uncle, who were granted guardianship. Serenity weighed less than 18 pounds when she was admitted to hospital on September 18 with severe head injuries, serious malnutrition, and anal and genital bruising. Three years later her caregivers were charged with “failing to provide the necessities of life.”

While Children’s Services received considerable criticism for the unfortunate placement, one must also wonder why others in the community did not observe or respond to the child’s distress.

Dear Cara,

1997: A few weeks after your body was found, another young woman named **Kelly**, age 18, was killed in a pedestrian-vehicle accident. We never knew her but I received a beautiful letter from her mother, who had read your story. Her first thought was “God is saving Kelly from something worse” because Kelly too was slightly delayed and struggled in many ways. It is a sad indictment on society that death could be seen as possibly favourable to social stigma. The tragedy of Kelly’s story was compounded when the driver committed suicide.

2005: At my monthly Victims of Homicide meeting, we talked about staying stuck or moving on. Some of us who were longer-time members continue, not from a place of being “stuck,” but from wanting to reach out to others. We strive to make meaning from our tragedy.

Sometimes, however, it takes little to turn my mood, such as remembering my insulting experience with the Criminal Compensation Board and the ruling of the Appeal Board. Over and above being told I “should have known” I could have applied earlier, I was asked whether semen

was found on your skeletal remains. To this day, I can't imagine what difference that would have made. My feeling of being owed an apology has not diminished. Family members deserve better courtesy. Agencies which are supposed to help families must realize that survivors, numb with shock, often need help with process rather than judgmental questions about the victim.

2014: Hundreds gathered in Calgary to pay respects to **Kathryn and Alvin Liknes** who disappeared with their grandson **Nathan O'Brien**, age 5, on June 30. The three were believed to have been murdered although their bodies had not been found. The man charged was scheduled for a preliminary hearing in May 2015. The wheels of justice turn slowly. A nephew speaking at the memorial service asked those present not to grieve without hope. "Hope changes everything... Memories allow us to look backward, but hope makes us look forward – it gives us expectations."

September 28: "Every day is a gift"

1991: The partially clad body of **Marlene Morawski**, age 35, mother of three, was found in a grove of trees west of Edmonton. She reportedly left her High Prairie home at age 15 after her adoptive mother died. Marlene was believed to have died of an overdose and her body dumped. An unanswered question is who undressed her.

Darling Cara,

2005: An *Edmonton Journal* headline introduced "the new face of the Queen in Ottawa." Michaelle Jean, age 48, an immigrant from Haiti and well-known Quebec journalist, was sworn in as the 27th Governor General of Canada. She spoke of her family's struggle as refugees and the value of freedom: "I, whose ancestors were slaves, who was born into a civilization long reduced to whispers and cries of pain, know something about its price, and I know too what a treasure [freedom] is for us all." Recovery and transformation are possible.

2015: Less than a year after narrowly surviving a murder attempt, 16-year-old Rinelle Harper spoke to a Spirit of Our Sisters Gala in Edmonton with the message “Every day is a gift.” Rinelle’s family moved to Winnipeg from northern Manitoba in 2014 to provide better education opportunities for their children. That November, one weekend after school, Rinelle was attacked by two young men, sexually assaulted, beaten and thrown in the freezing Assiniboine River.

Rinelle publicly supported calls for a national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women, at the time listed as more than 1181. The Spirit of Our Sister Gala, sponsored in part by the *Globe and Mail*, was Alberta’s first national gathering.

September 29: Orange Shirt Day – Every child matters

2017: Safe and Caring Schools and Communities honour and bring awareness to the experiences of residential school students with Orange Shirt Day. The date was chosen because of the time of year when children historically were taken from their homes.

Dear Cara,

2008: The *Edmonton Sun* ran a comprehensive four-part series exposing Canada’s hidden shame of human trafficking and the predominance of aboriginal women exploited across Canada. Reporter Tamara Cherry provided the following summary:

“Poverty, abuse, racism and troubled historical relations have all been cited as reasons for the Aboriginal population falling victim to Canada’s flesh trade at a far higher rate than non-Aboriginals. But those in the know suggest few are listening and little or nothing is being done to deal with the indiscriminate exploitation of this population.” (p. 36)

Perhaps people are inclined not to listen because they blame the victims or assume that participation in poverty and abuse is voluntary. Or perhaps it is because many do not see beyond status quo to question the prerogative of men to purchase sexual services.

2013: Orange Shirt Day grew from the story of Phyllis Jack Webstad, who was six years old when she attended residential school in Williams Lake, B.C. in 1974. She wore a shiny orange shirt for her first day of school but was stripped when she got to the Mission and her clothes were never returned. The color orange always reminded her of how her feelings didn't matter and she felt she was worth nothing.

Orange Shirt Day, often celebrated September 30, is an opportunity for First Nations, governments, schools and communities to come together in a spirit of reconciliation and hope for generations of children to come. Every Child Matters was an initiative launched in 2003 in England and Wales to ensure every child has the support they need to stay safe, be healthy, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution, and achieve economic well-being.



September 30: Zone of tolerance?

The blame for prostitution lies with men who purchase services.

1984: **Patricia Maye "Patsy" Favel**, age 18, disappeared from Regina Saskatchewan, four days after her son's first birthday. Patsy is reportedly Regina's oldest documented case of a missing woman. (Canwest News Service, October 24, 2009)

Dear Cara,

2002: A very emotional letter from Dawn H in the *Edmonton Journal* expressed her disapproval of a proposed red-light district:

ZONE OF TOLERANCE: Red-light area won't help victimized women

"Red light district? Give me a break! Red light districts do not work and this has been shown in Amsterdam not to mention that many of the women would not be eligible to work in the district for numerous reasons.

Prostitution is a law of simple supply and demand. As much as society would like to blame women, most of the blame lies with men who purchase services.

As a society we need to let men know that under no circumstances is it OK to buy sexual favours from anyone and when they do, they help feed addictions, pimps, and other predators who prey on the weakness of others.

As a former worker I can say that a red-light district does nothing to help women as far as "bad dates," sexual abuse, drug addiction and numerous other problems of survival.

With proper help, these women can become contributing members of society. Although the road back is long and hard, it can be done and I am living proof that we cannot write off people.

Community groups take a "not-in-my-backyard" approach to these things and do absolutely nothing to help those affected in the worst way – the poor and disenfranchised in our society."

2017: While "prostitution" is defined by Wikipedia as "engaging in sexual activity for payment," this commonly accepted meaning does not address the widespread abuse and exploitation inherent in the practice. Although "engaging for payment" suggests an informed and consensual exchange between two people, there is often considerable disparity in economic equality, status, and power. If/when such an exchange was informed, consensual, and equal, it would theoretically not be exploitive. We need to be mindful, however, that majority of sex providers include trafficked, pimped, or abused women and children. Even those who claim to act independently often do so from a place of financial desperation and lack of options.

The Canadian Criminal Code, through the Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act assented to on November 6, 2014, criminalizes the “commodification of sexual activity.” The wording is clear: **286.1** (1) “Everyone who, in any place, obtains for consideration, or communicates with anyone for the purpose of obtaining for consideration, the sexual services of a person is guilty...” More severe consequences are outlined if the obtaining is from persons under the age of 18. The preamble to the Act recognizes the risks of violence and social harm caused by the objectification of the human body and the commercialization of sexual activity.

Some survivors take the approach that if the word “prostitution” is to be used, the sordid context must be fully understood:

“When you are in prostitution you internalise the violence... Realising the truth is so depleting. You dissociate yourself from the men and their actions, because no one has the psyche to be present in the acts of violence...”

When you understand the complexity of violence, then you understand that prostitution can never be recognised as a profession, but that the only thing to do is to criminalise those who organize, maintain, and exploit people... This obviously includes those who pay for the sexual violence, which the buying of sex is...

People always ask me how criminalisation of buyers would have helped me... My answer is this: If it had been a crime to buy women for sexual pleasure then I would have known that what these men were doing was wrong. For a long time I blamed myself, thinking that it was my own fault... But I am sure I would have left prostitution much earlier if the law had been on my side... There was no support or help to get out... There is no social or political support for recognising prostitution as being violent and harmful.”

Tanja Rahm, “Internalizing the Violence” in
Prostitution Narratives: Stories of survival in the sex trade (2016, p.80-82)

Until the world is ready to hear the reality of “prostitution,” my choice is to avoid use of the word and hypothetical arguments about choice and consent. Sexual exploitation is a non-controversial concept and allows no dithering about semantics.

October 1: A lingering tendency to blame?

1997: “The tragedy of **Princess Diana's** death is possibly the largest shared experience of humankind ever. How many billion people watched the funeral? In Alberta the tragedy of Cara King's death went relatively unnoticed, after her body was found in a field outside of Edmonton.

How could there be such a huge difference between two women? One was a princess; one lived the life of the street. But what a difference. Can one person be so much more noteworthy, or just worthy, than another?”

(Keith Wiley in *Our Voice*, October 1997 edition)

2006: **Jarita Brittany Naistus**, age 20, from Onion Lake First Nation, was found strangled and beaten in a Lloydminster hotel room. An Alberta trucker was charged with second-degree murder and found not guilty after a second trial in 2011.

Dear Cara,

1997: *Our Voice, the spare change magazine* devoted its October edition to the deaths of you and Princess Diana with the headline, “DIED in Paris, MURDERED? in Alberta.” After receiving so much disinterest from the police the month you were missing, I will be forever grateful to then editor Keith Wiley for his compassion in agreeing to cover your story. Part of his editorial followed from the above quotation:

“Her ‘station in life’ gave Diana, as a celebrity, the opportunity to draw attention to good causes... Cara King’s ‘station in life’ was as different as you might get. But her plight was one of the good causes Diana could have taken up. Ill and vulnerable, Cara was a victim in our world. Addicted to cocaine, medicating for the pain of her mental illness, Cara did what she needed to do to get by. Yet there is a lingering tendency to blame Cara... for taking the risks, for living the life that put her in a position where someone likely murdered her.”

Here are some of the highlights from the feature story by reporter Michael Walters:

MURDERED? Why did Cara King die?

“I was sitting in my dining room when I noticed two very official-looking fellows walk up to the house. I knew that was it. It was Cara they had found.” Chills crawled up the spine of Kathy King every time she heard that a body had been

discovered somewhere in or around the city. This time, September 2, it was the end of four years of agonizing uncertainty over her daughter's life.

Her daughter had died, most likely murdered.

The body of twenty-two year old Caralyn King was discovered by a farmer in a field the day before. The cause of her death has not yet been determined. A police spokesperson revealed the autopsy results were inconclusive. She had been in the field so long that she needed to be identified by her dental records. Police have mounted a very active investigation...

"I have certain mixed feelings. I feel a tremendous sadness that I have lost a daughter and I feel sadness for the difficulties she suffered in her life, but I also feel a sense of relief to know that finally her pain is over. Maybe she has found peace, after all she's been through," says Cara's mother... "All I really wanted, since I couldn't help her, was someone who could. But there was no one..."

Cara King's life was challenged and tragic in ways that go beyond what most people can fathom. What could have been done differently to save the life of this pretty young woman? Maybe the mental health system could have been more sensitive. Maybe the addictions counsellors needed to do more. Maybe we can blame it all on the johns. Maybe it was her choice in friends at a vulnerable age or period in her life. Maybe it was fate. Maybe it was a combination of all of these things.

None of this will change the fact that a twenty-two year old girl with mental illness has unjustly died. For her mother, who tried to give Cara a healthy, normal life, it won't bring her daughter back."

2017: Cara, my darling, there was a time I believed that remembering you in happier times was the best tribute we could give. Now I am not so sure. It seems people need to hear your story and society still has much to learn. I hope this process will be helpful.

October 2: The only son we had

"If you had known our son... you wouldn't have killed him." Jane Orydzuk

Dear Cara,

2004: Jane Orydzuk, a member of the Edmonton Victims of Homicide support group, found journaling helped her cope after the murder of her son Tim in 1994. She wrote a compelling article in the *Edmonton Journal* to mark the tenth anniversary of his death:

“Ten years ago, you killed my son and his friend. You shot them each three times in the head and have never been held accountable.

Over the years, I thought of you often and wondered what went wrong in your life, but you rarely cross my mind anymore.

You wouldn’t have known the love in our hearts the day our son was born.

You couldn’t have known the thrill of hearing him say “mommy” or “daddy” for the first time or of seeing him start walking across a room when his tiny legs couldn’t sit still any longer.

You couldn’t have experienced the feelings of joy we had as parents when he built his first birdhouse or walked to school alone trying to convince us that he was old enough.

You weren’t looking out the window on rainy days to see him carrying his sisters on his shoulders because they were afraid of worms. You didn’t feel the swell of pride inside of us when he graduated from high school and his life as an adult unfolded.

You couldn’t possibly have felt the exhilarating excitement when he earned his wings at 18 and took me flying for the first time in a small Cessna.

You weren’t there when he married the love of his life and a year later presented us with a wee granddaughter who sported a mop of black hair and beautiful oval eyes.

You didn’t see him cradle his child in his arms and stroke her with his massive hand when she cried, or watch out the window to see him arriving at family gatherings with his little daughter perched high on his shoulders clutching a fistful of his dark curls in her tiny hands.

He was the only son we had...

I often wondered if smiles would ever return to my husband’s face and if the imaginary ton of bricks would lift from his chest, giving way to happiness again...

If you had known our son, if he had touched your life in the gentle and loving ways he touched ours for 33 years, you would not have killed him that sad day in October of 1994.”

2015: *Colleen Sillito*, age 46, mother of five, was shot to death in the driveway of her Fort Saskatchewan home by an ex-boyfriend who then killed himself. She was dating Mike Cameron at the time, who decided to become an agent of change and speak out against gender-based violence. Mike organized Ignore No More Run for Respect two years later to help raise awareness while standing in solidarity with survivors. Thank you, Mike.

October 3: Conditions for a Miracle

A miracle is a shift in consciousness. *A Course in Miracles*

Dear Cara,

2005: A workshop was offered on “The Twelve Conditions of a Miracle.” I wanted a miracle to help heal from the terrible sadness of your loss. The workshop was based on a book by the same name, *Twelve Conditions for a Miracle* (2008) by Todd Michael:

“As the conscious mind directs, the subconscious mind creates. The world is a reflection of my introspection. God is equally present in every moment and we take ourselves with us wherever we go. We are a field of unlimited potentiality as we sow the seeds of infinite possibility. What I need is just a thought away.”

I had almost forgotten how appealing that philosophy can be.

The conditions for a miracle, in summary from my notes, are as follows:

- (1) Emptiness – creating a calm quiet place within where the mind is cleared through spiritual practices and open to the beauty of the One Mind,
- (2) Alignment – identifying with Divine experience coming forward as healing and transformation, embracing Compassion as the highest form of love,
- (3) Asking – knowing that all I need has already been given,
- (4) Maximizing – blessing what is received with the awareness of Wholeness,
- (5) Giving - placing myself within the circularity of Life,
- (6) Grounding – knowing the truth of who I am, a boundless spontaneous free and perfect expression of God,
- (7) Envisioning – visualizing manifestation in harmony with Spiritual principles,
- (8) Gratitude – demonstrating my own graciousness for all I have received,
- (9) Acting as if – developing my own consciousness to attract and accept abundance,
- (10) Engaging the cycle – purifying and expanding my own responsiveness,
- (11) Receiving – rejoicing in the brilliance of Universal consciousness and
- (12) Recycling – letting go so that I am continually reclaiming composure and reconnecting to the principles of eternal possibility.

It sounds so simple – believe and create the opportunity to receive. The key seems to be that if we grounded in the peace of our own being, we can be grateful for whatever we receive.

October 4: Truth and Reconciliation – Red Dress Day

“Reconciliation is about forging and maintaining respectful relationships. There are no shortcuts.”
Justice Murray Sinclair

2016: “October 4th is a day where we honour the lives of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls. The violence experienced by Aboriginal women and girls in Canada is a national tragedy. We must take the time to give thanks to the families who are our reason we continue to demand action.”

Native Women’s Association of Canada (www.nwac.ca)

Dear Cara,

2016: The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) was part of a response by the government of Canada to address harm inflicted on Indigenous peoples through the residential school system. An estimated 86,000 children were enrolled in residential schools between 1879 and 1996. The 2006 Settlement Agreement established a \$2 billion compensation package for all students, particularly those who had been abused or harmed.

On June 11, 2008, then Prime Minister Stephen Harper apologized on behalf of the Government of Canada. Officially established June 2, 2008, and completed in December 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was tasked with discovering and revealing past wrongdoings in the hope of repairing past damage and helping victims heal. The TRC produced 94 Calls to Action. The first 42 focus on redress of the Legacy of residential schools and encompass Child Welfare, Education, Language and Culture, Health, and Justice. #41 called for a public inquiry into the victimization of Aboriginal women and girls:

“We call upon the federal government, in consultations with Aboriginal organizations, to appoint a public inquiry into the cause of, and remedied for, the disproportionate victimization of Aboriginal women and girls. The inquiry’s mandate would include:

- (i) Investigation into missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls
- (ii) Links to the intergenerational legacy of residential schools...”

The additional 52 Calls for Action under Reconciliation encompass The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Equality in the Legal System, National Council for Reconciliation, Professional Development for Public Servants, Church Apologies, Education, Youth Programs, Museums and Archives, Missing Children and Burial Information, National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, Commemoration, Media, Sports, Business and Newcomers to Canada. Much attention is required at many levels.

A year later in December 2016, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced the creation of a national council to help implement the 94 recommendations. Some action had already been initiated on 41 of the 45 Calls to Action under federal jurisdiction and, of course, the inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women had been launched. The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation at the University of Manitoba, established in 2015 to permanently archive materials related to the Residential School system, received additional funding to track progress.

October 5: World Teachers Day - Educating the heart

“Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all.” Aristotle

2002: Four new first-degree murder charges were laid against Robert Pickton in British Columbia. The women, whose remains were found at the pig farm, included:

Tanya Holyk, age 20, last seen in October 1996,
Sherry Irving, age 24, disappeared sometime in 1997,
Inga Hall, age 46, last seen in February 1998, and
Heather Chinook, age 30, last seen in April 2001.

2005: **Rose Brenda Decouteau**, age 43, was found strangled in an Edmonton motel.

Dear Cara,

2002: The shadow of evil darkens our world in spite of positive thought, a challenge to those who want to educate hearts. In addition to the four new charges, Pickton was previously

accused of killing eleven women: *Georgina Papin, Patricia Johnson, Helen Hallmark, Jennifer Furminger, Mona Wilson, Diane Rock, Sereena Abotsway, Andrea Joesbury, Heather Bottomley, Brenda Wolfe, and Jacqueline McDonell*. They were among 38 who disappeared from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside since 1996. That still left 23 unsolved.

2005: Today was the beginning of Mental Illness Awareness week. We need more than a week to reduce the stigma and discrimination related to mental illness. In world news, the Dalai Lama picked Vancouver as the site of the world's first peace centre to bear his name. The centre will focus on teaching children and youth to be compassionate, tolerant, and non-violent, what the Dalai Lama call "educating the heart." I would like to attend sometime and hope your story can have the effect of teaching compassion.

Larry King hosted Judge Judy as a guest. They spoke, as others have on *Larry King Live*, about losing a child as the hardest thing parent have to face and how parents never really recover. Recovery is an interesting word. It typically means to "regain control" or "bring back to normal state." There is no normal after such a loss. "New normal" is a concept some find helpful. Survivors need support to rebuild their lives and find meaning in what they have suffered.

October 6: Awareness of inequalities

1999: Kate Quinn was honoured with a City of Edmonton Citation Award for volunteer work in her community addressing sexual exploitation.

2008: A little Edmonton girl named "Ana," age 7, was abducted in front of her home by a strange man. Although she was dropped off at a restaurant an hour later, every parent's worst fear was triggered by the incident. The man charged had previous convictions for sexual assaults of young children. Three years later he was declared a dangerous offender, meaning he faces an indefinite jail sentence.

Dear Cara,

1999: Two years after your death, the October edition of *Our Voice* magazine featured Kate Quinn, who was awarded the City of Edmonton Citation Award for volunteer work in her community. (See also March 1.) She originally moved into her neighborhood as part of a Roman Catholic lay society. “I wanted to live my life with the awareness of inequalities,” she is quoted as saying. “We knew there were people here working on alternatives and hopeful responses... we could learn a lot here.”

Reporter Ron MacLachan further described Kate’s work:

“Not one to take all the credit for herself, Quinn says the Citation Award – for which she was nominated by the Safer Cities Committee – should be thought of as a tribute to all the community volunteers who have worked on the anti-prostitution project. It also recognizes her other volunteer work in helping to improve the quality of life for (local) residents and for her work with the Safer Cities Committee. Currently, she operates the “john school” (an alternative sentencing program where men arrested for prostitution related offences can attend a series of lectures on the impact of their behaviour on the community.)

“The men who come through the ‘john school’ just haven’t thought about the impact of their behaviour on other families,” Quinn concludes...

“What is it like to go driving through the downtown area late at night searching for your daughter had never crossed their minds,” she says.”

2017: One month and twenty years after your death, I pause to reflect on what has been accomplished. The Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples was established in 1992 when you were 17 and still at school. A final report of 440 recommendations was published in November 1996, unbeknownst to me, when you were still alive. The Canadian government unveiled *Gathering Strength: Canada’s Aboriginal Action Plan* in 1998 which included a commitment to recognize and apologize to those who experienced abuse at residential schools. All this was happening while I was fighting to find you integrated services and Kate was working in her community to address the harms of sexual exploitation. Hopefully, there are many more related journeys and different paths that will come together for our common cause.

October 7: Finding your sister

“No one is sent by accident to anyone.” *A Course in Miracles*

Dear Cara,

2004: *Down to This* (2004) by Shaughnessy Bishop-Stall was a book about a young man who chose to live ten months in a hobo town in the heart of Toronto. I was struck by his observations of the relationship between drugs and suicide:

“I’ve come to think that drugs – although they may get you to a point where life’s barely worth living – also postpone suicide. If you put all your energy into drugs – stuff your soul down into them – they will hold you afloat enough so that you keep breathing and you don’t have to face other things...” (p.416)

His closing comments about the difference housing made were also significant. Although the battles of the homeless seemed more about their demons than their environment, at least half coped better with proper accommodation. My greatest sadness was that you had no home.

2016: I always knew you had an older sister although you never had occasion to meet each other. Years ago she posted a search for information about her father. I did not respond at the time but found her later through Facebook, and we connected after she chose sobriety.

Chic was born in 1969, five years before you. You both wondered about the father who seemed not to care, you both loved horses, you were both hospitalized during adolescence, and you both struggled with addictions in your adult life. You would have turned 15 just after her daughter was born, 17 after her son. Chic was 23 years old when her niece Sandy died, 28 when you disappeared. She honoured both you and Sandy without knowing you were family.

What is most amazing is her story of her daughter’s imaginary friend Cara who “lived” with them for a few years after her daughter was age 7-8 and always wanted to play “sisters.” That would have been the same summer you disappeared.

October 8: New wave of revolution?

“We don’t see things the way they are; we see things the way we are.” Anis Nin

2009: **Michelle Lee Hadwen**, age 37, died in hospital two days after being discovered badly injured in an east Edmonton alley. She was originally from James Smith First Nation west of Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, and had been adopted at eight years old. She began drinking in junior high and troubles continued through her adult life.

2010: The body of **Cynthia Frances Maas**, age 35, was found in a Prince George park. She was last seen September 10 and reported missing by family members on September 23. Cynthia’s body was found in the vicinity of the Highway of Tears.

Dear Cara,

2014: Proposed legislation to protect exploited persons drew a variety of media response. Many columnists merely reiterated tired rhetoric about the world’s “oldest profession” and “personal choice” as if the women involved were free and equal players through history.

A notable exception was Kevin Hampson, whose column appeared in the *Edmonton Sun* June 18, 2014. He pointed out:

“Legalized prostitution also leads to higher rates of human trafficking, according to a study of 150 countries by three economists. Again, this shouldn’t be surprising; of course, human traffickers are going to set up shop in places where there’s an unfettered consumer demand for female meat...

Our disapproval of cannibalism, slavery and prostitution had nothing to do with consent or lack of it. We disapprove of these things because they turn people into objects, denying their inherent value as human beings. Permitting them would be socially destructive...”

Thank you, Kevin Hampson, for your perspective and clear thinking!!!

Maybe it’s time for another revolution. The 1980s first exposed “domestic violence” as largely male domination over women. We have still not addressed those root causes as shelters are full of women and children fleeing for their lives. Child sexual abuse was also exposed with the evidence that one out of three children experienced unwanted sexual touching.

A new wave of awareness must address sexual exploitation and the trafficking of women and children around the world for sexual purposes. If we as society turn a blind eye, we indirectly sanction consumer demand.

October 9: Men of Honour

Men of Honour are those who act in meaningful ways to foster respect, encourage healthy relationships, and create positive opportunities for people.

Men of Honour strengthen their families, communities, and workplaces. They respect the integrity, individuality, and humanity of vulnerable children and adults.

Men of Honour may be well known, or they may be quiet workers or volunteers. Men of Honour are found in many families, ethno-cultural communities, trades, professions, neighbourhoods, networks, and organizations.

CEASE: Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation

2011: Human remains found in an empty field near Innisfail in central Alberta were identified as **Dana Jane Turner**, age 31, mother of three sons. Dana was missing since August 14. A man she met in hospital, who previously stabbed her in the head, was charged with her murder.

2015: **Gloria Gladue**, age 44, mother of seven, was last seen in Desmarais, northern Alberta.

Dear Cara,

In a world where so many women are abused by men, objectified by men, exploited by men, and even killed by men, it is important to focus on the good and honourable men among us and to know that our struggle for dignity and respect is supported by them as well.

1993: Jackson Katz, an international educator from Los Angeles, was an early advocate in challenging gender violence. He co-founded Mentors in Violence Prevention, insisting violence was a men's issue because men commit the majority of abuse. His goal was to shift the paradigm to prevention by changing norms in male culture and challenging men to intervene

with other men when they see them acting in sexist or abusive ways. His premise was that “violence against women” needed to target WHO was doing the violence.

2006: An original Edmonton innovation was the Men of Honour Awards, a fundraising initiative approved by the agency later known as CEASE: Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation. The intent was to affirm positive male role-models and community leaders, a welcome reprieve from the world of “johns,” pimps, and drug dealers. Each year nominations were invited from the community and recipients were selected from a Committee.

The first Men of Honour event in Edmonton in 2006 was a relatively humble breakfast. The celebration moved to a Gala evening in 2008 and continued until 2015. Over 100 men were honoured during ten years of celebrations. These were men known to associates of CEASE as committed to shared values. The names of the men honoured in Edmonton can be viewed at www.ceasenow.org.

The first honorary chair, Chief Mike Boyd of Edmonton City Police, said in one of his talks: “When we speak of honourable men, we mean admirable, we mean worthy, praise worthy, principled, good, respectable, and right, men of courage who step up to do what they believe in, to do what is needed, and to do what is proper... We all know of tragedies that could have been avoided or prevented if more honourable men had been involved in the lives of young people.”

Two examples of men honoured were Inspector Dan Jones (2014) and his brother Staff Sergeant Scott Jones (2015) both of Edmonton Police Services who expanded their policing roles to become active members of the Victims of Homicide support society. In that role, they provided compassion, support and assistance to family members who lost loved ones to homicide.

2017: Thankfully, Jackson Katz is still active as an internationally acclaimed speaker. Men of the world are called to honourable behaviour which includes treating all others with dignity and respect. While our Canadian government seems committed to compensating injustices from previous decades, it would be much simpler to do it right the first time so that future generations will not have to apologize for the attitudes of today. My dream is to see an apology extended to women in the so-called “sex trade,” who have been marginalized far too long and blamed for participation in their own exploitation.

October 10: World Mental Health Day

Positive mental health is the capacity to feel, think and act in ways that enhance our ability to enjoy life and deal the challenges we face. It is a positive sense of emotional and spiritual well-being that respects the importance of culture, equity, social justice, interconnections, and personal dignity.” The Public Health Agency of Canada

Dear Cara,

2005: What does it really mean to be mentally healthy? It involves how we think, feel, and interact with the world in which we live, being happy with ourselves, being able to function in relationships, and maintaining balance with responsibilities of family, work and community. Health can be viewed on a continuum. Some days we do well and other days we struggle.

A check list was provided by Alberta Education (education.alberta.ca/mental-health):

- a sense of contentment
- ability to deal with stress and bounce back from adversity
- a sense of purpose and meaning
- ability to build and maintain fulfilling relationships
- flexibility re adapting to change
- balance of work and play, rest and activity
- self-confidence and high self-esteem.

Statistics suggest that one in five of us will experience mental illness during our lifetime, a sign that we have crossed an invisible line from wellness. A number of symptoms could indicate slipping from healthy to unhealthy. These include depression, loss of pleasure, panic or anxiety, emotional volatility, behaviour changes and hallucinations. Unfortunately, these signs often come with shame or embarrassment, which further prevent people from seeking help.

We all have the right to feel “normal” and to receive assistance in understanding and achieving what that may be. We are born with a wide variety of temperaments, personality, energy, like and dislikes, which are influenced by our genetics and our environment. Those who claim to be healthy have a responsibility to be supportive and kind to those who are struggling.

How do we help ourselves? We need to monitor our attitude and stress levels, choose to associate with positive people, build a supportive network, celebrate coping, learn new skills, find creative outlets, develop spirituality, have fun, eat a healthy diet, rest well, and stay hydrated. The check-list sounds easy; paying attention can be a challenge.

October 11: International Day of the Girl

2011: A Missing Women Inquiry began in British Columbia to investigate the murders and disappearance of women there. A five-volume 180 page report, *Forsaken*, was released the following year on November 19, 2012.

2014: Pakistani teen Malala Yousafzai was announced as a winner of the Nobel Peace prize, the youngest recipient of the award. She is celebrated as a young woman who speaks publicly for girls around the world to have the right to education. She was empowered by the love of her father, who modeled a new pathway by choosing to treat her with equality in a society where other men shot girls for speaking.

Dear Cara,

Although my focus is the missing and murdered women of Canada, we must also remember there are many missing and murdered men. While we know, thankfully, that not all men are abusive, the fact remains that most violence is perpetrated by a segment of the male gender and they also target each other. We must understand the pervasive and entrenched myths of “masculinity” that seem to excuse and sanction aggressive behaviours before we can address and change the dynamics. From my limited research, it appears Indigenous women are at risk both within and outside of their communities.

2008: **Dylan Koshman**, age 21, neither female or Indigenous, disappeared without a trace after leaving a home in south Edmonton. There was no answer on his cell phone and no activity in his bank account since that evening. Police found his wallet in a neighbour’s yard and no evidence of foul play. Dylan was a body builder and soccer player, who had just moved from Moose Jaw for work. His story is included to illustrate that men disappear as well as women. Although Indigenous women are disproportionately represented, the tragedy of missing children crosses all socio-economic and cultural populations. My belief is that we must study the bigger picture to understand why ethnic minorities are targeted.

2014: Six years later, Dylan’s family held an annual candle light vigil with the theme of hope. Members of the public were invited to attend. The *Journal* reported Edmonton police have 82 historical missing persons dating back to the 1970s. “It’s a nightmare that you don’t really wake up from ... the wound of him disappearing six years ago is still wide open because there was no closure, there’s no answers,” Dylan’s mother Melanie was quoted in the *Edmonton Sun*. “We desperately need, all of our family, to find Dylan and bring him home no matter what the circumstances are.”

October 12: SWAT – Sex Workers Addressing Treatment

“And once the storm is over you won’t remember how you made it through, how you managed to survive. You won’t even be sure whether the storm is really over. But one thing is certain: When you come out of the storm you won’t be the same person who walked in. That’s what this storm’s all about.” Haruki Murakami, goodreads.com

Dear Cara,

2005: The *Edmonton Sun* reported a sexual assault in which the young lady escaped. Project KARE had been notified, of course. City-TV called for my reaction but I missed the call. I might have said, “Wouldn’t it be great if she could identify her attacker?”

2008: The *Edmonton Sun* produced a four-part series on human trafficking:

(1) “Exposing our nation’s dirty, dark secret” (September 28) told the story of a 12-year-old girl pimped to an escort agency. Like many confused teenage girls, she believed false promises and accepted drugs when offered.

(2) “Young Aboriginal women used as a sex commodity in cities across Canada” (September 29) commented on the lack of official statistics on domestic trafficking while poverty, abuse, racism and troubled historical relations contributed to the vulnerability of Aboriginal girls and women. Colonization is linked to generations of parents with limited parenting skills, familial abuse, and gang victimization within Aboriginal communities.

(3) “Foreign workers lured with lies” (September 30) suggested that Canada failed as a country to live up to its international obligations of prosecuting human traffickers and providing meaningful assistance to victims.

(4) “Sex trade an addiction that’s hard to break” (October 3) described a program developed by Lauren Casey of British Columbia. “Never mind the drugs and booze that go

hand-in-hand,” she said, “there must be specialized rehab for people addicted to a lifestyle that’s built around fast, easy money, living on the edge, and the heady rush of power over others.”



October 13: Sisters in Spirit – We are the Women

2007: **Lorilee Mae Francis**, age 24, mother of two girls, was last seen in Grand Prairie mid-October. She was reported missing by her family in late December after she did not contact them over Christmas. Her disappearance was investigated by Project KARE. Lorilee was a member of Beaver River First Nation in northern Alberta.

Dear Cara,

2004: Sisters in Spirit coined the term “racialized sexualized violence.” It means Aboriginal women are targeted because of their gender and because of their Aboriginal identity. In Canada, racialized sexualized violence is associated with cultural isolation, the legacy of the residential school system, and societal indifference.

2009: A report from Sisters in Spirit, released in March, suggested the majority of missing or murdered women cases occurred in British Columbia, identifying a total of 137 cases or 26% of the national average. (Canwest News Service, October 25) Unfortunately the names in the report remained confidential. The numbers may have reflected a higher British Columbia representation because of attention at the time on Vancouver and the Highway of Tears.

2015: Earlier in the year I participated in “We are the Women,” an awareness event in support of International Women’s Day (March 8) and spoke on behalf of the unnamed women:

“Unfortunately, many lost women are still **not** named, **many** stories still untold, and many **lessons** still to be learned. We celebrate those who survive and we are grateful for those who continue to support their journeys...

There is talk in Canada about the need for an inquiry into missing and murdered women. I will end with an appeal on their behalf. Someone needs to accept the task of naming them and authenticating their stories.

There is such inconsistency among various websites that it is impossible for families to check if or where their loved one is listed. Even more ironically, the data in most major reports is protected by convoluted “confidentiality” which does not allow monitoring and modification.

I believe these cases need to be tracked and publicly documented.

As the RCMP report correctly observes, data **is** susceptible to human error, there **is** inconsistent collection of variables, and there **are** definitional challenges. Perhaps these can be opened to dialogue? How can partners and communities work together to find solutions, as they have been called to do, when data bases prohibit identity? Can we not work from the stories of the people and what is **already** public knowledge?

Not surprisingly however, from their nameless data, the RCMP report the **rate** of missing and murdered women is **four** times higher among the aboriginal population. However, the aboriginal population represents only 4.3% of Canada.

This means the **social** impact of 1017 victims within the aboriginal community would be equivalent of over **23,000** murdered women across Canada, and over **27,000** women if we include the 164 reported missing.

Would **that** be enough to have us take notice?

If we answer yes, we **must** pay attention to our aboriginal sisters and help **their** voices be heard among those who have **not** survived.”

October 14: Peace is every step

"Breathing in, I calm my body. Breathing out, I smile.
Dwelling in the present moment, I know this is a wonderful moment."

Peace is Every Step by Thich Nhat Hanh

2012: **Faith Jackson**, age 18, mother of a young son, was killed in a hit-and-run collision. An Edmonton man was later convicted of failing to remain at the scene of an accident and sentenced to 30 months in jail.

My dear Cara,

2003: My friend Pat and I were featured in the *Globe and Mail* under the headline "Grieving mothers form bond over daughters' disappearances." The subject is self-explanatory.

2005: Looking back two years later, I see it was a well written article. References were non-stigmatizing, such as "victims," "women," "bodies," and even "skull." My statement made sense: "...nobody can hurt her anymore and really nobody can hurt me anymore and so I can take this and turn it around and maybe help somebody else."

2016: While scanning the obituaries, as was my usual custom, I found an answer to my quest of the year – how to remain centered in face of political controversy, how to live peacefully in a city that seemed to scapegoat women by "regulating" commercial sexual exploitation, how to be happy in a world seemingly gone astray. It was not a new question except that I felt particularly drained and needed a way to stay fresh.

My answer came in the above quote: **"Breathing in, I calm my body; breathing out, I smile."** How ironical that I needed to develop an intervention for coping with the decisions and actions of my own City Council.

October 15: Sympathy for a killer

2008: My 'year of service' as Acting Executive Director of CEASE ended when Kate Quinn returned from her sabbatical. Even though I had several years of previous volunteer experience, it was humbling to learn the complexities of the not-for-profit world. I have new appreciation for those who work under continual funding challenges and for causes not well understood by the general population.

Dear Cara,

2005: The *Edmonton Sun* headline was "Sympathy for a Killer." This caught my eye because it was the story of Ross Davis, a young 16-year-old Edmonton boy who murdered his abusive stepfather in 1976 when you were still a toddler. The stepfather was released from jail after serving four months for raping Ross' sister (possibly a miscarriage of justice that so little time was sentenced.) Ross was afraid the man would continue to abuse her and their five younger siblings. I remember wondering why the man was even allowed back in their house.

Ross was sentenced to life imprisonment and pardoned in 1981 after serving five years. He reportedly married and had two children but became a chronic drug user and ended his own life in 2001. Who knows what abuse he suffered from the man he killed?

2017: Understanding Child Protective Services can be a challenge for observers. My concern these days is for the young son of your friend, Aura. Aura is still involved with drug abuse while her mom, Cinder, attempts to care for the little boy. Unfortunately, Aura treats her mother's home as a detox center, drop-in, hostel for her friends, storage for stolen property, meeting place for drug dealers, and protected user site. Cinder is subject to manipulations such as apologies, helplessness, blame, violence and threats of suicide while she continues to hope that, with enough chances, Aura will turn her life around.

October 16: Victor Malarek – a voice of clarity

“Men who buy sex feed the brutal human trafficking trade.”

Dear little Cara,

2003: Victor Malarek’s book, *The Natashas: Inside the New Global Sex Trade*, was reviewed in the *Globe and Mail*. The book documents hundreds of thousands of women from Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, and Romania who were sold into sexual slavery in the last decade. The horror and scale of trafficking is mind-numbing. We of Canada find it hard to believe so much poverty and corruption exists in Eastern Europe that young women could be forced to accept such terrible risks in seeking livelihood away from their homeland.

2009: Victor Malarek was keynote speaker in Edmonton at a fundraising event for an anti-human trafficking group that was building a safe house in Ukraine. Nobody speaks his truth so eloquently as Victor himself, as reported in the Edmonton Journal (October 19, 2009):

“There is a lot of ‘wink, wink, nudge, nudge’ still in our police forces, all the way up to the Crowns (prosecutors) and into the courts. That horse-blinder thinking has got to stop. We have to start looking at the reality that is out there, and the reality is that these women are being prostituted worldwide...

They are the victims of a system that is in place for men, so that you have to decriminalize the women and criminalize the men. Once you do that, you send out the message it is men who are responsible, and you will see things start to change.”

What will it take to shake the world into awareness? Exploited women are crying to be heard by police, by politicians, and even by ordinary citizens who are placated by “harm reduction” rhetoric. Conspiracy exists across the world against the young, poor, and ethnically subordinated groups. The “sex trade” is a vicious demeaning and degrading institution of inequality that cannot be sanitized by legalizing or decriminalizing it.

2017: A further book by Victor Malarek, *The Johns: Sex for Sale and the Men Who Buy It*, was released in 2010. It is difficult reading due to the depravity of the customers exposed. On a more positive note, I will include Victor's own words (emphasis added):

“The truth is simple... If men the world over did not demand paid sex, there would be no need to corral, break, and submit millions of women and children to this dehumanizing existence.

What have these women and children endured to be with these men? The violation of their bodies and the denial of their essence as human beings. What has it cost the “clients,” the johns? Nothing more than a few dollars.

Now multiply that by tens of millions of johns the world over. With billions of dollars streaming in, the profits are enormous. To ensure future profits, there must always be enough women willing to enter this so-called profession to satisfy the bottomless demand. Trouble is there never are... and never will be... The vast majority of women don't relish selling their bodies to survive.

Enter the traffickers, who through brute force ensure that there is an endless supply ready to satisfy the burgeoning demand – women of all ages, ethnicities, shapes, and sizes, women trained to submit to the full range of what johns demand. There's no question about it: the skyrocketing demand has contributed to global sex trafficking...” (p.293-294)

So what are we to do? Victor's suggestion for change are straight-forward (emphasis added): (1) **Target the johns:** Teach them what is at stake and hold them accountable for their actions. (2) **Abandon the fantasy of legalization:** Government sanctioned “respectability” will never sanitize the violence and degradation women endure. (3) **Change societal attitudes:** Society must confront how damaged masculinity has become. (4) **Start young:** We need to deal with the distortion of young minds by pornography. (5) **Educate boys:** They need to be taught loving relationships based on respect. (6) **Enforce the laws:** Pimps and traffickers need to be prosecuted and contained. (7) **Help the women:** The only avenue of escape is a real job. Society needs to address the economic and social inequities.

“This entire social tragedy boils down to one word: *dignity* – the dignity of women and girls worldwide... True equality between men and women will always be beyond reach as long as men feel they have the right to rent a woman’s body. It is not a right, and it never should be.” (Victor Malarek, as above, p.298)

Thank you, Victor, for supporting the women of the world.

October 17: Touched by Murder – the Journey

“Peace is being alone without being lonely.” Simple Reminders.com

Dear little Cara,

2008: The inaugural conference of the Victims of Homicide support society was held May 1-2. I was fortunate to have this group as part of my journey and encourage all helpers and family members across Canada to facilitate the development of similar supports. Patterned after Parents of Murdered Children in the United States, Edmonton’s group began as a grass-roots movement in 1994. It was founded by a brave mother who happened to watch a show on *Oprah* shortly after her son was killed.

The group evolved in different directions over the years as new members brought new visions, volunteer energy, and funding. A significant milestone was the decision to plan a conference to inform and train professionals. The event brought together survivors, police, media, victim services, justice resources and professionals who spoke about grief and trauma.

Keynote speaker Priscilla de Villiers, an advocate since the 1991 murder of her daughter, set the tone by suggesting our greatest failure is to create permanent victims. “We will never be the same, but our goal is to move on and be strong again.” She also cautioned on recognizing the difference between an advocate and a “pain in the neck.” We need to use our public face wisely. Oh dear, that can be a challenge for me at times.

2011: Another keynote speaker was Annette Stanwich with her talk “Forgive – Let Go – Live Free!” She reminded us that negative emotions can invade every cell of our body; hurt people go on to hurt others if they do not heal; and unless we get to the root cause of violent crimes, we cannot stop violence. “Letting go creates miracles. We cannot change the past; we can change our response.” Annette is author of *Forgiveness: The Mystery and Miracle* (2007).

2013: Edmonton trauma specialist Jacqui Linder spoke of “The Mourning After...” with dimensions of soul loss and the spectrum of recovery. Bringing love and loss together makes it bearable – the people we have lost are worthy of our tears. It is important to find a mission and learn about the journey of hope and our capacity for resilience. Quoting Gibran, she suggested “Pain is the breaking of the shell that contains our understanding.” Acceptance is our freedom.

Stevie Cameron, author of *The Pickton File* (2007) and *On the Farm* (2010), presented a synopsis of her research and the multiple traumas experienced not just by survivors and families of the missing, but by the many people involved in the investigations and court proceedings. Both books are compelling reading.

October 18: Canadian Heroes

1972: **David Matthew Wynn** was born in New Brunswick and later lived in Nova Scotia, a few years after we left. He was murdered in St. Albert on January 17, 2015.

2003: Nursing attendant **Carmen L'Hirondelle** of High Prairie, age 23, mother of three, was shot in the head by an acquaintance after she agreed to give him a ride. He was reportedly on a crack binge and convicted of second-degree murder March 16, 2006.

2017: **Gord Downie**, age 53, died a year after being diagnosed with incurable cancer.

Dear Cara,

2015: Life comes full circle in many ways. A major Canadian tragedy was the shooting death of **RCMP Constable David Wynn** at a St. Albert casino the early morning of January 17 where he went to confront a suspect about a stolen vehicle. The killer later took his own life as well. The connection is that you went to school with Dave's lovely wife Shelly in Nova Scotia and had friends in common. She remembers you. How poignant that we are linked tragedy.

Constable Wynn, age 43 and father of three sons, was respected and loved within his community where he also served as a DARE officer at an elementary school. Originally from New Brunswick, he graduated from high school in 1990, the year we moved back to Alberta. Dave completed paramedic training in 1994 and started work in Nova Scotia. He met Shelly MacInnis in 1997 when both were Red Cross first aid instructors and they married a year later.

Dave later expanded his dream to join the RCMP. He graduated in 2009 and St. Albert was his first posting. A full regimental funeral was held January 22, 2015. His sister Mona said in her eulogy: "David would want us to forgive. He was a peaceful man. He didn't have the time to even notice a reason for a grudge, much less hold one. He knew there were better things to hold on to, so he did. David was an ordinary man with an extraordinary capacity to make the world a better place for everyone around him."

2017: Another Canadian hero is **Gord Downie**, age 53, lead singer and lyricist with Canadian rock band The Tragically Hip from 1984, who died a year after being diagnosed with incurable brain cancer. Gord dedicated his last months to working toward reconciliation in support of the Indigenous people of Canada. In September he released *The Secret Path*, a multi-platform project of a graphic novel, music album and film which told the story of Chanie Wenjack. Chanie was a 12-year-old boy who died of starvation and exposure while trying to

walk home after escaping from a residential school near Kenora in 1966. Gord felt it was a story all Canadians needed to hear. (See also December 6.) As well, the Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund was established to help improve the lives of Indigenous people.

Like Constable Wynn, I strive to be a peaceful person, hoping to make the world a better place, and like Gord Downie, I have a story Canada needs to hear.

October 19: Okisikow Angel Way

1997: The remains of **Joyce Ann Hewitt**, age 22, a student from Kamloops, were found scattered through thick bush at a horse-boarding farm near Sherwood Park. She had been visiting Edmonton.

Dear little Cara,

2000: Significant world news was France tried its first person under a 1994 law prohibiting “sex tourism” with minors. The man was accused of raping an 11-year-old girl in Thailand. The UN Children’s Fund estimated two million children around the world were involved in “prostitution.” I use quotation marks as the p-word implies mutuality and is not applicable for children. One trial is a small beginning in stemming millions of child-rapists.

2011: There is a short avenue, only one block long, east of downtown Edmonton, running in front of the Women’s Emergency Centre, where you often slept in your drug-using days. On June 14 this stretch of avenue was named Okisikow (Angel) Way in honour of all women who experience violence and who continue to suffer. Okisikow means “*angel*” in Cree.

The sign blade was designed by local artist **Gloria Neapetung** (1970-2016). Gloria was a member of Yellow Quill First Nation in northern Saskatchewan who learned to survive on her own from age 13. After a difficult life on the street, she was sentenced for four years in federal prison for “accessory to murder” because she refused to testify about a violent boyfriend who

fatally stabbed two men in Regina in 2004. While incarcerated, Gloria discovered she was a talented artist, creating murals, sketches, paintings, beading, as well as working in leather and sculpting. After her release in 2008, Gloria stayed in Edmonton and became involved in several social justice movements as well as sharing her story and art.

2017: Okisikow Angel Way was rededicated on June 11 as part of the 10th annual Stolen Sisters and Brothers Awareness Walk with bigger signs unveiled at each entrance.

October 20: Edmonton activist - Founder of Memorial March

2005: **Delores Dawn Brower**, age 33, was listed as a missing person by Project KARE, 17 months after she was last seen on May 13, 2004, hitchhiking on 118 Avenue in Edmonton. Her remains were found eleven years later. (See April 19, 2015.)

Hi sweetie,

2005: News reported another missing woman. It's just as well that I was not phoned for comment. It was frustrating that 17 months had to pass before Delores' disappearance was taken seriously. She was the third woman reported missing this year, all petite and pretty.

As I headed through the mall, a very pregnant young woman said I looked familiar and asked if I had done any presentations lately. I guessed correctly she was from a local community college. She said she had started her practicum but planned to take a break as she was already dilating. She wasn't sure if she would have her baby in Edmonton or Rocky Mountain House but didn't seem worried either way.

Later that evening I received a call from a lady who identified herself as Danielle. She was a friend of several women who had disappeared in Edmonton and was setting up her own call service and web-site women could access. Danielle told me there was to be a press release

about Rachel Quinney's autopsy results and mutilation. I doubted any mutilation would be reported as that would be what police call "hold-back" information, known only to the killer.

2017: Danielle Boudreau and I became friends over the next few years. She began the Memorial March for the Murdered and Missing Women of Edmonton in 2006 (See February 14) patterned after the Valentine's Day marches held in Vancouver since 1991 to honour the women murdered there. Danielle organized the Edmonton March every year until 2017 when she stepped down. During the interim, Memorial Marches were picked up by many other cities and organizations across Canada.

October 21: Mrs. Universe

1989: **Ashley Callingbull** was born on the Enoch Cree Nation west of Edmonton. She is the first Canadian and only First Nations woman to win the Mrs. Universe title (August 29, 2015) and is a strong advocate for women's rights.

Cara, my dear little indomitable spirit,

2005: An *Edmonton Journal* headline read, "Love and support of family and friends essential during the grieving process." This is hardly news but encouraging that the experience of grief was acknowledged: "The most important thing to remember is that grief is a process, not a stable condition... Sharing one's mourning with people in a similar situation is therapeutic."

2015: The story of Ashley Callingbull is a remarkable example of resilience. She grew up in poverty, survived physical and sexual abuse as a child, and was bullied at school. To help heal, Ashley dug deep into her own sense of self and turned to her Enoch Cree Nation culture. She began participating in local beauty pageants, graduated from high school, completed a television program, and became a model, actress, and motivational speaker.

Ashley planned to compete in the Miss Universe pageant but switched to Mrs. Universe after marrying in February 2015. The Mrs. Universe pageant was based on a platform of domestic violence awareness and took into account the charitable and community work of participants. Ashley used the occasion to showcase her Cree culture. During the national outfit parade, she chose a jingle dress traditionally worn by dancers at powwow celebrations, and for the talent portion, she sang a traditional Cree song while dressed in white buckskin.



After winning her Mrs. Universe title in August 2015 at age 25, Ashley appeared on *Amazing Race Canada* in 2016 with her stepfather Joel Ground. An example of the power and possibility of transformation, Ashley continues her awareness and charity work with speeches, workshops, and international appearances.

October 22: False confessions

"I learned to GIVE not because I have much but because I know exactly how it feels to have NOTHING."

The Hunger Site (May 19, 2014)

2005: **Sara Easton**, age 18, was shot while walking home from an Edmonton bar.

Dear Cara,

2005: An *Edmonton Journal* headline read, “False-confession rate shocks crime researcher.” An “astonishingly high” number of suspects falsely confess to crimes they did not commit, according to new research presented at an international conference. The study, based on nearly 2000 young people ages 15 to 24, said 7% made false admissions because they were covering for a friend or felt intimidated by the police.

This afternoon Will and I stopped at Scott Gallery downtown to view an art exhibit. The gallery was just around the corner from your first job at Esthetic Hair. That was a refreshingly normal step for you to complement your Beauty Culture studies. You did well, were appreciated at the salon, and spent your first paycheck on great clothes for work. But the job lasted only until the weekend morning you arrived home just in time to go to work.

Down the street was the apartment where your boyfriend Tall lived, and where he was evicted after your friend Carma got drunk and created a disturbance. I wonder what happened to Tall. He was a nice guy but too passive, like when Audacious stayed with him and he phoned to say he didn’t know how to get rid of her. I suggested simply packing her clothes and driving her back to the city. Somehow, that was not enough. She is gone now too, killed in a car accident.

The evening news was tragic. A young girl walking home with a group of friends after celebrating her 18th birthday was shot and killed by a passing motorist in what appeared to be a random attack. Terrible things can happen without warning, while the motives of killers remain unfathomable.

October 23: Joy Smith, an exemplary politician

"The ultimate relaxation is to be at peace with the world as conflict creates tension."

Source Unknown

Dear Cara,

2005: News identified the young girl shot last night as **Sara Easton**, not Aboriginal and not living a high-risk lifestyle. Her group of friends experienced an earlier murder in February 2004 when a young man was stabbed at the same bar where they celebrated Sara's birthday. The police are calling the shooter a coward, much like the men in the world who violate innocent children under the cover of darkness.

2014: Earlier this year (See July 8) Peter MacKay, then Minister of Justice, was noted for his work in introducing legislation to protect vulnerable people from sexual exploitation. Joy Smith, Conservative MP from Kildonan - St. Paul, Manitoba, must also be acknowledged as someone who has championed the protection of trafficked people for many years. She is recognized as one of Canada's leading anti-trafficking activists.

Joy Smith, born Feb 20, 1947, in Deloraine, Manitoba, is an exceptional woman. Her awareness of the depravity and pervasiveness of abuse to which some children are subjected was deepened through the work of her son, a former Integrated Child Exploitation investigator. She witnessed how much the impact of his work changed him and decided to join the fight against those who prey upon our most vulnerable citizens.

The Joy Smith Foundation was established in 2012 as a non-profit registered charity to provide funds to NGOs (non-government organizations) in caring for victims. Women are provided with food, clothing, shelter, counseling and support to begin their lives anew. Please check: www.joysmith.ca or www.joysmithfoundation.com.

In Medicine Wheel tradition, Freeze Up Moon teaches us to focus our energies, and to be adaptive while travelling in Creation between the Earth and Spirit worlds. We learn to stay grounded with our desire for truth and our ability to create changes.

October 24: Freeze Up Moon

“By living fully in the moment, you will accomplish the seemingly impossible without even realizing that you are doing it.”
Source Unknown

1989: The naked body of **Bernadette Lynda Ahenakew**, age 22, mother of three sons, was found in a ditch on a rural road near Sherwood Park. She was from Ile-a-la-Crosse in Saskatchewan, and last seen by her boyfriend almost a month earlier.

Dear Cara,

1989: There seemed to be some common themes. **Bernadette Lynda Ahenakew** died eight years earlier than you but at the same age; she too was found near Sherwood Park and was missing a month before her body was discovered. “I hope death is kinder to her than life was. She didn’t deserve to go that way,” a former foster father was quoted as saying. “She was someone who wasn’t able to get hold of her own life. She took the wrong road to go down and ended up in the wrong circumstances. She was a nice girl.” That sounds like you.

One difference is that Bernadette left three young sons. Another disturbing difference is that Bernadette’s younger sister, **Laura Ann Ahenakew**, was murdered a year later, in 1990, also at age 22, her body found west of Edmonton. Laura left behind a daughter. There is very little public information about Laura and she seems to have disappeared from public awareness.

2005: Oprah’s guest was the widow of a 9/11 casualty, still depressed four years later and medicated into numbness. She was afraid the sadness would be more than she could bear. That is always the tension. It feels like betrayal to live our own life well when shadowed with the sadness of loss. And yet delaying grief also postpones recovery.

October 25: Dr. Gabor Mate and Trauma

1990: The partially clad body of **Mavis Mason**, age 29, mother of five, was found in a ditch on a country road west of Edmonton. She had been stabbed to death.

Dear little Cara,

2016: Gabor Mate, a former Eastside Vancouver physician, has become an inspirational spokesperson for addicted and vulnerable persons of society. He maintains that a person's battle with addictions or mental illness is almost always at the root of homelessness. People with limited resilience, whose capacity was not developed in childhood, are more devastated by adverse circumstances because they lack the ability to bounce back.

In his own words, speaking about the epidemic of First Nation suicides, Dr. Mate states in an editorial to the *Globe and Mail* (April 13, 2016):

“The ordinary Canadian citizen simply has no idea, cannot even begin to imagine, what misfortunes, tragedies and other kinds of adversity many native young people experience by the time they reach adolescence – how many deaths of loved one they witness, what abuse they endure, what despair they feel, what self-loathing plagues them, what barriers to a life of freedom and meaning they face.

At the core of the suicide pandemic is unresolved trauma, passed almost inexorably from one generation to the next, along with social conditions that induce further hopelessness...

The march of the history and progress Canada celebrates, from which we derive much pride and national identity, meant catastrophe for natives: the loss of lands and livelihood and freedom of movement, the mockery and invalidation of their spiritual ways, the near-extirpation of their culture, the corruption of their intra-familial and intra-communal relationships, and finally, for nearly a hundred years, the state-sanctioned abduction, rape, physical abuse and mental torture of their children...

Canadians must be helped to see their First Nations peers in their fullness, which includes their humanity, grandeur unspeakable suffering and strength... We need to celebrate the First Nations cultural renaissance, a tribute to human resilience, now taking place.”

October 26: Highway of Tears review

What lasts is the impact we leave on minds and hearts.

Dear Cara,

2015: *Globe and Mail* headline: “I’m really hoping we can start to see some truth.” Those were the words of Dawn Lavell-Harvard, then president of Native Women’s Association of Canada, as the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the RCMP completed its investigation into the treatment of indigenous women and girls in northern British Columbia.

Part of the focus was the Highway of Tears where at least 18 women disappeared with five not yet found. All were from British Columbia except where noted. They include:

Gloria Moody from Williams Lake, body found in 1969,
Micheline Pare from Hudson Hope, body found in 1970,
Pamela Darlington from Kamloops, body found in 1973,
Gale Weys from Clearwater, body found in 1973,
Colleen MacMillen from 100 Mile House, body found in 1974,
Monica Ignas, age 14 from Terrace, body found in 1974,
Monica Jack, age 12 from Merritt, body found in 1978,
Maureen Mosie from Kamloops, body found in 1981,
Shelly-ann Bacsu from Hinton, Alberta, disappeared in 1983,
Alberta Williams from Prince Rupert, body found in 1989
Delphine Nikal from Smithers, disappeared in 1990,
Alishia Germaine from Prince George, body found in 1994,
Roxanne Thiara from Burns Lake, body found in 1994,
Ramona Wilson from Smithers, body found in 1994,
Lana Derrick from Terrace, disappeared in 1995,
Nicole Hoar from Red Deer, Alberta, disappeared in 2002,
Tamara Chipman from Prince Rupert, disappeared in 2005,
Aielah Saric Auger from Prince George, body found in 2006.

October 27: Miscarriage of justice

2017: A “Take Back the Night” march was held in Edmonton to raise awareness of people vulnerable to abuse. One participant was singer-songwriter Stephanie Harpe whose mother was murdered. Stephanie was physically abused by a former boyfriend but wanted to highlight positive stories of hope and inspiration.

Dear Cara,

2005: Dawn accompanied me to Calgary for a Criminal Justice conference. We checked into the International Hotel where you and I stayed one summer when you were eight years old. The boys were away for a month so I offered you a choice of vacation. You asked to “stay in a hotel.” One night was all I could afford at the time. You loved it, watched TV all day, and wanted room service for every meal. We spent a few days later with a friend in Calgary.

This evening Dawn and I attended a play, the *Steven Truscott Story*, which told how he at age 14 was arrested, tried, convicted and sentenced to death based on circumstantial evidence. I was moved to tears and expressed my condolences to Steven, who was present, wondering if it was hard for him to sit through it. He replied simply, “it was much harder the first time.”

Steven spent four months as Canada’s youngest-ever death row inmate until his sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. Credit must be given to his parents, family, and supporters who helped him endure those terrible years. He was paroled 10 years later and lived a private life with a legal new name for almost 30 years before coming forward to fight for exoneration.

A month later, a 700-page report released by the Justice Department concluded what most Canadians knew, i.e. there was “likely a miscarriage of justice” in 1959 when 14-year-old Stephen was sentenced to death for the rape and murder of his 12-year-old schoolmate Lynn Harper. As much as I want justice for you, I do not want an innocent person wrongly blamed.

October 28: Conference highlights

“If someone treats you badly, just remember that there is something wrong with them, not with you. Healthy people do not go around destroying other human beings.”

Mindsetofgreatness, Evolver Social Movement

1985: **Kathleen Whiteman**, age 26, died from stab wounds received at her Edmonton home. Her husband, who tried to stab himself, was charged with first-degree murder.

Dear Cara,

2005: A presentation, “Reparative Justice: Healing the Hurt of Victimization,” was given by Rev Dale Lang at the Criminal Justice conference. His son, Jason, was killed in a school shooting April 1999. Rev Lang made the comment that time changes things. “They do not get easier but we get more used to living with the pain of our loss. We live a changed life.” Rev Lang credits forgiveness with setting him free from anger. He is also grateful that his last half-hour with his son was incredibly positive and their last goodbye was as the best of friends.

Also speaking at the conference was Arlene Gaudreault, a criminologist from Montreal, who commented we must stay in the world of the living. Although victims and offenders often come from different worlds, we are joined by suffering, our respective paths marked by hurt.

Another clear memory was a media workshop, where a journalist reported a management decision, as a sign of respect, to not use the word ‘cop’ in their paper. “Wow,” I thought, “if media can make that kind of decision, there are a lot more words I would like to see eliminated!”

2017: There has been some progress in respectful media reporting and I have learned for the most part NOT to use words I don’t want repeated. “Victims” is sufficient to describe those who have been exploited or caught in a “high-risk” lifestyle of drugs and violence. “Survivors” describe those who have managed to exit and are in various stages of recovery and healing.

October 29: Reflections on grief

The feeling of guilt is common among parents who lose children; we always wish we could have prevented their death.

Dear Cara,

2006: I was fortunate to attend a Canada Victims Assistance in Mississauga where I shared some reflections about my own journey after your death:

My first response was an **overwhelming grief**. It suddenly made sense to me that some people wear black as part of their mourning. I wished for a big button I could wear in public that said, “Be nice to me. I’m a grieving parent...”

My second response is what I called **dissociation**, the ability to live on many different levels. For example, I was able to go to work and manage all day, saving my tears for my way home, crying and driving blindly so that I could be semi-composed again for my husband...

I also experienced **alienation, numbness, and passivity**, feelings of being alone in the world, not really caring, and living for others rather than myself... I felt incredibly alone and empty as I went through the motions of ritual and necessity.

My **anger** was extremely diffuse... I felt I had failed my daughter as a parent for not being able to prevent or cure her many afflictions and I was angry at society for not providing the supports that might have helped me save her.

Another surprising symptom was the **cognitive difficulty**... To this day I have little conscious recollection of those first few weeks.

Spiritual crisis is often listed as part of grief. For me it was a **need for meaning and understanding**. I used to believe that good could conquer evil and I wanted to believe it again, yet it felt like a betrayal to think that good could come from my daughter’s death...

Guilt is common among parents who lose their children. We all wish we could have somehow foreseen and prevented the tragic circumstance. For me, it also became a **fear of contamination** (that I would be a risk to others) and a **fear of loving again** (to prevent that possibility)...

Autopsies, police investigations, and media reporting compound the trauma of homicide and contribute to **secondary victimization**. Examples include:

(1) With the intrusive influences of the media, the deceased becomes part of public domain and their tragedy is sensationalized.

2) Victims of homicide are often devalued by being stigmatized and blamed for contributing to their own death.

(3) Families dealing with the courts soon learn that is a different reality from justice. Charges are against the state rather than the victim, and suddenly attention is focused on the rights of the offender.

(4) Societal pressure to be “over it” comes in many subtle ways from other people who find our anger uncomfortable or improper.

In summary I would like to say a few words about “**closure.**” Everybody seems to think we need it and everybody has ideas about how we can get it. To me there is no such thing as closure. I believe the process of reconstructing life without a loved one is a continuing process. We are forever changed by loss and, as time goes by, we hopefully look more to the future than to the past.



October 30: The REDress Project

“The colour red is a very important sacred colour, the only colour spirits can see. Red is a ‘calling back of the spirits’ of these women and allowing them a chance to be among us and have their voices heard through their family members and community.”

Jamie Black in an interview with CTV News 2014

Dear Cara,

2012: The REDress Project, by Jamie Black, is installation art, an aesthetic response to the national issue of murdered and missing Indigenous women. Jamie, a Metis artist based in Winnipeg, sought to create increased awareness of social and political events with her work. She

explained, “Through the installation, I hope to draw attention to the gendered and racialized nature of violent crimes against Aboriginal women and to evoke a presence through the marking of absence.” Her original intention was to collect 600 red dresses to be installed in public places as a visual reminder of the women no longer with us.

The first year was remarkable. Exhibitions included the University of Winnipeg – March 2011, Manitoba Legislature – May 2011, University of Ottawa – July 2011, Thompson Rivers University – October 2011, University of Manitoba – November 2011, and University of Alberta – March 2012.

2014: A permanent exhibition, *From Sorrow to Strength*, was installed at the Canadian Museum of Human Rights in Winnipeg. Dozens of red dresses hang in a forest of mostly birch trees. The installation is close to a view of the Red River where the body of 15-year-old Tina Fontaine was found (See August 17) and 16-year-old Rinelle Harper was miraculously rescued (See September 28 & November 8). The site of the Museum is considered sacred ground by First Nations who came to trade there long before the Europeans.



Museum of Human Rights

2017: Jamie Black called for the public to display red dresses on October 4, the National Day of Vigils, as a show of support for missing and murdered women. Red dresses have since appeared in many places at different times, such as those below which are a part of a photography movement championed by Edmonton's Mufty Mathewson. (See December 16 for REdress Photography Project.)



Photo credit: Mufty Mathewson



Photo credit: Tina Cho

October 31: Hallowe'en

Halloween dates back 2000 years to ancient Celtic festivals celebrating the end of harvest. It was believed that on October 31st the worlds of the living and dead overlapped and the deceased could come back to life. Masks and costumes were worn to mimic or appease evil spirits. (Edmonton Sun, Oct 30, 2013)

2004: **Glynnis Lee Hall (Cardinal)**, age 40, was stabbed in Edmonton. A woman, age 30, was charged with second-degree murder. They had apparently been arguing.

2015: **Leona Neapetung-Stevens**, age 17, was found stabbed in her west Edmonton home. A 20-year old man was charged with second-degree murder.

Dear Cara,

2001: Cherry Kingsley was featured in a November *Reader's Digest* article entitled "Out of the Shadows." Cherry was a young woman, born 1970, who ran away from an abusive step-father at age ten, lived in a series of foster homes, and at age 14 accompanied so-called friends to Vancouver. She was forced to sell herself while a pimp injected her with drugs. She suffered an overdose before her life began to change.

Cherry later founded Alberta Youth in Care and Custody Network, helped launch Alberta Safehouse Society, and spent five months in Ottawa with the National Youth in Care Network. She slipped back to the street and drugs for three years before making a final break in 1991 at age 21. She was hired by the B.C. government and, in September 1996, was invited by UNICEF to speak at the First World Congress Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children.

This led to a world congress for sex-trade youth in Victoria in 1998. The next year, in partnership with Save the Children Canada, Cherry launched her "Out From the Shadows and Into the Light" network from headquarters in Toronto. She organized talks at schools nationally and consulted with social agencies in Canada and other countries. In October 2001 she received the Governor General's Award for her work.

November 1: All Saints Day – Sacred bundles

November is Family Violence Prevention month in Alberta.

“In order for children to remain sacred, it takes the whole Community to raise a child.”
Komataan Consulting hosting a two-day conference in Calgary Nov 1-2, 2017

Dear Cara,

2004: I was invited to speak at the Prison for Women in Edmonton and was conscious my audience had probably been victimized in many ways by life circumstances. I modified my story to hopefully offer a new perspective:

“I can only encourage you to learn to know yourselves so that you can understand your own strengths and continue to improve whatever needs improving. For those of you who are parents, you can still be loving and supportive to the children in your life even if you are not physically present. You can be interested in what they are doing and listen to their concerns and encourage them in their activities...

It is so important to choose our partners wisely... There was a cartoon in the paper a couple weeks ago that I would like to share: Brad is a nice regular guy who has a crush on Toni. Toni is a beautiful young woman who is going out with a big rude possessive muscular jerk called Dirk.

Brad asks, “Toni, do you love Dirk?” Toni says, “I’ve asked myself that question a hundred times, Brad. You’ve only seen Dirk’s angry side... and I hate that Dirk. But he has a good side, full of fun and excitement. I enjoy that Dirk. So does that add up to love? I just don’t know.” Brad replies, “Well, I’m no math whiz but I think plus one and minus one equals nothing.”

We all need to be careful that we don’t sell ourselves short by settling for little pieces. You deserve to be the BEST you can be in a relationship and you deserve to be with someone who is not a compromise...”

A young lady known to me as a survivor from previous Offender Programs happened to be incarcerated at the time and graciously offered to be my guide for the day. She showed me around the living units, including the “drug-free” house. Apparently, even in federal prisons, choosing to be drug free is optional, with supports for those who make that conscious decision.

November 2: Celebrate diversity

“Diversity is the one thing we all have in common. Celebrate it every day.” Anonymous

Dear Cara,

2005: A colleague at work asked if I was the lady in the paper on the weekend. I spoke out in Calgary about my long wait for justice, referring to myself as a “Project KARE mom.” She hadn’t known my history previously but said her husband had to rescue his daughter from a drug house once, and she thought I was doing a good thing.

2016: As you know, I signed up for “Seven Weeks with Spirit,” a series of audio messages offered by local medium Carmel Joy Baird, as a possible connection with you. Most of the messages were quite amazing, starting with Week One:

“Cara has a beautiful smile and a big wave when she comes in like, ‘It’s me, Mom, I’m really here.’ Cara brings with her this warm inviting fragrance – I’m not sure if it’s her perfume or her lotion but I can tell when she comes in. She talks about a necklace you wear for her and she’s like ‘Oh gosh, Mom, too many pictures of me.’ She says she likes to make people laugh and she’s very happy in heaven. There’s a lot of laughter for her now that maybe she didn’t have before. She said she loves you and she misses you.”

For sure you liked to wear perfume; I always wear a locket with your image safely tucked inside; and my office is full of pictures. My “shrine” area is set up with several standing photos and angel figurines, little horses and candles surround your memorial urn, and three framed collages hang on the wall. Even the “click clack” clock you picked out for your bedroom is still ticking. Beanie bears Hope and Blessed, with Beanie bunny Grace, kneel in silent prayer. Yes, you liked to be happy and help others laugh. Coincidence? Possibly? Or perhaps Carmel really did make a connection.

November 3: Standing Together

2011: **Amber O'Hare**, age 59, a Toronto mother of two, died. She was the creator of MissingNativeWomen.org which is now closed. Amber was featured in the *Edmonton Journal* six years earlier on September 25, 2005, when she visited reserves across Canada as an AIDS educator and heard many stories of missing women. She began to build an online catalogue and documented hundreds of cases coast to coast. It is unknown if or where her records have been archived.

Dear Cara,

2005: *Standing Together: Women Speak Out about Violence and Abuse*, edited by Linda Goyette, is an anthology of stories and poems written primarily by Alberta women who survived domestic violence. It was a fundraising project of Alberta Council of Women's Shelters, and more importantly, an opportunity to address the root problems of poverty and despair and to give victims more power over their own lives. Escape stories of the women, however, do little to resolve the accumulative pathology of abusive people, mostly men. What is it about our society that we tolerate such insecurity and violence?

While at the bookstore launch, a gentleman in front of me suddenly asked, "Don't I know you?" He was Michael Walters, former reporter from *Our Voice* magazine, who wrote about you after your death. I told him I too was writing a book, and he was in it. After my manuscript was complete, I hoped to contact all my references. Who knew it would be such a long time?

Oprah today interviewed a bright young singer who claimed to still love a man who beat her several times. She just wanted him to say he was sorry. Oprah and a guest psychologist asked where she learned such poor self-esteem that she allowed people to treat her that way. Yes, they admitted, it does wear on one to be emotionally abused and demeaned. But why do people accept abuse in the first place? Probably because it is mixed with kindness and they don't know what choices are possible. Unfortunately, wounded people seem to find each other.

November 4: “Nobody sees her”

To remember is to work for peace.

Dear Cara,

2005: My morning was spent reviewing RCMP notes. A tip from Charlene said she saw you at a Cambodian drug house two days before you disappeared. The question was how she knew it was two days when you were not found for a month.

2005: A celebration of Betty Nordin was held November 6 in Edmonton. She dedicated the following poem to all the women of the streets who have passed away or are still missing:

NOBODY SEES HER

She's sitting huddled in the corner of the building
Shivering in the cold
NOBODY SEES HER
She's standing on the street shivering in the rain
NOBODY SEES HER
She's sitting in the back of a greasy café
Hunched over a cup of coffee
NOBODY SEES HER
She's waiting for a john to pick her up
NOBODY SEES HER
She's sitting on a filthy floor covered with used
Points, garbage and empty beer bottles
NOBODY SEES HER
She's puking as she slaps and prods her veins so the rig
Can give her that moment of feeling good
NOBODY SEES HER
She's just a junkie people say;
She's nothing
NOBODY SEES HER
She's a missing, forgotten and lost girl
NOBODY SEES HER
But today, everybody sees her
She is found in an unmarked hole in
The ground

November 5: Mentally ill warehoused in prisons

“Don’t be afraid to stand up for what you believe in, even if it means standing alone.”

Gloria Daphne Deering @ nametests.com

2010: A skull was found near Westlock in central Alberta was later identified as **Annette Holywhiteman**, age 41. Annette was not seen since late August 2008. A second search of the property in May 2010 turned up more skeletal remains. Annette had registered with Project KARE as part of their proactive program. (Only the month, not date, of the discovery was reported in the media.)

Dear Cara,

2005: An *Edmonton Journal* headline revealed: “Mentally ill inmates ‘warehoused’ in prisons, ombudsman says.” It was disheartening to see confirmed what I already suspected. You certainly received no treatment when you were in jail, although it was for relatively brief periods.

2017: It seems Alberta invests considerable time and money to promote gender equity and prevention programs for vulnerable families. However, the need for shelters continues to grow. At least there are no ludicrous suggestions that physically abused women could be better “protected” in licensed facilities where violence is renamed “massage” and offenders are offered discretion for acting out in private rather than public spaces. One wonders how such justification is accepted for so-called “body-rub” facilities.

While public officials are united in calling on everyone to make social changes against gender-based physical violence, the same consciousness has not yet expanded to victims of commercial sexual exploitation. Elected officials seem to shrug off federal legislation. Public safety is championed while private facilities are sanctioned. We are to believe that requiring providers to be “licensed” will somehow protect them from humiliating violations, degradation and abuse. If only they could be assured as much safety and discretion as their buyers.

November 6: New age of protection?

1999: **Ruby Anne McDonald**, age 49, was found dead in Edmonton and believed by her family to have been murdered.

2014 Important historical note: Official assent was given to Bill C-36, the Protection of Communities and Exploited Person Act, which criminalizes the purchase of sexual services in Canada.

Dear Cara,

2014: Finally in Canada, we have a legislative option to criminalize men who buy sex, as well as pimps and human traffickers. I'm sure you are rejoicing in Heaven.

The preamble to Bill C-36, the **Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act** includes:

Whereas the Parliament of Canada has grave concerns about the exploitation that is inherent in prostitution and the risks of violence posed to those who engage in it;

Whereas the Parliament of Canada recognizes the social harm caused by the objectification of the human body and the commodification of sexual activity;

Whereas it is important to protect human dignity and the equality of all Canadians by discouraging prostitution, which has a disproportionate impact on women and children;

Whereas it is important to denounce and prohibit the purchase of sexual services because it creates a demand for prostitution;

Whereas it is important to continue to denounce and prohibit the procurement of persons for the purpose of prostitution and the development of economic interests in the exploitation of the prostitution of others as well as the commercialization of prostitution; ...

CRIMINAL CODE

20. The Act is amended by adding the following under section 286:

COMMODIFICATION OF SEXUAL ACTIVITY

286.1 (1) Everyone who, in any place, obtains for consideration, or communicates with anyone for the purpose of obtaining for consideration, the sexual services of a person is guilty...

2017: The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Women and Girls came to Edmonton on a Monday. Although I had not received an invitation or confirmation of testimony, the poorly advertised opening ceremonies were in fact “open” to the public. I attended the fire ceremony, offered a prayer bundle to the flames, met Chief Commissioner Marion Buller, and listened to speeches thanking Creator for the sacred gathering and opportunity for healing.



November 7: MMIWG Inquiry in Edmonton

The Inquiry is about truth gathering, it is to be meaningful and safe. Stories are powerful and important. This is a Canadian problem.

Dear little Cara,

2017: I attended the first day MMIWG hearings, was finally able to register and confirmed that, “Yes, I would still like to testify.” There were several others who had been similarly overlooked and in due time, the queue was managed by conscientious staff.

We soon learned there were two rooms for public testimony and names were not made public prior to beginning, so it was by chance who observers heard or did not. Family were required to swear an oath of truth, and chosen stories were facilitated by legal counsel. My first witnessing was the family of **Amber Tuccaro** who expressed serious concerns that, even in 2010,

the investigation of her disappearance by local police left much to be desired. A formal complaint was met with no apology but reassurance that “policy had changed.” One would hope. Recommendations included more out-reach to family members, more health resources, and better ways for the Inquiry to contact community members.

Families who testified were offered eagle feathers, gathered from Haida Gwaii, to lift them up and give them strength in return for their sacred gift of testimony. More stories were presented of frustrations with reporting; of families doing their own search through walks, posters, Facebook, and media; discouragement when police reported investigations were “exhausted;” and feelings of anger, fear, and power imbalance.

Stephanie Harpe, singer-songwriter from Edmonton, spoke of her mother ***Ruby Anne McDonald*** who died in 1999 at age 49. “Why don’t I know that name?” I wondered, “I thought I was on top of all the Edmonton deaths.” The mystery was solved when I heard her story. Ruby was found at the bottom of her stairs with blunt trauma to her head. Her injuries were ruled accidental by police. Her family believe she was murdered by an abusive boyfriend. Ruby had attended residential school and suffered from addictions and depression during her adult life. In happier times, she was funny and loved to dance. Stephanie remembers that her mother was always full of love and pride, and helped her register in many classes, such as modelling and choir. Stephanie wanted to see a family data base created with more resources for healing.

What would you have wanted? For sure, you needed more resources when you were struggling on the street. You would be in favor of a public data base of names because you would like to be recognized and remembered. You were always generous so would like your memory used for good, so others might enjoy the peace and freedom you were denied.

November 8: More dynamics to consider

2014: **Rinelle Harper**, age 15, was celebrating the completion of high school midterms when she became separated from her friends, was sexually assaulted by two men, beaten, and thrown into the Assiniboine River in Winnipeg. She was discovered seven hours later and survived to become an advocate of missing and murdered women.

2015: **Vicki Cardinal**, age 35, from Peerless Trout First Nation in northern Alberta, died in an Edmonton hospital. Her common-law husband was charged with manslaughter.

Dear little Cara,

2005: I decided to attend a Humour workshop and arrived early at the downtown library. A very disturbed lady sidled up to me and whispered, “I hope you enjoy your fry. You’re going to the electric chair.” Another of our city’s lost souls was wandering the streets.


I was pleasantly surprised to notice a Sharps container for needles in the bathroom by the library theatre. That was possibly the closest Edmonton came to a safe injection site at the time. Interesting, I thought, that the public library was more tolerant than the Women’s Emergency Shelter, where women were denied accommodation for using needles.

2017: On the third day of the Inquiry, another lady told of her sister **Ruth**, age 51, missing from Athabasca in 2008 and found eleven days later out of town on the ice of the river. Again I wondered why I was not familiar with the name but soon realized it was because the police considered her death a suicide. Her sister testified Ruth was waiting for surgery on her ankle and could not walk far, much less up a steep embankment to the river.


When it came time for my statement, I presented written documents to complement my verbal testimony. A summary was included of the seven dimensions of vulnerability discussed earlier – learning disabilities, neurological disorders, social deficits, addictions, mental illness, homelessness, and incarceration. (See March 13-20 and September 15.)

As well, the Inquiry was also asked to consider **seven additional dynamics**:


(1) Police response to missing persons:

	<p>I tried several times to report my daughter missing only to be told there was “no file.” When I insisted that a file be created and asked what would happen next, I was told “Now we wait for a body.” No one should ever hear that. One can only imagine how many times this type of response was played out across Canada.</p> <p>Police jurisdictions need consistent, proactive and respectful protocols. Hopefully we have learned from Vancouver. The RCMP finally have a “Missing Persons” unit.</p>
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(2) Support for victims of violence and families of missing:

<p>Many victims, missing and murdered never make it to court. A variety of support services need to be developed for survivors and families. For example, Edmonton is fortunate to have, among others, CEASE: Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation, Victims of Homicide Support Society, Inner City Victims of Homicide support group under Metis Child and Family Services, and KARE Victim Services program.</p>	
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(3) “Domestic” violence:

	<p>Domestic violence crosses all ethnic and economic classes and unfortunately, statistics show Indigenous families are not exempt. Respect, equality and peaceful conflict resolution need to be taught and modeled in homes, schools and all levels of society.</p> <p>Prevention would be more effective than increased shelter capacities and treatment programs, although those are sadly and desperately still needed.</p>
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(4) Sexual Exploitation:

We must acknowledge sexual exploitation would not exist without sex trade consumers – and that vulnerable women and children have been targeted throughout history. Best Practices includes initiatives such as empowering women and communities through education and awareness, curbing demand, educating men, raising political awareness, training for law enforcement, peer support, exit strategies, media campaigns, building networks, and services for victim/survivors including rehabilitation, economic, and education, etc.

We have legislation with the **Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act** (assented to Nov, 2014); we need enforcement and education.



(5) Incentives for economic and social equality:



Growing up poor on the farm was humiliating but there was hope that education and employment could provide escape to a better life. Poverty without hope is demoralizing.

Jean Vanier said “the fruit of humiliation is either depression or violence.” I cannot imagine the indignity of being treated as a second-class citizen simply because of race. The TRC Calls to Action have highlighted concerns in Child Welfare, Education, Language and Culture, Health and Justice.

We know that that economically disadvantaged populations are prone to discrimination and exploitation around the world. Indigenous women appear to be at risk of increased violence both within and outside of the own communities.

(6) Judicial Monitoring:

One would like to think the legal / court systems monitor themselves but that often seems to not happen. I acknowledge that accused have rights to a fair trial and representation. However, it is extremely frustrating to hear defense lawyers use derogatory and stigmatizing language when referring to victims.

The 2017 Alberta Court of Appeal decision to overturn the murder acquittal re Cindy Gladue is an example of courts correcting themselves, although unfortunate it was required.



(7) Memorials:

 <p>A memorial poster for Caralyn Aubrey King. At the top, it says "20 years have passed" in a decorative font. Below this is a color photograph of a young woman with long, wavy brown hair, smiling. Under the photo, the text reads: "Caralyn Aubrey King December 28, 1974 - September 1, 1997". It then follows with a message: "Missing a month before you were found by a farmer harvesting his crop, the mystery of your death is still unsolved. Beautiful woman child, spirit now free, we carry on honoring all the missing and murdered. May the memory of your short life be used for good so others can enjoy the peace and freedom you were denied. Always remembered and deeply missed, Mom, family, and friends".</p>	<p>I would like to see recognition of all women and girls identified as missing and murdered. I would like to see a public website where information could be updated regularly. I would also like to see memorials in public places such as the Museum of Human Rights. Victims deserve to be named and honoured rather than blamed or shamed for their own deaths. Of course, families who chose to remain anonymous need the right to do so.</p> <p>In the 2010 Sisters in Spirit report, names of the 582 murdered and 115 missing were deemed “confidential” with the exception of 14 stories shared.</p> <p>Maryanne Pearce’s 2013 Awkward Silence was the first database (3329 women) created from public information.</p> <p>The 2013 RCMP Overview reported 1017 murdered and 164 missing but again the names were “confidential.” How is a family to know if or how their loved is counted?</p> <p>It is important that representative percentages from all ethnic groups be recognized. For example, the social impact of 1017 victims within the aboriginal community would be equivalent of over 23,000 murdered women across Canada, and over 27,000 women if we include the 164 reported missing.</p> <p>The CBC in 2015 posted pictures and brief bios of 242 missing and murdered across Canada.</p> <p>In 2016 (?) Edmonton’s IAAW Our Breaking Point listed 997 names from across Canada.</p> <p>Even the 2000 people who participated in pre-Inquiry meetings are now “confidential.” When are people to know if and how they will be acknowledged?</p>
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I was beginning to see a pattern much larger than the 150 or so names I had compiled from Alberta. Many more deaths had been dismissed as accidental or suicidal.

The 2015 website www.cbc.ca/missingandmurdered displayed pictures and stories of 242 unsolved cases. This was in response to the 2013 RCMP report that 225 cases were unsolved.

Since all names were considered “confidential,” CBC did their own research and discovered even more women. It is still unknown how many of the original 225 are included. To CBC’s credit, their number grew to 306 names plus another 34 cases were added, which authorities claim do not indicate foul play. A national public registry is long over-due.

2017: Still at the Inquiry, I was humbled and honoured to support another beautiful and brave survivor who testified anonymously. She was lured into exploitation as a homeless teen and controlled by an organized crime group with many American politicians and high-rollers among her “customers.” Even though several years had passed since her escape, she feared if she were recognized, her life could still be in danger. She had created an “exotic” pedigree for herself as an escort because Indigenous women were less valued and more at risk for abuse.

November 9: World Freedom Day – Kendra’s story

“Be stubborn about your goals, but flexible about your methods.” Unknown

Dear Cara,

Another amazing survivor speaks regularly for STOP: Sex Trade Offender Program. She worked as an “escort,” supposedly protected because she was “licensed” and “off the street”:

“I never thought I’d be able to say I’m an ex-sex trade worker. But I also never thought I would ever be a sex trade worker. I had a pretty normal upbringing, my parents are still married to each other, they ran a business together, and we lived an average middle-class life.

The only thing unusual about my childhood is that I was sexually molested in day care for about a year when I was three years old. There was a 7-year-old boy who used to find me every day at nap time and make me touch his penis. I was afraid to tell anyone in case I got in trouble and I didn’t know how to make him stop. I learned later that he was forced to watch porn with his dad every night so he had a rough time as well.

The result for me was that I became sexualized at a very young age. It felt like I never had a childhood. I was rebellious and mature beyond my years. I learned to dress provocatively because I thought being a young woman was all about being sexual. I lost my virginity at age 14 to an older man who pressured me for months.

My early adult years included a series of failed relationships. One boyfriend cheated on me, gave me chlamydia, and became physical abusive. I thought I would never be able to have my own children. Another started using drugs and stripped our joint account of \$10,000 by depositing empty envelopes and taking out cash. The bank had no sympathy and held me responsible because I was the only one trying to pay the overdraft.

I worked five jobs, 96 hours a week, to try to keep ahead of the bills. My parents' business was going through hard times so I didn't want to ask for help. Rock bottom was one day, at age 22, when I opened my fridge to nothing but a jar of mustard.

Then I saw an ad in the paper, "Make "\$2000 a week as an escort." I phoned and went for an interview, thinking "rub and tug, how hard could it be?" The madam running the agency quickly clarified there was no rub and tug about it, "We fuck for a living. Call me when you're ready."

I did return because it seemed I had no other choice and I told myself it would be for just a short time. The seven years I spent working in so-called "massage" parlors were the most horrific and disgusting of my life. Many times men forced themselves, others stalked me in public. I've been violently sodomized, choked, filmed without my consent, and bled for days from my vagina and rectum. I learned to control my gag reflex and to swallow my own vomit.

Who are these men?" you may ask. Let me tell you about the types of consumers in hopes of dispelling the myth that purchase of sexual services is a victimless crime.

First, there are the lonely. These are rather sad men, incapable of forming real relationships, who console themselves with buying sexual satisfaction. They usually mean no harm although some become infatuated, thinking their attachment is mutual.

Of course, selling a lie is part of the business. I had to say, "I'm so glad to see you, you're my favorite client" because if I told the truth, that the thought of them touching me made my skin crawl, they would not return.

Many were otherwise nice guys. Unfortunately, however, this group also includes the ugly, the unwashed, the old, the infirm, the grossly obese, the pathetic and the generally unattractive as well as those cheating on spouses and partners for any number of professed reasons.

Secondly, there are the uncommitted and sex addicts who want a variety of sexual activity without emotional involvement. They may be guys out on the town for what they see as casual fun without any strings. Ironically, this also includes those who lack sexual relations in an otherwise stable relationship and “don’t want to cheat” - because paying for sex doesn’t count.

The objectification of purchased activity allows complete emotional detachment. Others can be personified by Charlie Sheen who explained, “I don’t pay for sex; I pay women to leave.” Or the over-achievers who proclaim, “I’m so good you should be paying me.”

Thirdly, the most disturbing group are the sadistic and perverse. These are men who enjoy the power they wield, subjecting women to cruel and painful acts, while insulting and degrading them. They are men who ask for nauseating performances, pornographic simulations, and acts involving blood, feces or urine.

So-called “legalisation” unfortunately opens the door to increased prevalence of aberrant and deviant sexual activity. This is evident in Germany where consumers can pre-order from menus offering a repulsive range of licking, swallowing and penetration, while ignoring the probability that most providers are trafficked. Whether benign or vicious, friendly or antagonistic, all consumers share the common trait of buying a lie, the lie that their requests are welcome, albeit for a price.

I calculated that in seven years, I was violated over 4300 times. Each one of those times took away a piece of my soul. And not only did a part of me disappear each time, the hole was replaced with the negativity and revulsion I experienced. Even though I’ve been out of the business almost five years now, I still feel contaminated, as if 4300 is branded on my forehead forever.

All sexual consumers must hear and understand that their purchase represents the objectification and commodification of another human being. I am slowly rebuilding with the help of family and friends. I challenge consumers to look at their choices and find a way of treating everyone in their life with dignity, equality, and respect.”



November 10: Life on the other side

2007: Human remains, later identified as **Angel Edna Carlick**, age 19, missing six months, were found by a hiker in a wooded area outside Whitehorse, Yukon. Angel was last seen May 27 at the time of her high school graduation. She worked at The Youth of Today Society, a downtown resource centre, where she was well-liked and respected. Centre staff filed a missing person report with Whitehorse RCMP but officers did not share their concern.

Angel's mother, **Wendy Carlick**, became an advocate for missing and murdered women and was also found murdered April 19, 2017 at age 51, almost ten years after her daughter disappeared.

Dear Cara,

2005: Evening news featured Hazel Magnusson, the sister of Dr. Doug Snider who disappeared five years ago at age 59 and has never been found. A former medical colleague was charged and found guilty of manslaughter based on circumstantial evidence. Hazel saw the other doctor as a bully, someone who tried to get his own way by intimidation even in a professional setting. No segment of society is exempt. Hazel, a friend of one of my co-workers, wrote a book about her brother: *A Doctor's Calling: A matter of conscience* (2006).

2016: It is natural to want to maintain a relationship with loved ones who have passed. Your messages via medium Carmen Joy Baird in my contracted Seven Weeks with Spirit have been welcome and appreciated. Communication for Week Two included:

“Your daughter says there are people she recognizes. I feel like it’s a grandma and possibly a grandpa. She also talks about having a female, a younger female friend, maybe someone she went to school with. She wants you to know she is not alone. She says, ‘I have lots of people here.’ She also talks about being a caregiver for young people and helping them process through their life lessons and this is something she enjoys.”

Unfortunately, several of your school friends have died and could be there with you. It rather surprised me to hear that you might have a role, and one that you enjoyed.

November 11: Remembrance Day

In Flanders Fields

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We live, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved,
And now we lie in Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

Dear Cara,

This wonderful poem by John McCrae has become the symbol of all lives lost in war. The first Remembrance Day was celebrated in 1919, a year after the Germans ceased fire and signed the Armistice that ended the First World War. More than 60,000 Canadians were killed, ten percent of those who enlisted from 7.8 million people living in Canada at the time. It was considered the war to end all wars but, of course, history had other ideas. Why are we so slow to learn how to live in harmony?

Not only must we remember those who have been lost, we must provide those who survive with appropriate treatment, rehabilitation, security and education. That is true of survivors from any kind of battle – abuse, bullying, discrimination, exploitation. Until we learn to live with equality and respect, the wounded will always be among us.

November 12: Grief comes in waves

Grief, after the initial shock of loss, comes in waves. When you're driving alone in your car, while you're doing the dishes, while you're getting ready for work... and all of a sudden it hits you – how so very MUCH you miss someone, and your breath catches, and your tears flow, and the sadness is so great that it's physically painful!

Nicole Gabert @ Heavensbook Angels

My dear little Cara,

2012: Grief comes in waves some days until I am ready to die myself. I often feel overwhelmed with how much I failed you, not intentionally of course, but because of all I did not understand. Last week I was feeling “beat up and tossed to the curb” trying to set boundaries with my volunteer time. I needed to say, “No thank you. I am not able to do that.” Even though the work may need to be done, I would rather be free to carry on with my own projects.

2015: A wave of sorrow covered the sky with a foreboding sense that the world was in mourning. Later in the evening we heard that a passionate and vibrant spirit had passed. She was the mother of five children, a charismatic woman of vision and blessing who referred to herself as “Mama Goddess.” Although supporting many in her roles as daughter, sister, wife, mother, friend, midwife, doula, and volunteer, she struggled with mental illness and succumbed to a moment of despair. One of her tributes expressed, “A light had flickered out; a new star has entered the skies.” Her story is not mine to tell except to acknowledge that depression is a dark and mysterious force, depriving sufferers and their families of who they want to be, and some transitions are experienced as a cosmic event.



November 13: World Kindness Day – Provocative plays

“Be someone’s moon on a dark hopeless night.” Unknown

Dear Cara,

2005: I wanted to attend the play *Frozen* but couldn’t quite accept paying over \$50 for a ticket so consoled myself by ordering the script by Bryony Lavery (2002). It is the story of the mother of a murdered 10-year-old girl who wants to confront her daughter’s killer.

In exploring the link between childhood brain trauma and adult violence, a psychiatric researcher suggests to the mother that guilt and responsibility exist on a continuum. She explains that even bizarre deeds are not necessarily “evil” if the person is driven by forces beyond their conscious control; they are crimes of illness, symptoms rather than “sins.” The mother of the murdered girl, frozen with grief for years, is challenged by her surviving daughter to let go of her anger and explore the possibility of forgiveness.

Sometimes in life it is not so easy to tell the difference between those who act with malice (sin) and those whose behaviours (symptoms) have been shaped by their own childhood trauma. How could traffickers and pimps, who seem to act without conscience, be categorized? Those born without empathy need to be contained for the safety of other citizens. Those damaged in childhood, to the point of denying the humanity of their victims, perhaps have a chance of being restored if they can live with their remorse.

2013: Another disturbing play, *Pig Girl*, was performed in Edmonton. It was the portrayal of a young woman violated and tortured by a deranged killer man while two other unnamed characters, Sister and Police Officer, play the roles of anxious demanding family member and non-involved investigator because, after all, no victims had been found.

November 14: International trafficking - Where does it end?

International trafficking for sex generates billions of dollars a year.

2015: Human remains found northwest of Saskatoon were identified as **Karina Beth Ann Wolfe**, age 20 when she vanished in July 2010. A man confessed, led police to the location, and was charged with second-degree murder.

My darling daughter,

2001: *Maclean's* magazine featured the trafficking of foreign women into Canada. Victims were duped into coming under false pretences and found themselves trapped and exploited in the web of organized crime. The United Nations Development Fund for Women was quoted as saying as many as 1.5 million women and children are sold into the international so-called "sex trade" each year, a market which generated an estimated 12 billion dollars a year. The Canadian market was estimated at \$400 million annually. Although federal law prohibits the trafficking of people, government needs to take enforcement more seriously.

2005: *Maclean's* reported a disturbing example of historical exploitation. Thousands of young Jewish women were stolen from Eastern Europe in the 1860s to the 1930s and forced into sexual services in Latin America, South Africa, India and the United States. It was disheartening that poor and vulnerable women were tricked, by pimps and mobsters of their own culture, with promises of employment and marriage. Economic gain seems to be the insidious driver which crosses all nations, while the dynamics of continual consumers are less evident.

2016: The most comprehensive list to date of local MMIW, 66 names with brief stories, was posted as "Edmonton and Area Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women & Girls" on google.com. Although federal legislation in Canada, since 2014, criminalizes the purchase of sexual services, regulations need to cascade through all levels of government for enforcement to be taken seriously.

November 15: Philanthropy Day

“Nobody can do everything but everybody can do something.” Unknown

Dear little Cara,

2017: Collaborative work is required across communities, social agencies, legislators, police, and all levels of government for effective change to happen. The intention of my manuscript and website is philanthropic, to promote charities which advocate or support (a) the elimination of sexual exploitation and (b) the rescue and healing of exploited persons.

At the time of writing, my chosen beneficiaries are:

- (1) CEASE: Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation
This grassroots organization in Edmonton has worked since 1997 to heal the harms of exploitation at individual, family and community levels. The mission of CEASE is to provide tools for sexually exploited and trafficked persons to heal and rebuild their lives. www.ceasenow.org
- (2) Joy Smith Foundation
Founded in 2012, the foundation works to ensure that every Canadian man, woman, and child is safe from manipulation designed to lure and exploit them into the sex trade or forced labour. www.joysmithfoundation.com
- (3) Edmonton Community Foundation – Cara’s Friendship Fund
Founded in 1989, ECF has an endowment base of close to \$500 million and strengthens the community by connecting donors to charities and causes that are important to them. www.ecfoundation.org
Cara’s Friendship Fund provides services to individuals and/or families who have been sexually exploited or victimized by other tragedies.

My dear little Cara, I am grateful on your behalf to organizations and individuals around the world who already encourage public awareness, work to prevent and eradicate exploitation, and provide services to victims. My hope is that your story will inspire more readers to show support. We can all bring our unique voices to strengthen the bigger cause.

November 16: When children die

“Don’t be fooled - sometimes the healing hurts more than the wound.”

JP, *Women Who Run With the Moon*

Hello again my Cara,

2008: An *Edmonton Journal* headline related “Parents of Chinese children left without hope.” In another sobering reminder of exploitation, the article reported about 200,000 missing children in China with little police attention. Baby boys were thought to be sold to couples unable to have a son. Little girls may be put up for foreign adoption. Exploitation was not specifically mentioned although “spas” advertising Asian women are not uncommon in Canada.

2016: My favorite medium Carmel Joy Baird sent another message through my contracted Seven Weeks with Spirit. This was Week Three:

“Cara is telling me about her passing – that it was very sudden. Cara tells me there was something to do with her heart. I don’t know if there were drugs or alcohol involved but I do feel she passed very quickly. I also feel her passing was an accident... Cara wants you to know that she loves you and misses you and you are not to carry any guilt for this. She also says she wants you to be recognized and rewarded for being the most amazing mom in the world. She says, ‘thank you for continuing to support me and to always be there to lift me up when I need you’.”

It is reassuring to think of your passing as sudden. It could have been an overdose, although only the person who provided it would know for sure if it was accidental. I’m sure you also had a broken heart, as I did, from the drugs blocking our relationship. Suggesting that a parent not carry guilt is like telling the stars not to shine. It never occurred to me that you might still need support – or are you speaking on behalf of all who still struggle? Either way, you are most welcome. All is done in your memory.

November 17: Creating options, fostering hope

It can be demoralizing for victims and survivors to be a seemingly forgotten part of the justice system.

Dear Cara,

2005: Kate Quinn and I presented at a LEAF: Legal Education and Action Fund breakfast on the topic of “Creating Options, Fostering Hope.” I spoke of the heart as the center of all consciousness and our responsibility for the hearts of the vulnerable:

“As I have said many times, there is so much more to do than any of us will ever have time to do. As someone outside the legal system, I would like to take advantage of this opportunity to promote three areas in which I would like to see more legal attention:

(1) Sex tourism: We need effective legislation to help prevent the exploitation of women and children by citizens outside of their own country. Nations of the world need to unite in keeping their children safe from predatory visitors...

(2) Sexual exploitation of women: I am impressed there is a law in the world that sees prostitution as part of the continuum of violence against women. The Swedish Law That Prohibits the Purchase of Sexual Services is unique in that it addresses the demand side of prostitution by criminalizing the consumers rather than the providers...

(3) Services for victims: Principles of justice, accountability, and efficiency need to be applied to victims as well as offenders. It can be demoralizing for us as victims and survivors to be a seemingly forgotten part of the justice system...

Thank you very much for your attention. It is a privilege for me to share this time with you. I hope we can move forward together to create thoughtful and humane ways of addressing both social and legal problems in ways that will be uniquely and proudly Canadian solutions.”

2014: Bill C-36, the Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons, received royal assent on November 6 and came into force on December 6, the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women in Canada. It is heart-breaking that many otherwise well-intentioned politicians seem to believe “business as usual” is still the way to go.

November 18: Without a trace

1995: **Michelle Harmer**, age 29, disappeared from Edmonton and was never found.

Dear Cara,

1997: **Michelle Harmer** disappeared two years before you and has never been found.

Her mother, Patricia, wanted to make a difference, as documented by *Edmonton Journal* columnist Liane Faulder under the headline “Even prison can’t keep mother from her mission:”

“Like other street workers who fall victim to a harsh world... Michelle was somebody’s daughter. She was, in fact, a much beloved daughter, who despite her troubles, maintained close contact with her mother – phoning every other day, no matter where she was.

When the phone calls stopped, Patricia, 52, knew something was wrong...

Then, another tragedy. Patricia’s husband, Reg, had a heart attack and died. Patricia was sucked into a spiral of grief and depression with devastating results.

Just after Christmas last year, frantic with pain, Patricia set fire to her own home... While the Crown prosecutor recognized the incidents were rooted in her family problems, Harmer was still sentenced to 16 months in jail...”

Patricia wrote to Liane from prison and included a memorial poem for Michelle on the second anniversary of when they last spoke:

“Dear God,
Be kind to my baby,
Someone took her away.
He sent her to You, God,
One cold winter day. “

Patricia’s actions included a commitment to vulnerable women. She donated groceries and toys to women on the street at Christmas to help them with their children. I remember Patricia as the lady who collected teddy bears for the annual August memorial service held by CEASE for women who lost their lives through sexual exploitation. Bears were placed on every chair so that attendees had a comfort object to hold during the service and to take home if they wished.

RIP Michelle. I hope your mother will find the answers she needs.

November 19: Residential Schools

1948: Dear parents,

It will be your privilege this year to have your children spend Christmas at home with you. The holidays will extend from DECEMBER 18th to JANUARY 3rd. This is a privilege which is being granted if you observe the following regulations of the Indian Department.

1. THE TRANSPORTATION TO THE HOME AND BACK TO THE SCHOOL MUST BE PAID BY THE PARENTS.

The parents must come themselves to get their own children. If they are unable to come they must send a letter to the Principal of the school stating that the parents of other children from the same Reserve may bring them home. The children will not be allowed to go home alone on the train or bus.

2. THE PARENTS MUST BRING THE CHILDREN BACK TO SCHOOL STRICTLY ON TIME.

If the children are not returned to school on time they will not be allowed to go home for Christmas next year.

I ask you to observe the above regulations in order that this privilege of going home for Christmas may be continued from year to year. It will be a joy for you to have your children with you for Christmas. It will be a joy also for your children and it will bring added cheer and happiness to your home.

My darling Cara,

1948: The above letter (posted on google, original source unknown) is a sad reminder of residential school control and the conditions to which both students and their parents were subjected. One wonders how far away the families lived, what they used for transportation much less money, and if they were even able to understand or read English.

2005: I was recently described as an “articulate advocate.” That was much nicer than “pathologically enmeshed co-dependent” labels I was given at times. There seemed to be a circus of mental health workers chanting “let go, let go, let go...” so you could experience the consequences of your own actions. One doctor asked what my fear was. I told him you would disappear into the underworld. I was right. When I let go, you did disappear. I was tired and needed a rest. It was never my intention to let go forever – but maybe you didn’t know that.

November 20: National Child Day

“We need to respect our children’s needs, feelings and individuality as well as our own. As long as the child within is not allowed to become aware of what happened to him or her, a part of his or her emotional life will remain frozen and sensitivity to the humiliation of childhood will therefore be dulled.

Parents are helpless when it comes to understanding their child so long as they must keep the suffering of their own childhood at an emotional distance.”

Thoughts attributed to Alice Miller, source unknown

2003: The body of **Alexandra Jacko-Peche**, age 15, was found in a car in an Edmonton garage with an unidentified 51-year-old man dressed only in his underwear. Both were asphyxiated by carbon monoxide. Her family bravely spoke out about her challenges while his did not.

Dear Cara,

1995: “Shelter from The Stroll” in the *Alberta Report* featured Calgary’s beginning response to children there who were caught in exploitation. It was the year you disappeared.

2013: A beautiful piece, posted on Facebook, was credited to “a Pre-school Teacher:”

”What should a 4 year-old know?

She should know she is loved wholly and unconditionally, all of time.

He should know he is safe and he should know how to keep himself safe in public, with others, and in varied situation... He should know his personal rights and that his family will back them up.

She should know how to laugh, act silly, be goofy and use her imagination. She should know that it is always OK to paint the sky orange and give cats six legs.

He should know his own interests and be encouraged to follow them...

She should know the world is magical and so is she. She should know that she is wonderful, brilliant, creative, compassionate and marvellous...

But more important, here’s what parents need to know. Our children need fathers who sit and listen to their days, mothers who join in and make crafts with them, parents who take the time to read stories and act like idiots with them... They deserve to know they’re a priority for us and that we truly love to be with them.”

2017: While most parents can relate to this ideal, we must remember that many others in history have been unavailable to their children through no fault of their own. Children of the residential schools were torn from their families and forced to adopt a European culture that was often harsh and unforgiving. Many children of European heritage, outside the residential schools, were also subject to abuse and neglect secondary to addictions and poverty. With its history of general cruelty, floggings, servitude, child labour, dungeons and other tortures, it is a miracle that anyone of European descent was able to create pathways of love and caring. We share responsibility to raise the bar of our civilization and improve our collective behaviour.

November 21: Many ways of connecting

So you like to read over my shoulder?

2015: **Crystal Corrine Bruce**, age 36, mother of five, was stabbed in her northeast Edmonton apartment. Crystal, recently laid off as a camp cook, was described as happy, kind-hearted and always smiling. Her sister, charged with second-degree murder, pled guilty to manslaughter in December 2017.

My precious little Cara,

2016: Questions were encouraged in my Seven Weeks of Spirit agreement. My question for Week Four was how to keep our connection open and how to make up for lost time together.

Here is your answer via medium Carmel Joy Baird:

“Cara says, ‘Mom, there are so many things you can do.’ She wants you to write to her. She said she likes to read over your shoulder and she said, ‘When you write sometimes, it slows down your thoughts.’ She also likes for you to talk to her and to play games with her on the radio. So before you get into the vehicle, you’re going to say, ‘OK, Cara, I need a message.’ She says, ‘Listen to the lyrics, don’t focus on the type of song – rock, country – you can play with all types of radio stations.’ She also wants you to look up into the sky at night. She likes that shooting stars and northern

lights create really beautiful magical messages for you. She said she loves you and she's so happy that you understand now how this is going to work."

Funny writing was mentioned. You know I've been writing to you almost continually since you're gone – but how would Carmel know? Writing perhaps doesn't slow my thoughts so much as deepen them. I don't trust spontaneity so edit obsessively. As you also know, I seldom listen to music but frequently hear your voice through TV programs and books.

Tonight was an exception. A review of Dee Snider and his Twisted Sister rock band reminded me of you organizing Buddy and Chip in a protest about something back in grade school, marching around chanting, "We're not gonna to take it". You always enjoyed music, enthusiastically recorded songs, and liked attending concerts in your young adult years.

In Medicine Wheel tradition, Long Snows is the last moon of the calendar year. We learn about our desire for justice, and our ability to live with the dualities of nature and life, to be soft and strong at the same time. The Moon teaches strength of mind, independence, courage, determination, and open heartedness.

November 22: Long Snows Moon

Fragments of memories float through my mind.

Dear Cara,

1987: You carried the torch on Day 6 of the Olympic Torch Relay in Nova Scotia. Although my camera failed, the picture of your beaming face is etched forever in my mind. We entered your name when we were still living in Alberta and requested a few Nova Scotia dates in anticipation of our move. It was great day of celebration and you were later interviewed by your friend, reporter Jackie, for the school newspaper:

Jackie: How do you feel about running with the torch?

Caralyn: Sensational!

Jackie: Where did you run?

Caralyn: Oyster Pond

Jackie: Was it cold?

Caralyn: It was at first but the running warmed me up.

Jackie: How many entry forms did you pass in?

Caralyn: I passed in 15 but one guy passed in 2000. So I guess I was lucky I won.

Jackie: WOW!



The 1988 Olympic torch relay was the longest in history at that time. Beginning in Olympia on November 15, 1987, it arrived in St. John's Newfoundland two days later and travelled west and north across Canada for 88 days before arriving in Calgary, Alberta on February 13, 1988. You were one of 6214 people, chosen from millions of entries, to carry the torch for one kilometre. The torch, modeled after the Calgary Tower, was also transported by boat, helicopter, snowmobile and dogsled. I'm happy that you were able to have your Olympic moment, at Oyster Pond in Nova Scotia.

2000: Three years later we were on our way back to Edmonton. Returning home was another series of new beginnings. We stayed with my sister for the month of December while I started a new job, you registered for a vocational Beauty Culture program, and we found an apartment close to your school. New routines and new friends overshadowed what might have been familiar although Buddy's request to live with us created a sense of "family restored."

2017: What is still missing from my reflections? I've touched on familial and cultural trauma, the impact of low self-esteem on decision making, the challenges of poverty and single parenting, addictions, male privilege and gender-based violence, many dimensions of vulnerability, lack of coordinated services for multi-challenged citizens, lack of appropriate police response to missing persons, the process of grief, the horror of sexual exploitation, the unrecognized extent of human trafficking, progressive legislative changes versus the unconscionable reluctance of local government to focus on buyers, the incredible disproportion of Indigenous among the missing and murdered of Canada, the unclear impact of the Inquiry to date, resilience, and the possibility of transformation.

Unmentioned so far is the insidious force of pornography, which creeps through the consciousness of society and into susceptible young minds, suggesting that brutality and objectification are norms for human behaviour rather than compassion and intimacy. Pornography destroys the fabric of society by creating such deceptions in both men and women. A few brave citizens are beginning to warn of this danger, naming pornography as a public-health crisis because of the harmful normalization of violence and objectification. Pornography, unfortunately, feeds both misogyny and sexual exploitation, a dynamic ignored by those who suggest that "freedom" of expression cancels the cost of victimization.

November 23: Serial killers prey on Indigenous women

Yet another perspective...

Dear Cara,

2015: The *Globe and Mail* featured: "Prime target: How serial killers prey on Indigenous women." An interesting analysis, of 18 of the 25 convictions of 8 serial killers since 1980 across

the four western provinces, found that Indigenous women were roughly seven times more likely to have been targeted. Most victims were from British Columbia, except where noted:

Nina Joseph (15) strangled 1982 by Edward Isaac,
Mary Jane Serloin (35) killed 1981 by John Crawford in Lethbridge, Alberta,
Sheeley Napope (16) killed 1992 by John Crawford in Saskatoon,
Calinda Waterhen (22) killed 1993 by John Crawford in Saskatoon,
Eva Taysup (28) body killed 1992 by John Crawford in Saskatoon,
Theresa Umphrey (39) was killed 1993 by Brain Arp,
Sereena Abotsway (29-30) killed between 2001-2002 by Robert Pickton,
Marnie Frey (25-30) killed between 1997-2002 by Robert Pickton,
Georgina Papin (35-38) killed between 1999-2002 by Robert Pickton,
Mona Wilson (26) killed between 2001-2002 by Robert Pickton,
Brenda Wolfe (30-32) was killed between 1999-2002 by Robert Pickton.
Nina Courtepatte (13) killed in 2005 by Joseph Laboucan in Edmonton,
Cynthia Maas (35) killed 2010 by Cody Legebokoff,
Natasha Montgomery (23) killed 2010 by Cody Legebokoff,
Carolyn Sinclair (25) killed 2011 by Shawn Lamb, Winnipeg,
Lorna Blacksmith (18) killed 2012 by Shawn Lamb, Winnipeg,
Myrna Letandre (37) killed 2006 by Traigo Andretti in Winnipeg,
Jennifer McPherson (41) strangled 2013 by husband Traigo Andretti.
Where only one victim is named, others were not identified as Indigenous.

We also know a large number of alleged or suspected homicides never reach court for various reasons. The fact remains that Indigenous women are over represented. How many ways will the MMIW Inquiry be able to describe “vulnerable” and what recommendations will be forthcoming to move awareness to action?

November 24: Reciprocal rights

Human rights must extend both ways.

Dear Cara,

2005: At the Western Canadian Vice Conference, an impromptu meeting with an Indigenous woman took me by surprise. Many years ago when I worked at a street-level drop-in center in Calgary, she used to drop in. I remember helping her secure accommodation in a pleasant basement apartment, and was extremely embarrassed later when her landlady phoned to relate she had never heard such obscene language in her life. I realized that Human Rights must extend both ways. The right to reasonable housing must be balanced with respectful and responsible tenancy. Unfortunately, we both contributed to the landlady's distrust another time.

The tenant lady was surprised I remembered so much about her, like when she froze off her toes after running out of a house in her bare feet in winter to escape being beaten. Her story had been imprinted in my mind because it was a shock to my world view at the time that such things could happen. Her long beautiful black hair was now short and thin around her tired face.

2017: A unique perspective, "The Pain. The Progress." in the Fall 2017 issue of *UM Today* magazine, spoke of an initiative to help an estimated 30,000 sex trade workers in Kenya. SWOP, Sex Workers Outreach Program, provides education, treatment and counselling through dedicated clinics with the goal of controlling AIDS. The goal is achieved primarily through encouraging the use of condoms and empowering women to insist on that precaution. Of course, it is wonderful that lives of women are being saved so they can serve another day and that they have access to medication if they are HIV-positive. Cynical me, however, thinks it would be even more wonderful if they were given other economic or employment options. Working within status quo is similar to what the City of Edmonton is doing. We can do better.

November 25: Elimination of violence against women

Ripples of behaviour impact the community.

Dear Cara,

2005: Crown prosecutor Marisa introduced the Prostitution Offender Program with “It takes a village to bust a john...” This led to my presentation:

“One of the values of the Prostitution Offender Program is that it provides a forum for voices of the community who are impacted by the activity of men who prowl for sexual services. I believe it is important for the men who have been arrested to hear how the ripples of their behaviour extend far beyond themselves.

We have heard from teens who were hassled on their way to and from school and from a woman who was propositioned while walking her dog. We have heard from parents who found their young children playing in their own yard with freshly used condoms. We have heard from a businessman who provided shelter for a woman being beaten on the street and even from a librarian who witnessed a pimp monitoring girls through the window from the warmth and security of a neighbourhood library.

I speak at the Prostitution Offender Program to represent those who have not survived life on the street... If my daughter’s story can play a small part in reducing exploitive behaviour, then her death was not totally in vain. I would happily retire from the program if all women of the world were being treated with respect and if all men of the world had learned to become loving and faithful to their own families.”

A participant introduced herself as a correctional officer who knew you from the jail at Fort Saskatchewan. She said she liked you, and that you were always happy. Talking with her was a gift as I always appreciate meeting people who knew you on the other side, so to speak. She agreed to have me call her but we never did connect in spite of a couple tries.

November 26: National Addictions Awareness

“If you need booze and drugs to enjoy your life to the fullest, then you’re doing it wrong.”

Robin Williams

Dear Cara,

2005: An *Edmonton Journal* headline read, “Cocaine dealer gets 10 years.” Such news brings joy to my heart. Pimps and drug-dealers, who make a living by exploiting others, are a special kind of pathetic although one wonders what circumstances lead them to such choices.

Another story, “And then he was gone,” told of parents who arranged the kidnapping of their unmanageable 14-year-old son to a therapeutic wilderness program. I used to consider such an option for you but never had the financial resources. Your admission to an adolescent psychiatric program was probably the publicly funded equivalent. What we parents had in common was our feeling of failure and helplessness. The hospital had time-out rooms guarded by full-time attendants as a consequence for inappropriate behaviour. I never quite understood how to duplicate that at home and recall no assistance in that regard. The reprieve simply gave us both a chance to regain perspective and we were on our own again.

November 27: Redressing the wrongs of history – Salute to excellence

2010: **Angela Meyer**, age 22, was last seen in Yellowknife in the Northwest Territories. She was home for a weekend pass from a hospital psychiatric ward. Angela was diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes and schizophrenia. The police called off their official search on December 21, saying they had exhausted all tips.

2017: **Marlene Bird**, age 50, mother of two daughters, died in hospital at Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. She lost both her legs and much of her eyesight after she was viciously attacked and set on fire three years earlier.

2017: “Edmontonians have never shied away from a challenge. Regardless of the field of endeavor, our city’s residents are known for rising to the occasion, exceeding expectations and accomplishing truly amazing things... Their dedication and perseverance will help inspire a new generation of change-makers.”

Mayor of Edmonton

Dear little Cara,

2005: An *Edmonton Journal* headline suggested “Residential school compensation will let Canadians move on.” A valid debate is how we as a society or community begin to redress wrongs imposed in a previous time of history. Where do we begin and where do we end?

My grandmother was abused by her father who had been orphaned at a young age and had a difficult life. No doubt that was instrumental in the way she parented my mother, which in turn was partly responsible for me not learning how to be a better parent. Abuse is not restricted to any one ethnic group. History resounds with tales of torture, persecution, injustice, slavery, and genocide. Financial compensation to one group from another is a small token step in the process of reconciliation. More important are assurances of continuing peace and compassion.

As a friend asked, “who do I sue?” She was molested by an uncle through her childhood. Violence is part of life for many young people. It cannot all be blamed on residential schools.

2017: A Salute to Excellence was held in Edmonton, as it has since 1951, to celebrate the personal efforts and achievements of individuals and groups who provide leadership and vision. Such laudable objectives stand in stark contrast to the protection of commercial sexual exploitation in “licensed” facilities. (By conservative math, at least 500,000 sexual purchases are sanctioned each year in blatant contradiction to federal legislation. This figure is based on five purchases a day, 200 days per year, from each of roughly 500 “licensed” practitioners.)

While advocacy work has resulted in some positive modifications, such as mandatory awareness training for new applicants, the “harm reduction” approach defers to the obduracy of status quo. My hope is to be counted among those who did not shy away from a challenge and whose dedication and perseverance will help inspire a new generation of change-makers.

November 28: Lives in review

1993: **Joyce Cardinal**, 36, was beaten and set on fire in east Edmonton. She died December 20 from her infections. Seven years later a man was charged with first-degree murder. He pled guilty to second-degree.

2002: Four names were added to the list of 67 missing women from Vancouver. The women, not necessarily involved with the sex trade, were:

Verna Littlechief, age 58, last seen in 1978,

Marilyn Ann Moore, age 51, last seen April 11, 1985,

Lenora Elizabeth Olding, age 35, last seen October 16, 1986, and

Elizabeth Chalmers, age 57, last seen February 22, 1999.

Hi Sweetie,

2016: My conversation with you via medium Carmel Joy Baird continued through Seven Weeks with Spirit. My question for Week Five was where you were before we came together and how the decision was made for you to join me. I remembered reading a long time ago that sometimes we choose our life and sometimes we are sent. Carmel's answer was interesting:

“Before Cara came to you, she was on the other side in Love and Light and in every single lifetime you came into life together so you were sisters, mother/daughter, or daughter/mother. This is the first time she exited early. She says the two of you have a soulmate connection. The exit early is about her continuing to guide you and be a support. Also part of the life lesson is because there were friendships that changed and the whole family dynamic. She says this life lesson is about removing the negative energy, lifting yourself to a positive place, and finding those you love around you. She says it was just massive.”

For sure, there is a massive lesson involved. I sometimes wonder if you carried the spirit of Nanny returning as she would have wanted a way to stay close to her children. Grandpa John looked forward to being reunited with his family after death. Or did you bring a spirit from your father's side? You barely knew him in life so maybe it was your way of sorting out the Chaos? My life lesson is about choosing positive energy, and learning compassion, for addicts.

November 29: Giving day - Christmas decorations

“When you can tell your story and it doesn’t make you cry, you know you have healed.”

Lessons Learned in Life (March 5, 2016)

“Your vision will become clearer only when you can look into your own heart. Who looks outside, dreams. Who looks inside, awakens.”

Carl Jung, Daily Mediation Quotes (May 11, 2016)

Cara, my most precious Christmas gift,

2005: Many memories are stored with my Christmas decorations - doorknob covers from a school fundraiser, centrepieces crafted by a friend, an exquisitely beautiful tree skirt made by a former client. It is crocheted in white sparkly fiber with green leaves, red berries and red edging. I can’t imagine the hours it took to complete and was humbled to be a recipient of her generosity.

All my ornaments have a story, although some of the stories have faded. The Smurfs are from when you were little. I love to remember you and Chip playing with them under the tree. Carved wooden figurines came from the hospital where I worked in Edmonton – little girls on rocking horses and swings, a bear in a chair, angels on rainbows, snowmen in wreaths. Quilted bells, socks, doves and candy canes, as well as crocheted snowflakes and angels, came from other fundraising efforts. Many ornaments come from Nova Scotia – shiny musical instruments, miniature bikes and wagons, decorated nuts and pinecones; the gift bear in a bag.

More recent additions are festive San Francisco trolleys from my and Will’s honeymoon, a lace angel from your friend Paula’s wedding, red bells from South Fork Ranch in Dallas after Buddy and Belle’s wedding, leather crafts from Grandma, a wood cutter from Victoria, and a beautiful china egg from my talk at the women’s prison. (See November 1.) Last year I bought Jingle Beanies for my tree at work and this year purchased more for home. My decorating theme is bears and angels.

November 30: Resilience

1984: **Candace Derksen**, age 13, disappeared on her way home from school in Winnipeg. Over seven weeks later, January 17, 1985, her body was found in an abandoned tool shed, with wrists and ankles tied behind her back, where she was left to die in the freezing cold.

For another 18 years, the abduction remained unsolved until an arrest in 2007 based on DNA evidence. A man was found guilty of second-degree murder in 2011, twenty-six years later, and sentenced to life in prison with no chance of parole for 25 years. In another bizarre twist of court and life, he appealed his conviction in 2013 and won the right to a new trial, more than 30 years later.

2012: Edmonton launched a “Don’t Be That Guy” advertising program to target sexual offenders, placing responsibility appropriately on the perpetrators.

My dear Cara,

2016: Candace Derksen’s parents, Wilma and Cliff, are amazing examples of resilience. Wilma describes the horror of their first year in the book *Have You Seen Candace?* (1991) and became the Director of *Victims’ Voice* which developed resources to aid people dealing with the aftermath of violent crime. Many of those newsletters helped me along my journey and I particularly resonated with her struggles through overwhelming feelings of failure and guilt, rage and responsibility, and questions of who to forgive and how.

A second book, *Confronting the Horror: The Aftermath of Violence*, (2002) describes elements one might encounter. Wilma describes the five stage of react, retreat, rectify, refer and recover. “Did I really read the whole book?” was my question as I pulled it from the shelf years later and “yes” there were many underlines with arrows in the margins.

“Embracing the journey” is a complex and individual process. Among other things, we must learn to integrate our story, acknowledge our fears, deal with grief and guilt, mend the fragmentation of time, explore our spirituality, redefine ourselves, cope in new ways, control our rage, accept the limitations of professional and justice systems, and know recovery is ongoing.

As Spirit enters the final month of the calendar year, we prepare for surrender, to yield to the life we have been given and to make peace within it.

December 1: Working the streets

2007: **Chantelle Alice Rose Bushie**, age 16, mother of one daughter, was last seen in Grande Prairie. She was from the Dene Tha' First Nation in northern Alberta. Chantelle's daughter was being raised by her mother.

Darling Cara,

1997: *Our Voice* magazine in Edmonton published "Working the Streets" as part of their response to your disappearance and death. It mentioned nine women murdered:

"... Eighty percent of the women working the streets have serious addiction problems. There is an indirect relationship between drug dealers and men who buy sex off the street. The drug dealers need the johns to pay the women so they can continue buying drugs. The johns need the drug dealers to keep the women addicted so they will be forced to constantly turn to the streets to fund their drug habits. The women are caught in the middle... In many cases, women working the streets suffer from mental illnesses or the effects of abuse."

2005: An *Edmonton Journal* headline announced, "Mental Health gets \$22M boost." That's good news. Thirty new projects received funding, including crisis intervention, transition between hospital and community services (wouldn't that be nice?) and support for children and families. Terrific! Families need guidance when loved ones are dealing with mental illness.

Another headline reported "Brains of schizophrenics, teen pot users look similar." A study suggested it was too early to prove a connection. However, one of your doctors told me marijuana can trigger vulnerability to schizophrenia in some users.

While wandering through the mall, I ran into a former boarder with her new one-year-old daughter, a bright beautiful cherubic child who already had surgery for a heart defect. All is frequently not what it appears to be.

December 2: Day of People with Disabilities

“Just love me, Mom. I’m here!” Daniel Wong, 2016

My dear little Cara,

2006: One of your former friends called to ask if I minded if she went to the police with information she remembered. Of course, I didn’t mind. She described some of the encounters you, she, and Aura had with older professional men, otherwise respected in the community. One was not really a surprise as his reputation preceded him and I would love to see him exposed.

Your friend didn’t want to embarrass her “benefactor” because, she said, he treated her well enough “after he got what he wanted” and even helped her a few times. I called his professional college and was told there would be no investigation without criminal charges. How do these guys find each other? “So what do you do to unwind, shoot a round of golf?” “No, I troll the bars to pick up young girls, want to get together and share an orgy?” My consolation is their names are now and hopefully will be forever listed with Project KARE.

2016: A wonderful reflection was published in the *New York Times* by Nora Wong, who had lost her son three years earlier from a rare medical condition.

“So unbearable was my occluded heart that I called out to him in desperation one day: ‘What will I do with my love for you, Daniel?’

My eyes were closed in grief when suddenly I seemed to see him before me, his arms bent and lifted upward in supplication. In my mind’s eye, his face was suffused with love and tinged with exasperation, a common look for Daniel.

“Just love me, Mom,” he says,

“But where are you?” I ask.

“I’m here!” he answers with frustration. And then he is gone.”

And we the grieving parents of the word wonder if it really is that simple – our children are still with us but transformed. We can still communicate as we carry them forever in our hearts.

December 3: Women Against Violence and Exploitation

“You have been assigned this mountain to show others it can be moved.” Unknown

2017: This evening was the biggest and brightest full moon of the year.

Dear Cara,

A few years ago my friend Danielle and I, for an Oprah contest, proposed a television series outlining the efforts of women around the world fighting for respect, safety and equality.

Our idea is still a good one and the following are a few possible subjects:

2000: Veronica’s Voice in Kansas City was founded by survivor Kristy Childs. It is dedicated to human rights and social change for American victims of commercial sex exploitation; its mission is to give victims a voice and to provide resources for recovery.

2011: Jacqui Linder in Edmonton founded Chrysalis Network, a non-profit group to provide support for victims of trafficking through a national hotline.

2011: Tara Teng, age 22, crowned Miss Canada in January, dedicated her term to crusading against human trafficking. She traveled to Thailand and Cambodia to learn more about international exploitation.

2014: Metis artist Christi Belcourt of Winnipeg created an art exhibition “Walking with Our Sisters” made up of 1720 pairs of moccasin tops (vamps). The unfinished moccasins reflect the unfinished lives of missing and murdered aboriginal women and the loss of potential for the next generation. Christi planned a seven-year tour of North America.

2015: Lauren Crazybull, age 20, created an audio documentary “Voices of the Silenced” which tells the story of over 10 people with missing or murdered loved ones. Lauren was seeking to empower herself and others by using cultural knowledge to challenge systemic violence and restore gender equality.

2016: Christy Clark, then Premier of British Columbia, disclosed that she was sexually assaulted as a teen but never shared her story. She explained in the (June 10) *Edmonton Journal*:

“I don’t claim to speak for all women in explaining why I didn’t tell, but for me, as a child and then a teenager, I was ashamed. It made people uncomfortable...

Sexual violence is common. Unfortunately, so is staying silent about it. Our silence makes it easier for those who wish to harm us. We don’t share our stories, we don’t think anyone would care much if we did, and then we live with the warped impression that we are alone in our fear and shame...

Shame is painful. It’s also pervasive and isolating, but the capacity to survive and heal is achievable through the sharing of our experiences...”

How wonderful it would be to continually research and showcase the women, and men, of the world who are working to make a difference.

December 4: Sacred Lives – Lighting a candle

“Maturity is learning to walk away from people and situations that threaten your peace of mind, self-respect, values, morals and self-worth.”

The Law of Attraction @ The Truth is Here

My Cara,

2000: A report, *Sacred Lives: Canadian Aboriginal Children and Youth Speak out About Sexual Exploitation*, was authored by former exploited teen Cherry Kingsley and researcher Melanie Mark. Interviews were held with 150 native young people caught in the sex trade in 22 cities across Canada. Many of the young people interviewed had been sexually abused, struggled with racism, and experienced isolation from their home and culture.

2017: As I reflect on my activism over the last twenty years, lighting a candle has been an important symbol. Candles were lit in many cathedrals across Britain and Europe the year after you died. Candles are lit every year at the annual memorial service held August 14 by

CEASE to remember those who lost their lives because of sexual exploitation. Candles are also lit every December at the annual Memorial service of the Victims of Homicide. The flame is a symbol of hope that we can move forward with vision and commitment.

December 5: International Volunteer Day

1985: International Volunteer Day was officially designated by the United Nations as a day on which volunteers around the world are recognized and celebrated.

Dear Cara,

2016: As we continued our conversation through the Seven Weeks of Spirit, my question for Week Six was if your disappearance would ever be solved or what you could tell me about who was involved. This was the response of medium Carmel Joy Baird:

“Cara understands about the anger in your time together and wants you to know she is sorry. She said no one would have known how to handle things and she doesn’t want you to blame yourself for her decisions. She said her disappearance will be solved and she talks about there being a male involved. She talks about you being able to close the door on this in your lifetime. Cara talks about the number five – so the fifth day or the fifth month has some meaning. And she says, ‘Mom, you can smell me. Close your eyes and when you are standing somewhere where you shouldn’t be smelling perfume or roses, that’s me.’ Or if you’re standing somewhere and you shouldn’t be smelling cigarette smoke, that’s her. She says, ‘Mom, I’m really there!’ Be open to how energy communicates. Keep having conversations every single day because this is so important.”

The mystery of your disappearance has lingered so long that the possibility of it being solved leaves me disconcerted. My premonition is that once your story is told, my life too will be over. In the meantime, the fragrance of perfume is welcome, cigarettes not so much.

December 6: National Day of Remembrance

2015: **Christy Ramone Crane**, age 25, mother of a young daughter, was found on a rural gravel road near Samson Cree Nation south of Edmonton. She suffered serious head injuries and died the next day. An aunt was later charged with manslaughter.

Dear Cara,

1989: We were still in Nova Scotia when Marc Lepine, a 25-year-old student at L'Ecole Polytechnique in Montreal, murdered 14 women and injured ten others in the name of fighting feminism. He later turned his gun on himself. This tragic event, the worst single-day massacre in Canadian history, became a focal point of awareness for the reality of gender-based violence.

In 1991 the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women was named. Canadian flags have since flown at half-mast on all federal buildings. The day is also known informally as White Ribbon Day with all Canadians encouraged to wear a white ribbon to symbolize their commitment to end violence against women.

The Montreal women remembered are: **Genevieve Bergeron**, 21; **Helene Colgan**, 23; **Nathalie Croteau**, 23; **Barbara Daigneault**, 22; **Anne-Marie Edward**, 21; **Maud Haviernick**, 29; **Barbara Klueznick**, 31; **Maryse Laganier**, 25; **Maryse Leclair**, 23; **Anne-Marie Lemay**, 22; **Sonia Pelletier**, 23; **Michele Richard**, 21; **Anne St-Arneault**, 23; and **Annie Turcotte**, 21.

2017: In Gatineau, Quebec, a special naming ceremony was held for **Gord Downie**, frontman for the Tragically Hip who, when diagnosed with incurable brain cancer, chose to dedicate his remaining months to Canada's reconciliation with Indigenous people. During a solemn ceremony, Assembly of First Nations Chief Perry Bellegarde wrapped Gord in a star blanket, presented him with an eagle feather, and gave him the Lakota name *Wicapi Omani* meaning "Man Who Walks Among the Stars."

December 7: A Promise of Salt

1995: **Sheila Salter** was abducted and attacked in the parkade under her Edmonton office on her way to work in the morning. Her frozen naked body was found ten days later in a deserted farmhouse outside Edmonton.

2002: The naked body of **Breann Voth**, age 19, was found on a muddy path by the Coquitlam River in British Columbia. She had graduated in June and was on her way to her job at Home Depot when she was killed. Several nearby residents apparently heard screams about the time she disappeared but police were not called until her body was later found by hikers. Alberta is not the only province touched by tragedy.

Dear Cara,

2005: Sheila Salter's sister, Lorie Miseck, wrote *A Promise of Salt*, released in 2002, as a compelling reflection of the time when her family did not know what happened. Lorie described their waiting and the disbelief that followed:

“You were in the wrong place at the wrong time. This is said again and again. I begin to say it. A friend corrects me. “She wasn’t in the wrong place at the wrong time. He was. He was. Don’t forget that.”

Why are we always looking for reasons for everything? What are we trying to prove? Nothing is random? Are we looking for a way to blame the victim so we can stay safe? So we can say to ourselves, well, I would never go there at that time. Oh, she shouldn’t have been alone. What do you say about the woman who goes to work in the morning? She should have stayed home?”

2015: On December 8, the Government of Canada announced the launch of an independent inquiry to address missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, including two-spirited, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered and queer. It was to be a two-phase approach, phase one being consultation on design. More than 2000 survivors, family members, loved ones and service providers participated in 17 pre-inquiry meetings across Canada only to learn their stories, albeit culturally and spiritually supported, and even their contact information were now “confidential.” The Commissioners would need to begin yet again September 1, 2016.

December 8: Time to Listen

2001: The body of **Vivian Rose Paddy**, age 33, was found on the stairs behind a former school. She had recently moved to Edmonton from Wetaskawin. The building was home to an agency which served the inner city population.

2014: The body of **Brandy Vittrekwa**, age 17, was found on a walking trail in Whitehorse, Yukon. Two months later a young offender was charged with second-degree murder. He later pled guilty to manslaughter and was sentenced to two years in jail. Agreed upon statement of facts were that the 15-year-old boy had been drinking and beat her to death after she rejected his advances.

Dear Cara,

2006: The following statement was prepared for the National Victims of Crime Awareness week in April. The preview of your disappearance was posted in Winter on January 16 with the question: “Could the pain get any worse? Oh yes...” The second part follows:

It's Time to Listen

Imagine a young woman one day disappearing from her sad and lonely but predictable life. Imagine phoning her friends, her friends phoning you, everyone asking where she is, not knowing where to turn.

Imagine searching and searching, your eyes probing ditches and alleys, finally contacting the police only to be put off because of her “fluid” lifestyle.

Imagine being told, when a missing person's file was finally opened, all that could be done was to “wait for a body.”

Imagine then that the “body” was found after a month of suspense and anguish.

What more indignity could one suffer than to be tossed in a field, left alone in the sun and the rain, ravaged by insects and animals until only the bones were left to tell the story of the trauma suffered? Imagine having such an autopsy report as your final remembrance.

Could there be more?

Imagine a police investigation ongoing for years and still no arrest.

Imagine having to make peace with that silence, accepting that you might never know who administered the final fatal wound.

Imagine being considered a suspect because, after all, there was an insurance policy.

Imagine deciding that, no matter how your child died, you needed to find healing and meaning for your own life so that her death would not be in vain.

Imagine searching for ways to reach out to other young women similarly disadvantaged. Imagine even finding compassion for those charged with exploiting young women... and seeking a venue to face them and speak to them and challenge them to cease harmful behavior and practice respect for others.

Imagine revisiting the pain of loss with every reporting of another young woman missing and found murdered... and the media sharing it on the evening news.

Imagine reaching deep within yourself over and over again to try to find new words, more respectful language, to educate the media... and society... when such tragedies are sensationalized and disadvantaged women denied dignity even in their death,

It's time to listen, you say, and if I was heard, what might happen?

There might be more preventative programs in the schools, reaching out to young women at risk, helping bridge communication with frustrated parents.

There might be more services in the community for young people, any people for that matter, who struggle with the multiple challenges as learning disabilities, addictions, and mental illness.

There might be supportive housing, harm reduction services, so that even those with destructive lifestyles might be given respect equivalent to palliative care.

There might be more considerate police officers who, even if they planned to do nothing, could explain that more gently to parents of missing children. Really though, there might even be more the police could do. A high-risk lifestyle might qualify people for attention rather than dismissal when they disappear.

There might be warning clauses on insurance policies that, if your child disappears or dies a mysterious death, you could be considered suspect.

There might be more trained and better informed helpers available to walk with parents through the darkness of despair after losing a child.

There might be support groups available – and thankfully there was in Edmonton – where you can learn it is okay to laugh again after tragedy and still okay to be sad even years later.

December 9: Someone somewhere knows something

2004: **Maggie Lea Burke**, age 21, a beautiful young woman with a bright smile and an infant daughter, disappeared from downtown Edmonton. Project KARE issued an alert over four months later on April 23, 2005. Maggie has not yet been found,

2007: **Rene Lynn Gunning**, age 19, and **Krystal Ann Knott**, age 16, who disappeared from West Edmonton Mall on February 18, 2005, were added to Project KARE almost three years later. It was believed the girls may have attempted to hitchhike home to Fort St. John from Edmonton. Their skulls were found by campers on May 21, 2011, six years after they disappeared, near Forest Trunk Road south of Grande Prairie.

Dear Cara,

2015: Crime-stoppers erected a billboard for **Maggie Burke**, age 21 when she disappeared eleven years earlier in 2004, near the area she was last seen in downtown Edmonton. Her mother Marie spoke publicly for the first time. The *Edmonton Journal* reported “Mom always hopeful for missing daughter” while the *Sun* described “A nightmare.” Marie described Maggie as a very loving person who liked to work with animals and wanted to be a veterinarian.

Marie acknowledged the long and painful nightmare her family endured and was grateful that public attention might generate new tips. “It’s been a nightmare we haven’t really been able to wake up from... The billboard made it very real for us in that it’s taken seriously... My family wants answers... We hope that people will remember something and please come forward.” A police officer’s comment that “Someone somewhere must have information” echoes the refrain frequently spoken by families of missing and murdered across Canada.



December 10: Universal Human Rights Day - Rachel Moran in Edmonton

1948: This day marked a milestone in the quest to achieve world of peace and justice. United Nations' General Assembly passed the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** recognizing all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.

"The purpose... is to take something bad and try to alchemise it into something good. The 'something good' here is in the sharing of this understanding for the benefit of those who want an awareness of it, but who have never and will never experience it for themselves. **There is something good in exposing prostitution for what it really is.**

... [My parents] were in the grip of active addictions... I don't blame them and I know they weren't bad people, they were sick people. These facts are simply facts and I harbour no desire to play them for tears. I record them here only because they are central to an understanding of how I became involved in a **harmful, depressing, destructive lifestyle** that would have been scarcely imaginable to me the day before I first embarked upon it."

Rachel Moran from her book *Paid For* (2013, p. 2-3) Emphasis added.

Dear little Cara,

2015: Today marked day #16 of "16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence," first proclaimed by the Center for Women's Global Leadership in 1991. The 16 days begin on November 25, International Day for Elimination of Violence Against Women, and end on December 10, Human Rights Day. Since 1991, thousands of organizations in hundreds of countries have organized awareness events around gender inequality and violence.

Rachel Moran spoke in Edmonton on December 7, a chance encounter that helped crystalize my thinking on the topic of sexual exploitation and inspired a year of book-gifting. REACH Edmonton, who sponsored Rachel's talk, presented the first 50 attendees with a copy of her book, *Paid For*. I matched that offer over the next several months by purchasing 50 more books and distributing them to various politicians and community leaders at all levels of government. The book *Paid For*, aptly described as a paradigm shifter, clearly exposes the harm and destruction inherent in the sexual exploitation known as "prostitution."

2016: As my book-gifting continued, accompanying letters reminded recipients of the need for consistent enforcement across provincial and municipal jurisdictions given that Canada has federal legislation criminalizing the purchase of sexual service. I asked that readers not be swayed by simplistic arguments about “harm reduction” and to consider the position, as adopted by Equality Now, that curbing demand for commercial sex must be part of a holistic strategy.

December 11: Making a difference one person at a time

1995: **Becky Charles**, age 15, froze to death in northern Saskatchewan after being ordered out of a cab. The driver later pled guilty to not providing the necessities of life.

2015: Winnipeg police announced that a 53-year-old man was arrested in Vancouver and charged with second-degree murder in the death of 15-year-old **Tina Fontaine** who was found wrapped in a bag in the Red River in August 17, 2014, eight days after she disappeared. The accused had at least 92 convictions across Canada

Dear Cara,

2016: My Seven Weeks of Spirit concluded with Week Seven. My last question was if you had any comments about the work I am doing. Carmel’s response was reassuring:

“Your daughter talks about you expressing your inner truth so it’s like you are talking to people or sharing with other people. She talks about the work you are doing with helping others and being very proud of you every step of the way. She says, ‘Mom, you’re making a difference in the world one person at a time.’ She also wants me to talk about papers or documents, or something that wasn’t filed properly or done properly. She said this is now coming to a result.”

Carmel’s general comments were that (1) our loved ones are always with us, around us, and communicating and (2) Spirit is always 100% right so if a message doesn’t seem clear, it may be about something that is still coming. The only documents not filed properly were the incomplete state of my manuscript. Hopefully, that is now coming to fruition.

December 12: Report rubs the wrong way

2008: A skull found June 5 was identified as **Shannon Maureen Collins**, age 29, who was last seen almost a year earlier.

2015: **Yvette Lydia Morin**, age 28, mother of four sons, died from a gunshot wound in her downtown Edmonton apartment. It was later determined she was hit accidentally when a man shot through a closed door intending to deter a home invader. He pled guilty to manslaughter and was sentenced to four years in prison. Yvette was described as a kind and caring free spirit.

Dear Cara,

2016: My social protest of the year was to question the consequences of the City of Edmonton body-rub centers. My letter was printed in the *Edmonton Journal* (February 20) with the catchy title: “Report rubs the wrong way:”

“The federal government passed legislation in November 2014 called the Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons. This, among other things, criminalizes the purchase of sexual services.

Yet city council is preparing to receive recommendations next week from a “body rub” committee. The fact that this committee even exists is an example of the city’s ongoing attempt to circumvent federal legislation with bylaws regulating “erotic massage.” Many citizens consider such activities part of the commercialization of sexual exploitation.

The city report is difficult to understand, but seems to conclude that “erotic massage” is not considered a sexual service in Edmonton and therefore exempt from the legislation.

Really? All those men frequenting licensed facilities are hoping for what – to have their earlobes caressed?

It’s time the city gave its collective head a shake and adopted a more serious position.

I hope reporters covering this issue next week can see through the rhetoric and report on this apparent contradiction.”

Unfortunately, there was no significant attitude shift. In spite of several citizen protests, the licensing of body-rub facilities continued with qualifiers of increased “harm reduction.” The City was not yet ready to address sex-buyers so created new euphemisms for their activity.

December 13: Letter campaign

“When you can’t control what’s happening, challenge yourself to control the way you respond to what’s happening. That’s where your power is.”

Power of Positivity (Nov 9, 2016)

Dear Cara,

2016: My protests regarding the City of Edmonton’s decision to license “body-rub” facilities took on many dimensions. My initial letter of concern (February 16) was quite clear:

“Your bylaw people assure me the City is “on side” [with the **Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act**] without explaining what that means...

Any man, who is unwilling or unable to participate in consensual activity, can pay for an ‘erotic massage’ at a licensed City facility. I do not understand why the City of Edmonton continues to be involved in this blatant commercialization of sexual exploitation, especially after **Canada** joined many other forward-thinking countries in **criminalizing the purchase of sexual services...**”

Follow-up letters were sent to the Mayor, all councillors, and the Branch Manager whose department produced the controversial report. Their lack of response prompted me to extend my message further afield in hope that ripples of reason would somewhere have an impact.

My points are simple:

- (1) We cannot pretend we don’t know what really happens behind closed doors when many exited women are willing to testify.
- (2) “Licensed” facilities provide more protection to buyers than to providers.
- (3) Trauma is experienced by the majority of survivors who sell sex.
- (4) Best practices for combatting exploitation include education, political awareness, media campaigns, training for law enforcement, peer support, exit strategies, and services for victims.
- (5) Social justice requires that all citizens are protected from commodification.
- (6) If we are serious about harm reduction, can we consider registration of sex-buyers?

December 14: Real men don't exploit women and children

2015: An unexpected message was received:

"Hello. U may not know or remember me at all. I used to be friends with Cara so many years ago. Back when she was still in braces. We did a lot of crazy things together and had some wonderful times... I don't think I ever met such a beautiful person. I miss her often and always wanted to let you know she was a great person... We were friends and I loved her. If I could have been a better friend, I certainly would have tried. I always knew Cara had a great mom because she mentioned you often. I think of you both often. With all my love and sorrow, Katherine T"

Dear Cara,

2016: I don't remember Katherine but was happy to hear from one of your friends. The tragedy of your loss is softened when warm memories are shared.

People who speak of the "complex and controversial issue" of sexual exploitation are incredibly annoying in their short-sightedness. The issue is NOT about a mutual exchange between two consenting adults, if that ever exists. Because some practitioners claim to participate willingly, to pretend that all do is extremely naïve and socially irresponsible.

Some of the issues are economic equality and opportunity, freedom from oppression and coercion, safe and respectful treatment, full and informed consent. Exploitation may be complex but it is NOT controversial. It is WRONG to take advantage of anyone's youth, disability, poverty, ignorance, lack of social standing, or gender.

2017: The book *Trafficked* (2012) by Sophie Hayes tells the story of a young British woman, neither Indigenous nor Eastern European, lured into sexual servitude by a man who posed as her best friend. It is almost incomprehensible that one could be so manipulated. Yet the dynamics of low self-esteem and dependence exist around the world and leave many young people vulnerable to oppression, abuse, violence and bondage.

December 15: Dangerous dancing

1921: Circular from Department of Indian Affairs, Ottawa

It is observed with alarm that the holding of dances by the Indians on their reserves is on the increase, and that these practices tend to disorganize the efforts which the Department is putting forth to make them self-supporting.

I have, therefore, to direct you to use your utmost endeavors to dissuade the Indians from excessive indulgence in the practice of dancing. You should suppress any dances which cause waste of time, interfere with the occupations of the Indians, unsettle them for serious work, injure their health or encourage them in sloth and idleness. You should also dissuade, and, if possible, prevent them from leaving their reserves for the purpose of attending fairs, exhibitions, etc., where their absence would result in their own farming and other interests being neglected. It is realized that reasonable amusement and recreation should be enjoyed by Indians, but they should not be allowed to dissipate their energies and abandon themselves to demoralizing amusement. By use of tact and firmness you can obtain control and keep it, and this obstacle to continued progress will then disappear.

Yours very truly, Duncan Campbell Scott
Deputy Superintendent

My darling Cara,

2015: Your picture appeared unexpectedly in the *Edmonton Journal* as part of 18 women missing or murdered in various jurisdictions. An article headlined “Lessons from B.C.’s Missing Women Inquiry” suggested: “It [the Inquiry] will be lengthy, expensive and painful.”

Millions of tax dollars were spent on the B.C. Missing Women Commission of Inquiry

2010-2011. The summary included these words by Commissioner Wally Oppal:

“As a society, we must take actions to directly address these underlying causes that contribute to women’s violence and serial predation... Aboriginal women and marginalized women are more vulnerable to predations wherever they live; thus these conditions must be addressed through both local and broader strategies. In face of the tragic story of the missing women, we can no longer stand by or take half-measures.”

Many of the 65 recommendations remained ignored or “underway” when the government offered a new Inquiry. It remains to be seen what will be heard or implemented this time.

December 16: The Impact of trauma – REdress Photography Project

“There’s no Hell quite like watching drugs change someone you love into someone you don’t even know.”
Back-from-the-Ledge

2016: The passing of a beautiful young woman, neither Indigenous nor murdered, was announced. She remains anonymous. What struck me was the courage of her parents in acknowledging the forces that ended her life:

“Her pictures show her smiling, laughing, posing, loving and being loved by her family and friends. She was a stunningly beautiful young woman with the world at her feet. What doesn’t show in the pictures of this lovely girl is her involvement with drugs and the devastating toll they took on her and her family, ultimately resulting in her accidental loss of life due to a drug overdose. Despite the love and support of her family, and every opportunity given to help her recover from her struggles with addiction, she did not acknowledge what those around her could see happening. She thought she could stop, anytime. She will be missed forever by her heartbroken parents, family and friends.”

Dear Cara,

2016: “Imagine 1181 daughters never returning home. Now imagine that no one cares.”

On January 17, 2015, the *Globe and Mail* published a full-page photograph of a red dress hanging in the woods with those words. The photo was inspired by the REDress Project of Jaime Black (See December 16) and the words motivated Edmonton’s then 81-year-old Mufty Mathewson to action. She thought, “I do care and I know what I can do. I am a photographer; I can take pictures.” And so began the REdress Photography Project.

Mufty learned that redress meant “to right a wrong.” Other meanings include: seeking justice for torture survivors, relief from distress, remove the cause of a grievance, compensation for loss, and to heal. She purchased three red dresses, began taking pictures of them in different locations and invited her camera club members to join her.

The REdress Photography Project grew to include many amateur photographers. Hundreds of photos and collages were mounted and displayed in many sites across Alberta, and

I met Mufty at the Edmonton Spirit of our Sisters gathering in September 2016, where 10 composite photographs featured 181 images to honour the 1181 MMIW. It is encouraging that the REdress Photography has captured attention and inspired many people across the province. (See more photos on October 30.)



December 17: Tears of recognition

1995: The naked frozen body of 42-year-old **Sheila Salter** was found in an abandoned farmhouse east of Edmonton ten days after she was abducted from her work parkade. Her name is forever linked to Peter Brighteyes, who was convicted of first-degree murder and hung himself in the Edmonton Institution on April 25, 1997.

2015: Another unexpected message was received:

"Hello Kathy... I don't know if you remember me but I was the long blond haired friend of Cara's that she used to bring over from time to time... I want you to know that I still think of Cara often and hope one day that some justice can be served to the piece of garbage that took her from you and loved ones. She lives in my heart and always will. She is not forgotten about... at least not from this friend 18 years later. That tells you how special she truly was... My deepest sympathies... Know that Cara is loved and missed by me.

"Ps... I wanted to message you this for many years. I also remember how nice you always treated me!! Even though I was nervous when she would bring me. Hugs!!
"Also... I want to tell you to keep strong. I read about the work you have done and the world need more people like you... Cara was very proud of you. Hope you knew that... cuz she loved you very much. I know because she would tell me." Chris W.

Dear Cara,

2017: Sometimes out of the blue I receive wonderful gifts, such as the above note from another of your former friends. I was embarrassed that I did not see it when it first arrived, hidden as a Message on my unfamiliar phone. It popped up one day when I needed a sign.

A further book worthy of mention is Simon Haggstrom's *Shadow's Law* (2016). This is the true story of a detective in Sweden who works to enforce legislation in the first country in the world to criminalize the purchase of sex. Although some women still work to finance drug addiction and others are still trafficked, the legislation has been effective in shifting social attitudes. As stated in the preface, "Studies show that about 70% of the population are supportive of the legislation and there is a definite political unity." Buying sex in Sweden is now considered one of the most shameful crimes for which one can get arrested. The book describes several accounts of both buyers and sellers caught in the shadows of exploitation.

December 18: So many connections

“Do you really think that you have the power to mess up God’s plans?”

Touched by an Angel (1997)

1983: **Charlotte Hazel Bass**, age 18, was found dead inside a burning Edmonton house where she was living with friends. Police later said the fire was intentionally set. Charlotte is remembered as an animal lover with a zest for life. Her murder is unsolved.

2015: **Peacha Atkinson**, age 64, passed away after being diagnosed with cancer in July. Her life changed forever on April 3, 2005, when her 13-year-old daughter **Nina Louise Courtepatte** was murdered. Continuing the fight for justice, Peacha became a vocal advocate for missing and murdered women in Alberta. She attended many trials and appeals over the years as the five people charged in Nina’s death were tried separately and eventually convicted. Each year Peacha held a rally in Nina’s honour.

My darling Cara,

2001: Cherry Kingsley spoke in Japan at the Second World Congress Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children. “What we have to do is get beyond voicing outrage and move toward more practical and meaningful solutions,” she said. The conference brought together 3000 delegates from 138 countries to discuss how to free some 250 MILLION children. Such conferences preach to the converted. How can we change the consciousness of those who deny the humanity of women and children and treat them as objects for purchase?

2017: A pleasant surprise was contact from Christopher Bagley, a former professor and my thesis adviser from the University of Calgary. He invited me to collaborate on an article reviewing the experiences of sexually exploited children in Bangladesh. My delight in being involved was an opportunity to shift attention from the neutral term “sex work” to the documented physical and sexual abuse of adolescents who were studied as “participants.” The term “commercial sexual exploitation” was introduced to academic literature in our article, “Commercialised Sexual Exploitation of Children, Adolescents and Women,” published in *Advances in Applied Sociology*, 2017, 7, 137-150.

December 19: Hurt people hurt people

2016: Yet another message...

"I am looking for the mother of Cara King. I went to school with her. I was a young girl... 14 when the streets robbed me of my youth. I was on and off the streets for approximately 2 years. It was a struggle... Cara never knew that about me. I was good friends with Aura and Missy as well... Aura is now a meth addict and Missy overdosed and died in 2010.

I never had the chance to tell you or anyone else how sorry I am for your loss. The reason I am connecting with you is because I want to speak out. I want to help others... I was almost killed when I was merely 15 years old... I want to speak out about that as well... I remember like it was yesterday. I do look forward to hearing from you as I know you are a huge pillar in the community. Thank you for your time. I have a pretty interesting story, I rose above... sometimes still hard to believe I became who I did. I'm a very grateful girl who would love to reach out to struggling girls... It is possible to live a life full of love, with dreams and goals... and it's great." SRS

Dear little Cara,

2010: Cinder kept in touch with some of the friends you and Aura had in common and invited me to Missy's funeral. Missy used to stay with us in the apartment at times, taking a break from her own home. "I know Cara," exclaimed a bright blue-haired young man when Cinder introduced me as your mom. "You're not old enough," I protested. "No, but I heard so much about her, I feel like I know her," he explained. That was the essence of your charisma.

Your friend Katherine (See December 14) later echoed similar sentiments: "I never had a chance in life to meet anyone who made me love life as much as Cara... She had a wonderful personality. The day I heard of her death, I completely changed my life – for the better. I re-evaluated my thoughts and actions... She is always in my heart."

2016: A *Maclean's* magazine headline read, "Canada's unspoken crisis: Homicides involving Indigenous people are off the charts and no one is willing to talk about why." Scott Gilmore's provocative article outlines the many disadvantages Indigenous people face. They are

more likely to die in infancy, more like to be sexually assaulted, more likely to drop out of school, less likely to maintain employment, more likely to be incarcerated, more likely to be the victim of murder, and also more likely to murder. The last statistic is the most disturbing.

Gilmore suggests that disconnected and poor communities, whether rural or inner-city, have higher rates of violence which creates a vicious cycle. Children growing up in violent homes are more likely to have serious emotional or behavioural problems. RCMP statistics suggest the majority (71%) of homicide victims were killed by members of their own community, family or friends. The more complex questions are why communities turn on their own and how to prevent it.

December 20: Summary comments

“For what is it to die but to stand naked in the wind and to melt into the sun?
And what is it to cease breathing, but to free the breath from its restless tides, that it
may rise and expand seek God unencumbered?
Only when you drink from the river of silence shall you indeed sing.
And when you have reached the mountaintop, then you shall begin to climb.
And when the earth shall claim your limbs, then you shall truly dance!”

Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet*

1993: **Joyce Cardinal**, age 36, died from her injuries after being set on fire November 28. Seven years later a man pled guilty to second-degree murder.

My dear Cara,

2017: As my reflections draw to an end and the MMIW inquiry continues, numerous questions remain. How many systemic causes will the Inquiry find to explain disappearance and murder of countless Indigenous women? Let me list some of the possible considerations: Colonialism? Sexism? Racism? Pornography? Blaming victims? “At-risk” lifestyles? Lack of resources? Child abuse and neglect? Addiction? Trauma response? Exploitation? Alienation?

Inappropriate police response? Economic disparity? Lack of integration? Domestic violence? Lateral violence? Discrimination? Homelessness? Isolation? Incarceration? Trafficking?

“Being missing” may not be a crime but it often an indication that a crime has been committed. However many systemic causes are identified, willingness to change must follow. Hopefully, awareness will lead to attitude shifts, and new beliefs will lead to new actions.

Winter is “going within” time. Wisdom is the part of our awareness that waits to be shared with the next generation.

December 21: Longest night of the year – Elephants in the Room

“The Winter Solstice stands on the cusp between darkness and light. Out of the darkness light is reborn and hope returns so too in our lives.” Spirit of Old

1990: **Lorraine Wray**, a 46-year-old mother, was found strangled in the bathroom of her “massage parlour” business in west Edmonton.

Dear Cara,

2016: I was ecstatic and grateful to have my article on sexual exploitation published in the Fall 2016 issue of the *Advocate*, magazine of the Alberta College of Social Workers. At the risk of repetition, the article is presented in full. My belief is that social professions must take a stand on behalf of the citizens they serve.

Elephants in the Room

Can you see the elephants, silent in our midst, whenever there is talk of poverty reduction, job creation, or economic diversity? Giant grey phantoms cast shadows of entitlement, patriarchy, and racism over all discussions.

These elephants represent hidden victims. Prior to December 2014, prostitution was legal in Canada, the “exchange of sex for money” implying equality and consent. Why then were women labelled and stigmatized?

Legal statutes addressed only related activities – owning a bawdy house, procuring, and soliciting in public. In 1984, the Edmonton Journal reported children selling sex in Edmonton. Many social initiatives followed but attitudes were slow to change. Safe houses for exploited youth were opened and outreach program developed. New legislation followed to ensure the sexually abused under age 18 were recognized as victims rather than having made a “lifestyle choice.”

In 1994, the City of Edmonton introduced bylaws to ensure minors were not licensed, and to provide legal venues for private communication between adults. Women who chose to sell were easier to find and buyer anonymity was protected.

Wise elephants sighed. These changes meant that children, once recruited, would perhaps have options, but that was not enough. What would happen to young adults: desperate, addicted, homeless, scrambling for scraps of money?

Imagine an emaciated young woman circa 1995, high on drugs, approached by an undercover cop three times her size and cajoled to acknowledge a price for “blow and lay.” She received charges and jail time because he was considered the victim.

Citizens shook their heads; the city would be much safer without desperate women enticing bystanders. Others gathered to challenge men cruising their neighbourhoods and applied to have streets designated one-way to redirect traffic.

The first Prostitution Offender Program, aka john school, was held in 1996 in Edmonton through the collaborative action of community members, police, crown prosecutors and many others. Seven women disappeared from the street that year.

Imagine fighting to file a missing person report, expecting responsive action, and being told the police only “wait for a body.” Imagine a long month of silence before the body was found. Imagine many families waiting years, and others never knowing.

Another young woman was gang raped in the back of a van by four men and thrown out. Imagine her approaching police and being told, “That’s on you. It’s your choice to be out here. Keep moving or I’ll arrest you.” That woman had been groomed as a young girl and was responsible for feeding her brothers. She grew up with addicted parents and was taught by her grandmother, “You’re sitting on a gold mine, baby.”

Elephants hung their heads, wondering what needed to happen to free other young people similarly trapped. One light shone in the darkness in 1999 when Sweden became the first country in the world to ban the purchase of sexual services. In Alberta in 2003, the RCMP’s Project KARE was established to investigate the

growing number of missing women. The lesson learned from Vancouver was that “missing” often meant murdered.

In 2009, Alberta’s first charges of human trafficking were laid in both Edmonton and Calgary, token recognition that all involved in this world were not participating freely. Elephants tentatively waved little flags of hope. Who better understood the tedious humiliation of performing mind-numbing tricks day after day while pretending to enjoy?

... Wheels turn slowly. In December 2013, the Supreme Court of Canada, after three years of challenges and appeals, struck down three sections of the criminal code (those prohibiting bawdy houses, living off the avails of prostitution, and public soliciting) and gave government a year to come up with new legislation.

Peter McKay and the Conservatives produced Bill C-36, the Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act, which came into effect December 6, 2014. It seeks to reduce demand by targeting those who buy sex.

Elephants trumpeted in triumph. Canada dared to take innovative steps to combat sexual exploitation. But elation was short lived. The legislation was declared partisan by some. Others implied harm reduction was sufficient. Governments changed and the challenge was ignored.

The federal government says provinces are responsible for enforcing legislation. Alberta replies that police are responsible for investigating suspected illegal activity. Edmonton councillors voted unanimously to lift the body-rub moratorium declared three years earlier and the City was “back in business” effective April 1, 2016.

How can serious discussion continue about poverty elimination and gender-based violence when commodification is licensed in Edmonton? Surely economic security and equality includes the right to be free from commercial exploitation.

For social workers across Canada, the call to action is to rally around innovative federal legislation already in place. Best practices include empowering women and communities, curbing demand, educating men, raising political awareness, training law enforcement, providing and promoting hotlines, peer support, exit strategies and media campaigns, plus building networks and services for victims.

Political vision determines direction. Let’s talk about the elephants in the room, and ask ourselves, what kind of world do we want for our children?

In Medicine Wheel tradition, Earth Renewal Moon is first moon of the North. It begins with winter solstice when Father Sun returns to bring warmth to Mother Earth. It teaches clarity, vision and wisdom as we learn ancient traditions and ceremony.



December 22: Earth Renewal Moon – Winter Solstice begins

How are they, the MMIWG of Canada, to be counted?

My dear little Cara,

2016: Earlier in the year, then Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Carolyn Bennett stated to the *Globe and Mail* (February 17) the numbers of MMIW were “way bigger” than 1200. A 2014 RCMP report recorded 1181 cases from 1980. An update released in 2015 added 32 murders in 2013 and 2014. The names, however, are still “confidential” so families had no way of confirming if or how their loved ones are included.

Gladys Radek, co-founder of Walk4Justice, claimed to have collected more than 4000 names by 2011, of whom between 2500 and 3000 were aboriginal. It is my strong feeling that all vulnerable women must be considered to determine the additional risk of racial heritage. During all your struggles with addictions, mental illness, exploitation and homelessness, it never occurred to me that racism was a factor. If an ethnic bias exists among those who share some of your challenges, implications for both cause and prevention must be considered.

December 23: Blue Christmas

2007: **Shannon Maureen Collins**, age 29, was last seen in Edmonton by her family. Her skull was later found June 5, 2008, near Sherwood Park. Her former boyfriend was convicted of second-degree murder ten years later in 2017.

My darling Cara,

2005: The *Edmonton Journal* headlined a “Blue Christmas service to soothe season’s pain.” An interfaith service at the Unitarian Church of Edmonton was held for those who felt lonely, stress, or grief at a time that supposed to be joyful.

The *Edmonton Sun* reported on “Support group for victims’ survivors.” “There are many layers of intrusion following a murder, so people often need extra support.” said one member. “It’s a place to go where it’s safe to talk to other people who have had similar experiences.” Another added, “It helps to be with people who know what it’s like to lose someone, who are living in the same world you are.”

December 24: Celebrating Constable Daniel Woodall

1979: **Dan Woodall** was born in Manchester England and immigrated to Canada with his young family in 2007 to join the Edmonton Police Service. He was killed in the line of duty June 8, 2015, at age 35.

2006: **Marilyn Elaine Badger**, age 52, was found dead in Edmonton. Her nephew was later charged and found guilty of manslaughter.

Dear Cara,

2015: The position of Poet Laureate as literary ambassador for the City of Edmonton began in 2005 with the expectation that he or she, among other duties, produce at least three original compositions for specific events each year. Mary Pinkoski, a vibrant and passionate young woman, aptly described as a “spoken word artist,” served as poet laureate 2013-2015.

Mary's tribute to Constable Woodall, quoted here in part, serves as an accolade to all who work to make the world a better place.

"It is Evening in the City

Daniel, it is evening
And despite that the light is falling
that flags are falling
that tears and hearts are falling

We are not falling
We are lifting you up
On the wind of our river,
Under a glowing blue bridge
We are lifting you up
Like the way hope rises off a hallelujah

It is evening and you are our amazing grace
Our blessing, our journey into understanding
How beautiful you worked to make Edmonton...

It is still evening in this city
and the moon is rising into the sky
a light drowning us despite darkness
Go gently, Daniel

It is evening in the city,
And we are holding you up"

As my reflections draw to an end, Dan Woodall and Mary Pinkoski are included for different reasons. Constable Daniel Woodall (killed June 8, 2015) like Constable David Wynn (who died January 20, 2015) and the four RCMP officers killed at Mayerthorpe (March 4, 2005) represent the tragedy of those who die in honourable service for the safety of our communities. The terrible loss of young lives and the trauma to their families is acknowledged.

Mary Pinkoski represents the often unrecognized voices of artists, who seek new words or expression for thoughts and feelings many of us struggle to convey. I acknowledge all who find innovative ways to inspire the human spirit.

December 25: Christmas memories

"When the power of love overcomes the love of power, the world will know peace."

Jimi Hendrix

1996: **Joanne Ghostkeeper**, age 24, failed to arrive at her father's home with presents for her two children. She was later found strangled to death in her apartment.

My darling Cara,

You loved Christmas and often had a new red dress for the occasion. With your birthday coming so quickly after, I always tried to make sure you had two separate celebrations.

1985: One of my favorite memories is when you received not one but two Cabbage Patch dolls for Christmas. It was the year after the craze, we missed the first round, and dolls were still hard to find. Block surprisingly came home with a CP doll one evening. A few days later I was shopping with Buddy and we found another quite by accident. Buddy threatened to tell you if I didn't buy it. I didn't want to spoil Block's surprise so instead risked censure by duplicating his gift. You were ecstatic and carried both dolls to school for the rest of the year.

2005: One of my earliest Christmas memories is my devout English grandparents hushing the room in their small Alberta farmhouse and tuning in the radio to hear their Queen's message from far away England. This year Queen Elizabeth delivered the following words as part of her traditional address to the Commonwealth:

"This last year has reminded us that this world is not always an easy or a safe place to live in, but it is the only place we have... I believe also that it has shown us all how our faith – whatever our religion – can inspire us to work together in friendship and peace for the sake of our own and future generations."

Not much has changed. This could be true of any year. The world is not always easy or safe but it is the only place we have and we can all work for friendship and peace.

December 26: Overwhelming tragedies

2005: **Jessie Foster**, age 22, came home to Calgary for Christmas from Las Vegas but insisted she needed to return. That was the last time her family saw her; although they remained in contact until March 2016. A supposed boyfriend offered her a free trip in 2005, where she was forced to work as an escort under the control of an abusive pimp.

Jessie's mother, Glendene Grant, founded *MATH: Mothers Against Trafficking in Humans* to keep her daughter's story alive and to raise awareness of the dangers.

Darling Cara,

2004: A massive tsunami swept ashore in Asia the day after Christmas, killing over 200,000 people and leaving millions homeless. The tsunami created horrors of incomprehensible proportions and was called the worst natural disaster in history. Redeeming news was a major outpouring of relief funds from the international community. When I think of how hard it has been for me at times to carry on without you, I can only imagine the grief consciousness that is multiplied and reflected hundreds of thousands of times over in communities that have been emotionally as well as physically shattered.

We are all continually called to rebuild. My day job is listening to people who have been ravaged by life circumstance and seek new strength to carry on. I am often moved by their need to simply be heard. On those days it is a sacred privilege to bear witness.

It is a mystery why some are chosen to live and others are chosen to die, why some are chosen to suffer and others chosen to comfort. After all these years, many questions remain in my heart. I know I must make peace with your passing to go forward myself.

2005: Tonight I spoke with Grandma. She tried to read me an article from the *Sun* but couldn't. It was the story about our Victims of Homicide support group and the layers of intrusion families often face. Poor Grandma caused me to cry too. She is so distant with her feelings that I tend to forget she too is still mourning your death.

December 27: Winding down

"I am a Seenager (Senior teenager). I have everything that I wanted as a teenager, only 60 years later. I don't have to go to school or work. I get an allowance every month. I have my own pad. I don't have a curfew. I have a driver's license and my own car. The people I hang around with are not scared of getting pregnant and they do not use drugs. And I don't have acne. Life is great." Shared: Vintage

Dear little Cara,

2017: As my life winds down, I want to end with a note of levity. My life was a search for meaning, although some might say I created my own challenges. For now, I love retirement.

I honour Saskatchewan Cree artist Allen Sapp (January 2, 1928 – December 29, 2015) whose work inspired most of my adult life. The first time I saw one of his paintings was in the late 1960s when attending the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon. A simple prairie landscape reminded me of a pasture where I used to wander as a child and Allen's depictions of horses at work brought back memories of time spent with my father.

I was a poor student and the landscape painting listed at \$35, an incomprehensible amount at the time. I remember wondering how I could possibly raise that much money or who I could even ask for help. Years later, as Allen grew in fame, I attended other exhibitions but, as in the beginning, the cost of his original paintings continued to exceed my budget.

Allen Sapp was born on the Red Pheasant Reserve south of North Battleford, the third of seven children, four of whom died as children. His maternal grandmother named him "*Kiskayetum*," Cree for "he perceives it" as she believed he had a bright future to fulfill (noted by Patricia Dawn Robertson, special to the *Globe and Mail*, June 11, 2016.)

Allen was a sickly child, leaving him in the role of observer as depicted in his paintings. His views from above are particularly intriguing as if he had out-of-body experiences.

December 28: Together forever – Memories of love will be of you

“To transform the world, we must begin with ourselves; and what is important in beginning with ourselves is the intention. The intention must be to understand ourselves and not to leave it to others to transform themselves or to bring about a modified change through revolution, either of the left or of the right. It is important to understand that this is our responsibility, yours and mine. ..

Krishnamurti @ Daily Meditation Quote

“If I have harmed anyone in any way either knowingly or unknowingly through my own confusions I ask their forgiveness. If anyone has harmed me in any way either knowingly or unknowingly through their own confusions I forgive them. And if there is a situation I am not yet ready to forgive I forgive myself for that. For all the way that I harm myself, negate, doubt, belittle myself, judge or be unkind to myself through my own confusions I forgive myself.”

DiscoverYourAura @ Home Study Reiki

My dearest darling Cara,

Happy Birthday in heaven!

2005: One headline of the day proclaimed, “A kinder, gentler world.” “Despite wars, famines, terrorist attacks, natural disasters and continued poverty, the evidence suggests conditions are improving globally.” At least that was the conclusion of Dan Garner from the *Edmonton Journal*. “For all our failings, our species is freer, healthier, less warlike and more prosperous than any other time in history.” And yet we still have work to do.

2017: Every story has a beginning and an end. Yours began as a tiny baby girl, struggling to survive “placenta deficiency” even before you were born. Nevertheless, you came into the world an undaunted spirit, determined to forge your own way with unique energy. Like every child, you were a blessing and a new beginning. Like every child, you craved to be cherished and nurtured to fulfil your own destiny in the seasons of life.

Creator sent us on a discovery together. Whether we chose our path in some Life before life or whether we were sent by Spirit, it was our time to learn and grow from each other.

Today would be your birthday on earth. It's hard to imagine the challenges you would still face if you had survived. How terribly sad that you had to die for your struggles to be over. What a shame our world is not yet ready to offer full support to all vulnerable citizens.

My dear little Cara, you gave your life so that others may live. Your presence brightened my world in the time we shared together and your spirit continues to inspire my being. I will miss you and love you forever. Thanks for being part of my journey.



If we listen, perhaps we can hear the voices of all our missing and murdered sisters and brothers: “We are now present in the sun that shines, the stars that twinkle in the sky, the wind that blows, and the rain and snow that falls upon the Earth. We have been transformed. Let the memory of our short lives be used for good so others can enjoy the peace and freedom that we were denied.”

Final disclaimer: By naming a few of the many missing and murdered across Canada and by sharing Cara's story, my hope is to encourage more voices and, more importantly, to help eliminate sexual exploitation by promoting real choices based on dignity, respect, and equality. Thank you.