

The Invisible Victims

June 10, 2019



Two years ago, Ashley Heavy Runner Loring vanished without a trace, like thousands of other Native American women who go missing at alarming rates every year. Around the country, a remarkable movement, driven by Native women themselves, is leading the charge to find them.

The Invisible Victims Cont..

In June 2017, sisters Ashley and Kimberly Heavy Runner Loring were full of plans. Ashley hoped to leave her home on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation, east of Glacier National Park in Montana, later that summer for Missoula, where she would live with Kimberly while studying environmental science at the University of Montana. But while Kimberly was away for a few months getting to know her fiancé's family in Morocco, Ashley grew despondent. The then-20-year-old was devastated following a breakup and often texted her sister for advice. "It was like her world was ending," says Kimberly, now 25. Ashley cried more often and kept to herself. She stopped attending her classes at Blackfeet Community College and befriended a decades-older crowd, which included some who were rumored to sell and use drugs like meth. In early June, she called Kimberly, saying she needed money. Kimberly couldn't send it from Morocco but promised she would be home in just a few days. But before Kimberly returned to Montana, Ashley vanished. Unable to reach Ashley for days, her grandmother Loxie Loring reported her missing at the tribal police station in Browning, Montana, the reservation's largest town and governing seat. But she says police told her that Ashley didn't want to be found, that word around town was she was part of a raucous crowd and probably off partying somewhere. "We kept telling them, 'It's not like her,'" Kimberly says. Ashley always called.

The Invisible Victims Cont..

Upon her return, frantic at what she believed was police inaction, Kimberly organized the first of what would become more than a hundred search parties over the next two years. Ashley's family and friends combed the wilderness looking for clues but had little to go on. The reservation spans 1.5 million remote acres, Glacier National Park another million; vast, open plains stretch hundreds of miles east and northward into Canada. Kimberly had no idea where Ashley could be in all that space.

Like many communities that have experienced historical trauma, a term that describes how colonization and violence can affect families and communities for generations, the reservation, home to around 7,000 Blackfoot residents, has long weathered poverty and crime. The unemployment rate of nearly 11 percent is around three times that of the state; in Glacier County, where the reservation partly sits, the average annual income is less than \$17,000, with more than a third of the people living below the poverty line.

In 2017, Browning was still reeling from the unsolved murder of Matthew Grant, whose body had been found the previous winter. Many assumed it was drug related; in recent years, Blackfoot lands had been flooded with opioids, meth, and the crimes that came with them. The tribe's governing body even declared a state of emergency last October, linking crisis-level drug and alcohol use to a spike in criminal activity.

The Invisible Victims Cont..

And locals had complained for years that law enforcement was ineffective, even corrupt, when it came to protecting Natives. In 2000, a review issued by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) accused the tribal police of gross mismanagement. In 2003, a 13-year-old was raped, and doctors called for an investigator; no one showed up. Three years later, the BIA initiated a forced takeover: BIA agents armed with assault rifles filed into Browning, forcing out 13 police officers in the tribal police department. Years later, after the tribal government passed a resolution to phase out BIA control in 2010 and hand law enforcement back to the tribe, claiming the BIA had been just as lax in protecting citizens from crime, many locals still fear that criminals find impunity on the reservation.

Kimberly knew how dangerous the world could be for Native women. She had heard about the disproportionate number who were trafficked, missing, or found dead. Just north of the reservation's border, the Canadian government launched a high-profile national investigation in 2016 into the deaths and disappearances of reportedly thousands of indigenous women. But the fear was also felt closer to home. Just months earlier, another local Blackfoot woman, Charlene Mancha, 51, had been killed when her husband ran her over with his truck. And now the rumors about Ashley swirled: She'd been eaten by a mountain lion or sold into the sex trade; pieces of her had been found lodged in a dam or

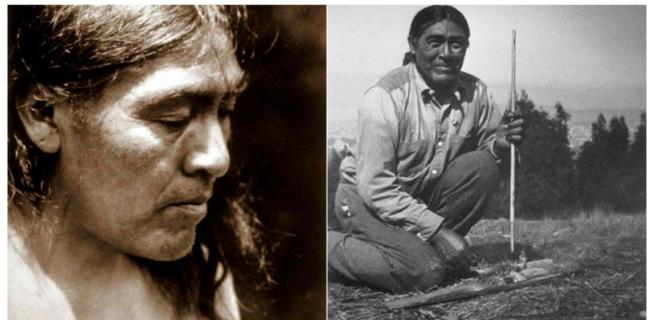
stuffed in an oil barrel. Someone had spotted her running from a car down an isolated road. All of it seemed terrifyingly possible. The last person to see her—one of her new, older friends—claimed he dropped her off on a remote road one night because another friend was going to pick her up. “Keep your face to the sunshine and you cannot see the shadow” - Helen Keller

<https://www.marieclaire.com/politics/a27560457/native-american-women-missing/>

Story of Ishi

By: Nikola Simonski

The Yahi tribe was a group of indigenous Native American people who used to populate the Deer Creek region in California. Belonging to the Yana group, the Yahi believed all individuals are equal and so lived with no central political authorities.



Divided into groups, the Yahi used to hunt and gather for their food. The nation consisted of 400 people who lived isolated from the outer world and fought fiercely to defend their territory, which was close to the Californian land mines.

The Yahi were the first to experience the consequences of the “Gold rush.” When more than 300,000 people from all around the United States came to

California in search for the precious metal, the Yahi's territory became overwhelmed by the hostile gold miners. The Yahi fought against the settlers but were eventually annihilated due to their lack of guns. A series of massacres decreased the numbers of the indigenous tribe to less than 100 people.

Ishi ran into the wilderness with some members of his tribe after the massacre of 40 of his tribesmen in 1865. Around 33 members of the Yahi tribe managed to escape, of which half were shot dead very soon after. Ishi remained in hiding for 44 years until a group of surveyors found their camp in 1908. Ishi and his relatives managed to escape, all but his sick mother. When Ishi returned to the camp, he found only his mother there, who died shortly after. The other relatives never returned, so he remained alone and spent the next three years wandering in the forest looking for food. In 1911, the desperate and starving man finally revealed himself to the modern world.

When Ishi was captured, the authorities wanted to send him to the Indian Reservation in Oklahoma, but Alfred Kroeber insisted that Ishi remain at the university. They got him an apartment near the university museum and studied him for several years. Ishi managed to learn around 600 English words and taught the anthropologists about Yahi culture and the Yana language.

He was employed at the University as a research assistant and constantly worked in the museum. Ishi was practically displayed for the visitors of the



museum, and he would spend his days showing the little children how to make bows and arrows. During those years, Ishi and the employees at the university became friends. He became especially close with Saxton Pope, who was Ishi's doctor and who was fascinated by Ishi's skills. In 1914, Ishi and his friends made an excursion to the Yahi natural habitat, where Ishi presented his tracking and hunting skills.

As a man who had spent most of his life outside the civilized world, Ishi was not immune to the modern diseases around him and became ill very often. Only five years after he became a member of the Western society, Ishi got sick from tuberculosis and consequently died on 25 March 1916.

<https://www.thevintagenews.com/2017/04/28/the-story-of-ishi-the-last-member-of-the-yahi-tribe-widely-acclaimed-in-his-time-as-the-last-wild-indian-in-america/>



Rose

How
Did the rose
Ever open its heart
And give to this world
All its
Beauty?
It felt the encouragement of light
Against its
Being,
Otherwise,
We all remain
Too
Frightened.



-Hafiz, Sufi Master, From the Gift: Poems by Hafiz

Growing Pains

by Janette Andrews



I have come so far in my recovery and self development since I left my abuser nearly four and a half years ago.

But a recent occurrence has shown me that it doesn't take much to bring me right back to where I was, at least in my mind.

It has been four years, three months and six days since my abuser hit me, or kicked me, or ripped out my hair, or tried to drive me into another vehicle. But a simple accident caused me to completely revert to that state of fear and panic I would experience after he had hurt me.

I asked my son to hand me my phone, and it slipped out of his hand and hit me in the mouth, hard. I saw that familiar starburst behind my eyes that a blow to the face results in. My lip swelled up and started to bleed, and I burst into

uncontrollable tears. My poor son was so worried, and felt so badly. He didn't mean for that to happen, but I couldn't spare him any attention, because I was trying desperately to pull myself together.

I was shaking and crying and couldn't seem to stop. I am fairly certain that my reaction had little to do with the shock and pain of my injury, but was a full-body flashback to one of the many fat lips I had received in the past. I eventually calmed down enough to reassure my son, and the long hug we shared went a long way to restoring normalcy and bringing me all the way back to myself. And as I healed, I was reminded of other times where I was still sore, and couldn't eat or drink, or in one case, even speak, normally for days. And by then he wanted to act like it was all in the past. I wasn't supposed to even complain about the pain, much less be angry. And all that was almost worse than the physical hurt.

So, as my current, truly accidental injury healed I had to remind myself that it was o.k. to wince if I bumped it, or hiss when hot coffee hurt my lip. No one was going to accuse me of being dramatic or trying to cause a fight. That was one positive that came out of the accident. Another was that it forced me to have a difficult discussion with my son. I have always said that if he ever asked or it became an issue, I would tell him the truth about his father and me, within reason. My son was feeling badly for hurting me and I needed to explain my reaction to him, as usually I am calm in the face of trouble, and can handle pain fairly



stoically. We had a good talk, and I found that his father has been telling our son lies about me, inappropriate ones. Beginning with how I “took him away and broke up our family”, and ending with how I am sleeping with a man we know, and calling me very bad names, to our son!

I wanted to cry, then I wanted to scream with the unfairness of it. How dare he say such horrible, confusing things to my sweet boy?! Untrue things, when I have been so careful to never bad-talk his father to him or around him. He was so young when we left, he doesn't remember how it was, and I wanted to spare him as much as possible. But, his father was so angry, and hateful that it scared my son. So, here we were, and I had to answer his questions. I *needed* him to believe me, to believe *in* me. I needn't have worried. He said he knew those things weren't true, but he was afraid to talk back to his father. Scared to say anything that would anger him further. And more, he no longer felt safe alone with him. I had always told my son that anytime he didn't feel safe with his father, he wouldn't have to be alone with him. And he felt enough trust in me to tell me when that time came.

This was a difficult, scary, upsetting time that I would have preferred to avoid. But a lot of growth and good came out of it. Sometimes it takes a push to get us to work on the hard stuff, sometimes it takes a violent shove, and suddenly we are treading water, out of our depth. So we take a deep breath and dive right in, because there is really nothing else to do but just keep swimming.



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| | 1 | 2 <i>Leadership Teen GRP 3:30-5p</i> | 3 <i>Parenting Group. 3-4:30</i> | 4 <i>FOCIS Beading Group 3-4:30p</i> | 5 | 6 |
| 7 | 8 | 9 <i>Leadership Teen GRP 3:30-5p</i> | 10 <i>Smoking Censations Group 5:30-6:00 Parenting Group. 3-4:30</i> | 11 <i>FOCIS Beading Group 3-4:30p</i> | 12 | 13 |
| 14 | 15 | 16 <i>Leadership Teen Group 3:30-5p</i> | 17 <i>Smoking Censations Group 5:30-6:00 Parenting Group. 3-4:30</i> | 18 <i>FOCIS Beading Group 3-4:30p</i> | 19 | 20 |
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| 28 | 29 | 30 <i>Leadership Teen Group 3:30-5p</i> | 31 <i>Smoking Censations Group 5:30-6:00 Parenting Group. 3-4:30</i> | | | |

Please Contact *FRTH's* Behavioral Health Department For More Information (530) 532-6181 *270

Happenings

Fatherhood is Sacred Motherhood is Sacred Parenting Group

Parenting Certificate Program
Contact Kayla @ 532-6181

FOCIS Women's Support & Craft Group

Native American Women's Support Group
Thursday afternoons from 3:00pm to 5:00pm
For info call Kayla @ 532-6181

Leadership and Life skills Teen Group

Open to all, ages 12-18 years old.
For more information call
Andrie or Anthony, 532-6181

HISTORY KEEPERS

Elders Group, 55 and older. Monday 1-2pm
For more information or to attend
Contact Ashley Weiss, 532-6181

White Bison Group

Wellbriety Movement
Intensive Outpatient Program
6 week group
Wellbriety- Medicine Wheel and 12 Step Program
Individuals 18 & older - Must be a registered
FRTH patient
To register please call Cathi Garrity 532-6181

LOCAL DV SERVICES

FOCIS PROGRAM SERVICES

Advocacy Services, Restraining Order assistance, court accompaniment,
Community education and in-service training, Crisis intervention services,
Resource information & referral service.
Feather River Tribal Health 530-534-5394 ext. 270

Catalyst DV Services

24-hour hotline for DV intervention & referrals, Emergency Shelter, Children's Program at HAVEN, Transitional Housing & Household establishment
Drop-in centers, Individual counseling, Support groups, Restraining Order assistance & Court Accompaniment, Community Outreach.
24-Hour Hotline 800-895-8476 Oroville Drop-in Center 530-532-6427

SHARP (Self Help and Referral Program)

Self Help center that provides general assistance to people who do not have attorneys. Assistance is provided in the areas of family law, guardianships, evictions, small claims, name changes, and restraining orders.
1675 Montgomery Street Oroville, 530-532-7015

FOCIS Staff

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Feather River Tribal Health Inc.