

Exhibit # 24

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SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 2001

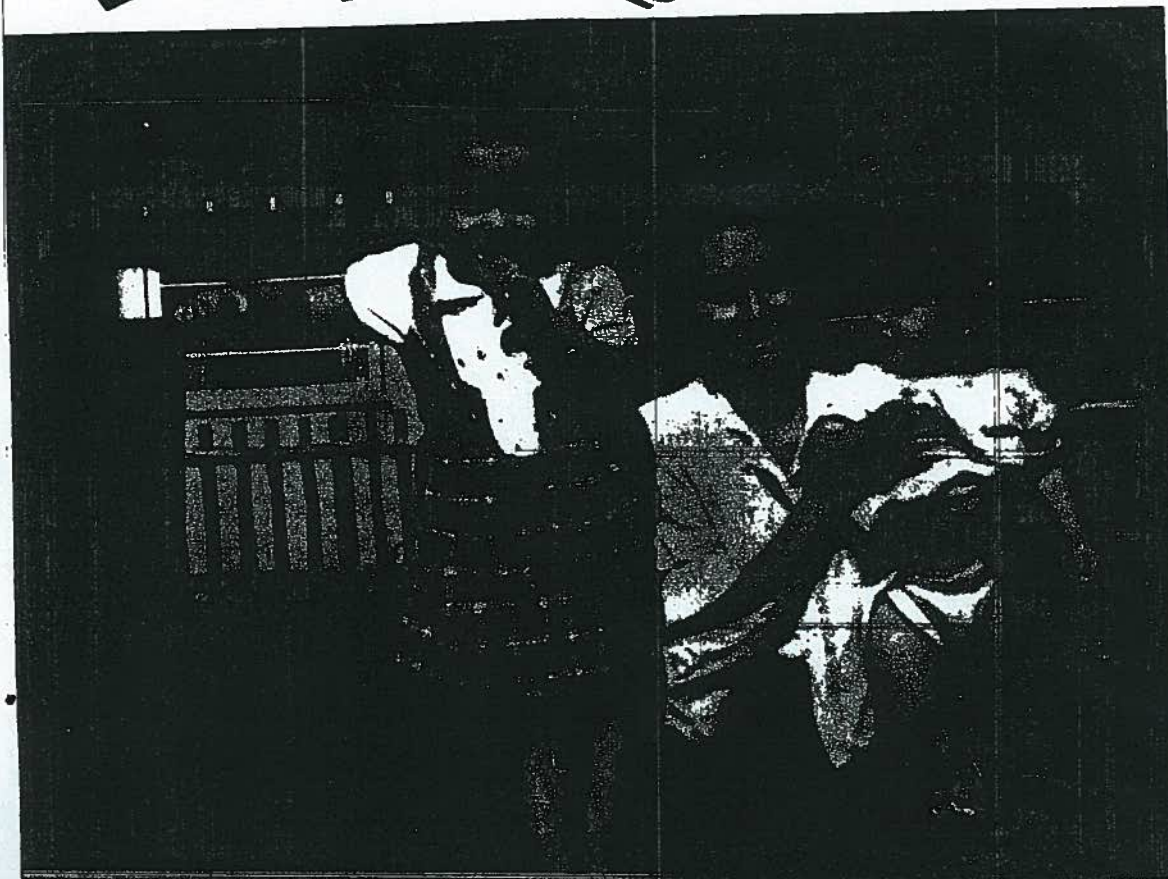
SECTION D

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Dawn of hope

Dawn Crey is missing from the Downtown Eastside, but her family still hasn't given up

D 3-5

Minnie Crey with daughters Dawn (left) and Lorraine (right)

MURDERS IN THE U.S. D 6-7

Tomorrow's University **Today**

From 5:30-8:30 pm

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| Missing Women Commission of Inquiry | |
| EXHIBIT No: <i>24</i> | |
| Date: | <i>October 26, 2011</i> |
| <i>[Signature]</i> | |
| Registrar | |

A single childhood incident pushed Dawn Crey into a downward spiral from which she would never completely escape

Lori Culbert



A girl and her father play together outside their house. It is the summer of 1962. The father is Ernest Albert Crey, 57, a former hard-rock miner and hard-drinking logger. He gave up booze to build a better life for his family and moved them, here, to a new home in Hope.

The girl is the fourth of seven children. Dawn Teresa. She is three years old and plump, with brown eyes and raven hair. A beautiful child.

When her father falls to the ground, she screams for her mother to come and help. Then she holds her father's head in her lap as he dies. The father's health had been failing, his heart weak.

But the little girl will always blame herself, will always think that she should have gone to get help right away, should have run inside and got her mom sooner.

That picture, the one of her father dying in her arms, will haunt her for the rest of her life.

Her father's death will do worse than that, however; it will tear apart her family, chase her mother back to the bottle, and scatter her brothers and sisters to a series of foster homes in the Fraser Valley.

For years, they will pass each other like ghosts on the streets of Chilliwack. They will lose and find one another, and then lose each other again, until, finally, searching for family becomes the shared narrative of their lives.

In the end, some of them will survive, grow to be native leaders and healers. Others will spiral into despair and drugs and, eventually, death. Dawn will disappear.

She will drift into drugs and prostitution, endure having acid thrown in her face and, finally, in late 2000, at age 43, she will join the ranks of 45 women missing from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside.

Then, as they have always done, the Crey children will resume the search for one of their own, a quest that, in many ways, began that day 40 years ago when their father collapsed and died of a massive heart attack.

In the months that followed Ernest Crey's death, their mother, Mimmie, along with her grief and frustration, returned to drinking and social workers moved in to seize her six youngest children.

Perhaps it was in those formative years, after Dawn was torn from her family and placed with unloving foster parents, that the many conflicts in her personality began to form: a painfully shy little girl with strangers, but chatty and witty with those she knew; a teenager who loved her baby boy, but loved her six even more; a caring, protective older sister, who became a moody and violent young adult when high on the Downtown Eastside; a once-beautiful mature woman who was very fussy about her looks, but would later walk the streets only at night to hide a newly disfigured face.

Dawn's first foster home was on a farm near Chilliwack, where she was sent to live with her older sister Faith. Their strict foster parents provided them a stable, if regimented, life. But later they would tell their brothers and sisters horror stories of their time there.

"Basically, they were used as child labour and horribly abused, so much so that our eldest sister, Faith, never stopped talking about how cruel those foster parents were on that farm," Dawn's sister Lorraine says.

Faith told her siblings that for a minor infraction, such as arriving late from school, the girls would be strapped or taken out of their beds at night to shovel chicken droppings in the barn.

"The girls were told if they didn't submit to discipline, they'd burn in hell along with all the other pagan Indians," Dawn's brother, Ernie, says in *Stolen From Our Embrace*, a book he co-wrote in 1997.

Faith, who later died of a drug overdose in Edmonton in 1989, once gave a speech to the Alberta Status of Women Action Committee in which she looked back on the grim experience she shared with Dawn on the farm.

"My life in poverty has been a long road," she said. "In my foster homes, there was lots of love and caring that I needed, but not all the material things."

"I went from there into foster homes at the age of nine or 10. I was in there for about eight years and we had everything we needed, all the material goods and everything, [including] food, but there wasn't any love. And that's when I started getting bad feelings about myself."

Occasionally, there would be awkward meetings with their other siblings.

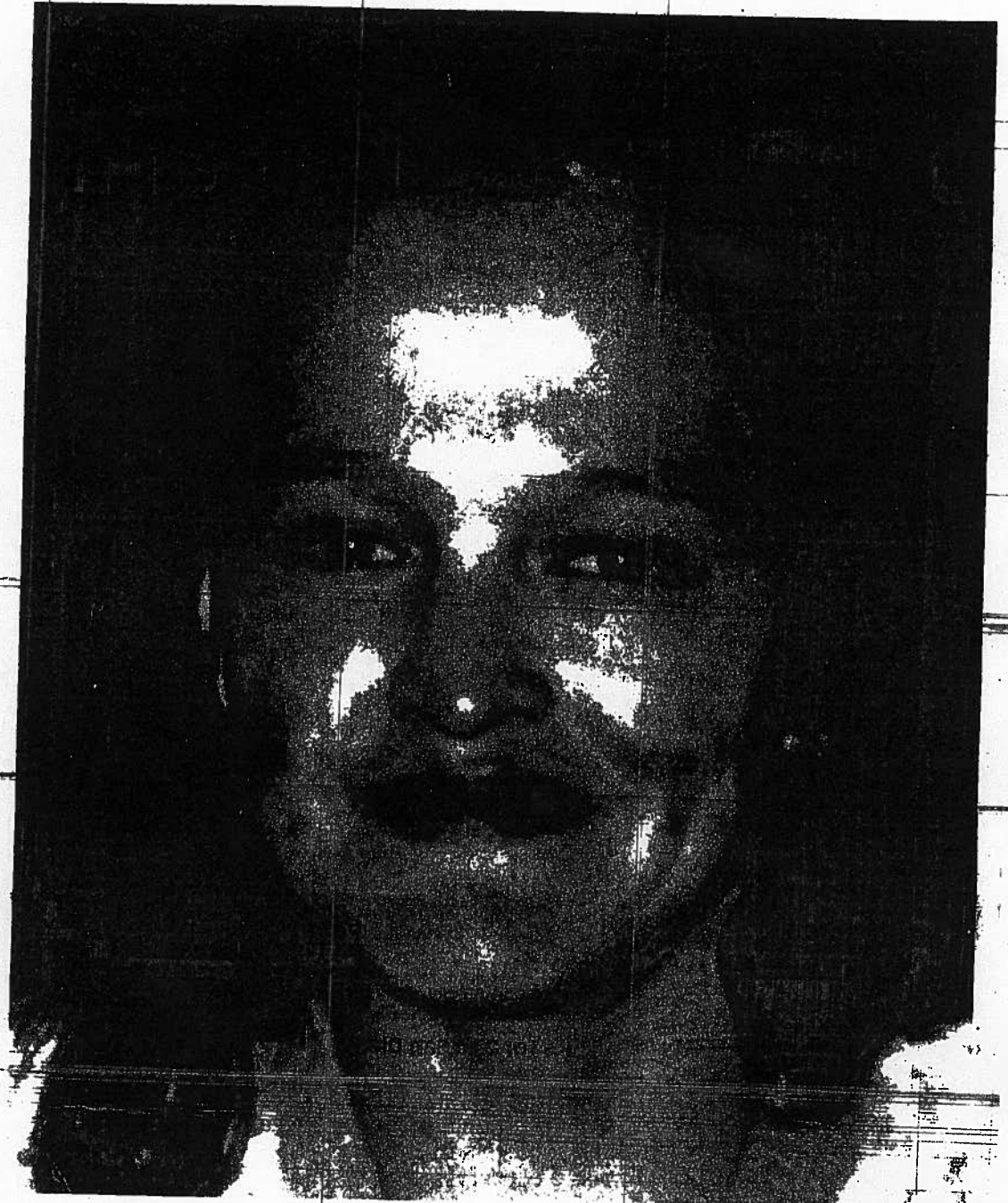
A foster parent arranged for Dawn and Faith to meet secretly in a Chilliwack schoolyard with their older brother, Ernie. "They were on edge, tense... Their response to me was polite, but emotionally muted," he recalled.

Lorraine recalls walking through a Woolworths store in Chilliwack as a child, just as Dawn emerged from a photography booth where she had been taking pictures of herself.

"Dawn was beautiful, very exotic-looking," she said. "Her face was all lit up and bright and she said 'Lorraine!'"

The meeting was brief. But when Lorraine came to know Dawn as a teenager, she could always see traces of that energetic child's bright expression.

"That was the look Dawn had on her face every time I saw her, like she was always happy



Dawn Crey in 1998, two years before she disappeared.



Dawn Crey (sitting on chair) with her father Ernest, who is holding baby brother Bruce, in about 1961.

to see me. It made me feel good." On another occasion, Rose, the youngest Crey child, who was taken from her family when she was just months old, recalls meeting Dawn and Faith on the steps of the Chilliwack Alliance Church.

"They were really nice and smiley, and I didn't fear them at all. But at that age, when you're four, the whole concept of sisters — well, my sister lives with me, so [Dawn] couldn't be my sister," said Rose Walton, who now lives in Bellevue, WA. "I remember it like a brief scene in a movie."

Years later when they were teenagers, Rose saw Dawn in a Chilliwack field as they were picking raspberries with their foster mothers. "She didn't try to push herself on me. She was considerate and understood that I was uncomfortable because I didn't know any of our family."

Some of her siblings Dawn never saw again after saying goodbye to them as a young girl. Her oldest brother, Gordon, died under mysterious circumstances at age 22 during a house party in Hope in 1968.

For four years, Dawn and Faith lived in their first foster home on the Chilliwack farm. Although it was not an easy life, the girls at least had some stability.

That was shattered at Easter 1967, when Dawn was just 10 years old.

The young girl was told she was being sent away to spend the holiday weekend with another foster family, the Wiebes. She was not told that her own foster parents, who were in their 60s, were planning to retire.

Marie and Jake Wiebe had taken in foster children in the past, but in the spring of 1967 were concentrating on raising their four biological children. After meeting Dawn over Easter, they agreed to provide her with a temporary home until new foster parents could be found for her.

Marie Wiebe recalls the social workers being terribly blunt when telling Dawn that she would now be living with this new family. She and 14-year-old Faith, who would be separated from her and sent to live in Hope, would never return to their former home.

"That was cruel," Wiebe recalled. "Dawn cried her eyes out."

Dawn's meagre belongings were brought to her and Wiebe took her a few times to visit her former foster parents.

She adjusted well to her new home, and became a friendly, well-behaved child. Although she struggled at school, she never created a fuss about going to class. "She was a wonderful little girl."

Wiebe, who has become a dedicated and caring veteran foster parent, said her family soon decided they wanted Dawn to stay permanently. "She just fit right in," Wiebe said from her elegant historic home in Chilliwack. "She laughed easily, loved jokes."

Dawn adored the family interaction. The holidays. The chance to go horseback riding.

She drew pictures, wrote stories, and sent sentimental Mother's Day cards. She was a flirt when boys were around. She yearned for hugs from her family. In hindsight, Wiebe wonders if Dawn's need for affection was a warning sign of insecurity.

"She was famous for bending the rules," Wiebe recalled. "She was quite defiant at times. Perhaps even her defiance was her way of testing our love."

Dawn was also still consumed by the death of her father. "In the ensuing days, weeks, years, she felt responsible for his death. She said she somehow felt guilty that she didn't run in sooner [for help]," Wiebe said.

But she was also an open, communicative child, who soon referred to Marie and Jake as Mom and Dad.

"There were lots of good times, lots of good times," Wiebe said.

For four years, she was a model child. And then she started to rebel at age 13.

That was the beginning of her downward spiral. She was becoming rather uncooperative. She was not extremely concerned at first.

However, Wiebe soon learned Dawn's actions were going beyond those of a restless teenager when she got up in the middle of the night and discovered her foster daughter was missing.

That summer, the five children in the house were staying in temporary homes on the family's front porch. When Wiebe found Dawn was not in her sleeping bag, the other children confessed she had been disappearing at night. Wiebe began to monitor the girls' movements more carefully, and was startled by what she unearthed: Dawn had befriended a young boy involved in drugs, and the 13-year-old had begun to experiment with illegal substances herself.

Wiebe tried to limit Dawn's friends, but said her tough-love stance got no support from social workers. She recalls telling social services in frustration that if she couldn't discipline Dawn, then she could not have the girl disrupting the rest of the family. That set off a year of Dawn bouncing from one temporary foster home to another.

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were willing to take her back. But it didn't take long — maybe six months — she had seen the other side of the world — Marie Wiebe, Dawn's foster mother

DAWN GREY from D5

But when she was about 14, she returned to the Wiebes with only the clothes she was wearing and a promise to follow their rules.

She had completed Grade 8 before leaving the Wiebes, and upon her return entered Grade 9, but her attendance was sporadic.

"We suspected she was into drugs ... but because she said that she would follow our house rules, we were willing to take her back. But it didn't take long — maybe six months," Wiebe said. "By this time she was 14 and she had seen the other side of the world."

Within the year, Dawn ran away again. For a while, she stayed with the families of two different friends in Rosedale, outside Chilliwack, and briefly attended Rosedale Junior Secondary school. Kelly Ann Douglas was a student at the school, and can remember Dawn being an attractive young woman who was in class for about half a term. They weren't good friends, but Douglas, who is native, said Dawn stood out because there weren't many other natives in the school.

"She had kind of a glow about her. She was kind of perky ... kind of sure of herself, in a way," said Douglas, who has researched lineage for the Cheam band. "I've seen a lot of Indians that were really timid, but she wasn't one of them."

Dawn also spent some time in Hope with her sister Faith, and began experimenting with hallucinogens to the Wiebes to shower and eat, before disappearing into a hazy world of drugs and boys.

"That whole scenario was such a traumatic thing," Wiebe said. "I remember her sometimes being away for days and coming home and wanting to shower and eat and go away again. She came back and forth to stay at home over and over again."

During the summer of 1975, Wiebe received a startling phone call from the 16-year-old. "She phoned me when she was three months pregnant and said she had OD'd and said she didn't want to do that to her child, and could she come home," Wiebe recalled. "The baby's father was a Nlaka'mapa man whom Dawn met in Hope while living on the streets. Their relationship had been a brief one."

Dawn moved in with the Wiebes and stayed by her foster mother's side through the next six months. She stayed off drugs during the rest of the pregnancy, and ate and slept well. "I remember these months as being wonderful. We had such hope for her. We encouraged her to keep the baby. We thought the maternal instincts would settle her," Wiebe said.

Dawn's baby boy was born in January 1976, but it was a difficult labour because the infant was delivered breech. She struggled with breast feeding, and found looking after a newborn a daunting task. "They came back here to live, but when he was about 3 1/2 months old she was having the after-baby blues," Wiebe said.

One day, Dawn announced she was going to meet a relative at a Chilliwack hotel. Wiebe was instantly worried. "She insisted it was just for coffee," Wiebe recalled. "But she never came back."

Dawn's younger sister Lorraine, who was then about 16, ran away from her foster home at the same time. They prowled the streets of Chilliwack together and stayed in "crash pads" — essentially any apartment or building they could find to spend the night. The teenagers loitered with other street kids and survived by eating chocolate bars, dining and dashing, or pulling vegetables out of gardens in the summer.

Dawn spoke about her infant son, but Lorraine said the pressures of motherhood were too much for her. "She was young. She still wanted to go out."

Wiebe can't remember if weeks or months passed before Dawn contacted them again. She came home and said she wanted her foster parents to adopt her son.

"We encouraged her to give it some time, let's not do anything rash," Wiebe recalled. But when it became clear that Dawn wasn't coming back, the Wiebes eventually adopted the boy. "She didn't forsake him, she just felt very inadequate. That's what we've tried to tell [her son] all his life: it wasn't that she didn't love him."

After several months of living on the streets of Chilliwack, Dawn and Lorraine grew bored with the Fraser Valley. They hit the highway, looking for a ride to the bright lights of downtown Vancouver.

A Volkswagen Beetle pulled over to pick them up, and behind the wheel was their older brother Ernie. The young man had stopped to offer a ride to two attractive native hitchhikers and was amazed to recognize them as his younger sisters — whom he hadn't seen for years. The three siblings drove to Vancouver, where they stayed briefly with their sister Faith.

Lorraine and Dawn had hoped this would be the beginning of their family reuniting, but Faith's boyfriend was angry the young women were living in his apartment. The man was physically abusive toward the girls, Lorraine said, and called them sluts and squaws.

"We were happy to think the family would get back together, but that never did happen," she said.

After about two months, the teenagers came home one night to find the apartment empty. "We were left homeless again," Lorraine said. "We didn't have anything. Only the clothes on our back."

The sisters were not interested in returning to small-town Chilliwack. "The big city lights, all those lights, we were amazed by them," Lorraine

town Vancouver. They met boyfriends who worked in the bar at the former Nelson Place Hotel, a common hangout for natives in the late 1970s.

Lorraine stayed six months, before taking a bus back to Chilliwack. "I remember telling Dawn 'I'm going to go,' but she said she was going to stay. I was worried, but she didn't have a place to stay back in Chilliwack," Lorraine said.

Alone in the big city, Dawn struggled to put her life on track. She started dating a young Haida man named Keith, whose large family lived in a house on Fraser Street. "Dawn was gorgeous when she was going with my son," says Ginger Donovan, Keith's mother.

Donovan, 63, said the young couple dated for less than a year, and she saw no warning signs of Dawn being in trouble. "She was a very nice girl. I didn't even think she was doing drugs."

For several months in 1979 and 1980 Dawn attended high school equivalency courses at the Ray Cam Cooperative Centre on East Hastings. Fellow students remember her as a pretty young woman with large brown eyes. But she dropped out of school after meeting other new friends in the Downtown Eastside — new friends whose pri-



An undated school photo of Dawn Grey.

A woman told Dawn that if she turned a few tricks, it was an easy way to make money. She was given some drugs to make the experience a little easier. "A year after I left, that's when a friend talked Dawn into working on the street and gave her drugs to relax. The first time was really hard, but once she saw the money," Lorraine said. "She didn't want to do it. She was scared."

Soon, the 18-year-old moved from prostitution to selling heroin to support her escalating drug addictions.

Between 1979 and 1985, Dawn was in and out of Lower Mainland courts and jails, convicted on at least nine different occasions for offences that included possession of a narcotic, possession of a weapon, theft, and taking a car without the owner's consent.

Throughout her turbulent adolescent years, Dawn never stopped thinking about her mother — whom she had not seen for nearly two decades. Minnie Crey was just a distant memory in a ramshackle house in Hope. But in 1979, Faith tracked down her younger sisters Dawn and Lorraine to tell them she had reunited with their mother.

Lorraine can recall walking tentatively into a small lounge in Vancouver's Chinatown with her sisters, and attempting to pick their mother out of the crowd. "Dawn and I were trying to guess: Were we still going to remember our mom? But I was right. I went up to her and said, 'I'm Lorraine, and those are your two other daughters over there.'"

The meeting was a difficult one for Dawn, who was still haunted by guilt over not having been able to save her father's life. "Dawn felt loved by our mom, but she felt uncomfortable being with her because she blamed herself for our father's death," said Lorraine. "Dawn never forgot it. She said it was her fault. She couldn't get help. She was so young then, she remembers screaming to our mother to come outside."

"I guess time heals for some people, but for Dawn it never did heal."

The sisters had hoped meeting their mother again would offer them some stability. "It was very important to us, because we thought that we would be getting back together, hoping we'd all live in a nice house again somewhere," said Lorraine, who at the time was 19 and about to become a single mother in Chilliwack. "But Dawn and I were always being turned away."

Minnie was living in a small housing project with her boyfriend, and there was no room for her fragile young daughters. Shortly after reconciling with her children, she was hospitalized in Vancouver and died in December 1980. She had been more than 20 years younger than her husband, and was just 52 when she passed away.

"Dawn lived through a life of losing a family and

finding it again, only to be rejected by her own family," Lorraine said.

Before she died, Minnie had asked a man whom she had befriended in Chinatown to watch out for her girls. Dawn found a new parental figure in Henry Yip, an older, divorced man who lived in downtown hotels and portrayed himself as a self-sufficient person with family money. She turned to Yip for support in the mid-1980s, when she hit rock bottom after a longtime boyfriend inherited some cash and left her.

"He up and left my sister for all the money, when they were planning a future," Lorraine said. "He just dropped her. That really hurt her, because she really, really loved him. That just blew her away."

"Before she was just chipping [dabbling in heroin], but then she started using a lot to block out the pain."

Dawn fled Vancouver, and borrowed money from Yip to buy drugs and rent a motel room in Chilliwack. She started to hallucinate and hear voices.

"This is when she started going crazy," Lorraine said.

Rose, the youngest Crey sibling, did not know Dawn well, but remembers seeing her older sister once on a Chilliwack street. "Dawn happened to walk by and I could tell she was just sick ... She looked just ashen," said Rose, who battled alcohol as a teenager but is now married and working as a Web site designer in Washington.

"Within 24 hours or 36 hours before, she had actually ODed and they had even thought that she was dead ... I think that was probably the one and only time that I can recall really thinking, 'Oh my goodness, here she's been close to death.' You could see it."

Ernie, who was concerned about his sister's well-being, tried to get Dawn into rehab but found there were no beds in any secure facilities. He went to court, armed with doctors' notes, to argue she should be admitted somewhere, but the only option offered to him was a local hospital.

His attempt to help wasn't successful: "I got her into the hospital, got her settled in. I went out the front door and she went out the back," said Ernie, who was then living in Maple Ridge with his family. His sister needed a place that would force her into treatment, but Ernie discovered — to his frustration — that the only beds available were in expensive private clinics or in public facilities reserved for prisoners.

Finally, Dawn took matters into her own hands. Ernie said she slammed Yip's head in a hotel room door. After the police were called, she was admitted to the Forensic Psychiatric Institute in Port Coquitlam in 1987.

"At those points in her life when she did stop to say, 'I need help,' it was so extraordinarily hard to

find," Ernie would later say.

While in treatment, Dawn gained some weight and stopped hallucinating, and went on methadone to try to kick her heroin habit. After being released, she lived in a series of motels and low-rent apartment buildings in Abbotsford for about four years, and survived on social assistance.

Marie Wiebe often visited with her foster daughter while Dawn was living in the Fraser Valley. She still has the last present Dawn gave her in July 1991 — two bookmarks with sentimental messages. But Wiebe said the methadone treatments Dawn was receiving from a Chilliwack doctor did not always help because she would sell the medication and use the money to buy drugs.

Dawn had sporadically visited her son during his youth, but in the late 1980s Wiebe curtailed the meetings after the boy said they made him feel agitated and unsettled. Although Wiebe loved her foster daughter, she said Dawn was unpredictable while on drugs. "She could become very violent. There were times I feared for my life when she was high."

"The final straw was one time [Dawn] came over really hooped," Wiebe said. "We said any time she wanted to visit we'd meet her somewhere, but not at the house."

Dawn's visits became less frequent. Her son, who is now 25 years old, was well behaved for his first 13 years but, like his biological mother, began to act out once he entered his teens. He is still living a troubled life today.

Dawn's life in the Fraser Valley was turbulent: She had run-ins with police, and in January 1992 was charged with assault by Chilliwack RCMP and put on probation for six months. But her life didn't become dangerous again until later in 1992 when she moved back to Vancouver — following her sister Lorraine who, after working in hotels in Abbotsford for several years, had enrolled in a professional development course in the city so she could learn a trade and provide better support for her daughter.

While Lorraine finished her course and got a job managing a native housing society in the East End, Dawn gravitated to the Downtown Eastside and its endless supply of drugs. "It was just coming back to Vancouver when you're not working, when you're not doing anything," Lorraine said.

Dawn often felt she was letting her family down, because she knew some of her siblings had mended their broken lives. "She was going into the drugs, and she felt ... ashamed," said Lorraine, who has held the same job for 10 years and lives in an attractive apartment on Vancouver's East side. "She thought that maybe she was a freak."

Dawn moved into the Columbia Hotel and was there for only a short time before her life took a devastating turn for the worse. One night after visiting Yip, she was followed to her tiny hotel room by two women. East Hastings Street is crawling with many desperate creatures, especially at night, but this time Dawn was scared. She had been getting into scraps with other women who were looking for drugs and believed Dawn had a stash, funded by Yip's money.

Dawn ran to her room and was covering in a corner when she heard the door being kicked in. "She curled up in a ball because she was prepared to be beaten. But she looked up and saw something thrown at her," Lorraine said.

It was battery acid. It soaked her cheeks, forehead, the top of her head and hands. It quickly and painfully devoured her hair and skin.

"It was horrible to see her. All the top of her scalp was burned off and her hands," Lorraine said.

Dawn did not see the faces of the women who attacked her. No police report was ever made.

Doctors prescribed strong medication to ease her pain and help with the long recovery process. When her supply of prescription drugs ran out, she started taking painkillers from Yip, who was battling cancer. Soon, swallowing the pills wasn't giving Dawn enough of a high.

"She found that injecting it would take the pain away more quickly than swallowing it, because it went straight into the blood," Lorraine said.

Dawn's pain and horror at her deformity also drove her to rely more heavily on heroin.

Before the burning, Dawn was proud of her looks. "She was very prissy. I remember that it would take her hours to get ready," said Lorraine.

But afterwards, Dawn refused to see anyone — including her sister. "When she had acid thrown in her face, things went right down. She stopped seeing me because she didn't want me to see her face," Lorraine said. "She wouldn't come out of her room, only at nighttime so people wouldn't look at her."

Lorraine scoured the Downtown Eastside trying to find Dawn, but when she did her sister would flee. "She'd put her head down, and she didn't want anybody to see her. It was like that for three years, until the scars started to heal and her hair grew back," Lorraine said.

The attack left Dawn with scars on her forehead, along the sides of her face and on her fingers. It also left her bitter. "She was using a lot of painkillers, she was always upset all the time, and she was in pain," Lorraine said. "Everyone stayed out of her way."

Dawn's rage brought three more assault convictions in Vancouver in just four months, from October 1992 to February 1993. On the last offence, she was sentenced to 30 days in jail.

That was the last time Dawn was arrested for assaulting Yip in

the Vancouver area. She was given a suspended sentence and ordered not to go to Yip's room at the Vogue Hotel on Granville Street for a year or to possess any weapons.

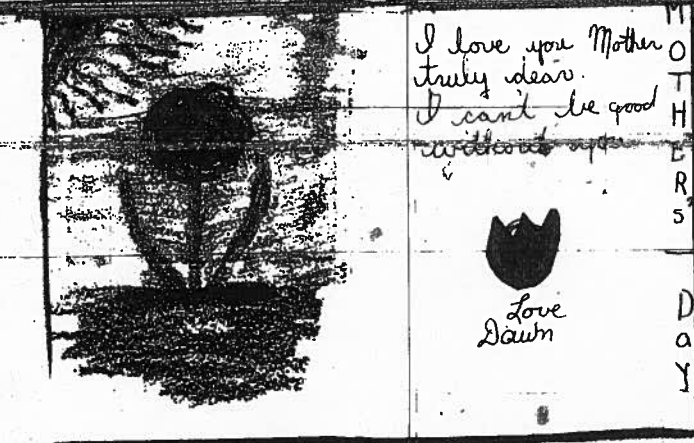
In January 1993 she was sentenced to another 30 days in jail after failing to comply with her probation.

It was Dawn's pain, depression and need for medication that led to her arrest.

Court documents indicate Dawn has a history of psychiatric problems, and spent some time in a Chilliwack hospital in 1991. She was described as delusional and mentally ill. A judge also noted she attended the outpatient clinic at Forensic Psychiatric Services on Broadway.

But Lorraine believes Dawn was more cranky than crazy, arguing she had the wherewithal to survive the Downtown Eastside for many years. "If she was so mentally unstable, she wouldn't have lasted that long."

Dawn was arrested again in January 1994, this time for stealing from the downtown Army and Navy. At the time, she was described by police as a heroin addict and a soft drug user with track marks on both arms, living at the Columbia Hotel. She must have made up with Yip, who was listed



An undated Mother's Day card given by Dawn Grey to her foster mother.



Dawn Croy (centre) with her younger sister Lorraine (left) and half brother David (right) in 1998.

Dawn's court documents paint a picture of a troubled woman struggling with her drastically altered appearance. At times her gender is referred to as both male and female, and there are indications she occasionally used a male alias.

As a teenager on Granville Street, Dawn would sometimes dress as a boy to try to elude police. But Lorraine didn't know if her sister was trying the same tricks in the 1990s.

After the acid attack, Ginger Donovan bumped into Dawn at the Vogue Hotel. She didn't realize the haggard-looking woman was the same person as the beautiful teenager who had dated her son Keith more than 10 years ago. "When I saw her at The Vogue, she hollered at me: 'Is that you, Ginger?' I said: 'Yes, Who is that?' She said: 'It's Dawn. I went out with your son.'" Donovan recalled. Dawn introduced Yip as her father, and Donovan said the pair appeared to have a good relationship.

Donovan, who was also living in the Vogue, is familiar with the rough ways of the Downtown Eastside. Her daughter, Carol Ruby Davis, was murdered in 1987 while working as a prostitute. Her death is unsolved. Another daughter, Nettie, is still living in the neighbourhood, and occasionally hung out with Dawn. "She had a lot to do with my other daughter because they were together doing the same things down there."

Donovan continued to see Dawn on East Hastings Street over the past decade, and said the woman attempted to make money by hocking used clothing she picked up from charities. "She'd walk around downtown and stop at all the bars trying to sell clothes," Donovan said.

But even on the streets from which she disappeared, Croy did not always find acceptance. According to a sex-trade worker who knew her for about three years in the late 1990s, Dawn was ostracized by some of the other working women because of the disfiguring scars on her face.

Terry, who asked that her last name not be used, said Dawn told her the burn-like scars resulted from acid being thrown on her by a man — even though she had told Lorraine the perpetrators were two women.

"When she disappeared I thought maybe she went to get plastic surgery. She told me the doctors were going to do it," said Terry. "She was really, really quiet, reserved. She was really nice to me. Some of the other girls always treated her like she was different. I tried to make her feel comfortable."

Terry said Dawn usually worked on Hastings, near Gore, but was not out on the street every day. However, Dawn did make daily visits to the regular haunts of other prostitutes — the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre for lunch and the WISH drop-in centre for dinner. "You always saw her every day," Terry said. "I always tried to tell her to be safe and to be careful."

But Dawn's fragile world was turned upside-down in November, 1999 when Yip died of cancer. "That's the day when she said, 'Oh, I lost a dad again.' ... She was always talking about his name, crying for him, all hours of the night," Lorraine recalled.

"She was going to commit suicide right after he died. She was going to buy a bunch of heroin and OD herself. She was lost."

horrible. That was when she became vulnerable and desperate that no one would look after her anymore."

Lorraine told Dawn that she couldn't live without her, and that suicide was a selfish solution. "I said, 'I don't know what I'll do without you. We'd been sidekicking for years,'" Lorraine said. "The reason I didn't get into drugs is because she said she'd kill the person who sold them to me."

During those last few years, Dawn made money from about four regulars who would pay her for sex in her room at the Rosevelt Hotel. Her clients were older men who used her services when they got their pension cheques.

"She didn't like the idea of standing on a corner getting into



Rose Walton and Ernie Croy (right), Dawn's sister and brother, attend a memorial for missing/ murdered persons held at Simpson Middle School in Abbotsford in September.

cars. That scared her," Lorraine said. It wasn't the life Dawn wanted to lead, but it was the way she knew to pay the bills — not unlike many of the women selling their bodies on the Downtown Eastside. "I never judged her for [the prostitution]," Lorraine said. "She said she never wanted me to do it, but we never talked about it."

"All it is for the girls out there is survival. All those girls out there have families too, and probably they were rejected too."

Money was tight, and Dawn would often buy the cheapest drugs on the street — Tylenol 3 was one of her standbys — and inject them directly into her veins. "She started shooting anything she could get her hands on," Lorraine said.

Dawn supplemented her income by panhandling and setting up a makeshift clothing store in her room, selling doctored clothing from a downtown church to prostitutes.

In early fall 2000, just months before Dawn's disappearance, Lorraine met her sister for a drink at the Regent Hotel and said Dawn appeared to have a new outlook on life. "She was talkative and seemed all right. She didn't seem agitated or anxious."

"For the last year before the disappearance she was wanting to make a change. She talked to me about cleaning up and wanted to work in Chilliwack with youths on the streets."

"She wanted to go back to school. She wanted to make something of herself. She was very tired."

Dawn was also trying to kick her heroin habit, by participating in another methadone program. But her mood had changed drastically by Lorraine's next visit, about three weeks later in her room at the Rosevelt. Dawn said she was terrified to continue living in the Downtown Eastside because she was convinced someone wanted to kill her.

"The last time I saw her she wasn't in good spirits at all. She was worried, anxious and she said she was scared. She said she didn't

want to get out of there — she said, 'What would you have to do to become a missing woman,'" Lorraine recalled.

"Somebody was saying they were going to kill her. She wouldn't tell me who... I was almost 100 per cent sure that she knew she was going to die."

Lorraine didn't have the means or the time to look after

her drug-addicted sibling in her own apartment, but offered to help get Dawn into a treatment facility where she volunteered. It was an offer Lorraine had made in the past — one which Dawn had never accepted. "I tried a couple of times before, and she got scared and jumped out of the car."

Lorraine left the Rosevelt that day to return to work, but encouraged Dawn to reconsider the treatment centre. She didn't know it was the last time she would see her sister.

"I wish I could have taken her with me," Lorraine would later say, tears welling in her eyes.

On Oct. 27, shortly after that last visit, Dawn was charged for stealing from a 7-Eleven store on Seymour Street. When she was arrested, she told police she had moved to the Balmoral Hotel. But Lorraine didn't know her sister had left her long-time residence, and dropped by the Rosevelt about

two weeks in November, looking for her. "Her room was so small, she wasn't usually hard to find. If she wasn't in her room at the Rosevelt, she was drinking at the bar in the Regent Hotel, or visiting a handful of support groups in the Downtown Eastside. "I was [looking] for a long, long time. I was doing that for weeks, hoping she would yell out to me."

After asking enough questions on the streets, Lorraine eventually learned that Dawn had changed her routine: she had moved to the Balmoral and had been hanging around a new corner on Powell Street.

By mid-December, when Lorraine's letters and phone messages continued to go unanswered at the Balmoral, staff let her into Dawn's room. There were no signs of anyone living there. The bed had not been slept in, the ashtrays were empty, there were unpacked garbage bags of clothes behind the door.

Lorraine was frantic, and contacted Rose, who travelled from Bellevue to Vancouver three days before Christmas to help look for Dawn. Rose, who had lost contact with many of her biological brothers and sisters since the 1980s, had been thinking about Dawn after seeing a documentary by two Vancouver police officers, *Through A Blue Lens*, about the troubled lives of Downtown East-

The last time I saw her she wasn't in good spirits at all. She was worried, anxious and she said she didn't want to die down there. She said she wanted to get out of there — she said, 'What would you have to do to become a missing woman?'

— Lorraine Croy, Dawn's sister

side reasons.

What the sisters didn't know is that Dawn had been reported missing on Dec. 11 by her doctor, after she stopped showing up for her methadone treatments in November. Vancouver police say she was last seen on Nov. 1 near Main and Hastings.

Dawn's family learned this information only after Lorraine's daughter saw a missing-persons poster about her aunt hanging in the Downtown Eastside in late January. Lorraine later found out Dawn had not picked up her social assistance cheques since November, either.

Dawn had been scheduled to attend court on Jan. 7, 2001, on the 2-Eleven theft charge, but a bench warrant was issued for her arrest because she failed to show.

Lorraine believes Dawn must have known the person who is responsible for her disappearance because her sister understood how to survive in the gritty neighbourhood she called home, on and off for 25 years.

"She may have walked away with somebody that she knew. She was an old-timer. She was street-wise. She knew how to survive," Lorraine said. "She's been around this activity since she was 16, hardcore around the Downtown Eastside. She put up with a lot of abuse and violence and was horribly mistreated — and she survived."

Lorraine was aware of the dangers Dawn faced on the streets. Through her sister, Lorraine had met some of the other women who are also missing from the Downtown Eastside. She can recall Sarah Devries rollerblading on the sidewalks; a once-pretty Angela Jardine strolling through the area, and a confrontational, boisterous Georgina Papin speaking with a loud voice and gesturing wildly with her arms.

Rose worries that people reading her sister's story may dismiss Dawn as a drug-addicted street person, but stressed she is a sibling, mother and daughter who was desperately reaching out to society for help.

"So many people have difficult hurts, desires, insecurities, but it gets exhibited in different ways. For Dawn, it was drug abuse," Rose said. "It must be harder for someone who is on the street, when you compound that with homelessness and poverty and drug addiction."

Dawn's foster parents lost contact with her after she moved to Vancouver in the early 1990s, but Marie Wiebe received an unexpected phone message from Dawn in the summer of 2000.

Her voice on the answering machine said: "Hi Mom, just thought it would be nice to see you." It left no contact number or address. Wiebe, who is still raising Dawn's son, did not hear from her again.

"I would like very much to find Dawn. I would like to see her to put closure to that. She's been a big part of our life and you don't just erase that," Wiebe said.

For Ernie Croy, his sister's disappearance strikes an all too familiar chord. "We were all missing from one another's lives for quite some time," he said at a recent memorial service in Abbotsford for the women who vanished from the Downtown Eastside.

"The truth be known, we've looked for each other all of our lives with varying degrees of success. And only in recent years, actually, have my brothers and sisters and I found each other. I'm 52 years old and I can tell you I'm a stranger, and my brothers and sisters are strangers to me."

to spend the better part of the last decade becoming familiar with one another... learning to establish a sense of family."

Ernie, frustrated at times by the pace of the police investigation into the whereabouts of Vancouver's missing women, believes his sister is dead. He argues that Dawn's disappearance should be no less important to society because of her

"I don't see her as suicidal at all. She was a highly intelligent person, very strong-willed, very independent-minded and very proud, in spite of her humble circumstances," he said.

Lorraine, who is likely the closest person to Dawn at the time of her disappearance, fondly remembers her sister as kind-hearted, loving and unselfish. She shudders when contemplating what has happened to her.

"Poul play is one thought that crosses my mind, and that terrifies me... But sometimes I feel her presence, and that gives me hope," Lorraine says.

"I can't just pack it in for Dawn, say my sister's dead and live with that. I have to see it to believe it. You can't bury someone without a body."

"I'll never give up hope for her."

Lori Culbert is a Vancouver Sun reporter.



Dawn Croy as a teenager, after soboring up and giving birth to her son, in the mid-1970s.

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