

VANCOUVER EASTSIDE MISSING WOMEN

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Print and quilt a legacy to missing women

THE NOW

by Angela MacKenzie - Staff Reporter

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The face of Sarah deVries - one of the more than 50 women missing from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside - reminded Katarina Thorsen of her own daughter.



Artist Katarina Thorsen, left, and Valerie Hughes with quilt honouring the missing women.

A Swedish-born artist living in Roberts Creek, B.C., Thorsen says it was deVries' story that sparked her haunting charcoal drawing of the young woman who disappeared in April 1998.

Thorsen said she visited the Pickton farm in Port Coquitlam in May with her mother and was moved by the memorial of candles, photos and flowers left near the farm's gate.

Robert William Pickton, who co-owns the property, stands accused of the first-degree murder of seven of the women listed by a Vancouver Police-RCMP missing women joint task force.

Thorsen learned more about the missing women through research on the Internet and started to collect clippings

about deVries, her life and her poetry.

Entitled Sarah - I Think of You, a reproduction print of the original artwork now hangs in the Coquitlam RCMP detachment.

The original, mounted on wood and washed over with blue acrylic, is intended to be installed at a future rehabilitation centre for women.

Thorsen said she decided to donate the reproduction after receiving a request from the detachment's Insp. Dave Debolt.

Debolt said he first saw Thorsen's artwork at a fundraiser organized by the Missing Women's Legacy Society at Coquitlam's Blue Mountain Park.

He requested a copy of the print, he said, "because of the impact this investigation has had on the detachment and the members here."

Debolt said he hopes the reproduction will serve as a reminder of the human side of the missing women investigation.

Thorsen has also created a quilt honouring the missing women. It features 54 smaller images of the print.

A dedication is embroidered across the top and bottom of the quilt: "Through the sum of our histories with a pure and chosen hope, we come to a healing place ... Dedicated to the women who live in our hearts 'I think of you' and to Val, Freda, Olive, Charleen and my mother Karin."

Valerie Hughes, whose sister Kerry Koski went missing in January 1998, was also on hand at the print presentation at the Coquitlam detachment Wednesday afternoon.

Hughes, who grew up in Coquitlam with her sister and now lives in Maple Ridge, said plans for a rehabilitation centre to be located in Maple Ridge are in the works.

The Missing Women's Legacy Centre, she said, would be a 10-bed facility open to any at-risk woman in the Lower Mainland, including the Downtown Eastside.

Counselling services would be offered, Hughes said, along with drug rehabilitation and an outreach program that would assist women in finding housing and other support services. Thorsen also plans to offer art therapy to the women and their children.

The full range of services, Hughes said, would help women leave their pasts behind.

"In order for our women to survive, we have to put those families back together," she said.

Although grieving continues for many of the families of the missing women, Hughes said, "Out of all this disaster and all this grief, I've been able to meet some wonderful, loving people."

Courtesy of

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[In Memory of Sarah 1969-1998](#)

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