

The search for Angel

Monday, July 16, 2007

By Rhiannon Coppin *News Reporter*

They stood around, unsure of where to begin. No one wanted to say it: She's probably dead.

Two-dozen locals showed up at the Blue Feather Youth Centre at 10 a.m. on Saturday. They planned to look for signs of Angel Eda Carlick. Clues, even. Evidence.

The 19-year-old has been missing for six weeks.

RCMP Const. Jennifer Drover briefed the group. They were to call if they found anything of concern.

You're going to find a lot of things in the bush, she said.

Most of the stuff can be ignored.

Angel's uncle found a map to mark off the searched areas.

By the end of the day, the map, laid out on the youth centre's pool table like a war-strategy plan, was only slightly marked with yellow highlights.

There's a lot of ground yet to cover.

Searchers explored Grey Mountain Road, the Millenium Trail and the woods near the baseball diamonds — where a woman was found murdered in 2000.

Teams of two and four walked along Long Lake, drove up Fish Lake Road to Haeckel Hill, and scoured the clay cliffs, parts of which had collapsed into deep sucking rain-soaked pockets of mud.

They found needle camps — glades that had become injection sites — littered with syringe packages and human waste.

Beer cans and whiskey bottles winked out from under the bushes.

In some places it appeared as though a laundromat had vomited: soiled, wet and dirty clothes hung from branches, clung to the ground.

Ladies' panties and bras were everywhere.

People were looking for signs. They wanted to decipher Angel's past, but there was too much to process out in Whitehorse's urban bush.

A blue BMX she'd borrowed and had been riding — until the back tire went flat — was left locked outside the Family Hotel for more than a month.

The management cut the lock off and threw the bike away.

The police still think she ran away, said a friend of the family.

“I heard she went up to Pelly Crossing,” said a young man passing on a mountain bike.

There are more theories than truths.

“There are so many rumours,” said Irma Scarf, one of the search organizers and mother to one of Angel’s friends.

“The search kind of made people aware that she is still missing.”

Scarf was upset that people were taking down the “missing” posters.

Limited information in the media had led some to their own conclusions.

Angel was last seen at the end of May, walking downtown.

She had paycheques to pick up from the youth centre, a high school graduation ceremony to attend and a family — a mother and brother — to hold together.

Some companies pitched in with support for the search party.

Midnight Sun and Starbucks donated coffee. Superstore, water. Pizza Hut and Boston Pizza provided lunch.

Though the fuel was appreciated by all, what the search really needed was more labour.

“I’d like to see the whole map covered in yellow,” said Scarf.

“I’d like to keep it open, to keep the search ongoing, and to call on organizations and businesses, if they (and their employees) can donate a couple of hours in the evening and go down to the youth centre and mark off a little piece of the map.”

Scarf went out with Angel’s mother.

They walked along the waterfront near Kishwoot Island. They spotted a roll of plastic that was proving to be more than interesting to a group of crows.

“They were going to town on it,” said Scarf.

The problem was that the plastic was offshore, snagged on a minor island. Scarf asked RCMP officers to get their boat.

They’d apparently already checked the islands with a dog team weeks ago, before the waters rose, and wouldn’t get the boat out again for the time being.

Steve Cardiff searched until 2:30 p.m.

“It’s a sad situation, how I view it, you know: this young girl’s gone missing,” said the NDP MLA.

“It’s hard to know where Angel’s gone, but the family needs to know what happened to her.”

He'd been searching down by Marwell and the riverfront under Mountainview Golf Course.

"We searched along the riverbank as much as we could — as much as you really could from shore," he said.

"In some areas you could cover it pretty well. In others areas it was pretty tough going and it was hard to see."

With a son, a daughter, and a granddaughter of his own, Cardiff easily sympathized with the family.

"It's hard to not know where your child has gone."

Some of the volunteers stayed out for more than five hours. Others, less than one. You couldn't blame them. It was sunny, and hot.

Forty signed up and signed out by 7 p.m.

The RCMP weren't assisting directly: they'd already searched.

"We've searched the areas that they will be looking through prior to them going," Const. Marc Janus said on Friday morning.

"I don't know the exact, every square millimeter we've covered, but we have gone through the area extensively," he said.

RCMP did respond to calls when searchers found suspicious items — whether or not they were possibly related to Angel's disappearance.

Under some bushes there were blood-stained mini sports socks.

Up the hill they found torn underwear and a torn camisole.

A friend recognized sweatshirts and jackets, but a lot of Angel's friends shared and swapped clothes too.

Two ladies found a set of bed sheets, possibly from a hotel, rolled up, hidden away, forgotten. They were coated in dried blood.

At the end of the day, Vicki Durrant (who runs the Blue Feather Youth Centre) and I went back to re-sift the bushes where some belongings had been found. A few of Angel's friends thought they recognized them as hers.

Four boys in their fashionable street wear sat on logs around a dead fire pit, asking us what we — two not-quite-young ladies — were doing hunched over awkwardly, sweating, squinting into the underbrush.

We explained about the search for Angel.

My companion went back to her van to get a baggie so she could pick up something suspicious we'd found.

I was left alone.

I kept poking through the bushes.

"She's not over there," one of the boys on the log mocked.

“Where is she then?” I asked.