

Unbroken: My Fight for Survival, Hope, and Justice for Indigenous Women and Girls

Angela Sterritt

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Award-winning Gitksan journalist Angela Sterritt is “holding ... pens of healing” in *Unbroken*, a thought-provoking memoir about advocating for missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada.

Highway 16 in Vancouver is known as the Highway of Tears. Along that road, young Indigenous women and children have been reported missing after “traveling by thumb,” including sixteen-year-old Ramona Wilson, who was last seen in the summer of 1994, and who never made it to her graduation dance. Sterritt notes that Wilson “could have been me”: she recalls hitchhiking in her teenage years, often with only a handwritten permission slip from her father.

At age fourteen, Sterritt was cast from her father’s house to live “the street life.” She found that the social system set up to help teenagers in her situation was worse than living on the streets. While facing bullies and violence in school, she slept under bridges, in her father’s van, and on the floor of a friend’s laundry room. Though she received top marks in school, she was still pegged as “that dumb little Indian who would never learn” by a social worker.

Through her later role as an investigative journalist, Sterritt became a voice for missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and their grieving families. Beginning with a haunting list of names of Indigenous women and girls who were either murdered or missing along the Highway of Tears, the book tells the stories of such ignored and abused victims, who are labeled unimportant, “high-risk” people, or classic runaways. The final product is eye-opening, making use of tragic firsthand accounts from grieving families and Sterritt’s personal memories, all raw and rich with detail. Sterritt’s “pen emerges as an agent of change.”

A powerful memoir, *Unbroken* is about the search for justice for missing and murdered Indigenous women and children.

ERIN NESBIT (May / June 2023)

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