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NORTH VANCOUVER'S MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

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The healing power of community

Perhaps a hundred bouquets had already been gently laid by the time I went to visit the site of the Lynn Valley tragedy the morning after. A steady stream of all ages was approaching the growing memorial in solemn silence. Even though downcast, their eyes communicated a shared sense of shock, anguish and sorrow.

People came to mourn, to memorialize the young woman who was killed, the injured and their families – but, I sensed, to also underscore their commitment to the community in which they live.

The entire North Shore has been severely shaken by the trauma of March 27th. But as North Shore News columnist Andy Prest wrote so insightfully last week, “For a few moments Saturday, we saw humanity at its worst. But it was so quickly overwhelmed by humanity at its best.”

In the aftermath, stories began to emerge of selfless acts of courage and humanity in those swift dark minutes. People mobilized to raise funds to support victims and families in their healing. The Lynn Valley Centre memorial grew and grew in proportion to the community’s outpouring – even a social media appeal for tents to protect the flowers from forecasted rain was quickly answered. A drive-through candlelight vigil was held.

Among the hundreds of cards at the memorial to the victims was one from the Lynn Valley Care Centre whose residents and staff have also experienced severe tragedy during Covid-19. It read, in part, “We hope that the support of the community lifts you, as it has lifted us in the past.”

These are all visible signs of a community resolute in its commitment to support one another. As someone rightly once said, “We cannot heal alone. We are meant to heal in community.”

One of the injured on that terrible day later reflected how soothing were the words spoken by a bystander in the immediate aftermath as he held a towel to staunch her wound. “You’re going to be okay.”

We can convey similar reassurance to those indirectly hurt by reaching out, caring and listening in an inclusive way.



And let’s all respect our own needs and be alive to the invisible but real emotional wounds that can affect us when we least expect it. Counselling support is available just a Google search away.

It is affirming that among the most inspirational of words expressed since that unimaginable instant come from Sheloah Klausen - a teacher from Argyle Secondary who was injured on that day – and is teaching still:

“The most important thing is that we gather in time, to rise up and bring joy back to Lynn Valley. One horrible act is just that - one. On that Saturday so many beautiful acts happened and we must take comfort in this. Our community is very special, and we will take back our Village. Love will prevail as always.”

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