



Department of Justice
Canada

Ministère de la Justice
Canada

PCVI Newsletter Fall 2016

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The Power of Our Voices – Victims and Survivors of Crime Week 2016

Victims and Survivors of Crime Week 2016 was commemorated across Canada from May 29 to June 4. With over \$1.2 million made available from the Department of Justice's Victims Fund, more than 180 projects and events took place during the Week hosted by victim-serving organizations in every province and territory.

In addition to community-based projects and events, the Department's Policy Centre for Victim Issues, with assistance from Public Safety Canada's National Office for Victims, hosted a federal symposium in the National Capital Region on June 3. The event was a great success and was attended by approximately 250 victims and survivors of crime, advocates, and those working in victim services.

Following an Indigenous welcoming song, the Honourable Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Jody Wilson-Raybould, delivered inspiring opening remarks to start the day. The Minister concluded her remarks by thanking "all the victims and survivors who use their voices to advocate for themselves and other victims and survivors". "Your contributions to the discussions are essential," she said, "and you have an invaluable role to play in effecting change." Colleen Cardinal-Hele, an Indigenous adoptee of the 60's scoop, daughter of a residential school survivor and family member to two murdered women, delivered a compelling keynote address on responding to violence against Indigenous women and girls.

The symposium featured a broad agenda on various issues of importance to victims and survivors of crime. Workshop presentations included the topics of vicarious victimization among first responders and service providers; supporting child victims and witnesses during the judicial process; restorative justice; online sextortion and cyberbullying; sexual assault; and the unique needs of those victimized by family members. The day concluded with an informative presentation on social media safety in a victim and witness context delivered by Jesse Miller of Mediated Reality, a company providing education on social media safety.

Previously known as National Victims of Crime Awareness Week, Victims and Survivors of Crime Week was rebranded in 2016 to include survivors in the title and reflect how many who have experienced victimization prefer to view themselves. The new title was met with great support and the 11th annual Week was a huge success.



Policy Centre for Victim Issues Team pictured with members of Bikers Against Child Abuse, which hosted a kiosk at the Victims and Survivors of Crime Week Symposium on June 3, 2016.

Criminal Justice System Review – What It Means for Victims and Survivors of Crime

In his mandate letter to Minister of Justice Jody Wilson-Raybould, the Prime Minister of Canada requested she conduct “a review of the changes in our criminal justice system and sentencing reforms over the past decade with a mandate to assess the changes, ensure that we are increasing the safety of our communities, getting value for money, addressing gaps and ensuring that current provisions are aligned with the objectives of the criminal justice system.” The Minister of Justice has indicated that a criminal justice system review is not just about assessing the changes over the past decade, but rather a review of the system as a whole and its relationship to other systems.

The criminal justice system review is an opportunity to create a criminal justice system that is just, compassionate, and fair, reflecting the values of all Canadians – a system of which Canadians can be proud. The review is not simply about re-writing the *Criminal Code*. Enduring change requires a more comprehensive approach that will not be realized in the short term. The most pressing issues facing the criminal justice system require integrated action and long term vision. This includes, for instance, rethinking how our social support systems relate with one another and collaboratively addressing the factors that bring people into contact with the criminal justice system.

There is abundant research to show that vulnerable populations are overrepresented on both sides of the criminal justice system. The review will examine where and how these groups intersect with the system. Studies show that an inordinate amount of resources are devoted to less serious matters, such as administration of justice type offences that are not related to public safety. The review aims to ensure resources are appropriately dedicated. Finally, the review aims to ensure the criminal justice system is equipped to respond to our rapidly changing world and remains relevant to Canadians, keeping pace with technological and societal change.

The review could provide the foundation for addressing some of the most challenging issues facing the criminal justice system today. Fundamental to this review will be careful and open collaboration, beginning with a program of engagement with stakeholders. While the review is only in the early stages, this is of particular importance as objectives and principles begin to take shape. To that end, the Minister of Justice is committed to engaging with stakeholders that represent various parts of the criminal justice system, including victims and survivors of crime.

Updated Victim Services Directory



The PCVI is proud to announce that recent updates to the Victim Services Directory were launched during Victims and Survivors of Crime Week 2016. The Directory was updated to make it more user-friendly and allow users to search with more specific terms.

Based on feedback received from organizations listed in the Directory, the interactive map was updated to make the search filters more specific. Users can now search by type of victimization, types of services offered, who the services are available to and the languages that the services are available in. Before the updates, the Directory's map required a postal code to search for services in particular areas. Now, while users can still search by postal code if they wish, they can also simply click on the interactive map and zoom in to the area where they wish to find services.

There are currently over 625 specified victim services listed on the Victim Services Directory and the PCVI hopes the directory will continue to grow and be used as a go-to resource to connect victims to relevant services in their area. If you haven't already done so, please add your organization to the directory by completing an ["Add, Edit or Delete an Agency"](#) form at victimservices.justice.gc.ca.

Federal Income Support for Parents of Murdered or Missing Children Grant

The Government of Canada is committed to supporting victims of crime and their families. The Federal Income Support for Parents of Murdered or Missing Children (PMMC) grant is available to help parents while they are dealing with their tragedy.

This grant provides \$350 a week of income support for up to 35 weeks to parents of murdered or missing children (less than 18 years of age) whose death or disappearance is the result of a probable *Criminal Code* offence which took place in Canada on or after January 1, 2013.

To access this income support, parents must be on leave from all employment and must apply for and receive the grant within one year of the offence. This grant can be shared by more than one eligible applicant for the same incident.

For complete eligibility criteria and more detailed information about the PMMC grant or to access the forms to apply for this income support grant, please visit www.servicecanada.gc.ca/pmmc.

The Federal Victims Strategy: Parallel Investments in Support of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

The Government of Canada launched [an independent National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in December, 2015](#). On August 3, 2016, the terms of reference and the names of the five Commissioners leading the Inquiry were announced. At that time, the Minister of Justice also announced additional project funding to support victim services projects across the country in order to directly help the families of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. This funding will help fill gaps where needs are high, building on the work of Indigenous organizations and specialized victim services programs.

Part of the funding will be made available to provincial and territorial governments to establish Family Information Liaison Units (FILUs) within their existing victims services departments. FILUs will work directly with families of missing or murdered Indigenous women and girls to gather the outstanding information they seek from government agencies and organizations related to the loss of their loved one. The need for general and case-specific information is critical for victims and survivors of crime and the FILUs will coordinate and gather information from various systems and agencies at all levels of government on their behalf. Funding for provincial and territorial FILUs will be available from September 1, 2016 until March 31, 2019.

Additional project funding is also now available to Indigenous community-based organizations, non-governmental community-based organizations, and victim services to support the design and delivery of culturally-responsive, trauma-informed services for families of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. This additional \$4.5M over four years will be added to the current \$1M per year available in the Victims Fund for these activities. This new funding is available from September 1, 2016 to March 31, 2020.

For more information on the funding available, please visit the updated Victims Fund website at <http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/fund-fina/cj-jp/fund-fond/vict.html>

Find out what's new with the Department of Justice *Canadian Victims Bill of Rights* Complaint Mechanism!

The *Canadian Victims Bill of Rights* (CVBR) came into force on July 23rd, 2015. The CVBR created statutory rights at the federal level for victims of crime. The legislation establishes statutory rights for victims to information, protection, participation, and to seek restitution. It also requires that a complaint process be established by federal departments, agencies, or bodies for breaches of these rights.

Based on a year of experience responding to CVBR complaints, the Policy Centre for Victim Issues (PCVI) has made several key improvements in an effort to streamline the complaints process for complainants. These efforts will be ongoing in order to ensure that the process evolves to become as simple and efficient as possible for those victims and survivors of crime who choose to make a CVBR complaint to the Department of Justice.

The previous complaint policy had three levels of review for a complaint, including the Director General (DG) or equivalent, Senior Assistant Deputy Minister (SADM), and the Deputy Minister (DM). In order to fast-track the process for complainants, the updated policy now includes that the SADM act as a first level of response following a review from the responsible DG. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the first level response, they can request to have the DM review their complaint as a second level of review.

In addition, the maximum time allowance for review has been significantly reduced from 196 business days total to 63 business days total.

If a complainant has exhausted the internal complaints process of a federal department or agency, and they are not satisfied with the outcome of that process, the complainant may contact the [Office of the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime](#) to express their concerns. The Ombudsman may be able to make recommendations to the department or agency in response to the issues raised within the complaint or regarding the complaint process, provide the complainant with information, or refer the complainant to victim services.

As part of the objective to streamline the complaints process, the PCVI has also combined the mechanism's pre-assessment form and complaint form into one complaint form. Now, complainants can provide all of the information required to make a complaint in a single submission. In addition, the new complaint form now specifies the types of CVBR complaints the Department is responsible for, including:

- Complaints concerning general information requested by the complainant about the criminal justice system, which relates to the right to information; and
- Complaints concerning victim access to the Parole Board Fund to attend parole board hearings, which relates to the right to participation.

If the complaint does not relate to one of the above, it may not be related to the Department's CVBR Complaint Policy.

Finally, the PCVI has implemented a forwarding mechanism in partnership with the other federal departments and agencies required to have CVBR complaint mechanisms. Where a complaint relates to another federal department CVBR complaint mechanism, it may now be forwarded to that department if the complainant has indicated their consent to share on the complaint form. This ensures that complainants will not be required to make multiple complaints or submit multiple forms to different federal departments and agencies.

For more information about the Department of Justice CVBR Complaint Mechanism and for information on how to make a complaint click [here](#).

Responding to Victims' Needs: Benefits of a Multi-Disciplinary Approach

Victims of crime often have to engage with numerous professionals and volunteers from various disciplines in order to deal with the crime that they have experienced and its impact on their lives. Organizations that work to support victims have sought to develop services that are responsive, reduce the risk of further trauma and are built on solid models of practice. One of these models is the multi-disciplinary team.

A multidisciplinary team (MDT) is a team of professionals including representatives of different disciplines who come together to provide a comprehensive assessment and response in cases where someone has experienced a crime. Also called integrated teams or interagency teams, the purpose of an MDT is for all partners to ensure that the unique needs of victims are recognized and responded to. MDTs are facilitated by memoranda of understanding (MOUs), letters of agreement and/or protocols that delineate the roles, responsibilities and commitment of each partner to the multidisciplinary team, and outline parameters for information sharing and confidentiality.

Multidisciplinary teams have many benefits. They can promote coordination between agencies; identify gaps and barriers to communication; reduce duplication of services; provide a continuum of support and assistance to victims; and, identify systemic problems that may hinder victims from seeking or obtaining the help and support they need. MDTs also enhance the knowledge and capacity of individual team members as they learn more about the roles, responsibilities and strategies of their MDT partners.

Teams have been developed to respond to cases of elder abuse, human trafficking, child abuse, domestic violence and to the needs of disabled victims of crime, among other areas. One example of a multidisciplinary response is an Inter-Agency Case Assessment Team, otherwise known as an ICAT. ICATs are comprised of representatives from agencies that address high risk domestic violence cases. Membership often includes representatives from police, child protection, community-based victim services, police-based victim services, health, aboriginal service providers, and other agencies that respond to domestic violence. Team members meet to assess highest risk cases of domestic violence where a significant probability exists of serious harm or death to victims. These cases followed until safety measures can be put into place for the victims and offenders and the risk is lowered.

The North Okanagan Integrated Case Assessment Team (NOICAT) was created in 2008 by the former Executive Director of the Vernon Women's Transition House Society, Debby Hamilton and RCMP Staff Sgt. Robb Daly, to reduce the number of victims of domestic homicide. The province of British Columbia, through the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, supports the training of other communities in BC using the Vernon ICAT model as a best practice.

In 2014, the NOICAT received the Regional Premier's Award in the Partnership category. The Award honours exceptional service to British Columbians by provincial public service employees and their partners.

<http://vwts.ca/2014/09/north-okanagan-integrated-case-assessment-team-icat-wins-regional-premiers-award-partnership-category/>

<http://endingviolence.org/prevention-programs/ccws-program/interagency-case-assessment-teams-icats/>

Multidisciplinary teams are also used frequently to respond to cases of child abuse. MDTs are an essential component of child advocacy centres (CACs), child-friendly centres that coordinate the investigation, treatment and prosecution of child abuse while helping abused children and their non-offending families. CACs bring together a team comprised of law enforcement, child protection investigators, medical professionals, mental health professionals, victim services advocates/workers, prosecutors, where possible, and the staff of the CAC to provide a coordinated, seamless and comprehensive response to the needs of children, youth and their families where abuse is suspected. The multidisciplinary response seeks to coordinate the activities of appropriate professionals to reduce the stress experienced by child victims and their families, as well as the potential for re-victimization of children by the systems intended to help them. MDTs facilitate a comprehensive investigation, information sharing and effective case management. They seek to ensure that at all stages of a case, children and families can access support and assistance.

The Zebra Child Protection Centre, Regina Children's Justice Centre, SeaStar Child and Youth Advocacy Centre, and Boost Child and Youth Advocacy Centre are examples of CACs. Today, there are more than

25 CACs open or in development across the country that will have a multidisciplinary team of caring, dedicated professionals at the centre of what they do.