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# PCVI News

Issue 5



## National Victims of Crime Awareness Week 2010

From April 18 to 25, we marked the fifth anniversary of National Victims of Crime Awareness Week (NVCAW). At the Federal Symposium held in Ottawa, Prime Minister Stephen Harper kicked off the week by pledging the government's continued support and a stronger voice for victims of crime in the criminal justice system. Although the week has come to an end, it is important that we continue to keep its theme "Every Victim Matters" in mind. PCVI will continue to work to acknowledge the impact crime has on our communities, and make every effort to provide victims of crime with the help and services they need. For more information about the week or the symposium, we invite you to visit the NVCAW Web site at [www.victimsworld.gc.ca](http://www.victimsworld.gc.ca).

### Pamela Arnott

Director and Senior Counsel, Policy Centre for Victim Issues

### Catherine Kane

Senior General Counsel, Criminal Law Policy Section



## The 2010 Symposium: Coming together because "Every Victim Matters"

In its fifth year, the National Victims of Crime Symposium once again successfully highlighted the struggles victims of crime face in many aspects of their lives. Several workshops were held during the Ottawa symposium on April 19. The workshop topics ranged from "Male Survivors of Sexual Abuse" to "The Community Impact of Hate Crime" – all of which were well attended and provided valuable insight to those who participated.

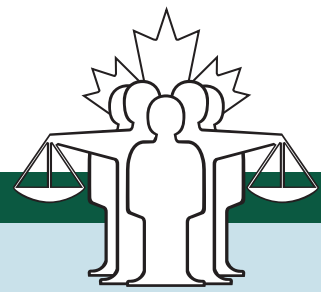
The workshop "Choose Your Words Carefully: Talking About Victimization" was particularly popular with attendees, as it highlighted the importance of thoughtful language in talking about victimization, violence, and consent – especially in the media, in common parlance, and in criminal justice proceedings.

Arguably the most moving words came from Mrs. Suman and Mr. Manjit Virk, of Victoria, British Columbia – their teenage daughter Reena was murdered by a group of her peers, mainly girls, in November 1997. The Virks encouraged families, members of communities, teachers and role models to take action,

such as teaching youth right from wrong, and instilling a sense of compassion and morality in them, which may serve to prevent future similar situations.

The afternoon plenary session offered participants the opportunity to share their vision of, and views on, the next Federal Victims Strategy. The "Blue Sky Discussion" was an excellent opportunity for PCVI to hear from stakeholders as they shared their thoughts, reflections and ideas for the next strategy. There is a wealth of knowledge across the country and the symposium was an opportunity to learn from the knowledge and experiences of all participants.





## Regional Events

NVCAW has always been a special event, in part because communities across Canada participate in it. For the first time in the week's history, events took place in all 13 provinces and territories in Canada. The Department of Justice Canada provided more than \$700,000 in funding for 93 events from coast to coast to coast. One of the events held this year was a two-day conference hosted by the SAFFRON Centre in Edmonton entitled "Understanding the Impact of Cyberviolence on Youth."

The SAFFRON Centre provides support to those who have been affected by trauma, abuse and

sexual violence, and also offers public awareness education to youth on the issues they face in using the latest technologies.

This conference, the first of its kind held in Alberta, featured keynote addresses by Steve Sullivan, the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime, who spoke about his report *Every Image, Every Child*; Hal Niedzviecki, a Toronto author who shared his thoughts on society's new obsession with "Peep Culture"; Bill Belsey, the creator of the groundbreaking Web sites [www.bullying.org](http://www.bullying.org) and [www.cyberbullying.ca](http://www.cyberbullying.ca); and Craig Kreiger, a Crown prosecutor from Alberta who spoke about his work as part of the provincial Internet Child Exploitation team.

The multimedia presentations held each afternoon were unique and included a youth theatre group play about the consequences of cyberbullying entitled *IRL: In Real Life*, and a screening of SAFFRON's latest movie *It's Just a Game – Or Is It?*, which is meant to be used as an awareness-raising tool for youth.

The conference attracted participants from different sectors, including educators, policy makers from municipal and provincial governments, social workers, and victim service workers.

For more information, visit [www.saffron-ssac.com](http://www.saffron-ssac.com).

## Interview Carolyn Sinclair

*Carolyn Sinclair is the Executive Director of Police Victim Services of British Columbia (PVSBC) and facilitated a workshop at this year's National Symposium.*

**Q** What kind of work does the Police Victim Services of British Columbia do?

**A** PVSBC is an association that brings together 92 police-based front-line victim services programs across British Columbia. We work with the RCMP and municipal police detachments to enhance the services provided to victims of crime. This is done through identifying training needs, creating awareness about victim issues, and advocating for ongoing funding and support for front-line programs. Put simply, PVSBC strengthens the voice of police-based victim services in British Columbia.

**Q** What are the greatest challenges facing victim services groups in British Columbia?

**A** In the current climate, ensuring that enough resources are available to provide victims with the services they need is definitely a challenge. PVSBC works closely with government and other partners to ensure those resources are available to its members. But just as

challenging is the increased complexity of the needs of victims. Language barriers, increases in mental health issues, poverty and ongoing violence in relationships often make it difficult for police and victim services to effectively assist individuals in crisis.

**Q** What advice would you give to victim service workers in other parts of the country?

**A** More than anything, I would stress the importance of worker-care and self-care. We have great people working for victims in British Columbia and we want to keep them. For this to happen, we need to make sure workers maintain good physical and mental health. Workers should take a good look at themselves to work within their own personal boundaries and limits. When stress, burnout and compassion fatigue threaten workers, they need to give themselves permission to look after themselves and their personal well-being first.

**Q** How did PVSBC mark National Victims of Crime Awareness Week 2010?

**A** Through a Victims Week grant we received from the Department of Justice, PVSBC created a toolkit we call "The Continuum of Care." We worked with our partners at Correctional Services Canada and the National Parole Board. We collected information – documents, forms, and resources that victim services workers from all agencies

would need to better support victims. Along with the toolkit, we delivered an orientation on how to use the toolkit that allowed us to bring together victims services workers from all three agencies. We also hosted a practitioners' roundtable. During NVCAW, we held events in Abbotsford and Terrace to launch the toolkit and provide training on how it can best be used by our members. What is great about the toolkit is that it doesn't reinvent the wheel. It takes advantage of the existing expertise of our partners and helps our programs respond to the needs of victims promptly.

**Q** Did attending the National Symposium help you in the work you do?

**A** I have been attending the symposium since it started five years ago. I have enjoyed watching it grow nationally. Having the Prime Minister attend provided an extra boost to the excitement of the day. It demonstrated that our government takes victims and victim service workers seriously and that they are willing to show support for the work. Lots of energy was displayed and several great ideas were shared at the symposium. We always learn a lot from each other, but more important, it was a great kickoff to the week. In my opinion, NVCAW is one way to honour the journey of victims as well as the valuable work being done by service providers. Everyone's role is important for us to effectively demonstrate that "Every Victim Matters".