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PCVI News - Summer 2012



Welcome

Pamela Arnott, *Director and Senior Counsel, Policy Centre for Victim Issues (PCVI)*

The past several months have been very busy for PCVI. The Government's robust criminal justice agenda has had important impacts on victim issues in Canada. A number of initiatives in policy development, legislative reform, service delivery and awareness raising have taken place since the last *PCVI News* was published and we are pleased to be able to share them with you.

Earlier this year, PCVI had the honour of working with Mr. Christopher Ducharme, poet and President of the British Columbia Bereavement Helpline, to produce a video for the Sharing Our Stories portion of the National Victims of Crime Awareness Week (NVC AW) website. Christopher shares his thoughts about making this video below.

As always, if you have any comments on this edition of *PCVI News*, or if you would like to suggest topics for consideration in the future, we would love to hear from you. In the meantime, on behalf of PCVI, I would like to wish all of our readers a restful and rejuvenating summer.

Recent Developments of Importance to Victim Issues in Canada

- In April the Prime Minister announced a new federal income support program for parents of missing or murdered children. Under this initiative, parents of a child who has gone missing or who has been murdered will be eligible to receive \$350 per week for up to 35 weeks.
- Recently the Government introduced legislation to amend the *Criminal Code* to make age an aggravating factor in sentencing. If passed, this legislation will help to keep the elderly members of our community safe from violence and fraud while holding offenders accountable.
- Bill C-10, the *Safe Streets and Communities Act*, contained a range of reforms including: providing victims of terrorism with the ability to sue listed foreign states

not only for supporting terrorism, but also for committing an act of terrorism; enshrining victim participation in conditional release board hearings and keeping victims better informed about the behaviour and handling of offenders; and eliminating pardons for serious crimes. In addition, it ends conditional sentences for serious and violent crime and better protects children from sexual offences, through new and increased mandatory minimum penalties and other sentencing measures.

- The Government has also introduced legislation to increase the amount of the federal victim surcharge and to remove judicial discretion to waive the surcharge. The funding collected through the surcharge helps provinces and territories deliver services to victims of crime. C-37 is currently being considered by the House of Commons.
- Budget 2012 announced \$7 million in new funding for the Victims Fund. Minister Nicholson reiterated this commitment at the NVCAW 2012 Symposium in Ottawa on April 23. Child advocacy centres and other victim-serving organizations will directly benefit from this funding. Application forms are available on the PCVI website.
- Finally, close to \$10 million in funding from the Victims Fund has recently been allocated to provinces and territories to provide services to victims of crime over the next five years. This funding will assist the provinces and territories in developing and delivering the services that have been identified as priorities in each jurisdiction.

National Victims of Crime Awareness Week 2012: At a Glance

NVCAW 2012's theme *Moving Forward* recognized the journey that victims of crime, victim service providers and governments at all levels take to build a new normal after victimization has occurred. Awareness of victim issues was raised across the country and, for the first time, events were held in every province and territory throughout the week. The annual NVCAW Symposium featured addresses by Minister of Justice Rob Nicholson and Senator Pierre-Hugues Boisvenu followed by an inspirational key note speech by Victor Veith. Please visit the NVCAW web page to learn more and to view the 2012 Sharing Our Stories series.

PCVI extends its sincerest thank you to the dedicated members of the NVCAW organizing committee who are already planning ahead for NVCAW 2013! We would love to hear about how you marked the 2012 NVCAW in your community: send us an email at webadmin@justice.gc.ca.

New Anti-Sexual Violence Campaign in Ontario

'Draw the Line' is a new bilingual, province-wide anti-sexual violence campaign produced by Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes (AOcVF) and the Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres (OCRCC). In developing the campaign, they

consulted extensively with service providers, grassroots organizations, advocates and survivors. The intent was to create a campaign that represents the ethnic, linguistic, cultural, sexual, economic, and geographic diversity of Ontario.

'Draw The Line' is an interactive campaign that aims to engage Ontarians in a dialogue about sexual violence. The campaign challenges common myths about sexual violence and equips bystanders with information on how to intervene safely and effectively.

draw-the-line.ca

For more information or to request material: info@draw-the-line.ca

An Interview with victim advocate Christopher Ducharme:

1. Chris, thank you for agreeing to share your story as part of National Victims of Crime Awareness Week (NVC AW) 2012. Your video, which can be found at the Sharing Our Stories link on the NVC AW web site, has had over 1000 views. <http://www.victimswweek.gc.ca/home-accueil.html>

I am pleased to hear that we were able to reach so many people across Canada. I would like to post this video onto our www.bcvictimsofhomicide.com website (which is coming very soon). It was an honour to be part of this video, especially with the theme "Moving Forward", for National Victims of Crime Awareness Week, which I believe to be a valuable addition to our justice system for victims of Canada. The unity brought about through the 160 events across Canada demonstrate the movement to liberate victims from the pain and tragedy through finding healing, hope and connection to the community and loved ones.

2. Using video as a means to tell a victim's story is a relatively new endeavour for PCVI. Can you please tell our readers what it was like to make this video?

Making the video was a great experience especially since it was my way to get the point across of the importance of having a support group program which is specifically focused to meeting the needs of those impacted by homicide grief. It was not always easy to publicly display my story but, I always see these types of opportunities as a way to make a sacrifice so that others can benefit.

3. Chris, you are a published and well-respected poet. In fact, you read your poetry at last year's NVC AW Symposium in Ottawa. How was telling your story in a video, which is now posted on the internet, different than sharing your story through the written or spoken word?

Speaking in front of a tangible audience is a more engaging experience and it was therapeutic for me to see and feel the reaction of those I was connecting with.

4. What would you say to other victims who are thinking about sharing their story with the public?

I would encourage them to seriously consider the significant impact that they can have on communities in our country. I believe it is important to have a network of support in preparing for filming the video and that there is a good rapport with the producers and interviewer.

5. Your story is one of personal resilience and the ability to overcome tragedy to go on to help others. Can you tell us what this year's NVCWA theme, Moving Forward, means for you?

I believe our stories are a very powerful way to help others understand the grief journey, so they are able to better support victims of crime going forward.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to answer these questions and thank you so much for selecting me to participate in this year's promotional video.