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PCVI News - Winter 2014

Welcome

Welcome to the winter edition of the PCVI News. In this edition, we would like to share with you some of the important developments for victims of crime that are took across Canada from coast to coast to coast in 2013. What a great year it was!

In Canada, both the federal government and provincial/territorial governments have powers related to criminal law. The federal government is responsible for making criminal laws that apply across the country and setting the procedure for criminal courts. This ensures fair and consistent treatment of criminal matters across the country. The provinces and territories are primarily responsible for enforcing the law, prosecuting offences, administering justice in general within their own jurisdictions and providing services and assistance to victims of crime.

This issue of the PCVI News highlights initiatives that operate at the federal and provincial and/or local levels to meet the needs of victims of crime. Working together, we can all ensure that victims have a more effective voice in the criminal justice system.

PCVI is interested in your feedback and ideas for this Newsletter. If you have a story to share, information to pass on to colleagues in the field of victim issues, or suggestions for improvement, please contact us at PCVI-CPCV@justice.gc.ca.

Federal Initiatives

Victims' Rights

On February 4, 2013, the Minister of Justice announced the Government of Canada's intention to move forward with legislation to create a Victims Bill of Rights. This intention was reinforced by the October 16, 2013 Speech from the Throne and the February 11, Budget 2014 in which the Government committed to introducing and supporting the implementation of a Canadian Victims Bill of Rights. The complete [Speech from the Throne](#) and [Budget 2014](#) are available online.

To inform the development of this legislation, the Government held in-person consultations, one in every province and territory, with the public and stakeholders to better understand the various views of what rights should be recognized by a federal Victims Bill of Rights. More than 300 submissions were received through the on-line consultation that was hosted on the Department of Justice website between May and September, 2013. The PCVI has been carefully reviewing all of the submissions, and the Minister of Justice has committed to introducing legislation to create a Canadian Victims Bill of Rights [early this year](#).

Thank you to everybody who took the time to send in their views. Stay tuned for important developments on this historic step for Canada!

National Victims of Crime Awareness Week

National Victims of Crime Awareness Week (Victims Week) is held in April every year. The goal of Victims Week is to raise awareness about issues facing victims of crime and the services, programs and laws in place to help victims and their families.

Victims Week 2014 will take place from April 6-12, 2014. The theme Taking Action recognizes that:

- Throughout Canada, countless dedicated professionals and volunteers are taking action to better serve victims of crime every day. Criminal justice service providers give information and meaningful support to victims and their families at the community, provincial, territorial and federal levels.
- Over the past three decades, Canada has made significant advances towards giving victims a more effective voice in the criminal justice system. By working together collaboratively, all levels of government are taking action on issues important to victims of crime. The Government of Canada will continue to build on this momentum to make meaningful change for victims of crime in Canada.
- The first level of support for many victims of crime is family and friends. All Canadians are taking action by helping victims of crime access the services available to them. Victims Week 2014 provides a backdrop for a national discussion about the laws, services and programs available for victims of crime at the community, provincial, territorial and federal level.

Visit the [Victims Week website](#) for more information about Victims Week, for help planning your local Victims Week event, and for information on the Federal symposium that will be held in Ottawa, Ontario on April 7, 2014. The website offers free downloadable promotional materials, and sample news releases and public service announcements to raise awareness about your local events.

Social Media

You can also follow Department of Justice Canada on Twitter (@JusticeCanadaEn) or join us on Facebook for important updates. Sharing Our Stories videos that highlight stories from those affected by crime are also available on the Department's [YouTube channel](#).

Parole Board of Canada

Victim Services: new video tells victims about parole hearings

A new video, [Parole Board of Canada: Victim Services](#), helps victims to better understand the conditional release process and their role in it.

Produced by the Parole Board of Canada, the video shows how a hearing works and tells victims about their right to present a statement to the Board in person or via a recording. It outlines what information registered victims may receive from the Board about an offender and directs victims to other sources of information about conditional release, such as the Parole Board [website](#) and toll-free victim information line (1-800-789-4636).

Victims have the right in the conditional release process to both receive and provide information, including attending and presenting a statement at a hearing, as now enshrined in law. The Parole Board released the video to help victims understand and prepare to attend a hearing, should they chose to do so; the video adds to the suite of PBC products for victims, such as the [Victims: Statement Checklist](#). Any organizations that work with victims should share the link to the video to help inform victims of their options.

For more information, contact the Parole Board of Canada at 613-960-1856.

From Across Canada

British Columbia

In partnership with the BC [Centre for Elder Advocacy and Support](#) (BC CEAS), the Community Safety and Crime Prevention Branch of the BC provincial government has developed the *Understanding and Responding to Elder Abuse E-Book* and webinar.

This is a valuable tool for support workers in BC who work with older adults who have been abused and/or neglected. In addition to providing a comprehensive resource guide, the E-Book covers several key issues:

- the types and risk factors of elder abuse;
- BC Government programs and community services available for older adults who are abused and neglected;
- how to work with older adults who have been abused;

The webinar also reviews the issue of financial abuse.

These resources are available on [Community Safety and Crime Prevention Branch](#) website.

Alberta

Criminal justice officials in the Alberta government have produced a new handbook to help ensure victims of sexual assault continue to receive excellent services from provincial departments and agencies.

The [Best Practices for Investigating and Prosecuting Sexual Assault](#) handbook has been distributed to police chiefs and Chief Crown prosecutors across the province and is available on the [Alberta's Justice and Solicitor General](#) website.

The handbook is a compilation of best practices and current information to assist those working in the investigation and prosecution of adult sexual offences. The ultimate goal is to increase the quality of sexual assault investigations and prosecutions, and provide greater assistance to victims.

Saskatchewan

In recognition of the 2013 “Missing Persons Week” in Saskatchewan, the RCMP “F” Division produced a series of videos on missing persons. Throughout the week, five long-term missing persons cases from across the province were profiled, with videos about each case released daily. Each video also addresses common myths about missing persons and procedures related to investigating cases of missing persons.

The videos can be viewed on the [Saskatchewan Association of Chiefs of Police Missing Persons webpage](#).

Missing Persons Week was an opportunity to raise awareness about the reasons people go missing, and provided an understanding about what families and friends can do when someone goes missing. The needs of families, and the programs available through Victims Services to respond to these needs, were also highlighted.

Manitoba

With funding from the Policy Centre for Victim Issues, several new resources for victims of domestic violence are now available on the Manitoba Justice website.

Included in these new resources is a multi-language factsheet that provides an overview of the province’s Victim Services programs. The factsheet is available in English, French, Mandarin, German, Tagalog, Arabic, Punjabi, Ojibway, Cree and Spanish. This factsheet, and other multi-language factsheets, are available on the [Government of Manitoba’s](#) website. Manitoba Justice has also developed a [Domestic Abuse Community Resource Map](#) to assist individuals identify available community resources and to access the services that best meet their needs.

Ontario

In April 2013, 11 individuals and six organizations in Ontario received the provincial Attorney General’s Victim Services Awards of Distinction for 2013. These awards recognize victims of crime whose courage and dedication have raised awareness of victims’ issues in Ontario, and organizations, professionals and volunteers that advocate on their behalf.

A list of [award recipients](#) can be found on the Ontario Ministry of Justice website. Congratulations to all of the individuals and organizations who help to ensure that the needs of victims of crime are met.

Nominations for the Ontario Attorney General’s Victim Services Awards of Distinction for 2014 are now closed. The recipients will be announced during National Victims of Crime Awareness Week.

Quebec

Congratulations to [Centres d'aide aux victimes d'actes criminels](#) (CAVAC) au Québec on the organization's recent 25th anniversary !

The interdepartmental coordination committee on domestic, family and sexual violence held consultations and conducted analyses to develop the 3rd domestic violence action plan. The public launch of the *2012-2017 Government Action Plan on Domestic Violence* was on December 6, 2012. The plan proposes 135 measures, including 35 for Aboriginal communities.

The plan includes measures proposing the maintenance and continued development of the services the CAVACs offer to victims of domestic violence and their immediate families. The action plan is mainly aimed at people living in a context of increased vulnerability.

The Department of Justice is responsible for more than one third of the commitments in the action plan.

Nova Scotia

On May 10th, 2013 Nova Scotia's [Cyber Safety Act](#) received Royal Assent , and the Act came into full effect in late September. The purpose of the legislation is to provide safer communities by creating administrative and court processes that can be used to address and prevent cyberbullying.

Under the Act, the province started the country's first [cyberbullying investigative unit](#) on September 30th, 2013. Nova Scotians can call 424-6990 in Halifax Regional Municipality or toll-free at 855-702-8324 to talk to an investigator. A new website, <http://cyberscan.novascotia.ca>, has also been launched which offers information to help people determine if they are being cyberbullied and outlines available options.

Atlantic Canada

In fall 2012, the [cybersafegirl.ca](#) website was launched at the Atlantic Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women meeting in St. John's, NL, and a presentation of the website was made at Canada's Permanent Mission to the UN during the March 2013 UN Commission on the Status of Women Meetings in New York City. The launch of the website followed a series of focus groups that were conducted across the province with girls aged 8-17 including those who resided in rural and urban areas of the province.

The ministers responsible for Status of Women in Atlantic Canada continue to demonstrate their commitment to working together to create awareness and to undertake prevention initiatives to address cyber violence perpetrated against girls on the internet and through social media.

Yukon

The [Cybertip campaign](#) partnership between the Yukon government and the [Canadian Centre for Child Protection](#), designed to raise awareness of tools for the prevention of and response to online exploitation of children, has seen some tremendous results.

During the two-month Cybertip advertising campaign, more than 2,000 Yukoners visited www.cybertip.ca, representing a 1,285 per cent increase in average monthly visits from Yukon. The Cybertip website hosts information on preventing and reporting the online exploitation of children. The campaign included posters, newspaper, radio, bus, newsletter and online ads.

The Yukon government is providing \$75,000 over a three-year period to the Canadian Centre for Child Protection to bring its resources to the territory. A team made up of officials from the departments of Justice, Education, and Health and Social Services, as well as the Women's Directorate and the Youth Directorate, is exploring further ways to bring the Centre's expertise and educational materials to Yukon.

Northwest Territories

Northwest Territories Victim Service programs are working with community organizations to support the needs of victims. One of its main activities is providing court accompaniment for victims and working with victims to prepare Victim Impact Statements. The Victim Services workers also work closely with Community Justice Coordinators and Crown Witness Coordinators of the Public Prosecution Service of Canada.

The Hay River Victim Services program holds face-to-face outreach meetings and provides a court support person to isolated and outlying communities. The program staff has also been involved in the creation of an Elders' Centre to work towards the elimination of elder abuse.

Nunavut

The [Pulaarvik Kablu Friendship Centre](#) in Rankin Inlet is the only friendship centre in Nunavut, and offers multiple programs to the community and the Kivalliq region, including:

- The Spousal Abuse Counseling Program, an innovative program that provides counseling to abused spouses. The program has been operational since 2002 and was designed in partnership with criminal justice professionals specifically for Rankin Inlet by community members; and
- [Victim Support Services](#), which offers counseling and assistance in court to people who are victims of crime or faced with violence at home (both reported and unreported).

From the Desks of PCVI

At PCVI we receive many emails about important developments in the area of victim issues and related fields. While we cannot forward every email to you, our readers, we have selected some of the most interesting and timely pieces to share.

If you have something of importance to share with the victim serving community, please send your links to: PCVI-CPCV@justice.gc.ca.

From: National Institute of Justice
Subject: [Understanding Elder Abuse](#)

As the aging population increases, elder abuse is becoming a greater concern. For this reason, in part, the National Institute of Justice has turned its attention toward an improved understanding of elder abuse issues. In their latest June 2013 edition of *Research in Brief*, the Institute provides a review of existing theories on elder abuse, puts forward new theories to enhance understanding, and makes recommendations on how to advance the body of existing elder abuse research.

From: The United Nations
Subject: [Translation Tool for Victims of Human Trafficking](#)

Law enforcement officials and victim service workers are often the first point of contact for victims of human trafficking. However, these victims may not speak the language of the country in which they are being trafficked, which poses challenges for first response professionals. The UN has developed a unique tool – VITA - to address this issue. VITA uses audio messages that are available in 40 different languages to provide a level of basic assistance to victims of human trafficking.

From: Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council
Subject: [Project THINK to End Bullying](#)

The Crime Prevention Council of Waterloo, Ontario, has a new initiative: *Project THINK to End Bullying*. Through this initiative, the council is encouraging people of all ages and backgrounds to think twice before sending a text, tweet, email, Facebook post, or other social media message. People are encouraged to ask the following 5 questions before they post to help ensure their message is “bullying” free:

- T** – Is it True?
- H** – Is it Hurtful?
- I** – Is it Illegal?
- N** – Is it Necessary?
- K** – Is it Kind?

From: The VERA Institute

Subject: [Report on the Sexual Abuse of Children with Disabilities](#)

Children with disabilities are three times more likely than children without disabilities to become victims of sexual abuse. In order to further explore this issue, the Center on Victimization and Safety (CVS) of the Vera Institute of Justice conducted its own research. The Institute's March 2013 newsletter reports the main findings of their research, as well as provides recommendations for responding to the issue.

From: US Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime

Subject: [Vision 21: Transforming Victim Services final report examines how to alter the way victims are treated in America.](#)

Thirty years after the release of the 1982 *Final Report of the President's Task Force on Victims of Crime*, the US Office for Victims of Crime has delivered the *Vision 21: Transforming Victim Services Final Report*. What's the vision? To permanently alter the way victims of crime are treated in America. The report outlines national-scope stakeholder recommendations on how to bring transformative change and better meet the needs of victims of crime.