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PCVI News - Summer 2014

Welcome

Welcome to the summer edition of the PCVI News. While we hope you are enjoying the dog days of summer, victim service providers – and their canine counterparts – are hard at work advancing the issues that matter most to victims of crime.

During National Victims of Crime Awareness Week (Victims Week) 2013, we introduced you to Caber, Canada's first "Trauma K9." Less than two years later, victim service dogs are being used in more and more communities, in both urban and rural settings. Read on to see how the use of these animals can vary depending on the location and organization.

At the Department of Justice, we have been hard at work over the past year developing legislation to create the *Canadian Victims Bill of Rights*. The legislation—[Bill C-32, the Victims Bill of Rights Act](#)—was introduced in the House of Commons in April and would improve the experience of victims of crime across the country by entrenching their rights into legislation at the federal level. Find more information below. Many of you provided invaluable input during consultations last year: thank you! Together, we are making significant progress in addressing the needs of victims of crime across the country.

In this edition, we would also like to re-cap some key developments that took place during the winter and spring months, such as Victims Week 2014, and highlight some important upcoming activities being spearheaded by various victim-serving organizations across the country.

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.

Canadian Victims Bill of Rights

On April 3, 2014, the Prime Minister of Canada [announced](#) the introduction of [Bill C-32, the Victims Bill of Rights Act](#), that would create clear rights at the federal level for victims of crime for the first time in Canadian history. The rights include:

[Right to information](#)—Victims would have the right to general information about the criminal justice system and available victim services and programs, as well as specific information about the progress of the case, including information relating to the investigation, prosecution and sentencing of the person who harmed them.

[Right to protection](#)—Victims would have the right to have their security and privacy considered at all stages of the criminal justice process, to have reasonable and necessary measures to protect them from intimidation and retaliation, and to request their identity be protected from public disclosure.

[Right to participation](#)—Victims would have a right to convey their views about decisions to be made by criminal justice professionals and have them considered at various stages of the criminal justice process, and to present a victim impact statement.

[Right to restitution](#)—Victims would have the right to have the court consider making a restitution order for all offences for which there are easy-to-calculate financial losses.

To read the legislation in full, or to check on its status as it moves through the [parliamentary process](#), please visit the [Parliament of Canada website](#).

Thank you again to all who participated in the online consultation or the in-person meetings held last year to inform the development of this important piece of legislation. Your ongoing input is invaluable as we continue working towards giving victims of crime a more effective voice in the criminal justice system.

National Victims of Crime Awareness Week

The 2014 National Victims of Crime Awareness Week (Victims Week) took place from April 6-12 with the theme “Taking Action.” The theme was chosen to recognize **you**: all of the dedicated professionals, volunteers, policy-makers, and friends and family who take action every day to give victims a more effective voice in the criminal justice system.

There was certainly a lot of action around the country during Victims Week 2014. Through the Department of Justice’s [Victims Fund](#), more than \$1 million in funding was allocated to community groups in each province and territory for events to raise awareness of victim issues or to recognize those people working for victims of crime. There were over 180 events organized this year. We thank all those who hosted or attended an event—it is thanks to all of you that Victims Week continues to be a success across the country.

To launch Victims Week 2014, the Department of Justice’s Policy Centre for Victim Issues (PCVI) organized a Federal Symposium attended by over 250 people, including victims, their families and friends, victim service providers, law enforcement, community support organizations, and policy-makers, to share experiences and best practices. Mrs. Laureen Harper, Mr. Sheldon Kennedy, Board Member of the Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre in Calgary, and victim-advocate Mr. Glenn Canning joined the Ministers of Justice and Public Safety in launching Victims Week in an inspirational opening ceremony. Workshop sessions offered during the Federal Symposium covered many relevant and timely issues for victims of crime, including sexual assault, elder abuse, services for First Nation and Northern victims of crime, and youth victimization in immigrant communities.



The PCVI also helped raise awareness of victim-serving organizations in Canada by profiling four organizations that are taking action in innovative ways to respond to the needs of victims of crime. Learn more about the following organizations by visiting the [Sharing our Stories](#) section on the [VictimsWeek.gc.ca](#) website:

- The [Missing Children Society of Canada](#), established in 1986, is using innovative technology, including social media, to help reunite missing children with their searching families;
- [A & O: Support Services for Older Adults](#) in Winnipeg responds to the needs of Manitobans who have experienced criminal victimization and elder abuse;

- Montreal's [Shield of Athena Family Services](#) provides intervention, support and prevention services that are culturally and linguistically adapted to meet the needs of the city's diverse communities; and
- The [Child and Youth Advocacy Centre Demonstration Program at the IWK Health Centre](#) in Halifax will be the first CYAC in Atlantic Canada, and draws on a multi-disciplinary team to serve the needs of child victims in the region.



Next year will be especially significant as we mark the 10th anniversary of the National Victims of Crime Awareness Week. **Mark your calendars:** Victims Week 2015 will take place from April 19 – 25, 2015. Stay tuned to the [Victims Week](#) website for up-to-date information on Victims Week 2015.

Victim Service Dogs

In 2013, we introduced you to Caber, Canada's first "Trauma K9," in the National Victims of Crime Awareness Week (Victims Week) [Sharing Our Stories video](#). The video showcased how Delta Police's Victim Services Coordinator, Kim Gramlich, and Caber provided comfort, care and support to a school and community following the traumatic murder of a young student. In the video, a friend of the young student expressed hope that the use of victim services dogs would be expanded across Canada "because he really does help children and teenagers and even adults cope through situations." Gramlich echoed this sentiment, adding that she looked forward to an expanded role that would see victim service dogs providing direct support to victims in courtroom settings.

Less than two years later, both of these wishes have been realized. Victim service dogs are being used in more and more communities across Canada, and their role is being adapted to a variety of situations. Could victim service dogs be used in your area?

Here are two profiles to show how victim service dogs are currently being used in two regions with very distinct needs, separated by more than 3,000 kilometres. These profiles show that regardless of your setting—rural or urban—victim service dogs can play an important role in providing services and support to victims of crime. Whether your organization takes on a trained dog full-time or takes advantage of community partnerships to deliver the service, it is about finding an arrangement that works for you and your organization, and helps you be more responsive to the needs of victims of crime.



Camrose and District Victim Services: Lucy
Camrose and District Victim Services, one of only two amalgamated Victim Service units in Alberta, provides enhanced support to victims of crime and tragedy for both the Camrose Police Service and the Camrose RCMP.

In the fall of 2011, members of the Camrose and District Victim Services were introduced to Caber and Kim Gramlich who shared program material, knowledge and experience so the unit could develop a business case in support of their own victim service dog. Their application was successful, and Lucy joined their team in April of 2013 after being extensively trained by Alberta-based [Dogs With Wings](#).

As with Caber, Lucy attends work each day with her primary handler, Program Coordinator Michelle Hauser, and shadows her throughout the day. As a victim service dog in a rural setting, though, Lucy needs to be able to follow the dynamics of the Victim Services unit by being willing to jump into a range of diverse duties. She attends meetings, training sessions, interviews and all “calls” that are suitable for her to be on. She participates in tours of the Police Service, visits the local Women’s Shelter, and is an instrumental part of group crisis debriefings. Lucy’s ability to identify and empathize with persons expressing distress, sorrow or fear makes her a unique comforting presence, playmate, and distraction for those in need.



What is especially unique about Lucy is that she has also been able to provide direct support to victims in courtroom settings. She is waiting to greet the victim at the door when they walk in the courthouse, walks with them to the witness room, and waits until it is time for them to testify. The discretion of the judge dictates where she will be located in the court room when the victim testifies; she may be under the stand so the victim can hold onto her leash as something tangible, she may only be allowed in the gallery placed in a position so the victim can make her their focus point during testimony, or if closed-circuit television is being used, she may be placed beside the victim either on the floor or, in some cases, on a chair next to them so they

can touch her physically. She allows a bit of control and empowerment in a situation over which the victim has little control.

While she is assigned full-time to Camrose and District Victim Services, the team recognizes Lucy’s value and the challenges for units in rural Alberta that may be too small to justify having a dog. When requested, she travels to other units in Alberta to assist with cases.

York Region’s crisis therapy dog program

The communities of York Region are served by more than 1,364 full-time police professionals and approximately 496 support staff. Victim Services of York Region is a non-profit charitable agency that works in partnership with the York Regional Police and the Ontario Provincial Police (Aurora Detachment) to provide 24-hour emotional support and practical assistance to persons victimized by crime or tragic circumstance.

The crisis therapy dog program in York Region is a pilot project between [St. John’s Ambulance Therapy Dog Program](#), [York Regional Police](#) and [Victim Services of York Region Inc.](#) The vision of this collaborative program is that all people in the region who have been victimized by crime or tragic circumstances receive the option of a therapy dog response that is immediate, caring, skilled, effective and coordinated, with an emphasis on companionship and respect for personal dignity and privacy.

As with Caber and Lucy, the therapy dogs that volunteer in the program and their handlers have gone through extensive training. The dogs are part of the [St. John’s Ambulance Therapy Dog Program](#), a program that began as a pilot program in 1992 and now includes nearly 3,000 therapy dog teams that reach thousands of people annually. Victim Services of York Region and the York Regional Police screen the dogs, and also screen and train the dogs’ handlers, to ensure that they can effectively respond to people who are in crisis, including victims of crime.

Due to the partnership with [St. John’s Ambulance Therapy Dog Program](#), Victim Services of York Region and the York Regional police are not required to find a full-time partner and care provider for their therapy trauma dogs; the dogs and their handlers are volunteers who are on-call on a rotational basis, ready to respond 24-hours a day when on duty.

While the program is still in its infancy, there are currently two trained handlers and four program-approved dogs. The benefits of the program are becoming evident to the victim service providers in the region who are already planning another training program to increase the number of available dogs and handlers.

Victims of Crime Research Digest

Research can play a very important role by providing the evidence needed to make changes to how we get things done or to introduce us to completely new effective programs or processes. In conjunction with Victims Week 2014, the Department of Justice released the [seventh issue of the Victims of Crime Research Digest](#), which covers the following topics:



[A Snapshot on Cyberbullying](#)—An overview of cyberbullying’s key issues, including a common definition of the term, whether there is a link to suicide, and what Canadian research tells us about the prevalence and nature of the problem.

[Assisting Victims through Technology](#)—The results of a study examining how technology is being used to help victims of crime in Canada. The article also discusses how technology benefits victims and service providers.

[Let’s “Paws” to Consider the Possibility: Using Support Dogs with Victims of Crime](#)—Research on the efficacy of support dogs and look at how these animals are being used in the United States and Canada to make a positive difference for victims of crime.

[Third Party Records: The Case Law from 2003-2010](#)—An update of a previous review of third party records decisions (1999-2003) to understand the outcomes of these applications in the context of sexual offences.

[The Human Cost of Impaired Driving in Canada](#)—An exploration of the data available in Canada on the number of fatalities caused by impaired driving.

The full Research Digest is available on the [Department of Justice website](#). If you would like hard copies of this edition of the Research Digest, please contact Susan McDonald, a Principal Researcher at the Department of Justice Canada, directly at 613-957-9315 or at susan.mcdonald@justice.gc.ca.

Launch of the Child and Youth Advocacy Centres (CAC/CYAC) Website

With financial assistance provided by the Department of Justice’s [Victims Fund](#), the [CAC Canada website](#) has been launched. The website is managed by Pamela Hurley, a specialist and educator on issues related to children in the justice system and lecturer at the King’s University College at the University of Western Ontario. The website provides valuable information about recent CAC/CYAC-related developments across the country, [various resources and practical tools](#), and interviews with many CAC/CYAC leaders — at both long-established CACs, and others still in development.

The site’s [Spring 2014 newsletter](#) notes what a busy year it has been for CAC/CYACs in Canada: “While 6 centres were open in April 2013, there are now 15 up and running and providing various levels of services in Spring 2014.” While noting the many challenges faced by CAC/CYACs, the newsletter also offers practical solutions and insights on how to best overcome these common challenges. The

newsletter also includes links to [videos](#) produced by several CAC/CYACs across Canada that may be useful to other organizations and cities looking to build support for their own centre.

Big congratulations to all of the multi-disciplinary teams that have come together across the country to better meet the needs of young victims of crime. You are making a difference not only to them and their families, but to your respective communities.

From the Desks of PCVI

At PCVI our inboxes and voicemail boxes are overflowing with important news and developments of interest to victims of crime, victims serving organizations, victim advocates and policy-makers. While we cannot share them all, below are some of the more interesting pieces we thought you, our readers, might enjoy.

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

From: L'Association Québécoise Plaidoyer-Victime
Subject: [30^e anniversaire de l'AQPV](#)

As noted in their April 2014 [L'InfoPV](#) information bulletin, this year marks the 30th anniversary of the l'Association Québécoise Plaidoyer-Victime. The anniversary will be marked on September 30th, 2014. Please visit the [l'Association Québécoise Plaidoyer-Victime](#) website regularly to see how this important anniversary will be celebrated.

From: [Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime](#)
Subject: [TerrorVictimResponse.ca](#)

As part of the [Kanishka Project Contribution Program](#), a multi-year investment in terrorism-focused research funded by the Government of Canada, the Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime (CRCVC) has launched a bilingual website, [TerrorVictimResponse.ca](#), for communities to utilize to help them prepare for and mitigate a terrorist attack or mass victimization event in Canada. The website encourages communities to develop a comprehensive response plan which will positively impact the resiliency of victims, survivors and communities in the event of a terrorist incident on Canadian soil.

From: [MADD Canada](#)
Subject: [2013 Ipsos-Reid Survey of Impaired Driving Victims](#)

In 2013 MADD Canada commissioned Ipsos-Reid to conduct a survey of impaired driving victims/survivors who have received support from MADD Canada's National Office or their local Chapter/Community Leader. The results of the survey showed that while respondents were generally very satisfied and thankful for the support they received, there were also some areas for enhancements to MADD Canada's Victim Services program. One of these enhancements included the National Office working with the Chapters/Community Leader groups to do outreach to victims/survivors as soon as possible after a crash to let them know about our support services. For more information, please visit the [MADD Canada website](#).

From: [Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General](#)
Subject: [Attorney General's Victim Services Awards of Distinction](#)

The Ontario Attorney General's Victim Services Awards of Distinction were distributed in April and recognized the exceptional achievements of dedicated professionals and volunteers in the field of victim services. They also acknowledge the strength, creativity and courage of individual victims who have been able to move forward to forge a better future for themselves, their families and their communities while raising the profile of victims' issues in Ontario.

The PCVI would like to extend congratulations to all award recipients, including Margaret Schreurs, a pediatric social worker who played a pivotal role in the vision and creation of the Child Advocacy Centre of Simcoe/Muskoka, which opened its doors in January 2014.

Social Media

You can 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](#).