



EMPOWER

A publication of the Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime

June 2020

Volume 26, Issue 6

[Visit Us](#) | [Support Victims](#) | [Newsletters](#) | [Contact Us](#)

Please share our **free** newsletter with your colleagues and friends or sign up to receive it directly by clicking [here](#).

[Donate Here](#)

Dear National Justice Network (NJN) Update Reader

Welcome to the second edition of our newly revamped newsletter: EMPOWER. Inside you will find stories, links and issues affecting Canadian crime victims.

We changed the name of our monthly newsletter from NJN Update to EMPOWER for two main reasons:

- All of our work is designed to EMPOWER victims as they work their way through Canada's criminal justice system
- The articles, links, events and stories you will read EMPOWER you with information and updates you need to join us as we continue using our collective voices to influence justice for victims.

I hope you enjoy our new format and I encourage you to share EMPOWER with your network.

Thank you for subscribing to EMPOWER!

Sincerely yours,

Aline Vlasceanu
Executive Director



In joining the Canada-wide and worldwide effort, the Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime (CRCVC) staff is not in our office right now. However, we are still fully functioning remotely and ready to support victims of crime and their families.

Chat & Text Support

CRCVC's chat and text support for victims of crime who wish to access information as well as emotional support.

Text: Our number is 613-208-0747

Chat: Please access through our [website](#).

Hoping to connect with you soon!

Snapshots

Crowns request to appeal 'extreme intoxication' ruling

The Supreme Court of Canada will be asked to weigh in on a recent ruling that allows individuals accused of violent crime to use the defence of extreme intoxication.

In two separate cases, convictions of two men were overturned with automatism as the defence. However, this decade-old section of the Canadian Criminal Code was deemed unconstitutional.

Critics worry that while the extreme intoxication defence is not common, that it undermined the protection of women from sexual assault.

Family finally recognized as victims, "but embittered by the process"

On March 22nd, 2017, 18-year-old Daphné Huard Boudreault was murdered by her ex-partner, Anthony Pratte-Lops. Daphné's mother, father and stepmother were repeatedly not recognized as victims; the family was denied by Service d'indemnisation des victimes d'actes criminels (IVAC) because they did not witness the murder.

The family expressed that the police were not actively involved in protecting Daphné, who had been receiving threats for several days before the murder. Since 2017, IVAC had ignored the family and the complications they had with the agency ultimately negatively impacted their grief. Daphné's mother, Mélanie Huard stated that "The scars are still there. I sleep, but not the way I did before."

However, on June 10th, 2020 the Tribunal administratif du Québec reversed their decision, which means they will now be eligible for reimbursement of services such as therapy, loss of income, financial support, and a lifetime annuity.

"Lawyer Marc Bellemare, who handled their case, said the Crown prosecutor and justice department are 'complicit in the denigration of victims by IVAC.'" Concerns have been expressed that IVAC is not truthful about conditions for reimbursement and that the information provided by IVAC's telephone line and website services is extremely misleading.

The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) has released a report on the response to Ottawa's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG)

One year after the release of the National Inquiry into MMIWG, the NWAC has issued a report which points to the inadequate response to the recommendations made in the inquiry. The NWAC has formed a strategy guiding further action to be done in Ottawa. NWAC President, Lorraine Witman stated, "I'm really disappointed in the process because it's lack-of." The NWAC hopes that the federal government will start proceeding as a result of the growing concerns.



Of the four evaluated areas, the NWAC gave a failing grade for culture, health, security, and the right to justice. As such, the NWAC is requesting that Ottawa immediately creates a national task force. More specifically a task force with independent investigators to look into the unsolved files of MMIWG. Additionally, the NWAC is requesting the development of a national database to track cases, appoint an independent mechanism to apply recommended changes, and to create a national campaign as a preventive measure for "racism and sexualized stereotypes."

The organization is hoping that decisions will be made together and that the NWAC is a part of the decision-making table on issues directly related to MMIWG. Additionally, the NWAC is hoping to gain access to additional financial resources to help establish the organization's awareness campaign and an internal unit that will assist with creating and implementing recommendations. The Crown-Indigenous Relations Minister, Carolyn Bennett, expressed that the federal government and relevant partners have been working very quickly in hopes of creating a strategy for the families of MMIWG. Consultations are still taking place with stakeholders to develop a national action plan and address the 231 recommendations that were made as a result of the inquiry. A collaborative approach has been prioritized when devising the new changes.

In terms of funding, the department is hoping to obtain over \$6 million to respond to the inquiry with the help of various "national and regional Indigenous and gender-diverse organizations." Additionally, Indigenous Services Canada is hoping to obtain \$4 million to help create additional shelters, as well as various violence prevention projects. Lastly, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation is seeking over \$3 million to assist with shelter development, specifically on reserves, to help Indigenous women and their children who are fleeing violence. The federal government has pointed to the work done thus far in response to the inquiry, making note of the new website that was developed to promote legislation that protects Indigenous languages. They also highlighted changes to the child welfare system.

Qajaq, the former commissioner states that if the federal government can come together in response to COVID-19, the same can also be done to support MMIWG in creating a missing and murdered file. Qajaq relays that a "nationwide, co-ordinated response is imperative. Not disconnected patches of varying levels of engagement and response."

The former commissioners of the inquiry have expressed the need to appoint an international organization that will be impartial when creating and implementing the recommendations. Marion Buller, the former national inquiry chief commissioner stated that the federal government has not been proactive in leading the changes, which is hindering the progress of the national action plan, a plan which does currently have a definitive timeline.

The federal government has blamed the COVID-19 pandemic for the delay, however, NWAC states that the government should be reciprocating the kind of effort the organization is putting in to foster change and follow-through. Growing concerns have arisen during this time, Whitman stated that "COVID-19 has highlighted the fact that Indigenous people are at higher risk due to systematic overcrowding, food insecurity, lack of clean water and inadequate health services and infrastructure." Not enough is being done to support the increase in violence experienced since the onset of the pandemic. Whitman has expressed there has been a one-way dialogue when attending Zoom meetings to discuss these issues.

The Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime, Heidi Illingworth expressed that while Canada's response has been inadequate, its inadequacy should not be blamed on the minister. Rather, ministers and members of parliament need to be included in the conversations and processes as well as be held accountable for their involvement with Indigenous communities.

Additionally, there has been debate over the need for further consultation as this should not be an excuse for the lack of action that has been taken. The response has been ongoing with the leader of the NDP, Jagmeet Singh, putting pressure on the Prime Minister concerning the delay of implementing a national action plan. Justin Trudeau responded, stating "We have been responding for five years and taking action for five years."

Alberta victim services group concerned over proposed legislation allowing the government to raid a fund meant to support victims of crime

An Alberta based victim service group has expressed concerns over the introduction of Bill 16, which would allow the government to access funds meant to support victims of crime. The group is hoping that the \$74 million surplus that the Victims of Crime Fund currently has, will be allocated to support victims.

The bill was proposed by the United Conservative government which would allow the government to use funds from the Victims of Crime Fund for police measures. This would include additional police teams with specialized services, courts for drug treatment, as well as increasing the hiring of Crown prosecutors.

The Alberta Police Based Victim Services Association stated that if the legislation becomes successful, "the solicitor general will arbitrarily have unfettered access to the fund to provide more police, more prosecutors and fund other undefined public safety initiatives."

The Victims of Crime fund is collected through provincial fine surcharges. This money is put aside to help victims of crime across the province, both police and community-based services. This fund has been accumulated with no taxpayer money. The fine surcharges were raised an additional 5% in April, which allowed for an increase in the annual budget by \$20 million, bringing the total budget up to \$60 million a year.

Alberta Justice spokeswoman, Inna Lucila stated, "The government is expanding the scope of the Victims of Crime Fund to fund initiatives that help prevent victimization while still providing the support victims need when they need it."

In a 2016 report, Alberta's auditor general recommended that the funds be used productively based on need in addition to recognizing areas where the funds could go to help any pronounced gaps in services.

Alf Rudd, the President of the Victim Services Association explained that the organization represents over 70 victim services programs in the province. Rudd hopes to further discuss how the additional funds could be used. Rudd recommends that victim service organizations work together in collaboration with the government so that victims are better served in the province.

Concerns over "a new low in the war against gun control"

Kathlene Dixon, a volunteer with PolySeSouvient, a firearms-control advocacy group based in Montreal spoke out against the backlash the group has been receiving. Dixon stated that she understands that people are frustrated and that they have begun to lash out with [misogyny and intimidation](#) as a result. She went on to explain per position, "They are the perfect examples of people who should not have weapons."



PolySeSouvient was created in response to the massacre that occurred at École Polytechnique where 14 women were murdered. The group advocates for increased gun control and have experienced an intense increase in online attacks for their advocacy efforts. While they have experienced threats of this nature in the past, Dixon explained that there has been a sharp increase, which began last fall when the Liberal Leader, Justin Trudeau "[promised tough new firearms legislation](#)" as part of his federal campaign. Following his re-election and the mass shooting that took place in Nova Scotia, Trudeau introduced a new ban on assault weapons, which further increased the backlash received by the firearms-control group.

Over the [three decades](#), since the group was formed, this is the first time that there have been threats of a defamation suit. It was noted that there has been speak in the past of legal action, but nothing this serious before.

A [cease-and-desist request](#) has now been addressed to two women who survived the massacre at Polytechnique in 1989, [Heidi Rathjen and Nathalie Provost](#). Both have dedicated their lives to advocate and fight for justice since surviving the mass shooting. This letter was sent out by [Marstar](#) which manufactures and distributes firearms as well as other related products.

Dixon states that their right to advocate can not be taken away, and more specifically the right to [advocate for public safety through calling for more gun-control measures](#)."

In the cease-and-desist letter, Lawyer Judith Wilcox [spoke](#) of their recognition that the group has a right to advocate and to take a legal position. However, the recognition of rights presented in the letter appeared to be merely a formality, with the legal notice moving on to make claims against the advocacy group of defamation as well as trademark infringement and other copyright violations. These allegations were made in response to a letter sent out using the company logo advocating for gun control speaking to the mass shooting in 2017 at the Quebec City mosque and two other incidents in 2014 and 2012.

[Sylvain Beauchamp](#), PolySeSouvient's lawyer stated that the legal allegations are "absurd". This was explained in more depth in a legal letter sent out to Marstar. To date, there has been no official action on the defamation allegations. However, it has been discussed that in response to these claims, there is the potential for a Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation (SLAPP suit). This was explained as a suit wherein, "[deep-pocketed businesses go after small grassroots organizations through the courts in a bid to stifle opposition](#)."

The growing concerns over legal actions could harm PolySeSouvient and similar groups who are funded by

shoestring budgets. It was [explained](#) that shifting the focus to these legal matters takes away from the mission of the group and uses up resources to defend against the claims.

PolySeSouvient expressed their belief that the assault weapon ban does not address all concerns such as the promised firearm buyback program and the alteration of legal magazines that advertise ammunition.

Additionally, Marstar's website contains various resources that target the ban as a form of bad policy and aims to protect the rights associated with gun ownership. However, narratives in the media are fuelled by the idea that ["pro-gun control advocates want to take away all guns and curtail even legitimate hunting and sporting activities..."](#)

PolySeSouviet is dedicated to fighting for gun control measures and Dixon expressed that if survivors of gun violence have to be silenced through legal and court action, that ["the war against gun control has reached a new low."](#)

Spotlight on Research



Statistics
Canada

Statistique
Canada

Canadians perceptions of personal safety since COVID-19 outbreak

[Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic](#), police and victim services have reported changes in crime, both in volume and type. It has been reported that some police services in Canada have seen drops in crimes such as impaired driving and robbery. However, some areas have had increases in commercial theft and concerns rising over increased fraud and family violence.

50% of survey respondents reported no change in perceptions of neighbourhood crime since the start of the pandemic. Further, ["15% felt that crime had decreased and 11% felt that it had increased. The remaining 24% of participants said they did not know if crime had changed or stayed the same."](#)

It was also found that 11% of men and women reported feeling that crime in their neighbourhood had been increasing. However, women were 13% less likely to report that crime had been decreasing in comparison to men at 17%.

Additionally, 17% of participants who identified as Indigenous and 14% of participants who identified as visible minorities were more likely than participants who were non-Indigenous to report that crime had been increasing in their neighbourhood (in comparison to the 11%).

The majority of participants also reported feeling safe from crime when walking home after dark which was similar to findings before the pandemic. 22% of participants did not feel safe to walk after dark since the outbreak. [Findings indicate](#) that among women, 49% are more likely to report feeling unsafe walking alone after dark than men (29%). These percentages were also higher for Indigenous and visible minority participants. This aligns with similar trends noted before the pandemic according to the [2014 GSS](#).

Young women were also more likely to report feeling unsafe. Of those aged 15 to 24, approximately 12% reported that they felt ["very safe walking alone after dark in their neighbourhood."](#) Of those aged 25 to 34, this was true for approximately 25% of women.

Approximately 37% of participants felt ["that harassment or attacks based on race, ethnicity, or skin colour"](#) occurred at the same rate before the pandemic in their neighbourhood. While 52% stated that they did not know.

However, those who reported an increase in race-based incidents were much higher than those who believed it was decreasing (7% in comparison to 4%). Visible minority participants, particularly men (8%), were more likely to report an increase in these incidents in comparison to women (6%). Non-binary participants reported the highest increase at 22% and younger participants (15-24) at 11%.

["Some police services and media outlets across Canada have reported an increase in hate crimes since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically those targeting Asian populations."](#)

10% of participants reported that they contacted victim services for assistance relating to crimes since the start of the pandemic. 11% of women were more likely than men (5%) to contact victim services. The highest age group to contact or use a victim service were women aged 15 to 24.

Overall, the results reveal that the majority of participants did not experience a significant change in crime or safety due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, the results suggest that there is a greater impact on the perceptions of safety among young people, particularly young women.

Former journalist and Victimology professor Tamara Cherry is looking for participants for a research study about the impact of the media on victims and survivors of crime. As part of the study, Tamara has created two surveys: One for survivors of homicide and motor vehicle fatalities, and another for survivors of sexual assault and human trafficking. Tamara is also interested in speaking with victim service providers, including those who would like to remain anonymous for professional reasons, about their insights on the topic, whether they feel equipped to support victims and survivors in dealing with the media, and tips for journalists covering traumatic cases. The goal of this research study is to produce educational tools for investigators, victim service providers and journalists who are hoping to better understand and support victims and survivors in dealing with and utilizing the media.

General information about the research study and contact information for Tamara can be found [here](#).

1. The Survey for Survivors of Homicide and Motor Vehicle Fatalities can be found [here](#).
2. The Survey for Survivors of Sexual Assault and Human Trafficking can be found [here](#).



Statistics
Canada

Statistique
Canada

Statistics Canada: Update on Trafficking Persons in Canada

On June 23rd, 2020, [Statistics Canada](#) published an overview of data (police reported and court services) related to human trafficking. It is stated that COVID-19 may have an impact on the nature of human trafficking and there is a need for future research.

In Canada, 2018 was the first year since 2010 that the number of reported human trafficking cases decreased. In 2017 there were 348 reported cases and in 2018, 315. Although this decline is notable, the "[overall number of police-reported incidents of human trafficking has been increasing over the past decade.](#)"

Additionally, 90% of cases were reported in metropolitan areas and are often reported by women or girls- approximately 74% of all victims were identified to be under the age of 25. Further, 92% of victims knew the individual who trafficked them (this includes a friend, acquaintance, current or former spouse, common-law partner, and other intimate partners).

In adult criminal court, there has been an increase in trafficking charges due in part to the higher volume of, and attention by, the police.

Quick Links

The CRCVC pays its respects for the 35th Anniversary of the largest mass murder in Canadian history, the Air India Flight 182. The Chair of the Board of Directors for the CRCVC, Susheel Gupta, was 12 years old when his mother was murdered by terrorists on board Air India Flight 182 as it crashed into the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Ireland. June 23rd has also since been designated Canada's National Day of Remembrance for Victims of Terrorism.

You can hear Susheel Gupta speak [here](#).

You can also click [here](#) to listen to our executive director, Aline Vlasceanu's message.

Upcoming Events



National Conference for Victims of Impaired Driving

A variety of workshops are offered throughout the weekend. MADD Canada and Local Chapters sponsor



delegates will attend the conference. Priority for the conference is given to people who have never attended before and whose crash was recent. An important component of the conference is the *Reflection Sessions* which allow victims and survivors to meet with others who share similar experiences.

When: September 25-27, 2020

Where: Toronto, ON

Register By Phone or Email

Phone: 1-800-665-6233 or 905-829-8805

Email: info@madd.ca

VIRTUAL Ottawa Monthly Drop-In Support Group for "Loss to Violence"

The drop-in support group for family members of homicide victims addresses the gap in support within the community and offers a place for peers to support each other in healing.

Due to COVID-19, we will be meeting virtually; please email us at crcvc@crcvc.ca for more details.

You can also "like" the [CRCVC Facebook page](#) or follow us on [Twitter](#) or [Instagram](#) to stay updated about the support group dates. We welcome all family and loved ones to join us!

