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Determining the Role of the CRCVC in Supporting Indigenous Victims of Crime

Written by: Shelley Trevethan

In support of recent commissions and inquiries that refer to Indigenous victims of crime, the Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime (CRCVC) is discussing its role regarding Indigenous Peoples. For instance:

- The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015) Call to Action (CTA) #40: call on all levels of government, in collaboration with Aboriginal people, to create adequately funded and accessible Aboriginal-specific victim programs and services; and
- The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (2019) Call for Justice (CFJ) #5.6(ii): adequate and reliable culturally relevant and accessible victim services must be provided to family members and survivors of crime, and funding must be provided to Indigenous and community-led organizations that deliver victim services and healing supports.

The mandate of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was to inform all Canadians about what happened in residential schools. The TRC documented the truth of survivors, their families, communities, and anyone personally affected by the residential school experience.

To help the CRCVC Board and Executive Director determine the best way to support the implementation of the CTAs and CFJs relating to the provision of victim services, we have asked some key stakeholders to share their insights and wisdom on the need for victim services and the role that the CRCVC can play

in supporting Indigenous victim service organizations.

The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls was mandated to look into and report on the systemic causes of all forms of violence against Indigenous women and girls, including sexual violence; the underlying social, economic, cultural, institutional, and historical causes that contribute to the ongoing violence and particular vulnerabilities of Indigenous women and girls in Canada; and existing institutional policies and practices to address violence, including those that are effective in reducing violence and increasing safety.

Shelley Trevethan is a Board Member at the Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime (CRCVC). During her 30-year career, Shelley has focused much of her work on social justice, particularly the over-representation of Indigenous Peoples in the criminal justice system. This includes her work as Director of Indigenous and Community Research at the Correctional Service of Canada, Executive Director General of the Parole Board which included work with the Indigenous Circle, Chief Operating Officer of the Indian Residential Schools Adjudication Secretariat, and over the past four years as a consultant working on initiatives such as the response to the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and the examination of Indigenous-specific crime prevention programs.

How Can We Support Indigenous Victims of Crime?

Editor's Note: In recent months, Canadians have been shocked to learn of the discovery of mass graves near several former Indian Residential Schools. Reports by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) in the last several years have also given Canadians reason to re-evaluate their relationship with Indigenous Peoples.

The CRCVC has reached out to several prominent Canadians, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to discuss how our organization can work towards the TRC Calls to Action and the MMIWG Calls for Justice.

In Canada, Indigenous Peoples are significantly overrepresented in all stages of the criminal justice system, both as perpetrators and victims.

For Indigenous people, colonialism is the root cause of the issue, leading to cultural alienation, intergenerational trauma, systemic discrimination, and marginalization amongst crime victims seeking justice and hope within the system.

In a recent wide-ranging discussion with the Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime (CRCVC), Chief Cadmus Delorme of the Cowessess First Nation, shared his views on the treatment of Indigenous people when they become victims of crime.

Chief Delorme doesn't need to look any farther than the Cowessess First Nation and the discovery of 751 unmarked graves near the now-demolished Marieval Indian Residential School, which operated in Saskatchewan's Qu'Appelle Valley from 1899-1997.

"It has been mentally and emotionally draining...for the Cowessess First Nation People," says Chief Delorme. "The emotional connection, family kinship to that gravesite is what's in every family of Cowessess First Nation."

"We are treating this moment of our unmarked graves as a crime scene," says Chief Delorme. "It's very personal and very, very controversial. There are priests and nuns that ran residential schools that are still alive today and some survivors are starting to name them."

"Who do we go to see if this is criminal in (the) physical, mental, sexual abuse stories that are coming forward?"

"So, that is why, when I say, 'We are treating this like a crime scene' is that ultimately many survivors just want someone held accountable for what they experienced and/or what their family has experienced."

Sadly, the odds for accountability are questionable. A Department of Justice report states; "studies have found that biases have led to Indigenous people being seen as less worthy victims by the police, having their credibility questioned, and their requests for assistance ignored or not adequately supported."

The Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls recommends 231 individual Calls for Justice directed at governments, institutions, social service providers, industries, and all Canadians.

The Calls for Justice are one thing, but the actual pursuit and delivery of justice for Indigenous people is another. Due to intergenerational trauma caused by the institution to which the Indigenous population is supposed to report a crime, there is a complex relationship between Indigenous people and the police. In other words, how can you trust a Government that, for years, has been systematically biased against you?

Chief Delorme offers some concrete examples.

"Every region, every Nation has its unique approaches," he says. "There's no cookie-cutter approach to addressing this."

"Every Nation is on a different healing journey. Every Nation is at a different trust relationship with those off-reserve. Even within our urban people within cities and where they go or who they lean on, there's a mistrust and a trust."

Chief Delorme suggests a system customized and adapted to local needs, wants and norms. "There have to be assessments done. Where are the gaps?" he asks. "Where are these females going when they are in an abusive relationship and they need to talk to somebody? How do they bring up something when they were abused ten, twenty, thirty years ago?"

"How do we make them feel they are valued and that justice will happen?"

The CRCVC has been helping crime victims from across Canada, and Canadians who have been victimized abroad since 1993.

"We stand beside Indigenous people and are here to support them," says CRCVC Executive Director,

Aline Vlasceanu: “However, we have so much to learn and we are on the very first steps of a journey to discover how to better support Indigenous people and community organizations according to their customs, values, and needs .”

Chief Delorme welcomes this approach and provides some key advice to the CRCVC and any victim service organization serving Indigenous people.

“At the end of the day, it’s about relationships,” he says “You should never come in and start giving services. First, you’ve got to show them your heart. You’ve got to show them that they matter. You’ve got to show them who you are. Then, when that shield comes down, and that trust is there, that’s when you start to address the services.”

Need help? Please visit the CRCVC website for a [list of Indigenous-specific victim service organizations](#), or contact the [CRCVC](#) via chat, text or email to receive free, confidential support.

Resource Directory

Giving Tuesday: Your Chance to Help Victims of Crime

Canadians are bombarded with advertising and opportunities for holiday shopping. According to Forbes, we receive anywhere from 4,000 to 10,000 ads every day!

With the two busiest shopping days of the year (Black Friday and CyberMonday) behind us, Giving Tuesday is the chance for us to turn the page, giving Canadians the opportunity to do something for someone else; the opportunity to give.

The Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime invites you to join us on Giving Tuesday, to help clients who are forced to navigate a legal system that seems tilted in favour of the offender.

Here are some quotes from the people you’ll help [when you make a donation today](#).

“I cried when I read the complaint letter that you prepared on my behalf. You really encompassed my experience and I am so incredibly grateful for that. Thank you, thank you thank you. Please feel free to send it.”

“I appreciate your time and the resources that you have sent to me. I would like to write a letter and would appreciate your guidance in doing so. I’m just not sure what to do and what the next steps are. I have been silenced for so many years and I am happy that I can actually share and tell my story now. Moving forward I would like to work with you and your team.”

“I do want to say a big thank you for the work you’ve put in. This is a level of progress I wouldn’t have been able to attempt on my own, let alone get it this far. The (cautious) optimism is a welcome change from the everyday doom and gloom of pandemic life! So thank you very much for getting things this far.”

[Please join us on November 30 - Giving Tuesday - or any day! - with your support.](#)

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Sex Assault Acquittal “Turns the Clock Back 30 Years”

Caption: Aline Vlasceanu, Executive Director, Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime. PHOTO BY JEAN LEVAC /Postmedia

Can a woman who is secretly slipped a date rape drug still have the capacity to consent to sexual intercourse?

According to a judge’s verdict in a recent Ottawa rape trial, the answer is open to interpretation.

The Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime (CRCVC), Ottawa Victim Services (OVS), and the Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women (OCTEVAW) believe there was a significant error of law in the case of Edward 'Eddie' Ekiyor, who was acquitted on October 1, 2021, of overcoming resistance to commit an offence, kidnapping, and sexual assault.

In this November 19, [Ottawa Citizen article](#), CRCVC Executive Director, Aline Vlasceanu shares her thoughts on the judge’s verdict.

[Click here to support victims of crime.](#)

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Quebec Plans to Create Specialized Court for Victims of Spousal and Sexual Violence

“It must change and it will change,” promised Quebec Justice Minister Simon-Jolin Barrette during his emotional reading on the study of Bill-92 which aims to create a specialized court for victims of spousal or sexual violence.

“We represent victims of sexual violence in Quebec,” says CRCVC Executive Director Aline Vlasceanu.



“With less than twenty percent of sexual assaults being reported in Canada, victims need every bit of help they can get to ensure they receive justice.”

“Quebec has seen 17 reported cases of femicide in 2021 alone. We hope that this new bill helps bring some peace to victims and justice to offenders.”

[Learn more about Bill-92 and Minister Barrette's comments here.](#)

The Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime provides bilingual, free, unlimited and unconditional support for victims of crime. If you need support, please contact us by email crcvc@crcvc.ca, or via live chat and text through our website at www.crcvc.ca.

Canada's Homicides at Highest Point Since 1991

The numbers are shocking.

Since the pandemic began in 2020, Canada reported the highest number of homicides since 1991. Police reported 743 homicides in Canada, pushing the homicide rate up by 7%. This total is the highest number of homicides recorded in Canada over the past thirty years and marks the highest national homicide rate since 2005.

Although homicide represents less than 0.2% of all violent crimes in Canada in 2020, these rates are an indicator of an increased level of violence both nationally and internationally. The rise in Canada's homicide rates can be largely attributed to increases in Alberta and Nova Scotia—including the 22 victims of the April 2020 mass shooting in Portapique, N.S. Toronto continues to have the highest number of homicides in the country.

Social isolation, reduced income, and job loss brought on by COVID-19 contributed to a higher risk of family violence in Canadian households. Although spousal homicides decreased by 9 in 2020, homicides committed by other family members were up by 11, and homicides committed by intimate partners increased by 7.

Indigenous groups including First Nations, Metis, Inuit, and others represent 28% of all homicide victims in Canada. 179 victims were visible minorities, 50% of which were identified as Black. 89% of these victims were men, and over half of these homicides were reported in Toronto.

The CRCVC invites homicide survivors to join us for our **Monthly Loss to Violence** support group. This group is open to family members, friends, and close loved ones of homicide victims and intends to offer support to those dealing with violent loss.

If you are a survivor of homicide or if you know someone who is, you can join us for the final support group of the year. Our holiday session will be held on Wednesday, December 8th, from 6:30 to 8:30 EST and will focus on coping and maintaining bonds with victims during the holiday season. Note: these sessions are in English only and virtual.

Learn more about the support group on [our website](#).

For a complete picture of Canada's homicide rates, visit the Statistics Canada page [“Homicide in Canada 2020”](#).

Our Support Groups

Caliber Communications Becomes CRCVC's Newest Partner With Innovative Fundraising Idea!

Caliber Communications proves philanthropy and business can work together.

For the month of December, kicking off on Giving Tuesday, Caliber Communications is pledging \$1.25 for every crime their innovative technology deters.

Caliber Communications is an industry leading security technology company founded in 2016. Their patented cellular video monitoring platform, proprietary artificial intelligence system, and innovative security peripherals focus on one primary objective: *the early detection and deterrence of criminal activity, before it happens.*



“We are pleased to have Caliber Communications join us as a partner,” says Bernie Forestell, Director of Philanthropy at CRCVC. “Relationships like these help CRCVC tell our story and allow us to help more clients.”

You'll be able to follow the progress of the campaign on the Caliber Communications social media accounts:

Twitter: [@caliber_comms](#)

LinkedIn: [Caliber Communications](#)

Facebook: [Caliber Communications](#)

Interested in joining CRCVC as a partner? Contact Bernie at bernard@crcvc.ca

Visit Our Partners Page

DETERRENCE DECEMBER

For every crime we deter in the month of December, we will be donating \$1.25 to the Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime.

0000
Crimes Deterred

\$ 0000.00
Money Raised



Check the Caliber Communications Social Media Pages Throughout December and Watch the Numbers Grow!

Upcoming Events



CRCVC'S Loss to Violence Support Group

Our Loss to Violence support group is for family members, friends and close loved ones of homicide victims and is intended to offer peer support to those dealing with violent loss. This support group is offered nationally meaning that we can connect with and support survivors from across the country.

Please RSVP via email at crcvc@crcvc.ca or by phone at 1-877-232-2610.

English only.

Wednesday, December 8th from 6:30 to 8:30 pm EST.

Funded by the Department of Justice for Victims and Survivors of Crime Week 2021.

[Email Us](#)

Spotlight on Research

Victim Services and Vicarious Resilience

The Victim Services and Vicarious Resilience research project is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). It is a three-year project to learn more about survivor resilience from the perspective of victim service providers, as well as learn more about service provider well-being. We hope to hear from victim service providers across Canada and we are so thankful for your willingness to be involved!



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