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# EMPOWER

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We respectfully acknowledge the CRCVC office is located on the traditional, unceded territories of the Omàmiwininiwag (Algonquin peoples) Nation.

Text: Our number is 613-208-0747

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For hours of operation and other info, please [click here](#).

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## Make It Monthly Donation Campaign with CanadaHelps

For the month of March, CanadaHelps will make a one-time extra \$20 donation for every new monthly gift of \$20 or more that is made to the CRCVC using CanadaHelps.\*

Crime victims around Canada are limited in the help they can get. However, the CRCVC is there for them in providing necessary information and resources. All of our services are free which is why we consider your support imperative.

To donate to us using CanadaHelps, you can click [here](#).

\*See full terms of conditions here: <https://www.Canadahelps.Org/En/Make-It-Monthly-Terms-And-Conditions>

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## How Can We Support Indigenous Victims of Crime?

## Don't Jump In and Out.

Diane Redsky understands the grim reality faced by indigenous victims of crime in Canada.

Ms. Redsky also understands why indigenous people are over-represented in Canada's legal system.

"The systems are set up to predict the outcome," says Ms. Redsky. "We're not surprised when we have an over-representation of (indigenous) people who are criminalized in the justice system."

Sadly, she notes; *"the systems are designed so that we fail."*

In Winnipeg, where Ms. Redsky is the Executive Director of the [Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre](#), she believes support services for indigenous victims of crime have a long way to go.

"They certainly don't go far enough," she says. "There's no cultural safety built-in. They're open 9-5, they don't have any elders, there's barely any indigenous staff, and then they provide limited services."

While Ms. Redsky is speaking about her community of Winnipeg, the same issues are felt in indigenous communities across Canada.

For victim services to be effective and helpful within the indigenous community, Ms. Redsky points out several gaps must be closed to provide culturally appropriate support.

One example she shares is how "victim services are not always upfront a hundred percent on what victims are entitled to in terms of what resources and supports are available. That's a real problem."

Ms. Redsky advocates for a comprehensive, holistic approach where indigenous crime victims can get the healing support and advocacy they need so they **have a voice of their own** in the justice system.

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## The Path to Supporting Indigenous Victims of Crime

The Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime (CRCVC) is at the very beginning of a journey that will someday bring it closer to being a trusted ally of Indigenous leaders and crime victims in Canada.

"We humbly see ourselves working closely with indigenous groups to better understand how CRCVC can help," says CRCVC Executive Director, Aline Vlasceanu. "With almost thirty years of experience working with and for crime victims, we believe there is an opportunity for us to make a difference. We also are prepared to be methodical and thoughtful in our approach."

Part of that approach includes a few key areas Ms. Redsky suggests any organization follows when determining the best way to support indigenous crime victims, including;

- Reading the [TRC \(Truth and Reconciliation\) Report](#)
- Meaningful participation in ways to better understand the impact of colonization
- Understanding how colonization continues to create victims of crime in indigenous communities
- Offering trauma-informed training through an Indigenous lens
- Resisting the urge to play 'saviour' by *jumping in* and offering short-term support

"You may want to start by bringing together a knowledge-keeper that can be well supported, well-funded," notes Ms. Redsky. "A real effort to have indigenous people on the board, Indigenous people in your organization, an elder and knowledge-keeper council that is giving you advice, starting in ceremony, so it's done in a good way and good energy is going into it, and really take their advice."

"We agree with Ms. Redsky," says Ms. Vlasceanu. "The path towards Truth and Reconciliation is one we do not take lightly. [Our recently formed Victims Advisory Committee](#) is one example. Members of the committee include indigenous people who have experienced justice and injustice, felt by an overwhelming majority of indigenous crime victims."

"As a resource centre, there is an opportunity perhaps to help with some of the advocacy and support of victim services," says Ms. Redsky. "That helps us at the grassroots level when we know that there are other avenues and allies working on it."

"You can't do it without us, we can't do it without you," says Ms. Redsky. "If we're going to do it well and maximize our resources and people, you know because we need lots of healing resources most certainly... that it's done at a common table. And to take the time to build those relationships and do that well, rather than (the charity model of) jumping in and jumping out."

"I think there are more Indigenous organizations that are just not accepting that anymore, of the charity model, because it's perpetuating some stereotypes that we're not smart enough to do it ourselves. And that there's a reliance on external things when the *answers are always at that kitchen table in that community at the grassroots.*"

There is cautious optimism from Ms. Redsky, even though she knows it took several generations to get into this situation and it will take several more to correct the consequences created by colonialism.

"I believe if it wasn't for the resilience of our people and passing on all those teachings and ceremonies that we wouldn't be as strong and powerful as we are today. And there's a lot more effort than I'm seeing where people want to come to a common table and use their gifts, strengths, networks, influence to be able to change things."

But, Ms. Redsky cautions, it is important for non-Indigenous organizations who want to help crime victims to ensure they take the time to build relationships and that any and every solution is co-developed and co-managed.

"I'd strongly support that approach. Because, if not, then it's just another charity model of jumping in, and jumping out."

The Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime welcomes all support. [Please visit our website to discover how you can make a difference.](#)

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## Family Day and Indigenous Reconciliation go Together; Here's How.

As Family Day (February 22nd in the province of Ontario) has officially passed, it is important to remember family of all kinds - whether it be maternal, paternal, or chosen. Family Day is about being grateful and showing appreciation for the people in our lives. This means nurturing familial relationships as well as communal relationships.

You can help out Indigenous families in your community by engaging in small gestures and activities to show that you support and care for reconciliation. For there to be reconciliation, there must be *awareness* of the past and an *acknowledgement* of the harm that has been previously inflicted on Indigenous communities.

This [article](#) written by the Indigenous Corporate Training Incorporation highlights 6 ways in which you can engage in Indigenous learning with your family.

The CRCVC encourages you to share this article with your community and join us in the reconciliation of Indigenous lives. The CRCVC stands in solidarity.

[Read the Article](#)

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## The Boushie Family: Still Pushing for Change

In August of 2016, Colton Boushie was shot and killed after he and four others from the Red Pheasant Cree Nation drove onto Gerald Stanley's farm in Saskatchewan. Colton was only 22 years old.

February 9th is a day about remembering the injustices toward the Boushie family and all Indigenous communities. It marks the day that a jury found Gerald Stanley not guilty of second-degree murder in 2018 for the shooting of Colton Boushie.

On the night her son died, Debbie Baptiste was interrogated by the RCMP in what has been proven to be a racist, cruel and insensitive manner. The officers asked her if she had been drinking and smelled her breath, assuming that she was telling them lies.

The jury that decided on the acquittal of the murderer was all-white, and heavily racialized ideas and narratives were circulating in the courtroom throughout the trial.

Four years later, the Boushie family is still advocating to eliminate systemic racism in the Canadian criminal justice system.

This is a problem that needs to be immediately addressed. Indigenous communities remain subject to disproportionately high levels of violence at the hands of non-Indigenous people.

In light of their mistreatment within the criminal justice system, the Boushie family decided to publish a series of booklets to help other Indigenous victims navigate similar situations. The resource is called [Tools for Indigenous Family Survivors of Violence](#)

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## Saskatoon's Starlight Tours

In November 1990, 17-year old Neil Stonechild was found frozen on the outskirts of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. He was wearing jeans and a light jacket and was missing a shoe on the -28C night of his passing. The Saskatoon Police Service closed their investigation into Neil's death in December 1990, finding no signs of foul play.

Stonechild was the victim of a racialized police practice called "[starlight tours](#)". Officers pick up Indigenous people (who they deem drunk or rowdy) and drop them off at the edge of the city on winter nights. These individuals are then left to walk home, often without the necessary clothing to protect them from the cold.

Drop-offs can be deadly, and Stonechild was not the only victim. Two more Indigenous people in Saskatoon have died this way, and Darnell Night barely survived after being taken on a starlight tour in 2000. Night's case gained international attention and led to the 2003 inquiry into the actions of the Saskatoon Police Service and the death of Neil Stonechild. As reported in a [Macleans article](#) by Megan Campbell, Night has since moved to British Columbia. He explains that he "found it very hard to recover from and move on from what they did to [him] that January night", and has never received an apology from police. He and his family refuse to return to Saskatoon.

[CBC News](#) reports that officers involved in Night's incident were sentenced to eight months in prison for unlawful confinement. Two officers were fired for Stonechild's death, and an apology was made by the police chief to Neil's mother. To date, no officers have been convicted specifically for the freezing deaths.

Although Saskatoon has made a commitment to provide "Aboriginal cultural awareness" training for all government employees including police, this is not enough. Training must not only raise awareness but adopt an anti-oppressive framework as well. The calls for police accountability in the Stonechild inquiry are mirrored by the calls to action made by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission over a decade later in 2015.

Although Indigenous issues have become more prominent in the Canadian consciousness recently, we are still lacking knowledge and awareness when it comes to missing and murdered Indigenous men and boys.

The numbers are shocking. [APTN Investigates](#) has identified over 600 missing and murdered Indigenous men and boys in Canada since 1974. They have found that the average Indigenous male homicide victim is 31 years of age, and typically hails from the Prairies.

According to [Statistics Canada](#), Indigenous men and boys are seven times more likely to be murdered than non-Indigenous males, and three times more likely to be murdered than Indigenous women. In 2020, the number of Indigenous male homicide victims increased by 32 compared to the previous year. This is the highest count since 2014 when complete data on Indigenous identity became available. Eight percent of Indigenous male victims were reported missing before being identified as homicide victims.

Indigenous stereotypes are a key factor in these cases. “The familiar stereotypes of Indigenous males are that we are criminal types, gangsters, that we are violent people. [It] really desensitizes Canadians from looking at it” says John Hansen, a professor at the University of Saskatchewan. Hansen explains that stereotypes of Indigenous inferiority can have lasting effects on Indigenous peoples. These stereotypes are often internalized and make Indigenous individuals more susceptible to violent victimization.

Indigenous communities pushed for men to be included in the scope of the 2019 national inquiry into MMIWG. Families and advocates have since called for a second national inquiry with a specific focus on missing and murdered Indigenous men and boys.

If you or someone you know requires information about a missing adult loved one, please visit the [Canadian Centre for Information on Missing Adults](#) website.

*Indigenous-specific resources are there as well.*

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## February 14: Women’s Memorial March

This past February 14th marks the 31st anniversary of the Women’s Memorial March during which thousands of people gather in Downtown Eastside Vancouver to honour murdered and missing Indigenous women, girls, trans people and Two-Spirit people.

The first march was held in 1992 in response to the murder of Cheryl Ann Joe, an Indigenous woman, on Powell Street in Vancouver. Loved ones and supporters in the neighbourhood gathered together and started to march to commemorate the life of the woman who had lost her life. Each year since, family members of missing and murdered women speak before marching through the streets, highlighting the injustices that they have faced for being part of marginalized communities.

Indigenous women are disproportionately subject to victimization as they face more physical, mental, emotional and spiritual violence on a daily basis than other populations. The amount of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls continues to increase, signifying that this remains a problem in our country.

The Women’s Memorial March honours the lives of these people in hopes of drawing attention to the fact that the families of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls go unsupported and are often mistreated. It allows communities to remember those lost to the violence of colonization and to urge those in power to take meaningful action to prevent further harm.

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## Monthly Homicide Support Group

Our newly renamed **Homicide Support Group** (formerly known as the “Loss to Violence Support Group”) started in 2018 due to the lack of formal support for survivors of homicide across Canada. As the need became more apparent, the group quickly turned into a virtual, national support group.

On the last Thursday of every month, close to 20 people participate in the group where they can hear from professionals including lawyers, police detectives, victim support specialists, and social workers.

For the month of March, 2022 are excited to announce that we will have a special guest: Dr. Kristine Peace. Dr. Kristine Peace is an Associate Professor at MacEwan University who specializes in forensic psychology. Her research interests include trauma and memory in forensic contexts, PTSD, psychopathic traits, victim impact statements, and much more.

*(Read more about Dr. Peace on our [website](#).)*



If you have lost someone to homicide or know someone who you think may benefit from the monthly Homicide Support Group, [please visit the CRCVC web page for registration information](#).

If you wish to sponsor or support the group through a financial gift, please contact our Director, Development Bernie Forestell at [bernard@crcvc.ca](mailto:bernard@crcvc.ca) or [visit here to make a donation](#).

To RSVP, email us at [rcvc@crcvc.ca](mailto:rcvc@crcvc.ca) or call us at 1-877-232-2610.

## In the News

### “Enough is enough.”

During an [interview](#) about the “Freedom Convoy” that occurred in Canada’s Capital, executive director Aline Vlasceanu mentioned that “after seeing all the hateful messages and the harassment, we really wanted to put it out there that we’re standing with the folks that are affected”.

She also added that this protest may not seem as violent, but that it is a “type of masked violence because it can look very different” and “can take many forms”.

For example, the “gaslighting that has been taking place in the media and from those that might be part of the protests” has Aline Vlasceanu and the CRCVC feeling upset. “It’s really taking away from what people are experiencing” and “denying what they’re feeling”.

You can view our statement about the recent surge in violence in Ottawa [here](#).

### Trauma lasts forever

Mark Olivier is a victim left traumatized from a gunpoint robbery in his St. Thomas store 27 years ago.

Olivier nearly lost everything. Now, he wanted to share his journey.

CRCVC Executive Director, Aline Vlasceanu, stated in an [interview](#) with Dale Carruthers, from the London Press, that Olivier’s ordeal “reflects many of the long-term challenges facing crime victims”.

For Olivier, the future remains uncertain as he still experiences PTSD from the traumatic event. It’s important to recognize “the impact a crime can have on your life”, says Vlasceanu.

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