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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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### Letter from the Executive Director

#### **Victims of crime have a voice.**

However, sometimes their voices are drowned out by Canada's legal system and the institutions designed to protect and uphold their rights.

The Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime is here to listen to and amplify the voices of crime victims across Canada.

One of the best ways to serve crime victims is to ensure there are enough caring professionals in the field of victimology for years to come.

In this issue of **EMPOWER**, you'll meet two students, Alex and Emily, who worked with CRCVC, helping clients and picking up the skills they'll need in their burgeoning careers.

It has been two years since the horrific mass shooting in Nova Scotia. The families of the twenty-two innocent victims are lending their voices to the Mass Casualty Commission (MCC) which was created to ["provide meaningful recommendations to keep communities safe in the future."](#)

A daughter of one of the victims explains why she regrets her decision to push for a public inquiry as she wonders if other surviving family members will have their chance to share their experience with the Commission.

We hear the voices of homicide survivors every month during our Homicide Support Group meetings. We hear the voices of survivors of intimate partner violence as they try to get their lives to a level of normalcy many of us take for granted. We hear the voices of elderly women who lose life savings and their homes to strangers, partners, and family members.

We stand beside anyone and everyone who may have lost their voice as a result of the crime.

We dedicate every minute to helping you get your voice back. It's not always easy, but it's always rewarding.

Thank you for your interest.

If you wish to help someone get their voice, [please consider making a donation by clicking here.](#)

Thank you,

**Aline Vlasceanu**  
Executive Director

## In Their Words: Student Field Placements at the CRCVC

### Alex

Hello! My name is Alex, and I am a student at the University of Ottawa about to graduate with an honours degree in Criminology and a minor in Psychology. Completing a field placement with the Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime was an incredible opportunity to work in the field and is one that I'll never forget.

During my placement at CRCVC, I was given the chance to learn about the many ways to support victims of crime. I had the chance to participate in writing advocacy letters to the government, writing victim statements, and talking directly to victims through our online chat. All of these have allowed me to develop many skills to work with victims of crime. Working with vulnerable populations, such as victims, has always been something that I wanted to do and I am extremely thankful that I was given the chance to do so with CRCVC. I hope to continue working with vulnerable populations and will always remember the wonderful connections that I made here at CRCVC.

### Emily

Hello! My name is Emily, and I am pursuing an honours degree in Criminology and Criminal Justice with a Concentration in Law at Carleton University. Completing my field placement at the Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime has been one of the most rewarding things I have taken part in this year.

Working at CRCVC allowed me to expand my knowledge about victims' rights, gain a deeper understanding of many forms of victimization, and provide victims of crime with the support that they need and deserve. I have enjoyed contributing to our monthly newsletters and publications, writing advocacy letters, and connecting with victims over our live chat. I am so lucky to have been part of such an amazing organization and worked with such phenomenal colleagues. I hope to take what I've learned in placement and apply it to my work advocating for meaningful changes to our criminal justice system.

## The Burden of Blame – Victim Blaming April 3rd: National Victim-Blaming Awareness Day

(Image Credit)

### What is Victim-Blaming?

In the CRCVC report "[Victim Blaming in Canada](#)", victim-blaming is defined as "a devaluing act that occurs when the victim(s) of a crime or an accident is held responsible – in whole, or in part, for the crimes that have been committed against them." Victim-blaming can take lots of forms from outright blame to not believing someone at all.

Victim-blaming often comes from misunderstandings and myths about victimization that lead people to think the victim deserved what happened to them somehow. It can be hard for victims to deal with their trauma when they do not receive support from those they need it most from.

At CRCVC, we provide emotional and practical support for those who have been victimized by a crime. CRCVC helps victims regardless if the crime was reported, or if the perpetrator was found and/or charged. We believe in survivors, always.

### Victim-Blaming in the Workplace

Everyone should feel safe at home, in public, and at work. Unfortunately, workplace harassment can happen in any field, to anyone. Women and men from all walks of life can be victims of sexual harassment at work.

The [Ontario Human Rights Code](#) defines harassment as "engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct that is known or ought to be known to be unwelcome".

This can range from a variety of behaviours, including unwanted comments, spreading rumours, and touching, to assault. This often happens in workplaces because of the power imbalance that comes from the supervisor-subordinate relationship.

When reporting the abuse to management, victims often experience secondary victimization as they are blamed for the harassment, fear they will be blamed, or self-blame for the abuse ([Bongiorno et. al, 2020, p. 12](#)). This treatment can make the victimization experience worse.



This can range from coworkers and management believing that the accusations are false or exaggerated, that women had ulterior motives for filing the complaint, that their behaviour and clothes provoked the harassment, or that the victim failed to discourage the sexual advances.

Often people side with the perpetrator and feel more empathy for them than the victim because of workplace loyalty and hierarchy.

Recently in British Columbia, a former Surrey Food Bank employee expressed her frustrations with reporting a co-worker's inappropriate behaviour [by saying](#) "I was victim-blamed and mocked. It's infuriating." Another employee from the same food bank [said](#), "I feel like I was forced to leave the organization".

What can be done to challenge this?

- More empathy and looking at the harassment from the victim's point of view instead of the accused;
- Employees need to stop justifying and minimizing harassment;
- Workplaces must enact and enforce workplace anti-bullying and anti-harassment policies; and
- Meaningful enforcement and dealing with perpetrators in a manner that is respectful towards victims.

For the women in British Columbia who were forced to resign from their job, it is too late, but their story is a cautionary tale for employees, employers, and lawmakers. Until crime victims are believed and offenders are called out on the crimes they commit, victim-blaming will continue to place the rights of innocent victims behind those of the people committing the offence.

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## Second Anniversary of the Mass Shooting in Nova Scotia – The Inquiry Within the Tragedy

This April 18th, 2022 marked the two-year anniversary of the mass shooting in Nova Scotia, killing twenty-two people and injuring three before the killer was stopped by the police officers he was impersonating on April 19th, 2020.

The killer drove through three towns within Nova Scotia during the 13-hour rampage.

### What Was Done to Protect the Public During this Tragedy?

The Mass Casualty Commission (MCC) began public hearings in February 2022 after being delayed twice since October 2021. The goal of the MCC is to establish if more could have been done and suggest recommendations for public safety.

Darcy Dobson, the daughter of one of the victims, started to regret her decision in pushing for a public inquiry. Dobson [says](#) she wants the families of the twenty-two victims to have their voices heard and have their experiences shared and is doubting if they will have a platform to speak in the proceedings.

Dobson's mother, Heather O'Brien, was killed during the shooting and her family are now participants in the inquiry. Their lawyers have been in meetings with commission staff looking over information for the commission's own investigation. Dobson said she and her lawyer have not gotten any information to help prepare for the proceedings.

While no one knows why this tragedy happened, it is important for the victims' families to have as much information as they can as information is beneficial for the healing process.

### Experiences of Surviving Victims

The Jenkins family, who lost their daughter during the rampage, did not receive formal acknowledgment of her death until six or seven weeks after the incident. This was a trend in the treatment of the victims' families that was found in the MCC.

In fact, multiple families did not receive an official death notification until later, houses were not properly searched or cleaned from the crime, and vehicles were given back to families with body parts and bullet fragments remaining.

The families' lawyers have disclosed that families have been directed by the commission to give written testimonies rather than in-person which enables follow-up questions or clarification.

The commission interim report is due May first and time is running out for witnesses to come forward.

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## System Fails Indigenous Mother: Reveals Home Address to Abusive Partner

Imagine the stress of changing your name and moving with your children to avoid an abusive partner.

Now imagine how you would feel if the system, which is designed to protect you, fails to do so and reveals your new address and name to that same partner. How would you cope?

### What Happened?

During a child protection case, an address and phone number of an Indigenous mother, Heather (names are changed for this article), were given to her violent ex-partner and biological father of their child. The ex-partner had seriously assaulted Heather over ten years ago while she was pregnant.

Since then, Heather has taken safety precautions by changing her name and location. The agency has since put her and her children at risk.

### Policies Don't Always Work in Favour of the Victims

The Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) has a policy that declares the address of the woman is not to be included in any documents shared with the abusive partner.

The policy also states for social workers to speak with legal representatives about the importance of not discussing the address of the mother or child during a testimony.

Heather was told she could file a complaint to the ministry or Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society, but the damage had already been done.

### Following a Breach of Privacy

Heather now has to move out of the house she shares with her partner and two younger children.

Following the allegations from her child, Heather went to a family case conference to discuss the allegations, where, unknowingly, her abusive ex-partner had also been invited but did not attend. Heather has now been retraumatized [twice](#) as it brought up traumatic memories and feelings.

After the family case conference, another meeting took place to address the contact information of Heather and her other children. During this meeting, one of the social workers apologized but a bigger response from the Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society is needed for Heather.

### Needing to be Moved

Heather wanted them to [move](#) her to a different location because they have given her information to a violent offender, yet at this time, Heather is still in the same place.

Even though Heather had done what she could do to protect herself and her children by changing her name and location, the policy put in place to protect Heather let her down.

Heather's fear became a reality when one of her children saw the abusive ex-partner come to their door but was not able to get inside. Even though policies were in place to protect Heather from her abusive ex-partner. The outcome was still detrimental.

We all deserve to feel safe in our homes.

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## Sentencing Gets Delayed in Two Major Crimes

### Deadly Van Attack

On April 23rd, 2018, a deadly van attack took place on Yonge Street in Toronto where a man drove over the curb, intentionally running over pedestrians.

The man who was responsible for this vicious act was found guilty of ten counts of first-degree murder and sixteen counts of attempted murder.

One of the surviving victims, Cathy Riddell, is fed up with how long it is taking to sentence the man who has ruined the lives of so many people.

According to [this](#) article in the Toronto Star, he will be sentenced on June 13th, 2022, for only one count of first-degree murder rather than for all ten.

The delay in sentencing is because the prosecution is waiting until the Supreme Court of Canada can rule on how judges are able to decide parole eligibility when multiple murders are involved.

### Cause of Delay in Sentencing

In 2011, a law had been passed to allow judges to stack parole ineligibility periods when it comes to cases that involved multiple murders that could exceed twenty-five years.

A count of first-degree murder is set for twenty-five years without eligibility for parole whereas second-degree murder is set for ten to twenty-five years without eligibility for parole. The ongoing question is if this is constitutional to be able to "stack" parole ineligibility periods.

### Lack of Compassion for Victims

Ms. Riddell doesn't understand why they cannot proceed with how the law stands now. There are many frustrations the surviving victims are feeling when it comes to this case, including a virtual hearing confirming the timing but no victims, media representatives or members of the public were allowed to attend.

Many surviving victims share the same frustration regarding the delays in sentencing.

### Supreme Court Ruling Affects Other Homicide Survivors

A month prior to the deadly van attack, on March 14th, 2018, Krassimira Pejcinovski and her two children, Venellia and Roy, both teenagers, were murdered by the mother's boyfriend in Ajax, Ontario.

Krassimira's oldest child, Victoria, was elsewhere at the time of the murder and now has to deal with her tragic loss.

"Losing all three of them at once was unimaginable," said Victoria in her victim impact statement, quoted in this [Toronto Star article](#).

The judge, in this case, decided to delay sentencing until August 2022, when he expects the Supreme Court to have decided on the constitutionality of allowing judges to "stack" parole ineligibility periods in cases that involve multiple murders.

This is the same challenge facing Cathy Riddell, Heather and all the surviving victims of the van attack.

As the Supreme Court and Canada's legal system continue to wrangle with their decisions, real-life victims are left on the sidelines wondering what kind of justice will be done, as they try to honour the legacy of their loved ones.

In the words of the late Krassimira Pejcinovski's surviving daughter Victoria, "I know they are watching over me in heaven and I will spend the rest of my life trying to make them proud."

If you have lost someone to homicide, the CRCVC hosts a Monthly Loss to Homicide Support Group on the last Thursday of every month. For information, please click [here](#).

## Recent News

### Real News: Pandemic Brings Rise in Domestic and Intimate Partner Violence – CRCVC Executive Director

Spousal and intimate partner violence are on the rise in Canada.

Domestic violence and intimate partner violence continues to put people's lives at risk.

What is being done to prevent further victimization?

CRCVC Executive Director, Aline Vlasceanu, sat down with student journalist Nitika Mishra from Humber News to discuss the reasons for the rise and offer some solutions.

Read the article [here](#).

### In Ontario, anti-handgun election promises are aiming at the wrong target

"The evidence from 50 years of criminological studies, and a prestigious report on the roots of violence in Ontario, shows that the most effective and cost-efficient way to reduce handgun violence is prevention before the violence happens."

Read the article [here](#).

## Upcoming Events



### Victims and Survivors of Crime Week 2022

For more information about the program, click [here](#).

**When:** May 15th- May 21st

**Where:** Virtually

Sign up [here](#).



### Monthly Homicide Support Group

Our [Homicide 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.

*English only.*

**When:** May 26th at 6:30 pm EST

**Where:** Virtually

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

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