

Yukon Department of Justice

# Victims of Crime Strategy



**Moving Forward Together**

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# Victims of Crime Strategy

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## Minister's Message:

The Government of Yukon is committed to achieving a better quality of life for all Yukoners. This means having a robust economy and healthy, vibrant communities. As a government, we can contribute to achieving a better quality of life for Yukoners by improving the health, safety and socio-economic well-being of Yukon families and their communities.



As Minister of Justice and Minister Responsible for the Women's Directorate, I know that crime often undermines the quality of life for many Yukoners. Crime can have physical and emotional consequences, damage property and harm relationships. Yukoners who are victimized as a result of crime have individual and diverse needs for support and service. We are committed to providing programs and services that treat victims of crime with courtesy, compassion and respect. Victims of crime should be assured that their protection is, above all, the priority of the justice system.

Our government is committed to addressing the needs of victims of crime. Over the past several years, we have been working with numerous Yukon agencies to develop Yukon relevant public education and training materials on the prevention of violence against women. In March 2008, we hosted a "Focus on Victims Conference", where Yukon resource people were able to come together to share their knowledge. This year, we doubled the funding available on an annual basis for the Prevention of Violence Against Aboriginal Women program. Through initiatives like the Safer Communities and Neighborhoods Act, we have created more opportunities for Yukoners to identify and address crime issues in their community.

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Our government embarked on an extensive correctional consultation and redevelopment initiative. We have a new Corrections Act and we are building a new correctional centre that will improve the delivery of client-focused programming for offenders. In addition, we have committed to strengthening and further developing our programs and services for victims of crime.

The Victims of Crime Strategy is a framework document that will guide Government of Yukon programs and services for victims of crime, and assist us to further work with our partners to address the needs of victims of crime. The strategy explores ways to enhance programming and services to victims of crime, paying special attention to addressing violence against women. It will help us to examine legislative options that will provide greater rights for victims. We are also committed to working with our partners and will look for ways to further develop the capacity of communities to support victims.

*Marian C. Horne  
Minister of Justice and  
Minister Responsible for the Women's Directorate  
Government of Yukon*

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## Introduction

The Government of Yukon provides direct services for victims of crime including court support, crisis support, group counseling and referral through the Victim Services Unit in the Department of Justice. The Government of Yukon also provides public education, prevention activities and support to community agencies, through the Department of Justice, the Women's Directorate and other departments. In addition to the services provided by government, women's organizations, non-governmental agencies, First Nations and community groups provide direct and indirect services for victims of crime.



Yukon, like the other Canadian territories, has higher crime rates than the provinces, and in particular higher rates of violent crime. Northerners experience violent victimization at a rate three times that of residents in other parts of Canada, and victims in the territories are more likely to be injured during violent incidents committed against them. In our small and close-knit Yukon communities, crime has far-reaching impacts on individuals, family members, friends and entire communities.

Across Canada, women are disproportionately affected by domestic violence and sexualized assault, and sustain more injuries as a result of violence. Aboriginal women experience rates of violence three times higher than non-Aboriginal women. Across the territories, women, and in particular Aboriginal women, experience high rates of victimization in domestic violence and sexualized assault. The Yukon's rate of sexual assault is more than double that of the provinces.

This Victims of Crime Strategy is intended to be a framework to guide Government of Yukon programs and services for victims of crime. It confirms and guides the direct services of the Victim Services Unit and identifies indirect programs and initiatives which will be carried out by other units in the Department of Justice and the Women's Directorate, and provides the opportunity to work with other agencies to explore and develop new ways to address the needs of victims of crime.

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## Background

Yukoners have indicated, in a variety of forums, that providing programs and services for victims of crime is an important role provided by the Government of Yukon. During the 2005 public Consultation on Corrections, co-chaired by the Government of Yukon and the Council of Yukon First Nations, Yukoners said that there is a need to continue and to also improve services to victims of crime. Likewise, during the 2007 Yukon Aboriginal Women's Summits, we heard that violence against Aboriginal women continues to be a serious and prevalent issue in our communities.

Yukoners have expressed their commitment to addressing violence, supporting victims and dealing with issues surrounding violence and victimization. This has been articulated during the Consultation on Corrections, the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Summits, the Yukon Substance Abuse Action Plan, the Healing and Corrections Conference (September 2007) and the Focus on Victims Conference (March 2008).



The development of this Victims of Crime Strategy results from a commitment made by the Department of Justice as part of the Correctional Redevelopment Strategic Plan. The Department of Justice and the Women's Directorate have collaborated to develop this strategy and are committed to working with the many organizations that provide service to victims of crime on the strategy's implementation.

## Purpose

The Victims of Crime Strategy is designed to:

- acknowledge, formalize and strengthen the Government of Yukon's existing services;
- confirm and explore new and emerging initiatives, including legislative options; and
- establish mechanisms to work with others to examine new supports for victims of crime.

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## Principles

This strategy is grounded in the Canadian Statement of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime which affirms that victims of crime have the right to be treated with courtesy and respect, to be protected and to be informed of progress in the investigation, prosecution, and outcome of crimes against them (see page 12 for the full statement).

In addition, the following principles will guide the implementation of the Victims of Crime Strategy:



In providing services to victims of crime, we will remember that the needs of victims are individual and diverse. We recognize that for some victims of crime these needs are complex, and we will work to meet each individual's unique needs.

We will recognize the need to preserve the dignity of victims of crime, families and communities, we will listen to their voices, ensure they have the opportunity

to make decisions about their own course of action, and respond in holistic and culturally sensitive ways.

We will seek partnerships with others to help address the individual and systemic challenges facing victims of crime, families and communities.

We will acknowledge the long lasting, profound, complex and intergenerational impacts residential schools have had on individuals, families and communities, we will strive to provide services that are culturally sensitive and grounded in the basic rights and freedoms to which all victims are entitled.

In our delivery of client-focused programs and services, we will look to Yukon, national and international research and best practices to guide our service and encourage new approaches.

We will work together to address and prevent family violence in the Yukon.

We will monitor and evaluate the implementation of this Strategy.

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## Looking Forward: 2009 - 2014

The Victims of Crime Strategy focuses on five inter-related areas. An annual workplan will be developed for each year of the strategy, to outline the work being undertaken in each of these areas during that year.

### 1. Strengthening the Focus on the Needs of Victims of Crime

Our programs and services for victims of crime will continue to be client-focused. We are committed to developing appropriate and skilled responses to the unique and specific needs of victims of crime.

The Department of Justice Victim Services Unit will continue to focus on court support, crisis support, group counseling and public education, and will develop a clear process for linking with other agencies for longer term, more specialized counseling.

We recognize that women experience domestic and sexualized assault at rates higher than any other identifiable population and that women have unique needs for safety and support, and we are committed to continuing to offer both individual and group counseling to women in the Yukon.



We are committed to responding to the needs of children and youth who are victims of crime. We will continue to develop skills and knowledge to work effectively with child and youth victims of crime, and where appropriate, their families and others in their lives.

We recognize that for many victims of crime, their victimization can be compounded by complex personal and systemic issues. We will continue to increase our understanding of these factors and to provide gender specific responses.



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We will continue the arrangement with the Attorney General of British Columbia for Yukoners to access the toll free 24-hour “VictimLINK” line.

In recent years, much has been learned about the needs of vulnerable populations with respect to interacting with the criminal justice system. The Department will continue to develop skills and knowledge to work with vulnerable and high risk victims of crime in order to provide appropriate services and responses.

We will continue to monitor and contribute to research in the area of victimization, effective response and prevention strategies to inform and continually improve our services.

We know that there are Yukoners who are victims of crime who do not report this victimization and/or seek services. We will identify barriers to reporting and create approaches to respond to unreported victimization.

We will work with other victim service providers to explore the broad range of needs of victims of crime, and to develop an integrated approach to addressing these needs, which includes enhancing practical support for the immediate needs of victims of crime.

We will work with other agencies to identify gaps in services and support for all victims of crime.

We will work together to develop a comprehensive, focused training plan to implement this strategy, to further develop the skills of victim service providers and community based resources, particularly in rural Yukon communities.



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## 2. Focus on Addressing Violence against Women

There is a high rate of violence against women in Yukon, and in particular against Aboriginal women. Women and girls are at higher risk for victimization for domestic violence and sexualized assault. Women also report experiencing a greater level of fear of violence. Addressing violence against women is a priority of the Government of Yukon and is incorporated throughout this strategy.

We will continue to provide a high level of service and support to women experiencing domestic violence and sexualized assault, and we will work with other agencies to develop clear processes for linking and referral.

Building on the success of a recently completed three-year interagency violence prevention public education campaign, we will collaborate with women's groups and shelters, First Nations and non-government organizations to explore options for a continued focus on innovative, Yukon-relevant violence prevention public education campaigns and materials.



In collaboration with First Nations and Aboriginal women's organizations, we will support activities that will help increase community capacity to address Aboriginal women's equality.

## 3. Exploring Legislative Options

Yukon is the only jurisdiction in Canada that does not have victims of crime legislation. This Strategy provides the opportunity to bring victims' rights to the forefront in Yukon's criminal justice system with legislation focused on victims of crime issues.

We will explore the development of legislation for addressing the needs of victims of crime that:

- recognizes that at all stages of the justice system, consideration is given to the needs and concerns of victims of crime;
- ensures that victims are treated with courtesy, compassion and respect; and
- ensures that victims have access to appropriate protection.

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#### 4. Mentorship and Capacity Building in Communities

The Strategy will support a focus on capacity development in rural Yukon communities with high crime and victimization rates. This was identified as an area of importance in the Correctional Redevelopment Strategic Plan and recommendations from the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Summits.

We will continue to seek partnerships with Yukon First Nations, non-government and women's organizations and communities, and provide support to capacity enhancement initiatives that will strengthen and enhance response to the needs of victims of crime across Yukon.



We will continue to work with communities and non-governmental organizations to develop integrated community safety plans, which include support for victims of crime.

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## 5. Integrating Responses for Victims, Offenders, Families and Communities

We are committed to developing coordinated community responses to programming, taking into consideration that working with clients may include working with their families and communities.

In conjunction with Correctional Services, we will implement a pilot project that will utilize collaborative case planning and integrated supervision and services for higher-risk offenders. This will include a focus on the victim's needs, safety and voice in the case management process.

In partnership with Yukon First Nations and other agencies, we will explore a family reconciliation pilot program which could support clients who have made the choice to return to a relationship after a crime has occurred.

We recognize that it is important to take into account imbalance of power, potential for re-victimization, and the need for safety for all parties.

We will explore the feasibility of piloting a victim/offender reconciliation program that would be carried out in partnership with interested Yukon First Nations and other agencies. This program would focus on victim healing and safety, offender accountability including specific interventions, safety planning and restoration of losses.



## Next Steps

The Department of Justice and the Women's Directorate will work together on the implementation of this Strategy. An Advisory Committee composed of other Government of Yukon Departments, women's organizations, First Nations and non-governmental organizations will be established to guide the implementation.

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## Canadian Statement of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime

*With respect to principles for guiding programs and services for victims of crime, Yukon endorses the Canadian Statement of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime, as developed by the federal Policy Centre for Victims Issues and agreed to by all provinces and territories.*

*These principles assert the right of a victim to be treated with courtesy and respect, to be protected when necessary and to be informed of progress in the investigation, prosecution, and outcome of crimes and other offences against them. The views, concerns and representations of victims are deemed important and should be considered in accordance with prevailing law, policies and procedures.*

Victims of crime should be treated with courtesy, compassion and respect.

The privacy of victims should be considered and respected to the greatest extent possible.

All reasonable measures should be taken to minimize inconvenience to victims.

The safety and security of victims should be considered at all stages of the criminal justice process and appropriate measures should be taken when necessary to protect victims from intimidation and retaliation.



Information should be provided to victims about the criminal justice system and the victim's role and opportunities to participate in criminal justice processes.

Victims should be given information, in accordance with prevailing law, policies, and procedures, about the status of the investigation; the scheduling, progress and final outcome of the proceedings; and the status of the offender in the correctional system.

Information should be provided to victims about available victim assistance services, other programs and assistance available to them, and means of obtaining financial reparation.

The view, concerns and representations of victims are an important consideration in criminal justice processes and should be considered in accordance with prevailing law, policies and procedures.

The needs, concerns and diversity of victims should be considered in the development and delivery of programs and services, and in related education and training.

Information should be provided to victims about available options to raise their concerns when they believe that these principles have not been followed.

*The Victims of Crime Strategy is a framework to guide  
Government of Yukon programs and services for victims of crime.*

**Government of Yukon  
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