

SUMMER 2019 - POLICY CENTRE FOR VICTIM ISSUES NEWSLETTER

Knowledge Exchange on Victims' Involvement in Restorative Justice

On February 5, 2019, the Policy Centre for Victim Issues (PCVI) hosted a one-day Knowledge Exchange on Victims' Involvement in Restorative Justice Issues at the Hilton Lac Leamy Hotel in Gatineau, Quebec. The knowledge exchange involved approximately 100 restorative justice practitioners, victim service providers, criminal justice professionals, Indigenous justice partners, academics and federal, provincial and territorial officials. Participants met to discuss promising practices, experiences, and challenges regarding victim engagement and their safe participation in restorative justice processes, in order to better support the involvement of, and effectively serve, victims. Agenda topics included:

- How participation in restorative justice processes can meet the needs of adult victims of crime. Drawing on a relational lens, research findings, and practical application, speakers discussed why victims choose to participate in restorative justice, the impacts that participation can have on victims, offenders and communities and the outcomes they experience, the importance of adopting a trauma informed approach, and the importance of measuring outcomes. Participants also considered the positive outcomes as well as risks associated with victim participation in restorative justice processes.
- The role communication and coordination play in contributing to restorative justice processes that are accessible, safe and effective. Participants highlighted examples of concrete partnerships and collaboration across sectors at the community and organizational levels.
- An exploration of promising practices and models in restorative justice processes. Participants discussed approaches to effectively engage and prepare victims to participate in processes and explored models of practice focusing on methods to ensure that victims are supported to meaningfully participate in restorative justice processes, have access to available services and follow up support.
- A dialogue between a mediator and a participant to a Restorative Opportunities Process, describing reasons for participation, how the process was organized, needs that were met, and outcomes that participants experienced.

Victims and Survivors of Crime Week 2019

Victims and Survivors of Crime Week 2019 took place from May 26 to June 1, 2019, and this year's theme was *The Power of Collaboration*. This theme recognizes that Canada has made significant advances within the criminal justice system and victim services field to increase collaboration and make the system more responsive to the needs of victims of crime. It highlights the ongoing need to enhance cross-sector collaboration, coordination, partnerships, and multi-disciplinary responses to better support victims.

This year, Justice Canada funded 179 Victims and Survivors of Crime Week projects in all provinces and territories, worth a total of \$1.3 million, to raise awareness about the issues facing victims and survivors of crime and about the services, assistance and laws in place to help victims, survivors and their families.

The Victims and Survivors of Crime Week 2019 federal symposium was held on May 27, 2019, in Fredericton, New Brunswick. The symposium began with a welcome and song provided by local Elder Maggie Paul. Opening remarks were provided by Mr. Matthew DeCoursey, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, on behalf of the federal government, and the Honourable Carl Urquhart, Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General of New Brunswick. Mr. Jeremy Dias, Executive Director of the Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity, delivered a

powerful and thought-provoking keynote presentation on supporting 2SLGBTQI+ victims of crime. The symposium was attended by approximately 130 victim advocates, victim service providers, police officers, crown prosecutors, and public servants from across Canada, including many local service providers from New Brunswick and across Atlantic Canada.

Throughout the day, participants engaged in various breakout sessions, all of which related to the theme of collaboration. The breakout sessions addressed topics such as: supporting victims of sexual violence, victims with disabilities, and children affected by trauma; siblings' of homicide perspectives of police contact; the use of accredited facility support dogs in the Canadian criminal justice system; self/peer exploitation among youth; and responding to mass violence and human trafficking events through the use of victim assistance centres.

From the Desks of PCVI

PCVI continues to advance work, in partnership with provincial, territorial, and non-government organizations, as well as victims and victim advocates, on a range of victims' issues.

Access to Justice for Adult Victims of Sexual Assault

In November 2018, Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers approved the publication of a report prepared by the Coordinating Committee of Senior Officials (Criminal Justice) Working Group on Access to Justice for Adult Victims of Sexual Assault, entitled "Reporting, Investigating and Prosecuting Sexual Assault Committed Against Adults – Challenges and Promising Practices in Enhancing Access to Justice for Victims". The report can be accessed at: <http://www.scics.ca/en/product-produit/reporting-investigating-and-prosecuting-sexual-assaults-committed-against-adults-challenges-and-promising-practices-in-enhancing-access-to-justice-for-victims/>

Knowledge Building

PCVI hosted the following knowledge building events in Fall 2018:

- On National Seniors Day, October 1, 2018, PCVI hosted a WebEx on *Responding to Elder Abuse: A Legal and Ethical Overview to Enhance your Practice*, which was presented by Krista James, the National Director of the Canadian Centre for Elder Law.
- On November 22, 2018, to commemorate National Restorative Justice Week, PCVI hosted a WebEx on *An Adult Post-Charge Victim Offender Reconciliation Program and the Involvement of Victims in Victim-Offender Reconciliation*, presented by Chris Cowie, Executive Director of Community Justice Initiatives in Waterloo Region.
- To commemorate the International Day for Persons with Disabilities on December 3, 2018, PCVI hosted a webinar to explore various approaches in *Supporting and Empowering Women Victims and Survivors with Disabilities*. The webinar was co-presented by Rayann Fleming, Manager of Inner City Victim Services at the Bissell Centre in Alberta, and Patricia McKay, a specialized Older Women's Outreach Worker at the Victoria Women's Transition House Society in British Columbia.

Supporting families of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

PCVI continues to support the strong network of Family Information Liaison Units (FILU) across Canada who are assisting families of missing or murdered Indigenous women and girls to access a wide range of information from across sectors and agencies about their loved ones. A one day FILU training event was held to provide an opportunity for FILU teams from across Canada to meet, share knowledge,

participate in training, and lead discussions about wise practices in delivering assistance to families that is culturally-grounded and trauma-informed.