



Police Victim Services of British Columbia

Annual Report

2020

Annual General Meeting

November 26, 2020



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1. **President's Report – Karyn French, Board President**

Last year's President's Report ended with this quote, which still rings true:

“Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success.” Henry Ford

For Police Victim Services of BC, the 2019-2020 fiscal year has been one of coming together as a team to build a solid organizational foundation. With a strong commitment and leadership from the Board of Directors and Executive Director, PVSBC forged organizational cornerstones identified in the 2020 – 2022 Strategic Plan:

- Empower our members for success
- Provide excellent, relevant member services
- Advocate for police-based victim services in BC
- Enhance PVSBC capacity and sustainability

The PVSBC Strategic Plan lays out the roadmap for 2020-2022 and during this fiscal year, a number of key initiatives were actioned:

- Development of an action plan focusing on initiatives such as a Comprehensive Provincial Review of the police-based victim services sector, Sector Health and Wellness, Training and Professional Development and building PVSBC Capacity and Sustainability.
- Investing in Board development such as the role of Governance resulted in the formation of a Governance Sub Committee.
- Implementing improved financial accountability measures with our first Audited Financial Statements.
- Development of the Training and Development Sub Committee as well as the formation of a cross-sector Training Advisory Committee.
- Building strong relationships including the initiation of a BC Police Based Victim Services Partners and Stakeholders Committee.

As I write this message, the world continues to experience the overwhelming disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic. PVSBC board members reached out to the members in each of the regions to share ideas and strategies for managing frontline victim service delivery while supporting one another. PVSBC like all organizations during these unprecedented times had to find new ways to advance



our strategic priorities. COVID-19 may have slowed us down slightly but it has not stopped the momentum of working together towards progress and success.

This Report provides me with an opportunity to thank those who have stood by PVSBC during this time of transition and renewal:

- To our members – you are the backbone of our sector and the reason why the work of PVSBC is so important.
- To our partners and stakeholders – our funders and our police, justice and community victim services partners and stakeholders.
- To the PVSBC board members who give freely of their time, experience and wealth of knowledge.
- To the PVSBC staff, Ian Batey, Executive Director and Celine Lee-Gee, Program Coordinator for their dedication and commitment while working tirelessly on behalf of the board and membership of PVSBC.

It is with excitement that I look forward to the coming year as a member of PVSBC!

2. Directors Reports:

Vancouver Island – Karyn French, Regional Director

The Vancouver Island Region covers Vancouver Island, the Gulf Islands and other south coast Island communities. Our communities range from rural to urban with many of the programs staffed by one part time person. Each program faces unique challenges that of course are not exclusive to our region. As a group, we usually meet 3-4 times a year to share information and support each other as well as learning about other community resources from invited speakers.

During the 2019/2020 fiscal year, invited guests included:

- Tamara Huber, Correctional Services Canada
- Jennifer Howard, Moms Stop the Harm and Healing Hearts
- Ian Batey, Executive Director PVSBC – update and presentation of the 2020-2022 PVSBC Strategic Plan.

In March in response to the rapidly changing dynamics of the COVID-19 pandemic, the group met frequently via ZOOM. These meetings have continued providing an opportunity to support one another during these unprecedented times.



Finally, on behalf of all the programs in the Vancouver Island Region, I would like to thank the dedicated staff and volunteers who are committed to providing victim services support in each community.

Lower Mainland – Jessica Johnson, Regional Director

Lower Mainland Region includes 10 regions, including 7 RCMP Victim Services programs and 3 Municipal police Victim Services programs as follows: Richmond, UBC, Vancouver, West Vancouver, North Vancouver, Sunshine Coast, Squamish, Whistler/Pemberton, Burnaby, New Westminster.

Highlights of undertakings within the Region, including those associated with operational adjustments in response to COVID-19, are:

- Continue to meet with the LMD region on a quarterly basis
- All meetings during pandemic are taking place over zoom calls
- The Region remains diversified on how each agency is working and responding to crisis calls during the pandemic. Models include:
 - Exclusively Work-from-home with all crisis support via phone only,
 - Blended work-from-home and work-in-office, and combination crisis support on-scene with PPE and safety precautions to phone support only
 - Work-in-office and attend all crisis calls with PPE and safety precautions
 - Majority of Units are operating around the mid-range with blended home/office settings and combination of on-scene and phone-based crisis support.
 - The RCMP Sea to Sky Detachment- Squamish Victim Services has a new Coordinator, Shawna Bain who joined on in late September.
 - Discussions to take place in December regarding how each Victim Services unit is planning on addressing callout attendance during the cold/flu season, worsening weather conditions and the increased number of community transmission of covid19

Fraser – Amanda Murphy, Regional Director

This past year has brought with it some unprecedented changes for Victim Services (VS) personnel in the Fraser Region and throughout the province.

While there are some similarities between programs in the Fraser Region, each program has faced different challenges as they have been navigating the COVID-



19 pandemic. Some programs in the region stood down their volunteers immediately, leaving significant caseloads to be managed solely by staff.

Many VS staff found themselves working remotely while others faced challenges in obtaining the proper equipment to make remote work possible.

In many cases, on-scene crisis response has been limited and VS personnel have had to find new and creative ways to build rapport quickly over the telephone during crisis and to provide ongoing support to clients remotely.

In addition to the above, the overdose crisis continues to significantly impact communities throughout the region, with VS workers often being engaged with grieving families. Waitlists for affordable counselling services are a challenge in many areas. Many VS program managers in the region have also noted an increase in referrals to support individuals and families struggling with mental health. In response to this need, Mission RCMP VS engaged in some additional training and awareness around mental health support.

When asked to reflect on what has worked well this past year, a number of VS program managers in the region expressed a great deal of pride at how flexible and adaptable their teams have been. Victim Services personnel have continued to provide a high level of support services to clients during a very uncertain time.

As we turn towards 2021, some ongoing challenges that VS program managers in the Region have noted include:

Finding new ways of connecting to community to do awareness and prevention pieces (e.g. school talks, seniors safety talks, etc.) while in-person presentations continue to be difficult, if not impossible, in many cases.

- Creating some consistency between programs and/or streamlining the process for members sending client referrals to VS (e.g. a referral mechanism through PRIME or other option).
- Availability of the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General (MPSSG) VS online training modules, or other basic VS training that PVSBC may offer, for individuals outside the sector for a fee. This could serve as a small revenue stream and ultimately reduce the required budget and training time during the recruitment and hiring process for new VS workers.



Thompson Okanagan – Anita Eilander, Regional Director

COVID-19 has changed the landscape for Victim Services programs in the Thompson/Okanagan region in a number of ways. To support each other, the region has and continues to meet regularly via Zoom to discuss what the current workplace looks like, provide support to each other and assist in reducing the impact of working in isolation, returning to work plans, safety protocols, and anything else that comes up. MPSSG Phinder Dulai and Ian Batey have also attended. Most have access Zoom remotely as many RCMP detachments do not have Wifi or attend meetings via phone. Community meetings have maintained engagement through Zoom meetings.

Most staff are back in the office, but during the early stages of the pandemic, many were working remotely. Most did not have access to RCMP equipment and resorted to duplicating case notes before being able to enter onto VSIS when in office.

Some programs have continued to offer on-call crisis support in person, and others are supporting over the phone only except in extenuating circumstances.

A number of programs indicated feeling disconnected from their detachments and direct communication with members while working remotely and some noticed a decline in referrals when working remotely.

Programs within the Thompson/Okanagan region describe a considerable increase in client need with additional stressors due to the pandemic. Our region has seen an increase in mental health related files, suicidal persons and suicide, homicide, an increase in family problems and in neighbour disputes this year.

Programs in the region have identified staffing shortages this year with a number of programs experiencing staff turnover and leaves. It has been challenging finding replacement staff, and those that employ volunteers may not be able to utilize volunteers due to restrictions within detachments for COVID safety. Programs have experienced increased workload demands without an increase in staffing.

A number of programs were successful in receiving grant money from the COVID-19 Victim Services and Violence Against women Support fund towards eligible incremental costs incurred as a direct result of the pandemic.



Columbia Kootenay – Christine Van Dyke, Regional Director

The Columbia Kootenay Region catchment area includes Boundary, Castlegar, Columbia Valley, Cranbrook, Creston, Elk Valley, Golden, Trail, Kimberly, Nakusp, Nelson, and Robson Valley.

In response to the evolving situation associated with responding effectively to COVID-19, many VS staff found themselves working remotely while others faced challenges in obtaining the proper equipment to make remote work possible. Many programs found themselves in the midst of making critical decisions around staff safety and developing protocols, often without a lot of necessary direction. During this period, police based victim services personnel continued to provide a high level of seamless support to clients during this very uncertain time.

On behalf of all the programs in the Columbia Kootenay Region, I would like to thank the dedicated staff and volunteers who are committed to providing dedicated police-based victim services support in all of our communities

North West – Sherry Pellegrino

The North West Region catchment area includes - Prince Rupert, Kitimat, New Aiyansh, Houston, Smithers, Burns Lake and Terrace.

Accomplishments/Highlights including those associated with responding to the operational impact of COVID-19, include:

Programs managed to pivot from being in the office full-time to working from home or a hybrid model while adjusting to new technology etc. All staff throughout the region are now working in their respective Detachments.

In March, program managers in the midst of making critical decisions around staff safety and developing protocols, often without a lot of guidance, continued to ensure the seamless delivery of services.

Many Programs continue to see monthly overall increase in files, particularly those associated with mental health issues. This is attributed in part to the positive working relationship they have the members in their individual detachments.

Specifically in Terrace, we have received a great deal of support from our local government and the detachment as we adjusted to differing levels of service. The same can be said for most of the programs in the Region.

Terrace RCMP Victim Services was successful in advocating for its staff for coverage under the Municipality's provided Employee Assistance Program. This



success provides staff with key support when dealing with the accumulated impacts associated with delivering front line police-based victim services to police and members of our community.

Programs within our region applied for a number of grants and were successful in receiving new funding.

The Regional Director initiated a series of regional conference calls with presentations and conversations with Heather Hildred, Director, Victim Services "E" Division RCMP and Ian Batey, Executive Director, Police Victim Services BC.

In conjunction with our Municipality confirmed program staff are covered for any illness upon exhausting regular designated sick time. It is important, as contractors, we ensure staff are supported in staying home, when necessary.

Challenges:

As the pandemic began impacting the workplace in March there were challenges around working from home and office, including:

- Technology issues and lack of appropriate workspace when working from home.
- Programs indicated they experienced a sense of disconnect from their detachments and members when working from home.
- Staff working from home around providing emotional support all day feeling disconnected from the office environment and regular check in's with their colleagues.
- Lack of support and information from the Ministry regarding guidance for program managers regarding safety protocols.
- Significant increases in client files for many programs as well as the complexity of files.
- Significant strain on many programs who are in the position of having to "fill the gaps" due to the lack of available supports and resources in their community, particular mental health/addictions and homelessness.

Training participation continues to be a huge challenge as the detachments often do not have internet connectivity, including the access to external sources. In response many programs leave the office participate in most trainings unless presentation materials are provided in advance allowing conference call participation.



Programs within our region continue to be considered contractors. This poses many challenges related to consistent service delivery, staff benefits and program direction. Not having employee status also impacts how we are viewed by police and contract holders, particularly when information is disseminated police-based victim services is neither acknowledged as part of the team. This is done in part to ensure there is no confusion about victim services relationship with the contract holder. So often when the RCMP acknowledges their public servants and municipal employees, our members we are overlooked. This is often very demoralizing, impacting how we are seen by police members, particularly given the length of time police-based victim services has provided services to the community.

Over the period, increased workload demands without increases in staffing have led to programs being impacted in many ways. For example, increases in files related to mental health and addiction, sex assaults, wellness checks and assistance with homelessness as well as an escalation in terms of the level of violence in domestic issues. Overall, most programs have also noted an increase in files compared to this time last year.

Many, if not all programs continue to provide support services outside their mandate because of the everchanging needs of the community and the lack of available resources.

North East – Connie Buck, Regional Director

The North has seen more increases in Domestic Violence files particularly higher risk along with a dramatic increase in Mental Health issues. Suicides, attempted suicides with NOKs have increased for most PVS units. This has increased the time for PVS units in working with victims and their families, a definite increase during these COVID 19 times. As for COVID 19 affecting how units are running, includes with some not all, masks, hand sanitizer along with adjustments to the call out process. With some PVS units, call outs are still the same, others phone calls to victims and their families at scenes or calls the next day.

Most PVS units have returned to some kind of normalcy at the office, others attending office when less people in the Detachment (RCMP laptops at very few units at present) and other units have not changed, still attending the office during their regularly scheduled office hours.

There is a new PVS coordinator in Fort Nelson although they are still waiting for Security Clearance from E Division. PVS Fort St John is still covering this area



and may continue to cover for the Northern Rockies Detachment until the New Year.

Chetwynd PVS has a new worker hired again, waiting for a Security Clearance. Dawson Creek PVS unit usually covers this area when there is no one in the position.

COVID 19 has affected how PVS units in the North East continue to do business. Phone calls to victims, their families is more the norm and will continue well into the New Year. Social Distancing, either by staying home more and attending office on weekends, evenings or after regular Detachment hours is occurring. An area with files that is consistent with all units, is the increase in Mental Health files and DV files.

Very few PVS units have RCMP issued laptops, and most are still comfortable attending their unit offices in Detachments to complete their work online. Most of the in-office requirement is also in part of the need to connect with others at work during these challenging and different times.

3. Executive Director Report – Ian Batey, Executive Director

The Executive Director (ED) joined PVSBC in May 2019, commencing with a period of familiarization and learning regarding the membership, Board of Directors and external organizations associated with the delivery of police-based victim services throughout the Province. In July, after becoming acquainted with PVSBC, the ED developed and gained board approval of an Action Plan producing a series of key deliverables related to:

- Engaging, communicating, and building relations with our members, associates, partners, and stakeholders.
- Engaging, communicating, and building a strong relationship with the Board of Directors.
- Ensuring funding and funding opportunities were established to meet the current needs of the organization.
- Identifying and facilitating the delivery of appropriate board governance development and the implementation of governance based on best practice models.
- Establishing a strategic planning framework and budget in concert with the Board of Directors.



- Increasing the professional competencies of the membership by delivering the Supporting Survivors of Traumatic Death program and resulting Supporting Survivors of Traumatic Death Best Practices Reference Guide.
- Ensuring PVSBC fulfills its BC Society and CRA Charity obligations by conducting the Annual General Meeting and filing Annual and CRA Charity reports.
- Advocate to conduct a comprehensive province-wide review and assessment including all current practices, procedures, organizational models and funding, along with suggested recommendations to establish best practices.
- Continuing to ensure PVSBC operates efficiently, effectively, and economically through its internal financial, human resources, information technology, facility and administrative policy and procedures.

The ED was responsible for the implementation of elements related to the Action Plan, as the road map, designed to brand PVSBC as the “go to” leadership organization in advocating, representing and lobbying for the interests of the police-based victim services sector across the Province of British Columbia. The ED researched, developed and implemented the following strategic direction setting initiatives:

- In late October, the membership participated in the Supporting Survivors of Traumatic Death workshop at the Justice Institute of BC with a simultaneous broadcast allowing members to participate virtually from their current work locations.
- In late October, the Board of Directors participated in a Board Governance Development Session. This session focused on the fundamentals of governance best practices. This included: roles and responsibilities of Officers and Directors; reviewing foundational documents, such as the Constitution and ByLaws; effective recruitment and succession planning; the study of organizational models, policies, procedures and practices appropriate for adoption by PVSBC.
- In late October, the Board of Directors and ED participated in a facilitated Strategic Planning Workshop producing the current 2020-2021 Strategic Plan. The Plan was approved and implemented in early March 2020. The ED was assigned the responsibility of executing the Strategic Plan, including the elements listed in the President’s Report.



With this focus, the ED was able to draw on the significant strengths and competencies of Ms. Celine Lee, Program/Financial Coordinator. Ms. Lee has added significant value, capacity, and organization to all aspects of the administrative, technology, financial, event management and program development functions of the organization. The ED wishes to formally recognize Ms. Lee's overall contribution to the repositioning of PVSBC during the reporting period.

4. Directors and Officers:

Karyn French, Director Vancouver Island, Board President

Anita Eilander, Thompson Okanagan, Board Vice President

Amanda Murphy, Director Fraser Valley, Board Secretary

Christine Van Dyke, Columbia Kootenay Region, Board Treasurer

Barbara Vincent, Municipal Victim Services Programs

Carla Sampson, RCMP Victim Services Programs

Connie Buck, North East Region

Jessica Johnson, Lower Mainland Region

Sherry Pellegrino, North West Region

Sgt. Rob Smith, Municipal Police Representative

Sgt. Frank Jang, RCMP Police Representative