

# MISSING WOMEN COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

## Bridging the Gap to Shape the Future: The Report on the Policy Forums

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A CONSULTATION REPORT PREPARED FOR THE  
MISSING WOMEN COMMISSION OF INQUIRY  
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### **Statement of Purpose**

***This report was prepared for the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry and represents the views expressed by participants in the policy forums. The Commission has not verified any of the facts contained in this report. The Commission gratefully acknowledges the assistance provided by all of those who participate in and supported these events.***

***The content of the report does not necessarily reflect the views of the Commissioner and Commission staff and, in particular, no conclusions have been reached to date on the issues raised in this report.***

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## 1. Introduction and Overview

### ***Introduction***

This consultation report provides a summary of the input the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry received through its final consultative process: the policy forums. As a part of its Study Commission mandate, the Commission held a series of six policy forums from May 1 to May 10, 2012. These public discussions concluded the Commission's public consultation process to gather recommendations for change from affected communities and knowledgeable individuals. To initiate the discussion and provide food for thought, the policy forums commenced with a keynote presentation by Doreen Binder on April 30, 2012, on the topic of innovative approaches to protecting vulnerable and marginalized women.

During the policy forums, discussions knitted together recent changes to police practices and new police initiatives, often aimed at improving relationships with community members and increasing community participation in policing. Discussion highlighted the ongoing gaps, problems and barriers that contribute to community disengagement, disaffection and distrust and the ongoing vulnerability of vulnerable and marginalized women. Police officers described initiatives to increase the safety of women, improve the investigation of missing persons and adapt the structure and organization of policing to enhance coordination and accountability, while speaking of their dedication to continue to collaborate with communities to make women safer. Community speakers, conversely, described ongoing challenges. Many community speakers expressed their frustration at the structure of policing and their concerns about approaches to policing. They also emphasized the extent to which women are still targets for violence: police and the greater community and society have a long way to go to ensure that women are safe.

However, both community members and police officers alike engaged in productive discussions to put forward recommendations to improve the current situation, and ultimately, the safety of vulnerable and marginalized women. The many recommendations presented to the Commission to address the problems and issues related to missing and murdered women are described over the course of this report.

### ***Mandate of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry***

The purpose of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry is to inquire into and report on the conduct of the missing women investigations. There are four parts to this mandate:

- (a) To conduct hearings, inquire into and make findings of fact respecting the conduct of investigations in 1997-2002 respecting women reported missing from the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver;
- (b) To conduct hearings, inquire into and make findings of fact with respect to the decision of the Criminal Justice Branch to enter a stay of proceedings on charges against Robert William Pickton;
- (c) To recommend changes considered necessary respecting the initiation and conduct of investigations in British Columbia of missing women and suspected multiple homicides; and
- (d) To recommend changes considered necessary respecting homicide investigations in British Columbia by more than one investigating organization, including the coordination of those investigations.

Within these terms of reference, the Commission has two main functions:

- (1) Fact-finding about the specific matters related to the missing women and the Pickton investigations, carried out through the formal hearings; and
- (2) Making recommendations for change to improve the initiation and conduct of missing women investigations, a function carried out mostly through the Study Commission activities.

The hearing and the study aspects of the Commission's mandate are equally important. The Commissioner will rely on the input that he receives from both aspects to develop a single report.

The Study Commission involves five main initiatives: consultations, research, written submissions, workshops, and policy forums. These activities were designed to facilitate the broader participation of individuals who have been directly or indirectly affected by the missing women investigations. The Study Commission initiatives were designed to provide individuals and organizations an opportunity to share their experiences and views with the Commission in authentic, collaborative and supportive venues.

### ***Purpose and Description of the Policy Forums***

Through the Commission's work to date, a number of themes or ongoing issues had been identified as potential areas for recommendations. Many of these issues came up throughout the Commission's consultations with communities in the North West along Highway 16, the Highway of Tears, and in Prince George; with community members in the Downtown Eastside ("DTES"); and with family members of the missing and murdered women. They have been elaborated in the written submissions the Commission has received and within the Commission's own research. The Commission planned the policy forums to seek out additional community input and recommendations about these issues and to learn more about current initiatives, with the ultimate goal of developing recommendations to make communities safer for vulnerable women.

The Commission planned the policy forums with a view to focusing discussion and recommendations from the community and police on six major themes, which were divided into subthemes:

- Forum 1: Ensuring the safety of vulnerable women, specifically
  - A: Preventing violence against sex trade workers<sup>1</sup>
  - B: Preventing violence against Aboriginal and rural women
  - C: Building strong police-community relationships
- Forum 2: Vulnerable and intimidated witnesses in the criminal justice process
- Forum 3: Improving missing person practices, specifically
  - A: Accepting and investigating missing person reports
  - B: Police relationships with victims' families, the community, the public and the media
- Forum 4: Inter-jurisdictional collaboration and coordination among police
- Forum 5: Enhancing police accountability
- Forum 6: From report to substantive change – healing, reconciliation and implementation.

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<sup>1</sup> The terms "sex trade", "sex work", and "prostitution" are all used within this report, generally to reflect the language used by speakers. No position or comment on the ongoing debate regarding the use of these terms is intended to be made within this report.

In order to facilitate participation in the forums, the Commission prepared an overall guide to participation, individual short written guides to each forum and a short video highlighting some of the issues to be discussed at each forum. These resources are available on the Commission website.<sup>2</sup>

The policy forums were a vital aspect of the Commission's work. The forums brought together all that has been learned through research, consultations, workshops, and written submissions, in a dynamic process that allowed interested individuals to share and exchange their views on what steps should be taken to address the problems and issues related to missing and murdered women.

The policy forums were based on open and inclusive communication principles. Each forum was opened by a Squamish elder, Xwalacktun, who performed an opening song. This opening was followed by a welcome from the Commissioner, who described the purpose of each forum and the questions the Commission hoped to consider in the forum. The facilitator spoke next, to describe the general rules of engagement.

The Commission had hoped originally to employ a talking circle model for the forums; however, in order to adapt to the constraints of time and the technology required to web-cast the forums via live feed, a modified circle was used. Seating was arranged in a horseshoe with the Commissioner, facilitator, and Policy Counsel, at a table at the opening. Speakers addressing the group came forward to a stationary microphone.

Speakers were invited to speak for approximately 10 minutes each. Once everyone had an opportunity to speak, there was a short break, followed by an open discussion. Some speakers registered ahead of time with the Commission, but others joined the speakers' list or the discussion by informing the facilitator or raising their hands. Each forum was attended by approximately 30 to 40 people, with 10 to 20 participating in the discussion.

Each forum concluded with closing remarks from the Commissioner. Finally, at the end of the last forum, Xwalacktun guided the group in a moving closing ceremony.

The forums were webcasted live and the videos have been archived on the Commission website.<sup>3</sup> Viewership of the live webcasts was larger than expected, with over 100 viewers for many of the sessions.

The Commission is grateful to everyone who attended the forums and is particularly appreciative of everyone who provided their thoughts and recommendations for change. The input, feedback and experiences put forward were incredibly valuable in informing the Commission about what can be changed, what needs to be improved, and what must be done. We acknowledge the time, effort and courage it takes to stand up publicly and be heard, and so we sincerely thank everyone who participated.

Each forum focused on one of the specific themes or issues; however, discussions often strayed from one topic to another through the course of the forums, highlighting the interconnected nature of the issues. For the purpose of clarity, in this report contextual remarks and recommendations will be discussed under the heading of the most germane topic rather than strictly within the specific policy forum in which they were made.

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<sup>2</sup> [www.missingwomeninquiry.ca/forums/](http://www.missingwomeninquiry.ca/forums/)

<sup>3</sup> [www.missingwomeninquiry.ca/forums/](http://www.missingwomeninquiry.ca/forums/)

## ***Executive Summary***

Speakers spoke about the importance and priority of eliminating violence against women, particularly sex workers and Aboriginal women, and the importance of police consultation and the involvement of marginalized communities in policing to promote trust and increase reporting of violence. Community members emphasized that women continue to be at risk. Many speakers stated that greater funding was needed for police to focus on community and Aboriginal policing and provide more liaison officers. Many agreed that police officers should use discretion in enforcing warrants against women reporting violence; however, police officers cautioned that such use of discretion needs to be legislated and standardized to ensure consistency. There was also widespread support among speakers for greater and more comprehensive funding for organizations that provide support to vulnerable and marginalized women, and greater investment in and access to safe housing, mental health care, and addictions treatment.

To promote the participation of vulnerable and intimidated witnesses in the criminal justice system, and to prevent their re-victimization by their involvement in the process, speakers made recommendations about centralizing and integrating supports. Many of these recommendations echoed recommendations to protect women from violence: provide safe housing, addictions treatment, and ongoing support. Specific recommendations were made to improve witness accommodations; to ensure prosecutorial decisions are explicitly informed by the right to equality; to promote transparency of Crown decision-making; to lower the charge approval standard to a reasonable likelihood of conviction; and to amend evidence law to protect vulnerable and intimidated witnesses from traumatic cross-examination.

Community members and police officers alike identified ongoing concerns with regard to missing person practices. Members of the Vancouver Police Department (“VPD”) and Royal Canadian Mounted Police (“RCMP”) provided information on their current practices and recent initiatives, including a provincial BC Missing Person Centre and advancements in risk assessment protocols, and discussed upcoming developments, such as a Real Time Intelligence Centre in the Lower Mainland. Police officers spoke about their evolving protocols for communication with victims’ families, while family members discussed the issues with communication that remain. Many speakers recommended greater provincial oversight, including a 1-800 number for reporting or a centralized missing person unit, standardization of police procedures in accepting and investigating reports, expanded police databases, public education on the missing person process, and greater use of analysts and statistics to recognize trends and series in missing person incidents, including recognizing the probability of a serial predator. How police and Victim Service workers interact with families and the information provided to families were also the subject of recommendations. For example, recommendations were made that police should ask each family, as a standard practice, how they want to be given news that their loved one is deceased.

The Commission also heard about the subject of integration of policing services in BC. Many police officers spoke about current initiatives to improve and promote coordination and responses to emergent crimes, for example, use of integrated units and major case management. Community speakers commented on ongoing issues arising from poor coordination and collaboration of police in their responses to multi-jurisdictional crimes. Often the conclusion was that integration was insufficient: regionalization is necessary for the police to effectively, efficiently, and promptly respond to cross-jurisdictional crime. Others made suggestions to improve coordination absent regionalization, such as the development of a Real Time Crime Centre for the Lower Mainland and the standardization of the triggering, establishment and conduct of multi-jurisdictional investigations.

Community speakers and police officers presented many ideas to enhance police accountability. Speakers emphasized that police accountability must encompass two things: individual officer misconduct and community oversight of policing. To deal with specific complaints of misconduct, suggestions were made for an additional, more informal system, to resolve complaints using alternative dispute resolution with a focus on promoting education and prevention as opposed to meting out punishment. To ensure communities, in particular marginalized communities, have authority to oversee police priorities, resource allocation, and complaint resolution, speakers suggested community accountability committees. These committees would function to promote dialogue between the police and community and to increase community oversight, and ultimately, police accountability to the public.

On the last day of the policy forums, speakers identified barriers to the healing of individuals and communities impacted by the loss of the missing and murdered women, the police investigations, and criminal justice process. Individuals impacted by the tragedy, in particular family members of the missing and murdered women, continue to suffer: the trial and inquiry process has not given them the healing they need. Speakers identified suggestions to promote healing, reconciliation, and implementation of change. Discussions centered on using a restorative justice process to help families and others affected by the tragedy to heal. Speakers discussed the importance of providing opportunities for ongoing dialogue, apologies and amendments, and leaving a legacy and memorialize the victims. In particular, community members felt strongly that children of the missing and murdered women should receive support to enable them to overcome their losses and traumas. Speakers also spoke of the reconciliation that needs to take place between Aboriginal communities and larger society, to ensure healing within Aboriginal communities and to ensure that we move forward together.

Finally, change management was discussed. A speaker outlined tools necessary to ensure that changes, once identified, are made and sustained over time. Police officers spoke about the changes they have made and continue to make in their organizations, and pledged their commitment to make changes based on the Commission's final report.

## **2. Summary of the Forums**

### **Forum 1: Ensuring the Safety of Vulnerable and Marginalized Women**

In British Columbia, Canada, and around the world, violence against women continues. Some women suffer violence disproportionately due to conditions of vulnerability and marginalization. Social factors that contribute to increased vulnerability or marginalization of women include a history of being subjected to violence or abuse, health issues, unstable housing, economic insecurity, drug and alcohol abuse, mental illness, sex discrimination, and racism. These factors often cluster together to create a cumulative effect that further reinforces vulnerability and marginalization.

Women involved in the sex trade and Aboriginal women are particularly vulnerable to violence. The phenomenon of missing and murdered women is one tragic example of the heightened level of violence both women in the sex trade and Aboriginal women face. Therefore, the Commission sought public input on strategies to prevent the violence these women continue to encounter and recommendations to ensure their safety.

Necessarily, the Commission's focus is on the role of police to ensure the safety of vulnerable and marginalized women. Although the police occupy a central and unique position with respect to violence against vulnerable women, they are certainly not the only institution or agency with a role to play. Many of the comments the Commission heard in these forums related to other entities: health services, specifically for mental health and addiction treatment; provincial and municipal governments; non-profit organizations providing support services; and so on. While the discussion about all of those actors is included in this discussion, the focus remains on the police. Because the Commission has heard that relationships between the police and vulnerable and marginalized communities are marked by distrust, the Commission also sought input on recommendations on models and structures for building strong police-community relationships.

### ***A) Preventing Violence against Sex Trade Workers***

The first section of Forum 1 focused on developing strategies and recommendations for enhancing the protection of street engaged women and survival sex workers. These women face extreme risk of all forms of violence, including serial predation. They may also have a strained relationship with police, in part due to the criminalized nature of their work in the sex trade.

#### **Context**

In their remarks, community members painted a vivid picture of the violence and dangers women on the street continue to face. Individuals commented that the violence against women continues, and conditions in the DTES have not become safer since Pickton was arrested; rather, the same conditions that existed from 1997 to 2002 continue. Some women do not have safe access to telephones to call the police and women in the sex trade must work in isolated, dark "containment zones", referred to as the "killing zones" that allowed Pickton and other predators to operate. A speaker noted that we continue to have high-risk, addicted sex trade workers whom predators will target.

Community members emphasized that predators like Pickton are not the only source of violence, nor even the main source of violence. Women experience violence from clients and other women, but overwhelmingly from those involved in the drug trade.

Community members often discussed why women were vulnerable or why they were involved in the street level sex trade, exposing them to violence. They talked about how youth are denied welfare, so that if they do not live in a group home, they are left without means to provide for themselves, driving many into the sex trade. Many women use illicit drugs: this makes them vulnerable to robbery and causes them to put themselves at risk to make enough money to purchase drugs. Further, the lack of effective and accessible drug treatment leaves women vulnerable, as does stigmatizing labeling that limits women's self-confidence. The income of women on welfare or disability is insufficient for survival, so often they are involved in the sex trade for their survival. Jamie Lee Hamilton, a community activist, stated that "survival sex trade worker" is a term that should apply to all sex workers, because all are involved due to economic necessity.

Community members also discussed how the stigma and stereotyping of women involved in the sex trade contributed to the violence they face. Women in the sex trade are subject to particular and specific bias; however, the general sexualization of women, particularly of young women, assists in turning women into sexual commodities. Kerry Porth stated that bias and disregard is perpetuated by the community and public at large: Vancouver's history is filled with accounts of the city trying to "get rid of sex workers". This treatment has forced women into the DTES and acted as a virtual invitation to potential serial killers. Women



involved in the sex trade and drug addicts continue to be treated as less than human. Susan Davis cited detrimental beliefs that continue to have currency, for example, that sex workers cannot be victims of sexual assault. In addition, the belief that women in the sex trade cannot or should not be protected from mistreatment or injury is reflected in the lack of harm reduction approaches to sex worker safety.

Community members cited instances in which police exhibited bias against sex workers. Krissy Darch referred to a current VPD blog in which a police officer reminisced about bygone days when terms such as “whores”, “beggars”, “rubby-dubs” and so on were used regularly to describe the residents of the DTES. She posited that teachers who train police or police analysts exhibit faulty reasoning about the power dynamics that motivate crime, reasoning that contributes to prejudicial attitudes and beliefs like victim blaming. Police sensitivity training does not address this faulty reasoning or lack of information on power and gender motivated crimes, perhaps a factor in the overall lack of use of the category of gender in the hate crime provision for sentencing.

In the face of the serious violence that women involved in the sex trade face, women will not access the services of the police when violence is committed against them, because they do not trust the police

Many people spoke to the community’s ongoing and deeply entrenched fear of the police. This fear, community members said, was entirely justified for women in the sex trade who are criminalized and therefore always have an uneasy relationship with police. Further, community members talked about how police harm vulnerable and marginalized women, directly and indirectly. They cited examples of police officers exploiting women by coercing them into sex acts; closing brothels and forcing women to work on the street; creating “red light districts” or containment zones; and displacing women to unsafe industrial areas in response to nuisance calls. They also said that “over policing” women, by ticketing them for minor offences, initiated a domino effect of breaches for such procedural offences as failures to appear, ultimately causing women to be put in remand and prisons while suffering from withdrawal without proper medical treatment. Community members suggested that police do not take the complaints of vulnerable and marginalized women seriously, and will not investigate violence against them. Many contributed to the discussion that women will not report violence to police because of outstanding warrants against them.

Women involved in the sex trade generally have a fear and distrust of the criminal justice system and the government. Individuals spoke of women’s fears that police or other workers would have their children removed because they were involved in the sex trade.

The community identified that the issue was how to build trust between the police and women to improve women’s safety. The goal of protecting women must also be balanced with the police’s role in enforcing the criminal law. Individuals gave examples of positive police-community relationships. For example, Jamie Lee Hamilton praised former VPD officer Dave Dickson for his invaluable work: he developed relationships with support services that women access, but also walked around the community to develop relationships with individual women, 80% of whom were not accessing services. Susan Davis also spoke of her experiences working with the VPD and the Surrey RCMP on initiatives to promote sex workers’ safety.

Some participants supported the use of DNA databases by police forces to collect DNA and other personal information on street level sex workers, in order to identify them if they go missing or are murdered. However, others did not support this type of program. This was discussed most comprehensively by Susan Davis. She spoke about how uncomfortable DNA collection made her and others, because it suggested that

the police would not protect women while they were alive but wanted to identify their bodies when they were murdered. However, she also noted that some women were comfortable contributing to a database and voluntarily provided their information to police.

Of course, the police do not operate in a silo. Services for vulnerable and marginalized women can contribute to their safety and enable police to protect them better. A lot of discussion focused on the lack of centralized, accessible services available to sex workers. The dearth of services is caused by the lack of operational funding, a result of provincial reorganization of funding for non-profit services. Because funding of services is patchwork, many existing services were at risk of closing down, including PACE in the DTES and the Warm Zone in Abbotsford.

The community noted that the Lower Mainland is bereft of vitally needed health services for women with drug addictions. Drug treatment and transition houses were referred to as among the most needed and least available services for vulnerable and marginalized women, services that would materially contribute to their safety and wellbeing. As already noted, drug treatment is not provided to people suffering from withdrawal while incarcerated. There are few detox beds available to women and little in the way of long-term treatment options. In addition, hospital staff may “wait out” women seeking emergency treatment who are drug addicted, delaying processing them until the women begin to suffer symptoms of withdrawal and voluntarily leave. Some community members linked the limited availability of drug addiction treatment to the general unmet need for mental health care.

Community members also pointed to the lack of transition homes for women and noted that transition homes that do exist may not accept people with addictions or mental illnesses.

A theme that was repeated by many was the failure to coordinate among the services that did exist.

The Commission also heard about existing community or government services that make women safer. Community members discussed some health services and initiatives that enhance women’s health, including safe injection sites and Vancouver Coastal Health’s program to gather and provide information to women involved in the sex trade about how to protect themselves.

The Commission also heard in detail about two drop-in centres for women, the Warm Zone and the Surrey Women’s Centre. Michele Giordano and Erica Thomson told the Commission about the Warm Zone, a drop-in centre that provides services to street engaged women in Abbotsford. The Warm Zone provides support to vulnerable women and acts as a bridge between its clients and the broader community. The Warm Zone follows a women-centered harm reduction approach, providing basic necessities to women and support to those involved in the criminal justice system. The Warm Zone has developed a relationship of trust with the Abbotsford Police Department and works with police to enhance women’s safety. Women are provided with three options for reporting violence: formal reports with the support of Warm Zone staff, third party reports, and bad date reports.

The Warm Zone provides “no barrier” services, in that it does not exclude women who are using drugs or may be intoxicated; but it struggles because of the lack of psychiatric and mental health care available to its clients. Its focus is on creating stability in each woman’s life, at her own pace. It provides women their basic needs and operates as a liaison to other services that its clients need. This includes providing safety information to women, providing a free long distance phone so women can keep in touch with families and friends, and being a part of community meetings and committees to bring the police, health services and

other interested partners together to promote women's health and wellbeing. It also provides first stage independent housing at Penny's Place, where four women live with a facilitator.

The Commission also heard from Joy Ward Dockrey and Maryam Majedi about the Surrey Women's Centre, which does similar work to the Warm Zone. The Surrey Women's Centre is a gathering place for women and a source of communication between women and the broader community. Members of the Surrey Women's Centre highlighted that Surrey has its own DTES, which is growing quickly. Because of this, the Centre's services are integral to the community. It performs risk assessment on all of its clients, whether they call or drop in. It is a part of the Surrey Mobile Assault Response Team and works with forensic nurse examiners and outreach workers. Members of the Centre emphasized the importance of outreach work: services cannot open their doors and expect women to come; rather, they must go into the community and involve women from the beginning.

Through information about the existing services for sex workers, many of which are staffed primarily by people with direct experience in the sex trade, the Commission heard that it helps to have experiential people providing education about the sex trade to officers and other workers.

In detailing the extensive good work already done by the community, community members referenced previous reports that aim to promote the safety of vulnerable and marginalized women, particularly women involved in the sex trade. Mary Clare Zak referred to the report provided to the Mayor of Vancouver and City Council in September 2011, entitled *Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Protecting Vulnerable Adults and Neighbourhoods: A Comprehensive Approach and Action Plan for the City of Vancouver*. The report was drafted in consultation with the community and provides recommendations to improve the safety of sex workers, including both survival sex workers and indoor sex workers. Susan Davis referenced the 2007 BC Coalition of Experiential Communities consultation project, *Confronting Bad Dates*, and its many recommendations, including to provide protection for everyone reporting violence, to provide a 1-800 number and red drop boxes for police reports, to make online bad date reporting available, and to prevent women from ending up on the street.

Members of different police services also talked about the current situation that affects the protection of women involved in the sex trade.

Members of the VPD discussed changes that have been made since 2002 and the Department's current approach to providing protection to women involved in the sex trade in the DTES, who are some of the most vulnerable community members.

As discussed by Inspector Mario Giardini, much of the VPD's efforts have focused on developing good communications and relationships with sex worker serving organizations and women involved in the sex trade, to break down barriers and build trust. The VPD has a Sex Industry Liaison Officer, Constable Linda Malcolm, whose focus is to develop trusting relationships with vulnerable women in the community. She can provide information to other officers in the VPD, such as the Beat Enforcement Team, to act on information she receives from the community to protect women. The VPD has also established the SisterWatch Project, comprising a number of initiatives and programs to protect vulnerable women in the DTES. It includes a 1-800 number, town halls, and a committee report. It also recently drafted a resource card, to be provided by police officers to vulnerable women, that provides contact information for agencies where women can receive support and assistance outside the police. The VPD also recently finished the Sex Trade Enforcement

draft guidelines. This evolving document was drafted in consultation with community partners and affirms the VPD's approach to issues of safety and violence against sex workers, including a commitment to ensure that those doing sex work are treated with dignity and respect.

To show its focus on community consultation, the VPD pointed to the Living in Community project, carried out in cooperation with sex worker organizations like WISH Drop In Centre Society, PACE Society, PEERS Vancouver, and the BC Coalition of Experiential Communities, as well as the VPD, the City of Vancouver, and Vancouver Coastal Health. The purpose of the Living in Community project is to make communities healthier and safer in relation to sex work and sexual exploitation. The VPD also referenced the City Project in Collingwood.

Members of the VPD commented on the ability of police officers to use discretion to not enforce warrants against women when they are reporting violence. They noted that although the police can and sometimes do use discretion, it is not uniform and does not happen in every case.

Members of the RCMP also spoke to the issue of preventing violence against women involved in the sex trade, providing information on many of the RCMP's policy changes and projects devoted to prevention or investigation of violence against, and disappearances and murders of, women involved in the sex trade. The projects include Project KARE and the Saskatchewan Provincial Partnership Committee on Missing Persons (which will be discussed later in this report). As discussed by Staff Sergeant Gerard MacNeil, Project KARE is a multi-jurisdictional operation that operates in Edmonton. The RCMP leads the project, partnering with the Edmonton Police Service. The project's role is to investigate, identify and apprehend persons responsible for the murder of vulnerable people. Its work includes a Proactive Team, a group of officers who have worked diligently to build trust in the community. They work with women involved in the sex trade in Edmonton to their gather personal information and DNA and collect it in a database. To date, the project has collected the information of over 1200 people. The Proactive Team recognizes the importance of consent and privacy in its work: the information and DNA samples belong to the women who gave them, and they can withdraw their consent at any time. While collecting this information, the Proactive Team talks with the women about activity on the street and in the community. They also often bring along workers from social service agencies or health agencies to provide support, assistance, and referrals to the women.

Members of the community expressed concern and in some cases dismay at the idea of collecting the DNA of vulnerable women; however, the RCMP believes it is an important aspect of Project KARE's work. Although it may be morbid, police face significant impediments when they lack DNA to identify victims and perpetrators. Officers involved in Project KARE believe the DNA database will ultimately contribute to promoting safety, because it will enable the police to identify perpetrators of crimes, thereby preventing further violence by that offender.

Project KARE also operates a website where it receives tips on crimes and provides information on missing persons. It works with police forces and medical examiners to link missing persons with found human remains. Its practices have evolved from the best practices of Project Evenhanded.

The RCMP also noted the existence of the Provincial Prostitution Unit, which is currently housed in the RCMP BC Missing Person Centre. The Unit works closely with sex trade workers to understand issues they face and to provide support and resources. The RCMP emphasized that prostitution is not confined to the DTES, but occurs across the province in many forms.

As a part of its dedication to community policing, the RCMP is working with community partners to promote the protection of women. For example, it is working closely with the Ending Violence Association of BC, a non-profit organization, on its policy and delivery of programs to address intimate relationship violence.

RCMP members also commented on their discretion not to enforce warrants outstanding on women reporting violence. They noted that police officers could be legally liable if a person were harmed after a police officer exercised discretion not to enforce on a warrant, just as if the person were in police custody at the time. However, RCMP officers also noted the importance in using discretion in the knowledge of how much it can impact on a woman's life: for example, for a woman who has exited prostitution, become sober, has child care problems and has a upcoming job interview, a bylaw ticket can potentially have cascading and far-reaching effects.

In her keynote address, Doreen Binder described an innovative approach to the issue of warrants taken at the new Bud Clark Commons a multi-use building that provides shelter, housing and many services run in Portland, Oregon by Transitions Project. Court sessions will be held at the Bud Clark Commons and residents will have the opportunity to be placed on the court docket specifically for the purpose of clearing warrants.

## Recommendations

The Community made a number of recommendations to the police about their policing priorities and how police should engage with vulnerable women involved in the sex trade:

- **Priorities**
  - Police must take violence against women seriously. (Kerry Porth)
  - The focus should be on arresting violent persons, not janes or johns. (Michele Giordano)
  - Police must address systemic bias. (Kerry Porth)
  - Law enforcement should expend more enforcement effort at the docks to prevent drug importation. (Terri Williams)
- **No enforcement of brothel laws to promote safety**
  - There should be more protection to prevent women from ending up on the street, including the reversal of anti-brothel laws and their enforcement. (Susan Davis)
  - The law should allow sex workers to work in licenced clubs so they can escape the dangers from working outside in the DTES. For example, the Forbidden City club should operate with a city license. (Jamie Lee Hamilton)
  - Police should use discretion in enforcing brothel provisions. They should communicate to see how complaints can be resolved. (Jamie Lee Hamilton)
- **Promote reporting**
  - Everyone should enjoy protection when they report violence. (Susan Davis)
  - There should be a 1-800 number for reporting violence. (Susan Davis)
  - Red light alert sheets should be left next to red drop boxes on the street for police reports. (Susan Davis)
  - There should be online bad date reporting. (Susan Davis)
- **Discretion for enforcement of warrants and related issues**
  - Police should exercise discretion over warrants not to charge women. (Ann Livingston)
  - Police should stop ticketing people for minor offences and waive charges to enable people to be witnesses or victims. (Ann Livingston)
  - Police should not put women in danger by pressuring them to testify against a dealer or pimp. (Ann Livingston)

- Outstanding warrants should be put aside when a person is reporting a violent crime. (Lori-Ann Ellis)
- Training and experience to counter bias and promote understanding
  - Police should take an interpersonal relations course that teaches you to deal with biases and your sense of self, as well as how not to de-humanize people different than you, and how to show empathy and compassion. (Rae-Lynne Dicks)
  - Attitudes of law enforcement personnel toward women involved in the sex trade (referring to them as “girls”) need to change from the top down. (Rae-Lynne Dicks)
  - There should be continuing teacher education for people who instruct crime analysts and police officers, to ensure that police training addresses gender issues, sexual assault, victim blaming, PTSD, coercion, and so on. There should be training to address the lack of information and the misinformation on power and gender-motivated crimes. (Krissy Darch)
  - Higher ranking officers should work on Hastings Street for one week every six months to see where resources would best be spent. (Lori-Ann Ellis)
  - Police officers should have to spend one shift in the DTES talking to women on the street. (Bonnie Fournier)
  - Police should work with drug user groups to humanize the problem and issue. (Erica Thomson)
  - Police should have to volunteer 100 hours at a mental health facility to learn how to handle mental illness non-violently. (Terri Williams)
  - Police should ride along in the health van or with Emergency Health Services, or walk along the stroll with a sex worker who is given an honorarium for each shift so that they can get to know the community/neighbourhood. (Bonnie Fournier)
- Trust-building, consultation and communication
  - To build trust, the police must begin with community consultation. (Mary Clare Zak)
  - Police must meet and talk directly with sex workers (as they used to in the 1990s at the Dufferin Hotel) on a regular basis, and not just work through agencies. (Jamie Lee Hamilton)
  - There should be communication to reassure women that their children will not be apprehended because they are involved in the sex trade. (Kerry Porth)
  - Police should meet people outside crisis situations to develop rapport. (Susan Davis)
  - Police officers should consistently talk to women on the street. (Bonnie Fournier)
- Placement and staffing
  - The VPD should add an additional Sex Industry Liaison Officer. (Mary Clare Zak)
  - A Native Liaison officer should work with the Sex Industry Liaison Officer. (Jamie Lee Hamilton and Mary Clare Zak)
  - A former sex worker should work with the Sex Industry Liaison Officer. (Jamie Lee Hamilton)
  - The VPD should stop sending new recruits to the DTES – we need more experience and age. (Kerry Porth)
  - I would like 50 Dave Dicksons out there. (Jamie Lee Hamilton)
  - We must have the right officers in the right positions – people who fit and like the job and service. (Erica Thomson)
- Refer women to support agencies
  - Police should distribute the card that lists support agencies, independent from police, on the back. (Maryam Majedi)
  - There should be more Car 87s (where a police officer and a nurse are partnered to give assistance to those with psychiatric problems). (Bonnie Fournier)
- Accountability
  - There should be acknowledgement and public investigation into accounts of police coercing women into sexual acts. (Krissy Darch)

Community members made recommendations about the use of DNA databases for women involved in the sex trade, specifically noting that many were not comfortable with the police housing such sensitive and personal information:

- Do not recommend police collect DNA from women. Rather, the police's focus should be more proactive and preventative. (Susan Davis)
- A service agency should run a voluntary database in which it collects contact information for women's families, where they usually go, and who they usually associate with. If a woman does not check in after agreed upon interval, then the agency will conduct an investigation to determine if she is missing. The investigation will be conducted as agreed upon by the woman, through a consultative process, for example, whether service organizations or friends should be contacted first. (Kerry Porth)

The recommendations also included recommendations to government to make changes to law, law enforcement, or the criminal justice system:

- Provincial government must provide leadership to include police across the metropolitan region, the government and the community and coordinate mechanisms to support sex workers. (Mary Clare Zak)
- All three levels of government – federal, provincial and municipal – must be involved. (Bonnie Fournier)
- Federal funding for gang prevention should include funding for prevention of sexual exploitation of children and youth. (Mary Clare Zak)
- For health and safety, there is a need to develop protocols with prisons, hospitals, health authorities not to allow people to go into withdrawal. (Mary Clare Zak)
- Law enforcement should employ a definition of "power based crimes" as a new category for enhanced sentencing provisions, to address difficulties in using the gender category in hate crimes because of the definition of hate. (Krissy Darch)
- Prostitution should be decriminalized to enable women to speak to police about violence against them. (Don Larson)

Many of the recommendations revolved around government provision of funding and services to promote the safety and health of women involved in the sex trade. These recommendations included increasing or establishing services, expanding funding for service agencies, providing training for those in health care, and creating education programs.

Recommendations to expand funding to increase supports to women involved in the sex trade were as follows:

- There must be operational, sustainable funding for service groups like WISH and a 24-hour shelter and drop-in centre for sex workers. (Michele Giordano, Mary Clare Zak, Dave Dickson, Inspector Giardini)
- Supports must be provided to those exiting the sex trade, including culturally appropriate and supported housing options. (Mary Clare Zak)
- WISH, or a similar organization with a proven track record, should be open 24 hours a day. (Dave Dickson)
- Drop-in centres must be open to people with drug addictions and mental illnesses. (Maryam Majedi)
- There is a need for a 24-hour low barrier shelter. (Mary Clare Zak)
- Services should be coordinated so a woman only needs to go to one place. (Rae-Lynne Dicks)

- It is important to have one central information resource for support and advocacy for women. (Michele Giordano)
- Sex workers need a cooperatively-run place, with community support, so women have a place to work that is safe. We need to find a way to honour the choice to be in the sex trade. (Susan Davis)
- Expand the “Stop the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth Week” and reinstate funding for community partnerships on these issues (Mary Clare Zak)
- Reinstate the Assistant Deputy Minister Committee on Prostitution (Mary Clare Zak)
- Establish a provincial body and pool resources, to include Surrey and other areas. (Joy Ward Dockrey)
- Governments should provide bridge funding for central sources to link agencies. (Michele Giordano)

Recommendations were also made to increase the social safety net for vulnerable and marginalized people:

- Welfare rates should be increased. (Jamie Lee Hamilton)
- The options women have regarding housing and welfare need to be increased. (Ann Livingston)

Many of the recommendations focused on expanding health care services, in particularly focusing on drug treatment and mental health services:

- Work is needed on health care strategy, creating awareness with committees. (Michele Giordano)
- Access to health care should include access to mental health treatment. Mental health treatment should be better, and there should be more mental health treatment facilities. (Mary Clare Zak and Jamie Lee Hamilton)
- Mental health treatment facilities that were formerly available should be re-opened. (Bonnie Fournier)
- Work should be done to identify how primary care and detox can be safer and accessible for sex workers. (Mary Clare Zak)
- Drug treatment and detox for sex workers should be available on demand. (Jamie Lee Hamilton)
- More detox beds for women should be opened up. (Lori-Ann Ellis)
- There should be more addiction treatment options to refer people to. (Bonnie Fournier)
- Health services should provide safe, medicated detox. (Erica Thomson)
- The government must re-evaluate drug treatment and provide more programs; in particular, look at methadone treatment, heroin prescription, and stimulant replacement. (Ann Livingston)
- The government should allow additional community-run safe injection sites to be established. (Ann Livingston)
- There is a need for a forum on drug addiction and available treatments. (Ann Livingston)
- Insite or other experienced agency should be used as a hub to provide treatment/services for addiction. (Bonnie Fournier)

Community members also made recommendations aimed at making the DTES a safer place for women:

- The City must play a role in making changes, such as providing more lighting where people in the sex trade work and establishing the task force promised in 2008. (Jamie Lee Hamilton)
- The City should provide safe access to 911 in the DTES, including 911 cell phones. (Terri Williams)
- The City should provide “smack phones” (emergency buttons that record fingerprints), payphones and licence plate cameras in the DTES. (Lori-Ann Ellis)

Speakers made recommendations that focused on providing education and awareness to combat stigma and prevent violence against women:

- Men must be given the message to stop beating and raping women. (Kerry Porth)



- There should be education about who is involved in the sex trade: not solely women, but males and transgendered people. (Jamie Lee Hamilton)
- Training should be given to health care providers working in emergency rooms about patient care with respect to interactions with sex workers. Experiential people should be involved in training, development and implementation of protocols. (Mary Clare Zak)
- There should be education to combat stigma. (Susan Davis)
  - Education should not focus on preventing people from becoming involved in the sex trade because that perpetuates stigma: it teaches children that people in the sex trade are “unsavable.”
  - Education should honour choices to be involved in the sex trade and promote safety.
  - Educational programs should talk about sex workers on equal terms. The focus should not always be on living a “high risk lifestyle”; police or soldiers are also high risk, and also suffer from PTSD.
- Awareness programs for youth about how to protect themselves should be developed. Expansion of ongoing programs for at-risk youth, particularly those for Aboriginal youth, such as the Roving Leaders and Red Fox programs. (Mary Clare Zak)

Both the VPD and the RCMP expressed that a focus on breaking down barriers to communication and establishing and building trust with the community was necessary.

Many of the specific recommendations from the police revolved around recommendations for increased funding for specific police initiatives and establishing provincial standards or programs:

- VPD
  - More funding is needed to expand the Sex Trade Liaison Officer’s position and to include a culturally based liaison position. (Inspector Mario Giardini)
  - There should be more coordination with other police departments across Canada. (Inspector Mario Giardini)
  - There should be a national 1-800 number to serve as a centralized contact point for missing persons for the purpose of reporting, inquiries, and tips. (Inspector Mario Giardini)
  - There should be changes in law and the establishment of a provincial standard so police officers do not have to act on warrants in cases when sexual assault or violence is being reported, but also do not use discretion inconsistently. (Inspector Mario Giardini)
- RCMP
  - Additional funding should be made available provincially and federally for community and Aboriginal policing throughout BC. (Superintendent Paul Richards)
  - Consider an amnesty day like “firearm freedom day” for warrants, so women can come forward and have warrants dealt with and avoid situations of non-reporting because of outstanding warrants. (Superintendent Paul Richards)
  - Police officers should enjoy protection from liability using common sense to not enforce outstanding warrants. (Superintendent Paul Richards)
  - Legislators should encourage front line officers to use discretion in enforcement, because using it wisely can be lifesaving. (Staff Sergeant Gerard MacNeil)

Police officers also made recommendations about the need for funding for social services, and specifically recommended a number of police or community based initiatives:

- There should be a Facebook registry for bad dates. (Detective Constable Judy Robertson)

- There should be a voluntary reporting database system, designed to respect women's privacy: if there has been no contact for 30 or 60 days, check to see if they are okay. (Detective Constable Judy Robertson)
- There should be regionalization and integration of support services: WISH could expand into other communities. (Detective Constable Judy Robertson)
- There should be education for girls in grade 11 and 12 about survival sex prostitution. (Detective Constable Judy Robertson)
- There should be more housing options for women. (Detective Constable Judy Robertson)
- Sustainable funding for groups trying to do this work is needed. (Inspector Mario Giardini)

### ***B) Preventing Violence against Aboriginal and Rural Women***

As noted previously, Aboriginal women and rural women are at extreme risk of all forms of violence, including serial predation. Aboriginal women in Canada are at particular risk as a result of the legacy of colonialism and racism exemplified in forced assimilationist policies, including the residential school system. This forum was conceived to address how rural and Aboriginal women and communities could be more involved with the design and implementation of policies to protect women, as well as the crime strategies that could be used to explore the connection between missing women in the urban and rural contexts.

#### **Context**

During the policy forums, violence against Aboriginal women was a recurrent thread. At the same time, many Aboriginal groups boycotted the policy forums, meaning that few Aboriginal women spoke during Policy Forum 1B. Many of the comments about Aboriginal women's experiences were not necessarily made during this specific forum, but occurred during the discussion of other topics. Nonetheless, in order to provide a more comprehensive treatment of this important issue, comments on Aboriginal women's safety are grouped and discussed below. In addition, ad hoc counsel for the Commission, Linda Locke, Q.C., conducted a consultation in the Northwest BC to bring the views of those communities to the Commission. She provided a brief summary of her report at the forums. For more information on her consultations, please see her report.<sup>4</sup>

Speakers from the community talked passionately about the legacy of colonialism and ongoing discriminatory treatment and hardships suffered by Aboriginal peoples in Canada. Kelly White referred to the "apartheid" in Canada that Aboriginal people live in. Community members discussed the legacy of residential schools and the ongoing removal of Aboriginal children from their families by the government. They stated that injustices against Aboriginal people continue and are perpetuated by various means: the court system which requires Aboriginal people to engage in the adversarial process to establish their rights over their ancestral lands; the government's failure to abide by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; and the poor conditions on reserves, which feature diminished access to clean water and adequate nutrition, poor housing, and inadequate or unavailable education. Individuals spoke movingly about how the injustices suffered by Aboriginal people have contributed to their deaths and high rates of alcoholism and addiction. They noted that many of the missing and murdered women were adopted or separated from their families and lands, and perhaps alienated from their cultures and roots.

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<sup>4</sup> Available at: [www.missingwomeninquiry.ca/reports-andpublications/](http://www.missingwomeninquiry.ca/reports-andpublications/).

Speakers also stated that without fair and equitable treaties and the affirmation of their rights and title to their land, without peace and reconciliation, Aboriginal people would continue to migrate to the DTES and to suffer from alcoholism and drug addiction. Aboriginal people do not want an industry of help, the Commission heard, but equality, land and resources.

The Commission heard from community members that Aboriginal people are still subject to discrimination in Canada. An example of discrimination was provided by Marianna Ussner. She spoke of the designation of status under the *Indian Act*: she stated that recognizing status in some Aboriginal people while denying it to others is discrimination, because it pits Aboriginal people against one another. Inequitable historical rules about how status is conferred and loss or destruction of documents proving status has meant that recognition of Indian status is uneven and arbitrary.

Aboriginal women are subject to a particular type of bias, which renders them more vulnerable to violence. Speakers stated that Aboriginal women are depicted in media and society as lesser people. For example, Ann-Marie Livingston noted the use of derogatory terms like “drunk Indian” and “drunken Aboriginal prostitute.” Professor Lisa Monchalin also spoke on this topic, stating that Aboriginal women are presented as extremely sexualized, reinforcing the notion of white male dominance over Native women. The sexist and discriminatory attitude to Aboriginal women makes them particularly vulnerable to the culture of sexualization of women. It was said that violence against First Nations women is embedded in the psyche of Canada.

Community members talked about the suffering of the children of the missing and murdered women: how they have suffered the loss of their mothers and, in addition, how many have suffered as generational residential school survivors. Ann-Marie Livingston, herself a child of a missing woman, Elsie Sebastian, stated that many families may have an ingrained sense of dysfunction and tragedy.

Ann Livingston also warned that Aboriginal people are particularly vulnerable to criminalization. Because they are offered nothing by conventional society, they will take the offers that are given to them by criminalized society to participate in gangs and violence.

Aboriginal people have a fear and distrust of authority, and in particular of police and government. This often centres on a fear of child apprehension: because of the legacy of residential schools and the high child apprehension rates among Aboriginal families, and the trauma the parents and children experience when the child is removed from care, there is great fear that interactions with authority in general, but in particular with the police and Ministries of Social Development and Children and Family Development, will result in removals of children.

Community speakers spoke about the continuing challenges in the relationship between Aboriginal and rural communities and the RCMP. Relationships in communities that are served by distant RCMP detachments are characterized by distrust, because the police will only attend the community in dire or extreme circumstances. Further, community members said that the RCMP uses small, Aboriginal communities as training grounds for new officers. This contributes to strained relationships, as new recruits may come with trepidation or fear of Aboriginal people; it also contributes to a police culture characterized by lack of respect and integrity. Speakers commented that six months of training for new recruits was insufficient to instill knowledge about power and abuse. Issues were also raised about First Nations governance and Aboriginal policing.

Community members noted that moving forward to ensure the protection of Aboriginal and rural women will require respect, honesty, and transparency on both the community side and the police side.

The RCMP acknowledged the ongoing challenges they face in policing Aboriginal communities. Importantly, the RCMP acknowledged its challenges in working with the community because of its history as a colonial police force. Ongoing challenges include ensuring there are enough resources in Aboriginal communities to deliver specialized programs, such as drug and alcohol addiction programs, culture-based programs that recognize the importance of cultural awareness and elder wisdom, and youth education programs to avoid violence, to ensure the communities are as healthily as possible. The RCMP resource allocation to community and Aboriginal policing must be balanced with resources for front line policing.

The RCMP has 117 First Nations police officers in BC. It has recruitment programs for Aboriginal cadets and youth. It is also working on cultural orientation within its ranks; however, there is still work to be done. It has a required online training course for officers to assist them in understanding Aboriginal perspectives. It also has an Aboriginal perspectives course done on-site for police officers, ECOMM operators and other personnel, which is delivered by a First Nations company. The course provides information on various issues facing First Nations communities, such as the legacy of residential schools, poverty, and sexism.

RCMP officers stated that many experienced officers work in rural communities in the North West, including in Hazelton. Most officers want to remain in those communities after being posted there. The RCMP mostly hears of positive experiences between the community and officers.

The RCMP is working to engage with Aboriginal communities, specifically with elders and youth. It uses community resource tool kits to ensure service delivery in a culturally sensitive manner. For example, it partnered with the Native Women Association of Canada's Sisters in Spirit initiative to create and deliver a tool kit about prevention of violence against First Nations women.

The RCMP discussed challenges that Aboriginal people face transitioning from rural to urban environments. They specifically noted that lack of community supports for those people. This informs the RCMP's position that missing person reports from persons other than family members, for example, roommates, must be considered as significant as reports from family members. The RCMP also noted the unique impact on rural families when a loved one goes missing after leaving for the city: it is as if the city itself had swallowed her up.

Police officers also noted challenges in policing with regard to urban Aboriginal women. One noted that when she locates a missing Aboriginal woman on the street, often the woman does not want to return to the group home from which she went missing. Police try to provide women with other options where possible.

## Recommendations

Members of the community had a number of recommendations for the police about how they could improve the safety of Aboriginal and rural women:

- There needs to be continued acknowledgement of the sensitive issues of racism and poverty. (Ann-Marie Livingston)
- There needs to be a positive relationship with police and improved response time in rural communities. (Ann-Marie Livingston)
- RCMP detachments should work with an Aboriginal person as a community liaison. (Ann-Marie Livingston)

- Models for missing person investigations must integrate police and community resources because other agencies/people can assist to solve investigations; we need to enhance grass roots actions and ways to enable grassroots group to work with police (Ann Livingston)
- We need to provide support for Aboriginal tribal policing for reserves and rural communities. (Joy Ward Dockrey)
- We need to build unity between us so we can show respect both ways. (Don Larson)

Community members also had recommendations regarding supports and programs needed to improve Aboriginal women's safety, provided by government and community organizations.

- There should be a national strategy to prevent violence against Aboriginal women (Professor Lisa Monchalin)
  - Training for police and government is needed, to shift their thinking about Native women.
  - There should be a personal responsibility centre led by Aboriginal people and people affected by violence – a leadership hub to coordinate efforts of prevention, to integrate all supports/services.
  - We should continue to collect and evaluate data.
  - Anti-violence efforts need a bottom-up approach.
- We need to create and fund Aboriginal-focused and accessible child care, including after school care programs. (Mary Clare Zak)
- There should be more outreach centres and community centres outside the DTES. (Gunargie O'Sullivan)
- We need to create programs for drug and alcohol resistance, tailored to the Aboriginal community, for youth in school. (Rae-Lynne Dicks)
- We must provide healthy supportive environments for young Aboriginal people so they can develop self-esteem and a chance for bright futures. (Marianna Ussner)
- When a person, particularly a First Nations person, takes steps to seek help, she must be taken seriously. (Gunargie O'Sullivan)
- There should be two aggressive campaigns, one that focuses on providing facilities for heavily addicted people, from detox to living spaces after treatment, and another aimed at youth in schools to combat drug use. (Elizabeth Hunt)
- Services should be provided, through the federal government and the city, for families, youth and individuals making transitions from rural to urban environments. (Mary Clare Zak)

The police mainly limited their remarks to the current situation they face in policing Aboriginal communities. However, police officers made a few recommendations about training and the need for education and more supports for Aboriginal communities:

- Police should implement training programs about the traditions of Aboriginal people, online and in person, to be taken regularly rather than one time only. (Detective Constable Judy Robertson)
- RCMP
  - Education tools within First Nations communities should be developed by First Nations people, to make communities safer. (Superintendent Paul Richards)
  - Education needs to recognize both the cultural piece, to ameliorate feelings of dislocation and separation from traditional culture, and education about risks. (Superintendent Paul Richards)
  - Poverty and lack of safe housing and basic necessities must be addressed; education and awareness alone will not get us where we need to go. (Superintendent Jim Gresham)

### ***C) Building Strong Police-Community Relationships***

This forum was designed to explore what proactive policing strategies could be used to address the sometimes uneasy relationships that exist between police and communities and how implementation of these strategies could contribute to increased safety for vulnerable and marginalized women. In particular, participants were asked to provide concrete input about activities that police could engage in with community to build trust and about changes to training and recruitment.

#### **Context**

A constant theme of Forum 1 was the need to improve the relationship between marginalized communities and the police. Particularly with respect to women involved in the sex trade and Aboriginal women, historical relations with police had resulted in an atmosphere of distrust.

Many comments from the community emphasized the need for the affected community groups to be consulted by the police on safety and policing matters from the start. Susan Davis noted that, in the past, the lack of consultation with the affected people had led to the policing conducting initiatives that adversely affected those people's safety. Speakers noted that in the past, meetings and initiatives to improve the safety of sex workers often excluded sex workers from participating. However, it appeared that police were becoming increasingly aware of the need for community consultation. Two consultative processes were mentioned and praised. The development of the draft Sex Trade Enforcement Guidelines had enabled the VPD and women involved in the sex trade to learn about one another, and therefore enabled women to more easily understand and accept police enforcement actions. The Living in Community project similarly had included participation of a wide range of organizations, including the police, about the safety of sex workers. However, Jamie Lee Hamilton also noted that police now often meet with groups that provide services to or advocate for sex workers, but not with sex workers directly, even though they are the ones who can best explain their situations and how police can help.

Some community members made general comments about the police-community relationship. Jamie Lee Hamilton mentioned that police had improved greatly and that many go beyond the call of duty; those officers should be commended. Don Larson noted that there was still a division between the community and police: both look at each other unequally. Ann Livingston specifically commented that the relationship between police and drug users is not positive, and the police would not provide enforcement statistics like CompStat to the drug-user group VANDU.

Police officers also provided contextual remarks relating to their efforts to improve their relationships with the community.

Staff Sergeant Gerard MacNeil of the RCMP remarked that, in building community partnerships, police often have to go further than halfway, because members of the community might be unwilling to be engaged. The RCMP provided information on its many community policing programs around the province, programs which take many forms depending on the community's size. Echoing members of the community, RCMP officer Superintendent Paul Richards noted that the key to developing positive relationships was consultation, specifically the RCMP's use of community consultative groups, which meet regularly so the police can understand the community's policing priorities. The RCMP seeks wide representation from the community in these groups, to get a broad range of views. The RCMP is also involved in Community-Tripartite Agreements: First Nations communities draw up letters of expectation about how the community will be policed and the

communities meet with the government regularly to ensure these priorities are being met. A number of other community projects were given as examples of the RCMP's engagement with communities, and included the DARE program, Aboriginal Shield program, and the 911 phone project in Surrey.

The VPD similarly spoke of its projects to promote good community-police relationships. These included SisterWatch, which has done a lot of good work with its community partners, women's groups in the DTES. Sergeant Anne Fawcett mentioned the Domestic Violence and Criminal Harassment Unit, which has made 911 phones available to women. However, she also acknowledged that much more work is needed: for example, the Domestic Violence and Criminal Harassment Unit only works with a small percentage of affected women; most affected women do not have access to services. The VPD believes that more community partnerships are needed.

Individual police officers commented on approaches they believe work for developing rapport with communities, or, in particular, vulnerable and marginalized women. Constable Judy Robertson noted that wearing plain clothes rather than her uniform had helped her develop rapport with community members. She also noted that it is important for police to meet women where they are comfortable; for example, if women are not comfortable talking on the street, police officers should be willing to go, for example, into a coffee shop. On the other hand, Dave Dickson commented that he had always attended community functions in his uniform: he believed resistance to his uniform was a barrier he had to break down. Furthermore, he stated that if police only appear in uniform when they are acting in an enforcement role, community members may only see police officers in their role arresting people, and not engaging with the community in other ways.

## Recommendations

A number of the community recommendations included enforcement priorities, and ways in which the police could promote reporting by vulnerable women:

- The criminal justice system should not prioritize failures to attend or other procedural offences. (Ann Livingston)
- Police should avoid criminalizing people. (Ann Livingston)
- The police should stop enforcing "petty" laws in the DTES and focus on serious violent offences. (Lori-Ann Ellis)
- A community car with a staff member and police officer in plain clothes is needed to respond to complaints from sex workers. (Susan Davis)
- There is a need for a liaison person to operate between police and sex workers, a liaison who is not related to the police department. (Lori-Ann Ellis)
- A community safety officer should take reports of violence against women. (Terri Williams)
- There should be a 1-800 line for individuals in the sex trade to report to who are fearful to report. (Jamie Lee Hamilton)

Community speakers also recommended the police should provide education and referrals to at-risk women:

- Police should teach techniques to women about how to physically protect themselves and do environmental scans for safety. (Susan Davis)
- Police policy and procedures manuals should be revised to give officers tools to refer people to organizations, demonstrating movement from enforcement to protection. (Susan Davis)

Community members also recommended that police use consultative processes going forward, to develop positive relationships with the communities they serve:

- The Sex Work Enforcement Guideline process conducted by the VPD and community groups should be replicated around the province. (Susan Davis)
- Police or government should not take any broad enforcement actions without consulting the people affected, an approach that will build trust and understanding. (Susan Davis)
- There should be a collaborative working group with the VPD, organizations, and current sex workers or former sex workers that meets every month or two months. (Jamie Lee Hamilton)

A number of community recommendations focused on general engagement with the community, to develop positive relationships through social engagement and community focused initiatives:

- Police officers should attend and host social functions, like neighbourhood barbeques, to develop relationships. (Lori-Ann Ellis)
- We need a community policing office that is community focused, staffed by civilians with experience on issues such as drug addiction and mental illness, which has a separate entrance and space for women only. (Kerry Porth)
- Police need to invest more in community based policing, through relationships between individual patrol officers and community members. This should be fostered through supporting and allowing officers to work in one geographical area when officers want to work with the community. (Kerry Porth)

Police officers also had recommendations to improve their relationships with the community, focusing on specific initiatives and general approaches.

- Have some plain clothes patrol officers who approach women to develop relationships. (Detective Constable Judy Robertson)
- We must balance arrests with building relationships and educate police that their jobs are not all about arrest statistics. (Detective Constable Judy Robertson)
- The community, not the police, must determine community policing models. (Dave Dickson)
- Community policing offices should not be staffed by 14 officers and one civilian. (Dave Dickson)
- VPD
  - Community town hall meetings must be community-led; police should ask the community what issues they want to discuss. (Inspector Marcie Flamand)
  - Police need not only to come to the table, but to act and show that we are acting. (Inspector Airth)
  - Town hall meetings should be community driven. (Inspector Cita Airth)
  - Police must go more than half way; ask community to do the same. (Inspector Cita Airth)
- RCMP
  - It is important to have the right people for the environment and the job; that must be determined by managers who are responsible for assessing officers. (Staff Sergeant Gerard MacNeil)

## Forum 2: Vulnerable and Intimidated Witnesses in the Criminal Justice Process

Vulnerable and marginalized women not only face barriers in accessing the protection of the police, they also face barriers engaging with the criminal justice process in general. Beyond reporting violence, women may be unable or unwilling to act as witnesses in trials, or may suffer negative consequences such as re-traumatization or retribution if they do participate. While a number of services and protections are available



to witnesses before and during trials, it is not clear if they are regularly used or sufficient to adequately support traumatized and reluctant witnesses. Additionally, stigma continues to affect the credibility of those who are drug-addicted or involved in the sex trade. This forum aimed to look at how best practices already in use could be expanded and what additional changes are needed to enable more witness participation in the criminal justice process.

## Context

Speakers from the community identified barriers that prevent women from participating in the criminal justice process, including fear of being identified as a sex worker or a drug addict. Ann Livingston noted that women may be put in danger if they are forced to act as witnesses, for example, if police pick up women who are girlfriends of drug dealers or gang members to force them to testify. Maryam Majedi noted that, without support services, women who are forced to testify in court will lie or recant.

Because women do not trust the police, the criminal justice system cannot successfully address crimes against women. Michele Giordano stated that, to participate, women must have an advocate and support systems.

If women do attempt to participate in the criminal justice process, they may face barriers in accessing and benefiting from Victim Service supports. Women involved in the sex trade who are victims of crime may not be eligible for programs through Victim Services, because harms must be attributable to a specific traumatic incident; according to Susan Davis, sex workers who have experienced multiple rapes by multiple perpetrators may be “too raped” to qualify for supports. She said there were also concerns that sex workers are too greedy and will claim too much compensation. Mary Clare Zak also echoed the concern that sex workers may not have the same access to support services, particularly counselling, that other victims do. Specially, there may be barriers to accessing Victim Services depending where such offices are located: for example, Ann Livingston commented that criminalized populations will not go into a police station to access support.

Staff workers from support organizations provided information on services that are presently available to women to support them through the criminal justice process outside police-based Victim Services and the barriers that women continue to face. For example, Erica Thomson told of how the Warm Zone in Abbotsford provides women with ongoing support throughout their participation in the criminal justice process. Front line workers accompany women during interviews, a necessary element in maintaining the trust relationship between the women and the agency, and provide information to Crown counsel about the special measures required to support the woman during her appearance in court. Front line workers from the Warm Zone have addressed courts, providing information about services accessed by women and about considerations for sentencing offenders. The Warm Zone also advocates for women’s interests in the criminal justice process generally: its members sit on violence against women committees with criminal justice partners and work with specialized police units such as the Domestic Violence Unit.

The Surrey Women’s Centre also provides support to women during their participation in the criminal justice process. For example, it is a part of the Surrey Mobile Assault Response Team to provide support to women with other agencies, such as forensic nurse examiners and outreach workers.

Associate Chief Justice Nancy Phillips from the Provincial Court spoke about vulnerable and intimidated women in the criminal justice process, providing the perspective of judges. She noted that judges were aware

of these issues: judges regularly work on cases that include vulnerable witnesses and individuals who have challenges regarding mental health, literacy and language, for example. She also noted that judges are a part of the community too, and, like other people count vulnerable people among their families and friends. She provided information on the judicial education: she reported that provincial court judges receive five days of mandatory training every year, and the Canadian Association of Provincial Court Judges has an equality and diversity chair to ensure education and training on these issues at a national level.

Support to victims in their engagement in the criminal justice process is often provided by Victim Services. In BC, Victim Services is a part of Victim Services and Crime Prevention and is governed by the *Victims of Crime Act*. Services are split between 69 independent, community-based Victim Service agencies and 93 police Victim Service Units. Community Victim Service agencies have non-disclosure policies, meaning information about crimes disclosed is kept confidential; on the other hand, police Victim Service units must report all crimes to police.

The Commission heard from a number of Victim Service workers about the issue of vulnerable and intimidated witnesses in the criminal justice process. Police should refer victims to Victim Services when a crime occurs, but sometimes they do not. However, victims do not have to wait for the police: they can refer themselves through VictimLink, a website with a 1-800 number. As noted by Beverly Coles, a former Victim Service worker, the purpose of Victim Services is not to judge, but to remove the impediments to a victim's participation in the criminal justice system. Fiona Flanagan, an RCMP Witness Coordination Services Unit manager, explained that Victim Service workers should meet with victims early in the process to begin developing a trusting relationship. Victim Service workers explain the process, show victims the courtroom, and do anything else that needs to be done to assist victims to participate, such as helping them to find appropriate clothes to appear in court and helping to arrange child care. Victim Service workers provide emotional support, court support, and referral to other services: they do not provide counseling, but do refer victims to counselors. Victim Services also offers cultural and sensitivity training to sheriffs and police officers.

Some Victim Service workers acknowledged that Victim Services does not meet the needs of all victims. Victim Service programs are struggling to support victims with insufficient funding. For example, Victim Service coordinator Kim Gramlich noted that other provinces offered excellent and innovative programs that BC Victim Services is not able to offer due to lack of funding. There are programs for witness accommodation that Victim Service workers would like to make available and hope to see in the future. One example of a new program that some would like to see expanded is a Victim Service Trauma K-9 named Caber. An affectionate yellow Labrador retriever, Caber is the first Trauma K-9 in Canada. His job is to support victims and witnesses, which he can do in ways that humans perhaps cannot.

Victim Service workers identified barriers to the use of special measures for vulnerable and intimidated witnesses. One noted that Crown counsel do not consistently use the services and accommodations available for vulnerable and intimidated witness; some have told Victim Service workers not to mention the measures available to victims. Maryam Majedi, a staff member of the Surrey Women's Centre, also reported another barrier: some women do not trust Victim Services.

Police officers also discussed the situation facing vulnerable and intimidated witnesses in the criminal justice system. Officers noted that re-victimization of vulnerable witnesses by the criminal justice system is a barrier to reporting and contributes to victims' lack of trust that police will act on complaints. One must consider the

system the victim is facing, which includes high charge approval standards and the requirement to undergo cross-examination if the person testifies.

Police provided the Commission with information on current processes to help vulnerable women participate in the criminal justice system, including Victim Services. For example, the VPD Domestic Violence and Criminal Harassment Unit helps women navigate the process and provides support after it is finished. The RCMP will approve an integrated Victim Service worker for small RCMP detachments that do not have Victim Service Units. For large Victim Service projects, the RCMP receives special funding to ensure victims have the support they need. For example, for Project Evenhanded, Freda Ens and Marilyn Johnson from the Native Friendship Centre were hired full-time to provide support during the pre-trial phase, the Pickton trial and the appeals. In addition, families were provided with resources for travel, healing ceremonies, and emotional support. The Highway of Tears investigation also includes a large Victim Service component, which is working closely with grassroots organizations to provide support to families.

Some officers discussed a holistic approach to providing support that included the community as a whole. VPD Inspector Cita Airth noted that an entire community can be victimized because of the stories that are told. She noted that town hall meetings are a way to dispel myths and rumours and promote community healing. There are other methods to provide holistic, coordinated approaches: Inspector Cita Airth noted that child advocacy centres are provided for child abuse and sexual abuse victims; and RCMP Superintendent Paul Richards referenced sentencing circles that are used in the Yukon.

## Recommendations

Community speakers and Victim Service workers made recommendations for police and community agencies to provide comprehensive support to women while reporting crimes and participating in the criminal justice process. These recommendations encompassed making referrals to support services and ensuring there are more support services, and changing rules about cross-examination during trial:

- Victims and witnesses should be asked what they need for support. (Beverly Coles)
- Police should bring trauma counselors when attending a victim of crime. (Terri Williams)
- On a card given to victims and witnesses, police should provide contact information to crisis services to facilitate women being supported in safe environments where they will not be afraid to talk and get support. (Maryam Majedi)
- The government should provide comprehensive funding so groups can work together to provide support. (Erica Thomson)
- Resources should be allocated to “soft-service” community groups to support the work of police. (Ann Livingston)
- Safe housing with full resources to support vulnerable witnesses should be available during and after the process. (Erica Thomson and Beverly Coles)
- Support services should be created to assist sex workers through the justice system and specifically ensure they have access to trauma counseling. (Susan Davis)
- Police, lawyers, and Victim Service workers must work together so that the victim can go to any part of the team for support. (Beverly Coles)
- The government should conduct a review of Victim Fine Surcharges and use some of those funds for support of witnesses. (Kim Gramlich)
- The government should provide greater core funding for Victim Services. (Kim Gramlich)
- Witness trial accommodations available should be expanded. One such example is to provide Victim Service Trauma Kits. (Kim Gramlich)

- The need for accommodations should be emphasized with Crown counsel and judges. (Kim Gramlich)
- Victims with addictions should be allowed to take maintenance doses while they are at court. (Beverly Coles)
- The accused should not cross-examine a vulnerable or intimidated witness. (Beverly Coles)
- Testimonial accommodations should be easily available and witnesses should not be cross-examined on their need for accommodation. (Beverly Coles)
- The scope of cross-examination of vulnerable victims should be limited and there should be an opportunity to debrief with victims afterwards. (Beverly Coles)

Professor Christine Boyle also made a number of recommendations for amendments to Crown counsel policy as laid out in the BC Crown Counsel Manual, to ensure that prosecutorial decisions respect the equality rights of vulnerable and intimidated witnesses.

- The Ministry of Justice should consider adopting a good general statement about the importance of equality in the BC Crown Counsel manual, something similar to the one in the Ontario manual.
- It should be possible to ask for more reasons for Crown decisions, particularly in vulnerable witness cases; more statistics could be gathered about Crown decisions, particularly for categories of vulnerable witnesses; existing systems of accountability could be more effective.
- There should be explicit inclusion of equality as a fundamental criterion in charging decisions.
- BC's charge approval standard is currently one of the highest in Canada. It should be lowered from "substantial likelihood of success" to "reasonable likelihood of success," which is the standard in other provinces.
- There should be direction in Crown policy to prosecutors not to pre-judge credibility specifically in cases involving violence against women and prostituted women.
- There should be provision in Crown policy about the importance of providing appropriate supports for vulnerable witnesses.
- Mandatory training on equality should be required for all Crown prosecutors.

Police officers also made a number of recommendations to promote the participation of vulnerable and intimidated witnesses in the criminal justice process.

- Victim Services should be integrated to ensure the Victim Service worker does not change while the victim is dealing with the police or Crown counsel. (Detective Constable Judy Robertson)
- VPD
  - Consider a holistic, integrated child advocacy centre model to provide integrated and coordinated services to vulnerable adults. (Inspector City Airth)

### Forum 3: Improving Missing Person Practices

#### ***A) Accepting and Investigating Missing Person Reports***

Policy Forum 3 focused on options for improving the initiation and conduct of investigations of missing women and suspected multiple homicides. The Commission's research identified a number of potential areas for reform aimed at improving police policies and practices. These included the definition and categorization of missing persons; reporting requirements; initial response; investigation; obtaining, recording, sharing and disclosing information; long-term missing person cases; cold cases; and closing missing person cases. Possible improvements for discussion included greater standardization of police practices, use of risk assessments and protocols to identify missing persons at risk, introduction of different investigative techniques, and analysis of missing person data.

## Context

Community members related continuing problems making missing person reports. Ann Livingston noted that in 2000 and 2001, the police were still not accepting missing person reports for vulnerable and marginalized women, and there are ongoing problems reporting someone to whom the complainant is not closely related missing. Lori-Ann Ellis cited concerns about confusions over police jurisdiction in missing person cases, increasing confusion to reportee and family members about where to report a given missing person; lack of standardization among police agencies about information to gather during reporting; police recognition of risk in some missing person cases; and lack of regular and effective reviews of ongoing missing person investigations.

The VPD provided the Commission with an overview of its current missing person practices, with particular emphasis on efforts it has made to address reports of vulnerable and marginalized missing women.

Missing women from the DTES are now considered the highest risk. Other high-risk categories include children, elderly persons, marginalized people, and Aboriginal women.

Patrol officers conduct the initial investigations of missing persons.

Once a missing person report is received, it will be reviewed by one of four duty officers who are assigned full-time to provide oversight within the VPD. The duty officer will ensure adequate resources are applied to the initial investigation, before the Missing Person Unit is involved. For example, if the missing person is a sex trade worker, they will consider whether the absence is normal for her and will send an officer to WISH to determine if she has been seen. For ground searches, they will sometimes use the Search and Canvass team and have access to an RCMP helicopter if necessary. A photograph of the missing person will be requested so a press release is ready immediately.

The file is prepared before it is transferred to the Missing Person Unit, if the person remains missing. However, missing person cases with potential foul play are immediately referred to the Homicide Unit.

The VPD Missing Person Unit is composed of one sergeant, two detectives, one civilian coordinator and one liaison detective. Missing Person Unit officers are specifically chosen for their aptitude; VPD members spoke about the importance of having the right people to work in the system. This includes having the right manager: the sergeant managing the unit must allow officers to develop relationships with the community.

The Missing Person Unit is also available to provide advice on initial investigations: Missing Person Unit investigators are frequently called out at night or called to provide advice to patrol sergeants or duty officers.

The VPD ensures missing person investigations are regularly reviewed. Outstanding missing person cases are reviewed regularly, internally by the Homicide Unit and occasionally by external agencies. In addition, the inspector in charge of the Major Crime Section is briefed every morning on outstanding missing person cases; they are also discussed during the morning meeting with the Chief Constable and VPD executive.

Inspector Brad Desmarais reported that missing person investigations are proactive, with specific and aggressive investigative techniques used. Missing person investigations have one of the highest profiles within the VPD.

The VPD has a 99.9% solve rate for missing person cases. In 2010, the VPD received 3690 missing person reports; three remain outstanding. In 2012, it received 3507 reports, of which three are outstanding.

The VPD will never turn away a missing person complaint based on jurisdiction. If jurisdiction is unclear, the VPD will investigate the report in the first instance. A VPD regional duty officer may also discuss the case with the RCMP regional duty officer to determine jurisdiction. However, the VPD noted that there continue to be jurisdictional challenges in the Lower Mainland. Under the current approach, jurisdiction is determined where the missing person was last seen: in a case where sightings of the missing person are continually coming forward, jurisdiction may be transferred along to various jurisdictions, as the place the person was last seen changes. In such a case, jurisdiction continues to change without any police department conducting a fulsome investigation.

Although the VPD has made many changes resulting from the missing women investigations, Chief Constable Chu is concerned that other, smaller police agencies may continue to make those same mistakes.

RCMP officers also provided an overview of the RCMP's current approach to missing person reports in the province, including recent changes to policy.

As discussed by Chief Superintendent Janice Armstrong and Superintendent Jim Gresham, the RCMP's missing person policies have changed significantly in the past two years. Its risk assessments are different. All Lower Mainland detachments now use the same risk assessment tool, first implemented in Surrey, which triggers the response, supervision and oversight of the case. All missing persons are considered at risk until demonstrated otherwise. High-risk missing persons include young people, people involved in the sex trade, people with drug or alcohol dependence, confirmed victims of abduction, victims of domestic violence, and people with a risk of suicide or self-harm. Superintendent Paul Richards provided that Aboriginal people are not considered high-risk; to consider them so would be contrary to RCMP policies for bias-free policing.

In general, the RCMP policy now allows the engagement of specialized detectives earlier in the investigation. High-risk cases can quickly transition to major crime investigations. Medium or high-risk files are transferred to the Missing Person Unit or Major Crime Unit.

RCMP policies for missing person file reviews have also changed. Files are reviewed on a daily basis and diary dates are built into missing person files. A supervisor conducts the first level of review, during the acceptance and risk assessment of the report. When the file is transferred to a detective unit, the team commander process is involved, which requires review by accredited team commanders, who ensure the right strategies, management, and resources are employed. In addition, protocols dictate that files must be reviewed after three to five days, and again after six to eight weeks. Reviews are conducted by more experienced officers new to the file, to promote early recognition of gaps in the investigation and suggestion of strategies. The BC Missing Person Centre also reviews high-risk files.

Superintendent Jim Gresham reported that RCMP detachments always accept missing person reports. On transfer to another jurisdiction, files will not be closed until the other police jurisdiction has a clear understanding of its ownership, demonstrated through a paper trail. He noted that the current basis for jurisdiction, where the missing person was last seen, is sound because it is a reasonable place from which to launch the investigation. He also stated that jurisdiction will not repeatedly change in cases where the missing person is continually spotted in a different jurisdiction; rather, the original department will hold the

file and maintain liaison with the family. In determinations of jurisdiction, it is rare that the BC Missing Person Centre needs to be involved.

The RCMP also commented on upcoming policy changes. These amendments include requiring debriefing of missing persons who are found, in order to gather intelligence and determine why the person went missing, to promote prevention of missing person incidents. In addition, there will be structural changes to the command of investigations that will integrate all municipal, provincial, and federal investigations under one command in certain situations, for example, when foul play cannot be discounted in a missing person investigation. The RCMP is also introducing investigative service standards for all front line officers, standards that place greater emphasis on community service.

RCMP Staff Sergeant Maureen Wilkie shared information about the RCMP's work in Saskatchewan to improve the response to missing person incidents in that province, through the Provincial Partnership Committee on Missing Persons ("PPCMP"). The PPCMP is a partnership of 19 agencies including police, coroners, First Nations, non-governmental organizations, Victim Service agencies, and so on. The work of the PPCMP resulted in the drafting and passage of the 2009 Saskatchewan *Missing Persons and Presumption of Death Act*, an Act that enables greater and easier police access to private information during missing person investigations and allows families to deal with the estates of missing persons they believe to be deceased. The PPCMP is currently working to develop a standardized intake form and risk assessment for missing person reports across police agencies in Saskatchewan.

The RCMP is also establishing two missing person centres: the National Centre for Missing Persons and Unidentified Human Remains and a BC Missing Persons Centre. The National Centre has already identified best practices, and some funding has gone to improving the Canadian Police Information Centre ("CPIC") database, specifically to add more fields for data entry to increase support of investigations and allow uploading of photographs. The National Centre will also have a website, currently under development, that will provide information on missing person cases and allow the public to provide information on cases.

The BC Missing Persons Centre coordinates and provides support for missing person cases across BC. It can make determinations of jurisdiction and provides daily review of high-risk missing person investigations, to ensure compliance with RCMP policy and to identify investigative gaps. It also provides operational assistance and can deploy officers to support a detachment in an investigation.

The RCMP has not created a 1-800 number for missing person reports in BC. An RCMP officer identified concerns that such a number would detract from community policing. Under the current system, if a report made to specific department, it triggers a quick response and networking with service groups; there are fears this would be lost through provision of a centralized number.

When questioned about its ability to identify trends in missing person cases, Chief Superintendent Janice Armstrong responded that the RCMP has a number of mechanisms in place. The Violent Crime Linkage Analysis System ("ViCLAS") plays a role in identifying trends by linking cases together. In addition, she pointed to a report on research the RCMP had conducted in 2008 together with the University College of the Fraser Valley, entitled *A Review of the Nature and Extent of Uncleared Missing Person Cases in British Columbia*, in which outstanding missing person cases dating from 1950 were studied.

A number of police officers and former police officers identified ongoing challenges facing police in accepting and investigating missing person reports.

A police officer agreed with the VPD's concern about jurisdictional disputes. He commented that there continue to be challenges in police departments taking jurisdiction and communicating with one another about which department is taking jurisdiction, with the concomitant accountability and resource issues.

Much of the discussion about ongoing concerns related to risk assessment of missing person cases. Officers noted that, in the vast majority of missing person cases, no crime has been committed and the missing person is not in danger. In the context of scarce police resources, the challenge police face is to identify the one percent of cases in which the missing person is at risk.

Sergeant John Hebert from the Calgary Police Service spoke about his department's approach to missing persons. The Calgary Police service received approximately 54,000 missing person reports between 1995 and 2001; of those, 48 remain outstanding. The underlying factor the Calgary Police Service identifies in its risk assessment is whether the disappearance is out of character for the missing person; therefore, it uses past behaviour to predict future behaviour. However, the area of missing persons lacks concrete data on a number of issues that present ongoing challenges to police attempting to identify risk: Sergeant Hebert stated that the literature does not show what time frame constitutes an increased risk, and does not show on average how long people are missing or how far they travel during that time. There are also no performance measures for missing person cases other than "missing" and "found"; there is no specific policy or goal that a missing person must be located in a specific amount of time.

Detective Constable Judy Robertson also noted that different police departments consider different, although often very similar, factors in risk assessments. Different police departments also have different standards for diary dating and "bring forwards" of missing person investigations.

Dr. Kim Rossmo identified ongoing challenges to the identification serial missing person cases. He noted that missing person cases are assessed case-by-case; however, in the context of a serial killer, multiple cases may span years and different police jurisdictions. He stated that police are relatively good at identifying some high-risk missing persons, but cases where the risk assessment is not high can slip through the cracks. Therefore, it is important that police be able to identify series or clusters of missing persons, because this is the only way to identify predators who successfully hide or dispose of bodies.

Police officers also noted that the lack of legislative support for missing person investigations presents a significant challenge. Because of privacy legislation, police officers cannot access information about missing persons that would assist investigations. Some provinces have drafted legislation to amend this problem: Alberta has a *Missing Person Act* that allows police to apply for judicial authorization for access to personal information in non-urgent cases.

Collecting, storing and searching data on missing persons are all areas that present obstacles. It was noted that when police officers contact hospitals for information on a missing person, there is no single central source they can contact; they must go through a list of contacts. Dental records, while critical for identifying found human remains, are not recorded in a standardized way beyond the standard CPIC form. There is also no means of obtaining victim DNA and collecting it into a national databank: DNA cannot be submitted for analysis to a crime lab unless it is connected to a crime. Finally, former ECOMM operator Rae-Lynne Dicks noted that CPIC only contains basic statistics on missing persons.



## Recommendations

Community members recommended a number of changes to the acceptance and investigation of missing person reports:

- It would be useful to create a central missing person unit for all of BC, which takes all missing person reports and assigns them for investigation to the appropriate police department. (Lori-Ann Ellis)
- Police should make it clear who has authority to report a missing person. (Ann Livingston)
- Police should have a second contact person in the missing person's family to ensure they gather information the first contact person might not have. (Lori-Ann Ellis)
- Police should ask a standardized set of questions when taking a missing person report. (Lori-Ann Ellis)
- Police should conceive of the process as involving five steps, following the PPCMP's analysis:
  - Prevention
  - Situation of concern
  - Report
  - Investigation/response
  - Outcome. (Ann-Marie Livingston)
- The high-risk category of missing persons should include people who are addicted. (Lori-Ann Ellis)
- RCMP should expand the type and amount of information collected by CPIC so it is more detailed. (Rae-Lynne Dicks)
- After a missing person report has been outstanding for six months, it should be reviewed by a new set of eyes. (Lori-Ann Ellis)

Police officers from agencies other than the VPD and RCMP also offered their advice on improving the acceptance and investigation of missing person cases:

- It would be helpful to have a central reporting system that determines jurisdiction. (Detective Constable Judy Robertson)
- There must be policy on which police department takes jurisdiction on a case. (Detective Constable Judy Robertson)
- Risk factors in risk assessments should be standardized in BC. (Detective Constable Judy Robertson)
- Risk factor assessments should identify the following groups as "high risk": sex trade workers; substance abusers; anyone who has been forcibly abducted; anyone in a domestic relationship going through separation; anyone with a history of suicide attempts or a history of mental health issues; children; the elderly; and people suffering from dementia or Alzheimer's. (Detective Constable Judy Robertson)
- There should be one central source for police to check for information about whether a missing person has been admitted to a hospital or medical facility. (Detective Constable Judy Robertson)
- There should be a provincial body to pool resources, comprising representatives from mental health, BC Medical, hospitals, addiction services, crime analysts, crime stoppers, police detachments, media, ICBC, Victim Services, social assistance, information technology, and so on. (Detective Constable Judy Robertson)
- Pattern identification must be built into the missing person system to determine series of offences; series analysis should be undertaken. (Dr. Kim Rossmo)
  - Information collected on acceptance of the report must include information crime analysts could use to identify connections with other missing person cases.
  - Historical information must be collected.
  - Like epidemiologists, analysts must collect enough information over a large enough geographic area and time span to analyze events outside the norm.

- Things outside the norm should operate as a warning of something that police need to respond to.
- One method might be to formally establish standards for series identification, and apply a number to each series so it can be assigned; this would contribute to responsibility and accountability.
- Series analysis should include the Solicitor General or a body outside the police.
- Any series identified should require a warning to the public and media; police do not have authority and responsibility to make judgments about public warnings.
- Information collected on acceptance of the report must include information to assess risk. (Dr. Kim Rossmo)
- Police should conclude there is a serial killer based on statistical models, and when there is enough risk or confidence that something is going on; conclusions should not be based on an individual's judgment. (Dr. Rossmo)
- There should be a standardized input form for dental records. (Sergeant John Hebert)
- There should be a national victim DNA databank. (Sergeant John Hebert)
- There should be legislation enacted allowing police access, with judicial authorization, to personal information in missing person cases. (Sergeant John Hebert)
- Improvements can only be made through consultation with the community. (Inspector Joanne Boyle)
- Diary dates for missing person files should be standardized across all jurisdictions in BC. (Detective Constable Judy Robertson)
- Police training for Patrol and Major Crime investigations should be increased. (Detective Constable Judy Robertson)
- There should be more input from departments about the role of the BC Missing Person Centre and more information to officers about it. (Detective Constable Judy Robertson)
- Systems must ensure that investigations will not fail because of one individual's failings; systems must overcome individual deficiencies. (Dr. Kim Rossmo)

Members of the VPD also offered some recommendations, focusing on strengthening a coordinated provincial response and creating legislation to enable police to access private information for investigations:

- The provincial response must be strengthened. (Inspector Brad Desmarais)
- There should be a 1-800 missing person line. (Inspector Brad Desmarais)
- There should be a stronger centralized organization to properly analyze trends, with capacity to look at all missing persons, but especially high risk missing persons. (Inspector Brad Desmarais)
- There should be capacity for web-based communication between investigators and any centralized authority. (Inspector Brad Desmarais)
- Operational protocols in the Lower Mainland need to be changed through the development of a centralized unit to, in part, determine jurisdiction in cases where file is passed along based on new information of where the missing person was last seen. (Inspector Brad Desmarais)
- The government should enact provincial legislation establishing which agency investigates a given missing person case and allowing police to obtain personal information about a missing person immediately in exigent circumstances, when the missing person is believed to be at risk of imminent harm, and in other circumstances based on a production order or warrant. (Inspector Brad Desmarais)
- The following recommendations from the joint report by SisterWatch and the VPD, entitled "The Tragedy of Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women in Canada: We Can Do Better", were referenced by the VPD:
  - Keep better national statistics about missing and murdered women.
  - Better coordinate between jurisdictions on a national basis.
  - Develop a provincial 1-800 number.

- Develop a national 1-800 number at a national centre that can serve as a Centre of Excellence.
- Establish harmonized legislation so police can check databases quickly, similar to Alberta's. (Chief Constable Jim Chu)

Members of the RCMP also offered recommendations to improve the response to missing person reports in BC:

- We should build on the existing RCMP risk assessment tool to develop a standardized response. (Chief Superintendent Janice Armstrong)
- We should enact missing person legislation to remove barriers to investigators. (Chief Superintendent Janice Armstrong)
- We should create a national DNA databank for missing persons. (Chief Superintendent Janice Armstrong)
- It would be helpful to find a way to improve analysis and ability to identify patterns. (Superintendent Jim Gresham)

### ***B) Police Relationships with Victims' Families, the Community, the Public and the Media***

Building and maintaining positive relationships with family members, the community, the wider public and the media can be essential to locating missing persons and solving potential crimes, particularly when the missing persons are living in non-traditional or precarious circumstances. A collaborative and integrated response involving communities, organizations, and individuals requires that those involved be treated fairly and equally, and that the networks and investigative mechanisms in place meet their needs for information and emotional support. This forum focused on the interactions between police and families and the role of the media in missing person cases.

#### **Context**

Members of the community, many of whom are family members of the missing and murdered women, outlined their concerns with the police relationship with the community and public, including the police's treatment of and communication with family members.

In many cases, the first person families have contact with is an ECOMM or 911 operator, who may work long shifts and take many calls during those shifts. Former ECOMM operator Rae-Lynne Dicks reported that organizational and traumatic stressors can affect these operators and result in them treating family members making reports poorly. Although police officers are provided unlimited psychological support, civilian members are not, and support that is provided is not always easily accessible.

Many community speakers commented on the police's treatment of family members of missing and murdered women. Concerns were raised about the identification by police of one contact person in each family, who then in turn is responsible for passing along information communicated to other family members. Ann Livingston noted that family dynamics and the different abilities of family members to accept reality or address a given situation influence who is best suited to be the contact person for the police. Lori-Ann Ellis explained her concerns that some family members are excluded from the process, by police or Victim Services, and not treated respectfully, because they are family by marriage. There were also concerns that police do not understand the meaning "family" has to Aboriginal people.

Lori-Ann Ellis noted that the police contact person, from whom families could seek information from about the case, may regularly change without the family being informed. This may create confusion in families regarding whether they need to provide information about the case anew to the officer. In addition, a high turnover of investigators hinders good relationship-building between families and police.

Lori-Ann Ellis also stated that, in some of the Pickton cases, the way in which family members were informed that their loved ones were murdered was disrespectful. In addition, information provided to families about support services was often out of date or referred to services out of the area. For some families, it took a long time for them to receive counseling. There were also concerns about the language used with families with regard to their grief: some family members do not like the word “closure” because they may not be ready to deal with the finality it implies, and prefer the term “peace.”

There were also concerns about police recommendations to families regarding their interactions with the media. Police recommended that family members not speak to the media; however, some found the media was a good way to get their messages out and, most of the time, their first source of new information about the case, because the media provided such information before Victim Services did.

There were also concerns about police saying that they would offer something to families and subsequently not providing it. For example, Lori-Ann Ellis explained that it was very significant when police or Victim Services suggested to families that they could view photographs of the personal items of loved ones. Being told later that this opportunity would not be available was distressing.

Community speakers also discussed the current relationships between police and the larger community, specifically with regard to how members of the community are involved in missing person investigations and the protection of vulnerable women. Community members noted that private citizens and community organizations are instrumental in solving missing person cases, and therefore must be involved in the investigative models followed by police. The Warm Zone is an example of an organization that is well-placed to assist police investigating missing vulnerable women because of the information they can provide to police. A staff member of the Warm Zone, Michele Giordano, told the Commission that they ask their clients to let them know if they are going out of town or will not be attending the Centre, and they use daily sign-in sheets and logs to keep track of when women attend and the details of their visit. The Centre collects personal information about their clients, as much as each woman is comfortable disclosing, including information on next of kin, contact persons, drug of choice, and tattoos and distinctive marks, for the Centre to use in an emergency. Staff members put up posters of missing women in their Centre and, through their networks with other service agencies, assist to locate missing women. Due to its ongoing relationships, the Centre is also able to discover when a woman last picked up her welfare cheque or methadone prescription.

Service agencies may also be able to provide police with an assessment of a missing woman’s family relationships. For example, Michele Giordano cautioned that it is important for service agencies not to assume that a family member is a positive force in the woman’s life. The Warm Zone can provide an assessment of the health or safety of a woman’s home environment.

Police officers also discussed the current relationship of police with families. They noted that in police departments, an officer may hold a specific position for two to three years but that it was understandable that families of missing persons would want to deal with the same officer over the course of the investigation. It was also noted that Victim Services may not know how to handle missing persons’ families.

Specifically, the supports Victim Services can provide to families, given that families can be involved in a missing person's disappearance, should be considered. Sergeant John Hebert from the Calgary Police Service also noted concerns about releasing information to the media about a missing person: privacy concerns and the need for media releases to be infrequent enough to cause an impact must be considered before disclosing information, particularly given that once information is posted online, it is there forever.

Members of the VPD spoke about its current practices regarding communication with family members and involving the public and other agencies in investigations of missing persons.

VPD members noted that it is important for families to have a single point of contact for police, particularly for situations when a person is located and for next of kin notifications. VPD detectives who begin the investigation and develop a relationship with the family will do the notification. The VPD will also ask the family to tell them how they want to be notified if their family member is found deceased. This occurs when it appears a file will be difficult or long: an officer will explain the normal protocol and ask the family their preference; typically family want an investigator who is known to them to contact them, preferring an over the phone notification from a known contact to an in-person notification by an officer unknown to them. In addition, if a file is transferred to another police jurisdiction, the VPD officer who developed a rapport with families will nonetheless notify next of kin if the missing person is located.

VPD Inspector Jana McGuinness provided information on the VPD's current practices regarding information dissemination and media releases in missing person investigations. Patrol officers will obtain a photograph of the missing person from her friends and family and canvass hospitals, taxis and transit services, among others, to find the missing person. Notifications will also be made to health services, Realty Watch,<sup>5</sup> and border agencies. Investigators also use social media, such as Facebook, to find people, particularly youth.

If the missing person cannot be found by patrol, duty officers will inform the media relations unit about the case. The current system allows for information to get to media relations quickly. Media relations will send out information about the missing person to 350 people or agencies, and to police agencies outside of Vancouver. For media releases, it is important police have a photograph of the missing person, something that is not always available for people living in difficult circumstances. The VPD issues approximately two or three media releases for missing persons per week; further media releases will be done if the case remains outstanding, or if there is a cluster of missing persons, for example, the missing young men.<sup>6</sup> In extraordinary cases, the VPD will engage family members to make a public plea for information. The VPD remains, however, careful about the privacy of the missing person, ensuring that it only releases appropriate and sensitive information.

Members of the RCMP also provided information on its current communication practices in missing person investigations.

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<sup>5</sup> A voluntary organization of realtors who provide information to police: [www.realtywatch.net](http://www.realtywatch.net).

<sup>6</sup> Referring to the disappearances of five young men in the Lower Mainland 2011; see: <http://www.vancouversun.com/news/Vancouver+five+unsolved+2011+missing+persons+cases+young/6099055/story.html>.

The RCMP stated that the ways it engages with families have changed as a result of the lessons learned in Air India and Project Evenhanded. The current approach for the Highway of Tears investigation, Project E-Pana, involves annual family meetings with all family members and private “kitchen table meetings” with individual families, to provide updates on the investigations. RCMP also holds town hall meetings.

With each family, officers develop a schedule for contact based on what the family wants. RCMP officers understand the need for primary and probably secondary contact in each family; if a family needs the police to have contact with multiple family members, the RCMP will do that. They also ensure the police contact is not changing so that families do not need to tell their stories repeatedly. In addition, the Victim Service worker has continuity with family members, to mitigate the problem of police officers transferring out of positions. The police also ensure that the family understands which police department or detachment has jurisdiction of the investigation.

With regard to how officers treat family members, the RCMP has a strong and detailed policy on bias-free policing, to ensure everyone is treated with respect. RCMP officers are provided with training about treating people with empathy and non-judgment.

Chief Superintendent Janice Armstrong noted that public safety is the responsibility of everyone, but the police have the lion’s share. Therefore, together police and community must move past historical harm and judgment to work together for a common goal of finding missing persons and protecting women. The key to success of these goals is the police’s relationships with the community; however, these relationships must be nurtured over time. The RCMP noted that it is connected to communities, including in its partnerships and networks in areas such as mental health and addictions.

Like the VPD, the RCMP uses media to assist in investigations of missing persons. Dawn Roberts, a civilian member of the RCMP, provided the Commission with information about the RCMP’s media strategy. Missing persons is an important priority section of the RCMP website: it contains news releases, public alerts, and safety tips. The RCMP also has a growing social media presence: it uses Facebook and Twitter to share information with the community. Dawn Roberts also noted that the use of media in rural environments must be different, to take into account the different geography and accessibility in that environment.

The RCMP also works closely with families to help them get out their information to the media in the best way. This process includes news conferences, statements from the RCMP and ensuring a liaison for the release of information.

RCMP officers also commented on the educational and prevention aspects of their engagement with communities. It was noted that information about making missing person reports needs to be known to community members; therefore, educational tools like the Sisters in Spirit tool kit are valuable for the police.

As discussed by Staff Sergeant Maureen Wilkie, the RCMP has been working to improve its relationships with family members and the community in the work of the Provincial Partnership Committee on Missing Persons (PPCMP) in Saskatchewan. The Committee met with family members of missing persons in 2007 and again in 2009, meetings which culminated in a report with 20 recommendations on how to improve missing person incidents. Recommendations also encompassed ways to assist families to cope with their losses, for example, through memorial sites for missing persons who were found deceased or places of reflection for families of missing persons who had not been found. In 2011, the PPCMP had a Western Regional Forum that resulted in 16 recommendations. The PPCMP is involved in a media and public awareness campaign to dispel myths on

reporting missing persons. There is also a sub-group of the Committee that works with media to improve the sensitivity in the media's reporting of missing person stories.

## Recommendations

Community speakers recommended police provide more information to the public about the missing person process and prevention:

- There should be a media campaign to educate people on the process of making missing person reports, and safety and prevention, done in both video and social media. (Ann-Marie Livingston)
- There should be a "mapping book" or information booklet for people trying to find a missing person. (Joy Ward Dockrey)
- Safety and prevention information on the RCMP's website should also be available offline: in television commercials, billboards, newspapers, courses, etc. (Lori-Ann Ellis)

Many community speakers made recommendations about the relationship between police and victims' families and reportees, including how families and reportees are treated during reporting and notifications to families that their loved one is deceased:

- People taking missing person reports should be given compassion training to ensure they ask questions respectfully. (Lori-Ann Ellis)
- Cultural sensitivity training should be provided so officers understand Aboriginal traditions. (Ann-Marie Livingston)
- Police should consider the varied abilities of family members to act as contact persons and accept the situation in determining the most appropriate contact person. (Ann Livingston)
- Police must recognize everyone in the family unit as a family member, regardless of proximity or blood relationships. (Lori-Ann Ellis)
- Police require clarity about who is part of a family, particularly for Aboriginal people who have large families. (Ann Livingston)
- Officers investigating missing person files should ask reportees and families how they want to be notified of a death. (Lori-Ann Ellis)
- When visiting family members, police should appear in plain clothes. (Lori-Ann Ellis)
- There should be continuity of investigators. (Ann-Marie Livingston)
- Police should advise family when the police contact person is changing. (Lori-Ann Ellis)
- Police and Victim Services should not misinform the families of their rights, but should tell families what they can do to help. (Lori-Ann Ellis)
- The BC Missing Person Unit should set up a three way email or web-based system between the person working on the report, the MPU and the reportee to exchange information. (Lori-Ann Ellis)
- In giving families bad news, officers and Victim Service workers must be respectful and compassionate. (Lori-Ann Ellis)
- Police should ensure contacts they provide to families for support services are local and up to date. (Lori-Ann Ellis)

Community members also made recommendations about the provision of supports for families of missing persons, directed at both the police and Victim Services:

- Counseling should be available to families when they make the missing person report. (Lori-Ann Ellis)
- Police and Victim Services should use "peace" instead of "closure" for family members, to acknowledge their right to feel the way they do. (Lori-Ann Ellis)

- There should be changes in Victim Services to provide more education and healing. (Ann-Marie Livingston)
- A healing retreat, a place where families could heal together, should be provided. (Ann-Marie Livingston)
- Promises that cannot be kept should not be made to family members, because it can cause suffering and resentment. (Lori-Ann Ellis)

Recommendations also encompassed how the police communicate with service and government agencies during missing person investigations, to ensure police and community departments are able to search for missing persons effectively and quickly:

- Police should properly involve other agencies in the investigation by forwarding a skeleton version of the report to, for example, coroners, hospitals, and support service agencies. (Lori-Ann Ellis)
- The province should create an inter-agency living will so people can authorize agencies to share information if they go missing. (Ann Livingston)
- Networks of grassroots agencies for female sex workers should establish protocols for information sharing and coordination outside of police investigations. (Ann-Marie Livingston)
- Police should contact support services that act as central agencies when locating a missing person. (Michele Giordano)
- Media should play audio clips of women who are currently missing on the radio. (Gunargie O'Sullivan)

Community members also made recommendations for processes to help police and family members work together to develop relationships and to ensure family members are receiving the appropriate level of service:

- Families and police should sit on a committee to develop future policies. (Ann-Marie Livingston)
- Victim Services should do an exit questionnaire to gather input on people's experiences with lots of room for comments. (Lori-Ann Ellis)

A recommendation was also made to the media about how it portrays missing vulnerable and marginalized women, particularly Aboriginal women:

- There should be a protocol for media to ensure derogatory language is not used to describe Aboriginal women and to ensure women are portrayed in a dignified manner. (Ann-Marie Livingston)

Recommendations were also made for support services for civilian members involved in missing person investigations:

- Support programs must be available to all first responders to incidents, including 911 operators, civilian responders, police members, and firefighters, to help them cope with cumulative stress. For example, a program like the West Coast Post Trauma Retreat (in California) should be created and made available to all first responders. (Rae-Lynne Dicks)

Police officers also made a number of recommendations about improving the relationship between police and victims' families:

- File continuity with one officer could be looked at: perhaps file can be continued with an officer after a change of position. (Detective Constable Judy Robertson)
- Police should change policies to ask families how they want to be contacted and notified. (Detective Constable Judy Robertson)



- When attending a family, police should have a list of resources they can access, including Victim Services and counseling. (Detective Constable Judy Robertson)
- VPD
  - There should be single point of contact for families and police to reduce confusion. (Inspector Brad Desmarais)
  - There should be some counseling or support for families of unsolved missing person cases, as they have no closure. (Sergeant Kirk Starr)
  - There should be a provincial website of missing persons that people can look to and pass on ideas. (Sergeant Kirk Starr)
  - Other police agencies should implement programs like SisterWatch to develop trust with communities so that police and communities can work together to stop predatory behavior. (Chief Constable Jim Chu)
- RCMP
  - Policy for initial communication with Victim Services and reporting needs to be fleshed out and formalized. (Chief Superintendent Janice Armstrong)
  - Expanding the use of tool kits about navigating the missing person process, for example, the toolkit by NWAC and the RCMP, should be looked at. (Chief Superintendent Janice Armstrong)
  - We should be asking if we are providing the right level of service, so that if we aren't doing a good job, we can do better in the future. (Chief Superintendent Janice Armstrong)
  - Police must continue to target community groups and First Nations in outreach. (Chief Superintendent Janice Armstrong)

A member of the VPD also made a recommendation directed at service agencies:

- Shelters and other service agencies should take pictures of their clients (with their consent), so that they can be used if people go missing. (Inspector Jana McGuinness)

## Forum 4: Inter-jurisdictional Collaboration and Coordination Among Police

This forum focused on whether the current policing structure in BC is capable of providing the collaborative services necessary for investigations of missing women and suspected multiple homicides, when investigations cross one or more jurisdictional boundary. Issues to consider included the culture of the different policing forces, the use of multi-agency integrated teams, and whether amalgamation of a regional police force could address some of the challenges posed by the current network of different agencies.

### Context

Community members, including former police officers and academics, spoke about the negative consequences of the current “patchwork” policing situation in the Lower Mainland. Speakers commented that the current situation is a product of history, politics and change; if it were possible to start over, the system would not be designed this way. Rae-Lynne Dicks, a former ECOMM operator, provided an instance of a responding officer throwing a victim’s shoe found at the scene of an accident from the Burnaby to the Vancouver side of the road so that the VPD had to take jurisdiction, as only one example of many demonstrating a lack of cooperation between police departments. Susan Davis also noted that women flee other areas to Vancouver because of the enforcement actions against sex workers taken in those

jurisdictions. Displacement causes a higher numbers of sex workers in one area, relatively fewer customers, and women not knowing their customers, a situation that puts women at risk.

Dr. Kim Rossmo felt that the current situation of multiple police forces in the Lower Mainland was unlikely to be changed, so he discussed concerns regarding cooperation and coordination of police agencies. He said that, in the past, we heard that the problems relating to coordination had been solved; however, new crises continue to reveal cracks. He noted that although many databases are integrated, not all are, and not all users can perform searches on all databases. He also noted that integration affects accountability in cases of multi-jurisdictional crime: without formalized cooperation, cooperation depends upon the personalities involved. Problems arise when police agencies prioritize investigations differently: different priorities can arise when some agencies are busier than others, a greater number of the crimes are committed in one agency's jurisdiction, or agencies are under-resourced and therefore preoccupied with their own problems. Dr. Rossmo also provided an example of coordination of police resources used in Austin and Travis counties in Texas. There, a regional centre for crime analysis and intelligence, originally intended as a counter-terrorism centre, now provides analysis for regular policing concerns. Once the analysis is conducted, the information is shared and a decision is made about who is responsible for the investigation. These crime-based centres in the US are doing, in Dr. Rossmo's opinion, an interesting and worthwhile job.

Some community members argued that integration and coordination was insufficient. Dr. Robert Gordon said there had never been an independent evaluation of the integrated team approach. He further said that the integrated team system is an attempt to get around the politics of police reform and to avoid the issue of regionalization: suggestions for integration are merely suggestions to prop up a broken system.

A number of community members recommended regionalization of police forces in the context of discussing the constraints of the current system. Dr. Mike Webster approached this issue from a psychological standpoint. Cooperative behaviour, demonstrated to be beneficial for morale, productivity and effectiveness, was threatened in the police context by two variables: a group dynamic resulting from a paramilitary structure, which values individual achievement over team achievement; and an individual dynamic that results from the personality type attracted to military and paramilitary work, the "AAA personality", which is achievement oriented and competitive. He found that it is easier for management to control these issues if all members are part of the same organization, with the same supervision, goals, culture, collective agreement, police association, and so on.

Dr. Robert Gordon also found that the missing women investigation demonstrated how, within police organizations, competition of individuals dominates over collaboration and coordination, contributing to interpersonal and interagency dysfunction; this is seen in regional units where one police organization tries to dominate the other. These problems are reduced when everyone is a part of the same organization, with the same training and workplace culture. Dr. Gordon suggests that improved integration will not change the culture of the organizations nor the personalities that make up the organizations. Rather, individual police officers will bear the burden of bad social policy.

Police officers also discussed the current context, providing examples of integration. Detective Constable Judy Robertson noted that integration allows smaller police forces to respond to specific community needs, for example, through an integrated Vice Unit or First Nations liaison. Sergeant John Hebert also described the Real Time Crime Centre in Calgary, a central repository for analytics, intelligence, investigative support, communication, and so on, that serves the entire city.

Chief Superintendent Janice Armstrong and Superintendent Jim Gresham discussed the RCMP's current strategies for coordination and communication in multi-jurisdictional situations. The RCMP provides regional oversight to the Lower Mainland district, overseen by a district commander responsible for delivery of contract policing, working with detachment commanders and government, primarily district councilors. This provides a unified command while at the same time allowing detachment policing, where police respond to the needs of the community and consult with local groups and council to establish community priorities. The RCMP also has regional duty officers who provide day and night reports and briefing notes on high-risk cases, and share information around the region. In addition, the RCMP has a Lower Mainland Strategic Communication Centre and district-wide protocols for responses to high-risk major crimes, which include protocols for risk assessment, reviews and information sharing.

Regional oversight also includes oversight of the five integrated teams operating in the Lower Mainland, including the Integrated Homicide Investigation Team ("IHIT"). The integrated teams provide specialized support for investigations, funded by municipalities and RCMP, and represent partnerships of the RCMP with municipal police detachments. Integrated teams allow shifts of coverage and supervision and promote communication and sharing of high-end equipment. They also allow resources to be brought to incidents in small communities.

In addition to partnerships on integrated teams, the RCMP coordinates and communicates with municipal police departments through operational meetings and other means to share information, including weekly gang meetings, monthly advisory committee meetings, bulletins on specific crimes, and the communication of information through shared databases. All police departments in BC use PRIME, an information management database. Investigators in all police departments in BC can access information or find a point of contact to access information, for major crime investigations, about files in BC. There are other databases that provide like access.

With officers from other departments, RCMP officers coordinate on investigations and crime analysis to identify suspects. Agreements about the primacy of responsibility for a multi-jurisdictional investigation are often based on the jurisdiction where offences are most prevalent or where the offender lives.

The use of major case management and accredited team commanders promotes coordination on investigations. In addition, during the team commander course, officers are given training about inter-jurisdictional collaboration.

The RCMP has developed a Provincial Intel Centre, providing a multi-jurisdictional approach to gathering crime intelligence and conducting analysis. In addition, a Real Time Intelligence Centre will begin operations in the Lower Mainland on June 1, 2012. The Centre will be staffed by agencies throughout the Lower Mainland and with provincial resources. Its focus will be on gangs and organized crime, but it will also look at other emerging crimes.

RCMP officers acknowledged that there is room for improvement in information sharing, but stressed that it has improved from the past. It takes leadership to ensure all agencies work together and focus on the same goal. Although the RCMP has a process and protocol focus for long term operations, it is able to respond quickly and efficiently to emergent issues across jurisdictions.

Superintendent Mike Porteous and Inspector Brad Desmarais also spoke about its current approach to multi-jurisdictional crime, stating that they were open to suggestions for improvement. Members spoke about the

VPD's model for responding to homicides and other violent offences. They noted that the homicide rate in Vancouver dropped to a low in 2009 and shootings were also reduced by half. The VPD focuses on proactive analysis to target people likely to commit a murder, resulting in putting offenders in jail, perhaps on other crimes, before they are able to kill someone. The VPD's organization allows it to change form and muster resources quickly; for example, it is able to put together a team of 20 to 50 investigators within hours. The model works because it allows the VPD to respond quickly. As a result, VPD members are not in favour of an integrated model such as IHIT.

In terms of coordination with other forces, the VPD has accredited team commanders for the major case management system. Members sit on a committee for standardized practices in BC.

A VPD member, Superintendent Mike Porteous, said it would make investigations easier to have a regional force. He was not in favour of an integrated model, but a regional model. He found regionalization would be beneficial because communication among agencies was ad hoc and based on personal relationships between officers.

VPD Inspector Brad Desmarais noted that there are profound cultural differences between the RCMP and VPD, from the management level to the patrol level. He noted that municipal police agencies tend to be more nimble and less bureaucratic; the RCMP is more process oriented and centrally controlled. Officers in the two agencies are trained differently. Although members of both cooperate and have a common bond to help one another, in the long term responses to issues that require nimbleness, such as emergent crimes, may not be as easy in an RCMP environment.

That said, Inspector Brad Desmarais also stated that integration can be very effective, as demonstrated by a number of focused, integrated major investigations that were successful. In his experience, he found that information sharing has been most successful when it is conducted by analysts, whose training does not include the kind of cultural indoctrination common in police forces. Including analysts in the investigative process has made profound differences; unfortunately, the RCMP and the VPD do not have enough analysts.

## Recommendations

Community speakers made a number of recommendations to improve the coordination of police forces in their responses to multi-jurisdictional crime, from providing training on the importance of coordination to regionalization of police services:

- There should be police training in Depot and the Justice Institute on working with other organizations, including the importance of collaboration, problems that arise, and procedures. (Dr. Kim Rossmo)
- Training on the importance of collaboration and accountability must start with recruits. (Rae-Lynne Dicks)
- There must be an integrated strategy, including a task force, regarding sex work and protection of women. (Susan Davis)
- Standardization, including of major case management, is necessary to ameliorate difficulties associated with patchwork policing, to enable police agencies to come together quickly and efficiently to respond to situations.
  - Require a formalized response for police to come together across jurisdictions.
  - Solutions must be multi-dimensional and include technological integration, structure, policies and practices, and cultural dimensions.

- Policies should require integrated databases in which all users can conduct searches.
- There must be formal identification of cross-jurisdictional series so formal authority and responsibility can be assigned.
- Changes to the *Police Act* that formally establish responsibility and accountability for cross-jurisdictional crimes are needed. (Dr. Kim Rossmo)
- Establish a regional police force to eliminate arguments about jurisdiction, from patrol to commanding officer level. (Rae-Lynne Dicks)
- Regional police services are required in BC as a solution to competition among police agencies; integrated police services are not proven to be sufficient. (Dr. Robert Gordon)
- Regional police services are required to more easily manage group and individual dynamics within police organizations and to improve collaboration of police. (Dr. Mike Webster)

Police officers also made recommendations to improve inter-jurisdictional coordination. Police officers differed in their opinions about regionalization. Members of the VPD supported regionalization, but members of the RCMP did not offer a recommendation either way.

- There should be an Integrated Vice unit; women involved in the sex trade do not stay within jurisdictional boundaries, so police should work together in a way that bridges boundaries as well. (Detective Constable Judy Robertson)
- If the Commission does not recommend integration of police services, it should recommend a Real Time Crime Centre model. (Sergeant John Hebert)
- VPD
  - A regional police force would make investigations easier. (Superintendent Mike Porteous)
  - Deep cultural differences of VPD and RCMP must be addressed. (Inspector Brad Desmarais)
  - Absent regionalization, a Real Time Crime Centre is very attractive to enable analysts to look at information in a centralized way. (Inspector Brad Desmarais)

## Forum 5: Enhancing Police Accountability

In the context of the missing and murdered women investigations, it has been alleged that police agencies failed to marshal the resources needed to conduct effective investigations because of indifference, bias and/or poor risk assessment. Accountability in this context concerns allocation and prioritization of resources in police and government decision-making, and the community's involvement in oversight. It also concerns the conduct of individual officers in carrying out their duties. Mechanisms for police oversight include formal inquiries and inquests; internal reviews of police accountability; province-wide task forces; municipal, provincial and federal governments deciding on police force budgets; internal investigations departments; and activities of specialized civilian and police complaints tribunals. This forum focused on issues of community input into priorities and police discipline and whether changes are needed to existing systems.

### Context

The ongoing unease in the relationship between members of the DTES community and police was evident in discussions by community speakers alleging misconduct of police officers and the failure of the current accountability system to address those allegations. Community members made comments illustrative of their beliefs that individual police misconduct against community members, including murder, assault, sexual assault of women in the sex trade, harassment, and failure to provide protection, continues to be unaddressed by the current system. Speakers, including Juliet Belmas and Terri Williams, indicated feelings of helplessness in calling police to account for these actions, suggesting there was no way to bring a charge

against a bad police officer or that files were destroyed or not provided to community members, even alleging that the police target or harass people who make complaints.

According to Jen Allan, one of the functions of the organization Cop Watch is to follow police officers engaging in such behaviour in the DTES and to provide continuing support to the victim. Terri Williams also said that, without legal aid for community members making complaints about police, there would be no accountability.

Allegations of police misconduct and police failure to respond to complaints cause the community to be distrustful of police. This was noted by Don Larson. In addition, as noted by Marianna Ussner, police failure to respond to complaints also cause trauma to individuals, increasing their vulnerability. Misconduct sends the message that members of the DTES community can be abused by police.

There were suggestions of more systemic accountability issues relating to police priorities. For example, Ann Livingston complained the police are “mining” the DTES community for warrants, and more generally over-policing high risk people, without a mechanism for community input on priorities and accountability for this action. She also noted that local community policing boards were filled by members of business improvement associations, excluding marginalized community members. General complaints were also made about police priorities, which did not include witness protection money, something one community speaker, Terri Williams, believed was important.

Concerns were made about the current system’s response to community complaints. Many of these concerns were raised by Ann Livingston. She said that the Mayor should not be on the Police Board; rather the chair should be a non-political position. She also noted that the Police Board appears to have no function with respect to accountability. Moreover, she identified community concern that some accountability issues, notably the treatment of the entire DTES neighbourhood, did not qualify as something the Office of the Police Complaint Commissioner could investigate, leaving the community with little or no recourse. This was also noted by Dr. Kim Rossmo: the police complaint system is designed to deal with specific incidents of individual police officer misconduct, not larger systemic problems. To identify underlying problems, such as the organization not functioning as the community thinks it should, patterns of offences or complaints not amounting to offences must be examined.

Dr. Mike Webster stated that the concerns of police failures to act abetted by either indifference or bias, raised in the missing women and Pickton investigations, went beyond misconduct to police malpractice or corruption. Police corruption, he said, involves abuse of position, corruption of the special trust given to police, or actions to further private or departmental advantage. Malpractice is facilitated by both constant and variable factors. Constants, such as the discretion police are provided to enforce laws and the presence of dominant coalitions who determine the priority of enforcement, together allow decisions to be influenced by personal or departmental advantage at the expense of community priorities. Variables, such as a lack of professional pride, influence the extent of malpractice in an organization. Dr. Webster outlined strategies to prevent corruption, including human resource management, anti-corruption policies, internal controls, and the external environment and external controls, all of which are more easily implemented and monitored in a single regionalized police force.

To address more widespread concerns, Dr. Robert Gordon said that accountability must encompass more than receiving and investigating complaints of police misconduct. It requires a structure to administer the

police: an independent authority for control, oversight, allocation of resources, including financial audits, and resolution of complaints, and a community board to set out the priorities of police. The current police board structure does not perform all of these functions. For example, the \$1 billion police expenditure in BC has never been publicly audited, calling into question the financial accountability of the police. Additionally, the current accountability mechanism is unclear and confusing because some provincial accountability mechanisms do not apply to the RCMP.

The Police Complaint Commissioner Stan Lowe provided information about the current mandate and authority of his office. His office has tremendous powers. It oversees investigation of complaints by police, who investigate in the first instance. His office will tell police what steps they have missed in their investigations. Moreover, if the investigation appears biased, his office will give it to an independent investigator. Retired judges also hold hearings to review investigations to determine if they agree with the police's findings. The Office of the Police Complaint Commissioner may also use alternative dispute resolution processes to resolve complaints. However, Commissioner Lowe acknowledged that many complaints do not come within the criteria his office's jurisdiction, and therefore could not be addressed by his office. Therefore, he asked whether the current processes for discipline are meeting the community's needs and whether less formal processes are needed.

Inspector Mike Serr of the VPD also discussed the current accountability system. To address an increase in police complaints, the current requirements under the *Police Act*, and the dissatisfaction people experienced with the past system, the VPD recently started the Quick Response Team together with the support of Commissioner Lowe. The Quick Response Team enables the VPD to resolve more complaints informally, for example, by arranging healing circles. The number of complaints resolved informally by the VPD ranged from 12-14%, but is now up to 20%. The VPD's goal is to resolve 40% of complaints informally. In addition to promoting informal resolution of complaints, the Team also proactively identifies trends and patterns in complaints, to engage VPD members about these trends.

The VPD also stated that the best way to deal with corruption is through policies regarding who is hired, who is promoted, and how training is conducted.

Inspector Mike Serr addressed concerns that incidents were not investigated properly, stating that such complaints fall under neglect of duty and are taken seriously. Investigations into neglect of duty complaints will be reviewed and audited, and if necessary, reassigned for investigation.

Chief Superintendent Robert Morrison and Superintendent Jim Gresham also discussed structural accountability issues, such as how the RCMP works with communities to gather community input on priorities, and oversight and review of investigations and operations. Chief Superintendent Robert Morrison described the work of the Operation Strategy Branch. The Branch conducts reviews of detachments to see gaps, for example in training, to shift resources within the RCMP. It drafts an annual response plan for detachments based on consultation with communities and elected officials. It also oversees reviews of existing service delivery models, such as integrated teams, providing goals and priorities to each, and conducting annual follow up. For example, the Branch is currently reviewing all rural detachment models in BC to ensure they are efficient, properly resourced, and accountable. The Branch may also engage external processes, such as university-led processes, to conduct independent reviews.

Superintendent Jim Gresham discussed the RCMP's policies for review of operations or investigations. Internal review systems create review processes for high-profile investigations. This includes oversight of high-risk missing person investigations by the BC Missing Person Centre, which provides daily review, feedback and advice; the accreditation process for team commanders; and the use of the major case management model, characterized by a command triangle and consultation. In external reviews by the Office of the Police Complaint Commissioner, an overseer from the Office observes the investigation of police involved incidents. Reviews also involve municipal agencies, and the RCMP also engages a community liaison, often a First Nations observer, in investigations of complaints.

The RCMP also uses a program to address officer accountability proactively. The RCMP employs a program with a predictive component to ensure accountability, for example, to prevent officers from engaging in misconduct.

Amendments, including new accountability and performance measures, will be introduced with the new provincial RCMP service contract. In addition, the RCMP is addressing recent harassment allegations that have been the subject of media reports and legal actions.

## Recommendations

Community speakers recommended changes to systems and approaches to address individual police misconduct:

- If a police officer is abusing his authority by requesting sexual favours, it needs to be investigated, and if the allegations are true, the officer should be fired. (Michele Giordano)
- Action should be taken to stop police from targeting people in the community who make police complaints. (Jen Allan)
- Integrity testing, like a "Mr. Big" sting<sup>7</sup> for police officers, should be used to determine if officers are suitable for the role. (Ann Livingston)
- "Mystery shopping"<sup>8</sup>, conducted by an external body, should be used to determine what police are doing, including with respect to accepting reports of missing persons. (Ann Livingston, Rae-Lynne Dicks)
- A strong independent watch dog is required to investigate alleged police misconduct. (Don Larson)

Community members also recommended the use of an informal system to address complaints that do not amount to police misconduct or complaints that would be more appropriately addressed in an informal way:

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<sup>7</sup> According to Wikipedia, a Mr. Big sting is a covert investigation tool commonly used in Canada and Australia, whereby police officers pose as members of criminal organizations in order to gain the confidence of suspects: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mr.\\_Big\\_\(police\\_procedure\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mr._Big_(police_procedure)).

<sup>8</sup> According to Wikipedia, mystery shopping or a mystery consumer is a tool used externally by market research companies, watchdog organizations or internally by companies themselves to measure quality of service or compliance with regulations, or to gather specific information about products and services. The mystery consumer's specific identity is generally not known by the establishment being evaluated. Mystery shoppers perform specific tasks such as purchasing a product, asking questions, registering complaints or behaving in a certain way, and then provide detailed reports or feedback about their experiences: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mystery\\_shopping](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mystery_shopping)



- For complaints that do not qualify as proper complaints to the Office of the Police Complaint Commissioner, there needs to be a secondary, independent civilian system to resolve issues. (Rae-Lynne Dicks)
- There is a need for more informal accountability processes for police misconduct short of putting someone's job at risk. (Ann Livingston)

A number of community recommendations envisioned a more holistic approach to police accountability, one that went beyond resolving complaints of police misconduct to encompass community control over police priorities and transparency of police actions:

- Accountability must include control over priorities, financial accountability, and resolution of complaints by an independent, non-government related body. (Dr. Robert Gordon)
- Community boards can feed police priorities into a regionalized body. (Dr. Robert Gordon)
- For accountability, police need to be transparent about their data; specifically, police should provide CompStat reports to community members. (Ann Livingston)
- There needs to be a community oversight committee that community members can participate in. (Ann Livingston)
- Police must hold regular meetings with the community to discuss community issues and priorities. (Ann Livingston)
- There should be a normalization of interest in police accountability. (Ann Livingston)
- We must move away from the idea that only businesses have an interest in a neighbourhood. (Ann Livingston)
- To ensure police are not mining a population for officer advancement, we need to ensure there is no incentive for police to arrest and establish a system of checks and balances. (Ann Livingston)
- Community accountability committees should be developed, which include a representative who would bridge the gaps between the police, marginalized communities, and the community at large, to create a regular dialogue about accountability in a broader way. (Police Complaint Commissioner Stan Lowe)
- We need to create a single regionalized police service to more easily address police malpractice. (Dr. Mike Webster)

A VPD member agreed with Ann Livingston's suggestion for more informal processes to address complaints:

- Police need to better address issues in a way to help complainants and members learn, in a more informal process. (Inspector Mike Serr)

## Forum 6: From Report to Substantive Change – Healing, Reconciliation and Implementation

### ***Healing and Reconciliation***

In cases of large-scale tragedies or government actions that have affected public trust, special measures and processes may be required to promote the healing needed to move forward. This forum asked participants to consider whether steps need to be taken for further public acknowledgment of the tragedy of missing and murdered women. It also asked whether restorative justice measures are needed and whether they could be used to improve the relationship between police and community members in communities that have been particularly affected, such as the DTES or along the Highway of Tears.

## Context

Professor Jane Miller Ashton gave a presentation focusing on how to promote healing of grief and reconciliation between law enforcement or government forces and communities in situations like the missing women investigations. Her presentation emphasized the role everyone has in changing institutions in our society to ensure this tragedy is not repeated.

Much of her talk focused on the needs of those who had suffered trauma, drawing on approaches from Aboriginal practices to promote healing and reconciliation. The people harmed by the loss of the missing and murdered women and the investigation must have an ongoing voice, an ability to retell their stories as they evolve, on their terms, not within the often narrow constraints of the criminal justice system. They need to be able to sit in circle, across from those whom they feel harmed them, for apologies and amends to be made. People also need to be given opportunities to mark the tragedy, through memorials or events.

To enable the community to move forward together with the police, Professor Miller Ashton referenced the belief found among First Nations about the interconnectedness of all things. This relates to the need to build trust and community together through socialization, to allow informal dialogue to influence the cyclical process of meeting and making decisions. To move forward, community and police must be involved in restorative dialogue, together, always seeking to include those voices that need to be heard.

Kelly White, a member of the CRAB Water for Life Society, spoke movingly about the history of Aboriginal peoples in Canada and the need for reconciliation to look back at the harms done before we can move forward. She reminded participants of the residential schools legacy, the ongoing removal of Aboriginal children from their homes, the failure of the Canadian government to recognize land rights of BC's Aboriginal peoples and the effects that displacement and cultural disruption had had on many of the women who ultimately went missing from the DTES. She spoke about the need to remember the women who had disappeared and been murdered with love, and the need for a memorial service to honour them and to conclusively close the Commission's proceedings.

Lori-Ann Ellis, sister-in-law of Cara Ellis, spoke about the need for healing in families and individuals involved in the criminal justice process who had been touched by the tragedy. She spoke of some ongoing challenges to healing. For example, she noted disparities in the amount of compensation families received for this loss: some family members received \$5,000 and others \$10,000, causing ongoing confusion and concern among families. She also stated that the children of the missing and murdered women are forgotten, that many have disappeared into the child welfare system. Because of the harms they have suffered, the families need healing: the trial and Inquiry process have not provided the peace they sought. Now that these processes are over, after 15 years of putting their families' lives on hold, the families must return to the world. Lori-Ann Ellis was also concerned about the healing required for others, for example, jurors and forensic specialists who searched the farm for evidence.

A number of community speakers identified specific challenges impeding the healing of members of Aboriginal communities. Elizabeth Hunt commented that First Nations have had no part in creating the larger society, and that the wider community often knows little about Aboriginal people. For example, she commented that the missing and murdered women are described as Aboriginal, but their specific communities, the communities that gave them their roots, are not identified.

Some speakers stated that Aboriginal people require the support of their culture and communities to enable them to heal. Doris Peters stated that it is important for Aboriginal women to know who they are and where they are from. She provided examples of working with inmates, using healing circles, to help people reconnect with their roots.

Members of the RCMP and VPD also discussed the need for healing and reconciliation.

Chief Constable Jim Chu of the VPD expressed his regret about the investigation. On behalf of the VPD, he apologized that they did not catch Pickton sooner, and apologized for the many failings in the investigation. Chief Constable Chu described how the VPD responded to the investigation: the VPD assigned an officer to determine what happened, and to draft a comprehensive report and make recommendations to improve investigations in the future. These recommendations resulted in changes to the VPD's Missing Person Unit and changes to requirements for experience in major case management among officers at the VPD. The VPD has prioritized violence against women, specifically First Nations women and marginalized women in the DTES. They have reached out the community and created SisterWatch, to improve the police response to community concerns about violence against women.

Chief Constable Jim Chu emphasized that the VPD will apologize for the investigation in any way that resonates with the community and asked the community members present to tell the VPD what form that apology should take.

Assistant Commissioner Wayne Rideout of the RCMP acknowledged and recognized the deep impact the tragedy has had on the families and broader communities. In August 2010, Deputy Commissioner Gary Bass expressed his deep regret. In 2012, Deputy Commissioner Craig Callens apologized that RCMP did not do more. The Assistant Commissioner acknowledged that the loss can never be made whole.

RCMP members stated the RCMP understands it plays a role in the process: it has supported families throughout Project Evenhanded, made changes and commitments to improve missing person practices, and placed greater emphasis on community policing and consultation, tailoring policing services to individual communities' needs.

The RCMP also recognized that one legacy of the investigation is lingering distrust. The RCMP is committed to bridging this gap through community policing initiatives and strengthening its connection to communities.

Inspector Andrew Koczerzuk of the RCMP gave a touching statement about his struggles to help the families heal in the face of RCMP policies. He said that he has done his best to resolve as many issues as he could, but it has not been easy to make the required changes. RCMP policies are resistant to change and inflexible in terms of exceptions; the focus is on catching "the bad guys," not supporting families through the process. He described one example. The families wanted to see photos depicting personal belongings of their loved ones, photos of exhibits prepared for the trial. Evidently, this wish was contrary to the expansive RCMP policy on exhibit handling. Inspector Koczerzuk and his team did their best to convey how important it was for the families to see the pictures, that to them these were not just exhibits. They communicated that, for healing and reconciliation, the RCMP would have to do more. He was successful and the families will now be able to view the photographs.

In his experience, Inspector Andrew Koczerzuk found that policy cannot be the "be all and end all." Policy is written to serve people, not to isolate them, a purpose that sometimes gets lost in the bureaucracy. He said

that the Inquiry process has sensitized the RCMP to those issues. They have made changes and will continue to make changes, and they are there to listen.

## Recommendations

Community speakers made a number of recommendations for processes to help families and other individuals impacted by the tragedy heal. Some of these recommendations focused on the police making amends and building trust with communities:

- Officers involved in the investigations should be involved in apologies. (Lori-Ann Ellis)
- The public and police need to have dialogues to gain trust and build relationships, and learn about each other. (Prof. Jane Miller Ashton)
- We must provide amends-making opportunities, for people who need healing, to meet and make apologies or amends in a restorative justice process. (Professor Jane Miller Ashton)

Other recommendations focused on ongoing processes to provide support and counseling to affected people and to provide a memorial and legacy for the missing and murdered women:

- It may be valuable to use a restorative circle process, with assistance and support, to allow all people impacted by the tragedy to tell their story for healing. (Professor Jane Miller Ashton)
- Families who are not blood relatives of the women should also qualify for funding for counseling. (Lori-Ann Ellis)
- Civilians involved in the reporting process, for example, ECOMM operators, should be given an opportunity to heal with the families using a restorative justice process. (Rae-Lynne Dicks)
- The government should provide support for an opportunity to leave a legacy and memorialize the victims. (Professor Jane Miller Ashton)
- Community and government should support a memorial for the families and women, which involves Aboriginal protocols for putting the life and spirit of the missing and murdered women away and celebrating their lives in an honourable way, to take place after the Commission's closing submissions. (Kelly White)

Community members also made recommendations that specific supports should be provided to the children of the missing and murdered women:

- We must locate the children of the missing and murdered women and provide support to them, ensure they are okay, and tell them we are sorry. (Ann Livingston)
- We should establish a legacy fund or healing retreat for children of missing and murdered women. (Ann-Marie Livingston)
- The government should be accountable to the children of the missing and murdered women, including taking financial responsibility for them. (Lori-Ann Ellis)

A number of recommendations from community members spoke to the need to change systemic discrimination within both police agencies and the larger community against Aboriginal people, particularly Aboriginal women:

- The United Nations *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* must be implemented in police agencies. (Kelly White)
- Society needs an attitude adjustment in terms of how it sees Aboriginal women; rather than seeing them prejudicially as prostitutes, destitute, and so on, it should view them with love. (Kelly White)

- The missing and murdered women should not be identified as Aboriginal, but should be identified by the First Nation they are from. (Elizabeth Hunt)
- The Commission's work must reflect that many First Nations boycotted this process. We need to take steps to get everyone back in the circle. (Elizabeth Hunt)

In addition, after the policy forums, a number of family members and academics met at another meeting to develop recommendations for healing and reconciliation to provide to the Commission. The report from this follow-up forum entitled *In Memory of Our Fallen Angels...* is appended at the end of this document.<sup>9</sup> It contains additional recommendations for change and encourages continued dialogue on these important issues.

Police officers did not offer specific recommendations about the healing process. Rather, they listened to community members to hear what they need to heal.

### ***Implementation***

The Commission acknowledges that a great deal of research has already been carried out on how to address the root causes that contribute to the vulnerability and marginalization of specific groups of women including street-engaged women and survival sex trade workers, and Aboriginal girls and women. The Commission's report will focus on the policing aspects of these issues and, more particularly, on what went wrong in a specific series of missing women investigations. In designing an action plan for moving the report forward from recommendations to implementation, the Commission asked whether mechanisms for measurement and evaluation should be set out in the report. This forum aimed to focus on what best practices for initiating, sustaining and managing change processes should be integrated into the Commission report.

### **Context**

To promote the exchange of ideas on change management, Heather Lehmann gave a presentation on change management using the ADKAR model. The ADKAR model outlines the five essential elements that must be present in each stakeholder group for successful change: awareness, desire, knowledge, ability, and reinforcement.

- Awareness: stakeholders must understand why there is need for change. To influence and involve stakeholders, there must be the involvement of people who have credibility with stakeholder groups.
- Desire: there must be personal motivation for change.
- Knowledge: stakeholders must have the knowledge, tools, and skills to effectively make change.
- Ability: stakeholders must apply knowledge and skills and remove barriers to make the change.
- Reinforcement: to sustain change, it must be reinforced with rewards or punishment.

For change to be successful, each element must exist within each stakeholder group. Because stakeholder groups are made up of individuals, each element must apply to the individuals.

Professor Lisa Monchalin spoke about the importance of implementing programs to stop violence against women early on, including in school classrooms. She discussed the success of such programs in measurably changing attitudes about sexual violence, including against Aboriginal women, and the need to continue to collect data for monitoring purposes.

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<sup>9</sup> Appendix B – *In Memory of Our Fallen Angels...*

The VPD's Chief Constable Jim Chu emphasized that the VPD has made changes to address the mistakes made in the missing women investigations. The VPD will continue to engage with the community and make changes based on the Commission's recommendations.

Chief Constable Chu noted that it was the police oath of office to protect and serve everyone equally without favour or malice. In order to rebuild trust with the community, the VPD has made changes to acknowledge the importance of building relationships with the community and working together, for example, creating SisterWatch. SisterWatch, together with the VPD, drafted a report entitled "The Tragedy of Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women in Canada: We Can Do Better", which made further recommendations for change. SisterWatch also resulted in the VPD requesting the community provide more information about Martin Tremblay, which led to his arrest. Acting Sergeant Lynn Nofle spoke about the VPD's, and specifically her Beat Enforcement Team's, willingness to meet with community members. However, Chief Constable Jim Chu warned that the VPD must serve all communities in the DTES impartially, and therefore they must also consider the priorities of property owners, business owners, renters, and seniors, who also make up the DTES community.

Through its consultations, the VPD has learned that information spreads strangely in the DTES, and that conventional methods of communicating with the public, like press releases, may not resonate with the community. The VPD has followed suggestions that they meet with the community after a tragic event, to inform the community about what the police are doing. For example, the VPD used this approach in aftermath of Chelsea Holden's murder, in addition to attending the public vigil held in her memory.

The VPD will make further changes based on the Commission's recommendations.

Members of the RCMP also expressed their organization's commitment to change, including its commitment to listen to the results of the Commission. Members stated there was no significant institutional barrier to recommendations being implemented and adopted within the RCMP. From the RCMP's perspective, their role in change management is to work with the community: as Inspector Andrew Koczerzuk said, the predators will win if we do not.

The RCMP also noted that, although all police agencies had an instrumental role to play, they could not do all the work. Throughout the policy forums, speakers made it clear that there were issues facing the larger judicial system, the health care system, the housing and income assistance programs, and so on, which also need to be addressed. The problems were not simply ones of enforcement. Therefore, having all relevant partners working together for change will be, in the RCMP's opinion, critical for success.

### 3. Summary of Recommendations

Although everyone who participated in the policy forums presented her own unique perspective and opinions, discussions often centralized around a common understanding of barriers and problems. Sometimes, speakers expressed widespread agreement about recommendations for change; of course, in other cases, there was general disagreement. Below is a brief summary of the recommendations that emerged from the discussions.

Ensuring the safety of vulnerable and marginalized women:

- Violent offenders should be the police's priority.
- Police must take violence against women seriously.

- Police should use discretion in enforcing warrants against vulnerable and marginalized women who are reporting violence; this discretion should be standardized and legislated.
- To build trust, police must begin with community consultation. Collaborative processes should be used to address community and police concerns.
- Building relationships between police officers and community members and developing a rapport outside of enforcement situations are important to develop trust.
- More funding is needed to provide greater liaison support to the Sex Industry Liaison position, perhaps adding both an Aboriginal liaison and civilian liaison to the unit.
- More funding is needed to support community and Aboriginal policing throughout BC.
- Police should provide information to vulnerable and marginalized women about centralized support resources.
- The government must provide operational, long term funding to support agencies, to enable the creation of centralized, integrated, comprehensive and holistic services for those who need them, including funding for a 24-hour shelter and drop-in centre in the DTES specifically for those in the sex trade.
- Funding must be provided to address ongoing social and health concerns faced by vulnerable and marginalized communities, including Aboriginal communities and the community in the DTES. Using the enforcement powers of the police is not an effective way of addressing social problems like poverty, mental illness, addiction, and the legacy of colonialism on Aboriginal people.
- Police training must include training on the issues facing sex trade workers and Aboriginal people to ensure officers treat people equally, and with respect and sensitivity.
- Education campaigns should address prevention of violence, elimination of bias against sex workers and Aboriginal people, specifically Aboriginal women, and prevention of addiction.

#### Vulnerable and intimidated witnesses in the criminal justice process:

- Vulnerable and intimidated witnesses should be supported throughout their participation in the criminal justice process, including through provision of social supports, counseling and witness accommodations during testimony. For this, greater funding is needed.
- Decisions of prosecutors should be explicitly governed by principles of equality and subject to greater transparency.
- The charge approval standard should be lowered from “substantial” to “reasonable” likelihood of conviction.
- Amendments to evidentiary law should be made to protect vulnerable and intimidated witnesses from re-victimization through certain lines of questioning in cross-examination.
- Victim Services should be integrated and coordinated, and Victim Services should work closely with police and Crown counsel to ensure the witness is supported.

#### Improving missing person practices:

- There should be a regionalized method of accepting missing person reports, such as a 1-800 line or regional centre.
- The acceptance and investigation of missing person reports should be standardized, and perhaps legislated, across BC, with respect to how jurisdiction is determined, what information is gathered from the complainant, and how risk assessments are conducted, including the factors indicating risk.
- National and provincial databases regarding missing persons and unidentified human remains should be established and expanded, including a national missing persons DNA database, a provincial website on missing persons, and the expansion of the type and amount of information held on CPIC.
- There should be a national missing person centre to serve as a Centre of Excellence.

- Analysts should be more involved in missing persons investigations, including identifying series or patterns of cases.
- Better statistics and information on missing persons should be kept, and more research done on identifying risks and patterns in missing person cases.
- Legislation should be enacted to remove barriers police face in investigating missing persons by allowing authorized access to private information and immediate access in emergency cases.
- Police should provide information, through campaigns or booklets, to the public about navigating the missing person process.
- Police should ensure referrals given to family members of missing persons are local and up to date.
- Victim Services should focus more on education and healing of victims' families.
- Police should consult with family members about how they would like to be given next of kin notifications.
- Police and civilian members in contact with families of missing persons should be given training to ensure they are compassionate and respectful.
- Police should try to ensure continuity with respect to the officer who is in contact with the family of a missing person.

#### Inter-jurisdictional collaboration and coordination:

- Police officers should be given training on the importance of coordinating with other police agencies, including procedures and issues that arise.
- There should be an integrated strategy regarding the sex trade and protection of women.
- Formal and standard protocols should be established for creation of an integrated multi-jurisdictional response, including changes to the *Police Act* that allocate responsibility and ensure accountability for cross-jurisdictional crimes.
- Law enforcement agencies should develop a Real Time Crime Centre for the Lower Mainland.
- There should be a regional police force in the Lower Mainland and greater Victoria areas.

#### Enhancing police accountability:

- A process or tool such as mystery shopping should be used to measure the quality of police service or compliance with standards, or police officer integrity.
- Strong responses are required for police misconduct, particularly abuse of vulnerable and marginalized women.
- A more informal complaint resolution process should be developed to incorporate alternative dispute resolution and enable complaints to be addressed with less grave consequences, and more of a focus on education, prevention and reconciliation.
- Accountability must include community control over priorities, financial accountability and resolution of complaints.
- Community accountability committees should be established to promote dialogue and consultation between the police, marginalized communities, and the community at large.

#### Healing, reconciliation and implementation:

- A restorative justice process should be used for healing and reconciliation. People affected by the tragedy of the missing and murdered women, particularly families, require opportunities to tell their stories. Opportunities should also be made to allow people to apologize or make amends in a restorative justice process.
- Support should be provided to leave a legacy and memorialize the victims.



- Children of the missing and murdered women should be provided support, including a legacy fund and the provision of a healing retreat.
- To heal, changes must be made in how society views and treats Aboriginal people, particularly Aboriginal women.

## Appendix A – List of Speakers at the Policy Forums

### Policy Forum 1A

- Susan Davis
- Kerry Porth
- Jamie Lee Hamilton
- Maryam Majedi
- Mary Clare Zak
- Ann Livingston
- Detective Constable Judy Robertson
- Inspector Mario Giardini
- Superintendent Jim Gresham
- Superintendent Paul Richards
- Staff Sergeant Gerard MacNeil
- Staff Sergeant Maureen Wilkie
- Rae-Lynne Dicks
- Michele Giordano
- Dave Dickson

### Policy Forum 1B

- Ann-Marie Livingston
- Ann Livingston
- Michele Giordano
- Superintendent Jim Gresham
- Detective Constable Judy Robertson
- Superintendent Paul Richards
- Staff Sergeant Gerard MacNeil
- Staff Sergeant Maureen Wilkie
- Rae-Lynne Dicks
- Elizabeth Hunt

### Policy Forum 1C

- Susan Davis
- Krissy Darch
- Jamie Lee Hamilton
- Lori-Ann Ellis
- Ann Livingston
- Bonnie Fournier
- Erica Thomson
- Inspector Marcie Flamand
- Terri Williams
- Sergeant Anne Fawcett
- Detective Constable Judy Robertson

- Staff Sergeant Gerard MacNeil
- Staff Sergeant Maureen Wilkie
- Superintendent Paul Richards
- Dave Dickson
- Inspector Mario Giardini
- Constable Ali Gailus

## **Policy Forum 2**

- Beverly Coles
- Professor Christine Boyle
- Associate Chief Justice Nancy Phillips
- Erica Thomson
- Terri Williams
- Inspector Cita Airth
- Fiona Flanagan
- Superintendent Paul Richards
- Kim Gramlich
- Bonnie Fournier
- Ann Livingston
- Gunargie O'Sullivan

## **Policy Forum 3A**

- Lori-Ann Ellis
- Michele Giordano
- Dr. Kim Rossmo
- Sergeant John Hebert
- Detective Constable Judy Robertson
- Inspector Joanne Boyle
- Inspector Brad Desmarais
- Sergeant Kirk Starr
- Detective Constable Raymond Payette
- Chief Superintendent Janice Armstrong
- Superintendent Jim Gresham
- Joy Ward Dockrey
- Ann Livingston
- Rae-Lynne Dicks

## **Policy Forum 3B**

- Lori-Ann Ellis
- Michele Giordano
- Sergeant John Hebert

- Detective Constable Judy Robertson
- Inspector Jana McGuinness
- Chief Superintendent Janice Armstrong
- Superintendent Jim Gresham
- Dawn Roberts
- Rae-Lynne Dicks
- Bonnie Fournier
- Joy Ward Dockrey

#### **Policy Forum 4**

- Dr. Robert Gordon
- Dr. Mike Webster
- Superintendent Mike Porteous
- Inspector Brad Desmarais
- Chief Superintendent Janice Armstrong
- Superintendent Jim Gresham
- Dr. Kim Rossmo
- Joy Ward Dockrey
- Sergeant John Hebert
- Rae-Lynne Dicks
- Sandy DiPasquale
- Terri Williams

#### **Policy Forum 5**

- Don Larson
- Juliet Belmas
- Dr. Robert Gordon
- Dr. Mike Webster
- Inspector Mike Serr
- Chief Superintendent Robert Morrison
- Superintendent Jim Gresham
- Jen Allan
- Terri Williams
- Ann Livingston
- Police Complaint Commissioner Stan Lowe
- Rae-Lynn Dicks
- Dr. Kim Rossmo

#### **Policy Forum 6**

- Professor Jane Miller Ashton
- Kelly White

- Lori-Ann Ellis
- Marianna Ussner
- Michele Giordano
- Assistant Commissioner Wayne Rideout
- Doris Peters
- Linda Locke, Q.C.
- Chief Constable Jim Chu
- Heather Lehmann
- Terri Williams
- Ann Livingston
- Inspector Andrew Koczerzuk
- Dr. Lisa Monchalin
- Acting Sergeant Lynn Nofle
- Elizabeth Hunt
- Rae-Lynn Dicks

**Appendix B – Supplemental Report on Healing and Reconciliation – *In Memory of Our Fallen Angels***

# [2012]

Missing Women's Public  
Inquiry – Policy Forums

Recommendations to the  
Commission



## [IN MEMORY OF OUR FALLEN ANGELS...]

*Sereena Abotsway, Yvonne Boen, Andrea Borhaven, Heather Bottomley, Heather Chinnook, Mary Clark,  
Wendy Crawford, Dawn Crey, Tiffany Drew, Cara Ellis, Cynthia Feliks, Marnie Frey, Inga Kall,  
Jennifer Furminger, Helen Kallmark, Tanya Kolyk, Sherry Irving, Angela Jardine, Debra Jones,  
Andrea Goesbury, Patricia Johnson, Kerry Koski, Stephanie Lane, Diana Melnick,  
Jacqueline McDonell, Georgina Papin, Dianne Rock, Elsie Sebastian,  
Sarah de Vries, Mona Wilson, Brenda Wolfe, and Jane Doe*

## In Memory of Our Fallen Angels...

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Date: May 19, 2012

Time: 12:00pm

Location: Best Western, Chateau Granville

### **BACKGROUND**

On May 19 2012 a group of family members and other interested people convened in a board room at a downtown Best Western in Vancouver to conduct a special forum related to the Missing Women's Public Inquiry Commission. This opportunity developed as an outgrowth of a discussion that took place among a few individuals that were participants at the final Missing Women's Public Inquiry Commission Policy Forum on May 10, 2012. Lori-Ann Ellis subsequently approached the Commission with a request to hold a supplemental forum to further the intended work of that final public forum. This idea was readily agreed to by the Commission who also suggested the use of space away from the Commission office space to create more a conducive and private conversation. The Commission was also willing to cover the cost of light refreshments and an offsite room but the latter was in the end not needed as the space was kindly provided free of charge by the Best Western hotel management. Jane Miller-Ashton ( a Kwantlen Criminology Instructor and community mediator and restorative justice facilitator) was approached to guide the dialogue and did so willingly as a volunteer. Jane also invited a fellow instructor and psychologist Lisa Kitt to support the meeting. Rae - Lynne Dicks one of the participants agreed to take minute notes and a summary of the meeting was also captured on flip charts for the whole group to view.



# In Memory of Our Fallen Angels...

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## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of the special forum was “*to discuss and share ideas with respect to healing, recovery, reconciliation and related restorative and other outcomes that might help create positive movement forward*” in the face of and in the aftermath of this monumental individual, community and nation tragedy.

## **GOALS**

The goals of the forum were twofold:

1. To create by the end of the meeting some starting point ideas and recommendations that could be provided to the Commission for its report
2. To collectively conduct the gathering in ways that would be positive in nature and honour some of the very processes associated with restorative practice and Aboriginal traditions that can create conditions for healing and forward movement, etc.

## **PARTICIPANTS**

Lori-Ann Ellis invited people to the forum that she thought might be interested in this topic (victim’s families, participants of the inquiry and representatives of non-profits and organizations from the DTES). There was a lot of expressed interest in the event although in the end there were only 9 adults and one young man who were able to come. This smaller than expected turn-out is thought likely due only to the fact that there was a very short planning window and also because the meeting fell on the May long weekend. Nonetheless those who attended participated fully and actively, and it was

## In Memory of Our Fallen Angels...

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expected that they would share the outcomes more broadly with others who had shown an interest

The names of those who came to the forum are as follows: Darryl Baybutt, Lillian Beaudoin, Rae-Lynne Dicks, Lori-Ann Ellis, Sean Kirkham; Lisa Kitt, Ann Livingston, Jane Miller-Ashton, and Michele Pineault.

### **PROCESS**

The process was designed to give participants the experience of some aspects of restorative processes as they might be applied in a "talking circle" concerned with a specific task. It was not a healing circle per se but it was hoped that it would help set the conditions that would promote authentic and safe and respectful conversation about healing related topics. It was also a time limited event (4 hours), so there needed to be realistic commitment to what was possible to achieve together in that time.

Lori - Ann opened the session by welcoming everyone and by outlining the goals and parameters for the day. An opening drumming ceremony had been planned to help the group focus but when this was not possible a poem was shared by Jane about some of the challenges and hopes of peacemaking. The group was subsequently introduced (for those not familiar) to the talking piece and the circle process and each person had a chance to introduce themselves and to say something about themselves and their connection to the topic and issues at hand for that day. This was followed by a time to consider some of the values that we hold dear in discussing issues that matter to us. The group also created and agreed to guidelines that would help support each other step in the direction of a respectful dialogue. This was done by consensus. Before getting to

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the agenda regarding ideas for healing etc, the facilitator asked the group to name those groups and individuals that they felt were in need of healing. The group then took on the task of creating and generating ideas and this was accomplished by successive uninterrupted rounds using the talking piece , allowing each person the chance, if they wished, to add suggestions and recommendations on the topic. There was agreement that ideas would not be assessed or fleshed out fully but rather simply named at this beginning stage and due to the short time available. The focus was rather on keeping the ideas *flowing*. At the conclusion of the meeting Lori -Ann outlined some suggested next steps for completing the submission and encouraged the group to find ways for the ideas to be shared and discussed with others, and for participants to continue to contribute and seed" new ideas. It was also stressed by the facilitators that there are many ways for these healing ideas to be brought to fruition.

Finally, just as it was important to open a meeting of this type in ways that help create safety, comfort and a "time set apart " it was equally key to end with some sort of ceremony or clear closing. This was accomplished by giving each person in the group an opportunity to name a person who has been a mentor for them and one teaching that person has given them that is of value now at this time, and for these important tasks. Participants were also asked to name a person or group that they are inspired to work for or with as they move forward with positive and progressive ideas for change, ideas that will help not see this tragedy happen again.

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### **GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS WHO NEED HEALING (as identified and named by the participants, in no particular order):**

- Police and RCMP needing to heal, the ones involved
- Men and women, girls and boys who still work on the streets of the DTES
- Missing women families, and friends
- Children of the Missing Women
- Project Sister Watch
- Wally Oppal and all the Commission lawyers, staff
- First responders, victim service workers
- Workers who worked on the Pickton farm, forensics
- Wish foundation
- Agencies who work with women on the streets
- Volunteers who helped out
- Anderson, and any other survivors
- Lawyers, those who worked the trial and/or the inquiry
- Friends, family of Pickton and Robert Pickton
- Wider community of the DTES
- Citizens of BC who have been let down or affected by this in their community, even those with no involvement... this city needs to heal
- 911 operators
- Media and authors who have written about the missing women
- All families of victims – expanded out to all ...not just the missing women families
- Aboriginal families – first nations peoples
- Friends of the victims i.e.: Missing Persons of BC on Facebook and Vancouver Missing.net

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**RECOMMENDATIONS:** The following recommendations and suggestions were developed by members of the forum. An effort has been made to capture and honor the essence of each individual's words and ideas as verbalized by them. These ideas are presented in no particular order of priority, but rather in the order in which they were created. Although we did not discuss each person's idea in detail nor did we have time to develop consensus support in the meeting for all the suggestions, there was a strong *feeling/atmosphere* of general support in the room for *all* of the ideas, and the report was circulated to those who participated and no one objected to any of the ideas going forward as presented.

- Suggest that individual family members of missing women get involved in the healing on the DTES in whatever way they can. Help save somebody so that our daughter's deaths are not in vain. Take some time and volunteer in the DTES or its equivalent in your home town. Spending even a few hours per month can make a real difference. There were wonderful people who worked and volunteered with our girls. Taking time out of our lives can go a long way to showing that we have respect and compassion for the girls still working in the DTES.
- Recognize that there are various methods that enable people to explore and discover their true selves, to find meaning and purpose, a greater sense of who they truly are... to become stronger and then go out into the world to have the impact that the previous speaker spoke of... gain the strength to do so. Be willing to explore every day, your own nature... as a way to have more discovery.
- Suggest a collaborative theatre project involving police, colleagues and children, 'johns', boyfriends, pimps... agencies who served the women, lawyers, first responders. It would be similar to work done by Vancouver based 'Headlines Theatre' such as one of their plays called Shattering. These types of plays work with social injustices, can be short or long, they depict and educate the public about an issue. They are interactive and promote cooperation. These plays can have a huge impact. It's a project, in the safety of a venue would let us get next to each other in a way that will promote healing without forcing it.

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- Recommend the creation of some ongoing support systems for the victims. Once the Inquiry is over the formality of the support systems will go away. Some support system needs to be created for the victims... the commission 'needs to fork out' some money to pay for this. The first victims of this tragedy were of course the women who were murdered. The second group of victims were the family members and friends they left behind. Keeping in contact with friends and family members is and will continue to be critical as they share memories and grief. When the inquiry ends the relationships will continue. The government should do whatever is necessary to keep the victims who wish, in contact with each other.
- Recommend that VPD and Coquitlam RCMP 911 operators (currently working or retired) be canvassed for any who wish to find out whether or not they took one of the missing persons reports for women whose DNA was found on Pickton's farm. For those who wish to know, their names and or ID numbers should be checked on the original missing women's reports and that any who are confirmed, be informed and included in the restorative healing process. For some, this lack of knowledge is what they prefer, but for others it is a source of anguish and being excluded has increased their anguish. Those who wish to find out should be able to do so, in order for them to process it and therefore move forward.
- Offer opportunities for equestrian/animal therapy. It's very healing, it teaches you to trust in something other than yourself. You work with horses, (therapeutic horseback riding instructors) trained therapists and sometimes with other animals, cats/dogs... starting with something so basic .. an animal that gives unconditional love, be accepting of whatever it is that you need from them. A good way for many to begin healing and trust that there is help out there. Equestrian therapy group is available in Langley near the highway called Pacific Riding for Developing Abilities and their contact person is Michelle Meacher. (I did speak to Michelle at Pacific Riding to make sure her information could be put in this report. She said she had no problem with that and also said her name could be added as well. She did say that there is at present no psychologists but that can be set up if needed in order to assist our groups.) [http://www.prda.ca/Contact\\_Info.html](http://www.prda.ca/Contact_Info.html)

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- Recommend that a support system that includes longer term counseling for the families should be made available. Even after seeing a psychiatrist for several years it is not enough. Family members really need this, it should have been ongoing and wasn't so now it needs to be given. For ALL family members! Limitations on how many counselling sessions presently available with funding is very inadequate. It is felt that 13-18 sessions per year until no longer deemed necessary by the counselor (trained professional) is the best way to ensure the victim gets the proper help needed to heal. We do not feel that money should stand between lifelong grieving and good mental health.
- Acknowledge that this has been such a huge part of our lives, even for those of us who have resumed regular life... it never goes away.
- Recommend that before the inquiry ends, everyone involved should gather together for a dinner. A way to let go and put some personal face to themselves... not in their professional roles. Add the human factor to a process that has been inhumane. Bring this community together.
- Suggest that individuals seek out ancient traditional practices of yoga, tai chi etc... can all give a person a balanced state of being, release of feelings, etc.
- Acknowledge the need for spirituality or faith supports.
- Acknowledge that singing and other musical activities can be helpful to healing.
- Acknowledge the need for grounding activities that reconnect us with nature.
- Recommend a retreat once a year to see what has changed and to become elders in the process.
- Recommend a process of communication between DTES marginalized peoples and police, because there is a need for much more...such as, street hockey, basketball, soccer, etc... if a group of police officers were to take portable nets and a few balls out into Oppenheimer park and start playing, people would come to join them. This is how community relationships are built, by doing things together. Make it a regular thing, not just a one off.

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- Recommend, that in case the above this doesn't happen, a commitment be made to reach the frontlines and to reach out to current marginalized members of the DTES. Our work should not be in vain, there needs to be continuing contribution from the community.
- Recommend that police and first responders work to break down the culture and stigmatization over mental health, this can be done via education. There are courses and training programs in place that can help teach police and first responders to be more compassionate and further their growth, ... to stop the 'othering' and shift those cultures away from the need to be stoic and the need judge those they deal with.
- Recommend that we find ways to forgive and move forward but not to forget. The message of the women keeps getting pushed aside in the inquiry, the public are becoming desensitized by the media... it needs to be brought back into a positive light, this is an important issue. Remembering the names of the women who were murdered on Robert Pickton's farm is something many family members struggle with. Recommend therefore that a community garden be created in the DTES ... with each planter named after one of the murdered women whose remains were found on the Pickton farm. The garden could be tended by the residents of the DTES and then produce donated to the kitchens that currently provides meals to the homeless in the DTES. Photos of the garden could be sent to the families of each girl.
- Recommend that organizations in CJS need to embrace restorative and dialogue processes as a way of doing their regular business... as way of building ongoing relationships both internally and with community partners. Recommend that CJS organizations have ongoing collaborative processes with partners not just when seeking their input at crisis or decision points. Recommend that training in these restorative circle and dialogue processes be provided to CJS agencies such as police.
- Recommend that restorative justice, conflict resolution and dialogue processes be an essential part of preparing students for entering the CJS or the field of journalism.
- Recommend that media outlets form partnerships and receive training from victim serving and restorative justice agencies to better their understanding of communicating and relating to victims and victims' families.



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- Recommend that a summer camp for the children of Pickton's victims and future victims be established ... like a cancer camp for kids. There should be counselors to give support to the kids and enable them to 'just be kids' with support if/when needed.. an accepting environment. I would hate for their growth to be stunted due to a crime being committed that they had no control over. This camp could be done yearly or more often if needed. This would allow the children of victims of crime to be with other children of similar circumstances. This would allow the children to let their guard down and just be children. It would also be possible for the grown children to give back by attending as adults and helping out, so that future children of victims of crime will also have a place to go. This model of ongoing involvement is in place already for children with disabilities.
- Recommend strongly the creation of a Healing House – for all victims of violence.. now and in the future... in memory of the missing women of the DTES. This house could be used for victims of crime who have to travel into Vancouver for court. It could be made as a safe house for those who may have reason to fear being in Vancouver's courts, and could also take away the costs of having to re-attend the city long after the crime occurred. This would make an already stressful situation of having to deal with the justice system easier to cope with. It would make victims/witnesses feel welcome and safe. It could include a sanctuary for non-Aboriginal peoples, and a healing circle for Aboriginal peoples. There could be separate hotel like rooms with phones and internet while still having a common room for people to gather. There could be a full kitchen for communal cooking and eating, but also the ability to eat in one's own room. There could be a counselor available on an as needed basis, and victim services support.
- Recommend that a service or organization be created to assist persons from the point of filing a missing persons report. After the report is taken, the reportee could be referred to this service to guide them through the steps they need to take, to get help and support beyond simply calling 911 to report... can be a support and advocacy group who has the knowledge of the process and what to do next.
- Recommend that volunteers on the DTES be available to local people to provide information about places to stay, or services available, how to report a person missing etc, as an information and guidance resource. Can be open 24/7... can be located in various areas around the city where marginalized persons are. This could be similar to the tourist Ambassadors program, where volunteers hand out pamphlets and provide information as they walk about the downtown core.

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- Recommend that a network of all the available support services in the DTES be created and kept up to date. Each individual support service should have access to that list. This is so that when a person needs a type of support that the service they are currently at does not have, or have available.. i.e.: shelters who are full, the service can look up online another local service (that hasn't been shut down) and refer the person to it directly. This way, the poor and homeless in the DTES are not being sent from place to place only to find the service they need no longer exists. It will also inform all the service providers of the DTES with a current listing of what services are available, so that if someone see's a 'hole' ...they can maybe fill it.
- Recommend that the Province of BC/Federal government establish a day every year dedicated to missing and murdered men and women of this province/country. February 14<sup>th</sup> it is the day already set aside for the missing women's march...this should be a provincial/federal recognized day.
- Recommend that a Candlelight vigil be held in Vancouver. This could be done as a way of raising funds for the DTES. Candles could be sold to raise funds for the community and then the purchaser could put their candle in their window to remember the missing and murdered on the night of remembrance. There could also be a gathering to allow people to join together with their candles and remember the missing and murdered people of this province.
- Recommend that anger management therapy be provided, for anyone involved who feels they need it.
- Recommend that a Website be built to facilitate continuing contact among the families and friends, this could be set up as a way for the families and friends to keep in contact with each other. It could also be a site where there could be updates about memorials, vigils, summer camps for children, new news from the DTES.
- Recommend that a block party be held every year in the DTES. There could be activities planned to help all the attendees to help interact with each other. Photos could be taken and given to the residents or used on community newsletters. There could be gift bags given at the end of the day filled with useful items like deodorant, soap, wash cloth, books or magazines, candy, coupons for free food or coffee. In order for this to work, the police and local businesses need to participate – come out of their stores and be a part of the community. This works in a preventative fashion, i.e. it is much less likely that a homeless person will pee on your storefront window if they know your name and like you.

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- Recommend that restorative justice, mediation or circle processes be offered to those impacted by this tragedy who may wish to have a “face to face” meeting with someone else who was involved in the aftermath of the tragedy. This would promote understanding and healing for all. For example meetings could take place between CJS employees and victim’s family members.
- Recommend that there be opportunities for victims, family members and friends if they wish to share their stories to help educate groups and organizations. For example, university classes and police training seminars etc. There is evidence that shows that this can be healing for victims as well as valuable to audiences. It is important not to lose sight of these experiences, the stories must be passed on.
- Recommend that some traditional healing processes for First Nations survivors/families be provided in consultation with First Nations peoples.
- Recommend reaching out to other cultures and other parts of the world for ideas about healing.
- Recommend that families of the missing and murdered women be included on implementation and follow up committees regarding the recommendations included in this report, as much time and thought went into contributing to this process.
- Recommend that the Commission support a request for funding for any recommendation above that will require monies in order to be implemented.

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## **IMMEDIATE OUTCOMES**

In addition to the list of creative, thoughtful, and practical ideas that were generated some other comments expressed by the participants at the end of the meeting regarding their experience together was that they felt that:

- they had had a fair chance to be heard
- the process was respectful to all
- the meeting content was positive in orientation
- there were some creative and useful outcomes
- they felt encouraged about the work that had been started in a short period of time
- there was a sense that the ideas could be broadcast widely as well as recommended to the Commission and that more ideas were welcome.

## **NEXT STEPS AND CONCLUSION**

As the inquiry comes to a close many are wondering what to do next. This forum and the people who attended it have planted seeds that will surely blossom and grow. These ideas are not owned by the group that created them they were made for all who might need them. We would like you who read this to take all or part of these recommendations and run with them. Talk to people anywhere and everywhere about what you have read here. Healing for each person will be a difficult process. As we pass this report to Mr Oppal we trust that he also will use as many of our recommendations as possible to ensure that there are building blocks for healing, learning and moving forward.

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To those of you who may need healing: when you look at these recommendations we hope you are able to find one or more ideas you can carry with you and act on. We hope that your healing is quick and thorough. We hope that our work here has allowed you to realise that you are not alone in your pain and suffering. We will all walk the road to healing sometimes on our own and sometimes with a gentle push but remember you will never be alone.

To the Commissioner: we would request that you will review each of these recommendations carefully and consider seriously giving support in your report to as many as possible, thereby assisting in the healing and ability to move forward - for all.

Quotes to remember;

One person with a thought is a idea,  
Two people talking about it makes it a dream,  
Acting on it can make it a reality.  
Lori-Ann Ellis

I am not a victim.  
No matter what I have been through, I'm still here.  
I have a history of victory.  
Rae-Lynne Dicks (from Steve Maraboli)