

#OFOVCCOMMUNITY NEWSLETTER



Welcome back, OFOVC Community! As always, we hope you and your loved ones are safe and well as we navigate pandemic measures across Canada. The Ombudsman and team were busy this winter serving victims and survivors of crime, making new connections with stakeholders across the criminal justice system, and planning our Webinar on enforceability for victims' rights, which was held on February 3rd (more on this below!).

EVENTS AND ENGAGEMENTS WITH STAKEHOLDERS

The Ombudsman and Executive Director held several meetings over the last few months as they worked to draw attention to the recommendations of the Progress Report: The Canadian Victims Bill of Rights (CVBR). In December, they met with Special Advisor Ralph Goodale for an update on the progress being made in terms of Canada's ongoing response to Flight PS752. In case you missed it, read the Ombudsman's statement on National Day of Remembrance for Victims of Air Disasters. In January, they held a call with police-based victim service units in Alberta to hear providers' concerns over budget cuts to victim services in the province. The Ombudsman then presented to the Canadian Association of Police Governance, where she discussed recommendations from our Progress Report on the CVBR- specifically the role police play in informing victims of their rights, and the need to implement trauma-informed training and practices.

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On February 4th, the Ombudsman was invited to provide remarks to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights on the study of controlling and coercive conduct within intimate relationships along with speakers; Janine Benedet, Carmen Gill, Jennifer Koshan, Genevieve Isshak from Hiatus House and Andrea Silverstone from Sagesse Domestic Violence Prevention Society.

On February 10th, the Ombudsman met with RCMP Commissioner Brenda Lucki to discuss the national roll out of a Victims' Rights Card, as recommended in our Progress Report on the CVBR, as well as victims' complaints under the CVBR and the need for a distinct complaint form. They also discussed sexual assault information review committees (SAIRC) and how the RCMP was addressing systemic racism.

On February 23rd, the OFOVC held our third virtual Indigenous Advisory Circle (IAC) meeting. The meeting consisted of a roundtable discussion on systemic racism within policing and the MMIWG National Action Plan on violence against Indigenous women, girls and Two-spirit people. Guest speaker Shirley Cuillierrier, Special Advisor to Combat Human Trafficking, also joined the meeting to discuss Canada's national strategy to address human trafficking. We look forward to the next meeting, which will be held in early May.



Shirley Cuillierrier, Special Advisor for Human Trafficking, joins the IAC to discuss Canada's strategy to prevent human trafficking.

WEBINAR ON “MOVING TOWARDS ENFORCEABLE RIGHTS FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME IN CANADA”

In case you missed it: On February 3rd, OFOVC hosted a discussion panel on “Moving Towards Enforceable Rights for Victims of Crime in Canada”. Our Executive Director, Dr. Nadia Ferrara, moderated the event as four prominent experts - Kathleen Dufour, Arlene Gaudreault, Melissa Heimerl, and Marie Manikis - joined the Ombudsman to discuss a series of questions on the legal responsibility and implications of enforceability for victims' rights. Thank you to the close to 600 participants who joined in! We encourage all Canadians to read the Progress Report on the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights and write to their Member of Parliament to urge them to [#ReviewTheVictimsBill](#). We hope you will join us in our call to action to strengthen victims' rights in Canada.



Screencapture from our webinar. From left to right: top row: Dr. Nadia Ferrara, Arlene Gaudreault. middle row: Melissa Heimerl, Kathleen Dufour. bottom row: Marie Manikis, Ombudsman Heidi Illingworth.



RECOMMENDATION LETTERS



The OFOVC has been busy writing recommendation letters to federal agencies in order to ensure victims and survivors of crime are treated fairly. On December 10th, the Ombudsman wrote to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, the Honourable Bill Blair on preventing victimization related to handguns. On January 22nd, we received a response from Jennifer Oades, the Chairperson of the Parole Board of Canada to our letter from December 21st on providing victims with written reasons when conditions they have requested are not imposed on an offender's conditional release. Additionally, we wrote a letter to the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General of Alberta, the Honourable Kaycee Madu on Alberta's Victims of Crime and Public Safety Act.

OUR RESEARCH CORNER

We have recently published several submissions and academic reports written by external subject matter specialists related to victimology in our research corner such as our submission on Crime Victims' Experience with Chronic Pain in Canada and Restorative approaches and gendered violence: Moving beyond is it possible? A Discussion Paper by Verona Singer. Stay tuned for 6 more reports to be added in the next fiscal year!

LOOKING AHEAD



We're happy to share an overview of the many initiatives planned for the coming months!

Virtual Sharing Circle: Yukon

Our ability to travel is limited given our current health guidelines in order to limit the spread of COVID-19, but the OFOVC plans to deliver on our commitment to engage with victims of crime across the North of Canada virtually. We are planning to hold a virtual Sharing Circle for residents of Yukon to share information about our Office's work and hear from residents about their lived experiences with the criminal justice system. Stay tuned for the outcomes of the event!

Upcoming webinars

Once again, we want to thank everyone who participated in our discussion panel on "Moving Towards Enforceable Rights for Victims of Crime in Canada". We are planning our webinar "Uphold Victims' Rights and Uproot Systemic Racism" for June 9th, 2021. Planning is underway – stay tuned for more information!

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