



*This report is a 10 year review of the PPCMP's work on the recommendations made in the Final Report of the Provincial Partnership Committee on Missing Persons – 2007.*

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## PROGRESS AT A GLANCE

Implemented

Ongoing/In-progress

Outside the PPCMP's Scope

### ISSUES RAISED BY FAMILIES

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Media Sensitivity

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Family Support Network

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Legislative Review

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## INTRODUCTION/EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In December 2005, the Government of Saskatchewan established the Provincial Partnership Committee on Missing Persons (PPCMP or the Committee). Organizations with knowledge, experience and expertise in the area of missing persons were invited to join this collaborative partnership to examine the issue and improve responses to missing person cases. The PPCMP, chaired by the Ministry of Justice, has representation from 20 organizations across the province including police, Indigenous and non-Indigenous community organizations, search and rescue and government.

Based on feedback from families of missing persons and an examination of the issues, the PPCMP prepared a list of 20 recommendations in the [Final Report of the Provincial Partnership Committee on Missing Persons](#) (October 2007), which is available on the Government of Saskatchewan website [www.Saskatchewan.ca](http://www.Saskatchewan.ca). In the years since, the PPCMP has worked towards implementing many of these recommendations as well as to identify other possible initiatives that may assist missing persons and their families.

The following report summarizes progress on these recommendations beginning with the Progress at a Glance table (above), which identifies recommendations as **Implemented** (substantial progress has been made), **Ongoing/In-progress** (work continues as action was never complete or further work is needed) or **Outside Scope** (beyond the capacity of the PPCMP to directly address or influence further). Fourteen (14) of the recommendations have been completely or substantially implemented. However, activities such as increasing public awareness require ongoing action. Four (4) recommendations have been identified as ongoing, often in a modified form from that initially envisioned in 2007. Two (2) recommendations are considered outside the scope of the PPCMP to significantly influence.

The next three sections offer a more detailed description of the recommendations as initially organized in the 2007 report, by issues raised by families, prevention and public awareness, and improving the response. For each recommendation, there is a summary of the status of any response, whether by the direct efforts of the Committee itself, by Committee member organizations, or by other organizations to which the Committee advocated but may not have directly influenced.

The PPCMP initially met with 53 persons representing 21 families of long-term missing persons in Regina, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert in 2007, and subsequently met with 24 family members representing 14 families of long-term missing persons in October 2009 to report back on action taken to respond to the Report recommendations and to seek their advice on further action. The families indicated that they appreciated the opportunity to provide input, as well as the work of the PPCMP overall. They also supported many of the actions undertaken by or through the PPCMP, such as implementing *The Missing Person and Presumption of Death Act* and developing the checklist and media kit. The families also identified some key themes regarding areas for further action:

Ongoing communication: The continuing importance of improved communication between police investigators and families of missing persons. Even if there are no new details regarding the case, the family needs to know that work is still occurring and that their family member has not been forgotten.

- Networking for families: Many families raised the need to develop a more comprehensive support network. They were pleased to hear about both Child Find's Connecting Families program, as well as plans to establish Missing Persons Liaisons positions, but felt that a more formalized network of support involving families would also be beneficial.
- Financial support for families: Families indicated that few community or other supports were available to them and they often experience long-term financial stresses.
- Search and rescue capacity: The lack of local capacity for search and rescue was raised. Many families felt that they were predominantly responsible for searching for their missing loved one.
- Support tools for families: Families appreciated the media kit and checklist, but made some suggestions such as simplifying the language in these materials.
- Jurisdictional issues: Concerns were raised about cases where the missing person disappeared outside Saskatchewan or the investigation involved a police service outside Saskatchewan. This can increase the confusion for families around who to contact and how to proceed.
- Prevention and awareness: There was a need for more prevention and awareness, such as informing the public that any family can suffer the tragedy of a missing person and to educate youth about the risks of going missing or running away.
- Missing Aboriginal women: A number of families raised concerns about the disproportionate number of Aboriginal women missing in Saskatchewan.
- Continued development of the partnership: Many family members and other participants spoke about the benefit of meetings with families and how families could be partners in developing response to missing person's cases.

To respond to these suggestions, the PPCMP took the following actions:

- Child Find Saskatchewan, with the support of the PPCMP members and funding from the federal government, organized a "Western Forum on Supporting Families of Missing Persons" on March 2 and 3, 2011, in Regina. The purpose of the Forum was to enhance collaboration and networking amongst agencies in Western Canada to support families of missing persons. Government and non-government agencies from Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, the Northwest Territories, and Yukon attended, as well as federal government representatives. The forum discussed four central questions:
  1. What are the needs of families of missing persons?
  2. What services are different jurisdictions providing to families of missing persons?
  3. What gaps exist in the provision of support to families of missing persons?
  4. How can the supports provided to families of missing persons be improved both within jurisdictions, as well as between jurisdictions?

The [Report on the 2011 Western Regional Forum on Supporting Families of Missing Persons](#) was released to all participants in May 2011. It is available on the Government of Saskatchewan website [www.Saskatchewan.ca](http://www.Saskatchewan.ca).

The PPCMP then, with funding from the federal government, undertook to work through Child Find to develop a strategic business plan for the PPCMP. Community members and stakeholders were consulted and three strategic areas were identified for the business plan: to continue to improve on working together, to focus on raising awareness and to find ways to support families. This report, [Strategic Business Plan: Addressing the Needs of Missing Persons and their Families](#), was released in 2012 and shared broadly with agencies. It is available on the Government of Saskatchewan website at [www.Saskatchewan.ca](http://www.Saskatchewan.ca).

The PPCMP has taken action to raise awareness in particular through the annual Missing Persons Week in May of each year since 2013, along with issuing newsletters to update families and agencies on the work being done.

Following a discussion on the evolving understanding of how trauma and ambiguous loss affects the brain, the PPCMP determined in early 2014 to hold meetings to share this information with families and with agencies that work with families of missing persons. The PPCMP then met with families of missing persons again in September 2014. At that time, the PPCMP worked with Greystone Bereavement Centre (now Caring Hearts Counselling Inc.) and Duane Bowers, a grief counselling specialist, to facilitate family gatherings in Regina and Saskatoon. Forty-five (45) persons representing 19 families participated in person, while 20 persons representing four families participated in a further session conducted by Telehealth in the Prince Albert and north region supported by North Sask Victim Services. Duane Bowers facilitated a support workshop on traumatic grief loss, ambiguous loss, and resiliency. Additional topics included emotions and how to handle them (focusing on people who have been missing for more than six months); relationship issues and coping with their new reality over time. Family members were also given an opportunity to share with one another and to provide feedback on what they thought would be helpful moving forward. Similar to the gatherings in 2007 and 2009, investigators were present to meet with family members to provide case updates and answer questions. As well, 80 agencies involved in serving families of missing persons – from police to First Nations and victim services agencies – participated in a day long training session on ambiguous loss in Saskatoon in September 2014.

In addition to the recommendations made in 2007, specific suggestions made by families in 2009 and 2014 are also referenced in this progress report. The report from the 2009 meeting with families, as well as the PPCMP's 2007 Final Report and many other materials, are available on [www.Saskatchewan.ca](http://www.Saskatchewan.ca).

The last section of this document concludes with a brief look at the initial discussions for a strategic plan for the Committee for now and in the future.

The PPCMP currently consists of members from the following organizations, which are listed in alphabetical order:

- Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan
- Caring Hearts (formerly Regina Palliative Care and Greystone Bereavement)
- Child Find Saskatchewan
- Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN)
- FSIN Women's Commission
- Government of Saskatchewan:
  - Education
  - Government Relations
  - Health
  - Justice
    - Office of the Chief Coroner
    - Community Safety and Well-Being
      - Victims Services
    - Corporate Initiatives
    - Counsel for Children
  - Social Services
    - Child and Family Services
  - Status of Women Office
- Métis Family and Community Justice Services
- Regina Treaty Status Indian Services (RTSIS)
- Saskatchewan Aboriginal Women's Circle Corporation (SAWCC)
- Saskatchewan Association of Chiefs of Police (SACP)
  - RCMP F Division
  - Regina Police Service
  - Weyburn Police Service
- Saskatchewan Police Commission
- Saskatchewan Towards Offering Partnership Solutions to Violence (STOPS)
- Search And Rescue Saskatchewan Association of Volunteers (SARSAV)



## PROGRESS REPORT 2007 – 2018

### *Provincial Partnership Committee on Missing Persons*



The yellow circle shows the location of the Missing Persons Oak Tree just off Lakeshore Drive on the south side of Wascana Park on the Old Broad Street Road across from Pine Island.





Oak Tree planted to remember missing persons in 2016.

## RESPONDING TO ISSUES RAISED BY FAMILIES

### Recommendation 1 – Support for Families

#### Status: Implemented

Supports need to be developed by the PPCMP or other partner organizations to help families deal with a missing person situation:

- Families require a simple checklist with actions they can, or should take, such as determining who the family contact person is with the police, with the media or the type of information they might look for to assist the police in the investigation;
- Families require a media kit or information on dealing with the media to help them understand the issues and relationship that may develop during an investigation in terms of providing information to the media or responding to media inquiries; and
- Family members who are involved in supporting a missing person investigation may need financial and emotional support from community members or organizations.

#### Response

A checklist and a media kit are available online at [www.Saskatchewan.ca](http://www.Saskatchewan.ca) and on the Saskatchewan Association of Chiefs of Police (SACP) website [www.sacp.ca](http://www.sacp.ca). Families are reminded about the media kit annually when they are advised of the upcoming Missing Persons Week. Agencies such as Victim Services and Caring Hearts (previously, Regina Palliative Care and Greystone Bereavement) offer emotional support and access to counselling services, and some families access Indigenous Elders.

During the 2009 meeting with families of missing persons, families indicated that they appreciated the opportunity to meet with the PPCMP, and the work done on the checklist and media kit. They also provided some suggestions that could be considered in future revisions, such as simplifying the language in these documents; reordering some sections of the checklist; and letting families know about the importance of having a backup spokesperson who can speak to the media in case the primary spokesperson is sick or unavailable.

During the 2009 meeting, the need for financial support for families was also discussed. A number of families also provided information regarding the financial stress they faced, such as losing income due to taking time off work to participate in the search or meeting the financial obligations of their missing loved one, such as paying for their rent or child care. It was suggested that long-term financial support would be helpful to offset these expenses and the travel costs families incur when checking out leads.

Unfortunately, there are no programs in place in Saskatchewan which consistently offer financial support to families. The FSIN's Women's Commission has an annual fundraiser so that it is able to offer some financial assistance to family members for eligible activities, as funds allow. The federal government offers limited financial support to families of missing or murdered children. The Federal Income Support for Parents of Murdered or Missing Children (PMMC) is an income support grant for eligible applicants taking time away from work to cope with the death or disappearance of their child or children. This support is only available if the child is missing as a result of a probable *Criminal Code* offence, and applicants must be able to satisfy certain employment income history criteria such as having earned a minimum of \$6,500 in the previous year.

Offering financial support is a complex issue as the needs are varied and ongoing. As a result, many agencies are reluctant or unable to become involved. A booklet has been prepared by the PPCMP to assist agencies working with families to discuss issues related to raising and managing such funds.

The Committee continues to discuss how financial support can be provided to families, including addressing recent challenges, such as online crowdfunding scams which may affect vulnerable families.

Saskatchewan's Family Information Liaison Unit (FILU) plays a key role in providing information and support to families. FILUs were established in provinces and territories with federal funding in order to help families impacted by the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. It works alongside, but separate from, the National Inquiry. Saskatchewan's FILU, which was established in September 2017, helps families of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls locate the information they seek, to the extent that legislation allows, from agencies such as Social Services, the Office of the Chief Coroner, Public Prosecutions, and police (both municipal and the RCMP). The FILUs activities have included:

- Facilitate access to information relevant to a situation involving a missing and/or murdered Indigenous women or girls;
- Partner and/or collaborate with Indigenous organizations/agencies such as the FSIN, Regina Treaty/Status Indian Services, Iskewuk Ewichiwitochik-Women Walking Together, and Saskatchewan Aboriginal Women's Circle Corporation, in providing culturally-appropriate, trauma-informed support for families;
- Community and family outreach activities with other agencies such as Kawacatoose Health Centre, Onion Lake Wellness Centre and Prince Albert Grand Council – Women's Commission to organize and/or financially support family gatherings and art/music therapy workshops specifically for youth (Prince Albert); and
- Help families and communities better engage with the police and justice system.

Saskatchewan's FILU provides services in a trauma-informed and culturally-safe manner.

In January 2018, the FILU contracted the FSIN Women's Commission to provide two Indigenous Family Liaison Officers who work directly with families in local communities. Both those who are legally recognized as family and those who fall under the cultural definition of "family" may be eligible for FILU services, including any members of "street families" of missing or murdered Indigenous women or girls.

## Recommendation 2 – Media Sensitivity

### Status: Outside Scope

The media is encouraged to develop best practice standards in dealing with missing person cases which include consistent, neutral messaging sensitive to the family and cultural circumstances.

#### Response

This is outside the mandate of the PPCMP. However, in 2007-08, member organizations of the PPCMP engaged with the media to improve awareness and cultural sensitivity on how the media communicates in these cases and how it affects the family. As such, the media no longer uses mugshots to identify missing persons or inappropriate language or references to a missing person's background, such as labeling someone as a prostitute.

The Committee has identified that, in addition to respecting family and cultural circumstances, the media needs to be aware of their role in protecting missing persons, including children and youth, from additional trauma. Inappropriate media reporting and inadequate moderation of comments on media websites can result in online bullying and psychological harm to vulnerable persons.

The Committee will continue to advocate for best practice standards in missing person situations.

## Recommendation 3 – Family Support Network

### Status: Ongoing/In progress

Families of missing persons should be supported by governments and involve agencies to develop a support network.

#### Response

As previously discussed, this issue was also raised during meetings with the families of missing persons in 2009. Several members of the PPCMP have undertaken work on this recommendation. For example, Child Find Saskatchewan offers the [Connecting Families](#) program, while Caring Hearts is working towards developing and delivering a support group for families. SAWCC and RTSIS have also provided opportunities for families to develop a support network where families can meet on a weekly basis. Additionally, the families of missing and murdered persons can access free counselling through Caring Hearts, and Elders in residence are available to meet with and support the families. Caring Hearts also works to enhance community and local supports and services for families of missing and murdered



Indigenous women and girls by providing ambiguous loss, trauma and intergenerational trauma education sessions to community front line professionals, Elders, and volunteers.

In 2014, the PPCMP hosted a series of family meetings featuring guest speaker Duane Bowers; these meetings provided an opportunity for families to learn about ambiguous loss and to meet other families of missing persons. The support network as first envisioned would provide an opportunity for families to share experiences and knowledge and to learn that they were not alone in trying to deal with the trauma, questions, and problems raised by the disappearance of a loved one. This recommendation should continue to be reviewed to identify the feasibility or opportunities of supporting such a network or networks.

## Recommendation 4 – Legislative Review

### Status: Implemented

The provincial government should review existing common law and legislation dealing with missing persons and develop a timely, comprehensive legislative response to deal with the estate of the missing person.

#### Response

*The Missing Persons and Presumption of Death Act* was proclaimed in 2009 in response to this recommendation. The Act allows for the appointment of a property guardian for the estate of the missing person which allows them to, among other things, pay for the maintenance or education of the missing person's dependants. Families can also apply for an order declaring the presumption of death of a missing person, allowing them to settle the missing person's estate.

Amendments to this legislation were tabled in the Saskatchewan Legislature in spring 2017 to enhance the provisions to be consistent with changes proposed nationally (*The Uniform Act*). The amendments are based on *The Uniform Act* and will provide more comprehensive search powers for law enforcement officers investigating missing person's cases. Law enforcement would rely on the new provisions in place of a production order under the *Criminal Code* where a person is missing, but there is no reason to suspect a crime has taken place. The Bill includes provisions for law enforcement to:

- Obtain a search order;
- Access a broader range of records including global position system information, employment and school records;
- Access information about a person who might be in the company of a missing person who is a minor or vulnerable adult; and
- Make an emergency demand for records where certain criteria are met.

## Recommendation 5 – Recognizing Missing Persons

### Status: Implemented

- 5.1 The provincial government, in partnership with police services, First Nations, Métis and Aboriginal organizations, and local governments, should consult with families of missing persons to determine the form or forms that a provincial memorial to missing persons could take and how it would be implemented and maintained.
- 5.2 The Saskatchewan minister of Justice should raise the topic of creating a national memorial to missing persons at the next Ministers responsible for Justice meeting.

### Response

- 5.1 In 2009, the PPCMP asked the families it met whether or how to proceed on this recommendation. The PPCMP understands that families need to know that their loved one is remembered. Families consulted in 2009 indicated that they did not feel “memorial” was the correct word, since they had hope that their loved one would be found. Those families preferred an object, particular location or awareness walk to be used as a place of reflection or remembrance rather than as a memorial.

In 2014, the PPCMP dedicated the Saskatchewan Missing Persons Oak Tree in Wascana Park, Regina, to acknowledge and remember all missing persons. The oak tree was selected for its longevity and as a symbol of strength, courage and endurance. Longevity and endurance are regarded as important concepts to hold onto for the families of missing persons

The PPCMP also acknowledges other sites dedicated to missing persons around the province, including the Sisters in Spirit Place of Reflection at RCMP Depot Division in Regina and the statue to Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls at the Saskatoon Police Service Headquarters in Saskatoon. Government members of the PPCMP contributed funding to both of these sites.

- 5.2 The Saskatchewan minister of Justice raised the issue in Federal-Provincial-Territorial (FPT) Justice Ministers meetings in 2010 and 2012, and the idea of a memorial is now included in the terms of reference of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.



## **Recommendation 6 – National Website for Missing Persons**

### **Status: Implemented**

The Saskatchewan Association of Chiefs of Police (SACP) is encouraged to promote the concept of a national website or linked websites and the Saskatchewan minister of Justice is encouraged to raise the need for a national website or linked websites on missing persons at the next meeting of Ministers responsible for Justice.

### Response

The SACP and the minister of Justice raised the need for a national website in national forums, and the recommendation is contained in a 2012 Federal-Provincial-Territorial Justice Ministers report on Missing Women. In response to this and other public pressures, the website [canadasmissing.ca](http://canadasmissing.ca) was created. This site is run by the RCMP and has links to some provincial police services.

## RESPONDING TO PREVENTION, AWARENESS AND PUBLIC EDUCATION ISSUES



Photos of long-term missing persons in Saskatchewan and empty chairs honouring them at the opening ceremony at Missing Persons Week 2015.

## Recommendation 7 – Public Awareness

### Status: Implemented

- 7.0 As a priority, the Provincial Partnership Committee on Missing Persons or another agency, with relevant community stakeholders, should be tasked to develop information/education materials to provide a factual overview of all aspects of missing person situations.
- 7.1 Agencies that deal with at risk populations should establish teams to conduct presentations on awareness, prevention and personal safety to social and professional networks throughout the province.
- 7.2 The Committee or another agency should be tasked with compiling and maintaining an inventory of agencies involved in missing person cases to support networking and a publicly accessible inventory of existing or new educational materials on prevention and personal safety.
- 7.3 Police, as part of communications with the public, should ensure that information about police policy, procedure, and practices related to missing person's cases, and the role that the public can play in assisting in missing person cases, is generally available.

### Response

Significant progress has been made on this recommendation and public awareness remains an ongoing focus of the PPCMP. As previously mentioned, there are several tools and resources for families of missing persons on the Government of Saskatchewan website [www.Saskatchewan.ca](http://www.Saskatchewan.ca) and the SACP website [www.sacp.ca](http://www.sacp.ca).

- 7.0 Raising public awareness of missing person issues is a key goal of Missing Persons Week. Topics covered during Missing Persons Week included dispelling myths about missing person situations, explaining some of the various reasons people go missing, highlighting how communities and agencies offer support in missing person situations, and explaining what happens in a missing person situation. The Committee has also published the [Agency Response Guide to Missing Person Situations](#) in Saskatchewan for agencies assisting and supporting the families and friends of missing persons.
- 7.1 Various Committee member agencies raise awareness of missing person issues. For example, the Regina Police Service does presentations to the Police College and the Citizens' Police Academy and also runs an active social media campaign during Missing Persons Week.
- 7.2 The inventory of agencies is complete and available online at [www.saskatchewan.ca](http://www.saskatchewan.ca). In addition to maintaining the inventory, ongoing work should include considering how agencies are identified to ensure that the inventory represents agencies in the province.

- 7.3 The response to this recommendation is ongoing. Public education materials created for distribution during Missing Persons Week are available on the SACP website [www.saskatchewan.ca](http://www.saskatchewan.ca) and a newsletter, the PPCMP Update, is available on the Government of Saskatchewan website. Available resources include informational videos on how to report someone missing and what happens during a missing person investigation. During Missing Persons Week, this information is shared through the social media networks of PPCMP agency member organizations and during interviews with traditional news media. PPCMP member organizations also engage in various public education activities such as the Victim Services Missing Persons Liaisons' annual film screenings, which may feature presentations by police investigators.

## Recommendation 8 – Saskatchewan Ministry of Education and School Community Councils

**Status: Ongoing/In progress**

Saskatchewan Learning (now the Ministry of Education) should include awareness about the risks of going missing or facing missing children and youth in all schools through health education programs and encourage educators and School Community Councils (SCCs) to continue to build awareness through access to materials, speakers, or other programming.

### Response

SCCs are designed to be a local voice that reflects the needs and strengths of their particular community. Thus, each council may approach issues such as the safety and well-being of children and youth in its own way and in alignment with any strategic plans and goals developed by the school division for all of its schools. The broadly stated mandate of SCCs allows room for them to participate in education or awareness programs that would address the risks associated with missing persons.

The Ministry of Education does not track or monitor the educational/awareness activities of SCCs. School divisions' annual reports sometimes include brief descriptions of SCC activities that could have a bearing on topics related to missing persons, and any other agencies involved in the learning and development of students, including agencies working to promote the safety of children and youth.

Child Find Saskatchewan has conducted training with some schools through the Alert Youth and All About Me ID programs. STOPS to Violence has also been running the *Kids Matter* program for children ages five to 12, which offers education on preventative measures aimed to keep children safe and teach them how to seek help.



## PROGRESS REPORT 2007 – 2018

### *Provincial Partnership Committee on Missing Persons*



Materials Available to Support Families Missing Persons Week, May 2017.



MedicAlert Canada Good Samaritan Award presented during Missing Persons Week 2018 to a Saskatchewan family for helping a person find their way safely home.



Many agencies are involved in responding to missing persons cases. Missing Persons Week 2015.



## IMPROVING RESPONSES TO MISSING PERSONS CASES

### Recommendation 9 – Saskatchewan Police Commission Policy

**Status: Implemented**

- 9.1 The Saskatchewan Police Commission should review its current policy and work with all police agencies in Saskatchewan to develop and implement an overarching provincial Missing Person Policy for all municipal police agencies and encourage the RCMP to adopt the policy in Saskatchewan.
- 9.2 The Saskatchewan Police Commission should give consideration to incorporating the following standards in the policy:
1. A missing person report must be taken immediately when information comes to the attention of police, regardless of the length of time the person has been missing or the location where the person went missing.
  2. A standardized specialized intake form for recording a missing person report and a specialized investigative checklist should be used.
  3. A common assessment tool should be developed to help assess the priority of the investigation.
  4. Immediate investigation of missing persons in suspicious circumstances.
  5. Once it is established that a person is missing, the case will be entered on the Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC) as soon as possible.
  6. Continued communication with the families of missing people.
  7. A media and public communications protocol for disseminating information about missing persons and requesting the public's help in locating a missing person.
  8. The police, upon identifying a chronic runaway situation, should develop approaches to link with other agencies to support appropriate intervention.
  9. All police forces should assign a police officer responsible for coordination of missing person files and establish a backup process to avoid gaps in effectively responding to missing person reports.

10. In order to effectively implement the above approach to recording and managing investigations on missing person cases, standardized training and practice guides should be developed.
11. There is a need for a more systematic and consistent approach to collecting data on:
  - 1) missing person reports; 2) actual missing persons; 3) basic demographic information about missing persons and 4) CPIC data entry.

Response

In February 2013, the Saskatchewan Police Commission implemented a comprehensive new policy for municipal and First Nations police services regarding the conduct of missing persons investigations. This new policy was informed by the work of the PPCMP, of which the Saskatchewan Police Commission was a member, and by consultations with other stakeholders, including the police community. The policy addresses concerns the PPCMP heard from families of missing persons, community groups who assist families, police and other organizations and individuals active in helping when people go missing. To view the Commission policy in its entirety, please go to Chapter OB 70 in [the Commission's policy](#) manual, which is available via [www.Saskatchewan.ca](http://www.Saskatchewan.ca).

The RCMP F Division has substantially adopted the Commission policy as well. This results in a substantially consistent approach to missing persons files across the province.

## Recommendation 10 – Communicating Urgency in High-risk Cases

**Status: Implemented**

A process is required to ensure that all suspicious and at-risk missing person reported incidents (those involving young children, people with medical issues, the elderly, and people living a high-risk life style) are fanned out to all relevant police agencies in the province immediately.

Response

This recommendation was addressed in the police policy standards (see Recommendation 9). For example, the Regina Police Service uses the Canadian Police Information Centre fan-out.

## Recommendation 11 – Protocols with Community Agencies

### Status: Implemented

Police should establish protocols with community agencies to provide a formal system to fan out “Missing Persons Information”.

#### Response

This recommendation was addressed in the policy standards (see Recommendation 9). The Saskatchewan Police Commission concluded that a formal protocol was not needed, and police services were encouraged to engage in additional outreach. Regina Police Service, for example, uses its media department and the services of the Canadian Centre for Child Protection.

As well, the Alzheimer’s Society works with the Safety Home program to support family members with dementia.

## Recommendation 12 – Legislative Reviews – Police

### Status: Implemented

- 12.1 The provincial government should amend provincial legislation to permit the disclosure of information on missing persons to police conducting a missing person investigation as information necessary to protect the mental or physical health or safety of an individual.
- 12.2 The Saskatchewan minister of Justice should raise with the Federal Ministers responsible for Justice the need to amend federal legislation to ensure that when police are investigating a missing person case they have access to information under federal jurisdiction relevant to the investigation.

#### Response

- 12.1 This was addressed in the revised legislation (see Recommendation 4) and amendments to *The Health Information Protection Act* (HIPA). British Columbia, Alberta and Manitoba have also followed Saskatchewan’s lead and enacted missing person legislation.
- 12.2 In Saskatchewan, *The Missing Persons and Presumption of Death Act* came into force in 2009, which includes a provision that allows family members and law enforcement to apply to court for access to information about a missing person. The Saskatchewan minister of Justice spoke about this issue at FPT Ministers meetings, and FPT Ministers/Deputy Ministers agreed that the Uniform Law Conference should work on uniform legislation regarding missing persons.

In 2014, the Uniform Law Conference of Canada adopted the *Uniform Missing Persons Act* and recommended that it be implemented by Canadian jurisdictions. *The Uniform Act*, which was largely based on Manitoba's *Missing Persons Act*, governs access by police to information about persons reported missing. Alberta, Manitoba, British Columbia, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador have enacted legislation based on or similar to *The Uniform Act*.

## Recommendation 13 – Victim Services

### Status: Implemented

The mandate of Victim Services should include the provision of support to families of missing people.

#### Response

A protocol was approved between the Ministry of Justice and the SACP in 2010 to support an expanded role for victim services to serve families of missing persons. As well, since 2011-12 three Missing Persons Liaison victim services worker positions were created and have been employed in the Prince Albert, Saskatoon and Regina police services, with federal funding support, to provide information and assistance to families of missing persons. They also provide training and support for other victim services around the province that support families of missing persons.

## Recommendation 14 – Search and Rescue

### Status: Ongoing/In progress

- 14.1 The province and local government need to enhance search and rescue resources province-wide by standardizing provincial policy and providing provincial core funding to ensure volunteer sustainability.
- 14.2 The province, communities and search and rescue organizations need to work cooperatively to ensure effective Search and Rescue (SAR) responses by:
  - a. Creating a provincial SAR Advisory Council of representative and mandating agencies, for strategic and operational direction to SARSAV;
  - b. Creating a standard policy regarding the use of SAR teams;
  - c. Ensuring that municipalities and communities take ownership of SAR volunteer teams;
  - d. Providing basic SAR training and equipment to volunteers free of charge;
  - e. Ensuring trained SAR teams, SAR managers and trainers are available throughout all areas of the province;
  - f. Creating a central provincial database for all SAR events, training and personnel;
  - g. Ensuring consistent and timely involvement of SAR teams in a missing person's event;

- h. Providing specialized training for SAR volunteers, i.e. emergency management and recognizing the need for SAR teams in a disaster event, crime scene or evidence recovery;
- i. Developing heavy urban SAR capacity;
- j. Ensuring support systems are in place for long term and/or remote searches;
- k. Ensuring liability protection for volunteers; and
- l. Ensuring Critical Incident Stress Management support to SAR volunteers.

Response:

The need to enhance search and rescue capacity in many areas of the province was raised by families of missing persons in 2009. Many families felt that they were left predominantly responsible for searching for their missing loved one.

The PPCMP is discussing these matters and considering reviewing and reclassifying these recommendations according to what is within the Committee's capacity to address and which recommendations should be addressed through advocacy to relevant organizations.

14.1 A report is being developed regarding search and rescue in Saskatchewan, which should assist with supporting the volunteer community by identifying needs and issues.

14.2 A number of initiatives are underway to address this recommendation. For example:

- a. Creating a provincial SAR Advisory Council: The SAR Advisory Council includes the Volunteer Air and Ground organizations, SARSAV, Civil Air Search and Rescue Associations, the RCMP, Public Safety Saskatchewan/Emergency Management and Fire Safety, the Office of the Fire Commissioner, Regina Police Service, Saskatoon Police Service, and the PPCMP. This Advisory Committee had been dormant for a number of years, but is now being rejuvenated and would benefit from more Indigenous participation.
- b. Creating a standard policy regarding the use of SAR teams: Policies are under development to address the many ways in which people can go missing. Concerns have been raised about using a standard policy for urban, rural, and remote northern areas, and there may be a need for different responses in different situations, such as youth missing from care, Alzheimer's patients, overdue canoeists/hikers, or when foul play is suspected.
- c. Municipal and community ownership: While SAR teams receive periodic support from municipalities and other communities, the level of support varies, especially in remote and rural areas which struggle to maintain national training standards. Consistent support and funding for training, equipment, and activation, and more regular activation of SAR teams would enable better responses in situations where people go missing.

- d. Providing SAR training: SARSAV chapters participate in a variety of training opportunities, including province-wide multi-jurisdictional search exercises; Search Manager, Team Leader, Searcher, and Train the Trainer sessions that align with the national standards; and ongoing community based training. Training sessions are organized by local teams, SARSAV and Search and Rescue Volunteer Association of Canada. Many of these training opportunities lately have been supported through funding from the federal New SAR Initiatives Fund (NIF). Sustained funding is needed to continue training.
- e. Ensuring trained SAR teams, managers, and trainers are available throughout the province: SARSAV has been implementing CSA Z1620 (core competency standards) and the Z1625-16 Training Curriculum Standards for SAR ground operations in Canada. Starting in 2016, SARSAV worked to bring all levels of volunteer SAR responders up to the newly-developed National Certification Standard in Ground Search and Rescue. SARSAV has hosted multiple training sessions for Searchers, Team Leaders, and Search Managers with joint attendance from Parks Canada and the RCMP to ensure trained SAR responders are available across Saskatchewan.
- f. Creating a central provincial database: A SARSAV website has been established, and Search and Rescue Volunteer Association of Canada has been developing a national database that will track the personnel capacity of SAR groups province-wide. Public awareness programs delivered through Adventure Smart are also being monitored. SARSAV is in the second year of a three year NIF project (federal funding by the National Search Secretariat of Public Safety) on data management and SAR resource tracking in Saskatchewan, and has signed into the provincial data management system that is used by Emergency Management and Fire Safety. This is a centralized provincial database and will be rolled out to all SARSAV in the coming months.
- g. Ensuring consistent and timely involvement of SAR teams: The RCMP and municipal police service activations have begun to include SAR chapters in missing person situations.
- h. Providing specialized training for SAR volunteers: SAR training is part of the 2016 emergency management organizations-RCMP-SARSAV proposal, and is in progress.
- i. Developing heavy urban SAR capacity: This is in progress. Heavy Urban SAR involves teams that are trained to search collapsed buildings and other structures. This is a highly specialized skill requiring intensive training, gear and equipment, and falls under the ownership of Emergency Management and Fire Safety.
- j. Ensuring support systems are in place for long-term and/or remote searches: This is an area that requires more consideration.
- k. Liability, workers compensation and medical insurance for on-search injuries and protection for volunteers: SARSAV workers currently have some liability and very basic personal injury or death protection when they are activated under the RCMP. More comprehensive protection regarding personal injury or death, workers compensation and liability that includes coverage during SAR training, administration duties, travel to and from SAR events, and situations when SARSAV members are activated by groups other than the RCMP, is still lacking. Workers compensation is not currently provided.



- I. Critical Incident Stress Management support for SAR volunteers: Awareness of the issue has improved and some chapters have made progress. Public Safety Saskatchewan through Emergency Management and Fire Safety is leading the development of a provincial plan.

## **Recommendation 15 – Search and Rescue Protocol - Police**

### **Status: Implemented**

The various Saskatchewan police forces need to establish protocols on when and how to engage search and rescue capacity in a missing person's event.

#### Response

This recommendation was addressed in Recommendation 9 – Saskatchewan Police Commission Policy. Continued development of the implementation of this policy extending through the SARSAV teams is in progress.

There is also a need to consider continuing public education about the difference between formal search activity and public awareness and support activities when someone goes missing. There are many things that families can do which are referred to in the PPCMP checklist.

## **Recommendation 16 – Schools Missing Person Policy**

### **Status: Outside Scope**

All school divisions are encouraged to develop policies and procedures for collaborating with police and/or school resource officers in missing person cases, which may include procedures for requesting information from students and staff, appropriate communication and information sharing practices and critical response provisions.

#### Response

As this recommendation is outside the scope of the PPCMP, it was communicated to the Ministry of Education for action. Provincial schools have developed administrative procedures and partnerships with local enforcement authorities to respond to missing person's inquiries and emergent situations.

The Ministry has entered into Memorandum of Understandings with Justice, Corrections, and Social Services to meet the data sharing needs of the respective ministries with regards to missing person inquiries and emergency situations.

## Recommendation 17 - Runaways

### Status: Implemented

The Committee recommends that the government undertake a study to better understand the issues related to the high number of runaways and to identify prevention and intervention strategies, particularly for chronic runaways and their families.

### Response

The families of missing persons raised concerns in 2007 about the need to educate youth about the risks of running away and going missing. More recently, the term “runaway”, which was used in the original recommendation, has been replaced by “missing youth” or “youth missing from care.”

In 2010, the PPCMP responded by having the [Runaway Children and Youth: Saskatchewan Police and Practice Report](#) prepared. The Government also addresses this issue by providing funding for STOPS To Violence, Child Find Saskatchewan for Alert Youth, and support for the Regina Under-11 Initiatives.

Additionally, the Ministry of Social Services has responded by implementing some changes in policy. Police services and the Ministry of Social Services are continuing to review and address issues related to missing youth and youth missing from care.

## Recommendation 18 – Police-based Caseworker Program

### Status: Implemented

The provincial government should fund a caseworker pilot with a police service. This caseworker would work with the “found” missing person and their family to deal with the causes of the person going missing by discussing how to avoid future situations and linking the individual and/or family with available resources to deal with the underlying causes of the person going missing to try to avoid repeat situations.

### Response

This recommendation has been addressed in alternate ways such as implementing the Missing Persons Liaisons described in Recommendation 13. As well, some communities have Hubs that provide similar kinds of responses.

## Recommendation 19 – Aboriginal Response Capacity

**Status: In progress**

The provincial government, the FSIN, the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan, First Nations, and Métis communities and organizations should be encouraged to develop and enhance mutually supportive strategies to ensure that:

- First Nations and Métis communities have the capacity to respond to a crisis when a person goes missing;
- Trained Search and Rescue capacities exist in all communities that incorporate and are sensitive to the culture, language, traditions and values of those communities;
- First Nations schools participate in prevention and response approaches similar to the recommendations for provincial school involvement; and
- Relationships between the police (RCMP and municipal police forces) and First Nations and Métis communities are strengthened in missing person cases.

### Response

The FSIN Women's Commission, with some funding from government, has done some work towards addressing this recommendation. Current community safety planning programs are also addressing these issues.

Additionally, SARSAV has a number of First Nations and Métis members in its chapters, who when called upon provide guidance in respecting cultural traditions. SARSAV has worked with Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies to provide awareness of our roles and is continuing discussions around awareness-level and prevention training for Resolution Health Support Workers.

## Recommendation 20 – National Information Database

**Status: Implemented**

The Saskatchewan minister of Justice should raise at the next meeting of Ministers responsible for Justice the need for national consideration of whether and how a voluntary national information base or linked information bases on potential missing persons could be created.

### Response

In 2010 and 2012, FPT Ministers of Justice endorsed the need for such a database. Along with other pressures, this led to a national database, the National Centre for Missing Persons and Unidentified Remains (NCMPUR), run by the RCMP.

## STRATEGIC PLAN – 2017 AND BEYOND

In December 2015, the Committee began reviewing its first ten years. The existing vision statement of the PPCMP is:

*Work towards a future that ensures that when people go missing there is a full response that mobilizes all necessary participants and that recognizes the equal value of every life.*

The Committee agreed that the vision is still valid, shared the ways in which things have changed since that vision was created, and identified how it might be updated for the next ten years.

### What's Changed?

- There is increased trust and improved collaboration among member agencies.
- The response in missing person situations has improved due to changes in legislation as well as policy and programs which support awareness and offer consistent messaging.
- More information is available to the public on why people go missing and what to do in a missing person situation.
- The Committee recognized that issues continue and the numbers of missing person cases are increasing (in part due to youth missing from care, but also likely due to more people being more willing to or knowing how to file reports).
- While more resources are available, there are also continuing needs and gaps.
- The Committee has learned more about the impact of social issues and mental health on missing person situations.
- Social media has been both a positive and negative influence/tool in responding to missing persons cases.
- Police reporting has improved, including after a missing person has been found. For example, using technology to protect the privacy of missing persons, in particular children and youth, who have been located.

The Committee felt that the vision could be updated by adding or emphasizing:

- The equitable response/value of every life.
- Increasing the focus on missing person and their families.
- Teamwork – all necessary participants should be involved in missing persons situations, such as professionals, communities, and agencies that play a role in responses and prevention.
- Prevention, awareness, and education.

- Long-term and short-term issues experienced by missing persons.
- Coordination of response activities.

Going forward, the Committee identified three main priorities: working together, raising awareness/prevention, and supporting families:

- Working together to maintain collaborative partnerships, improve information sharing, and enhance capacity by expanding the PPCMP to involve community, regional, and national partners.
- Raising awareness and improving education on how to prevent persons from going missing by engaging communities through targeted programs, prevention strategies, or safety plans, by matching messages and technology to various audiences.
- Supporting families by improving access to information and services, continuing to engage with families through meetings and mail outs, and engaging with agencies to identify gaps in services.

As the PPCMP enters its second decade, it is reviewing these priorities and developing a new work plan. The PPCMP looks forward to continuing to working collaboratively to implement these priorities and address the issues facing the families of missing persons.