

PPCMP Update

May 2019 A newsletter from Saskatchewan's Provincial Partnership Committee on Missing Persons [PPCMP]



Saskatchewan Missing Persons Week is proclaimed each year, and 2019 marks its 7th annual event. The dates are **May 5-May 11, 2019** under the theme **Safety for All**. This theme will focus on what each of us can do, as individuals, families, communities, and organizations, to prevent people from going missing and how to respond if they do. The key topics will be enhancing public awareness, promoting safety techniques, and highlighting prevention. People can go missing at any point during the life span for a variety of reasons. The Provincial Partnership Committee on Missing Persons (PPCMP) encourages you to consider how each one of us can be involved and have a role in safety planning. This volume highlights safety tips, new partnerships, updates on legislation, and provides details on the Saskatchewan Missing Persons Tree.

Saskatchewan Missing Persons Tree

The PPCMP recognized the importance of providing families with an area devoted to the memory of missing persons. The Missing Persons Tree was dedicated in Wascana Park, Regina on Friday, September 19, 2014. Families of missing persons were invited to attend or to write a note to be buried at the root of the tree. The ceremony included a reading of The Sacred Tree by Judie Bopp and the planting of messages from family members. Participants took turns adding a shovel of soil to represent each of the long-term missing persons in Saskatchewan.

Today the tree stands tall and continues to thrive. The tree provides a place to reflect and remember loved ones, and can also be used as an area for vigils or other activities.

According to the Saskatchewan Association of Chiefs of Police website, the total number of long-term missing persons in Saskatchewan in April 2019 was 134 people.

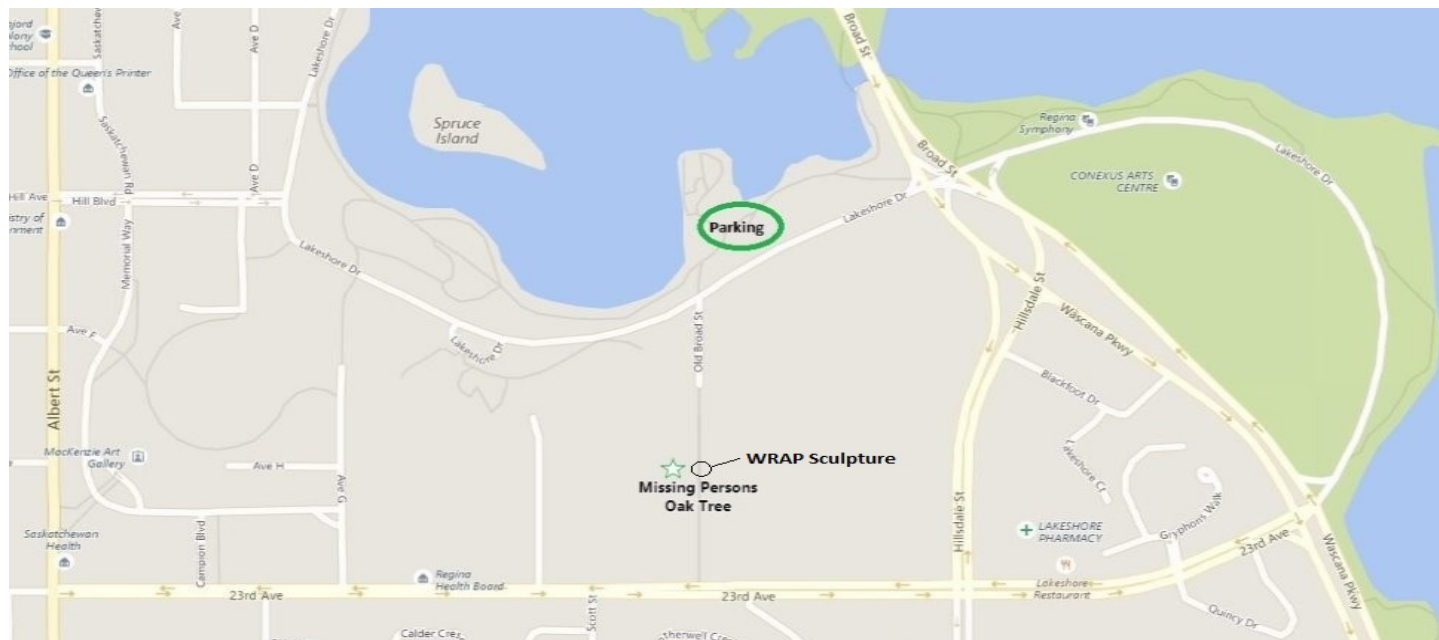
In Spring 2015, a plaque identifying the tree was placed in front of it. The inscription on the plaque reads as follows:

"This tree is dedicated to all missing persons, their families and friends by the PPCMP. This oak tree was chosen as a symbol of strength, courage, and endurance. ...loved beyond words, missed beyond measure."



Map of the Missing Persons Tree

To find the tree, park your car and walk south down Old Broad Street. You will see a sign entitled Arboretum Park. Continue walking south down the cement path; approximately 91 meters (100 yards). Once you reach a point where the path meets with the WRAP Sculpture, turn right (west) and you will see the Missing Person Oak Tree and the plaque in front of it.



New Missing Persons and Presumption of Death Legislation

Police services in Saskatchewan now have additional means to help find missing people, with amendments to *The Missing Persons and Presumption of Death Amendment Act, 2018*. The Act enhances the existing powers of police in missing person investigations where there is no reason to suspect a crime has taken place. “It is devastating for friends and families when a loved one goes missing,” Justice Minister and Attorney General Don Morgan said. “We must offer them every support available. These changes will ensure that police services have the most up-to-date tools to help find missing people.”

When a person is reported missing and there is no reason to suspect a crime, police cannot rely on the *Criminal Code* to access personal information. This could stall a missing person investigation. The amendments allow law enforcement agencies to:

- obtain a search order where a missing minor or vulnerable person is believed to be in a building;
- access a broader range of records including global positioning tracking records, employment records and school records;
- access information about a person who might be in the company of a missing minor or vulnerable person;
- and make an emergency demand for records where certain criteria are met.

The Missing Persons and Presumption of Death Act was introduced in 2009. The Act establishes how the property of a missing person is administered, adopts presumption of death provisions and sets out how family members and law enforcement can access information about a person who is missing. Saskatchewan was the first Canadian jurisdiction to create access to information provisions in relation to missing persons. To learn more, please visit:

<https://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/news-and-media/2019/march/15/missing-persons-legislation>

10 Tips for Reducing Risk of Missing Persons

Be Cautious About Sharing Information with Strangers Met Over Social Media

While technology like the internet, social media and smartphones have made it easier for friends and family to connect, the same technology has made it easier for strangers to connect with you. When using these tools of communication, it is important not to share personal details like age or address. Parents should teach children how to stay safe while using the internet and smartphones to avoid dangerous behavior such as meeting strangers.

Communicate Openly and Often with Your Children

It is important for parents to know their children's general schedule, who their children's friends are, and where their children frequently hang out. This can help parents know when and if it is unusual for their child to be late, who they can contact if they're looking for their child, and where the child may be. Having regular conversations with your children about these subjects and teaching them the importance of letting someone know their plans are ways to promote personal safety.

Have an Activity/Trip Plan When Preparing for Outdoor Recreational Activities

Many missing persons reports are a result of accidents involving outdoor recreational activities like boating, hunting, and hiking. When you and your friends are planning a trip outdoors, it is worthwhile to create an activity plan that involves your whereabouts and timeline. This plan should be left with a responsible

family member or friend who can take action if you do not return in the designated time. If an accident does occur, the individual can contact the police to begin a search.

Avoid Traveling Alone, and Plan a Safe Ride Home

Traveling in pairs or in groups is a helpful way for adults and youth to reduce the risk of going missing. Leaving parties and bars alone can be dangerous, especially if you were originally planning to leave the people you came with. At the very least, it is important to inform your friends when you leave, telling them where you are going, and who you are going with. Avoid accepting or asking for rides from individuals outside your circle of friends and family by planning a safe ride home BEFORE leaving for the event.

Keep Current Information About Your Loved Ones

Having a current photo of a loved one can help if their whereabouts are unknown. Both law enforcement and the public will have an accurate visual image to keep an eye out for them. Websites such as https://www.ready.gov/sites/default/files/NCMEC_Child_ID_Kit_wc_FEM_A_508.pdf have Child ID kits that parents can fill in to keep their children's information as current as possible. Relevant information includes fingerprints, height, age, and distinguishing features.

Become Familiar with Preventative Tools

Many agencies and support groups concerned with missing persons offer tools for families to help reduce risk of a loved one going missing. For

example, the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan has partnered with MedicAlert® to provide a voice to Canadians in an emergency. Individuals with mental health disorders can be at risk of wandering away. Tools such as MedicAlert Safely Home can provide the public with the information necessary to ensure their safe return. Lists of agencies in Saskatchewan that support missing persons can be found at

<http://publications.gov.sk.ca/documents/9/86179-PPCMP%20Agency%20Directory%20-%20January%202016.pdf>.

Try to be Conscious of Your Loved Ones Difficulties

Under some circumstances, persons can go missing intentionally in an attempt to avoid difficulties in their personal life. These difficulties can include financial issues, abuse, family breakdown or other overwhelming situations. In being aware of a loved one's personal struggles, it is possible to be a support or stabilizing force in their life. This can ultimately help in preventing a loved one from intentionally going missing.

Be Aware of Potential Signs

Youth can sometimes demonstrate risky behavior well before any incidents occur. As a parent, it is important to monitor your child's behavior. If you notice their attitude or friends changing significantly, you may want to pay closer attention. These kinds of changes might indicate further problems that may be cause for concern.

Keep Sources of DNA Intact

If you have growing concern for a loved one's safety, you might choose to keep a source of DNA sealed in a plastic bag. Potential sources of DNA can include an individual's toothbrush or hairbrush. Families and friends may want to take this precaution because DNA can help in the search for a missing person, and investigators may request articles

that hold DNA. This does not necessarily mean the missing person is not safe, and is meant to be precautionary. DNA can take extended periods of time to process, so it is helpful to have it as soon as possible.

Report Missing Persons Immediately

If you suspect a loved one of going missing, do not wait to report it. It is a common myth that a person must

be missing 24 hours before a report can be filed. Reports can be filed by anyone who suspects that a person has gone missing, and is important to do so sooner rather than later. The sooner a person is reported as missing, the better the chances are of finding them.

Submitted by: Will Jordan; University of Regina; Human Justice Studies practicum student.

Missing in the North: Submitted by Ian McNeil: SARSAV

Imagine the following situation. A person is lost. It's getting dark. The person realizes that help is needed. Their situation has changed. What started out as a pleasurable trip has turned into a potential life threatening situation. Who will come looking and offer assistance?

Throughout the province there is a group of volunteers who give up their time. They leave the comforts of their own families and home to help find missing persons. Some of the individuals even take time off from work to help. These are members of Search and Rescue Association of Volunteers (SARSAV). They are trained to Canadian Standards Association (CSA) standards. Using a combination of their knowledge of search and rescue and "bush" survival skills they venture out in a systematic way to locate a missing or overdue individual.

There are 19 SARSAV chapters, eight of which are located in northern Saskatchewan, the widely varied area of the boreal forest and the mixed forested areas of the province. This area covers over ½ of the province with a low population density. What it lacks in population it makes up in

abundance of lakes, valleys, rivers and trees...Yes, lots of trees.

Searchers need to be prepared for small urban searches in towns and at the same time be prepared for extended searches in the challenging terrain in northern Saskatchewan. As a group, searchers need to know how to utilize a variety of machinery, including snowmobiles, quads, and boats. Volunteers also require specialty skills such as tracking, search dog utilization, and assisting with planes and helicopters as well as working closely with other agencies such as the Canadian military. As a volunteer, each searcher strives to develop these skills and knowledge in the hope that they can make a difference and help bring someone home safely. They don't mind coming to the rescue when help is needed, but they do offer the following advice.

- **Leave a trip plan** with a responsible individual. If we know your intended direction of travel, we can locate you faster. The Adventure Smart Trip Plan App was launched February 8, 2019. <https://sarvac.ca/adventuresmart-trip-plan-app/>

- **Regular communication** either by satellite phone, or another method so we know when to start looking if you've had unexpected difficulty. Nothing is more frustrating (for both you and us) if you've had difficulty on your first day and for a whole week no one is looking for you since everyone thinks you're enjoying your week-long trip.
- **Be prepared.** One of the biggest factors in improving your survival is being prepared. Before your trip think of potential dangers and then plan to avoid them.
- **Know how to use all your safety equipment.** An emergency is not the time to test and learn how to use your safety equipment. Know how to use your Global Positioning System (GPS), compass, personal locator beacon, and other devices before you start your trip. While on the trip, use the safety equipment properly. For example, the purpose of a lifejacket isn't to provide a comfy cushion. It's designed to save your life.

- **Safety in numbers.** Travel with a group. The combined knowledge and equipment will assist if you encounter a dangerous situation.
- **Dress for the weather.** Anticipate typical weather changes for the time of year you're traveling and be prepared.
- **Positive mental attitude.** Keeping a positive mental attitude is crucial and will greatly affect your survival.
- On a final note: **Have Fun!** Enjoy all the wonders and beauty of the Northern Saskatchewan But remember... **Do it Safely!**



MedicAlert Connect-Protect Province-wide

Saskatchewan, was the first in Canada, to launch

The Saskatchewan Association of Chiefs of Police (SACP) partnered with the MedicAlert Foundation Canada in October 2018 to launch Saskatchewan's MedicAlert Connect Protect service province-wide. The service is a voluntary registry that gives emergency responders and police direct access to information that can help officers take quick action to locate lost or missing vulnerable individuals so they can be safely returned home.



SACP President Chief Marlo Pritchard (Weyburn Police Service) talks with reporters about the value of MedicAlert Connect Protect.

A MedicAlert subscriber provides a recent photo and personal information including identity, physical descriptions, attributes, wandering history, behavior



Photo courtesy of Catherine Horlock, Director, Customer Experience & Strategic Alliances. (L to R): Joanne Michael, Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan; Robert Ridge, President, MedicAlert Foundation Canada; June Draude, Autism Resource Centre, Catherine Horlock, Director, Customer Experience & Strategic Alliances, MedicAlert Foundation Canada, Eryn Langdon, Regina Support Worker, FASD Network of Saskatchewan; Jennifer Tarr, Policy Analyst, Ministry of Justice Government of Saskatchewan

management strategies such as anxiety triggers and de-escalation techniques, as well as caregiver information.

In an SACP news release on October 3, 2018, Marlo Pritchard, Chief of the Weyburn Police Service and President of the SACP, said “having a vulnerable family member or friend go missing, even for a short time, is every caregiver’s nightmare. We are pleased to work in partnership with

MedicAlert in this voluntary program to help vulnerable individuals live in safety.” Specifically, those with Alzheimer’s, dementia, brain injury, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder, autism, mental health, and special needs.

Learn more about MedicAlert, how it works, and how you or a loved one can sign up to a service plan by visiting medicalert.ca or calling 1-866-696-0273

PPCMP 10 Year Progress Report

Progress Report 2007-2018

In October 2007, the Provincial Partnership Committee on Missing Persons (PPCMP) met with numerous families of missing persons to better understand challenges they faced. The PPCMP finalized a report outlining 20 recommendations based on the concerns expressed by these families.

It has now been 10 years since these recommendations have been made available to the public and published to the Government of Saskatchewan website. The PPCMP wants to highlight the recommendations made and what has been done provincially to address these issues.

Responding to Issues of Families

When a loved one goes missing, it can be especially confusing to know what steps to take when you begin searching. Families have expressed this concern as well as the need for tools to better manage communications with media.

The PPCMP has published a checklist for when a person goes missing and a media toolkit. Both tools can be found on the Saskatchewan Government website at:
<https://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/family-and-social-support/help-for-families-of-missing-or-murdered-persons#agency-support>

Families also expressed the need for the provincial government to review existing common law and legislation concerning missing persons. In 2009, *The Missing Persons and Presumption of Death Act* was proclaimed to help address issues regarding property of a missing person:

<http://www.qp.gov.sk.ca/document/English/Statutes/Statutes/M20-01.pdf>. The Act was amended in 2018 to enable police to apply for a search order or record access order if the police are conducting an investigation into a missing person: <http://www.publications.gov.sk.ca/reelaw/documents/english/Chapter/s/2018/Chap-22.pdf>

Awareness, Prevention, and Public Education

Significant progress has been made on this recommendation, and public awareness remains an ongoing focus of the PPCMP. Missing Persons Week is proclaimed in Saskatchewan each year to raise awareness of key issues surrounding missing persons.

In addition to Missing Persons Week, the PPCMP has published numerous documents. A comprehensive agency inventory list, among other tools for families, can be found on the Saskatchewan Government website by searching for “missing persons.”

Improving Responses to Missing Persons Cases

While meeting with the families of missing persons, concerns regarding police policy and how it could be improved were discussed. In 2013, the Saskatchewan Police Commission implemented a comprehensive missing persons investigation policy for municipal and First Nations police services. The policy addresses concerns the PPCMP heard from families. These policies were also adopted by RCMP F Division to create a consistent approach to missing persons cases in Saskatchewan.

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 PPCMP will continue to work collaboratively to provide useful information to families of missing persons. To see the full report visit <http://publications.gov.sk>

Submitted by: Will Jordan;
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