

PPCMP Update

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A Newsletter from Saskatchewan's Provincial Partnership Committee on Missing Persons [PPCMP]

Issue 7

The Opening Ceremony for Missing Persons Week 2019

The Provincial Partnership Committee on Missing Persons raises awareness about why people go missing and promotes measures that can be taken to prevent or respond to such situations. Since 2013, Missing Persons Week (MPW) has been proclaimed annually in Saskatchewan. This year, MPW ran from May 5 to May 11, 2019. The theme—*Safety for All*—promoted safety tips; created awareness regarding the ways people go missing; and explained how individuals, families, communities, and organizations can help to prevent people from going missing, as well as how to respond when they do.

On May 6th, the Honourable Don Morgan, Minister of Justice and Attorney General, joined members of the PPCMP for the opening ceremony at the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Heritage Room in Regina. Each of Saskatchewan's 134 long-term missing people were symbolically honoured by an empty chair. Each chair was draped in white cloth, and pinned with a yellow and green missing persons ribbon.

The ceremony began with a special prayer from Elder Larry Oakes of Nekaneet First Nation, and drumming by Beryl Kaiswatum and Eric Chief. Following this, Minister Morgan shared the following: "It's

important that we, as a province, continue the work being done to find missing persons and to address the reasons people go missing in the first place. We all share the responsibility to not only keep ourselves safe, but also to keep everyone around us safe."



Next, Lori Whiteman of the Treaty 4 Education Alliance shared a story about her mother, Delores Marie Whiteman who was a member of the Standing Buffalo First Nation, went missing in the 1980's, and was listed as a missing person in 1995. Whiteman's powerful presentation focused on how "love is the common thread" within the issue of

missing and murdered Indigenous women. She said, "Love is in every search. It's love that drives us to continue searching for our loved one and love that forces us to believe, to keep hope alive and to have faith that things will be ok, even when our deepest innermost instinct says otherwise."

Whiteman spoke about how her search for her mother took a different form of action a few years ago when a number of dedicated individuals came together to create a stone medicine wheel called the Place of Reflection on the RCMP grounds in Regina. There are 1191 stones placed in this circle as a permanent reminder of the missing and murdered women. The Place of Reflection was created in partnership with the RCMP F Division and Depot, and a small volunteer committee which included Cree sculptor Lyndon Tootoosis, retired RCMP member Lloyd Goodwill, human rights community advocate Reggie Newkirk, Saskatchewan Aboriginal Women's Circle Corporation (SAWCC) President Judy Hughes, and others who contributed along the way.

The story of the stones and the story of the Place of Reflection were captured in a video that is now used for RCMP training. Whiteman shared that the goal is to create a "formal educational component within the Heritage Centre so that visitors and

others will know about this special place where all are welcome." In particular, she noted that it is a place for anyone connected to missing and murdered Indigenous women and 2SLGBTQIA people, and "indeed anyone who has faced the pain and grief of loss." Whiteman made note that the Place of Reflection is a testament to the lives of those who have gone missing and to show that they mattered. She finished by inviting others to visit this place at any time and said there is no formal protocol, but to "please enter in a kind and gentle and a respectful way."



The sculptor continues to add rocks and recently added rocks for Tiki Laverdiere and Ashley Morin of the North Battleford area.

Young Leaders Speak out on the Issue of Safety

The opening ceremony included a video presentation entitled *Our Voices*, created by youth representatives from Yorkton Tribal Council's Engaging Young Leaders Program. The video focused on creating awareness about missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and how to prevent someone from going missing in the first place. Following the video, three young leaders, Kirstyn Kennedy, Brandi McKay and Amy Esquash, spoke passionately about safety. Their messaging conveyed hope that change will begin with their generation. They reminded everyone to communicate with their children by encouraging them to follow precautions and to "have

a safety plan in place." The [video](#) can be viewed online.



Brandi McKay, Kirstyn Kennedy, and Amy Esquash with the Honourable Don Morgan, Minister of Justice and Attorney General

Zoe Baylis and Merah Gasmu, from Campbell Collegiate High School, created a unique and inspiring spoken word poem about safety issues that women face. Zoe and Merah felt it was time to openly discuss the personal safety issues women think about, and examine how day-to-day interactions and generally insignificant moments are often filled with a sense of uneasiness. During the presentation, Zoe narrated the events of an ordinary day in the life of a female character, while Merah relayed the corresponding thoughts inside the woman's head. The voice reminded the woman to take such precautions as:

- "Remember you shouldn't have your headphones in; be aware of your surroundings!"
- "Take your key out, you may need it. Don't make yourself a target!"
- "The fear will keep you safe!"

Following the performance, the Campbell students shared that the poem is intended to illustrate that, "The fear of violence is as profound as violence itself. It shapes and it narrows the lives of women in so many ways." A [video](#) performance of their poem is available.



Zoe Baylis and Merah Gasmu with the Honourable Don Morgan, Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Before the opening ceremony, the students from the Yorkton Tribal Council and Campbell Collegiate had never met or spoke about their individual presentations, yet the messages were very similar. It is clear that today's youth are deeply concerned and aware of the safety issues facing people in our communities. What is also apparent is that youth want to use their voices to make a difference and that they can positively impact the lives of many. We just need to listen.



Special thanks to Yorkton Tribal Council, The Engaging Young Leaders Program, Campbell Collegiate and the many people involved to make this event a success!

Phyllis Hallatt 34 Years of Volunteer Service for Child Find Saskatchewan



Phyllis Hallatt, President of Child Find Saskatchewan was honoured with letters of acknowledgement from Prime Minister of Canada, the Right Honourable Justin Trudeau; and the late Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan, the Honourable W. Thomas Molloy. She received the honours for her 34 years of dedication and volunteerism in bringing awareness to the issue of missing persons, advocating for the rights and protection of children and youth, supporting searching families, and helping missing persons find their way home.

The Provincial Partnership Committee on Missing Persons, would like to congratulate Phyllis as she continues her valuable work and outstanding efforts to the benefit of communities and families in Saskatchewan.



Photographs submitted by Sue Ramsey; Child Find Saskatchewan.

Regina Community Participates in the Faceless Dolls Honouring Project during Missing Persons Week 2019

From February to June 2019, residents of North Central Regina attended a weekly gathering at the Regina Public Library (RPL), Albert Branch. Albert Family Night is meant to bring library patrons and community members together with their loved ones for soup, bannock and an activity to make or learn something new. On May 7th, the RPL wanted to highlight Saskatchewan Missing Persons Week events and honour Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. The evening began with Elder Lorna Standingready of Peepeekis offering a heartfelt opening prayer. Next, Jennifer Tarr from the Ministry of Justice spoke about Missing Persons Week and the theme for this year—Safety for All. The 27 participating family members at the event were encouraged to write their ideas for staying safe on posters that were put on display.

The main activity of the evening was a partnered program with Saskatchewan Aboriginal Women's Circle Corporation (SAWCC). Nichol Rittinger, Jocelyn McGregor and Shirley Wilson facilitated the group with the Faceless Dolls Project. They explained that it is an honouring project for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Participants each received a small kit containing felt, and various little pieces of material for hair and clothing. Nichol, Jocelyn, Shirley, Jen, and Lorna helped the families create uniquely adorned honour 'women' to represent the many unaccounted for murdered and missing Indigenous women and

girls. These were placed on a presentation board at the end of the evening to create a powerful statement about the value and beauty of each missing loved one.

The library staff who were present observed that the sacred and expressive nature of the activity was a special way to connect with the tragedy of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. The feedback from participants was very positive. As the evening wound down, Lorna Standingready spoke about her own family history, and delivered a closing prayer.

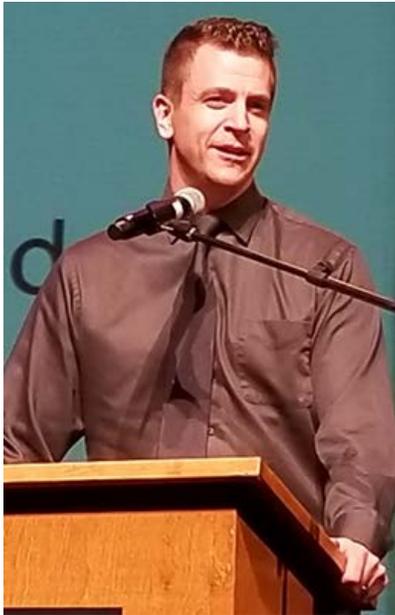
Submitted by Jo Shepherd; Community Specialist; Albert Branch, Regina Public Library; māmawēyatitân centre.



Participants created a doll and could keep their doll or offer the doll to SAWCC, who will be exhibiting them across Saskatchewan and making presentations when invited.

To Those Who Took the Missing Crimestoppers Initiative

Constable Ryan Ehalt spoke with passion to various audiences during Missing Persons Week 2019. The topic was a social media launch that took place on May 9 called the *Crime Stoppers Historical Missing Persons Project*. The goal of the project is to solicit anonymous information from the general public about historical missing people through Facebook Posts called 'To Those Who Took the Missing.'



To Those Who Took The Missing, What would it be like to be free from your secret and its heavy burden?

Many lives changed That Day. Your lives changed as well. We can picture you shutting yourself away from the world for a time, waiting for that knock on your door from the Police. You wanted it to happen and dreaded it at the same time as the weight of your actions started to take its toll.

This weight has been with you to this day, impacting your everyday life as moments of great fear, anxiousness and paranoia are common place for you. But, what if...

We started this post by asking you a question. Do you ever wonder what it would be like to be free of this heavy burden? A person who was once in the same circumstance as yours is quoted as saying, "I came in. I confessed. I was free." The only way to have this level of 'freedom' is through confession. Today is the day. It's time to come in and talk. Do you have information regarding a Historical Missing Person? Why carry the burden for what someone else did? Please click the "Contact Us" button on our Facebook Page or call 1-800-222-8477 to leave a completely, anonymous tip. We will pay up to \$2000 for any information that helps find them.

(We know not everyone who is a missing person has been "taken." By using this unique approach we are hoping to get information about those who have been.)



The public is asked to call Crime Stoppers with any information they may have about a missing person. The project also hopes to reach those who have taken a missing person to come forward and confess and thereby ease their conscience and help solve the case, so families can have answers about their loved one. Ehalt believes that this project will help find historical missing people and identify those responsible for their disappearance. The first post appeared on Facebook and received about 1000 shares, 119 comments, and 171 reactions. In addition, the Saskatoon Star Phoenix partnered with Saskatoon Crime Stoppers to produce a YouTube video, with the same message. It received 204 shares, 37 comments, and 88 reactions. You can view this [video](#) online.

Crime stoppers has translated their letter, "To Those Who Took The Missing" [into the Cree TH dialect](#) as a unique way to reach the Indigenous population of our province.

People who call Crime Stoppers can ask for a Cree translator. Crime Stoppers is also hoping to find a Dene speaking individual who would like to volunteer their time to help with the translation of this letter.

As of October 8, 2019, Ehalt said, "To date we have received over 125 different tips on a significant amount of historical missing person cases. Included in the 125 tip total are tips that are about unsolved homicides in the province, as well. We attribute this to the messaging within the letters, 'The only way to possibly be free is to confess.'" People are unburdening themselves whether it is about a missing person case or a homicide investigation. Although we will never be able to say which investigations have received tips, we will say that some tips have been useful and highly detailed. All these tips have been sent to the appropriate police agency for investigation.

This initiative has exceeded expectations and it is only halfway through the year-long project. You can hear a radio version of the current letter playing four times a day on MBC Radio. The second letter was launched, on August 28th. Stay tuned for the next letter which will be posted to social media in late November.

We are truly appreciative for the support this project has received. We will continue to look at ways to continue it indefinitely, until all missing people are home! (*Update submitted by Constable Ryan Ehalt.*)

Marnie Grundman – Why I Ran and Kept Running Broadway Theatre – May 8th, 2019)



"I ran for the first time at the age of five after my mother dropped me out of a two story building for financial gain. [Her mother's plan was to sue the landlord for an unsafe window.] Two broken arms later I was sent to live with my grandparents...the creators of my mother. At 13, I ran again, this time for good." **Marnie Grundman - Youth Advocate and Author of MISSING – A Childhood Lost.**

Marnie Grundman shared her story with an attentive audience at the Broadway Theatre during Missing Persons Week in Saskatchewan. She spoke of living a life on the run at the tender age of 13. After suffering years of abuse at the hands of her own mother and her grandparents, Marnie felt her only escape was to run and keep on running. She chose being scared, hungry and alone, and sleeping on a park bench rather than to be constantly subjected to a life of torment from those who were supposed to love and protect her.

Marnie's story of suffering, healing and rising up against all odds to reclaim and re-write her life was a true inspiration to the event's guests. Marnie advocates for the rights and protection of youth who

run due to their unbearable conditions at home. She encouraged the audience and those who work on the front lines to view these young people through a different lens. She brought to light—from firsthand knowledge—the many reasons why youth run regardless of race, religion, chosen career or socio-economic status. *"On June 20th, 1980 at the age of thirteen, I became a missing child. In the blink of an eye I went from living in an upper middleclass home with a soft bed and all the food I could eat, to being a child of the streets."* **Excerpt from MISSING – A Childhood Lost.** We don't like to think that Marnie's story is typical but unfortunately it is far more common than we realize and the risky lifestyle choices made by youth left to their own devices often has dire consequences. Youth who run are a perfect target for predators, explained Marnie. The sex trafficking of these vulnerable youth is on rise.



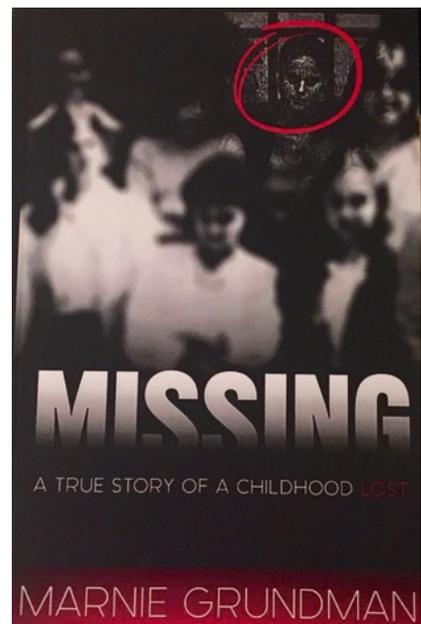
Currently, Marnie works to raise funds for Covenant House in Toronto. Covenant House provides 24/7 crisis shelters and transitional housing on-site and in the community, along with comprehensive services, including education, counselling, health care, employment assistance, job training and aftercare to assist them on the path to independence. Their doors are always open and love is given unconditionally. Marnie also tours the U.S. and Canada speaking to groups of people to help de-stigmatize the stereotype and dispel

the myths that surround youth who run for those that find themselves homeless.

Child Find was very pleased with the reception received at the Broadway Theatre and was thrilled to learn that Marnie has made connections here in Saskatoon with the hopes of being involved in some projects on a local level. For more information and the latest interviews and videos of Marnie Grundman visit her website: <https://www.marniegrundman.com/>

Marnie is the author of MISSING – A Childhood Lost. Child Find Saskatchewan has copies in the office at Child Find you can purchase a copy for \$20 plus postage [on Amazon](#) or you might find it at your local library.

*Submitted by Sue Ramsey; Child Find Saskatchewan
202-3502 Taylor Street East,
Saskatoon*



231 Calls for Justice

The National Inquiry into MMIWG released *Reclaiming Power and Place; the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls* on June 3, 2019 at the Museum of History in Gatineau, QC. Since the National Inquiry began in September 2016, there have been 15 community hearings plus 9 Knowledge Keeper, experts, and institutional hearings. A total of 2386 participants took part in the Truth Gathering process. These include:

- 1484 family members and survivors provided testimony
- 819 individuals shared through artistic expressions
- 83 experts, Knowledge-Keepers and officials provided testimony

Various works from the PPCMP were exhibited during the National Inquiry, including:

The Agency Response Guide to Missing Person Situations in Saskatchewan; Media Relations: A Toolkit for Families; The PPCMP's Progress Report 2007-2018; and Saskatchewan Missing Persons from the Saskatchewan Association of Chiefs of Police web page.

In talking about her work as part of the Provincial Partnership Committee on Missing Persons with the Government of Saskatchewan during a hearing, Betty Ann Pottruff described "the need to build trusting relationships as a fundamental step in protecting and respecting justice in the lives of Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, Asexual (2SLGBTQIA) people, and their families".

The Final Report delivered 231 Calls for Justice which focuses on "transformative actions in the areas of health, security, justice, and culture". For further information you can find [the report](#) online.

Upcoming Event

Caring Hearts Counselling Inc. is reaching out to our partners to participate in a two-day facilitated dialogue on Tuesday February 25 and Wednesday February 26, 2020.

WHAT: Knowledge Exchange Community Action Initiatives in Support of Education and Services to Cope with Ambiguous Loss and Grief

WHEN: February 25 and 26, 2020

WHERE: Naples Room, Delta Hotel 405 – 20th Street East
Saskatoon

WHY: Our objective is to create a forum to share information about what each of our organizations/agencies currently do to enhance mental health support through education, counselling, and charitable initiatives for those dealing with missing persons and ambiguous loss. We recognize the need for inter-agency and community teamwork to address some of the growing demands for service across the province.

Background: As you may be aware, Caring Hearts Counselling Inc. operated as the Regina Palliative Care Inc. (RPCI), a non-profit organization since 1984. In August, 2018 our organization changed its name to Caring Hearts Counselling Inc. and expanded our scope to a provincial mandate. Since 1999, our work has included raising funds to provide grief support for children and teens, through our biannual *Caring Hearts Camp*, a weekend retreat for bereaved children from across the province. We also facilitate sharing circles that

integrate members of the community, provide group grief sessions, and individual counselling. A big part of our programming focus includes working with families of missing persons. We have developed resources to provide training and education with the communities and agencies as an effort to build capacity and work collaboratively to support families needing support. In late July of this year, we launched seven online webinars on our website:

- Children's Grief
- Trauma Informed Care/Trauma
- Ambiguous Loss
- Early Nurturing Developmental Trauma
- Self-Care & Resiliency Building
- Intergenerational Trauma
- Traditional Healing

All participants will receive a copy of the 64-page Caring Hearts resource manual "Supporting Families of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women & Girls & Other Missing Persons" and the 25-page Guide to Traditional Healing.

Please RSVP by January 10, 2020 to: Shelley Svedahl, Executive Director contactus@caringheartssk.ca and use: Knowledge Exchange 2020 in the subject line.

For more information on the PPCMP

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