

PPCMP Update

Sept.
2020

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

Issue 9



YOU ARE NOT ALONE!

SASKATCHEWAN'S MISSING PERSONS WEEK IS
SEPTEMBER 13 TO SEPTEMBER 19, 2020

ONLINE EVENTS WILL OCCUR DURING THE WEEK TO HIGHLIGHT
PREVENTION, RESPONSES, AND SERVICES AND SUPPORTS
FOR ANYONE WHO HAS BEEN IMPACTED BY HAVING A LOVED ONE GO MISSING.

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Missing Persons Week 2020

Missing Persons Week has been declared for the past seven years in May to raise awareness about why people go missing and to discuss prevention and response measures. Due to COVID-19 physical distancing and public gathering restrictions, Missing Persons Week in May 2020 was postponed until September. The new dates for Missing Persons Week are September 13 to September 19, 2020, and the theme is **You Are Not Alone**.

The Provincial Partnership Committee on Missing Persons (PPCMP) is a unique Saskatchewan partnership which includes Indigenous and non-Indigenous community-based organizations, police, search and rescue, and several provincial government ministries. The committee was formed in 2005 to support families of long-term missing persons (persons missing longer than six months).

During Missing Persons Week, the PPCMP recommends hosting online events to honour, remember and reflect on those who have suffered the loss of a missing person and to highlight the range of supports and services for families. The PPCMP encourages you to reflect on the following three questions:

- What is one thing you can **learn** about preventing people from going missing?
- What is one thing you can **do** to support those impacted by having a loved one go missing?
- What is one thing you can **change** in terms of awareness, supports, prevention and responses to missing persons?

How Can I Recognize Missing Persons Week During COVID-19?

The theme for Missing Persons Week is “You Are Not Alone”, which is meant to draw attention to the impact of having a loved one go missing on those left behind. During the week, the PPCMP recommends hosting online events to raise awareness about an issue that, tragically, any one of us could encounter, and how to amplify the supports and services available for families.

While Saskatchewan proceeds with the [Re-Open Saskatchewan Plan](#), it is important to observe the current health restrictions and guidelines when planning an event. COVID-19 numbers are being monitored daily, and restrictions regarding public spaces and gatherings are being updated to reflect the evolving situation. Since we are not yet sure what restrictions might be in place in September, the PPCMP strongly recommends participants hold awareness events online this year. There are several ways to host activities and projects through technology and the internet.

Online platforms and outreach are a good way to reflect the theme and message that “You Are Not Alone.” Although there are many thoughtful ideas and opportunities for events, here are a few suggestions to start the conversation.

- You can add a frame to your profile picture on Facebook to support Missing Persons Week (MPW) from September 13 to September 19, 2020. To add a frame, click on your profile picture to update. Choose “add frame” and type the words “Missing Persons Week 2020” in the search box. To add this frame, simply click on the frame and then click the blue box on the bottom right called “use as profile picture.”
- Consider hosting an online workshop to create missing persons awareness ribbons, which are yellow and green. While making the ribbons, engage in a conversation about what each of us can do to prevent people from going missing within our own communities. Talk about how we can best support those left behind. You can encourage friends and family members to wear the ribbons during MPW. In addition to being the colours of our provincial flag, yellow and green hold a very special meaning in the context of missing persons. The yellow ribbon is a symbol of hope for the safe return of all missing persons. The green ribbon was adopted by Child Find Canada to increase public awareness about missing children.
- Look for opportunities to increase awareness about missing persons supports and prevention. Attend a webinar or online event and encourage others to join.
- Profile the work of your organization and reach out to local media to do a story about what you are doing to address missing persons’ issues. Draw attention to the impact of missing persons on those left behind and explain how communities can best offer support.
- Create an online event and invite community members to showcase music, dance, poetry, and writing to support community building and prevention. Members can participate by recording or livestreaming themselves.
- Host an online panel discussion and invite local leaders such as the mayor, chief and council, and other local dignitaries to have an online discussion about how we can work together to increase efforts to prevent people from going missing and support families.
- If you are symptom free, consider visiting locations in the province that are dedicated to missing persons with members of your household. The sites listed below are dedicated towards reflecting, honouring and remembering missing persons.
 - **The Place of Reflection** medicine wheel in Regina was dedicated in 2016 to families of missing persons. It is located on the RCMP

grounds adjacent to the RCMP Heritage Centre. This is a special place where everyone is welcome.

- **The Missing Persons Oak Tree** in Regina is located in Arboretum Park near Wascana Park and the Wascana Rehabilitation Centre. It was dedicated in 2014 to all missing persons. September 19, 2020 marks the last day of Missing Persons Week this year, and it is also the sixth anniversary of the oak tree.
- **The Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) Monument** is located directly in front of the Saskatoon Police Service building. In 2017, the Saskatoon Tribal Council and Saskatoon Police Services partnered to create a monument to honor Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

One-year Anniversary: The National Inquiry into MMIWG

The solemn one-year anniversary of the Final Report by the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls was marked on June 3, 2020.

Created from the testimony of more than 2,380 contributors over the course of the Inquiry, the Final Report informed Canadians on the history of inter-generational tragedies affecting Canada's Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people.

Earlier this year it was announced that a \$300,000 [First Nations and Métis Community Partnership Projects](#) grant program will focus on issues raised by the National Inquiry through locally developed projects. Applicants who focus on initiatives that address the vulnerabilities within society that lead to risks for inter-personal violence will be given special consideration.

The grant application deadline for the current intake is September 11, 2020. Organizations that are interested in submitting a proposal are encouraged to contact fnmr@gov.sk.ca or 306-798-0183 in advance of the deadline. The second intake deadline for applications is December 15, 2020.

Improving Response to Missing Children and Youth

In November of 2016, Operation Runaway was established through EGADZ, a non-profit community based organization in Saskatoon that provides programs and services to children, youth and their families in making healthy choices to improve their quality of life. Operation Runaway was set up as a pilot project aimed at reducing the number of habitual youth runaways in the Saskatoon region. The project is an innovative, non-traditional, inter-agency team approach to helping runaways. The team includes: EGADZ, the Saskatoon Police Services, the Ministry of Social Services, Mental Health and Addiction Service, and other organizations.

The inter-agency team meets with the youth in a supportive circle to listen, understand and engage with them to identify what factors or circumstances in their life are contributing to their behaviour and leading them to run away. The youth is empowered as the expert on their situation to develop alternative responses and identify additional supports they require to alleviate those challenging factors or circumstances.

While Operation Runaway is largely concerned with addressing the root causes of running away, it also recognizes that some youth living in group homes consistently run away and are not at imminent risk of harm or abuse. These youths are considered low risk but must still be reported to police by group home staff as missing. To better identify these low

risk youth and attempt to reduce their runaway behaviour, a pilot was started to create a missing child and youth risk assessment tool. This pilot project was supported by the Ministry of Social Services, EGADZ, police, and the Operation Runaway Youth Committee to evaluate a missing child/youth as low-risk.

The goal of the pilot was to use the risk assessment tool to identify children/youth who are at low risk of potential harm or abuse while absent from their residence. The Operation Runaway Youth Committee identified that calling the police every time youth are absent from their residence 'criminalizes' their behaviour, when they have not committed any crime and are often simply wanting contact with significant others. Rather than reporting low risk youth as missing, efforts and resources can be put into working with them to identify what supports they need to reduce their tendency to go missing from their place of residence.

The risk assessment tool considers multiple factors that may contribute to a youth being deemed low risk. Some examples of risk reducing factors include: whether the youth has community supports they can choose to access, whether the youth is consistent with communicating with their supports, and if the youth has a safety plan. There are also several factors within the risk assessment that would contribute to a youth receiving a high risk designation. These factors include, but are not limited to: the youth's age being below the age of 12, whether the youth has physical or mental health conditions that are untreated, or if they are involved in any sort of abusive relationship.

The pilot project to evaluate the risk assessment tool took place over a seven-month period, beginning on September 7th and ending March 31st, 2019. Throughout the pilot, nearly 510 risk assessments were completed. In using the risk assessment tool, 274 cases of youth runaways representing 54 per

cent of total did not need to be reported to police as missing due to their low risk designation. Of the youths who ran away from home throughout the trial, 89 per cent returned home within 48 hours. Of the youth deemed low risk, only 24 needed to be reported at a later date as missing to police.

For more information on Project Runaway visit the following link:

https://www.egadz.ca/programs/day_support.html

Article submitted by Ken Wynes, Consultant, Program Design and Operational Policy, Ministry of Social Services and Will Jordan, Research Officer, Ministry of Justice.

New Support for Families

My name is Leslie Gordan and I was hired in June 2020 by the Saskatchewan Coroners' Service as the new Family Liaison Consultant. This new position offers a creative opportunity for knowledge building. For me, this position was a whole new adventure but it isn't the first time I have set out to develop a new role. Previous to taking this position as the Family Liaison Consultant with the Saskatchewan Coroners Service, I was the first Community and Cultural Coordinator for the Regina Provincial Correctional Centre, so forging new paths is not unknown to me. Both journeys offer a chance to connect with the people of Saskatchewan, particularly people who are in need of assistance at a very emotionally charged time.

One of my most important responsibilities within the Saskatchewan Coroners Service is to be there for families who will be going through the process of a Coroner's Inquest. One of the first tasks I gave myself was to expand my own knowledge of inquests, as like the majority of people within Saskatchewan, I only knew the basics. Most people equate any court process with the findings of right,

wrong or fault, but a Coroner's Inquest is a fact-finding process. It is also a very long, emotionally draining and confusing time for families and it is my role to be there with them through every step of the journey. This is not a journey that anyone should have to make alone and from now on, families will have this support.

So far during my time with the Saskatchewan Coroners Service the most rewarding parts of my day are spent talking to the families and giving them some relief. In these particular situations, the relief is to have someone listen to their concerns and ensure the questions they have are answered. Knowledge and understanding of any process brings security and comfort and it is my hope that I will be able to make their difficult journey easier.

My Mushom (Grandfather) used to say in Cree at the end of his prayers, "Take care of one another." I have used this throughout my life and will continue to use it in my new role because I believe we will walk further and stronger if we all walk together.

Story and photo submitted by: Leslie Gordan (below), Family Liaison Consultant, Saskatchewan Coroners Service.



COVID-19 Impact On Child Find Saskatchewan

This year has been like no other as COVID-19 swept across the globe affecting the daily operations of businesses, governments and organizations like our own. Child Find Saskatchewan complied with health professional recommendations and reduced its operations, but ensured that we were still able to offer assistance to families in need. Our 24-hour Crisis Line was available to aid the search for any missing persons. Additionally, from March through until the end of June, the Saskatoon Child Find office was open for two mornings a week, run by a trusted volunteer. We would like to thank the Crisis Line workers as well as this volunteer for ensuring that Child Find operations remained functional during this time.

Along with the 24-hour Crisis Line remaining available, our in-person operations have resumed to normal office hours from 9 am to 4 pm Monday to Friday under health guidelines set out by the Re-Open Saskatchewan Plan. We have procedures in place to keep the office space and employees safe to reduce the possible spread of COVID-19.

As we re-opened to full capacity, there was a lot of work to catch up on from the previous months of reduced operations. We are fortunate to have hired two summer student employees who have been making lots of headway in the office. Their assistance with day to day operations and long-term planning has been extremely beneficial, and we thank them for their help. We have also contracted a person to run our social media platforms. Their work has shown positive results, with 80,000 and 70,000 active engagements for Child Find social media posts in June and July respectively, and an average of over 7,000 engagements for each missing persons' photo posted. We appreciate this person's commitment to improving the quality of our social media.

The economic situation has had a dramatic negative effect on both individual and corporate charitable giving. As a result, Child Find faces uncertainty in fundraising projections and a loss of revenue from cancelled events. We find ourselves in need of mitigating the loss of programs and operational funds. The need for support for Saskatchewan's missing children and their families is even greater now, and the future outcomes of their cases depend on community support. We hope to remedy the current financial situation through donations and grants from supporters, and through upcoming fundraisers.

Recent Missing Person Cases: In the past few months, we have started work on three new missing person cases. Two cases from British Columbia are now closed, as the people have been located. The other case is in Battleford. James Turgeon, then 22 years of age, has been missing since April 17, 2012. His family registered him with Child Find in June 2020, because they were motivated by Missing Person's month in May.

All About Me & Alert Youth: The "All About Me ID" is a comprehensive personal identification booklet prepared by Child Find Saskatchewan for children which offers safety tips and a check list for parents, information about what to do if your child goes missing, a place to record pertinent information about the child, a photo, fingerprints or footprints for babies, a place for physical, medical and environmental data.

ALERT Youth is an awareness program focusing on the safety and well-being of youth between the ages of 9 to 18. The program is comprised of a presentation and a workshop which also provides a booklet for a photo, fingerprints, and pertinent information about the child. If you are interested in getting an ID booklet prepared, they will be done in our office on Tuesdays from 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm,

located at 202-3502 Taylor Street East in Saskatoon. Please book an appointment time ahead of coming in at 306-955-0070.



Article submitted by Susan Clark, Officer Coordinator, Child Find Saskatchewan

Join others on social media to recognize Missing Persons Week in Saskatchewan:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SaskPPCMP> (Sask Missing Persons Partnership @SaskPPCMP)

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/MissingSask> (@MissingSask)

Instagram:
<https://www.instagram.com/skmissingpersonspartnership/> (@SKMissingPersonsPartnership)

YouTube: :
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC2wxwH48NrizLOfzBpVfZxQ?view_as=subscriber (Sask Missing Persons Partnership)

#skmpw2020 and #skmissing

For more information on the Provincial Partnership Committee on Missing Persons, contact:

Jennifer Tarr, Policy Analyst,
Corporate Initiatives, Integrated Justice Services, serving
the: Ministry of Justice and Attorney General
& Ministry of Corrections and Policing
306-787-6238
Jennifer.tarr@gov.sk.ca