

SMPP Newsletter

May 2021 A Newsletter from Saskatchewan's Missing Persons Partnership

Issue 10

Missing Persons Week 2021

Missing Persons Week (MPW) serves as an important time to remember and reflect on how deeply we care about missing persons and their families in our province.

Missing Persons Week has been declared for the past eight years, typically in the month of May, to raise awareness about why people go missing and to discuss prevention and response. Due to the risk of COVID-19 and public health restrictions on gatherings, Missing Persons Week 2021 will be postponed until September. The dates for Missing Persons Week are **September 19 to September 25, 2021**, and the theme is **"What We Can Do."** The theme will focus on public education and what organizations and individuals can do in terms of prevention and response to missing persons and providing support to families and loved ones left wondering.

What We Can Do

It may be helpful to learn what organizations can do to assist members of the community, and what steps and considerations organizations have when doing their work. For instance, community groups can provide tools and materials on safety. In terms of action and response, there are certain steps police and search and rescue organizations take when a person is reported missing. Following a missing persons report, we can also examine what organizations do to help support family members.

Organizations such as the Family Information Liaison Unit, Child Find Saskatchewan, Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan, and Victims Services offer a range of services to support the families of missing persons and those who may be at risk of going missing.

During Missing Persons Week, the Saskatchewan Missing Persons Partnership (formerly the Provincial Partnership Committee on Missing Persons) will support events to honor, remember, and reflect on those who are missing and those who have suffered the loss of a missing person. The Saskatchewan Missing Persons Partnership will also consider "what we can do" to provide support for families in a way that is caring, practical, and accessible.



**Saskatchewan's Missing Persons Week is
September 19-September 25, 2021**

Online events will occur during the week to highlight the theme **"What We Can Do"** to prevent people from going missing, to respond to missing persons, and to support those impacted when a loved one goes missing

A New Name

The Provincial Partnership Committee on Missing Persons (PPCMP) was created in 2005 to raise awareness and help coordinate supports for families of long-term missing persons (persons missing longer than six months).

The partnership brings together government with police and community and Indigenous organizations. Our partners work to provide support by listening to the needs of families to help develop and coordinate services, advise on policies and legislation, and organize Missing Persons Week each year.

In March 2021, the committee decided to choose a new name to make a clearer connection to Saskatchewan and focus on our collaborative approach as a partnership. This important work will continue under the new name **Saskatchewan Missing Persons Partnership (SMPP)**.

The SMPP 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 focuses on prevention, awareness, and response, and recognizes the value of every life.

In the image below, *each chair represents one of Saskatchewan's long-term missing persons.*



During Missing Persons Week 2021, the SMPP encourages organizations and individuals to reflect on **What We Can Do** and the following three questions:

1. What is one thing **we can do to learn** about preventing people from going missing?
2. What is one thing **we can do to support** those whose loved one has gone missing?
3. What is one thing **we can do to enhance** awareness, supports, prevention and responses to missing persons?

Project Lifesaver Saskatoon

Over the past six years, Saskatoon Search and Rescue (SSAR) has seen that more than two thirds of our activations for missing people have involved those who are prone to wandering – elderly people with Alzheimer’s or other forms of dementia as well as younger people with autism or other cognitive challenges. In some cases, the outcomes have been tragic.

With traditional search methods, locating a missing person can take upwards of 12-24 hours, several days, weeks, months or even years, depending on the circumstances.

SSAR is now taking a proactive approach to searching for vulnerable people called the Project Lifesaver International program (www.projectlifesaver.org). In 2017 a grant from the Saskatoon Police Service Foundation made it possible to bring the program to Saskatoon. SSAR officially launched the program and signed up the first client in February 2018.

Project Lifesaver clients wear a transmitter or “personal locator unit” on their wrist or ankle that emits an individualized radio frequency. If the client goes missing, the caregiver immediately notifies police and identifies the person as a Project Lifesaver client. In addition to regular police resources, members of Saskatoon Search and Rescue who are trained and equipped “Electronic Search Specialists” are immediately activated. The missing person’s individualized radio frequency number is programmed into a receiver and the search begins.



Since the start of the program, we have been activated by the Saskatoon Police Service 18 times because a Project Lifesaver client had gone missing. All of these clients were located quickly and safely in less than 30 minutes with the exception of one case that took longer.

Our fundraising efforts have allowed us to provide this equipment free of charge and provide peace of mind to more than 70 families whose loved ones are prone to wandering.

For more information on Project Lifesaver Saskatoon go to www.projectlifesaversaskatoon.org



**-Article and photos submitted by
Shelley Ballard-McKinlay, President, Saskatoon
Search and Rescue**

Highlights from Last Year's MPW

Last year, due to COVID-19, MPW was postponed in May and held online in September 2020. The theme for 2020 was "You Are Not Alone." During the week, the Saskatchewan Missing Persons Partnership developed and launched its own social media channels on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube to help get the message out about supports, services, and MPW events. Some highlights from the week include the following:

- Elder Lorna Standingready, Minister Don Morgan, Lieutenant Governor Russ Mirasty, and, RCMP Superintendent Maureen Wilkie provided recorded video messages to launch the week.
- The SMPP created a video to highlight many direct services and supports for families of missing persons.
- The Regina Police Service created a video honouring the 133 long-term missing persons in the province which received over 100,000 views on social media.
- From the moment you contact the police, there is an entire team that works diligently to find your loved one. Both the Saskatoon and Regina Police Services released one video each day from a different member to highlight the various units who are dedicated to finding missing people, with a focus on what steps are taken and what supports are offered.

The SMPP promoted several awareness events by partners and community organizations such as:

- OUTSaskatoon and the Aboriginal Friendship Centres of Saskatchewan hosted a panel on issues related to missing persons and two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersexual, and asexual (2SLGBTQQIA) people, with a focus on some of the National Inquiry's Calls for Justice.
- Saskatchewan Restorative Justice Network, Reconciliation Saskatoon, and Iskwewuk Ewichtwitochik co-hosted an event called "Putting a Face on Justice".

- Saskatchewan First Nations Women's Commission and Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations hosted the "Call Home Our Loved Ones Ceremony", which included a presentation about ambiguous loss and grief.
- Search and Rescue Regina held a mock search scenario that was open to the public.
- The Saskatoon Public Library provided an online book display to highlight books about missing persons.
- The Regina Police Service hosted a Q and A on the topic of missing persons.

The Saskatchewan Missing Persons Partnership would like to thank everyone who helped raise awareness to truly highlight the theme that 'You Are Not Alone'. The new social media platforms helped to broaden the reach to include people living outside Saskatchewan.

For more information about the SMPP and MPW, please visit, like, and follow the following social media pages.

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/SaskMissingPersonsPartnership>

Twitter:

<https://twitter.com/MissingSask>

Instagram:

<https://www.instagram.com/skmissingpersonspartnership>

YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC2wxwH48NrizLOfzBpVfZxQ>



The Canadian Benefit for Parents of Young Victims of Crime

The Government of Canada is committed to supporting the families of young victims of crime. To ensure parents get the help they need, the Government introduced the Canadian Benefit for Parents of Young Victims of Crime on September 30, 2018.

The benefit provides income support to eligible parents who suffer a loss of income as they take time away from work to cope with the death or disappearance of their child under 25 years of age, as a result of a probable *Criminal Code* offence. The following are key features of the benefit:

- Eligible parents have two years following the date of the incident to apply for and receive benefit payments of \$450 per week, paid bi-weekly, for a maximum of 35 weeks.
- To receive the benefit, parents must be on leave from employment or working reduced hours up to a maximum of 50% of their regular work week (up to a maximum of 20 hours per week).
- Applicants must also have a recent labour force attachment, having earned at least \$6,500 in the previous calendar year or the 52 weeks immediately prior to the incident.
- The benefit can be shared by more than one eligible parent for the same incident.

The *Canada Labour Code* also was amended to ensure that employees in the federally regulated private sector can benefit from the improved grant without any fear of losing their job.

For more information on the benefit and eligibility criteria, or to apply, please call 1-800-O-Canada (1-800-622-6232) or visit

www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/parents-young-victims-crime.html.



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Please join the SMPP online:

Facebook: [Sask Missing Persons Partnership](https://www.facebook.com/SaskMissingPersonsPartnership)

Twitter: [@SaskMissingPersonsPartnership](https://twitter.com/SaskMissingPersonsPartnership)

Instagram: [@SKMissingPersonsPartnership](https://www.instagram.com/SKMissingPersonsPartnership)

YouTube: [Sask Missing Persons Partnership](https://www.youtube.com/SaskMissingPersonsPartnership)

Hashtags: #skmpw2021 and #skmissing