

# PPCMP Update

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

Issue  
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## Missing Persons Week 2016

Building on last year's success

The opening ceremony for this year's Missing Persons Week will be held May 2 at 9:30 a.m. at the TC Douglas Building in Regina. The theme chosen for the fourth annual week dedicated to Saskatchewan's long-term missing persons is *Missing but Not Forgotten*, which will highlight the ongoing efforts by agencies across Saskatchewan.

The Provincial Partnership Committee on Missing Persons (PPCMP) hopes to build on last year's success. At the 2015 ceremony, various ministers and police officials reaffirmed their commitment to supporting missing persons issues in Saskatchewan. Attendees watched a video about what happens when a missing person report is first filed with police. The event also launched the Twitter hashtag #ImAMissing, which was used to tell the story, over social media, of a missing persons case and the efforts of all agencies involved over the course of the week.

Several police services and search and rescue organizations hosted informational events on social media during the week. Saskatoon Police Service shared information on the issue of chronic runaways



Many viewed poster boards displaying 122 long-term missing persons in the province at MPW 2015.

which affects their city, while Weyburn Police Service sought to dispel myths around missing person cases in the local paper & on local Access cable television.

Police & Volunteer Search and Rescue groups also shared information about how they collaborate. CASARA observed Missing Persons Week with an aerial search and rescue exercise over Regina.

PPCMP member organization activities included an Open House hosted by Sask. Aboriginal Women's Circle Corp. (SAWCC) in Yorkton and a Charity Breakfast

Fundraiser hosted by Child Find Saskatchewan in Saskatoon.

This year, a number of victim services organizations across the province will be screening documentaries related to missing persons cases. Police and other agencies will once again take part throughout the week by tweeting information about their missing persons efforts and highlighting missing persons cases. Member agencies are asked to use the Twitter hashtag #skmpw2016 when tweeting about their related activities during the week.

# Ten Things to Know About Grief

A guide from the Greystone Bereavement Centre

When someone you know goes missing, the uncertainty becomes traumatic – ambiguous loss paralyzes the grief process, prevents closure and hampers healing. Although your grief is unique to your relationship with the person who is missing, there are some common themes. It helps to know these to understand how you and others are coping.

**1. Global effect of loss.** When someone very close to you goes missing, this can be a life transforming event that affects all aspects of yourself and your life. It can feel as if your world has been shattered.

**2. Grief is a natural process.** One-to-one counselling and group support is crucial to helping families of missing persons build resiliency and hope and learn to live in the present.

**3. Individual differences in grieving styles.** Although grief has some definable outlines, how you grieve is a unique result of your personality, your past history of loss, and the relationship that you had with the person who died.

**4. Children and grief.** Children look to the important adults in their lives to learn how to grieve. They are sensitive to the moods and behaviour of the adults

around them and will not talk about their thoughts and feelings of loss unless the adults do.

**5. Social connections and support.** When you are coping with the stress of continued uncertainty surrounding the disappearance of your loved one, you want and need support from others now more than ever. Some people may not be able to provide the understanding and caring that you expected from them. You may find that the company of other people who have missing loved ones comforting.

**6. Experiences you might have in grief.** When people grieve, their emotions, mind, and reactions may seem unreliable; they feel intense pain and emotions - this is a natural part of grief. Responses such as fatigue, forgetfulness and irritability result from attention and energy being directed toward grief and adjustment to loss. The never-ending uncertainty in a missing person situation can keep you locked in this cycle of grief with periods of elevated grief responses.

**7. Fluctuations in the grief process.** As you journey along the path of grief, there will be unpredictable ups and downs that may be felt as waves of grief or as good days and bad days. It

is important to understand and value the good days as breaks or rests in your particular journey.

## **8. Self-care and what helps.**

Getting information about ambiguous loss can help you to understand your responses and your journey. Be gentle and patient with yourself. Support may come from a variety of sources: family, friends, trauma and bereavement groups, chat rooms, etc.

**9. Time for grief.** You may feel pressure to be better than you are by now but despite what you may hear, there are no time lines for grief; it takes as long as it takes.

**10. Grief as a spiritual journey of healing.** When someone goes missing, your life's journey goes on a different life path. Nothing will ever be the same, even if your loved one is eventually found, yet you must somehow find meaning in the new path before you.

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*(Adapted from "Ten Things to Know About Grief" by Greystone Bereavement Centre, a PPCMP member.)*

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## The PPCMP

### A uniquely Saskatchewan approach

by Betty Ann Pottruff Q.C.,  
Children's Counsel, past Co-  
Chair of the PPCMP

The PPCMP is a unique Saskatchewan approach to missing persons that has been recognized provincially, nationally and internationally for its work. It is the result of a task force created in 2005 to address public concerns around missing persons, including cases of missing Aboriginal women. In 2006, the PPCMP was formed and quickly drafted this vision: *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.*

Once the committee had agreed on its mandate, it focused on the task ahead. In the beginning, that involved collecting information and research to understand issues and identify possible solutions to dealing with missing persons cases. The Committee then organized meetings with the families of missing persons in Saskatchewan. It was both humbling and extremely motivating to spend time with family members who openly shared their experiences with us. This type of communication helps reduce the sense of isolation that families face and builds trust



Betty Ann Pottruff speaks to reporters about the goals of MPW 2015.

between everyone involved in the process.

The PPCMP released its findings in a report in October, 2007, which identified two main recommendation areas: responding to issues raised by families and improving responses to missing persons cases. This marked a new stage of the Committee's work. It invited agencies from across western Canada to a workshop in Regina in 2011 to promote cross-border cooperation. The Committee's strategic plan was released in 2012, outlining its ongoing goals for the future.

Part of that plan was increasing public awareness around missing persons. This is where Missing Persons Week was born. The week was first declared in 2013.

I have been very privileged to be involved in the unique work of the PPCMP. I have learned a lot about the issues surrounding missing persons and how to nurture partnerships based on respectful, shared responsibility. This kind of relationship encourages engagement and innovative thinking by everyone involved. I am pleased that the success of this unique Saskatchewan approach was acknowledged by being awarded the Premiers award for innovation in 2011. This model of partnership owes its success to the openness of families and the commitment of the participants in the PPCMP who invest their time, energy and passion towards meeting this common goal.

## Missing Persons Awareness Ribbon

### Why yellow and green?

The Missing Persons Awareness ribbon is yellow and green. Although they are the colours of our provincial flag, they hold a very special meaning in the context of missing persons.

### The Yellow Ribbon

An English folk song of unknown origin told of a wandering merchant wearing a green willow leaf around his hat, *"twelvemonth and a day...because my true love is far, far away."* Though the age and origins of the song are unknown, in Shakespeare's Othello, Desdemona refers to an old song 'of [green] willow' sung by her mother.

With time, the tune of the original English became a popular American army marching tune. Various versions were copyrighted as songs; the most popular which was *She Wore A Yellow Ribbon*. Here's a verse from that song:

*"Around her hair she wore a yellow ribbon*

*She wore it in the springtime*

*In the merry month of May*

*And if you ask her why she wore it*

*She wore it for her soldier who was far far away"*



The reason for the change in the colour from green to yellow may have been nothing but artistic licence – the writers of *Tie A Yellow Ribbon ('Round The Ole Oak Tree)* claimed the colour simply worked best for the tune of their song.

Although *Tie A Yellow Ribbon* is about a woman showing her willingness to forgive her lover for his absence (in this case, while he was in prison) and welcome him back home, the yellow ribbon evolved into a symbol hope for the safe return of soldiers missing in

action and eventually all missing persons.

### The Green Ribbon

The green ribbon was adopted by peers and teachers of 15-year-old, Kristen French of St. Catharines, Ontario following her abduction and subsequent murder. In memory of this tragedy, every year Child Find Canada holds the Green Ribbon of Hope Campaign during the month of May which is recognized nationally as Missing Children's Month. Child Find aims to increase public awareness about missing

children. May 25th is National Missing Children's Day.

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