

PPCMP Update

April 2018 A Newsletter from Saskatchewan's Provincial Partnership Committee on Missing Persons [PPCMP]

Issue 5

Missing Persons Week 2018 - Helping One Another Stay Safe



Missing Persons Week has been proclaimed in the province of Saskatchewan from April 29, to May 5, 2018.

The theme chosen for the week is *We All Have a Role*. 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 when they do.

It takes a community response to help when someone goes missing. The PPCMP encourages everyone to consider how they can be involved and what role they can play in helping each other stay safe.

This issue of the PPCMP newsletter highlights the ongoing efforts by agencies across Saskatchewan to prevent people from going missing across their entire

lifespan. Children, youth, adults, seniors, and vulnerable groups such as Indigenous women and girls all have unique needs and can go missing for a variety of reasons. Regardless of how the person went missing, families should always file a police report as soon as possible.

Children and Youth

Children and youth sometimes go missing when they run away from home or their placements in youth care. Fortunately, most of these missing children and youth are found within 48 hours.

Children and youth may run away because they are rebelling against curfews and household rules. They may also run away because of difficult circumstances at home involving abuse, neglect, or addictions. Additionally, they can go missing as a result of abduction (parental or stranger), mental illness, wandering off, or inadequate supervision. In some circumstances they may have been kicked out of their home by their families or caregivers.

While children and youth sometimes run away *from* something, they may also be running *to* something, such as to meet with someone they have been forbidden to see or

someone they have met online. Children and youth who go missing for these kinds of reasons or for extended periods of time are at higher risk for sexual exploitation, abuse, and addictions.

Although there is no one-size-fits-all approach to preventing children and youth from going missing, there are things we can do as parents, as citizens, as educators, and as a community, to try to reduce the number of missing children and youth.

We can teach ourselves and our children the steps they need to take to keep themselves safe. Being present in their lives and establishing ground rules is a good start.

For younger kids:

- Children should know their full name, their parents/grandparents full names, addresses, and phone numbers, and who they are allowed to spend time with.
- Talk to children about walking the same route to and from school, using the buddy system, and walking in pairs.
- Children should know to never approach a car or speak with an adult who has asked for directions or help in

looking for something they claim they have lost.

- Above all – parents should keep their eyes on their child and be involved in what is going on in their lives. Parents who are involved in their children’s lives are much more likely to know when something is wrong and in a stronger position to do something about it.
- Similarly, parents should keep a close eye on their children when they are out with them. We all too often get busy with daily tasks and errands or become distracted by our phones. It only takes a second for something to happen.

For older children and youth:

- Older children need to follow rules such as curfew, checking in periodically with a call or text, and letting parents know if plans have changed.
- As children become teenagers and start to challenge parental authority, our approach to these issues may need to become more adaptable, which can be difficult. Talk openly with your teenager and be as involved as possible in their lives. Should you be unreachable for whatever reason, have a secondary person your teenager can call if they need help.
- Have them walk in well-lit areas and avoid alleys and routes they are unfamiliar with.
- Insist they never meet up with someone they have only

met online. Have a conversation about the risks of going to parties or getting into vehicles with people they don’t know well.

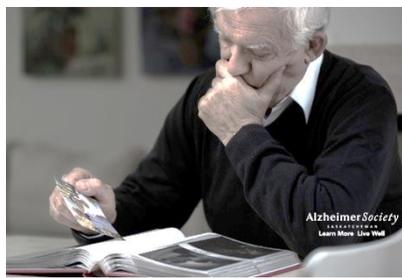
- Learn who their friends are and have a conversation about the possibility of being taken advantage of. They need to know that not everyone has their best interests at heart and that getting caught in unfamiliar surroundings with people they don’t know well can be dangerous.

Learning to be safe takes commitment and practice. For more information on how to keep your children safe, visit www.childfind.sk.ca

Submitted by:
Child Find Saskatchewan
202-3502 Taylor Street East
Saskatoon
306-955-0070

Adults and Seniors

Sixty per cent of people with dementia will go missing, often without warning. There are nearly 20,000 people in Saskatchewan living with dementia. We all have a role in helping people living with dementia to stay safe. Here is what you can do:



- **If you or a loved one has dementia, learn the ABCs of dementia and get a diagnosis:** Getting a diagnosis is the first step in living well with dementia. There are 10 evidence-based changes that have been identified as warning signs. It is about much more than memory loss, and different dementias having different warning signs. These signs often involve a change in the individual’s abilities, behaviours, or how they communicate. By learning the ABCs of dementia, you can empower yourself, your friends, and your family with an early diagnosis and improve your ability to live well with dementia.

- **Develop a safety plan:** People with dementia should have the opportunity to move about as freely and independently as possible. The balance between independence and safety is delicate. A safety plan can include identifying triggers for what could potentially cause the person to go missing, carrying identification cards, registering with MedicAlert Safely Home, and using technology such as cell phone or GPS tracking.

- **Be dementia friendly:** Be aware of those living with dementia in your community. Do you notice someone who looks confused or lost? Be a good samaritan, ask if they need assistance, and call the police.

To download the Alzheimer Society Getting a Diagnosis Toolkit, find out about strategies for living with dementia, or learn more about being dementia friendly, visit:

www.alzheimer.ca/sk

Submitted by:
The Alzheimer Society of
Saskatchewan
1-800-263-3367

Vulnerable Individuals

Some members of our community are more vulnerable than others. For example, an individual who has complex needs, a mental illness, certain medical conditions, and/or addiction issues, may be at an increased risk of going missing.

One group particularly at risk is Indigenous women and girls. Violence against Indigenous women and girls is a serious provincial and national concern. Indigenous women have consistently made up 50% or more of long-term missing women in Saskatchewan. They also have an increased likelihood of going missing as a result of foul play compared to non-Indigenous women.

Community members can play a key role in prevention by engaging in activities to bring



Saskatchewan Crime Stoppers is a community Program that successfully combines the efforts of the public, the media, and the police to solve crimes in our communities

awareness to this important issue, understanding the history of Indigenous peoples, and working towards the development of mutually supportive partnerships to promote equality and diminish violence.

If you are a community partner working with vulnerable persons, you can engage them in conversations about personal safety, community supports, healthy relationships, and self-esteem. You may be able to help them with the following:

- Developing a personal safety plan. The vulnerable person needs to have a voice in his or her safety plan. The plan should be written on paper, and a copy should be given to the individual. Ideas for the safety plan may include warning signs about unsafe situations, knowing where safe places are and making a list of people they can ask for help, such as a neighbor or friend.
- Providing information and connecting vulnerable persons to resources and services for ongoing help and potential long-lasting

support. Providing a written list of these supports along with phone numbers is one idea. There are many provincial emergency/crisis resources listed at:

http://sk.211.ca/saskatchewan_247_hour_crisis_hotlines#6th.

Final Thoughts

These are just a few of the ways that we can help our children and youth, senior citizens, vulnerable members of the community, and each other to stay safe. If we see suspicious activity in our neighborhood, we can call the police or make a report to Safer Communities and Neighborhoods (SCAN). SCAN can be contacted at:

- Regina: 1-866-51-SAFER
- Saskatoon/Prince Albert: 1-855-933-6411.

It takes all of us working together to keep our communities safe. Education, building relationships, and letting people know about available supports and services are important steps to prevent and respond to missing persons.

Family Information Liaison Unit (FILU)

Saskatchewan Ministry of Justice Community Safety & Well-Being

Saskatchewan's Family Information Liaison Unit (FILU) helps families of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls locate the information they seek, when legislation allows, from agencies such as Social Services, the Office of the Chief Coroner, Public Prosecutions, and police. This article discusses why FILU was developed and how it operates.

The Establishment of FILUs

In 2005 the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) Sisters in Spirit received funding from Status of Women Canada for research into violence against Indigenous women. Ongoing research, education, and policy initiatives were undertaken to raise awareness of the alarmingly high rates of violence against Indigenous women and girls.

As of March 31, 2010, 582 missing or murdered women and girls were entered into the NWAC database. The majority of disappearances and deaths occurred in western Canada. Due to these high numbers, in 2015 the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada issued Call to Action #41, which called upon the federal government, "in consultation with Aboriginal organizations, to appoint a public inquiry into the causes of, and remedies for, the disproportionate victimization of Aboriginal women and girls."

In 2016, the Government of Canada officially launched the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Justice Canada provided funding to

provinces and territories to support services to help families impacted by the National Inquiry. FILU work directly with families of missing or murdered Indigenous women and girls (MMIWG) who may have been involved with the National Inquiry or who wish to tell their story. When someone goes missing, the uncertainty becomes traumatic; ambiguous loss paralyzes the grief process, prevents closure, and hampers healing. FILUs can help families get through the process in a helpful and meaningful way.

The Role of the Saskatchewan FILU

In November 2017, Saskatchewan's FILU was formed within the Ministry of Justice. Its role is to:

- Facilitate access to information relevant to a situation involving a MMIWG;
- Support Indigenous agencies such as the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN), Regina Treaty/Status Indian Services, Iskwewuk Ewichiwitochik-Women Walking Together, and Saskatchewan Aboriginal Women's Circle Corporation, in providing culturally-appropriate, trauma-informed supports to families; and
- Help families and communities better engage with the police and justice system.

The FILU provides services in a trauma-informed and culturally-safe manner. Staff can help families navigate through the various government agencies as well as act as a liaison between families and the



11Artwork: Simone McLeod: theme of the art piece is "Sharing Teachings of Parenthood"

health, social services, and the criminal justice systems.

The FSIN was contracted to provide two Indigenous Family Liaison Officers who directly engage families in their communities in collaboration with the FILU, commencing January 2018.

Who is Eligible for FILU?

Anyone who is blood relations or part of the cultural definition of "family" is eligible for FILU. MMIWG have sometimes been street-involved and may have street families who may also be eligible to access the services of FILU. Eligibility is determined by demand or need, as well as provincial

privacy regulations and legislation. In some cases, street family members or cultural kinship relationships may not be eligible to receive information.

Contacting Saskatchewan's FILU

The FILU is considered separate from the Ministry of Justice or the Victim Services Branch. The outreach model is used to reduce the barriers for families who want to access services. A toll-free number is available as a way for direct contact at no cost. The FILU also has an email that can be contacted for additional information. As previously mentioned, there are two Family Liaison Workers available to assist individuals and families who contact FILU.

For more information, contact:

Dorothy Myo-FILU Manager
902-1801 Hamilton Street
Regina, Saskatchewan S4P 4B4
Tel: 306-787-3581
Cell: 306-519-7804
Toll Free: 1-833-529-6486
Info Email: FILU@gov.sk.ca

Missing Persons Liaison Programs

Missing Persons Liaison Programs were created in the Victim Services units in Prince Albert, Regina, and Saskatoon in 2011-12 with five-year funding from Justice Canada. The funding agreement has been renewed, which will enable these valuable services to continue through 2020-21.

Missing Persons Liaison programs provide specialized victims services that are responsive to the unique needs of families of missing persons. This includes offering direct service such as emotional support; specific updates about the case, information

about ambiguous loss, and referrals to other agencies and community resources.

The programs work closely with police to provide a coordinated response to families of missing persons. The programs also identify or develop best practices for supporting the families of missing persons. They provide expertise, advice, training, and case consultation to all other police-based victim services units in Saskatchewan, as well as workshops, presentations, and training materials to other professionals who work with the families of missing persons.



All Police-based Victim Services programs in the province provide services to the families of missing persons, sometimes in consultation with the Missing Persons Liaison Programs.

Saskatchewan's Missing Persons Liaison Programs can be contacted at:

Prince Albert Victim Services

Prince Albert Police Service
45 – 15th Street West, Prince Albert
SK S6V 3P4
Phone (306) 953-4357

Regina Victim Services

Regina Police Service
1717 Osler St, Box 196, Regina SK
S4P 3W3
Phone (306) 777-6372

Saskatoon Victim Services

Saskatoon Police Service
76 – 25th Street East, Box 1728,
Saskatoon SK S7K 3R6
Phone (306) 657-8667

National Missing Persons DNA Program

The following is a summary of a March 2018 backgrounder from Public Safety Canada about the National Missing Persons DNA Program.

According to Public Safety Canada, in 2017 over 78,000 Canadians were reported to police as missing. While approximately 88% of those people were found within a week, approximately 500 remained missing after one year. Resolving these cases would bring much-needed answers to families of missing persons.

Recent amendments to the *DNA Identification Act* have allowed for the creation of new DNA-based indices within the RCMP's National DNA Data Bank, such as the Missing Persons Index and the Relatives of Missing Persons Index.

While this will not provide the solution to all outstanding missing persons investigations, it will help to ensure that every effort can be made to locate missing persons.

For more information about the National DNA Data Bank, see: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-safety-canada/news/2018/03/the-national-missing-persons-dna-program.html>



<http://www.sacp.ca/missing/>
There are currently 126 long-term missing people in Saskatchewan.

Contact the PPCMP:

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Corporate Initiatives, Integrated Justice Services

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Ministry of Justice and Attorney General

Ministry of Corrections and Policing

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