

# FINAL REPORT OF THE PROVINCIAL PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE ON MISSING PERSONS

October 2007



FSIN

Women's Commission



*Child Find*  
Saskatchewan



SAWCC



Alzheimer Society  
SASKATCHEWAN



Labour

Saskatchewan Towards Offering Partnership Solutions To Violence Inc.



Justice



Corrections and  
Public Safety



First Nations and  
Metis Relations



Police  
Commission

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## FORWARD



Back Row: Terry Hawkes, Laurie Beck, Cheryl Deibert, Ken Crawford, Patty Schuster, Rick Peach, Fran Stevenson & Wayne Christensen  
Front Row: Al Trainor, Judy Hughes, Trish LaFontaine, Betty Ann Pottruff, Phyllis Hallatt, Erica Beaudin & Scott Wright  
Absent: Murray Sawatsky, Betty McKenna, Pat Falconbridge, Lynn LaRose, Joanne Michael, Cheryl Queweznee & Carla Dee Bellanger

The Provincial Partnership Committee on Missing Persons wants to thank all those who contributed to the work of the Partnership Committee, particularly the families who met with us.

The members of the Provincial Partnership Committee on Missing Persons present this report to the Minister of Justice and to their respective organizations in the expectation that this work can:

- contribute to a greater understanding of the issues related to missing person cases both within Saskatchewan and nationally; and
- support significant changes to improve responses to missing person cases in Saskatchewan.

This report concludes a first phase of identifying actions that are seen as necessary to improve the overall response to missing persons. The recommendations deal with actions to improve public awareness and education about the risks of going missing and how to respond to missing person situations, what supports families need to effectively respond to missing person situations, and what improvements are needed in response systems, such as police.

Implementation, monitoring of implementation and impact, and continuing enhancement of the provincial response are further stages of development that are needed. The Provincial Partnership Committee suggests that the Partnership Committee could play a significant role in contributing to this work if the Committee is continued.

The Committee is encouraged by the ability of diverse agencies to work and learn together in a partnership forum. The Committee members have developed a deeper understanding of the issues related to missing persons, of the roles that various agencies, families and communities play and the importance of working in partnership.

## **SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **I. Responding to Issues Raised by Families:**

**Recommendation 1:** Supports need to be developed by the Provincial Partnership Committee or other partner organizations to help families deal with a missing person situation:

- Families require a simple checklist to follow of actions they can or should take, such as determining who the family contact person is with the police, with the media, or the type of information they might look for to assist the police in the investigation;
- Families require a media kit or information on dealing with the media to help them understand the issues and relationship that may develop during an investigation in terms of providing information to the media or responding to media inquiries; and
- Family members who are involved in supporting a missing person investigation may need financial and emotional support from community members or organizations.

**Recommendation 2:** The media is encouraged to develop best practice standards in dealing with missing person cases which include consistent, neutral messaging sensitive to the family and cultural circumstances.

**Recommendation 3:** Families of missing persons should be supported by governments and involved agencies to develop a support network.

**Recommendation 4:** The provincial government should review existing common law and legislation dealing with missing persons and develop a timely, comprehensive legislative response to deal with the estate of the missing person.

**Recommendation 5.1:** The provincial government, in partnership with police services, First Nations, Métis and Aboriginal organizations, and local governments, should consult with families of missing persons to determine the form or forms that a provincial memorial to missing persons could take and how it would be implemented and maintained.

**Recommendation 5.2:** The Saskatchewan Minister of Justice should raise the topic of creating a national memorial to missing persons at the next Ministers Responsible for Justice meeting.

**Recommendation 6:** The SACP [Saskatchewan Association of Chiefs of Police] is encouraged to promote the concept of a national website or linked websites and the Saskatchewan Minister of Justice is encouraged to raise the need for a national website or linked websites on missing persons at the next meeting of Ministers Responsible for Justice.

## **II. Responding to Prevention, Awareness and Public Education Issues:**

**Recommendation 7.0:** As a priority, the Provincial Partnership Committee or another agency, with relevant community stakeholders, should be tasked to develop information/education materials to provide a factual overview of all aspects of missing person situations.

**Recommendation 7.1:** Agencies that deal with at risk populations should establish teams to conduct presentations on awareness, prevention and personal safety to social and professional networks throughout the province.

**Recommendation 7.2:** The Provincial Partnership Committee or another agency should be tasked to compile and maintain an inventory of agencies involved in missing person cases to support networking and a publicly accessible inventory of existing or new educational materials on prevention and personal safety.

**Recommendation 7.3:** Police, as part of communications with the public, should ensure that information about police policy, procedure and practices related to missing persons cases and the role that the public can play in assisting in missing persons cases is generally available.

**Recommendation 8:** Saskatchewan Learning should include awareness about the risks of going missing or facing missing children and youth in all schools through health education programs and encourage educators and School Community Councils to continue to build awareness through access to materials, speakers, or other programming.

## **III. Improving Responses to Missing Persons Cases:**

**Recommendation 9.1:** The Saskatchewan Police Commission should review its current policy and work with all police agencies in Saskatchewan to develop and implement an overarching provincial Missing Person Policy for all municipal police agencies, and encourage the RCMP to adopt the policy in Saskatchewan.

**Recommendation 9.2:** The Saskatchewan Police Commission should give consideration to incorporating the following standards in the policy:

1. A missing person report must be taken immediately when information comes to the attention of police, regardless of the length of time the person has been missing or the location where the person went missing.
2. A standardized specialized in-take form for recording a missing person report and a specialized investigative checklist should be used.
3. A common assessment tool should be developed to help assess the priority of the investigation.
4. Immediate investigation of missing persons in suspicious circumstances.
5. Once it is established that a person is missing, the case will be entered on CPIC as soon as possible.
6. Continued communication with the families of missing people.
7. A media and public communications protocol for disseminating information about missing persons and requesting the public's help in locating a missing person.
8. The police, upon identifying a chronic runaway situation, should develop approaches to link with other agencies to support appropriate intervention.
9. All police forces should assign a police officer responsible for coordination of missing persons files and establish a backup process to avoid gaps in effectively responding to missing person reports.
10. In order to effectively implement the above approach to recording and managing investigations on missing person cases, standardized training and practice guides should be developed.
11. There is a need for a more systematic and consistent approach to collecting data on:  
1) missing person reports; 2) actual missing persons; 3) basic demographic information about missing persons; and 4) CPIC data entry.

**Recommendation 10:** A process is required to ensure that all suspicious and at-risk missing person reported incidents (young children, medical, elderly, high risk life style) are fanned out to all relevant police agencies in the province immediately.

**Recommendation 11:** Police should establish protocols with community agencies to provide a formal system to fan out “Missing Persons Information”.

**Recommendation 12.1:** The provincial government should amend provincial legislation to permit the disclosure of information on missing persons to police conducting a missing persons investigation as information necessary to protect the mental or physical health or safety of an individual.

**Recommendation 12.2:** The Saskatchewan Minister of Justice should raise with the Federal Ministers responsible for Justice the need to amend federal legislation to ensure that when police are investigating a missing person case they have access to information under federal jurisdiction relevant to the investigation.

**Recommendation 13:** The mandate of Victim Services should include the provision of support to families of missing people.

**Recommendation 14.1:** The province and local government need to enhance search and rescue resources province-wide by standardizing provincial policy and providing provincial core funding to ensure volunteer sustainability.

**Recommendation 14.2:** The province, communities and search and rescue organizations need to work cooperatively to ensure effective Search and Rescue responses by:

- Creating a provincial SAR Advisory Council of representative and mandating agencies, for strategic and operational direction to SARSAV;
- Creating a standard policy regarding the use of SAR teams;
- Ensuring that municipalities and communities take ownership of SAR volunteer teams;
- Providing basic SAR training and equipment to volunteers free of charge;
- Ensuring trained SAR teams, SAR managers and trainers are available throughout all areas of the province;
- Creating a central provincial database for all SAR events, training and personnel;
- Ensuring consistent and timely involvement of SAR teams in a missing person’s event;
- Providing specialized training for SAR volunteers, i.e. emergency management and recognizing the need for SAR teams in a disaster event, crime scene or evidence recovery;
- Developing heavy urban SAR capacity;
- Ensuring support systems are in place for long term and/or remote searches;
- Ensuring liability protection for volunteers; and
- Ensuring Critical Incident Stress Management support to SAR volunteers.

**Recommendation 15:** The various Saskatchewan police forces need to establish protocols on when and how to engage search and rescue capacity in a missing person's event.

**Recommendation 16:** All school divisions are encouraged to develop policies and procedures for collaborating with police and/or school resource officers in missing persons cases, which may include procedures for requesting information from students and staff, appropriate communication and information sharing practices, and critical response provisions.

**Recommendation 17:** The Committee recommends that the government undertake a study to better understand the issues related to the high number of runaways and to identify prevention and intervention strategies, particularly for chronic runaways and their families.

**Recommendation 18:** The provincial government should fund a caseworker pilot with a police service. This caseworker would work with the "found" missing person and their family to deal with the causes of the person going missing by discussing how to avoid future situations and linking the individual and/or family with available resources to deal with the underlying causes of the person going missing to try to avoid repeat situations.

**Recommendation 19:** The provincial government, the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan, First Nations, and Métis communities and organizations should be encouraged to develop and enhance mutually supportive strategies to ensure that:

- First Nations and Métis communities have the capacity to respond to a crisis when a person goes missing;
- Trained Search and Rescue capacities exist in all communities that incorporate and are sensitive to the culture, language, traditions and values of those communities;
- First Nations schools participate in prevention and response approaches similar to the recommendations for provincial school involvement; and
- Relationships between the police (RCMP and municipal police forces) and First Nations and Métis communities are strengthened in missing person cases.

**Recommendation 20:** The Saskatchewan Minister of Justice should raise at the next meeting of Ministers Responsible for Justice the need for national consideration of whether and how a voluntary national information base or linked information bases on potential missing persons could be created.

## INTRODUCTION

On November 7, 2005, the Throne Speech made reference to a Missing Persons Task Force. On November 21, 2005, the Honourable Frank Quennell, Q.C., Minister of Justice, announced the details of the task force indicating that the province would spend almost \$2 million over three years to solve historical and current cases of missing persons in Saskatchewan.

In making this announcement, Minister Quennell said:

The issue of missing persons is a tragedy for families and communities across our province. The families and friends of these missing persons face daily uncertainty of what has happened to their loved ones. We need to take all reasonable steps to find answers for those who have suffered such a loss.

Minister Quennell then provided details of the three distinct components of the task force:

- Funding for six additional investigative positions for the RCMP, two positions for the Violent Crime Analysis Section and four investigators for the historical crime unit, to provide additional resources to ongoing investigations, and an additional police services resource for both Regina and Saskatoon.
- Support for the development of a province-wide policy and protocol for the investigation of missing persons to standardize how all missing persons reports are received and investigated by municipal police services and the RCMP across the province.
- Mobilizing provincial organizations that have expertise in the issue of missing persons to improve collaboration and support provided to families and communities of these missing persons.

In December 2005, a number of organizations with interest and expertise or province-wide experience in the issue of dealing with missing persons cases were invited to designate a representative to participate in the Provincial Partnership Committee on Missing Persons. Membership on the Committee has grown as new information needs or new partners were identified. Appendix A contains an Inventory of the agencies that participated in the Provincial Partnership Committee. It explains the connection the agencies have to this topic and provides general information about their services.

The Committee developed a mandate statement to guide its work.

**PROVINCIAL PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE ON MISSING PERSONS MANDATE**

**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.

**Goals:**

- To raise awareness of and support public education around the reasons why people go missing;
- To promote prevention strategies;
- To encourage cooperation and partnerships amongst agencies to better support families and communities where someone goes missing; and
- To enhance capacity to respond to cases of missing persons at the family, community and provincial level.

**Principle:**

The Partnership recognizes that people go missing for a variety of reasons, and will work to respond specifically to each of these reasons, as brought forward by the members of the Partnership committee, while addressing the needs of all missing persons.

**Key areas where action will be taken or recommended:**

- Raise awareness of and support public education on the risks to Saskatchewan citizens that lead to persons going missing.
- Recommend, implement or promote prevention strategies.
- Build a network of protective interventions to assist in deterring or responding to missing persons cases.
- Develop supports to help families and communities identify missing persons cases, support their role in responding to these cases and in addressing the families' immediate and long-term needs.
- Identify best practices in responding to missing persons cases.
- Improve understanding of roles and responsibilities to help agencies network and communicate (could require development of protocols).
- Improve data and information collection and information sharing between agencies in missing persons cases,
- Suggest improvements to police reporting procedures/policies on missing persons cases.
- Suggest ways to work to improve media coverage of missing persons cases.

Final Report of the Provincial  
Partnership Committee on Missing Persons

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Membership in the Partnership Committee includes representation from:

RCMP	Staff Sergeant Wayne Christensen Staff Sergeant Fran Stevenson
Saskatchewan Aboriginal Women's Circle Corporation (SAWCC)	Judy Hughes Cheryl Quewezanee
Saskatchewan Labour, Status of Women Office	Pat Faulconbridge
FSIN Women's Commission	Erica Beaudin Patty Schuster
Child Find Saskatchewan	Phyllis Hallatt
Saskatchewan Police Commission	Betty McKenna
Saskatchewan Association of Chiefs of Police (representation by Regina Police Service)	Inspector Terry Hawkes Inspector Al Trainor
Métis Family and Community Justice Services of Saskatchewan Inc.	Lynne LaRose
STOPS [Saskatchewan Towards Offering Partnership Solutions to Violence]	Ken Crawford Laurie Beck
Saskatchewan First Nations and Métis Relations	Trish Lafontaine
Saskatchewan Justice, Policy, Planning and Evaluation Branch and Law Enforcement	Betty Ann Pottruff, Q.C. (Co-chair) Murray Sawatsky (Co-chair) Rick Peach
Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan	Joanne Michael
Saskatchewan Corrections and Public Safety, Protection and Emergency Services Branch	Carla Dee Bellanger Cheryl Deibert
Search and Rescue Saskatchewan Association of Volunteers (SARSAV)	Scott Wright

Organizational support provided by Curt Woytiuk and Cheryl Moats, Saskatchewan Justice.

## Final Report of the Provincial Partnership Committee on Missing Persons

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The Saskatchewan Provincial Partnership Committee on Missing Persons is a unique approach that brings together a broad range of perspectives to build partnerships across sectors and amongst differing perspectives to strengthen the Saskatchewan response to all cases involving missing persons. While activity on missing persons is occurring in other jurisdictions, that work appears to be focused on specific types of cases or sector responsibilities.<sup>1</sup>

The Committee held its inaugural meeting on January 25, 2006 and held 16 subsequent meetings between March 9, 2006 and September, 2007. As well, it held three meetings with families of long-term missing persons.

At the Partnership Committee meetings, members shared information respecting: their roles in relation to missing persons cases; their concerns about why people go missing; how missing persons cases could be responded to; and how to respond better to family and community needs. Sub-committees were formed to look at specific issues around Prevention/Public Education, Response to Missing Persons, and Communications. These sub-committees met regularly from April 2006 to May 2007 to develop ideas and share information.

Specific presentations were provided to the Committee on: the Alzheimer's Society "Safely Home" Project; the AMBER Alert Program; the services and work of Child Find; SARSAV presented on search and rescue capacities and challenges; policing protocol/response issues by Dr. Jeffrey Pfeifer; British Columbia's Highway of Tears investigations; the "Sisters in Spirit" initiative by SAWCC; and the FSIN Women's Commission work on missing person cases.

As well, the Committee organized three meetings with families involved in cases of long-term missing persons from about 1990 on for the purpose of sharing information, identifying key issues and suggestions for improving the process of responding to missing person cases and commenting on the work of the Partnership Committee. These meetings occurred February 1 in Regina, March 15 in Prince Albert and March 16, 2007, in Saskatoon. Invitations to attend were sent to 47 families and 53 persons representing 21 families participated. A summary of the discussions will be provided later in this report and the views of the families will be referenced in relation to various recommendations made in this report.

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<sup>1</sup> An example is the Ontario Provincial Police work on a police protocol which has been accepted as a model by the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police.

## INFORMATION ON MISSING PEOPLE IN SASKATCHEWAN AND CANADA

The following provides some information on the scope of the problem of missing persons. The information supports the need for a common approach to dealing with missing persons, while responding to the unique needs associated with the different reasons persons go missing. The data comes from differing sources as comprehensive data tracking is not available.

- A 2005 consultation report released by Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada indicated that there were over 100,000 reports of missing persons annually in Canada with around 4,800 persons still recorded as missing after a year with an average increase of 270 new, long-term missing persons annually. As well, about 20 to 30 new or partial sets of human remains are discovered each year in Canada.<sup>2</sup>
- Research completed by Dr. Jeffrey Pfeifer in November, 2006, found that in Saskatchewan in 2005, there were 4,496 reports of missing persons filed with the police.<sup>3</sup> However, these reports represented only 2,956 people. This differential is the result of some individuals going missing a number of times during the year. The discrepancy between these two numbers highlights the challenge of dealing with chronic runaways. The data also reveal that:
  - There is generally an equal distribution of males and females.
  - The majority of missing persons are reported as white or First Nations/Aboriginal, but race is not listed for a number of individuals. As well, the number of First Nations/Aboriginal persons reported missing is disproportionate to their representation in the population – about 38 per cent of cases where race is known.
  - The bulk of missing persons fall between the ages of 9 and 18.
- While the Provincial Partnership Committee has been developing its approach to this issue, other relevant activities have been underway. For example, on April 6, 2006, the Saskatchewan Association of Chiefs of Police (SACP) launched a website<sup>4</sup> listing all known cases of Saskatchewan long-term missing persons and unidentified human remains. The site provides the public with a convenient location to find out about the known cases and an opportunity to get involved in providing information to the authorities.

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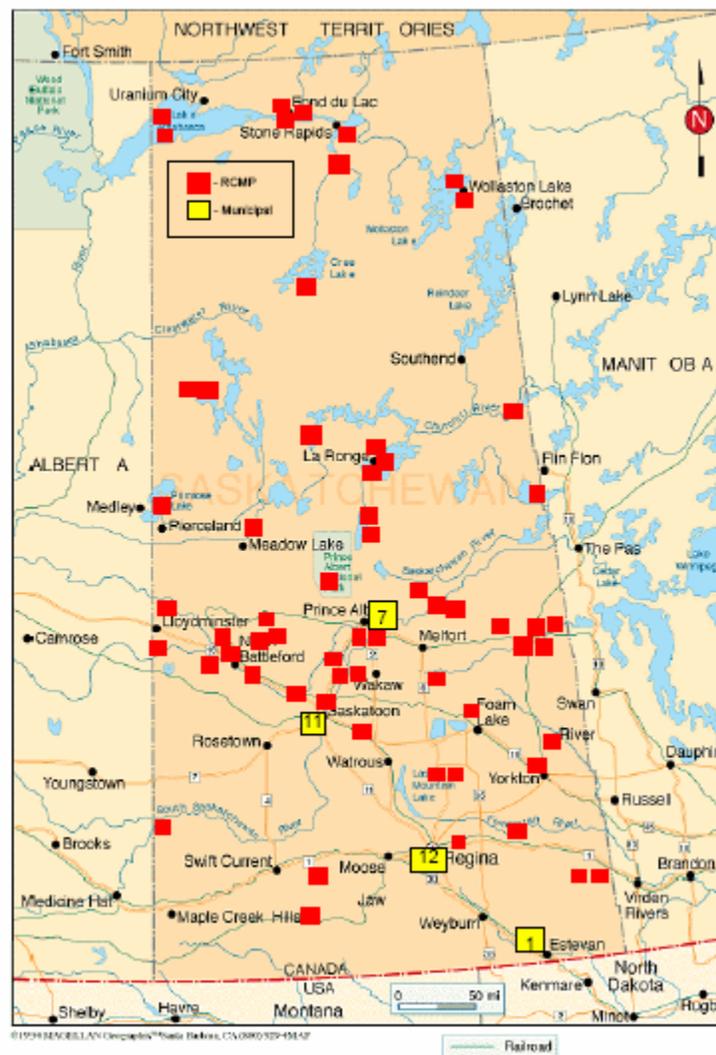
<sup>2</sup> Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada, DNA Missing Persons Index (MPI), A Public Consultation Paper, March 2005. [www.psepc-sppcc.gc.ca/publications/Policing/mpi/index](http://www.psepc-sppcc.gc.ca/publications/Policing/mpi/index). Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC) data.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Jeff Pfeifer, Missing Persons in Saskatchewan: Police Policy and Practice, November, 2006.

<sup>4</sup> [www.sacp.ca](http://www.sacp.ca)

## Final Report of the Provincial Partnership Committee on Missing Persons

- Information on the SCAP site on long-term missing persons shows:
  - People have gone missing from all across the province (see map below);
  - More males have gone missing than females;
  - While equal numbers of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people have gone missing, more Aboriginal females have gone missing than non-Aboriginal females while more non-Aboriginal males have gone missing than Aboriginal males;
  - The average age of those missing is 37;
  - Of the 89 cases as of August 1, 2007, foul play is suspected in 32 cases, with 19 cases involving females as compared to 13 cases involving males; and
  - The reasons persons are believed to have gone missing vary from accident, to mental or physical condition, to foul play, to runaways or voluntary disappearances, to child abduction.



- Internationally research on missing people indicates that:
  - In Australia, 30,000 people are reporting missing annually with children and young people having rates three times those of adults. However, most are found relatively soon, with 86 per cent located within one week.<sup>5</sup>
  - In the United Kingdom over 210,000 people are reported to go missing annually.<sup>6</sup> Among those vulnerable to go missing, they report that a third of all children in care will at some stage go missing, with girls between 13 and 17 being the highest proportion; also young men of 24 to 30 go missing for a variety of reasons including the inability to find work, drugs and sexual problems.<sup>7</sup> Another significant group is middle-aged men in their 50s who get depressed, particularly with downturns in the economy. They report that around 30 per cent of those who go missing have mental health problems, including dementia.<sup>8</sup>
  - The UK research also found that in most cases persons go missing for between one to two days, with 62 per cent of runaways returning within 24 hours and 77 per cent within 48 hours. Two per cent of runaways were absent for more than 14 days. Data for 1997/98 showed that 1.1 per cent of the missing person reports were outstanding and 0.03 per cent of total reports were cleared because the person was discovered dead.<sup>9</sup>
  - United States research has found that the majority of runaways returned within seven days and 3 per cent failed to return within 30 days. However, the longer the absence, the greater the likelihood that the child had been abducted or had fallen victim to a violent crime.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Henderson, Henderson and Kiernan (2000), Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice, published by the Australian Institute of Criminology at <http://www.missingpersons.gov.au/Missing.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> BBC News UK Missing persons' map launched August 20, 2007, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/6954631.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/6954631.stm)

<sup>7</sup> GeoffNewiss, 1999, United Kingdom (UK) Police Research Series Paper 114 on "Missing presumed...? The police response to missing persons" found at <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/prgpdfs/fprs114.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Guardian news story at [http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk\\_news/story/0,,1726517,00.html](http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk_news/story/0,,1726517,00.html)

<sup>9</sup> GeoffNewiss, supra.

<sup>10</sup> Simons and Willie, FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin (November 2000)

**Saskatchewan Missing Persons  
Statistical Overview  
1940 – 2007 (August)**

There are currently **89 Missing Persons** recorded in this database.

**Gender**

62 Males  
27 Females

**Race**

43 Caucasian  
44 Aboriginal Descent  
2 Unknown

**Other**

37.27 Years Old = Average Age  
14 Reported Drowning Victims either boating or other water mishaps

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**Male Missing Persons = 62**

**Race**

32 Caucasian  
28 Aboriginal Descent  
2 Unknown

**Age**

39 Average Age  
12 Under 20 Years of Age  
12 Between 20 & 30 Yrs of Age  
38 Over 30 Years of Age

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**Female Missing Persons = 27**

**Race**

11 Caucasian  
16 Aboriginal Descent

**Age**

35 Average Age  
6 Under 20 Years of Age  
9 Between 20 & 30 Yrs of Age  
12 Over 30 Years of Age

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**Foul Play Suspected - In Missing Person Cases = 32<sup>11</sup>**

**Gender**

13 Males  
19 Females

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<sup>11</sup> The foul play suspected statistics are based on investigators' opinions formed through information gained during the police investigation of the suspicious circumstances in which the missing person disappeared.

### **People are reported missing as a result of different situations**

**Missing Children:** 64 per cent of missing person reports in Saskatchewan in 2005 involved children.<sup>12</sup> The majority appear to have involved runaways (1,792 cases).<sup>13</sup> Nationally, 78 per cent of missing children reports involved runaway children (57 per cent female vs. 43 per cent male). In 2005, Canadian missing children reports decreased from 67,266 to 66,548. Less than .005 per cent involved a stranger abductions (30 cases), while parental abductions represented .05 per cent of all cases (332). In Saskatchewan, there were 14 reported parental child abductions and one stranger abduction. Child abductions can have dire consequences as research indicates that “one in four children abducted by parents or relatives was later found to have been murdered by his or her abductors”. Often those abducted, particularly by strangers, may be murdered within a relatively short time frame and the body hidden.<sup>14</sup> Approximately 11 per cent go missing because of an accident or wandering away.

From 1968 to 2005, the total number of missing children reports increased by 16 per cent nationally with a general increase in the number of runaways. There are local agencies, such as Child Find, local police, the Saskatchewan Justice Central Authority on International Child Abduction, national agencies such as the National Missing Children Services of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and international agencies or links such as Interpol, which assist families in trying to determine the fate of runaways and abducted children.

Child Find Saskatchewan was established in August 1984. The agency’s role in dealing with missing children cases is endorsed by the Saskatchewan Association of Chiefs of Police and the RCMP Missing Children Service in Ottawa. Child Find is a partner in the AMBER Alert Program. Child Find relies on donations and volunteers to operate. Child Find provides prevention and awareness information from “All About Me ID Clinics” which help families to record vital information about their child to keep in a booklet. The organization also raises awareness of missing children issues through mechanisms such as publishing a quarterly magazine that talks about prevention and profiles cases and pictures of missing persons. Child Find reports that it has held 50 All About Me ID Clinics to help photograph and fingerprint some 3,000 Saskatchewan children. It is part of a national network and international network. It assists families where a child has gone missing by: aiding in the search; obtaining and distributing information on the child; providing emotional support; and referring family members to appropriate agencies to help them cope with the crisis.

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<sup>12</sup> Supra at note 3 – table on Distribution by Age 2005, pgs. 46-48.

<sup>13</sup> Child Find Saskatchewan Magazine, Fall 2006, page 55

<sup>14</sup> Boudreaux et al, 2001

Nationally, the majority of runaway situations are solved within 24 hours to a week of the police having received the report of the child going missing.<sup>15</sup>

Youth run away for a variety of reasons: to escape or avoid a particular situation, or to find or get something such as a sense of belonging or acceptance. Child Find Saskatchewan's Fall 2006 Magazine<sup>16</sup> contains information on the motivations of a runaway, warning signs of potential runaway, and ways of preventing runaways.

Youth who run away are at risk for a range of negative impacts which include becoming sexually exploited. A recent research report on sexually exploited male youth found that running away often triggers entry into the sexual exploitation trade and recommended paying closer attention to the needs of youth who run away to stabilize youth before they become involved in years of abuse and drug use on the street.<sup>17</sup>

***Health-related concerns:*** People with Alzheimer disease have a degenerative brain disorder that destroys vital brain cells. They sometimes lose the ability to recognize familiar places, to communicate or to remember their name or address. They may leave home and become confused and get lost. Saskatchewan has the highest percentage of people over 65 in Canada and it is projected that the number of people with Alzheimer disease or related dementia will continue to increase over the next two decades.<sup>18</sup>

To address this concern, the Alzheimer Society developed a program in 1995 to assist police in finding people and to help families and missing persons find their way home. The program is called "Safely Home". In Saskatchewan, only 625 persons are currently registered in the program which may speak to a lack of knowledge of the program or its benefits.<sup>19</sup>

"Safely Home" is a nationwide program designed by the Alzheimer Society in partnership with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police so that a registry of information on those who may potentially go missing is stored on a police database. When a registrant goes missing the care giver can call the police and they can access the computer database to find out pertinent information on the registrant including personal history, physical characteristics and locations where the person is known to visit. Registrants have an ID bracelet that helps the police to identify them when found. Registration is voluntary for a small one-time fee of \$35. It appears that this valuable program capacity is not being fully used by families, care givers, or members of the medical profession in terms of referrals to the program.

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<sup>15</sup> Missing Children Reference Report – National Missing Children Services, National Policing Services, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada (2005).

<sup>16</sup> Child Find Saskatchewan Magazine Fall 2006, article by Michael G. Conne, pgs. 49-53.

<sup>17</sup> Dr. Susan McIntyre, Under the Radar – The Sexual Exploitation of Young Men, British Columbia Edition, www.hindsightgroup.com, November 24, 2006.

<sup>18</sup> Prairie View, Alzheimer Society Saskatchewan, Volume 2, Fall 2006, page 1.

<sup>19</sup> Brochure from Alzheimer Society.

As well, people may go missing due to other health-related concerns such as mental health problems, including suicide.

***People may go missing as a result of foul play:*** Foul play or criminal conduct that may lead to a death may be suspected in cases involving both missing male and female persons. The national homicide rate increased in 2005, with a total of 658 homicides. Saskatchewan had the highest provincial homicide rate at 4.33 victims per 100,000 compared to a national rate of 2.04 victims per 100,000. Eight in 110 homicides were committed by someone known to the victim; 49 per cent by an acquaintance; 32 per cent by a family member; and 18 per cent by a stranger. Homicides involving gang activity represented 16 per cent of homicides in 2005. Murder-suicide may be involved as 6 per cent of all incidents culminate in suicide of the accused person and often in family situations involve murder-suicide. Mental illness is often reported in persons who commit murder-suicide.<sup>20</sup>

***Violence against Aboriginal women:*** A particular concern about violence against Aboriginal women has been raised provincially, nationally and internationally by the Amnesty International Report “Stolen Sisters, A Human Rights Response to Discrimination and Violence Against Indigenous Women in Canada”<sup>21</sup> released in October 2004. Violence against Aboriginal women is also the focus of workshops being conducted by the Native Women’s Association of Canada called the “Sisters in Spirit” Campaign. It is concerned about the reported approximately 500 Aboriginal women who have gone missing or been murdered across Canada in the last 20 years.<sup>22</sup> This number refers to suspected cases from all forms of violence, including self-inflicted harm.<sup>23</sup> As noted above, Aboriginal women in Saskatchewan are disproportionately represented amongst missing women and as possible victims of foul play.

As well, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women have been the focus of investigations involving suspected serial killers in recent investigations such as Project KARE in Alberta, the Highway of Tears Report in B.C., and the Vancouver Missing Women Joint Task Force that has resulted in one person being charged with 26 counts of murder.

In terms of violence, Aboriginal people aged 15 years and over are three times more likely than non-Aboriginal people to report experiencing a violent victimization in the preceding 12 months. Victimization data indicates that Saskatchewan Aboriginal victimization rate was 23% higher than the national Aboriginal violent victimization rate and 3.6 times greater than the Saskatchewan non-Aboriginal victimization rate.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide in Canada 2005, released November 8, 2006.

<sup>21</sup> Amnesty International, Canada, Stolen Sisters Discrimination and Violence Against Indigenous Women in Canada, United Kingdom, 2004.

<sup>22</sup> [www.nwac-hq.org](http://www.nwac-hq.org) and [www.sawcc.net](http://www.sawcc.net)

<sup>23</sup> Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Aboriginal Women: A Demographic, Social and Economic Profile, table 2.5 on Female Mortality Rates due to Violence per 100,000, 1989-1993, page 16, summer 1996.

<sup>24</sup> Statistics Canada, 2004 General Social Survey on Victimization.

In the Saskatchewan context, the SACP statistics noted earlier demonstrate the disproportionate number of Aboriginal women missing and, in particular, the disproportionate number feared to be missing as a result of foul play as compared to the percentage of Aboriginal population in the province. An estimated 60% of missing females are Aboriginal while representing approximately 6% of the population.

***Persons who go missing as a result of accident:*** Boating, hunting or other accident situations may lead to a report of a missing person and can lead to the involvement of search and rescue authorities. For example, 14 of the 89 cases reported as long-term missing persons from 1940 to present involved cases of suspected accidental drowning.

## **RESEARCH ON POLICE RESPONSE TO MISSING PERSONS CASES**

The Partnership Committee had the opportunity to discuss with Dr. Pfeifer the research that he undertook under contract with Saskatchewan Justice on the current issues and challenges relating to police services in Saskatchewan on the issue of missing persons.<sup>25</sup> In November 2006, the Partnership Committee received his report on these issues. The Partnership Committee reviewed the findings and recommendations in his report. In particular, this report provides the first comprehensive count of missing persons and detail about gender, age and race for 2003 to 2005. However, given data limitations, data for 2005 is referenced in this report as providing the most comprehensive data for a current year.

Dr. Pfeifer's report examines the role of police with regard to missing persons and supports the need for a collaborative and integrated response involving communities, agencies, organizations and individuals.

Dr. Pfeifer found that police identified the following challenges in responding to missing persons cases:

- resource and personnel issues involved in dealing with chronic runaways;
- frustration over not being able to provide more open communication with families of missing persons due to evidential concerns;
- frustration over not having the resources to make every missing person case a high priority;
- confusion over who should be informed regarding missing persons (i.e., the immediate family, extended family, community representatives); and
- concern regarding the length of time before an individual is reported as missing in some cases.

As well, non-police sources interviewed for his study noted the following issues:

- concern over not knowing the current missing persons policies for police services;
- frustration with issues related to communication between families and the police services;
- challenges with attempting to implement cooperative programs with police services (e.g. Safely Home Program);
- frustration with the number of missing persons reported each year in Saskatchewan;
- concerns regarding the level of input from community regarding missing persons cases;
- confusion over the role of search and rescue in missing persons cases;
- confusion over the actual number of missing persons cases in Saskatchewan; and
- concern over gender and racial trends with regard to missing persons cases.

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<sup>25</sup> Supra, note 3.

Dr. Pfeifer observed a need for:

- standard provincial policy to guide police procedure and practice within each police force;
- improved communication with family of missing persons;
- improved collection of data on missing persons cases by police;
- need for enhanced communication and understanding of police response time to missing persons cases and what drives this;
- improved public knowledge of police policies;
- more comprehensive work on issues related to chronic runaways; and
- improved understanding of and process with regard to use of search and rescue resources.

**ANALYSIS OF THE FLOW OF ACTIVITY ON MISSING PERSONS CASES**

The Committee developed the following schematic to represent how a missing person case develops. This may be helpful in understanding the role and relationship of agencies, families and communities.

<b>Prevention</b>	<b>Situation of Concern</b>	<b>Report</b>	<b>Investigated/Response</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
Public Education and Awareness and Prevention (involves agencies, families, and communities)	Families or friends become concerned or start to suspect person missing. What initial action to take (education/awareness for families and communities)	Family, friends or agency reports (what do they need to know to report and to whom)	Formal System engaged with Police, Search and Rescue (role of agencies, family and community needs to be coordinated)	Dealing with closed cases (is there follow up action needed formally in the criminal justice system or with family or community or to raise awareness, etc.)

**MEDIA ROLE THROUGHOUT**



## **WHAT WE LEARNED FROM THE MEETINGS WITH THE FAMILIES**

The Partnership Committee wants to express its deep appreciation to the family members who participated in meetings with Committee members. The comments and discussions at the meetings and following the meeting contributed significantly to the final recommendations in this report. We also want to indicate our appreciation for the victim support, police investigator and facilitator support provided to the Partnership Committee throughout the process.

As indicated earlier, the meetings with family members involved cases of long-term missing persons [generally over 6 months]. The meetings were planned to provide an opportunity to obtain views and ideas from the families, to share information about missing person issues and to allow discussion on the draft recommendations developed by the Partnership Committee with the families. The selection of families going back to 1990 was chosen to engage those families who had the most recent experience.

The meetings with families involved an overview of the work of the Partnership Committee, including the recommendations made in the Interim Report, along with an opportunity for the family members to ask questions, provide suggestions or views on the work of the Partnership Committee. Given the sensitive nature of these discussions, invitations were sent to family members directly and those present at the meeting were asked to respect the privacy of the participants. Following the general information and dialogue session, small groups were formed, with facilitators, to have specific discussion about the following two questions:

1. From your experience, what worked well or did not work well in dealing with a missing person situation?
2. Is there something that you think could have been done differently that you feel would have made a real difference for your or your family?

These questions were provided to the invitees prior to the meeting so that they had an opportunity to consider what advice they could bring or wanted to share at the meeting. The meetings were attended by family members, Partnership Committee members, police investigators to provide support and information, victims services supports to support family members during and after the process to deal with personal issues, First Nations and Métis Elders to provide spiritual support to participants, and facilitators provided through Mediation Services, Saskatchewan Justice.

The dialogue with family members raised many issues that had not been addressed in the Interim Report of the Partnership Committee. This demonstrated the importance of directly engaging with families to enhance our understanding of the needs of families. Some of the points raised about police response and search and rescue are dealt with in other sections of this report.

Some of the key issues raised in the meetings were:

- An enhanced role and support for families – families need better information about the process of reporting a missing person and what they can do [a checklist to follow or brochure, for example]; and families need a list of resources or a place to go for information. Families may need practical and financial support.
- Increased media sensitivity to family needs and provision of fair and equitable coverage of information initially and on-going. Media and responders also need to respect the culture and traditional ways. Any information released about the missing person should be checked with the family to ensure it is accurate.
- Continued and increased attention to communication between families and investigators and within families and between agencies during the initial investigation stage and on-going. In some communities, this includes ensuring appropriate interpretation services such as for aboriginal languages. As well, there needs to be continuity of investigators or better coordination in the transfer of information to new investigators.
- Police response needs to be timely and follow quickly upon the report of a missing person. Continued improvements in police response were sought.
- Enhanced first responder and search and rescue capacity across the province.
- On-going support to families to keep them informed and involved including building a support network for families.
- Improved processes are needed to allow families to deal with the estate of the missing person.
- Improved processes are needed to allow investigators access to information on the missing person's health, banking or other information relevant to the situation of the missing person.
- Enhanced public acknowledgement and support to recognize the trauma and grief experienced by the families of missing persons and to recognize the spiritual connection including some form of memorial.
- Enhanced relationships and information sharing across jurisdictions on missing people and better knowledge of existing websites, such as the SACP website. While the SACP website was seen a valuable tool, a broader national website or linked websites would ensure a broader dissemination of and access to information on missing people.
- The investigators and search and rescue agencies may need to recognize, access and engage the skills and abilities of local community members to aid in the investigation, search and rescue.

## **RESPONDING TO ISSUES RAISED BY FAMILIES**

**Issue: What type of supports do families need to be able to be effectively and adequately engaged in dealing with a missing person situation?**

**Recommendation 1: Supports need to be developed by the Provincial Partnership Committee or other partner organizations to help families deal with a missing person situation:**

- **Families require a simple checklist to follow of actions they can or should take, such as determining who the family contact person is with the police, with the media, or the type of information they might look for to assist the police in the investigation;**
- **Families require a media kit or information on dealing with the media to help them understand the issues and relationship that may develop during an investigation in terms of providing information to the media or responding to media inquiries; and**
- **Family members who are involved in supporting a missing person investigation may need financial and emotional support from community members or organizations.**

### **Rationale:**

Many families spoke of their sense of confusion and frustration in not knowing what to do before or after reporting a person missing. There was no one information source they could go to and no checklist of what the family or friends might do to assist in the investigation. Instances were noted where the family had relevant information or had access to relevant information but didn't realize it or where it took time for the information to be shared. A simple checklist of items that families can follow can assist the family to organize the information they have, to build police/family trust and communication links, and to empower the family by ensuring they can participate effectively to resolve the case of the missing person.

During our discussions, Child Find shared a copy of a checklist they use for initiating child abduction files. As well, the Australian Federal Police have developed a Guide for the Families and Friends of Missing People [<http://www.afp.gov.au/missing>] which is a plain language support for families. Research needs to be done on what other checklists or guides may exist that could be adapted to use in a Saskatchewan context. Such a checklist would need to be available both centrally, for example, on an Internet site or in print, and available from supporting agencies and the police when a missing person case is reported.

A media kit or information on dealing with the media may also be needed to help the family deal with media issues. The Native Women's Association of Canada has a Tool Kit on media relations to help familiarize advocates and supporters in their Sisters in Spirit initiative with how

to work with the media.<sup>26</sup> The Australian Guide, noted above, also contains a section on Working with the Media. It might be provided to the family by the police or other support services upon the reporting of a missing person. It would explain the role of the media and what they may expect from the family and the ways the family can choose to interact with media. As well, the media kit would explain the benefit to the family of establishing a central contact to deal with the media.

For example, the FSIN Women's Commission prepared a report detailing their experiences in dealing with missing person cases (attached as Appendix B to this Report). The report notes that in some cases the FSIN Women's Commission provided a liaison function between the family and other groups involved in the search/investigation and assisted in managing the communications and media on the family's behalf. They note that, "As with any situation where a person is in grief, contact with the media is not often on the top of their priority list. We managed this situation to ensure the family was safe from the questions of the media, but also attempted to give the media the opportunity to tell a story which could in the end help the current case by informing the public about the missing person which may result in information being passed onto police."<sup>27</sup>

The development of these types of "kits" is something that the Partnership Committee or the partner organizations could take on.

Additionally, those experienced in supporting families dealing with a missing person investigation noted the importance of considering the support needs of families. In terms of the emotional supports that families need, we have recommended that the Victims Services mandate be expanded to provide support to families of missing persons, but it also needs to be recognized that these families may need support from the community, from cultural/traditional or spiritual counselors.

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<sup>26</sup> Native Women's Association of Canada, Community Education Tool Kit, "Unlocking the Mystery of Media Relations".[[www.nwac-hq.org](http://www.nwac-hq.org)].

<sup>27</sup> Saskatchewan First Nations' Women's Commission Secretariat, Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, "Missing First Nations Persons In Saskatchewan: A preliminary Overview", March 31, 2007, at page 9 (Appendix B attached).

Because persons go missing in a variety of circumstances and in communities with differing service and support structures, it is difficult to provide a template for what the support structure for families of missing persons should be. Local circumstances should guide the development of such supports. However, those involved in the investigation and with the family need to consider their role in ensuring the family is supported and in helping to link to supports in the community. Some examples of the roles that can be played by support persons are noted in the FSIN Women's Commission report. This can include community organizations or businesses showing support by providing food, lodging or other supports to the family or to the search and rescue operation as needed.

**Issue: Instances were raised where the role of the media was questioned in terms of provision of accurate or appropriate information. What can be done to improve media coverage in missing person cases?**

**Recommendation 2: The media is encouraged to develop best practice standards in dealing with missing person cases which include consistent, neutral messaging sensitive to the family and cultural circumstances.**

**Rationale:**

Families and communities can be supported by appropriate media action, such as the broadcast of information about a missing person. However, media coverage that is insensitive to the family circumstances, that contains comments about the missing person that devalues their worth, or that is insensitive to cultural needs is not supportive of the family and may detract from effectively engaging the public on the key issue of finding the missing person. Media may benefit from industry "best practice" standards in terms of communicating about missing persons.

Indeed, consistency in neutral, effective media coverage should be encouraged. In Recommendation 9.2, the Committee suggests the development of a media and police communications protocol. This is seen as a process that could support the development of media best practices.

While this concern is being raised by the Partnership Committee, we also note that overall the notification about missing person cases, at least in the print media, seems to be generally consistent and neutral. Recent notifications provide public information about the missing person and the circumstances of their going missing, as well as a public update if the person is found. Generally, these stories are supported by effective police/media communication lines.

In the family meetings, however, examples were provided by families of situations where they felt the media coverage, particularly in follow up articles, was not accurate or was perceived as insensitive.

As well, there were comments on the lack of cultural sensitivity in dealing with First Nations families or communities and respecting local practice and procedure. In the FSIN Women's Commission report a gap noted is:

Media relations is an issue which needs to be worked on - often media does not show compassion to a family who is in shock. They will not give up until an interview is given by the family who may not want to give an interview. The way media sometimes portrays a person who is missing can be insensitive and not truthful.<sup>28</sup>

**Issue: How to continue to support families of missing persons, particularly long-term missing person cases?**

**Recommendation 3: Families of missing persons should be supported by governments and involved agencies to develop a support network.**

**Rationale:**

The experience of holding meetings between the Partnership Committee and the families was unique. Many family participants commented favorably on the meeting as the first opportunity they had had to talk about their concerns and issues. The meetings also provided an opportunity for families to share experiences and knowledge and to learn that they were not alone in trying to deal with the trauma, questions and problems raised by the disappearance of a loved one. Many participants suggested further such meetings would be helpful. While families were often at different stages of dealing with a missing person case, the Partnership Committee observed that the sharing of information and experiences was seen as positive by the participants. The meetings were also seen as a clear demonstration that government and other support agencies were listening and concerned about the issue of missing persons.

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., at page 16.

The FSIN Women’s Commission has been providing support to a number of First Nations families who have missing loved ones. They learned that families need on-going support and have held a series of gatherings to bring families together into a setting called Family Gatherings with the intent to give them opportunities to deal with their current situation. As they describe it:

...Through the family gatherings we invite a critical incident stress management team to work with the families to help them gain an understanding of what they are experiencing and learn ways to deal with their emotions. We also used the gatherings as an opportunity for the families to network together and develop relationships with other families who are going through similar traumatic situations. We wanted the network they developed to become contacts they could use in times when they needed to discuss what they were experiencing with others who had some understanding and empathy.<sup>29</sup>

**Issue: What can be done to assist families in dealing with property, bank accounts and the estate of the missing person?**

**Recommendation 4: The provincial government should review existing common law and legislation dealing with missing persons and develop a timely, comprehensive legislative response to deal with the estate of the missing person.**

**Rationale:**

When someone goes missing, there are practical consequences for the family and the estate of the missing person as the person may have property held solely or jointly that needs to be attended to such as bank accounts, mortgages, or personal property such as the family car may be in the missing person’s name. The dependants, joint owners or potential beneficiaries of the missing person must struggle to determine how to deal with debts, maintenance or sale of property, or may have trouble accessing banks accounts or other funds.

There appears to be no jurisdiction at common law for the court to make a declaration of death. There is no missing person legislation as such in Saskatchewan. Instead, a court may declare a person an “absentee” for the purpose of the management and preservation of his or her estate. There is no set time limit for declaring a person “absent” for the purposes of designating a “committee” for that person’s estate, nor is there a set time frame for declaring a person deceased in Saskatchewan. Instead, upon application, the court may look at all of the evidence before it and determine whether a person is “absent” and subsequently whether an estate should be distributed.

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., at page 10.

A coroner may complete a medical certificate of death for a missing person after conducting an investigation or holding an inquest, but there are no criteria for determining when this may be appropriate.

Other legislation provides some limited remedy in that both *The Saskatchewan Insurance Act* and *The Marriage Act, 1995*, prescribe a presumption of death after seven years.

This means that there is a lack of certainty around the preservation and management and eventual distribution of the estates of missing persons. The management and distribution of the estates of missing persons may, without legislative changes, continue to be problematic for their families.

Options for providing greater certainty in this area include: providing presumptions under *The Absentee Act* of death after someone has been missing for a period of time, for example six months, to allow for applications for directions or management of the estate; create a universal seven year time limit for the presumption that a “missing person” is dead where after which the estate can be distributed; or creating a “Missing Persons Act” to deal with presumptions, management of the estate and devolution of the estate of a missing person, and other matters helpful to the investigation of missing person cases such as permitting disclosure of personal information to help determine the circumstances under which the person went missing.

As well, it is noted that as on-reserve estate issues are dealt with under the provisions of *The Indian Act*. First Nations and the federal government may be interested in looking at whether changes in existing legislation that deals with estates of on-reserve citizens are needed to deal with missing person situations.

**Issue: Would a memorial be appropriate to publicly recognize the importance of the missing persons and the families and friends grief?**

**Recommendation 5.1: The provincial government, in partnership with police services, First Nations, Métis and Aboriginal organizations, and local governments, should consult with families of missing persons to determine the form or forms that a provincial memorial to missing persons could take and how it would be implemented and maintained.**

**Recommendation 5.2: The Saskatchewan Minister of Justice should raise the topic of creating a national memorial to missing persons at the next Ministers Responsible for Justice meeting.**

**Rationale:**

In situations where a death occurs, there is generally a ceremony and there is some location where the body is laid to rest. This process serves to help family and friends deal with the certainty and implications of the death and to move through the grieving process.

In situations involving missing persons, there is no certainty regarding the status of the missing person and no closure in terms of a ceremony or location associated with the grieving. The families of missing persons do grieve, even if they hope and believe that the missing person will be found alive.

One article from Australia estimates “that for every person reported missing, the impact is felt by 12 others, predominantly family members and friends, but also work colleagues and other community members. Families and friends of missing persons face a range of physical, emotional, psychological and financial impacts. Relationships can be strained as well as significant changes in quality of life and routine activities.”<sup>30</sup>

As well, the article notes that: “Families and friends of missing persons often find they can’t negotiate the normal grieving process as there is no identified death of their loved one. When a relative is missing there is no resolution, only what families have termed ‘continuous grieving’ or ambiguous loss”.

Families spoke to the Partnership Committee about their need to have their grief and the significance of the life of the missing person recognized. While cases may be acknowledged through sites such as the SACP website, there is no general public recognition of the circumstances of the missing persons and their families. Thus, families raised the issue of creating a memorial for missing persons.

A memorial would provide a focal point for ensuring continuing attention to the plight of families and missing persons. A memorial could take a number of forms. Some of the ideas discussed by the Committee included: a computer site that lists missing persons; a specific location and memorial or stained glass window; a dedicated pow-wow with a feast if a First Nations person is missing; a provincial day, week or month dedicated to missing persons; a provincial statue or a more geographically dispersed memorial. For example, a process could be established with support of government, communities, and families to provide dedicated memorials in parks in a location acceptable to the family. Such a local memorial could consist of a bench or marker developed using some common criteria to ensure recognition.

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<sup>30</sup> Platypus Magazine, Edition 92, September 2006, “Life is a Puzzle – every piece is important”.

One suggested model is: to create a provincial memorial to missing persons to be located in Regina, to dedicate a day to missing persons in May each year, and to develop an approach that would allow for the dedication of local park benches or markers to missing persons in locations acceptable to the family.

There are such memorials in other jurisdictions such as Ireland and the U.S. For example, New York State has a Missing Person Remembrance that stands on a small hill near the Empire State Plaza in Albany, New York. It is a granite and stainless steel frame with an eternal flame on the top and on the base is engraved the signature statement: As a symbol of our eternal hope may this flame light their way home.

A national memorial may also be something which could be promoted to other jurisdictions.

To determine what the appropriate form of a memorial or memorials would be, it is suggested that further dialogue is needed with the families of missing persons and with support agencies and other governments. This consultation could be in person or by survey. It is noted, however, that this topic is one which might be appropriate for in person discussion with at least a representative group of families to obtain their sense of what is fitting to address the variety of circumstances in which people go missing, how such memorial should be funded, maintained, etc. The membership of the Provincial Partnership Committee on Missing Persons may be able to assist in organizing such a consultation as a follow up to the consultations held with families in spring 2007.

**Issue: What would help ensure greater public access to information on missing person cases across jurisdictional borders?**

**Recommendation 6: The SACP [Saskatchewan Association of Chiefs of Police] is encouraged to promote the concept of a national website or linked websites and the Saskatchewan Minister of Justice is encouraged to raise the need for a national website or linked websites on missing persons at the next meeting of Ministers Responsible for Justice.**

**Rationale:**

The SACP is to be applauded for providing a website with accessible information on long-term missing persons cases in Saskatchewan in a publicly accessible way. While this coverage is a significant improvement on the information available to the public in Saskatchewan or elsewhere on persons missing in Saskatchewan, a national website or linked jurisdictional sites which contained similar information from across Canada would have a greater profile and allow for broader dissemination of information about all missing persons in Canada. This in turn could assist in solving more cases of missing persons.

The case of Mary Catherine Shanahan which ran in the Moose Jaw Times Herald on March 17, 2007 is an example of the value of the Internet and public access to information, as well as the importance of dedicated investigators, in terms of solving missing persons cases. In the Shanahan case, Corporal Cam Moore from Moose Jaw Police Service pursued a case dating back 24 years. A story ran on the case in January 2006, and from that the police received a tip about an Internet hit for a name that Ms. Shanahan had used. This led to tracing Ms. Shanahan to Ontario where it was determined that she had died in 1987.

The Committee understands that there are a variety of websites developed across the country that list missing persons. Some police forces have websites with information about their specific area [i.e. Ontario Provincial Police, Project KARE in Alberta, Halifax Police, and Vancouver Downtown Eastside missing women] and some private groups also have websites [Doe Network]<sup>31</sup>. Manitoba recently launched a provincial website [[www.macp.mb.ca](http://www.macp.mb.ca)] which is very similar to the Saskatchewan website.

There are many national or local websites in the U.S. and the UK that could be reviewed and linked to such as National Center for Missing Adults [[www.hope2support.com](http://www.hope2support.com)], National Runaway Hotline [[www.nrscrisisline.org](http://www.nrscrisisline.org)]; the UK Police National Missing Persons Bureau; the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System in the U.S. called NamUs launched in 2007; or the Australian National Missing Persons Co-ordination Centre. There is a need for and

opportunity to use the Internet to help address missing person cases and to address the “overwhelming need for a central reporting system for unidentified remains cases”.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> The Doe Network “International Center for Unidentified & Missing Persons” Covering The United States, Canada, Australia, Europe & Mexico (<http://www.doenetwork.org/>)

<sup>32</sup> Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Justice Department Launches National Missing and Unidentified Persons Initiative (NamUs), July 2, 2007.

## **RESPONDING TO PREVENTION, AWARENESS AND PUBLIC EDUCATION ISSUES**

**Issue:** What steps can be taken to raise awareness about the issue of missing persons and how to respond to missing person events?

**Recommendation 7.0:** As a priority, the Provincial Partnership Committee or another agency, with relevant community stakeholders, should be tasked to develop information/education materials to provide a factual overview of all aspects of missing person situations.

**Recommendation 7.1:** Agencies that deal with at risk populations should establish teams to conduct presentations on awareness, prevention and personal safety to social and professional networks throughout the province.

**Recommendation 7.2:** The Provincial Partnership Committee or another agency should be tasked to compile and maintain an inventory of agencies involved in missing person cases to support networking and a publicly accessible inventory of existing or new educational materials on prevention and personal safety.

**Recommendation 7.3:** Police, as part of communications with the public, should ensure that information about police policy, procedure and practices related to missing persons cases and the role that the public can play in assisting in missing persons cases is generally available.

### **Rationale:**

The Partnership Committee, based on feedback received from families of missing persons, from review of Dr. Pfiefer's research and through exchange of information amongst members, has identified a need for a more sustained, coordinated and collaborative effort to educate communities, and particularly target audiences at risk, about all aspects of a missing person event. This includes prevention, recognition of when a person is missing, notification of authorities and recognition of the role the communities can play when a person is missing. Information tools are needed to enhance awareness and understanding of target groups.

Some government support may be needed to ensure collaboration between government and non-government agencies to develop these tools. The Provincial Partnership Committee has an appropriate mix of membership to support development of these tools, in consultation with other relevant stakeholders who deal with specific target groups.

Partner agencies and governments also have a role to play in helping to identify the target audiences, needs, and approaches and in providing information to the target groups they serve. For example, Child Find Saskatchewan issues a regular publication “Child Find Saskatchewan Newsmagazine” that provides information on risks and responses dealing with children and youth who may “run”, be at risk of abduction or at risk of an accident.<sup>33</sup> Various agencies associated with the Partnership Committee or dealing with at risk groups may be able to broadly disperse awareness and prevention information to target groups by sharing and building upon the work of partner agencies.

A powerful communication tool, particularly with at risk populations, is engagement of social networks. People within these networks share information by word of mouth primarily rather than by sharing of printed material. Presentations to members of these social networks provides an opportunity for open two-way communication that leads to a deeper understanding and retention of new information.

Many people remain unaware of preventative measures that can keep them safe. The Partnership Committee is interested in finding effective ways to help people remember safety messages and to positively influence behavior in target groups, while recognizing that this needs to be done without creating an atmosphere of fear.

This is a role that partner agencies can also play to ensure awareness of any developed materials or websites.

There is also very limited information provided to some vulnerable groups, such as Aboriginal women or runaways or their families. The Provincial Partnership Committee was advised of some of the issues raised in workshops with Aboriginal women about the need for more accurate information needs to be available to the community on the risks and realities of missing persons and how to respond to safety concerns such as being followed or chased by a stranger.

There is a need for general information that could be available on the Internet, on posters or in publications to provide a picture of the variety of risks that people face and how to respond to these risks. This information may need to be available in different languages, particularly Cree and Dene.

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<sup>33</sup> Summer 2007 Child Find Saskatchewan Newsmagazine contained articles on “Alternatives to Running Away”, and “Safety in the Great Outdoors”.

It is important for the public, particularly those at risk, to understand the roles and responsibilities which individuals, families, communities, police, non-government agencies, and government can play in preventing or responding to missing persons situations.

Materials on why people go missing and how to prevent or respond to these risks need to be available to individuals and families where they can easily access it to reinforce their understanding and to encourage them to take appropriate steps to respond. For example, do medical centres have information available on “Safely Home” to provide to people where a loved one is diagnosed with Alzheimer disease or do youth drop-in centres or outreach centres have access to information on how youth can keep themselves safe or how they can assure family members that they are okay through mechanisms such as the Child Find “I’m OK” postcards? Are help line numbers or agency contact numbers readily available for more information or for assistance?

Some information may also be needed to ensure the public knows where to go for accurate information, such as the SACP website or organizations such as Child Find, or how to assess whether information comes from a reliable source. For example, some alerts over the Internet of missing persons may be hoaxes and distribution may cause needless concern or confusion. In other cases, private firms or individuals may offer for a fee to provide a service to maintain personal information on a child or other loved one, yet lack the credentials to ensure secure storage or access to this information.

There is some excellent information available through existing agencies to raise awareness of risks to certain vulnerable groups, such as those suffering from Alzheimer disease or at risk of facing a child abduction situation. These materials are developed, maintained and distributed to specific audiences and to the degree that the limited resources of the specific agencies can support.

The Provincial Partnership Committee had hoped to develop an inventory of agencies involved in missing person cases to ensure that the network started with the Partnership Committee could be expanded and enhanced. A more effective and coordinated approach to dealing with missing person cases could be promoted through this approach. As well, this would allow for a broader dialogue on this issue. Unfortunately, the Partnership Committee was not able to complete this task prior to issuing the final report.

As well, the Partnership Committee knows that there is a range of educational materials currently available. However, these materials need to be catalogued for public reference and may need to be adapted to meet current or future needs of the network of agencies involved in preventing or responding to missing person cases. Such an inventory could avoid duplication of effort and could also identify any gaps that need to be filled. This would allow the limited financial resources of partner agencies to be more effectively utilized for prevention and awareness activities.

Finally, police services can reduce public confusion or frustration regarding police response and can promote effective ways for the family and community to become involved in resolving or reducing missing persons cases by providing consistent, clear information about how the police respond to missing person cases. In addition to the capacity to support investigation, an educated community is also better able to support the family and friends with a missing loved one.

Dr. Pfeifer reports that myths about police response exist, such as a public belief that police will not act on a report of a missing person until 12 to 24 hours have elapsed. This is not a policy found in any police manual in Saskatchewan. There is a need to ensure the public is aware of how and when to report suspicions of a missing person situation and to understand what the police will do once a report is made.

The Vancouver Missing Women Task Force and other missing persons investigations have noted that a delay in reporting by relatives or friends can create impediments to effective police investigation. Sometimes this delay happens because families or friends lose contact with an individual and in other cases because people are not comfortable with reporting to the police.

Consistent, clear information on how to report concerns, what information you may be asked to provide, and what the police will do with this information could assist in ensuring that there is no unnecessary delay in reporting missing persons cases.

**Issue: As children and youth are a particularly high at risk group to go missing, how can these age groups be influenced to reduce the number that go missing?**

**Recommendation 8: Saskatchewan Learning should include awareness about the risks of going missing or facing missing children and youth in all schools through health education programs and encourage educators and School Community Councils to continue to build awareness through access to materials, speakers, or other programming.**

**Rationale:**

Schools provide access to the greatest number of children and youth. The highest number of reported missing persons annually and the greatest proportion of those who may repeatedly be reported missing are found amongst children and youth from age 12 to 17. This age group, in particular, needs to be informed about the risks and how to respond in these cases to help themselves or their friends and classmates.

Health Education is a Required Area of Study in grades 1 – 9. All topics in health education are taught, learned and evaluated through the framework of a decision-making process. Students learn to make informed decisions (e.g. related to personal safety), to establish health-enhancing goals, and to carry out action plans in their daily lives to attain these goals.

Personal safety, self-confidence, and assertiveness skills are emphasized throughout the health education curriculum. Personal safety is not an issue only for schools. It is an issue that needs to be shared by the school, home and community. A comprehensive school health program includes a wide range of supports and services, in schools and communities, collaborating to enhance the well-being of students. There are two goals in health education: to increase students' health-enhancing behaviors and to decrease students' health risking behaviors.

Life Transitions 20,30 is an elective at the Secondary Level. Students have the opportunity to address risks associated with missing persons in the Community Issues and Ethics Module. As the Health Education program does not extend past grade 9 and older youth are at significant risk of going missing, particularly as runaways, the Provincial Partnership Committee suggests that on-going education about the risks of going missing and how to develop personal safety plans is required throughout the high school years. Perhaps this can be done by making information available, calling in local speakers from agencies knowledgeable on the topic, or other program responses.

The development of targeted awareness and capacity of local agencies to speak on these topics to target groups, and of an inventory of materials available which is proposed in Recommendation 7 could support the work that the education system is being asked to undertake.

## **RESPONSES TO MISSING PERSONS CASES IN SASKATCHEWAN**

As noted earlier, the 2005 announcement of a Missing Persons Task Force included an increase in police resources in the Province to help investigate historical cases including missing persons. The RCMP Historical Case Units are fully staffed with four investigators each in Regina and Saskatoon. As well, two municipal police positions for Regina and Saskatoon Police Services have been staffed to support this type of investigation. The Historical Case Units are responsible for investigating: unsolved homicides, suspicious deaths, missing persons (persons who have been missing over 6 months or in exceptional cases) and unidentified human remains.

Since 2003 there has been a Provincial Cold Case Investigators Association that meets every 6 months or more often if required. This association has representatives from the RCMP and all the large municipal police services. The investigators share information, expertise and combine resources when required to try to find missing persons. It also shares information with investigators in other provinces. This group was instrumental in the development of the Saskatchewan Missing Person website [[www.sacp.ca](http://www.sacp.ca)] launched in April 2006. The website is accessible to everyone including the general public and all police services and comes complete with graphs and statistics. As of August, 2007, there are a total of 89 missing persons on the website.

Since the website was launched 16 months ago, 5 long term missing persons have been found in the province. Unfortunately all located were deceased and all were female. In two of these cases the deaths were determined to be natural cases and in three the deaths are being investigated as homicides. In one homicide case (Victoria Nashacappo) a 1<sup>st</sup> degree murder charged has been laid and this matter is before the courts.

As well, the province has an Amber Alert program in place that, as a result of an unfortunate situation in 2006, we know is effective in establishing a link between the public and the police to help resolve cases involving abducted children. Saskatchewan has only issued one Amber Alert, but the process in that case was effective. Regular drills are planned to ensure that agencies involved regularly retrain on AMBER Alert protocol and to ensure everyone knows his or her roles and to ensure that contact lists are kept up-to-date. The Provincial Partnership supports this approach and this program.

The AMBER Alert program in Saskatchewan applies to persons under 18 years of age or an individual with a proven mental or physical disability. Where an investigation confirms either abduction by a stranger or abduction (parental or non-parental); the circumstances lead police to believe that an abducted person is in danger of serious bodily harm or death; there is enough of a description available that the public could assist in locating the abducted person or suspect, and an alert can be issued in a time frame that would provide a reasonable expectation of apprehending the suspect or having the abducted person returned – the police can issue the alert to all media and it will be broadcast at regular intervals to alert the public to be on the lookout for

the abducted person and the suspect. The AMBER Alert is intended to be used only in the most serious, time-critical cases. Its use is contained to ensure that this extraordinary remedy receives immediate attention by the media and by the public where an alert occurs.

While AMBER Alert programs exist across North America and in most Canadian jurisdictions, there are differences in programs between jurisdictions. Saskatchewan is working with other Canadian jurisdictions to develop an approach that will allow alerts to occur across jurisdictions recognizing that an abductor may flee to another jurisdiction.

## **IMPROVING RESPONSES TO MISSING PERSONS CASES**

**Issue: How to promote consistent police policy, procedure and practice in responding to missing persons reports?**

**Recommendation 9.1: The Saskatchewan Police Commission should review its current policy and work with all police agencies in Saskatchewan to develop and implement an overarching provincial Missing Person Policy for all municipal police agencies, and encourage the RCMP to adopt the policy in Saskatchewan.**

**Recommendation 9.2: The Saskatchewan Police Commission should give consideration to incorporating the following standards in the policy:**

- 1. A missing person report must be taken immediately when information comes to the attention of police, regardless of the length of time the person has been missing or the location where the person went missing.**

Members of the public frequently conduct their own inquiries before making a report of a missing person allowing valuable time to elapse. It is vital to report an incident immediately to the police to allow them to determine whether to commence an investigation. There is currently no specific time period that must elapse before an investigation is undertaken. It is not prudent to have a requirement for a person to be missing for a pre-determined period of time (i.e., 24 or 48 hours,) as each case is unique and time may be a critical factor in bringing investigations to a successful conclusion.

All police agencies in the province should be equipped to collect the required information from a member of the public to begin the investigation into a missing person complaint. Communication technology is readily available to quickly move necessary information from one agency to another. There should be no requirement that a person make a report in the jurisdiction where a person went missing as that could extend the time period before an investigation is commenced and would add to the frustration of the public who may lack the necessary understanding or ability to differentiate between police agencies.

- 2. A standardized specialized in-take form for recording a missing person report and a specialized investigative checklist should be used.**

As identified in Dr. Pfiefer's report, specialized in-take forms now exist in Moose Jaw, Prince Albert, Regina and Saskatoon. The use of a standardized form will ensure the proper information is collected each time a missing persons report is taken. The better the information is captured during the initial communication, the better ability there is to follow up on the report.

The investigative checklist should contain concise questions that are demonstrably related to the investigation, including a self-identification option for First Nations and Métis people to indicate their status and home community.

Police would need to be trained to explain that the purpose of collecting the information is related to working with relevant First Nations and Métis or Aboriginal organizations to support the investigation or the family during the investigation, plus to assist in understanding the risk profile of the missing person. This would also help to identify that there may be specific language or cultural needs associated with the investigation.

**3. A common assessment tool should be developed to help assess the priority of the investigation.**

There is a need for a standard risk assessment tool to help prioritize missing person investigations. Depending on risks, this instrument will give a sense of how much priority will be given to each file. It will be an assessment tool based on factors identified in the information provided above.

Dr. Pfeifer's report suggested that all police services have either a formal or an informal list of specified priority variables that impact decisions regarding the priority of a missing person report. Emerging or current trends should be part of this analysis. In the Saskatchewan context this may include identification of missing Aboriginal women as a potentially high risk situation.

Lifestyle, age and immaturity, medical condition, environmental circumstances, etc. may indicate a more immediate or different type of investigative response. The investigation forms should allow for the capturing of information that would identify high risk groups.

**4. Immediate investigation of missing persons in suspicious circumstances.**

It is important for an investigation to begin immediately when suspicious circumstances exist. Time may be of the essence in saving lives or protecting evidence.

**5. Once it is established that a person is missing, the case will be entered on CPIC as soon as possible.**

CPIC is an important tool to communicate information about missing persons to all police agencies. Standard reporting forms and entry of information on CPIC will ensure more complete records for investigation and evaluation purposes. Important statistics about missing persons are also collected from CPIC entries and assist in the development of policy regarding deployment of resources. It is important for these statistics to be accurate. However, when it is practical to enter this information onto CPIC may vary depending on

police resource capacity, i.e. a small detachment may concentrate on investigation rather than returning to the detachment to enter CPIC data.

**6. Continued communication with the families of missing people.**

Family members continue to desire information on the status of the investigation into the disappearance of a loved one long after the event has occurred. Continued, frequent police-initiated contact with family members provides valuable information for police investigators.

**7. A media and public communications protocol for disseminating information about missing persons and requesting the public's help in locating a missing person.**

Many missing persons investigations are cleared because of information received from members of the public after news releases have been issued. This approach could help to establish a media best practices protocol as mentioned earlier.

**8. The police, upon identifying a chronic runaway situation, should develop approaches to link with other agencies to support appropriate intervention.**

Most missing persons reports in Saskatchewan involve young persons who have run away from their families or other living arrangements. A large number of these cases involve young people who repeatedly run away for various reasons. Processes must be in place to assist police to recognize when a young person has a propensity for running away; no matter in what jurisdiction the event occurs. Young people put themselves at great danger when they go missing and present themselves as easy targets for those who wish to victimize them.

If the inventory of agencies discussed in Recommendation 7 is developed, that will help police to identify support agencies. In many cases, local relationships with the school, child protection, or health agencies may be called upon.

**9. All police forces should assign a police officer responsible for coordination of missing persons files and establish a backup process to avoid gaps in effectively responding to missing person reports.**

A missing persons coordinator in each agency will help to facilitate communication between police, other agencies, media and family and bridge gaps between RCMP detachments. A coordinator will also provide a common point of contact and enable the identification of patterns and trends.

However, a full-time coordinator may not be feasible for each force, or may be absent due to training, holiday or to deal with the needs of other investigations. In these cases, the police force needs to ensure that there is a backup to the coordinator or the coordinator function to ensure that gaps in responding do not occur.

**10. In order to effectively implement the above approach to recording and managing investigations on missing person cases, standardized training and practice guides should be developed.**

As police throughout the organization may encounter missing person reports, be involved in investigations, or encounter persons considered “missing”, it is important that there be a consistent approach to police practice in these matters. This includes training in the overall management of such cases and on information sharing between agencies and police forces.

**11. There is a need for a more systematic and consistent approach to collecting data on: 1) missing person reports; 2) actual missing persons; 3) basic demographic information about missing persons; and 4) CPIC data entry.**

In Dr. Pfeifer’s report he notes the difficulty encountered in trying to obtain data on missing person cases in Saskatchewan<sup>34</sup>. Such information is necessary to allow for analysis of opportunities to reduce the number of or respond better to missing person cases. As well, it is important to assist in monitoring whether the changes recommended in this report have had an effect on police practice and the resolution of missing person cases.

**Rationale:**

Policing is a very large part of what the response sub-committee focused on. The Partnership Committee had the benefit of reviewing the report on police practice regarding missing persons cases of police forces in Saskatchewan with Dr. Pfeifer. Given the level of inconsistency or lack of policy amongst police forces operating in Saskatchewan, as noted in Dr. Pfeifer’s report, the Partnership Committee strongly endorses the need for a standardized policing policy for dealing with missing persons cases in Saskatchewan. It notes that work that has been done in Ontario with the OPP and there is national endorsement of this protocol by the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police. This work demonstrates that a common approach is desirable and doable.

Currently, there are differences in each police agency’s response to a missing persons investigation. Internal organization structure and community needs might be different for each police agency; however, it is important for a standard policy to be in place to ensure a consistent level of service is provided across the province. Standardized policy will also provide the basis

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<sup>34</sup> Supra at note 3, page 19.

to: inform citizens and interested community organizations of the expected police response to missing persons investigations; provide a measurement tool to assist in determining the appropriate level of resources needed to provide this capacity; and provide a basis for evaluating the police response to incidents.

A common approach to dealing with missing persons cases was endorsed in the US in the August 2005 Identifying the Missing: Model State Legislation.<sup>35</sup> While the US has taken a model legislation approach, in Canada, the development of model standardized approaches to reporting and management of missing persons cases may be more appropriate given the differing federal and provincial legislative responsibilities and the need to develop local practice standards.

The Ontario policy suggests that it is important for police members to be aware of the emergent nature of these investigations, the trauma and crisis experienced by the family, and recognize/respect the ethnic background of the persons affected. It encourages police to accept all reports of lost and missing persons irrespective of jurisdiction, assign high priority to the case, determine search urgency level, establish initial information on the missing person and the circumstances surrounding the disappearance, and enter the case on CPIC.

As well, communication links need to be established with the family. Information on best practices from investigations such as the Vancouver Downtown Eastside and Highway 16 (Highway of Tears) suggest developing:

- a master family member contact list that is shared with police, victim services and Crown counsel;
- creating a family member database, communication methods for keeping family members informed including family meetings, information bulletins, secure website, and phone contacts; and
- personal home visits by police, counseling, travel support for family members, family respite space and separate family space for any court proceedings, resource guide for family members, tent area designated at investigation site.

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<sup>35</sup> <http://www.innovations.harvard.edu/cache/documents/8071.pdf> . President's DNA Initiative (www.DNA.gov ) US Department of Justice. The objective of the legislation is to overcome the inability of law enforcement authorities to share resources and information when conducting investigations and identifying remains and to ensure a safe return where possible. The scheme proposes statutory provisions to ensure that missing persons reports are promptly taken by law enforcement, the collection and analysis of information, to provide a process for prompt identification of "high risk missing persons", providing a step by step approach for improving the collection and analysis and dissemination of information to aid in the identification of human remains.

**Issue: How to promote increased information sharing and dissemination between relevant police forces?**

**Recommendation 10: A process is required to ensure that all suspicious and at-risk missing person reported incidents (young children, medical, elderly, high risk life style) are fanned out to all relevant police agencies in the province immediately.**

**Rationale:**

While information is made available to police forces when data is entered in CPIC, there are circumstances in which such an entry may not be made immediately and also situations where the police investigating the case may have reason to believe the person may be in another police jurisdiction. In these situations, it may be important to have capacity and practice which can be put into effect immediately to alert specific police forces.

**Issue: How to promote information sharing and dissemination between the police and community agencies to support investigations into missing persons reports?**

**Recommendation 11: Police should establish protocols with community agencies to provide a formal system to fan out “Missing Persons Information”.**

**Rationale:**

Relevant community agencies need to have information on missing persons or on specific vulnerable groups. If these agencies can be linked early on to the police investigation they can help resolve cases early on where the person is not missing. To implement this requires development of: protocols for police notification and community agency response; processes to fan out the information; guidelines on how the information is communicated, the type of information, and the treatment of the information; how agency privacy issues are dealt with, for example, what the agency can communicate about what they know about a missing person’s status; and police and community agency training to understand the protocol and procedures.

A central police committee using the Internet and an external e-mail program could contact a great number of support agencies and police agencies in the cases of “High Risk” missing persons to reduce the amount of time traditionally used when physically deploying human resources to these places to make inquiries. This is not meant to eliminate personal contact between investigators and other agencies, but rather to enhance it. In addition to saving valuable investigative time, the customized sharing of information in this quick and detailed format could be seen as a demonstration of trust and willingness to work together.

This “Fan-out” system will not work without ongoing efforts towards building partnerships, trust and open communication with social support agencies in the province. These contacts would include medical facilities, women’s shelters, soup kitchens, and drug addiction centres. Communication could be by Internet, phone or face-to-face.

The protocols required may involve province-wide protocols with agencies or organizations with province-wide coverage, but may also involve development of relationships with local agencies and local protocols. A common template for developing protocols may be useful.

The Edmonton Project KARE has established such a process to fan out information on missing persons. It involves 109 social agencies and 106 law enforcement agencies. Clearly, there is a need to be sensitive to the helping role which many agencies play with people in difficult circumstances, the need to ensure privacy and safety, and the need to ensure that a “fan out” protocol in no way jeopardizes the reliance that clients have on these agencies. It may be that the Provincial Partnership Committee could play some role in developing the protocol relationship with community agencies.

While the privacy of family members and the missing person must be guarded, as appropriate, when someone goes missing it is not just a “family issue”. It is an issue which involves the whole community and community agencies should be encouraged to support the family of the missing person, to provide whatever relevant information they may have, and to support the investigation. In some situations, the family of the missing person may not have the most current information on the person’s activities and community agencies may be better able to provide this information.

**Issue: How to support police access to information on missing persons to help determine if the person is missing or not?**

**Recommendation 12.1: The provincial government should amend provincial legislation to permit the disclosure of information on missing persons to police conducting a missing persons investigation as information necessary to protect the mental or physical health or safety of an individual.**

**Recommendation 12.2: The Saskatchewan Minister of Justice should raise with the Federal Ministers responsible for Justice the need to amend federal legislation to ensure that when police are investigating a missing person case they have access to information under federal jurisdiction relevant to the investigation.**

**Rationale:**

Police investigators indicated to the Provincial Partnership Committee that they encountered difficulty in obtaining information in missing person cases as there was no clear legislative authority for them to access personal information such as bank accounts, federal or provincial benefit payment information, medical information, etc. While, in some cases, the causes of the person going missing may be related to a criminal incident, this is not certain at the time that the police initiate the investigation and, indeed, access to various sources of information may be needed to confirm whether the case involves potential foul play or criminal activity. Thus, the police cannot rely on their criminal law powers of investigation. As well, most missing person cases do not involve foul play.

It is important to note that this information is needed to determine the status of the investigation – is the person missing or not and in what circumstances – for example, was there foul play or criminal activity involved? If the person has voluntarily gone “missing” and is found by the police, then the investigation can conclude and it is the person’s decision whether to provide contact information to the family.

Privacy law raises some formidable barriers to the ability of police to collect personal information as part of a missing person investigation. Federal and provincial privacy legislation provides that public bodies, private organizations and federal works, undertakings and businesses may only disclose the personal information of an identifiable individual for the purpose for which it was collected and with that person’s consent, or without the consent of that person under certain prescribed circumstances. It is challenging for police to fit a missing person investigation within one of these circumstances. Only provincial health legislation contains a provision that explicitly permits a health information “trustee” to disclose personal health information to a police officer without the individual’s consent as part of a missing person investigation, though the personal health information that the “trustee” may disclose is narrowly prescribed. As well as authority to access the information, the police also require a simple process to follow given that the need for information is urgent to assist in the investigation to try to resolve the missing person case as expeditiously as possible to avoid harm or trauma to the person and the family.

*The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* applies to any provincial “government institution”. It allows release of information where disclosure is required by law or for a law enforcement agency to enforce a law, or where necessary to protect the mental or physical health or safety of any individual or in compassionate circumstances to facilitate contact with the next of kin or a friend of someone injured or ill.<sup>36</sup> While missing person cases are not explicitly authorized under the legislation, arguably the extension of release authority to the police in these cases is consistent with the intent of the above provisions of the legislation.

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<sup>36</sup> See section 29(2) of FOIPA.

Similarly, *The Local Authority Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* which governs local authorities allows release in similar wording. As noted above, *The Health Information Protection Act* and regulations authorize some release of information to help locate a missing person.<sup>37</sup>

*The Children's Law Act* allows a court to order disclosure of information from any person or public body to enforce a custody or access order, but not for other purposes.

As many sources of information about an individual may be the subject of federal legislative authority, either in federal government records or under federal constitutional authority, such as banking, changes to federal legislation also seem to be required to ensure full police access to information to ensure that missing person reports can be effectively investigated to determine if the person is missing and the circumstances in which they went missing.

The federal legislation that could be considered for amendment includes the *Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act* which protects personal information or personal health information collected by any private organization or federal work, undertaking or business (but to a government institution), including banks, airlines, etc. Disclosure of personal information is authorized in fewer circumstances than under provincial law, but those purposes include where required by law or where needed because of an emergency that threatens the life, health or security of an individual.<sup>38</sup> *The Family Orders and Agreements Enforcement Assistance Act* authorizes police to obtain information in child abduction cases from certain federal information banks upon filing an affidavit that meets specific criteria. Neither of these statutes would provide the clear authority for the police to obtain the information necessary and in a timely way in a missing person investigation.

Some options for addressing this perceived gap in police authority in terms of provincial legislation are amendments to clarify existing provincial privacy legislation or regulations to include this within allowable grounds for release. In terms of federal legislation, amendments may be required to either or both of the federal pieces of legislation noted above – or other federal legislation to establish the basis and process for police timely access to information in missing person cases.

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<sup>37</sup> See *The Health Information Protection Regulations*, H-0.021 Reg. 1, s. 5.1(1).

<sup>38</sup> PIPEDA, section 7(3)(e).

**Issue: How can we improve the supports available to families of missing persons while the police are investigating the missing person case?**

**Recommendation 13: The mandate of Victim Services should include the provision of support to families of missing people.**

**Rationale:**

Crisis intervention including the provision of support, information and referrals is critical to a comprehensive model of service provision for those impacted by missing persons incidents. Immediate referrals by Saskatchewan police agencies to Victim Services units will enhance liaison and support to families of missing persons. Families need assistance to deal with police investigation needs, media demands, notification of other family and community members, and ongoing assistance to deal with trauma and any ongoing investigation or criminal proceedings.

Situations such as the Whitewood case, in summer 2006, demonstrate the value of having victims services involved early on with the family to assist with the trauma and communication with police and media. The family in these situations may or may not be dealing with an incident involving a criminal action but face similar trauma regardless of the reason the person goes missing. In many cases, the situation is resolved relatively quickly. Recognizing that the Victim Services program may not need to respond in cases that are resolved quickly and that responding to all cases could require significant resources, it is suggested that a protocol be developed between the police and victims services to ensure that victims services are engaged once it has become clear that the family requires and wants such support.

This protocol would deal with how families are offered or made aware of the potential to have victims services assistance and address any privacy issues that may arise.

**Issue:** How to strengthen the search and rescue capacity across the province?

**Recommendation 14.1:** The province and local government need to enhance search and rescue resources province-wide by standardizing provincial policy and providing provincial core funding to ensure volunteer sustainability.

**Recommendation 14.2:** The province, communities and search and rescue organizations need to work cooperatively to ensure effective Search and Rescue responses by:

- Creating a provincial SAR Advisory Council of representative and mandating agencies, for strategic and operational direction to SARSAV;
- Creating a standard policy regarding the use of SAR teams;
- Ensuring that municipalities and communities take ownership of SAR volunteer teams;
- Providing basic SAR training and equipment to volunteers free of charge;
- Ensuring trained SAR teams, SAR managers and trainers are available throughout all areas of the province;
- Creating a central provincial database for all SAR events, training and personnel;
- Ensuring consistent and timely involvement of SAR teams in a missing person's event;
- Providing specialized training for SAR volunteers, i.e. emergency management and recognizing the need for SAR teams in a disaster event, crime scene or evidence recovery;
- Developing heavy urban SAR capacity;
- Ensuring support systems are in place for long term and/or remote searches;
- Ensuring liability protection for volunteers; and
- Ensuring Critical Incident Stress Management support to SAR volunteers.

**Rationale:**

While policing agencies are usually the organization used to find a missing person, communities may become informally involved in a search and, where necessary, the police may utilize volunteer search and rescue (SAR) units within the province.

Standardized policy development focusing on the use of search and rescue teams including multi-jurisdictional protocols are needed to ensure that all SAR workers within Saskatchewan have a standardized level of search and rescue response which includes mandatory training and equipment requirements. Consistent and timely involvement of search and rescue teams in missing persons events will improve response.

Recognizing that people go missing for many reasons, a proactive approach to possible missing persons incidents would include providing specialized training for volunteers in emergency management, crime scene or evidence recovery and developing a capacity provincially for heavy urban search and rescue.

Volunteer recruitment and retention will be increased throughout the province with the provision of basic training and equipment free of charge. Liability protection is in place for ground SAR volunteers called out by or under the operational control of the Provincial Police Service. However, it is noted that such liability protection is not available for volunteers engaged in lower risk activities such as exercises and training. Workers' Compensation coverage in the same circumstances is being actively pursued. It is essential that municipalities consider ways to provide for the protection of volunteers when called out or under the operational control of a municipal police agency. The availability of Critical Incident Stress Management services for SAR volunteers is equally essential to the volunteer program.

At this time, there are gaps in the availability of trained SAR teams across the province and a need to ensure that existing and new SAR teams are adequately supported through SARSAV, a provincially recognized umbrella organization and that recruitment and training is ongoing to build and maintain provincial capacity. While these services are part of overall emergency management in the province, they can also play a very significant role in searches for individuals or evidence in missing persons cases.

As SAR teams are composed of dedicated volunteers who encounter difficult and potentially dangerous situations where rapid and trained response is required, it is important for the province and the communities the SAR teams serve to provide equipment, logistical, liability and stress management support to maintain these volunteer services.

**Issue: How to enhance police utilization of search and rescue capacity?**

**Recommendation 15: The various Saskatchewan police forces need to establish protocols on when and how to engage search and rescue capacity in a missing person's event.**

**Rationale:**

Concerns were raised during discussions with partners about the understanding or practice of police in terms of determining when to call on search and rescue resources or how to link effectively with these resources in a timely manner. It was suggested that there needs to be a common protocol and approach developed to ensure appropriate linkage and consistent use of search and rescue capacities. This may be particularly necessary as the provincial search and rescue capacity increases.

As well, the police practice and protocol should be part of communicating with the public on police response as referenced in Recommendation 9.2.

**Issue: How to encourage effective working relationships between schools and students and police in missing persons cases investigations?**

**Recommendation 16: All school divisions are encouraged to develop policies and procedures for collaborating with police and/or school resource officers in missing persons cases, which may include procedures for requesting information from students and staff, appropriate communication and information sharing practices, and critical response provisions.**

**Rationale:**

While recognizing the need to protect the privacy of the child and family, it is also important to recognize that school authorities and students may have information which is critical to the timely outcome of a missing person investigation and the safety of the individual involved. School boards may need to work out policies and procedures to support investigations of missing children reports.

Protocols may need to be developed, similar to the Child Abuse Protocol, to deal with police access to school officials, students and the involvement or notification of parents.

**Issue: How can better responses to child and youth runaways be developed?**

**Recommendation 17: The Committee recommends that the government undertake a study to better understand the issues related to the high number of runaways and to identify prevention and intervention strategies, particularly for chronic runaways and their families.**

**Rationale:**

The Provincial Partnership Committee is concerned about the number of missing persons cases that involve runaways. Many of these children and youth may be facing issues that require response or intervention from the Department of Community Resources, Corrections and Public Safety, Learning or other government agencies. More needs to be done to understand why children go missing from home, community or government resources and to understand what prevention and intervention activities are needed to decrease this risk and to assist children and families deal with the risk.

As mentioned previously, a recent article in the *Child Find Magazine* noted reasons why children/teens may run away: to avoid an emotional situation, to escape painful experiences, to avoid loss of relationships, to be with people they view as supportive, to be distracted from problems at home such as a marriage breakup or death in the family, to escape abuse, to obtain drugs or alcohol, or to demonstrate defiance of authority.

Warning signs can include arguments, associating with defiant or anti-social friends, increasing pattern of impulsiveness. Possible responses to behaviour that demonstrates risk of runaways includes accessing counseling, seeking medical attention to assess physical or mental health risks, and developing parenting and communication skills.

Children run from home and from government run institutions. As an example, recently there was a discussion in the Legislature about children who had run away from one government institution — Red Willow Centre in Saskatoon in 2006. It was noted that while the children were residing at Red Willow Centre at the times of the runs, they often ran from school, community outings, or home visits. Some children had run up to 10 times in the time period from January 1 to November 17, 2006. The total time away while on the run ranged from a matter of hours to a maximum of 52.8 days.<sup>39</sup> It is noted that Community Resources is developing new policy to deal with children missing from care.

Saskatchewan Learning's Student Data System provides a means for school officials to track the movement of their students. The system allows school officials to run reports that will let them know if a student who has left their school has registered in another school and to undertake follow-up activity if the student has not. In addition, when new students register, school officials can review the student's school registration history to determine if the student has undertaken multiple moves over the course of the year, which may indicate the need for additional educational and other supports to stabilize the student and/or family.

As well, using attendance data, schools may become aware of students who have multiple unexplained absences, which may be an indicator of other issues that could contribute to running away. Schools are an important community partner in the prevention and recovery of missing children and youth.

It may be that more resources are needed to prevent and intervene to stop runaways. Research and evaluation is needed to identify the causes of the high level of runaways and to identify steps that can be taken to intervene effectively. For example, in the UK, the National Missing Persons Helpline maintains a Message Home service which not only offers confidential advice to those who have gone missing, but also acts as a conduit to forward messages to families and friends or to arrange a three-way call or conference call. It also will pass on emails to family and friends. Calls and emails cannot be traced.

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<sup>39</sup> Government of Saskatchewan, Legislature, Questions and Answers, November 27, 2006.

**Issue: How can the police services intervene to try to deal with the causes of people going missing, particularly repeat or chronic cases of missing persons?**

**Recommendation 18: The provincial government should fund a caseworker pilot with a police service. This caseworker would work with the “found” missing person and their family to deal with the causes of the person going missing by discussing how to avoid future situations and linking the individual and/or family with available resources to deal with the underlying causes of the person going missing to try to avoid repeat situations.**

**Rationale:**

The police through investigations of missing person cases may become aware of factors that led to persons being reported missing or repeatedly going missing where intervention with the individual and family may stop the person from being reported or going missing in the future. Some situations may involve chronic problems. Given the high number of repeat “missing person” cases which draw upon police resources and result in individual, family and community trauma, an approach to try to better deal with the causes of the missing person case and link “found” missing persons and potentially their families or friends with resources to address the underlying problem may result in an overall reduction in the number of reported missing persons.

Thus, it is proposed that a project be funded with a police service to pilot a caseworker approach to link the issues identified in the investigation with resources in the community or in the family to address the underlying causes of the person going missing.

This position could collect information about repeat or chronic missing persons, work with the individual, family and agencies to identify the issues underlying the “missing” circumstances and to link supports to the found “missing person” or family, and provide educational programming to the individuals at risk of going missing about safety planning steps they could take to reduce the risk of their being reported missing.

**Issue: How can we encourage mutually supportive responses between First Nations and Métis communities within themselves and with the larger Saskatchewan communities?**

**Recommendation 19: The provincial government, the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan, First Nations, and Métis communities and organizations should be encouraged to develop and enhance mutually supportive strategies to ensure that:**

- **First Nations and Métis communities have the capacity to respond to a crisis when a person goes missing;**
- **Trained Search and Rescue capacities exist in all communities that incorporate and are sensitive to the culture, language, traditions and values of those communities;**
- **First Nations schools participate in prevention and response approaches similar to the recommendations for provincial school involvement; and**
- **Relationships between the police (RCMP and municipal police forces) and First Nations and Métis communities are strengthened in missing person cases.**

**Rationale:**

First Nations and Métis communities have a role to play with their members and communities and in supporting efforts across the province to deal with missing persons cases. There is a need to involve First Nations and Métis communities and organizations in responding to issues related to prevention and intervention in missing persons cases.

First Nations in Saskatchewan have considerable experience in responding to when a person goes missing from their communities. Particularly in the northern First Nations communities, organized and/or ad hoc Search and Rescue teams often recover persons who have been reported as missing. When First Nations people go missing, search and rescue efforts may involve urban, rural and First Nations land, raising logistical and jurisdictional issues.

The FSIN Women's Secretariat report notes the need to expand and/or focus development work on First Nations search and rescue capacity. The report identified lessons learned from past cases which include the need for strong partnerships and open communications to deal with the potential of multi-jurisdictional searches. While many people are willing to participate in a search, there is a need for structure to organize the search, management of practical support, and experienced leadership to ensure that volunteers' safety is ensured and their efforts lead to practical results and do not damage the investigation. The FSIN report notes that search and rescue and emergency preparedness needs to be introduced on First Nations.

The report notes:

Two Recommendations have been presented by the FSIN and passed in Principle:

1. To create a First Nations search and rescue unit which will encompass the province of Saskatchewan. The unit will maintain an on-call status, which can be activated by our own First Nations people and/or in partnership with various agencies like the RCMP, the RPS Saskatoon Police Service and other community and municipal law enforcement agencies.
2. To create the necessary teaching mechanisms including a search and rescue training manual, developing up to date technological assistance and a strong communication strategy to enable such a search and rescue unit to exist and run in a cohesive manner.<sup>40</sup>

A recommendation arising from the Highway of Tears review was for the creation of First Nation Crisis Response Teams. These teams were envisioned to be assembled from a roster. They would work with counselors in the community to support the victim's family, peers and the general community both with immediate needs and with healing. Such a process might include establishing information links between communities to ensure that people starting out from one community arrive at another community or to support linking families between First Nations communities. As well, such a support service could ensure culturally appropriate responses and links with the local police.

The Highway of Tears report indicated that:

...First Nations communities are closely knit, and when a tragic event occurs to a First Nation community member; (murder, suicide or disappearance); the event's impact goes beyond the immediate family, its effects are felt throughout that entire community....<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Supra at note 28, page 14.

<sup>41</sup> The Highway of Tears Symposium Recommendations Report at page 28, <http://www.turtleisland.org/news/htears.htm> and <http://www.ubcic.bc.ca/files/PDF/highwayoftearsfinal.pdf>

**Issue: Is there a need to create a voluntary submission database for potential missing persons which has national scope?**

**Recommendation 20: The Saskatchewan Minister of Justice should raise at the next meeting of Ministers Responsible for Justice the need for national consideration of whether and how a voluntary national information base or linked information bases on potential missing persons could be created.**

**Rationale:**

A voluntary database would support a common, standardized approach to collecting, preserving information and allowing appropriate access to information where persons living a high risk lifestyle, suffering from dementia, or children at risk of abduction can have information maintained for use in situations where they go missing or for comparing with unidentified human remains. Such a databank would contain voluntary entries of personal descriptive information, which could include DNA, that could be accessed in the event the person goes missing.

The Provincial Partnership Committee recognizes that the issue of missing persons raises issues beyond the provincial sphere. Is such a database required? How would it be linked to other databases such as CPIC? What information would be stored in such an information base? Who would be responsible for its development and on-going maintenance? How would it be governed? What privacy and access standards are needed?

There are different reasons why people would want to store personal identifying information. For example, there have been initiatives to collect such information from high risk populations involved in the sex trade or who consider they may be at risk of going missing, for the purpose of identifying the person should their body be subsequently found. Such an initiative was undertaken in Saskatchewan in the past. The difficulty is that the existence of the data, if housed with a community organization for example, may not be known or the information may not be complete or maintained. Similarly, we understand that Project KARE in Edmonton used a process to obtain information and data on high risk persons in that community.

In other cases, parents who fear their child may be abducted may collect their own information through the assistance of organizations such as Child Find or, in some cases, may provide this information to a third party to hold.

As well, the Alzheimer's Society has a data collection process on families and vulnerable persons registered with that organization which includes a link to CPIC to allow the information to be used if the person goes missing.

Final Report of the Provincial  
Partnership Committee on Missing Persons

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The Committee also understands that there has been discussion of the creation of a federal database to deal with DNA of missing persons, however, this database would deal with collection of information after the person has gone missing and may be limited to DNA profiles.

It is not clear what the demand for such an information database is, the extent of information or clients it should contain, how it should be established or maintained, whether a common database/information base would be useful, etc.

Given the scope of this issue, the Partnership Committee felt it should raise this concern, but recognizes that a national discussion and solution may be needed.

The Committee did note that without a common, standardized approach, any information collected will lack consistency, may not be accessible when needed, and such information could be misused given the lack of oversight or controls.

**APPENDIX A**

**INVENTORY OF MEMBERS OF THE PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE**

**INDEX**

- 1. Regina Police Service**
- 2. Policy, Planning and Evaluation Branch, Saskatchewan Justice**
- 3. Métis Family and Community Justice Services of Saskatchewan Inc.**
- 4. First Nations and Métis Relations (FNMR)**
- 5. Royal Canadian Mounted Police (Regina Major Crime Unit & Historical Case Unit)**
- 6. Royal Canadian Mounted Police (Saskatoon Major Crime Unit & Historical Case Unit)**
- 7. Public Safety & Sask911**
- 8. Child Find Saskatchewan**
- 9. Saskatchewan Towards Offering Partnership Solutions to Violence Inc. (STOPS)**
- 10. Saskatchewan Aboriginal Women's Circle Corporation (SAWCC)**
- 11. Alzheimer Society**
- 12. The Saskatchewan Police Commission**
- 13. Status of Women Office, Saskatchewan Labour**
- 14. Search and Rescue Saskatchewan Association of Volunteers (SARSAV)**
- 15. Saskatchewan First Nations' Women's Commission**

**1. Regina Police Service**

**Agency Name and Address:**

Regina Police Service  
1717 Osler Street,  
P.O. Box 196,  
Regina, Saskatchewan  
S4V 2Z8  
Ph: (306) 777-6500  
Fax: (306) 757-5461

**Services Provided:**

Investigation, initiate and follow up on public appeals for assistance and “victim services” including providing information, assessment and referral to support agencies.

**Linkages with other agencies:**

Very case specific, but includes other police agencies, DCRE, Child Find, safe houses, First Nations (including SFIN and local bands), schools, mental health agencies, financial institutions, crisis response agencies, etc.

**Assessment of what works and gaps in responding to missing persons cases:**

- Good communication between police agencies in high profile cases, CPIC system that provides an efficient and global resource for police agencies in Canada.
- Good relationship with the local media and a willingness by the media to help with our communication needs.
- Policies that allow missing person reports to be filed at any location, regardless of where the person was last seen or believed to have gone “missing from”.
- Recognition of the need for intervention in the lives of habitual missing persons and their families.
- Need for a consistent response by police and related service providers and an established information sharing network (Provincial Protocol).
- Ability for the intervention previously mentioned to be timely, effective and meaningful. This might be a resource and capacity issue.

## **2. Policy, Planning and Evaluation Branch, Saskatchewan Justice**

### **Agency Name and Address:**

Policy, Planning and Evaluation Branch, Saskatchewan Justice  
3rd Floor, 1874 Scarth Street  
Regina, SK  
S4P 4B3

### **Services Provided:**

- Central Authority for International Child Abduction for the province:

Saskatchewan had acceded to the International Hague Convention on Parental Child Abduction which is incorporated in our International Parental Child Abduction Act. Under that legislation, Saskatchewan must establish a Central Authority to assist in dealing with cases of children who are wrongfully taken/abducted by a parent from Saskatchewan or to assist in dealing with cases where children are wrongfully brought into Saskatchewan by an abducting parent.

We deal with 10 to 20 cases a year. There is a whole network of Central Authorities across the world that deal directly with each other and also through the police networks, such as the RCMIP Missing Children office and Interpol. We also work with local police and occasionally with school authorities to try to trace children who have been abducted.

- Co-chair of the Interdepartmental Committee on Interpersonal Violence and Abuse — work with other human services departments to present one window to government on family and interpersonal violence issues for community and also work to coordinate family and interpersonal violence activities within government,
- Work nationally to represent Saskatchewan Justice perspectives on justice policy issues that affect the area of missing persons such as the current discussion on creation of a Missing Persons DNA Index; and other national committees that collaborate with the federal government and other governments to develop and implement criminal and family law policies.

**Linkages with other agencies:**

- As noted above, provincially on parental child abduction cases, PPE works with police, prosecutions, Child Find, Department of Community Resources and schools as needed. We also provide information and training to the Bar, police, and others as needed,
- At the national level, there is a network of Central Authorities in Canada that meet regularly to discuss issues and share best practices. As well, we work with the RCMP Missing Children Centre.
- Internationally, there is a network of Central Authorities around the world that we are in contact with as required.
- As noted above, PPE works with other Saskatchewan government human services departments and with STOPS on family and interpersonal violence issues.
- At the national level, PPE is involved in a range of committees and processes of coordination in criminal, family, aboriginal justice and other justice related areas.

**Assessment of what works and gaps in responding to missing person cases:**

- I think these have been identified in our previous meetings and relate primarily to areas of prevention, public awareness, networking, best practices in reporting and responding to missing person cases.
- Best practice — for parental child abductions a current list of contacts numbers is available on a Hague website along with regular paper copy updates; as well, a diagram can be used to help identify any significant identifying marks for the child; for missing children cases, legislation allows us access to information and non-compliance is an offence. The RCMP Missing Children Registry and related federal initiatives with border control and immigration authorities — the national network is a real support and allows for quick action.
- Gaps — for persons missing, other than children, this information may be held in different databases or files and we need to ensure central recording of and access to this information.

**3. Métis Family and Community Justice Services of Saskatchewan Inc.**

**Agency Name and Address:**

Métis Family and Community Justice Services of Saskatchewan Inc.  
#317-165rd Avenue South  
Saskatoon, SK S7K 1L8  
Tele: (306)964-1440  
Fax: (306)964-1448

**Services provided:**

Métis Family and Community Justice Services of Saskatchewan Inc. (MFCJS) does not provide a service for missing persons at this time. MFCJS is currently involved on the Provincial Partnership Committee on Missing Persons as a representative for the Métis people in Saskatchewan. MFCJS is mainly involved as a Committee member to ensure that the Métis people of Saskatchewan are not left out of the process. However, we can take a role as an informational agency with our Métis communities.

**Linkages with other agencies:**

Not yet established until MFCJS can clearly identify their role as a committee member.

**Assessment of what works and gaps in responding to missing person cases:**

1. response time for adults should begin no later than the 8<sup>th</sup> hour of missing
2. cases need to be handled with sensitivity when trying to rule out the family as suspects
3. identified lifestyles should not be used against the missing person
4. educating women and children/parents on being street wise
5. educating women and children/parents to be safety conscious
6. educating women and children/parents to keep in daily contact with family/friends - providing family/friends of your whereabouts when not at home
7. keeping records up to date such as address changes, contact numbers, new people in their lives
8. keeping identification records up to date such as medical, dental, name changes, change of address etc.

#### **4. First Nations and Métis Relations (FNMR)**

**Agency Name and Address:**

First Nations and Métis Relations (FNMR)  
210 – 855 Victoria Avenue  
REGINA, SK  
S4P 3T2  
Phone: 787-6250  
Fax: 787-5832

**Services provided:**

FNMR supports First Nations and Métis women through policy development and program initiatives.

Through the First Nations and Métis Women's Initiative, funding support is provided to provincial First Nations and Métis women's organizations to assist them with undertaking projects and policy development activities of benefit to their respective members.

The Department currently provides funding to the Saskatchewan First Nations' Women's Commission (SFNWC), an arm of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN), and well as the Saskatchewan Aboriginal Women's Circle Corporation (SAWCC), the provincial representative for the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC), to address priority issues identified by their respective members.

**Linkages with other agencies:**

FNMR is represented on:

- the Interdepartmental Committee of Advisors on Women's Policy;
- the Interdepartmental Committee on Child Abuse; and
- the Interdepartmental Committee on Child Sexual Exploitation.

**5. Royal Canadian Mounted Police (Regina Major Crime Unit & Historical Case Unit)**

**Agency Name and Address:**

Royal Canadian Mounted Police  
Regina Major Crime Unit & Historical Case Unit  
6101 Dewdney Avenue  
Regina, Sk. S4P 3K7  
PH: 306-780-5582  
FAX: 306-780-3389

**Services provided:**

Major Crime Mandate includes:  
RCMP Jurisdiction in the Southern part of the province.  
Area of responsibility would be locations South of Saskatoon.

- \* Missing Persons where foul play is suspected or likely
- \* Historical Cases of Missing Persons ie: Missing > 6 months
- \* Monitoring of long term missing person case investigations

**Linkages with other agencies:**

All Municipal Police Dept's in Saskatchewan on regular basis  
\* Member of Provincial Cold Case Investigators Association (Meet regularly)

Liaise with many agencies during Missing Person investigations:  
Have contacts and access to all other provinces Missing Persons investigators through police contacts, resources to query USA & other International locations.

**Assessment of what works and gaps in responding to missing person cases:**

Better co-ordination between all groups involved in Missing Persons cases.  
We can identify those groups who are involved and the contact persons.  
Create improvements to information sharing. (Website will be a great help).

Wayne Christensen S/Sgt  
NCO i/c  
Regina RCMP  
Major Crime Unit 2006-03-08

**6. Royal Canadian Mounted Police (Saskatoon Major Crime Unit & Historical Case Unit)**

**Agency Name and Address:**

Royal Canadian Mounted Police  
Saskatoon Major Crime Unit & Historical Case Unit  
400 Brand Place  
Saskatoon, Sask. S7J 5L6  
PH: 306-975-5153  
FAX: 306-975-5119

**Services provided:**

Major Crime Mandate includes:

RCMP Jurisdiction in the Northern part of the province.  
Area of responsibility would be locations North of Saskatoon.

- \* Missing Persons where foul play is suspected or likely
- \* Historical Cases of Missing Persons ie: Missing > 6 months
- \* Monitoring of long term missing person case investigations

**Linkages with other agencies:**

All Municipal Police Dept's in Saskatchewan on regular basis

- \* Member of Provincial Cold Case Investigators Association (Meet regularly minimum of every 6 months as a group)

Liaise with many agencies during Missing Person investigations: Have contacts and access to all other provinces Missing Persons investigators through police contacts, resources to query USA & other International locations.

EG: Project KARE Alberta and Project RESOLVE Ontario ( Missing Persons)

Saskatoon Major Crime & Historical Case Unit also manage the Provincial Missing Person website [www.sacp.ca](http://www.sacp.ca) in our Major Case Management Unit.

All Missing persons who are missing in excess of 6 months are added.

All information on these cases is directed to our office.

Fran Stevenson S./Sgt  
NCO i/c  
Saskatoon RCMP  
Major Crime Unit 2006-08-24

## **7. Public Safety & Sask911**

### **Agency Name and Address:**

Public Safety & Sask911  
Protection and Emergency Services Branch  
Corrections and Public Safety  
#101, 1855 Victoria Avenue  
Regina, SK S4P 3T2  
Phone: (306) 787-2688  
Fax: (306) 787-7107

### **Services Provided:**

Public Safety & Sask911 assists municipalities in developing public safety programs in the areas of emergency preparedness, fire and life safety and the coordination of 9-1-1 services. Upon request, operational response during an emergency is provided to advise and assist communities in the coordination of their response. Inherent within public safety program development is training, public education and encouraging partnerships between emergency response agencies, emergency management committees, government departments and non-government organizations to ensure efficient and effective prevention activities and response to all emergency events within communities. A missing person(s) is an emergency incident within a community.

Public Safety & Sask911 partners with the Search and Rescue Saskatchewan Association of Volunteers (SARSAV) to assist in the development and continuity of Search and Rescue teams throughout the province. Such partnerships ensure support is provided to teams at the municipal level primarily through the facilitation of partnerships between the local authority, police force of jurisdiction and emergency management committees before, during and following a search event.

Public Safety & Sask911 coordinates funding to SARSAV through the Federal New Initiatives Fund (NIF) for search and rescue training programs and equipment.

**Linkages with Other Agencies:**

Representation is provided for:

- Ground Search and Rescue Council (GSAR) of Canada,
- Provincial liaison with the National Search and Rescue Secretariat (NSS),
- Provincial liaison with SARSAV, and
- The NSS committee which reviews volunteer SAR programs nationally.

Public Safety & Sask911 works closely with provincial departments, municipal government, First Nation communities, emergency response agencies (RCMP, municipal police forces, fire departments, EMS, etc) and non-government/volunteer organizations in all areas of public safety program development and operational response.

**Assessment of what works and gaps in responding to missing person cases:**

Best Practices:

- Standardization of search and rescue volunteer training within Saskatchewan (FOGSAR)
- Coordination of search and rescue activities as part of municipal public safety planning to ensure that search is supported in both principle and through funding (training, logistical support, etc) at the local government level through emergency management and emergency response services and activities. Consideration of the need for SAR during a disaster is under development.
- The development of Critical Incident Stress Management services for search volunteers, families and impacted community members.

Gaps:

- Differing departmental responsibility for search and rescue activities (ground search, air search, canine search)
- Differing police policies (RCMP, municipal)
- Liability issues (WCB coverage for volunteers)
- Continuity of funding
- The need for a central provincial database for all search and rescue events.
- Consistent and timely involvement of SAR teams in a missing person(s) event.

## 8. Child Find Saskatchewan

### Agency Name and Address:

Child Find Saskatchewan Inc.  
202-3502 Taylor Street East  
Saskatoon, SK. S7H 5H9  
Telephone 306.955.0070 Fax: 306.373.1311 Toll Free 1.800.513.3463  
[pahallatt@aol.com](mailto:pahallatt@aol.com) or [childsask@aol.com](mailto:childsask@aol.com)

### Services Provided:

Cases dealt with: Children until age eighteen.  
Circumstances: Abducted, Kidnapped, Missing, Unknown, Parental Abduction, Wandered Off, Accidental, Runaway.

Province-wide service based in Saskatoon, satellite office with full time person in Regina, and volunteers throughout the province.

1. We operate a 24/7, 365 days a year, crisis phone line to report a sighting or a missing child.
2. Provide support to parents/legal guardians of missing children.
3. Promote awareness and education in the community through the identification clinics offered in schools and community settings, both digital and manual formats.
4. Provide education and awareness of safety issues for youth and children, aimed at each age range, plus educate parents on how to teach their children on prevention strategies.
5. Liaison on all cases of missing children with law enforcement.
6. Distribution of pamphlets.
7. Produce and distribute I.D. cards for all ages.
8. We do I.D. kits or digital I.D. CDs.
9. Distribute cybertip information and Internet safety brochures.
10. Have strategies for personal safety on bookmarks, rulers and in printed forms.
11. We have promoted and distributed safety whistles.
12. Distribute and promote "Green Ribbon of Hope" in the month of May.
13. Release P.S.A. announcements when a child has gone missing.
14. Release pictures and inform the public through different media venues when a child has gone missing, also informing them once the child has been located.
15. Distribute posters and emergency flyers. Sometimes the emergency poster/flyers are placed outside of pallets shipped to Europe.
16. Our services are free to all searching families.

**Linkage with other Agencies:**

We work with:

1. Royal Canadian Mounted Police
2. City Police (all law enforcements)
3. Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN)
4. Justice Secretariat
5. R.C.M.P. National Missing Children's Registry in Ottawa
6. Border Patrol
7. Canada Customs
8. Immigration
9. Revenue Canada
10. Operation Go Home
11. International Social Services (ISS)
12. Social Services offices in Saskatchewan
13. Saskatoon Indian & Metis Friendship Centre
14. Pro Bono Law Students at the University of Saskatchewan

Endorsed by:

1. Saskatchewan Association of Chiefs of Police
2. RCMP NCO in Saskatoon Major Crimes Unit
3. RCMP NCO in charge National Missing Children Services (Ottawa)

Partners with Child Find Canada and all Child Find offices across Canada  
Partnership with Saskatchewan Federation of Police Officers

In the United States:

We work with:

1. Federal Bureau of Investigators
2. National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children in Washington, DC
3. State Police
4. All NPO in the USA that are members of AMECO
5. State Clearing Houses

World Wide through Interpol and AMECO members

Members of:

1. AMBER Albert program committee
2. American Missing and Exploited Children's Organization (AMECO)

## APPENDIX A

### Inventory of Members of the Partnership Committee

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#### **Assessment of what works and gaps in responding to missing person cases:**

1. Child Find is not always informed when a child goes missing, unless they are contacted by the parent/legal guardian. Please note this is improving.
2. Communication gap between law enforcement and outside agencies.
3. An identified need to deal with cold cases. Please note this also is improving.
4. If the AMBER Alert system is to be of value, the response time from law enforcement on missing children should be reviewed. This is being worked on.
5. There is a gap between decision-makers and front line workers.
6. We would like more communication and training on how to better assist law enforcement.
7. We would like to access the same training that is given to victim services in order to deal with families in crisis.

#### **Education, Prevention, Awareness as response and prevention.**

**9. Saskatchewan Towards Offering Partnership Solutions to Violence Inc. (STOPS)**

**Agency Name and address:**

Saskatchewan Towards Offering Partnership Solutions to Violence, Inc.  
Box 4481  
Regina, SK  
S4P 3W7  
Telephone: (306) 787-3835  
Fax: (306) 798-0038  
Email: [stopstoviolence@sasktel.net](mailto:stopstoviolence@sasktel.net)

**Our Mandate Reads:**

Saskatchewan Towards Offering Partnership Solutions to Violence, Inc. (STOPS) is a provincial organization dedicated to supporting partnerships with individuals, communities and governments. Through partnership, STOPS encourages the use of ideas, environments and opportunities to address issues of personal and relationship violence.

STOPS to Violence provides referrals and information to agencies in the province that offer support and service to those affected by interpersonal violence and abuse.

**Linkages with other agencies:**

STOPS to Violence has a current informed partner list of over 270 agencies, individuals and government partners. STOPS is involved with 7 roundtables in the province that deal with issues of interpersonal violence and abuse in rural and urban areas. Over 85 communities in the province currently receive and share information through STOPS. STOPS hosts provincial roundtable meetings to provide opportunities for community and government to work together in addressing solutions to interpersonal violence and abuse.

**Assessment of what works and gaps in responding to missing person cases:**

Our organization encourages multi-sectoral partnerships to address gaps and strengthening of local and provincial responses.

**10. Saskatchewan Aboriginal Women's Circle Corporation (SAWCC)**

**Agency Name and Address:**

SASKATCHEWAN ABORIGINAL WOMEN'S CIRCLE CORPORATION (SAWCC)

#17 — 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue North Yorkton, Saskatchewan S3N 0Y9 Tel: 306.783.1228

Fax: 306.783.1080 Email: sawcc@hotmail.com www.sawcc.net

Mailing address: P.O. Box 1174 Yorkton, Saskatchewan S3N 2X3

**Services Provided:**

- SAWCC is a provincial organization inclusive of First Nations, Métis, Inuit and non-status women. Our mandate is to address issues affecting Aboriginal women and families pertaining to the Environment,, Employment, Family Violence, Child Welfare, Education, Justice, Health, the Indian Act, the Constitution, Aboriginal Rights and other pressing issues that are brought forward by our membership. Our mission is to advance the status of Aboriginal women by involving them in the development of policies and programs promoting equal opportunity for Aboriginal women and families.
- Our four pillars are:
  - Education
  - Advocacy
  - Research
  - Resource Sharing
- SAWCC shares knowledge and expertise by participating on national, provincial and local committees as well as producing research and reports for policy advice.
- Specific to missing persons, we provide support and assistance based on requests from families and participate on the Missing Persons Task Force for the government of Saskatchewan.

**Linkages with other agencies:**

SAWCC has an extensive membership of individuals across the province. Specifically, we are one of the 13 Provincial-Territorial Member Associations of the Native Women's Association of Canada. As well, we partner with communities, agencies and government departments at the national, regional and local levels. We launched '*Sisters in Spirit which* is a national campaign that aims to bring to the public's attention the alarmingly high rates of racialized, sexualized violence against Aboriginal women which often leads to their disappearance and death.

**Assessment of what works and gaps in responding to missing person cases:**

<i><b>WHAT WORKS</b></i>	<i><b>GAPS</b></i>
Taskforce on Missing Persons	Ongoing communication among families, service agencies and police to close the communication gap
Building trust and acknowledging expertise among families, service agencies and police	Development of a provincial protocol and consistent policies across Saskatchewan and Canada
Working together	Awareness and education on personal rights and safety for young girls and women
Prevention, awareness, education	Broaden the 'Amber Alert' system
	Responses by Justice system especially sentencing
	Fully resourced advocates for Aboriginal women and their families
	Dealing with racism and discrimination against Aboriginal people who go missing

**Summary Report of SAWCC Activities**

**Missing and Murdered Women**

**2004—2005-2006**

- Support and resources to family members
- Host national gatherings bringing together family members
- Awareness walks with family members
- Presentations at community gatherings, student assemblies
- Saskatchewan launch of the Sisters In Spirit Campaign, December 10/05
- Press conferences, news releases, march on Parliament Hill
- Regional Sisters In Spirit Research Workshops
- Place issue on table at the First Ministers Meeting (FMM), November/05
- NWAC Youth Council Ribbon Campaign lead by SAWCC Youth Representative Tori-Lynn Wanotch
- Provincial Partnership Committee on Missing Persons
- National policy forum on Violence Against Aboriginal Women, March/06
- Partner in production of a documentary of Sisters in Spirit

## 11. Alzheimer Society

### Agency Name and Address:

Alzheimer Society Of Saskatchewan  
301-2550-12<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Regina SK S4P 3X1  
Ph: (306) 949-4141  
Fax: (306) 949-3069

### Services Provided:

The Alzheimer Society Of Saskatchewan is a charitable organization that provides family [support](#), [education](#), and [information](#), advocates for the best care possible for people with Alzheimer's Disease and their caregivers, and supports [research](#) efforts into finding the cause and cure of Alzheimer's Disease. Promotes registration and the use of Safely Home™ – Alzheimer Wandering Registry program.

### Linkages With Other Agencies:

RCMP including Depot Division, Saskatchewan Police College, Municipal Policing Agencies, Search and Rescue

### Assessment of what works and gaps in responding to missing person cases:

- Safely Home™ as part of CPIC
- Training of Saskatchewan Police College recruits and RCMP cadet (every 3<sup>rd</sup> troop) about Alzheimer's disease and Safely Home™

### Gaps:

- Public Awareness/ and stigma associated with Alzheimer's disease and wandering
- Ongoing awareness and education of members/officers/communication staff who have been working for sometime about Alzheimer's disease and the Safely Home program.
- Getting the Safely Home™ resources added to the RCMP Toolbox and other local policing “intranets”
- Working with LTC (Special Care and Private Care Home) in promotion and implementation of Search is an Emergency (pre-plan manual for the search and rescue of missing people with Alzheimer disease and related dementia
- Establish relationship and train Search & Rescue Agencies and volunteers

## **12. The Saskatchewan Police Commission**

### **Agency Name and Address:**

The Saskatchewan Police Commission  
6<sup>th</sup> Floor, 1874 Scarth Street  
Regina, SK  
S4P 4B3  
Phone: (306) 787-6518  
Fax: (306) 787-0136

### **Services provided:**

Our Mandate Reads:

The Saskatchewan Police Commission has a legislated mandate for the promotion of effective and adequate policing in the province. *The Police Act, 1990* contains a number of provisions regarding these responsibilities; of prime consideration are,

- The operation of the Saskatchewan Police College — training for municipal police officers;
- The creation of Regulations for municipal police services; and
- The creation of a policy and procedures manual for municipal police.

### **Linkages with other agencies:**

The Saskatchewan Police Commission works closely with a number of agencies and the RCMP, however, its principal focus is on governance and discipline for municipal police

Assessment of what works and where you see the gaps in responding to missing person cases:

The commission is in a position to consider recommendations from this committee and may create Regulations or policies for municipal police services.

**13. Status of Women Office, Saskatchewan Labour**

**Agency Name and Address:**

Status of Women Office, Saskatchewan Labour  
400-1870 Albert Street, Regina, Saskatchewan S4P 4W1

**Services Provided:**

The Status of Women Office provides leadership to government on policy direction affecting the status of women in Saskatchewan. It has a broad mandate to monitor government programs, services and initiatives for their impact on women and families.

**Linkages with other Agencies:**

The Status of Women Office meets with key provincial stakeholders outside of government to define areas of concern. The Status of Women Office maintains close working relationships with other Federal/Provincial/Territorial Status of Women offices to help inform policy at the national level on women's economic security and justice issues.

**14. Search and Rescue Saskatchewan Association of Volunteers (SARSAV)**

**Agency Name and Address:**

Search and Rescue Saskatchewan Association of Volunteers (SARSAV)  
2703E Pepper Drive  
Regina, Saskatchewan  
S4V 0X4

Scott Wright (President)

Phone: (306) 586-9679 (h)  
(306) 966-4120 (w)  
(306) 527-7482 (c)

Fern Paulhus (Vice-President)

Phone: (306) 693-9073 (h)  
(306) 631-8487 (c)

**Services Provided:**

SARSAV provides for the development and maintenance of a trained Ground Search and Rescue community in Saskatchewan. Upon activation by a mandating agency (RCMP, Police Service, EMO) SARSAV provides for an operational response during an urgent, or evidence search event. SARSAV has established a training standard and program that ensures well trained Searchers, Team Leaders and Search Managers are available to respond to the needs of the community and be self-sufficient for a minimum of 24 hours.

SARSAV partners with organizations such as Public Safety & Sask911, and mandating agencies to provide appropriate search expertise from 22 SAR Chapters throughout the province before, during and following a search event. Funding is received through Saskatchewan Justice, Federal New Initiatives funding through the National Search Secretariat, and local Chapter fundraising events with organizational and training support provided through Public Safety & Sask911.

**Representation is provided for:**

- Search and Rescue Volunteer Association of Canada (SARVAC)
- 22 SAR Chapters across Saskatchewan
- The Proposed Prairie Region Crisis Intervention Team
- Evidence Recovery Teams
- Public Safety & Sask911

**Assessment of what works and gaps in responding to missing person cases:**

Best Practices:

- Standardization of search and rescue volunteer training within Saskatchewan (FOGSAR)
- Strategic planning session for Search and Rescue provincially
- Coordination of search and rescue activities with municipal public safety planning to ensure that search is supported in both principle and through funding (training, logistical support, etc) at the local government level through emergency management and emergency response services and activities.
- Consideration of the need for SAR during a disaster is under development.
- The development of Critical Incident Stress Management services for search volunteers, families and impacted community members.
- Provincial representation to Federal partners, and coordination and administration of Federal New Initiatives Fund grants.

Gaps:

- Continuity of core funding
- Liability issues (WCB coverage for volunteers)
- Differing departmental responsibility for search and rescue activities (ground search, air search, marine search, canine search)
- Differing police policies (RCMP, municipal, and regional variability)
- Consistent and timely involvement of SAR teams in a missing person(s) event
- The need for a central provincial database for all search and rescue events
- A systematic connection with First Nations efforts in SAR

## **15. Saskatchewan First Nations' Women's Commission**

### **Agency Name and Address:**

Saskatchewan First Nations' Women's Commission  
Fort Qu'Appelle Sub Office  
Treaty Four Governance Centre  
Telephone: (306) 332-2556  
Fax: (306) 332-2557

### **Services Provided:**

The Saskatchewan First Nations' Women's Commission (SFNWC) is the recognized political voice for the advancement of First Nations women's and children's rights in Saskatchewan. The SFNWC is committed to the development and sustenance of healthy communities by which all First Nations people benefit. Saying this, the SFNWC takes the lead on certain issues that are considered "women's and children's issues" in mainstream society, although not dictated as such in First Nation communities by First Nations philosophy, which emphasizes collective as opposed to individual rights.

It is the will of Saskatchewan First Nations' Women Leaders to advance the voice of women and children through having a recognized women's governance process. This is not intended to replace any existing political and community structures, instead it is meant to enhance these structures. It is also meant to fill any gaps there are in the political and community arenas where it concerns women and children including safety issues.

### **Linkages with other agencies:**

Federal Government, Provincial Government, DCR, First Nation communities, liaise with several organizations for the enhancement of the voice of First Nation women and children.

### **Assessment of what works and gaps in responding to missing persons cases:**

Building partnerships between various agencies in order to create a faster and stronger response time to when a person is identified as missing.

Encouraging public awareness to effectively ensure a person is reported missing in order to give policing agencies a quicker chance at finding the person.

There is a need to have a networking body to liaise between policing agencies and First Nations when a First Nation member goes missing.

Public education and awareness must be created and passed on to First Nation communities to provide safety plans and safer lifestyles for people who may be at risk of going missing.

### **March**



**Missing First Nations Persons In Saskatchewan:  
A preliminary Overview**

**-March 31, 2007-**

**Submitted For Review to:  
Provincial Partnership Committee on Missing Persons**

From the Office of:  
Saskatchewan First Nations' Women's Commission Secretariat  
Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations

March 31, 2007

To the Members of the Provincial Partnership Committee on Missing Persons

**Dear Members:**

Presented to you today is a draft report which discusses lessons learned and gaps identified in responding to Missing Persons cases as derived from the practical experience of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations' (FSIN) Saskatchewan First Nation Women's' Commission Secretariat (SFNWCS).

The SFNWCS first developed experience with cases of missing persons after FSIN mandated the secretariat to play a major role in the search and rescue effort of then five year old White Bear First Nation member, Tamra Keepness. After vanishing from her house in early July 2004, an intensive search followed including in urban areas, rural areas in and around farm land and First Nation territory. Relationships were forged between various agencies and organizations, which still meet today to discuss the current status of Tamra's disappearance. The SFNWC continues to work with this case as well as several other current cases involving First Nation women and children, whose stories are just as tragic.

The Secretariat has developed lasting relationships with various people who are involved with the cases, from families, to law enforcement agencies and Chief and Council of affected First Nations. The experience gained over the course of the last three years has been instrumental in developing our future work plans which include identifying strategies to combat the issue.

The following report is a synopsis of our past experiences and our recommendations for change. We share this report with you today, to give you insight into our hands on experience, which we have used to help identify necessary changes to the existing actions currently be taken in response to the case of a missing person.

Erica Beaudin  
Executive Director,  
Saskatchewan First Nations Women's Commission

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## **Saskatchewan First Nations' Women's Commission (SFNWC)**

The Saskatchewan First Nations' Women's Commission (SFNWC) is the recognized political voice for the advancement of First Nations' women's and children's rights in Saskatchewan. While the Commission by virtue of its name may indicate a gender-based mandate this is misleading. The SFNWC is committed to the development and sustenance of healthy communities by which all First Nations people benefit. Saying this, the SFNWC takes the lead on certain issues that are considered "women's and children's issues" in mainstream society, although not dictated as such in First Nation communities by First Nations philosophy, which emphasizes collective as opposed to individual rights.

It is the will of Saskatchewan First Nations' Women Leaders to advance the voice of women and children through having a recognized women's governance process. This is not intended to replace any existing political and community structures, instead it is meant to enhance these structures. It is also meant to fill any gaps there are in the political and community arenas where it concerns women and children including safety issues.

## **Introduction**

The Saskatchewan First Nations' Women's Commission Secretariat (SFNWCS) has developed unique hands on experience concerning the issue of missing person's. Our first involvement involving the case of a missing person came about as a result of location and expertise. The Secretariat, located in Regina, was called into help in the search efforts then 5 year old missing First Nation child Tamra Keepness's disappearance in July 2004. At first, the Secretariat handled communications and worked with the Regina Police Service (RPS) to coordinate First Nation volunteer searches. Our responsibility carried forth as the FSIN took over the search after the RPS scaled back their efforts. Future searches would range from a youth identified as a run away from a First Nation to an urban center, an individual found murdered, a person who perished due to environmental elements, and persons who are still missing. Searches have included First Nation men, women and children. With each passing search and rescue effort, each opportunity and experience has being used as a learning process to further our work concerning missing persons in Saskatchewan.

The SFNWCS understands change is necessary to this issue and is looking at all areas to help improve the well-being of all First Nation people and our communities and all aspects when a loved one goes missing. We have also made several recommendations including participating and assisting with the Province's mainstream response to when a loved one goes missing and a work plan based on developing awareness, funding and providing support to families of missing persons.

The following report will expand into three main components which will help identify the process of a search and rescue effort of a missing person.

1. Community and Family response
2. Police Response
3. Media and communication response

On a larger scale, three other main areas will be identified and explanation where are our experiences fit into the situations. The three areas are:

1. Public education and Awareness
2. Response
3. Communications

Understanding these three areas will also allow for an analysis of gaps and lessons learned within the experiences of the SFNWCS.

## Becoming involved-Tamra Keepness Search

One of the most important lessons learned by the SFNWCS during the search and rescue efforts of Tamra Keepness was the sheer magnitude of such a task. Upon arrival at the search and rescue command center located at the offices of RTSIS, the Gathering Place, in Regina it was obvious while there was a will, the need to develop a way was necessary. Working with the law enforcement, the local community who wanted to volunteer in a search capacity, and both local and national media became the main focus of our first critical encounters in the parameter of a search and rescue effort.

Developing a relationship with the Regina Police Service (RPS) was prominent on our list. We met with investigators and the Cultural Unit to understand their course of action and how we could be of assistance. While they were dealing with the investigation aspect of the Tamra's disappearance, we were trying to develop a systematic approach to how we could best combine the efforts of local volunteers to best compliment their investigation process. RPS's Corporal Jim Pratt, a member of the Muscowpetung First Nation, became a strong influence in our future steps. He taught us the importance of structure in the search. For security reasons he showed us why signing in volunteers was importance, their name, time of start search and time of stop search. He taught us how to set up a command center, which became crucial to maintain our course of actions as secure and private. Our command center included large maps of areas where we searched and areas that needed to be searched. We set up a local line with one of our own manning the phones and kept a log of all phone calls. We had a runner whose responsibility was to make sure we had everything we needed to make the search a logical and succinct search. The command center became our place of meeting with policing agencies, search masters, and other trusted individuals instrumental to the search.

### Tamra Keepness

- 5 year old girl went missing for her home located in Regina, SK
- Reported missing July 6, 2004 though last seen July 5<sup>th</sup>, 2004
- Member of White Bear First Nation
- Parents are Lorena Keepness and Troy Keepness, Step Father Dean Mcarthur
- Investigation included several searches by Regina City Police, RCMP, SAR, expert First Nation searchers and civilians
- Development of an investigative unit by RPS which followed up on solely on the Keepness case
- Keepness's Location is still unknown

We soon developed a daily course of action, which included morning meetings to gather a list of volunteers that some days topped a hundred or more people wanting to search. We assigned a search master whose main duty was to identify local areas within Regina and its outskirts where we could send the searchers. Thankfully, the Gathering Place had a large gym where we could hold morning meetings with all the volunteers who would sign in each morning and wait for their commands. As we forged relationships with

some of the searchers we recognized several First Nation people who were expert searchers and who traveled from northern communities including Montreal Lake Cree Nation and La Ronge. We soon understood their value of their expertise and utilized their efforts to our advantage. The search and rescue effort of Tamra Keepness became a professional effort due to their expertise, which will be later discussed.

We soon learned a search and rescue effort is more than just having searchers sign up each morning. Providing food often became an overwhelming task. Again we were in the right place to hold a search because the Gathering Place has a fully functioning Kitchen with room to make food for all the volunteers. We soon had a troop of cooks ranging from ladies in the community and young girls who would usually stay from early morning to late at night. They provided three nourishing meals a day including snacks and liquids. We learned from the searchers that types of food could be instrumental in making the search day go by easier or it could make it a hard day. In the morning toast, boiled eggs and porridge or oatmeal started off the day with a good start because it made them full enough to last until lunch but not too full to make it difficult to walk for hours. The temperature was often excruciatingly hot and so water and nourishment bars were sent with the searchers. Lunch time consisted of soup, sandwiches and sometimes hot dogs and hamburgers. Suppers were usually a basic square meal to nourish the searchers who would often be back within hours to start a new search day.

Shopping needed to be done everyday and often the Women's Commission secretariat would do the shopping between 9 pm and 10 pm at night to stock the kitchen for the next day. Carts full of food would have to be hauled to the Gathering Place and everything would have to be put away ready for the cooks for the next day. Finances necessary to obtain the food became a real issue and everyday the command center was also a place to raise dollars to make sure the searchers were fed everyday. Once we seemed to have a handle on the search efforts, a new turn developed.

The Regina Police Service moved the search out to one of the surrounding First Nations which caused a whole new set of guidelines to follow. Developing a relationship with the Chief and Council of the First Nation was prominent on the agenda. FSIN was able to go onto the First Nation and able to develop a course of action to move the search to the specific community. Maintaining a continued line of communication with the Chief and council as well as the membership proved to be instrumental in the success of the search and rescue effort. Setting up the command center as well as coordinating the searchers to continue their efforts was critical.

The search itself was complex and an arduous journey and several partnerships were developed as a result of our efforts.

## **Community Response**

While it was apparent the Regina Police Service were making every attempt to find and bring home Tamra, it was difficult for the public to sit by and watch the process. Many individuals within the community of Regina as well as the First Nation community in and around the area of Saskatchewan came together to offer their support and help. The community response was large and often hectic. Many took on the role as civilian searches and in the first few days fanned out and helped the police in the efforts. After several exhaustive days and few to no leads, the police as mentioned before drastically scaled back their own search process which left the community with little or no course of action.

When FSIN stepped in to the process it was more to assist the families and persons still interested in offering support within the community. Many supporters believed the search was called off too soon and wanted to continue the search for Tamra. With the backing of the child's First Nation, FSIN decided in order to continue the search it would have to be developed in a cohesive manner. A command center was set up and coordinators from the SFNWCS began organizing the efforts to ensure safety and response effectiveness. Working with the police was crucial because it allowed the SFNWCS to pass on what sort of limitations to expect as well as to develop a daily course of action to follow.

Community response on a larger effort came into play at this time. Many organizations began a donation process which led to the command center being joined by the salvation army who supplied water and fruit, the St. John's Emergency who were on hand to provide assistance to the searchers who braved plus degrees weather that was often excruciating. Citizens began to drop off lunches for the searchers as well as any items they felt would help in the efforts. Larger organizations including restaurants, water and ice venues, large grocery stores, and other places provided necessities as well as financial donations which helped prepare for each day. The Travelodge south in Regina proved to be invaluable as they offered rooms at a cost rate for several searchers who came into town to provide their expertise which cut down on monies owed.

One incident involving Saskatchewan transportation co. puts into perspective the attitude and compassion of how the community responded. It was expected to be a hot weekend and the commanders were concerned about the health and potential risk the heat would have on many searchers, some who were not accustomed to the difficult terrain and physical strain. Calls were put into the Saskatchewan Transportation Company to see if a bus could be donated which would allow the searchers to rest at the site in an air conditioned environment. The call was late in being received but STC worked diligently and in the end donated one bus along with a driver donating his time. The next day the driver appeared on time and stayed with the searchers long after his duty was over. He became a bright spot to many involved in the search and when supper was served late in the evening he stayed and talked with the searchers and families and showed a true spirit of compassion. His attitude and will to going over and above his duty is reflective of so

many others and their true efforts in trying to help in whatever capacity to find Tamra and bring her home.

In several other searches involving First Nations people, much of the efforts often surrounded the community. In the summer of 2005, two searches ensued, the first was for Amber Redman, who went missing on July 15, 2006 from Fort Qu Appelle and resided on a nearby First Nation and the other search for Melanie Geddes who went missing from an urban center, Regina on July 13, 2005. Amber Redman was last seen at a local hotel and bar at about 2:00 am after the establishment was closing. Her disappearance was reported several days later by her partner. Several reactions developed including policing, family and community. On the police side, the RCMP from the local detachment located on Standing Buffalo First Nation, also Amber's First Nation began their own investigation. The family immediately began doing their own search to try and find Amber including contacting their chief Roger Redman of Standing Buffalo First Nation who then put in a call to FSIN. FSIN immediately dispatched the Women's Commission Secretariat to travel to Standing Buffalo First Nation and provide any assistance necessary. A command post was immediately set up in the band office, and several contacts were made in the community to define the search process and develop it in an effective manner. While the search continued in partnership with the RCMP and First Nations searchers, it was the community which brought together the everyday necessities which allowed the search to be run in a cohesive manner.

### **Working with the Families of Missing Persons**

One of the most difficult aspects of our past three years of experience is developing and maintaining relationships with First Nations families of missing persons. The families whom we have developed contact with are in obvious trauma and are often not prepared to deal with their current situation. We have watched as mothers question why their child is missing and why it has become a burden they must carry. We have experienced the pain of watching a mother burying her child who was missing for several months and later found murdered with few clues as to the child's final hours. We have experienced children cry for their mother who one day vanished. We have stood beside a family as they plead to the public to please return their child safely home because she is really missed.

Our experiences are endless and it has been one of our main goals to help the families deal with the trauma they are experiencing. We have been able to be of assistance on several levels. On the issue of daily support we learned that daily contact with the family was and still is important in the first days after the disappearance. In the immediacy of learning a person is missing, we developed direct contact with the families in most cases and identified ourselves as individuals who could be utilized as liaisons between several other groups involved in the search of their missing loved one. We often set up command centers to a specific sight, perhaps a house, after identifying the needs of families and attempting to meet their needs.

One of our main efforts was to manage media and communications on behalf of the family. As with any situation where a person is in grief, contact with the media is not often on the top of their priority list. We managed this situation to ensure the family was safe from the questions of the media, but also attempted to give the media the opportunity to tell a story which could in the end help the current case by informing the public about the missing person which may result in information being passed onto the police.

Many of the missing persons in Saskatchewan are not found in the immediate days following a report they are missing. It has been our intent to identify and follow through with ways to help the families deal with their grief and trauma. We have made contact with as many family members of missing persons through call outs to First Nations and urban centers. We have brought the families together into a setting we call Family Gatherings with the intent to give them as many opportunities to deal with their current situation. Through the family gatherings we invite a critical incident stress management team to work with the families to help them gain an understanding of what they are experiencing and learn ways to deal with their emotions. We also used the gatherings as an opportunity for the families to network together and develop relationships with other families who are going through similar traumatic situations. We wanted the network they developed to become contacts they could use in times when they needed to discuss what they were experiencing with others who had some understanding and empathy.

We have attempted to work with the families to ensure they recognize people have not forgotten their loved ones who are missing. Often the families have concerns that the police who are involved with their cases are not doing enough to search and locate their loved ones. They have often searched for their own family member, which has become a financial burden on the families. We have defined initiatives including a banquet, which we held to gain public awareness to the family causes and raise funds.

## **Working Together**

### **Policing**

Working with various policing agencies involved in each missing persons case at times could be difficult and not without its hardships. We realize the importance of the timing of reporting a loved one as missing. In order for the police to have an adequate response time it was necessary for the family or peers to report the person missing as soon as they realized it was an issue. The police were forced to deal with hundreds of inexperienced searchers in the Keepness search and human resources were taken from the investigation to keep the community people safe and searching in an effective manner. FSIN took the lead after a public outcry when the search for Tamra Keepness was stopped by the RPS. The RPS did keep some of its members on the search with the civilian effort which was a great help.

The SFNWCS at one point was instrumental in working with the RPS and RCMP to tackle a jurisdictional issue where one First Nation was concerned about a search coming onto their land. Together it was assured the search would not be harmful to the community and after several conversations it was decided the search could continue. Overall the experience with the police has been extremely necessary and beneficial.

## **Media and Communications**

One common element between each of the searches was the necessity of a strong communication strategy. Communications between FSIN, family, law enforcement, communities and the media proved to be at times trying and not without its share of difficulties.

As mentioned in the previous section media relations with the family was exhaustive and very difficult to manage. While we understood it was necessary for the public to be aware of the status of the missing person which proved to be invaluable at times, it was difficult to protect the families from the prying eyes of the media. We continuously attempted to allow the media to continue their story by allowing them to have limited access to the family; often the media would hound and even push their way into situations where they were not invited. It often became a struggle for us to ensure their efforts were ethical and in the best interest of the family.

Communications between the police or RCMP and the families was something we attempted to ratify. Often a complaint of the family was that the police or RCMP who were handling the case did not keep them informed about the status of the investigation concerning their loved ones. This is an area we continue to look at today and will attempt to make recommendations in the future.

With each case of missing persons, communications was necessary for all parties involved. In a case where a person is missing from a First Nation we found it was necessary to develop an immediate response for the community Chief and Council so that they could make preparations for a search and rescue effort on their first nation. Often times relationships between RCMP and the police service handling the case was limited and as a result communication was not prevalent. It was always our intention to work on this area and acted as a liaison between the communities and the police service in order to maintain an efficient search and rescue.

The SFNWCS is also tackling the issue of using media as a resource tool as opposed to only addressing media in times of crisis. In recent cases concerning missing First Nation women, public education and awareness has been developed through door to door campaigning, missing person signs and most importantly, using media outlets. If public is bombarded with images of the women and children who are missing it will help identify this epidemic of sorts and ensure people realize First Nation people have taken charge. On August 20, 2005 a vigil was held to commemorate the 7 days since the disappearance of Melanie Geddes and the media was used as an effective tool to not only

inform the public about the vigil but also to raise awareness of Geddes' disappearance. Amber Redman's mother and other family members and Keepness family members attended the vigil to show a sign of togetherness in raising awareness of the plight of missing First Nation women and girls including their own family members and the public was able to see this because media told the story. SFNWC helped coordinate the vigil and took part in the event.

## **Cultural Relationships**

### **Working with Elders**

To date our searches have been for Missing First Nations persons. While each case has been investigated by law enforcement officials, we have recognized that cultural elements have played an important part in the search and rescue efforts. Elders have been utilized by the police and RCMP as well by the families and community members.

Cultural ceremonies included starting each search day with the offering of tobacco to an elder to pray for the search efforts. Elders prayed for the searchers and the family. We recognize the importance of having Elders working with the search and rescue efforts and were pleased with the respect the RPS gave to our Elders who were instrumental on several occasions for identifying areas to search.

### **Understanding Visions and Spiritual Ceremonies**

There have been several instances where families of missing persons have sought the knowledge of First Nation Elders through their spiritual and ceremonial knowledge. It must be understood that these instances are cultural elements passed down through First Nation ancestry since time immemorial. The SFNWCs continuously recognized the abilities of the individuals holding the ceremonies and at times, the information was identified as a plausible tip and search and rescue efforts were defined to follow up on the tip or lead. It was also encouraging to see the RPS did take seriously many of the tips and respected First Nations culture and spirituality to understand its importance to the family and follow up on the tips as possible leads.

## **Issues Concerning number of First Nations People Missing**

### **Is there a Reason to be Concerned**

It is apparent all people are at risk of going missing. Circumstances do not necessarily influence whether a person may or may not go missing. Looking at statistics provided by the RCMP, 84 long term cases of missing persons has been documented. While an initial breakdown of missing cases shows that there are not more cases associated to any one type of person, comparing the same stats consistent with population, First Nation women are more likely to go missing than any other group. Several cases in Saskatchewan involved First Nations females including in a two year span May 2003-August 2005,

4 females of First Nation status disappeared, of which 3 are currently still missing, the other is now considered a homicide.

By not recognizing that statistics prove there are more First Nations females going missing per capita than non first nation females, is not addressing the issue at hand. Higher risk lifestyles, transitions for reserve to urban without a strong support system, lack of proper transportation such as hitchhiking from a reserve to urban center all contribute to risks that a person may or may not go missing. By identifying that some First Nation women may go missing because of who they are, a stronger response can be put in place if a person is thought to be missing. Gearing public education and awareness strategies to higher risk persons may also minimize the numbers of missing First Nation women.

There is a reason to have valid concerns regarding the number of First Nation Females who are currently missing, have been missing for several years and who are at risk for going missing now or in the future. While it is difficult to identify that First Nation women may in fact be targeted, for example John Crawford, who was convicted of killing several First Nation Women in and around Saskatoon, to not identify this as a possibility may in fact reduce the ability to make improvements in this area of concern.

## **Discussing Search and Rescue**

### **What is Search and Rescue**

Search and Rescue (acronym SAR) is an operation mounted by emergency services, often well-trained volunteers, to find someone believed to be in distress, lost, sick or injured either in a remote or difficult to access area, such as mountains, desert or forest ("Wilderness search and rescue"), or at sea, whether close to shore or not. The term can also be applied in urban situations when young children or senile people wander away from their homes and cannot be found.

Through our efforts of search and rescue we recognize the necessity of expanding and/or focusing on several areas. Developing strong partnerships with all parties involved to ensure the best possible outcome, helped to keep the focus of the search professional and productive. It was understood that the search and rescue effort could cross multi-jurisdictional areas. Over the course of several searches the SFNWCS learned it was important to keep an open line of communication with all jurisdictions involved. A First Nation person who can act as a liaison between a first nation reserve and the RCMP can have an added positive outcome especially for the searchers who are trying to cover an area to locate a missing person. This open line between two jurisdictions possible with the aid of a liaison person can become an exercise in developing strong relationships and communications between all parties involved.

## **Working with Professionals**

The SFNWCS first started in this area of assisting in the search efforts of Tamra Keepness. With little experience in the area, it became a task of learning from professionals who were experienced and capable. The SFNWCS soon developed a strong relationship with searchers from Montreal Lake Cree Nation who were often called in by the RPS as expert searchers. Because there were so many volunteers we soon learned that if there were civilian volunteers, specific guidance was given to ensure their safety and most practical use of their efforts. Use of technology and innovation as well as cultural elements was used by professional First Nation SAR searchers to execute a responsible and effective search and rescue effort. Maintaining a log of specific data and information which could be utilized at a later time to identify issues concerning the search and rescue effort was something the RPS taught the SFNWCS. Setting up a command center and a secure area to keep financial logs, telephone logs and maps which included information where searchers were executed or where tips being phoned in were kept.

## **Future Steps in search and rescue**

While it is obvious the main factor in the search and rescue of missing persons has been to bring a loved one home to their family, it has also been a catalyst for creating strong relationships between various communities and organizations. FSIN has developed a strong working relationship with the RPS, the RCMP and various search units including members of Montreal Lake Cree Nation's search and rescue unit. With FSIN at the helm of the search it has been possible to create an open arms policy for both the RPS and the RCMP to enter into First Nation jurisdiction to continue the search effort. The First Nation communities themselves have shown an exemplary attitude towards the search and rescue efforts and have offered continued assistance in providing necessities including command areas, technology support and meals, human resources and search volunteers. Communications between the various agencies has been open and forthright, an objective which has been maintained and refined throughout the search by the FSIN.

FSIN is currently discussing an initiative to create a province wide First Nations search and rescue unit. The unit itself would be derived with the help of our experienced searchers from Montreal Lake Cree Nation and coordinators from the FSIN and possible assistance from the RPS and RCMP. Talks have already started to incorporate the experience of searching for missing persons and developing it into a full scale, trained on-call search and rescue unit would be run by First Nations individuals. Along with the unit itself, a training manual would be developed and integrated as a teaching mechanism to train First Nations individuals within various communities in Saskatchewan.

Two Recommendations have been presented by the FSIN and passed in Principle:

1. To create a First Nations search and rescue unit which will encompass the province of Saskatchewan. The unit will maintain an on-call status, which can be activated by our own First Nations people and/or in partnership with various agencies like the RCMP, the RPS Saskatoon Police Service and other community and municipal law enforcement agencies.
2. To create the necessary teaching mechanisms including a search and rescue training manual, developing up to date technological assistance and a strong communication strategy to enable such a search and rescue unit to exist and run in a cohesive manner.

## **Final Analysis**

The SFNWCS has been involved with the issue of missing First Nation persons in Saskatchewan since 2004 when Tamra Keepness went missing from her home in Regina. Since that time, the secretariat has been involved with search and rescue efforts, working with families, area of communication and media, raising awareness, working with policing agencies, and utilizing culture within the process of searching for a missing person. At first the focus was on each case as they came forth and only included First Nation females. Now the focus has moved to cases of all missing persons in Saskatchewan as well as looking at developing policy to improve the current response to cases of missing persons.

## **Lessons Learned**

Through the experience several lessons have been learned.

First and foremost, the issue of reporting a person missing right away is necessary. Often people do not report a loved one missing for several hours, days or even years since last sighting which makes it difficult for the police to try and find the person. Raising public awareness that a person should be reported missing as soon as possible is necessary and can help the police and search and rescuers possibly find that person.

Another lesson learned is the value of creating strong partnerships between various organizations when a person goes missing. The SFNWCS has developed relationships with several organizations and has maintained an open line of communication which has been extremely beneficial. Working with the RPS, SPS, and the RCMP has given the SFNWCS an opportunity to at times play a liaison role between family and police as well as bring together families and investigators to develop their own level of communication. Several family members have asked us to sit in on meeting with police officials for support as well as to push forth their questions. Cross jurisdictional searches which included RCMP going onto reserve land to do a search was made easier because the

SFNWCS was able to develop an open line of communication between the First Nation and the RCMP.

Search and Rescue and Emergency Preparedness needs to be introduced on First Nations. Montreal Lake Cree Nation is progressive in this area and continuously strives to improve the safety of their members. The SFNWCS learned the importance of being prepared and having a community that has a background in search and rescue and are on call to aid in community emergencies.

Develop one day seminar to include families of missing First Nation women and children for the purpose of support has been instrumental in helping the families deal with their crisis. We learned that the families related to each other and a network was developed amongst the families.

### **Gaps Identified**

Several Gaps have been identified by the SFNWCS and include:

Media relations is an issue which needs to be worked on- often media does not show compassion to a family who is in shock. They will not give up until an interview is given by the family who may not want to give an interview. The way media sometimes portrays a person who is missing can be insensitive and not truthful.

Response time by the police-we have heard from family members they did not feel the police did enough when their loved one went missing. Stronger and faster response time for all cases of a missing person could be crucial to finding their whereabouts.

Public Awareness- Few people recognize they are vulnerable to situations which may result in them going missing. An experienced snowmobile rider might hit a blizzard and get lost only a few hundred feet from his/her's home. A woman walking three blocks home may disappear and not be found. Everyone is at risk and a hard campaign should be developed and presented to the public to raise awareness that everyone is at risk and a safety plan should be developed.

Lack of funding- more financial assistance needs to be given to organizations which provide services to high risk individuals. Shelters, advocacy groups, and support and counseling services must have adequate funding to provide necessary support.

Stronger partnerships-By creating partnerships between First Nations communities, organizations and governing bodies with police and other governments to focus on this issue will bring together a stronger effort to keep people from going missing. Capacity building and strategies developed through working together will create more accountability in this area and decrease the amount of persons disappearing.

Establish an accurate database compiling the cases of missing First Nation women and children in Saskatchewan-To date there is not an accurate data base recognizing specifically how many First Nation persons are missing provincially and nationally. A database which could be accessed by organizations who are working in this area would be a benefit.

Information Center focusing on missing persons- There is not currently a strategic plan to deal with the issue of missing persons that can be utilized by organizations perhaps provincial or on a national level should be researched and developed. Several organizations are working in this area separate from each other and it could be helpful to have access to their findings as well as share findings.

## **Conclusion**

Everyday the face of missing persons can be seen everywhere. Whether is it grabbing national headlines or walking into a community store and see a missing person poster, it is everywhere. Today people are recognizing it is more important to face the issue of missing persons than to maintain the current process which in most cases is not working. By creating partnerships and working together including police and community, several recommendations will come forth which can help a person to not go missing. The SFNWCS has been working in this area and has seen people pull together to try and find a loved one. In some cases the person has been found and in others, they are still missing today.

Compassion from a community is often extended to the family members of the missing person and people want to do what they can to help. Police often work long hard hours as do search and rescuers to try and find the person. Everyone wants to help when a person goes missing, but more importantly they wished that person was safe and sound. That is a long and hard task but by working together, facing reality of sometimes grim situations and strategizing to make the most of resources, comprehensive and coordinated responses may one day make a difference for one person who will not go missing.