

Family Guide

Support for Families of Homicide Victims or
Missing Persons where Foul Play is Suspected

Exhibit: *National Inquiry into Missing and
Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*

Location/Phase: Part 2 Regina

Witness: Brenda Butterworth-Carr

Submitted by: Anne McConville

Add'l info: P02P02P0401

Date: JUN 28 2018

Initials

63

I/D

Entered

110

BC RCMP Major Crime Section

Integrated Homicide Investigation Team



A message from the officers in charge



Losing a loved one, or not knowing where they are, is an extremely difficult experience for family members, friends and the community as a whole. In order to assist you during this difficult time, the E Division Major Crime Section and the Integrated Homicide Investigation Team offers you this *Family Guide: Support for Families of Homicide Victims or Missing Persons where Foul Play is Suspected*.

We will conduct a thorough investigation into the disappearance or death of your loved one, the goal being to identify the person(s) responsible, apprehend them and bring them to justice. During the course of this investigation, you may have questions and concerns regarding your loved one and the investigational process.

If at any time, you have any questions or concerns, or you need support, please remember you do not have to cope alone at this difficult time. Our Victim Service Unit personnel are available to provide support and can be contacted by phone via your local RCMP Detachment or police department. In Canada, victims of crime have rights to access information under the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights, the British Columbia Victims of Crime Act and the Crime Victim Assistance Act. This also includes witnesses and family members.

There are many steps to an investigation and there will be a lot of information provided to you. It is our intent that this guide function as a reference booklet to assist in providing you with an understanding of the investigative process and assist you in identifying support resources. Please also use this guide to write notes, record the file number or important contact information; keeping that information easily accessible to you in one place.

If you have any questions, concerns, or information regarding the disappearance or death of your loved one, we encourage you to contact the primary investigator.

Sincerely,

Officer-in-Charge
E Div. Major Crime Section

Officer-in-Charge
Integrated Homicide Investigation Team

Victim Services support for you

If you are a victim of crime there are services and resources available to help you deal with the emotional, physical and financial effects of a crime.

Victim Services programs are available to anyone who has been a victim of crime. These programs can provide you information about victim rights, emotional support, the criminal justice system, specific updates on your police file investigation and your court case, practical assistance completing Victim Impact Statements and Crime Victim Assistance Compensation Applications, as well as referral to additional resources.



Contact your local RCMP detachment or police department to speak to a victim service program worker. You may also access victim services by contacting **VictimLINK**, a 24-hour, British Columbia toll-free information **(1-800-563-0808)**, support and referral line for victims. They are available to you to provide emotional support, help with recovery and reduce further victimization. They can also provide further information regarding your loved one, and information about the court process and offender(s) after an arrest has been made.

Victim Service workers can provide you a supportive ear and are equipped with information on grief and grieving, which you may find helpful. They will also be able to assist you in identifying additional support services you may wish to make use of, such as grief support services, counselling and more. Please do not feel you need to cope with grief alone. There are many services available to assist you during this extremely difficult time.

VictimLINK (1-800-563-0808)

How can you help?

Providing Information to the Police

All information you provide is critical to an investigation, so be prepared to answer questions regarding your loved one. The more information you are able to provide the stronger an investigation will be.

- Where was your loved one last seen? What were they doing? Who were they with? Who do they associate with? What do they look like? Do they have any unique markings, like scars? Does your loved one use social media? Are you able to provide information or consent to obtain cellular telephone records? Does/did your loved one engage in any high-risk behaviour or use illegal substances? If you remember any other information after you have already spoken to an officer let them know immediately.

How can you be kept informed?

Ask Questions

Keep a record of the report/file number, who is assigned to the file, and when someone will be next following up with you. If you have any questions/information later on, don't hesitate to contact the investigator in charge of your file. We have included a **notes** section at the end of this guide where you can record information.

Identify a Contact Person

To simplify communication between the police and the family and friends of the missing or murdered person, it is important to appoint an individual to act as the **primary contact**. This person should be a member of the family or a friend who is willing to act as a liaison between the family, investigators, and victim services.

This single point of contact will alleviate any missed information, allow the family to remain informed and the investigative team to remain focused on their task.

The **primary contact's** duties may include sharing with police, information that is sensitive or embarrassing to the family, or having to receive from the police, potentially difficult or devastating news. If unable or unwilling to take on this role, victim services may be able to provide assistance.

Who is in charge of the investigation?

The primary investigator of the file is responsible for conducting an investigation, and preparing it for trial. The primary investigator along with the investigative team will work with many other officers and law enforcement agencies. If the primary investigator transfers or retires, the case is re-assigned and the investigation continues without interruption. If this occurs, you will be notified of the changes. It is important to understand a homicide or missing person where foul play is suspected is investigated and never concluded; it remains open and active until it is solved.



What are the investigational steps?

Every investigation begins with police gathering physical, electronic, and eye-witness evidence. They process evidence, assess its value and follow the evidence where it's leading. Often this requires additional interviews with witnesses, family members or further laboratory tests as evidence is collected.

As a family member, you will be contacted and interviewed. This is common and necessary, and may be intrusive at times. The investigator needs to learn about you and your family member(s) because it may tell the investigator what they might have been doing at the time of the incident. Any information you provide can be important. Questions about sensitive information may be uncomfortable. The investigator is not asking these questions to make judgments or form opinions, but rather to learn about your family member's behaviours, and assist the investigation. The information you provide can tell the investigator about your family member's hobbies, friends, and places they most often visit. All of this information is important in an investigation.

Why won't the investigator answer the phone when I call?

We understand you are worried about your loved one, and may be concerned with the progress of an investigation. The investigator may not answer the phone when you call for a handful of reasons. The investigators work hours which are often not consistent throughout the week and weekend. They attend court frequently, are often out of the office looking for evidence, following up on leads, which does not allow them to always answer the phone. However, if you leave a message or email them, either they or the primary investigator will contact you. We have included a *notes* section at the end of the guide where you can record contact information.



While the police will try to give you as much information as possible, occasionally the law and privacy prevents it. For example, if you or someone else is required as a witness in court, it will compromise the investigation to share some details with you, which will be used as evidence.

Why won't police tell me the information about my case?

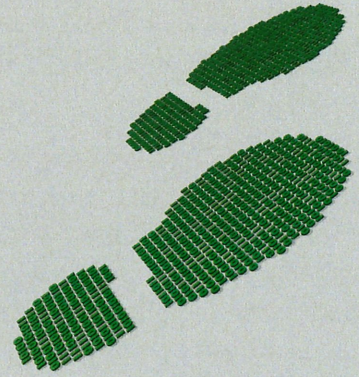
The timeliness of an arrest depends greatly on the investigation, its circumstances and complexities. Some arrests can be made within hours while others can take days, weeks, months, or sometimes years. It is important to remember, however, that there is no time limit when a person can be charged regardless of when the murder occurred. The case is not concluded until a resolution is reached.

An arrest typically occurs faster when witnesses (which could include family) are cooperative. Witnesses do not always cooperate. It may be they know the perpetrator and are afraid of them, and /or simply do not want to be involved.

If a witness does not cooperate, it does not mean they are involved in the crime. It is important to know police will do everything they can to encourage those reluctant witnesses to cooperate.

Evidence gathering and analysis

Evidence is gathered from many places during the course of an investigation. The examination and analysis of that evidence is often specialized and can be complex. It can sometimes take months for the results of that analysis to be made available to the investigative team by the Forensic Lab. To an outsider these processes may seem to take a long time. Rest assured the lab technicians and the investigative team is doing everything possible to extract the best evidence that will assist the investigation; those examinations are very important and cannot be rushed.



The media

Communicating through media (including social media) is a great way to spread a message instantly. Should the media cover your story, thousands of people will see and hear your message, raising awareness about your family member. However, information you provide, although unintentional, may not convey the message you intended. Before you speak to the media (or post to social media) please contact the **primary investigator** assigned.

If you should decide to speak with the media, be prepared and poised. You will be more likely to express your thoughts clearly and confidently and less likely to be caught off-guard by unexpected questions if prepared.

Receiving multiple requests and calls from the media can sometimes become uncomfortable and emotionally taxing when competing media outlets are trying to obtain your story.

No matter the circumstance, you decide when and where to meet the media or the best time for someone to call you. You can review and approve the questions beforehand or decline if you find questions inappropriate. Finally, you can stop the interview at any time.

“A Media Relations Officer will assist you in managing media inquiries if you wish”

Grieving

What is natural grief?

Natural grief is a human experience following the death of a loved one. Grief is natural and spontaneous. It is a complex process, a deeply personal and painful experience. It is an array of mixed feelings, sensations, thoughts and behaviours. Grief is the pain, and mourning is how we express it.

What is homicide grief?

Homicide grief is similar to natural grief, but is unique by its profound and lasting effect on the victim's family. The additional distress knowing someone purposely took the life of your loved one is unimaginable. That is then combined with having to deal with the police, the media and the courts. It all tends to re-victimize the survivors for a long time and in some cases, for years. It can effect all aspects of life, such as personal relationships, work, and social life, physical, emotional and spiritual well-being.

The impacts of homicide grief

People may experience intrusive thoughts about the violent way in which their loved one died. They may suffer from flashbacks or memories from the scene of the crime, or from having to identify their loved one in a morgue. Also, people may feel that their own safety is at risk.

Survivors of homicide victims may feel isolated and alone. It may seem that society blames the victim and may attach a stigma to their death. Many feel as though no one understands the depth of their grief, and others have unrealistic expectations of the time it takes to grieve the loss of a loved one as a result of murder.

Dealing with the police can be particularly difficult, especially in the early stages when families are in shock and trying to come to terms with what has happened. The police may not be able to give out any details of the murder due to the on-going investigation, which leaves the family feeling angry, more isolated and confused.

Reporters and the news media can be acutely persistent in their endeavours to obtain "the story" from the family. This has the potential of re-victimizing a family and effecting their emotional, mental and physical well-being.

The funeral is an important process in the grief journey. It provides the opportunity to say goodbye to the victim. While viewing the body provides a final opportunity to say goodbye, the lasting image may worsen the pain. It is a personal choice and can become an internal emotional struggle with some survivors.

Our right to grieve

It is important to take the time to grieve. Everyone will grieve differently, but they each deserve respect, understanding, patience, and compassion.

As survivors of homicide victims you are going through the worst possible unimaginable grief you will ever experience. There is no roadmap on this journey. Our needs and intense feelings are normal under the circumstances and we have the right to have them respected. Total resolution or closure for some survivors cannot be expected. Very slowly we integrate the tragedy into our lives, painfully reconstruct ourselves and strive for a "new normal."

Only you can be the judge of time, be gentle with yourself.

Support for you

Financial Pressure

Going through the tragedy of a murdered or missing child can leave you grief-stricken and unable to work. The Federal Income Support for Parents of Murdered and Missing Children (PMMC) grant is available to assist with your financial needs while you are coping with this tragedy. It is available to eligible parents who have lost income from taking time away from work to cope with the death or disappearance of their child as a result of a probable Criminal Code offence. To be eligible to receive a PMMC grant, you must meet both applicant and incident eligibility criteria. For further assistance please contact your Detachment Victim Service Unit or visit the PMMC website link below.

The British Columbia Crime Victim Assistance Act (CVAA)

Victims injured as a result of certain crimes, immediate family members of an injured or deceased victim and some witnesses may be eligible for financial assistance or benefits. In most cases, the application must be received within one year from the date the crime occurred. You do not have to wait for charges to be laid or for the offender to be convicted before applying for benefits.



Resources for you

- **Federal Income Support for Parents of Murdered or Missing Children Grant**

<http://www.cpomc.ca/legislation/pdf/PMMC-EN.pdf>

- **Victim Service Link:**

<http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/justice/criminal-justice/victims-of-crime/victimlinkbc>

- **Canadian Victims Bill of Rights (CVBR):**

<http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-23.7/>

- **The British Columbia Victims of Crime Act (VOCA):**

http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/96478_01

- **The Crime Victim Assistance Act (CVAA):**

http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/01038_01

- **Crime Stoppers: 1-800-222-8477** <http://www.solvecrime.ca/>

Additional information is located on the back cover

Contact and notes

Police File #: _____

Primary Investigator: _____

Victim Services: _____

Notes: _____

Contact and notes

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Victim's rights

Canadian Victim Bill of Rights (CVBR) & British Columbia Victims of Crime Act (BCVCA): These Acts provide certain rights if you are a victim of an offence under the Criminal Code. There are limitations to exercising these rights to ensure they don't interfere with the proper administration of justice.

CVBR victim definition: A victim is any person who has suffered physical or emotional harm, property damage, or economic loss as a result of a crime. The victim must be in Canada, a Canadian citizen or a permanent resident.

Acting on a victim's behalf: Others that can exercise those rights on the victim's behalf when they are unable: the victim's spouse; common law partner who has lived with the victim for at least one year prior to the victim's death; relative or dependent of the victim; or anyone who has custody of the victim or of the victim's dependent(s). Note, a person who has been charged, convicted, or found not criminally responsible due to a mental disorder for the offence that resulted in the victimization is not defined as a victim.

Victim's rights: A victim has the right to information, participation, protection and restitution. Upon request, victims will receive the following, information about the criminal justice system and offender; services and programs available to victims; review of an offender's conditional release and the timing and conditions of that release; details about an offender's progress in relation to their correctional plan; offender's release date, definition and conditions of release and current photo of the offender prior to certain releases or the end of the offender's sentence.