

RCMP's National Missing Persons Strategy (2014)

Our Vision

The RCMP will maintain the highest quality of missing person investigations, incorporating a multi-agency community response focused on prevention, and utilizing established best practices.

Overview

The RCMP defines a missing person as anyone reported to or by police as someone whose whereabouts are unknown, whatever the circumstances of the disappearance. The person will be considered missing until located.

Every year in Canada approximately 65,000 people are reported as missing to police. Canadian geography, cultural diversity, and multiple police jurisdictions are factors which complicate the investigation of reports of missing persons. Nevertheless, proactive measures have been taken to ensure that missing person investigations are pursued to the fullest possible extent. The RCMP has formed partnerships with other law enforcement agencies, provincial and territorial governments, nongovernmental organizations, and First Nation, Métis and Inuit organizations, both regionally and nationally.

The RCMP has or leads several task forces in western Canada dedicated to actively reviewing files with respect to missing women. In working collaboratively to address this important issue, the task forces have developed best practices for information sharing, file management, file coordination and disclosure that can be shared with other investigative units or implemented in similar initiatives across the country.

The incorporation of National Missing Children Services into the National Centre for Missing Persons and Unidentified Remains (NCMPUR) resulted in the availability of specialized services to Canadian police agencies, medical examiners and chief coroners on a national level. Three significant NCMPUR deliverables include a national website for missing persons and unidentified remains which will provide NCMPUR clients with more comprehensive information on cases across jurisdictions, the creation of a best practices document developed in consultation with various police partner agencies, and the development of training to increase investigative effectiveness.

Senior RCMP officials have ensured that the issue of missing person investigations has been brought to the forefront as a priority in the organization. The subject of missing persons is a national standing item for the attention of provincial and territorial Criminal Operations Officers who ensure that investigative priorities are addressed by divisional investigative resources. Their support has been foundational to the development of this *National Missing Persons Strategy*.

Exhibit: National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls		
Location/Phase: <u>Part 2 Regina</u>		
Witness: <u>Brenda Butterworth-Carr</u>		
Submitted by: <u>Anne McConville</u>		
Add'l info: <u>P02 P02 P04 01</u>		
Date: <u>JUN 28 2018</u>		
Initials	I/D	Entered
<u>63</u>		<u>112</u>

In development of the *National Missing Persons Strategy* a comprehensive review of reports, policies and best practices has led to the following conclusions:

- Multi-dimensional, multi-agency responses are required.
- It is vital to focus on enhanced operational police response in concert with community awareness and engagement.
- Additional communication with stakeholders is required.
- Reporting myths and perceptions on missing persons investigations need to be dispelled.
- Families of missing persons need to be made aware of available victim services and community support.

Challenges

Although there have been significant advancements in the conduct of missing person investigations, the following challenges remain:

- Delays may result from jurisdictional confusion and myths related to reporting procedures.
- The definition of a “missing person” and reporting protocols may vary across police jurisdictions.
- Perception of lifestyle, behaviour and culture may hinder timely reporting and police action.
- The application of due diligence in missing person cases regardless of situational factors.
- Assigning the appropriate level of importance to and heightening awareness of missing person investigations.
- Families of missing persons may not be referred to Victim Services for support, as this service relies on the availability of provincial programming for missing persons cases.
- The dynamics of every missing person occurrence is unique which makes it difficult to conduct a standardized risk assessment, or to provide a standard response.
- Inaccurate media coverage can distract from police operations, heighten public anxiety, and negatively impact police rapport with families of the missing.

Strategic Goal

To provide a foundation for missing person investigations focusing on four key pillars:

- demonstrating accountability;
- entering partnerships;
- supporting families; and
- increasing awareness.

The RCMP will implement prevention measures and standardize an organizational approach to locating missing persons.

Exhibit: National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls		
Location/Phase: _____		
Witness: _____		
Submitted by: _____		
Add'l info: _____		
Date: _____		
Entered	I/D	Initials
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Strategic Approach

The RCMP approach will be to follow the four pillars which are key components of RCMP core policing activities. They will guide and support an effective, comprehensive and coordinated response to missing person investigations in RCMP jurisdictions.

Four Pillars:

- Demonstrating Accountability: Investigation / Intelligence
- Partnerships: Consultation and Integrated Service Delivery
- Supporting Families: Assistance and Communication
- Increasing Awareness: Prevention and Communication

Demonstrating Accountability:

The RCMP will provide strong leadership and supervision related to missing person investigations by:

- Incorporating established best practices into missing person investigations;
- Supporting investigative excellence by providing sound missing persons policy;
- Confirming policy compliance by RCMP employees through effective supervision;
- Considering enhancements to RCMP records management systems to capture all available missing person data.

Partnerships:

The RCMP will provide an integrated response to missing persons investigations by:

- Working with:
 - Other law enforcement agencies (locally, nationally and internationally);
 - Families of missing persons;
 - Provincial and Territorial governments, and non-government organizations (NGOs);
 - National Aboriginal organizations and cultural advocacy groups;
 - Communities (local groups and citizens);
- Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police (CACP);
- Engaging all necessary resources in order to provide the most effective response;
- Integrating with other law enforcement agencies to further advance missing persons investigations;
- Seeking to obtain family cooperation at the earliest opportunity to support investigations;
- Identifying opportunities to work with government, NGOs and Aboriginal and cultural advocacy groups, to leverage their knowledge and maximize joint prevention efforts;
- Reducing the prevalence of missing persons through community collaboration; and
- Involving the community in response to missing person investigations.

Supporting Families:

The RCMP will continue to foster effective communication with families of missing persons throughout investigations by:

- Developing a schedule in consultation with the family/reporting party to provide investigative status updates;
- Informing the family/reporting party of available victim services and other relevant supporting agencies while being cognizant of the need for cultural sensitivity.

Increasing Awareness:

The RCMP will develop prevention strategies and enhance communication to resolve and reduce missing person occurrences by:

- Developing a national communication plan to support the missing persons strategy and highlighting established best practices and RCMP missing persons policy;
- Informing the public of reporting procedures related to missing persons occurrences to improve outcomes;
- Encouraging the development of and participation in collaborative prevention and intervention strategies with government agencies and NGOs;
- Undertaking prevention campaigns to heighten awareness of missing person issues among Canadian citizens (e.g., public service announcements [PSAs]; social media campaigns; posters; school talks; and community town halls).

The Strategy

The RCMP will introduce measures to reduce or eliminate challenges historically faced during missing persons investigations. The following measures will effectively enhance the quality of investigations:

Immediate Improvements:

- Update of RCMP National Missing Persons policy incorporating established best practices;
- Initiation of the development and use of a mandatory national missing person intake form;
- Implementation of a mandatory national risk assessment tool as an investigative aid;
- Ensuring that supervision and guidance is provided on all missing person investigations;
- Conduct of interviews with located individuals to identify risk factors to inform prevention and early intervention measures;
- Ensuring that available victim services are provided to support the families of missing persons;
- Provision of ongoing and timely communication to the families / reporting parties of missing persons.

Expected Outcome:

- RCMP national Missing Persons Policy will be published in 2014 and will include the above components to contribute to national standardization and professional consistency in the calibre of missing persons investigations conducted by the RCMP.

Enhanced Practices:

- Providing enhanced training for RCMP employees with respect to their respective roles as they relate to missing persons reports and investigations;
- Ensuring effective and accurate communication, internally and externally.

Expected Outcomes:

- NCMPUR will complete preparation of three on-line Level 1 investigators courses, in the areas of missing children, missing adults and unidentified remains in 2014;
- Three internal communications products will be developed and delivered by the end of fiscal year 2014-2015 (RCMP internal website content; a force-wide broadcast; a Commissioner's video message);
- A national social media campaign (YouTube; Facebook; Twitter) to be initiated in fiscal year 2014-2015;
- Development of a communications toolkit for use by divisions (PSAs; social media campaign; posters, school talks; and community town halls) with delivery in winter 2014-2015.

Proactive Measures:

- Conduct a review of the operational files related to the recent report, *"Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women: A National Operational Overview"*, to identify vulnerability factors and next steps;
- Participate in the development and implementation of initiatives to reduce the incidence of missing persons;
- Create partnerships with key community stakeholders to enable information sharing and maximization of the effective use of resources;
- Consultation with experts, key stakeholders, and community and cultural groups to ensure that initiatives adequately and proactively address current issues and concerns with respect to missing persons.

Expected Outcomes:

- Review and revise the RCMP's *Missing Persons Policy* to ensure that it is current;
- Ensure periodic review of the RCMP's *Missing Persons Policy* to ensure that it remains current;
- In the course of business NCMPUR will identify and implement, or partner on the implementation of initiatives which provide investigators with specialized services to improve the quality of missing persons and unidentified remains investigations across Canada;

- National Crime Prevention Services will champion the *National Missing Persons Strategy* and maintain coordination of national initiatives implemented in its support;
- The RCMP will participate in the CACP working group on missing persons initiatives;
- RCMP divisional Crime Prevention Services units will disseminate missing persons toolkits to community groups.

Governance

Roles:

- National Champion / Executive Sponsor – Deputy Commissioner, Contract and Aboriginal Policing (CAP);
- Project Lead – National Aboriginal Policing and Crime Prevention Services (NAPCPS);
- Communications Lead – National Communications Services (NCS);
- Contributors – CAP National Criminal Operations (NCROPS); National Centre for Missing Persons and Unidentified Remains (NCMPUR).

Reporting:

- Tracking and reporting of the elements of the strategy through CAP monitoring of a *National Missing Persons Strategy* Action Plan;
- Progress updates to RCMP Criminal Operations Officers through reports to the National Integrated Operations Council (NIOC);
- Progress updates to the top levels of senior RCMP leadership by reports, as required, to the Senior Executive Committee (SEC).