

ANNUAL REPORT

2020/21

Williams Lake RCMP Based Victim Services

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MESSAGE FROM THE PROGRAM MANAGER

Message from the Program Manager

2020/21 has been a time of upheaval in the world as we know it and the Williams Lake RCMP Victim Service ("VS") Department is no exception. Besides the worldwide pandemic, the most pressing issues facing Williams Lake VS over the past two years are: a full staff turnover; an ever increasing Opioid crisis; and effects of climate change, which would include any residual effects from the 2017 Wildfires, previously our biggest crisis.

The pandemic has brought changes to many of procedures: meetings and the court process have become virtual, many clients and colleagues are working from home and comfort level of individuals who many need our services always being taken into consideration to name a few. For the VS workers though, the biggest shift would be from one of being proactive, and always contacting victims, to being reactive and waiting for referrals or direction from members who have attended a situation for which they deem VS necessary. Largely this was due to public health restrictions for the workplace and reluctance of victims to have in person contact with strangers without all precautions in place.

At the beginning of 2020, Cheryl JACQUES (full time) and Meg FEHR (half time) staffed the program. Aislin BARR was added to the team in February of 2020. 2021 brought the departure of both Cheryl JACQUES and Meg FEHR; while Tracey BALLAS joined in April of 2021. As well, 2021 brought the departure of Municipal Manager, Evan DEAN, who was the overseer of the program, now replaced by myself, Cheri WIEBE. Very challenging to maintain a consistent high level of service with so many changes in the midst of everything else that was going on.

The Opioid crisis has also been a stress factor facing VS workers. The number of deaths and overdoses facing our marginalized community members has dramatically increased and more and more VS workers are called upon to come and assist families in these dark moments.

Finally, the residual effects of the wildfires from 2017, the heat dome and even the current flooding situations in communities close to our own, have caused some stress and mental health issues in our community. We have seen an increase in the number of people in Williams Lake who have fled their communities due to intense events which have not allowed them to maintain their lifestyle and now bring their own brand of social issues here, including drug addictions and criminal lifestyles.

MESSAGE FROM THE PROGRAM MANAGER

Having brought forward all the negative factors that the VS workers are facing, I need to commend them for rising above their circumstances to excel in the face of these difficulties.

The VS team still continues to have a healthy working relationship with their partners. Williams Lake RCMP VS team, in conjunction with Community Based VS and Aboriginal VS, while not able to meet together regularly, maintained communications and continued with referrals and contact as required. Each person that required their assistance was dealt with in a compassionate manner.

Members and support staff were afforded the opportunity to debrief after many of the bigger files and situations that arose: VS facilitated a safe space to express personal difficulties experienced while helping others in crisis.

The team's morale and commitment to personal mental health, as well as the level of engagement has continued to be a consistent positive in our work environment. They are always looking for opportunities to assist in and provide improvements for the detachment and its members.

When fully staffed, which we anticipate happening in early 2022, with the third part time caseworker, the team can continue to work together on some files as well as allow more time to share and debrief amongst themselves. This is key to a healthy team.

The RCMP members, clients, community members and professionals continue to express appreciation for the high level of care, comfort and compassion our caseworkers have given the beneficiaries in need. Over the last few years we have learned that we must expect the unexpected, however we are cautiously optimistic that, looking forward, it will be a year full of opportunity.

Cheri WIEBE

Manager of RCMP Municipal Services / VS Program Manager

March 2, 2022

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Program overview

The Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General has established both Police-based and Community-based programs throughout British Columbia to provide services to victims of crime and their families. The City of Williams Lake and the Cariboo Regional District contribute funds to the Williams Lake Police-Based VS Program.

In this reporting period there was also a further funding partner in the form of a grant from Red Cross for Wildfire Recovery.

The program provides services to any victims of crime who may or may not have reported the crime to police or be involved with the criminal justice system. The objectives of a victim service program are:

- To lessen the impact of crime and trauma on victims and their families and to assist in their recovery
- To increase victim safety and to help reduce the risk of future victimization
- To increase the level of participation and sense of empowerment for victims throughout their participation in the criminal justice system; and
- To increase the effectiveness of a victim while acting as a witness in court proceedings.

Service area

The service area included the policing of the Williams Lake RCMP Detachment, which includes the City of Williams Lake, north on Highway 97 to the CN rail overpass north of McLeese Lake, South on Highway 97 to 132 Mile, west to Riske Creek, Farwell Canyon and east to Horsefly, Likely and Quesnel Lake.

Court support may be provided to victims from other areas upon referral from the lead agency.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Services

The Program will provide the following services:

- Emotional Support: VS caseworkers will provide victims with emotional support to assist in their recovery from the effects of crime and trauma. The program does not provide any counselling services to victims, however the case workers will refer a victim to an appropriate resource for service.
- General Information: VS caseworkers will provide victims with information including, but not limited to the Justice system, relevant federal and provincial legislation and programs pertaining to victims of crime, crime prevention, safety planning and next of kin death notifications.
- Public Education: Public awareness and education programs in the local community on victimization, victim services, and crime prevention.
- After Hours Services: The Williams Lake Police-Based team program provides service 8:00 am to 4:00 Monday through Friday. For after-hours calls and depending on the nature of the request, the caseworker will make the decision to attend immediately or the following day.

Additional Information

The Williams Lake RCMP VS Program is funded for the equivalent of 1 and a half case workers but due to the stressful, and often mentally taxing, nature of the job, three part time case workers make up our team.

At this time, the Williams Lake RCMP VS program only has one volunteer, who can be used in a number of different ways; helping out in court and in a relief capacity to afford much needed time off for the case workers, or if the circumstances warrant extra help, the volunteer steps up.

PROGRAM CASE LOAD

Program Case load

The Williams Lake RCMP Based VS team is embedded within the Detachment and treated as part of the 'family'. They are highly valued and frequently consulted on a regular basis. The top three types of cases that they would receive are Domestic violence, Sudden Deaths, lately including many overdoses, and Assault files. By way of the contract that the City of Williams Lake VS team manages with the Province of British Columbia, all domestic violence, sexual assaults and files involving First Nations clients must be referred to the Community Based or Aboriginal VS team. The Williams Lake RCMP Based VS team deals with all the initial contact for immediate assistance and then if case dictated, the case is referred to appropriate outside services.

The following is a monthly breakdown of New Clients, previous report's numbers added for reference:

<i>Month</i>	<i>New clients</i>	
	<i>2018</i>	<i>2019</i>
January	32	56
February	37	40
March	24	46
April	14	40
May	31	54
June	44	68
July	34	60
August	39	56
September	45	39
October	28	54
November	36	45
December	36	42
<i>Total new clients</i>	<i>400</i>	<i>589</i>

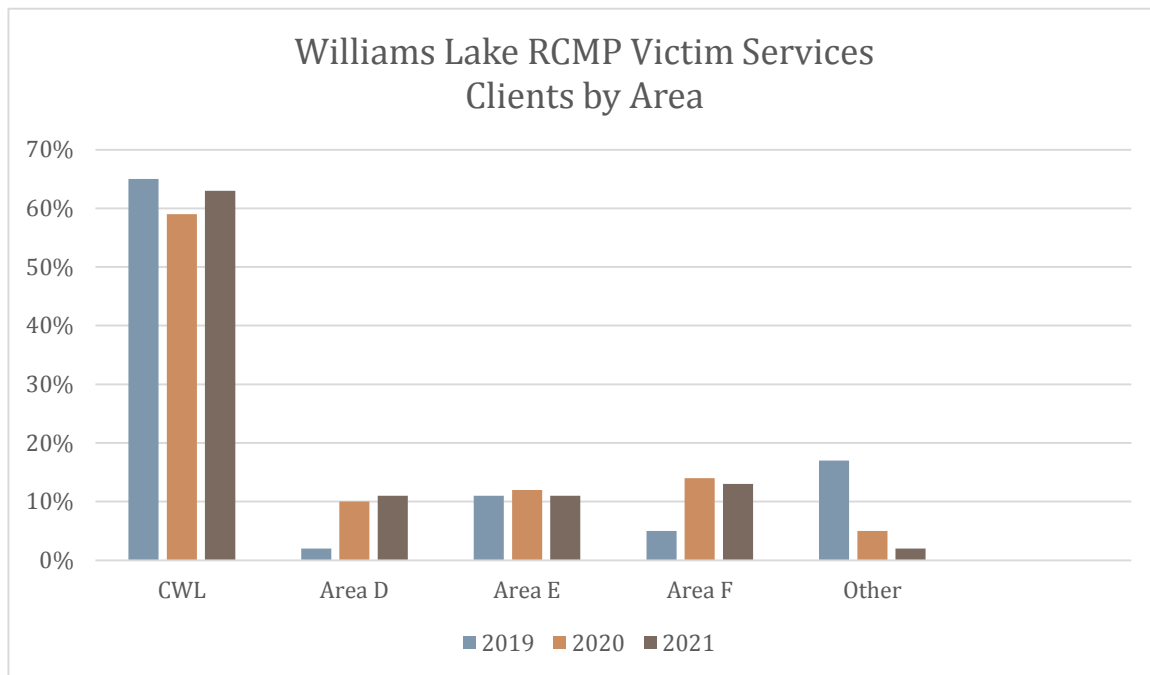
PROGRAM CASE LOAD

For reference.

<i>Month</i>	<i>New clients</i>	
	<i>2020</i>	<i>2021</i>
January	45	48
February	75	42
March	53	57
April	38	52
May	58	64
June	49	57
July	76	43
August	78	36
September	61	34
October	63	37
November	50	52
December	55	37
<i>Total new clients</i>	701	559

Source: VSIS – Victim Services Information System

PROGRAM CASE LOAD



* CWL – City of Williams Lake

**Other – Includes Areas J & K, as well as transferred in files from other detachments or jurisdictions.

Financial

Funding for the Williams Lake RCMP-Based VS is received from several sources; Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, Cariboo Regional District and the City of Williams Lake.

Additionally, in April of 2019, the Canadian Red Cross provided extra funding in the form of a Wildfire Recovery Grant. This project concluded after the first quarter of 2021 and no further funds are available through them.

In 2020, the funding amounts were:

- Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General \$67,254.00
- Cariboo Regional District \$24,500.00
- City of Williams Lake \$13,225.34
- Canadian Red Cross (Wildfire Recovery Grant) \$50,684.40

In 2020, the operational expenses were \$155,663.74 which is made up of wages, benefits and miscellaneous expenses.

In 2021, the funding amounts were:

- Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General \$70,560.91
- Cariboo Regional District \$24,500.00
- City of Williams Lake \$37,778.85
- Canadian Red Cross (Wildfire Recovery Grant) \$16,894.80

In 2021, the operational expenses were \$149,734.56. It should be noted that the wages included do not include any portion of the Municipal Manager, only the contracted Victim Service Employees

Source: City of Williams Lake Financial

PROGRAM INFORMATION

Program Information

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