

ANNUAL REPORT

2023

Williams Lake Police Based Victim Services

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MESSAGE FROM THE PROGRAM MANAGER

Message from the Program Manager

In 2023 there was a complete transition of the senior management team at the Williams Lake RCMP, through transfers and promotions, with the exception of myself, the Municipal Manager. Inspector Rob LAKE is the new Detachment Commander, coming in from Manitoba, S/Sgt McKINNON is our operations NCO (non-commissioned officer), Michelle BAGUSCH has taken on the role of office manager and Sgt Josh SMITH has stepped into the operations support NCO position which had previously been unoccupied.

After much review of our organizational structure, it was discovered that an RCMP member is required to oversee the Victim Service Unit, together with the Municipal Manager. Sgt SMITH has had a much more hands on approach when dealing with our partner agencies since, as a member, he has first hand knowledge of the value and limitations of this unit to our clientele. He has brought a different perspective to the unit, with a very structured approach to our inter-agency relationships and the protocol we have signed as the Victim Services team for the Williams Lake area.

This year has been a year of challenges with staffing levels. There was some unexpected leave as well as a maternity leave which left us short staffed for the latter part of the summer. From August until mid-October the program was staff with only one case worker carrying the entire file load. Since the end of October, we have been working with two caseworkers who have increased their hours to cover the equivalent to one and a half full time employees. As the caseload has not decreased, we have implemented a practice of referring any victim who consents to Victim Services on scene, to the appropriate provider, without speaking to them directly. Not only has this enabled our team to carry the file load when there are fewer caseworkers, but it has spared the victim from sharing their story more than once, and potentially forming a bond with the first caring person they open up to. While initially this felt uncomfortable, it has made it easier to refer and to focus on the files that we should be carrying through to completion. We also expect that it will expand the time capacity of the Policed Based Victim Services to begin to provide other proactive services within the community.

While details and circumstances in this role are constantly changing, it is amazing to see the consistent effort that these caseworkers bring to each and every client that they deal with. I'm very proud of the work that they do.

Cheri WIEBE Manager of RCMP Municipal Services / VS Program Manager

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Program overview

In 1987 the City of Williams Lake and the Attorney General entered into a funding arrangement to hire the first Victim Services Coordinator to “enhance and ensure that the victim services resources and volunteer help agencies continue to be viable and serve the community”. In 1996 an agreement was then entered into between the City and the Ministry of the Attorney General that this Victim Services Coordinator would become the Police Based Victim Services Program at the Williams Lake RCMP Detachment. The Cariboo Regional District joined as a partner in 2003.¹

Police-based and Community-based Victim Services programs are spread throughout British Columbia to provide services to victims, witnesses and their families affected by traumatic events. Williams Lake also has an Aboriginal Based Victim Services which is funded through the Province. The City of Williams Lake and the Cariboo Regional District jointly continue to contribute funds to the Williams Lake Police-Based Victim Services Program.

The program provides services to all 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 Police-Based Victim Service Program are:

- To provide immediate and on-going support in order to lessen the impact of crime and trauma on victims, their families and those who have witnessed these events;
- 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 provide emotional and physical support for a victim while acting as a witness in court proceedings.

Service area

The service area for the Williams Lake RCMP Victim Service Unit encompasses all the policing area of our local RCMP. When looking at the Cariboo Regional District map, it would encompass: Area D to the north, just past McLeese Lake to the overpass at McAllister; Area E, covering Alkali Lake and parts of the Gang Ranch; Area F covering the areas of Likely, Horsefly, 150 Mile House and surrounding areas; and Area K partially, almost to Riske Creek.

Court Support may also be provided to individuals if their local Victim Service worker is not able to travel to attend court in Williams Lake, as Williams Lake is a hub for court for many outlying areas.

¹ Information from City of Williams Lake Council Resolutions 1987, 1996, 2003 and 2007

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Services

The Program will provide the following services:

- **Crisis Intervention:** Victim Service case workers provide crisis intervention services in the immediate aftermath of a crime. This may include emotional support, transportation, referrals, and safety planning.
- **Emotional Support:** Victim Service case workers will provide victims with emotional support to assist in their recovery from the effects of crime and trauma. The program does not provide counselling; however, the case workers will provide emotional support by listening to concerns, validating the experience and helping to develop coping strategies as well as referring to other community resources if the situation dictates.
- **General Information:** Victim service case workers will provide victims with information including, but not limited to, the Justice systems, relevant federal and provincial legislation and programs pertaining to victims of crime, crime prevention, safety planning and next of kin death notifications.
- **Court Support:** Victim Service case workers are able to assist with all aspects, including: assisting victims to engage with the justice system and justice system personnel; support through the court process by assisting with pre-trial interviews and accommodations, witness room accompaniment, preparing victim for emotional responses in court, accompaniment during the trial while the victim provides testimony, providing court orientation of both the courthouse and the appropriate protocols, as well as safety planning with the Sheriffs for the actual court date.
- **Transportation:** Transportation services including, but not limited to, the transport of a victim and or family members to hospital, court, RCMP, transition houses and or shelters. This service falls within the mandate of the Victim Services team, but is not frequently used.
- **Public Education:** Public awareness and education programs in the local community on victimization, victim services, and crime prevention is something that we are renewing our focus on. Presently we are looking for opportunities to provide this service within our community by being involved in various committees and potentially being present in the schools.
- **New Member Orientation:** This is provided by Victim Service case workers to educate the member about services provided by the unit so they are more likely to refer and use this tool that is available to them.
- **Follow up Support:** Victim Service case workers continued to provide follow up support to victims by regular check-ins to ensure the individuals ongoing safety, to provide additional referrals to other organizations, and overall wellbeing of the victim.
- **After Hours Services:** Required or optional services as described above may be provided after regular program hours. The Williams Lake Police-Based team program provides service 8:00 am to 4:00 pm Monday through Friday. For after-hours calls and depending on the nature of the request, the member and case worker may make the decision to have immediate Victim Service attendance.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Additional Information

The Williams Lake RCMP Victim Services Program is funded for the equivalent of one and a half case workers, which previously was staffed by three half time employees: at this time we have two case workers covering the allotted hours.

The Williams Lake RCMP Victim Service program also has one trained volunteer that can potentially be called upon. Her security clearance was updated in 2023, however with the face of the program changing we have not had the opportunity for any volunteer hours to date.

PROGRAM CASE LOAD

Program case load

The Williams Lake RCMP Based Victim Services team carries a very full workload stemming mainly from the files of the Williams Lake RCMP. The unit is housed within the Detachment and are a valued resource when assisting with files. Contact that Victim Services has with clients come almost exclusively from referrals from members, both local and from other policing jurisdictions, though Crown Counsel Agencies may also send referrals: as well occasionally someone may attend the detachment front counter and request assistance. Assaults of all types, property crimes and trauma files make up the biggest portion of the caseload, with sudden deaths being the most likely reason for an after-hours call out. It is also noted that files of any type with a mental health component are increasing.

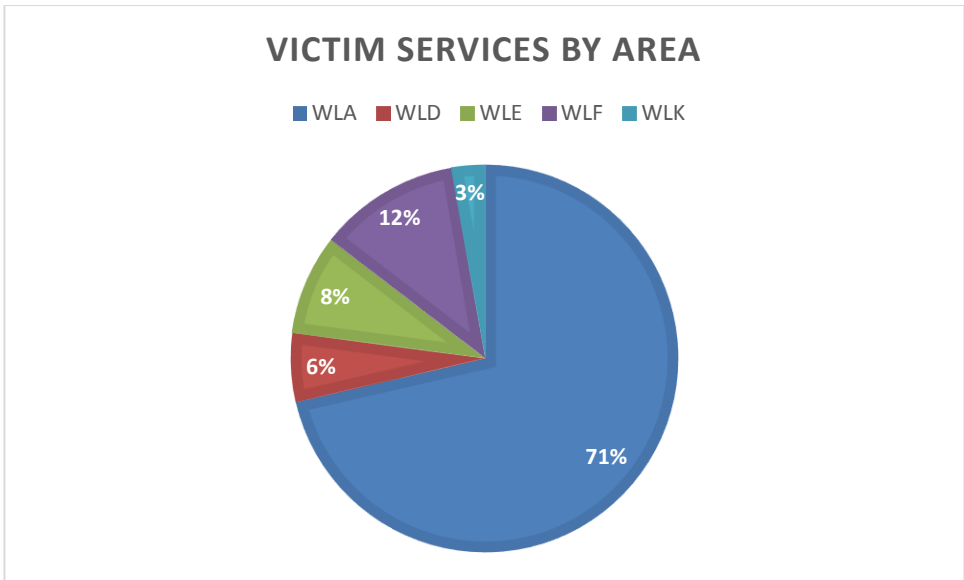
As per the contract managed by The City of Williams Lake and applying the mandate oversight provided by the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General and RCMP E Division, all “power-based” crimes and all files involving Indigenous clients are mandated to be referred to the Community Based or Aboriginal Victim Services team. The Williams Lake RCMP Victim Service team may provide initial contact on files that require immediate assistance but if the situation dictates, referrals will be made to the appropriate provider as soon as practicable. As previously stated, it is no longer required to make that initial contact if a member has gained consent for Victim Services on scene, thus making the referral process more streamlined for the victim to obtain the services they require quickly.

The following is a monthly breakdown of New Clients, compared to the previous year’s reporting:

<i>Month</i>	<i>New clients 2022</i>	<i>2021</i>
January	44	44
February	47	74
March	57	27
April	48	46
May	43	58
June	51	62
July	54	82
August	57	67
September	29	40
October	44	36
November	56	64
December	73	28
Total new clients	603	628

PROGRAM CASE LOAD

Source: Williams Lake RCMP PRIME



The above chart is a representation of files that have had Victim Services either referred and accepted on scene by a member or files that were proactively referred after the fact. As Police Based Victim Services is considered an intake and referral service in some cases, the victim may not have been contacted by us prior to referral, but the documentation must still be completed for each incident.

It is noted that there has been quite a change in the percentages when comparing municipal to rural in 2023, with rural referrals down from 43% in 2022 to 29% in 2023. When looking at the actual numbers however, the number of rural referrals was almost identical to the previous year, the change seems to be the increase in municipal files and referrals.

Financial

Funding for the Williams Lake RCMP-Based Victim Services is received from the following sources: Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General; Cariboo Regional District; and the City of Williams Lake.

In 2023, the funding amounts were:

- Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General \$83,036.26 (plus a one-time amount of \$5,373.61);
- Cariboo Regional District \$24,500.00;
- City of Williams Lake \$21,144.11.

In 2023, the operational expenses were \$134,053.98 which is made up of wages, benefits and miscellaneous expenses.

Source: City of Williams Lake Financial

PROGRAM INFORMATION

Program Information

Williams Lake RCMP-Based Victim Services unit
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