

# BRITISH COLUMBIA'S PROVINCIAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PLAN FIRST ANNUAL REPORT | 2015



DELIVERING ON GOVERNMENT'S VISION THAT ALL BRITISH COLUMBIANS  
ARE SAFE IN RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNITIES.

*PREPARED BY THE PROVINCIAL OFFICE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE*



Ministry of  
Children and Family  
Development

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

### THE PROVINCIAL OFFICE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

*(PODV) would like to  
thank all its community  
anti-violence and  
government partners,  
organizations, individuals  
and communities for their  
dedicated efforts and  
commitment to ending  
domestic violence in B.C.*

## CONTENTS

MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER . . . . .	3
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	4
BRITISH COLUMBIA'S PROVINCIAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PLAN . . . . .	6
1   PUBLIC AWARENESS AND PREVENTION . . . . .	10
2   SUPPORTS AND SERVICES FOR SURVIVORS . . . . .	12
3   JUSTICE SYSTEM RESPONSE. . . . .	14
4   COORDINATION, INFORMATION SHARING AND REFERRAL . . . . .	16
5   RESEARCH, TRAINING AND EVALUATION . . . . .	18
MOVING FORWARD . . . . .	20

## MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER



It is my pleasure to present the first annual report on the Provincial Domestic Violence Plan. When we launched the plan in February of last year, we set out to build on our extensive consultation with anti-violence groups and the public and make B.C. a safer place for women, children and anyone who has been affected by domestic violence. That work

is progressing well and, together, we are making a difference and building stronger systems of support to help British Columbians be safe in their relationships and communities.

I am proud to say that we have fulfilled each and every one of the plan's year-one commitments. We will continue to work alongside our community and government anti-violence partners to deliver targeted investment and direct service improvements over the next two years of the plan.

Every British Columbian has a role to play in preventing and addressing domestic violence, and we will continue to emphasize the need for system-wide collaboration as we increase our collective efforts to end this grave societal challenge. I would like to thank everyone involved in ending domestic violence in B.C.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Scadieux".

**STEPHANIE CADIEUX**

*Minister of Children and Family Development*

### **CHRISTY CLARK PREMIER OF BRITISH COLUMBIA**

*“Domestic violence and other forms of violence against women can devastate lives, families, and entire communities. No one should suffer in silence. That’s why we are working to raise awareness, change behaviours and improve the way our system supports victims and survivors. The Provincial Domestic Violence Plan is a crucial step in that process and I am pleased that the plan’s year-one commitments have been fulfilled. Working towards our Vision for a Violence Free BC, the plan is setting the course for a better, safer British Columbia.”*

## DEFINITION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

*“Violence against women in relationships” and alternative terms used when referring to “domestic violence” (including “spousal violence”, “spousal abuse”, “spouse assault”, “intimate partner violence” and “relationship violence”) are defined as physical or sexual assault, or the threat of physical or sexual assault against a current or former intimate partner whether or not they are legally married or living together at the time of the assault or threat.”*

*In addition to physical and sexual assault, domestic violence also includes criminal harassment, threatening, or mischief, where there is a reasonable basis to conclude that the act was done to cause, or did in fact cause, fear, trauma, suffering or loss to the intimate partner. Intimate partner relationships include heterosexual and same-sex relationships.*

.....  
*Violence Against Women in Relationships Policy (2010)*

## INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence is a serious problem that cuts across all social, economic, religious and cultural segments of society. One death is one too many. The B.C. government has recognized and acknowledged that a coordinated, systemic approach to addressing violence is critically needed. In 2012, the B.C. government established the Provincial Office of Domestic Violence (PODV) in response to the 2012 Representative for Children and Youth’s Report *“Honouring Kaitlynn, Max and Cordon: Make Their Voices Heard Now.”*

PODV is British Columbia’s permanent lead for government, and is responsible and accountable for strengthening the province’s systemic response to domestic violence. PODV’s mandate, as a central coordinating office, is to work with community and cross-ministry partners and provide expertise and leadership to improve and strengthen services and supports for children, women and families affected by domestic violence. Ministry and anti-violence community partners remain responsible for individual client advocacy, program implementation and direct service delivery.

Collaborative and strong partnerships among various cross-ministry and community anti-violence partners have resulted in numerous systemic improvements in addressing domestic violence in B.C. For example, training on domestic violence for multi-sector

### SONYA BOYCE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND RONNIE TAKHAR, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COMMUNITY LIAISON – Surrey Women’s Centre

*“Surrey Women’s Centre acknowledges the Province of B.C.’s and PODV’s commitment to working together to address domestic violence. The three-year provincial plan highlights the importance of working collaboratively across sectors to achieve systemic change. Key commitments in the plan, including increased coordination and enhanced information-sharing, not only change how we work together but, most importantly, increase the safety of women and children who are fleeing domestic violence. Several partnerships between the Province and agencies like ours have been important in addressing this serious issue, and we look forward to further partnerships with the Province that promote evidence-based best practices, share resources, and streamline service delivery as part of a coordinated community and systemic response.”*



professionals has been a priority, and the number of professionals who have received training on recognizing and providing a coordinated response to domestic violence has reached over 32,000. This builds on training initiatives introduced since 2009 for school personnel, police officers, child welfare workers, employment and assistance workers and community professionals, including victim support workers.

When PODV released the three-year *Provincial Domestic Violence Plan* in 2014, it included a commitment to report out annually on the progress of the plan's commitments. The plan focuses specifically on strengthening the systemic response to domestic violence and includes specific actions and timelines.

In addition, Throne Speech 2014 promised a concrete plan towards ending violence against women, and *The Violence Free BC* Strategy (VFBC), released in February 2015, delivered on that promise. The VFBC strategy is a blueprint for addressing violence against women in B.C. over the next decade. It works in harmony with the plan, while taking a broader approach to understanding the complex and underlying factors that contribute to violence against women.

This report predominantly reflects work completed during the year-one reporting period (April 1, 2014-March 31, 2015) and includes some actions and initiatives that will continue into years two and three. In some sections, aggregate numbers are provided for a longer period of time to reflect work that has been underway in B.C.

**KATHRYN ROBERTSON,  
COMMUNITY AND  
SERVICES ADVISOR –**

*East Timor*

*“I started my work on violence against women in the Transition House in Victoria and my work eventually took me to Asia where I am now working with service providers and government to improve and expand services to respond to violence. We are looking at international best practices and experiences in other places, and it's been great to connect with the Provincial Office of Domestic Violence (PODV) in B.C. and learn about what's happening in B.C. The three-year Provincial Domestic Violence Plan and A Vision for a Violence Free BC are inspiring and comprehensive. They recognize that work is needed in communities – and society at large – to break the cycle of violence. B.C.'s commitment to ending domestic violence deserves recognition.”*



## KEY GOVERNMENT PARTNERS\*

*Ministry of Children and Family Development (CFD)*

*Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation (ARR)*

*Ministry of Education (EDUC)*

*Ministry of Health (HLTH)*

*Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training and Responsible for Labour (JTST)*

*Ministry of Justice (JAG)*

*Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation (SDSI)*

*Ministry of Natural Gas Development and Responsible for Housing (MNGD)*

*B.C. Housing*

.....  
\* All key government partners work closely with community anti-violence partners/experts

# British Columbia's PROVINCIAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PLAN

In 2012/13, PODV met with key community anti-violence and government partners prior to leading the coordination and development of the cross-ministry three-year Provincial Domestic Violence Plan that was released in 2014.

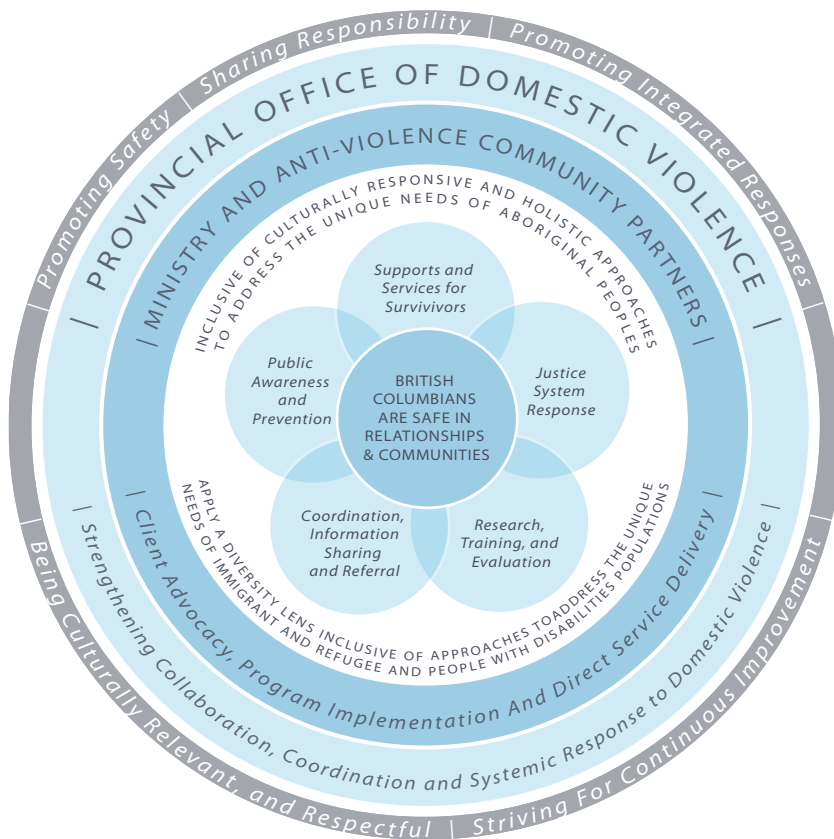
The plan included feedback from PODV's consultations with anti-violence community partners, Aboriginal leaders and the public. The plan builds on previous action plans and strengthens B.C.'s collective approach to addressing domestic violence – through investment across government ministries and through organizations involved in direct service delivery for children, victims/survivors and perpetrators of domestic violence.

The plan will help strengthen the systemic response to domestic violence by building on the valuable and tireless work of the anti-violence sector and other government ministries. This will be achieved through:

- 1. AN INTEGRATED AND COORDINATED RESPONSE STRATEGY**
- 2. ENHANCED INFORMATION SHARING BETWEEN ALL SERVICE PROVIDERS ACROSS SYSTEMS TO INCREASE SAFETY**
- 3. IMPROVED DIRECT SERVICES FOR SURVIVORS, CHILDREN AND PERPETRATORS**

The key ministries and Crown corporations that share responsibility for addressing domestic violence have demonstrated strong leadership and commitment to fulfilling the specific actions, targets and timelines under the plan.

The plan is centered on safety in interpersonal relationships, and on the key actions that are necessary to address domestic violence. Each ministry and Crown corporation involved in the implementation of the plan is accountable for their specific commitments and take responsibility for their related operations and service delivery. PODV, as the central coordinating office, is accountable for ensuring that strong collaboration and coordination between systems occur and that the response to addressing domestic violence is strengthened provincially.



The consultation with key government and community anti-violence partners and the public provided valuable information about the strengths and gaps in B.C.'s response to domestic violence. This helped develop the plan's response areas.

Several key components are the focus of the work underway. The plan includes five response areas. They are all linked by common principles that help guide the implementation of the plan, with the ultimate vision – that all British Columbians are safe in relationships and communities.

**SHERRI MOHORUK,**  
**RETIRED SUPER-INTENDENT – Integrated Services and Safe Schools – Ministry of Education**

*“I was directly involved with the PODV-led cross-ministry domestic violence Assistant Deputy Ministers table, and my staff were part of the cross-ministry working table that was tasked with implementing the three-year Provincial Domestic Violence Plan. The level of engagement and commitment by cross-ministry leaders and partners was impressive and their desire to engage and work closely with the community anti-violence sector has resulted in numerous improvements and initiatives. Since 2012, I believe we have seen a serious shift in addressing domestic violence. The Provincial Office has played an important role as the Province's lead on domestic violence and has been instrumental in strengthening collaboration and coordination between sectors and working towards ending domestic violence in B.C.”*

**DR. MARGARET JACKSON, DIRECTOR – FREDa Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children, Simon Fraser University**

*“The FREDa Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children has been connected with the Provincial Office of Domestic Violence (PODV) since the initial consultations for its development in 2012. The Office has expended enormous energy and commitment since that time in addressing the systemic problem of domestic violence in the province, especially notable in this first year after the release of the three-year Provincial Domestic Violence Plan. PODV is providing much needed direction and action in that regard. FREDa itself has benefited from their support of its own research and evaluation efforts, both from individual PODV members supporting our efforts to advance the B.C. PRIME Policing Study of Domestic Violence Cases (with the RCMP and EVA), to PODV’s support through representation at events such as the presentation of our Costing/Impacts Study on Children who have been Exposed to Domestic Violence (partnered with the University of Victoria).”*

As outlined in the graphic on [page 7](#), the five response areas include:

1. PUBLIC AWARENESS AND PREVENTION
2. SUPPORTS AND SERVICES FOR SURVIVORS
3. JUSTICE SYSTEM RESPONSE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
4. COORDINATION, INFORMATION SHARING AND REFERRAL
5. RESEARCH, TRAINING AND EVALUATION

The plan includes an Aboriginal focus and diversity lens. Aboriginal women are nearly three times as likely as non-Aboriginal women to experience domestic violence. The plan specifically identifies the unique challenges that Aboriginal women, families and communities face. This includes a commitment to support Aboriginal communities to develop their own culturally relevant and holistic approaches to services.

Research indicates that immigrant and refugee populations and persons with disabilities also have an increased vulnerability for experiencing domestic violence. [Accessibility 2024](#) is a roadmap for a more accessible, inclusive and progressive B.C. This 10-year action plan represents the themes that emerged through the disability consultation process. Creating accessible services for women with disabilities who are also survivors of violence was one of the concerns discussed in the action plan.

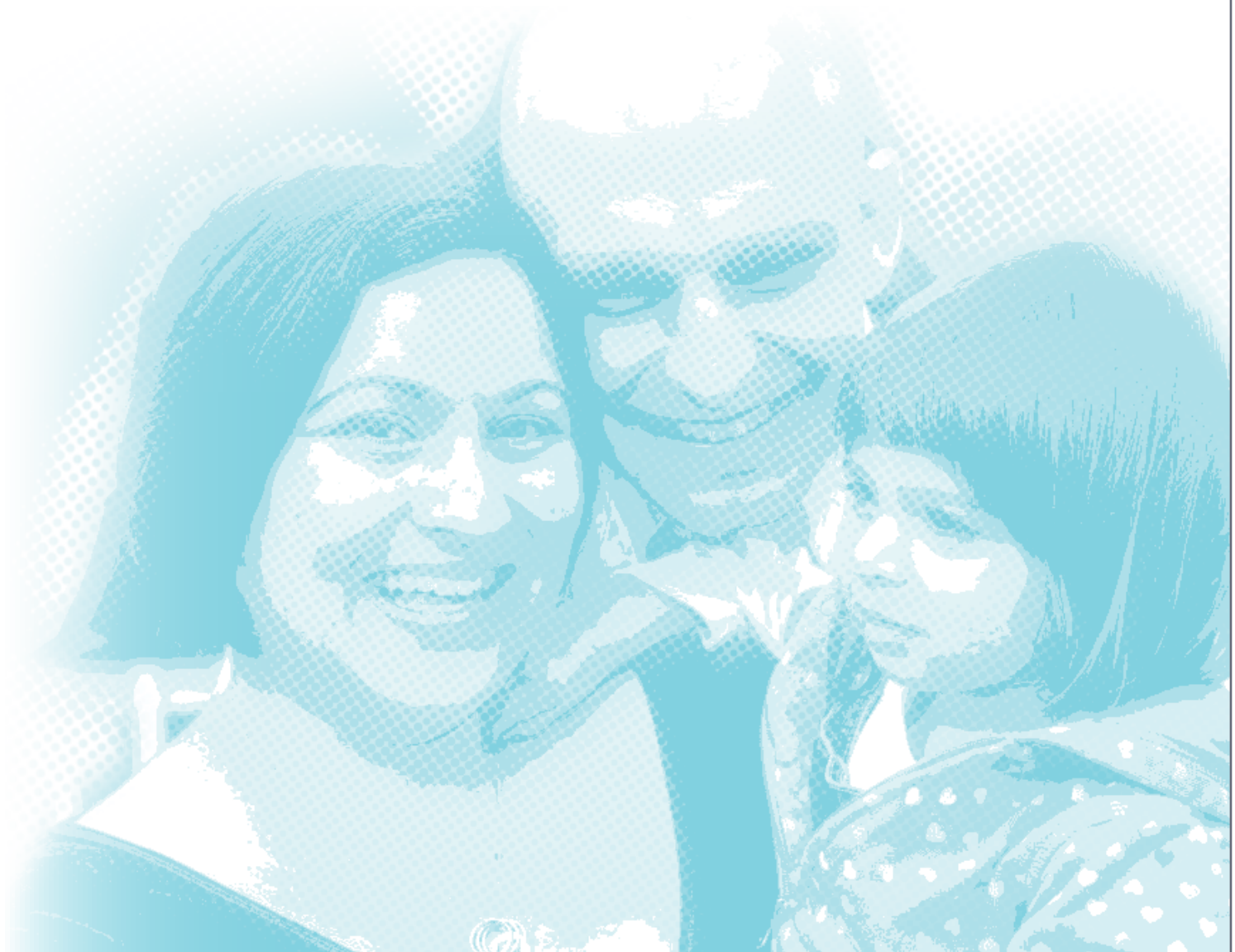
The plan supports responsive and relevant approaches to address the unique needs of these populations by working closely with the settlement sector, anti-violence community, government partners and advocacy groups. PODV and other government partners work closely with multicultural, multi-faith, and advocacy-focused organizations that provide direct services and supports.



**FARIDA BANO ALI, CHAIRPERSON, THE BOARD OF WOMEN'S COUNCIL FOR BC MUSLIM ASSOCIATION & CHAIRPERSON, MUSLIM ADVISORY COMMITTEE (MCFD)**

*"The Provincial Office of Domestic Violence (PODV) consulted with diverse groups while developing the three-year Provincial Domestic Violence Plan, and since its release, has continued to work closely with community partners serving diverse populations and faith groups. PODV representatives have participated in events hosted by the BC Muslim*

*Women's Association, involve us in important dialogue, and are available to support us in our community work. We look forward to continuing to work together to strengthen our culturally sensitive response to domestic violence for diverse populations. My best wishes for PODV's continued success."*



## RESPONSE AREAS

### WHAT WE SAID WE WILL DO

*Build on existing partnerships across sectors to increase public awareness and prevention work among diverse populations, and involve men and boys in standing up to end violence against women and girls;*

.....  
*Promote and enhance public education materials, with a particular focus on VictimLink B.C. and the Domestic Violence Helpline; and*

.....  
*Continue to increase accessibility to the Seniors Abuse and Information Line (SAIL) through increased hours and capacity.*

## 1 | PUBLIC AWARENESS AND PREVENTION

### HIGHLIGHTS OF WHAT WE DID

PODV and government partners promoted and leveraged existing anti-violence campaigns and provincial websites that increase public awareness about preventing and ending domestic violence.

- ▶ ***Moose Hide Campaign*** – This campaign, led by the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres, aims to engage Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal men to stand up and speak out about the violence committed against women and children. In 2015, the campaign distributed more than 50,000 moose hide pins, and more than 100,000 have been handed out since 2011. It has been promoted by community members from Port Hardy, B.C. to Halifax, Nova Scotia and as far away as Australia. This year, the Province invested \$20,000 through a civil forfeiture grant to support the campaign.
- ▶ ***Be More than a Bystander Campaign*** – Founding partners, the Government Canada, the B.C. government and the Encana Corporation, in partnership with the Ending Violence Association of BC and BC Lions, supported BC Lions players going into schools throughout the province to offer training to students that focused on violence against women and respectful relationships. Since 2012, more than 62,000 students have participated across 60 schools and our province has benefitted from more than 138 million impressions of the Be More Than A Bystander message via social and mainstream media. In 2014, 15,946 students from 20 schools participated in the training. In 2015, 17,196 students from 27 schools received training. In 2015, the program received a one-time-only grant of \$480,000. Since 2011, the B.C. government has provided approximately \$1.08 million for this award-winning initiative.
- ▶ ***#SaySomething Campaign*** – The B.C. government's 2015 social media and radio campaign focuses on the issue of domestic violence and is a call to action for everyone to share the responsibility of stopping violence against women. The campaign website provides information and resources under three main categories: "I need help," "Where to get help," and "I want to help," and includes animated videos, images and tweets. Information is available in Punjabi, Mandarin, Cantonese, and English. In 2015, the Facebook campaign delivered over 5.5 million impressions to more than one million individuals, has generated over 1.4 million engagements with the content (likes/comments/shares), and the campaign videos have been watched more than 1.4 million times.

- ▶ **VictimLink BC Campaign** – To promote awareness of VictimLink BC, a toll-free, confidential, 24/7 help and information line, government placed advertisements in rural B.C. newspapers, on Facebook and Google, and ran radio public service announcements. There were 8,176 visits to the VictimLink BC website during the week of the 2014 spring campaign, more than 14 times the number of visits over the previous week and more than 19 times the weekly average of visits since May 2012. VictimLink BC provides services in more than 110 languages, including 17 North American Aboriginal languages.
- ▶ The VictimLink BC awareness campaign supports recent initiatives to provide multi-lingual information related to domestic violence to diverse populations by translating several publications into Chinese, Punjabi and French, including the **For Your Protection: Peace Bonds and Family Law Protection Orders pamphlet**, as well as **Help Starts Here**, a series of resources for victims of crime. Victim Impact Statement Forms and Guides are also available in nine additional languages: Chinese, Filipino, French, Hindi, Korean, Persian, Punjabi, Spanish and Vietnamese.
- ▶ Government increased accessibility to the **Seniors Abuse and Information Line (SAIL)** through public awareness initiatives, and increased hours and capacity for the phone line. The number of calls increased from 264 in March 2014 to 322 calls in March 2015. SAIL provides language interpretation services in more than 110 languages upon request, including 17 North American Aboriginal languages.
- ▶ Government continues to support the **Roots and Seeds of Empathy** prevention programs in early childhood settings and kindergarten classrooms. To date, schools have delivered Roots of Empathy programs in 345 school-based settings, reaching 8,625 students in 71.6% of the province's school districts. Seeds of Empathy programs have been delivered in 51 preschool settings, 39% of which were in Aboriginal centres, reaching approximately 816 children. These programs include professional development and training instructors and program staff.
- ▶ **PODV's website** was updated to promote and enhance public education materials and improve access to information about domestic violence and the many supports and services that are available. Between January 1, 2014 and March 31, 2015, the website had nearly 5,000 views.
- ▶ Government representatives participated in and supported several international anti-violence public awareness campaigns, including **1 Billion Rising** and the **UN Women's Orange YOUR Neighbourhood**.

**PAUL LACERTE,  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR –  
BC Association of Aboriginal  
Friendship Centres &  
Founder - Moose Hide  
Campaign**

*“Violence committed against our Aboriginal women and children is a deeply complex issue in our communities and has long-lasting effects and devastating consequences for too many of our families. The BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres acknowledges the Province of B.C.'s efforts and the work of the Provincial Office of Domestic Violence in addressing the issue of domestic violence. The three-year Provincial Domestic Violence Plan, released in 2014, included an Aboriginal-specific lens. We appreciate the acknowledgement that changing how we approach domestic violence – and working together to create long-lasting, systemic change – must be done with cultural understanding and safety for the health and wellness of our Aboriginal communities.”*

## RESPONSE AREAS

### WHAT WE SAID WE WILL DO

*Cross-ministry review, revision and enhancement of government policies and resources to ensure consistent responses to domestic violence situations involving survivors, children and families;*

.....  
*Cross-ministry improvements to programs addressing domestic violence and ensured flexibility for culturally responsive and holistic approaches to domestic violence; and*

.....  
*Increase availability of settlement sector tools and resources to enhance recognition, risk assessment, reporting and responding to domestic violence among diverse*

## 2 | SUPPORTS AND SERVICES FOR SURVIVORS

### HIGHLIGHTS OF WHAT WE DID

- ▶ *The Child, Family and Community Service Act* (CFCSA) domestic violence amendments came into effect on June 1, 2014 and set out when a child is in need of protection. The CFCSA amendments were in response to recommendations made by the Representative for Children and Youth.
- ▶ All families, including those in remote, rural Aboriginal communities, have access to child protection mediation services. As of April 2015, there were 62 specially qualified mediators on the *Child Protection Mediation Program* (CPMP) roster, 19 of which self-identify as Aboriginal (First Nations, Inuit or Métis). The CPMP completes over 1,100 mediations a year and applies a domestic violence lens in all its cases.
- ▶ A cross-ministry working group continues to monitor, analyze and recommend improvements to the Protection Order system introduced with the implementation of the *Family Law Act*.
- ▶ A cross-ministry working group consisting of representatives from government and the First Nations Leadership Council continue to develop an approach to implementing the *Family Homes on Reserve and Matrimonial Interests and Real Property Act* that addresses the legislative gap related to real property located on Reserves after the breakdown of a relationship.
- ▶ The *Homeless Prevention Program* (HPP), introduced in 2014, is aimed at providing rent-supplements to people at risk of homelessness. These supplements help people to access rental housing in the private market. Women who have experienced violence or are at risk of violence are one of the groups identified for the program. As of March 31, 2015, 558 of the 1,716 HPP rent-supplement recipients were primarily identified as women fleeing violence.
- ▶ Government funded the BC Society of Transition Houses (BCSTH) and the Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Services Agencies of BC (AMSSA) to produce the *Knowledge Exchange Toolkit*, a training and self-assessment resource to help settlement workers and other professionals respond to immigrant and refugee families affected by domestic violence. The toolkit was distributed to settlement agencies across B.C.



- ▶ Government provided a grant to BCSTH to develop a service delivery model to better support Aboriginal women and their children to access women's transition housing and support programs. The new model is being piloted in three communities: Victoria, Penticton and Burns Lake.
- ▶ A multi-sector Council to Reduce Elder Abuse (CREA) was established to facilitate the implementation of British Columbia's *Together to Reduce Elder Abuse – B.C.'s Strategy (TREA Strategy)*, launched in 2013. Through partnerships, TREA addresses elder abuse, including domestic violence directed at older adults. In 2015, TREA awarded capacity-building grants to 14 organizations, working in partnership to build community awareness, enhance training, and improve their response to elder abuse.
- ▶ B.C.'s five regional health authorities have implemented the *Nurse-Family Partnership Program*, which provides young, disadvantaged first-time moms with knowledge and support throughout their pregnancy, continuing until their children reach age two. Nurses receive specialized education, including recognizing and responding to domestic violence. All clients are offered a universal safety assessment and tailored intervention from the nurse if exposure to current or past intimate partner violence is disclosed. Researchers at Simon Fraser University, the University of Victoria and McMaster University are conducting a scientific evaluation to determine how effectively the US-developed Nurse-Family Partnership Program works in B.C.



## SHASHI ASSANAND, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

– Vancouver and Lower  
Mainland Multicultural  
Family Support Services  
(VLMFSS)

*“With the establishment of the Provincial Office of Domestic Violence (PODV), the Province has taken a very progressive step in focusing on the very difficult issue of domestic violence throughout B.C. Their work in bringing together all the players across the different ministries and communities will certainly help develop appropriate solutions for this very pervasive issue. VLMFSS sees that PODV has become a central focal point in bringing together all stakeholders in addressing the challenges of domestic violence, developing a balanced plan and creating systemic changes. With changing trends in immigration, it is our belief that we will need to continue to collaborate and invest more resources into the key elements – such as education, awareness, prevention and service – to support immigrants/refugees families. VLMFSS looks forward to working with the Province and PODV in this regard.”*

## RESPONSE AREAS

### WHAT WE SAID WE WILL DO

*Work with the judiciary and other justice system partners to explore the development of a framework for domestic violence courts;*

.....  
*Identify and implement improvements in communications between police and Crown counsel at the charge assessment stage;*

.....  
*Support Legal Services Society (LSS) to expand the family legal aid services it provides and to test expanded criminal duty counsel; and*

.....  
*In collaboration with Federal/Provincial/Territorial colleagues release a research report on issues, challenges as well as promising practices related to the intersections of the family and criminal justice systems.*

## 3 | JUSTICE SYSTEM RESPONSE

### HIGHLIGHTS OF WHAT WE DID

- ▶ A comprehensive review of domestic violence court processes helped inform the development of a *Framework for Domestic Violence Courts in British Columbia*. The Framework seeks to articulate a set of consistent, evidence-based key principles and critical components that should be considered prior to implementation of specialized domestic violence court processes in B.C.
- ▶ A specialized court strategy is also being finalized which aligns with and builds from the findings of the Framework. The strategy will provide an evidence-based, integrated and strategic approach for existing and future specialized courts in the province.
- ▶ There are currently four courts in B.C. with domestic violence court processes in place: Kelowna, Penticton, Duncan, and Nanaimo.
- ▶ To improve communication between police and Crown Counsel at the charge assessment stage, disclosure training materials were produced and distributed to police across the province. Also introduced was a Quality Control Standard requiring strict adherence to a Memorandum of Understanding on Disclosure between the Prosecution Service and Police in British Columbia. It is anticipated that both enhanced police awareness and adherence to the disclosure enforcement quality control standard training will result in a more rigorous disclosure process, resulting in more complete and timely charge assessments.
- ▶ Starting in 2014/15, the Legal Services Society (LSS) will receive \$2 million per year for three years to support five pilot projects aimed at enhancing legal aid services to improve access to justice in family, criminal and child protection law matters. This brings the government's total legal aid commitment to \$74.6 million in 2015/16. The pilots were developed collaboratively with LSS, government and other justice sector partners, such as Mediate B.C. Access to justice is being improved through enhanced early legal advice, coaching in self-representation, and out-of-court resolution services.

- ▶ The B.C. government – through Family Justice Counsellors (FJs) – provides dispute resolution services to families undergoing separation and divorce through 21 Family Justice Centre and three Justice Access Centres. Section 10 of the Family Law Act provides authority for FJs to offer assistance to clients. FJs assist clients when violence is an issue or there are safety concerns. Assessing for domestic violence and power imbalance in relationships is a critical component of their dispute resolution services.
- ▶ **B.C.'s 4th Justice Summit** brought together over 80 leaders from the judiciary, legal profession, police agencies, victim services, corrections, First Nations groups, the academic community, provincial government and community and advocacy organizations, including those working with multicultural populations and people with disabilities. This diverse group of participants identified key ways to address issues related to domestic and sexual violence.
- ▶ B.C. government representatives, along with officials from the Department of Justice Canada, were part of a Federal-Provincial-Territorial (FPT) ad hoc working group that was tasked with developing a report looking at issues and challenges (as well as promising practices) related to the intersections of the family and criminal justice systems. The resulting report was: ***Making the Links in Family Violence Cases: Collaboration among the Family, Child Protection and Criminal Justice Systems.***

**DEPUTY CHIEF SCOTT GREEN** – *Saanich Police Department*

*“Through my current position, membership with the BC Association of Chiefs of Police (BCACP), and representing the BCACP on the Community Coordination for Women’s Safety (CCWS) Working Group, I’ve had first-hand exposure to the Provincial Office of Domestic Violence (PODV). My experience in working with PODV has been highly beneficial and demonstrative of the value in having a provincial government entity with a mandate that is specific to a critical public safety issue in our society: domestic violence. PODV plays a key role in systemic advocacy and relationship building with police, government entities, non-profits, the public, and those most impacted by domestic violence. Just as it takes a community to raise a child, it takes a community to support, assist, and problem solve the issue of domestic violence to ensure all of us do everything within our power and authority to help every person affected by domestic violence. Everyone has the right to be safe. PODV is a critical partner in all our efforts to make this a reality.”*

## RESPONSE AREAS

### WHAT WE SAID WE WILL DO

*Work with the Community Coordination for Women's Safety (CCWS) program to provide ongoing support for initiatives across the province, including the development of local Violence Against Women in Relationships (VAWIR) committees and Interagency Case Assessment Teams (ICATs), targeting highest risk domestic violence cases; and*

.....  
*Expand provincial pilot projects that will help health and social services staff identify, as early as possible, parents with serious untreated mental illness, problematic substance use and/or risk of domestic violence.*

## 4 | COORDINATION, INFORMATION SHARING AND REFERRAL

### HIGHLIGHTS OF WHAT WE DID

- ▶ For a number of years, community organizations and the B.C. government have been involved in the development of violence against women coordination initiatives. In 2014/15, **CCWS** continued to work with communities to support the development of local coordination initiatives, including the development of local VAWIR/Domestic Violence committees and **Interagency Case Assessment Teams** (ICATs) to respond to highest risk domestic violence cases.
- ▶ ICATs are made up of responders to high-risk domestic violence and often include (but are not limited to) a representative from police agencies, community-based victim services, police-based victim services, child welfare agencies, health, Aboriginal service providers, and other agencies that respond to domestic violence. ICATs work to appropriately share information through coordinated risk identification, management and safety planning.
- ▶ As of March 31, 2015, there are 24 active ICATs, and a number of others under development, in communities across B.C. They are usually located in smaller communities that do not have the same volume of domestic violence cases as urban centres. The government provides funding to support CCWS in working with these ICATs as they develop.
- ▶ In 2014, the *Safe Relationships, Safe Children* (SRSC) initiative was expanded from two pilot sites to 20 locations, some involving multiple communities. The goal for this initiative is to strengthen health-care and child-service systems through the identification of risks and increased responsiveness to the needs of children and families affected by parental mental health problems/challenges, problematic substance use and/or intimate partner violence.



Consultation with government, health authority and community partners, First Nations and Aboriginal individuals, as well as the First Nations Health Authority and other relevant Aboriginal stakeholders including Delegated Aboriginal Agencies, has occurred and will continue as the project moves forward. A [Guide to Enhance Practice](#) (for service providers) and a [Community Implementation Toolkit](#) (to support community planning) have been developed to support phased implementation of this initiative and online training modules are being developed for service providers.

- ▶ The Protection Order Registry (POR) is a confidential database containing all civil and criminal protection orders issued in B.C. The goal of the POR is to help reduce violence against women, vulnerable adults, youth and children by supporting the enforcement of civil and criminal protection orders. In 2014, an electronic access agreement was signed, allowing government partners to provide select MCFD staff to access protection orders from the POR. This will enhance child protection risk assessments and safety planning.
- ▶ In December 2014, government updated the [Persons Fleeing Abuse Policy](#) to clarify that women fleeing abuse and residing in a transition home are eligible to request a moving supplement.
- ▶ Between January and March 2015, government received 1,408 new applications for assistance from people who identified as fleeing abuse.
- ▶ In 2014, organizations received over \$1 million in civil forfeiture funding to support existing and new Domestic Violence Units (DVUs) in the province. DVUs generally bring police investigators, community-based victim services, and child protection workers together in one location to coordinate and collaborate on the highest risk domestic violence cases. In 2014/15, the total number of DVUs increased from four to seven, and DVUs are now located in Abbotsford, Greater Victoria, New Westminster, Surrey, Vancouver, Kelowna and Nanaimo.

**CATHERINE TALBOTT,  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**  
– BC Society of  
Transition Houses

*“The Provincial Office of Domestic Violence (PODV), since its inception, has worked extensively to increase collaboration between available supports and services for women and children impacted by violence. Working together leads to better outcomes for everyone and an awareness of potential gaps in service and supports that require solutions. As part of PODV’s coordination of services, one theme focuses on anti-violence public awareness and prevention activities. BCSTH views this as a valued key element in the PODV three-year plan as we know in this sector that prevention reduces future offending and victimization. BCSTH looks forward to a continued relationship with PODV through our collaborative work.”*

## RESPONSE AREAS

### WHAT WE SAID WE WILL DO...

.....  
*Partner with academic institutions that engage in domestic violence research;*

.....  
*Develop an evaluation framework for the provincial plan using cross jurisdictional data to compare and ensure effectiveness of BC's response; and*

.....  
*Develop cultural awareness and sensitivity training for police officers in the province, particularly related to the cultural implications in a range of settings including family violence, childhood sexual exploitation, and violence against women in the sex trade.*

## 5 | RESEARCH, TRAINING AND EVALUATION

### HIGHLIGHTS OF WHAT WE DID

The B.C. government supports and promotes partnerships with academic institutions to share their latest research and help promote evidence-based policies and best practices to strengthen the provincial response to domestic violence.

- ▶ PODV has established formal partnerships with various academic institutions including, the University of British Columbia, the University of Victoria, Simon Fraser University, Kwantlen Polytechnic University, and Western University.
- ▶ PODV, in partnership with Kwantlen Polytechnic University, developed an evaluation framework. Moving forward, the evaluation framework and cross-jurisdictional data will support the continued assessment of the Provincial Domestic Violence Plan's progress.
- ▶ Online Domestic Violence: *Safety Planning Training* is available for support workers in victim services, violence against women, and transition house programs. The training includes a safety planning resource guide that has a specific section on women with disabilities. To date, 1,177 front-line staff at the Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation have completed this training.
- ▶ The majority of MCFD staff (1,654) received domestic violence online training in 2013-2014. Also, between April 2014 – March 2015, 156 MCFD staff and 36 Delegated Aboriginal Agency (DAA) staff completed the training. Joint classroom training on the amendments to the CFCSA began in spring 2014 for MCFD, DAA staff and anti-violence partners. A total of 299 MCFD staff, 25 DAA staff, and 343 anti-violence sector staff have taken this training to date.
- ▶ Since 2014, mandatory training for family dispute resolution professionals includes how to identify, screen for, and manage family violence or power imbalances to determine if a resolution process is appropriate, and what type of process should be pursued.

- ▶ The Justice Institute of BC, the Continuing Legal Education Society and other partner organizations provided family law practitioners with training on the *Family Law Act*.
- ▶ In 2014/15, more than 15 ICAT training sessions were completed in a number of communities including: Clearwater, Courtney/Comox, Grand Forks, Haida Gwaii, Kamloops, Kelowna, Kitimat, Langley, New Hazelton, Port Alberni, Prince Rupert/Nass Valley, Revelstoke, Smithers and Vancouver.
- ▶ Government completed the launch and implementation of the second phase of online domestic violence training for all police in B.C. This training focused on assessing domestic violence risks and safety planning, with an emphasis on applying these skills in a multicultural context. The training program was launched along with a set of templates designed to put the training into practice and to standardize how police investigate and report domestic violence risk factors. The training has now been taken by all front-line police, and the templates are being used across B.C.
- ▶ To date, more than 2,500 paramedics in B.C. completed an online domestic violence course.
- ▶ All 68 Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) nurses, 10 supervisors, and 1 provincial coordinator have taken intimate partner violence education.
- ▶ Over 500 front-line victim support workers and related staff completed the Provincial Health Authority's (PHSA) core Indigenous Cultural Competency (ICC) training. In a survey of the participants, 85% said the course changed the way they think about Aboriginal peoples, while more than 90% said this would positively affect their day-to-day work and that they would use the information in their personal life as well.
- ▶ Work is underway to develop justice-specific modules within the Indigenous Cultural Competency (ICC) training course, and the curriculum will include domestic violence content.
- ▶ **B.C.'s ERASE Strategy** (Expect Respect and a Safe Education) includes a five-year, multi-level training program for educators and community partners to help them proactively identify and address bullying and undertake threat assessments. As part of the training, educators learn how to identify signs of mental health and domestic violence issues.

**DR. BALBIR KAUR  
GURM, NURSING  
FACULTY – KWANTLEN  
POLYTECHNIC  
UNIVERSITY AND  
FACILITATOR – *Network  
to Eliminate Violence in  
Relationships (NEVR)***

*“Collaboration initiatives on wicked social problems, such as domestic violence (DV), are critical as they are an enormous health problem that costs Canadians over \$10 billion a year. DV cannot be addressed by any one group alone; therefore, it is imperative that professionals, agencies and communities work together. NEVR was founded to provide such a forum for working together, and the Provincial Office of Domestic Violence (PODV) has been a committed partner. NEVR and PODV have partnered on a number of research and training initiatives, including sponsoring Kwantlen Polytechnic University nursing students to create a domestic violence toolkit for health professionals. PODV's commitment in this area, and their desire to work closely with academic institutions, has been critical to their success.”*

**TRACY PORTEOUS,**  
**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR –**  
*Ending Violence Association*  
*of B.C.*

*“Since the Provincial Office of Domestic Violence was started, the Ending Violence Association of BC has been working very closely with the leadership and staff in that office on a number of fronts. I am very pleased to report that we find them engaged, very alive to the issues facing women experiencing domestic violence, and always using their position in government to advance the issues forward. That work is not always visible, but I can attest to their responsiveness, their intelligence and their commitment. They are actively involved in our Interagency Case Assessment Team (ICAT) development, in our work to ensure communities are using a coordinated, collaborative approach to increasing safety for women and children, and they assist us with access to various ministerial initiatives where we deem it important for more community input. Our hat is off to them!”*

## MOVING FORWARD

Minister of Children and Family Development Stephanie Cadieux, during the release of the *Provincial Domestic Violence Plan* stated: *“Our three-year Provincial Domestic Violence Plan will mean better direct service delivery for children, survivors and perpetrators of domestic violence... This plan is the next essential step as we continue to build on the good work we’re doing in collaboration with the community anti-violence sector to make B.C. a safer place for women and families.”*

Multi-sector partners are committed to working together to end domestic violence in B.C. On June 13, 2014, Aboriginal leadership and the Province of British Columbia signed a *Memorandum of Understanding Regarding Stopping Violence Aboriginal Women and Girls* (MOU). The MOU signatories developed an MOU Joint Partners’ Table which facilitates collaboration between the MOU signatories on priorities, implementation principles, intended outcomes, and actions needed to stop violence against Aboriginal women and girls. Culturally responsive and holistic responses are ensured through government’s work with First Nations and Métis communities and Aboriginal organizations, as well as through the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation’s *Minister’s Advisory Council on Aboriginal Women* (MACAW). Reports such as, the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s “Calls to Action” Report (2015)* (TRC) continue to guide the province’s work to address domestic violence.

Work on the Year 2 and 3 commitments outlined in the plan are well underway. Multi-sector partners are committed and working together on a number of initiatives to strengthen B.C.’s response to ending domestic violence. On December 9-10, 2015 hundreds of multi-sector professionals from around the province will gather in Vancouver to participate in a training forum – *TOGETHER! BC Collaborates to Stop Sexual & Domestic Violence*. The event is hosted by the BC Association of Chiefs of Police, BC Society of Transition Houses, Ending Violence Association of BC, Government of B.C., Police Victim Services of BC, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. This collaborative training forum will be the first of its kind in B.C.’s history.

Domestic violence is a complex social issue that impacts individuals, families and communities. It is not a private matter or a women’s only issue. It’s everyone’s issue, and it requires all of us to be involved in ending domestic violence.



# #SaySomething

WWW.SAYSOMETHINGBC.CA

## TAKE ACTION

*Spread the word through the power of social media*



