



36th Annual Victim Assistance Fund Report 2024-2025

Victims Assistance Committee of the
Northwest Territories

THE HONOURABLE JAY MACDONALD
MINISTER OF JUSTICE

Dear Minister Macdonald:

Victims Assistance Committee Annual Report

The Victims Assistance Committee would like to present the 36th Annual Report for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025, thereby meeting the legislative requirement as per section 10(1) of the Northwest Territories *Victims of Crime Act*. The committee members would like to thank you for your ongoing support of the Committee over this last year.

An element of the Committee mandate is to ensure the Victims Assistance Fund provides services and supports that benefit victims of crime across the NWT. The funding is allocated for a variety of projects and programs that include training for services provider; supports to improve services for victims/survivors of crime and their families; and public awareness of the needs and rights of victims under the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights.

This report provides information on the Legislation guiding the Fund, Committee membership, and highlights from the 2024-2025 fiscal year including information on meetings, a Statement of Revenues and Expenditures and resulting activities supported by the disbursements.

The Committee appreciates your continued support in raising public awareness about the needs and rights of victims of crime, to lessen the effects of crime on victims and their families in the Northwest Territories.

Sincerely,



Gladys MacPherson
Chair,
Victim Assistance Committee

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NWT Victims Assistance Committee – Legislation

NWT VICTIMS OF CRIME ACT – R.S.N.W.T. 1988, c.9 (Supp.) in force April 1, 1989

The Northwest Territories (NWT) *Victims of Crime Act* establishes the Victims Assistance Fund (VAF) and provides for the appointment of a Victims Assistance Committee (VAC).

Definition of “victims” under the *Victims of Crime Act*:

“Victims” means persons who, individually or collectively, have suffered harm, including:

- (a) physical or mental injury,
- (b) emotional suffering,
- (c) economic loss, or
- (d) substantial impairment of their fundamental rights, through acts or omissions that are in violation of criminal laws or laws that have penal consequences, regardless of whether the perpetrator is identified, apprehended, prosecuted or convicted, and includes persons who have suffered harm in intervening to assist victims in distress or to prevent victimization and, where appropriate, the immediate family or dependants of the direct victims.

Victims Assistance Fund

The Victims Assistance Fund (VAF) is a special-purpose fund established by subsection 11(1) of the NWT *Victims of Crime Act* with revenue from victim fine surcharges from territorial and federal courts. The VAF supports community-based projects and activities that support victims of crime including:

- Training to sensitize and inform community resource workers about the needs and circumstances of victims of crime;
- Direct services that assist victims through crisis response, personal support, follow-up assistance, information, and referrals;
- Public awareness and information on the rights and responsibilities of victims, available services, the criminal justice system and its procedures, and any other issues relating to victims of crime;
- Research into the needs and concerns of victims;
- Distribution of victim services information; and,
- Promotion of services for victims.

The VAF does not provide direct financial compensation to individual victims or their families and does not consider funding proposals from private businesses. As this is a revolving fund based on victim of crime surcharges from the NWT and Federal Courts, the amounts vary, and available funds are sometimes limited.

Victims Assistance Committee

The NWT *Victims of Crime Act* establishes the three-member advisory Victims Assistance Committee (VAC) appointed by the Minister of Justice and provides for three-year term appointments of Committee members (section 2(2)), as well as the designation of the Chairperson (section 3).

The Committee has a responsibility to promote:

- courteous and compassionate treatment of victims;
- redress (restitution) for victims for the harm that they have suffered;
- information to a victim about:
 - the progress of the prosecution of the offence in which he or she was a victim,
 - the role of the victim in the court proceeding,
- available social, legal, medical and mental health services and how to access them, and
- reporting the crime and co-operating with law enforcement agencies;
- assistance to victims in bringing their views and concerns to the attention of the court;
- measures to minimize inconvenience to victims and to ensure the safety of victims
- training for police, health, social service and other personnel as to the needs and concerns of victims; and
- research about services to victims and the needs and concerns of victims;
- making recommendations to the Minister on:
 - disbursements from the Victims Assistance Fund;
 - the development of policies respecting services to victims; and
 - any other matter that the Minister may refer to the Committee
 - making an annual report of Committee activities

The Committee's objective is to support comprehensive community services including, but not limited to, victim support, information and assistance and training in best practices of staff and/or volunteers in how to best meet the needs of victims.

The committee supports innovative and community-based workshops, events, capacity building and projects to provide support to victims of crime and to raise awareness in the community of the impact of crime on victims.

Highlights from Committee Meetings

Committee members continue to be concerned with the many challenges Northerners and Northern communities are faced with. The high cost of living, housing and food insecurity continue to be a concern, particularly with individuals facing family and intimate partner violence. These individuals often opt to stay in unhealthy relationships rather than leave due to these noted challenges.

For many remote northern communities, accessibility to emergency shelter continues to be a barrier. Some communities do not have emergency shelters and transportation to one can be challenging. Individuals wanting to flee family/ intimate partner violence, will often need to manage unsafe situations until they are able to find room at a shelter and can arrange transportation out.

Committee members have also expressed wanting to have more frequent meetings to share statistical information collected through the Victim Services programs. This would assist in addressing gaps in service, determine what types of supportive programming may be needed through the Victim Assistance Funding and would reassure what types of programming is going well.

Committee members met four times during the 2024-2025 fiscal year. Factors that limited meetings this year included a change of VAC Administrators from the Department of Justice. The NWT Victim Services Coordinator provides the administrative support to the committee. The Territories' historic fire season which resulted in several community evacuations also limited meetings. The VAC was able to meet in person this year in January 2025. Despite these challenges, the committee was able to meet several times through out the year to review and approve proposals and continue discussions about the many concerns brought forward from past meetings. Committee members feel many of these are still very relevant.

The mandate of the Committee is broad enough to meeting the needs of victims/survivors of crime across the NWT. Each year organizations and non-profits use the funding to benefit all NWT communities. The Victims Assistance Funding is reaching many NWT communities. The most common challenge in submitting a proposal is the capacity of organizations within communities. They are aware various funding opportunities are available from government and non-government agencies. The reluctance to submit a proposal comes from this lack of capacity. The same community organizations step up to do the work year after year, apply for funding, plan, organize and preparing all the reporting. These organizations are usually mandated to provide support NWT wide focused on initiatives related to the same concerns for victims/survivors that the Victim Assistance Fund supports. These same organizations have limited budgets, limited staff and volunteers are over extended. Accessing funding may not be the issue but community capacity may be.

The committee continues to support former members to engage community members on projects such as those listed below.

The challenges facing victims of crime in the Northwest Territories:

- Colonization
- Legacy of Residential School
- Lateral violence and bullying in organizations and communities across the NWT
- The agencies and social services available to victims are not working for the people who need it most.
- Law / Justice systems (over representation of Indigenous people in the Justice system; not easy to navigate)

Some additional concerns brought forward by committee members in the past, but members still feel strongly about are:

- Helping youth and adults understand the meaning and feeling of a healthy relationship and supporting initiatives which allow for their development. This is just one strategy to help address the issue of intimate partner and family violence. It may be helpful to have programs that address gender-specific issues, and this is a further avenue of exploration for the committee and community groups.
- The question of how do we build a society that is responsive to the historic trauma to ensure future generations are given the traditional knowledge of the past to carry with pride and honour?
- How can we build a comprehensive picture of the services available throughout the NWT for survivors of crime, and plan for improvements where gaps are identified?

Committee members continue to engage with communities in their daily work and lives to better understand issues facing victims/survivors of crime across the Northwest Territories. It's good to see proposals that include cultural awareness within their planned activities.

Bringing people together to connect with their communities especially involving a traditional way of life has great healing and positive mental health benefits. Community people enjoy this and it's a great way to support knowledge sharing which is commonly referred to as "healing and learning on the land" or elders mentoring youth and community members.

This does not mean that our population is without prejudices. Schools and most agencies take any opportunity to promote healthy safe communities that celebrate diversity.

Committee Members and Recruitment

This year, the Victim Assistance Committee is made up of Gladys MacPherson, member and Chair representing her home community of Fort Smith, Janine Harvey of Ulukhaktok and Graham Arts of Yellowknife.

Victims' Assistance Committee (VAC) Members Appointment Detail:

Member	Appointed	Term Ends
Gladys MacPherson Fort Smith, NT Chair – Active Member - Active	8 May 2024 Appointed as of: May 8, 2024, for a 3- year term	Ends: 7 May 2027
Janine Harvey Ulukhaktok, NT Member - Active	15 October 2023 Appointed as of: October 15, 2023, for a 3-year term	Ends: 14 October 2026
Graham Arts Yellowknife, NT Member - Active	15 October 2023 Appointed as of: October 15, 2023, for a 3-year term	Ends: 14 October 2026

Appendix A - Statement of Revenues & Expenditures

Programs funded this past year (2024-2025):

1. Status of Women Council of the NWT
2024 Family Violence Prevention Month - **\$45,000.00**
2. Status of Women Council of the NWT
Shine the Light Campaign & 16 Days of Activism - **\$10,000**

Appendix A - Statement of Revenues & Expenditures

April 1, 2024 – March 31, 2025

Revenue	Amount
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Victim Fine Surcharges – Territorial/Federal – Fund 19

Revenues

Opening Balance April 2024	\$ 238,705.83
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Surcharge - Receipts	\$ 102,080.70
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Interest Accrued	\$ 14,433.30
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Total Revenues	\$ 116,514.00
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Expenses

Contributions Issued (2024-25)	\$ 55,000.00
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Total Disbursements	\$ 50,071.00
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ENDING Balance	\$305,148.83
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Appendix B - Statement of Disbursements

April 1, 2024 – March 31, 2025

The Victims' Assistance Fund continues to support community initiatives that directly benefit victims of crime and their families and communities through:

- **Projects** - various projects, programs, public promotion/awareness, activities and events;
- **Research & Training** - the participation of Victim Services providers and justice partners in research projects, training, conferences and knowledge exchanges to better meet the diverse needs and rights of victims of crime and their families; and
- **Support and Services to Victims in the NWT** - promotion and delivery of services to victims of crime across the NWT.

Disbursements from the Victims Assistance Fund in 2023 - 24 totalled \$ 130,300.00. The following summarizes the project approved by the VAC by each funding category.

Support and Services to Victims in the NWT:

Public Information/Awareness/Promotion:

1. Status of Women Council of the NWT
Family Violence Prevention Month – Community Grants **\$45,000.00**

The Status of Women Council of the NWT have been one of the lead organizations working with multiple community partners throughout the Northwest Territories to hold and support Family Violence Awareness Month events.

This years Family Violence Prevention events took place in the month of November 2024. Funding for this project supported partners in fourteen (14) communities to host 18 events in their own communities. These events focused on multiple demographics including youth, adults, and entire communities with the theme of "Come Together, Act Now". Local activities ranged from craft nights to family movie nights, community breakfasts, community skidoo rally, sharing circles, elder abuse information sessions, essay contest, family game nights and on the land activities.

Communities eagerly awaited these grants to assist in administering their own activities and events to promote Family Violence Prevention as this has been an annual funding opportunity for many years that has reportedly had a great impact on developing locally informed strategies to raise awareness of this important issue across the NWT.

2. Status of Women Council of the NWT

Shine the Light and 16 Days of Activism - **\$10,000.00**

The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence is a global campaign that was observed from November 25 to December 10, 2024. This campaign is aimed at raising awareness and advocating for the prevention of violence against women and girls.

The Shine the Light campaign, launched in 2010, focuses on raising awareness about violence against women and girls by encouraging local community organizations to illuminate landmarks and buildings in purple on November 1st, demonstrating support for women and girls impacted by violence.

The Status of Women's Council of the NWT hosted an open mic night on November 25th to kick off the 16 Day of Activism campaign which was followed by a 16-day communications campaign through social media and local radio ads. Each day of the campaign highlighted a relevant topic relating to GBV, such as policy change, mental health supports, consent, community effort, bystander intervention and the disproportionate amount of violence in Canada faced by Indigenous women and girls. The campaign shared important resources and information supporting survivors of gender-based violence and promoting community based allyship resources. The campaign concluded on December 10, International Human Rights Day, highlighting the importance of ongoing action of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) recommendations.

The Status of Women's Council worked with organizations across the NWT for the Shine the Light campaign to have various landmark lit up with purple lights to signify solidarity with women and girls impacted by violence. The Legislative Assembly was one of the landmarks that shone purple lights for this campaign.

Appendix C – Submitting Proposals

Applications for either type of proposal can be submitted in fillable online documents that are on the website of the Department of Justice-Community Justice-Victim Services links below. Proposals can also be mailed through Canada Post or delivered in person to the Community Justice Division of the GNWT Department of Justice, 5th Floor, Courthouse in Yellowknife.

For more information on funding and the two types of proposals:

https://www.justice.gov.nt.ca/en/files/victims-assistance-fund/629-VictimAssistance_Brochure.pdf

<https://www.justice.gov.nt.ca/fr/fonds-daide-aux-victimes/>

For “Project, Event, Activity, or Program Applications”:

<https://www.justice.gov.nt.ca/en/files/victims-assistance-fund/VAF%20Project%20Application.pdf>

<https://www.justice.gov.nt.ca/fr/fichiers/fonds-daide-aux-victimes/Fonds%20d%27aide%20aux%20victimes%20Demande%20de%20projet.pdf>

For “Training & Development Applications”:

<https://www.justice.gov.nt.ca/en/files/victims-assistance-fund/VAF%20Training%20and%20Development%20Application.pdf>

<https://www.justice.gov.nt.ca/fr/fichiers/fonds-daide-aux-victimes/Fonds%20d%27aide%20aux%20victimes%20Demande%20de%20formation%20et%20perfectionnement.pdf>

Mailing Address:

Community Justice Division
5th Floor, Courthouse
4903 – 49th Street
PO Box 1320
Yellowknife NT, X1A 2L9

Contact Person for More Information:

Coordinator, NWT Victim Services
Community Justice Division, Department of Justice
Tel: 867-767-9261 ext. 82214 or Fax: 867-873-0199