**Understanding the needs of victims of crime and trauma**

***(press release)***

Crime significantly impacts many Canadians but it is less clear how to best help those who are the most affected.

In an attempt to better understand and address the needs of victims of crime and trauma, Bow Valley Victim Services (BVVSA), in conjunction with the Alberta Police Based Victim Services Association (APBVSA), is undertaking a new and ambitious study.

Beginning January 16, 2017, a questionnaire is now available for past victims of crime and trauma to complete.

Individuals, who at one time in their life were assisted by a police-based victim service program in Alberta, are being invited to complete this voluntary and anonymous questionnaire. The questionnaire can be accessed at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BVVS_VictimNeeds> or via the APBVSA home page at [*http://victimservicesalberta.com*](http://victimservicesalberta.com)

As this is the first study of this nature and scope to be conducted, Peter Quinn, executive director of BVVSA believes that by hearing directly from victims, service providers will better understand the needs of victims crime and trauma.

 *“The more people who are willing to complete this questionnaire, the better we will understand the needs of victims of crime and trauma, which in turn will help ensure victim service programs are providing appropriate and meaningful support to those who need our help,”* said Quinn.

In 2014, Stats Canada reported that 6.4 million criminal incidents occurred in Canada, directly affecting more than one in five Canadians aged 15 years and older, (approximately 5.6 million people). Their study goes on to report that:

 *“Criminal victimization has serious impacts on the well-being of victims, their families and friends, their community and on society as a whole (Justice Canada 2013). Impacts can be both direct and indirect and can include financial, physical, psychological as well as emotional consequences. Overall, crime can impact a community’s sense of well-being.”*

Despite understanding that crime can have a significant effect on all of us, for many years very little assistance was ever provided to people who were directly impacted by crime and trauma. In the 1970’s, this lack of support was slowly addressed by organizations such as the Calgary and Edmonton Police Services, who began to offer more assistance to victims of crime and trauma. Early programs such as these led to the development of the specialized police-based victim service units that we see today across both Alberta and North America.

Today, police-based victim service units in Alberta can be found in 153 regions and in the 2014/15 operational year, approximately 80,000 people were assisted by these programs.

Any questions regarding this study can be directed to Quinn at 403 760-0197 at Peter.G.Quinn@rcmp-grc.gc.ca