

RCMP



ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

SERVING THE POLICE COMMUNITY SINCE 1939

GAZETTE

**2018 MARCOM
GOLD AWARD
WINNER**



VOL. 81, NO. 3, 2019

CHANGES COMING
to print edition p.4

ONE STEP AHEAD INNOVATIVE IDEAS FOR POLICING SUCCESS

**PROJECT
COLLECTEUR**
GOING AFTER MONEY
LAUNDERERS P. 7

**EXTRA EYES
AND EARS**
VOLUNTEERS HELP RECOVER
STOLEN VEHICLES P. 8

**FOCUS ON
HEALTH**
WELL-BEING A PRIORITY FOR
CHILD EXPLOITATION UNITS P. 13

RCMP - GRC . GC . CA



Royal Canadian Mounted Police Gendarmerie royale du Canada

Canada

RCMP



ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

A UNIFORM WITH
YOUR NAME ON IT
IS WAITING FOR YOU



**BE READY FOR ACTION FROM
THE DAY YOU GRADUATE**

Once you've graduated from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Academy, you immediately start your career in policing.



rcmpcareers.ca



Royal Canadian Mounted Police Gendarmerie royale du Canada

Canada



7

COVER SECTION

- 7 RCMP uses new approach to catch money launderers
- 8 Volunteers help police recover stolen vehicles
- 9 Panel discussion: How can policing be more innovative?
- 12 Interactive robot reduces young victims' anxiety
- 13 Well-being a priority for child exploitation units
- 14 App to provide real-time view of operations
- 15 Unit offers rapid intelligence to responding police
- 16 Geographic profilers can help focus search for serial crimes
- 17 Program helps employees manage stress, perform better



12

DEPARTMENTS

- 4 Editorial message
- 5 News Notes
- 18 Just the Facts: Water safety
- 19 Detachment profile: Vernon North Okanagan tackles issues in busy region
- 20 Training: Crisis negotiators fine-tune skills each year
- 21 Ask an Expert: Telecomm operators ready when someone needs help
- 22 Last Page: Dive team recovers remains from 1959 plane crash



14



ON THE COVER:

Innovation in policing goes beyond science and technology. RCMP employees are coming up with smart solutions to improve their work, like the money laundering investigation pictured.

Photo: RCMP



22



SMART SOLUTIONS FOR EVERYDAY WORK

That's a brilliant idea. Why didn't we think of that sooner?

When we started to put together our issue on innovation, those two statements became our guide to choosing stories. Naturally, some of our content features new and emerging technology, but most stories go beyond science and tech to explore how RCMP employees are coming up with smart solutions to improve their work.

In our cover section, Patricia Vasylichuk highlights a new approach to fighting money laundering. In a takedown worthy of Hollywood, RCMP in Quebec cracked down on the people providing the laundering services to organized crime groups. As the story explains, one way to stop criminals from spending their dirty money is to hit those hired to clean it — while the cash is in their hands.

Paul Northcott writes about a program in Surrey, B.C., that uses the power of volunteers to help identify stolen vehicles. These extra sets of eyes and ears support officers by examining thousands of licence plates each month. Their efforts last year alone led to dozens of recovered vehicles and multiple arrests.

Investigations can be stressful, both for the victims involved and the officers working the cases.

In Red Deer, Alta., the RCMP's Victim Services Unit has taken the lead from the medical community by using an interactive robot to help young victims of crime. The robot is programmed to connect with children, tell them what to expect in court and offer age-appropriate strategies to help them relax.

For employees in the RCMP National Child Exploitation Crime Centre, regularly reviewing images and videos that portray the sexual abuse of children can take its toll. But new software that performs some of these tasks coupled with mental-health supports help employees cope.

RCMP Sgt. Marie-Josée McCool took it upon herself to create a method for officers and employees to keep calm and alert in stressful situations. The resilience program she developed helps people regulate their bodies and minds using rhythmic breath-

ing, a pulse sensor and an app.

Communication is a key aspect of police operations, especially when serious incidents are unfolding.

A new secure mobile application, known as the Android Team Awareness Kit, is being developed to give officers on the ground and at command centres a real-time view of operations. The technology will show officers' locations on multiple devices, even when they're not with their cars, and provide critical situational awareness.

There's no shortage of smart, resourceful police work going on. We look forward to sharing the next brilliant idea with you in our pages and online. ■

— Katherine Aldred

CHANGES TO PRINT MAGAZINE

Based on the results of the *Gazette* readership survey this past spring, we'll be making some changes to how we distribute the print magazine to employees.

While we are moving toward more online stories and digital products and away from printing, our RCMP readers have told us the print magazine still matters to them.

Starting July 1, 2019, we will reduce the number of print copies we send to most RCMP detachments and office buildings. Each location can request additional copies if needed by sending an email to gazette@rcmp-grc.gc.ca.

We will discontinue the free copies we send to national libraries.

Starting in 2020, we will also be printing magazines less frequently. But that doesn't mean there will be fewer stories.

We're proud to continue providing all our award-winning content on our website as well as online exclusives not available in print.

Readers and libraries can access PDF copies of current and past issues of *Gazette* magazine at Government of Canada Publications. Simply click on the year to view the issues published. ■

PUBLISHER: Kevin Fowler

EDITOR: Katherine Aldred

WRITERS: Paul Northcott, Travis Poland, Patricia Vasylichuk

WEB PUBLISHER: Richard Vieira

GRAPHIC DESIGN: Jennifer Wale, Samantha Clusiau-Lawlor

TRANSLATION: RCMP Translation Services

PRINTING: Performance Printing

The *Gazette* (ISSN 1196-6513) is published in English and French by the National Communication Services of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in Ottawa. The views expressed in any material published in the magazine or in its online version are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Cover design and contents are copyrighted and no part of this publication may be reproduced without written consent. Canada Post Publications Mail Agreement 40064068. The *Gazette* is published four (4) times a year and is issued free of charge on a limited basis to accredited police forces and agencies within the criminal justice system. Personal subscriptions are not available.


The *Gazette* welcomes contributions, letters, articles and comments in either official language. We reserve the right to edit for length, content and clarity. © 2019 RCMP.

HOW TO REACH US:

RCMP *Gazette*
73 Leikin Drive,
M8 Building, 1st Floor, Room 801
Ottawa, ON K1A 0R2
CANADA


Phone: 613-843-4570
E-mail: gazette@rcmp-grc.gc.ca
Internet: www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/gazette


STAY CONNECTED WITH THE RCMP

 Visit our website:
www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca

 Follow us on Facebook:
www.facebook.com/rcmpgrc

 Follow us on Twitter:
[@rcmpgrcpolice](https://twitter.com/rcmpgrcpolice) #rcmpgazette

 Watch us on YouTube:
www.youtube.com/rcmpgrcpolice

 Follow us on Instagram:
[@rcmpgrcpolice](https://www.instagram.com/rcmpgrcpolice)



PROGRAM PROMOTES SLEEP FOR OFFICERS' SUCCESS

By Paul Northcott

Sleep issues are always on the minds of Fiona Vincent and Dr. Charles Samuels, who say fatigue is one of the biggest health and safety challenges facing police officers.

The duo are working on an online training program for police about the importance of sleep management.

Vincent, who is manager of the Fitness and Health Promotion Unit for Saskatchewan RCMP, and Samuels, the medical director of the Calgary-based Centre for Sleep and Human Performance, want to make information about fatigue and the importance of sleep more available to police.

“Not everyone is in a position to be able to easily work towards making a positive change in their life behaviours,” says Vincent. “What we really want to get right is to provide information to members about the impact fatigue has on their performance and coping strategies.”

In 2016, Vincent and Samuels developed and delivered an in-person sleep-management program to hundreds of officers in Saskatchewan. It provided information on how to improve sleep, the importance of nutrition and exercise, measures to manage fatigue and the importance



Serge Guin, RCMP

New online training will help RCMP officers better manage their sleep so they can perform their work more effectively, whether during the day or night.

of daytime rest. Samuels says making positive changes involves finding a balance in behaviours.

For instance, he says caffeinated drinks may not be a wise choice before bed, but during the day could be helpful.

“Caffeine during the day can improve alertness and battle fatigue,” says Samuels.

He’s committed to supporting the needs of police and other first responders.

“The officer who works here (for the RCMP) can’t relax. They’re carrying a gun,”

says Samuels. “They don’t come into the same job each day where they can hang out at the office. They’re responsible for a lot of things in their community.”

The online program will be launched in Saskatchewan later in 2019 while a national release is planned for 2020.

Information about the Fatigue Management Training Program can be found on Saskatchewan RCMP’s internal website under employee tools and fitness and health promotion or on the sleep centre’s website. ■

POLICE ALERT RESIDENTS ABOUT LOCAL CRIMES

By Paul Northcott

The RCMP in Saskatchewan is using an online mass-notification tool that’s transforming how police interact with the public.

The Saskatchewan Crime Watch Advisory Network is a pilot project that provides RCMP officers with a fast and user-friendly platform to alert citizens once police become aware of suspicious or criminal activity.

“In rural areas police can’t be everywhere all the time,” says Supt. Kevin Kunezki. “So we had to come up with a unique way to improve how we police.”

S/Sgt. Devin Pugh, Saskatchewan RCMP South District Commander, says police previously used social media to connect with citizens.

“It was kind of like that game

(telephone) you played as a kid: messages were sent but sometimes the message got changed,” says Pugh.

Now, the public can go online to join the network, which is currently being funded by Saskatchewan’s Ministry of Corrections and Policing. Residents can select a method — text, email or a text-to-voice translation to a landline — to receive advisories and from which detachment.

Once alerts are sent, residents have the opportunity to notify police with any new information about the incident. As a result, police have recovered stolen property more quickly and calls for service that once took hours, have been resolved in minutes.

The network’s online platform also provides district commanders and managers with a more efficient way to request addi-

tional resources in urgent situations.

“Instead of hours making calls to find members during an emergency, we can find officers in minutes,” says Kunezki, who notes that aspect of the program has been available since January throughout Saskatchewan.

The network was first launched in southern Saskatchewan in March and then made available province-wide in April. Funding is in place until spring 2020 at which time Kunezki hopes it becomes permanent.

Residents can join the network by registering on the websites of the Saskatchewan Crime Watch Advisory Network, the Saskatchewan RCMP, the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association, and the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities. ■



RCMP PARTNERS WITH HIGH SCHOOL FOR CRISIS TRAINING

By Travis Poland

Vancouver Island RCMP officers went back to high school this March to refresh their crisis negotiation skills.

Officers from Vancouver Island's crisis negotiation team visited Royal Bay High School collaborating with drama students to conduct realistic training scenarios.

In the field, crisis negotiators work with incident commanders and the Emergency Response Team to help diffuse tense situations. Through active listening and communication, they seek peaceful outcomes during a crisis.

Cpl. Jill Swann, Vancouver Island crisis negotiation team co-ordinator, says the student actors never appeared nervous and were committed to their roles.

"They tried to make it tough and it can be very dynamic," she says.

Swann recalled one scene where the negotiators resolved a hostage situation but the student then made it a barricaded-person scenario.

"It keeps us on our toes and that's what we need in our training," says Swann, who's been with the RCMP for 22 years and a crisis negotiator since 2005.

During the training, negotiators sat with their backs to the stage listening and



Realistic training scenarios are among the best ways crisis negotiators can keep their skills sharp.

responding. This imitates actual negotiations where sometimes a telephone is the only way police can contact someone in crisis.

After a scenario, which could last up to 45 minutes, the negotiators and students would discuss the negotiators' responses including tone of voice and active listening.

Jackson Fraser, a Grade 12 student who participated in the training for the third

time, says the improvisation and character creation made it a great acting experience.

He says students were prepped by their teacher beforehand to try to make negotiators use different techniques and de-escalation methods.

Swann says working with high school students helps officers learn about the perspectives of young people and maintains open communication with youth. ■

RCMP WORKS WITH FRIENDS OF MURDERED TEEN

By Patricia Vasylchuk

Looking back at the two years before her friend was murdered by a jealous ex-boyfriend, Benisha Aujla can identify all the signs that Maple Batalia was in a violent relationship and needed help.

In September 2011, Batalia was stabbed then shot dead in a parking lot of her Surrey university campus, after trying to end the relationship. She was 19.

"We never thought it would lead to this, we just thought he was a jerk," says Aujla. "We didn't know what abuse could look like."

Eight years after the murder, Aujla is working with the RCMP in British Columbia to reduce intimate partner violence by

shedding light on the most common signs of a violent relationship.

Since last fall, Aujla and two other friends of Batalia's from high school have visited schools in B.C.'s Lower Mainland presenting Batalia's story as a cautionary tale to students in grades 8 to 12.

The hour-long presentation includes a talk on youth intimate partner violence, a documentary of the murder and a Q&A session with Batalia's friends and RCMP Cpl. Samara Bilmer.

"It can happen in dating relationships and it's not just a single punch to the face," says Bilmer, who works in the Serious Crimes Unit in Chilliwack, B.C.

During the session, Bilmer goes through *Criminal Code* offences presents them in a

way that's relevant to youth.

"They often don't know that doing anything that makes someone fearful can be a criminal act," she says.

The warnings signs of intimate partner violence in youth can be stalking, excessive phone calls or texts, breaking windows, keying a car, breaking a cellphone so it can't be used, or even threatening to kill themselves or a pet if their partner breaks up with them.

According to Aujla, Maple's boyfriend attempted suicide twice when she tried to leave him — once by driving his car into a pole and another time by overdosing on medication.

It's important to get help as soon as possible because incidents often become more severe each time, according to Bilmer. ■

FOLLOWING BAGS OF CASH

RCMP USES NEW APPROACH TO CATCH MONEY LAUNDERERS

By Patricia Vasylchuk

In a takedown worthy of Hollywood, the RCMP followed suitcases filled with cash to dismantle one of the biggest money-laundering networks in Canada. It's not the traditional way to investigate dirty money, but it's paying off.

Last February, the Integrated Proceeds of Crime Unit (IPOC) in Montreal charged 19 people, executed 13 search warrants, and seized \$10 million cash, eight properties valued at \$20 million and eight bank accounts.

"In the past, we would get involved at the end of a drug investigation, identify the assets and take them away from the criminals," says RCMP Sgt. François-Olivier Myette, who led the investigation, dubbed Project Collecteur. "It's a new era for money laundering cases because we're now investigating the offence of money laundering instead of the assets."

Traditionally, when criminals make money from illegal activities, they use it to buy big ticket items such as houses, cars, boats and jewelry. Or, they reinvest it in new criminal activities and transfer the cash abroad to pay off suppliers.

They can't just put it in the bank since monetary transactions like these are traceable and Canadian banks report deposits of \$10,000 or more.

In order to use the money without arousing suspicion, organized crime networks hire professional money launderers to clean dirty money through a series of transactions to make it seem like it came from a legitimate source of income.

IPOC is cracking down on the people providing the service to organized crime groups.

"The bottom line is that it's cash generated from drug offences," says Myette. "The best way to fight money laundering is to hit them at that level, when they have all this cash in their hands and they're trying to figure out what to do with it."

DIRTY LAUNDRY

Acting on a single tip from the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration in May 2016, IPOC began surveillance of a criminal

network in Canada that was linked to an organization importing drugs from Columbia.

The Montreal and Toronto-based criminal network used what's known as an informal value-based transfer system to launder approximately \$20 million internationally each month.

"They weren't actually transferring money from country to country but picking up cash locally and using other cash at their disposal internationally to pay off transactions," says Myette. "It's like putting a dollar in your left pocket and taking another dollar from your right pocket."

Most of the money was used to re-invest in illegal activities, including more drug importations.

The team used a multitude of investigative techniques to prove that the money came from illegal activities — and that the offenders knew it.

Police conducted several undercover operations, led hundreds of surveillances, installed GPS trackers on suspects' vehicles, obtained wire taps, mounted hidden cameras and handled covert vehicle and telephone searches.

In the process, IPOC witnessed more than 120 hand-to-hand exchanges of duffel bags and suitcases filled with hundreds of thousands of dollars in cash, in underground parking lots and other secret locations.

"It was ground breaking. We pretty much used all the tricks in the book," says Cpl. Nicolas St-Antoine, who took over leading the investigation after Myette.

The team's biggest challenge was proving the suspects were aware the money came from illegal activities, according to St-Antoine.

"It's really difficult because how do you get into somebody's head?" says St-Antoine.

He says by arresting secondary suspects, it set off panic throughout the network. As news of the arrests spread through the members, IPOC was listening to their conversations and gathering evidence.

MAJOR EFFORT

Up to 35 officers at a time worked on the investigation, according to Cst. Stephanie Clayton, the file co-ordinator on the project, who was responsible for compiling anything that would be used as evidence against the offender — a process she refers to as disclosure. Clayton disclosed 88,000 case documents to the Crown prosecutors including investigators' handwritten case notes, several thousand multimedia files and four months' worth of electronic intercepts.

According to Myette, IPOC was motivated to change due to international scrutiny.

In June 2016, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), an international organization that tracks money laundering worldwide, gave Canada a poor report card on its performance fighting money launderers and recommended stricter policies.

"We're trying something new and what we're doing now is working really well," says Myette. ■



Last winter, RCMP officers brought down a major money-laundering network with ties to a Columbian drug importation ring.



AN EXTRA SET OF EYES

VOLUNTEERS HELP POLICE RECOVER STOLEN VEHICLES

By Paul Northcott

Helping to catch criminals and recover pilfered property are two of the big rewards for Bill Ingram, who volunteers with the RCMP in Surrey, B.C. to locate stolen vehicles.

But there's an even greater return for the 59-year-old retiree.

"It allows me to give back to the community I was born and raised in," says Ingram, who lends his time to the RCMP's Surrey Stolen Auto Recovery Program.

ON PATROL

Teams of program volunteers patrol neighbourhoods several times each week to check licence plates in search of stolen vehicles. Their efforts support officers such as Cst. John Tsonos, who works with the Surrey RCMP's Auto Crime Target Team.

"Their value is an extra set of eyes and ears in the community," says Tsonos, who volunteered with the police in Kingston, Ont. before graduating from Depot in 2008.

According to RCMP in Surrey, the Stolen Auto Recovery Program volunteers examine thousands of plates each month. In 2018, they helped recover more than 41 stolen vehicles. So far in 2019, they've helped return 29 vehicles to their rightful owners, leading to multiple arrests.

"The sooner we can locate a stolen car the better. It gives us the chance to start an investigation as quickly as possible, find fingerprints and hopefully lay charges," says Tsonos.

Ingram shows up for a four-hour shift about twice a week, sometimes more. He's one of a three-person team — a driver and two partners — who enter plate numbers of parked and moving vehicles into an app using smartphones provided by the City of Surrey.

"It's really a team effort," says Ingram. "I think we all feel a sense of achievement knowing we can help police and help return a car to the owner."

Before their work day officially begins, volunteers receive "a data package" that's been compiled by RCMP analysts to strategically plan much of the volunteers' patrol.



Volunteers with the RCMP's Stolen Auto Recovery Program in Surrey, B.C., prepare for their shift.

RCMP

"They (the analysts) know day by day which areas had the biggest spike in car thefts and recoveries (of vehicles)," says Gabriel Pelletier, an RCMP community programs co-ordinator in Surrey. "So with some level of certainty, they can focus the team's efforts on recovery."

He adds that data provided by the Canadian Police Information Centre also lets volunteers and police know if the plates belong to a stolen vehicle.

TARGETED APPROACH

The volunteers have been trained to look for tampered or missing licence plates, rolled down windows and certain makes and models of vehicles — all telltale signs of stolen property.

Tsonos says his years on the job have helped him understand the motives behind vehicle thefts and why some stolen cars are abandoned.

He says they are used to commit other crimes or to flee the scene after a crime has been committed, and then eventually left on streets or in parking lots. Often they're

dumped in areas where a vehicle new to area could go overlooked for a long period of time.

"High-density areas with lots of cars and visitor parking stalls are popular places for stolen vehicles because they may go unnoticed," says Tsonos, who adds the element of familiarity is why volunteers also like to patrol their own neighbourhood.

"They know what to look for and if they see something sticking out, they'll notice it. After living in an area for a while you get to know the vehicles that come and go."

If the Stolen Auto Recovery volunteers get a hit, they'll double-check the plate to make sure the vehicle is stolen and then report the find after leaving the scene.

"We always push safety to our volunteers," says Tsonos. "We don't want any confrontations."

Pelletier says the program has been around since the early 2000s and has helped to further link RCMP officers with the community they serve.

"It's brought volunteers together with police, and that has helped to build and sustain connections within the community." ■

INNOVATION IN POLICING
COVER



RCMP officers in Red Deer, Alta., conduct plainclothes surveillance as part of their work with the Crime Reduction Team. Their targeted approach, even without new resources, has led to a drop in property crime.

HOW CAN POLICING BE MORE INNOVATIVE?

THE PANELLISTS

- **Supt. Gerald Grobmeier, officer in charge, Red Deer detachment, Alberta**
- **Simon Baldwin, manager of the Operational Research Unit, Contract & Indigenous Policing Directorate, Ottawa, Ont.**
- **Supt. Shelly Dupont, Northeast District Commander, Bathurst, N.B.**
- **Insp. Mitch Monette, Prime Minister's Protective Detail, Ottawa, Ont.**

When it comes to being innovative, we often think of new science and technology. But innovation means more than that — it's also about improvement. We asked four RCMP employees about creative and inventive techniques and approaches that make policing better and what it takes to turn a good idea into a great practice.

SUPT. GERALD GROBMEIER

Every business in today's society faces the same questions. How do we become more innovative and how do we better use the resources we already have?

Policing is no different. Policing budgets are on the minds of every mayor, council, board and citizen that pays taxes. Finding efficiencies and doing our work better is imperative and is demanded of us. Adding more resources isn't always the answer in these fiscally tight times. We need to ensure we're doing the most with the resources that we have before asking for more.

In 2016, the City of Red Deer was

No. 2 on the CSI (Crime Severity Index) in Canada for cities with populations over 15,000. Property crimes along with robberies were driving these high CSI numbers. So how could we do better? No new resources were forthcoming but the status quo couldn't continue.

Red Deer detachment's answer to this was PINPOINT — the first part of Red Deer's Crime Reduction Strategy.

PINPOINT uses resources that are already in place but focuses all the units on one goal: reducing property crime.

Criminal intelligence analysts determine crime hot spots, residences with high calls of service, prolific offenders, breach checks and clients who need more help than policing can provide.

Monthly meetings are held with all the unit heads. People and areas of interest are assigned to officers to enforce and report back on.

This approach has allowed us to be more

effective and strategic with our resources, focusing on certain crimes, certain people, certain areas and certain times. It's an approach that's being used throughout Alberta with great success.

Any idea or new approach requires people with passion to drive it.

It needs the support of management to allow people to take reasonable risks. If we continue to do the same things, we'll continue to obtain the same results.

Implementing a new strategy also demands patience and perseverance. Research and planning are also critical to be successful.

It took us five months in Red Deer to implement PINPOINT. We wanted to make certain we got it right and then spent countless hours communicating the plan and altering it as we received feedback. This allowed us to hit the ground running with minimal resistance. We were able to show that we weren't asking members to do more with less — we were asking them to do their



work differently.

Early wins help build momentum and we've been able to demonstrate that to our officers. Communication remains key. Properly using the expertise available helps to grow any innovation.

I am happy to say that in 2017, our CSI rate dropped to No. 5 and in 2018, property crime in Red Deer was reduced by 28 per cent.

SIMON BALDWIN

With the RCMP Commissioner's focus on making sound decisions, it's essential for the organization to look for new and innovative ways to use operational data and evidence for developing policy, training and equipment. This is particularly important for officer safety and reducing the risks that front-line officers face in their operational duties.

The Operational Research Unit provides research support to all areas within Contract & Indigenous Policing (C&IP) — such as use of force, Emergency Response Teams and crime prevention. We've been recruiting skilled research students and collaborating with subject matter experts through strategic and sustainable academic partnerships.

These partnerships, including one with Carleton University's Police Research Lab, have facilitated the growth of C&IP's research capacity and led to more rigorous methods and analysis, gender-based analysis plus to name one. They've also resulted in significant external funding to conduct operational research.

Each year, through this collaboration, we obtain new students through field placements, practicums, directed studies and theses/dissertations to work part time on various C&IP research projects and priorities.

The students have worked on meaningful initiatives that have provided the evidence base for many tangible improvements for officers such as faster holsters, increased OC spray concentration and safer personal protective equipment.

This integrated and collaborative research model has also created an excellent recruitment tool where skilled students transition into full-time employment at the RCMP. Many of the students, like me, have found their home within the organization as public servants, dispatchers and police officers. Many continue to collaborate with



Serge Guin, RCMP

In New Brunswick, the Activity Status Reporting System captures all operational and administrative activities to help ensure member safety and allocate resources where they're most needed.

the RCMP while pursuing their graduate degrees.

This has created a large network of skilled people in the organization and in academia who have a strong and pragmatic understanding of policing issues and challenges. Another important aspect of this approach is developing our current employees by supporting educational opportunities to develop "pracademics" — academics who work within the policing environment.

We've also focused on improving data access and integrity.

One of the ways we've done this is simply by modernizing our existing reporting processes, like forms, to ensure that operationally relevant information is being captured in a way that's accessible and can be analyzed at the national level.

A key example is the Subject Behaviour/Officer Response (SB/OR) report — the RCMP's national use-of-force reporting system. The data from SB/OR is used to inform all relevant use-of-force policies, training and equipment initiatives. For instance, analyzing officer injury rates played a key role in initiating and updating Block Training for police officers.

We've developed Block Training scenarios based on the most common situational factors in police work. This helps ensure that training is as closely aligned as possible with the operational realities facing officers. Analyzing officer-involved shootings also helps to inform the development and evaluation of firearms training.

Lastly, C&IP is focusing on improving employees' and senior management's ability to consume and interpret operational data. This includes the use of dashboards that provide up-to-date trends from our operational system.

We've also started using an electronic, interactive mapping system to visualize the distribution of operational equipment, training and critical incidents across the country. This additional evidence-based information gives provinces and detachments the ability to make sound, risk-based decisions.

SUPT. SHELLY DUPONT

Innovation can mean different things to different people. Some may think that it pertains to modern technology, equipment and tools. Others may think it is improvements in processes, policies, (whether operational or administrative) or in law.

Perhaps it's an innovation to do with virtual work spaces or offices that make dispatching more efficient. It could also be a shift from reactive policing to predictive analytics and crime analysis, so that police and other social service interventions can be deployed and initiated earlier, to reduce and prevent crime.

For me, innovation in policing is all of this and more. It starts with an idea or a possibility that's then put into action and becomes a reality. Innovation is that creative process that takes a challenge or problem



and creates a solution that improves or even removes the initial difficulty.

For innovation to be successful, it often requires a leap of faith. It's about taking a hard and critical look at the tool, equipment, process or policy that creates challenges or frustrations, and realizing that it's time to do things differently.

It takes many people to make innovation come to life, and a culture of support and openness to try new things. For change to happen, we all need to own our organization and the uniform we either wear or support.

In New Brunswick, we've defined innovation as a combination of thoughts and actions that lead to positive impacts where it's being conducted. Innovation focuses on what's new, whether it's evolutionary or revolutionary.

To that end, the RCMP in New Brunswick has implemented an innovation network, a group of subject matter experts from among our own employees who can review and provide support for ideas on modernization and efficiencies. The innovation network aims to foster a culture where the ideas of our own employees — those who know our work best and are invested in and care about our organization — can be harnessed, developed and implemented to benefit the broader organization.

The Activity Status Reporting System is an excellent example of the innovative work that's been accomplished here. By enhancing our reporting system to capture all

operational and administrative activities, we can better ensure member safety and more accurately allocate resources where they are most needed.

Innovation is more than just introducing new ideas or exciting new concepts. It's vital to ensure the different aspects of our organization are supporting each other in the best way possible, providing the best policing to the communities we serve.

Society and the things that police encounter and deal with have changed. Policing has to evolve and modernize in response, and we already have the necessary solution — our people.

Whether it's the constable working in a small detachment or the public service employee who works every day to keep her RCMP family safe — they are innovation in policing. Tapping into and empowering them is how we grow and evolve.

INSP. MITCH MONETTE

I think that innovation is a word that gets thrown around a lot these days. When most people think about innovation, the use of new technologies is often the first thing that comes to mind. And with such a large organization, it can be challenging to bring changes at the macro level as we have such diverse operational realities from one province to the next.

My personal beast over the past few years has been ensuring the prime minister's safety, which I realize is very different than what most RCMP employees tackle. But

regardless of the work we do, it's up to each employee to challenge the status quo.

Here at the Prime Minister's Protective Detail (PMPD), we've been making small changes here and there that are having a ripple effect on our team.

For example, we're bringing a more scalable approach to protection — based on the client's program and threat environment — by being more nimble in terms of resource management.

We're also empowering employees to be more active in decision-making. This was challenging at first because everyone was used to the same operational approach. To that sense, we heavily rely on our intelligence unit, who help us better adapt to the actual threat reality.

We also try to be innovative in terms of how we work with our clients. A few months ago, we had the prime minister and later his staff attend our facilities to gain a better understanding of our operations, which in turn enables us to provide exceptional close protective services. Imparting security of the PM as a shared responsibility with the Prime Minister's Office has come a long way from our historical the-RCMP-does-it-all approach.

There are many examples of technologically innovative ideas that we're working on.

Being innovative can be anything you want it to mean but it also sometimes means taking risks as you are entering into the unknown. Embracing innovation in all its forms improves the way we do business. ■



Members of the Prime Minister's Protective Detail have been making small changes to improve their work, including inviting the prime minister and his staff to attend the PMPD facilities and gain a better understanding of operations.

Prime Minister's Office



KEEPING KIDS CALM

RCMP USES ROBOT TO REDUCE VICTIMS' ANXIETY

By Patricia Vasylychuk

RCMP Victim Services in Red Deer, Alta., has a new staff member and he's only two feet tall.

Since last winter, the unit's been using a robot named Ard-E to reduce anxiety in young victims of crime when they prepare for police interviews and court proceedings.

Interacting with the free-moving robot has proved to be a great distraction for children who find the police and court experience overwhelming, says RCMP Cst. Nicole Quick.

"They're in a new environment with a bunch of strangers and they know they're going to have to talk about the most terrible things they've ever experienced," says Quick, who manages the unit. "Anything we can do to make that easier on them is a good thing."

With child-like humour, Ard-E engages with children by freely walking around, telling stories, singing, dancing and doing calming exercises such as deep breathing and Tai Chi. Blinking, turning its head toward motion and asking and answering questions make it seem like it's interacting.

MIND MATTERS

Ard-E is programmed to say and do things that build trust with the child and convey information about the court process such as "It's OK to ask to repeat a question," "I get butterflies in my tummy, too," and "You can ask for a glass of water."

Everything it says or does is based on cognitive-behavioural strategies that help children relax and build trust, according to Dr. Tanya Beran, a child psychologist and professor at the University of Calgary.

"When the robot is teaching children in a playful way where it doesn't look like they're trying to teach them anything, they really connect with that and the information sinks in," says Beran, who worked with Quick to design Ard-E's police-specific dialogue.

In 2014, Beran started buying the robots from a company in France and reselling them in Canada. She programs each one with cognitive-behavioural strategies used to comfort children.



Cst. Nicole Quick, RCMP

A robot programmed with child psychology strategies can be a good tool to help put young victims of crime at ease.

BEDSIDE MANNERS

The Alberta Children's Hospital has four of Beran's bots. It was the first in the world to use one for pediatric care at the bedside.

The hospital uses the bots to manage negative emotions in children before, during and after medical procedures.

"We're dealing with fears of the unknown," says Jackie Pearson, a children's life specialist at the hospital whose job is to make medical experiences positive for kids and their families. "By introducing play, the robot can help patients feel calm and help us communicate in a more playful and reassuring way."

Though the robot helps most patients relax and keep their mind busy during

medical procedures, Pearson says she has seen particularly good results with children on the autism spectrum.

In Red Deer, the robot has been an effective distraction technique and a good alternative for kids who aren't comfortable with a therapy dog, according to Quick. She says young children often talk to it like a human friend while older ones are fascinated with the mechanics of how it works.

When Ard-E busts out a rendition of Frozen's Let it Go, or Psy's Gangnam Style, the appeal is universal, according to Quick.

"He's got all the moves down and everything," she says. "He's really another great tool that's part of the complete set." ■



STOPPING 'THE BADDEST OF THE BAD'

WELL-BEING A PRIORITY FOR CHILD EXPLOITATION UNITS

By Paul Northcott

It requires a focus that many people couldn't sustain. The job of some RCMP officers and employees requires them to regularly review images, videos and written materials that portray the sexual abuse of children.

"Our team works to catch the baddest of the bad and there's nobody more vulnerable in our society than children," says Sgt. Dawn Morris-Little, manager at the RCMP National Child Exploitation Crime Centre's (NCECC)'s Victim Identification and Covert Investigations Unit. "Because of that, people have a real passion for it."

Aside from being motivated, members of this unit are able to do the work by taking advantage of mental-health supports and using the latest software to direct their attention to those children most at risk.

A FOCUSED SEARCH

To find those cases, Sgt. Arnold Guerin, who works in the technology section of the NCECC, and his team have for years turned to artificial intelligence.

Also known as machine learning, the software is programmed to perform specific tasks without relying on precise computer-coded instructions.

Where child sexual exploitation images are concerned, a single case — known as a data set — is run through a machine-learning program that can identify and categorize images. That means the images could be deemed either legal and therefore not require an investigator's attention, or they are identified as child sexual abuse that must be immediately reviewed or investigated.

The data sets can also include images that NCECC investigators, or those from the unit's national and international policing partners, have already declared to be child sexual exploitation. As a result, they don't have to be looked at again.

Knowing that they're not repeating work that's already been done and that their current efforts could lead to a quick arrest of an abuser or the identification of a child, provides employees with a sense of purpose and well-being.

"You don't want to be going through

images you don't have to," says Morris-Little.

GROWING CONCERN

The NCECC has received more than 35,600 cases so far in 2019. From 2016 to 2018, the NCECC had 27,300, 35,712 and 61,220 online child sexual exploitation cases respectively. Some contained one image while others contained thousands.

The centre reviews all the cases it receives, but only those with confirmed child sexual exploitation photos or videos are investigated.

"If we know a child has already been identified, we can prioritize the newer cases and focus on the ongoing abuse," says Morris-Little.

Roberta Sinclair manages the Strategic and Operational Services Unit of the Sensitive and Specialized Investigative Services — formerly the Canadian Police Centre for Missing and Exploited Children/Behavioural Science Branch.

She agrees technological improvements help focus investigators' work and can enhance their sense of purpose. But simply getting them to take a break is important, too.

"Getting them to do that (take a break) can be tough," says Sinclair. "Some feel like they're giving up on a case, or the child, but of course they're not."

Other initiatives that support the mental health of online child sexual exploitation employees include quiet rooms, opportunities to play video and board games that can offer a much-needed distraction from their work, and a variety of RCMP-offered mental health programs.

Moving forward, the technology and mental health and wellness supports will only continue to expand for people in the online child sexual exploitation units nationally.

The number of cases referred to the NCECC will continue to climb as high-speed Internet access continues to improve, the storage capacity for child exploitation images rises, and storage costs remain affordable.

"It's our job to protect the child and prevent the sexual abuse of more children," says Guerin. "If I can help reduce the amount of toxicity employees have to endure every day, then I'm keeping them as healthy as possible, while also keeping more kids safe." ■



Taking a break is one way that employees at the National Child Exploitation Crime Centre reduce the mental-health impacts of the images they review.



YOU ARE HERE

APP GIVES REAL-TIME VIEW OF OPERATIONS

By Paul Northcott

The RCMP is working on delivering a secure, mobile-technology application that will improve command-and-control awareness for police officers.

The app — called the Android Team Awareness Kit (ATAK) — will provide officers, both on the ground and at command centres, with a real-time view of operations by showing officer locations on multiple devices, such as android phones or large-screen televisions.

FULL PICTURE

“That’s situational awareness,” says Laila Martin, a manager with the Systems Delivery and Project Portfolio Management Branch. “You know where other RCMP officers are and any other friendly forces. You will also be able to paint a picture of where the suspects or criminals are or were last seen.”

The RCMP was provided a test version of the app by a U.S. security agency in 2017, and is adapting it for its own needs.

Interest in the technology stems from the MacNeil Report, which examined all aspects of the 2014 Moncton shootings. Three RCMP officers were killed in those

targeted shootings. Among its findings, the report recommended better communication and co-ordination in the field.

Cpl. Al Comeau, an Emergency Response Team (ERT) leader in New Brunswick, calls the app a “game changer.”

“The app will provide an unprecedented technological leap,” he says. “Suspect details and location will be relayed in real-time through the app and the responding ERT members will be able to better formulate and execute action plans.”

The app’s capabilities also include Global Positioning System tracking, text messaging, distance measuring tools, access to satellite imagery and terrain, chat and video communication, and tools to share information that will increase safety and collaboration.

Right now, commanders know where officers are based on the location of their car. But once they leave their vehicle, officers must use their radios to relay where they are.

“As soon as an officer leaves their vehicle, we’ll know their exact location,” says Minh A. Nguyen, a developer in the RCMP’s Application Development Branch, who’s been training officers to use the app during the testing phase.

Brandon Rowen, who is also an RCMP application developer, works with Nguyen to provide programming support.

The pair recently demonstrated how senior officers and police in the field can use the technology to support their work. Icons identify officers on a command centre screen, which can be used to help recognize the needs and next steps necessary for officers on the ground to perform their jobs successfully.

Senior officers can watch them (on a screen) and send all the information instantaneously to an officer’s phone,” says Rowen.

TESTING TECHNOLOGY

Several trials of the app have been conducted with ERT members, including one during the August 2018 funeral in New Brunswick for two Fredericton police officers shot and killed while responding to a call. Thousands of police officers from across the country and hundreds of public officials attended the service.

“There were so many officers there from so many different police forces. There wasn’t a specific threat but the trial was implemented as a pre-emptive measure,” says Martin, who says the exercise included 25 ERT members. “We needed to show the effectiveness of the app in a critical incident situation and make sure that commanders could co-ordinate RCMP officers in a variety of operations.”

The technology is also being tested by officers during their day-to-day operations.

“How officers share location and information, the geo-tracking of members and the location of evidence are just a few features that will benefit them,” says Comeau.

Response has been positive. One officer used the app while apprehending a suspected impaired driver who fled the scene of an accident on foot.

“I had the ATAK mobile tablet in the car, pulled over and was able to direct other officers to contain the area in real-time. It was extremely useful,” the officer wrote during his feedback.

The RCMP is now working with Shared Services Canada to ensure the app can be rolled out to all officers but no national launch has been set. ■



The RCMP is adapting a secure mobile-technology app to improve its ability to locate and communicate with officers in the field.

SHARING CRITICAL DETAILS

NEW UNIT OFFERS REAL-TIME INTELLIGENCE TO POLICE

By Patricia Vasylchuk

Their only piece of information was a partial licence plate number.

But from the moment a call about an assault in progress was dispatched last winter, it took a team of analysts and criminal intelligence officers only 90 minutes to identify a suspect who was later arrested.

The Real Time Intelligence Centre – British Columbia (RTIC-BC) is a new 24-7 operational unit in Surrey, B.C., that’s helping speed up investigations by providing relevant suspect information in real time to officers responding to serious incidents.

While officers deal staff with a call, teams of intelligence and criminal-analyst assistants use the critical details that 911 operators enter into an electronic dispatch system to sift through up to 30 databases for information that could help the investigation.

“We’re a force multiplier,” says RCMP Insp. Vaz Kassam, who is in charge of the RTIC-BC. “If we’re monitoring, then officers at the scene have up to seven people helping them in the background.”

SILENT PARTNERS

RTIC-BC employees monitor the dispatch system and police radio for calls where police units are dispatched. They begin an analysis only for incidents where there is a threat to the safety of officers or the public.

Officers can access some of these details from their police cruiser, but most of the research must be done back at the office.

“We might give officers something in half an hour that they would have figured out on their own in five days,” says Tracy Mundell, a criminal analyst assistant at the centre since September 2014.

In addition to the real-time analyses, the centre also accepts requests from investigators at any stage in their work.

The centre has a multi-jurisdictional partnership between the RCMP and the province’s municipal police forces, as well as Canada Border Services Agency, Correctional Service Canada, B.C. Cor-

rections and B.C. Sherriff Services.

The unit’s 43 staff members, which include permanent RCMP positions and municipal police officers who rotate every four years, have access to the databases of all the partner agencies.

“There needed to be more information-sharing between these agencies because criminals don’t have jurisdictional boundaries,” says Kassam.

He says the RTIC-BC became the central repository that gave them the ability to monitor all the information coming in from every police jurisdiction in the province.

PARTNERS IN CRIME-FIGHTING

Since joining the unit two years ago, acting Sgt. Leigh Hodak of the New Westminster Police Department has seen the benefit of law enforcement partnerships first hand. Last fall, his team’s knowledge of a series of bank robberies in Burnaby and Westminster helped police catch the offender when he struck again in Vancouver.

“We had the suspect’s vehicle descrip-

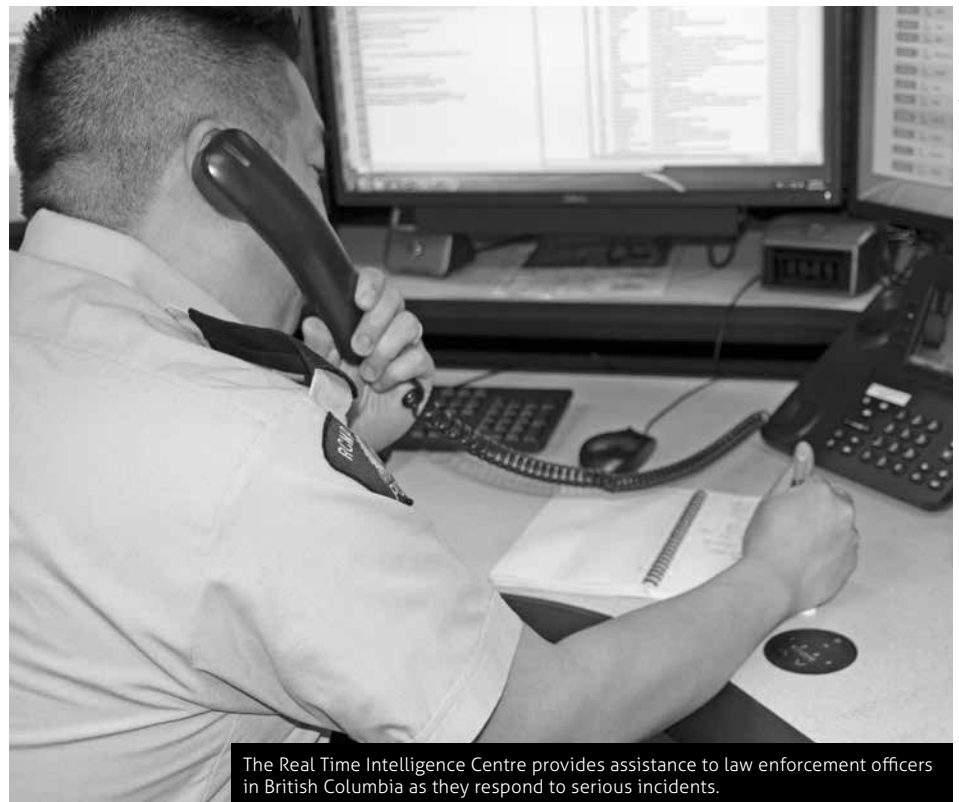
tion and we knew his method of operation and that he was going to hit again very soon,” says Hodak, who’s in charge of one of the teams of analysts.

His team alerted the Vancouver Police Department and soon after, as predicted, the suspect hit another bank. Using the vehicle description provided by the RTIC-BC, responding officers quickly found and arrested the suspect.

“Having knowledge of everything that’s going on throughout the province is a nice holistic approach to policing,” says Hodak. “If a police force is working just in its own community, it’s not aware of what’s going on around it.”

Though the RTIC-BC doesn’t track the status of investigations, its employees measure success by the surge in calls and requests — they’ve seen a 35 per cent increase between January 2018 and 2019.

“It’s really rewarding when we can provide information to officers that they wouldn’t have available to them or wouldn’t have known until a lot later in their investigation,” says Hodak. ■



The Real Time Intelligence Centre provides assistance to law enforcement officers in British Columbia as they respond to serious incidents.



CLUES IN THE LANDSCAPE

GEOGRAPHIC PROFILERS HELP POLICE SOLVE CRIMES

By Patricia Vasylychuk

RCMP S/Sgt. Carl Sesely was skeptical about geographic profiling — until it helped him find the man who set fires to 28 occupied homes across Burnaby, B.C., more than 20 years ago.

The investigative technique uses the locations of serial crimes such as arson to identify the area where a suspect is likely living and where police should focus their search. Geographic profiling remains an important way to help advance serial crimes.

“Unlike on all those sexy television shows, geographical profiling doesn’t solve crimes. It’s just another tool that investigators use,” says Sesely, who was an investigator at the Burnaby RCMP detachment at the time of the arsons.

After nine months, police still didn’t have a suspect and fear in the community was growing. To help the investigation, Sesely asked the RCMP’s Behavioural Sciences Unit to develop a criminal profile, which described the suspected traits and characteristics of the offender.

He also reached out to the Vancouver Police Department for a geographic profile because the RCMP didn’t employ any at the time. The report he received included a colour-coded map of the hunting area. The area where the suspect was likely living was red.

Still skeptical, Sesely showed the map at a public consultation meeting where he got a key tip from a property manager who owned a building in the target search zone. She told police that one of her tenants matched the suspect’s description.

Sesely looked into the man’s background, which led to his arrest.

Sesely says he was so impressed by the accuracy of the report, he decided to learn more. He became a certified geographic profiler in 2001.

There are 12 geographic profilers in Canada — seven are RCMP officers, two are with the Sûreté du Québec and three work for the Ontario Provincial Police. Many of these officers are also certified criminal profilers.



Martine Chénier, RCMP

S/Sgt. Carl Sesely and Sgt. Jean-Yves McCann analyze the results of a geographic profile that identifies an area hit by a string of arsons.

CLUES ABOUT CRIMINALS

Every crime has a geographic element to it and provides clues about the offender, according to Sesely, who’s worked at the RCMP for 33 years.

“We look for anything that helps us understand why they chose that location, how they got there and how they escaped,” he says.

Officers can develop a geographic profile for serial crimes where there’s a pattern of repeated behaviour committed by the same person in at least five different locations that are spread out in an area — as opposed to all occurring on one street.

“Studying geography is important because criminals’ hunting patterns are typically predictable,” says Sesely. “They might change their habits to throw us off for a while, but eventually they get lazy and go back to what’s comfortable for them.”

Officers insert the location of each relevant crime into a computer software program that analyzes the area where the crimes occurred. Police refer to this area as the hunting ground.

“The software looks at each pixel on the map and asks ‘What’s the probability that the offender lives here?’ And then it does that 40,000 more times and calcu-

lates a probability score,” says Sesely.

When a case doesn’t meet the criteria needed to develop a geographic profile, profilers can still analyze the geography of a crime scene, whether in person or using satellite and panoramic street-view images.

HUNTING PATTERNS

In 2013, Sgt. Jean-Yves McCann of the Sûreté du Québec was a new geographic profiler working his first case in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, Quebec, where someone was setting fire to BBQs, billboards and cedar hedges.

Having been trained by Sesely in 2013, McCann asked him to help develop a profile for the string of nuisance fires, which were steadily becoming more serious.

After a lengthy investigation of each crime site, the officers developed a profile and advised investigators where they should focus their search for the offender. Based on the recommendation, officers flooded the target search area on foot and caught the suspect in the act of setting another fire.

“His address was right in the peak zone,” says McCann. “It was a classic example of how we use geo profiling to prioritize suspects and help catch the offender.” ■

BEING CALM AND ALERT

PROGRAM HELPS EMPLOYEES MANAGE STRESS

By Paul Northcott

Just breathe — two words you might hear from someone who thinks you need to relax.

They're also the primary elements of a program that RCMP Sgt. Marie-Josée McCool developed to help boost people's natural resilience to challenges such as stress.

McCool created the Resilience Advantage Program following her training at the HeartMath Institute, which offers instruction in a system of techniques to self-regulate one's emotions and behaviour.

The approach is also meant to be used any time and anywhere to achieve what she calls "calm alertness."

"You have to breathe anyway, so you might as well learn to breathe in a way that works for you," says McCool, referring to the use of rhythmic breathing and the ability of the heart to synchronize the body and the brain to increase energy and mental clarity, and to feel better.

IMPROVING PERFORMANCE

She says signals sent from the heart to the brain affect how people think, feel and perform.

"Achieving a smooth consistent heart rhythm can help you maintain your composure in challenging situations," says McCool, who notes by using the program's techniques, she says people can recover more quickly from stressful events, whether personal or operational.

"We all have an inner balance but the stresses and demands of the modern world can hijack our biological machinery and can contribute to increases in stress, anger, cynicism and other issues."

She says resilience training is particularly important at the RCMP because of the demands employees face.

"We're supposed to run towards stress, not avoid it," says McCool, who has served as a general duty police officer, a war-crimes investigator and in international policing at Europol. "This program provides you with more energy so you can perform at an optimal level."

Cpl. Josée Jolicoeur calls the training "life changing."

Jolicoeur has worked in high-stress jobs during her 18-year career. She says there were times when everything was "off" and her difficulty managing her stress affected her work and family life.

"I wasn't eating right, not sleeping, I was short with people," says Jolicoeur, who notes in the past officers didn't talk about such things. "You just lived hard and moved on, but resilience training has helped improve how I feel, and my focus."

PRACTICE IS KEY

Jolicoeur says she uses the tools she learned to help cope with stressful scenarios.

"The way it affects me is less now because of the program. I'm more aware of how I feel and how I should deal with stress."

There's also a technology element to the program that people enjoy, says McCool, who has provided the sessions for the past five years to RCMP employees and workers at other federal departments, depending on her availability.

The training uses an app that, when combined with an earlobe sensor, can dis-

play the user's heart rhythm, and monitor their progress.

"You can see in real time that they are able to calm their physiology," says McCool.

Supt. Rick Burchill is co-chair of the RCMP's Contract and Indigenous Policing Psychological Health & Safety Working Group.

He credits McCool for recognizing the need and taking the time to develop and deliver the program.

"There's a need for programs like this," says Burchill. "Every police officer, one way or another, will face some stress and this gives people one more tool they can use."

While recent academic studies have reported resilience training is effective for police officers, McCool is aware some people may be wary of the program when results may not be immediately evident.

"As with any new skills, it takes practice and repetition before it becomes automatic."

Jolicoeur adds: "It's like working out. You're not going to lose weight on Day 1. But if you practice and get better at it, you'll see changes." ■



Martine Chénier, RCMP

An RCMP resilience program helps employees recover more quickly from stressful events. When used with a pulse sensor and app, participants can monitor their progress.



When the weather warms up, the number of drownings and accidents on the water increases. Following a few simple practices during the summer months could make the difference between a fun day on the water and a tragedy.

Drowning

The third-leading cause of unintentional death in Canada following car accidents and poisonings.

Between 2011 and 2015

2,262
lost their lives in Canadian waters,
according to the Lifesaving Society.

72%
happened in lakes,
rivers and the ocean.

21%
occurred in bathtubs,
pools and hot tubs.

Risk factors



Nearly 30% of teenage and adult water-related fatalities involve alcohol.



Nearly 80% of drowning victims are male.



Most drownings occur between May and September — peaking in July.



More than half of drownings happen on a weekend, and most on a Saturday.



Across all age groups, one-third of drownings happen when individuals are alone.

Life-saving tips



Every boat in Canada must have an approved personal flotation device for each person.



Operating a vessel with improper or inaccessible life-jackets and safety equipment can lead to a fine of at least \$200.



Not wearing a life-jacket or personal flotation device is a contributing factor in many deaths on the water.



The Red Cross suggests that pools should be fenced in on all sides and have a self-closing gate.



Two-thirds of drowning deaths among children under 5 happen when supervision is absent.



The Canadian Pediatric Society recommends swimming lessons for all children over 4.



'SWITCHED ON AT ALL TIMES'

VERNON NORTH OKANAGAN TACKLES ISSUES IN BUSY REGION

By Travis Poland

There isn't a typical day at the RCMP's regional Vernon North Okanagan detachment.

In the past year, officers found themselves on a 12-hour search-and-rescue operation, securing the area around an improvised grenade and saying hello to ice fishermen during community patrols.

Sitting in British Columbia's scenic Interior, this detachment has five offices serving multiple communities in the North Okanagan including Vernon, a city home to half the region's 84,000 residents. The other four offices are in Armstrong, Lumby, Enderby and Falkland.

Supt. Shawna Baher, the officer in charge of the 100-person detachment, says its regional nature means police encounter an array of situations.

"In the city, crimes associated with drug addiction, personal safety and homelessness are issues we see daily. In the smaller offices there are issues, but traffic or youth may be more of a priority," says Baher.

Outside of Vernon, officers can find themselves deep on forest service roads and spend up to an hour driving between calls.

"Rural officers need to be switched on at all times and be self-sufficient," says Sgt. Glen Caston, who works in the detachment's Enderby office. "Backup and services like fire and ambulance can be delayed due to geography."

Caston says the rural areas face the same challenges as the city, such as the drug trade, but on a smaller scale.

"It becomes a big issue to the people who live here," says Caston. "They live in the country for a reason and when they're faced with big city problems, it's frustrating."

COLLABORATION

The regional detachment — responsible for policing the City of Vernon, surrounding small towns and Indigenous communities — allows officers to come together across 7,500 square kilometres.

Sharing resources is important during peak vacation seasons. Vernon is a tourism hotspot and in 2016, it contributed \$190 million to the local economy.

"During special events, we can target things without having to worry about one police officer being from Enderby another being from Armstrong," says Sgt. David Evans, who has worked in the detachment's rural area and in the City of Vernon.

In Vernon, more visitors requires more police visibility.

Vernon's Downtown Enforcement Unit uses foot and bicycle patrols to increase their presence, and adds extra patrols on Friday and Saturday evenings during the summer.

"We have to get out and be more visible," says Evans, who co-ordinates the downtown unit.

The RCMP also patrols local lakes checking for impaired driving and other violations, and conducts ATV patrols around backwoods campgrounds.

In the rural areas surrounding Armstrong, Lumby, Enderby and Falkland, officers are involved with search-and-rescue operations if hikers, bikers or skiers run into trouble.

"We're the liaison between families and friends, and the rescue agencies," says Caston.

NOT IMMUNE TO DRUGS

The picturesque region hasn't escaped a problem shared with many other communities: drug use and overdoses.

"The opioid crisis has caused a lot of havoc with deaths in our community," says Baher.

Vernon saw six overdose deaths in 2014. That number leaped to 24 in 2018, according to a report from the B.C. Coroners Service.

The detachment recently created a provincial pilot project that provides drug users in police custody with educational videos, support services and naloxone, a drug that blocks the effects of opioids. The project's second portion will introduce opioid replacement therapy while individuals are in custody.

"If we have people in our cells who want help, we can start an opioid replacement therapy and if they're stabilized on suboxone while in custody, they may not have the urge to use when they're out of our cells and therefore won't commit a crime to pay for their drugs," says Baher, who recently earned a Governor General Order of Merit for her work on the project.

Programs like the opioid pilot project are driven by community engagement and listening to residents' worries.

In Vernon, officers meet with downtown associations and community partners to hear concerns and in other communities, the detachment maintains a close relationship with municipalities and the Splatsin and Okanagan Indigenous reserves.

"It's what we can do instead of only looking at enforcement," says Evans. ■



Officers with the Vernon North Okanagan RCMP can find themselves policing the dense forests and scenic waterways of British Columbia's interior.



TEAMWORK AND TACTICS

CRISIS NEGOTIATORS FINE-TUNE SKILLS AT ANNUAL TRAINING

By Travis Poland

RCMP crisis negotiators help diffuse tense and high-stakes situations — and frequent training keeps them at their best.

To help negotiators stay up to date with the latest techniques, the RCMP National Critical Incident Program holds an annual crisis negotiation workshop where nearly 60 officers from across Canada converge at the RCMP's training academy for lectures and live-scenario workshops.

The sessions gives crisis negotiators the chance to practise active listening and rapport-building skills.

“These abilities need to be kept sharp and hands-on scenario training is one of the best ways,” says Sgt. Ed Jobson, co-ordinator of the National Crisis Negotiation Program.

As part of the National Critical Incident Program, crisis negotiators work under an incident commander and alongside the Emergency Response Team on calls ranging from barricaded persons and distraught individuals to hostage situations and kidnappings. The training prepares negotiators for these and other scenarios.

HOSTAGE SCENARIO

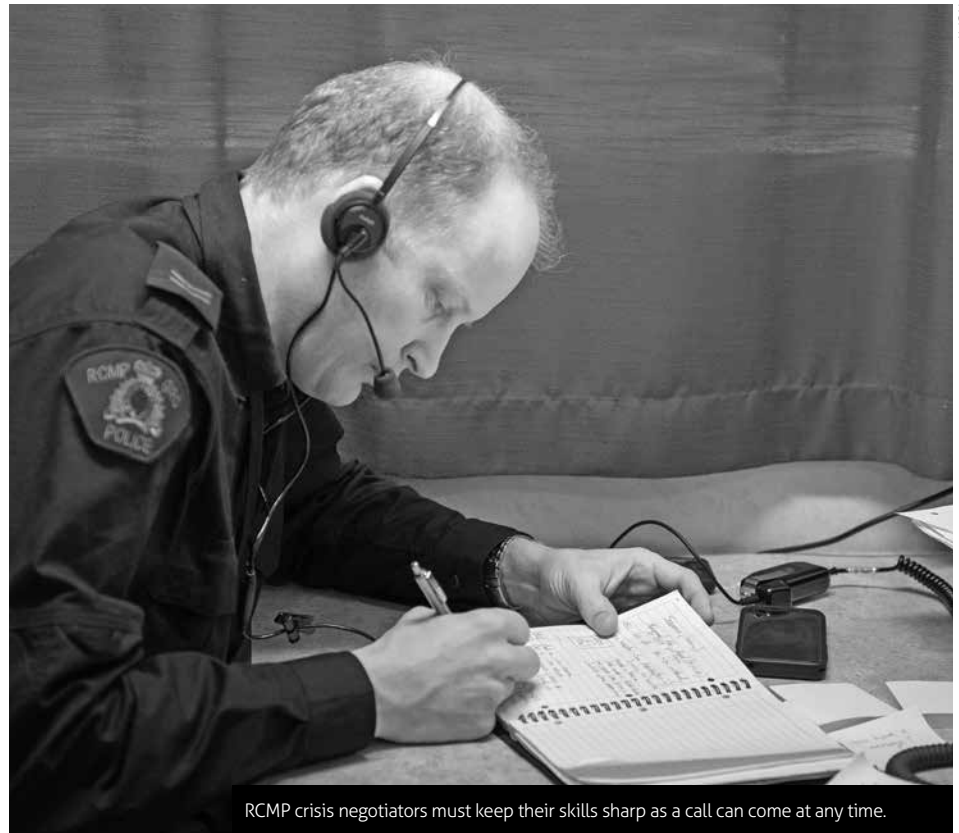
This year, the workshop focused on terrorism. Members from the Integrated National Security Enforcement Team lectured on religious extremism and assisted with a workshop involving a mock hostage situation.

“These are situations you hope you never face but we need to train and prepare for,” says Jobson. “The skills needed for these circumstances apply to many negotiations.”

The workshops use actors and scripts to mimic a real situation allowing officers to practise effective listening and responses.

“The actors respond based on what the negotiator says and the negotiation must be performed well,” says RCMP Corps Sergeant Major Al McCambridge, a course facilitator who has been involved in more than 100 negotiations as a crisis negotiator for the past 28 years.

“It forces you to brainstorm and stretch your knowledge and skill set,” says RCMP Cpl. Kent Hall, who's been on a crisis ne-



RCMP crisis negotiators must keep their skills sharp as a call can come at any time.

RCMP

gotiation team for four years and became a negotiator a year ago. “The scenarios feel real and we have to give max effort.”

While overseen on the national level, each province is responsible for its crisis negotiation teams. The national workshop offers training that is sometimes inaccessible to certain provinces.

Training with other crisis negotiators allows everyone to study and learn.

“This gives us a chance to review everything from logistics and team construction to debriefing,” says Hall, who's based in Kelowna, B.C. “We learn what works for other teams and it makes us all better.”

The information from the national workshops is then shared with provincial team members.

Members of other Canadian police forces fill a handful of seats at the workshop and prepare negotiators for working with officers throughout Canada.

Crisis negotiators must work well on a team because the situations to which they're deployed have many moving parts. And the

same goes for the training, even though many at the workshop had just met.

“We had to come together and put ideas forward and that was really productive,” says Hall.

NEW CHALLENGES, NEW SKILLS

The course changes every year with new obstacles and challenges.

“We assess what's happening around the world and stay up to date with current trends and techniques,” says Jobson. “Not every negotiation is done over the phone anymore. We now train and practise with social media and text-based tactics.”

Hall says meeting with long-time crisis negotiators is a fruitful aspect of the course.

“They know additional things from their experience and it reminds you that you have to look at the unexpected outcomes,” says Hall.

Nearly 150 RCMP officers volunteer to be crisis negotiators. Negotiators are first trained at the Canadian Police College in Ottawa and must have at least six days of training each year. ■



MULTI-TASKING MASTERS

OPERATORS THE FIRST CONTACT WHEN SOMEONE NEEDS HELP

When you call the police, there's a good chance you'll speak to a telecommunications operator. These specially trained employees play a vital role in public safety by answering calls and dispatching police officers. Travis Poland spoke to Rhonda Kawaleski, who has worked as a telecommunications operator for 18 years, about what the job is like.

WHAT DOES A TELECOMMUNICATIONS OPERATOR DO?

Telecommunications operators answer most police-related calls. We take the call, whether through 911 or rerouted from a detachment, and determine its priority and the situation's severity, before sending the information to an officer so they know what's happening and where to go.

HOW DO YOU WORK WITH POLICE OFFICERS?

We're the contact point between the public and police officers, 24-7. We get the call and dispatch it to officers. We talk to officers a lot providing them with information like record checks on people and vehicles. This lets officers know what the situation may be like and helps keep them safe. During a call, we ask questions that help police when they arrive on scene. We try to find where a situation is occurring, what's happening, when it happened, who's involved and if weapons are present. We ask if drugs or alcohol are involved because these things can escalate a situation.

WHAT ARE THE QUALITIES OF A GOOD TELECOMMUNICATIONS OPERATOR?

You have to be patient, understanding and a good communicator. It's important to be empathetic, but you have to process information quickly to get people help as soon as possible. Multi-tasking is important, too. Operators use several pieces of equipment simultaneously such as computer software, telephones and radios. We're always open so there is some shift work involved and operators must be flexible.

WHAT TYPE OF TRAINING DO OPERATORS RECEIVE?

Since 2014, every telecommunications opera-

tor with the RCMP takes a six-week training course. There's two main focuses: call taking and dispatching. Call taking looks at information gathering and what questions to ask, especially when someone is going through a traumatic situation. Dispatching looks at taking information from the calls and sending it to officers. There's theory lessons and practical training to make sure people are comfortable before starting the job.

WHAT CALLS DO YOU RECEIVE?

Calls come in about everything and anything; it can be unpredictable. Some may have nothing to do with police, like flooded basements. Others can include vehicle accidents and 911 misdials to missing persons and noisy neighbours. Nobody calls us when they're having a good day. They can be upset, frustrated or scared. We must handle every call with understanding and ensure the information we're getting is correct so police can respond appropriately.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES AND REWARDS OF THE JOB?

I really like the problem solving and not

knowing what can happen any given day. Sometimes a Tuesday night can be busier than a Saturday night. The technology is always evolving so you have to keep up with software updates, radio changes and any policy changes. It's important to establish work-life balance. You hear emotional things every day and bringing that home can weigh heavily. It can be a challenging job, but it's amazing knowing you're helping people when they need it most. I've had opportunities to support operations at major events such as the 2010 Winter Olympics and G7 and G8 summits.

WHAT LED YOU TO THIS CAREER?

My dad was an RCMP officer and when I graduated university, he told me the RCMP was hiring operators. I toured the communications centre and thought it was a fascinating opportunity to make a difference and contribute to the bigger picture. I went through the interview and hiring process and when I got in the hot seat, I never left. You're the first person to answer a call that in five minutes or less, can make a difference in someone's life. ■



Serge Gouin, RCMP

As the contact point between the public and police officers, telecommunications operators are standing by 24-7, ready to help people when they need it most.



A TRAGEDY AND A MYSTERY

DIVE TEAM RECOVERS REMAINS FROM 1959 PLANE CRASH

By Travis Poland

A RCMP underwater recovery operation has helped bring closure to families after 60 years of mystery.

On a foggy August morning in 1959, pilot Ray Gran and conservation officer Harold Thompson were flying from Buffalo Narrows to La Loche, Sask. Sometime during the flight, their Cessna 180 single-engine airplane went down over Peter Pond Lake.

Family members reported the pair missing and an extensive search began. At least five aircraft were used to investigate, but the only signs of an accident were an oil slick and a floating briefcase.

Gran, leaving behind an expecting wife, and Thompson, a new father, weren't heard from again.

But some of the mystery was settled in January when RCMP divers recovered Gran's and Thompson's remains.

BRINGING CLOSURE

"Not having to wonder anymore, that gives families closure," says Cpl. James Diemert, a Saskatchewan Underwater Recovery Team (URT) member who began co-ordinating the operation after a family-led sonar scan found the sunken plane in July 2018.

Knowing the plane's exact location made the recovery possible six decades later.

"It's unique that we were diving on a historical plane crash," says Sgt. Andy Pulo, a member of the Manitoba URT who worked on the recovery job. "Most of the plane crash dives we do are recent."

The team considered diving to the crash site during the summer, but conditions on the lake — Saskatchewan's sixth largest — proved too rough.

"The plane crashed almost in the middle of the lake and we knew it was going to be a challenge," says Cst. Peter Rhead, a member of the Saskatchewan dive team who worked on the operation. "Waves were three to four feet high. It was tough enough to anchor the boat let alone try to dive."

A remote-controlled underwater vehicle filmed the plane, but diving was postponed until winter when ice reduces the problems caused by waves and wind.

Over three days in January's -2C water, RCMP divers from Saskatchewan, Manitoba and British Columbia — who often join forces — dived to the plane's underwater resting place.

UNDER THE SURFACE

The operation began with using sonar to locate the crash site under the ice. Once pinpointed, a chainsaw cut a 1.5-metre triangle through the thick ice layer. Tents and heaters were set up to protect divers and support staff from the -30 C air.

Despite the icy water, the divers' gear doesn't change much. The only additions are thicker dry suit underwear and glove liners.

The diving began on Day 2. Once the crew confirmed they had the right aircraft, divers connected a "down line" from the plane to the surface to guide subsequent divers. The line was important as no ambient light reached the 20-metre depths and visibility was reduced to zero when anything disturbed the silty lake bottom.

"We have flashlights on us but they don't do much in poor water conditions," says Rhead.

To ensure a safe dive, Pulo says the

operation used surface-supplied air technology allowing divers to focus on the underwater job while their air was delivered via a set of hoses.

Recovery began on Day 3. Divers went under the ice in pairs allowing one to enter the plane when another stayed outside the wreckage collecting remains and mementos while watching for any signs of trouble.

"You need to know your role and have good communication because it doesn't take much for a simple dive to become a scary situation," says Rhead.

Diemert says the team laid Canadian flags upon the remains after recovery — a way to acknowledge Gran's service as a pilot in the Second World War, where he earned a distinguished flying cross, and Thompson's service as a conservation officer.

The divers also recovered personal items such as a pocket knife and camera to return to the families.

Community members volunteered to help the RCMP as they worked to find an ending to the local story. Some drove Bombardier snow vehicles bringing equipment to the dive team, a restaurant extended its hours to suit the URT's 12-hour work days, and a hotel welcomed the RCMP visitors. ■



Divers from the RCMP's underwater recovery teams work together on an icy dive in Saskatchewan.