

For Immediate Release

Pilot Project Creates New Way to Anonymously Report Sexual Assault To Police

Sea to Sky Corridor, B.C. (November 12, 2018) The Third Party Reporting (TPR) Option is a new way for survivors in the Sea to Sky Corridor to report sexual assault to police, allowing adults (aged 19 and over), to anonymously provide crime details with assistance from a trained, locally-based Third Party Reporting Worker who specializes in emotional, practical and other supports for survivors of sexual assault.

"TPR Workers are a bridge of communication, a buffer between victims and law enforcement, so survivors won't have direct contact with police, except when disclosure reveals a child or other members of the public are in significant danger," explains Shannon Cooley Herdman, the Sexual Assault Response and Prevention Advocate and Facilitator for the Women's Centre. "After the survivor makes their Third Party Report, anonymized information will be entered by the local detachment into the PRIME system, and will contact any BC police jurisdiction associated with the TPR. A dedicated police member at RCMP "E" Division will also examine the report for recurring crime patterns in our region or elsewhere in BC, potentially catching serial perpetrators more quickly."

In 2008, the Third Party Reporting Option was approved as a provincial protocol in response to "the Bakker Case", when a serial assailant was discovered to be targeting women unlikely to report to police. A Third Party Report continues to be intended for survivors who **would not otherwise report their sexual assault to police** and is considered a reporting option "of last resort". The Third Party Reporting Option is not a formal police investigation, nor is it a substitute for calling 911, but any person pursuing the Third Party Reporting Option can apply for the Crime Victim Assistance Program (CVAP) to access specialized help, such as trauma counselling. The specialized TPR Workers are a key pillar of the TPR protocol, facilitating access to and support for survivors to access their support and reporting options, including TPR.

"Small towns don't typically have the breadth of victims' programming urban jurisdictions take for granted," explains Shannon Cooley Herdman. "Prior to this pilot, only agencies in larger communities with a contract-type known as Community Based Victim Services provided the Third Party Reporting Option. We are so pleased the Sea to Sky region can now offer sexual assault survivors this new way to access the justice system." Cooley Herdman expands, "We anticipate sexual assault disclosures will go up and the Third Party Reporting Option will be a helpful tool to catch serial assailants. We can also be reassured that survivors choosing the TPR Option will receive key supports and referrals to trauma-informed follow-up resources, whether they happen to live in the Corridor or elsewhere."

A wide variety of community services throughout the Sea to Sky region have now received information sessions on this new police reporting option, with additional sessions being scheduled in Corridor communities in the near future. The Women's Centre will also be posting resource material, including more detailed information about the TPR Option to its website: www.hswc.ca

Squamish Women's Centre

38021 Third Avenue
PO Box 2052 Squamish, BC V8B 0B4
T: 604-892-5748 F: 604-892-5749

Whistler Women's Centre

1519 Spring Creek Drive
Whistler, BC V0N 1B1
T: 604-962-8711 F: 604-932-0599

Female survivors of sexual violence in Whistler and northward, as well as gender-diverse survivors, and male survivors who live in the Southern Stl'atl'imx Nations (Lil'wat, N'Quatqua, Skatin, Samahquam, Xa'xtsa) are asked to file Third Party Reports through:

1. Jane Walser (Sea to Sky Community Services), 604.698.6909

Male survivors of sexual assault who live outside the above noted First Nations can make Third Party Reports through:

2. Hollyburn Family Services, 604.815.5863

Female survivors of sexual violence and gender-diverse survivors in Squamish, the Squamish Nation (Squamish Valley) and southward to Bowen Island, may contact the Howe Sound Women's Centre to make a Third Party Report.

3. Shannon Cooley Herdman (Howe Sound Women's Centre), 604.892-5748, Ext. 227

The expansion of the TPR Option in BC has been an initiative by the Ending Violence Association of BC (EVA) and Community Coordination for Women's Safety (CCWS), in partnership with RCMP "E" Division. The Sea to Sky Corridor is one of five regions in BC invited to establish a locally created interagency protocol to provide the Third Party Reporting Option. Local protocol agencies include Sea to Sky RCMP Detachments, Stl'atl'imx Tribal Police, the Howe Sound Women's Centre and Sea to Sky Community Services.

About The Howe Sound Women's Centre Society

The Howe Sound Women's Centre Society is a registered charity serving on the traditional territories of the Squamish and Lil'wat Nations for over 37 years. The Women's Centre is focused on community wellbeing, using a feminist lens to support women, children and youth who are exposed to violence. The Women's Centre offers emergency housing through Pearl's Place Transition House and Pearl's Safe Home; children and youth programming, such as PEACE counselling, prevention education within regional schools; and further building collaborative responses to sexual violence, multicultural outreach, and other wellness programming. The Howe Sound Women's Centre supports over 4500 women, youth and children annually. The Women's Centre also operates Pearl's Value & Vintage, a second hand thrift store selling gently used and vintage goods, with all proceeds from sales supporting Howe Sound Women's Centre Society programs. For more information, visit www.hswc.ca.

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