



Victoria Family Court
& Youth Justice Committee

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

Presented January 20, 2021



Victoria Family Court & Youth Justice Committee Code of Conduct 2021

1. Members shall at all times conduct themselves with propriety, decency and respect and with the understanding that all members of the committee and guests are to be treated fairly with dignity, courtesy, and empathy.
2. Members understand that the meetings often discuss issues where confidential personal identifying information is included. Any such confidential information shall be treated as confidential and not discussed outside of the committee.
3. Members shall act in a manner that fulfills the mandate and the mission of the Victoria Family Court & Youth Justice (VFCYJ) committee;
4. Members shall respect the due process and the authority of the Chair, Vice-Chair or the Presiding Officer;
5. Members shall give fair consideration to diverse opinions and viewpoints;
6. Members shall demonstrate professionalism, transparency, timeliness, accountability in completing tasks undertaken by the committee;
7. Members shall strive to attend all meetings, sending apologies to the Chair for necessary absences.
8. Members will prepare for the meeting by reading the agenda, papers and any emails before the meeting.
9. Members if they need to clarify anything about the agenda, process or mandate contact the Chair.
10. Members agree to arrive on time for the meeting and strive to stay to the end.
11. Members are encouraged to fully participate in the meeting.
 - a. Listen to what others have to say and keep an open mind.
 - b. Contribute positively to the discussions.
 - c. Be concise
 - d. Be respectful of others opinions and time
 - e. Minimise the side conversations
12. Members shall have the best interests of the VFCYJ committee in mind at all times.
13. Members shall draw attention to any potential conflicts of interest that may arise in the meeting.
14. Members shall fulfil any responsibilities assigned to them at the meeting and be prepared to report back on your progress at the next meeting.
15. Each member of the committee will receive a copy of this Code of Conduct.



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Supporting Documents

An archive of Annual Reports from the Victoria Family Court and Youth Justice Committee and a regularly updated wealth of supporting documents, resources and links to relevant organizations in the Greater Victoria region can be found at the VFCYJC website.

www.victoriafamilycourt.ca

RESOURCES

Anxiety BC

www.anxietybc.com

BC Mental Health & Substance Use Services

www.bcmhsus.ca

Canadian ADHD Resource Alliance

www.caddra.ca

Chatterblock (Parenting Resources)

www.chatterblock.com

Dr. Ross Greene, Collaborative Communication

www.drrossgreene.com

Families for Addiction Recovery

www.farcana.org

Foundry (Health & Wellness Resources for Youth)

www.foundrybc.ca

Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre

www.keltymentalhealth.ca

Kids Help Phone

www.kidshelpphone.ca

Need2

Suicide Prevention Information and Support

www.need2.ca

Trans Lifeline

1-877-330-6366

Two-Spirit, Trans, Queer & Allied Youth

Drop-in and Family Support

250-475-7624

Vancouver Island Crisis Line

www.viccrisis.ca

Youth in BC

Crisis Intervention Services

www.youthinbc.com

Youthspace

Online chat for youth/young adults to age 30

6 – 11 p.m. daily

Texting support 778-783-8565

Island Sexual Health

Text line for youth with sexual health questions and concerns.

250-812-9374

First Call BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition

www.firstcallbc.org

Advance the interests of children and youth through public education, community mobilization and public policy advocacy.

BC School Centred Mental Health Coalition

www.bcscmhcoalition.ca

Office Representative for Children and Youth

www.rcybc.ca

Serves children, youth and families who need help dealing with the child-serving system.

Disability Resource Centre

www.drcvictoria.com

Indigenous Perspectives Society

www.ipsociety.ca

Offerings include Cultural Perspectives Training and Gladue Report Writing.

Indigenous Corporate Training Inc.

www.ictinc.ca

Crisis and Trauma Resources Institute – Canada

ca.ctrinstitute.com

Training and resources for mental health, counselling skills and violence prevention.

Ku'uus Aboriginal Crisis Services

1-800-588-8717

Capital Region Action Team

www.crat.ca

Mobile Youth Services Team (M.Y.S.T.)

www.pacificcentrefamilyservices.org/crime-reduction-exploitation-diversion

Restorative Justice Victoria

www.rjvictoria.com

2020 LOCAL GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES

Cynthia Day, VFCYJC Chair, Councillor (Colwood)
Marie-Terese Little, Vice-Chair, Councillor (Metchosin)
Bill McElroy, Treasurer & CRAT/SEY Chair
Matt Sahlstrom, Councillor (Langford)
Jeff Bateman, Councillor (Sooke)
Sharmarke Dubow, Councillor (Victoria)
Heather Gartshore, Councillor (North Saanich)
Marcie McLean, Councillor (Highlands), Chair, Priorities Sub-Committee
Leslie Anderson, Councillor (Alternate-Highlands)
Barbara Falot, Councillor (Sidney)
Esther Paterson, Councillor (Oak Bay)
Terri O'Keefe, Councillor (Alternate-Sidney)
Stewart Parkinson, Councillor (Alternate-Colwood)
Patricia Pearson, Council (Alternate-North Saanich) (September – present)
Murray Weisenberger, Councillor (Alternate-North Saanich) (January – June)
Sandra Sarsfield, CRD, Co-Chair, Youth & Family Matters Sub-Committee
Lee Mauro, Citizen Representative, Esquimalt
Daleen Thomas, Citizen Representative, Central Saanich
Geanine Robey, CRD, Chair, Communications Sub-Committee (January – April)
Adam Flint, Citizen Representative (View Royal), Chair, Communications Sub-Committee
Marilynn Holman Citizen Representative, Saanich, Co-Chair Youth & Family Matters Sub-Committee

2020 SCHOOL DISTRICT REPRESENTATIVES

Margot Swinburnson, Trustee, Sooke SD 62
Alicia Holman, Trustee, Saanich SD 63
Angie Hentze, Trustee, Victoria SD 61
Jordan Watters, Trustee, Victoria SD 61 (alternate)
Diana Seaton, Trustee, Sooke SD 62 (alternate)

2020 RESOURCE AGENCIES

Boys' & Girls' Club
Cate Bennett (MCFD - Youth Justice)
Single Parent Resource Centre
Ranj Atwal, (MCFD, Director of Operations South Vancouver Island)
Suzanne Beavan, Youth Justice Team Leader Member, Youth Probation Officer, Saanich Police
Sue Hendricks, Aboriginal Programs & Relationships
Mia Golden, Mobile Youth Services Team
Colin Tessier, Threshold Youth Housing
Victoria Court Registry
John Howard Society of Victoria
Central Saanich Police
Public Safety and Solicitor General
Victoria Police
Saanich Police
Sidney RCMP
Sooke RCMP
West Shore RCMP

THREE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

2018-2021

Mission:

To facilitate connections between municipal and First Nations governments, school districts, service providers, and the broader community in order to educate and advocate on the challenges and shortfalls facing youth and families who may come into contact with the justice system.

Vision:

Families and youth have access to timely and appropriate supports within their communities so that they may achieve their full potential.

Goals:

1. Increase awareness of the issues facing families and youth involved with the justice system, and raise the profile of the Victoria Family Court and Youth Justice Committee.
 - a. Identify gaps in services.
 - b. Support youth initiatives.
2. Pursue and promote meaningful reconciliation with the Indigenous community.
 - a. Committee members participate in Cultural Competency Training
 - b. Acknowledge and reduce the over-representation of Indigenous people in the justice system.
3. Advocate for policies and initiatives that improve outcomes for families and youth who may come in contact with the justice system.
 - a. Give a platform to youth/ amplify youth voices.
4. Support equity of access to resources across the region.
 - a. Help other organizations leverage their resources in support of families and youth.
5. Facilitate collaboration between community service providers and governance bodies in the interest of better supporting youth and families.



2020 NEWS SHARED

Island Health

December 22, 2020: It's a BIG DAY for us here at Island Health! The first of our colleagues received their COVID-19 vaccination!



First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition

BC's annual BC Child Poverty Report Card is now out. Confirmation that nearly 160k children in BC live in poverty, a third of them under the age of six.



Victoria Foundation shines in support of Greater Victoria

“By amplifying our interdependence as well as inequities resulting from systemic barriers, COVID-19 is highlighting the best in us and the worst. How we continue to respond as a society will determine how well we get through the crisis and what kind of community we’re all left with.”

www.victoriafoundation.bc.ca/vital-signs-launch



Foundry reaches out for support for Youth Services!

WINTER CLOTHING DRIVE IN SUPPORT OF YOUTH

THRESHOLD HOUSING SOCIETY

The Foundry's Youth Advisory Committee will be holding a Winter Clothing Drive, with all donations benefiting various youth-serving organizations in our community.

We would like to acknowledge, with gratitude, that this initiative is taking place on the traditional territory of the Coast Salish People of the Songhwees and Expanmál Nations.

Threshold Housing Society serves youth who are experiencing homelessness, aging out of care, or fleeing violence in the home. Young adults need a place to call home and people who believe in them- and Threshold strives to

PANDORA YOUTH APARTMENTS

OUT OF THE RAIN

VICTORIA NATIVE FRIENDSHIP CENTER YOUTH DEPARTMENT



CHAIRS REPORT

This 'Pandemic Year' we look hopefully to the arrival of new vaccines; longstanding problems are complicated by our 'new reality'; providing 'safe havens' is challenging when isolation is mandated; and while BC's programs grappled with finding solutions, this committee, charged with knowing the circumstances for youth and families who may be involved with the family court or youth justice systems, has had to focus on our internal connections and mandate following calls for a review of our operation, mandate and procedures.

Appointed by 3 School Districts and 13 Municipalities, and one Regional District, mandated by both the Province and the Federal Governments – Family Court and Youth Justice Committees all over Canada struggle to represent our communities and ensure that the needs of those served are heard. We are all in this together!

The silver lining has been a greater focus on our history and extra efforts to provide resources to the community without direct contact – including renewed vigor and assistance with communications on our relaunched and revitalized website and social media accounts.

The Victoria Family Court and Youth Justice Committee continued to meet virtually during the pandemic, as did our Steering Committee and Sub-Committees. It has been a year of reflection and analysis, especially in light of an ongoing review by the Capital Regional District in response to concerns by several of our appointees and as part of the CRD's systematic review of all of its many committees.

We look forward to continued evolution in 2021 as we refresh and refine our practices as the VFCYJC enters its 55th year of continuous operation. In this time of extreme isolation, our committee has found that some of the connections we thought were working were in fact not working well. While daunting, the needs of our beautiful communities still shine through and the many people who continue to work to bring light, life and love to those in need have helped us all to retain our resolve to make this world a little better than we found it.

News articles - Change is possible!

www.victoriafamilycourt.ca
www.facebook.com/vfamcourt
www.twitter.com/vfamcourt

CBC - How parents can protect kids from human trafficking

www.cbc.ca/player/play/1699631683681

Establishing an Indigenous Court in Port Hardy

www.victoriafamilycourt.ca/indigenous-court-in-port-hardy-will-offer-alternative-sentencing-options
www.aboriginal.legalaid.bc.ca

Snapshots of the local youth Nation

Sooke School District #62's Healthy Schools, Healthy People program
www.sd62.bc.ca/programs-services/healthy-schools-healthy-people

This excerpt from Arnold Viersen, MP for Peace River-Westock

"I am hopeful ... about meaningful solutions to end the sexual exploitation of women and children online.... you can:

Urge the Canadian government to implement the recommendations in a recent report by the Canadian Centre for Child Protection www.protectchildren.ca/en/resources-research/csam-reporting-platforms

Ask VISA and Mastercard to stop processing payments for the pornography industry through Defend Dignity.
www.choosechangecanada.org/mastercard-and-visa/

Sign a petition supporting Bill S-203 on age verification.
www.mparnold.ca/ending-exploitation/bill-s-203/https://www.protectchildren.ca/en/

Dark Cloud: The High Cost of Cyberbullying examines a growing epidemic affecting the lives of young people: the toll of cyberbullying, online trolls, and digital antagonism. Told through the eyes of Carol Todd, the mother of B.C. teen Amanda Todd, whose suicide after years of bullying and cyberstalking became a flashpoint for global action and gained her the label ‘The Girl Who Woke Up the World.’ www.telus.com/en/wise/dark-cloud

Mitzi Dean, MLA for Esquimalt-Metchosin

since 2017 and former member of the VFCYJC, was re-elected in November and was appointed Minister of Children and Family Development. Read the Tye article here: www.thetyee.ca/News/2020/12/11/Mitzi-Dean-Plans-BC-Children-Ministry/



“The overall number of children in care may be, as Dean claims, the lowest in the last 30 years, with the fewest Indigenous kids in care in 20 years ... Yet 67 per cent of the 5,588 kids in care in B.C. today are Indigenous, despite being approximately 10 per cent of the province’s children.”

Grant Charles, UBC associate professor of social work, is quoted: “The Children’s Ministry... should hire more Indigenous people to ... senior positions if they truly want to decrease the over representation of Indigenous children and youth in care.”

While a member of the Victoria Family Court and Youth Justice Committee, Dean helped to craft a guide document to increase uptake for the Calls For Action by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, highlighting areas for municipal and regional assistance in moving towards reconciliation. Reducing the number of Indigenous Youth in Care and Indigenous Persons Incarcerated

remains reflected in our Strategic Plan (Goal 2b). VFCYJC members are encouraged to take awareness building education with Indigenous Perspectives Training – 100% of participants have reported a high degree of satisfaction!

The Dual Pandemics

Our report would not be complete if we didn’t talk about our overdose epidemic, a significant concern for all communities in BC – including the remote and isolated.

“We’ve created a society where significant numbers of our fellow citizens cannot bear to be present in their lives without being drugged. We’ve created a hyperconsumerist, hyperindividualist, isolated world ... The opposite of addiction is not sobriety. The opposite of addiction is connection.”

By Health Authority in 2020, Vancouver Coastal Health reported 38 deaths per 100,000 individuals. Overall, the rate in BC is 33 deaths per 100,000 in 2020, higher than rates in 2017 and 2018.

“It is a very challenging time right now, in the midst of dual public health emergencies – the overdose crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic “

www.stopoverdose.gov.bc.ca/theweekly/overdose-prevention-and-covid-19

People are experiencing additional pressures – now is the time to support each other.

COVID-19 Hospitalizations and Deaths listed by week of the pandemic

www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/COVID_sitrep/Week_50_BC_COVID-19_Situation_Report.pdf

Table 1. COVID-19 severe outcomes by episode date, health authority of residence, and phase, BC January 15, 2020 (week 3) – December 12, 2020 (week 50)

| Health authority of residence: | FHA | IHA | VIHA | NHA | VCHA | Outside Canada | Total n/N (%) |
|--|--------------|------------|-----------|------------|------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| Ever Hospitalized | 1,353 | 119 | 47 | 131 | 650 | 9 | 2,309/43,628 (5) |
| Pre-Phase 1 & Phase 1 (17 weeks) | 245 | 29 | 24 | 12 | 176 | 2 | 488/2,309 (21) |
| Phase 2 (5 weeks) | 26 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 6 | 1 | 36/2,309 (2) |
| Phase 3a (11.5 weeks) | 100 | 5 | 0 | 11 | 40 | 2 | 158/2,309 (7) |
| Phase 3b (12 weeks, excluding week 50) | 865 | 57 | 17 | 84 | 380 | 3 | 1,406/2,309 (61) |
| Week 50 | 117 | 27 | 6 | 22 | 48 | 1 | 221/2,309 (10) |
| Ever ICU | 301 | 32 | 12 | 56 | 162 | 2 | 565/43,628 (1) |
| Pre-Phase 1 & Phase 1 (17 weeks) | 76 | 13 | 8 | 7 | 67 | 1 | 172/565 (30) |
| Phase 2 (5 weeks) | 6 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 9/565 (2) |
| Phase 3a (11.5 weeks) | 25 | 1 | 0 | 7 | 15 | 1 | 49/565 (9) |
| Phase 3b (12 weeks, excluding week 50) | 163 | 16 | 3 | 38 | 70 | 0 | 290/565 (51) |
| Week 50 | 31 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 8 | 0 | 45/565 (8) |
| Deaths | 376 | 6 | 8 | 15 | 273 | 0 | 678/43,628 (2) |
| Pre-Phase 1 & Phase 1 (17 weeks) | 55 | 2 | 5 | 0 | 84 | 0 | 146/678 (22) |
| Phase 2 (5 weeks) | 22 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 28/678 (4) |
| Phase 3a (11.5 weeks) | 20 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 25 | 0 | 46/678 (7) |
| Phase 3b (12 weeks, excluding week 50) | 215 | 4 | 1 | 9 | 135 | 0 | 364/678 (54) |
| Week 50 | 64 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 23 | 0 | 94/678 (14) |

a. Cases with unknown outcome are included in the denominators (i.e. assumed not to have the specified severe outcome).

"The COVID-19 pandemic has jolted our collective consciousness into recognizing that equity is vital for ensuring health security. This means incorporating a health equity approach to pandemic preparedness, response, and recovery. It relies on leadership at all levels, commitment of all Canadians and support by a strong public health system.

The bottom line: no one is protected until everyone is protected."

~ Dr. Theresa Tam, Chief Public Health Officer of Canada





On June 19, 2020, Hon. Dr. M.E. Turpel-Lafond (Aki-Kwe), was appointed by British Columbia’s Minister of Health, the Hon. Adrian Dix, to conduct a review of Indigenous specific racism in the provincial health care system. The impetus for this important report were allegations of a “Price is Right” game played by health care providers in some B.C. hospital emergency departments. The review released in November did not find evidence of an organized game with this name occurring in B.C. hospitals as originally depicted. The review has produced anecdotal and episodic evidence of multiple activities in the health care system that resembled these allegations in some fashion, but none of them could be described as coordinated, organized, widespread or targeting only Indigenous patients.

The report *In Plain Sight: Addressing Indigenous-specific Racism and Discrimination in B.C. Health Care* did find that the B.C. health care system had widespread systemic racism against Indigenous People with stereotyping, discrimination, and prejudice resulting in a range of negative impacts, harm, and even death. Indigenous women are particularly impacted and public health emergencies are magnifying these issues. Island Health has acknowledged the report and committed to change.

As you can see from all of the above, the Pandemic Year produced unprecedented challenges along with a wealth of opportunities, breakthroughs, inspiring examples of community support and the renewed recognition that, as Dr. Bonnie Henry repeatedly reminded us as the COVID rollercoaster rolled on, we’re all in this together.

Respectfully,

Cynthia Day

Chair, Victoria Family Court and Youth Justice Committee



FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

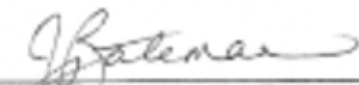


Annual Financial Statements 2019-2020
(for the period December 1, 2019 to November 30, 2020)

| | | |
|---|---------------------|---------------------|
| Opening Balance December 1, 2019: | | \$ 13,114.67 |
| Expenses: | | |
| Lunches | \$ 585.83 | |
| Secretarial | \$ 3,900.00 | |
| Office Supplies (See Note 2) | \$ 1831.39 | |
| Total Expenses: | \$ 6,317.22 | |
| Revenue: | | |
| Interest: | \$ 6.00 | |
| Annual Grant CRD | \$ 14,218.00 | |
| Total Revenue: | \$ 14,224.00 | |
| Closing Balance November 30, 2020: | | \$ 21,021.45 |

Note 1: Accounts kept on a cash basis.
Note 2: Office supplies, internet site.
Note 3: Shares in Vancity Credit Union \$ 7.11

We have reviewed these financial statements and the accompanying documentation and confirm that they are a fair representation of the financial position of the Victoria Family Court and Youth Justice Committee.



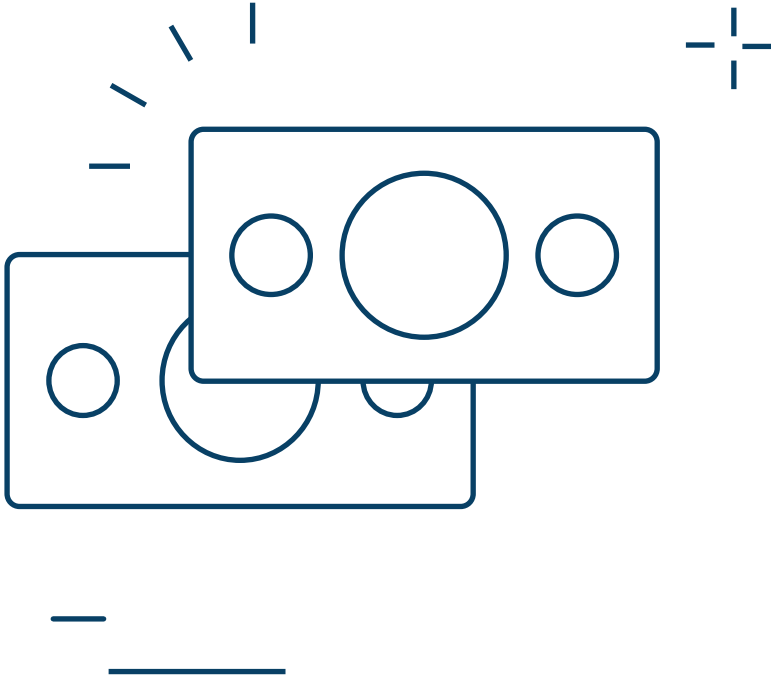
Jeff Boteman, Member, Audit Committee



Adam Flint, Member, Audit Committee

2020 BUDGET

| Revenue | | Totals |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|
| CRD Grant | \$15,000.00 | \$15,000.00 |
| Expenses | | |
| Secretarial | \$4,000.00 | |
| Office | \$1,000.00 | |
| Lunches | \$4,000.00 | |
| Special Events (Co-sponsoring, such as tco2, Restorative Justice, youth criminal justice workshops, registration fees, etc | \$2,000.00 | |
| Equipment (Computer, peripherals) | \$1,000.00 | |
| Professional Development (conferences, displays) | \$1,000.00 | |
| Website Development Completion | \$2,000.00 | |
| Total: | \$15,000.00 | \$15,000.00 |



SUB-COMMITTEES

We ask that members join one of the Sub-Committees to assist in developing materials to bring forward to the main committee. Meetings may be held via email, at any appropriate venue, and chairs may incur expenses up to \$200 to facilitate meetings without advance approval. Chairs are encouraged to present a motion to the main committee for extraordinary expenses. Our goal is to make it easier for volunteers to meet while still maintaining fiscal accountability. The practice has been to try to reserve funding for work that supports youth and families while also supporting those who give freely of their time and expertise.

| Committee | Chair | Email |
|------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| Communications | Adam Flint | flintadam@gmail.com |
| Priorities | Marcie McLean | marciemclean@shaw.ca |
| Court Watch | Marie-Terese Little | mtlittle@metchosin.ca |
| Youth & Family Matters | Marilyn Holman Sandra Sarsfield | maholman@gmail.com sarsfieldlaw@shaw.ca |
| CRAT | Bill McElroy | bill@mcelroys.ca |

Youth Mental Health Task Force moved to participation in
BC School Centered Mental Health Coalition

Communications supports outgoing communications, website design, Facebook and Twitter accounts.

Priorities supports applications for extraordinary expenses and coordinates information presentation for partnership opportunities that the committee may consider.

Court Watch coordinates Native and regular Court House visits to observe and report on the circumstances for youth and families.

Youth & Family Matters brings information to the main committee on Family Matters, Youth Matters and monitors the circumstances that youth and families encounter during separation, divorce, and custody arrangements as well as documenting hot button issues for youth and encourages youth involvement.

CRAT stands for Capital Region Action Team for Sexually Exploited Youth, advocates with expertise meet to address sexual exploitation, grooming, pimping, coercion, youth sex work and pornography.

Youth Mental Health has been a VFCYJC focus because of the strong correlation between mental health, young offenders and recidivism. Resolutions put forward with VFCYJC input to the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) have resulted in more youth service centres (FOUNDRY as well as school-based health clinics) and a BC-wide coalition to help coordinate needs and resources, including liaison with provincial ministries.

The BC School Centred Mental Health Coalition coordinates agencies, ministries, unions, parent associations, and school boards to meet regularly to increase supports for mental health and ensure healthy environments for students and instructors. VFCYJC members can sign up to attend via its portal: www.bcscmhcoalition.ca

COMMUNICATIONS SUB-COMMITTEE REPORT

www.victoriafamilycourt.ca | www.facebook.com/vfamcourt | www.twitter.com/vfamcourt

2020 marked the launch of a new, vastly expanded and considerably more functional VFCYJC website. We appear to be the first BC Family Court and Youth Justice Committee to have our own website. Having a strong, regularly updated on-line presence will help to elevate our profile, better serve our members and provide valuable and timely information to the public. It anchors the Committee's outreach and reporting functions alongside our AGM reports (which we ask our members to share with their respective organizations) boards and councils, and Chair Cynthia Day's yearly presentations to the CRD.

All credit for the VFCYJC website refresh and relaunch goes to our former Communications Chair Geanine Robey, who worked closely with Jon Valade from Victoria-based IdeaZone Website Development and Strategies. Once complete, the day-to-day maintenance and operation of the website was handed to the Sub-Committee. Access to the admin account was granted to a number of people to ensure it will continue to operate seamlessly in future.

The members-only section was created as an area to share information securely with VFCYJC members. It is password protected and the password was made available to members of the committee in October 2020. This section includes steering committee and all member meeting agendas, minutes, confidential correspondence, presentations and reading materials. This will eliminate the volume of email that is currently sent to committee members.

In late 2020 Google Analytics was added to the site and will be monitored and reported to the committee moving forward on a bi-annual basis.

An additional feature of the new website's home page is its integration with our social media accounts. This allows website users to quickly navigate to their chosen network to find additional content and to share it with others. Our Twitter feed (@vfamcourt) has been busy since 2014, and our Facebook page (/vfamcourt) is now into its second year of regularly updated content.

Members are encouraged to interact on social media – bring the community in!

If you have any general or specifically related content you'd like us to share -- articles, events, training opportunities, reports, news, etc. -- please email the links to Marnie Essery at vfamcourt@gmail.com and she'll forward them to the committee for posting. Visiting, liking and sharing our Twitter and Facebook posts is much appreciated.

Many thanks to my fellow members of the Communications Sub-Committee, Cynthia Day, Jeff Bateman and Marilyn Holman, and to our Secretary, Marnie Essery, for their help and support.

Respectfully,
Adam Flint
Chair, Communications sub-committee



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Dedicated to educating the public about the juvenile justice system, reviewing family and





December 3, 2020

Ministry of Attorney General
PO Box 9044 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

Dear Honourable Minister Eby,

The Victoria Family Court and Youth Justice Committee has existed since the 1960's and was designated as the Youth Justice Committee in the 1980's, representing the Community for the Youth Detention Centre here in Victoria up until youth containment moved from Vancouver Island to the mainland's two Detention Centres.

We are charged with knowing what the circumstances are for youth and families in the Capital Regional District who may be involved with the justice system. Our Survey of youth in Containment here in Victoria led to our advocacy for increased Youth Mental Health Services at the UBCM since 2003, when we observed that 80% of youth in custody had a primary or secondary diagnosis of a mental health disorder complicating their lives.

In 2013, we undertook a project with a practicum student from the University of Victoria who described the Court System he observed:

"I've seen about 180 cases, some only lasting a minute or two. At the beginning of this volunteer placement, I couldn't fathom how these decisions were being made at such a fast pace"... "Behind each case and decision, a child's life and future is determined." ... "it was shocking how little support the parents showed for their children. Out of the 180 cases I observed, only 56 had parents present, 30% of total cases. Even more surprising was the fact that only 4 cases had children present."

Our Committee has participated in 'Gang Reduction through Informed Practice' put on by Safer Schools Together, BC Police and Gang Specialists and notes the potential connection between financial needs, pride or shame, and loss of social connections (possibly connected to Family Court involvement) and the increasing prevalence of Gangs as a means of achieving a financial or personal image of 'success'. We recognize the challenges for Families and youth involved in the Court system and the predictable 'negative impacts' that follow. Youth and families lose 'protective factors' such as community connections, financial stability, or neighbourhood associations. It will likely be easier to keep the protective factors children, youth and families already have rather than trying to acquire new protective factors after a family break down.

Your Ministry announced new family court rules would be effective in May, 2021 with the aim to "increase access to justice in Family Court Issues" with "Modernized court procedures including electronic communications, enabling electronic filing and giving judges more flexibility in determining the best use of court time and focus on early resolution in the best interest of children and families". While the Victoria Family Court and Youth Justice Committee applauds these changes, they are long overdue and there remains a large backlog in the Court System which needs to be addressed in order for these changes to be effective in reducing the cumulative negative impacts of Family Court systems on families and

youth. More resources will need to be employed to effect these changes and address the backlog.

Your acknowledgement of Children's Rights is appreciated. Supportive systems and guiding documents that outline those rights for all participants will be needed to ensure that consideration of Children's Rights becomes the default for all participants.

While we applaud efforts to reduce the harm caused by an overwhelmingly busy and complex Court System, we are also concerned that the potential for undue influence increases where electronic communications may be used. Screening for Family Violence must come with special expertise because of the potential negative impacts of any such designation on children and their very important support system – the family. Strong Families are crucial and extra supports will be needed.

We recognize that change is difficult and may create confusion and delays in a system already challenged by volume and capacity in a world scrambling to stay safe from Covid-19. Additional capacity will be necessary to address the long-standing backlog as you work to improve Court services for children and families and additional capacity would reduce the harm caused by the very long waits for Court services to address maintenance, custody and access issues.

Our members include family lawyers and counsellors and we have reviewed your plan and would like you to consider:

- potential marginalization of those without access to electronic communication
- providing access to technology for remote areas or those areas without good public transit or good internet availability
- additional access to social workers or counsellors for families navigating the 'new system'
- mitigating the impacts of the Court not seeing body language or facial expressions with remote access technology (such as Zoom, Google Meet, etc.)
- safeguards to ensure testimony is free from undue influence, threats or violence (repeat check ins, or additional check ins)
- programming to reduce the financial and emotional impact on children
- mitigating community and social connection loss for children and families with parents or children in custody in a more distant community (keep community connections intact)

Yours truly,



Cynthia Day
Chair, Victoria Family Court and Youth Justice Committee
Colwood City Councillor

Cc: CRD Municipalities and School Districts



Victoria Family Court
& Youth Justice Committee

December 3, 2020

Attorney General
PO Box 9044 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

Dear Honourable Minister Eby,

RE: Victoria Sexual Assault Centre – Core Funding

Oak Bay Councillor Esther Paterson, an appointee to the Victoria Family Court and Youth Justice Committee, told us at our meeting of Sept. 18 about Oak Bay council's recent letter to you requesting consistent and stable funding for the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre (VSAC).

In support of Oak Bay's advocacy, the VFCYJC committee unanimously approved a motion to write you on this same subject.

Quoting from Mayor Murdoch's letter of June 14, centre staff have "worked tirelessly to serve survivors of sexual assault and childhood sexual abuse, through advocacy, counselling and empowerment ... we are aware that the Province of BC contributes to the VSAC in several ways, including government grants and contracts, but none of these offer a sustainable, predictable revenue stream to support their continued operations."

Representatives from the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre have addressed our committee a number of times over the years and we understand the many challenges they face in delivering their truly essential services.

We appreciate that the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General provided \$200,000 in April, 2019 to help with VSAC's operating costs over two years. That amount is equal to the centre's annual operating budget. As MLA and former VFCYJC committee member Mitzi Dean noted at the time, "this is a service that needs to be funded annually, forever."

On behalf of the VFCYJC committee, I'd like to join the District of Oak Bay in urging stable, consistent annual funding for the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre.

Sincerely,



Cynthia Day,
Chair, Victoria Family Court and Youth Justice Committee
Colwood City Councillor

Cc: The Honourable Mike Farnsworth, Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General
The Honourable Mitzi Dean, Minister of Children and Family Development
Victoria Sexual Assault Centre

PRIORITIES SUB-COMMITTEE REPORT

The Priorities Sub-committee consists of the Victoria Family Court & Youth Justice Committee (VFCYJC) Chair, its Treasurer and one or two members appointed by the Chair as per the VFCYJC Terms of Reference.

Consideration of Priorities Application(s) Process:
The Priorities Sub-committee reviews the applications for Goods and Services Submissions and Extraordinary Committee Member Expenses requests. This may involve questions posed to applicants via the Priorities Chair, verbal or email discussion amongst members, and a determination made by the Sub-committee. Recommendations are made in the form of a motion which is placed on an agenda for the main VFCYJC for their consideration and a decision at that main meeting.

The Sub-committee works to ensure that the applications are complete and dovetail with the intentions of the mandate for the VFCYJC and its Strategic Plan. The Sub-committee Chair may follow up with approved applicants regarding the success of the event and the evaluation framework (required).

Membership

For 2020 the Priorities Sub-committee members were Cynthia Day (Chair VFCYJC), Bill McElroy (Treasurer), and Marcie McLean (Priorities Sub-committee Chair).

Secretary

Marnie Essery has been contracted to provide services to the Committee including, monitoring the vfamcourt@gmail.com email address as well as distributing meeting notices, forwarding correspondence and annual reports, distributing the agendas and taking minutes. The committee pays \$300 per month for these services 12 months per year (recognizing that some months have more work, there is no adjustment for extra meetings or additional correspondence, just a flat rate to ensure consistency of response.)

Review

In May 2019, VFCYJC received a letter from CRD (Capital Regional District) CAO Robert Lapham. He wrote: “We note that at page 56 of the Supporting Document for the Family Court Committee (FCC) there is a grant application form, which may give third parties the impression that FCC is a granting authority. We respectfully suggest that you remove this grant application form from your documents.” Therefore, for 2020 the Priorities Sub-Committee did not accept any Priorities grant applications.

In October 2019, the CRD Board directed staff to “Work with the Victoria Family Court and Youth Justice Committee to review the committee’s mandate, governance, finances and communications and prepare a report with recommendations”. The CRD staff report went to the CRD Governance & Finance Committee meeting of Oct. 07, 2020. Its recommendation to the Board was “That staff be directed to report back on the process to restructure the committee in accordance with the recommendations set out in Appendix H”; and “That the report be referred out to all member municipalities”. At the CRD Board meeting of Nov. 18, 2020, that motion was endorsed.

The VFCYJC has not yet met with CRD staff to discuss the report and ask questions. It is important to note that the CRD does not have a policy or procedure for reviews of committees or commissions. As the report contains some factual inaccuracies and personal opinions, the following information is offered for some clarity:

- As of Sept. 30, 2020, CRD staff has met with 3 executive members of the VFCYJC for 1 hr 30 minutes and also spoke for 30 minutes with the Sub-committee Chair of the Capital Regional Action Team (CRAT) for Sexually Exploited Youth.
- It is unknown how much time may have been spent with the 2 VFCYJC members that initiated the review request.
- At the invitation of VFCYJC Chair Cynthia Day, CRD staff attended the Annual General Meeting in Jan. 2020 and a Zoom meeting held on Oct. 21, 2020.

Based on the CRD Board's resolution, the executive members and some other VFCYJC members had anticipated more consultation and discussion with CRD staff. At least one meeting is planned for early 2021.

This VFCYJC is unique, as are other Family Court Committees including Vancouver and Richmond. This unique nature is not new and it is detailed in VFCYJC annual reports over the years. The Committee's history dates to the 1960's. It is guided by both Provincial and Federal legislation through the BC Provincial Court Act, Family Court Committee Section 5, and the Federal Youth Criminal Justice Act, Youth Justice Committees Section 18 (1). Part of the Committee's mandate comes from those statutes. The VFCYJC was formally declared a Youth Justice Committee (added to its Family Court mandate) by the Honourable Brian Smith, QC (with documentation).

What is not clear however is the role of a Regional District beyond the purpose and bylaw that exists to collect funds from the participating member municipalities and distribute those funds annually to the Committee for its operations.

There appears to be no legislation in respect to a Regional District and a Family Court or Youth Justice Committee. The Local Government Act, Community Charter and the Provincial Court Act have been thoroughly reviewed for information or linkages and none were found. Therefore, it is not confirmed that a Regional District has the legislative ability to determine the functions, operations or structure etc. of a Family Court or Youth Justice Committee.

Although the Provincial Letters Patent to the CRD indicates that the CRD may participate in, contribute to and provide funds to the Family Court Committee, those letters do not appear to indicate that the CRD has any authority or jurisdiction over the VFCYJC.

Beyond the funding aspects, it is not clear what role the CRD has towards the Victoria Family Court Committee. Excerpts from CRD Bylaw No. 2560 indicate that: "In 1987 the CRD was granted the

authority to fund the operation" and, in 1998, "To convert the portion of the service pertaining to the funding of the Family Court Committee to an extended service."

Existing Structure

The VFCYJC has a Steering Committee which meets the same 8 months as the main committee. The Steering Committee sets the agenda items, determines potential guest speakers, and receives suggestions and concerns from VFCYJC members. Members of the Steering Committee are the executive and chairs of the Sub-Committees. However, all Committee members are welcome and receive notification.

Membership per the VFCYJC's constitution may be up to 23 people with: 13 municipal appointments (alternates permitted), up to 7 CRD appointments and 3 School Board appointees. Some municipalities appoint a citizen representative. Only about 5-7 municipally elected officials who are appointed regularly attend meetings, and regularly attending citizen appointments are about the same (5-7 members).

In the Provincial Court Act Section 5, (4) "The Family Court Committee must be composed of representatives from each area served." And, 5 (1) "A municipality may have a Family Court Committee appointed by the municipal council". Municipal appointments therefore are at a municipality's discretion.

VFCYJC agendas and materials are distributed to members in advance of the meeting and meeting minutes are kept; the Chair uses a speakers list; motions are formal and recorded in the minutes; resource members' votes are not counted as they are not voting members; and agenda items not considered are carried over to the next agenda. Some funds are used to provide a modest lunch for meetings, making it easier for the resource people and service providers to attend. This small perk (also for volunteers) is greatly appreciated as their work, time, shared knowledge and connections are invaluable to the committee.



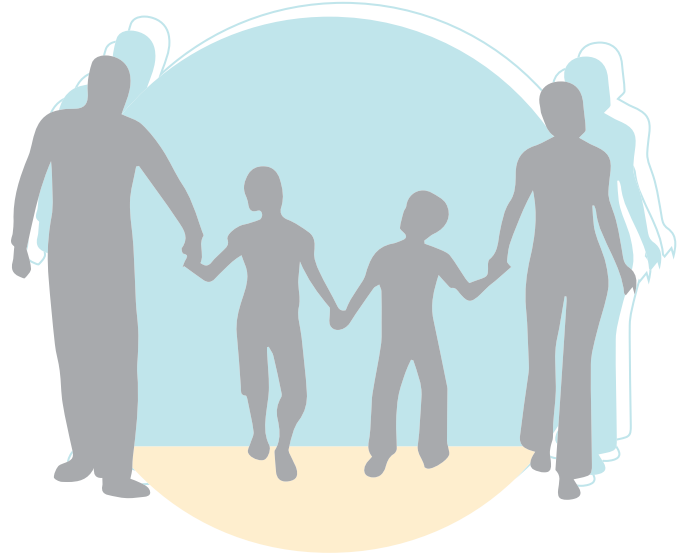
As VFCYJC agendas are always full and attendance has not been an issue, the CRD report's recommendations to reduce meeting times and the number of members may not be beneficial, nor would term limits. Finding members with the right combination of experience and interest can be challenging.

The VFCYJC has a Terms of Reference, Constitution, Strategic Plan and an Orientation Manual which were not presented in the CRD staff report. Up until last year (when the new website was under development) those documents (except the Orientation Manual) were included in all the committee's Annual Reports and presented to the CRD annually. The Annual Reports are also provided to the Provincial Attorney General and participating CRD municipalities each year.

The VFCYJC continues to update its website <https://www.victoriafamilycourt.ca/> some funds have been put towards this project with professional assistance and much volunteer work from the Communications Sub-committee.

On the matter of a VFCYJC member attending a conference in Las Vegas, and a concern that there was no debate or discussion, the Chair has explained that in 2018 the member submitted an application for Extra Ordinary Committee Member Expenses (and within the scope of the VFCYJC's Travel Policy). At that time his application had been approved by resolution to attend the Youth Justice Training Session (a 3-day event), however the applicant was unable to attend in 2018, and reapplied the following year. Therefore, in 2019, the matter was discussed and debated again. No Committee member voted in opposition to the motion to approve the expenses.

A yearly audited (reviewed and signed by two VFCYJC members who are not on the executive) Financial Statement is provided in the Annual Reports. Once adopted, the Annual Report is presented to the CRD Board by the VFCYJC Chair. Members are requested to present the Annual Report to their appointing agencies, with support as needed.



It was brought to the attention of the VFCYJC Chair in May 2019 that the CRD bylaw in place did not delegate enough authority for the committee to issue grants. VFCYJC therefore stopped accepting Priorities Applications for Goods & Services in 2020. Historically, for over 15 years, all Priorities Applications for small grants and any Extraordinary Expense(s) applications from VFCYJC members have always been detailed in the Annual Reports.

The act of providing small grants via the Priorities Sub-Committee form for Goods & Services Submissions by VFCYJC resolution (to community agencies or persons who provide services for youth and/or families having contact with the justice system) has been the committee's practice (for approximately 14 years) as a way to gather more input on the needs and shortfalls for users of the justice system and to help members to evaluate options to recommend. Therefore, some VFCYJC members likely assumed some authorization had occurred in order to be doing so; this is now understood to be a misunderstanding.

Respectfully submitted,
Marcie McLean
Chair, Priorities Sub-committee

YOUTH AND FAMILY MATTERS SUB-COMMITTEE REPORT

Life in 2020 has been extraordinary in many ways, and for Family Courts across BC and in Greater Victoria, things have been very different! Reported this year, in person hearings, appearances, case conferences, and trials have gone the way of - well, COVID. The Courts closed altogether for a few weeks and then began to ramp up for urgent matters as judges began hearing arguments by phone. Then Microsoft Teams was enlisted for video conferencing where possible.

The lasting result may have its pros and cons, but there will likely be some permanent changes. Filing of applications has been made possible by e-mail or by other online applications, and this is very convenient for everyone, but especially for self-represented folks who don't have time to drive to a courthouse, find and pay for parking, stand in line at a wicket and then get out of town again in time to pick up the kids at school. This is a COVID wrinkle that may find it's way into permanent practice. Service of documents has also been allowed to 'go virtual' under COVID rules, including swearing of affidavits.

Looking forward, the new Early Resolution and Case Management Rules being rolled out in Victoria and Surrey Family Court Registries is a go. This process has been largely in place in the Victoria Court Registry for almost two years, but not in the Western Communities Court Registry. It involves a strong push with clients to engage in mediation for solutions following family breakdown, especially respecting parenting responsibilities, parenting time, guardianship, and support. Pre-screening is done to ensure family violence does not interfere with the appropriateness of mediation. When mediation is not successful, or appropriate, clients receive some legal assistance to assist them to go to court. This is a step further than what has been happening in Rule 5 Registries in the Province of BC, such as Nanaimo, where mediation is a pre-condition to court applications, except when family violence is a factor.

Through Legal Aid BC, duty counsel services are now provided by phone and dedicated Family Law Lines have been expanded, which can be very helpful for clients who can now access these services while sitting in their car or while baby is having a nap in the next room. E-mail follow ups with advice, resources, and follow up suggestions are now more convenient.

Largely, Family Court is changing, for better or worse.

Respectfully,
Sandra Sarsfield and Marilyn Holman
Co-Chairs, Youth and Family Matters Sub-Committee



2020 COURT WATCH UPDATE

Due to provincial restrictions regarding in-person meetings because of the threat of COVID infections, members of the Court Watch Sub-Committee have not had the opportunity to view any Family or Youth Court hearings in 2020. However, the Victoria Family Court and Youth Justice (VFCYJ) Committee has been kept up to date on new rules and legislation involving youth and families.

On June 1, 2020, the Ministry of the Attorney General announced new family court rules effective May, 2021. The aim is to improve how BC families can resolve their legal issues in family court and to increase access to justice. The new rules will enhance the ability of the provincial court to resolve family disputes more efficiently and effectively while creating a better experience for families resolving their legal disputes. The new rules feature modernized court procedures including electronic communications, enabling electronic filing and giving judges more flexibility in determining the best use of court time. The new rules focus on early resolution of family law cases and on the best interests of children and their families.

New approaches to case management include family management conferences, streamlined court processes and new forms that use plain language and are easier to use and understand. The changes are aimed at enhancing the ability of the provincial court to resolve family disputes more efficiently and effectively, while creating a better experience for families resolving their legal disputes.

The provincial courts had resumed most of their operations by the end of 2020. However, to protect the health of all court users and to help contain the spread of COVID-19, the court has moved some operations to video and/or conference telephone calls and encouraged the filings of court documents to be done electronically. Other measures such as physical distancing, masks and use of sanitizers have been implemented.

Once it is safe to do so in 2021, members of the VFCYJ Court Watch Sub-Committee will resume in-person visits.

Respectfully,
Marie-Térèse Little
Chair, Court Watch Sub-Committee



CAPITAL REGION ACTION TEAM FOR SEXUALLY EXPLOITED YOUTH

Due to COVID and weather, CRAT only met twice in 2020, both meetings via Google Meet.

TCO2 made presentations to 2500 students during their February trip to Victoria, February 24-28. We will have to examine their presentations for 2021 as we do not know if presentations in schools will be permitted this year, so we have not booked them. We are looking at alternatives.



We have been informed that luring has increased on social media since COVID-19 started. This is very difficult to track. Parents need to be vigilant.

The graphic novel/video project is on hold, as many offices are closed and creative people are unable to do any work.

The Victoria Family Court and Youth Justice Committee is undergoing a review. As CRAT is part of this committee, it is unknown what impact this will have on CRAT.

We will book rooms at Victoria City Hall for 2021 only if we are able to meet in person.

Respectfully,
Bill McElroy
Chair, Capital Region Action Team



HIGHLIGHTS OF RESTORATIVE JUSTICE VICTORIA

While Restorative Justice Victoria is not a VFCYJC Sub-Committee, most restorative justice organizations in BC began with involvement of a Youth Justice Committee. Each organization is unique in that each has evolved in response to the needs identified in our communities. The Victoria Family Court and Youth Justice Committee was a contributor to the evolution of restorative justice in Victoria – funding the production of video presentations, supporting youth-led presentations, and facilitating volunteer education through the provision of resource materials. RJ Victoria has come a long way!

Restorative Justice Victoria is a success story, overcoming the differences in the provision of police services to become an organization of accomplished, skilled volunteers who can be relied on to support better outcomes for those who access this ‘accountable option’ after a crime. Restorative justice can provide better outcomes – for all participants, and the highly skilled volunteers are asked to provide these better outcomes for increasingly complex cases throughout the CRD while RJV funding remains critically insecure. 15 Resolutions about restorative justice were sent to the Union of British Columbia Municipalities between 1999 and 2018 calling on the provincial government to support restorative justice. 11 were carried, action is still required.

Restorative Justice Victoria’s 2020 Annual General Meeting is available for replays on YouTube. Regular VFCYJC attendee Gillian Lindquist, Executive Director, delivers an overview of case reports (starting at 12:30 on the video). Gillian points to the continuing percentage increase of more violent crimes (assault, partner violence) as a percentage of the cases they facilitate. Keynote speaker Alana Abramson, an instructor specializing in youth justice in the criminology department at Kwantlen Polytechnic University and veteran RJ researcher and trainer, is introduced at 1 hour/8 minutes approx. RJV newsletters are excellent and published monthly.

2020 AGM:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=G5HBZ9-2qz0&t=1s&ab_+channel=RestorativeJusticeVictoria

RJV Community Newsletter:

Archived on the VFCYJC website at www.victoriafamilycourt.ca/community-resources-reports/#toggle-id-12

Subscribe here: <https://mailchi.mp/559b3640e11a/rjv-community-newsletter>

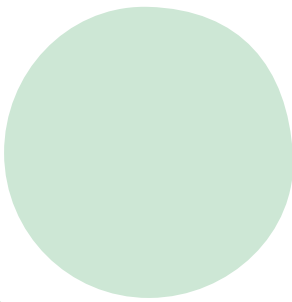
Annual Report:

www.rjvictoria.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/2019-Annual-Report.pdf



Victoria Family Court

& Youth Justice Committee



C/O Colwood City Hall

3300 Wishart Road

Colwood, BC V9C 1R1

Phone 250.478.5999

Fax 250.478.7516

www.victoriafamilycourt.ca