



# Northern Justice Symposium 2016

## Executive Summary

The 12th Annual Northern Justice Symposium convened on May 17, 2016, at the Ches Leach Lounge in Prince Albert, and ran until midday on May 19. In all, the symposium collected about 230 participants, and they listened to more than 20 presenters speak on a diverse range of issues, over the 2 ½ days. Participants were drawn from all across the province, coming from First Nation reserves and the municipalities in roughly equal numbers. As usual there was a large RCMP posse from various northern detachments as well as a gaggle of officials from the Ministry of Justice.

The overriding purpose of the Northern Justice Symposium is to pick apart the heavy impact of the criminal justice system on northerners in Saskatchewan, to identify the challenges and opportunities that present themselves to communities, governments of different levels, the RCMP, and other key agents working in the justice, education, social services delivery systems in the north and elsewhere. Socio-economic conditions in the north and the range of historical factors contributing to high crime and victimization rates in the north present a challenging backdrop, stretching the capacity of governments and agencies to respond effectively and appropriately. At the Northern Justice Symposium, we hear about how communities are themselves agents of change in their own right, taking the lead in pursuing local initiatives to make their homes safer and healthier places to live and raise families.

An underlying and informing theme of all Northern Justice Symposiums is that engendering effective partnerships between communities, government, the RCMP and other agencies working in the north, is the

key to driving change and improving outcomes for northern people.

### Background

The Northern Justice Symposium evolved through a formalized partnership between the RCMP, Saskatchewan Justice and New North representing all 35 northern municipalities. These parties became signatories to a Framework Agreement for Community Policing Initiatives and signed a historical Memorandum of Understanding on May 5, 1999 to improve police and community relations in Northern Saskatchewan. Early discussions with New North identified a number of serious and chronic issues that have formed the basis of the Framework Agreement and that Police relations was a top priority for northerners. Original discussions identified other justice priorities such as limited access to justice services and limited access to community justice alternatives, case overloads resulting in long waiting periods to attend court, remand waiting issues; transportation issues, minimal contact with legal aid; no community capacity to respond to crime and safety issues; minimal communication between various human service agencies and lack of responses towards victims and offenders in the north.

Community Police Boards were established to provide a community based structure and mechanism for addressing crime and safety issues and for discussions between community and formal criminal justice system. An annual Northern Justice Symposium, the first one being in 2002, was just one of the outcomes from the development and implementation of the Framework Agreement. The Symposium provided a venue for all stakeholders to come together to network, learn about initiatives, increase capacity and

improve justice conditions for their communities in Northern Saskatchewan. Another direct result from this Framework Agreement on Community Policing Initiatives was the establishment of a full time sergeant position situated within the RCMP North District to act as a liaison between police and northern communities.

Since 2002, the Northern Justice Symposium has become a high visibility event as well as important event for providing a forum for positive interactions between northern stakeholders and government officials. The event has increased awareness and understanding in communities and provided many opportunities for partnerships and linkages with government agencies. It allows justice officials and other stakeholders to discuss northern concerns, to identify and prioritize community based solutions to enhance existing services, fill gaps and avoid overlaps as well as approach many community justice concerns with crime prevention initiatives as well as developing community capacity. The event brings northerners and government agencies together to provide opportunities regarding future directives and partnerships in order to collaborate, support and implement community-based social justice development.

## Plenary Sessions

Dr Ken Coates from the University of Saskatchewan, first day keynote speaker, spoke of the historical dimension of the impact of the criminal justice system on northern aboriginal people in his “Before justice: the social and historical realities that shape northern engagement with police, courts and prisons.”

Coates began with a critical distinction between what he called “basic justice” and “formal justice.” Formal justice is what we might call the machinery of the administration of justice—the courts, police, government, and so on. However, Coates, while acknowledging the obvious significance of the relationship between the administrative arm of the justice system and northern people, believes that we need to simultaneously address “basic justice” — sometimes referred to as “social justice” — the underlying mechanics of social and economic inequality that create the conditions of northerners’ interaction with the formal justice system. As his key argument

is that the relationship between northerners and government has been predominantly one of interference and external intervention, he maintains that for us to properly deliver and facilitate the achievement of basic justice we now need government to “step back,” to allow First Nations and aboriginal leadership and their communities to develop the appropriate cultural apparatus, the “cultural partnerships,” they need to move forward on their own terms.

Russ Mirasty in his presentation focussed on “engagement,” in all its dimensions. He began with an implicit address to government, critiquing the model of engagement of often used by government, of consulting with leaders or appointed stakeholders, which often overlook the “individual voices.” “It has to be almost one-on-one. Some would say 'well that's impossible for government leaders to do that, but it's not, quite frankly. If you want to know the north, if you want to know northerners, you have to speak to northerners on a personal level," he said.

But, he said, an important element of engagement is self-reflection. How much do we accept responsibility for our failure to engage?

Calling upon his recent experiences consulting with students as part of a project with the Ministry of Education, Mirasty said he was struck by the importance of reciprocity to students. He noted that the students he spoke to craved attention from their teachers, parents and grandparents, and he wondered how students can be expected to care about their education if no one else does.

Broadening this idea, Mirasty identified a number of barriers to effective engagement that can limit reciprocity—such as the belief that decision makers don’t care and will do what they want anyway, and so on. Mirasty implicitly hit upon the vicious cycle that contributes to ineffective engagement and apathy—that people who don’t believe they will be listened to won’t engage—and said that the only way to break it is to “believe we can contribute ... we have to believe in ourselves.”

"Ultimately we have to take responsibility for our own behaviors, our own children, their education, their activities," he said. "We have to recognize that

some of it is ours to own. So when we accept that, then it's ours to fix."

He challenged everyone in the audience to think about their own engagement, at every level of their lives: "Where does it start? Here, in this room. Parents, grandparents: if kids see us engaged in their lives ..."

Josey Roske and Jason Young for the Northern Lights School Division #113 presented the Violence Risk Assessment Protocol, an instrument which can work as the framework for how to respond to potential or actual violent threat situations in schools. Superintendent of Education Jason Young says prior to this event, NLSD would have under-reacted to a risk to violence, and waited for it to blow over. But now they've been trained in how to notice and address the signs. Young says no one "just snaps."

Now, staff at the division and areas around the division are trained in violent threat risk assessment—and they've already used that training to help students.

Throughout the presentations focusing on community-driven initiatives, like Al Ducharme's talk on RADA—Reserves Against Drugs and Alcohol—the point was made again and again that communities have become stronger, and have the capacity to meet their own challenges.

Yet, even then, perhaps the most challenging refusal of passivity, of the victim narrative, was Harold Johnson's "Story of Alcohol," the morning of Day 2 insisting that "if everything is just story," then we need to change the story we tell about alcohol: "If I say, 'I'm at the end of my drinking career and I have this thing called alcoholism,' if I tell myself that it is a disease, 'I got it by chance. It was God's will. There's nothing I can do about it'—I won't do anything about it. If, on the other hand, I say, 'This is an injury I gave to myself because of my drinking pattern. It's my fault,' then I can also say, 'It's my responsibility,' and then I will do something about it."

Angie Bear's "Traditional Aspects of Domestic Violence," began by dismissing the myth that domestic violence was just a physical thing, but rather extends across a spectrum that can include emotional and fi-

nancial violence as well. She asked "what can traditional teachings tell us about domestic abuse?" Traditional communities, she said, would not have survived had they not "honoured the role of women," she said. At the heart of domestic violence is the unequal status accorded women by men—a challenge to a society organized by men, in the interests of men, she said. But, she said, that is where the illusion starts. In her family, it was her grandmother who "called everyone home," and in traditional communities, where women were the nurturers, the men the protectors, it is not the roles each plays, but the power that gravitates to those roles that is important. In traditional communities, there were no such power distinctions. She spoke, by contrast, of the "negative energy" in a home where a woman's role is not honoured, which can emerge, powerfully, in passive aggressive behaviour—which she illustrated with the story of the "crooked braid" (a woman will respond to disrespectful behaviour from her husband with poor quality braiding).

The following day's presentation on the provincial government's response to the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Inquiry, by Ann Pottruff of the Ministry of Justice, also grappled, tentatively, with how to represent women as agents, not objects, in a context that is, quite literally, shaped by women's victimhood. Pottruff says the key to understanding why Aboriginal women are disproportionately the victims of extreme violence is vulnerability: "Women are and can be strong," she said, "but the situations they find themselves in are too overpowering." Vulnerability is partly, but not exclusively, framed by the status of women in the home—recalling Angie Bear—but societal attitudes based on "racism and sexism aggravated by vulnerability due to poverty" are also "root causes."

Despite all the talk of self-empowerment and resilience, there is a brute reality that requires the resources of governments and external agencies to help deal with. Betsy Kelly, of North Sask. Victim Services spoke of the agency's role to help women come up with safe plans to get out of the household and into a temporary accommodation, or to stay with family. She said that in the past year in the north, its workers in all regions have taken on 21 cases.

In other presentations, Grant St. Germaine, the northern area commander for F Division, dispelled some myths about search and rescue (for example, police don't wait 12, 24 or 48 hours before they go looking for someone). He also explained the factors surrounding underwater rescues—a point of contention in the north. St. Germaine explained that the RCMP observe Canadian Labour Codes, so the days of a single diver going down are long gone. In other RCMP presentations, Jane McLatchy spoke about some of the strategies being used by the RCMP to effect crime reduction through crime prevention.

Corey Lerat, a retired RCMP officer now working as the Director of Police Quality and Innovation with the Ministry of Justice, spoke plainly about the First Nations Policing Program, particularly where he thought it was falling down: “We haven't effectively engaged the First Nations communities,” he told the audience. “It's about having the bodies and resources to deliver the police service to those communities and it's not there.”

The First Nations Policing Program formally began in 1991 and, according to Lerat, strived to provide culturally appropriate policing for First Nation communities while giving them the same level of service larger cities such as Prince Albert or Saskatoon would receive.

Lerat said there wasn't enough funding for the program, leading to RCMP officers working in cramped buildings without a proper detachment and not enough manpower to accomplish anything meaningful. Lerat was joined by Rob Coffee, representing the federal government on this file, to speak about the First Nations Tripartite Agreement consultations being conducted by the federal government.

Motivational speaker Ernie Louttit, or “Indian Ernie,” as he likes to be called, entranced the audience with 20 minutes of stories from the beat as one of Saskatoon's first Aboriginal policemen. He said he quickly learned that a key quality of a good cop is “empathy,” and implored for those in the audience to carry that idea into their jobs.

## Northern Excellence Awards

The Northern Excellence Awards made a welcome return to this year's Northern Justice Symposium, with awards given out in the Citizen of the Year, RCMP Member of the Year, and Community of the Year categories.

The RCMP member of the Year was awarded to three RCMP members: Cst. Karlo Malik, of Patuanak Detachment, Sgt. Tara Norman for her contributions in Patuanak/English River during her posting in 2014 and 2015, and Cst. J.P. Gauthier of Waterhen Lake Detachment. Marya Walker from La Loche was awarded the Citizen of the Year. The awards committee decided that it couldn't actually decide which community to give the Community of Year award to so it gave it to every community.

## Media and Reporting

The Northern Justice Symposium attracts media attention because of the high level of public interest in the over-representation of Aboriginal people in justice system.

The 2016 NJS garnered almost a dozen media mentions, in both the print and broadcast media. This included a pre-event spot on MBC's midday news the day before the event, which included a segment from an interview with the New North CEO Al Loke, and an accompanying article on MBC's website. MBC published three additional news stories, covering Harold Johnsons Story of Alcohol presentation, the Northern Lights presentation on the violence threat risk assessment tools, and the final day panel session on domestic violence.

The Prince Albert daily newspaper, the Herald, and the online media outlet PANOW, published articles on Russ Mirasty's presentation on community engagement, and Corey Lerat's presentation on Aboriginal policing.

The event was recorded on video and presentations from Duane Favel, Harold Johnson, Dr Coates Ernie Loutitt, as well as Jason Young and Josie Roske, are available on the New North Youtube Channel (locat-

able by searching “New North Justice Symposium”), with the rest to follow as they are edited.

## **Outcomes and Further Thoughts**

The 2016 Northern Justice Symposium was successful in bringing together stakeholders from across the justice spectrum. One of the objectives of the organizing committee was to provide the stage for an informative and engaging conversation for everyone with an interest in northern justice issues. A part of this objective was to engage as many communities as possible, from the north and other parts of the province, in order to build on the collective knowledge and wealth of experience of the many people working in this area.

To this extent, the event has reached a new level of engagement, with more than 50 communities represented at this year’s event. A highlight here is the number of First Nations communities and organizations now participating, reflecting perhaps the extent of the realization that no one wants to “work in silos” any longer, and that solutions to long-term problems in communities around this issue will come from people working together, across jurisdictions, and perhaps outside their traditional comfort zones.

The format of the event will no doubt continue to evolve over the next few years, perhaps to incorporate some of the thoughts of MC and closing speaker Duane Favel, who said the event could benefit from more “community success stories,” which most people would no doubt agree with.

## Appendix A: Event Program

# Northern Justice Symposium

Ches Leach Lounge, Prince Albert

May 17-19, 2016

## Tuesday, May 17

8:00–8:30	<b>Registration</b>
8:30–8:45	<b>Opening Prayer &amp; Opening Ceremonies</b> MASTERS OF CEREMONY: <b>Duane Favel &amp; Inspector Roberta McKale</b> DIGNITARIES: <b>Brenda Butterworth-Carr</b> , Assistant Commissioner, Commanding Officer for RCMP F Division <b>Representative from PAGC</b> (TBA) <b>Deputy Minister Kevin Fenwick</b> , Q.C., Ministry of Justice & Attorney General <b>Duane Favel</b> , New North
8:45–9:30	<b>Motivational Speaker: Dr Ken Coates</b> “Before Justice: The Social and Economic Realities that Shape Northern Engagement with Police, Courts and Prisons”
9:30–10:30	<b>Northern Engagement Presentation</b> Presenter: <b>Russ Mirasty</b>
10:30–11:00	<b>Nutrition Break/Draws</b>
11:00–12:00	<b>Violence Threat Risk Assessment by NLSD #113</b> Presenters: <b>Jason Young &amp; Josy Roske</b>
12:00–1:00	<b>Lunch Break (Provided)</b>
1:00–2:00	<b>Traditional Aspects of Domestic Violence</b> Presenter: <b>Angie Bear</b>
2:00–3:00	<b>The Services and Rights of Victims of Crime</b> Presenters: <b>Dwight Lawrence &amp; Betsy Kelly</b>
3:00–3:15	<b>Nutrition Break/Draws</b>
3:15–4:15	<b>RADA “Reserves against Drugs &amp; Alcohol”</b> Presenter: <b>Al Ducharme</b>
4:15–4:30	<b>Closing Remarks &amp; Draws</b>

### Acknowledgements

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Rhonda Hueser, Ministry of Justice • Al Loke, CEO New North • Lindsay Smith, Ministry of Justice • Linda Gaumont, Ministry of Justice • Greg McNabb, Ministry of Justice • Val Deschambeault, Mayor of Cumberland House • Cpl. Con Lerat – RCMP Community Policing • Sgt. Cliff Joanis – RCMP Aboriginal Policing • Sgt. Dave Sanderson – RCMP, Aboriginal Policing • Betsy Kelly – North Sask Victim Services • Insp. Jane MacLatchy, RCMP • David Laroque, PACC • Rick Sanderson, PAGC • Brian Hardlotte, PAGC Vice Chief

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## Wednesday, May 18

8:00-8:30	Registration
8:30-8:45	Opening Prayer & Opening Comments
8:45-9:30	Motivational Speaker: Ernie Louttit "When We Know Each Other"
9:30-10:30	Effects of Drugs & Alcohol in Northern Saskatchewan Presenter: Harold Johnson
10:30-11:00	Nutrition Break/Draws
11:00-12:00	Search & Rescue: RCMP Roles & Responsibilities Presenter: Superintendent Grant St. Germaine
12:00-1:00	Northern Excellence Awards Luncheon
1:00-2:00	First Nations Policing Program Presenter: Cory Lerat
2:00-3:00	Community Tripartite Agreements Presenters: Rob Coffee & Sgt. Cliff Joanis
3:00-3:15	Band Bylaws & Bylaw Enforcement Presenter: Sgt. Cliff Joanis
3:15-4:15	Nutrition Break/Draws
4:15-4:30	RCMP Crime Prevention & Crime Reduction Presenter: Inspector Jane MacLatchy
4:15-4:30	Closing Remarks & Draws

## Thursday, May 19

8:30-8:45	Opening Prayer & Opening Comments
8:45-9:30	MMIW – "Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women" Presenter: Betty Ann Pottruff
9:30-9:45	Nutrition Break/Draws
9:45-11:45	PANEL DISCUSSION: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FACILITATOR: Jan Turner, ADM Courts & Tribunals Division PANEL: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inspector Jane MacLatchy, RCMP Anti-Violence Program</li><li>• Frankie Jordan, Senior Policy Analyst, Ministry of Justice &amp; Attorney General</li><li>• Betsy Kelly, North Sask Victim Services</li></ul>
11:45-12:00	Closing Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Duane Favel, New North</li><li>• Supt. Grant St. Germaine, RCMP North District Commander</li><li>• Pat Thiele, Executive Director Community Justice Division, Ministry of Justice &amp; Attorney General</li></ul>
12:00-1:00	Lunch (Provided) & Major Door Prize Draw