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# 21st Annual Report of the Victims Assistance Committee of the Northwest Territories

Part 2

2009/2010

## VICTIM SERVICES HIGHLIGHTS

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In 2009/10, local victim services workers and coordinators reported:

- 739 new clients served
- 3,595 total services provided to new and continuing clients
- 603 brief service contacts
- 33% of new clients are victims of violent crime
- 61% of the people impacted by crime were referred to victim services by the RCMP
- 316.5 hours of service provided by victim services volunteers
- 1108 hours were spent on-call by volunteers

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# VICTIM SERVICES PROGRAMS

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Since 1989, community-based victim services programs have helped victims of crime in the NWT.

In 2009/10, the Government of the Northwest Territories, through the Department of Justice Community Justice Division, provided assistance, training, resources and support to community-based victim services programs in Aklavik, Behchokò, Fort Good Hope, Fort Simpson, Fort Smith, Hay River, Inuvik, Paulatuk, and Yellowknife.

The benefits of community-based victim services are:

- Victims feel comfortable accessing services through a community-based agency;
- Services are available for victims of both reported and unreported crime; and,
- There is greater opportunity to develop the most appropriate victim services for the community.

## TERRITORIAL MISSION STATEMENT

Victim services offer support, assistance, information and referrals in a courteous and compassionate manner that respects the dignity and privacy of victims of crime.

## OBJECTIVES

Victim services' objectives are to:

- Make contact with victims in a manner that expresses concern and support;
- Offer practical assistance and information;
- Liaise between police, Crown and other court personnel so current information is available to victims and procedures do not unduly inconvenience them; and
- Help victims to access the resources they need in order to deal with the effects of victimization.

This report demonstrates the work of community-based victim services in 2009/10.

In 2009/10, a total of 11 paid coordinators/workers and numerous volunteers provided direct services to victims of reported and unreported crime. Throughout the year victim services workers/volunteers continued to provide outreach services, mostly by phone, to victims of crime in communities which lack victim services. In particular, outreach service were provided to the communities of Fort Providence, Fort Resolution, Tuktoyaktuk, Gameti, Tulita, Deline, Fort Liard, Kakisa, Wrigley, Hay River Reserve, Wekweti and Grand Prairie.

## SECTION 1: HOW MANY PEOPLE USED VICTIM SERVICES?

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Victim services help victims of crime and tragedy. The number of clients served each month is divided into three categories: new cases, brief service contacts and cases continued from the previous month.

New cases are those with whom victim services spent substantial time and where ongoing contact was anticipated at first contact. Brief service contacts usually involve telephone contact with clients, to whom brief service was provided, but no substantial time was spent and ongoing contact was not anticipated. Cases continued from the previous month are those people victim services continued to provide services to.

Table 1.0 shows the overall use of victim services by community, type of contact for 2009/10.

In 2009/10, victim services served 739 new clients who required ongoing services. They had 603 brief service contacts which often entail phone conversations with people where brief services are provided but where no ongoing contact is anticipated. Continuing cases, which were at 986 for 2009/10, involve cases where services are carried over month to month and sometimes from year to year, ensuring clients are supported for as long as needed.

Work is ongoing to build consistent reporting in and among programs.

**Table 1.0      Total number of clients served by community and type of contact, 2009/10**

Community	Brief Service Contacts	New Clients	Continuing Cases	Total
Aklavik	31	14	2	47
Behchokò	31	42	10	83
Fort Good Hope	23	39	17	79
Fort Simpson	74	22	45	141
Fort Smith	15	32	85	132
Hay River	111	38	66	215
Inuvik	13	102	584	699
Paulatuk	116	43	0	159
Yellowknife	189	407	177	773
<b>Total 2009/10</b>	<b>603</b>	<b>739</b>	<b>986</b>	<b>2,328</b>

**\*Note: Statistics are incomplete for Fort Smith and Yellowknife and represent a fraction of the actual number of victims services.**

## SECTION 2: WHO WAS SERVED BY VICTIM SERVICES?

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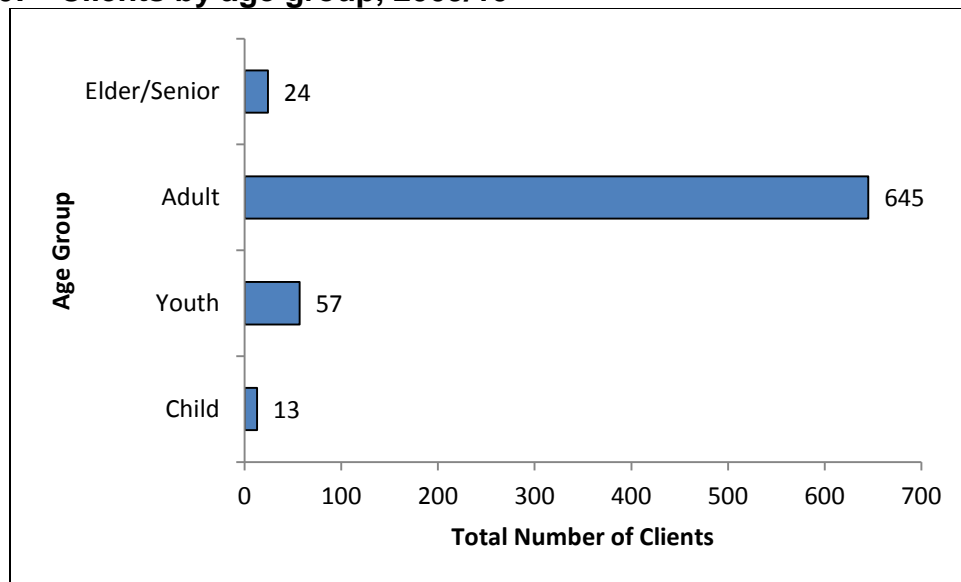
Services are provided to primary and secondary victims of both reported and unreported crime. Primary victims are the direct victims of crime, such as a female victim of spousal assault. Secondary victims may include those who live with and/or have a close relationship with the direct victim. In this example, a secondary victim could be the child of the spousal assault victim or a mother of a sexual assault victim.

Victim services workers track the following information about their new clients:

- Age
- Ethnicity
- Gender
- Victim type (primary or secondary) and
- Offence/incident type

Graph 2.0 shows the number of new clients (total 739) by age category that received services during 2009/10.

**Graph 2.0: Clients by age group, 2009/10**

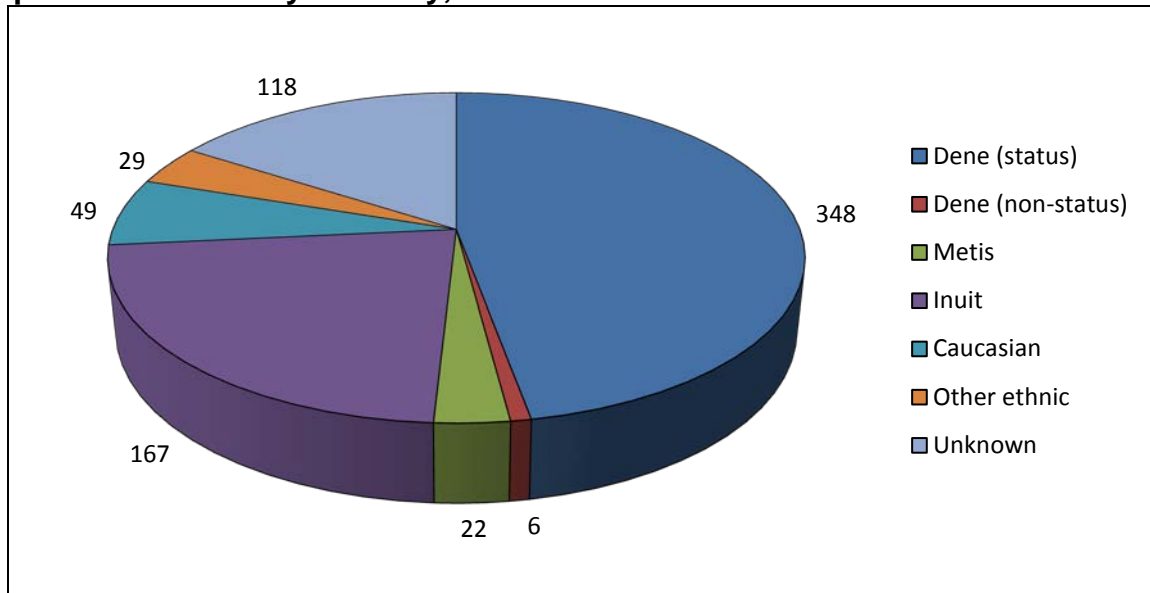


- Children: birth to 11 years
- Youth: 12 to 18 years
- Adults: 18 to 64 years
- Elders/seniors: 65 years and up

As Graph 2.0 shows, by far the majority (87.3%) of new clients were adults; while 7.7% of new clients are youth; 3.2% are elders/seniors; and 1.8% are children.

Graph 2.1 shows the 2009/10 client base by ethnicity.

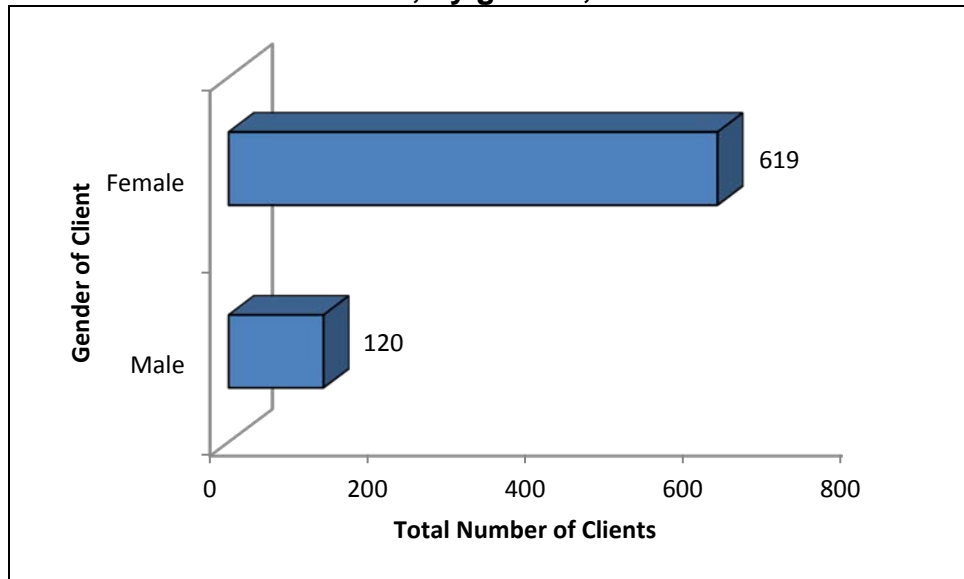
**Graph 2.1: Clients by ethnicity, 2009/10**



The largest group of victim services clientele are Dene (status and non-status) at 47.9%, followed by Inuit clients at 22.6%, clients whose ethnicity was unknown at 16%, then Caucasian clients at 6.6%, clients of other ethnicities at 4% and Métis clients at 3%.

Graph 2.2 shows the total number of clients, divided by gender, for 2009/10.

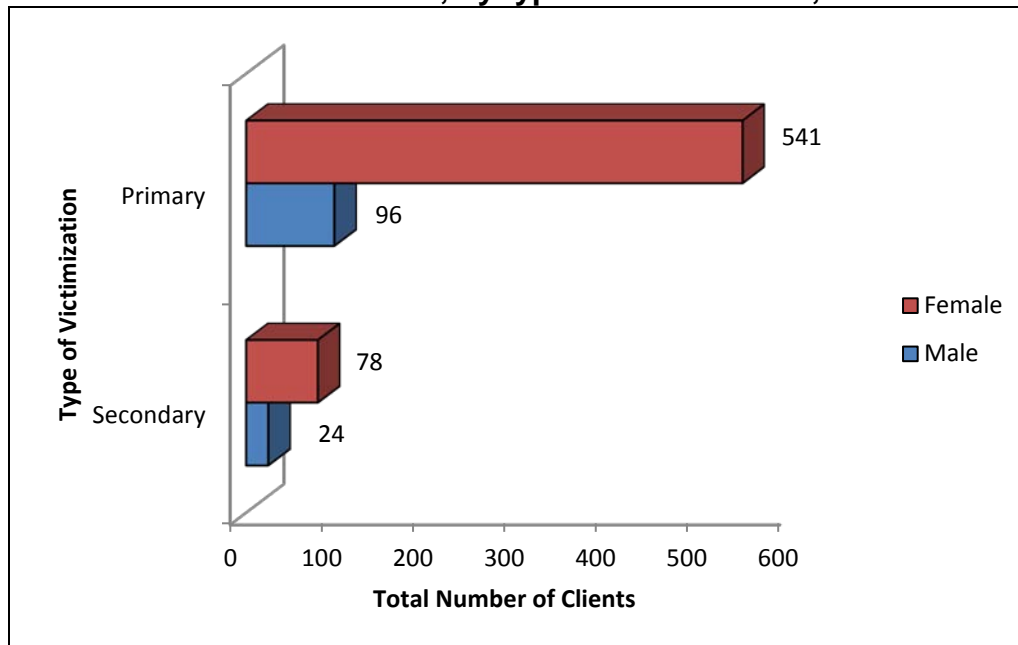
**Graph 2.2: Total number of clients, by gender, 2009/10**



In 2009/10, 84% of clients served were female and 16% were male.

Graph 2.3 shows the breakdown of primary/secondary and male/female victims in 2009/10.

**Graph 2.3: Total number of clients, by type of victimization, 2009/10**





In 2009/10 the caseload breakdown of clients was as follows:

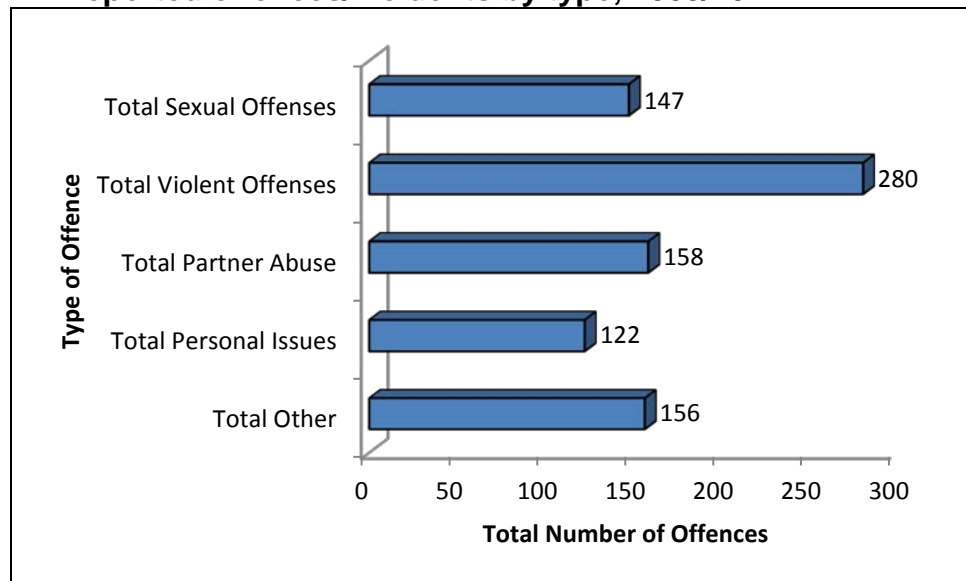
- 86% are primary victims
- 14% are secondary victims
- 73% are primary female victims
- 13% are primary male victims
- 11% are secondary female victims
- 3% are secondary male victims

The majority of the caseload involves working with people who have been directly impacted by crime, while about 1/7 of the caseload work is spent with people who either live with or are close to the direct victim.

Again, female clientele are overrepresented as both primary victims (73%) and secondary victims (11%), especially in comparison to male clientele who represent 16% of the caseload as both primary (13%) and secondary (3%) victims.

Graph 2.4 shows the number of offences/incidents by which clients were affected in 2009/2010.

**Graph 2.4: Reported offences/incidents by type, 2009/10**



- 'Sexual offences' include sexual assault (child, youth and adult), attempted and aggravated sexual assault, past sexual abuse and residential school abuse.
- 'Violent offences' include assault, assault with a weapon, assault causing bodily harm, aggravated assault, homicide/attempted homicide, firearms offences and robbery.
- 'Partner abuse' includes spousal assault, spousal assault with a weapon/aggravated assault, confinement, and criminal harassment (stalking).
- 'Personal incidents/issues' include sudden death, suicide/attempted suicide, and family difficulties/concerns.
- 'Other offences' include break and enter, uttering threats, civil matters and other offences.

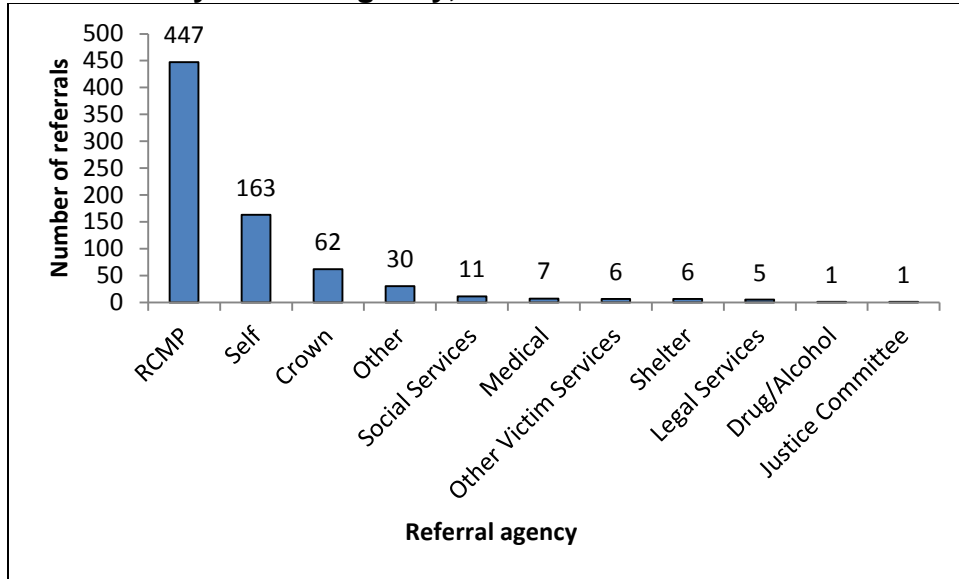
When looking at the offences, there were a total of 861 offences for 739 new clients. The 861 offences can be broken down as follows:

- 33% were violent offences
- 17% were sexual offences
- 18% were partner abuse
- 14% were personal issues
- 18% were other offences

## SECTION 3: WHO REFERRED CLIENTS TO VICTIM SERVICES?

Graph 3.0 shows the number of clients by referral agency in 2009/2010.

**Graph 3.0: Clients by referral agency, 2009/10**



60% of the referrals came from the RCMP, which made up the majority of referrals. The second largest source of referrals came from victims contacting victim services on their own. This group made up 22 per cent of the referral sources.

In October 2008, the GNWT Department of Justice and RCMP “G” Division signed the “NWT-Wide RCMP Referral Protocol”. The purpose of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was to establish protocols and procedures for the referral of victims of crime by the RCMP to victim services programs in the NWT. The protocol requires that RCMP refer all victims to victim services unless the victim expressly objects to a referral. When a victim does object to the referral, the RCMP will provide the victim with contact information for the local victim services program. Department Victim Services meet annually with the RCMP to discuss the number of referrals and to identify ways in which we can continue to improve services provided to victims of crime.

The number of self-referrals demonstrates that clients feel comfortable with and have confidence in their victim services worker and their local victim services program.

‘Other’ referral sources can include: the Native Women’s Association Training Centre, GNWT Justice, the Salvation Army, YWCA transitional housing project, mental health counsellors, probation, families, other victim services programs, friends, siblings, community wellness counsellors, courts, coroner, concerned community members, victim service volunteers/advocates, crown witness coordinators and Aurora College.

## SECTION 4: WHAT KINDS OF VICTIM SERVICES WERE DELIVERED?

Victim services programs provided referrals, information, assistance and support to victims of crime as described in Table 4.0 below:

Service	Description
Information	<p>Victim services workers provide information to clients about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The criminal justice system and processes;</li> <li>• The progress of their case;</li> <li>• The role of the police and Crown counsel;</li> <li>• The recovery of property;</li> <li>• Being a witness and what it involves;</li> <li>• Using testimonial aids; and</li> <li>• Other local resources and types of assistance available.</li> </ul>
Practical Assistance	<p>Victim services workers assist clients with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medical forms, offender restitution and victim impact statements;</li> <li>• Home security checks;</li> <li>• Visiting various agencies and the courts;</li> <li>• Helping victims to get registered with the National Parole Board;</li> <li>• Arranging third party interpretation; and</li> <li>• Arranging childcare and transportation.</li> </ul>
Emotional Support	<p>Victim services workers help to provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuous emotional support from the time of first contact throughout and beyond the court process; and</li> <li>• Helping relationships as clients come to know and trust the worker and feel more comfortable expressing their feelings and concerns.</li> </ul>
Court Orientation	<p>Victim services workers assist clients involved in the court process by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Familiarising them with the court setting;</li> <li>• Explaining procedures, terminology and the roles of the court personnel;</li> <li>• Assessing and advocating for testimonial aids; and</li> <li>• Accompanying clients to court when necessary.</li> </ul>
Community Resources Referrals	<p>Victim services workers refer clients to outside resources in the community providing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medical services;</li> <li>• Financial help or child protection;</li> <li>• Counselling or mental health services;</li> <li>• Transitional housing; and</li> <li>• Rehabilitation services</li> </ul>

Table 4.0 shows the types of services delivered in 2009/10

**Table 4.0 Services delivered by type, 2009/10**

<b>Service Type</b>	<b>2009/10</b>
Advocacy	94
Assess need for testimonial aid	0
Cantalk	0
Childcare arrangements	36
Consultation with Crown	143
Consultation with other	323
Consultation with RCMP	266
Court prep/accompaniment	177
Crisis intervention	63
Dedicated support person used	0
Emotional support	745
Information	1206
Interpretation/translation	1
Next-of-kin notification	2
Other	66
Other forms	65
Referral	237
Transportation	55
VCEF forms: help client complete	18
VCEF: information provided	0
VIS: help client complete	102
VIS: help client in court	11
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3595</b>

The services most frequently delivered, as a percentage of total services provided, include:

- Information (34%)
- Emotional support (21%)
- Consultations with Crown, RCMP and other professionals (20%)
- Referrals (7%)

In 2009/10, victim service providers reported 102 instances of helping a client to complete a victim impact statement (VIS) and there were 11 incidents where they provided VIS assistance in court. This contributed positively to the total number of victim impact statements submitted to NWT Courts during 2009/10.

Table 4.1 shows the number of victim impact statements filed with NWT Courts, by registry and year, including 2009/10.

**Table 4.1 Victim Impact Statements filed with NWT Courts, by registry, by year**

	Victim Impact Statements Filed with NWT Court Registries								
	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	TOTAL
<b>Yellowknife</b>	64	68	81	64	78	41	61	82	539
<b>Hay River</b>	21	62	55	54	48	37	39	54	370
<b>Inuvik</b>	59	72	41	19	17	27	30	40	305
<b>Total</b>	144	202	177	137	143	105	130	176	1214

Another important aspect of victim services is brief service contacts. A brief service contact is normally made via telephone, where a victim services worker does not anticipate ongoing contact with the caller. Victim service workers note the type of brief service that is provided and record it under three categories: information, referral and/or support. One, two or all three types of service can be provided during the course of one brief service contact.

Table 4.2 shows the different services provided to brief service contacts in 2009/10.

**Table 4.2 Types of brief service contacts, by type, 2009/10**

	Information	Referral	Support
Aklavik	25	12	17
Behchokò	24	0	11
Fort Good Hope	19	3	23
Fort Simpson	70	8	10
Fort Smith	14	1	2
Hay River	98	30	43
Inuvik	5	0	8
Paulatuk	4	26	115
Yellowknife	132	35	85

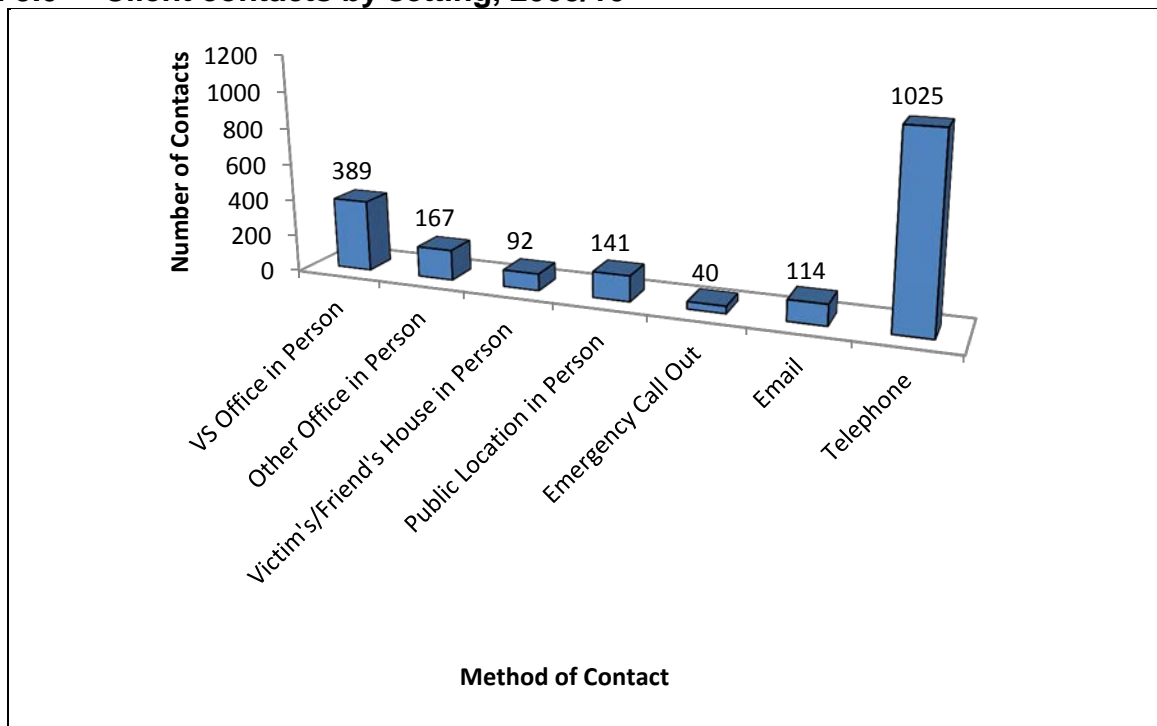
These statistics are over and above the 3595 services delivered to new and ongoing clients.

## SECTION 5: IN WHAT SETTINGS WERE VICTIM SERVICES PROVIDED?

Victim Services can be provided in different settings. Services can be provided out of a victim services office; in a public location, like a courtroom; or through home visits in victims' homes. Frequently, services are provided over the telephone, especially in cases where clients live in communities where there are no dedicated victim services programs. With the advent of technology, we see increasingly that services are being delivered by email.

Graph 5.0 shows the number of client contacts by setting in 2009/10.

**Graph 5.0 Client contacts by setting, 2009/10**



In 2009/10, there were a total of 1,968 client contacts.

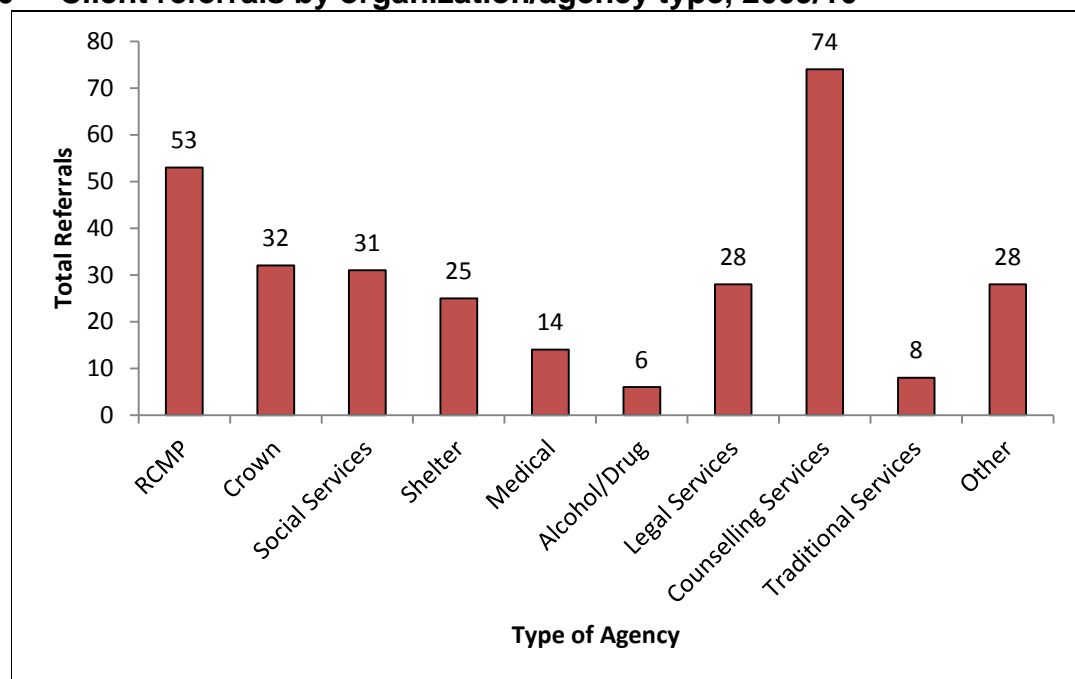
Victim services have more clients who have more needs for service. Delivering more services requires more frequent contact between the worker and the client.

## SECTION 6: TO WHAT OTHER ORGANIZATIONS AND AGENCIES WERE VICTIMS OF CRIME REFERRED?

Referring crime victims to other programs and services that can help them is a very important role for victim services workers. For example, to help victims cope with the psychological impact of violent crime, victim services can refer crime victims to other agencies/service providers for counselling. The majority of referrals are client-driven.

Graph 6.0 shows the referrals made by victim services to other agencies in 2009/10.

**Graph 6.0 Client referrals by organization/agency type, 2009/10**



Other agency referrals can include referrals to Seniors' Society, income support, parenting after separation support, NWT Courts, emergency protection order application, other victim services, mental health, the Council for Persons with Disabilities, probation, John Howard Society of the NWT, Human Rights Commission Advocate, the YWCA of Yellowknife or Crime Stoppers.



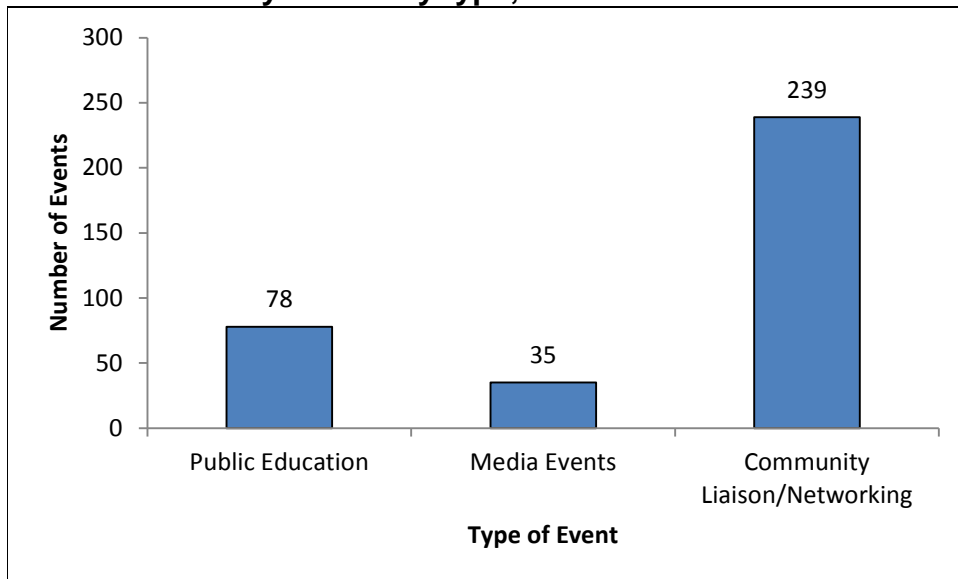
## SECTION 7: IN WHAT TYPES OF COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES WERE VICTIM SERVICES INVOLVED?

In addition to providing direct services to victims of crime, victim services also participate in community activities. Community activities include public education, media events and acting as a community liaison or networking. The goal of community activities is to improve coordination and delivery of services to victims of crime.

Through community activities, victim services can work with others to build processes, structures and protocols to better serve victims of crime. These activities can also serve to increase awareness about victims' needs and concerns. Victim services engage with other professionals such as the RCMP, the Crown, and social workers in community activities with the aim of improving the coordination and the delivery of services to victims of crime.

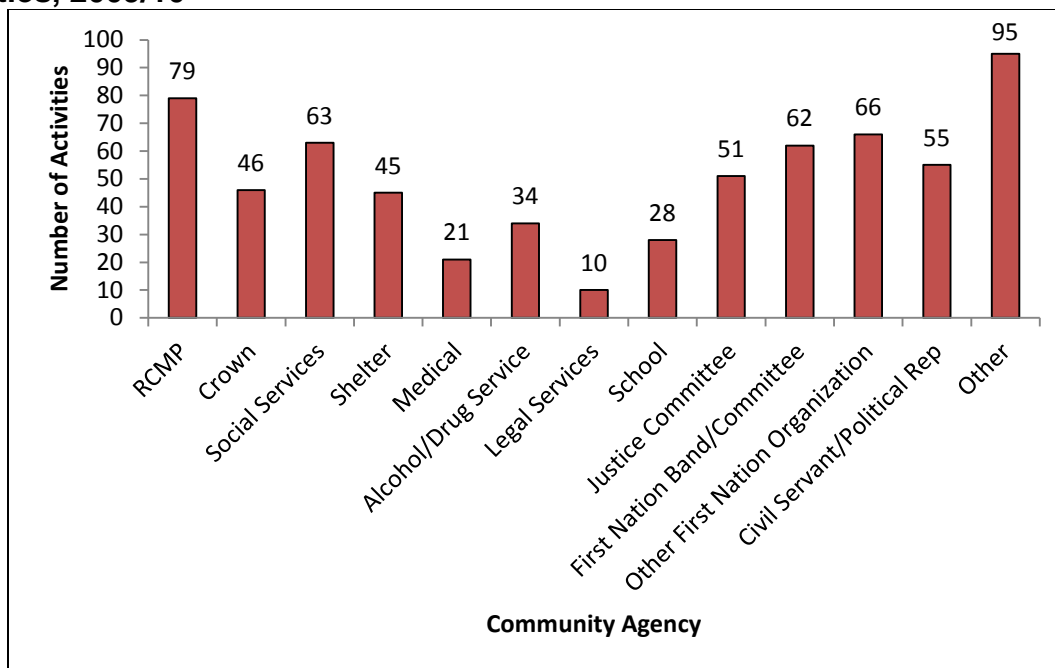
Graph 7.0 shows the different types of community events that victim services were involved in during 2009/10.

**Graph 7.0 Community events by type, 2009/10**



Graph 7.1 represents the number of occurrences of cooperation between victim services and other agencies in community events in 2009/10.

**Graph 7.1 Occurrences of cooperation with other agencies in community activities, 2009/10**



The top five agencies that participated in community activities with victim services in 2009/10 include: First Nation/Band committees and other First Nation organizations (128 activities), other (95 activities), RCMP (79 activities), Social Services (63 activities) and civil servants/political representatives (55 activities).

Other agencies can include: the NWT Victims Working Group, GNWT, Policy Centre for Victim Issues, friendship and youth centres, FASD consultant, mental health professionals, Healthy Families, Native Women’s Association of the NWT, Aurora College, local Senior’s Societies, members of the public, health committees, homeless shelters, the Coalition Against Family Violence, and Income Support.

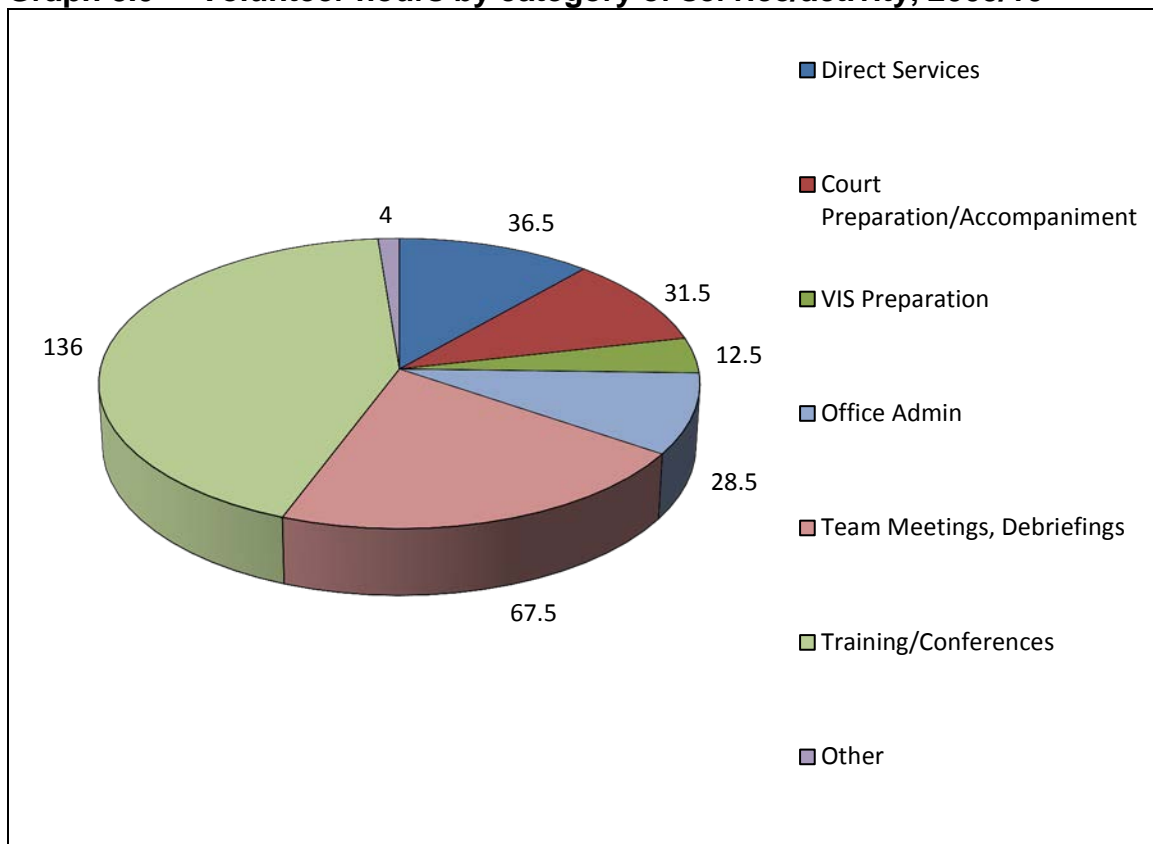
## SECTION 8: WHAT ROLES DID VOLUNTEERS PLAY IN PROVIDING VICTIM SERVICES?

Victim service volunteers are screened to determine their suitability for service delivery. After they have been accepted for service as volunteers, they are trained in how to provide services to victims of crime. With victim services volunteers on-call during evenings and on weekends, the RCMP can call them in to provide immediate response and support to victims of tragedy and reported crime. By calling in victim services volunteers, the RCMP are able to continue with their investigations and respond to other emergencies while victim services volunteers help victims to deal with the impact of trauma.

The areas of activity and service that victim services volunteers track (in number of hours) include direct services, court preparation/accompaniment, victim impact statement preparation, victim impact statement help in court, VCEF and testimonial aid support, office administration, team meetings/debriefings, training or conferences, and time spent on call, as well as other activities.

Graph 8.0 shows the number of hours volunteers dedicated to ten different activities.

**Graph 8.0 Volunteer hours by category of service/activity, 2009/10**



Not including on-call hours, victim services volunteers recorded a total of 316.5 hours of service in 2009/10.

Volunteers in 2009/10 provided 36.5 hours of direct services. They also provided 236 hours of indirect services, including office administration, team meetings/debriefings, training or conferences and other services.

In 2009/10, over and above the hours shown on Graph 8.0, victim services volunteers recorded a total of 1108 hours of on-call service where they were available to respond to an RCMP call-out for service.

## CONCLUSION

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This year, as in other years, we noted vacancies in positions such as Fort Simpson where the victim services program coordinator position was vacant for three months and Hay River which was vacant for two months.

When Hay River did hire their worker, insufficient funding resulted in the sponsoring organization asking the worker to reduce work hours to half time.

Unlike previous years, 2009/10 saw either reduced or no reports submitted by up to three workers from two communities. Workers report too much work and no time to do reports as the reason for reports not being submitted. Additional positions to each of these programs would help not only with the completion of statistics in a timely fashion but also provide better services to victims of crime.

During the year, several workers presented with symptoms of compassion fatigue. Compassion fatigue has been described as “the cost of caring” for others in emotional pain. Our workers are impacted by hearing clients talk about trauma they have experienced and helping people who have just been victimized. This is particularly true for frontline workers in the Northwest Territories, where the crime rates are the highest nationally and sexual assaults and assaults related to spousal violence make up the majority of our victim services workers’ caseload on a daily basis. Workers are expected to respond from the time of the offence, right through the criminal justice process as well as after, providing emotional support, practical assistance, referrals and information to clients who have experienced some of the most horrific circumstances.

Not only do our workers have a heavy caseload which has continually increased each year, but they have also taken on more responsibilities including most recently the scoring of the Ontario Domestic Assault Risk Assessment (ODARA) tool. While we are expecting more from our frontline workers, and the cases are becoming increasingly more complex, we have not provided them with additional funding resources.