ANIMAL ASSISTED CRISIS RESPONSE AND CREATING CONNECTIONS:
A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR IMPLEMENTING THERAPY DOGS INTO A
VICTIM SERVICES POLICING ENVIRONMENT

by

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ABSTRACT

This project was created to address the needs of police based victim services units as they implement a therapy dog program into police detachments. Taking the form of a manual, this project examines the many considerations of implementing a program that has very little precedent in Canada and no precedent at all within the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). The manual is broken down into distinct sections with headings and sub-headings that address different aspects of each component listed. The main content is factual and experiential in nature and will lead the reader through the considerations of implementation as well as offering examples of the program in practice. The project looks at the historical precedence of animal assisted therapy and explores its challenges, findings and successes while also discovering the unexpected benefit of the therapy dogs’ presence within the detachment itself and how this soft approach to grounding helps clients, officers and victim services workers alike.
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Chapter One: Introduction

Animals have played a significant role in the lives of humans for thousands of years with the relationship between canines and humans dating back to the domestication of dogs by Native Americans over 30,000 years ago (Brodie & Biley, 1999). With this lengthy history in place, utilizing dogs to aid vulnerable populations such as children and the elderly has slowly been increasing in popularity over the last 50 years although academically the positive effects haven’t been examined extensively. Psychologist Dr. Boris Levinson broke new ground when he presented a paper (Levinson, 1962) to a psychotherapy conference touting the benefits he’d experienced using his dog Jingles in treating his patients. Unfortunately, he was met with scepticism and even ridicule with other conference attendees with one of his colleagues asking if the dog would be sharing his fees (Morrison, 2007). Coincidentally and serendipitously, at the same time there were several biographies being written about Dr. Sigmund Freud that detailed the relationship he shared with his chow dog Yofi whom he brought into his office for his own benefit. The respect and admiration that Dr. Freud garners helped to bridge the gap between the psychotherapy world and the human-animal bond. Freud’s enriching relationship with his own dog was a catalyst for him involving Yofi with his patients because, though Yofi was there to keep him calm, he began to notice positive effects that the dog was having on his patients during sessions (Hines, 2003). Suddenly the opportunities to explore dogs in therapy became an option rather than an anomaly and the work of Levinson (1962) gained the respect it deserved.

Over the last half century dogs have slowly garnered acceptance within helping fields as varied agencies have expanded their programming to capitalize on the positive relationship between canines and humans. Medical facilities, old age homes, sexual assault centres and jails are just a few agencies that have introduced a therapy dog element to aid clients. Policing,
though enjoying a lengthy history with working dogs dating back to 1935 for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), is fairly new to using dogs in a comforting capacity. The first victim services agency to implement therapy dogs in Canada was with Delta City Police in 2010, and since then this practice has been growing in popularity and a definite interest has been noted however there have only been a handful of police departments who have followed suit to date. In the structured para-military organization of the Prince George RCMP detachment this addition to service has been tentatively welcomed as it breaks new ground but there is a recognized need to understand more clearly the benefits of this enhancement to service.

The process of implementation of a project that has so little precedence into an environment that is ruled by policy and procedure has presented several challenges as it has moved forward into being. The creation of a manual that examines the successes, failures and avenues for improvement was the purpose of this project with an end goal of sharing the manual with RCMP and City Police agencies across Canada.

**Crisis K-9’s and Victims of Crime**

Victim Services assists the community and specifically victims of crime in three major phases of interaction after a trauma occurs that may be enhanced with the presence of a therapy dog. The first is during the initial crisis or tragic event during which time it is necessary to quickly gain the trust of a victim and put them somewhat at ease. The phrase, emotional support, is used to sum up the essence of action in a case and encompasses several aspects of care. Emotional support (Kruger, Trachtenberg & Serpell, 2004) in the company of a therapy dog allows for an additional level of rapport building. While turning to others during moments of stress and crisis and to feel cared for and supported as a result, even “relatively brief interactions with animals” (Kruger, Trachtenberg & Serpell, 2004, p. 10) can enhance the connection and
experience. These moments are vastly different in each instance but the affect is the same, to provide a connection with something or someone outside yourself. Accompanying this first interaction with a client; is the offering of a stuffed toy or blanket. These transitional objects serve a comforting function in therapeutic contexts as well and, in Animal Assisted Interventions, the dog, like these items “is described as ‘alleviating the stress of the initial phases of therapy by serving a comforting, diverting role’” (Kruger & Serpell, 2006, p. 30) as the therapist and patient build rapport.

The second phase of client interaction in victim services is the interview. This can take two different forms and the first most commonly occurs when a victim or witness is required to attend a police station to make a statement. Therapy animals can help make this sterile and intimidating environment more palatable, friendly and even calming for those who haven’t had good experiences with law enforcement or for children who have witnessed a parent being arrested (Phillips & McQuarrie, 2009). The second form of interview takes place off scene and officers, usually in the company of a victim services worker, interview children who are victims of sexual abuse at a multi-use facility that combines a medical exam and an interview room providing a less clinical and more neutral setting. In 2006 in Texas, Harry, a therapy dog, began working in one of these facilities to great acclaim. One case of note at the onset of the program involving an eight year old sexual abuse victim brought to the clinic for a forensic interview describes the girl as afraid and hiding behind her mother but when she saw the dog she immediately went to him and he was able to accompany her throughout the interview and medical exam process as well as being with her at subsequent appointments. His presence provided the necessary catalyst to moving her through the process (Phillips & McQuarrie, 2009).
Finally, the third phase to incorporate therapy dogs into involves the criminal court process. Building on the existing relationship begun in one or both of the previous phases of contact, victim services agencies in the United States have begun to use therapy dogs in court accompaniment. As with the eight year old sexual assault victim who had built a foundational relationship with the therapy dog throughout her interactions with medical and police interviews, that same dog would be available to attend court and provide comfort as she gave her testimony (Phillips & McQuarrie, 2009). Therapy Dogs in Canada are still very new however, Calgary broke new ground on October 29, 2014 with the first case involving court accompaniment with a child witness. Hawk, the therapy dog was present with a seven year old girl while she gave her testimony in court. British Columbia has two courthouses that have granted courtesy access to therapy dogs for court interviews, pre-trial, the Surrey Court House and the Prince George Court House, and have opened up the option for lawyers to apply to the court to have permission for the dogs to be present in the courtroom for testimony.

The terminology surrounding animals in therapy has taken a few different roads since it began to be put into practice. The DELTA Society in the United States started the first program to standardize and certify animals that work in a therapy capacity and also created some generally accepted categories for the different work dogs can do. Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) is now used to describe planned interactions that have a certain desired outcome such as eliciting specific facts or building trust and generally takes place in a medical facility. Animal Assisted Intervention (AAI) is less scripted and takes a freer form than AAT in that it doesn’t have a prescribed desired outcome and is generally used with sick patients or to provide cheer in old age homes (Kruger & Serpell, 2006). AAT’s have had some success in studies that recommend the medical benefits of dogs in treatment however, “with very few exceptions, the
research that has been conducted to date has not been designed or controlled in ways that bring AAI’s closer to becoming empirically supported treatments” (Kruger & Serpell, 2006, p. 34).

The use of therapy dogs in Victim Services is unique in that it can potentially use the dogs in both AAT’s and AAI’s when dealing with victims of crime in the three different phases of interaction previously described and the term Animal Assisted Crisis Response (AACR) has been coined to describe the crisis component that is faced by victim serving agencies. For the purposes of this proposal I will use the phrase Therapy Dogs to describe one or both of the methods coined AAT’s, AAI’s and AACR’s.

**Crisis K-9’s in a Police Station**

My focus, when advocating the inclusion of therapy dogs in the Prince George Victim Services unit, was solely on the benefits of therapy dogs with vulnerable populations and though it is all still very new, I haven’t been disappointed. Animal interventions are noted to improve many facets of mood and psychological well-being (Morrison, 2007), and I have been witness to the grounding capabilities and the calming influence in high stress situations that the dogs are having on clients. What I didn’t anticipate was how the dogs might affect the environment in the office itself. I began to notice that when Max, my primary office dog, was in my office I had many more interactions with police officers and staff alike who would simply drop in and give Max a pat. A common phrase I began to hear was “I could use a little dog therapy myself today” followed by the seeker giving Max a cuddle and then going on their way. Andrea Shultz, director of a Child Assault Centre in Dallas, Texas noted a similar finding with the “unexpected benefit” of improving staff morale and “by helping to prevent burnout in the professionals that work their cases” (as cited in Phillips & McQuarrie, 2009, p. 25).
According to the study by Jennifer Geary (2009) it is not unusual for employees of these kinds of agencies to experience a strong sense of isolation which is exacerbated by a belief that showing emotional reactions could affect how confident your colleagues were in your ability to do your job. Although there are services available to officers who are experiencing emotional job related stresses, there is a sense that availing those services could imply weakness: a very unenviable state for the tough guy (or girl) image necessary for success in a para-military organization.

Victim Services caseworkers though working in the policing environment as well, are much more involved in the trend toward managing the potential for vicarious trauma and secondary trauma. Incorporating debriefing techniques and other coping mechanisms, they may be better equipped to acknowledge the emotional impacts of the work but they also find themselves in the similar situation of providing temporary emotional first aid to clients without getting past the surface of the pain of here and now as those they assist are often passed on to longer term counselling once the crisis is over. The very nature of helping on a surface level is problematic. The opportunity of maintaining a connection and following through with their clients is limited and puts the helpers in the precarious position of potentially needing help themselves.

The logistical process of implementing therapy dogs into victim services and the extent of the benefit of therapy dogs on those who work with them, those who encounter them and those who interact with them in a policing environment has not been studied however, police dogs from an enforcement perspective have been the focus of some research. Clinton Sanders (2006) outlines the difficulties he encountered as a researcher from the outside of policing looking in. He spent several months attempting to gain access to a police dog training facility
and “despite having received (somewhat grudging) permission to observe training, at times [he] found access limited.” He notes “research access to law enforcement settings typically is problematic” (Sanders, 2006, p. 150) as, in his case, the officers in charge were somewhat suspicious of his motives. Once those fears were put to rest, he was left to observe as a “somewhat peripheral participant” (Sanders, 2006, p. 152). As the manager of the Prince George RCMP Victim Services Unit I have been in and continue to be in a unique and well placed position to observe, create and document the process of building a cohesive therapy dog program that addressed the needs of the community, office and victims alike from an insider perspective without any of the hindrances that could be faced by an outsider attempting to gain the same form of insight.

**Understanding the Human-K-9 Interaction**

The most commonly noted and studied elements of human-animal interaction are focused on the quantitative health benefits. Numerous studies document the positive physiological effects and relationship between petting a dog and improved stress levels, heart rate and blood pressure (Morrison, 2007). However, studies that examine the emotional aspects of interacting with animals are limited and often excluded altogether from academic bodies of literature. Dr. Karen Allen (1995) documents doing extensive interviews with widows going through the transition of losing a spouse and how their dogs factored into their well-being however that information was not included in the published version of her work despite the fact that she felt it was a very important part of her research.

In working with therapy dogs what is often being observed is a feeling, a sense that something just feels better when the dog is present and this is a very difficult phenomena to study. Interestingly, it is the non-verbal nature of dogs themselves and their heightened ability to
use their senses that makes the human-canine relationship such a powerful one. Their way of knowing that is beyond words, of reaching out and soothing without any science backing up their actions, their way of calming a soul that there are no words for that makes a therapy dog a possibility. Following the whole process of implementation and the experiences of those who will work with the dogs from all the different possible perspectives is very new and untried so each step forward will be taken by following what feels like the right action with inquiry on what dog therapy is to supplement forward motion. This new territory, without guidelines or structure is allowing this researcher the opportunity to follow her nose...like any good canine would do.

**Personal Location**

As a self-expressed dog lover and victim services manager, I became interested in Animal Assisted Therapy as it combines two of my greatest passions. I have always been driven by a sense of social justice and as I choose my work and navigate through my life I ask myself if my choices will make the world a better place and if my actions will make me an agent for healing and helping. I celebrate the work I get to every day with my best friend, Max, by my side and love the innovative nature of the work as we create positive interactions for clients and coworkers alike.

Social justice has always been a strong focus of my life and has influenced most decisions I’ve made including career, personal and political choices. I want my actions and decisions to have a positive impact on making the world a stronger, safer, happier place. I find the work I do in victim services gives me an opportunity to see the justice system from a unique perspective as someone who looks at the world through a social justice lens. Defining my role within victim services has been both interesting and challenging and it has required a lot of thought. I find I am often torn by many aspects of what I bear witness to and though I strive to
see all sides of a situation, the close personal relationships that exist between myself and some of
the people I work with on a daily basis may influence my perceptions. I believe there are many
shades between good and evil and that it’s very difficult to understand why people make the
choices they make. A large number of my clients that are victims on one file are then
perpetrators on another. I think what is so powerful about the therapy dogs is that with dogs there
simply is no judgment and they offer equal opportunity affection in all their interactions whether
comforting a victim/perpetrator, a child or an officer. I am in a unique position to witness and
explore this human-canine relationship and delve into the effects on both victims of crime and
first responders.

I feel strongly that vicarious trauma is not given the attention it needs in a policing
environment. The situations and work we deal with is very heavy and, if it isn’t dealt with, can
cause a multitude of problems both physical and mental. I believe that, for those who are dog
lovers, a therapy dog in the office may be exactly what’s needed. When I first started working in
this field I thought I was coping very well with the stress of the job until about a year after I
started when I had my own experience with vicarious trauma. I really had no idea what was
happening to me but I do know that at that point in my life I was very much enjoying being at
home in the company of my dogs.

The presence of a therapy dog sitting happily in the victim services office who is always
available for a pet or a cuddle can bring the topic of therapy and self-care to the forefront of
conversations without any judgement and can even appear as joking or jesting which is a fairly
common occurrence in a police detachment as a method of coping. The aforementioned phrase
that I mentioned in reference to Max in the office was “I could use a little dog therapy myself
right now” and this is exactly the reaction that is needed. The chain of thought I hope to elicit
starts from the very basic existence of the dogs presence, the ease with which the dog can be approached, the conversations that come up and the awareness that, though not necessarily stated, the dog makes the person touching him feel better. This is self-care at its finest because it doesn’t need to be named, it is simply experienced. I firmly believe that a therapy dog program can provide an innovative mode of taking care of a community, a victim services program, police, a courthouse and general office staff while also mitigating the effects of potentially developing symptoms of vicarious trauma.

**Overview of the Project**

The non-threatening interaction that exists between man and dog provides a safe space that is not competitive or needy and offers a non-judgemental experience where acceptance is unconditional and the comfort provided is genuine and unbiased. Through the experience of implementation, exploration and observation of those who interact with the therapy dogs, I have created a document that helps build a practical guide and gives real time experience and examples by which to integrate a program into Victim Services to help frontline staff better understand the impact and experience that the dogs can have on mitigating the effects of trauma. Gavriele-Gold (2009) describes the interaction with dogs as offering us “a step back, a way to reconnect with our feelings and ourselves” (Gavriel-Gold, 2009, p. 105). With the disjointed and heavy work that goes on in policing this seems like a very advantageous relationship to nurture.

This manual highlights some successful tried and true methods by which other victim services agencies can implement therapy dogs into their programming and in doing so, also reports on the benefits and emotional impact that the dogs have on the policing environment itself.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

The visceral nature of dogs makes an exploration of how they fit into therapy work a challenge. Much of the academic literature that is available is focused on the medical benefits of interacting with animals and has a distinctly quantitative bent. Exploring the question then of what it is about dogs that makes them a good fit for therapy work I look to the qualities that I believe are the necessary elements for successful interactions and these involve the senses. Dog’s actions and motivations are closely tied to instinct and consequently, intuition: a way of knowing that is beyond words. In their capacity as a therapy dog their method for helping or calming a sad soul it to merely be present, soothe without premeditation and present their whole being as a comfort.

Seeing is Believing

Perception as a factor in building relationships is examined by Katherine Kruger and James Serpell (2006) as they discuss the elements of creating a quick connection with the presence of a therapy dog at hand. In their article *Animal Assisted Interventions in Mental Health* they discuss the power of expedited rapport building when a dog is introduced to treatment facilities. As soon as the dog appears, all eyes are on the furry new friend and those who see the dog instantly have their interest piqued. The popularity of the dog is noted and expected but the handler is also seen as likely having some of the qualities of the dog simply by being with them. The handlers, through no action other than accompanying the dog, are instantly perceived as “friendlier and happier” (Kruger & Serpell, 2006, p. 29).

In a study by M. Wells and R. Perrine that is cited by Randolf T. Barker (2005) the perception of the business itself is enhanced when dogs are a part of the workplace. The benefits were a more relaxed playful environment facilitating a reduction in stress as well as making the
workplace “appear more friendly, creative, informative, and interactive” (Barker, 2005, p. 307). The presence of animals broke down barriers to communication amongst the employees and management and the pet owners felt supported and more comfortable in the office.

Part two to the study by Wells and Perrine (as cited in Barker, 2005) involved the impressions of how students perceive their professors when they had a dog or a cat in their offices during office hours. The perception of the students was that the faculty member with the dog was considered friendlier, busier and easier to approach than those with a cat but the overall feeling was that having an animal there, cat or dog, was better than no animal and therefore “may be able to positively influence students’ impressions” (Barker, 2005, p. 307).

Sanders (2006) describes the public’s insatiable interest in police dogs and how interactions and favourable impressions of the dogs can help a police force gain positive media attention, something that is not always easy for police departments to achieve due to the level of public scrutiny they experience. The dogs’ personalities and popularity are reported on and the dogs are even trained to do public appearances and demonstrations of their abilities which are invariably met with interest and approval. The trust and devotion the dogs have to their handler, partner and family member while showing off their prowess in a public setting lets the public glimpse the strong, commanding and loving relationship that exists between the two. “Training officers also frequently employed parental terms when talking about the handler-dog relationship. ‘See the way he’s looking at you? He’s wondering what Dad wants him to do’ (Sanders, 2006, p. 158). Despite the tough working relationship, this kind of interaction makes the police officer seem more human and the dog seem more like a pet.

The public’s perception of therapy dogs is very positive and a dog in a vest draws every eye wherever it appears but ‘despite the longevity of the practice of including animals in
therapeutic contexts and the unvaryingly positive media attention that animal-assisted interventions receive, the field is still struggling to define itself and gain credibility as a form of complementary medicine (Kruger & Serpell, 2006, p. 34). Though the eye can bear witness to the positive relationship between helping and healing it’s more difficult to define in words.

**When There Are No Words**

Communication between canine and human is at the very basis of understanding in this relationship (Garviele-Gold, 2011). Though some tests of dogs verbal comprehension cite awareness of approximately three hundred words in varying languages, what they comprehend is the emotion behind the words. Dogs offer a method of communication that humans are slowly developing a better understanding of and that is creating a clearer understanding between nature and “a sense of oneness in the world. There is a power in nonverbal contact and in the companionship dogs offer” (Garviele-Gold, 2011, p. 104). Despite their silence dogs can offer a kind of support that isn’t necessarily available from their human counterparts as “they say no words that hurt, offer no advice and ask no questions, keep their silence, yet they bear witness (Garviele-Gold, 2011, p. 105). The fact that a dog has no words to offer but simply gives quiet support is a powerful incentive for using therapy dogs in victim services to aid both the client and practitioner. As silence brings up emotion, a person has time to collect their thoughts and feel supported in their silence rather than thinking about and listening to their words.

People who are comfortable interacting with a pet or therapy animal may find themselves in a stronger position in terms of ability to communicate than those who don’t have that kind of interaction. Allen (1995) reports on a study done on couples with and without dogs and the overall pattern revealed that “those with highest attachment to their dogs, and those who confide in their dogs most frequently, fare the best of all” (Allen, 1995, p. 6) having less marital
problems and longer lasting relationships. “Using the pet as a confidant, and someone to ‘discuss’ difficult situations with has emerged as an important factor” (Allen, 1995, p. 8).

In most helping fields the benefits of disclosure and debriefing are essential in maintaining a healthy staff and environment to handle stress and coping. Allen (1995) tout’s these benefits but notes that although these are widely recognized methods of coping in health psychology the “nature of their confidant has not been described before to include animals” (Allen, 1995, p. 8) and she indicates this is an omission that should be rectified.

The author and poet Margaret Atwood is quoted as saying “a word, after a word, after a word is power” which I think illustrates the complexity of human interactions with language. Words, used for either kindness or cruelty hold a great deal of weight, so what makes a canine human interaction so powerful is that words aren’t available to gain position, to hurt or even to soothe. Dogs, in their silence, are completely supportive, non-judgemental and comforting.

**Touching and Feeling**

Touch can hold both positive and negative implications and for those who’ve been victims of abuse and, be it physical or sexual, touch can become complicated. Boundaries around touch are noted as confusing for one little girl named Abby (Phillips & McQuarrie, 2009) and determining healthy touch was a challenge. The use of the therapy dog, Rigo, in her treatment plan helped her build her confidence around touch with gentleness and kindness as she learned methods to groom Rigo and to let him know if she didn’t want any licks by asserting herself and saying “that’s enough” as the handler had taught her. She learned how to touch Rigo in an appropriate way and to notice that he was enjoying himself and feeling safe with the physical contact. While sitting on the floor with Rigo she was able to settle down, and stop her continual motion, to share her thoughts and to respect his personal boundaries as he respected hers. This
relationship eventually helped her to feel safe enough to disclose the sexual assault she’d experienced (Phillips & McQuarrie, 2009).

Allen (1995) explains that “one of the most endearing qualities of pets is that they provide consistent companionship, and they are always ready to give and accept affection” (Allen, 1995, p. 8). This is not always something that is present in our human relationships. People with difficult medical issues are often the recipients of less touch than others. Allen describes the experience people who have Alzheimer’s and AIDS as having touch from other humans diminished as people learn of their ailments. A study conducted in 1991 by B. J. Carmack (as cited in Allen, 1995), explored the role of companion animals with people who have AIDS and this relationship and interaction “provided affection, support, nurturance and acceptance otherwise totally absent in the lives of most people who have AIDS” (p. 8).

The health benefits for people who have even brief interactions with touching and petting an animal, either their own or an unfamiliar dog, have been reported as having decreased stress (serum cortisol) after 5-24 minutes (Odendaal, 2000). Even a brief touch or playful interaction with an animal can bring about a smile creating a positive environment in seconds.

**Emotion and Law Enforcement**

Trauma workers and first responders, by taking on the stress of those they help, put themselves at risk of experiencing compassion fatigue, the more palatable term for secondary traumatic stress (Figley, 2002). Working with perpetrators and victims of crime and trauma, though often rewarding in some aspects, can be extremely draining and a very real side effect of the work is a change in the way the officer or victim services worker sees society. Professionals, in hearing and investigating and assisting people through the dark stories of tragedy and violation, reported “changes in their own cognitive schemas related to their beliefs about the
world” (Saltson & Figley, 2003, p 167). Attitude, acceptance and a desire for greater wellbeing is possible in a policing environment but there are additional hurdles and barriers that do affect the potential of a positive outcome. The book “*Emotional Survival for Law Enforcement*” by Kevin M. Gilmartin (2002) expounds on the difficulties around continually dealing with darker aspects of society and how that constant negativity wears down the ability to see the world in a positive light. The author describes a word association test he did on police employees and non-police with the word ‘scout leader’ and while the majority of people came up with positive connotations, it was more common for the policing group to come up with words like ‘pedophile’ or ‘sex offender’ (Gilmartin, 2002, p. 22). Interestingly, as I did this exercise, my answer was similar to that of the officers. I wish I could say I was surprised by this but I do believe that the influence of working in this environment does breed a level of suspicion even in those who are determined to embrace a positive philosophy. “Law enforcement personnel, like all other human beings, form their worldviews and predictions about life from the situations and events they see every day. Who calls the police to their home because things are going well?” (Gilmartin, 2002, p. 23). It is not an easy task to step back from a place of cynicism and open up to other perspectives but awareness of the need to do so is a crucial component to coping with secondary trauma symptoms.

One very difficult section to work in at a police station is the sex crimes unit as the officers are exposed to interviewing both child and adult victims who recount their experiences of sexual abuse and then, if there is video evidence, reviewing that evidence and witnessing the acts taking place. Naturally, this is a difficult job to do and a study (Perez et al., 2010) looking at the effects of viewing this form of media on officers and the outcome was “that these employees were experiencing substantial rates of burnout and many were at risk” for developing secondary trauma.
trauma (p. 120). A suggested strategy for the officers was limiting exposure by capping the length of time an officer would work in those sections but this can be problematic as a level of expertise is required of these officers. This led to the discussion of getting help outside the agency and the general consensus was that those officers who had a greater amount of safe relationships fared somewhat better than those who did not. Exposure to the material caused some rifts in communication with those in their personal lives as their partners expressed a lack of understanding of the emotional toll the work was taking on the officers.

Victim services workers, though looking through a slightly more compassionate lens, are also privy to the dark stories of victimization and can certainly be changed by the stories they are now exposed to in the policing environment. A study that was done by Petrina Hargrave, Kate Scott and John McDowall (2006) examined volunteer victim services workers in New Zealand, looking at experiences of Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS), hypothesized high instances of stress among this population. However the study found that this was not the case and that the volunteers had lower STS levels than their paid counterparts and therapists indicating there may be a benefit to the volunteer having the option of choosing their exposure and number of hours in service. However, those volunteers with a past trauma history, particularly those with unresolved trauma, had high and equivalent scores to paid trauma workers and were at risk to a triggered response to experience STS when exposed to a case or situation that was akin to their personal trauma. Despite the findings that indicated that, overall, there were less STS symptoms for volunteers working in a victim services capacity, there was an identified need to be sure the overseeing organization is doing everything they can to offset those stressors by providing solid support.
Alteration in world perception is a natural consequence of the work and this can be a challenging concept to explain to family and friends who don’t share knowledge of the policing environment, with the potential for conflicts in relationships (Figley, 2002). However, if the environment itself is supportive and there are coping methods in place to handle the emotionally charged situations, the work itself can still be positive. In a study by Saltson & Figley (2003) 45% of the people enjoyed their work and had positive things to stay and 35% had found coping strategies that would assist in the processing of the difficult thoughts and material, specifically, health and wellness activities and seeking emotional support.

An element that cannot be ignored as a contributing factor for coping in an emergency responder environment is black or gallows humour. This rather dark method of dealing with the extreme situations that are regularly encountered somehow builds a bond between those at a traumatic incident. Carmen Moran (as cited in Figley, 2006) discusses the challenging nature of describing and defining exactly what humour looks like and its effectiveness but “those who use humour in emergency work may be signaling to others just how much they recognize the horrors of their tasks” (p 148). James Thompson and Michael Solomon (as cited in Figley, 2006) in a 1991 review observed that a friendly and supportive environment among police and policing volunteers is enriched by the presence of humour and jokes and allows for the potential to ask for help when it’s needed. With a strong, connected team providing foundational support, the ability to cope with the multitude of crime types and potential stressors can be better managed.

**Resiliency and the K-9 Partner**

Managing the well-being of the therapy dog is a crucial consideration in Animal Assisted Therapy as, like their human counterparts, there is a need to build resiliency in order to cope with the stresses and to be effective in the work. For a dog, the coping mechanisms may be somewhat
different but they are in line with the general principles of self-care and can be accomplished in similar ways by doing the things the dog enjoys in addition to the helping work with victims of crime be that catching a ball, chasing a Frisbee or taking a nice nap in the sunshine; play time, fun time and down time are a necessary component. Helton (2009) explores the idea that if animal assisted therapy is what practitioners want to be doing, then they have a greater capacity for the stressors that go with the work and, it follows that the same may be true for the dog as well. Assuming all indicators point to the notion that the dogs “enjoy their jobs, live in harmony with their handlers, and are not obliged to do what they do not like, they will not interpret negatively” the heavier aspects and stresses of the work itself and while experiencing both positive and negative emotions, they can manage their working lives with the help and assistance of their handler (p. 296-297).

The nature of the work and the length of the sessions was examined in a quantitative study on dogs that perform AAT’s in Austria by Haubenhofer and Kirchengast (2006), looking at cortisol levels, a physical measurement of stress. The outcome indicated that there was a noted increase in the cortisol levels when the therapy sessions were short or of a high intensity while the longer, more laid back sessions that consisted of several breaks produced a lower, though slightly elevated, level of cortisol. In addition, if there was a greater number of sessions in a week cortisol levels were higher for those dogs versus the weeks when there were less sessions and more breaks. Though the study did notice variable cortisol levels, they also indicated that this wasn’t necessarily detrimental to the dogs as the owners observed that the dogs were still enjoying their work and were still effective with their clients.

A quantitative study by King, Watters, and Mungre (2011) looked into the cortisol levels of dogs that were given a time out or a play break in their working day to determine if this was
an effective method of managing the dog’s stress. Overall, the study didn’t note a significant
difference when short play breaks were taken however it did notice a reduction in cortisol levels
at the end of the working day. What was observed however was that the experienced AAT dogs
had lower cortisol levels than their younger and less experienced counterparts and the dogs that
had clear routine despite the changing environments they were exposed to, had lower cortisol
levels as well. Much like their human counterparts, AAT dogs fare better from an emotional
stability viewpoint if they are given adequate training and are prepared for the work they
perform. Exposure to various settings, sounds, people and environments allows the handler to
assess the behavioural stress signs in their partner, commonly observed as panting, a tucked tail,
whining, excessive licking and trembling to name a few, in a controlled environment allows the
handler to build an awareness of the stimuli that effects their partner and triggers stress.

Dogs can suffer from various forms of trauma such as PTSD, Secondary Trauma or
Vicarious Trauma so when introducing a victim services dog into a unit there is a need to be
cognizant of the potential risk of developing stress symptoms that can lead to something more
serious. In an interview with Discovery conducted by Jennifer Viegas (2012), the chief of
behavioural medicine and military working dog studies, Walter Burghardt Jr, from Lackland Air
Force Base stated that “military dogs appear to be most at risk, but it’s likely any intense,
stressful period could induce the debilitating condition” (p 1). He describes a mild case of a dog
named Cora who, prior to deployment in Iraq, enjoyed the tracking tasks and considered the
training a fun game however after spending six months working her cheerful disposition
deteriorated and she became snappy, hesitant to go to work and the previously independent and
confident dog hated to be left alone.
The Law: Challenges, Policy and Therapy Dogs

The Guide Animal Act which governs dogs in a working capacity in Canada and is therefore applicable to dogs working in victim services as animal assisted crisis response and therapy dogs was written in 1996, prior to the inception of therapy dogs into the policing environment. The Canadian Service Dog Foundation defines this distinction between service and therapy dogs stating “service dogs are trained to provide a service directly to their disabled handler, while a therapy dog is trained to provide a service to others working for a handler who may not have a disability” (Canadian Service Dog Foundation, 2011). A therapy dog is generally present as an addition to the work that the handler of the dog is doing, generally involving some form of crisis intervention or therapy.

The basic standard of training for therapy dogs in Canada is granted by the Canadian Kennel Club and requires a dog to obtain a Canine Good Neighbour title and certification. This testing standard certifies a dog and his/her handler can function in a variety of different settings and “ensures that the dog is well socialized and has no environmental sensitivities” (Canadian Service Dog Foundation, 2011). In addition to this standard, therapy dogs in victim services, though not required to do so by law, generally take their training to a higher level with pet therapy training agencies by exposing the working dogs and handlers to situations that they may encounter working in a policing environment such as sirens, interview rooms, closed in spaces, courtrooms, large public facilities and upset and/or crying people. At this time, however, a prescribed level of additional training is difficult to standardize as the field is so new.

Another consideration of victim serving agencies and the implementation of therapy dogs surrounds the issue of public access requirements to public facilities as governed by the Guide Animal Act of Canada. Currently two forms of public access are available to dogs in a public
working capacity: Public Access which is what is granted to Guide Dogs who are serving a disabled person one on one and this form of access cannot be denied and Courtesy Access which is granted to those who have permission to perform therapy dog work in public places (Guide Animal Act, 1996). Canine assisted intervention dogs and therapy dogs fall under the Courtesy Access umbrella and in order to legally bring a dog to a location, Courtesy Access must first be obtained by getting verbal and/or written permission from the location in question. Unlike police dogs, who are allowed to be with their handlers as they are performing their duties as their legal status as assisting peace officers as a tool supersedes the legalities of the Public Access law, victim services dogs still need to take heed of the access laws during a crisis situation so it is important to know where and who your unit has agreements with and to have established relationships in place to prepare for critical incidents.

**Opportunities**

I couldn’t find any literature that related to specific benefits of therapy dogs on law enforcement personnel in the presence of a policing victim services agency and I believe this is simply because the existence of dogs in this capacity and in this setting is so new that it hasn’t been developed or studied. This manual examines the historical perspectives of animal assisted therapy and takes the reader through a step by step process that will address the potential advantage of having dogs within the office to immediately offset some of the initial reactions to trauma for both clients and staff alike.

Managers within policing have been supportive of the dog programs to date but that support could be augmented with empirical data that suggests a benefit to employees as well as to clients. Policing can be emotionally taxing Newell & MacNeil (2010) identify education and organizational appreciation of self-care as a necessity from managers of those who work with
trauma victims. The approach of each agency in their advocating for coping mechanisms “whether or not an agency culture acknowledges the existence of Vicarious Trauma as normal reactions to client traumas may significantly contribute to the coping ability of individuals experiencing these conditions” (Newell & MacNeil, 2010, p. 62). The RCMP, by embracing the therapy dog component, could provide a critical element of support to its members. The goal of the program itself is to provide a comfort that transcends language but offers a grounded connection to a living, breathing creature that wants nothing more than to be touched and loved. The human-animal bond is a strong force and one that should not be ignored when looking at the needs of people in times of crisis, whatever form they come in.
Chapter Three: The Manual

Introduction

This project takes the form of a manual and was created to fill the gap that I experienced when implementing therapy dogs into the Prince George Victim Services Unit. By providing such a document and a guideline for other agencies, I hope to make the transition to adding a dog to Victim Services programming somewhat smoother for the agency interested in moving in this direction.

Due to the structured nature of the RCMP, governed by strict policy and serving communities across Canada, this manual aims to provide a starting point for creating a consistent format for those including therapy dogs into victim services across the country. The manual examines the historical precedence of animal assisted therapy and explores our own processes of implementation along with our experiences, both the challenges and successes.

The manual is organized into distinct sections with headings and sub-headings that address different aspects of each component listed. The main content is factual and experiential and hopefully leads the reader through the considerations of implementation as well as offering examples of the program in practice. The manual also includes academic research on the various topics examined throughout the first two chapters of this project.

The Addendum section to the manual provides specific items referred to within the document and includes handouts, media stories, letters of support, power points and other related items used in the promotion of the therapy dog program.
Figure 1 Canada Winter Games 2015 (Biathlon, Caledonia Nordic Ski Centre, Prince George, British Columbia. From left to right: Krista Levar, Max (Victim Services K-9), Cst. Paul Starr, Safety Bear, Linda Parker. Photo credit: Cpl. Craig Douglass.
Background

The inclusion of therapy dogs into a policing environment is a new initiative however dogs have strong ties to their human counterparts and have done so for many more years than can easily be quantified. As we begin the exploration into the process of implementation a background on the human-animal relationship will be examined to provide a context for moving forward. Looking at historical accounts of animals being integrated into therapy environments will be outlined as will the origins of the language and terminology associated with this new field along with explanations for understanding the variant definitions, sources and subtle differences in how therapy dogs are classified and characterized by their work.

History of therapy dogs. Animals have played a significant role in the lives of humans for thousands of years with the relationship between canines and humans dating back to the domestication of dogs by Native Americans over 30,000 years ago (Brodie & Biley, 1999). With this lengthy history in place, utilizing dogs to aid vulnerable populations such as children and the elderly has slowly been increasing in popularity over the last 50 years although academically the positive effects haven’t been examined extensively. Psychologist Dr. Boris Levinson broke new ground when he presented a paper (Levinson, 1962) to a psychotherapy conference touting the benefits he’d experienced using his dog Jingles in treating his patients. Unfortunately, he was met with scepticism and even ridicule with other conference attendees with one of his colleagues asking if the dog would be sharing his fees (Morrison, 2007). Coincidentally and serendipitously, at the same time there were several biographies being written about Dr. Sigmund Freud that detailed the relationship he shared with his chow dog Yofi whom he brought into his office for his own benefit. The respect and admiration that Dr. Freud garners helped to bridge the gap between the psychotherapy world and the human-animal bond. Freud’s
enriching relationship with his own dog was a catalyst for him involving Yofi with his patients because, though Yofi was there to keep him calm, he began to notice positive effects that the dog was having on his patients during sessions (Hines, 2003). Suddenly the opportunities to explore dogs in therapy became an option rather than an anomaly and the work of Levinson (1962) gained the respect it deserved. Over the last half century dogs have slowly garnered acceptance within helping fields as varied agencies have expanded their programming to capitalize on the positive relationship between canines and humans. Medical facilities, old age homes, sexual assault centres and jails are just a few agencies that have introduced a therapy dog element to aid clients. Policing, though enjoying a lengthy history with working dogs dating back to 1935 for the RCMP, is fairly new to using dogs in a comforting capacity.

Therapy Dogs began to be used in the United States after the tragedy at the World Trade Centre and have been used at every large scale disaster since. In the field of Victim Services, therapy dogs were introduced by the FBI when their Victim Specialist began to use her personal dog, who had obtained therapy dog status through Pet Partners, to assist her clients. This step moved therapy dogs into local police agencies and from there they have been introduced into the court system. The first victim services agency to implement therapy dogs in Canada was with Delta City Police in 2010 and since then K-9 Crisis Response Dogs have slowly been moving into other police detachments across the country with great success.

Terminology. The terminology surrounding animals in therapy has taken a few different roads since it began to be put into practice. The DELTA Society in the United States started the first program to standardize and certify animals that work in a therapy capacity and also created some generally accepted categories for the different work dogs can do. Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) is now used to describe planned interactions that have a certain desired outcome such as
eliciting specific facts or building trust. Animal Assisted Intervention (AAI) is less scripted and takes a freer form than AAT in that it doesn’t have a prescribed desired outcome other than to provide comfort. The use of therapy dogs in Victim Services is unique in that it can potentially use the dogs in both AAT’s and AAI’s when dealing with victims of crime and the additional component and factor for victim services K-9’s is Animal Assisted Crisis Response (AACR). This form of assistance brings together the different aspects that helping animals can provide and focusses on normalizing the crisis situation, helping with grounding and serves as a bridge for communication.

**Animal assisted therapy versus crisis response.** The following chart outlines the various applications for animals working in a therapy capacity and further breaks down the nature of the terminology in practice rather than simply in theory. This chart factors in the working methods of a therapy dog in traditional forums and then contrasts and compares the variation to the practice when a crisis work component if factored in.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pet Therapy (AAI &amp; AAT)</th>
<th>Crisis Response (AACR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Visits are typically scheduled in advance.</td>
<td>1. Callouts rarely have any warning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Travel to and from therapy visits usually takes place with a familiar method of</td>
<td>2. Travel to a crisis scene can happen in a variety of ways including car, train, plane, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>transport, such as a car that the dog is familiar with.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Most visits are routine, predictable and take place somewhere that is familiar to</td>
<td>3. Crisis scenes are generally unpredictable and may expose the dog to loud sounds, bad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the dog.</td>
<td>smells and sights.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Visits are usually calm. Emotions may run high but they may not as well.</td>
<td>4. The nature of a crisis itself denotes the potential for highly charged emotions and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>stress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Help is usually available if needed and the places you go are generally safe.</td>
<td>5. Crisis response teams must be prepared to be self-sufficient and be able to take care of themselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. There is often a specified time limit associated with the visit.</td>
<td>6. The length of the callout is unpredictable and can vary depending on the situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Visits can be done alone without much concern for safety.</td>
<td>7. Callouts are usually done with other team members for safety reasons. The welfare of the dog and handler is crucial and must be considered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Visits are not usually physically demanding and are usually indoors.</td>
<td>8. Callouts may be very physically demanding, requiring walking long distances and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>remaining on your feet and in the elements for long periods of time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Costs incurred by a pet therapy volunteer are typically quite minimal.</td>
<td>9. Costs associated with crisis response dogs can be much high due to travel costs and additional training and supplies needed to conduct the work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. AAI/AAT can be done with dogs as well as with other species of animals such as</td>
<td>10. Crisis response work is suitable specifically to dogs. Dogs are a generally accepted helper and are acceptable to be present at a crisis scene.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rabbits, cats and birds.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Adapted from Pet Partners comparison chart.
Therapy Dogs in Victim Services: Three Phases

Victim Services assists the community and victims of crime in three major phases of interaction after a trauma occurs that may be enhanced with the presence of a therapy dog.

Phase one. Phase one encompasses a quintessential example of an Animal Assisted Crisis Response (AACR) as the event is generally without warning, can be chaotic and requires a handler to be in complete control of their canine partner as well as being very aware of their surroundings. These types of callouts can vary in length and a certain amount of preparation has to be in place prior to bringing a K-9 Crisis Response dog to the scene. A common item for Victim Services workers is a ‘go’ bag in which general supplies are placed at the ready for quick departure when a crisis occurs and creating a ‘go’ bag for a K-9 partner is necessary as well. Considerations at the scene are the level of noise, sounds, odors, debris and any unpredictable variable that may come up and that may affect the physical and/or mental health of the K-9. All of this must occur while, at the same time, the Victim Services worker is taking care of the client/s they are there to assist. In this type of situation it is preferable to have a Victim Services partner present in addition to the Victim Services K-9 handler.

During the initial crisis or tragic event it is necessary to quickly gain the trust of a victim and put them somewhat at ease. The phrase, emotional support, is used to sum up the essence of action in a case and encompasses several aspects of care. Emotional support, in the company of a therapy dog, allows for an additional level of rapport building. While turning to others during moments of stress and crisis and to feel cared for and supported as a result, even “relatively brief interactions with animals” (Kruger, Trachtenberg & Serpell, 2004, p. 10) can enhance the connection and experience. These moments are vastly different in each instance but the affect is the same, to provide a connection with something or someone outside yourself. Accompanying
this first interaction with a client is the offering of a stuffed toy or blanket. These transitional objects serve a comforting function in therapeutic contexts as well and, in Animal Assisted Interventions, the dog, like these items “is described as ‘alleviating the stress of the initial phases of therapy by serving a comforting, diverting role.’”

Theory into practice: Phase one example. During a callout to a sudden death Max, one of the VS Therapy Dogs, went with his handler to a callout. At the scene a young woman had been discovered dead in her apartment by her mother. As additional family members arrived, unaware of why they had been summoned, the terrible news of this woman’s death at a young age was continually repeated and each family member was very upset. However, when the woman’s 18 year old daughter arrived, the callout become truly devastating as the young girl faced the news of the untimely death. During the preceding exchanges which were taking place in the families driveway as the deceased was inside with the Coroner and police, Max remained in the vehicle as things were moving quite quickly and an opportunity to ask if he would be a help wasn’t available. Once the 18 year old heard the news she became very upset and wouldn’t speak to anyone or let anyone touch her. She went and sat on the lawn by herself close to where Max was waiting in the vehicle. He was looking at her and she was looking at him and then she asked why he was there. His handler explained what he was there for and she asked if she could meet him. He was brought out to meet her. He sat with her and she pet him and talked to him while she awaited seeing her deceased mother for the last time. When the handler and Max were leaving the young woman thanked them for being there and she said she really appreciated Max helping her through this.
Phase two. The second phase of client interaction in victim services is the interview or in-office visit. The nature of the setting allows for a somewhat planned environment so can take the form of an AAI and an AAT but can also fall under the AACR category of animal assistance when there is a crisis drop in situation or when a crisis response is carried into the office from the original scene.

When an AAI is the focus, there may be no specific case work happening and the Crisis K-9 may simply be an adjunct to provide a comfort pre and post client interview. This may happen as a transition or rapport building opportunity which allows for a meet and greet scenario to establish a safe place and comfortable setting.

In the instances when an AAT is the focus, there is a plan in place to assist a victim that has a desired outcome. This phase is most commonly activated to assist a victim or witness who is required to attend a police station to make a statement. The role of the Crisis K-9 would be to help make this sterile and intimidating environment more palatable, friendly and even calming for those who haven’t had good experiences with law enforcement or for children who have witnessed a parent being arrested. However this kind of planned intervention or interview can also take place out of the office and officers, usually in the company of a victim services worker, can interview children who are victims of sexual abuse at a multi-use facility that combines a medical exam and an interview room providing a less clinical and more neutral setting.

Theory into practice: Phase two example one. On July 2014, Cpl Holly Hearn and I attended to the Prince George SCAN clinic to interview 2 siblings, a 6 year old boy and a 9 year old girl. Approximately three years prior, it had come to light that both children had been the victims of extensive sexual abuse. These follow-up interviews were being conducted with the children as new disclosures and information had recently been provided. In prior conversation
with the mother of the children and their counsellors it was learned that the children, and especially the little boy, were having difficulty dealing and talking about what had happened to them. It was discussed and decided that Max could/would attend to the SCAN clinic to provide another level of comfort and support to the children before and maybe also during their interviews. In Holly’s interview with the little boy, Max and Krista did end up sitting in the interview room with them. It quickly became apparent that the little boy was not at all comfortable or interested in talking to Holly about what had happened to him. The little boy did however, show an interest in Max and Holly used the opportunity to ask the little boy if he would be more comfortable and willing to talk to Max about what had happened to him. Holly and Krista left the interview room after the little boy indicated that he would talk to Max. With Holly, Krista and myself, watching from the video monitor room next door, the little boy proceeded to disclose, to Max, what had been done to him. Two times Holly and Krista left Max alone with the little boy and both times the little boy provided Max with details of how he had been sexually abused. At one point the little boy bent down and hugged and/or was petting Max, telling Max that he was angry about what had happened and just didn’t want to talk about it with anyone. Outside of what the he had disclosed to Max, the little boy did not provide anything further. Holly later provided details of the disclosures to the children’s mother and their counsellors. As I understand it, everyone was amazed as, up to that point, the little boy had provided very little if any previous disclosures or details about what had been done to him.

Watching the interview, and I’m sure Holly would agree, I am certain that had Max not been present for the interview, the little boy would not have provided any disclosures that day. Thanks to the great work of Max, this little boy’s parents, counsellors and the police now have some new information to work with and assist them in helping this little boy and his sister. It was
truly something special to observe the interaction between Max and this little boy. My eyes have really been opened to the importance and real potential of a good therapy dog like Max. I look forward to working with Max and Krista again when the next opportunity arises (Cst. Jackabowski, 2014).

**Theory into practice: Phase two example two.** The use of one of our therapy dogs was requested by Debra Blake, the child and youth counselor at Elizabeth Fry Society to assist a victim of sexual abuse who was also in foster care and who had witnessed his parent being arrested. He was very afraid of police. Grimmus was chosen for this task because he shared a similar story to that of the little boy. Grimmus was a rescued dog from the SPCA and he knew a little bit about foster care and being adopted. The very quiet little boy met with Grimmus, his handler and his counselor for an hour once a week and after 6 weeks he had started to find his voice again. For his last session he came to do a tour of the police detachment where, accompanied by Grimmus, he was able to see police officers from a different perspective. The dogs share some of the same stories that the children share – being given up and going in to foster care. The children can understand and relate to the dogs with the goal of developing compassion and empathy in the child. The dogs also create a sense of empowerment and purpose for those children that feel abandoned and disempowered due to circumstances beyond their control (Deborah Blake, n.d.).

**Phase three.** Finally, the third phase to incorporate therapy dogs into involves the criminal court process and could be categorized most commonly as an AAI or an AAT however, could potentially be considered an AACR depending on the state of the client and whether the interaction is planned or comes about as a consequence of a crisis response.
Generally this phase builds on the existing relationship begun in one or both of the previous phases of contact and the therapy dogs could then be utilized for court accompaniment. A victim who has built a foundational relationship with a therapy dog throughout his/her interactions would potentially have that same dog available to attend court and provide comfort leading up to and even during testimony. British Columbia Courts are only in the beginning stages of developing the court aspect of the program. In Prince George, Crown Counsel Marie-Louise Ahrens approached Victim Services when she heard about the therapy dogs and advised this would be a welcome addition to the court support programs. Administrative Crown Counsel Anne Baines agreed that the therapy dogs would be a great enhancement to service and passed on this information to Inspector James Glaicar, in charge of the Sheriffs at the courthouse, who then discussed the possibility with Chief Judge for the North Judge Brecknel who is very interested in the program. A meeting is in the process of being set up between Victim Services and the Judge to further discuss this possibility. Prince George Victim Services and the Prince George Courts may be one of the first to implement therapy dog accompaniment in Canada.

Theory into practice: Phase three example. Two boys were being interviewed by Crown Counsel Tyson Gamble and were recounting their experience of being sexually assaulted and beaten by their stepfather. The boys had to meet individually with the Crown while the other boy waited. During the waiting portion of the meetings Max’s handler introduced the boys to Max in front of the courthouse. Max did some tricks and lightened the somber mood of the day. When the boys had their court date they requested Max meet them out front to provide support and comfort prior to going in to testify.
Logistics

Putting a program such as this into practice requires several considerations prior to moving forward. There is a need to assess who it is that you would like to partner with, what your agency feels the partnership should look like and how to go about making the choices and establishing the infrastructure necessary to create a successful program. In this section of the manual several issues will be addressed that were crucial to the implementation process for our purposes and would be beneficial for any aspiring victim services agency interested in this form of addition to their programming.

Partner agency: Choosing the dogs. I began researching therapy dogs in Victim Services in 2010 and went to visit a municipal force (Delta PD) to see what they were doing as they had implemented a therapy dog in their program. I learned a great deal about how the Delta PD program came into being and why and how it was structured. I then met with the Pacific Assistance Dogs Society (PADS), which is the agency that supplied Delta PD with a Crisis Response Dog. The dog they placed with Delta PD was assessed as not being able to do the work of a Service dog so was trained, instead, to work in a therapy capacity. Though I believe the agency is doing good work, I chose not to go that route as there were some concerns that arose when I considered how a crisis response dog supplied by PADS would fit within an RCMP detachment versus a city detachment. The concerns that swayed me away from using their program were the following:

1) They retain ownership of the dog and I felt that it would be too difficult for me to give up the dog if I changed jobs in the future.
2) There are very specific rules that the dog must follow outside of when they are working including never leaving the dog for more than six hours at a time.

3) As I already had dogs of my own and I felt it would cause confusion with my personal dogs if another dog was introduced and treated differently due to their training needs and requirements.

4) PADS asks to have a good amount of publicity, support and fundraising from the agency that they supply the dog to and RCMP need to remain neutral and can’t endorse a specific agency.

5) They use specific breed dogs and bred dogs rather than rescue dogs.

As a result of these concerns, I put the idea of getting a therapy dog to the side and then last year I was approached by a local agency, Pawsitive Horizons, who train therapy dogs rather than service dogs, they are not breed specific and they focus on finding the right dog for the right environment/client. In particular, I liked the idea that the dogs were primarily rescues and that they were given another chance on life and an opportunity to help heal others which I felt would work better for our unit as our clients could sympathise and compare their own stories with those of our canine crew. Pawsitive Horizons owner Kirby MacInnes, while offering her services to our unit also chose to become a Victim Services volunteer. She offered to train myself and other members of our team as handlers to work with her dogs, Grimmus and Chara. (Chara has since had a tragedy occur which has affected her abilities and is not working with Victim Services right now). Once we started working together I asked Kirby to assess my personal dog Max who I had done substantial obedience training with and who I thought would be a good fit since, if we were matched as handler and therapy dog, we could more easily model our therapy dog program after the other successful programs implemented by other Victim Services agencies. Max
was assessed and then he was put into training and he has successfully obtained his CKC badge and facility access from the veterinarian.

Max and Grimmus are chosen to do specific tasks based on their skillset. For instance, Max is good in quiet settings and will remain silent during interviews so is a good fit in the office or at court while Grimmus is more rambunctious so is better in loud situations or with kids and people who are a bit rougher around a dog.

The law: Challenges, policy and therapy dogs. The Guide Animal Act which governs dogs in a working capacity in Canada and is therefore applicable to dogs working in victim services as animal assisted crisis response and therapy dogs was written in 1996, prior to the inception of therapy dogs into the policing environment. The Canadian Service Dog Foundation defines this distinction between service and therapy dogs stating “service dogs are trained to provide a service directly to their disabled handler, while a therapy dog is trained to provide a service to others working for a handler who may not have a disability” (Canadian Service Dog Foundation, 2011). A therapy dog is generally present as an addition to the work that the handler of the dog is doing, most commonly involving some form of crisis intervention or therapy.

The basic standard of training for therapy dogs in Canada is granted by the Canadian Kennel Club and requires a dog to obtain a Canine Good Neighbour title and certification. This testing standard certifies a dog and his/her handler can function in a variety of different settings and “ensures that the dog is well socialized and has no environmental sensitivities” (Canadian Service Dog Foundation, 2011). In addition to this standard, therapy dogs in victim services, though not required to do so by law, generally take their training to a higher level with pet therapy training agencies by exposing the working dogs and handlers to situations that they may
encounter working in a policing environment such as sirens, interview rooms, closed in spaces, courtrooms, large public facilities and upset and/or crying people. At this time, however, a prescribed level of additional training is difficult to standardize as the field is so new.

Another consideration of victim serving agencies and the implementation of therapy dogs surrounds the issue of public access requirements to public facilities as governed by the Guide Animal Act of Canada. Currently two forms of public access are available to dogs in a public working capacity: Public Access which is what is granted to Guide Dogs who are serving a disabled person one on one and this form of access cannot be denied and Courtesy Access which is granted to those who have permission to perform therapy dog work in public places (Guide Animal Act, 1996). Canine assisted intervention dogs and therapy dogs fall under the Courtesy Access umbrella and in order to legally bring a dog to a location, Courtesy Access must first be obtained by getting verbal and/or written permission from the location in question. Unlike police dogs, who are allowed to be with their handlers as they are performing their duties as their legal status as assisting peace officers as a tool supersedes the legalities of the Public Access law, victim services dogs still need to take heed of the access laws during a crisis situation so it is important to know where and who your unit has agreements with and to have established relationships in place to prepare for critical incidents.

Certification. The certification process is based on the training rubric used for therapy dogs in the United States that comes from Delta Society, the oldest and most recognized organization in association with therapy dogs. The Canadian Kennel Club adopted the same criteria for their certification which is called the Canine Good Neighbour Program and is the acceptable standard
for therapy dogs in Canada. The 12 steps (in simplified form) that are required to achieve a CKC Certification are:

1. Accepting a Friendly Stranger
2. Politey Accepts Petting
3. Appearance
4. Out for a Walk
5. Walk through a Crowd
6. Sit/Down Command
7. Come when Called
8. Praise/Interaction
9. Reaction to a passing dog
10. Reaction to distractions
11. Supervised Isolation
12. Walking through a door or gate

**Facility access.** Therapy dogs that are out and about performing AACR, AAI and AAT may need access to locations that other dogs are not allowed. Most people and agencies know that service dogs and their human companions are allowed access to all public places by law; however, dogs that are not ‘guide dogs’ as classified under the Canadian Guide Dog Act must be granted Courtesy Access to enter these public domains. Those with therapy dogs in Victim Services need to be aware of this law and to be respectful of the businesses or locations that they may need to attend with their dog, obtaining permission from the organization in question. For the purpose of dogs doing Victim Services AACR work, the need to be on scene can supersede this law as once a crime scene is considered a crime scene then the dogs in service of the RCMP are then allowed wherever is necessary for the purposes of conducting their work.

In preparation for bringing a therapy dog into a public setting the dog should obtain a veterinarian assessment that outlines their physical fitness, their medical history and that their shots are up to date and that they are behaviourally sound to work as a therapy dog.
Training. In addition to basic obedience and drills that keep the dogs basic skills up to date and fresh, Pawsitive Horizons' Kirby MacInnes, Victim Services dog handlers and the dogs themselves train once per week in a group setting. They work on extended obedience commands, fun commands and scenarios. While in this setting the dogs are exposed to different environments, sounds and stimuli and they are assessed on demeanour and socialization to determine areas that could be improved. For example, this could mean taking the dogs in elevators, around crying people or other dogs. The handlers are taught to pay attention to the non-verbal cues of the dogs and to be attuned to the dogs' capabilities and needs. Just as humans experience fatigue from heightened emotion, dogs also experience this and are at risk for vicarious trauma if they aren't taking care of their needs.

Training log. Modelling the training log of the RCMP K-9 Unit, the therapy dog unit has a weekly training log for the therapy dogs that highlights what skills they have worked on each week. The section headings are:

1. Obedience
2. Fun Commands
3. Demeanour
4. Scenarios
5. Socialization/Features
6. Notes: what was worked on, general observations, hours and settings

The other tracking form is the Monthly Dog Activity Report which tracks the work the dogs do within the unit including hours in the office, callouts, presentations and events and training hours.
Costs & Insurance

The financial considerations of implementing this program were a crucial component of obtaining approval to move forward. Fiscal implications associated with the responsibility of bringing a living and breathing animal into a professional environment centred around capacity, responsibility, sustainability and were an ever present discussion topic during the development phase. The categorization of the different financial considerations examined start-up costs, annual expenses and insurance.

Start-up costs. The costs for starting this program were very reasonable due to the fact that both dogs were privately owned so there were no costs associated with obtaining a specialized dog and the cost of training the dogs was donated by Pawsitive Horizons. The following list comprises an estimate of the costs associated with starting the program.

One dog in the office:

1. Dog Uniform (Hard Vest) $100
2. Crest and ID Embroidery $50
3. Dog Light Office Uniform $90
4. Crest and ID Embroidery $20
5. Access Tag $40
6. Specialty Training Collar $30
7. Flat Collar $20
8. Dog Bed $50
9. Dog Toys $50
10. Training Matt $50
11. Dishes/Bowls $40
12. Furminator Brush $100
13. “Go Bag” and Embroidery $40
14. Dog Cards $400
15. Travel Crate $120

Total Cost $1200
**Ongoing Costs (Annually)**

1. Vet Insurance $500
2. Liability Insurance $0 **
3. Collars/Uniforms $100
4. Toys $100
5. Dog Bed $100
6. Dog Cards $400
7. Colouring Books $300

**Total** $1500

**Insurance costs are covered under the Pawsitive Horizons business coverage program.**

**Additional potential costs.** The Delta PD program covers the cost of their therapy dog’s food, veterinary shots and upkeep as well as providing a stipend to the handler to cover any extra costs associated with care for the dog. Because we chose to use personal dogs and trained them to pass the necessary certification, the owners of the dogs have assumed these costs. In the future, it would be possible to include these costs within the program if financially feasible. At the time of the program’s inception, I thought it prudent to start the program with lower operating costs in order to get the necessary support for a trial.

Another cost would involve a vehicle that is specific for the therapy dog program within Victim Services. This vehicle would be used exclusively for transporting the therapy dogs to and from scenes and would have a temperature control and be marked as a Victim Services vehicle. This is something that is for future development and that we would hope to get donated to our unit. An estimate of this cost annually is $1700 which would include insurance and gasoline.
Resiliency and Your K-9 Partner

Managing the well-being of your dog is a crucial consideration in Animal Assisted Therapy as, like their human counterparts, there is a need to build resiliency in order to cope with the stresses and to be effective in your work. For a dog, the coping mechanisms may be somewhat different but they are in line with the general principles of self-care and can be accomplished in similar ways by doing the things you enjoy in addition to the helping work with victims of crime be that catching a ball, chasing a Frisbee or taking a nice nap in the sunshine; play time, fun time and down time are a necessary component. Helton (2009) explores the idea that if animal assisted therapy is what practitioners want to be doing, then they have a greater capacity for the stressors that go with the work and, it follows that the same may be true for the dog as well. Assuming all indicators point to the notion that the dogs “enjoy their jobs, live in harmony with their handlers, and are not obliged to do what they do not like, they will not interpret negatively” the heavier aspects and stresses of the work itself and while experiencing both positive and negative emotions, they can manage their working lives with the help and assistance of their handler (Helton, 2009, p. 296-297).

The nature of the work and the length of the sessions was examined in a quantitative study on dogs that perform AAT’s in Austria looking at cortisol levels, a physical measurement of stress, and the outcome indicated that there was a noted increase in the cortisol levels when the therapy sessions were short or of a high intensity while the longer, more laid back sessions that consisted of several breaks produced a lower, though slightly elevated, level of cortisol (Haubenhofer & Kirchengast, 2006). In addition, if there was a greater number of sessions in a week cortisol levels were higher for those dogs versus the weeks when there were less sessions and more breaks. Though the study did notice variable cortisol levels it also indicated that this
wasn’t necessarily detrimental to the dogs as the owners observed that the dogs were still enjoying their work and were still effective with their clients.

A quantitative study (King, Watters & Mungre, 2011) that looked into the cortisol levels of dogs that were given a time out or a play break in their working day to determine if this was an effective method of managing the dog’s stress determined that, overall, there wasn’t a significant difference when short play breaks were taken however it did notice a reduction in cortisol levels at the end of the working day. What was observed however was that the experienced AAT dogs had lower cortisol levels than their younger and less experienced counterparts and the dogs that had clear routine despite the changing environments they were exposed to, had lower cortisol levels as well. Much like their human counterparts, AAT dogs fare better from an emotional stability viewpoint if they are given adequate training and are prepared for the work they perform. Exposure to various settings, sounds, people and environments allows the handler to assess the behavioural stress signs in their partner, commonly observed as panting, a tucked tail, whining, excessive licking and trembling to name a few, in a controlled environment allows the handler to build an awareness of the stimuli that effects their partner and triggers stress.

Dogs can suffer from various forms of trauma such as PTSD, Secondary Trauma or Vicarious Trauma so when introducing a victim services dog into a unit there is a need to be cognizant of the potential risk of developing stress symptoms that can lead to something more serious.
**Contraindications.** There are some instances when it is not appropriate or a good fit to use the therapy dogs and this needs to be considered and identified prior to introducing a dog to a situation. There are intrinsic challenges, however, due to the unpredictable nature of working in crisis response situations. Each callout needs to be assessed on a case by case basis with attention to several mitigating factors. The following is a list, though not exhaustive, of instances in which it may not be beneficial to involve therapy dogs on scene.

- With substance users
- With unstable subjects
- At hazardous scenes
- With people who have phobias
- With people who have allergies
- When other animals are present

To ensure respectful usage of the dogs with clients, permission to use the dogs is always obtained prior to their introduction to clients. Generally, the availability of the therapy dog is mentioned to the client and, if welcomed, will be deployed. To date, every time the dogs have been offered as a support, their services have been accepted.

**“Go” Bags.** Victim Services workers need to be prepared to “go” to a scene at any given time when they are on call and the same is necessary for their K-9 counterparts. Having a labelled bag that contains all of the items that may be of use when on a scene for an extended amount of time will allow the process of mobilization to go much more smoothly. The following items are contained within the bags of our K-9 Caseworker “Go” Bags:

- Water bowl
- Snacks/cookies
- Dry food
- Brush
- Leash (short)
- Mat
- Spare comfort vest
- Toys
- Colouring Sheets
- Business Cards
- Pins
- Fur removal roller
- Bottle of Water
- Dog First Aid Kit
- Dog Insect Repellant
- Poop Bags
Therapy Dogs In the Office

Having the therapy dogs added to the RCMP work place environment, a space fraught with high stress and tension, has been incredibly positive and received with a strong welcome. Though the reason for implementing therapy dogs was purely for the benefit of clients and victims of crime, the unexpected side effect has been to provide a levity and a way of connecting and grounding for the officers and victim services workers alike.

Workplace environment. My focus when advocating the inclusion of therapy dogs in the Prince George Victim Services unit was solely on the benefits of therapy dogs with vulnerable populations and I haven’t been disappointed. Animal interventions are noted to improve many facets of mood and psychological well-being (Morrison, 2007), and I have been witness to the grounding capabilities and the calming influence in high stress situations that the dogs are having on clients. What I didn’t anticipate, however, was how the dogs might affect the environment in the office itself. I began to notice that when Max, my primary office dog, was in my office I had many more interactions with police officers and staff alike who would simply drop in and give Max a pat. A common phrase I began to hear was “I could use a little dog therapy myself today” followed by the seeker giving Max a cuddle and then going on their way. Andrea Shultz, director of a Child Assault Centre in Dallas, Texas noted a similar finding with the “unexpected benefit” of improving staff morale and “by helping to prevent burnout in the professionals that work their cases” (as cited in Phillips & McQuarrie, 2009, p. 25).

According to Geary (2009) it is not unusual for employees of these kinds of agencies to experience a strong sense of isolation which is exacerbated by a belief that showing emotional reactions could affect how confident your colleagues were in your ability to do your job.
Although there are services available to officers who are experiencing emotional job related stresses, there is a sense that availing those services could imply weakness: a very unenviable state for the tough guy (or girl) image necessary for success in a para-military organization.

Victim Services caseworkers though working in the policing environment as well, are much more involved in the trend toward managing the potential for vicarious trauma and secondary trauma. Incorporating debriefing techniques and other coping mechanisms, they may be better equipped to acknowledge the emotional impacts of the work but they also find themselves in the similar situation of providing temporary emotional first aid to clients without getting past the surface of the pain of here and now as those they assist are often passed on to longer term counselling once the crisis is over. The very nature of helping on a surface level is problematic. The opportunity of maintaining a connection and following through with their clients is limited and puts the helpers in the precarious position of potentially needing help themselves.

The logistical process of implementing therapy dogs into victim services and the extent of the benefit of therapy dogs on those who work with them, those who encounter them and those who interact with them in a policing environment has not been studied however, police dogs from an enforcement perspective have been the focus of some research. Clinton Sanders (2006) outlines the difficulties he encountered as a researcher from the outside of policing looking in. He spent several months attempting to gain access to a police dog training facility and “despite having received (somewhat grudging) permission to observe training, at times [he] found access limited.” He notes “research access to law enforcement settings typically is problematic” (Sanders, 2006, p. 150) as, in his case, the officers in charge were somewhat
suspicious of his motives. Once those fears were put to rest, he was left to observe as a “somewhat peripheral participant” (Sanders, 2006, p. 152). As the manager of the Prince George RCMP Victim Services Unit I am in a unique and well placed position to observe, create and document the process of building a cohesive therapy dog program that addressed the needs of the community, office and victims alike from an insider perspective without any of the hindrances that could be faced by an outsider attempting to gain the same form of insight.

**Dogs and their senses: Intuition.** In working with therapy dogs what is often being observed is a feeling, a sense that something just feels better when the dog is present. Interestingly, it is the non-verbal nature of dogs themselves and their heightened ability to use their senses that makes the human-canine relationship such a powerful one. By examining their unique way of knowing that is beyond words, of reaching out and soothing without any science backing up their actions, their way of calming a soul that there are no words for makes therapy dogs a perfect fit for victim services. In essence, the powerful gift a therapy dog can give is an offer of equal opportunity affection in all their interactions: big, small, short or tall dogs see only your energy and spirit and offer unconditional acceptance and comfort providing an opportunity to mitigate the effects of trauma simply by being.

Exploring the question then of what it is about dogs that makes them a good fit for therapy work I look to the qualities that I believe are the necessary elements for successful interactions and these involve the senses. Dog’s actions and motivations are closely tied to instinct and consequently, intuition: a way of knowing that is beyond words. In their capacity as a therapy dog their method for helping or calming a sad soul it to merely be present, soothe without premeditation and present their whole being as a comfort.
Dogs and their senses: When there are no words. Communication between canine and human is at the very basis of understanding in this relationship (Garviele-Gold, 2011). Though some tests of dogs verbal comprehension cite awareness of approximately three hundred words in varying languages, what they comprehend is the emotion behind the words. Dogs offer a method of communication that humans are slowly developing a better understanding of and that is creating a clearer understanding between nature and “a sense of oneness in the world. There is a power in nonverbal contact and in the companionship dogs offer” (Garviele-Gold, 2011, p. 104). Despite their silence dogs can offer a kind of support that isn’t necessarily available from their human counterparts as “they say no words that hurt, offer no advice and ask no questions, keep their silence, yet they bear witness (Garviele-Gold, 2011, p. 105). The fact that a dog has no words to offer but simply gives quiet support is a powerful incentive for using therapy dogs in victim services to aid both the client and practitioner. As silence brings up emotion, a person has time to collect their thoughts and feel supported in their silence rather than thinking about and listening to their words.

People who are comfortable interacting with a pet or therapy animal may find themselves in a stronger position in terms of ability to communicate than those who don’t have that kind of interaction. Allen (1995) reports on a study done on couples with and without dogs and the overall pattern revealed that “those with highest attachment to their dogs, and those who confide in their dogs most frequently, fare the best of all” (Allen, 1995, p. 6) having less marital problems and longer lasting relationships. “Using the pet as a confidant, and someone to ‘discuss’ difficult situations with has emerged as an important factor” (Allen, 1995, p. 8).

In most helping fields the benefits of disclosure and debriefing are essential in maintaining
a healthy staff and environment to handle stress and coping. Allen (1995) tout’s these benefits but notes that although these are widely recognized methods of coping in health psychology the “nature of their confidant has not been described before to include animals” (Allen, 1995, p. 8) and she indicates this is an omission that should be rectified.

The author and poet Margaret Atwood is quoted as saying “a word, after a word, after a word is power” which I think illustrates the complexity of human interactions with language. Words, used for either kindness or cruelty hold a great deal of weight, so what makes a canine human interaction so powerful is that words aren’t available to gain position, to hurt or even to soothe. Dogs, in their silence, are completely supportive, non-judgemental and comforting.

**Dogs and their senses: Touching and feeling.** Touch can hold both positive and negative implications and for those who’ve been victims of abuse and, be it physical or sexual, touch can become complicated. Boundaries around touch are noted as confusing for one little girl named Abby (Phillips and McQuarrie, 2009) and determining healthy touch was a challenge. The use of the therapy dog, Rigo, in her treatment plan helped her build her confidence around touch with gentleness and kindness as she learned methods to groom Rigo and to let him know if she didn’t want any licks by asserting herself and saying “that’s enough” as the handler had taught her. She learned how to touch Rigo in an appropriate way and to notice that he was enjoying himself and feeling safe with the physical contact. While sitting on the floor with Rigo she was able to settle down, and stop her continual motion, to share her thoughts and to respect his personal boundaries as he respected hers. This relationship eventually helped her to feel safe enough to disclose the sexual assault she’d experienced (Phillips & McQuarrie, 2009).
Allen (1995) explains that “one of the most endearing qualities of pets is that they provide consistent companionship, and they are always ready to give and accept affection” (Allen, 1995, p. 8). This is not always something that is present in our human relationships. People with difficult medical issues are often the recipients of less touch than others. Allen describes the experience people who have Alzheimer’s and AIDS as having touch from other humans diminished as people learn of their ailments. A study conducted in 1991 by B. J. Carmack (as cited in Allen, 1995), explored the role of companion animals with people who have AIDS and this relationship and interaction “provided affection, support, nurturance and acceptance otherwise totally absent in the lives of most people who have AIDS” (p. 8).

The health benefits for people who have even brief interactions with touching and petting an animal, either their own or an unfamiliar dog, have been reported as having decreased stress (serum cortisol) after 5-24 minutes (Odendaal, 2000). Even a brief touch or playful interaction with an animal can bring about a smile creating a positive environment in seconds.

**DVD Interviews**

A 14 minute DVD video, specific to the experience of having Max in the Prince George RCMP detachment on a daily basis, was created to both promote the program and to showcase the nature of the work being done with one of our therapy dogs in Prince George. The video looks at the benefits to clients and staff alike and offers experiential interviews with those who work on a daily basis with a therapy dog on duty. The building of the relationship between Max, our clients, the police and victim services workers and those community members that come to the detachment regularly is explored and the benefits to Max’s presence in the face of a crisis or a tragedy is highlighted as a potential factor in mitigating the effects of vicarious trauma.
Victim services K-9’s in the community

There is a real fascination and interest in dogs with jobs and this has become very evident as Max and Grimmus began their careers in the RCMP Victim Services unit. They are requested to attend meetings, events, schools, hospitals and are the centre of attention everywhere they go. Once they don their uniforms, they are professionals and they are representing our unit with a panache that escapes their human counterparts.

Public perception and dogs in the media. Perception as a factor in building relationships is examined by Katherine Kruger and James Serpell (2006) as they discuss the elements of creating a quick connection with the presence of a therapy dog at hand. The power of expedited rapport building is noted as a positive effect when a dog is introduced to treatment facilities (Kruger & Serpell, 2006). As soon as the dog appears, all eyes are on the furry new friend and those who see the dog instantly have their interest piqued. The popularity of the dog is noted and expected but the handler is also seen as likely having some of the qualities of the dog simply by being with them. The handlers, through no action other than accompanying the dog, are instantly perceived as “friendlier and happier” (Kruger & Serpell, 2006, p. 29).

In a study by M. Wells and R. Perrine that is cited by Randolf T. Barker (2005) the perception of a business itself is enhanced when dogs are a part of the workplace. The benefits were a more relaxed playful environment facilitating a reduction in stress as well as making the workplace “appear more friendly, creative, informative, and interactive” (Barker, 2005, p. 307). The presence of animals broke down barriers to communication amongst the employees and management and the pet owners felt supported and more comfortable in the office.
**Good will ambassador tasks.** The Prince George community has welcomed the Victim Services therapy dogs with open arms and are, in fact, some of the most famous dogs in town. The therapy dog program was the third most popular news story for the RCMP in 2013, they have done some excellent work assisting children with reading when they partnered with the Prince George Public Library and when kids have been on tours at the new detachment they have mentioned the therapy dog is the highlight of the tour.

Clinton R. Sanders (2006) describes the public’s insatiable interest in police dogs and how interactions and favourable impressions of the dogs can help a police force gain positive media attention, something that is not always easy for police departments to achieve due to the level of public scrutiny they experience. The dogs’ personalities and popularity are reported on and the dogs are even trained to do public appearances and demonstrations of their abilities which are invariably met with interest and approval. The trust and devotion the dogs have to their handler, partner and family member while showing off their prowess in a public setting lets the public glimpse the strong, commanding and loving relationship that exists between the two. “Training officers also frequently employed parental terms when talking about the handler-dog relationship. ‘See the way he’s looking at you? He’s wondering what Dad wants him to do’” (Sanders, 2006, p. 158). Despite the tough working relationship, this kind of interaction makes the police officer seem more human and the dog seem more like a pet.
Out and about in Prince George. A dog in a vest draws every eye wherever it appears and the Prince George RCMP therapy dogs are a hit. The dogs have attended several events as good will ambassadors and are always very popular. Some of the events they have attended over the last year are:

- Canada Winter Games
- Take Back the Night
- VAWIR meetings
- NVCAW Gala (guest appearance by Grimmus prior to dinner)
- Media events (SPCA support event, NVCAW launch)
- School Presentations
- Library Reading Program
- Family meetings for Legebokoff trial
- Victim Services Presentations
- RCMP Community Policing VLA Picnic
- RCMP Block Watch Party
- Lakeland Mills Community Meeting
- Victim Services Annual Picnic
- CN Centre Cougar’s Game – 1st Period Show
- Run For Fun weekly training and 5km race event
Media. The dogs have been featured in several publications within our community and across the country: all very positive, upbeat stories about the great work therapy dogs can do. The tie in with the RCMP and policing is of key interest to the public and this is a great opportunity for police to get media coverage that is positive in nature and highlights the successful interactions that aren’t always a focus in policing stories. The therapy dog story in became the third most popular news story for the Prince George RCMP in 2013.

The following are URL links to some of the stories:

**CKPG**

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gFXIP06sPJU
http://ckp.com/therapy-dogs-join-victim-services
http://ckp.com/dogs-added-to-the-therapy-force-video

**Kelowna NOW**

http://www.kelownanow.com/watercooler/news/news/Provincial/15/01/30/Prince_George_Thera py_Dogs_are_Making_a_Name_for_Themselves

**My Prince George NOW**


**Opinion 250**

http://www.250news.com/2015/01/27/therapy-dog-cleared-for-courthouse-work/
http://www.250news.com/blog/view/30279

**Pony Express**

Prince George Citizen


Prince George Free Press


Prince George RCMP Website

http://princegeorge.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/ViewPage.action?siteNodeId=775&languageId=1&contentId=40636

http://princegeorge.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/ViewPage.action?siteNodeId=775&languageId=1&contentId=32580

Shaw Cable

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VtArjqYBavY#t=13

Twitter

https://twitter.com/P._RCMP/status/570048019460005888?s=09)

https://twitter.com/P._RCMP/status/570002744741752833?s=09)

https://twitter.com/P._RCMP/status/569995196261277696?s=09)
Agencies that support the therapy dog program.

Elizabeth Fry Society - Children who Witness Abuse and Victim Services Programs
Ministry of Justice
Native Friendship Centre
The Northern John Howard Society
Police Victim Services of BC
Prince George Courts
Prince George Public Library
Prince George New Hope Society
RCMP Community Policing
RCMP Sex Crimes
Sheriff’s Department
SPCA
Chapter Four: Reflections and Moving Forward

**Reflections:** Integrating this unique and ground-breaking program into my work environment has been a joy but a significant challenge; there have been hurdles I hadn’t considered, opportunities I hadn’t thought of and there has been a lot of fun. Looking back over the last 18 months, I have learned many lessons and the best part is that I’ve got my best friend and partner at my side day in and day out. I am so impressed with what I have witnessed as I watch Max interacting with people in the community and I feel proud of the gains and positive attention this work has garnered from those we serve both as internal and external clients.

One of the main challenges to the implementation process was communication with various agencies both internal and external that didn’t see the value in the program and, because there wasn’t any empirical data on the effectiveness of this work it was, at times, difficult to ‘sell’ the idea. Fortunately, the Officer In Charge of the Prince George RCMP at the time, Supt. Eric Stubbs, was willing to take a chance on the program and, having an opportunity to put theory into practice, allowed precedent to be created and allowed the program to have a chance to gain momentum and experience which, once tried and tested was determined to be successful.

This program, on a larger scale, has drawn intense interest from agencies across the country and the work we have done here has the potential to influence Victim Services programs on a national scale. We are in a unique position to provide valuable insight into the processes and procedures necessary for successful implementation and thus, the impetus for the creation of this manual, to ease the transition to adding therapy dogs to victim services units.
Moving forward: As we gain stability and become a common presence within the detachment and community, I see many opportunities to utilize the popularity of the dogs to bring awareness to issues faced by victims of crime and trauma. Since adding the therapy dogs to the Victim Services unit we have had increased interest in the work that victim services does specific to the dogs but also in relation to the work we do independent of them. This interest presents a significant educational benefit as those who had no knowledge of the services available to victims of crime are now aware that there are people who are present and willing to assist when they are facing the hurdles of victimization and recovery.

One project I’ve just started working on is to organize and host an open house at the police detachment for community members to meet the therapy dogs and interact with them. This event will be focused on youth and will consist of colouring contests, teddy bears, dog tricks and treats and will take place in May on Therapy Animal Day.

A consideration that is difficult to think about but that is a reality that must be faced is succession planning. Due to the success of the program the question has come up around what will happen when Max and Grimmus are no longer able to continue their work due to old age, retirement and health issues. Max, in particular, has extensive training for the work he is doing in court and that level of training will need to be in place before another dog can take over this work for him once he retires. As a unit we have begun to discuss training options with Pawsitive Horizons so that there is enough time and a focus on training a dog for this specific purpose.

Along with succession planning for the dogs in the unit, the consideration of what will become of the program if staff choose to move on or if a new coordinator doesn’t want to be a dog handler needs to be examined. At this time, what we’ve put in place, is training volunteers to
handle and be paired with a dog. The hope would be that the program could be sustained via the volunteer participation with or without a program manager handling a dog.

**Concluding Thoughts:** This program has been a life changing opportunity and I have had a chance to pair my three great loves: my passion for helping victims of crime and trauma, my desire for learning and education and my love for dogs. By combining these aspects of myself I have been able to reach people on a much grander scale than I thought possible. I have connected with clients during the wagging of a tail, the brushing of a coat and the eating of a biscuit. I have talked to people from all walks of life, some of whom would not have been willing to engage in a sincere conversation with a person connected with the RCMP but, who, due to sharing a love of animals, have seen something in me that allowed them to feel comforted amidst a sea of sadness and trauma. Watching Max bring a glimmer of joy and hope to clients has been an unparalleled experience and I am blessed to be a part of a program that has the power to build connections on a level I hadn’t even hoped for. There are so many partnerships that we have the potential to develop and explore as we continue to cultivate the program and I look forward to its growth, changes and successes each and every day.
References


Appendices
List of Support Documents

Appendix A Logistics: Canine Good Neighbour Program Description
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Appendix C Logistics: Copy of Max’s Veterinary Recommendation
Appendix D Logistics: Sample from Training Log
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Appendix F Your K-9 Partner: Canine Stress
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Appendix K Victim Services K-9’s in the Community: Media Articles and Press Releases
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Appendix A

Logistics: Canine Good Neighbour Program Description
Canine Good Neighbour Program

EXERCISE DESCRIPTION

**TEST 1 - Accepting A Friendly Stranger**

This test demonstrates the dog's ability to allow a friendly stranger to approach and speak to the handler. The evaluator will walk toward the handler and dog and greet the handler by shaking hands and briefly chatting. The dog should remain under control with only gentle resistance, if necessary. The dog should not go to nor jump on the evaluator and must not exhibit any signs of shyness or resentment.

**TEST 2 - Politely Accepts Petting**

This test demonstrates the dog's ability to allow a friendly stranger to pet it while out with its handler. The evaluator will pet the dog on the head and shoulders. The dog may sit or stand quietly beside the handler and may change position, but must not exhibit any signs of shyness or resentment.

**TEST 3 - Praise/Interaction**

This test demonstrates the dog's ability to walk politely on a leash as well as the handler's ability to control the dog. The evaluator will walk the dog with a handler and dog walk a course, which will include at least one right and left turn and a 180-degree turn. It is not necessary for the dog to be exactly aligned with the handler or it when the handler stops. The handler may talk to the dog.

**TEST 4 - Out For A Walk**

This test demonstrates the ability of the dog to walk politely beside the handler in pedestrian traffic, while remaining under control at all times. The dog and handler walk through and close to several people. Throughout this test the handler may talk to the dog giving praise and encouragement. The dog must maintain a position close to the handler without becoming unduly stressed or unruly. The dog may show some interest in strangers but should not go to them.

**TEST 5 - Walking Through A Crowd**

This test demonstrates the dog's ability to walk politely beside the handler in pedestrian traffic, while remaining under control at all times. The dog and handler walk through and close to several people. Throughout this test the handler may talk to the dog giving praise and encouragement. The dog must maintain a position close to the handler without becoming unduly stressed or unruly. The dog may show some interest in strangers but should not go to them.

**TEST 6 - Come When Called**

This test demonstrates the dog's ability to come when called by the handler. The evaluator will stand near the dog and instruct the handler to position the dog in either a sit, down or stand position. The handler will then leave the dog and go to a distance of 3 metres before turning and calling the dog. The dog should come readily to the handler; the handler may encourage the dog.

**TEST 7 - Reaction To Distractions**

This test demonstrates that the dog is confident when faced with common visual and auditory distractions such as doors opening, baby strollers, joggers, etc. The dog may express natural interest in the distraction and may temporarily startle, but should not show aggression or fear. One or two barks are permitted and the handler may talk to the dog throughout this test.

**TEST 8 - Supervised Isolation**

This test demonstrates the dog's ability to be left alone with a person other than its handler, while maintaining a calm acceptance of the situation. The handler asks another person to hold the dog and tells the dog to stay. The handler goes to a pre-designated location, out of sight of the dog and waits 3 minutes until called to return by the assistant evaluator. The dog should not show excessive stress by pulling on the lead, or exhibit excessive panting, barking or whining.

**TEST 9 - Accepting A Friendly Stranger**

This test demonstrates the dog's ability to allow a friendly stranger to approach and speak to the handler. The evaluator will walk toward the handler and dog and greet the handler by shaking hands and briefly chatting. The dog should remain under control with only gentle resistance, if necessary. The dog should not go to nor jump on the evaluator and must not exhibit any signs of shyness or resentment.
Appendix B

Logistics: Copy of Max’s Certification
MAX IS A Canine Good Neighbour

IN RECOGNITION OF SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF

The Canadian Kennel Club
Canine Good Neighbour Test

OWNER: KRISTA LEVAR

DATE TEST COMPLETED: JULY 6, 2014

K-9 TRAINING & WELFARE
Appendix C

Logistics: Copy of Max’s Veterinary Recommendation
**Pawsitive Horizons**

Pawsitive Horizons Therapy Dog Program:
Veterinarian Certification

Dog's name: **Max Levar**

Date of birth: **Sept 6, 2007**

Breed: **Yellow Lab**

Handler's name: **Krista Levar**

Address

Telephone:

E-mail

*(Veterinarian fills the following information.)*

**Vaccinations**
(Attach a copy of all relevant veterinary records.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vaccination</th>
<th>Date administered</th>
<th>Date to be re-administered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

If any of the above vaccinations are not current, what is the reason why?

*Para-influenza does not occur/not documented*
To the best of your knowledge, are there any existing conditions that may render the dog unfit for therapy work?

_____________________________

To the best of your knowledge, has the dog ever displayed or engaged in aggression towards other animals or people?

\[ \text{No behavior of concern} \]

_____________________________

Has the dog sustained physical injury that is, in your professional opinion, consistent with injuries from physical altercations?

\[ \text{No evidence of any injury or marks} \]

_____________________________

I hereby certify that "Max" "Devan" is, to the best of my knowledge, physically fit and behaviourally sound and capable of participating in Pawsitive Horizons Therapy Dog Program pending Pawsitive Horizons' evaluation.

Veterinarian signature: __________________________

Veterinarian's name (print): JENNIFER MCCONNELL

Date: \[ \text{AUGUST 8, 2014} \]

Telephone: \[ 350 963 9848 \]

Address: \[ 2933 GOURD RD, PRINCE GEORGE \]

E-mail: \[ dr.jenn.mccarrell@gmail.com \]
Appendix D

Logistics: Sample from Training Log
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week:</th>
<th>Dog:</th>
<th>Handler:</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Obedience</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sitz</td>
<td>Excels</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Platz</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foose</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look (eye contact)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch (my hand)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aus (drop it)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pfui (leave it)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tay</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hop</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take/Bring/Aus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fun Commands</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hello (waving)</td>
<td>Excels</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love Me (speak)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy (roll over)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Demeanour</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Strangers</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Notes:</strong></td>
<td>What did you work on?</td>
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<td><strong>General observation of the session?</strong></td>
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Appendix E

Logistics: Sample of Monthly Report
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<th>Monthly Report - 2013</th>
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<th>Nov</th>
<th>Dec</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Presentations/Events</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training - formal</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training - informal</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vet visits</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix F

Your K-9 Partner: Canine Stress
Many of the incidents to which you and your canine partner will be called to work will be stressful situations. The elements of danger, urgency, injuries, fatalities, unknowns are all stress producers, for the human and the canine member of the team. As humans, it is our obligation to our canine partner that we not get so caught up in our own thoughts that we fail to consider and observe their reactions.

Canines are a species with sophisticated and subtle communication skills. They exchange information with each other and with us through body language. Some of it is obvious to us as handlers, but much of it frequently goes unnoticed to the untrained eye. If a handler isn't paying close attention to these subtleties, they can actually believe the dog is working when it is in fact just going through some of the motions.

These loyal canine partners of ours are so willing to work with us that we easily fall into the trap of thinking of them as tools. They can be, in fact, valuable tools, but are not machines. They are living individuals and experience emotions similar to many of ours. Dogs can feel joy, fear, anxiety, excitement, agitation, jealousy etc. and stress. It is stress that we need to deal with in these particular incidents.

Recognizing Stress

Can you easily recognize when your dog is experiencing stress? Do you consciously watch for it? There are many signals through which you may spot this condition before it becomes out of hand or critical to performance. Dogs and their body language form of communication have many signals or gestures that tell us how they are doing. As each dog is an individual, it will be your job as handler or observer to look at the big picture and determine what the dog is telling you. Common things that can indicate stress are:

**Body posture**
- Body tense, stiff
- Body droopy, tired appearance
- Body lowered, not cowering but slinkier than usual
- Stretching
- Skin twitching
- Change in pace
- Sit down
- Tail wag different from normal

**Vocalizing**
- Whining
- Barking

**Eyes**
- Dilated pupils
- Glazed look

http://www.csst.org/canine_stress.html 2015/02/25
Squinting
Shifty eyes
Whale eye, white showing
Blinking
Red pigment around eyes (also inner ears)
Avoids eye contact (turns head away)
Looks to handler frequently for directions

**Mouth**
Panting, too wide or too narrow
Licking lips or nose
Yawning
Jaw clamping
Drooling
Velvet tongue

**Face**
Furrowed brow
Mouth corners back
Ears back or uneven
Veins prominent under eyes

**Other**
Stop to chew on self, scratch
Just sits or lays down
Comes to you in an attention getting manner
Paws sweating
Tail held lower than normal
Sniffing
Digging
Circling, returning to you in arc path
Out of context behaviors

Many of these signals are very subtle, and can be harder to observe on some of the longer haired breeds, but not impossible. If you spend some time watching your dog and looking for any of these occurrences and think about what was happening when you saw them, you will become more adept at recognizing them when it’s very important. Obviously, some of the above examples would also indicate there might be a problem with hazardous contaminants (drooling, red pigment around eyes, etc.). You need to use some judgement in this respect.

Since canines communicate through body language, they have long since figured out what every little gesture you use really means. If you are intense, uncomfortable, tired, frustrated, worried, blah blah blah, **or stressed**, they will be totally aware of it. As your partner, they will react to that as well as to the environment. You may find them trying to calm you down with calming signals; approaching you in an arc, turning their head away, averting eye contact, licking lips and nose, turning their back and sitting down, or simply jumping up on you and offering a snuggle. Hard as we try, it is next to impossible to fool them about our feelings.

**What to do**

So, I observe my dog feeling the stress, what can I do? This is going to depend on the circumstances of the environment, but here are some suggestions:

**Take a break**

this may be complicated if you have to go through decon to leave the area, but you can also stop and break where you are. However, a total scene change is more effective.
Use calming signals

stretch (in the form of a doggy play bow lightens up to atmosphere), yawn, blink your eyes, look away rather than direct eye contact with the dog, and take a deep breath and sigh

Relax yourself

free your mind of all the business that’s running through and think of something pleasant, let your muscles go into relax mode, but maintain a confident posture

Reassure the dog

vocalize to the dog that they are great and all is well etc. Carry on a conversation in a light hearted, soft and reassuring manner - the voice can be very calming - just don't overdue it, they will figure that out in a hurry.

Training for stress

It can be very valuable to do some training with stress control in mind. This will help you and the dog learn to cope together and prevent you from exceeding either of your thresholds for stress too quickly.

Put a calming word into your training vocabulary. Use it frequently when everything is relaxed and safe. Use it at home, out and about, during trainings, until the dog realizes that it is the cue that everything is fine. This becomes a great tool when you are pushed to work a stressful area, as you can reassure the dog and yourself because it has become conditioned for both of you.

Remember, stress is cumulative. You will not be effective if enough is amassed and you don’t break and leave the area for rest and to regroup. The saying "I can feel it in the air" is very appropriate when working a dangerous and hectic site. Everyone’s stress level adds to another’s, so be aware that it is critical that you break when either you or the canine is above your threshold. Often when you arrive on a site, the stress level is already at the stage that you can ‘feel’ it. Dogs feel it too!!

info@csst.org

http://www.csst.org/canine_stress.html

2015/02/25
Appendix G

Therapy Dogs in the Office: DVD Interview
Appendix H

Therapy Dogs in the Office: Dog Quotes
Fig. 2 Photo of Prince George Therapy Dog team 2013.
From left to right: Krista Levar, Max, Grimmus, Kirby MacInnes, Chara, Ruth Walter.

Dog Quotes

"He is your friend, your partner, your defender, your dog. You are his life, his love, his leader. He will be yours, faithful and true, to the last beat of his heart. You owe it to him to be worthy of such devotion."

"Be the person your dog thinks you are."

"One reason a dog can be such a comfort when you're feeling blue is that he doesn't try to find out why."

"The reason a dog has so many friends is that he wags his tail instead of his tongue."

"If your dog doesn't like someone you probably shouldn't either"

"There is no psychiatrist in the world like a puppy licking your face."

Ben Williams

"I wonder if other dogs think poodles are members of a weird religious cult."

Rita Rudner

"I have caught more ills from people sneezing over me and giving me virus infections than from kissing dogs."

Barbara Woodhouse

"A dog is the only thing that can mend a crack in your broken heart"

Judy Desmond

94
Appendix I

Victim Services K-9's in the Community: Max and Grimmus Cards
Max

BREED: Yellow Lab
BIRTHDAY: September 6, 2007
GENDER: Male

Max is a member of the Victim Services Unit of the Prince George RCMP. Along with his handler and best friend Krista, he provides support to members of the community who have suffered a tragedy or trauma.

Max was born in Prince George and was a foster dog for a few months until being adopted by Krista. He has enjoyed a long history of training and loves to do tricks and try new things.

Likes: Smelly toys, wrestling, tennis balls
Dislikes: Barking too much, people that bother him on car rides.

---

Grimmus

BREED: King Shepherd
BIRTHDAY: October 23, 2009
GENDER: Male

Grimmus is the senior and most experienced K-9 member of the Victim Services Unit. Along with his owner/handler and best friend Kirby, he provides support to members of the community who have suffered a tragedy or trauma.

He was rescued from the Prince George SPCA and though he is just over 100 pounds he is a true gentle giant who loves to work. He is a laid back guy who brings smiles and comfort to those who need it.

Likes: His blue ball, lying in the snow, getting his fur blown off and popcorn
Dislikes: Getting his paws stuck, not getting to ride the snowmobile when someone else is on it and getting too many days off.
Appendix K

Victim Services K-9's in the Community: Media Articles and Press Releases
Quesnel past offers essential services example

Dogs give crime a good licking

New Prosperity rhetoric heats up
Canuck confirms stake in Cougars deal

Good things come to those who wait. In Prince George'sHL, the Vancouver Giants have confirmed they will be the home team for the Cougars.
A tail-wagging furry friend is now appearing at the Prince George courthouse to help ease the stress and tension felt by witnesses and victims when they're about to take the stand.

Max, a seven-year-old yellow Labrador Re-treiver and certified therapy dog, won't be able to accompany anyone into the actual courtroom but he can be there to provide a level of reassurance right up to that point.

He did so much on Tuesday, his first day on that particular job.

"They asked if Max would come and sit with her and keep her calm and so far so good, it went really well," said Krista Lever, the Prince George RCMP's victim services co-ordinator and the dog's handler.

"He was very welcomed over at the courthouse and I think he feels like a lot of a way going up those stairs."

Lever pitched the idea to Judge Michael Frenette, the administrative judge for the provincial court's northern region, in September and Max was subsequently given courtesy access within the courthouse.

As a victim service worker, Lever said she can do only so much to assist a witness's nerves, particularly since the law prohibits her from talking with the witness about the case at hand.

"You want to provide support but you don't want to affect testimony," she said. "But with Max there, I think that's broken and sometimes you just don't need to talk as much when a dog is there and becomes the focus of the conversation.

"They're just calming and soothing."

Max went through extensive training with the help of Petroleum Heritage. Max's name is included in the list of witnesses so he can be accompanied by a courtroom, which is where he is best used in a courtroom, where verbal commands could interrupt proceedings.

Policy is also being developed around allowing therapy dogs into the courtrooms during trials.

Just one other courthouse in B.C. - Surrey Provincial - allows a therapy dog in court and only under circumstances similar to how they're used in Prince George.

Lever said a therapy dog has been allowed in a Canadian courtroom during a trial, but that occurred in Calgary.

But it's becoming more common in the United States and interest is growing in Canada. Lever said she has heard of an interest from as far away as Ontario as well as from around B.C.

"It's just such a positive program that people want to be engaged and be a part of it," Lever said.

With an array of downtown screens and parking closed to vehicles or covered for other uses during the Canada Winter Games, the city has seen an increase in those looking for monthly permits.

According to bylaw services manager Fred Cristoforetti, staff are receiving daily calls asking about monthly stall availability for February.

"I think people are realizing - especially with some of the street closures and some of the other parking lot closures - some of their normal daily actions are not there so they've chosen to make sure they have a stall available in one of our paid monthly lots," Cristoforetti said.

By the time the Games are in full swing, about 100 daily and hourly off-street parking spaces will be taken over to accommodate monthly permit holders who were kicked out of their normal stalls for Games use.

There are still 127 hourly and daily off-street spaces available, said Cristoforetti.

Monthly permit holders were moved to different lots as close as possible to where they would normally park, said Cristoforetti, and if they were put into a more expensive lot, they wouldn't be charged the difference.

"If we found there was a big discrepancy the other way, we gave them a credit," he said.

Those with questions about off-street parking can contact the city at 250-553-7222.

On-street parking will mostly be used for those staying in downtown hotels, Cristoforetti said.

"If our staff have been given the latitude to know where they want to go, they can go to the stop sign and turn around and go to the church and things like that," he said.

Drivers are also reminded that public transit will be free during the Games, thanks to the work of LOCAL students who ran the campaign.

"People have another option," Cristoforetti said.

"It's just too much to ask," he said.
Prince George, B.C. — There are three new caseworkers with the Prince George RCMP’s Victim Services Unit.

Grimmus, Max and Chara, bring a cold nose and warm heart to help victims crime and trauma.

The three are therapy dogs, and are part of the K-9 Crisis Response team with Victim Services in Prince George and have been in service since September.

Victim Services Coordinator for the Prince George RCMP is Krista Levar. She had heard of therapy dogs being used by other police forces and did some research on how to make it happen. There were no resources for such a program, at least not until Kirby Macinnes from Pawsitive Horizons came along. “When Kirby Macinnes from Pawsitive Horizons approached me to offer training and handling services free of charge, we jumped at the opportunity” says Levar.

Grimmus (in photo @ right) is a long haired Sheppard patterned/handled by Macinnes. He is a certified therapy dog and is the most experienced of the three.

Max is a Golden Retriever-Lab cross, who loves spending his days at the RCMP Detachment’s Victim Services office. He is patterned/handled by unit coordinator, Krista Levar. And Chara, patterned/handled by Victim Services volunteer Ruth Walter, is a cute little trainee who brings a sweet and loving nature to the team.

All three dogs are either rescue or foster dogs, one of which came from the local SPCA.

Superintendent Eric Stubbs says the dogs are already having a positive impact with victims of crime.

On Max’s first day on the job, he comforted an upset woman. When he entered the room, he immediately went to the woman and placed his head on her lap, positively impressing the woman immediately. While the woman provided a statement to officers, Max remained at her side, putting her at ease. When the interview was over, the woman asked if she could come back and visit Max.

In another case, a young child victim was having difficulty communicating with investigators, so Grimmus was brought in to assist. After spending some time with Grimmus, the child began disclosing useful information about the case to him.

Other benefits of the K-9 Crisis Response include:

• Help normalize traumatic situations;
• Help ground people who are upset;
• Act as a bridge to communication;
• Have the capacity to reduce blood pressure in victims;
• Reduce isolation for people, particularly people who struggle to communicate such as children or persons with disabilities.

“As an added bonus, the dogs are also goodwill ambassadors” says Levar. “When I’m with one of the dogs in their vests, people feel comfortable talking to me and petting the dogs. I feel like every time I leave the office I have an opportunity to connect with people that may not otherwise know about the work we do in Victim Services. That’s just amazing and so exciting.”

Prince George RCMP Victim Services is the first Northern BC policing agency to bring therapy dogs into their work.

This is fantastic! As the great advocate Roger Caras once said "Dogs are not our whole life but they make our lives whole."

Just about any pet can be a therapy animal but it's nice to know that these rescued animals are given training to simply be friendly and comforting. They have a real purpose in life now and I'll bet they really enjoy it.

This is wonderful. Thanks to all you got this going, opinionated, love your quote. So true.

I think all workplaces could use pet therapy.

Comments for this article are closed.
Prince George, B.C. – Don’t be surprised if you spot a fur friend at the Prince George courthouse.

The Therapy Dog program, operated by the Prince George RCMP Victim Services Section, will see ‘Max’, a seven year old Yellow Lab, available to accompany victims and witnesses to interviews as well as sit with them while they wait for their turn to testify.

(at right, Max sits and waits - photo submitted)

“Max has the perfect temperament for this kind of work” says Krista Levar, coordinator for the Prince George RCMP Victim Services Section. “He is calm and quiet, content to just sit by a person. I have been working with him on hand signals so I could offer some assistance from afar if need be.”

The Prince George courthouse is only the second courthouse in the Province to have approved this aspect of the Therapy Dog program.

“This is a wonderful step forward in appreciating victim’s needs and in providing victim support in a unique and creative way” says Levar, “Gathering the courage to attend court and to testify during a trial is a daunting task for anyone. If ‘Max’ can make that a bit easier then we have accomplished a wonderful thing.”

The Therapy Dog program through RCMP Victim Services, has been operating in Prince George for a year and a half. Levar says she will be heading to Vancouver for a special meeting with E Division to talk about policies and best practices for this kind of service.

Levar says young people seem to connect with the dogs, and those connections have led to some success stories “There are two that stick out in my mind. The first resulted in a disclosure of a crime from a child that would only talk to ‘Max’ about what had happened to him. The second was watching ‘Grimmus’ make a connection with a child in foster care who identified with Grimmus who was a foster dog.”

The dogs are personal pets, so there is no added cost to the detachment for their care.

The dogs also benefit the officers at the Prince George detachment. Max goes to the Victim Services office at the detachment most days and is just the fur friend some officers need to help reduce stress levels, “He just brightens up the day for everyone” says Levar.

Comments

Posted on Tuesday, January 27, 2015 @ 3:09 PM by Grizzly2

I have no doubt this will make a huge difference for victims and witnesses.
It's been a long time coming. Many dogs are highly intuitive and I can really see the need for them.
My question now is, which lawyer is going to try and ban the dog, because, they will try. ”Your Honor, my client has dog allergies” isn't what I mean.

Posted on Tuesday, January 27, 2015 @ 4:19 PM by brcarco

I am sure if someone has allergies they will let the dog handler know...
if the handler doesn't keep the dog away only then is there a problem for the sheriffs or judges to deal with...
This has been becoming more popular in courts for years... if it helps a child or person make it through the maze BONUS

Posted on Tuesday, January 27, 2015 @ 5:25 PM by Grizzly2

Be, you don't understand, but that's okay, lawyers unfortunately keep chipping away for a loophole, hope they don't find one for this. Huge bonus for victims.

Posted on Tuesday, January 27, 2015 @ 6:57 PM by brcarco

I get what you are saying Grizzly... and yes there are lawyers who will pursue anything just because they can... and to try and make a name for themselves, no matter what the name is...
I think in the end they will lose but until then, let's hope they have little or no success...

Posted on Tuesday, January 27, 2015 @ 7:56 PM by Boon
H DIVISION
MEMBER RESCUES ABANDONED PUPPIES
BY SIGRID FORBERG

It was just a feeling that brought Cst. Jim Robinson, from the Halifax District Detachment, down a rural road one night in late January.

He was on a call for service and he’d been looking for a vehicle. When he couldn’t find it, he decided to take a drive in the area. He almost drove past the road in question, but he got the sense that he should turn down it and take a look.

When he spotted a bump on the road, he assumed it was a rock or a chunk of ice. He got out of his patrol car to move it out of the way, but as he got closer to the spot, he realized the object was moving.

"Approaching the bump, I realized it was three animals," says Robinson. "And then I was surprised to see that it was actually three very small puppies."

He coaxed the dogs into his car and then brought them to the Cole Harbour Detach-

E DIVISION
UNCONDITIONAL LOVE FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME
BY DEIDRE SEIDEN

In Prince George, B.C., this past fall, the victim services unit added a few new friendly faces to their team of volunteers.

Max, a golden Labrador retriever; Grimmus, a long-haired German shepherd; and Chara, a German shepherd-Labrador retriever cross, have important jobs to do. They’re the first dogs in northern B.C. to be trained to comfort victims of crime and trauma that come through the detachment.

"If someone is upset and their anxiety level is high, but they want to give a statement, we’ll bring a dog in if they are dog people," says Krista Levar, victim services co-ordinator and Max’s handler. "Watching him work with people is amazing. People seem to really respond to him."

After her supervisor gave her an article about another police service using therapy dogs, Levar knew she wanted to go in this direction with her unit.

After three years of research and planning, Levar made contact with a local agency, Pawsitive Horizons. The agency volunteered their services and dogs, Grimmus and Chara, free of charge in exchange for the experience. They also trained Krista’s own dog, Max, to be a therapy dog.

Max is in the office every day, giving love wherever he goes. He and the other dogs go on house calls or sit with victims in the office when they give statements.

"I’m very pleased with the addition of our canine friends to the victim services team," says Supt. Eric Stubbs. "Krista has an army of volunteers that do an incredible job to assist our victims of crime. And the dogs add another layer of assistance."

Levar has even noticed staff at the detachment seeking out Max’s calming influence.

"People bring in treats for him," says Levar. "When they’re having a bad day, they come by for a little bit of Max’s therapy."

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Levar has even noticed staff at the detachment seeking out Max’s calming influence.

"People bring in treats for him," says Levar. "When they’re having a bad day, they come by for a little bit of Max’s therapy. Put another way, where they were given water. They were then taken to the dispatch centre, where dispatchers had purchased food and supplies to bathe them.

The following morning, they brought the puppies to an animal shelter. Covered in fleas and dealing with health issues ranging from frostbite and a broken tail to a heart murmur, they were placed in quarantine.

The shelter staff gave each of them law enforcement-related names — Cuffs, Siren and Radar — in honour of their rescuer.

When the story got out, there was huge public interest in the puppies. Robinson had the chance to visit them at the shelter for an interview with a journalist and was pleasantly surprised by how quickly they’d grown and how well they were doing.

When Robinson thinks about what could have happened, he says it’s fortunate for the dogs that he stumbled upon them.

"The rest of the members on the watch and I talked about it a lot afterwards because it snowed later on that evening, and if they had stayed there, they probably would have been covered over," says Robinson. "They were just lucky I found them."
RCMP Victim Services Has Gone to the Dogs

Prince George RCMP’s Victim Services Unit have added a new breed of caseworker to assist victims of crime and trauma. Grimmus, Max and Chara are the newest members of the Victim Services team at the Prince George RCMP Detachment. Much like the other 19 Victim Services workers, all three bring compassion and devotion to their duties. The difference is, these three each have four legs and a tale.

Since September, the three therapy dogs have been providing their services to victims of crime and trauma in the Prince George area. “I’m so excited to be adding this amazing dimension to our services” says Krista Levar, Victim Services Coordinator for the Prince George RCMP. “When I heard about therapy dogs being used by other police forces, I knew this was a direction I wanted our program to take. Over the last three years I have researched the possibility of implementing therapy dogs but have not had the necessary resources to move forward. So when Kirby MacInnes from Pawsitive Horizons approached me to offer training and handling services free of charge, we jumped at the opportunity.”

*Photo of ‘Max’, a Golden Lab in training to be a Certified Therapy Dog.*

Kirby MacInnes, owner of Pawsitive Horizons and a Victim Services volunteer in training, is passionate about animal assisted therapy. “I believe in the work. Increasing the accessibility to therapy dogs and training handlers for this kind of crisis work is truly inspiring to me and I am thrilled to be a part of this organization.”
Grimmus is a long-haired Sheppard partnered/handled by MacInnes. He is a certified therapy dog and has the most experienced of the three. Max is a golden lab trainee who loves spending his days at the RCMP Detachment’s Victim Services office. He is partnered/handled by unit coordinator, Krista Levar. And Chara, partnered/handled by Victim Services volunteer Ruth Walter, is a cute little trainee who brings a sweet and loving nature to the team.

These three dogs have been given a second chance, as they have all started out as either a rescue or a foster dog, one of which came from the local SPCA. Each one is now making a positive impact on peoples’ lives. “I’m very pleased with the addition of our canine friends to our Victim Services Team as this adds another layer to the important work of assisting our victims of crime” says Supt. Eric Stubbs, Officer in Charge of the Prince George RCMP. “Already, we have seen the benefit of these dogs when dealing with some of our victims.”

Photo of ‘Grimmus’ with his handler Kirby MacInnes

Max’s first case on his first day, involved comforting an upset woman. Upon entering a crowded room, Max immediately went to the upset woman and placed his head on her lap, positively impacting the woman immediately. While the woman provided a statement to officers, Max remained at her side, putting her at ease. Upon completing the interview, the woman asked to come back and see Max in the future. In another case, a young child victim was having difficulty communicating with investigators, so Grimmus was brought in to assist. After spending some time with Grimmus, the child began disclosing useful information about the case to him. In the short period of time that the therapy dogs have been in use, it is clear that they provide a safe, non-judgmental support to victims in our community.

Here are some benefits of K-9 Crisis Response:

- Help normalize traumatic situations;
- Help ground people who are upset;
- Act as a bridge to communication;
- Have the capacity to reduce blood pressure in victims;
- Reduce isolation for people, particularly people who struggle to communicate such as children or persons with disabilities.
"As an added bonus, the dogs are also goodwill ambassadors" says Levar. "When I'm with one of the dogs in their vests, people feel comfortable talking to me and petting the dogs. I feel like every time I leave the office I have an opportunity to connect with people that may not otherwise know about the work we do in Victim Services. That's just amazing and so exciting."

The benefits of animal assisted therapy have been recognized for some time but it is fairly new in the field of policing, particularly in Canada. K-9 Crisis response grew out of the use of dogs following the tragic attacks on New York on September 11, 2001 and has developed within the FBI, Victim Support and US Court System. Prince George RCMP Victim Services are the first Northern BC policing agency to bring therapy dogs into their work.

For more information about the Prince George RCMP’s Police Based Victim Services Program, contact the unit coordinator, Krista Levar, at (250)561-3373. For interview requests, please contact Cpl. Craig Douglass at the numbers below.

Released by

Cpl. Craig Douglass
Communications NCO / Media Liaison Officer
Prince George RCMP
pg_media@rcmp-grc.gc.ca

Check out our website at www.princegeorge.rcmp.ca
January 27, 2015
Prince George, BC

Therapy Dog Program continues to make Strides

Krista Levar, coordinator for Prince George RCMP Victim Services Section, is heading to Vancouver later this week where she will meet with BC RCMP Victim Services to present on and showcase the amazing work and successes of the Therapy Dog program that was introduced in our community a year and a half ago. The Therapy Dog K-9 Crisis Unit consisting of 'Max', the calm interview saavy office hound and 'Grimmus', the on-scene specialist have blended into the Prince George Detachment with ease, grace and enthusiasm. Their roles continue to expand, grow and develop at the Prince George Detachment.

The most recent development in the Unit is ‘Max’s’ new assignment which will expand his caseload to include a new venue: the Provincial Courthouse in Prince George. Levar is very excited that this initiative has been approved by the Judiciary. “This is a progressive decision and will be the second courthouse in BC to have therapy dogs accompanying victims and witnesses to interviews, and to sit with them while they await their turn to testify.”

Photo of Victim Services coordinator, Krista Levar with ‘Max’, one of the Prince George RCMP’s Certified Therapy Dogs.

“This is a wonderful step forward in appreciating victim’s needs and in providing victim support in a unique and creative way” says Levar. “Gathering the courage to attend court and to testify during a trial is a daunting task for anyone. If ‘Max’ can make that a bit easier than we have accomplished a wonderful thing.”
The Therapy dog program has allowed the Victim Services unit to build partnerships that didn’t exist in the past. Examples would be:

- The Public Library Reading Program which partnered therapy dogs with kids for reading;
- Attended the Lakeland Mills family meeting to support those in need;
- Attended the Prince George Cougars Raise the Woof night;

"Youth really seem to connect with the dogs and fostering those interactions with children have brought about some big success stories" added Levar. "There are two that stick out in my mind. The first resulted in a disclosure of a crime from a child that would only talk to ‘Max’ about what had happened to him. The second was watching ‘Grimmus’ make a connection with a child in foster care who identified with Grimmus’ who was a foster dog."

The Unit has produced ‘Max’ and ‘Grimmus’ cards to hand out to kids as well as colouring pages that hang proudly in Levar’s office.

Photo of ‘Grimmus’, one of the Prince George RCMP’s Certified Therapy Dogs.

As a side note, one of the surprise benefits of the Therapy Dog Program, is the joy the dogs bring to the officers, staff and volunteers within the Detachment itself. The policing environment can be very stressful and though the dogs are there for clients, they are also there for whoever is in need of some non-judgemental comfort. ‘Max’, who attends the office on a daily basis, is just the guy for the job.

Victim Services provides crisis intervention and emotional support for victims of crime and trauma. They are the primary liaison between victims and the court system, law enforcement and community agencies. They provide information regarding the court process and referral services, free of charge to anyone in need.

For more information or for interview opportunities, please contact Krista Levar at 250-561-3373 or on cell at 778-349-0856.

Released by

Cpl. Craig Douglass
Communications NCO / Media Liaison Officer
Prince George RCMP
pg_media@rcmp-grc.gc.ca

Check out our website at www.princegeorge.rcmp.ca
Appendix L

Victim Services K-9's in the Community: SPCA Calendar
Max is a six-year-old golden lab with a mellow personality in office, but a playful, mischievous streak after hours. He has a good work ethic and looks forward to putting on his vest in the mornings and heading out to work. His days in victim services are spent attending meetings, working with clients or offering his company to anyone who wants to pet him. In his off hours, he enjoys snowshoeing, jogging, barking at cows, swimming and walks to pretty much anywhere. His favorite snack is cheese or pepperoni — preferably at the same time.
Appendix M

Community Support: Letters of Support from various agencies
Krista Lavar  
RCMP Victim Services Coordinator  
Prince George RCMP Detachment  
Prince George, B.C.  
V2L 0B7

Attention Krista:

I am writing this letter in support of the RCMP Pet Therapy Program through the Victim Services department of the Prince George RCMP.

Recently, the P.G. Elizabeth Fry Society had the pleasure of working with the Certified Pet Therapy dogs as a support for the children who are attending counseling through our Children Who Witness Abuse Program. This collaboration between agencies has provided another avenue to reach out and support traumatized children and assist them with some of the challenges that they have experienced being witness to domestic violence.

The Therapy dogs have bridged that gap between counselor and child, making the process of connecting and communicating less threatening. The dogs share some of the same stories that the children share - being given up and going into foster care. The children can understand and relate to the dogs with the goal of developing compassion and empathy in the child. The dogs also create a sense of empowerment and purpose for those children that feel abandoned and disempowered due to circumstances beyond their control. The benefits of Pet Therapy are numerous especially with traumatized children.

It is my hope and recommendation that the RCMP Pet Therapy Program continues to support and provide services to child victims that access the Children Who Witness Abuse Program at the Elizabeth Fry Society.

With Gratitude,

Debra Blake  
Child and Youth Counselor  
Children Who Witness Abuse Program  
Prince George and District Elizabeth Fry Society
August 19, 2014

To Whom It May Concern:

Pet Therapy Program

This letter is in support of the Prince George RCMP Victim Services unit’s submission to secure funding for a Pet Therapy Program within their victim services unit.

The Prince George RCMP Victim Services is well recognised for providing excellent resources in the area of advocacy, education, health, and information on social/legal justice issues. They provide exemplary services to families and demonstrate a strong level of expertise, dedication and commitment to those they serve.

The proposed project will prove to be highly successful capturing the importance of therapeutic work using pets i.e. dogs that are trained as well as their handlers in working with survivors of crime including adults, youth and children. We have been very fortunate to have used one of the trained dogs and their handler within our Children Who Witness Abuse Program. This experience assisted and supported a young youth while accessing services at the Elizabeth Fry Society.

As a service provider we serve many diverse populations and see many families who, due to lack of information, support and resources are unable to cope with the multiple challenges that they may face.

We have worked extensively over the years with the Prince George RCMP Victim Services Program and are confident that their expertise and dedication in working with victims of crime from unique and diverse populations will prove to be successful within pet therapy program. Furthermore their organizational strength in taking action is to be commended.

I strongly recommend the acceptance of the Prince George RCMP Victim services proposal for a pet therapy program for victims of crime and look forward in being able to access such a program.

Sincerely,

Bally Bassi, MA – Community, Social and Justice Programs Manager
September 5, 2014

Ms Krista Levar
Program Manager
Prince George RCMP Victim Services

Dear Ms Levar:

I am writing to provide you with information about our observations of “Max”, the support/therapy dog. Freda Ens, Victim Support Caseworker and I had the opportunity to interact and observe Max during a victim and family member meeting with Crown Counsel that took place in Prince George regarding a major high profile case. We were very impressed at the ability of Max to calm and provide a comforting influence during a very long and emotionally charged meeting involving a large number of victims and family members.

We felt having Max in the meeting was instrumental in helping to calm some of the tensions in the room. For example, we observed one man, who sustained severe injuries in the incident and was not receptive to interacting with support workers, would turn so he was facing Max and watch him for a while until he calmed down. From time to time, he would walk over and pet Max. Further, as tensions began to rise in the room, Max would start to become aware and would want to move around the room. We also observed Max acting as a communication bridge — you were talking with one of the family members of a deceased victim with Max beside you. As you were speaking with the widow, she petted Max as she was talking and this seemed to enable her emotions to come out more freely.

I was impressed at Max’s ability to enhance and expand the accessibility of service delivery — people felt able to connect with him and this opened the door to conversations with support workers. I am happy to provide you with further information and observations.

Best regards,

Steve Ford
Director, Justice and Safety Programs
Victim Services and Crime Prevention
August 21st, 2014

Re: RCMP Victim Services Dog Therapy Program

To Whom It May Concern:

I am pleased to add our support to the RCMP Victim Services Dog Therapy Program.

The Prince George New Hope Society is a non-profit agency focused on bridging the gaps in services for sex trade workers by creating a place of safety and security for women to access support services. The only organization in Northern BC offering member-specific services to survival sex trade workers, sex trade workers, sex trafficked and the sexually exploited, this being our said, no womyn is turned away from services offered.

I have had the pleasure of working directly with the womyn and their positive reactions to having the dogs attend workshops. We address complex issues facing street entrenched and all marginalized womyn. Having Krista bring Max to groups eases the tensions and breaks down the barriers of communication that would otherwise hamper the womyn’s journey to health and safety.

I find it quite hard to explain on paper exactly how much the dogs help and so I will give you an example: when a womyn has been traumatized, let’s say a rape, it is very difficult to talk to anyone about this trauma... bring in Max (therapy dog) and the connection between victim and dog is immediate, the love and non-judgement of the dog, opens the channels of communication. Many times, the womyn talk directly to the dog while reporting the incident to RCMP or Victim Services. Without this interaction there would be no reporting or only third party reporting of some horrific crimes against womyn in our community. With this valuable service many womyn are safer on our streets.

Please accept this letter as confirmation of Prince George New Hope Society’s enthusiastic ongoing support and partnership for this very important project.

Please do not hesitate to contact me directly if you require further confirmation of our support.

Warmest Regards,

Jan Wilson
Executive Director/Project Coordinator

1046-4th Avenue Prince George, BC V2L 3J1 Phone:(250) 562-8680 Fax (250) 5628685

pgnewhopesociety@live.ca jan_newhope@hotmail.com

www.princegeorgenewhopesociety.ca
2014-08-12

Hi Krista,

Just wanted to let you know that I enjoyed helping out with the tour of the detachment last week. Probation employees are a key partner with the RCMP and I hope they liked the tour. I know that seeing Max was a highlight - now if only you could teach him to bring me my coffee in the morning!

Paul
To Whom it may concern:

Re: Max

We are more than happy to write a brief note in regards to the value and benefits of Victim Services therapy dog Max! We appreciate the impact of having a therapy dog in our community and on the amazing effect he can have on any individual. We have seen over and over how animals can connect with people in a very unique, personal level and provide quiet comfort. Max has become something of a celebrity in our community and has earned a reputation as a being a tireless worker, at the ready and always accommodating. Max's companionship provides a victim the rare opportunity to relax and unwind without the silence being broken by ruminating and reflecting back on their ordeal. Their focus can be gently guided towards a connection between themselves and Max. It is a welcome break from the realities of being a victim and the trauma associated with victimization.

We are grateful to Victim Services for providing this unique resource in our community and believe in the power of animals to help soothe our souls and give us comfort. Max is a valued member of our therapeutic community and we would love to see these services enhanced and expanded.

Sincerely,

Wayne Hughes
Executive Director
Northern John Howard Society of BC
154 Quebec Street, Prince George, BC. V2L 1W2
Ph: 250 561 7343
wayne.njhs@shaw.ca
On July 31st 2014, Cpl Holly Hearn and I attended to the Prince George SCAN clinic to interview 2 siblings, a 6 year old boy and a 9 year old girl. Approximately 3 years prior, it had come to light that both children had been the victims of extensive sexual abuse. These follow-up interviews were being conducted with the children as new disclosures and information had recently been provided. In prior conversation with the mother of the children and their counsellors it was learned that the children, and especially the little boy, were having difficulty dealing and talking about what had happened to them. It was discussed and decided that Max could/would attend to the SCAN clinic to provide another level of comfort and support to the children before and maybe also during their interviews. In Holly’s interview with the little boy, Max and Krista did end up sitting in the interview room with them. It quickly became apparent that the little boy was not at all comfortable or interested in talking to Holly about what had happened to him. The little boy did however, show an interest in Max and Holly used the opportunity to ask the little boy if he would be more comfortable and willing to talk to Max about what had happened to him. Holly and Krista left the interview room after the little boy indicated that he would talk to Max. With Holly, Krista and myself, watching from the video monitor room next door, the little boy proceeded to disclose, to Max, what had been done to him. 2 times Holly and Krista left Max alone with the little boy and both times the little boy provided Max with details of how he had been sexually abused. At one point the little boy bent down and hugged and/or was petting Max, telling Max that he was angry about what had happened and just didn’t want to talk about it with anyone. Outside of what the he had disclosed to Max, the little boy did not provide anything further. Holly later provided details of the disclosures to the children’s mother and their counsellors. As I understand it, everyone was amazed as, up to that point, the little boy had provided very little if any previous disclosures or details about what had been done to him. Watching the interview, and I’m sure Holly would agree, I am certain that had Max not been present for the interview, the little boy would not have provided any disclosures that day. Thanks to the great work of Max, this little boy’s parents, counsellors and the police now have some new information to work with and assist them in helping this little boy and his sister. It was truly something special to observe the interaction between Max and this little boy. My eyes have really been opened to the importance and real potential of a good therapy dog like Max. I look forward to working with Max and Krista again when the next opportunity arises.

Thanks!

Cst Darryl Jakubowski
Prince George RCMP
Sex Crimes
Appendix N

K-9 Crisis Response Power Point Presentations: Therapy Dogs and Trauma Perspectives
"He is your friend, your partner, your defender, your dog. You are his life, his love, his leader. He will be yours, faithful and true, to the last beat of his heart. You owe it to him to be worthy of such devotion."

"Be the person your dog thinks you are."

Historical Perspective

- Human/animal relationship
- Psychologist Boris Levinson
- Freud – "the father of psychology"
- Terminology
- Dogs in the RCMP & the Policing World
Meet Our Dogs

*Grimmus*

is a certified therapy
dog with Pawsitive Horizons and a Shepherd so a natural fit at a police station

*Max*

is a certified therapy dog with Pawsitive Horizons and his laid-back lab attitude is very relaxing

Therapy Dogs in Victim Services

- **Phase One: Initial Crisis or Tragic Event (AAI)**
  - At a Sudden Death callout of a 35 year old deceased woman Max drew the attention of the woman’s daughter who was uncommunicative and distraught
  - Max had remained in the vehicle as things were moving quite quickly and an opportunity to ask if he would be a help wasn’t available
  - The family and Victim Services were outside and the girl was sitting on the lawn by herself close to where Max was waiting in the vehicle. He was looking at her and she was looking at him and then she asked why he was there and if she could meet him.
  - He sat with her and she pet him and talked to him while she awaited seeing her deceased mother for the last time.

*Up and Comers...*

Freddie
And Cabella

“One reason a dog can be such a comfort when you’re feeling blue is that he doesn’t try to find out why.”

“The reason a dog has so many friends is that he wags his tail instead of his tongue.”
Therapy Dogs in Victim Services

- **Phase Two: Client Interaction (AAI & AAT)**
  - During an interview with a child victim of a sexual assault, the boy being interviewed did not want to speak to police although he seemed very interested in Max. The officer asked the boy if he would be willing to tell his story to Max and the boy said he would. The officer left the room and, while the interview was being recorded, the boy told Max in detail exactly what had happened.
  
  - Grimmus was able to make a connection with a youth who had trust issues with the RCMP and authority figures as he had been taken from his home and put into foster care. The boy identified with Grimmus’ story of living in the SPCA and then being fostered and eventually finding a new hope and a new lease on life as a therapy dog.

- **Phase Three: Criminal Court (AAI & AAT)**
  - Two boys were being interviewed by Crown Counsel and were recounting their experience of being sexually assaulted and beaten by their stepfather. Each boy had to meet individually with the Crown while the other boy waited.
  - During the waiting portion of the meetings Max was introduced to the boys one on one in front of the courthouse. Max did some tricks and lightened the somber mood of the day.
  - When the boys had their court date they requested Max meet them out front to provide support and comfort prior to going in to testify.
Beyond Words: Grounding with Victims

- Energy & Intuition
- Senses
  - Smell – another way of seeing
  - Taste – dogs aren’t too picky
  - Sight – rapport building and perception
  - Touch – soothing, grounding, complicated
  - Hearing – dogs are great listeners!

Vicarious Trauma and K-9’s

- Cortisol and Stress studies
  - Regular breaks
  - After work
  - Age and experience
- Preparation and training
- Partnership
- PTSD
- Signs and symptoms
Vicarious Trauma and Policing

- Fight or flight personality
- World view
- Exposure to various high stress situations
- Hypervigilence
- Compassion fatigue
- Cynicism
- Black humour
- Confidentiality
- Innocence

A Police and Community Perspective on Therapy Dogs in the Policing Environment
Emotion & Law Enforcement

- Considerations
  - Why does a dog bring out calming emotions in an officer?
  - What are the over-reaching themes in the video?
  - Requirements of the job?
  - What's normal?
Appendix O

K-9 Crisis Response Power Point Presentations: Program Implementation
K-9 Crisis Response

Prince George
RCMP
Victim Services

How it all began...

Working Dogs

Where have you seen dogs working?

Therapy Dogs

- Historical Perspective
- Animal Assisted Therapy
- Animal Assisted Intervention

“He is your friend, your partner, your defender, your dog. You are his life, his love, his leader. He will be yours, faithful and true, to the last beat of his heart. You owe it to him to be worthy of such devotion.”
Police Dogs

- What do police dogs do?
  Then
  - Became members of the RCMP in 1935
  - Variety of breeds
  - Started out doing foot patrols with their owners and worked as trackers looking for caches of illegal liquor, stills and people.

Now
- German Shepherds
- There are 108 dogs
- Specialized training – 17 weeks long

K-9 Crisis Response Dogs Victim Services

History
K-9 Crisis Response

- Started in USA after 9-11
- 4 programs in Canada, all in BC
- Attend crime scenes with their handler
- Go to interviews to provide support for victims
- Help witnesses give statements
- Provide support in the office for anyone who needs a snuggle

Differences between Pet Therapy and Crisis Response

What exactly do they do?

- Help normalize traumatic situations.
- Help to ground people who are excessively upset.
- Act as a bridge to communication with people who are struggling to talk.
- Reduce isolation for any person but particularly people who struggle to communicate such as children, persons with disabilities, etc.
- Have the capacity to reduce blood pressure of victims.
- Act as a goodwill ambassador for the RCMP and Victim Services.
What will this look like?

- Just like police K-9’s, these dogs live with their main handler and attend the detachment with their handler.
- They see clients at callouts, go to scenes of large-scale community incidents, etc.
- Attend interviews with clients to provide comfort and support.
- Spends time getting to know all his/her co-workers in the Victim Services office in the Police Station.

“Be the person your dog thinks you are.”

Making it Happen

- Interviewed Delta PD and met with Caber and Kim.
- Attended PADS to discuss dog placement.
- Made a pitch to the City Managers and got approval.
- Long wait...
- Got a call from Kirby at Pawsitive Horizons.
- Made a pitch to the OIC of the Detachment.
- Started the program!
Choosing the Dogs

Grimmus
is a certified therapy dog with Pawsitive Horizons and a Shepherd so a natural fit at a police station

"One reason a dog can be such a comfort when you're feeling blue is that he doesn't try to find out why."

Max
is a certified therapy dog with Pawsitive Horizons and his laid-back lab attitude is very relaxing

Training and Training Log

- Obedience
- Fun Commands
- Demeanor
- Scenarios
- Socialization/Features
- Notes
- General Observations

"The reason a dog has so many friends is that he wags his tail instead of his tongue."
Certification

Canine Good Neighbour Program
- Accepting a Friendly Stranger
- Politely Accepts Petting
- Appearance
- Out for a Walk
- Walk through a Crowd
- Sit/Down Command
- Come when Called
- Praise/Interaction
- Reaction to a passing dog
- Reaction to distractions
- Supervised Isolation
- Walking through a door or gate

“There is no psychiatrist in the world like a puppy licking your face.”
Ben Williams

Budget & Costs

Start Up Costs:
- Dog Accessories $200
- Dog Uniforms $300
  TOTAL $500

On-Going Costs:
- Liability insurance $0 (Covered under PVSBC volunteer insurance)
- Promotional Items $300
- Vehicle $0 (fundraise for vehicle donation)
  - Insurance $1000/yr
  - Fuel $500/yr
  - Repairs/Upkeep $200/yr
  TOTAL $2000/yr

GRAND TOTAL $500 + $2000 = $2500
Contraindications

- It is not appropriate to use the K-9 in some circumstances:
  - With substance users.
  - With unstable subjects.
  - At hazardous/inappropriate scenes.
  - With people who have phobias or are allergic.
  - When other animals are present.

“I wonder if other dogs think poodles are members of a weird religious cult.”
Rita Rudner

“I have caught more ills from people sneezing over me and giving me virus infections than from kissing dogs.”
Barbara Woodhouse

Case Example

Scottsdale PD was called to a MV Fatality. They located a female on the side of the road holding the hand of her deceased husband who was ejected from the vehicle. She was crying and non-responsive. She became agitated when police attempted to move her away from her husband's body.

Police brought in the K-9 CR dog and handler. The dog approached her and put his head in her lap. The female let go of her husband's hand and cried into the dog. Shortly thereafter she became communicative and responders were able to move her away.

“A dog is the only thing that can mend a crack in your broken heart”
Judy Desmond
Dogs and their Senses

- Sight
  - Rapport building, barriers, perception
- Smell
  - Another way of seeing, 1000 times stronger, gives the whole story, can smell mood, sickness
- Touch
  - Soothing, can bring down blood pressure, reduce stress levels, regulate heart rate, and it just feels good
- Taste
  - Dogs aren’t generally too picky, less taste buds
- Hear
  - Dogs are GREAT listeners!

Their 6th Sense

- They just know
- They feel your energy
- Look to the person with the calmest energy and that becomes their pack leader

“If your dog doesn’t like someone you probably shouldn’t either”
Author Unknown
Good Will Ambassador Tasks

- Attend Victim Services functions such as:
  - Take Back the Night
  - VAWIR meetings
  - Annual Appreciation Gala
  - NVCAW Gala
  - Cross-cultural events
  - Media events
  - School Presentations
  - Victim Services Presentations
  - Fundraising Events
  - Around and About the community wearing his/her smashing Victim Services Working attire
  - PVSBC Annual Conference

Current & Future Partnerships

- Prince George Public Library
- Hospital
- Courthouse
- Pawsitive Horizons
Thank you!