Final Report

Understanding the Effects of Impaired Driving in Saskatchewan:

Perspectives of Family Members of Victims Killed by an Impaired Driver

Nicholas A. Jones, Ph.D., Jody Burnett, Ph.D., & Robert Mills, M.A.

Prepared for:

CSKA | Community Safety Knowledge Alliance

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UNDERSTANDING THE EFFECTS OF IMPAIRED DRIVING IN SASKATCHEWAN:

Perspectives of Family Members of Victims Killed by an Impaired Driver

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ABOUT THIS REPORT

This paper was commissioned by the Community Safety Knowledge Alliance for the purpose of improving our collective understanding of the experiences of families who have lost loved ones at the hands of impaired drivers. It explores the health, social, and economic impacts on these families as well as their experiences with the criminal justice system.

This paper largely draws on the lived experiences of 13 family members—grandmothers, grandfathers, mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, and aunties—from across Saskatchewan, Canada. In total, these individuals were affected by 8 separate impaired driving instances which resulted in the deaths of 12 family members. For some the loss occurred very recently, while for others more time had passed.

About Community Safety Knowledge Alliance

CSKA is a non-profit that supports governments and others in the development, design, and implementation of new models and approaches to community safety and well-being. Through its four lines of business (research, evaluation, technical guidance and support, and professional development), CSKA mobilizes, facilitates, and integrates research and the development of a knowledge base to inform how community safety-related work is organized and delivered. To that end, CSKA:

- informs how community safety-related work is structured, organized, and delivered;
- informs and improves professional practices across the community safety system;
- informs alignment within the sector; and
- improves safety and well-being outcomes at the individual, community, and policy levels.

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MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

In September 2016, in the margins of a conference at which we were both speaking, I sat down with Sue O'Sullivan, the then Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime. Sue told me about an interesting study she had recently read that explored the health, social, and economic impacts on the families of homicide victims in the United Kingdom. She gave me a copy of the study, which I read with interest. It struck a chord and resonated with me.

In 2016, 57 people died at the hands of impaired drivers in Saskatchewan—the highest rate of death by impaired driving of any Canadian province. Those deaths were entirely preventable. How might a study, similar to the one in the UK, but focussed on the families of those killed at the hands of impaired drivers, serve to inform public policy and help to change the narrative around impaired driving? Might such a study complement the existing mix of strategies in play in Saskatchewan? We thought it would.

This research brings forward the voices of 13 members of Saskatchewan families who have suffered the death of loved ones at the hands of impaired drivers. Their lived experiences, as expressed in this report, are often raw and powerful.

We would like to thank our project partners MADD Canada, the Saskatchewan Ministry of Justice, and the University of Regina. We would also like to thank Saskatchewan Government Insurance for its support. Most of all, our heartfelt gratitude goes out to those families who invited our research team into their homes to share their stories and experiences. We are confident that their collective voice will serve to inform public policy and shape the emerging narrative on the impacts of impaired driving.

Sincerely,

Cal Corley
Chief Executive Officer
Community Safety Knowledge Alliance, Inc.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The researchers would like to acknowledge the efforts and contributions made by groups and individuals involved in this research. First, we want to recognize the Community Safety Knowledge Alliance which provided the grant to fund the research[1]. Second, we acknowledge the invaluable contributions of the research participants—their willingness to volunteer their time to discuss the very difficult subject matter of this research cannot be understated. Finally, we wish to recognize the victims of these tragic events.

[1] This report does not necessarily represent the views of the Community Safety Knowledge Alliance.

DEDICATION

This report is dedicated to the memory of the loved ones who lost their lives due to impaired driving. We want to express our sincere gratitude to their families for taking the time to candidly share their difficult stories.

Danille Brooke Kerpan

Tanner Brent Kaufmann

James Paul Alexander (JP) Haughey

Daphne Schmidt

Chanda, Jordan, Kamryn, and Miguire Van De Vorst

Eddy Belanger

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Background and Research Objectives

Saskatchewan is home to some of the highest rates of impaired driving and impaired driving causing death in Canada (Transport Canada, 2011 & 2016). Fatality rates due to impaired driving have increased over the past decade, resulting in various provincial legislation changes to enact tougher drinking and driving restrictions for adults. Despite this, many families have suffered the deaths of their loved ones as a result of impaired driving.

In response to rising impaired driving statistics in Saskatchewan, representatives from the Community Safety Knowledge Alliance (CSKA) initiated a meeting with an interdisciplinary group of scholars from the University of Regina and representatives from MADD Canada to examine a draft proposal to investigate the lived experiences of bereaved family members who have lost loved ones to impaired driving. The discussion proceeded to identify potential avenues for research that would help inform public policy and funding decisions, and more importantly, assist government in understanding the victim's perspective. The group felt it was important for the living victims of these tragedies to have a voice and to share how they had been impacted by the sudden death of their loved ones. This, in turn, would help identify relevant areas for further inquiry and potential change. Work ensued to engage family members whose loved ones had been killed in an impaired driving collision. Inquiry for this report sought to provide much needed insight into the impact that sudden, traumatic death has on family members' health, relationships, employment, and finances as well as their experiences with the criminal justice system. Information specific to these effects as it pertains to victims of impaired driving is underrepresented in existing bodies of literature.

This exploratory research seeks to understand the lived experiences of individuals subject to secondary victimization due to an impaired driving event that resulted in the death of a family member(s). This research produced findings that can assist the government in better understanding the victims' perspective and inform public policy and funding decisions. It also provides the basis for further research in this area.

Methodology

Following ethics approval from the University of Regina, the researchers engaged MADD Canada and Saskatchewan Government Insurance to seek out individuals over the age of 18 who had lost a family member(s) because of impaired driving. Purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used in this process. In total, 13 family members reached out to the researchers and asked to participate in the project. The participants were grandmothers, grandfathers, mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, and

aunties from rural and urban communities across Saskatchewan. In total, these participants represented eight impaired driving incidents resulting in fatalities. Once transcribed, the researchers analyzed the interviews following Attride-Stirling's (2001) thematic network analysis.

Limitations

This research is exploratory in nature. It examines the lived experiences of family members following the death of a loved one due to impaired driving. Given the sensitive nature of the topic and difficulty in identifying the population of interest, the results are limited to the perspectives of those interviewed and are not necessarily reflective of the broader population of impaired driving secondary victims. Nonetheless, the results are, in many regards, consistent with the limited literature available in this area of study. There is reason to argue that while not generalizable per se, the results do provide a sense of wider resonance (Mason, 2002) that conceivably extends beyond the experiences of the participants.

Main Findings

Upon completion of the analysis, five organizing themes emerged from the data including: 1) Harms Experienced; 2) The Experience with Justice System Processes; 3) The Degree of Faith in the Justice System; 4) Coping and Supports; and, 5) The Desire for Change. The organizing themes coalesced into the final global theme: Impaired Driving Causing Death – Victims' Perspectives. The participants in this research all experienced victimization—the death of one or more loved ones—because of an impaired driving crime. The following sections address the key findings that emerged from the analysis of their narratives.

Harms Experienced

The harms experienced by the participants were significant and included emotional, social, and financial distress. All participants expressed immense grief and loss in the immediate aftermath of the crime. Those feelings continue to affect them to the present day—their lives have been forever changed. While all participants experienced traumas resulting from the crimes, their experiences and responses were not uniform. How the trauma manifested or how they sought to deal with it was dependant on their personal circumstances. Each victim's experience and recovery process was different. Although many commonalities were shared by participants, each family member's experience was dependent on a number of variables including, but not limited to, their physical health, their social supports and relationships, and their ability to ensure their financial subsistence while attempting to cope with the loss of their loved one(s). At the time of the research, each participant was at different stages of grief and healing. It was clearly demonstrated that no two victims experience a crime the same way, though all acknowledged that life will never be the same.

The Experience with Justice System Processes

The participants discussed five components of the justice system. Their comments regarding the police, Victim Services, prosecutors, courts, and corrections were mixed. For the most part, when representatives from these facets of the justice system demonstrated compassion, empathy, respect, and understanding for the participants and their families, treated victims with a sense of importance, provided timely and adequate information, and generated a feeling of engagement, the participants were generally satisfied with their experiences. Those who reported unsatisfactory experiences felt they had been unheard, uninformed, excluded from the process, and sometimes re-victimized. Their experiences highlighted feelings that the system was more concerned with the offenders' experience than that of the victims'. The comments indicated that the agencies that had the most face-to-face contact with the participants had the best opportunities to build relationships with them, establishing trust and rapport.

With regard to the supports that participants received, most of the participants felt that Victim Services was not as responsive to the needs of victims, nor did it account for the diversity of experiences of victims. Where services were insufficient to meet the needs of victims, access to additional resources—individualized supports—were dependent on location, financial resources, personal preferences, and culture. Furthermore, some participants felt that Victim Services programs were restricted by existing policies that failed to engage all potential "victims" and to fully address their unique needs.

In discussions about the court system, the majority of participants felt excluded, uninformed, and unsupported in a process that was very unfamiliar to them. They also felt the seriousness of the traumas they experienced were minimized in judicial proceedings. Likewise, they felt the courts seemed more empathetic to the offenders to the exclusion of the victims. The participants expressed grave disappointment with the Victim Impact Statements. The statements did not have the impact on sentencing or on the offender's sense of accountability they desired. Given the emotional trauma that many participants experienced during the process of writing and delivering the statements and the lack of recognition achieved by them, the participants questioned the value of Victim Impact Statements. Additionally, in cases where the offender was of Indigenous descent, participants had mixed reactions to the Supreme Court of Canada's Gladue decision—some struggled with the relevance of ancestral experiences at sentencing, while others recognized it as being an important consideration.

The Degree of Faith in the Justice System

Once again, the participants described a notable disconnect between themselves and the justice system and described feelings of being "outside" the system. This disconnect was not based on a lack of constructive relationships, but rather as something endemic to the system itself. That is, the processes designed to meet the system's statutory requirements and legal precedents (and are familiar to its

practitioners) did not anticipate the needs of the surviving victims and, as a result, did not accommodate them. One critical component of this disconnect was the participants' lack of understanding about the system, which created frustration, particularly when different components of the system (e.g., courts and corrections) seemed to contradict one other.

Coping and Supports

Participants identified numerous strategies for coping through varied support mechanisms. With regard to formal supports, there was a disparate response as to how well, or even if, the support providers engaged with the victims and provided adequate supports. Outside of formal victim support programs and the healthcare system, participants tended to seek out supports on their own that met their individual grieving needs and filled the gaps left by formal support services. Some participants sought out counselling, connected with their spirituality, or become involved with MADD which offered a support network of others with similar experiences and connected participants with advocacy opportunities. Participants stressed the importance of victims being offered appropriate supports and modes of coping that are respectful and congruent with their own individual personalities, histories, cultures, and social contexts. A one-size-fits-all approach is insufficient to meet the diverse needs of victims.

The Desire for Change

Participants discussed missed opportunities, the desire for something positive to arise from their tragedies, and potential avenues for change so that others would not have to endure the harms they experienced. They expressed a fervent belief that these crimes and their devastating results were preventable and suggested that individuals, organizations, and officials missed several opportunities for preventative intervention. Organ donation and impaired driving advocacy were two ways participants felt they could constructively contribute to the issue of impaired driving in Saskatchewan. They also discussed the role of the government in terms of addressing some of their most pressing concerns. Participants suggested the government could do more to prevent incidents of impaired driving, expand its definition of "victim" to be more inclusive, be more responsive to victims' needs, review Victim Services' policies and procedures, and include victims in its reviews and deliberations regarding preventative strategies. Finally, participants discussed their frustration with the sentences handed down by the courts in cases of impaired driving causing death. They did not feel the sentences reflected the seriousness of the resulting harms.

Taken together, the participants' stories clearly demonstrated their desire that more be done to address the enormity of the impaired driving issue in Saskatchewan and their collective wish that no other families would have to experience what they have gone through. A significant common thread that emerged from these narratives was that these tragic events were, and are, avoidable. Collectively, the

participants expressed hope that sharing their experiences would lead to progress in addressing impaired driving in Saskatchewan.

In summary, impaired driving caused immense, life-changing grief for all participants. However, the trauma and how participants sought to address it varied greatly. Support services available to these victims did not address the diversity of their needs or experiences. Participants' experiences with the criminal justice system also varied. Positive experiences resulted when officials provided participants and their families with compassion, empathy, respect, and understanding as well as timely and adequate information and a feeling of engagement. Negative experiences resulted when participants felt unheard, uninformed, excluded from the process, and sometimes re-victimized. But every narrative did share at least one common and significant belief: these tragic events are avoidable.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the themes that emerged from the analysis of interviews with participants. They reflect participants' collective experiences and desires for change to reduce the trauma for other victims. The recommendations are provided in no particular order of importance.

Recommendation 1: Victim Support

Secondary victimization due to impaired driving results in significant harms and affects families in multiple and diverse ways. Victim Services legislation and practices must reflect a much broader understanding of who victims are and what their needs might be.

a) Develop a broad and inclusive definition of "victim" that is consistent with the definition provided by the *Canadian Victim Bill of Rights*.

b) Ensure that support services are extended to meet the individual needs of victims for the duration that is deemed necessary by the victims.

c) Recognize culturally appropriate avenues for support.

d) Ensure that Victim Service support workers are proactive in reaching out to, and engaging with, all potential victims.

e) Establish a network of professionals that can ameliorate the range of harms experienced by victims such as emotional/psychological, social, and financial harms.

Recommendation 2: Death Notification Process

As part of the death notification process, police should ensure that immediate supports are in place for victims (circumstances and time permitting).

a) To ensure such supports are available on site, police should develop working relationships with the appropriate support service agencies.

Recommendation 3: Victim Education

Provide educational opportunities to victims to assist their understanding and navigation of judicial processes thereby establishing realistic expectations around case law and precedence.

Recommendation 4: Communication and Information

Establish a clear and consistent mode of communication with victims to ensure they have accurate and timely case information throughout the entire justice system process.

Recommendation 5: Support for First Responders and Case Personnel

Recognize that first responders and judicial personnel may also experience trauma as a result of their involvement with a case and ensure that support services are provided to them as needed.

Recommendation 6: Victim Impact Statements

Review the Victim Impact Statement process from inception to delivery, particularly with regards to support and information that victims require when drafting and potentially delivering statements. It is critical to involve victims in this review process.

a) Ensure victims understand the role of their statements and the associated limitations with respect to sentencing.

Recommendation 7: Restorative Practices

Explore the possibility of post-judicial restorative practices where offenders and victims have the opportunity to interact and, where appropriate, perhaps work together on preventative programs.

Recommendation 8: Prevention

Engage in a review of impaired driving cases to assess missed opportunities for prevention. This would provide information on preventable mistakes and events leading to tragedies and help to determine different levels and kinds of accountability.

Recommendation 9: Victims' Role in Prevention

Recognize the value of victims in the development and promotion of impaired driving prevention measures.

1. BACKGROUND

The human costs of impaired driving deaths extend far beyond the scenes of the crimes; these events leave permanent scars on the lives of victims' families. On January 12, 2017, representatives from the Community Safety Knowledge Alliance (CSKA) initiated a meeting with an interdisciplinary group of scholars from the University of Regina and representatives from MADD Canada to examine a draft proposal to investigate the lived experiences of bereaved families who have lost loved ones to impaired driving. This proposal sought to provide much needed insight into the impact that sudden, traumatic death has on family members' health, relationships, employment, and finances as well as their experiences with the criminal justice system. Discussion ensued to identify potential avenues for research that would help inform public policy and funding decisions, and more importantly, assist government in understanding the victim's perspective. The group recognized that it was essential to engage the "expert" in this area, acknowledging that only the bereaved family members who have lost a loved one to impaired driving would be able to identify relevant areas for further inquiry.

This research project is an initial exploration into the lived experiences of individuals who have experienced the tragic loss of a family member (or members) killed due to impaired driving in Saskatchewan. This exploratory research delves into the social, economic, and health impacts of impaired driving on the aforementioned population as well as their experience with the criminal justice system. It represents a preliminary component of what is hoped to become a larger research endeavour examining additional factors related to driving while impaired.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

To date, there is very limited research available on the impacts on individuals who have had a family member die as a result of impaired driving. However, there is a body of literature that supports the notion that there is very little difference in terms of the grief response of survivors who have experienced a sudden traumatic death of a loved one, whether by homicide or some other violent event (Rubel, 1999; Murray, Toth, & Clinkinbeard, 2010). As such, this study sought out literature pertaining to the impact on individuals who have experienced a sudden traumatic event, such as homicide. This preliminary inquiry was originally informed by a 2012 study conducted in the United Kingdom that examined the social, economic, and health impacts on individuals who suffered the sudden death of a loved one due to homicide. The study was led by SAMM National (Support After Murder and Manslaughter), a UK charity supporting families bereaved by murder and manslaughter. As part of the study, 417 individuals completed a survey about the impact the homicide had on their health, relationships, employment, and finances. They were also asked questions about their experience with the criminal justice system. Results of the study inferred that apart from the emotional harms experienced following the death, the impact on health and dealing with the criminal justice system were

the most difficult things to manage. Furthermore, 75% of respondents indicated they had experienced significant relationship difficulties since the homicide and over 50% became separated or divorced following the loss of their loved one. Many respondents also reported suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) but did not seek out support to manage this condition. Respondents stated that they were not capable at the time of the incident to seek out the appropriate supports and resources; those who did seek help experienced delays on waitlists in the healthcare system. Results of this study were shared with the UK Ministry of Justice which used this data to inform policy and to make the necessary changes to improve the availability of, and access to, specialized support services. Prior to this, many people did not have adequate access to trauma counselling, either because they could not afford it or because they were uncertain about where to obtain it.

Although this significant piece of research did not specifically address situations where loss of life was incurred by impaired driving, it appropriately represents the experience of survivors' grief from a sudden loss of a family member and provides an excellent methodology on which to base future inquiry. In line with the SAMM National study (2012), a literature review on death-related road trauma conducted by Lord (2010) noted that the impact or harms families experienced following a road trauma is "very similar" to that of a homicide (p. 3). These identified harms highlighted the significant emotional, mental, social, and financial impacts on family members as well as the challenges experienced when dealing with the criminal justice system. The review also cited literature that emphasized the need for specific clinical supports to attend to the vast needs of individuals and families impacted by road trauma, including initial crisis response as well as aftercare post incident, both short- and long-term. Literature specific to these identified areas of experienced harms is provided in the following sub sections.

2.1. Mental Health and Emotional Harms

Although not pertaining specifically to death by impaired driving, other sources of literature related to the bereavement and harms incurred by family members following a motor vehicle accident are available. An inquiry conducted by Bolton et al. (2013) utilized administrative data sets identifying all parents in the province of Manitoba (n = 1,458) who had a child die in a motor vehicle accident between 1996 and 2008. These individuals were matched to a control group of parents who had not had a child die from any sudden cause during the study period. The team used generalized estimating equations to compare the incidents of diagnosed mental and physical disorders, social factors, and treatment utilization in both parent groups in the two years before and after their child's death. They identified that the risk of depression among bereaved parents nearly tripled during the two years after losing their child in a motor vehicle accident. Likewise, there were significant increases noted in the risk of anxiety disorders, marital break-ups, and increased physician visits (post-accident) when compared to non-bereaved parents. Another corroborating study investigated the potential for increased

psychopathology following the unexpected death of a loved one. Results concluded that the individuals in the bereavement period immediately following a sudden death had a significantly higher propensity for multiple psychiatric disorders (Keyes et al., 2014).

Hill's (2003) literature review focussed on a victim's response to trauma following a crime, specifically with regards to mental health (PTSD, depression, and anxiety). Literature included in the review highlighted the vast individualized response to trauma (and the implications therein), the range of coping mechanisms utilized, the medicalization of trauma, and the process of matching suitable psychological interventions and supports for victims of trauma. The review highlights models by which to view victimization and addresses implications for survivors. The author notes that victims do not return to a 'pre-victimized state', but rather are permanently impacted and altered by the experienced victimization. This body of work also identified that specific indicators, such as crime characteristics (severity, use of violence, use of a weapon, use of threat), victim characteristics (coping skills, abuse history, personality characteristics, demographics) and system characteristics (reaction of officials, perceived and received support) can affect the victim's overall distress level following a trauma. Although Hill's review is not directly related to death caused by impaired driving, it is plausible that correlations can be made with regards to the trauma experienced. Key insights about the mental and emotional harm incurred, as well as successful interventions utilized to support victims, can also be gleaned from this review.

Available literature also indicates that individuals who experience a sudden or traumatic death of a loved one are at an increased risk for a trauma or a stressor-related disorder such as PTSD. The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 5th Edition* (2013) identifies specific criteria for PTSD for adults, adolescents, and children older than six years of age that have had exposure to actual or threatened serious injury. These include i) Directly experiencing the traumatic event; ii) Witnessing, in person, the event as it occurred to others; iii) Learning that the traumatic event occurred to a close family member or friend whereby the event was violent or accidental; and/or, iv) Experienced repeated or extreme exposure to adverse details of the traumatic event. Inquiry conducted by Brewin, Andrews, Rose, Kirk, and Phil (1999) investigated the prevalence of acute stress disorder and its relationship to onset PTSD in individuals who identified as victims of crime. After following and interviewing 157 participants who had been the victims of violent assaults, results inferred that the initial onset of acute stress disorder was a substantial indicator for future diagnosis of PTSD. Koren, Arnon, and Klein (1999) also investigated the degree to which acute stress from an incident such as a traffic accident could predict the onset of PTSD. They conducted a one-year prospective study comparing the group of injured traffic accident victims with individuals who had been hospitalized for elective orthopedic surgery. Results demonstrated that the traffic accident victims were at higher risk of developing PTSD than the group of orthopedic surgery patients.

2.2. Social and Financial Harms

Although acknowledged, the social and financial harms incurred by families who have lost loved ones due to impaired driving have not been thoroughly investigated in the literature. Many studies refer to these harms in general terms but do not provide specific inquiry relative to scope and/or impact. In general, literature identifies that trauma from victimization has the potential to impact a wide range of systems, including family, marital-peer, professional, and community relationships (Burlingame & Layne, 2001). Regarding financial harms experienced, the vast majority of available literature speaks to the overall cost of impaired driving as it pertains to collision fees, automobile insurance, and compensation through class action suits (primarily in the United States).

The SAMM National study (2012) was the only source where the social and financial harms were discussed at length. Analysis found that participants felt the hardest issues to deal with were harms related to their health, the criminal justice system, relationships, the media, and financial consequences. In this study, 73% of respondents identified relationship difficulties, most commonly with their spouse or partner, followed by children, siblings, parents, and other family members. Of those, 44% indicated that the relationship strain caused them to become estranged, separated, or divorced following the bereavement. With regards to housing and employment, 27% reported that they had to move from their home following the incident. Seventy percent had to stop working for a period of time (1 month to over a year) due to the grief they experienced. Participants also reported financial strain with over half (59%) stating that they had difficulty managing their finances following the death of their loved one. Moreover, 44% reported that they had to borrow money in order to supplement the costs incurred during bereavement. Individuals who had experienced financial challenges (lived in social housing) prior to the death of their loved one were more likely to report that the financial consequences were the hardest part of bereavement (32%) as compared to others (25%) who were more financially stable (owned their home).

A study conducted by Lehman, Wortman, and Williams (1987) examined the long-term effects of losing a loved one (spouse or child) in motor vehicle crash. They interviewed individuals who had lost a spouse or child four to seven years prior to the study. Matched with controls, participants' responses were analyzed, identifying several key indicators of general functioning, including social functioning. When asked about employment history, individuals who had lost a child were significantly less likely than their control counterparts to still be working at the same job they held at the time of their child's death. They were also more likely to have held multiple jobs during that time. Results from participants who had lost a spouse, although not statistically significant, also followed the same trend. With regards to financial status, the study revealed that although there were no significant differences in income between the bereaved and the control group before the deaths of their loved ones, analysis inferred that following the motor vehicle accidents, significant differences were noted and the bereaved participants had lower levels of income. In the study, the authors noted the degree to which income intersects with

psychological well-being. Furthermore, they highlighted the notion of ongoing bereavement and the significant impact incurred by the loss of a spouse or child that will require a lifetime of mourning.

2.3. Lack of Supports and Resources

As noted, the literature supports that the grief and harms experienced by family members who have lost a loved one to a sudden traumatic death is consistent, despite the cause of that death (impaired driving causing death or homicide) (Rubel, 1999; Murray, Toth, & Clinkinbeard, 2010). In the aforementioned SAMM National study (2012), data collected from bereaved family members of homicide highlighted the need for accessible and appropriate mental health supports. In that study, 80% of family members surveyed experienced trauma-related symptoms: 76% reported as being "depressed", 83% had repetitive nightmares and thoughts, and 25% used alcohol as a means to cope with their grief. The survey also found that 78% of respondents attempted to access support. The most common form of support was from their family doctor (59%) who prescribed medications to manage their symptoms. Forty-nine percent (49%) accessed bereavement counselling; however, only 29% received trauma-specific counselling. Seven percent (7%) did not receive any support or counselling at all.

Work conducted by Sprang and McNeil (1998) also inferred that the harm incurred by family members who experience the death of a loved one due to an impaired driver is significant. The study, which collected data on 171 adult primary family members of impaired driving victims, found that gender, religious beliefs, health status, and social supports all impact the grieving process. Using the Texas Inventory of Grief (TIG) to measure the grief response, analysis indicated a difference in the level of grieving experienced by males and females, with females experiencing higher levels of grief than their male counterparts. Using the Mississippi Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (M-PTSD) scale, analysis found that 68% of females reported higher levels of PTSD as compared with 31% of males. Notably, the authors reported that the length of time since the sudden death did not affect the degree or extent to which individuals experienced grief or the level of experienced PTSD. The study also highlighted the need for specific supportive responses (e.g., utilizing PTSD response protocols) for an individual's course of bereavement, given the violent and sudden nature of a death resulting from impaired driving. Rubel's work (1999) also identifies the need for specific and immediate mental health interventions for survivors, which could potentially help reduce the incidence and severity of PTSD for these individuals.

Hill (2003) also identifies the various means of coping that trauma (crime) victims utilize, with particular precedence given to "natural" sources of support such as friends and family. About 12% of victims also seek out professional mental health services. Other common, more individualized, coping strategies utilized by victims included mechanisms such as "information seeking", "activities in service of regaining control", "activism", "avoidance", and "denial". Literature examining aftercare supports following a sudden trauma as a result of crime suggests that victims are not accessing sufficient supports (Lowe et al., 2015; Mayhew & Reilly, 2008; McCart, Smith, & Sawyer, 2010). A 2016 qualitative study in the UK

examined the role victim services played in initiating service provision to victims of violent crime. In the study, 17 semi-structured interviews were conducted with victims of violent crime during a six-month period in England and Wales. Results concluded that despite initial contact by victim services, a significant portion of participants did not engage or access this mode of support. Of the participants that did engage, positive experiences with this supportive process were reported. Barriers to engagement included the timing of initial and follow up contact made by victim services, the establishment of trust, and the availability of alternative social supports such as friends and family. This finding is consistent with Hill's (2003) review noting that victim's predominantly access "natural" sources of support such as family and friends before (or rather than) seeking professional help. Respondents from the SAMM National study (2012) also reported feeling supported by friends and family and peer groups (88%), with 83% reporting that these people provided the longest amount of support (more than 5 months).

A study conducted by Lord (1987), investigated survivor grief following an impaired driving crash. In the study, 292 adults were surveyed who had lost a primary family member or had a primary family member seriously injured due to an impaired driving crash. Participants were asked questions that pertained to the duration of their experienced grief, beginning with the day of the crash, the day of the funeral, a week and a month post-crash, during the criminal trial, and at the present time of the study. Specifically, they were asked to recall their grief from a list of 30 symptoms and reactions experienced at each aforementioned interval. Participants were also asked about the most and least appropriate support interventions provided by family, friends, and related medical professionals and first responders. Results inferred that many of the victims experienced numbness, sadness, confusion, loss of appetite, and insomnia on the day of the crash. Moreover respondents noted feeling helpless. They required support in basic decision making and daily living details. Respondents reported the need for the support of loved ones at this time and pointed out that if professionals approach victims at this time, it must be done with great empathy, honesty, and understanding. Analysis identified that 15.7% of respondents felt that the medical staff lacked empathy, understanding, and honesty; 15% reported that the police were not empathetic or understanding at the scene and inappropriately notified the family of the crash. Likewise, respondents reported feeling a lack of privacy, with too many people interfering or "prying" into their personal family affairs.

Analysis pertaining to the day of the funeral found that while initial shock symptoms had subsided minimally, constant sadness was increasing, as was a sense of helplessness and a need to withdraw. Victims found it helpful to feel supported in the expression of their grief and identified the need to have their close friends and family around them. In terms of least appropriate behaviour, victims resented others who attempted to rationalize their loved one's death or diminish their grief in any way.

Results one week post-crash noted considerable numbness and shock, however sadness was the predominant response by victims. Likewise, physical symptoms of depression such as insomnia, inability

to concentrate, physical weakness, and confusion were prevalent. Of note, the number of participants reporting significant feelings of rage and anger towards the offender had doubled at this point. Participants shared that appropriate supports were provided through ongoing attentiveness, continued calls and visits by friends and family, the continuation of help with daily living, and the availability of people to just listen. Areas identified as least helpful included the withdrawal of support via friends, interference of others into personal matters, lack of responsiveness by either the police or attorney's office, and the expectation of others to "get over" their grief.

A month post-crash respondents reported experiencing clinical feelings of depression. While feelings of numbness had decreased, hopelessness and anger continued to increase, and for the first time, frustration with the court system is listed in the top ten symptoms. At this stage, contact and supports for victims were decreasing overall and a sense that they should "get on with life" had doubled in response analysis (p. 426).

Feedback gathered pertaining to the time of the court trial identified that victims felt excluded from the process and angered by the lack of accountability by the offender (particularly when the character of the deceased was questioned). They felt silenced and unable to contribute to a sentence that they were dissatisfied with. In terms of supports deemed appropriate during this time, friends, associates, or MADD representatives that were present in the courtroom were listed, as was the support of a MADD representative to aid in legal advice and support at that time. When respondents were asked how they feel now (at the time of the study), three prominent reactions were reported, including: frustration with the court system, ongoing sadness, and anger at the offender. When asked specific questions about the role of MADD, respondents felt, overall, that it was a helpful resource in terms of providing emotional support, advocacy, and information. Lord's study provided valuable insight into the realities of the victim's experience as it pertains to the interpretation of appropriate and inappropriate support following the loss of a loved one due to impaired driving. It provides intentional feedback that can help to foster thoughtful consideration of what victims need and when they need it most.

2.4. Experience with the Criminal Justice System

A victim's experience with a criminal event is, in part, shaped by their experiences with the various criminal justice institutions they encounter (Kenney, 2010). Although victims engage the justice system to seek assistance in dealing with criminal matters, the primary objectives of the justice system are offender-driven wherein apprehension, conviction, and concerns for offenders' rights trump the rights and needs of victims (Kunst, Popelier, & Varekamp, 2015; Scott, 2016). In addition, as criminal justice processes tend to be offender-focussed, they "adopt a rather generic approach to deal with crime victims and fail to account for individual differences in crime victims' emotional states and their coping needs" (Kunst et al., 2015, p. 354). This often leads to secondary victimization, primarily from the neglect victims report—no input at various decision stages, delays, insufficient provision of information,

and cross-examination if they act as a witness—as they are not provided with equal legal standing as an offender such that their "initial victim identity was exacerbated by dealing with the justice system" (Kenney, 2010, p. 88). The level of satisfaction victims have with their experience in the criminal justice system may have an effect on their recovery processes and future emotional well-being (Kunst et al., 2015), suggesting that these experiences should be given due consideration with respect to the impact on victims.

Some frustration and angst experienced by victims because of their interactions with the justice system is linked to feelings of powerlessness as they are the "forgotten party" within the justice system and its varied processes (Wemmers, 2009). Victims become what Christie (1977) calls "double-losers" as they first experience a loss when victimized at the hands of the offender and then again when the state essentially steals their conflict (their case), removing victims from participating in the resolution of their own case. Therefore, many victim advocates call for a more inclusive and participatory role for victims in criminal justice processes (Miller, 2011; Wemmers, 2009; Van Ness & Strong, 2015). Indeed, Bradford (2011) reported that providing victims with avenues for participation in the criminal justice process—giving victims a "voice"—increased the degree of confidence they have in the system.

Victims Bill of Rights

In response to the concerns noted above, and others not covered here, some progress has been made with regard to policies and programs that seek to reduce the negative effects on victims of crime when their case proceeds through the criminal justice system. One example is that many jurisdictions have adopted a Victims Bill of Rights. In accordance with the *Canadian Victims Bill of Rights* (S.C. 2015, c. 13, s. 2 "definitions"), "**victim** means an individual who has suffered physical or emotional harm, property damage or economic loss as the result of the commission or alleged commission of an offence." This broad definition of victim may be generally interpreted as including anyone who has experienced harm because of crime. Harm arising from crime may be experienced by an individual directly (primary victim) or indirectly (secondary victim) wherein the harm directly affecting an individual also results in harm to others—quite often those who know the primary victim (Van Ness & Strong, 2015). Victims of crime, regardless of whether directly or indirectly harmed by an offence, experience harms which create needs that necessitate repair (McCold, 2007). Defining who falls under the definition of victim is important in the determination of who is covered by the *Canadian Victims Bill of Rights* and who qualifies for the various services available to victims.

Victim Services

Although, as noted above, there is a decided lack of supports for victims of crime, one step forward in meeting victims' needs is the proliferation of victim services programming in many forms across numerous jurisdictions around the world (Kenney, 2010). Victim services are designed to provide both

referral and support services for victims. The services may include "emotional support, keep clients informed about their cases, pass on relevant forms and documentation, and liaise with prosecutors, other justice officials, counsellors, and community organizations" (Kenney, 2010, p. 145). In the Canadian context, Kenney (2010) identifies four broad types of victims' services programs: 1. Police-based services, 2. Crown/court-based victim/witness services, 3. Community-based victim services, and 4) System-based services (p. 144).

Bryce et al. (2016) conducted research in England and Wales about the barriers reported by victims in accessing supports, thus resulting in low engagement. Despite the fact that referrals to support services were made and contact was established, many victims did not pursue engagement with support services. The authors reported that some victims did not seek out support services because they perceived their own coping strategies and existing support networks to be effective, rendering the support services unnecessary. The timing of contact by support workers—too early in the trauma process—as well as feeling overwhelmed by the volume of contacts, were also significant barriers to actually engaging with support services.

Victim Impact Statements

In connection with the *Canadian Victims Bill of Rights* are Victim Impact Statements (VIS) that represent an attempt to provide victim participation and voice in the court process (Kenney, 2010; Markin, 2017, Wemmers, 2009). Assuming an individual is legally considered a victim, they have the right to make a VIS (Wemmers, 2009). "Crime victims in Canada … have been given the opportunity to submit an impact statement, and legislatures have directed courts to consider these statements when determining a sentence" (Manikis, 2015, p. 85).

VIS provide the means for increased participation in the court/criminal justice process. Providing a VIS gives a victim the opportunity to share their experience and what is relevant to them with the court (Wemmers, 2009). It may also humanize the victim and the process as the victim's narrative explains the effect the crime has had on them personally across a number of life dimensions (Scott, 2016). "Participatory rights support a variety of purposes, all connected to addressing the exclusion of victims from the criminal process and reversing the secondary victimization they experience" (Markin, 2017, p. 97). Scott (2016) suggests that "recognizing the victim as an important participant in the process raises his or her self-confidence, restores his or her dignity, and reduces his or her feelings of powerlessness" (p. 254). Furthermore, Bradford (2011) reports that participation in the process, through the provision of a VIS, can increase the perception of procedural fairness on the part of the victim.

Despite the inclusion of VIS to meet the victim's legal rights, they have been subject to much criticism and controversy. For example, Wemmers (2009) suggests that VIS are "criticized as being too little and too late" (p. 399) because victims desire to provide input into the criminal justice system much earlier

than at sentencing; also, the time it takes to get to sentencing is often far removed from the precipitating incident—an important time when victims are seeking recognition of their suffering. Manikis (2015) also reports that the "VIS regime in Canada remains a legal no man's land, with neither its role nor aims being clearly defined and articulated" (p. 85). While the court is required to listen to and consider VIS, Kenney (2010) cites reports suggesting that VIS have very little substantive effect on sentencing. This can lead to victim frustration as they might feel the court has disregarded their experience of harm. As Kenney (2010) reports, evidence has been amassed that VIS do not increase victim satisfaction with the court process.

2.5. The Saskatchewan Context

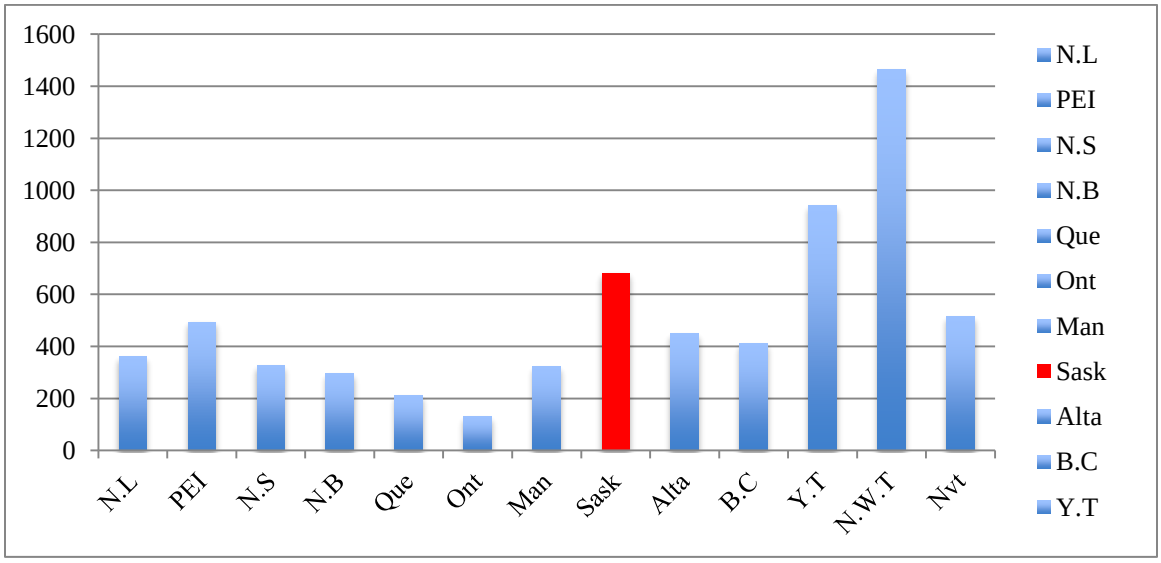
Information derived from provincial data in Saskatchewan indicates that despite many initiatives to reduce impaired driving (both national and provincial), Saskatchewan continues to have some of the highest rates of impaired driving and impaired driving causing death in Canada. The most recent statistics released by Saskatchewan Government Insurance (SGI) in 2014 reported 59 fatalities due to impaired driving. Although provincial statistics have not been released yet, a 2015 study conducted by Solomon, Dumschat, and Healey on behalf of Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) provided Saskatchewan with a "D-" grade (or 52%) in terms of enacted legislation or initiatives intended to decrease the incidence of impaired driving. In the study, Canadian provinces were graded on 20 legislative provisions based on recognized best practice. These 20 criteria were analyzed province-to-province resulting in a grade for each. Inadequacies in existing legislation are reflected in the D- grade provided to Saskatchewan. As shown in Table 1, scores were also provided to the other nine provinces; Saskatchewan was just below the national average of 54%.

Table 1. Provincial Analysis/Grading – Impaired Driving Legislation

Province	Criteria /20	Grade Received
Alberta	17 (68%)	C +
British Columbia	15 (60%)	C -
Ontario	15 (60%)	C -
Prince Edward Island	15 (60%)	C -
Nova Scotia	14 (56%)	D
Saskatchewan	13 (52%)	D -
Manitoba	12 (48%)	F +
Newfoundland and Labrador	12 (48%)	F +
New Brunswick	11 (44%)	F
Quebec	11 (44%)	F
Canada (average)	13.5 (54%)	D

The most recent data collected by Statistics Canada (2011) comparing provinces and territories shows the highest rates of impaired driving to be in the Northwest Territories and the Yukon, followed closely by Saskatchewan (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Impaired Driving Incidents, 2011



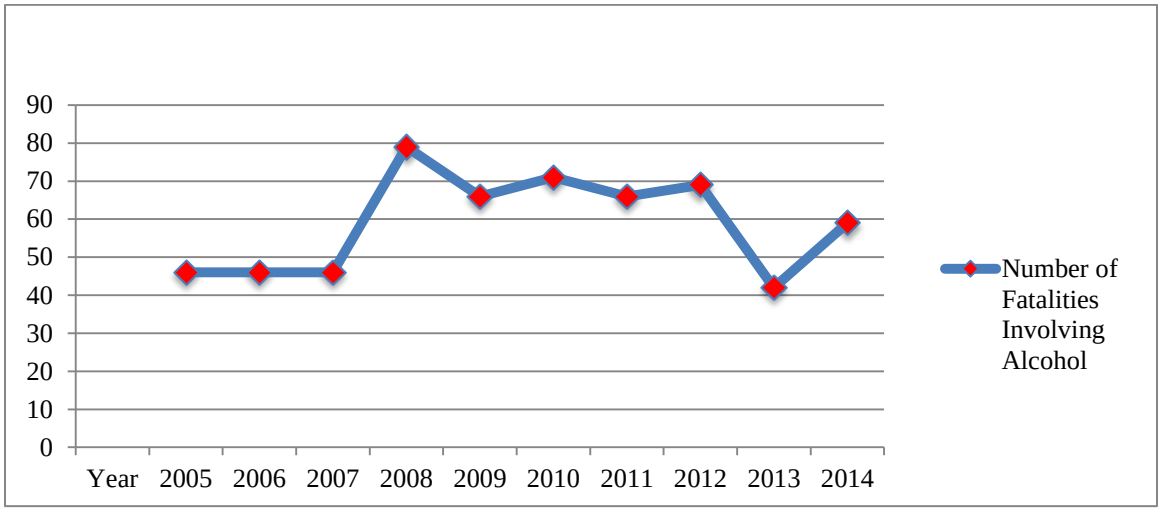
Transport Canada publishes the *Canadian Motor Vehicle Traffic Collision Statistics* report annually. When comparing data across Canada, Saskatchewan ranks amongst the highest across Canada when looking at a number of different provincially-based statistics (see Table 2).

Table 2. Saskatchewan Collisions Resulting in Fatalities and Injuries (2010 and 2015)

	Fatality and Injury Collisions per 100,000 SK Residents		**Fatality and Injury Collisions** per Billion Vehicle KM driven		**Fatality and Injury Collisions** per 100,000 SK Licensed Drivers	
2010						
Canada	6.5	500.0	6.6	504.1	9.5	724.8
Sask.	16.0	625.9	12.8	499.5	23.1	905.3
Rank*	#1	#1	#1	#4	#1	#1
2015						
Canada	5.2	451.6	5.1	442.5	7.4	640.6
Sask.	10.7	489.4	8.7	396.3	15.4	707.0
Rank*	#2	#4	#3	#8	#1	#3
*The rank is based on the data comparing the ten provinces						
Adapted from Transport Canada 2010 and 2015 Annual Reports						

Despite modest reductions in 2013, data collected by SGI shows relatively high fatality rates for collisions involving alcohol on Saskatchewan roads, particularly in the last seven years. However, the Government of Saskatchewan has been working to improve these rates through a variety of means including legislative changes to *The Traffic Safety Act*, *The Driver's License and Suspension Regulations* and *The Vehicle Impoundment Regulations.* Modifications to these pieces of legislation have established tougher drinking and driving restrictions for adults (experienced drivers) over the age of 19. The provincial government has also implemented programs such as the Report Impaired Drivers (RID) program which is intended to identify and apprehend suspected impaired drivers on the road.

Figure 2. Number of Fatalities Involving Alcohol, 2005 - 2014



Unfortunately the statistics gathered on fatalities of impaired driving do not include the number of family and friends that have also been forever impacted and "injured" by the trauma of losing a loved one due to impaired driving. These victims are not accounted for. The abrupt and unnecessary loss resulting from a impaired driving fatality leaves surviving family members not only grieving the loss of their loved one, but also becoming a victim of the crime themselves (Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime, 2005).

3. METHODOLOGY

This research seeks to understand the lived experiences of individuals who have lost a family member to impaired driving. The research attempts to garner insights into those lived experiences to understand the various harms, processes, and challenges participants faced, the means by which participants coped with the trauma, and how effective formal and informal supports were (or were not) in addressing the harms they experienced. According to Vogt (1999), "*social science exploration* is a broad-ranging, purposive, systematic, prearranged undertaking designed to maximize the discovery of generalizations leading to description and understanding of an area of social or psychological life" (p. 105). According to Morgan and Smircich (1980), individuals construct meaning by interpreting their experiences through social interaction, arriving at a shared understanding of their experiences. Furthermore, given the relative paucity of extant literature regarding the specific area of interest—the effects of impaired driving causing death— the current research coalesces with what Stebbins (2001) refers to as "exploratory research", which he suggests aligns best with qualitative methods of inquiry, data collection, and analysis. Finally, qualitative methods were employed in this research in order to permit researchers to "hear the voices" of the participants and to gain an understanding of their experiences first-hand (Liamputtong, 2007, p. 7). This uses what is referred to as an emic perspective which focusses on the personal accounts of "insiders"—those who have direct experience with a given phenomenon—and provides an understanding through the lens of the participants (Pelto & Pelto, 1978; Peterson & Pike, 1954). Utilizing a qualitative approach requires researchers to incorporate an inductive process whereby the information gathered is used to identify emerging patterns, themes, and relationships (Creswell, 1994).

According to Kvale and Brinkman (2009), "the research interview is based on conversations of daily life and is a professional conversation; it is an inter-view, where knowledge is constructed in the interaction between the interviewer and interviewee … conversing about a theme of mutual interest" (p. 2). However, unlike a conversation, the semi-structured interview follows an interview guide, prepared in advance, that directs the conversation toward answering the research questions (Adams, 2010). The semi-structured interview provides researchers with the means to build rapport and gather detailed, first-hand information regarding the lived experience of the participants; it also provides an opportunity for in-depth probing of additional areas of interest as they arise during the interview process (Liamputtong, 2007).

Attride-Stirling's (2001) thematic network analysis was employed to analyze the transcripts. This resulted in a thematic map which provided "web-like illustrations that summarize the main themes constituting a piece of text" (p. 385). Following Attride-Stirling's multi-step process, the researchers constructed a coding framework based on constructs identified in the extant literature that remained open to the inclusion of unforeseen new codes emerging from the data. The researchers then dissected

the text—in this instance, the interview transcripts—into smaller related segments. Using the collated segments of text, the researchers applied an iterative process to identify **basic themes** corresponding to codes that coalesced around issues emerging from the interview data. The researchers used a similar process to construct **organizing themes** whereby the basic themes were organized around a higher-level construct; this process involved the exploration and examination of the meaning and relationships between the basic themes with regard to their contribution to understanding the organizing themes. The researchers then explored and examined the organizing themes in the same manner to establish a **global theme**, the highest level of analysis. Using the networks constructed at each of these levels, the researchers provide the reader with the progression of the analytical relational matrix derived from the interview data.

3.1. Sampling

This research targeted individuals over the age of 18 in Saskatchewan who experienced the loss of a family member due to impaired driving. The researchers employed purposive and snowball sampling techniques to identify research participants. Non-probability purposive sampling is a technique employed by researchers when there is a particular population of interest, but a complete list of all possible participants is not available (Bachman & Schutt, 2014). A purposive sample reflects a group of participants selected to engage in the research process because of their expertise (knowledge and/or experience) in a given subject area (Neuman, 2006). According to Noy (2008, p. 330), snowball sampling techniques are often used when trying to conduct research with populations that are difficult to access and involve participants identifying other potential participants. In addition, researchers quite frequently use snowball sampling when the research subject matter is of a very personal and/or sensitive nature (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981).

Given the sensitive nature of this research, the researchers partnered with MADD Canada and Saskatchewan Government Insurance (SGI) to identify potential participants and to extend to them an opportunity to participate in the research. MADD Canada has a longstanding history of working with victims of impaired driving. SGI was in the process of developing an impaired driving awareness campaign that involved the families of individuals killed in impaired driving crashes. After receiving Research Ethics Board approval at the University of Regina, the researchers created a research project recruitment poster which they provided to MADD Canada and SGI for distribution to affected families in Saskatchewan. The poster provided some details about the project and the contact information for the two principal researchers. The researchers did not have direct access to the target population; individuals contacted the researchers if they were interested in learning more about the project and potentially participating. Other individuals who experienced this type of tragic event and became aware of the research through “word of mouth” (i.e., means other than those described above) were also provided the opportunity to learn more about the research and participate if they so desired.

3.2. The Participants

All participants who shared their experiences as part of this research lost a family member to an impaired driving event. They were grandmothers, grandfathers, mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, and aunties from rural and urban communities across Saskatchewan. In total, these 13 individuals were affected by 8 separate impaired driving instances on Saskatchewan roads which resulted in the deaths of 12 family members. For some of the participants, the loss occurred very recently, while for others more time had passed. Criminal justice processes surrounding the crimes were at various stages of completion at the time of the interviews and provided different perspectives on these processes.

3.3. Ethical Considerations

Given the purpose of the research, the sensitive nature of the questions posed to interviewees (asking them to consider and share their experiences revolving around a family tragedy) raised potential ethical issues. Bouma, Ling, and Wilkinson (2009) suggest that researchers take into consideration the potential harms arising from the interviews and the potential benefits thought to result. After careful consideration, the potential benefits—understanding the participants' experiences in order to make things better in the future—was determined to outweigh the potential harms. Ethical issues may also arise as the information shared by participants is disseminated in a public forum (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). Therefore, researchers are obligated to make every attempt to ameliorate the potential harms befalling the participants at every stage of the research process. Issues for consideration include voluntary participation, providing participants with informed consent, giving participants the freedom to withdraw from or stop the interview process, confidentiality, anonymity, stresses occurring during the interview, and ensuring an accurate representation of the participants' voices in the transcription, analysis, and final reporting (Bouma, Ling, & Wilkinson, 2009; Kvale & Brinkman, 2009).

Because the recruitment process involved outside agencies (MADD and SGI), provided participants with the contact information of the researchers, and involved snowball techniques, the researchers could not guarantee the anonymity of participants. However, the process of participants making contact with the researchers was completely voluntary. Each participant was emailed an informed consent form that provided an overview of the research. Prior to engaging in an interview, the researchers reviewed the informed consent form and provided each participant with the opportunity to ask questions for clarification. In addition, the informed consent form included a clause giving participants the right to withdraw from the interview at any time without consequences. Each participant was also provided a list of mental health resources should they feel any distress as a result of the interview. Furthermore, one of the researchers is a clinical psychologist and provided participants with her contact information for follow-up if necessary. That same researcher also contacted participants following the interviews to see how they were doing. Finally, the researchers informed each participant that they would receive an electronic copy of the final report should they want one. The researchers submitted a research ethics

application to the Research Ethics Board at the University of Regina. The application received approval on May 24, 2017 (REB# 2017-070).

As noted by Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen, and Liamputtong (2008), when conducting qualitative research on potentially difficult topics, researchers may also face potential harms. The risks noted by these authors include psychological and emotional distress that can also manifest themselves physically (e.g., headaches, sleep disturbances). The researchers are experienced in conducting interviews on topics that might pose a risk to their own well-being. Nevertheless, the interviews (and analyses that followed), which required the researchers to listen to and examine the participants' very emotional accounts of loss, grief, anger, and frustration, proved difficult. Following the interviews, and throughout the analyses, the researchers debriefed and discussed their experiences to ensure each was not having trouble beyond that with which they could effectively cope.

3.4. The Researchers – Personal Frameworks

Because this research employed qualitative methodologies and analytical strategies, the potential for researcher bias is an issue that warrants exploration and acknowledgement (Berger, 2015; Greene, 2014; Pitard, 2017). Each of the individuals engaged in this project brought their personal and professional histories to this research. It is acknowledged that this might have affected the research processes.

Nicholas Jones has worked in a variety of positions (doorman, bartender, manager) in a number of licensed establishments over the course of his educational pursuits. He wrote his master's thesis on legal issues and licensed premises in Alberta. He also re-drafted and delivered a mandatory course at the University of Calgary (for anyone involved in liquor sales) on the safe service of liquor and the consequences that accompany that responsibility. He also drafted an unpublished manual, based on his master's thesis, which was provided to a number of colleagues working in licensed venues in Calgary. Finally, he worked with individuals convicted of impaired driving causing death at a halfway house in Calgary.

Jody Burnett has worked as a psychologist providing general individual and family counselling for over 10 years in clinical private practice. In this capacity, she also has had opportunity to work with first responders to aid in high performance techniques and stress management. Both her master's thesis and doctoral dissertation were related to addiction in First Nations populations and identified existing addiction supports as well as gaps in service delivery.

Bob Mills was a member of the RCMP for 35 years. As a police officer, he experienced the devastation of motor vehicle collisions and their aftermaths, including collisions involving impairment. On many occasions, he had primary responsibility for delivering the news of injuries and fatalities to loved ones.

He also held a variety of policing roles in the investigations and court processes that followed these incidents. Further to his operational policing experiences, he was involved with the Saskatchewan Victim Services program as a board member developing policies and overseeing a local program and in a policing capacity where services were delivered to victims.

4. RESULTS

The words of the participants form the basis for the discoveries outlined in the following sections. To achieve this, the participants' narratives were first organized around the many issues discussed during their interviews. The researchers then organized the issues discussed into basic themes by identifying interconnected issues. The relationship between these basic themes were then explored and analyzed to reveal organizing themes; that is, groups of basic themes that complement or support one another. The organizing themes were then explored in a similar fashion to reveal a global theme. Each of these themes is anchored by direct quotes from the participants to ensure that they, and any findings revealed by them, are drawn from and supported by the participants own testimonials.

4.1. Organizing Theme 1: Harms Experienced

Table 3. Organizing Theme 1: Harms Experienced

Issues Discussed	Basic Theme
The real long-term impacts of the experiences on victims	General Victim Experiences
The adjustments victims made to their lives because of the event	
How these events changed the victims' interactions with others	Social Relationships
How the event changed or ended friendships	
How familial relationships are affected	
How new friendships emerge from common grief experiences	
Financial and estate challenges	Financial and Estate Challenges
Perceptions of challenges from government and private agencies	
How financial and estate challenges can strain relationships	

Basic Theme 1: General Victim Experiences

The significant loss experienced by each participant was evident in the painful stories they shared. These events had a profound impact on many aspects of their lives and accentuated the need for appropriate supports.

Issue: The real long-term impacts of the experiences on victims

In the immediate aftermath of the event, participants reported feeling confused, shocked, and emotionally overwhelmed. Many noted the difficulty of having to deal with immediate actions such as getting to the hospital, arranging travel, and getting time off from work.

> *You're going through the -- we go to the hospital, everyone's looking at you and everyone knows what's happened when you get there because they were all doing the Code Whatever for the two grandkids, they knew that everyone else was, the two other ones were passed away. How do you feel, like you're numb? (Linda)*

> *I worked in a bank, and banks don't give you time off, by the way. I flew in on a Friday and I was back in Kelowna by Tuesday. (Sheila)*

> *If this happened to me when I was at the mine I could have got six months off and it wouldn't have been a problem and "Come back when you can." (Chad)*

Many participants recalled the details they or their family members experienced in the immediate aftermath of the event.

> *I never went to go see my brother or Chanda in the morgue because I didn't want to see them like that. But I know my parents did, and they've got to stick with that in their head for the rest of their lives. (Angie)*

> *You are having to deal with your family, to tell them this has happened, and then you're dealing with organ transplants, you know, all these big issues. "Would Jordan and Chanda have wanted that?" And you're not only our family, you're with their, with Chanda's family too. Everyone's got a right to make a decision. (Linda)*

Because she has been profoundly affected by that instant. We were supposed to go tobogganing with those guys the next day. And of course that didn't happen. And she knows—that was the first thing she said when I came home from the hospital that day. I said, "I have this information I have to tell you and you should sit down." And then I told them what had happened, and my youngest—that's the first thing that she said. "We were supposed to go tobogganing with them." I'm, like, "I know." (Angie)

A number of participants reported experiencing intense feelings of anger to the aftermath of the event.

Our life is a living hell every single day. I am full of anger, I am full of hatred. I hate the fact that they took my son away. (Marilou/Alex)

Our kids are angry and I will say that…They are very angry. They are angry at her, they are angry at …They are angry at everything. But, you know, we can't really talk about it. (Linda/Lou)

I hate the fact that I am still here and my son is not here. I hate the time waves, birthday, Christmas, anniversary. I hate the month of May because it's his anniversary, it's a Mother's Day ... I just hate the fact, the life that I have right now. (Marilou/Alex)

The progression of events that followed the trauma was, at times, overwhelming for the participants. Many felt frustrated by the flurry of activity and unwanted publicity following the incident.

It's a process too through the courts, and all the questions that you have to answer, and the media. So you had the media phoning you all the time wanting to interview, and so in a way you felt like you were under a microscope. Not a lot of private time with your grieving. … It's in the newspapers, it's everywhere, and media used my picture as well in some of their interviews because I was interviewed a couple times. So everywhere you go in Regina—it feels like it—I feel like I'm a celebrity or something, because I get stopped all the time. (Amy)

But the rest of it is just—and you know sometimes they have—because you can read comments on—like, social media posts or people have opinions about news articles. And I find that all very aggravating as well. I had to stop reading them because people are opinionated, and they are not entirely educated in the facts of things. (Angie)

Of course the media ran with our story and it was pretty big, so my phone for the first six weeks just was -- it had shut down, a brand new phone just shut down because I would get thousands of messages, hundreds of phone calls. (Chad)

I know SGI had very good ideas about some of their ads, and I know that they were given permission by [a family member] to use—I thought it was a little soon for me. I couldn't go on social media without seeing my brother disappear from a picture. I understand that they wanted the impact, and I hope that it made an impact on other people. For me, I didn't need to see that. It was hard. (Amy)

The participants also discussed the profound sense of loss that extended to other family members, friends, and even acquaintances.

He was like the father figure in our family. I miss him every day of my life, and I will for the rest of my life. I'm not kidding. I get emotional. But he had—his three children—the mother is white. His three children grew up without a father, and she never remarried. They grew up not knowing who we are or their culture or their history. (Sheila)

Even though, you know, we have, you know, family gatherings and stuff like that, there is always -- you know? And it's not like it's really, not really evident or really out there kind of thing, but there is always in the back of your mind that, you know, Jordan and his family isn't here anymore. (Lou)

When you see your granddaughter -- as we are trying to get this house ready to put on the market they are painting it and she is bawling and I thought, "Well, what is -- you know, what is the --" -- and what it was is she says, "You are painting away all the memories." That's an eight-year-old. (Linda)

Purolator guy or a Canada Post van came up here. Delivered something one time, delivering some flowers. I don't know who sent them. His, I think it was his son or daughter. His daughter was at the same school as JP. And they know JP. I had to console this man, I had to try and console him. He was in tears, and he was shaking, he was so devastated, because he's thinking, "What if that would have happened to my daughter?" (Marilou/Alex)

But that death really affected our family. I mean, there's seven of us—well, we've lost a sister since—but we were raised by a single parent who was an alcoholic, so we are familiar with addiction, you know. It just about killed my mother because she only had the two boys, and they were the apple of her eye, right? She was never the same after my brother died. (Sheila)

Issue: The adjustments victims made to their lives because of the event

Collectively the participants shared how the experience had changed them—the way they behaved and the way they lived. For many, they withdrew from the activities that had previously provided them with resilience and joy.

A lot of things that you do you just don't feel are really that important anymore so why bother. You know? I think that's a big thing that came out of this, is there is a lot of things that you think, you know, "It's not worth it. I just don't have the energy for it." (Lou)

January 3rd of '16 hits and I go from the top of my game to the bottom of my game in a heartbeat. So the consequences to all that are huge; there's no way to even put it in words. (Chad)

I hate going out, to tell you the truth. I hate going outside. If I could just live and stay in the house and not going out, I would. And that's we do. We go to work, we come home; that's it. (Marilou)

And for the longest time I wouldn't go out in—even afterwards. I'm, like, "You [my kids] can't go to the park by yourself. You can't go anywhere. You can't go—I don't want you to go to school." They didn't go to school for the first two weeks. And I just could not let them—like, I didn't—never expected that somebody else—when somebody takes something away from you and you have no control over it, I was, like, I cannot lose either one of you. I'm terrified now. (Angie)

I used to sing in the church choir for years and then I stopped singing there … But she (Linda) said to me, "…You know, why don't you sing in a, just a community choir?" So she got me in touch with a choir director and I joined that choir and I have been singing with them ever since. But since the accident I just don't feel it anymore, you know. (Lou)

Ultimately these life-changing events also impacted the physical and emotional health of the participants and their families.

> *My oldest boy, he got really sick after we lost Kenneth. He lost, like, 30 pounds. He withdrew from everything. He even—I had to actually give him a break from school. He was supposed to graduate this year. I had to let him take a break and take a semester off so he could graduate next year. (Shirley)*

> *Short-term memory was just gone. As simple as getting out of bed and even eating: I would just go to work and wouldn't eat, no breakfast, no lunch. At 7:00 or 8:00 o'clock at night I would finally eat. Just not there at all. You go through the motions and do everything you need to do or what you think you need to do and you forget 90% of what you are supposed to be doing. (Chad)*

> *My anxiety of course that comes with my kids and then Kenneth's birthday and then his memorial that's coming up a year here. I just [quickly] and—it's tough. (Shirley)*

> *It's completely changed my identity, this experience. I thought I had a pretty good handle on it, but it has, it's completely change my identity, and I don't even know—I don't even know who I am right now. (Alana)*

> *I'm usually healthy. One good sickness a year. But just with all the stress I've endured this year, and different emotions going on and it's just really tough. (Shirley)*

Participants also shared how these events have influenced significant and lasting changes to their lives and routines.

> *When we go out people look at us—in my mind, not that they are doing it—but in my mind I'm thinking, "They are watching to see if we are drinking and driving." It changes our life totally. We don't drink when we go out at all. Why don't we drink? Number one, because it killed our family. (Linda)*

But it's definitely negatively impacted that part of my life, the social part of my life, even—to be honest, even going out and—going out with friends and having drinks, it's just like, I can't still. Yeah. I struggle. I struggle. It's almost like this guilt I carry, because it's like, if I start having fun that means I've forgotten. (Alana)

Our oldest daughter wouldn't let us take the, refused to take, let us take the kids in our small car when we went on our trip. That was a big effect. So we ended up buying a bigger car just last week, you know, just because it's an issue, it's a fear. (Linda)

I'm scared to drive. When I hear the ambulance or the police car my whole body shake because I keep thinking, "Who is going to be the person that's going to go through what we are going through?", you know, "Whose family is going to," you know, "get a police coming into their door?" My whole body just shakes. (Marilou)

To this day I hesitate about driving at night because I don't want to—I don't know who's driving or if they're paying attention. (Angie)

I don't have the patience to listen to that you stubbed your toe and you couldn't come to school and now you've failed, and it's all the universe's fault. I don't have time for that. (Amy)

I don't turn on music because I hate to hear the song that we like, even in the car. It becomes so empty and I can see the roads being so empty. And they keep on saying that, you know, there's the light at the end of the tunnel. I don't see it that way. They don't know how, how crushed we are. (Marilou)

Summary

It is clear that the effects of overwhelming and traumatic events such as these have immediate and long-lasting effects. The participants reported emotional consequences including anger, fear, anxiety, memory loss, and depression. They also described physical responses such as a lack of energy, weight loss, and susceptibility to illness. It is important to note that these consequences were not only confined to the participants, but also extended to family members, friends, co-workers, acquaintances, and even relative strangers in some cases.

The aftermath of these events caused significant trauma in the participants' lives. The death of their loved one due to impaired driving changed their lives suddenly and completely. The physical and emotional consequences incurred were overwhelming. Activities that at one time provided entertainment and social engagement became difficult and, in some cases, impossible to continue. The participants reported that activities like driving, socializing, being out in public, and even hearing a song on the radio were often difficult, painful, and frequently avoided.

Participants also shared that the tragedy of losing a loved one was not the only contributing factor to ongoing turmoil and frustration. For many, the processes that followed the event, such as navigating the court system, managing newfound publicity, dealing with getting time off work, travelling, and even well-intentioned advertising by impaired driving prevention initiatives sometimes exacerbated their grief.

Basic Theme 2: Social Relationships

This theme represents the effect the incident had on participants' relationships. Experiences included the damage incurred to relationships as well as the emergence of new relationships.

Issue: How these events changed the victims' interactions with others

Participants suggested that the people around them struggled with how to respond to the events and how to interact with those left behind.

> *You get a phone call prior to going back, "How do we treat you when you come back to work?" And for me I said, "Treat me the same way. If I break down and cry it will be okay. It's just my way of dealing with it." (Linda)*

> *People treat you differently. They look at you—you can tell they are walking on eggshells. (Allan)*

> *I think it's [their relationship with each other] about the same other than like you say it's just not maybe quite as much joy, period, in everything around, you know, like so it's pretty, it can be pretty dull and boring. (Melanie)*

He [a doctor presenting at the MADD conference] said, "You guys are Martians," he said, because everything, you know, the way you look at the world is completely different than everybody else and you're in a different spot than everybody else," and he's right, that's a really good way of putting that. (Allan)

People I've worked with, yeah. They don't seem to have the words. I could understand that because—yeah, sometimes I don't have words. What do you say? But I don't know, until you experience something like that. (Marie)

So yeah, we're eating cotton candy, we're going on fun rides, it's a fun day. No. Ran into, you know, people who—okay, I kind of know who you are, but I have to ask, like, your last name to even know who you are. They—and then they're putting their emotion on me. At this point, I'm happy, I'm having a good time. That's what my focus is…And you're crying on me, and did you even know Tanner? You met him once, or you went to a—you know? Like, come on. I'm not taking this. I'm not. (Amy)

Issue: How the event changed or ended friendships

Critical relationships, including relationships with close friends, changed and became awkward in some cases. Participants acknowledged that some people in their lives could not relate to them anymore and did not know how to engage them or support them.

But at the same time they just don't get it, and because they don't get it, it's really hard—I don't know how to explain it, but they—we—and it's not them drifting away from us, it's us drifting away from them because we know that they just don't get it and there's some things—and they are just too much …whereas another couple, we go for coffee with them on a regular basis and I think they understand—I think, I just think they understand it a little better. So I think our relationship with them is the same as it was before. (Lou)

It's a friend of ours, turns around he goes, "Oh, why don't you adopt?" Nobody can replace my JP. I don't care. You know, "Get a dog so that you have something to look after." There's nothing going to replace my JP. If I want a replacement I want JP back instead. (Marilou)

You can talk to other people and they come and they help you, you know, and spend time or whatever, but they don't know what it's like, really. And you can't blame them. (Melanie)

I have a friend whose husband was a drunk driver, and the victim died. I've had a hard time even talking to them, but I've also been able to have a little bit of—and they understand where I'm coming from. (Amy)

And I feel like a lot of my friends just don't understand. I have a few friends that are—have been wonderful and amazing, and a great support, but it's definitely negatively impacted that part of my life, the social part of my life. (Alana)

Issue: How familial relationships are affected

Familial relationships can be a source of support; however, participants identified that they can also become strained.

For a while I totally separated myself from my parents. I just didn't call much, and they didn't call. And it wasn't so much of a—it was just a self-preservation thing. I can't hear about it. I don't want to hear about the estate. I don't want to hear about the conflict that you're having. (Angie)

Before the accident we didn't visit lots or see each other lots, but every time we did it was really good. And now it's to the point where we don't even talk to each other. (Chad)

Like I'm jealous with my family with my sisters, with my brothers, because they've got their own kids and I don't have. You know? No matter what, yes, I love my nephew and my nieces. (Marilou)

I don't care about things as much anymore, just like I can't, there's no joy or excitement and—hopefully I will get it back. Like my grandkids are a huge help. (Melanie)

Even my husband was, like, "I don't know, are you okay?" I'm, like, "I'm okay. I just have no patience for anything right now at all," except for the kids. Because if I didn't have them, I don't know what—I have no idea, things would be very, very different. (Angie)

I have a sister who has an impaired charge, and we really beat up on her, the rest of her. Oh, did we beat up on her. "How could you do that? We lost a brother—two brothers and sister. How could you do that?" Well, then we beat up—we harmed her. So none of us had the coping skills. (Sheila)

Christmastime was quite difficult. We kind of just all sat there like a—uh, what do we do? What do we say? But no, it was—just to be together was good, yeah. (Marie)

When it happened, I knew things were going to change in my family, and my relationships were going to change and all of our relationships were going to change, but I had no idea that it was going to be this awful and this negative. (Alana)

Issue: How new friendships emerge from common grief experiences

Amidst the strain placed on pre-existing friendships and on familial relationships, new relationships sometimes emerged.

But, and you get a special bond with people that have lost children and even not necessarily in the same way but anybody who has lost—like the day or two after like when people come and visit, I think one day we had, just from the neighbourhood here, people, like five people who had lost children in some form or other, you know? (Melanie)

We're pretty close with Lou and Linda Van de Vorst. And I don't know, like maybe I'm not supposed to name names, but we will because you know of that case too. And they're just good people and we really like them and it's comforting. (Allan)

We just heard that the latest person who was killed by a drunk driver, right, and we said, we looked at each other and go, "We'll phone them." And that's what we did—we didn't do it right away, but we did phone. (Melanie)

Just for an example, a couple years ago we were on a bit of a road trip and we ran into, we met by—and I don't believe this coincidence, but we met—you're familiar with Chris Kyle, the American Sniper you see in the movie? We met his mom and dad…And we didn't know it was them until we got talking a little later, but yeah, we got talking and we just ended up spending the whole evening and the whole next morning and we have become friends with them. In fact I was just at the Chris Kyle Memorial Benefit in Fort Worth, Texas in May because—and they lost their son but a different way, but it's a loss, right? (Allan/Melanie)

Summary

While facing a variety of emotional and physical challenges, the participants also pointed to concurrent changes in important social relationships. They noticed challenges in their interactions with people in general, who seemed to struggle to converse with the participants, even on inconsequential matters.

This social awkwardness extended to close friends. Some friendships evolved and became supportive and helpful, while others withered, and, in some cases, disappeared altogether. Interestingly, the participants also pointed to new friendships that emerged as a result of their grief and subsequent coping strategies. These new friendships tended to be centered on common tragic experiences and were considered by the participants as significant and compassionate. These individuals could truly empathize with what the participants were experiencing.

Familial relationships changed as well with some relationships breaking down and becoming acrimonious. Other familial relationships were redefined and assumed new roles and new significance in the eyes of the participants.

Collectively, the participants suggested that their social support structures changed as a result of these experiences. This resulted in yet another significant adjustment in their lives at a time when their ability to cope with tragic circumstances was already at capacity.

Basic Theme 3: Financial and Estate Challenges

This theme covered a wide range of issues from settling the victim's estate to financial challenges experienced by those left behind.

Issue: Financial and estate challenges

A predominant theme that emerged from the interviews was the financial stresses that coincided with the emotional grief of losing a loved one. These comments ranged from an inability to maintain employment to dealing with the estate of the deceased victims.

> *The frustrations of dealing with the estate, dealing with no will. (Expels air) Who would have thought? We just took care of the kids six months prior when they went on their honeymoon. I told them, I says, "Make sure you get a will." "Yeah, Mom," "Yeah, Mom." Yeah, Mom, no. (Linda)*

> *Some of that [financial and estate matters] has to be done the first week already. (Marie)*

> *My husband and I had to reach out to his parents, actually, for some—for some help, even just to pay for the food during the first few weeks while we had people coming and going all the time. They helped us with our fuel, you know, that kind of stuff. (Alana)*

> *[Her sister] has definitely had—like we haven't so much, but she has had some financial issues. Yeah, it's hurt her more than anybody. And then dealing with the people in insurance, like can she, you know, continue and everything, has been, added to her anxiety greatly. (Allan/Melanie)*

> *For a year and a half that we were off. That's why we dig so much into our savings. We used up JP's school funds just to survive. But I don't care. So how many times did I get a letter from the power, energy, water, that I didn't pay my bill, because I wasn't here. (Marilou)*

We're in a life sentence situation. Financially we're just struggling, you know, day-by-day. We're not lawyers, doctors, we're just factory workers, right? So we do the best we can. And I mean, yeah, financially I mean, oh, if somebody gave me a hundred million dollars I mean it's not going to change anything in one sense. I understand that. But in another sense, you know, if there was a financial support of some kind there wouldn't be, it would make it a little …reduce some of the burden. (Alex)

That I had to use up all of my sick time, and then I think I had to use up a little bit of vacation time as well, but to be honest, it was all covered with my job at that time, which was really good. My husband, not the same story. So he did—we did suffer financially, and then we were in Regina all the time. (Alana)

Issue: Perceptions of challenges from government and private agencies

In many cases, participants reported that they became frustrated with what seemed to be bureaucratic and dispassionate responses to financial challenges arising from the tragic events. However, the experiences were not universally negative and, in some cases, organizations were reported to be flexible and supportive.

I was dealing with Revenue Canada for the last six months for the estate that just got kind of dealt with. And you can't blame them because they are only looking at one person, but they don't realize that I have lost four people. (Linda)

"Do you have to ask me the same questions every time I phone?" And I've got a list of how many times that I have phoned. Like it's just like "Oh, you don't know what you are doing, honey." (Linda)

Yes, I could say it would have been nice to know the steps. I mean, I don't know where [the person] got all [the] information on what the steps to take. But it would have been nice if I would have known that at the time. Maybe that would have helped too. (Marie)

I have a really good relationship with my banker and it's a good thing I do because I don't know what the hell I would be doing right now. I probably would be looking for work and selling everything, and it still might come to that. That scares the hell out of me. (Chad)

My parents should get something through SGI with the settlement, which makes me feel a little bit better, so at least I know that they'll be okay. I just don't know how long that takes, or what the process is. (Alana)

I had to use all my sick days, of course, and having chronic illness, that was a little bit worrisome. I have to say, Sask. Polytech stepped it up though. They worked out a lot of extra days that they paid me for that they didn't have to. (Amy)

Issue: How financial and estate challenges can strain relationships

Participants pointed out that the financial strain incurred only added to the existing stress experienced in their relationships.

So you're dealing with the estate, personality differences with the two families. (Linda)

It got to the point where [an individual] just decided what to do and it was [their] decision and that was that. And my mom, because she is quiet and reserved, just sits there, and stews, gets angry and gets mad and doesn't say anything and—so maybe there is an avenue there, too, to explore. Where you have two different families trying to figure things out maybe there should be somebody in the middle trying to help them. (Chad)

She [grandmother] got a settlement from insurance for [victim], my mother because he lived with her in his young years—younger years. (Shirley)

And I think one of the things that makes this tough too is that [an individual] got everything with regards to money. [The person] got the life insurance, and has the money, right? …. It was a big chunk of money, and [the person] offered nothing to anyone else. (Alana)

Summary

Participants described some of the financial challenges they faced in the immediate aftermath of the tragic events and over the longer term. These challenges included dealing with estates, interruptions in personal income, and obtaining paid time off work.

For many, the financial strain was significant enough that some participants reported having to rely on borrowed money from family or financial institutions for periods of time. In some cases, insurance settlements offset these challenges, yet in other cases, disputes over insurance benefits added more stress.

Responses from participants indicated that some organizations were more supportive than others. Experiences with Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) were frustrating for one participant who reported that they were sympathetic but bureaucratic in their interactions, not seeming to understand the magnitude of her situation. In some cases, employers were flexible and supportive, however in others, the participants struggled to get time off work and benefits to assist them in coping.

Not surprisingly, these financial stresses placed a great deal of strain on relationships. Families found themselves at odds over how these matters should be resolved, sometimes resulting in pressure on previously healthy family relationships.

Organizing Theme 1: Harms Experienced - Summary

The events experienced by the participants resulted in significant emotional, social, and, in some cases, financial distress. The factors relating to their distress are not mutually exclusive; each can have an effect on the others. Although many commonalities were shared by participants, each family members' experience was dependent on a number of variables including, but not limited to, their physical health, their social supports and relationships, and their ability to ensure their financial subsistence while attempting to cope with the loss of their loved one(s).

Overall, it was clear that despite the passage of time since the incident, all participants were still deeply grieved and challenged each day to resume their lives without their loved ones. Each were at different stages of grief and healing, clearly demonstrating that no two victims experience a crime the same way but acknowledging that life will never be the same.

4.2. Organizing Theme 2: The Experience with Justice System Processes

Table 4. Organizing Theme 2: The Justice System Experiences and Processes

Issues Discussed	Basic Theme
Perceptions of first contact with the police after the event	Interactions with Police
Perceptions of police support following initial contact	
Perceptions of the emotional pressure on involved police officers	
The police as a source of information	
Victims' perceptions of support by Victim Services programs	Victim Services
Victim Services needs to be proactive in reaching out to potential victims	
Time limits on victim support do not match the reality of victim experiences	
Victim Services as a program has a limited recognition of victims	
Victim support looks different for different victims	
The degree to which the prosecutor consulted and informed the families	Interactions with Prosecutors
Perceptions of empathy on the part of the prosecutors	
The importance of explaining the judicial process	
Impacts of the court process on those left behind	Interactions with Courts
Perceptions that the court's focus is on offenders to the exclusion of victims	
The degree to which the offender appeared remorseful	
Perceptions of how accountability should influence the consequences to the offender	
Perceptions of the appropriateness of the sentence	
Victims' perceptions of their involvement in justice system processes	
Perception of Victim Impact Statements	
Cultural considerations / Gladue	
The degree to which correctional officials communicated with victims	Interactions with Corrections
Positive and negative effects of contact with correctional officials.	

Basic Theme 1: Interactions with the Police

This theme represents direct interactions with police officers, exclusive of Victim Services programs.

Issue: Perceptions of first contact with the police after the event

The participants' first contact with the police illustrate the shock of being informed of the death of a loved one. Their comments convey a numbness and inability to process the complexity and enormity of what they had just learned.

> *The RCMP constable, came, who had, you know, investigated or came to the scene and he said, "We will do everything by the book so that we get a conviction." …And that gave me a lot of, you know, comfort to know that, yeah, she, these guys are doing it and they are going to do it right. (Lou)*

> *When they came that night it was like they knocked, this police officer knocked at the door at 1:00 in the morning and told us and even then I didn't want, I didn't ask what happened, really, any more than I knew there were a few details and I didn't need to know any details and ask any more. (Melanie)*

> *"There's been an accident" is kind of what they said and, well "the children were involved". And that's about all they said. So then they said to me, do I have any questions? Well, when you don't know what's involved, it's tough to ask questions. So—but then he came back in the house and he said it was drinking and driving involved. (Marie)*

> *And then a cop came in, the one that was involved on the scene. He came to the hospital, and he informed us about the scene and—but then he came back and talked to us also too, to see how we were all doing. (Marie)*

> *All of a sudden the police came and when you, you know that when the police came, and the police comes into your house you know that it's not right, it's not good at all. So I just went crazy and [a friend of her son] and my sister has to restrain me. I ran out to the cops and I told him, I said, "No, it's not my JP at all." I said, "You got it wrong," I said, "It's not my JP" and that's all and then I collapse. (Marilou)*

Issue: Perceptions of police support following initial contact

Participants' experiences with the police varied. In some instances, it was described as a positive, supportive relationship. However, for others, the relationship was more acrimonious and was not seen as supportive or helpful. In one case, the participants viewed the outreach by the police as being focussed on defending the police's role in the collision more than supporting the family. In another case, a history of animosity between the police and the family carried over to the impaired driving event.

> *But the people in the hospital, the RCMP, the, like everybody in the initial stages that first week, very, very, very good and they did everything they could to help us. (Chad)*

> *He [the RCMP officer] was really good. In fact, he was at the court case too. And in fact, he became friends of ours. Funny how you make friends when you think you don't need them. (Melanie/Allan)*

> *At some point that evening the RCMP officer came to the hospital, and I wasn't there because I was here with the kids. But I like that aspect because he—although I wasn't there and I don't know what everybody remembers, he was able to provide facts. I saw this. This is what happened. This is what—where she is or what—like, he just was able to paint a bit of a picture. (Angie)*

> *The very next day the police came here… It was like they couldn't wait to come and see us and …Well, not really [in a supportive way]. Like kind of like, "Oh, we're so sorry"… To cover themselves, to say that, you know, "Oh, we didn't do anything wrong." You know? (Marilou/Alex)*

> *We don't have the best relationship with the RCMP because they're not very supportive in my brother's case. And I don't know if it's because we're from a remote community and he was native and alcohol was a factor. (Shirley)*

Issue: Perceptions of the emotional pressure on involved police officers

Some participants acknowledged that the role of the police in these kinds of events can take an emotional toll on the officers themselves.

> *The RCMP that were first on the site—when that accident happened there was actually two, there was a cruiser going by and they were there less than a minute after it happened. The dust hadn't even settled, still floating in the air. The gentleman that was there and helped the kids and helped Chanda and Jordan, he actually came to the hospital and told us what he saw and what he did, and seeing his emotion and seeing it being real was good. I mean, yeah, it's hard, but also he understands what we were going through because he went through it, he was there. (Chad)*

> *I try to put my mask on when I'm dealing with that because, well, the prosecutor, the RCMP, they don't need my emotion. They don't deserve that. It's not a safe place for me. Let's get the facts, let's be realistic, and move on. That's just my black and white personality, I think. (Amy)*

> *I know some police officers, not that went to that scene, but I know that they go to others. Yeah. And I can imagine what they have to deal with. And don't tell me it doesn't affect them, you know? (Lou)*

Issue: The police as a source of information

In some instances, the police played an important role in providing key information about both the justice system and the specific circumstances of the particular case. However, not all participants felt that the police were a reliable source of information.

> *And for him to come in and explain what he saw and what he did was really good. So from the RCMP standpoint that was good, like very good. (Chad)*

> *The lead investigator was actually quite wonderful and helpful, and he went out of his way to let my husband know where things were at and what he knew, and gave us the court dates and all of that kind of stuff. (Alana)*

"Where did we find our answers?" And like I say at the beginning, I think it was the RCMP, that like told us about Victim Services, for example, and gave us their card. And he said, yeah, he said that it would be Victim Services in Moose Jaw, should be, but that they would move it to Saskatoon because we were closer to Saskatoon, and then hopefully the court case would get moved there and so on as well. So it was him that, you know, connected us there. (Melanie)

We had a really, the guy, the police officer that was in charge of the case was really quite good. He was our best guy. Well, he just stayed in touch with us and he was easy to get a hold of if you needed him and he was here, he came here a few times. Yeah, to let us know what was happening and what was going on, essentially. He was really good. (Melanie/Allan)

The RCMP talked to us and said, "You know, this kid has been known to cause a lot of problems, and we've been watching him and his friends." And they knew his history, so they were willing to share those kind of things with us, so I don't think ever—I was never worried that he wasn't a drunk driver from, yeah, the evidence and what the police were able to tell us, yeah, and behaviors and things like that, that we were given that information. (Amy)

The police officer got pretty upset with us, when we questioned him about that in a meeting we had in the police station and he got all upset and he says, "Look," he says, "If we would have pulled them over there, they would have bolted and they would have hit this white van that was on 20th Street there, because 20th Street is a very busy street," he said, "and if they would have hit him and killed him then they would have been blaming us." And I just about… I wanted to scream because that's exactly what happened. (Alex)

It just crushes you when you know you're being lied to by the police. (Alex)

Like, we only heard from Kenneth—Kenneth's case from family members and the hospital. Nothing was from the cops. Like, the cops were even trying to say Kenneth was driving, and yet he was ejected from the vehicle. (Shirley)

Summary

Participants' experiences with the police at the time of and the days after the incident ranged from great satisfaction to great disdain. For some, the first contact with police was at the time they were notified of the collision. However, not all participants were notified of the events directly by the police.

Following the incident and the subsequent events, participants shared the variable relationships that they had with the police. Again, these ranged from very supportive to utterly disengaged. Many participants identified the police officers assigned to their case as sources of support and information. These participants had very positive relationships with the police and, in some instances, described the relationship as a friendship. These positive relationships seemed to be characterized by the police showing compassion for the participants and anticipating their needs. It was reported that the police went out of their way to assist the families in the immediate aftermath as well as during the investigative and court processes. These same participants, despite experiencing their own unimaginable grief, acknowledged the emotional strain experienced by the police officers that had been present at the scene.

Alternatively, there were participants who did not have a good experience or relationship with the police. In one case, the family viewed the police as culpable in the collision and interpreted most police actions as being directed towards minimizing or even covering up their culpability. In another case, relations with the police had been strained prior to this tragedy, and as such, the participant felt it significantly contributed to a lack of support or information from the police.

Despite the context of the relationships with police, each participant identified the important role police play during such a traumatic event. Again, the need for empathy, direction, and pertinent information pertaining to both the case and the criminal justice system process was of importance to each participant.

Basic Theme 2: Victim Services

This theme focussed on the direct victim support provided (or not provided) to the participants following the trauma.

Issue: Victims' perceptions of support by Victim Services programs

Participants expressed differing views on the level of support they received through the Victim Services programs. In some cases, Victim Services were seen as supportive, responsive, and valuable.

For me the victim and you know, like the Victim Services people were awesome. The lady that was in contact with me and Mom and Tracy, she's (INAUDIBLE), she did an awesome job. She always seemed to know when to phone, too, and always if my phone ever rang it would be a shitty day and then it would be her. And I don't know how many times I talked to her on the phone for two or three hours, and I was usually driving so I would pull over on the side of the road and talk to her. (Chad)

Actually the Victim Services were very helpful identifying what—all the things were going to happen in court. And they also did tell me many times, the justice system is broken. (Marie)

[The person] from Victim Services, she's a gem. She put [a family member], my dad and myself on her call list, so she would communicate with all three of us. (Amy)

In other cases, however, Victim Services were noticeably absent from the experiences of the participants, even when families took the initiative to contact them.

Right there, from the very beginning, we have to fight for every single thing. Every single thing that we need we had to fight. No one was helping us, nobody. It's almost like, you know, "JP's gone," that's it. "Deal with it yourself." This is how I felt. They drop us in the middle of the ocean with a shark around you and say, "Go swim and survive." (Marilou)

There's support systems out there but they, they are not trained in the proper regard to dealing with people like me. (Alex)

We didn't have much from them [Victim Services]…We didn't ask for much. They didn't give—they were at, I know they were at the court case. (Allan/Melanie)

[There were no counsellors or social workers at the hospital], just my family support. When I got back to my [inaudible], I just asked for a counsellor from [an agency] because I could feel myself getting depressed, getting depressed fast and being a mother, I didn't want that to happen to me, to shut myself out of my kid's life. (Shirley)

Yeah, I accessed everything myself. I even had to find MADD myself. (Shirley)

She won't talk about it. So the mother's carrying this burden. You know, whether she knows who did it, what happened to that person, outcome—nobody in our family was ever offered services by anybody to grieve. (Sheila)

I don't know if it's because by numbers, they just figured, oh, they have a support system, they have each other, and they should be okay. I don't—I don't really understand why. I don't understand why they never called me back. My husband even tried to sort of take that role from me and call Victim Services and get information, and she never called him back. Like, it was just—yeah. (Alana)

One of the reasons why I took the job with Victim Services was because the services we received as a family was horrible. We called Victim Services numerous times, never heard back from them. We ended up calling the RCMP just so we knew what was going on. Our victim impact statements were sent to us in the mail with, like, no explanation whatsoever, with some pamphlets, and that was it. (Alana)

Issue: Victim Services needs to be proactive in reaching out to potential victims

Some of the participants expressed the view that Victim Services should be more proactive and less dependent on victims asking for assistance.

I mean there was, there was always somebody there saying that, "You know, we can get you, we can get you people to talk to, we can get you the psych team down here, we can get"—you know, it's always said, but rather than asking or saying that they should probably just do it, have people there. And maybe—it would be hard to figure out, but I mean every situation is different. (Chad)

Tracy has this, you know, territory and area in the province to cover so it's not that easy to go and knock on somebody's door. But maybe from Tracy's end of it, if you pick up the phone and talk to somebody and you have a good conversation like her and I always did, then you know things are good, but if you pick up the phone and—and talking to Mom is like talking to the table, then maybe she needs to get in the car and drive [there] [it's] only 40 minutes away; she's not far. (Chad)

Cause there's nobody that came here from the Victim Services. They know that that's happening, that what happened, but how come nobody came here and make sure that the people at the house are safe? He was at work. But what is, what am I going to do if my sister and Henry wasn't here when they come in? (Marilou)

I don't think they necessarily would have wanted someone from Victim Services, I think, in the hospital with them at that point. And the social worker that they did talk to, like, I worked with, and said, "Anytime you need anything, give me a call," blah, blah, blah, but nobody called us, you know? And it's like, do you really expect families to reach out and call? (Alana)

Issue: Time limits on victim support do not match the reality of victim experiences

One family expressed concern that the services offered through government Victim Services programs came with unrealistic time limitations.

There's another thing. They give you two years. After two years you can't and it's done. How can you put a time limit on grieving? (Marilou/Alex)

"If I need counselling for the rest of my life," I said, "than so be it. I don't give a damn thing." I said, "There's no limit for it." (Marilou)

And there shouldn't be like the police law that says you only have two years. How long does it take to grieve for a lost child? You're going to be grieving for the—how can you put a time limit on things like this? (Alex)

Issue: Victim Services as a program has a limited recognition of victims

In addition to the time limitations, the participants challenged the conventional understanding of who the victims of impaired driving traumas actually are, including recognition that, in some cases, the offender's families are victims as well.

And we were told that we were covered through the Victim Services. We went into counselling, went to counselling, SGI funding run out, and we didn't even know that we are not covered through Victim Services. (Marilou)

After she was gone they didn't hear from Rylan, didn't, you know, the connection was gone and so their family changed as well. And they went to counselling. But that's pretty much, it's either or, it can't be both the parents and the husband. It had to be one or the other that gets all of the benefits. (Melanie)

She caused mental pain of immeasurable amounts in our family…I don't know, there should be some kind of assistance for people whose family members are adversely affected by the choices of their own loved ones. Because they have a whole other, I would assume, shame and embarrassment and—I can't imagine having—oh, your mom did that? Oh, your grandma did that? (Angie)

Issue: Victim support looks different for different victims

Participants felt that support services needed to be responsive and acknowledge that different people and different circumstances require different approaches to victim support.

So not only do you need a team to help the people that are coming in and they are trying to save their lives, but you also need to have a team help the people that are coming in, to grieve what's going on. (Chad)

Make sure that, you know, the people, the parents or whoever their loved ones are, are safe. Because like I said, you don't know if they are alone or if they had a heart problem or whatever for some reason, you know? How about if they are not healthy? (Marilou)

So she [Victim Service Worker] was very good at asking about my mom. My mom did not want those phone calls. She wanted as little information about that as possible. (Amy)

Cheryl, at Victim Services would contact me and ask me certain things because, like, she would say, "You get it. You understand. You can explain it better than I can because you understand your people better." (Amy)

Summary

Participants were once again divided in terms of their experiences with Victim Services. Some found their experiences to be positive and supportive, while others felt they had fallen through gaps in service delivery and perhaps the legislation that facilitated such programming. The positive experiences shared identified the importance of Victim Services initiating contact with the participants and their families in a proactive manner. This approach helped to ensure that they had the necessary supports in place. It was also another avenue to access empathetic listening and to gain insight about the justice system and subsequent court proceedings.

Participants that felt unsupported by Victim Services noted that they felt excluded or ignored, resulting in a lack of support at a time when the families needed it most. Some participants and their families simply never had contact with Victim Services and were largely left to their own devices for support. In other instances, the participants and their families were not seen or treated as victims because of the legally defined mandate of the Victim Services program. That is, they were not entitled to receive support from the program.

Notwithstanding, the experiences the participants had with Victim Services programming created an opportunity for reflection and feedback that could help inform and strengthen the program for other families in the future. Firstly, participants felt the program should be more proactive and seek out victims in these kinds of events. Many were unaware of available services and, furthermore, were not aware if they even qualified for those services. Secondly, the program does not recognize many of the victims of these kinds of tragic events because of rigid guidelines for who “qualifies” as a victim. In some cases, participants were told that the only victims in the case were the loved ones who had died. In other cases, the program offered support to a more extended definition of victim but still excluded some who were profoundly affected by the tragedy. Thirdly, participants identified that the time limitations for support are often not adequate. Victims continue to suffer and have daily struggles long after program support ceases. Finally, the participants felt that it is imperative for Victim Services to recognize the diversity of individuals and the diversity of experiences that must be supported in these types of circumstances. This diversity means each of these circumstances may require a unique support system versus a one-size-fits-all approach.

Basic Theme 3: Interactions with Prosecutors

This theme explored participants' direct interactions with crown prosecutors during the prosecution of offenders.

Issue: The degree to which the prosecutor consulted and informed the families

Some participants felt that the prosecutor(s) representing their case did an excellent job of ensuring the family was informed on all aspects of the court case and helped to prepare them for what was to come. However, other participants experienced a sense of utter disengagement on behalf of the prosecutors and felt lost, misunderstood, and unheard in what was a bureaucratic shuffle in the justice system.

> *Our prosecutor was awesome. In that regard, once that she had finally plead guilty, he let us know that, and then he made sure that we were aware of what, the charges that she was being charged with and why they charged her with all four counts, you know? And why they dropped the other charges. (Lou/Linda)*

> *The prosecutor, and he had us in—like we talked with him and we kept in touch with him and so on, and he had us all in there and kind of told us what we could expect. (Melanie)*

> *We had nobody other than the Crown prosecutor, and I—they are not—they are—it was—it was—honestly, it was horrible. They shuffled my sister's file, I think between two or three of them, just because someone left and you know, this person went to this—you know, it was—it was—it was—honestly, it—it was—it—almost insulting, actually, how it was handled, because it was—it was a file. It was paper. (Alana)*

> *I actually ended up phoning because I had no freaking clue what was going on. I knew there was a court date. I'm like, has there even been a plea? Is sentencing happening right away? Like, what's going on? And I ended up—I made contact with him myself, and he was very rude and defensive, and I basically just said, like, "Why haven't you met with us? And what's going on?" and "Well, this isn't—this shouldn't be my role. And Victim Services should have been involved." (Alana)*

> *We don't have any legal representation and basically the Crown, the police, say, "Oh, it's not going to do any good" and, you know, "It's in the Crown's hands now and you don't have anything to say or do with it. The only thing you can do is put in a statement." How fair is that? (Alex)*

Issue: Perceptions of empathy on the part of the prosecutors

For the participants who spoke about the importance of empathy, it was clearly a significant aspect of their experience with the court process. Once again, however, the experiences of the participants were not consistent and varied significantly; some recalled an empathetic response from the prosecutors, while others felt empathy was completely absent.

> *So when he looked directly at her and, you know, just asked a few questions, he started crying, and that meant a lot. That was huge. And Mom, that really touched her, because I don't think anybody really talked directly to my mom. (Amy)*

> *So what ended up happening is about half an hour before court was to begin, he met with us and he arrived, you know, cracking jokes and this and that, and we went to the courtroom, and he, you know, relayed his information and my family was very upset because he basically just said, 'Just so you know, the defense lawyer and I have reached an agreement, and we feel a 45-month sentence is appropriate. (Alana)*

> *He actually looked at my family, and my parents who lost their daughter, and my niece and nephew who lost their mother, and my brother-in-law who lost their wife, that "It's not my job to make any of you happy." That's what he said to us. (Alana)*

> *The judge was compassionate, and I couldn't even tell you his name now, but he was good. (Allan)*

Issue: The importance of explaining the judicial process

It is clear that some prosecutor(s) took more time to explain the judicial process to the families than others. As a result, some participants understood what was happening, even if they were not in agreement with the results of the sentencing. In other cases, the participants were completely uninformed and unprepared for how the court proceedings would unfold.

> *I sure as hell wish that I would have known a few more of the details in advance. I know that the Crown is not—they can't tell you. They can't tell you much. I don't really like that process actually quite honestly. I think it was admirable of him to sit with us. (Angie)*

I wish the Crown would have just said… "It looks like we've reached an agreement" and he told us in advance she's going to get ten years minus the time served... He should have said, "And she will get this time in a healing [Lodge]." (Angie)

We got together with the Crown prosecutor and he kind of said he didn't have a whole lot of choice either on what—to say was going to be for the number of years. So we kind of had to go with what he was saying. He was going to try for this, but only got this. (Marie)

The prosecutor was very honest. Ryan. That was his name. I really appreciate that. He was honest. He said, "I'm not going to make you happy, but it's not my job to make you happy, unfortunately." I would love to go for 10 years or whatever, but he slowly explained the process to my parents and [another Family member] that, you know, it's [because of] precedent. (Amy)

Summary

Participants' insights about their interactions with the prosecutors demonstrated each participants' experience was uniquely perceived. For example, the actions of a prosecutor could be viewed as honest and supportive by one participant, while those same actions were viewed as dismissive and harsh by another, depending on the perspective of the participant. This may speak to the difficulty prosecutors have in meeting the needs of all the victims in such emotionally charged circumstances. Clearly the participants felt the role of the prosecutor, with respect to their obligations under the criminal justice system, was sometimes at odds with their needs as a victim.

Participants identified two key attributes that they felt were critical to building a supportive relationship between the prosecutors and the victims. Firstly, the participants wanted to be informed about what would happen in their case and when it would happen. Some participants felt disconnected and excluded from the criminal justice process. Others reported feeling adequately informed and able to ask questions which helped to provide a level of assurance during a time of such uncertainty. Secondly, the participants appreciated and valued demonstrations of empathy and compassion on behalf of the prosecutor(s). Even when the legal process was not unfolding as the participants had hoped, they indicated they could more easily accept the outcome when they felt the prosecutor heard, understood, and empathized with what they were experiencing. Alternatively, when they felt that the prosecutor had no empathy or understanding of their suffering, they developed much harsher attitudes towards

the prosecutor's actions and the decisions of the criminal justice system, which perpetuated the grief experienced.

Basic Theme 4: Interactions with Courts

This theme addressed the participants' experiences with the courts, inclusive of the judicial process, during the prosecution of offenders.

Issue: Impacts of the court process on those left behind

The participants expressed significant trepidation with the court process. Many reported feeling unprepared and felt that the court proceedings perpetuated their grief.

> *My oldest one asked about attending court and I said … "You know, you can come to court if you want, because I don't think that there would be anything necessarily wrong with you attending. I just need to tell you to think about—if you hear something, I can't help you un-hear it. And I don't know if you're going to want to hear what they're going to say." (Angie)*

> *I knew, yeah okay, if it went to court there is always a chance of something not going right, you know, and her getting off, especially I—like who knows? I didn't know who her lawyer would be or anything like that, so… I know that some are very successful at that kind of thing. So I was very happy that we got the guilty plea and relieved so that we can get this done and get this finished, you know, kind of thing. (Lou)*

> *One thing, we didn't realize that in court, they were going to give details, and details that they hadn't given us previously. So sitting in court, before you read your victim statement, all of a sudden you hear that his alcohol blood level was so high that he probably couldn't see, and that he was going 85 kilometers and didn't touch his brake. So we didn't know that previous, and that was said in court. So after that was said, I kind of don't remember hearing much. And then you're supposed to get up and read your victim statement. (Amy)*

For at least one participant, the court process was deemed insignificant.

> *The court case itself, for me, wasn't—I'm not going to say it was a non-event but I knew pretty much what was going to happen because I've been around the law and politics and stuff long enough to know that, I pretty much knew what he was going to get if they found him guilty, and he was, so I never focussed on the court case. (Allan)*

Many participants found the court process stressful and exhausting, noting the lack of acknowledgement and sensitivity towards the victims.

> *They changed judges that day and so this judge didn't have, didn't have any background on it at all, and so then he had to—he adjourned. He heard all the impact statements and then he adjourned to read through the court case and everything, so it was a lot longer than it maybe could have—or that—I don't know why they had to change judges last minute but I'm sure there was a reason. (Melanie)*

> *It felt like the judge had put a knife in your heart, because he says, "Look," he says, "We're not here for revenge." (Alex)*

> *When he pronounced the sentence, it just sounded like, okay, let's get this done and get out of here. (Marie)*

> *I don't want anybody to go through what me and my family went through with regards to—with regards to the court system at all. It's horrible. It's a horrible place for victims. (Alana)*

Issue: Perceptions that the court's focus is on offenders, to the exclusion of victims

Participants felt that the court process was very offender-focussed and dismissed the significance of the lives lost in the event as well as the surviving victims.

And then to make matters worse we went to that second hearing where she was (INAUDIBLE) in front of the judge at the provincial courthouse and we went in there to see what was going on and see what was happening and the judge was all over giving her, commending her for, "Oh, you're talented. You should stay in school" because of the letter she wrote. (Alex)

I also was very angry because as victims, you have zero rights in the court system. You really—you really do. You don't—you don't have a say in anything. The accused, Wade Ganje, had more rights than my family did. Wade Ganje was applauded by the judge at the end of the day before her sentencing for, you know, not applying for bail. "Oh, good for—good for you. And good for you for going to AA meetings while in remand. Good for you. There are so many great supports and programs in the penitentiary. Good for you. You take advantage of those." You know? And what do we get? The judge says to us, "Yeah, stay close and be there for each other." (Alana)

They did read out what she had done and everything else, but it was kind of pushed aside and then focussed on her and her life and her upbringing, which had nothing to do with Sarah and James, nothing whatsoever. She made a choice and she was a repeat offender. She was a gang member. (Alex)

The defense lawyer and the judge talked about, right, was oh, how he was going through such a hard time and he was so depressed, and he turned to alcohol to help him cope. Oh, poor guy. It's like, I don't care, because you know what? I get depressed and I get stressed and I get anxious, and I don't freaking drink and drive. (Alana)

Issue: The degree to which the offender appeared remorseful

Participants talked about the importance of witnessing remorse on behalf of the offender; of being able to see that the offender understood what they had done and accepted responsibility for their role in the events that took the lives of their loved ones. However, for the most part, participants did not report witnessing the offender expressing much remorse for taking someone's life, but rather felt the "remorse" displayed was related to the sentencing and penalty they were about to receive.

And as a grandmother and a mother, yeah, I would tell her off. And maybe that's the best thing that would happen to me for the simple reason, all the things that she had done from the time of the court case till now tells me she is only concerned about her own welfare. (Linda)

"You made one mistake. Okay, we will give you a chance." But that is already the pattern for them and there is no way that they are going to change because they had no remorse in whatsoever in their faces during the trials, nothing. She sat there bored to death. (Marilou)

And when they found out who it was and what they had done they were, they had to restrain her from going back in there. So because they were bragging and laughing and joking about what they had done, they were proud of what they did. (Alex)

I said in my impact statement, and I maintain today, I don't know you can apologize for what you probably can't even remember. And it really pisses me off that there's no—we can show you a thousand pictures of their faces and their bodies in the car. I'm pretty sure if you were that gone—you probably don't even remember anything. (Angie)

You know, when she read her statement, she had a lot of tears. But I wasn't convinced they were real. It's one of those things, how can you really say, was it real or wasn't it? It's only a three-minute thing, so it's tough to say. (Marie)

You were crying the whole time, but that's because you knew you were going to jail for a while. I didn't feel that genuine—and maybe because I've worked with youth in custody and feel I kind of can see genuine. (Amy)

All that everybody just needs to hear is that she's—she accepts responsibility. I don't want to hear excuses. I don't give a shit where you came from. I don't even care what you plan to do with your life afterwards because as far as I'm concerned, it's just empty anyways. You're just saying whatever you need to say because it's court. And I'm sure that she probably knew that. And even when she read it I was, like, you know what, I know you've had a really crappy day. Because this is probably one of the worst days of your life. This doesn't come close to the worst day in our lives. (Angie)

I think he heard us. He was hunched over. He looked defeated. When my niece went up there, she screamed at him and said, "Look at me. You need to turn around and look at me," because he had his back towards us, and he did. Turned around and he looked at her, and I don't know what I read in his face. I think it was—honestly, I think it was a little bit of fear because she was irate and screaming at him, but it looked like remorse, to be honest. But again, I feel as though it's remorse that he's in this situation, not remorse that he killed my sister. (Alana)

Issue: Perceptions of how accountability should influence the consequences to the offender

The concept of accountability was clearly an important one for the participants. Interestingly, this was not a discussion focussed entirely on the sentence the offenders received. Rather, it was about the need for offenders to accept and acknowledge how their behaviour had destroyed so many lives.

I was not angry at her but on the other hand she didn't get, I don't think she got what she actually deserved for a sentence, because I think when somebody does something wrong and when our kids did something wrong or when you make a choice—let's put it that way—when you make a choice to do something you have to live by the consequences of that choice. (Lou)

It's not JP and Sarah's fault why they became like that, so stop blaming. Stop blaming the society and start facing the consequences of what you did. And I don't care if they say sorry or whatever. It's not going to make any difference to me. (Marilou)

You grow up in that environment, I'm very sorry about that, sincerely, genuinely. I think it's a really shitty hand that you've been dealt. But as an adult, if you're an adult, you know right or wrong. You know the consequences. You know what you're doing. She knew what she did when she had two glasses of wine and then went to the first bar. She knew. She knew right then and there. I should not be doing this. Maybe she didn't think, I shouldn't be driving because she had two glasses of wine and she was a regular drinker. (Angie)

You have to, you know, be accountable to yourself for your own behaviour. You have to be able to look at your obligations as a result of your decisions to commit an offense in a safe way that's not judgmental, that's not punishment, and create a space that people, you know, can look inside, self-reflect. (Sheila)

> *There is a payment for—people call it [a] mistake or—you know, you did something that crossed the line. You messed up that bad in your choice that you need to pay a consequence for. Whether you were drunk or walking into a public place with a loaded gun, you need to pay for what you've done. (Amy)*

> *In a sense I feel like because he was impaired so he didn't really know what he was doing, that's why these sentences are so lenient as well, because they put so much emphasis on that. Well, if they were in a clear state of mind, they wouldn't have killed my sister. Well, yes. However, the choice is there. (Alana)*

Some participants pointed out that without offenders having to see the aftermath of their actions (as the first responders to the collision and the families that visited the morgue did), they cannot be expected to fully comprehend the magnitude of the event.

> *How could you understand the magnitude of what you did if you don't visibly get to see it? If you're not there—I remember saying shortly after, I'm, like, you know—morbid as it may be, does she go to the morgue to actually see? Like, you did this. Like, we're all seeing it. So you don't—you shouldn't get a free pass. You made this mess. You have to own it. (Angie)*

> *You know, the thing about Catherine McKay going to a healing lodge and not going to a federal penitentiary just says, it says, it speaks to me and it speaks to the police, it speaks to the justice, the judges that sentenced her. It speaks to the ambulance and the fire department people who got our kids out of that car. (Lou)*

Issue: Perceptions of the appropriateness of the sentence

Some participants felt that the sentence was inadequate for the crime committed and, as such, advocated for harsher sentences to impose more accountability.

> *If you are impaired and you kill another human, I was—I was hoping for five—five or six years, to be honest. I'm not looking for a life sentence. I'm not looking for something ridiculous. I also feel as though maybe there should be even a minimum sentence of three or four years, to be honest, or even five. (Alana)*

My only hope in our particular case was that they might, the court might raise the bar a little bit as far as the sentencing goes, and I think they did. Like the guy got four years (INAUDIBLE) driving prohibition, eh, which is higher than average by somewhat. (Allan)

"You worked here. You lived here. You had a good job," her defense lawyer said at the time, "You know, things got kind of tough and then she started to drink more." And I'm, like, yeah, things are really tough right now because I have a huge loss and I'm not making the same choices that you are. (Angie)

Well, I think she should have been ten years in federal penitentiary to begin with. (Marie)

I thought that his crime deserved a federal time. Yeah. And Ryan was able to guarantee that. (Amy)

[She] was very upset with the process, so her experience would have been very different, because she wanted 10 years, no parole, never get—you know, like, extreme. (Amy)

Other participants talked about the importance of rehabilitation to ensure the offender changes their behaviour to avoid future tragedies.

She is still at risk because she is not taking any courses for that [drinking], so why are you giving her the opportunity to do that, set up and be with family? Sure, she is watched and everything else, but you are putting her into an environment that she hasn't even been ready for. She hasn't been dealing with that for the whole year and a bit that she has been in jail. (Linda)

I don't know what the courts do with drunk drivers. I know they sentence them to jail. But that's not changing anything for me. You know what I mean? Like, did you put—get any—offer them treatment? Did you get them counselling? Because they're not going anywhere. They're still going to be walking on this earth and breathing and eating and sleeping. I'd rather know that, yeah, that system, you served their time, but you're working—you're doing better for yourself so that I don't have to be afraid of you. That's what bothers me about that system. (Sheila)

Some participants felt that the sentences handed down by the courts were too minimalistic and did not adequately reflect the severity of the crime.

> *And even when she stood up and gave her victim statement, "Whatever they ask I will do. I don't care how long." She spoke that. She said she wanted to be an advocate against drinking and driving, okay? That all came up in this court case. Five days later she is in the healing lodge. Wow. Not even a year. (Linda)*

> *Our kids live in Alberta. We—they can't afford to come see us. Now she gets escorted and driven to Saskatoon to visit with her family, escorted visits, and then she can't go back there so we have to pay for her to stay overnight in one of the places. (Lou)*

> *Like she is serving in Maple Creek…So like what right does she have to have that kind of—it's a luxury, it's like a five-star in there. I don't care if they say it's still in prison, no. You had more freedom in there than what you are in jail. (Marilou)*

> *You took the humanness right out of this and you've stuck a fancy label on it. And now she gets special treatment, whatever that special treatment is. Because up until a few days ago, I didn't even know what a healing lodge meant. (Angie)*

Other participants suggested that nothing in the sentencing process would alleviate the pain and loss they have suffered.

> *I noticed that with other people we have talked to, that's their focus right there, they're mad or they're happy or whatever, that they are with what happened with their outcome. But I just never, I said, "I'm not going to waste my energy on what he gets," you know? (Allan)*

> *I don't know how to say this without being rude about it, but there is nothing that they're going to ever tell us that happened to her, that will ever feel like justification or justice is being—like, there is nothing. (Angie)*

Issue: Victims' perceptions of their involvement in justice system processes

It was clear that the participants felt their options for influencing the justice system were limited or non-existent. The system moved along according to its own rules and precedents, and the experiences of the victims were not considered.

> *For James and Sarah we got no fair trial. For JP and Sarah and for everybody. No fair trial all—it's "You're dead, you don't matter. You're dead, you're dead," you know? "We don't care about you anymore. You're gone." And that's how we, the system is. (Marilou/Alex)*

> *Well, what we were told was that the judge would use that for his sentencing. But it was already predetermined what was happening between the two lawyers. We knew he was going to get three years. The defense had already agreed that he was pleading guilty, got three years, and five years no driver's license. We knew that coming in. So why did you put my mum through that hell. (Amy)*

> *And before you know it, someone's tied a little bow and they've stuck it on it and it's finished. (Angie)*

Issue: Perception of Victim Impact Statements

Participants discussed the emotional stress of preparing and reading Victim Impact Statements.

> *We all have victim impact statements that we—that we shared. I think there were 17 of them. I think court was about three and a half to four hours long. I wear a Fitbit and I've never actually had a high rate—or my heart rate was the highest I've ever seen it. I felt—it was—honestly, the whole court process, without any prep or any guidance, any information as to this is what's—what it's going to look like. I was completely traumatized by that experience. (Alana)*

She [my eleven year old daughter] wanted to see—she wanted to see who did this, the woman responsible, she kept referring to her. And she wanted to—they did a victim impact statement, and she wanted to read her statement out loud… the night before, she changed her mind and said, "You know what, maybe I'm just not going to go Mum, and can you read my statement for me so that I can still tell her what I want to tell her without necessarily seeing her?" (Angie)

For me that day reading my victim impact statement sucked because they had already decided what the penalty was before we came in there to read those. Why? I think it's maybe unnecessary to put people through that (INAUDIBLE). It was a hard day and I don't think we needed to do that. (Chad)

Yes, we did [a victim impact statement], but it's a torture, it's an emotional…You're looking at a blank piece of paper. You know, how do you put it? (Marilou/Alex)

She got into a healing lodge in Maple Creek. I guess she is not doing well, so they transferred her to the Edmonton Federal Correction and then they told us that there is going to be a hearing in June, so if we want to do a statement. And we start doing a statement almost like a victim impact statement again. So that, you know, brings you down again. (Marilou)

It [the victim impact statement] was hard to do, like it caused a lot of anxiety and (INAUDIBLE) times and making sure you get it right and that, so I don't think I got any value in it other than knowing that I think it, all those impact statements—there were 15, 16 or something—from different people made a difference in the result. And I mean just hearing, hearing everybody's I mean it was good, and it was consoling, and it was really hard. It was really hard, it was a hard day. (Melanie)

Participants also reported their disdain with the rules related to the content that could be included in the Victim Impacts Statements.

> *And then you need approval because Victim Services has to approve it. So for my mom, my dad and I, ours were fine. They accepted them right away. But other people's got sent back several times. No, you violated this part, or—so then that is again going through it. And my mom was so nervous because she's like, "Well, I didn't follow the sheet. I just wrote a letter." (Amy)*

> *They said that it [having someone else read the Victim Impact Statement] could be an option, but it would better coming out of your mouth. That was said over and over and over again. (Amy).*

> *So we all go up there and we—and we share our stories, and we're devastated, and we're emotional, and it's traumatizing. For what, really? Like, that's one of my biggest questions, and I was actually really furious with that. (Alana)*

The stress of preparing and presenting Victim Impact Statements was especially challenging for some participants because of the ambiguous role the statements actually played within the court process. Participants did not feel the statements had much influence on the sentence or decisions of the court and were also unconvinced that sharing them in court affected the offender in terms of accountability.

> *We were made to believe that these victim impact statements were something for us, like a—like almost like this is our kind of control, this is our way of sharing our experience and letting the judge know how this has affected us, and you know, it can affect the sentence. No, it doesn't. To be honest with you, I think victim impact statements are important because you do feel like you have a voice and at least you feel heard, but they don't influence anything. (Alana)*

I didn't realize that when we walked into the court that day, that the decision was already made. I didn't know that. I thought we would read our statements, the judge would disappear for a couple of hours and figure out what he wants to do and come back in and tell us. That was what I was lead to believe, rather than they basically told us what the decision was and then we read our victim impact statements. Why are they doing that? Is that to make her feel bad? Because she is already sitting in that chair and feels this big. You know, there is no need for that. (Chad)

At the time it [the victim impact statement] felt like it [was of some benefit], yes. Just to write that down, yes. But after the court was done, it felt like it meant nothing. So that's my feeling. (Marie)

He had them before and read them. So if it was for the judge, he had them all. He read them. Did he really need to see that, when we already knew what was going to happen? (Amy)

And did it do anything? I don't know if it did, because I don't think you're going to change somebody with a two-minute speech. (Amy)

Because I don't feel that he listened. I don't feel that—… Even in that situation, we—that court lasted three hours. We read victim statements for an hour and a half. I know he didn't hear enough of it for it to matter. (Amy)

Like Lou I know was very, very angry at her still that day, and so was my Mom, and reading their statements to maybe, you know, get a jab in with Catherine, maybe that's, I don't know maybe some people need that. (Chad)

Having participated in the process, some participants had suggestions as to how Victim Impact Statements could be utilized more effectively in court proceedings.

A young fellow, a friend of the family, that was at the court case and heard all of it to the impact statements went home and told his Mom, who is our friend, he said it was one of the hardest things he had ever heard and he said, "If people sat through that nobody would be doing drinking and driving." (Melanie)

To be more kind to the victims, I don't know if those need to be read by the people to the person. Maybe the judge. But couldn't that be done in a safer environment where—you know, his quarters. (Amy)

So after three months, I'm stronger, I've had time for that closure, and this is before you guys have even—I've talked to you—I want to talk to you now. I want to sit and read my impact statement to you now. You've had time to adapt to your new surroundings. You've also had some programming. You've also probably have had to been in AA for the time that you have been there, those kind of things. You aren't under the influence of drug and alcohol for sure …Perfect world. I think it would mean more right now to both of us for me to read him that victim statement now. (Amy)

Issue: Cultural considerations / Gladue

The application of the Supreme Court of Canada's Gladue decision[2] with respect to sentencing of offenders raised additional concerns about accountability and how past injustices influence current judicial processes.

We are people, we want a unified Canada. Let's all stand up to say, "Our children did wrong," "Our parents did wrong," "They should pay the consequences for their actions" instead of having special privileges here and there. I don't agree with that. I say healing lodges are good for all, not just some. We could all learn from them. But consequences have to be taken into account as well because you have, someone has done wrong, and it should be dealt with. (Linda)

I mean, who the person is, where they come from is irrelevant. It doesn't matter if you're—doesn't matter what your cultural background is. (Angie)

[2] The Supreme Court of Canada's decision in *R. v. Gladue* provided an interpretation of s.718.2 of the *Criminal Code* wherein judges, when addressing sentencing an Indigenous person, are to consider alternatives to incarceration in recognition of the colonial injustices and overrepresentation of Indigenous peoples in Canadian prisons (Roach & Rudin, 2000).

The Gladue Report and everything else, so, it really, really hurts, and when they turn around and say, well, "Oh, because my grandparents" or whatever…or in the residential schools, using that as an excuse in the courtrooms. It should have nothing to do with the justice system. If you do a crime you should be punished for that crime… not using excuses. I could see it if it was somebody, a poor kid on the homeless trying to survive and steal some food or whatever and/or a little robbery or something, where he is not in there to hurt anybody, he's in there just to survive, looking for food. The justice system should be able to recognize that. (Alex)

Up until that particular day, I didn't recognize her as a First Nations person. She was a human who made a choice. This is me in my mind. She was a human who made a choice or—she did essentially. She was capable enough to weave herself around on roadways and navigate herself through parked cars and down roads. She was just a human who made a really shitty decision, and it ended in the consequences that it ended in. (Angie)

If you kill someone, especially with this kind of situation, two young, innocent kids that had a bright future ahead of them, and for them to use their background and their past to get a lighter sentence, what kind of a justice is this? You know? (Marilou)

One participant pointed out that Aboriginal people exist in a different cultural context that must be considered.

We rely heavily on traditional elders that are experts in grieving and that kind of stuff, but if you don't have the money or the tobacco or how to get there, you're SOL. And you carry that stuff and your behaviour starts to change. (Sheila)

I believe there should be. I mean, Aboriginal people historically, well, because of all what we've gone through, we're told, don't talk about it. Let it be. And that was passed onto us because of residential school, right? So I think to expect Aboriginal people to say, "Excuse me. Can you talk to me about my victim?" that's not going to happen. (Sheila)

Although participants disagreed with the Gladue decision and its impact on sentencing, they also acknowledged that there were historic injustices that affected Aboriginal people.

> *That's where they got the Gladue Report, that's how they got it, through the residential schools and what happened and how the Indigenous people were treated. And for one minute I don't think they should have been treated like that and they deserve whatever they can, you know, get from the courts. But it's the Supreme Court that said the Federal Government is responsible…These criminals have applied for and been granted by… our provincial courts to use the Gladue Report. So if our provincial government is saying that you can use this as an excuse, you know, (INAUDIBLE) because of the residential schools and using the Gladue Report and I'm saying it is the government's, federal government's responsibility for taking the life of my son because it was them that did it years ago and put them through the residential schools and treated them like they did, and that's why they turned and it went from generation to generation to generation. (Alex)*

> *I know that there is this huge snowball of history and abuse and residential schools and you can go back and back and back and back. And I understand those things, and I am a compassionate human, and I understand that your background, you grow up in an alcoholic family and then therefore you've got other challenges throughout life and so on and so forth. But at the end of—when it comes to justice, it shouldn't—I don't feel like it should play a role in your sentence as far as where you serve and the length of time you serve. However, it (background history) should be considered in an offender's rehabilitation programming, with the same available treatment/programs/rehab offered to every same-offence offender. Basically, any and every offender should be afforded equal support while incarcerated regardless of background. (Angie)*

Summary

Participants' experiences with the court system and the processes therein were met with much trepidation and disappointment. Most of the participants reported feeling unheard, excluded, and helpless to influence a process and system much larger than themselves. Likewise, they felt any empathy or consideration communicated during court proceedings was directed toward the offender. Notably, participants also shared their disappointment with the Victim Impact Statements. Again, a potential opportunity to influence the court's decision was met with condescension. Although the court provided them with the opportunity to present their statements, it was clear to many participants that the decision on sentencing had already been made. This left families feeling very disrespected, given the

significant emotional trauma experienced in preparing and presenting these statements. Some participants suggested it caused them to regress in their emotional recovery and wondered whether it was worth the investment given the apparent lack of impact on the judicial process. Participants also identified that the instructions for completing the Victim Impact Statements were rigid and restricted them from expressing themselves fully. Furthermore, many participants reported having to re-do their statements several times as the content was not sufficient according to Victim Services workers.

The degree to which the offenders appeared remorseful was important to the participants. For some participants, remorse expressed by the offender seemed disingenuous, while others reported that offenders had a blatant disregard for the deceased and their families. Despite this, participants also felt that regardless of the presence of remorse, offenders should be held accountable for their actions. For some, accountability meant harsh sentences; for others, it meant a sentence that balanced the need for accountability with the need to rehabilitate the offender so as to minimize the risk to the public upon release. In many cases, these preferences were dependent, or at least linked to, the level of remorse shown by the offender.

Where the Supreme Court's Gladue decision was relevant to the offender (i.e., where the offender was Aboriginal), some participants suggested they could not comprehend how colonial injustices had specific relevance to the offender's degree of accountability for these offences. The participants largely acknowledged the historic injustices suffered by Aboriginal people, however, they did not feel those histories had a direct link to the actions of the offenders in their cases and should not have been a mitigating factor. One participant countered this perspective pointing out that it is important that the offenders be understood and treated in the context of their culture to provide an opportunity to address such histories as a means of rehabilitating and changing their behaviour in a meaningful way.

Overall, the court process did not bring closure to most of the participants and their families and, in fact, was a significant stressor. That said, most participants acknowledged the importance of the court proceedings even when they disagreed with the outcome.

Basic Theme 5: Interactions with Corrections

Correctional officials and processes played an important role in some cases. The contact between these individuals and participants was often indirect but impactful nonetheless.

Issue: The degree to which correctional officials communicated with victims

The participants reported very limited interactions with correctional officials. However some participants did take advantage of the option to be notified regarding some aspects of the offender's sentence.

So five days later we come back into town and we find out that she is moved already to the healing lodge, right away…Victim Services [told us]…Because we enrolled. We—yeah, we enrolled for information about it. (Linda/Lou)

Yes, we do [get updates on the offender's status]. We have to fill a form, so we are contacted. But some of us did not do that. (Marie)

In some cases correctional officials have arranged for family members to tour facilities similar to the one the offender is sentenced to.

Yeah. So we have made arrangements and they have made arrangements for us to go to Willow Creek. Which is the men's [healing lodge]; they won't allow us into the female. (Lou/Linda)

I haven't been to a healing lodge. My parents have recently gone. They went on Friday. So they kind of were able to share more of, like, what it actually is and—I don't know if it gave them—Dad said it was a positive thing. (Angie)

Issue: Positive and negative effects of contact with correctional officials

Communication with correctional officials sometimes appeared to re-open emotional wounds and ignite dialogue regarding accountability and consequences.

We have no support here at all. We are told that she has got personal development for 2 hours a day on these 17 days. She has got 8 hours for community service on this day, this day, and this day. I get a list. (Linda)

My mom was getting regular updates on what she's doing in prison and if she's asked for this and asked for that. And I didn't understand why she did either because I felt like it just rips the Band-Aid off the wound every single time when you hear, oh, she's granted privileges. (Angie)

Summary

While not a major contributing factor in the experiences of the participants, some did have contact with correctional officials with respect to updates on the offender's sentence. Although they were provided information on the how the sentence of the offender was carried out, they did not understand why those decisions were made, particularly when these actions appeared to contradict the incarceration sentence imposed by the court. Related issues included eligibility for parole privileges provided to the offender within the correctional facility as well as where the offender was being held.

In one case, the participants were given a tour of a facility similar to the one that the offender was being held in. These kinds of contacts with correctional officials were appreciated but in many ways still generated more questions than answers and evoked a sense of frustration and helplessness in the participants. This also generated a level of pessimism as to whether the offender was actually being punished for their crime and/or appropriately rehabilitated for the issues that caused them to offend in the first place.

Organizing Theme 2: The Experience with Justice System Processes - Summary

Participants discussed five components of the justice system. Of these, comments by the participants regarding the police, Victim Services, the prosecutors, courts, and corrections were mixed. For the most part, when representatives from these facets of the justice system demonstrated compassion and treated the participants and their families with a sense of importance and respect, the participants were generally satisfied with their experiences.

The participants' comments indicated that the agencies that had the most face-to-face contact with the participants had the best opportunities to build relationships with them, establishing trust and rapport. The interactions that the participants had with the police and with Victim Services received the most feedback. These relationships had the potential to be supportive by providing compassion and information to the participants and other victims from first contact after the collision and throughout the justice system processes. In some cases the participants expressed a profound sense of betrayal when they felt ignored or were provided with misleading information by the police or Victim Services. Furthermore, participants felt that existing policies restricted Victim Services programs from engaging all potential "victims" and fully addressing their unique needs. However, when the various judicial system representatives were viewed as honest, compassionate, and not inhibited by legislation, the participants felt supported and expressed a great deal of gratitude.

Prosecutors and correctional officials had fewer opportunities for face-to-face contact and as such, generated less feedback from the participants. Comments shared related, once again, to the need for compassion and the provision of adequate support to the participants, when possible, to help families feel included in those processes in which they often had no control. For example, providing the families an opportunity to have a correctional facility tour or explaining the intricacies of the law was deemed important to the participants, as was providing families with as much information as possible to ensure they were informed and apprised of the process.

In regards to the court system, the majority of participants felt excluded, uninformed, and unsupported in a process that was very unfamiliar to them. They also felt that the seriousness of the trauma experienced was minimized in the judicial proceedings. Likewise, they felt the courts seemed more empathetic to the offender to the exclusion of the victims. Their sense of whether or not the offender was remorseful was based primarily on their individual experiences in the court, taking into account the behaviours and responses of the offender.

Another challenging element of the court process was the preparation and delivery of Victim Impact Statements. Participants described this as a very traumatic, difficult, and emotional exercise that required a significant investment both in time and energy. Unfortunately, most participants felt these statements had very little influence on the court proceedings, particularly with regards to sentencing. Similarly, frustration was also experienced when the court referred to the Supreme Court's Gladue decision. While the participants were sympathetic to the impacts of Aboriginal history, they questioned the relevance of how this history could have influenced the offender's decision to drive impaired and kill innocent people.

Despite having many concerns, participants did not feel equipped or able to ask questions to gain an understanding about the decisions of the court. The police and Victim Services may have opportunities to play a limited role by providing information about the court process, but ultimately are unable to be integral to decisions made by and within the court system. Prosecutors seem like a more appropriate resource to answer questions and concerns that families have, however, many participants reported having significant difficulty in establishing rapport with prosecutors which, again, left them feeling excluded and removed from the judicial process.

4.3. Organizing Theme 3: The Degree of Faith on the Justice System

Table 5. Organizing Theme 3: The Degree of Faith in the Justice System

Issues Discussed	Basic Themes
Perceptions that the justice system seems closed off to victims	Interactions with the Justice System
The degree to which participants understand the goals and underlying philosophies of the justice system	Understanding the Justice System
Perceptions of whether the justice system reflects the participants' understanding of justice	
A lack of understanding of various justice processes and institutions can lead to frustration	

Basic Theme 1: Interactions with the Justice System

This theme speaks to the participants' overall experiences with the justice system.

Issue: Perceptions that the justice system seems closed off to victims

Participants expressed disappointment and frustration regarding their experiences with the justice system. Again, participants felt completely disconnected from the process, inclusive of events before, during, and after the trial. Some participants felt they were completely outside of, or removed from, the justice system processes.

> *Because I would like to know, because if—maybe we are complaining about the wrong thing, maybe we are reacting to the wrong, because we have the wrong impression, you know? And I don't want to do that; I want to have good information. (Lou)*

> *There's not a lawyer in town that would even… I couldn't even get some legal advice because they don't want to touch it. (Alex)*

> *They didn't even considered our needs and our feelings and our emotions at all, except for the criminals. (Marilou)*

It's a torture to people like us what the justice system does and they can, how politicians can sit there and write laws and not think about what they are doing to people like us, protecting—it seems like that's their first thing they want to do is they want to protect themselves for any kind of accountability. (Alex)

I did not have any idea how fast she was going until court that date. I didn't know what her alcohol level was. I didn't know where she had been or what she was doing. And I don't know, maybe it would have been—I know that there's, like, a confidence thing. They probably don't want all of this information out prior to court. (Angie)

When is this going to happen? When is he going to be in court? You know, just all of those kinds of things so we were—we were in the loop and we knew what was going on. And where the process was going, like, with regards to the just—like, with the court system. Like, that was a huge thing, and none of us had any experience with the court system before, the legal system, so we had no idea. (Alana)

I just think that it's just a really emotional thing to have to go through at a time when you're looking for answers and you're drawing information from people who may or may not even have the information. You don't even know who to ask. Like, there was many times after I was, like, can I call the Crown prosecutor? Can I call him back and say, "Can you sit with me because now court's done and I don't understand what just happened in court?" And I still don't know if you can actually call him. (Angie)

Summary

The majority of the participants interviewed recalled feeling excluded and uninformed as they moved through the justice system. That is, they did not feel they were part of the process, nor was the system concerned with engaging them. Additionally, at a time when their emotions were raw, the suggestion that emotions have no place in the justice system seemed to imply that the participants had no place in the justice system. This resulted in feelings of resentment, frustration, and mistrust of the process and the system.

Basic Theme 2: Understanding the Justice System

This theme is focussed on the participants' understanding of the justice system, rather than their experiences with it.

Issue: The degree to which participants understand the goals and underlying philosophies of the justice system

The participants pointed out that they did not always understand how the justice system worked and what the philosophical and procedural underpinnings of the justice system were. This included processes related to decisions on where the offender would serve their sentence, parole eligibility, and even how Saskatchewan Government Insurance (SGI) interacts with the justice system.

> *We're trying to take comfort in justice served, and—but it's not really served because—I mean, is it or isn't it? Like, it—and I think that's maybe a lack of understanding, and if there was more of an understanding of [the justice system as a whole] … a little advanced information probably would have gone a little bit further in such of—you're going to go to court and this is what they're going to say. Then she's entitled to this and this and this, facts wise, right. Like—which probably doesn't bode well for a lot of people who are looking for some kind of—it probably doesn't bode well for everybody. But for myself it would have been. (Angie)*

> *That was on July 29th. We found out about five days later that she was going to be moving to a healing lodge right away. (Linda)*

> *Why is the Crown prosecutor saying it doesn't really matter what we say because SGI can do whatever they want, right? …. And then Mom said to me one day, we were talking—Mom and Dad were talking to the Parole Board folks. And they said, "It doesn't really matter what the judge says at sentencing time. It's up to the Parole Board to decide." So I was, like, what is the point of going through all of the court if the judge is going to say 10 years with a portion spent in a healing lodge. (Angie)*

> *They don't have a lot—there's not a lot of experience in my family with the justice system. (Sheila)*

Why was Catherine McKay sent to a healing lodge versus a federal penitentiary? Are we ever going to have answers for that? And she got sent there so soon. It just didn't seem fair, I don't know. (Marie)

I knew this wasn't going to be a fast process in the courts, although other people in my family didn't realize that. (Amy)

Issue: Perceptions of whether the justice system reflects the participants' understanding of justice

Collectively, the frustration arising from a lack of understanding of justice system processes and procedures, as well as a lack of information on what was happening and why, lead the participants to the conclusion that the justice system is not founded on "justice" as they understood it.

I feel sad that all these police officers, the prosecutor, everyone did everything right and where she is right now, which we will probably come to a little bit later, is where it's leading into major frustrations for us, with the justice system. (Linda)

RCMP officers that got shot, that were murdered, the flags all over the country were at half-mast, they, the government was all over it and they had all the support and the whole, which they deserve, don't get me wrong. I'm happy for that, that they got the full justice that they deserved, right? They threw the book at this guy. This guy got 25 years for each officer. But why should he [my son] be any less? (Alex)

People go to court anticipating justice, for lack of a better term. Like, they…some kind of comfort and closure. And when you leave and you still have questions and you don't really know—you can't really go anywhere because it's done. (Angie)

I'm not saying she should sit and rot in jail for 20 years for a mistake. But in terms of helping people that are involved or helping loved ones that are looking for closure or whatnot, I just don't get how it's even considered on a 10-year sentence, whatever it is that she got. For that two and a half years, including your time served prior to your conviction, you can start asking to get out of jail. I don't see it as that much punishment to be honest, you know, for what you did. (Angie)

I also saw it on the news, and they had pictures of her where she's staying. Pretty posh to me. That's all I know. It just doesn't seem fair. (Marie)

The system is a joke. Sentencing is absolutely ridiculous. And now my sister's death is now a case study, and it's going to influence future sentencing, which just infuriates me. (Alana)

Our system's a joke to wow, what a joke. Like, the bad guy's the victim. (Angie)

Issue: A lack of understanding of various justice processes and institutions can lead to frustration

This lack of understanding led to a great deal of frustration on the part of the participants and their families as the justice system unfolded with respect to their loved ones' cases.

It shouldn't have to go to court and say, "Oh, try to prove it." You're drunk, you're drunk. That's why you're in here. What's the problem? You know, and why are you trying to make it, say, I didn't do it, I didn't do it. Yeah, you did it. Otherwise you wouldn't have gotten into this mess. But then we just, like they are, tap them on the hand and away they go. That—that makes me very angry. (Linda)

You get the door slammed in your face. We asked for, we asked them to appeal the court case, they wouldn't have anything to do with that, they—we asked them to move the young offender up because she was right on the border of being 18. We wanted her to be tried as an adult. They wouldn't have, the Crown wouldn't have anything to do with that. (Alex)

Why did she, number one, get privy to Legal Aid? She shouldn't have. She had a good job prior to this. Why are we as a government paying for this? (Linda)

Yeah, it really does feel unfair. I mean, you know, I think the judge said six years altogether or something and then you've got time served and then you've got, oh, so much time in this place and then so much time in this place and then on house arrest or whatever and, you know, on all these restrictions. It seems like they cut it right down, you know? (Alex)

> *So it was a long time to even know if he was going to get charged, what the charge is. But I—we just had to be patient and like I say, it wasn't our focus anyway. But knowing that they were doing that because they wanted to make sure they got everything right, that's what the RCMP guy kept saying, "We just want to make sure we've got everything right," because he's had cases where they have thrown it out because of whatever. (Melanie)*

> *I know when we left, my sister was very angry and she's, like, "I don't know what this … is. I'm not happy about this. What is this healing lodge?" I'm, like, "I don't know. I don't know what that is." (Angie)*

It was also pointed out that culture can play a hidden role within the justice system by catering to wealth and privilege at the expense of marginalized people.

> *His privilege, his Caucasian, very wealthy family. I think that he was treated a little bit different. I know he was. We know about how the court has different views on different cultures. (Amy)*

> *This kid got out on a 1,000 dollar bail. No, 500 dollar bail. And then, what, a month later when the Indigenous man—he had to pay, I think, five grand or something for his bail and had to sit in jail for how long before he was even given the opportunity to. So right there, you had two different—not that I think everybody—everybody situation is different. (Amy)*

Summary

Participants found themselves at a distinct disadvantage in that most of them had limited experience or knowledge with respect to the complex mechanisms of the justice system prior to these events. They were unable to fully prepare and understand how the courts interacted with other agencies such as the parole board, correctional services, or SGI, which contributed to their sense of disillusion with the concept of justice in these cases. As they observed the proceedings, this lack of understanding led to increasing frustration with the system and the outcomes therein.

Some participants raised the issue of culture and ancestry playing a role in the administration of justice. They observed that decisions made within the justice system appear to be influenced, not only by

culture and ancestry, but perhaps by wealth and status. This imbalance further tainted the idea that justice is a function of law, common sense, and the unbiased decisions of court officials.

Organizing Theme 3: The Degree of Faith in the Justice System - Summary

Once again, the participants described a notable disconnect between themselves and the justice system. They described feelings of being "outside" of the system. This was not a disconnect based on a lack of constructive relationships as previously discussed, but rather as something endemic to the system itself. The wheels of justice—the processes that are designed to meet statutory requirements and legal precedents so familiar to its practitioners—did not anticipate the needs of the surviving victims and, as a result, did not accommodate them.

As participants observed the justice system processes and decisions unfold from a distance, their frustration grew. Although some participants did have some understanding of the justice system and were able to get limited information through the relationships they had built with the police, Victim Services, and prosecutors, their relative lack of knowledge and experience within the justice system did not allow them to fully understand these processes and decisions, which led to additional frustration. What they observed was a system that seemed to contradict itself. Judges passed sentences that seemed to be ignored by correctional officials. Prosecutors made recommendations that contradicted the participants' understanding of justice. What seemed like common sense to the participants was overruled by statute or precedence.

Not surprisingly, this lack of interaction with the justice system, combined with a lack of understanding of what they had observed, led some participants to speculate that these subjective processes might be unfair and influenced by biases such as wealth or ancestry. In addition to grieving the loss of their loved ones, participants were left to speculate about the justness of the court's decision.

4.4. Organizing Theme 4: Coping and Supports

Table 6. Organizing Theme 4: Coping and Supports

Issues Discussed	Basic Themes
Immediate and long-term interactions with healthcare professionals	Interactions with the Health System
The degree to which information was shared by health service professionals	
The recognition that people grieve in different ways	Individualized Grieving and Coping Strategies
The system needs flexibility in accommodating different grieving responses	
Constructive and destructive responses to grieving	
The role of spirituality	
Additional sources of support accessed by victims	Other Sources of Support

Basic Theme 1: Interactions with the Health System

Under this theme, interaction with healthcare professionals is largely focussed on the immediate aftermath of the events, with limited references to follow-up support.

Issue: Immediate and long-term interactions with healthcare professionals

For the most part, the participants reported positive and supportive interactions with various components of the healthcare system.

> *The staff was very good up there. There was no doubt about that. Yeah, they went above and beyond to get us through those first two days. (Marie)*

> *But the people in the hospital, the RCMP, the, like everybody in the initial stages that first week, very, very, very good and they did everything they could to help us. (Chad)*

Yes, I don't remember any names, but yes, there was people there [at the hospital] that—they did—we had a room set aside for all of us, and they would come in and out to see if we needed any help or—food was brought in and that kind of stuff. It was good. Good in that aspect, yeah. (Marie)

She [family doctor] was awesome. She had me on her emergency list, and you know how family doctors cannot see you [snaps fingers] like that? Oh, no, she would make time because I have so many medical conditions, and with the grief, they heightened. (Amy)

Issue: The degree to which information was shared by health service professionals

Some participants pointed out that they did not necessarily know what to ask and were sometimes unaware of what information they needed, especially in the early stages of their grief.

All of the medical staff, they all did their best to kind of—everyone was amazing. They all did their best. But when you don't know what's coming, you don't know what to ask because you don't—you just don't know I guess, right? (Angie)

And the people in the hospital, same thing; they did their very best at explaining things to us and walking through things and offering support and offering, you know, the church services that are there and counsellors that are there and the people with the transplant teams and stuff like that. Very good at explaining what was going on and what's next and what we need to do and what—because when you are going through it you don't really know what the hell to do. (Chad)

Issue: This willingness to keep the families informed extended beyond the hospital to include EMTs (Emergency Medical Technicians)

The ambulance guys are the ones who narrowed down everything because Kenneth was ejected from the vehicle, he was definitely in the back seat. And the vehicle flipped head over three times. They found Dillon outside the vehicle. He was, like, stuck behind the wheel. So the ambulance guys were pretty—more friendly to me and the family than the RCMP were. (Shirley)

In some cases, exchanges with healthcare professionals included painful conversations with respect to the condition of their loved ones.

The pediatric neurosurgeon, I remember him saying at one point, he's, like, "She doesn't have much brain activity left." I remember saying at one point, prior to all of this, I'm, like, "Listen, obviously I came here expecting something different. I didn't anticipate what I was walking into." Because I let out—oh my god, that was really loud and I'm pretty sure I woke up most of the kids in the ward. But I remember saying to a nurse, "I need you just be blunt. If she's not going to make it, I'd rather hear that than—I need facts. Just tell me what the facts are so that I can deal with them." And she said, "Oh, no, she's not going to make it." (Angie)

Summary

Participants' experiences with the healthcare system, inclusive of hospital staff, family doctors, and EMTs (Emergency Medical Technicians), were generally positive. Healthcare personnel were viewed as compassionate, helpful, and informative. In addition they appeared to be able to diffuse highly emotional situations to avoid or minimize conflict.

Basic Theme 2: Individualized Grieving and Coping Strategies

This theme points to the diversity of grieving and coping mechanisms among the participants.

Issue: Recognition that people grieve in different ways

Each participant's shared experience emphasized that people grieve in very different ways.

There isn't a manual that says, okay, so this is coming up next and we're all dealing with it differently. (Angie)

You know, there's different things that we try to do but it's—I won't say it's on the back burner, it's just they don't deal with it, you know, they have to deal with it in their own time. (Linda)

My nephew isn't doing—hasn't done very well. He's had a lot of issues. The girls, they've done not bad. They have a lot of issues, but they hide them. (Sheila)

For some, staying busy helped them to cope.

> *In the first four months after the accident I was totally immersed— because I'm a numbers person and I'm a get-things-done—I focussed totally on the house, getting it ready, getting all the stuff to all the—like the whole estate file. (Linda)*

> *But like, you know, as long as I keep busy I'm pretty good. That's why I went back to work like right away. Like it happened the week and then I took another week just to get things, you know, some things done and everything, but I was back then. (Melanie)*

In families that had grieving children, helping them understand and cope with the tragedy was also an important for participants.

> *I have my kids and my focus as a mom. And then I have a sister and trying to navigate my own kids' grief and my own and my husband. (Angie)*

> *And as a parent, I didn't want them to see me struggle, like, you know. I put on a tough cover really fast with them because they're 18, 15, and 12. And, you know, I don't want them to see their mum breaking apart when inside that's what's really happening when I lost my family. (Shirley)*

> *I processed a little bit different. I think I was so worried about all this, and very worried about my boys, my nephews, you know, making sure that they had everything that they needed for a healthy, positive process. So not good for me because I probably submersed a lot, but I'm happy I was able to give those people that at that moment. (Amy)*

> *I know even between the two of them, they're three years apart and they had very—significantly different opinions. Not about her, but about the loss. Savella's very—she can be to herself a lot. Avea didn't say anything for about a year. And then out of the blue one day—I mean, she would—we'd talk about it a little, but it was more sad. Just, they're not here and I want to go play with them. (Angie)*

Many participants experienced grief as a "numbness" that resulted in isolation from friends and family.

> *There are days that we didn't realize that we didn't eat until our neighbours, our family or our friends come over. And we were just, like we were just sitting here, like you just sit there and—you know, like you don't even, you didn't even know if you were here or not. Like I, myself, I don't even want to get up in the morning. You know, I just want it to be night so that I can go to bed. I don't want to see the daylight, I don't want—I don't want to see the outside world because JP is my world, he is my life. (Marilou)*

> *You don't have any strength. You just feel like collapsing and you just don't know what to do with yourself. (Alex)*

> *They are afraid to bring it up if it brings back bad memories. We have told people that we like to talk about her. (Melanie)*

> *I don't want to [work]. I didn't want to do anything. It was difficult. (Allan)*

Anger was another emotion experienced as participants grieved.

> *My youngest is—she's all heart and she's more compassionate. She gets angry, but her anger, like mine, she does what she can to just—I'm not going to feel this. (Angie)*

> *The loss, the—focussed on things like how long he's going to go away, he needs to go away for a long time, his family should pay. You know, like, they—because the anger, they wanted that. (Amy)*

> *And then I recently—when I was feeling this angry and unusual hatred, which I don't—it's gone now, which is good, but I think it was a passing thing. (Angie)*

> *It's almost like this guilt I carry, because it's like, if I start having fun that means I've forgotten. So it's tough. And like I said, and I'm angry. It's like sometimes I just want to scream at people. (Alana)*

Issue: The system needs flexibility to accommodate different grieving responses

Participants suggested that people grieve and heal in a variety of ways and require varying amounts of time. Victim support systems must reflect that reality.

> *That's things I think people just have to go through and deal with and figure it out and everybody does it at their own speed and in their own way and in their own—everybody has to have a path. (Chad)*

> *And like I said, you know, I told them, he said, "Oh, some people doesn't need it," I said, "I am not some people, I am James' mom, and don't compare me to others because I am not others." So I said, "If you don't like it," I said, "stick it where the sun doesn't shine." I said, "If I need counselling for the rest of my life," I said, "so be it. You have to pay for it." I said, "There is no frickin' limit on grieving." (Marilou)*

> *Everybody does it [heals] differently and it takes time. (Marie)*

> *And it doesn't matter what she talks about or what she is saying, it's negative and it's bad and it's—she is just still really hung up on things and really, really struggling. And you have got to be careful who has that conversation. Because a lot of people, we need, they need positives, they need good stuff, they need to, you know, to get pumped up, not the other way. (Chad)*

Issue: Constructive and destructive responses to grieving

In some cases, participants responded to their situations by becoming involved in advocacy and charitable work.

> *My older sister, she is a schoolteacher and she has found a different outlet to deal with it and she actually is doing presentations in schools and she is working closely with MADD and SADD. And she has done presentations in Edmonton. So she is doing well, however, I think she has got some of that anger happening yet too. (Chad)*

> *My dad does a lot of public speaking. (Angie)*

I was probably only a couple of months kind of in the negative end of things and, you know, "Everything sucks" and "What am I going to do now?" and "Poor me" and all that crap. But once you get past that like you start to see the good things that are happening too. It's—I went to a—it would have been in April or May last year, I went to a fundraiser for a little guy that he was two and he had a hole in his heart and they were trying to raise some money for the family to take him to Edmonton and get him fixed. I went to that and there were 75 people there in that room and I never met one of them, I didn't know any of them. I don't know why I went, but I went and I donated some money and I helped. (Chad)

No, I've been involved with groups, like the senior groups, whatever, and—just visiting or whatever, yeah. No problem with that. I don't sit at home and look at four walls. I cannot do that. (Marie)

I'm incredibly proud of my niece for doing that story with the Leader-Post, and I think—I think her and I will probably end up doing a lot more together, but it's just a matter of where do we go and who do we—who do we connect and how do we make a difference? (Alana)

Because we're not going to the wedding, we're not going to hold those babies and that's just the way it is, you know? So what we can do we're going to do [fight for change], and we have done that and we are going to continue to do that. (Allan)

It would be 4:00 o'clock in the morning and not sleeping and I would get a message from somebody that's ready to hang themselves or jump off a bridge or whatever the case may be. So I—that was my avenue, that was my out, that was my—I don't know if it was me burying my own issues to help others, I don't know what it was, but for quite a while that's what I did to survive, was talk to people in the middle of the night that needed help. (Chad)

In other cases, participants shared that their grief became overwhelming and took them to a dark place emotionally.

I'm not ashamed or, you know, scared to say I was suicidal. I can't—I can't live without him. Like what is my life without him? (Marilou)

When we went to that MADD conference there was the lady, the people there that are stuck on revenge and that kind of thing, yes, they can bring you down. (Melanie)

[A family member] drinks a lot. He's—I don't think—he's slowly killing himself with the alcohol, I think, so that's another anxiousness and worry for me and my Mom, like, to watch him self-destruct. (Amy)

[A family member] is struggling very much. I know that [the member and their significant other] are arguing, and I think he's taking it out on her, to be honest. I think he's just—he's expressing every emotion in anger, and he's directing it towards her. (Alana)

Issue: The role of spirituality

Spirituality was identified as a positive means of coping with the grief experienced by participants. However, not all participants subscribed to such beliefs and, as such, did not find it helpful.

Yeah, it really helps a lot, I think, it really does, because we have always, we have always been—I think— well, I—yeah, I would say, you know, a good Christian faith, and we believe in Heaven and Hell and I believe in, I believe very strongly in the love of God. (Lou)

But I guess I won't see him until my next life, you know? (Marilou)

I have a pretty strong relationship with a higher power. I—and through my training, my work. My work healed me a lot. You know what I mean? Like, amazingly enough, that's what I think, because I'm very different from my siblings. I'm very different. They don't understand any of my work I do and how I can forgive offenders. You know what I mean? Because it's the work I do and it's my relationship with the higher power. (Sheila)

I think the other thing is, is I have faith and Al I think has faith, you know, like that she's in a good spot and we will see her again…My son and daughter aren't sure about that, so that's hard, hard for them. And my other son has turned more towards faith. (Melanie)

I feel so lost and empty because I don't have faith to kind of hold onto. Like my Mom believes that my sister is in heaven, and that God is taking care of her and we'll see her again. It's like, well, I don't,—I don't know. And so I question, like, where is she? (Alana)

Summary

Responses showed that participants and their families grieved and coped in different ways. In some cases, the participants focussed on staying busy, investing their time in advocacy work and connecting with others who had also experienced similar trauma and grief. Some participants described feeling numb and disengaged, while others talked about experiencing intense feelings of anger and despair and, in some instances, turning to alcohol or self-harm to cope.

Again, participants highlighted the need for varied supports in order to attend to the diverse needs of the grieving process. In terms of coping, some connected with their spirituality, while others engaged in other forms of support such as counselling. Despite the means of coping and support utilized, the participants felt strongly that the needs of the individual should dictate the type and duration of support.

Basic Theme 3: Other Sources of Support

This theme explored sources of support that participants accessed, outside of government-sponsored Victim Services programs.

Issue: Additional sources of support accessed by victims

Participants discussed a variety of sources of support to help them deal with their grief and coping. Some of these sources of support included counsellors, elders, and psychologists.

If I went to a psychologist or a counsellor or any—they actually tried—I tried one immediately after and that was—that didn't go well. (Angie)

I had outside sources too. I see a life coach here in Saskatoon and I would come and see her when I needed to, and she was fantastic and would help me out over the phone or texting or whatever. (Chad)

So I went to MLTC [Meadow Lake Tribal Council] and I asked for a counsellor. (Shirley)

Each school has a different counselor, yes. And I'm fortunate, the high school has the two—the few teachers that knew Ken, so they know my kids as well. So they often check up on my kids just to make sure how they're doing and how they're holding up and stuff like that. (Shirley)

There are some in my community that I do talk to myself. There was a couple of elders that were close to Kenneth that actually come and approach and talk to me on a regular basis about him. It makes me feel better to talk about him as well. (Shirley)

Other less conventional sources of support were related to various personal belief systems.

The other thing that [a family member] is finding a lot of comfort in mediums. (Amy)

I actually took my son to a medium so he could get a little bit of peace with Kenneth. And sure enough Kenneth was all over him at the medium and just [inaudible] him and honoured him and told him to keep going to school and just stuff like that to keep my kids going. (Shirley).

Allan wanted to go and Stefanie wanted to go, so we went there. And it [the medium] was in Calgary, actually, and it was pretty amazing, to me, like it, you know, it definitely felt—and sometimes like I guess you're lucky or you're not, and they always have a medium at the MADD conference as well and I have seen him connect with other people there and they said the same thing, it was just pretty amazing with all that she could tell, that it again reassured me that she's, you know, that her spirit is here. (Melanie)

I did some grief cupping and acupuncture with my traditional Chinese medicine doctor. (Amy)

Many of the participants also referred to experiencing a sense of comfort and support through their involvement with MADD. This included working with MADD in an advocacy capacity as well as using MADD as a conduit to connect with other individuals who had similar tragic experiences.

It [the MADD convention] was a real heavy, emotional weekend. But one thing that, we got some good information in terms of the legalities in the justice system and all that, out of that, and I also got a good glimpse of what other people have gone through and are going through like compared to us, and I think overall we are in, and I think, you know, yes, you lost four of our kids, but in terms of the whole situation I think there's other people who are, you know, a lot worse than what we are. (Lou)

That's when we made our first connection with them and it was positive. And then I actually worked in a school with Bonnie Stevenson's son, Quinn, so there was another contact there that we made. Marylou and Alex Hockey, actually they made a phone call, she made a phone call to me. I have never met this woman before and for her to make a call to me … which was really good because I helped, she says I helped her so I don't, I think I did. I know she was going through some pretty rough times and I'm glad I could—like I just—we do connect with them, but we don't spend all our time with them. (Linda)

We were just, basically start again, and thanks to people like MADD that have really, really helped us. We went to MADD conferences. (Alex)

They need somebody there explaining—like I found in MADD the people, very compassionate, they know exactly what because a lot of people have been through the same thing. And like…Dr. Fleming. A university, I think he's a professor, a psychologist …And he said, "We're all aliens in this room" … because we know how we feel and what we are going through…And the outside world doesn't know. (Marilou)

We got involved with MADD shortly after and it sort of refocussed efforts and your thinking. So like we started talking to, we got to know some of those people relatively well, fairly quickly, and—and that helped me because there was something to do, some work to do, right, and "We're going to do this…We will work on this project…work on that one and whatever." I think that helped me get—and, you know, I never really had time to be mad. (Allan)

We don't have the resources to deal with what we've been through. I found MADD, that's how I've been dealing with my counselling and—the ladies through MADD have been so supportive with me and taking me to Toronto with my son was, like, very awesome experience for us to meet other families that have been left behind from impaired driving. (Shirley)

Participants also reported valuing the informal support they received from their communities.

We had lots of support. It was great, like people were great. You know, people came and they still let you know they are thinking of you. We just had a fundraiser, the Co-op has a barbeque every Wednesday and so we did it—and they will do it for any charity, so we did it for Danille and, you know, people come out to support and they—and they see the advertisements that SGI had that was on and Wescan and so they mention it and so on. (Melanie)

The school was fabulous. They—actually, I would say the school was kindest to my Mom. They knew that my Mum was looking after those boys and needed a hug every once in a while and needed to ask how she was. The school was amazing. Yeah. Very amazing. The secretary would even call Mom. (Amy)

A lot of my friends are teachers, social workers, counsellors, psychologists, so I did have—or I still do—I feel I have a very good team of friends. (Amy)

Actually at one of our elder's meetings, [she] was asking if there was ever going to be a grief workshop in our community. So actually our elders are thinking as well, and we need a little bit. Grieving workshop would definitely help our community. (Shirley)

Summary

Participants discussed a number of support mechanisms outside of government-sponsored victim services. Many relied on more traditional supports including counselling and speaking with elders. Others looked to more unconventional sources of support including mediums, grief cupping, and acupuncture. Some participants discussed the unsolicited support they received from their communities.

Participants also referenced the supportive role MADD played in their grieving process. This included the opportunity to take part in advocacy work, to hear guest speakers, to share stories with other victims, and to form new friendships.

Organizing Theme 4: Coping and Supports - Summary

Participants described various manifestations of their grief and identified a number of coping mechanisms to manage grief following the loss of their loved ones. In some cases, sources of support and modes of coping were facilitated by victim support programs. Victim Services workers were able to adequately meet the needs of some participants or direct them to the appropriate support services. However, for others, it was reported that Victim Services did not engage them at all or were unable or, in some cases, unwilling, to meet their needs.

The healthcare system, while generally commended by participants as being a support in the immediate aftermath of the tragedy, did not emerge as a central figure in terms of support mechanisms and did not play a significant role in their long-term coping strategies.

Outside of formal victim support programs and the healthcare system, participants tended to seek out supports to meet their individual grieving needs. Some were conventional, such as accessing counselling or connecting with their spirituality. Some were grounded in cultural tradition, such as speaking with community elders. Other less conventional supports, such as mediums, were also explored. Many participants also reported becoming involved with MADD to access information and connect with advocacy opportunities. Their involvement with MADD also gave them a network of supportive people who understood what they were experiencing because they too had experienced the loss of a loved one to impaired driving. These self-identified support mechanisms helped to fill gaps experienced in the formal victim support programs and, furthermore, provided coping mechanisms that were better suited address the unique needs of victims.

One of the key messages from these discussions was the importance of offering victims appropriate supports and modes of coping that are respectful and congruent with their own individual personalities, histories, culture, and social contexts. One size does not fit all and what will help one individual cope with tragedy will not necessarily help another. People grieve in different ways and healing is a very individualized process; the systems to support people that have experienced such tragedy must be equally malleable. Although some participants were provided support by Victim Services, others were not. Some of those un-serviced participants found support mechanisms outside of formal victim support programs, however others did not and inevitably “fell through the cracks” and were left to grieve without support.

4.5. Organizing Theme 5: The Desire for Change

Table 7. Organizing Theme 5: The Desire for Change

Issued Discussed	Basic Themes
Perceptions of potential preventative mechanisms	Contributing Factors and Missed Opportunities
Direct or indirect actions contributing to this tragedy	
The positive impact of organ donation	Searching for the Positives
Using these experiences to educate and inform others	
The hope offenders will make positive changes in their lives	
The potential for the offender to become an advocate	
The need for a broader recognition of who is "victimized"	Defining the Victims
Perception that the system has a "hierarchy" of victims	
The need for expanded victim supports	
The actions of political figures with respect to the issue of impaired driving	Governmental Avenues for Change
Contact with political figures	
Whether political contacts resulted in concrete impact on perceived deficiencies in law or processes	
Whether the legal framework encourages a reduction in impaired driving incidents	
Participants' feelings toward the offender.	Victim-Offender Meeting
Perceptions of any benefit in a face-to-face meeting with the offender	
Participants' willingness to have a face-to-face meeting with the offender	
What participants would say to the offender	

Offender consequences should impact society's views	Fundamental Changes Required
The need for fundamental change in how society views impaired driving	
The potential for victims to be strong advocates in reducing impaired driving	
Participants' willingness to use their tragedy to raise awareness	
Practical solutions to impaired driving	

Basic Theme 1: Contributing Factors and Missed Opportunities

Under this theme, participants shared their reflections of what may have contributed to, and/or prevented, the tragedy.

Issue: Perceptions of potential preventative mechanisms

In the events leading up to the collision, the participants identified many opportunities to prevent the tragedy altogether.

> *I'm also frustrated with the people. The first stop—number one, she was drinking when she left home. She went to the first stop. They recognized the fact that she was, she had too much. They offered her a ride and instead of doing anything else they let her go on. I'm disappointed with those people. They went to the second place. They knew right away that she was so far gone, they let her go. (Linda)*

> *They could have saved him that night if they would have known he was out there with a drunk driver. But it's just, again, all those "what ifs". What if we could have did this? What if we could have did that? You know, like, after the fact of course, eh. Like, there's so many of that after. But, of course, it happens and there's nothing you could do to help anybody. (Shirley)*

> *Then you find out that he was at the Rider game with his dad and all his buddies, and adult men—you're adults, and then you take them all home, you keep drinking, and then there's a fight and you let this kid drive away out of your yard, hammered, and you don't do anything about it. So there's a lot of players in a drunk driving accident as well. There's not just the driver and the victim. There's the bartender that over-serves. It's the—your buddy that, 'Are you okay?' 'Oh, yeah, I'm okay,' but you're swerving when you walk, and they don't take away your keys or say anything. (Amy)*

In some cases, participants found themselves questioning the deceased victim's actions and questioning whether or not they could have avoided the collision themselves.

> *I can separate my emotion and my fact. I just—I need to know how Jordan didn't see her because it's such a big intersection and it's flat. And there's no trees, and there's no houses and I don't understand how he couldn't have seen her and done something. (Angie)*

> *One of the things that I kept going over and over and over in my head, shortly after the accident I said to Lou, "Surely to God he would have seen her coming, surely to God." He wasn't drinking, there was no alcohol in it. Like it's a huge intersection, like huge. Fifty feet before he noticed it, only 50 feet, not enough -- and Lou taught at one time, he says, "Linda, there was not enough time." (Linda)*

Issue: Direct or indirect actions contributing to this tragedy

In addition to failure to prevent the tragic events, the participants discussed the culpability of people and organizations that may have caused the event, or contributed to its severity.

> *From the person who left the key, to the police who never did their job as far as we're concerned and we feel we have been lied to by the police and everything else, to the justice system for letting them out on the street again, you know, after stealing so many vehicles, being in court, had the opportunity to rehabilitate and failed. (Alex)*

> *You know, I think there has to be more responsibility in terms of servers and bars themselves as to when you cut a person off and what to do with a person when they do leave your establishment. (Linda)*

I'm saying it's the federal government that is responsible and should take full responsibility for my son's death, because in our situation -- the Supreme Court said it's the federal government that are responsible for the Indigenous people. For the residential schools. Because of what happened in the residential schools. (Marilou/Alex)

Summary

Participants felt strongly that these tragedies were not inevitable. There were many opportunities to prevent them in the hours immediately preceding the collisions. Servers in licensed establishments, family, and friends all had opportunities to step in and prevent the offender from driving or to call the police to intervene. In some instances, the participants also questioned why the victim who was driving did not take action to prevent the collision.

In other cases, participants felt that a collective effort was required to prevent these tragedies. For one family, the police response to a crime in progress was viewed as a contributing factor. Other participants questioned why businesses licensed to sell alcohol did not take more responsibility in preventing their patrons from drinking and driving. Another participant pointed out that in the case of Aboriginal offenders, the federal government may bear some responsibility given past policies, such as residential schools, that have contributed to crime rates impacting Aboriginal people.

Basic Theme 2: Searching for the Positives

This theme reflects the participants' efforts to try find something positive in the midst of a devastating tragedy.

Issue: The positive impact of organ donation

The importance of organ donation and its positive impact on someone else's life seemed to provide some level of comfort to some participants.

You look for the positives and think, "Okay, if Kamryn hadn't died what would have happened?" You can think, "Well, would they have gotten the heart in time for that other person?" Maybe, maybe not; you never can tell, but at the same time at least we were able to put a little bit of a positive thing to this. (Lou)

With the organ donation stuff, I think they need to explore maybe where that stuff went and who it's helping and try to get that publicized a little better. We get updates a little bit to what's going on, but it's very general. And I realize it's confidential stuff. But if you can get the recipients on the other end to say, you know, the positives about that stuff and make it public, then they will get more people on board. (Chad)

Like, the organ donation part of things as well. Like, they tell you, you can kind of—I wrote a letter to the kids who received Kamryn's heart, or the one kid that received her heart. I haven't tried to communicate with any of the other kids. But you just sit and wait and you wonder, and you're in such a—and I don't expect them ever to respond or whatever because it's not—because that's not why I wrote the letter anyways. But I just felt so compelled to say, listen little one, you go and live a huge life because you can and you deserve to. And you really should because this is—be brave. You have a new heart. This is amazing. And don't feel sad for the family and stuff whose heart you have. (Angie)

Issue: Using these experiences to educate and inform others

Participants discussed the importance of using their tragedies to educate others to do what they can to prevent these kinds of events and, if possible, to change behaviours.

We have been asked to, which is I think has helped us, is the Police Department has asked us to—the Traffic Division Sergeant has asked us to come and do a talk on—and which we have done—on our experience of what happened that night and what we feel, what we would ask the officers. Just a way of encouraging them to do their job and to do it properly, because, you know, the job they do is very, very difficult. (Linda/Lou)

When we met with the Minister of Justice here, about the beginning of May, I point blank said, "Get us together with the chiefs and the elders from the different reserves here." I said, "We've got to start. You can't have the chiefs and elders over here and us over there. We've got to work together." (Linda)

There was a couple of speakers there in Vegas that blew my mind and I actually talk to them quite regularly now, how do you influence people, how do you get people to change their minds, change the way they think. And I—one day I will figure that out and I'm going to do something about this. (Chad)

If we save one life, we save one life. That's really good, that's an accomplishment. We could save some victims, but, you know, again, with saving one life, if they can put a system in place that will save one life, it's not only that life you save, it's the whole family. (Alex)

Like we have talked to schools a couple times and we would or could do more of that. But, again, it's hard. It's not like you really want to do that. Like that day it's down, but you think, then hopefully you're doing something good and it makes you feel that you're (INAUDIBLE). And this, the other thing that we are working on with the government is signs, the roadside signs will be coming up this fall, probably. (Melanie)

Issue: The hope offenders will make positive changes in their lives

Some participants expressed the hope that the tragedy would lead to the offender changing his or her life in positive ways.

I hope she makes something of herself, I really do. She was—she had a great job. (Angie)

I would love for her to come back and be a functioning member of society; however, like I said before, you make choices, there's consequences, and there should be consequences. (Lou)

Issue: The potential for the offender to become an advocate

In some cases the offenders had suggested they would like to become advocates for preventing impaired driving tragedies in the future. The participants supported this idea as another way for something positive to emerge from such tragic events.

She can't repair this. There is no way to repair this other than prevent or do something that may prevent it from happening to anyone else. (Lou)

Somebody should make her be, like, okay, so you said in court that you were going to make it your life's mission to—here's a project for you. You're going to be doing this presentation, this presentation, and make her do those community service or whatever they're called. Like, you—yeah, you're going to do that. Absolutely she should. And I—and for the whole rest of her life. (Angie)

I don't know her and I don't know if she is capable of standing on stage and telling her story and getting through to people. Maybe she isn't that kind of person. I don't know … It's a great idea, but what if she is not the right person for it and it doesn't work? I mean I have read all the articles, same as everybody else, and what kind of work she was in before and it sounds like she is probably somebody that could do that. (Chad)

I didn't even know who it was, didn't need to or whatever, but now the only reason I would be because he said, in the court that day he said, "Maybe I can do something to talk to people" and that kind of thing. (Melanie)

She said in court, "The only way I can live with myself is if I become an advocate for not drinking and driving." I hope she does. I would like to see something on paper that says she's gone to this and she's done this at some point. And she's actually standing up to what she said she would do in prison. I probably won't see it, and that's just me. (Angie)

When she said that she would like to follow through on being an advocate for drinking and driving, she did say those words, but it's not going to mean anything until she actually follows through on that. So when we—if we ever see that happen, maybe she is very sincere. (Marie)

Summary

Many of the participants shared the importance of trying to find something positive in the midst of their tragedy. For some, participating in the organ donation program filled this need. The ability to donate needed organs from their loved ones provided them with the comfort of knowing that their tragedies brought life to others and their families. Advocacy was another way that participants identified as a constructive process that could potentially help prevent such tragedies from happening to others. Many participants generated awareness about impaired driving through programs such as MADD and SGI's prevention programs and other public speaking events. Participants shared that while they could not change what had happened to their loved ones, through advocacy and awareness they could perhaps help prevent future deaths.

It was evident from the interviews that participants believed the offenders should also make positive changes in their lives and perhaps become advocates themselves. These were not predictive comments—in fact, many participants were skeptical that it would happen—but nonetheless, they felt it

would be impactful for offenders to "own" and be accountable for their decisions, to compel others to make better choices, and to contribute to the prevention of future tragedies.

Basic Theme 3: Defining the Victim

This theme reflected on the need to expand the qualifying definition of who a "victim" is in these circumstances.

Issue: The need for a broader recognition of who is "victimized"

Despite the significant impacts on their lives, the participants expressed the view that neither existing support systems nor the justice system identified or responded to them as victims. Participants felt strongly that the definition of "victim" should not be so rigidly defined and must be expanded within both Victim Services and the justice system.

> *Even the prosecutor said to us, "We are not the victim. Jordan and Chanda were the victims. We are not the victim. Jordan and Chanda and their kids were the victims in this crime." (Lou)*

> *We are not the actual victim because James is the actual victim. And that's why I said—they came here. They said to us, because I said, "We need counselling, we really need counselling."(Marilou)*

> *And my Mom said when she came back, she said, "You know what we learned? We learned that we're not the victims. That she's the victim and Jordan and Chanda and the kids were victims and that's all. Just those." And the rest of us are—we're not victims because we haven't caused any—we're not getting—we're just not victims. The victims passed away. Now the victim is her, and the rest of us are, like, collateral damage that just have to deal with it. (Angie)*

Well, I could say I was confused when I had to fill out Victim Services forms. There was one, I had to put—Chanda's name was the victim. And then I had to put on the—after that, relationship to the victim. Well, I'm the mother, but then I was told to put something in there, else in there, and I can't—I don't remember what I put in there. But I just found it odd. She says, "No, that's what you have to do." So okay, it's after the fact, okay. Where you are really not the victims, it's whoever was involved in the collision. (Marie)

And then the third individual, that was the boy's friend, he was in the vehicle as well. He got his shins smashed, and he actually just started walking again. And he hasn't even come around to the boys at all. He is, like, withdrawn. [He] feels like he's got survivor's guilt. He feels like he's ashamed to see the boys because he survived the accident. Like, I couldn't imagine. I couldn't imagine how the survivors of that accident feel, because they heard my nephew hollering, screaming right till he flew out. It's just heartbreaking. And then there was a younger individual, and she was only, like, 14, 15 years old. There was just—everybody that was in the vehicle was in really rough shape. (Shirley)

I got remarried in 2011 and I split from her in '14, October of 2014. She was really close with all four of these too… She has fallen through the cracks. When you have a marriage fall apart… And even with the Victim Services I asked Tracy, I said, "Is anybody phoning Mel?" She said, "Who is that?" Shit. We split it in '14, but even in 2015 when the kids would come to Watrous she would be at her house and I would be sitting right beside them having supper, or they would be at my house, or we would go to the park and she was there, down there, with—we both loved those kids. (Chad)

In some cases, participants also identified the family of the offender, and even the offender, as victims.

When we were in court I looked at this woman. Her daughter was sitting in the front row—actually right by my son; he didn't realize that—and we could see her looking at her Mom and saying…She was angry at her mother. You could see it. She was terribly angry. And she says, "You're an embarrassment." (Linda/Lou)

I felt really sorry for the offender in that one. You know, he took a life, but the community was brutal to him. He—when he got out of wherever he got out of, he went home, and he couldn't even walk down the street and people were screaming, "Murderer." And my mother said to me, "My girl, it's so hard to see that because they're wrong. They should not treat him like that." He committed suicide. So when you talk about victims not having an opportunity to grieve or talk about or resources, it comes out and they hit back. Now, he committed suicide and now you got to carry that. (Sheila)

I don't know her life at all, and I don't know her kids, and I don't—but her daughter two seats away from me sobbed the entire time when the Crown was talking about Miguire and the first responders. And I know she has kids, and I know she has grandkids. And I would be—I said—I remember telling my dad after, I was, like, "You know, for as much as we—this is our loss, she messed up her own family." They've got a stain on their family for the rest of their life that is just an ugly—my mother killed four people because she was drunk driving. (Angie)

If it was my Mom who did this and my Mom sat herself in prison for—or whatever, for the better part of however long, it's still a loss. It's a different degree of a loss for sure because my kids wouldn't have access whenever they want to their grandma. But I definitely feel less bad for them than I do for myself because at some point they will have that again, conversation. (Angie)

I'm trained to know that offenders are victims, or so—you know what I mean? It's my training and my work experience, absolutely. My personal experience, absolutely. The one young boy that killed Sarah, I never got to meet him, but man, I feel bad for him. Yeah, I lost a sister, and there's nothing that'll bring her back. He served his time, but it's the way the people treated him. (Sheila)

It was also widely recognized by the participants that these events had real impacts on the lives of the police officers and other emergency responders that were present at the scenes of the collisions or dealt with the families in the aftermath of the tragedies.

The officer was, he was crying as he was telling us, "I'm sorry to tell you, you have lost your son, Jordan, and his wife, Chanda, and your grandkids are very near dying." (Linda)

It's not just us who are impacted by our accident, it's not just us. It's—you know, like I said before, it's the police, it's the emergency. I know the first responder who arrived at the scene, I know her personally, you know? I know her. I know some police officers not that went to that scene but I know that …they go to others. Yeah. And I can imagine what they have to deal with. And don't tell me it doesn't affect them, you know? (Lou)

And he has actually transferred out of here, he went back home because he, I don't think he was able to deal with it very well, and who would? But I spoke with him quite a few times. He gave me his cell number, so he texted and we called. (Chad)

I felt sorry for the police officer to have to be able to come out there and give you that kind of news. And it must be hard for them too. (Alex)

And that's tough watching your family or your brother-in-law's family going through all that. Even the people that are there, like the police officer that explained it all and seeing his emotion, that's tough, or the people working in the hospital that were trying to save the kids, so that's tough too going through all that. (Chad)

Issue: Perception that the system has a "hierarchy" of victims

Perhaps related to the lack of recognition of some victims, the participants suggested that there is an apparent hierarchy of victims. That is, in the aftermath of these events, some victims are treated as being more important or perhaps more "injured" by the tragedy.

But I've found that a lot too, being—well, you're just the sister. I don't really count much. (Amy)

There were times where Dad asked to be involved, and was able to, but unfortunately, some of the things were—weren't given or invited to us. (Amy)

It's identifying the victims and making sure that all parties are involved with everything all the while. Because it goes right back to kindergarten; you hate to be left out. (Chad)

Maybe because we were just sister [so we were never advised what happened to the driver], we weren't the wife or the kids, you know. I mean, who knows why? (Sheila)

Well, it's one of those things. I don't know how they got contacted to be involved in such a way, but as far as I'm concerned, both families should have been contacted. (Marie)

Issue: The need for expanded victim supports

Participants identified that the discrepancy in how individuals are classified as victims resulted in a significant gap in services for those affected by the event.

Our counsellor that told us that "Victim Services are not covering your counselling" because we are not the actual—and then they told us after that because we phoned them. I said, "What's going on?" I said, "I can't go on without counselling. We need counselling," I said. "But you guys told us that we are not covered." So I said, "Who is going to cover for our counselling?" (Marilou)

One of the things that SGI doesn't really address is the people that are close, like for [name removed], her sister, and even her partner there, [name removed]. There was really nothing in the game for them in terms of direct access to counselling or—now if he would have been, if they would have been there then I guess there might have been or if they had had kids that would be a different story. (Allan)

Counselling support definitely. There was none in place. (Shirley)

I'm still angry and I'm still actually quite confused as to how my family completely fell through the cracks in the system with regards to support. So … But I think it would have made a difference. I really do. It would have made a difference for me. I guess I can't really speak for any of my other family members, but it would have made a huge difference for me. (Alana)

I would actually—I tried to get her to come with me to have [the ear] of the guy from MLTC. He's a mental therapist. But he's been so busy up north with the La Loche stuff. Remember that La Loche shooting and stuff? He's been busy up there with the community, and he was kind of hard to get a hold of at one time. (Sheila)

Summary

The assertion that current Victim Services supports have an inadequate understanding of who the victims are in these kinds of events was a common theme throughout these discussions. In some instances, participants were told that only those directly involved in the collision were considered victims. In other cases, more inclusive definitions of victim were extended to some family members, however there were still many people profoundly affected by the tragedy that were not offered or entitled to support via Victim Services.

One participant referred to an ex-spouse that had a very close relationship with the deceased but was not entitled to victim support. In other cases, children that were close to the deceased victims were similarly excluded from victim supports. Some participants also pointed out that the family of the offender went through trauma as well, and could potentially be considered victims, albeit in a different context than the families of the deceased.

Police officers, healthcare professionals, and other first responders were also identified by some participants to be victims that required support. Some participants described examples of long-term and, in some cases, life-changing effects on these individuals.

Participants shared their frustration in how victims affected by the trauma seemed to be prioritized. Wives were treated as more important than sisters, and families that were more vocal seemed to be given priority over those that were more reserved. This dynamic did not adequately represent the reality of who was affected and what supports were truly required. Nonetheless, examples were provided where some victims received more attention and more support than others.

Participants also pointed out that some of the time limits for support were not realistic. There is not an identified timeline that accompanies grieving and healing from trauma. However, in many instances, supports seemed to expire far too soon, leaving victims completely unsupported and often unaware of where or who to ask for help.

This limited recognition or definition of victims and the apparent hierarchy of victim acknowledgement illustrates the need to review the current state of Victim Services supports and related policies to more appropriately reflect the reality of surviving victims in these kinds of tragedies.

Basic Theme 4: Governmental Avenues for Change

Some participants felt that governments and politicians at all levels have a role to play in addressing the issue of impaired driving.

Issue: The actions of political figures with respect to the issue of impaired driving

Participants commented on the role that the government and government figures play in the broader conversation about impaired driving.

> *[Don McMorris] made me very angry…when he got caught. That made me very angry. I was more—like I said, I was more angry at him than I have ever been at Catherine McKay. (Lou)*

> *Steve [Steve Sullivan, MADD Canada], by the way, was in Ottawa, he was an advocate, victims advocate when I was a member of parliament and I got to know him a little bit through that. He advocated on behalf of the victims. (Allan)*

> *I think the laws and that that they are enacting make it a little bit easier for the traffic, the police to stop or to get people to, you know, do the roadside tests and that kind of thing. I'm thinking that will help, hopefully that will help, you know, that they can get this done. (Lou)*

Issue: Contact with political figures

In some cases, participants had direct contact with political figures in the aftermath of the tragic events.

> *We met with the Minister of Justice, here, which we have done. (Linda)*

> *I fought for the Victim Services. We went to MLAs and wrote letters and everything and they had another meeting with the... Justice Minister, and also he brought the Minister for Victims' Rights. And I explained to them—they increased it for us—and I was trying to explain to them. "Look," they were saying, "Well, most people, this $2,000," he says, "Most people don't use that." And I say, "We're not most people." (Marilou/Alex)*

> *We got a personal letter from Ralph Goodale. (Linda)*

We had a meeting on May 14, on May 4th, JP's anniversary, just this last May with Gordon Wyant and that's one thing that we always ask, we want an inquest. We also went to Cam Broten, before he lost the election, and also sent a letter for an inquest, requesting for an inquest. They won't grant us any at all. (Marilou)

He said that he is going to find out, talk to his colleague, he was going to talk to his cabinet, whatever it is, and we are waiting for that. And if he is not going to send us any letter I'm going to phone them again and I'm going to have a meeting with him again, because I am going to push it. (Marilou)

Issue: Whether these political contacts resulted in concrete impact on perceived deficiencies in law or processes

In some cases, participants were optimistic that these political contacts might lead to meaningful change; however, in other cases, they were more pessimistic.

And the Minister for SGI, is a topnotch guy. I just—well, I think you do too—we think the world of him; he's just a straight shooter, no fooling around, "We're going to change this." (Allan)

It's just, like—I find this family, they just like to blame other people for their faults instead of taking it on themselves. And I don't know how I could help them. Like, I don't know—with all the nepotism I can't really say anything to anybody. (Participant #6)

We tried to reach out to some MLAs and Brad Wall, and of course, he didn't want to comment on anything, but it's just like, they're all so focussed on preventative, preventative, preventative. Well, yeah, I agree. However, it's not working. Right? So I don't understand what's stopping—I don't understand what's stopping whomever makes up these laws to start making the penalties a little bit harsher. (Alana)

Issue: Whether the legal framework encourages a reduction in impaired driving incidents

Participants suggested that the justice system is not generally a deterrent with respect to impaired driving. That said, one participant suggested recent changes to the law might make a difference.

What did that lawyer, the minister say? He said, "There's no justice. All there is, is case law." (Alex)

Well, when you hear from the Victim Services that the justice system is broken, you kind of just don't have your hopes up high. (Marie)

Let's set a precedent. Like, why are—why are they so scared to look at a minimum sentencing? Why are they so scared to? I just—why are they so scared to actually sentence people a little bit longer? It's not an accident. It's a—it's a choice, right? (Alana)

Well, there is an office in the band office that's supposed to be the RCMP's. And I have never seen an RCMP officer in that office. He comes in there, looks at it and then he leaves. But to be honest with you, no, there is no relationship between the RCMP and the community. (Shirley)

Like these people, they should be punished, they should be taken out of society, they should be taken, their rights should be taken away. But our society gives them more rights than the victims that they have victimized. (Alex)

The other thing that I thought, "Shame on you, court," now, when someone pleads guilty and gets sentenced, you're taken in. You know, you wait for the guards. The guards take you in. Well, they allowed him just to run right to the door because he didn't want to face anybody, of course, and—like, I get that, but why did he get that special treatment? (Amy)

Summary

The actions of government, including the political figures within government, were relevant to participants. The conviction of MLA Don McMorris was referred to as a terrible example for an elected leader to set. In more general terms, the laws that address the issue of impaired driving were seen as important to the long-term resolution of this issue.

Some participants had discussions with political figures at both provincial and federal levels. Generally these meetings were positive, although many did not expect imminent changes that would directly result in reducing the incidence of impaired driving in Saskatchewan. Participants expressed that the penalties for impaired driving need to be harsher. It was felt this should accompany prevention legislation that was presently being implemented.

While various components of the legislation related to impaired driving were discussed, participants generally did not feel that the present laws—as they are now written and enforced and inclusive of the courts—have or will have a significant impact on the rate of impaired driving. Likewise, participants inferred that the justice system must become less focussed on the offender and more focussed on the victims and the families affected.

Basic Theme 5: Victim-Offender Meeting

Participants' opinions varied widely regarding whether or not they would be willing to participate in a face-to-face meeting with offenders and whether or not it would be of any benefit.

Issue: Participants' feelings toward the offender

During these interviews, participants expressed views ranging from anger, indifference, and even forgiveness with respect to the offenders.

> *Who knows what brought her there, but she was there, and I was never, I have never actually felt outright anger at her for what she did, and I almost felt sorry for her for what she did. (Lou)*

> *I've never hate anybody the way I hate those two people, never in my life did I hate anybody. (Marilou)*

A lot of people that have lost other loved ones, they want to know what the person is, when he or she is coming out of jail or where are they at. I could care less. It doesn't, it's not a factor for me. I know he's, and he could be out now, for all I know, or close. And it doesn't matter to me, he's not, he's a non-factor in my opinion. (Allan)

And maybe that's where the closure is supposed to be. Like, there's just—you just don't have to hear her name or look at her or—I don't know. I'm not sure. (Angie)

I have to forgive him for what he's done, you know. Because in the end, they were good friends, and I know if he would have survived and would have killed my nephew, I don't know how he could have dealt with it himself. But in the whole situation, I know he was drinking and driving before this. (Shirley)

You know, if you guys, if all of a sudden somebody brought a file here and told me what happened to all three incidents of the people that were—I don't know that would change things for me. I just might want to know, are they okay? Are they doing well for their lives and their families, right? Because of my ability to say, "I forgive what you did." Right? "But do better." Right? And I do forgive the drivers. (Sheila)

Issue: Perceptions of any benefit in a face-to-face meeting with the offender

Participants did see some potential benefits in having the victims and the offenders meet face-to-face at some point.

I think it [meeting with the offender] would be interesting as our families, two families on one side and her on another, to see what really would happen. She might not accept that, for one thing. But I think it would be one step—would be maybe informative. (Marie)

I think it [meeting the offender and having him hear me] would be—for me, yes, and it would depend on him. You know? Are you taking your program serious[ly]? Because the programming offered, if you actually do it and follow it and believe it, it's good stuff. But we know that criminals are able to manipulate and go through those programs and not internalize anything. (Amy)

I think it should be mandatory that they should actually inter—to meet with the family, both families, like in this case Chanda's family and my family, not just us. (Linda)

Issue: Participant's willingness to have a face-to-face meeting with the offender

Some participants indicated they would be willing to meet with the offender.

What if we told our story and you have everybody crying and you have pictures of the car that's squashed and then you have Catherine come out and tell her end, because she's got kids, she's got grandkids, she has a family that's all affected? I mean she, in her statement in court she said that she would like to help and try to change this. If she truly means that, put her on stage. And so, yeah, I would talk to her. (Chad)

I guess I would probably be open to it, yeah, if it would do some good, if we thought that was the best thing. (Melanie)

I know that my dad really wants to speak to his parents. I don't know what that would bring to him or what that would release for him, but that's something he wants in time. (Amy)

Others had no interest in meeting the offender or were still far too angry for such a meeting to be beneficial.

I don't want anything to do with them [the offenders]. To me they don't exist. And like I said, you know, if I see them I'm going to freakin' run them over. That's how angry I am towards them. I swear them to my graveyard. Like I said, do you know what? I will be happy and I'll throw a party if heard one of these days they are into an accident and dies. (Marilou)

I know that my son, Josh, said it's a good thing he didn't meet with him because at the time he had anger… You know, he said, "But then when I walked into the courtroom and saw him I just felt sorry for him." (Melanie)

I have no desire just to do it just to, like I have no desire to meet him or whatever. (Allan)

I would hesitate [to talk to her face to face], I've said many times, I don't want her to be released quite yet because I—God help me if I see her on a street. There will be nothing. I probably will say nothing, and then I will drive myself mental for the rest of my life for not saying something. (Angie)

I've thought of writing him letters. For whatever reason, that urge is in me, and maybe at some point, I will look into it a little bit more. But I'm also still angry. Like, I'm so angry that I don't feel like writing him or seeing him or trying to talk to him right now would even be a good idea. (Alana)

Issue: What participants would say to the offender

Participants' responses regarding what they might say to the offender varied, but most related to whether or not the offender had or would change their behaviour in the future and if, in fact, they were truly remorseful.

I think there is always a chance to change. And if coming back to seeing her, that's something that I would be very, very tempted to say to her, that "there is always a chance to change and a chance to redeem yourself and to change your life," and that's what I would say to her if I could talk to her about it. Because I would really hate for her to go that far as to end her life because she felt so bad about what she did. She did something horrific, no doubt about it, but still, I would still say to her, "You know, you can change." You know, it's all about choices, it's all about, you know, [and] what are you choosing to do. (Lou)

I would say that. If there was something that she could do to repair the harm that she did, that's what I would say to her, tell her story, tell people why she was drinking, what happened to her and why she was drinking and how it affected us. And we could share our story, yeah. And then we would share our story, and I would do that. (Lou/Linda)

If I were to meet them today, I would say, "What are you—are you drinking? But what are you doing for your life so that you have a better life?" That's my—and it's because of my work here probably. Most of my other siblings might not feel the same way, right? (Sheila)

He was so drunk, he couldn't tell me anything about it anyway, for that piece. And if you ask someone, "Are you going to change? Are you going to do this again?" they're going to give you the institutional answers, whether they mean it or not. I think you would hope that they do have remorse but you'll never know for sure, and I think there are some great actors out there, so even if you do feel that it's remorseful, I've worked with criminals enough that you get duped, even if you're very experienced with them. (Amy)

Summary

Participants expressed a number of feelings towards the offenders that ranged from outright hatred to forgiveness and even sympathy. In at least one case, the participant was largely uninterested in the offender or the offender's status. However, many participants did see some benefit to having a face-to-face meeting with the offender at some point in time.

When asked about their willingness to participate in such a meeting, some participants indicated that if given the chance, they would take part in such a meeting immediately, while some said they might be willing to meet at some in the future. Other participants were adamant that they would never take part in such a meeting, either due to their intense feelings towards the offender and/or because they could see no benefit in it.

For those willing to take part in a meeting, it was sometimes seen as part of the healing process, whereas other participants identified that they would use such a meeting to ensure the offender was fully aware of the damage they had caused. Some participants also suggested that they would use the meeting to ask questions and to gain information that they felt was not otherwise available to them.

Basic Theme 6: Fundamental Changes Required

A significant number of participants discussed the need for change with respect to impaired driving, including how it is viewed by society and how the aftermath of these kinds of events are handled.

Issue: Offender consequences should impact society's views

Participants suggested that current sentencing does not reflect society's views towards impaired driving, nor does it send the appropriate message to the offender.

That's what we were sort of pushing for. Let's get a severe enough sentence to make an impact on Saskatchewan because Saskatchewan has got such lousy -- and I didn't know Saskatchewan had such a lousy rate of impaired driving until my kids were killed, I didn't know that. (Lou)

The punishment is, it doesn't matter so much because it doesn't replace any, you know, it doesn't replace your loved one. But at the same time it does send a message, hopefully it should send a message, but sometimes that's the only thing it does to certain people. (Melanie)

Until people start getting wrung up for doing things like Catherine McKay did, the guy who gets his second and his third impaired charge. He's just obviously not getting the message. Until, you know, okay, this is your third impaired charge. You're 27. License is gone for life. It is a privilege. It's not your right as a Canadian to have a driver's license. You obviously are not getting the message. You don't value what you're—you don't value life. (Angie)

Issue: The need for a fundamental change in how society views impaired driving

Participants strongly expressed the view that while deterring people from drinking and driving is important, changing broader societal views would be more effective.

It is unreal. And like, hearing stories, like even my husband, he grew up, you know, on a farm and this and that, and I mean, you know, 16, 17 year old and they're booze cruising. Like, they're—and that's the culture. (Alana)

We've done a few projects with them [MADD] over the last couple years. And, and I don't know, you think you're starting to make some progress and then you get, the numbers come out the other day. It's just like you slap your head thinking, "Well, what the hell is wrong with people?" (Allan)

It's almost like they got rewarded for his bad behaviour. Yeah, and I was telling you guys earlier about the nepotism in my community. They named an award after him, the drinking, and driver. Like, I don't know, I can't get it. (Shirley)

Nobody ever sets out to drink and drive and hurt somebody, nobody ever does. But alcohol impairs your judgment, right? So you don't ever even plan maybe on drinking and driving but you have that one extra one and then all of a sudden buddy over there buys another round and then you've had too much and you think, "Well, I'm okay. I can drive home," and especially in Saskatchewan. (Allan)

It just bothers me and breaks my heart that they're not trying to promote it more with our young people. Like, we just had another graduation and there wasn't even no—like, we just lost two boys last year really close to grad to drinking and driving. And they would have had a big spiel about it. (Shirley)

It baffles me how—I don't know—as a province, as a country, that we're not—we're not really doing everything we can to help prevent this. (Alana)

Issue: The potential for victims to be strong advocates in reducing impaired driving

Participants pointed out that they and other victims who have experienced these types of traumas have the potential to be credible and motivated advocates for changing society's views on impaired driving.

Like if I could, didn't have to work, I would be banging down doors, I would be on every politician, I would be after our minister to try, and—I would be sitting there writing every day trying to think of different rights that we should have that would be …Yeah, I would be an advocate. (Alex)

I guess for me, it's like, that's where I want to make a change, and that's where I want to fight, and I want to be present and I want to be a part of a possible change. (Alana)

That's why I said we are going to fight and go out there. Whatever organization that wants to listen to us, we are willing to do it. (Marilou)

I want to bring MADD into my community full force if I could and, like, have check stops on my reserve and whatever I could. And if I could even run Operation Red Nose sometimes around Christmas, just to promote alcohol—drinking and driving in any way. I would be happy to volunteer anywhere I could. (Shirley)

I'm sure it [my work] impacts my life in terms of victims and giving them a voice. Absolutely, I think it has impacted my need to have balance in my work. Like, got an offender, got a victim. There has to be, you know, balance. So I definitely know that being a victim of that and other things, that I was never given a voice, that this has helped me have that understanding. (Sheila)

Issue: Participants' willingness to use their tragedy to raise awareness

Participants generally expressed the desire to use their loved ones' stories to raise awareness and influence societal views on impaired driving; in many cases, they've already done so.

But the bottom line is, things have to be changed in the system. And there is more to it than just the accident and how it has affected us. (Linda)

That's what I would like to see. I would like to see it kept in the forefront. And if that means showing my son's picture on advertising all over the province, and his family all over the province, then I will keep it out there. (Lou)

The only thing that keeps us going is my son, James, because, you know, that's all we have. And that's what I would be doing and this is exactly why I opened my doors to you to come in, because I am hoping that we're going to get some good results from this. And just the same with—I'm not sure if you have seen the advertisement for SGI? (Alex)

If you knew Danille, she would, if it was any one of us should be fighting for the cause, right. And it didn't take us very long to realize that we wanted to get involved by trying to make a change. (Allan)

That summer after it happened, so 2015, I was at, I was going to … with the semi and we had to get some work done on it… Anyway, right when we went past that spot … I came upon this truck with an ad sign on it with this Michael Knox … I passed it to see what and saw that it was Wescan … and I pulled over so I could see that … So then we pursued that as well, like I phoned them and I said, "I saw this truck." … And I said, "I saw this truck" and "Are they doing it?" and they weren't doing it anymore at that point or didn't know if they were going to renew, but then about a year later they were in negotiations and decided to and decided to use Danille, so that's good. (Melanie)

I'm really getting in touch with [name removed], and there's another lady. I've been emailing them, phoning them, and they're actually going to make a banner for Kenneth that I can put up in my band office, a MADD banner that has his picture and his life story on it. Plus, of course, some more promotion on my part, and I'm going to hang it up right on the [health] side of the band office and—hoping they'll get kind of the same idea. (Shirley)

Issue: Practical solutions to impaired driving

Participants had many practical ideas about things that could be done now—or are being done now—to either change behaviors or create awareness to those that might not be getting the message.

If you are at a bar and you are drinking, I would like to have it set up in every bar where "You turn in your keys to the bartender and I'll buy you your last three drinks" or something. Like how do you get people to hand over their keys, right? (Chad)

I told the Justice Minister, I said, "Manitoba has a…" -- they implemented this, if you don't, if you have an older vehicle you cannot register that vehicle unless you have an anti-theft system in it, right? So what the Manitoba government did is they said, "Okay, if you don't have that system in and you (INAUDIBLE), we will give you half and you give us half to the cost and we will have it done." Stolen vehicles went down I think it was 80%. (Alex)

It is harder in the country to plan ahead and make sure that you—like even this party, the staff party here tonight, right, like what are people thinking? Like it's out of town but most people are driving from different places, Saskatoon, Outlook and everything anyway, right? But you have to plan and you have to come with somebody else. (Melanie)

And people have asked me, "So you mean to tell me that if your dad got behind the wheel drunk and left your house, you would phone the cops?" I said, "Yes, I would." I would have three years ago. I most definitely would do it now without even thinking. Maybe three years ago, I would have thought [ergh] and—but still did it. (Amy)

SGI is trying to be a little bit more impactful with their—with their ad campaigns and their commercials, which of course, I appreciate, and they are powerful. But again, it's because it's happened to me. And then I think, how is this impacting somebody else that?— I—that's why I feel as though we need to look at sentencing, because how much longer do you wait? How many more campaigns do you have to try to initiate, right, when people still aren't getting the message? (Alana)

I'm still going to work with MADD and my community and bring it up and—they said they're going to have a couple of check stops there that I could be involved with and stuff like that. So they have monthly meetings. So I could be a part of that. And they said I could bring my family as well. So I think we'll take part in that. (Shirley)

Right on their keychain it has a picture of some of their family members and some of their phone numbers, people that love you, and the idea is when you get your keys out of your pocket at the end of the day when you have had enough to drink and you look at them and, "Oh, shit. I shouldn't drive. I should phone them," one of those eight numbers on there. He was thinking about that last year. (Chad)

Summary

Participants clearly articulated that fundamental changes are required to prevent future tragedies due to impaired driving. They pointed out that while there is a general condemnation of impaired driving, the penalties and sentences imposed by the courts do not seem to reflect the severity of the crime. Furthermore, there is still acceptance of this behaviour and a failure to recognize how serious the act of driving while impaired truly is. Many of the participants referenced their own recollections of people tolerating impaired driving and in some cases even encouraging it.

Participants also pointed out that victims of impaired driving have the potential to be powerful advocates for this cause and are probably underutilized at present. The majority of participants indicated a strong willingness to become advocates if given the opportunity.

Lastly, participants identified a number of things that could be done now to reduce impaired driving incidents such as making it mandatory for intoxicated patrons to turn over their car keys to bartenders, installing breath control devices on cars, helping people to better plan for their safe ride home, reporting suspected impaired drivers, conducting more police check stops, and imposing harsher

penalties. Participants felt strongly that change is needed, pointing out that current interventions are not working and that more drastic action is clearly required.

Organizing Theme 5: The Desire for Change - Summary

Participants reflected on the events leading up to the collisions and identified things that could have been done to prevent these tragedies. Friends, families, by-standers, and in some cases, organizations, all missed opportunities that might have changed the course of events on the days their loved ones were killed. Participants felt strongly that the deaths of their loved ones were preventable.

Many participants reported trying to search for something positive in the midst of their tragedy. Involvement in the organ donation program and advocacy work provided a way for families to constructively influence circumstances that were otherwise marked by sadness and negativity.

Feedback also suggested that governments and government-funded support programs, such as Victim Services, need a better understanding of who the victims of these events are. The participants recognized that "victim" is a difficult term to define but pointed out that the trauma experienced from impaired driving events reach far beyond the individuals who died. These victims suffer mentally, emotionally, financially, and sometimes physically, often over extended periods of time. Victim support systems need to recognize that trauma is not one-size-fits-all and does not always occur within the traditional idea of immediate family. Participants felt strongly that the definition of victim needs to be expanded and victim support services be provided accordingly.

Additionally, participants shared their frustration with what they considered to be lenient sentences handed down by the courts. Feedback identified the need for offenders to be fully accountable for their actions. In many instances, participants expressed that the sentence did not match the severity of the crime. This discussion also pointed out that the sentences for these offenders should act as deterrents to the public, noting that harsher sentences may help to discourage people from drinking and driving.

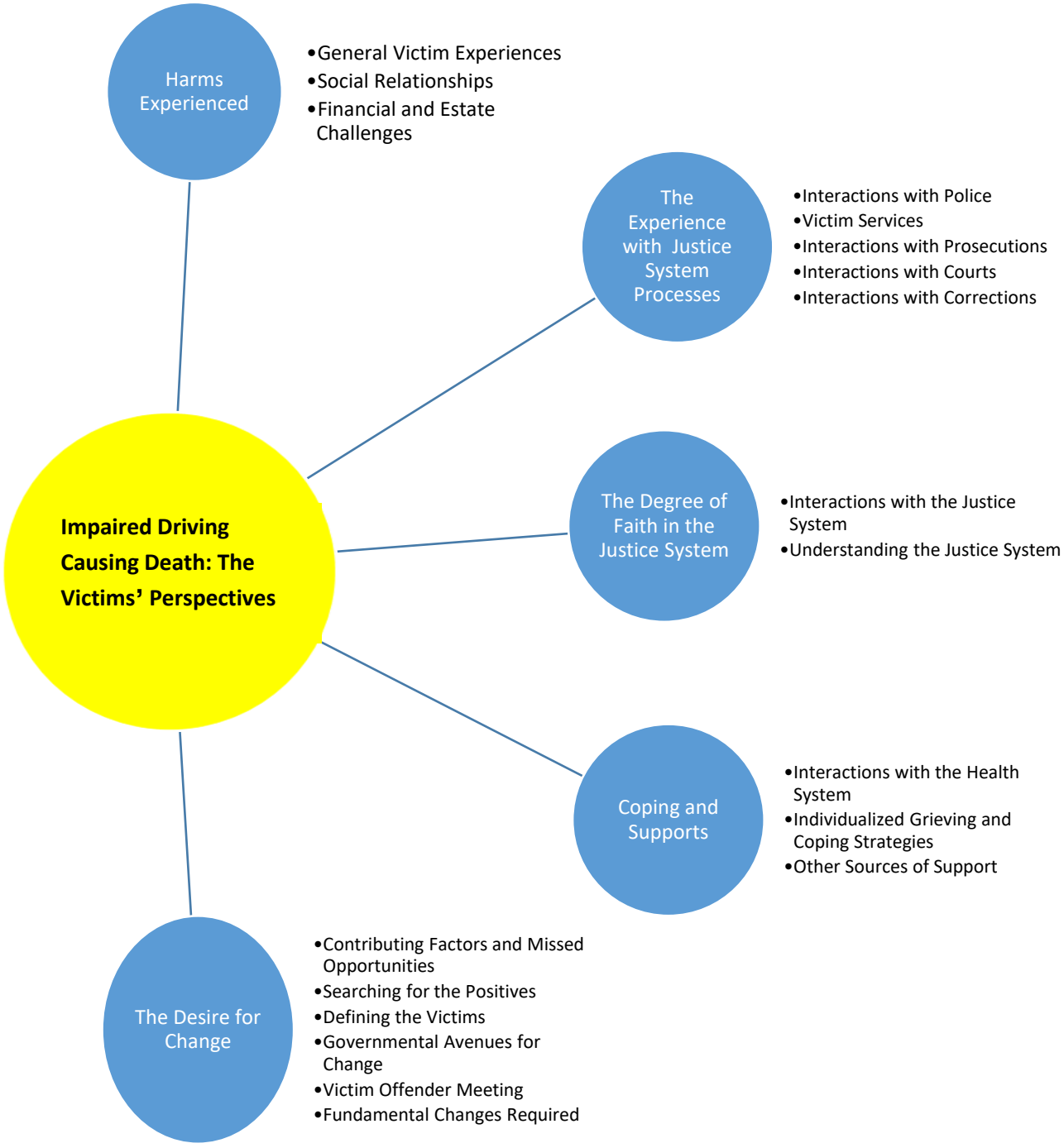
Participants pointed out the need for change in terms of societal opinions with regards to impaired driving. They suggested that there still seems to be a level of socially-acceptable drinking and driving in Saskatchewan, which hinders ongoing prevention and advocacy work. Participants felt strongly that this perspective must be changed. To achieve this change and prevent future tragedies, participants identified some key components to evoking real change in the province including providing victims of impaired driving with a greater voice and a platform to advocate for change. Many felt that by sharing their tragedy with others, young and old, they may be able to create a deeper, more personalized sense of awareness. In some cases, participants also indicated a willingness to do this in cooperation with the

offender. They noted that perhaps their stories may help to change the level of acceptance and nonchalant attitudes that many Saskatchewanians still have about having a few drinks and getting behind the wheel to drive.

Discussions about the value of a face-to-face meeting with the offender produced mixed results. While there was no unanimous agreement on the value of this type of encounter, some participants suggested it might have value from a restorative perspective and at the very least, may provide some cathartic benefits to the victims.

Participants also highlighted the need for governments to review policy regarding impaired driving laws and sentencing. Suggestions included harsher penalties and enforceable impaired driving laws as well as improved modelling of responsible behaviour by those with political power. In some cases, participants had direct contact with various political leaders after the event occurred. Responses varied, with some feeling optimistic that they had been heard and that changes would take place. However, in other instances, participants felt that there was little interest on the part of political representatives to take the necessary and drastic steps to truly address the issue of impaired driving.

Figure 3. Thematic Map



4.6. Global Theme: Impaired Driving Causing Death – The Victim's Perspective

By sharing their stories, each participant had an opportunity to provide significant insight into the realities of impaired driving. Each participant's experience of trauma incurred by impaired driving is represented in the five organizing themes shared in this report. While unanimity is not present on all issues, analysis of the interviews generated many common observations that helped to derive the content of this report and highlight the key issues that were of utmost importance to participants.

Following the loss of their loved ones, all the participants described the immense grief and loss they experienced and continue to experience. Although the trauma manifested a little differently for each individual, many key areas of their lives were affected in varying degrees. Many experienced significant disruptions to their mental/emotional health, physical health, social relationships, and financial stability. Likewise, each participant reported various means of coping including reliance on friends and family, counselling, religious or spiritual beliefs, and advocacy work. Some participants also identified the unhealthy ways of coping, such as drinking to escape the pain, that they had witnessed in their families.

With regards to effective supports, the majority of participants felt strongly that current Victim Services programs were not responsive to the needs of victims, and more importantly, did not account for the diverse group of victims affected by these traumatic events. Although some participants were able to access limited support through Victim Services, many had to seek out other forms of supports services to ensure they received the necessary assistance. Access to these individualized supports depended on location, financial circumstances, personal preferences, and culture. In some cases, participants depended on their social and familial relationships which, unfortunately, were also strained by the tragedy.

Participants' experiences with the justice system and the processes therein were varied and highlighted many challenges. Some participants reported positive relationships with various components of the justice system, including the police, prosecutors, and correctional personnel. The positive experiences of victims correlated to situations where justice system representatives showed compassion, empathy, and understanding and provided adequate and timely information. However, in other cases, these relationships were very strained and, in fact, became another source of stress for the victims. For these participants, they felt unheard and uninformed and, in some instances, re-victimized. This sense of disregard and exclusion was prominent among participants' experiences with the court system. Many felt that the courts were more concerned with the experiences of the offenders and that the memory of their loved ones had been trivialized. They also felt excluded from the court process, particularly in instances where the families were not adequately informed or prepared by prosecutors. Furthermore, participants were very disappointed about Victim Impact Statements. While most of the participants provided these statements, they felt they did not have significant influence on sentencing; in fact, participants felt they were not truly useful in evoking any sense of accountability on the part of the

offender. They also remarked on the restrictive rules associated with developing their statements, recalling many instances where they were told to revise or remove certain parts of their testimonies. As a result, many of the participants questioned the value of Victim Impact Statements, particularly given the emotional trauma experienced in preparing and delivering them to the courts.

During the interview process, several participants struggled with the influence that culture and ancestry had in the sentencing of the offenders. The Supreme Court of Canada's Gladue decision was specifically referenced. Participants readily acknowledged that Aboriginal people had been impacted by historic injustices, such as residential schools, and remain marginalized in many respects, but they struggled to make the connection between those events and the choices the offenders made that led to tragic outcomes. Other participants felt cultural history did play a role in the offenders' neglectful choices and inferred that it should be considered if offenders are to be expected to make meaningful changes in their lives.

In terms of the role of government, participants clearly expressed the ability and the need for public officials to do to more to not only prevent impaired driving, but also to improve services and supports for those individuals and families that have been affected by such traumas. This included the need to review the definition of "victim" to include a broader description of people affected by these tragedies. Furthermore, participants questioned the responsiveness of Victim Services supports, raising the need for a review of policies and procedures both in urban and rural settings across the province. Participants identified gaps in service and felt it is the government's responsibility to ensure victims are receiving adequate support and being appropriately linked with services in their communities.

While most participants agreed that governments should continue to build on their preventative strategies, they also acknowledged the need for victims to have a stronger influence in the creation of such strategies. Most participants indicated an interest in using their experience to change the way people view impaired driving. Some even suggested they would be willing to work with the offender in a public outreach capacity. Participants also identified weaknesses in existing legislation, suggesting that sentences given to offenders should better reflect the seriousness of their actions. Participants felt strongly that harsher sentences could potentially impact behaviour, making society more aware of the significant consequences of impaired driving.

Overall, participants used the interviews as a way to evoke change and create awareness, not only for the loved ones they lost, but also for themselves and the growing community of victims who have been affected by impaired driving. The opportunity to give voice to their experiences and to share their stories was incredibly important given that so many of the participants shared a sense of powerlessness during the trauma and subsequent events. Despite the lifelong grieving process the participants and their families will endure, each was hopeful that contributing their experience would provide a

perspective that has been historically underreported and inadvertently disregarded. The process of sharing and learning from each of these tragedies provides an invaluable source of evidence that has the potential to change the way we think and respond to impaired driving and the many individuals and families that are left to suffer the aftermath of these events.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on the themes that emerged from the analysis of interviews with participants. They reflect participants' collective experiences and desires for change to reduce the trauma for other victims. The recommendations are provided in no particular order of importance.

Recommendation 1: Victim Support

Secondary victimization due to impaired driving results in significant harms and affects families in multiple and diverse ways. Victim services legislation and practices must reflect a much broader understanding of who victims are and what their needs might be.

a) Develop a broad and inclusive definition of "victim" that is consistent with the definition provided by the *Canadian Victim Bill of Right*s.

b) Ensure that support services are extended to meet the individual needs of victims for the duration that is deemed necessary by the victims.

c) Recognize culturally appropriate avenues for support.

d) Ensure that Victim Service support workers are proactive in reaching out to, and engaging with, all potential victims.

e) Establish a network of professionals that can ameliorate the range of harms experienced by victims such as emotional/psychological, social, and financial harms.

Recommendation 2: Death Notification Process

As part of the death notification process, police should ensure that immediate supports are in place for victims (circumstances and time permitting).

a) To ensure such supports are available on site, police should develop working relationships with the appropriate support service agencies.

Recommendation 3: Victim Education

Provide educational opportunities to victims to assist their understanding and navigation of judicial processes thereby establishing realistic expectations around case law and precedence.

Recommendation 4: Communication and Information

Establish a clear and consistent mode of communication with victims to ensure they have accurate and timely case information throughout the entire justice system process.

Recommendation 5: Support for First Responders and Case Personnel

Recognize that first responders and judicial personnel may also experience trauma as a result of their involvement with a case and ensure that support services are provided to them as needed.

Recommendation 6: Victim Impact Statements

Review the Victim Impact Statement process from inception to delivery, particularly with regards to support and information that victims require when drafting and potentially delivering statements. It is critical to involve victims in this review process.

a) Ensure victims understand the role of their statements and the associated limitations with respect to sentencing.

Recommendation 7: Restorative Practices

Explore the possibility of post-judicial restorative practices where offenders and victims have the opportunity to interact and, where appropriate, perhaps work together on preventative programs.

Recommendation 8: Prevention

Engage in a review of impaired driving cases to assess missed opportunities for prevention. This would provide information on preventable mistakes and events leading to tragedies and help to determine different levels and kinds of accountability.

Recommendation 9: Victims' Role in Prevention

Recognize the value of victims in the development and promotion of impaired driving prevention measures.

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