



2023 British Columbia **JUSTICE SUMMIT**

Strengthening Partnerships
for a Safer British Columbia

Report of Proceedings

November 24, 2023

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Executive Summary

The fifteenth BC Justice Summit, *Strengthening Partnerships for a Safer British Columbia*, was held online via Microsoft Teams on November 24, 2023. It involved roughly 105 participants from across the justice and public safety sector and provided an opportunity to discuss the on-the-ground realities of cross-sectoral initiatives and partnerships in addressing challenges facing the sector. This Report of Proceedings outlines the 2023 Justice Summit's overall agenda, summarizes the ideas that emerged from discussions during the Summit, and identifies four recurring themes. The 2023 Summit consisted of three sessions, each one comprised of an information-sharing session followed by a time period dedicated to open discussion and dialogue. Each session was based around a topic at the forefront of public discourse relating to access, safety, and security, and allowed participants a forum to discuss the successes and challenges of collaborative work. The three sessions were:

- 1) **Collaborative Approaches to Addressing Homelessness in British Columbia.**
- 2) **Safer Communities Action Plan – Partnership in Response.**
- 3) **BC First Nations Justice Strategy – Reconciliation Through Partnership.**

Common and overlapping themes that emerged from discussions across the whole Justice Summit include:

- **Individualized Support:** Acknowledgement that support solutions are to be tailored to specific contexts across urban and rural/northern settings in BC.
- **Trauma-Informed Responses:** The ongoing need for trauma-informed and gender-based violence training when responding to people experiencing homelessness or in distress or crisis, and when ensuring Indigenous access to Justice.
- **Meaningful Collaboration and Partnerships:** That meaningful and effective cross-sectoral collaboration is required to address the complex and compounding social issues that shape the safety and well-being of communities across the province.

- **Services:** That people with an array of challenges require significantly more support to obtain the help that they need in a timely and effective fashion, and that programs directed at these clients are going to be necessarily resource heavy; it remains important to ensure agencies have the capacity to meaningfully collaborate and provide integrated, tailored services to help these individuals.

The 2023 Justice Summit provided an opportunity for government to highlight new and ongoing priority programs dealing with housing and homelessness, with safer communities, and with the BC First Nations Justice Strategy, and to explore further how cross-sectorial partnership is key to addressing ongoing challenges in the justice and public safety sector.

Introduction

Background to the Summit Process

The 2013 *Justice Reform and Transparency Act* (the Act) requires that a British Columbia Justice Summit be convened annually by Ministerial invitation. Summits are intended to encourage sector innovation and collaboration by providing a forum for frank discussion between sector leaders about how the system is performing and how it may be improved. Past Justice Summit Reports of Proceedings are available on the [BC Justice Reform website](#).

The Justice Summit maintains the principles of non-partisanship, non-attribution, and respect for organizational and statutory independence. Therefore, participant contributions are not attributed to specific individuals or organizations. Members of the Judiciary do attend the Justice Summit, but because of the courts' independent role, judges and judicial staff participate in the Summit as observers and do not comment on, endorse, or suggest policy choices, recommendations, or other substantive matters.

The 2023 Justice Summit

The 2023 Justice Summit was the fifteenth Summit held since 2013. The day-long event was held online via Microsoft Teams on November 24, 2023 and was facilitated by Megan Harris, Assistant Deputy Minister, Policing and Security Branch, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General. It involved roughly 105 participants from across the justice and public safety sector, including the Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General and the Attorney General, as well as members of the Judiciary, members of the public service, non-profit and access to justice organizations, law firms, Indigenous partners, academia, and human rights organizations.

This Report of Proceedings captures some recurring and common themes that emerged from the Summit discussions. It provides the justice and public safety sector with an opportunity to identify priorities for its organizations and opportunities for collaborative work. The Summit, discussion topics therein, and this Report of Proceedings were developed by the Justice Summit Coordination Team in collaboration with the Justice and Public Safety Council.

2023 Summit Theme: Strengthening Partnerships for a Safer British Columbia

The 2023 Justice Summit's theme emerged from expanding public focus on issues of public safety in the province in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, in response to increased media attention on repeat violent offenders, and amid an ongoing toxic drug crisis. In November 2022, the BC Government announced a multi-jurisdictional series of programs to address these issues called the "Safer Communities Action Plan" (SCAP). Recognizing that public safety is a complex sociopolitical issue with diverse causes and effects, SCAP is purposefully collaborative in scope and necessitates cross-ministerial partnerships to tackle complex social issues.

Taking place roughly one year after SCAP's announcement, the 2023 Justice Summit offered an opportunity for government to highlight new and ongoing priority programs and to receive input from key partners and communities on addressing challenges in the justice and public safety sector.

Summit Objectives

Feedback from participants of previous Justice Summits indicated a growing desire to prioritize educational or informative content, communicate new programs, and enable opportunities to provide feedback to government. The 2023 Summit was strategically designed to accommodate this feedback by creating a forum for conversation and reflection on the practicalities of sectoral partnerships: a discussion on how collaboration can enable agencies to better administer their services while acknowledging challenges. In light of its theme, the Summit would also provide partners with an opportunity to build connections and further facilitate communication between agencies, planting the seeds for future partnerships.

The Summit's agenda was organized around information sharing sessions that provided perspectives from organizations addressing justice and community safety from three different perspectives:

1. Housing, homelessness, and encampment response
2. The Safer Communities Action Plan (SCAP)
3. Indigenous Peoples access to justice

These three topics were identified because each is at the forefront of public discourse relating to access, safety, and security, and each presents an opportunity to discuss how working with communities can address justice sector challenges in innovative ways. The Summit would allow sector partners an environment to frankly discuss coordinated responses to dealing with homelessness and encampments, attending to citizens in crisis, ensuring community safety, and increasing access to justice.

Summit Format

The 2023 Justice Summit was delivered virtually using Microsoft Teams as a conference platform and was the third Summit successfully held online. The virtual Summit allowed for participants from across the province to easily attend the event and contribute to Summit discussions. The online Summit paralleled previous in-person events and involved larger plenary sessions as well as virtual breakout-rooms that allow for simultaneous group discussions.

The 2023 Summit also asked Anishinaabe Elder James Taylor, Otter Clan from Curve Lake First Nation Indian Reserve No. 35, to provide opening and closing ceremonies for the Summit. To align with efforts building towards reconciliation, the Summit sees traditional greetings and territory acknowledgements as enabling a wider community to share in Indigenous protocols and connecting participants with the traditional territories in which they live and work. Elder James Taylor was also invited to participate in discussions throughout the day. Recognizing that the Summit necessarily involves frank and honest conversations about difficult topics, Elder James Taylor was also present to provide private culturally appropriate support to Summit participants should they require it. The Attorney General, the Honourable Niki Sharma, K.C., provided opening remarks for the Summit and Facilitator Megan Harris called the Summit to order. The Summit consisted of the three sessions outlined in this Report. The Summit wrapped up with a brief session in which attendees could share their overall observations and thoughts on the Summit, including considerations for future Summit planning. Closing remarks were given by the Deputy Attorney General, Barbara Carmichael, K.C., who is also the Chair of the Justice and Public Safety Council.

Sessions

The three sessions provided case studies of cross-sectoral responses to complex and difficult policy issues and elaborated on the opportunities and challenges of collaborative, multi-agency initiatives. The three sessions consisted of:

- 1) A presentation on cross-ministerial collaborative efforts from the province, local governments, and various service providers to address issues related to housing and homelessness in British Columbia.
- 2) A presentation surveying the province's Safer Communities Action Plan followed by a panel discussion on the ground-level realities of the Plan. Panelists involved senior managers responsible for specific initiatives. The panel discussion format was necessary to capture the wide focus of the Safer Communities Action Plan.
- 3) A presentation by the Indigenous Justice Secretariat and the BC First Nations Justice Council on the BC First Nations Justice Strategy (the Strategy), which demonstrates sectoral partnership in action. Importantly, the Strategy directly supports safer communities, and the expansion of Indigenous Justice Access Centres, a program initiated by the Strategy, is also a major part of the Safer Communities Action Plan.

Summit Discussions

Summit discussions were designed to seek perspectives from participants with respect to their experiences as justice and public safety sector leaders. In order to provide the best forum for frank discussion, participants were divided into smaller groups and placed into distinct breakout rooms. Each breakout room was facilitated by volunteer staff from across the Ministries of the Attorney General and Public Safety and Solicitor General and were assigned a notetaker. Each panel provided questions that drove the breakout room conversations. There was a total of eight breakout rooms for each of the first two sessions, making sixteen total breakout sessions. The discussions summarized below are aggregated from the notes taken during the breakout rooms and reflect responses to the questions posed by panelists and the natural conversations that emerged on the day.

For the third session Q&A, discussions were directed by participants asking the presenters questions about the BC First Nations Justice Strategy and how interested organizations can offer support in advancing the Strategy across justice and public safety initiatives. The Q&A was facilitated by staff members from the BC First Nations Justice Council and the Ministry of the Attorney General's Indigenous

Justice Secretariat. The summary below is derived from notes taken during this session.

The discussions summarized by this report are a synthesis of notes taken during Justice Summit discussions. Not all participants contributed to all discussions. No inference of consensus (or majority opinion) should be made by the reader on any individual point, as no specific mechanism was employed by facilitators to determine the breakdown of opinion. Similarly, participants' ideas are represented here with the sole intent of providing an accurate account of the Summit's discussions. No analysis was performed on the accuracy of any assertion of fact.

Session 1: Collaborative Approaches to Addressing Homelessness in British Columbia

Session 1 featured four presenters from the Ministry of Housing, BC Housing, Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, and Ministry of Health that work together to address the increasing number of homeless encampments across the province.

Panel Members

Jennifer Miller, Executive Director – Engagement and Encampment Response Branch, Homelessness, Partnerships and Housing Supports Division, Ministry of Housing

Allison Dunnet, Executive Director and Strategic Advisor on Homelessness, BC Housing

Daryn Martiniuk, Executive Director, Community Integration Services, Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction

Roxanne Blemings, Senior Director, MHSU Programs and Services, Mental Health and Substance Use Division, Ministry of Health

Presentation Summary

Homelessness has increased in numbers and complexity across British Columbia, with more people sheltering in tent, vehicle, and structure encampments. This trend is the product of various intersecting issues, such as increasing housing costs, poverty, and systemic racism and discrimination, which make every person's experience of homelessness unique. Within this context, solutions to homelessness require collaborative actions from a range of partners, including the Province of BC, regional health authorities, local governments, and non-profit service providers.

This session focused on the Homeless Encampment Action Response Team (HEART) and the Homeless Encampment Action Response Temporary Housing (HEARTH), new programs created by the Province under the Belonging in BC Homelessness Plan. These new programs aspire to align with and support community partners in order to create and sustain effective systems for preventing and resolving encampments and homelessness.

Discussion Questions

- 1) What are the key opportunities and challenges related to coordinated responses to encampments?
- 2) What should Provincial partners consider as we advance new initiatives related to homelessness and encampments?

Summary of Discussions

The following section provides a synthesis of the discussions that occurred across all eight breakout rooms. They are not recommendations, but observations and insights shared by Summit participants. Notes taken during the breakout sessions were consolidated and analyzed to form the following points. This summary should not be interpreted as representing consensus amongst Justice Summit participants, nor as compelling action from organizations. Rather, this section is intended to summarize the discussions had by participants in response to the questions asked of them.

Opportunities Identified:

- Proactively preventing homelessness by engaging in early conflict management, preventing evictions, and improving access to timely dispute resolutions that keep people housed.
- The visibility of homeless encampments provides opportunities for targeted outreach and specific action based on the needs and characteristics of that target group in concert with the interests of local residents.
- Bringing empowering experiences to encampments through drumming or singing and reinforcing Indigenous practices to teach individuals of their worth and the availability of alternative paths to justice.
- Communicating the visible progress being made to address homelessness in the province, which is essential to correct public perception that nothing is being done to improve on the situation.
- Coordination, which involves working with individuals in encampments and provincial partners to find solutions and alternatives. The discussants emphasized the importance of continuing the coordination efforts and building trust and rapport with the homeless population.
- Virtual bail, a new initiative that allows accused persons to be bailed from their home communities rather than being transported to a courthouse, can help with displacement challenges and reduce the risk of homelessness for some people.

Challenges Identified:

- Poor data sharing hinders the coordination and collaboration among different government departments and agencies. Statutory and legislative barriers, as well as Freedom of Information provisions, also prevent the sharing of information and data.
- Housing restrictions limit the options available to the homeless population, especially those suffering from mental illness or addictions. Unhoused clients stay in encampments because a lack of options, because encampments offer a sense of community connection, or because they do not meet the criteria or conditions of the available housing.
- Need for transitional facilities (from medical or correctional institutions back into communities) and consistent access to mental health services are major barriers for marginalised individuals to obtain the help required during a crisis. Long waitlists delay the access and delivery of essential services such as mental health care, housing, and addictions treatment. This can lead to increased risk of conflict and law enforcement involvement.
- The paradox of wanting/needing government help but not trusting the government was a notable theme during discussions. Government help is seen by some as reduced autonomy, and there also is a history of perceived government hostility towards people in encampments.
- Difficult for support to flow to individuals when organizations work in silos and service providers are fragmented.
- Questions of urgency and immediacy: there remains a need to recognize the urgency of individuals seeking assistance and to recognize the need for supports that are equally responsive to these immediate requests for assistance.
- Violence in encampments continues to pose a threat to the safety and well-being of the residents in encampments and in the surrounding communities.

Consideration for future initiatives related to homelessness and encampments:

- Scenarios and projects where partnerships and resource sharing have worked in other jurisdictions could be used as case studies or as pilots in B.C.
- How initiatives might be applied differently in different contexts—i.e. in rural areas or remote communities as compared to urban municipalities—as each one has different needs, challenges, and resources.
- Additional/ongoing resources are required for people leaving encampments or transitioning from homelessness: providing shelter is only step one, and ongoing support is required, specifically for individuals with health, mental health, and addiction issues.
- Some encampments provide a sense of community and belonging: these social supports should be considered in any homelessness initiative.
- Housing affordability and housing availability remain systemic causes of homelessness and encampments.
- Collaboration has always been challenging, and there are ongoing concerns with government silos and atomization of support, particularly post-COVID. Effort and interest need to be maintained to generate future collaborative, cross-sectoral initiatives.

Session 2: Safer Communities Action Plan – Partnership in Response

Session 2 featured a brief presentation followed by a discussion by four panelists from the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions and Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, and an RCMP Superintendent. The discussion centered around Safer Communities Action Plan initiatives, highlighting key opportunities and challenges of working together to build safer communities.

Panel Members

Overview presentation by **Darrion Campbell**, Executive Director, Policing and Security Branch, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General

Panel Discussion featuring:

Tricia Poilievre, Executive Director, Complex Care Housing & Adult Mental Health, Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions

Blair Spencer, Director, Repeat Violent Offending Intervention Initiative, Corrections Branch, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General

Ali Bajwa, Senior Policy Analyst, Policing and Security Branch, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General

Superintendent Shawna Baher, RCMP, M.O.M., Officer in Charge, Vernon/North Okanagan Detachment

Panel facilitated by **Brian Sims**, Executive Director, Policing and Security Branch, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General

Presentation Summary

In November 2022, Government announced the Safer Communities Action Plan (SCAP) to strengthen enforcement to keep those who commit repeat violent offences off our streets, as well as to strengthen services to build safe, healthy communities for everyone. SCAP initiatives respond to a rise in repeat violent offending linked to unintended impacts of federal law changes and subsequent Supreme Court decisions, and better deal with mental health and substance use challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic and the toxic drug crisis. SCAP initiatives work to make communities safer under two tracks: enforcement and intervention. Each initiative is structured to improve co-ordination and partnership between law enforcement, community service organizations, justice system actors, health providers, and people who are experiencing substance and mental health challenges, using a collaborative, coordinated approach.

This session focused on discussing opportunities and challenges, highlighting several of the key initiatives from both enforcement and intervention streams.

Panel Discussions

Panel discussions revolved around two primary concerns regarding coordinated response initiatives as part of the Safer Communities Action Plan. The first concern was the Repeat Violent Offending Intervention Initiative, which involves the BC Prosecution Service (Ministry of the Attorney General), along with BC Corrections and the Policing and Security Branch (PSB) from the Ministry of the Public Safety and Solicitor General. The second concern was integrated service solutions for people in distress or crisis.

The Repeat Violent Offending Intervention Initiative (ReVOII)

At the time of the Summit, ReVOII was 6 months into its implementation, so quantitative data about the program remains incomplete, but general observations/qualitative information on the program have so far been positive. The coordinated response initiative has so far increased communication and collaboration between police, dedicated prosecutors, and correctional officers by providing real time updates and by streamlining support to priority areas/clients. Information sharing remains a challenge, particularly when moving from core agencies to external partners, although info-sharing agreements do facilitate this process. An additional (and ongoing) challenge is that prioritized individuals exhibit a complex and compounding array of issues – such as mental health issues, substance use issues, and homelessness – and thus require more intensive services. There are still not enough of these intensive services to support all the clients identified by ReVOII.

Integrated Service Solutions for People in Distress

Panelists discussed Safer Community Action Plan initiatives that aim to expand coordinated efforts to provide trauma-informed and culturally safe support for people in crisis, and to identify or intervene in situations before they reach a point

of crisis. **Peer Assisted Care Teams (PACTs)** involve civilian-led teams of trained peers – such as mental health professionals – acting as primary responders to people in distress, rather than, or alongside, police. **Situation Tables** bring together front-line staff from the public safety, health, and social service sectors to identify high-risk individuals and connect them to services and supports they need before they enter into the justice system. **Mobile Crisis Response Units** (known as Cars) involve partnerships between local law enforcement or RCMP and regional health authorities that connect an officer with a health-care worker to respond to mental health-related calls.

As highlighted by the panel, increasing cases of people suffering from complex and compounding issues amidst toxic drug supply and homelessness crises means that police are increasingly responding to situations they are not prepared for. These programs are necessary now more than ever as they divert cases away from police and towards other intervening agencies who are better prepared to address some situations. This in turn enables police to focus on public safety concerns. The panelists indicated that, as is the case with the ReVOII program, information sharing can be challenging, particularly with external agencies. Another challenge is that there remains a gap in appropriate service supports available to smaller communities; this gap means that police still primarily engage with people in distress, although the police continue to develop protocol on how to adequately respond in these situations.

Discussion Questions

- 1) What are the gaps, particularly in the justice system, that you see in keeping communities safe? Where and what can we do more?
- 2) More broadly, what are the client groups and what is their demographic – How can we understand them better? What services would best serve them and the public, and improve outcomes?
- 3) When we think of Safer Communities, what should government keep the public informed on?

Summary of Discussions

The following section provides a synthesis of the discussions that occurred across all eight breakout rooms. They are not recommendations, but observations and insights shared by Summit participants. Notes taken during the breakout sessions were consolidated and analyzed to form the following points. This summary should not be interpreted as representing consensus amongst Justice Summit participants, nor as compelling action from organizations. Rather, this section is intended to summarize the discussions had by participants in response to the questions asked of them.

Existing Gaps in the Justice System

- There are gaps between protection/no contact orders and actual family protection, especially for women in precarious conditions. The justice system is seen as a one size fits all system that does not account for the diversity and complexity of cases. There are also issues of misinformation and fear of consequences for immigrants and refugees who experience violence.
- The Ministry of Attorney General is creating a new regulatory body for all lawmakers in the province, with the key driver of new access to family law and justice. The system is setting up a Navigator position to connect people to available resources. However, there are impacts such as the overburdening of community agencies, the need for legal advocates, gaps in access to legal advice, and pushback from some lawyers.
- The current justice system inherits the gaps from the previous systems, which have a colonial focus and do not necessarily consider the rights and needs of Indigenous communities. There remains a need to unpack the histories of both Indigenous and Settler Justice systems and to continue working with Indigenous communities to develop a suitable framework that integrates both. Participants also highlighted the overrepresentation of Indigenous community members in the justice system, and the barriers of intimidation and legal fees.
- There exist resourcing issues that affect the sustainability and effectiveness of programs and services. Discussants mentioned challenges of applying for grants, maintaining programs, delivering programs, recruiting and training

staff, and ensuring the safety of workers and clients. They also pointed out the role of social media in creating dangerous and vulnerable situations.

- There exist key gaps in services to the following client groups: people with addiction issues, newcomers into Canada, international students, elderly people, children and youth, and children aging out of care.
- The criminal justice system should not be the last stop for people with addiction issues, but rather there should be other supports and interventions.
- Restorative Justice initiatives were missing from the presentation, although the province is investing in restorative justice; there is a place for restorative justice in the work that is currently being undertaken around the issue of violent reoffending.

Better Understanding Client Groups

- Discussants suggested that SCAP should focus on including the following (but non-exhaustive) key demographic groups: victims of gender-based violence, mental health patients, people with traumatic brain injuries, people with substance abuse issues, those living with fetal alcohol syndrome, and vulnerable youth aging into adulthood.
- The system is seeing more people with severe, compounding challenges and for whom there isn't an easy, single solution. For these individuals, an integrated and dynamic approach is better.

Safer Communities and Communication

- Questions were raised as to how communication efforts should be prioritized across two different facets: wider government communications directed at the public and on communications directed at service users.
- Discussants commented on the different way that people receive information. An observation is that people access justice information primarily through media outlets, and social media, and not government websites or official reports.
- Negative messaging dominates media discussions of community safety; a challenge is not to counter but to cut through this negative messaging. One way to do this could be through public forums which enables direct interactions between government and communities. This would allow government to

respond to specific concerns and outline the need for considered responses to complex problems.

- Another possible tactic to cut through the negative messaging is to better communicate just how complex community safety is. There is no simple solution to making communities safer and improvement is necessarily slow because of the challenge of working across complex systems. Within this context, communication needs to highlight both the programs that do work effectively, and those that need improvement: to acknowledge the work that is being done and that still needs to be done.
- Communication needs to be better directed at the public who might need services: with a focus on where and how people can access programs. There needs to be easily accessible and available information on which organization provides which services, and where clients can find these services (recognizing that people do not necessarily find this information on government websites).
- It is important to have navigator roles for folks requiring support, or at least a clear, concise, and accessible process map for clients to better understand the services, teams, organizations, supports, referrals, programs, etc. that they engage with as they move through the system.
- Notably, a more informed community and easily accessible information will lead to decreased 911 calls.

Session 3: BC First Nations Justice Strategy – Reconciliation Through Partnership

Session 3 featured a presentation and Q&A session by the Indigenous Justice Secretariat and the BC First Nations Justice Council. This presentation focused on the partnership between these two organizations and encouraged participation, and action from ministries related to the BC First Nations Justice Strategy. It was emphasised that transformative change to the justice system requires

collaboration and action across ministries, and that the BCFNJC and the Indigenous Justice Secretariat exist to support involvement from all.

Presenters

Colleen Spier, K.C., Assistant Deputy Minister, Indigenous Justice Secretariat, Ministry of Attorney General

Amanda Carling, CEO, BC First Nations Justice Council

Q&A session facilitated by **Cathy Stock**, Executive Director, Indigenous Justice Secretariat, Ministry of Attorney General; and **Natalie Martin**, Director of Communications, BC First Nations Justice Council.

Presentation Summary

The BC First Nations Justice Strategy (the Strategy), signed March 6, 2020, was Indigenous-led and developed over two years by the BC First Nations Justice Council through consultation and engagement with BC First Nations Chiefs, leadership and communities, and Indigenous service providers, with input from key justice system partners participating at two Indigenous Justice Summits hosted by the Province. The 2020 Strategy reflects and advances the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action and is consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. It mandates the justice system and its partners to undertake systems change along two paths: reform of the current justice system, and restoration of First Nation legal traditions and structures.

Fully implemented, the Strategy will reduce the number of Indigenous people who become involved with the criminal justice system, improve the experience of those who do, increase the number of Indigenous people working within the justice system, and support First Nations to restore their justice systems and structures. The Strategy includes a commitment to the establishment of a Cross-Ministry Indigenous Justice Secretariat led by an Indigenous ADM under the leadership of the Ministry of Attorney General to lead the transformative work within government as identified within the Strategy.

This session touched on the partnership between the Indigenous Justice Secretariat and the BC First Nations Justice Council (BCFNJC) in the development of programs, services, and policies that align with the strategies, which are aimed at achieving reconciliation through transformative change in the justice system along the two tracks of change. There was a call to action for participation across government for ministries to do their part in advancing and implementing the components of the Strategy relevant to their mandates. BCFNJC offered ministries support through the Indigenous Justice Secretariat in reviewing the Strategy and identifying which calls to action can be addressed by which ministry. The invitation was extended to all participants to attend the 3rd Annual BC First Nations Justice Forum (April 8th, 9th, and 10th, 2024) in order to continue the pursuit of actions that the Strategy calls for.

Q & A Summary

Participants asked the panelists questions on concerns related to the sharing or communication of Gladue reporting when Indigenous people intersect with the justice system; how organizations can support the Indigenous Justice Strategy; and issues related to improving Indigenous access to justice.

On how Organizations can Support Implementation of the BC First Nations Justice Strategy

- Reporting tools are being developed for government ministries to report out on their progress to support and advance the BC First Nations Justice Strategy, and to highlight their successes..
- Organizations **MUST** become champions in their efforts to advance the BCFN Justice Strategy in a variety of ways: funding, information sharing, helping to provide referrals, and working in collaboration with the Indigenous Justice Centres and other public-facing services connected to the Strategy.
- Instances where policies are unclear—when culturally specific practices might interfere with the province’s privacy laws for instance—can be opportunities for collaboration with the BCFNJC to explore culturally-appropriate solutions. Organizations are encouraged to reach out to the BCFNJC and the Indigenous Justice Secretariat for support.

On Improving Indigenous Peoples' Access to Justice

- Current services available through legal aid are not serving clients or lawyers, and the system incentivizes guilty pleas. The BCFNJC is looking for lawyers interested in restorative justice and justice reform, and who are committed to working with Indigenous people.
- In all instances, a flexible and case-by-case approach is required to suit the needs of clients, by liaising with Native Courtworkers, Elders, or other out-of-court services.

Emergent Themes

The following section provides a synthesis of commonly raised ideas that were identified within the Justice Summit breakout discussions by the Justice Summit Coordination Team. Notes taken from the breakout room sessions, the panel discussion, and the Q & A were consolidated and analyzed to form the following aggregate themes. The following themes should not be interpreted as representing consensus amongst Justice Summit participants, nor as compelling action from organizations. Rather, this section is intended to summarize concepts that were prominently and/or frequently expressed by participants, categorized according to general topics for ease of reference. These themes are not mutually exclusive or collectively exhaustive.

Individualized Support

Many of the discussions outlined a need for responses and service offerings tailored to or emerging from their specific contexts. For instance, urban centres have different needs than rural or northern locations. Additionally, the resources and supports available to responders and agencies in these different settings are vastly different. Discussions also outlined how support programs also need to be tailored based on the client types that they are targeting to ensure that those clients get the specific support that they require. For discussants, there remains a need for community engagement and consultation in order to ensure that justice and public safety initiatives are working effectively and constructively across diverse settings and contexts.

Trauma-Informed Responses

Discussions acknowledged the ongoing need for trauma-informed responses and gender-based violence training when it comes to issues related to homelessness and encampments, people in distress or crisis, and Indigenous access to justice. The need for continued and ongoing trauma-informed training and support was clearly articulated throughout breakout room sessions. Working with partners who have a gender-based, trauma-informed lens, and developing programs that have consistent training in this regard, would address gaps in the access to justice. Additionally, trauma-informed and gender-based training contributes to safer environments for people in distress, which in turn contributes to community safety. It is also important to consider the wellness of the people providing services and to recognize that those who provide services can also be members of communities with challenges (an example being gender-based violence).

Meaningful Collaboration and Partnership

Discussions recognized that the complex, overlapping, and multivalent social issues that impact the overall safety and well-being of communities in British Columbia require cross-sectoral and cross ministerial collaborative responses. Generally, participants found that larger, multi-agency collaborative projects are more difficult and more surface-level in their collaborative efforts than smaller, agency-to-agency projects. Discussants further asked what meaningful cross-sector collaboration looks like and identified two bases from which to build meaningful partnerships. Firstly, partnership needs to be driven by empowered decision-makers and teams invested in working collaboratively so that actions and progress remain open to input from partners. Secondly, meaningful collaboration should strive towards creating tangible outcomes based on defined objectives, targets, and results—and clear progress indicators. These two approaches align different organizations with a shared set of goals, and they also ensure collaboration is not merely being done in name only.

Services

Access to resources for both individuals and for organizations remained a major recurring theme throughout the Summit. For example, many discussants emphasized a need for better communications about what resources are available to people in distress. It was also pointed out that a lack of resources (or a lack of accessible resources) at a time when a person urgently needs them exacerbates their risk factors and can push them further into crisis. Similarly, access to resources heavily impacts an organization's ability to provide services to clients with increasingly complex and overlapping issues, and a lack of necessary funding remains a significant barrier to meaningful collaboration with fruitful outcomes. There remains a need to invest in individuals seeking support and in organizations that provide support or services, so that both can be adequately and continuously resourced.

A second major recurring theme acknowledged that many of the individuals or clients targeted by programs such as HEART and HEARTH, as well as ReVOII, experience a multifaceted array of challenges, including but not limited to substance use disorder, homelessness, and traumatic brain injury, which significantly increases the support required to get them the help they need. Programs that are directed towards these clients or individuals require a greater concentration of services. While it may seem like an increasingly large number of resources are being dedicated to an increasingly small group of the population, in the long run this model may end up costing the system less because it ideally diverts people away from the justice system.

Summit Feedback

Comments on the 2023 Justice Summit Report of Proceedings and the Summit process are encouraged and may be emailed to the Justice and Public Safety Secretariat at justicereform@gov.bc.ca.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Summit Agenda

15th British Columbia Justice Summit: Strengthening Partnerships for a Safer British Columbia.

Opening

9:00am-9:30am (30min) **Traditional Greeting:** Elder James Taylor
Welcome/Opening Remarks: Niki Sharma, K.C., Attorney General
Summit Introduction: Megan Harris, Assistant Deputy Minister, Policing and Security Branch, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General

Session 1 – Collaborative Approaches to Addressing Homelessness in British Columbia

9:30am-9:55am (25min) Presentation
9:55am-10:25am (30min) Breakout Room Discussion
10:25am-10:40am (15min) Break

Session 2 – Safer Communities Action Plan – Partnership in Response

10:40am-10:45am (5min) Presentation
10:45am-11:20am (35min) Panel Discussion
11:20am-12:00pm (40min) Breakout Room Discussion
12:00pm-1:00pm (1hour) Lunch

Session 3 – BC First Nations Justice Strategy – Reconciliation through Partnership

1:00pm-1:25pm (25min) Presentation
1:25pm-2:00pm (35min) Q&A Session
2:00pm-2:15pm (15min) Break
2:15pm-2:30pm (15min) Summit-Wide Session

Closing

2:30pm-3:00pm (30min) **Closing Remarks:** Barbara Carmichael, K.C., Deputy Attorney General, Chair of the Justice and Public Safety Council
Closing Ceremony: Elder James Taylor

Appendix 2: Summit Participants

Note that due to personal scheduling, some of the individuals listed below may have only attended portions of the overall Justice Summit programme. The following list does not reflect the specific sessions each individual participated in.

Abbey, Dante (Supervising Lawyer, Community Legal Assistance Society)

Abramson, Alana (Board Member, Restorative Justice Association of BC)

Adams, Alisia K. (Director, Policy & Justice Issues, BC Prosecution Service, Ministry of Attorney General)

Alcock, Rae (Acting Director of Court Services & Manager, Indigenous Outpatient Addiction Counseling & Detox Support, Native Courtworker and Counselling Association of British Columbia)

Baher, Shawna (Superintendent, M.O.M., Officer in Charge, Vernon/North Okanagan Detachment, RCMP/GRC)

Bajwa, Ali (Senior Policy Analyst, Policing and Security Branch, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General)

Belcourt, Billy Jo (Family and Youth Advocate, Native Courtworker and Counselling Association of British Columbia)

Blemings, Roxanne (Senior Director, MHSU Programs and Services, Mental Health and Substance Use Division, Ministry of Health)

Bond, Allison (Deputy Minister, Ministry of Children and Family Development)

Bryant, Michael (CEO, Legal Aid BC)

Campbell, Darrion (Executive Director, Public Safety Transformation, Policing and Security Branch, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General)

Campbell, Karen (Executive Director, BC Law Institute)

Carling, Amanda (CEO, BC First Nation Justice Council)

Carmichael, Barbara, K.C. (Deputy Attorney General, Ministry of Attorney General)

Chiddell, Dan J. (Executive Director, Corporate Support, Court Services Branch, Ministry of Attorney General)

Churchill, Chris (Lawyer - Defence Counsel, C.G. Churchill Law Corporation)

Dandurand, Yvon (Fellow & Professor Emeritus, International Centre for Criminal Law Reform)

Daws, Courtney (Provincial Director of Legal Aid Services, BC First Nations Justice Council)

Dunnet, Allison (Executive Director and Strategic Advisor on Homelessness, BC Housing)

Farnworth, Mike (Deputy Premier, Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General)

Ford, Stephen (Executive Director, Service Delivery, Community Safety and Crime Prevention Branch, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General)

Gin, Shelley (A/Director - Policy, Legislation and Issues Management, Court Services Branch, Ministry of Attorney General)

Govender, Kasari (Human Rights Commissioner, British Columbia's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner)

Harris, Megan (Assistant Deputy Minister, Policing and Security Branch, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General)

Henry, Lori (Regional Manager, Northern Interior, Native Courtworker and Counselling Association of British Columbia)

Hinkson, Honourable Christopher E. (Chief Justice, Supreme Court of British Columbia)

Hobday, Erin (Legal Counsel, Independent Investigations Office)

Hughes, Liza (Executive Director, BC Civil Liberties Association)

Hunt, Adrienne (A/Executive Director, Policy & Service Reform, Court Services Branch, Ministry of Attorney General)

Jackson, Aislin (Policy Staff Counsel, BC Civil Liberties Association)

Jepson, Kaitlyn (Senior Policy Analyst, Indigenous Justice Secretariat, Ministry of Attorney General)

Juk, Peter, K.C. (Assistant Deputy Attorney General, BC Prosecution Services, Ministry of Attorney General)

Kang, Ninu (Executive Director, Ending Violence Association of BC)

Kaur, Harjit (Executive Director, Vancouver and Lower Mainland Multicultural Family Support Services Society)

Kleisinger, Cori (Project Coordinator: Cedar Blankets, BC Society of Transition Houses)

Knife, Ellen (Jr. Native Courtworker, Native Courtworker and Counselling Association of British Columbia)

Kolp, Stephaney (Regional Executive Director, Court Services Branch, Ministry of Attorney General)

Lau, Alvin (Senior Policy Analyst, Court Services Branch, Ministry of Attorney General)

Leung, Karen (Legal Counsel, Provincial Court of British Columbia)

Lucas, Michael, K.C. (General Counsel/Sr. Policy Counsel, Law Society of British Columbia)

Mah, Chris K. (Assistant Deputy Minister and Chief Information Officer, Information Systems Branch, Ministry of the Attorney General)

Martin, Natalie (Director of Communications, BC First Nations Justice Council)

Martiniuk, Daryn (Executive Director, Community Integration Services, Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction)

Massey, Christine (Deputy Minister, Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions)

Medgyesi, Mark (Executive Director, John Howard Society of BC)

Mendes, Jacqui (Executive Director, Community Legal Assistance Society)

Miller, Jennifer E. (A/Executive Director, Homelessness, Partnerships and Housing Supports Division, Ministry of Housing)

Miller, Mark (CEO, Connective)

Morrison, Brenda (Director/Professor, Research and Engagement Centre for Restorative Justice, Simon Fraser University)

Neal, Melanie (Executive Director - Court Administration, Vancouver Island Region, Court Services Branch, Ministry of Attorney General)

Nevin, Caroline (CEO, Courthouse Libraries BC)

Orsetti, Daniel (Deputy Public Guardian and Trustee, Public Guardian and Trustee of BC)

Paras, Christianne (Executive Director, Restorative Justice Association of BC)

Poeckert, Lisa (Senior Policy and Legislation Advisor, Indigenous Justice Secretariat, Ministry of Attorney General)

Poilievre, Tricia (Executive Director, Complex Care Housing & Adult Mental Health, Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions)

Rudolf, Sally (Legal Counsel, Court of Appeal for British Columbia)

Russell, Linda (CEO, Continuing Legal Education Society of BC)

Salkus, Beverley (Manager, Indigenous Justice Strategies and Initiatives, Indigenous Justice Secretariat)

Scott, Douglas S. (Deputy Solicitor General, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General)

Sharma, Niki, K.C. (Attorney General)

Sharon Sutherland (Executive Director, Mediate BC Society)

Shaver, Claudene (Native Courtworker, Native Courtworker and Counselling Association of British Columbia)

Sims, Brian A. (A/Associate Director and Executive Director, Serious and Organized Crime Division, Policing and Security Branch, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General)

Sladeczek, Irina (Project Director, Indigenous Justice Secretariat, Ministry of Attorney General)

Spencer, Blair (Director, Repeat Violent Offending Intervention Initiative, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General)

Spier, Colleen, K.C. (Assistant Deputy Minister, Indigenous Justice Secretariat, Ministry of Attorney General)

Sponaugle, Holly (A/Manager, Engagement and Encampment Response, Homelessness, Partnerships and Housing Supports Division, Ministry of Housing)

Sran, Pawan (CDM Navigator, Mediate BC Society)

Statton, Joel (Regional Executive Director, Vancouver Coastal Region, Court Services Branch, Ministry of Attorney General)

Stock, Cathy (Executive Director, Indigenous Justice Secretariat, Ministry of Attorney General)

Sweet, Lisa (Assistant Deputy Minister, BC Corrections, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General)

Teillet, Carly (Senior Manager of Justice, Métis Nation of British Columbia)

Thomson, Michelle (Regional Executive Director, Court Administration, Ministry of Attorney General)

Veresh, Tim (CEO, PLEA Community Services Society of British Columbia)

Westell, Kevin (Principal, Pender Litigation)

White, Anisa (Provincial Director of Gladue Services Department, BC First Nations Justice Council)

White, Doug (Special Counsel to the Premier on Indigenous Reconciliation, Office of the Premier)

Wishart, Honourable Susan (Associate Chief Judge, Provincial Court of British Columbia)

Yang, Kathleen (Manager, Outreach & Communications, BC Civil Liberties Association)

Appendix 4: Coordination Team

Additional guidance, facilitation, report drafting, technical information, and other support materials were provided by the multi-disciplinary Justice Summit Working Group. Justice Summit development and planning processes as well as all final content, logistics, facilitation, and reporting for the event are managed by the Coordination Team.

The Justice Summit Working Group and Coordination Teams are as follows:

Anderson, Erin (Director, Partnerships and Planning, Corporate Management Services Branch, Ministry of Attorney General, Public Safety & Solicitor General and Housing)

Batchelor, Brian (Planning and Engagement Analyst, Corporate Management Services Branch, Ministry of Attorney General, Public Safety & Solicitor General and Housing)

Fondja, Whitney (Research and Program Analyst, Corporate Management Services Branch, Ministry of Attorney General, Public Safety & Solicitor General and Housing)

McKeown, Kayla (Executive Director, Business Planning & Chief Human Resources Officer, Corporate Management Services Branch, Ministry of Attorney General, Public Safety & Solicitor General and Housing)

Appendix 5: Breakout Room Facilitators and Notetakers

Summit breakout room facilitators and notetakers were volunteers from across the sector who gave their time to help deliver the 2023 Justice Summit. They played a critical role in ensuring the Summit operate as a forum for frank and honest discussion and in providing the basis for this Report of Proceedings.

Facilitators

Cochrane, Alistair (Executive Director, Gaming Policy and Enforcement, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General)

Dennett, Thom (Senior Policy Analyst, RoadSafetyBC, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General)

Kearsey, Stephen (Manager, Strategic Human Resources, Corporate Management Services Branch, Ministry of Attorney General)

Malainey, Stacey (Senior Policy and Legislation Analyst, Policing and Security Branch, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General)

Nadeau, Elizabeth (Family Justice Counselor, Justice Services Branch, Ministry of Attorney General)

Tonn, Greg (Manager, Projects and Stakeholder Relations, Gaming Policy and Enforcement Branch, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General)

Wilcher, Carolyn (Manager Superintendence and Evaluation Unit, Policing and Security Branch, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General)

Zaza, Catrina (Strategic Human Resources Consultant, Corporate Management Services Branch, Ministry of Attorney General)

Notetakers

Akinkuowo, Kash (Planning and Reporting Analyst, Corporate Management Services Branch, Ministry of Attorney General)

Benn, Jennifer (A/Executive Director of Executive Operations, Deputy Minister's Office, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General)

Bhangu, Taran (Research and Policy Analyst, Justice Services Branch, Ministry of Attorney General)

Delaronde, Lauren (Senior Communications Strategist, Corporate Management Services Branch, Ministry of Attorney General)

Ikle, Amber (Administrative Assistant, Legal Access Policy Division, Justice Services Branch, Ministry of Attorney General)

Johnston, Kaleigh (Director, Strategic Transformation Tribunal & Agency Support Division, Justice Services Branch, Ministry of Attorney General)

Smith, Evan (Project Coordinator, Corporate Management Services Branch, Ministry of Attorney General)

Starodub, Samuel (Performance Management Analyst, Corporate Management Services Branch, Ministry of Attorney General)