

Human Trafficking: A Violation of Human Rights



Action Coalition on Human Trafficking

Human Rights Education and
Multiculturalism Fund
Program Report – March 2012

1. Acronyms

ACAHT	Alberta Coalition Against Human Trafficking
ACT	Action Coalition on Human Trafficking
CBC	Canadian Broadcasting Corporation
CCR	Canadian Council for Refugees
CIC	Citizenship and Immigration Canada
CPS	Calgary Police Service
EPS	Edmonton Police Service
IRPA	Immigration and Refugee Protection Act
MRU	Mount Royal University
NGO	non-governmental organization
OHCHR	Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights
PSECA	Protection of Sexually Exploited Children Act
RCMP	Royal Canadian Mounted Police
TFW	temporary foreign worker
UN	United Nations
VSU	victims service unit

2. Human Trafficking in Alberta

“

Slavery was, in a very real sense, the first international human rights issue to come to the fore. It led to the adoption of the first human rights laws and to the creation of the first human rights non-governmental organization. Yet despite efforts of the international community to combat this abhorrent practice, it is still prevalent in all its insidious forms, old and new. The list is painfully long and includes chattel slavery; bonded labour; serfdom; and forced labour, including of children, women and migrants, and often for the purpose of sexual exploitation and domestic servitude...

”

Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General of the United Nations

Human trafficking, while being a criminal offence in Canada and a violation of human rights, occurs throughout the country and within the province of Alberta. As such, responses to human trafficking, including assistance to victims, prosecution of traffickers, and enhancing knowledge and awareness of the issue within communities must incorporate a human rights perspective

ACT Alberta has emerged as the leader in Alberta’s response to human trafficking and with the support of the Human Rights, Multiculturalism and Education Fund, promotes a human rights based response to human trafficking in communities throughout the province and across the country.

2.1 Background of the Action Coalition on Human Trafficking (ACT) in Alberta

In 2007, Changing Together... A Centre for Immigrant Women in Edmonton completed an Environmental Scan entitled “Trafficking of Women and Girls to Canada” to understand the scope of the problem in the city. The results of the scan formed the impetus for the Alberta Symposium on Human Trafficking in 2007, which fostered public awareness of the issue.

In the years since the symposium, there were increased calls for improved coordination efforts to respond to human trafficking in Alberta by government agencies, law enforcement, and servicing providing organizations. In response, a project was undertaken by Changing Together and was called the Alberta Coalition Against Human Trafficking (ACAHT). It subsequently changed its name in 2008 and became the Action Coalition on Human Trafficking (ACT) Alberta and set out to identify stakeholders and develop community-based responses in urban centres of the province.

With continued growth and success, ACT outgrew the mandate of Changing Together, which focuses specifically on immigrant women in Edmonton, and was incorporated under the Alberta Societies Act in December of 2010. Although now autonomous, Changing Together remains a strong advocate of ACT and a key stakeholder. ACT has established its mandate to respond to human trafficking in all its forms, including labour and sexual exploitation of men, women and children across Alberta.

To do so, ACT operates as a coalition of government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), specifically social service providers, immigrant serving agencies, healthcare providers, and law enforcement and government agencies, to improve responses to human trafficking, both from a victim support and prosecutorial perspective. As such, ACT Chapters were established in Calgary, Red Deer, Fort McMurray, and Grande Prairie. While the Executive Director of ACT oversees the activities of each Chapter from the head office in Edmonton, each Chapter is led and managed by local Coordinators, allowing for community-based solutions to the issue.

Each Chapter mobilizes its stakeholders to identify human trafficking and respond through prevention efforts, ensuring adequate protection and support for trafficked persons, supporting the prosecution of criminals involved, and encouraging effective and collaborative partnerships. Throughout its activities, ACT maintains a human rights approach and advocates for agencies associated with ACT to do the same.

ACT Alberta Mission

ACT Alberta will increase knowledge and awareness on human trafficking, advocate for effective rights based responses, build capacity of all involved stakeholders, and lead and foster collaboration for joint action against human trafficking

ACT Alberta Philosophy

ACT Alberta mobilizes stakeholders to identify and respond to human trafficking by

- i) prevention efforts;
- ii) ensuring adequate protection and support for trafficked persons;
- iii) supporting the efficient prosecution of the criminals involved;
- iv) establishing effective and collaborative partnerships.

To fulfill its mission, ACT Alberta is committed to the following:

- Coordinating services for victims of human trafficking
- Training and educating professionals working with trafficked persons
- Coordinating networking opportunities for service providers
- Providing public education and volunteer opportunities
- Researching human trafficking
- Managing an Emergency Victims Fund
- Helping to develop policy provincially and nationally to protect victims and prevent human trafficking
- Building capacity for community based responses through the ACT Chapters

Representatives from many agencies and organizations guide the work of ACT, both at the Chapter and provincial level. ACT Chapters meet regularly in Calgary, Red Deer, and Edmonton and there have been between 10 and 20 representatives involved at each meeting. Examples of organizations that have participated in ACT Chapter meetings include:

- Solicitor General and Public Security – Victims Programs, Special Policing
- Alberta Human Services – Income Support, Temporary Foreign Workers (TFW) Advisory Office, Child and Youth Services
- Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) detachments and Victim Service Units (VSUs)
- Edmonton Police Service (EPS) and Calgary Police Service (CPS)
- Service providing nongovernmental organizations, including women’s shelters, youth shelters, outreach programs assisting vulnerable populations, immigrant and refugee serving organizations, sexual assault centres
- VSUs of municipal law enforcement agencies

These meetings have been used to share information on planned activities, current case loads, and to strategically plan and coordinate actions to counter human trafficking.

After becoming autonomous from Changing Together, ACT instituted a voluntary Board of Directors representing government, NGOs, and concerned and engaged citizens to govern the direction, activities, and administration of the organization. The Board is advised by representatives from the Office of the Solicitor General and Public Security (Government of Alberta) and Status of Women (Government of Canada).

2.2 What is human trafficking?

Human Trafficking is considered to be the fastest growing form of transnational organized crime and is one of the most severe forms of human rights abuses, described by the United

Nations (UN) Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) as “a particularly abusive form of migration.”

In 2000, Canada joined other countries in signing the UN *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children* (known as the Palermo Protocol), an international treaty on trafficking that was ratified in 2005 when Canada amended the *Criminal Code* to include Section 279 that outlines the offence of human trafficking.

Since 2002, human trafficking has also been covered under Canada’s *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (IRPA), but this law only applies to cases of international trafficking where movement occurred across Canada’s border.

Section 279 of the *Criminal Code* of Canada defines human trafficking as a crime in which a person recruits, transports, transfers, receives, holds, conceals or harbours a person, or exercises control, direction or influence over the movements of a person for the purpose of exploiting them or facilitating their exploitation. IRPA defines human trafficking as the act of recruiting, transporting, or receiving someone across Canadian borders through abduction, fraud, deception or use or threat of force or coercion (Section 118). Noting both of these definitions, human trafficking violates subjects victims to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, crimes that violate an individual’s human rights, as outlined in Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 12 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms .

Victims of human trafficking may be exploited for the purpose of sexual exploitation, forced labour, domestic servitude, forced gang or criminal activity, or forced organ removal. Trafficked persons may not be able to, or perceive that they cannot, leave inhumane and harmful circumstances; this lack of freedom results in a violation of a person’s right to right to life, liberty and security of person as guaranteed by section 7 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Government of Canada, 1982).

Another method of conceptualizing the definition of human trafficking is looking at the three necessary components: **action** and **means** and **purpose**. If one condition in each of the categories is met, the result is human trafficking.



While human trafficking is often considered the illegal cross border trade in people, it is crucial to note that trafficking also happens within Canada and Canadians and permanent residents have been victimized (RCMP, 2010). Domestic human trafficking is the phenomenon whereby all stages of trafficking occur within Canada regardless of the victim's legal status.

International human trafficking has also been identified in Alberta and involves crossing Canada's borders. Border crossing can be done legally or through forged documentation, false statements, or unregulated sites. In other words, victims of human trafficking in Canada can be Canadians, permanent residents, or foreign nationals with regular or irregular status. Under Canadian human rights law, both domestic and international human trafficking are violations of human rights.

Human smuggling is often misinterpreted as human trafficking, as both may involve the movement of people across a border, however, they are considered different criminal offences. Human smuggling is defined as the facilitation of the illegal entry of migrants into a country for financial or material benefit, which is typically a business transaction that ends upon arrival (ACT newsletter, September 2011).

2.3 How common is human trafficking?

Some reports suggest that the most common form of human trafficking is sexual exploitation and the majority of victims are women and children. However, statistics and figures on human trafficking are inaccurate due to the clandestine nature of the activity and it is a phenomenon that thrives in marginalized sectors of the work force, like the sex trade and migrant labour, and is often hidden in the privacy of homes and businesses (RCMP).

As of the time of this report's publication, there have been five charges of human trafficking laid, one under IRPA and four under the *Criminal Code*. In four cases, the charges were dropped or the accused pled out on lesser charges. In the remaining case, which included IRPA charges, the accused traffickers has yet to be prosecuted in the courts. However, to date, there have been no convictions of traffickers in Alberta (Quarterman, Kaye & Winterdyk, 2012).

As mentioned above, official statistics and figures on human trafficking are not necessarily representative of the phenomenon or its effects on trafficked persons. However, the United States Department of State estimates that worldwide two million children are being trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation (United States Department of State, 2011). It is thought that females represent three quarters of all reported instances of suspected foreign trafficked victims, although an increasing number of men are being identified as victims, particularly victims of trafficking for forced labour (Perrin, 2010).

Indeed, many cases have been referred to ACT Chapters or queries made from frontline service providers and concerned citizens as to suspected cases of human trafficking and in the absence of formal reporting mechanisms, these cases do not appear on official records. It was recently found that a lack of knowledge of human trafficking by frontline service providers is an impediment to successfully identifying victims and the reported unwillingness of victims to self-identify or accept a label such as “victim” speak to the lack of reliable statistics on the phenomenon (Quarterman et al, 2012).

Through the work of ACT Chapters, it is believed that enhancing familiarity with the relevant concepts and processes will lead to improved identification of cases of human trafficking in Albertan communities. With continued support from ACT, all stakeholders in the fight against human trafficking can improve the collection and sharing of information on cases to improve the collective knowledge on trends and patterns and on the prevalence of human trafficking in Alberta.

3. Responding to Human Trafficking in Alberta

In order to respond effectively to human trafficking, a model outlining four elements has been proposed by the US Department of State and is called the 4P Approach: Prevention, Prosecution of the perpetrators, Protection for trafficked persons, and Partnerships between agencies, government departments, and community. This paradigm has been adopted by ACT and modified to suit each Chapter’s focus and strengths and is outlined below.

3.1 Prevention

In recent years, there has been more focus on defining meaningful prevention of human trafficking. ACT has participated in national level dialogue on the issue of prevention and exploration of promising practices, five of which have been compiled and outlined by the International Centre for Criminal Law Reform & Criminal Justice Policy:

- Build a comprehensive anti trafficking structure of a national action plan, rapporteur, referral mechanism;
- Promote women’s equality, including decreasing demands for commercial sex and decriminalizing the sale of sex and promoting the development of a comprehensive gender equality program;
- Enhance labour monitoring, especially in temporary labour programs such as the TFW, Live-in Caregiver, and Seasonal Agriculture programs;
- Support to effective NGO victim support services with a survivor-centred approach;
- Work with Aboriginal communities to prevent human trafficking (Barrett, 2011)

At a local level, ACT is also engaged in raising awareness in communities with the belief that as awareness of the issue grows, so too will the identification of victims of trafficking as well as those who are vulnerable to becoming a victim, particularly to the recruitment tactics of traffickers in the province. With the support from the Government of Alberta's Civil Forfeiture Fund, ACT Alberta is creating an informational video targeting youth with the aim that it will prevent future cases of trafficking.

While every case of human trafficking is unique, certain conditions exist that make potential victims easier to exploit. Domestically, it is suspected that some girls and women who are likely to become victims of human trafficking for sexual exploitation may come from lower socio-economic backgrounds with weak social connections to their families and their communities. The social and economic challenges that are prevalent in some Aboriginal communities may make Aboriginal girls, in particular, vulnerable to exploitation at the hands of traffickers. As one Edmonton Police Officer has remarked, predators may target Aboriginal girls and women with the belief that no one will try to stand up for them (Helping Hands of Hope Conference, January 20, 2012).

Furthermore, children and youth in group homes and foster care may also be at risk of recruitment into sexual exploitation or forced gang activity. By virtue of their status as minors, they cannot consent to such activities and therefore may be considered victims of trafficking. In Alberta, the enforcement of the *Protection of Sexually Exploited Children Act* (PSECA) provides for the protection of children who are commercially sexually exploited or those that are at risk of becoming involved in the sex trade. By identifying these minors, law enforcement and social service agencies are addressing human trafficking both by offering assistance and preventing the trafficking of children.

Poverty may also help to create a supply of vulnerable migrants both domestically and globally as people wishing to improve their economic wellbeing may relocate for employment and educational opportunities. There is nothing inherently dangerous about this phenomenon, but regular migratory pathways have been exploited by traffickers wishing to profit from the exploitation of others. In Alberta, poverty reduction campaigns that aim to increase the living wage of the poorest Albertans may be effective in reducing the vulnerability to trafficking and therefore reduce the prevalence of both domestic and international human trafficking.

In fact, this is in keeping with the OHCHR's Recommended Principles on Human Rights and Trafficking (specifically principles 4 and 5) that state:

- Strategies aimed at preventing trafficking shall address demand as a root cause of trafficking; and
- States and intergovernmental organizations shall ensure that their interventions address the factors that increase vulnerability to trafficking, including inequality, poverty and all forms of discrimination (OHCHR).

ACT recognizes the need to continually enhance prevention efforts to protect vulnerable populations through innovative and demonstrated programs. Through its work, ACT

encourages that these interventions not only target and focus on those that are considered vulnerable, but on the entire community and the improvement of systems for a holistic approach to prevention.

3.2 Prosecution

As outlined above, human trafficking is illegal in Canada and covered in both the *Criminal Code* and *IRPA*. While there is much debate and discussion about the definition of human trafficking in these pieces of legislation, these tools have been used to pursue successful prosecutions of those charged (Perrin, 2010).

It was not until 2007 that the first charge under section 279 of the *Criminal Code* was laid and it was not until 2008 that the first conviction for human trafficking was obtained in Canada (RCMP Criminal Intelligence, 2010). The first charges under the *Criminal Code* in Alberta were laid in 2009 and under *IRPA*, in 2011.

According to the Interpol Working Group on Human Trafficking, less than one half of one percent of victims agrees to cooperate with police and enter a courtroom to testify against their traffickers, which presents a challenge to securing a conviction of trafficking without a strong base of case law in Canada (RCMP, 2010). Victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation may have their own criminal history and fear exposure of their past activities and involvement in the sex trade that could lead to stigmatism, shame, and embarrassment (RCMP, 2010). Further challenges are the rejection of the label of “trafficked” or “victim” by those individuals whose testimony and cooperation are required to secure a conviction (Quarterman et al, 2012).

In cases that have been brought to court, drug dependencies and the effects of trauma have made victims of trafficking unreliable and uncooperative. Some victims display symptoms associated with Stockholm Syndrome and develop positive feelings of attachment toward their abusers, which is understandable considering many had a pre-existing relationship with the person who trafficked and exploited them (RCMP, 2010). These factors impede the criminal justice system in attaining prosecutions of traffickers.

The same challenges are true for cases of forced labour; many workers are fearful of their employer, law enforcement agencies, or Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), particularly if their immigration status is irregular, their work visa has lapsed, or their trafficker has made threats to have them deported. This along with the fear for their safety or that of their family, fear of retributions from their trafficker or larger trafficking rings, or simply fear not being able to provide support to their families back home prevent victims from cooperating and participating in the prosecution of their traffickers (RCMP, 2010).

Even workers who came to Canada legally under the TFW Program may be unfamiliar with Canadian laws and fear judicial punishment should they speak against their employer or recruiter. Indeed, the issue of recruitment outside of Canada has been identified as a challenge to prosecute all those involved in human trafficking as without jurisdiction outside of Canada’s borders, many recruiters overseas operate with impunity. Additionally, the long prosecution

and sentencing process can also be viewed as an obstruction for a victim to rebuild his or her life and continue to cooperate with the judicial process (RCMP, 2010).

The necessity of victims' cooperation is worthy of discussion as in current cases, it has been instrumental, however this practice has not resulted in convictions of traffickers and should be evaluated with an eye to trying those charged under *IRPA* or the *Criminal Code* for trafficking-related crimes without requiring victim participation (or, alternatively, exploring other options to include testimony from victims, such as video testimony).

ACT has supported phases of investigation and prosecution by law enforcement agencies through the coordination of assistance to victims of trafficking that have chosen to participate in the judicial process. This support has taken the form of referrals for community-based support, liaising between RCMP detachments, coordinating the replacement of identity documentation, and advocating on behalf of victims' choices and preferences. This is congruent with OHCHR's Guidelines on Human Rights and Human Trafficking to ensure an adequate response from state law enforcement actors (OHCHR).

3.3 Protection

Perhaps the most relevant arm of the 4P approach to ACT's work in addressing human trafficking is the area of protection, which focuses on assistance and support offered and provided to identified or suspected victims of trafficking.

ACT Alberta aims to educate victims of trafficking on their rights to justice and protection in Canada, in keeping with the principle that everyone is entitled to the protection of their human rights "without regard to race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, physical disability, mental disability, age, ancestry, place of origin, marital status, source of income, family status or sexual orientation" (Province of Alberta, 2000).

The Palermo Protocol specifically addresses the protection of human rights, stating in Article 2 "The purposes of this Protocol are... to protect and assist the victims of such trafficking, with full respect for their human rights (United Nations, 2000).

Moreover, OHCHR provides the following guiding principles in the area of protection:

- Trafficked persons shall not be detained, charged or prosecuted for the illegality of their entry into or residence in countries of transit and destination, or for their involvement in unlawful activities to the extent that such involvement is a direct consequence of their situation as trafficked persons;
- States shall ensure that trafficked persons are protected from further exploitation and harm and have access to adequate physical and psychological care. Such protection and care shall not be made conditional upon the capacity or willingness of the trafficked person to cooperate in legal proceedings;
- Legal and other assistance shall be provided to trafficked persons for the duration of any criminal, civil or other actions against suspected traffickers. States shall provide protection and temporary residence permits to victims and witnesses during legal proceedings;

- Children who are victims of trafficking shall be identified as such. Their best interests shall be considered paramount at all times. Child victims of trafficking shall be provided with appropriate assistance and protection. Full account shall be taken of their special vulnerabilities, rights and needs;
- Safe (and, to the extent possible, voluntary) return shall be guaranteed to trafficked persons by both the receiving State and the State of origin. Trafficked persons shall be offered legal alternatives to repatriation in cases where it is reasonable to conclude that such repatriation would pose a serious risk to their safety and/or to the safety of their families. (OHCHR)

ACT advocates for these principles to be streamlined in any assistance available to victims in the province. The term “protection” includes all aspects of assistance and in Alberta, these services include, but are not limited to, emergency and long term shelter, financial assistance, basic needs provision, communication and translation services, education and employment support, counselling, legal and immigration support, and addictions counselling.

To coordinate the available services in Alberta, ACT is developing localized protocols and referral pathways so that trafficked persons may have access to appropriate services across the province. These activities have been undertaken in conjunction with government and law enforcement agencies and in so doing, ACT has also played a role in advocating for a rights-based approach to victim assistance. Offering services from a rights-based perspective involves honouring victims’ wishes, ensuring they give informed consent for their information to be shared between agencies, and they drive the support and assistance they access.

While there are often competing priorities when a victim of trafficking is identified, advocacy for their rights is essential to ensure that the prosecutorial process does not dominate the assistance provided or that victim support is not reliant on their cooperation with authorities. For this reason, ACT networks throughout the province include government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and community-based supports are available to provide victims with options on support. This is particularly important when dealing with victims with their own criminal past or whose immigration status in Canada is irregular.

In recent research commissioned by ACT, it was suggested by service providers that in order to meaningfully prevent human trafficking, awareness must be raised of the issue, but services must also be available (Quarterman et al, 2012). In other words, relevant programming must be sufficiently funded to victims and suspected victims of trafficking so appropriate referrals can be made. Services should also be barrier-free and ACT has also advocated with service providing agencies to expand mandates or take clients that they typically would not. ACT does not promote a one-size-fits-all assistance package or agency for victims of trafficking, but does support the continued coordination and networking of relevant agencies and services so that seamless assistance can be offered that meets the comprehensive needs of victims of trafficking.

3.4 Partnerships

Human trafficking can only be addressed through a coordinated approach between agencies, government departments, the general public, and victims of trafficking. Therefore, partnerships are essential for everything from awareness building to providing victims of trafficking access to services. In this light, ACT builds networks of stakeholders in the communities where it is active and chairs regular meetings to bring stakeholders together either in the agency-based networks or the community-based volunteer networks.

These networks allow service providers to connect and liaise to ensure that referral pathways are created, formally and informally. ACT has reached out to relevant agencies that can raise awareness and support enhanced identification of cases as well as provide support to build the response throughout the province. These relationships are currently being documented in protocols and standard operating procedures to follow when victims are identified by various actors.

ACT volunteer networks have planned educational and fundraising events and partnered with community-based initiatives, as well as provided valuable human resources to the Coordinators of the ACT Chapters to undertake research and complete tasks to support the continued development and growth of ACT. By doing so, volunteers are engaged in the fight against human trafficking and embody a spirit of community mobilization and engagement and support of local initiatives.

By providing a platform for information sharing and strategizing on future action, ACT has created space for dialogue and discussion within Alberta with the intention of prevention and response to human trafficking and improving prosecutions of alleged traffickers.

4. ACT's Response: 2010 – 2011

In 2010, the Human Rights Education and Multiculturalism Fund provided funding to Changing Together... a Centre for Immigrant Women for a two-year project entitled Human Trafficking in Alberta: A Violation of Human Rights. In 2011, Changing Together transferred remaining funds to ACT to complete the project, which focused on capacity building and public awareness and is consistent with the fund's priority "to increase community capacity to develop and sustain work in building inclusive organizations and communities." Through this project, ACT increased community capacity to prevent human trafficking and continues to develop systems to better protect the human rights of those who have been trafficked.

This Project is based on the following principles:

- Community agencies, as well as the general public, must come together to acknowledge that human trafficking exists in Alberta;
- When victims do come forward, their human rights must be central to service provision;
- With increased awareness of human rights abuses, Albertans will be able to express their intolerance of such violations and respond.

ACT has been diligent in raising awareness of the issues of human trafficking and the number of requests for staff to do presentations continues to grow based on a reputation of possessing expert knowledge in the area. Concurrent with raising awareness has been the need to increase the capacity of organizations to detect, prevent, and respond to human trafficking when it occurs in their communities.

Increased public awareness

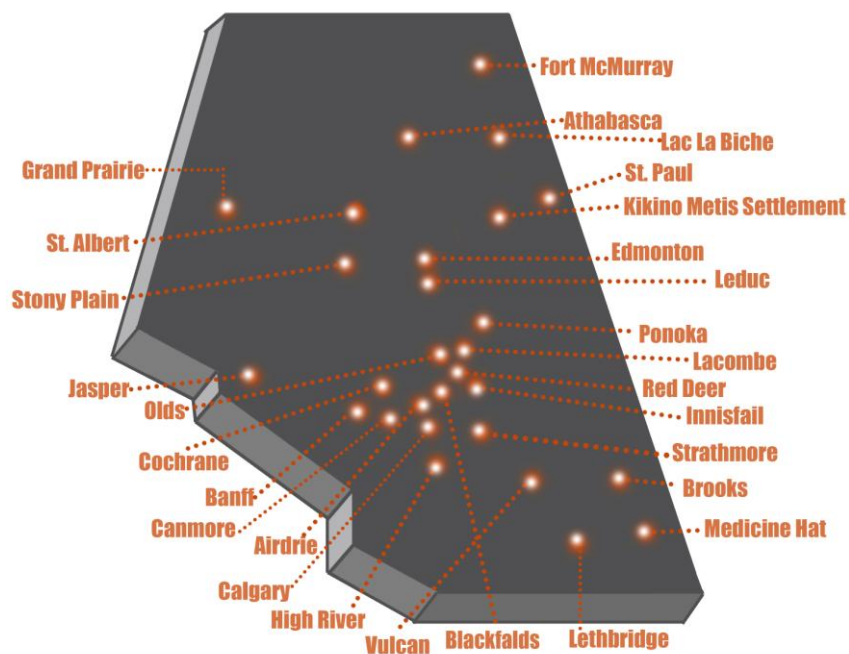
Public Presentations

In 2010, 5498 Albertans attended public education and/or training events delivered by staff/volunteers of ACT. Two thirds of the presentations had evaluations and a random sample of seven presentations indicated that 80% rated the presentations as either excellent or very good.

In 2011, 3428 Albertans attended 70 events facilitated by ACT about human trafficking; these events were intended to increase awareness of human trafficking.

Presentations have been made in a variety of venues, in conjunction with partner organizations, and in the following communities: Athabasca, Airdrie, Banff, Blackfalds, Brooks, Calgary, Canmore, Cochrane, Edmonton, Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, High River, Innisfail, Jasper, Kikino Métis Settlement, Lac La Biche, Lacombe, Leduc, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Olds, Ponoka, Red Deer, St. Albert, St. Paul, Stony Plain, Strathmore, and Vulcan.

PROVINCIAL REACH OF ACT



Alberta communities that received training or education from ACT Alberta, 2010-2011

Public Events

ACT was involved in a wide range of events that included the following:

- Sexual Exploitation Awareness Week (with the City of Edmonton, Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society, Edmonton Police Service, the Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton, and the Centre to End all Sexual Exploitation, ACT participated in planning and hosting nine events in Edmonton in 2011)
- The film Call + Response was screened in four communities (Red Deer, Grande Prairie, Edmonton and Calgary) with accompanying panel discussions on human trafficking. In total over 600 people attended these screenings.
- ACT hosted the book release for Invisible Chains by Benjamin Perrin in both Calgary and Edmonton, over 400 people attended
- ACT planned and hosted events for National Victim Crime Awareness Week that included the Declaration of Human Trafficking Awareness Day in Edmonton and Red Deer
- ACT participated on a panel on human trafficking with Member of Parliament Joy Smith and a Staff Sergeant of the RCMP, at the Human Rights Forum during the GlobalFest festival in Calgary
- ACT had tables at public events such as universities, mall displays, athletic events

Conferences

ACT delivered presentations and hosted workshops at several conferences in 2010 and 2011 that included:

- Alberta Criminal Justice Association's conference on human trafficking in Calgary and Edmonton
- RCMP Human Trafficking conference in Ottawa (ACT was on the Advisory Committee for this conference)
- Alberta Council of Social Workers conferences in Calgary and Edmonton
- Alberta Specialized Law Enforcement Training conference on Human Trafficking
- Canadian Council for Refugees conference on Human Trafficking

Other

- Training materials, fact sheets, and other information materials have been created and distributed to the public, government agencies, and NGOs
- Website was developed with interactive confidential links for victims or those wanting to report suspected traffickers
- Regular newsletter is produced that is distributed to over 500 recipients
- Media strategy was developed, clearly articulating media contacts, key messages and a news kit
- ACT was invited to participate in numerous national and municipal media interviews and panels, including repeated interviews on television with Alberta Prime Time and on radio with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC)

Direct Service

Although Alberta Human Rights does not fund ACT to provide direct service and assistance to victims of trafficking, ACT Coordinators have provided this support when necessary. Most often, other NGOs request assistance from ACT in its capacity as the expert on human trafficking to coordinate service delivery and make appropriate referrals through accessing the ACT network provincially and within Chapters. Referrals have also come from law enforcement agencies when victims self identify or are uncovered through criminal investigations. In most cases, victims require ongoing and long-term assistance and monitoring.

To support direct assistance, ACT collaborated with InformAlberta (informalberta.ca) to develop an online directory of available services in the city of Calgary that have either received training on human trafficking or are known to provide a service that could be relevant to victims of trafficking.

Policy and legislative changes to better meet the needs of victims

EPS and CPS have raised the profile of human trafficking and joined the RCMP in laying charges of human trafficking in Alberta. This enhanced profile of human trafficking on the police agendas may be due to the consultations and positive collaboration with ACT.

ACT consulted on a national strategy on human trafficking both through its involvement with the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR) and by providing recommendations (upon request) to Member of Parliament Joy Smith and the Federal Minister of Public Safety Vic Toews.

Greater community/organizational capacity to address the issue

Community Chapters

With funding from a Victims of Crime grant in 2009, ACT established Chapters in Calgary, Edmonton, Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, Lac La Biche, and Red Deer. Over 50 meetings were held in these communities to share information and to network on human trafficking, as well as to provide technical expertise in managing cases of human trafficking. ACT Alberta was unable to secure matching federal funding in that year to allow the formation of Chapters in Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Brooks, and the Mountain Parks. While Coordinators are not full-time employees of ACT, the Chapters were still able to do a substantial amount of work. Chapters offered education sessions, public awareness, networking meetings with local agencies, and volunteer engagement and management and outreach into rural and isolated communities.

Training

Training on how to identify and assist victims has been provided to hundreds of front line service providers across Alberta. ACT staff facilitated a total of 38 training opportunities to other service agencies, including government agencies and NGOs.

Training sessions were held in Banff, Brooks, Calgary, Cochrane, Edmonton, Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, Jasper, Lac La Biche, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, and Red Deer. Each of these workshops was geared toward the individual audience members and a different presentation and activities were developed and delivered to individuals representing the following groups:

- social workers
- healthcare workers
- support workers for sexually exploited women
- support workers for women involved in commercial sex work
- TFW support workers
- emergency call centre staff and volunteers
- emergency and interim women's shelter staff
- homeless shelter staff
- support workers for vulnerable and street-involved youth
- victim service advocates
- community service organizations
- staff at immigrant and refugee serving agencies
- law enforcement
- law enforcement VSUs
- federal, provincial, and municipal government agencies
- PSECA caseworkers
- faith based organizations

Draft protocol

In 2010, ACT created a draft protocol that outlines what organizations can offer to support identified and suspected victims of trafficking. The complex social and legal issues related to human trafficking, including the lack of shared understanding of the definition of human trafficking, has impeded the progress of formalizing and disseminating these agreements. Furthermore, there have been challenges of having formal protocols established and discussion on if the administrative burden of having protocols signed would stifle the growth and dynamic nature of the ACT Chapters.

The concept of establishing protocols to be followed when victims of trafficking are identified is still alive and some are under development, specifically with law enforcement agencies. These will outline the commitments of involved agencies and what the expectations will be.

As these documents are intended to be living documents, ACT will continue to evaluate and refine them to ensure continuing relevance, including working in conjunction with the RCMP, Victim Service Units and Alberta Solicitor General and Public Security.

5. Future Directions of ACT

ACT is a small organization addressing a complex and large human rights issue in unique and progressive ways. It is the only organization of its kind in Canada and is considered to be an expert in the field. The agency has a number of resources, including information on best practices when working with victims of trafficking and the successes and challenges of operating with a community-based focus to develop localized solutions to international problems. Based on the last two years of experience, ACT recognizes six fundamental areas of need that should be considered in future work to address human trafficking in Alberta.

1) Rights-centered services for trafficked persons

The most urgent need is to provide service to victims, ensuring the human rights of all individuals are protected in this process. Trafficked persons face a myriad of barriers to access support and case management and coordination of service for victims is crucial.

2) Involve and engage the public

The Alberta Human Rights, Multiculturalism and Education Fund is supporting ACT Alberta to implement a Train the Trainer program so that experienced and supported volunteer Community Educators can raise awareness on ACT's behalf. Information on human trafficking in Alberta should be available to all concerned and interested to learn more.

3) Engage in research

ACT Alberta has identified the need for research on human trafficking and partnered with MRU in 2011 to undertake research on human trafficking funded by PrairieAction Foundation and an Internal Grants fund of MRU. This groundbreaking research examines Calgary's response to human trafficking and will be used by policy makers and practitioners to improve the existing response, of which ACT plays a considerable role. ACT will continue engaging with academia where possible to support the critical analysis of all aspects of addressing human trafficking.

4) Connect to related phenomenon

ACT plans to focus on several other important related trends, including the TFW program, Live-In Caregiver program, forced and internet-arranged marriages and the exploitation of Aboriginal girls and women. ACT Alberta will conduct research into these phenomenon and, when needed, create interventions where human trafficking is occurring.

5) Continue to create new partnerships

It is clear that a coordinated approach is necessary and that there are many other stakeholders and partners that must be involved. Partnerships with EPS and CPS, the RCMP, Crown Prosecutors, and Correctional Services have been valuable. New partnerships are necessary to continue the work and ACT has begun to build new relationships with stakeholders, including:

- The Stollery Children's Hospital
- Women's Health Options
- University of Alberta Global Education Program
- Mount Royal University
- Edmonton Community Legal Centre
- Youth Emergency Shelter Society
- Edmonton Public School Board
- Indo-Canadian Women's Association

ACT has also formed several innovative corporate relationships with the following companies:

- The Body Shop
- Focus Communications
- WestJet Airlines
- GNS Trailers

“

It is up to each and every one of us to raise our voice against crimes that deprive countless victims of their liberty, dignity and human rights.

Human beings are not property... let us reaffirm the inherent dignity of all men, women and children. And let us redouble our efforts to build societies in which slavery truly is a term for the history books.

”

Ban-Ki Moon, Secretary-General, The United Nations

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