

The final session of *Uprooting Trafficking* focused on prevention and shared responsibility — how communities, organizations, and individuals can take meaningful action to reduce vulnerability and disrupt exploitation before it begins. Facilitator **Tamara Doerksen** thanked attendees for engaging throughout the series and acknowledged the emotional weight of the topic, emphasizing that awareness must translate into action.

Staff Sergeant Gordon MacDonald of the **Alberta Law Enforcement Response Teams (ALERT)** began by describing how trafficking networks operate much like organized business systems. He explained that traffickers move victims across provinces using established “corridors” designed to maintain control and prevent disclosure. This mobility contributes to victim isolation and manipulation. MacDonald stressed that law enforcement cannot address trafficking in isolation; ALERT relies on collaboration with NGOs, police services, and community partners to share intelligence and support survivors. “It takes a network to fight a network,” he noted.

Inspector Colleen Bowers, who leads the Youth Services Section of the **Calgary Police Service**, expanded on patterns of recruitment and exploitation, especially among youth aged 15 to 23. She emphasized that traffickers rarely abduct victims; instead, they use social media to identify, groom, and manipulate through attention, gifts, and false affection. Bowers encouraged parents and educators to maintain open communication, understand online risks, and monitor digital interactions. She described digital-safety education as a core prevention strategy that must be prioritized alongside traditional community-safety measures.

Kaitlin Bick, a survivor and advocate with **Victim Services Toronto**, provided a lived-experience perspective on early intervention and support. She highlighted the importance of trauma-informed interactions, noting that survivors may not trust systems or feel ready to share their story. Consistency, kindness, and respect for autonomy help rebuild trust. Kaitlin reminded attendees that community members can play a vital role by reporting concerns to local police or the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline, reinforcing that everyday vigilance can disrupt exploitation.

Peter Slocombe, a Canadian law-enforcement professional working in **rescue operations** abroad, described efforts to rescue minors in the Philippines and support aftercare. He highlighted the global dimensions of trafficking, including poverty, online exploitation, and organized demand, and underscored the need for international cooperation, accountability for traffickers, and prevention efforts such as education and job creation.

Across the session, panelists agreed that prevention is anchored in connection — across agencies, sectors, neighbourhoods, and personal relationships. MacDonald and Bowers highlighted the necessity of information-sharing and coordinated responses, while Bick emphasized the power of compassion and community awareness. Doerksen closed the event by encouraging participants to choose at least one small action to take — from sharing resources to initiating conversations — reinforcing the central message of the series: preventing exploitation begins with seeing ourselves as part of the same network of care.