

# Calgary small business puts price on human suffering

## Adding Up The Losses

BY MARIO TONEGUZZI, CALGARY HERALD MARCH 22, 2010



Cara Brown helped determine the award given wrongfully convicted David Milgaard.

**Photograph by:** Ted Jacob, Calgary Herald, Calgary Herald

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### Small Business

*Brown Economic Consulting*

- *Principal: Cara Brown*

- *Incorporated: 1991*

- *Description: Quantifying economic damages when wages or profits are interrupted by the negligence of others*

- *Employees: Six full-time, two part-time, four PhD professors*

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CALGARY - Cara Brown discovered her niche business -- her mission -- several years ago while doing her master's thesis at the University of Calgary.

And over the years, the successful venture has made a name for itself across the country by quantifying the economic damages people suffer through the negligence of others.

One of her biggest and most high-profile cases involved an assessment for David Milgaard, who was wrongfully convicted in 1970 for the rape and murder of nursing assistant Gail Miller. He was awarded a \$10-million settlement in 1999, which included compensation for pain and suffering, lost income, out-of-pocket expenses and legal fees.

Brown's company, Brown Economic Consulting Inc., also did assessments for the family members, particularly Milgaard's mother, because she had interrupted her career to fight for her son's release.

"So we calculated not just the loss of income from moving around and putting her time towards getting her son out of jail, but also her out-of-pocket costs, as well," says Brown.

The idea for her unique business was born several years ago when she was doing her master's thesis at the U of C, and was researching the economic disadvantage of divorce.

In 1991, Brown incorporated her business, which quantifies economic damages when wages or profits are interrupted by the negligence of others.

"We essentially prepare economic reports for lawyers or for insurers. Because we're an independent expert, we actually don't choose which side of the case we're on. It's whoever calls us first," says Brown, whose clients include plaintiff or insurance lawyers, and insurance reps, examiners or adjusters.

"We do economic loss reports and we focus on pecuniary losses and by that I mean just things you can quantify: Loss of income. Loss of family income if it's the death of a parent. Out-of-pocket cost like if somebody's a paraplegic."

Today, the business has its head office in Calgary with six full-time employees and two part-time staff. There are also four PhD professors -- one in Calgary, two in Nova Scotia and one in New Brunswick -- who cosign reports, can testify in court and sometimes provide background research. Satellite offices are in Kelowna, B.C., and Halifax.

The business becomes involved when there is an interruption in a person's career path or earning stream.

"The most common is motor vehicle accidents, but we've actually branched out," says Brown, who has a master of arts degree in economics.

"We do a lot of work for medical malpractice, slip and fall, as well as people who have been sexually assaulted."

Brown combined her interest in law with her head for business.

"A lot of the people that come and work for me love the idea that they're actually doing something in real people's lives, and they're helping people get the compensation that they really deserve," says Brown.

The typical time frame for an assessment is about two weeks. The company is hired at the end of the litigation cycle, which puts staff under a lot of pressure to work quickly.

"We use a very tailored approach because that's what the courts specifically want."

mtoneguzzi@theherald.canwest.com

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